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## New Japanese Scholarship in Cambodian Studies

### Introduction

HAYASHI Yukio\*

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The environment of mainland Southeast Asia for foreign researchers has drastically changed since early the 1990s. With the end of the Cold War and the introduction of open-market economic policies between the regions, foreign researchers have gradually been permitted to conduct academic research in socialist countries such as Vietnam, Lao P.D.R. and Cambodia. They now have access to regions where conjectural interpretations rather than analysis had long been made. Such opportunities offer the promise of new research findings, since the regions have been “under-studied” for several decades. Collaboration with native scholars also opens new horizons for inter-regional study from a comparative perspective.

Paradoxically, it should also be noted that the significance of microscopic studies focused on particular regions or villages tends to be disregarded, partly due to their obvious transformation, which is affected by the larger reformation of the regions in terms of economic and inter-regional relation between nations. More frequently, microscopic study of the people in a particular region today is officially encouraged by the states of the region from the stand point of promotion of national cultural heritage policy and the tourist industry of the region. Thus, stereotyped images of regional culture and society have disseminated more widely than ever before in parallel with the spread of information technology, whereas what really happens is that the more the regional world looks homogenized, the more local complexity appears.

It was in this context that the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), Kyoto University organized a three-year joint-research project from 1995 to 1998 to promote ethnographic studies of the region. Entitled “Inter-Ethnic Relations in the Making of Mainland Southeast Asia,” the project aimed to present and exchange first-hand data gathered by Japanese researchers who had finished long-term and intensive fieldwork somewhere in mainland southeast Asia [TAK 1998]. This initial and domestic seminar-meeting rapidly developed into a series of international workshops, the first of which was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 1998, which was sponsored by the COE program from 1999 to 2003. For the same purpose, four meetings with short-term excursions to rural villages of ethnic groups were held in Kunming (P.R. of China), Chiang Rai (Thailand), and Luang Phrabang (Lao P.D.R.), to which

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native and outside scholars of the region were invited [Hayashi 1998; Hayashi and Yang 2000; Hayashi and Aroonrut 2002; Hayashi and Thongsa 2003]. In the same period, another series of gatherings concerned with “Inter-Ethnic Relations, Migration and Cultural Reconfiguration” were held as joint-research seminars at CSEAS, expanding the region surveyed as well as the issues addressed. In the six years from 1998 until the end of fiscal 2003, this joint-research seminar met 19 times and invited 53 presenters.

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Most of the papers on Cambodia included here are revised English versions of presentations originally read in Japanese at a special seminar of “Inter-Ethnic Relations, Migration and Cultural Reconfiguration” held at CSEAS on 6th and 7th December, 2002. Each study is based on long-term fieldwork that was conducted by researchers under different research grants in the 1990s. The main purpose of this compilation is to introduce their new research findings in this under-studied region as well as to present one phase of the activities of the series of joint-research seminars mentioned above.

Except for some senior professors, there are very few Cambodian specialists among Southeast Asianists in Japan, compared with scholars of Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia. This is mainly because the civil war and the subsequent Pol Pot regime made it nearly impossible for foreign researchers to conduct empirical study in Cambodia. Accordingly, Cambodian study in Japan has been seriously muted. It was only after the “Paris Agreements,” the Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict concluded in Paris on 23 October 1991, that Japanese researchers began to conduct field work on issues concerning Cambodian society and culture [cf. Ohashi 1998; Amakawa 2001]. Most of the papers here are results of long-term fieldwork conducted since the mid-1990s at the earliest. With their skills in native language and their perceptions of life gained through several years of stay in contemporary Cambodia, most of the authors have become specialists of sorts on various issues in Cambodia. Therefore, it would be no exaggeration to introduce their works as those of new “pioneers” who are cultivating a regional study of Cambodia, at least in the sense that they do not share an Orientalist perspective on the research.

Except for the works of earlier scholars who began to study from the 1960s [Bizot 1992; Bizot et Von Hinüber 1994; Ebihara *et al* 1994; Vickery 1984; 1986; Nepote and Khing 1981], many of the academic works on Cambodian society and culture accumulated in the past two decades have been made by journalists or NGO workers rather than academic specialists. Other works are by specialists who have expanded their field of study for the purpose of (risky) comparison with their “home research sites” [Thion 1993; Keyes 1994; Hayashi 1995; 2002]. Under the UNTAC regime, foreign journalists, intellectuals and NGO workers often remarked: “Now nobody can meet any Cambodians whose ancestors built the great Angkor Vat in ancient times.” In 1993, I first joined a two-year research project to conduct a survey on Buddhist organization in Phnom Penh and its suburbs. In the chaotic environment that still prevailed, I

began to realize that Angkor Wat was a symbol to divert foreigners' attention from the ongoing social unrest and chaotic reality that people were struggling with their daily lives. In other words, the more foreign researchers consider themselves as crusaders fighting to help Cambodian society, the more they take an essentialist view of the common people and begin to think how to develop the disintegrated Cambodia, rather than to see what people are constructing with what kind of intentions in different settings. This positioning in the field seems to coincide with Orientalist ways of sketching of non-Western societies and cultures. Physically, Angkor Wat has been located far from the people living in various communities.

Regional study of Cambodia in the field of Southeast Asian studies seems to have long been dominated by the colonialist point of view as found overtly in the study of glorious Angkor Wat. The tendency to focus on elitist culture, which has a distance from living cultures of common people, can be observed even in the present condition of the research. The outstanding political movements and the related issues replaced obvious Orientalist studies. Recent studies on Cambodian society, however, have always been located in the aftermath of the turmoil of Pol Pot regime, which gave rise to the exodus and holocaust. In an Orientalist manner, most researchers have not focused on specific town/village residents, but on "survivors," "refugees" or diaspora together with the dystopia of the Khmer Rouge [Stuart-Fox and Bunhaeng 1986; Supang and Reynolds 1988; Gunn and Lee 1991; Mysliwiec 1988; Martin 1994; Wagner 2002]. On one hand, there is an abundance of works on political struggles as well as current reports of "formidable" socio-economic conditions. On the other, there is a paucity of substantial data on bureaucracy, provincial administration, cultural practices, family structure, kinship system in rural areas and the like, while it is true that some studies have shed light on hidden facets of the socio-political changing of Cambodian society [Chandler 1991; 1992; 1996; Kiernan 1985; 1996; Ovesen *et al.* 1996; Heder and Ledgerwood 1996]. It seems that such circumstances also reflect the foreigners' intention to reconstruct the socio-political environment, which is also sustained by the global development-aid and social welfare to "underdeveloped countries." In other words, what is concealed in problem-solving study are facts and realities rooted in everyday lives, which are easily overlooked or taken for granted. This is one reason why the classic descriptive work of Delvert [1958], who believed that to understand Cambodian people is to study rural peasants, is still highly valuable and beneficial. After his work we have only Ebihara's thesis focused on a specific village community [1968].

It is imperative to observe that Cambodia is not a "museum" filled with glory, as found in the past colonialist view, nor a mere field filled with tragedy and poverty, as depicted by observers living in the consumer society of "developed nations." Cambodia as a region is much more than that. It has local communities, to varying degrees, constituted by displacement. They are sustained in hybrid historical conjunctures. We should notice that, surrounded by images configured through an unchanging colonialist view, we know little about how people live there and react to the social realities of poverty, the political environment, and the outside world that foreign researchers come from. Under the wave of globalization, which promptly

classifies and reifies regional reality because of print capitalism, more fundamental research involving interaction between researcher and researched is urgently needed, rather than reproduction of stereotyped image based on macroscopic views, which accords with most Southeast Asianists' current academic propensity for area studies in terms of pandemic "global standard." In short, contemporary Cambodian studies have few substantial data or ethnography in many facets with which to capture the social reality.

What does the shortage of substantial data mean in Cambodian studies? To my knowledge, microscopic survey in a particular region is certainly lacking. What is needed urgently is to accumulate empirical data through long-term fieldwork, a process of interaction with locals, which requires not only literal knowledge but also a perception of the socio-cultural environment. Scattered knowledge obtained from successive interactive processes needs to be integrated, redefining the reality of each field of research, and providing a foundation for further investigation. It is true that such ethnographical knowledge from a specific field is always incomplete because it is constantly reconfigured in each process. However, such knowledge could also be constitutive as far as the process by which it was generated is reciprocal. Without having this reciprocal process, we could not meet any locals but anonymous actors.

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It goes without saying that the authors represented here did not necessarily intend to perform such anthropology oriented fieldwork. But each of them had seriously conceived what was their field of research and how new findings could be made in the difficult and chaotic conditions of contemporary Cambodia at the time. Meanwhile, as in other socio-cultural studies, up-to-date knowledge on Cambodia is promptly placed in leading to the "market" of academic knowledge in the name of a particular research association affected by government policies and media industry. Having been at a crossroad under such circumstances, the present authors do not intend to reproduce the stereotyped images that non-specialists tacitly expect in their enduring view of Cambodia as a country in turmoil, but aim to accumulate substantial data to be further studied, recognizing that their aim of study is to develop regional study of Cambodia as it is.

The papers address various subjects; the historical (Kitagawa and Sasagawa), the social (Takahashi and Sakanashi), and the cultural (Kobayashi).

Based on her careful examination of French archival documents and field research of the site, Kitagawa, who maintains the significance of focusing on regional factors in studying Cambodian history, attempts to reconstruct a regional history of Kampot, a marginal town that functioned as an outlet from Cambodia to a colonial resort, paying attention to its relations with outside world. Sasagawa's work explores the post-colonial discourses on the court dance, focusing on its historical process of cultural representation, by scrutinizing a huge repository of documents recorded in French and Khmer. Through the analysis of the court dance, the paper elucidates in detail how Cambodian "tradition" has been configured and transformed. Takahashi, an anthropologist who studied Thai culture in the late 1980s and recently conducted



fieldwork in rural villages in Cambodia, describes the present state of female-headed households in a rice-growing village of Takaev province. She reveals the continuity of function of the kinship system despite the drastic change of the outside world. Sakanashi, the youngest of the authors, analyzes opinions collected in a sociological quantitative survey of both urban and suburban secondary school students and finds salient patterns of orientation to their future social positions including jobs associated with the current unstable socio-economic conditions. In the last paper, Kobayashi describes the historical process of transformation of Buddhist practice in rural villages of Kampong Thum, showing valuable data obtained from his intensive fieldwork for more than two years. His observations in villages are precious, compared to the latest studies on social change and religion, which remain schematic and impressionistic, with no first-hand data from specific fields [cf. Marston and Guthrie 2004].

It should be noted that the papers in this volume are a minimal introduction of many important works by a new generation of Japanese specialists in Cambodian study. In recent years, many other valuable works on various issues have appeared, including works on archaeology, land tenure, government organization, legislation, economic development, classic/modern literature, and language. Although there is no space to mention them here, these academic contributions to regional study of Cambodia should not be dismissed [cf. Amakawa 2001].

Reconsidering previous analytical schemes as well as positioning in the field, both new specialists and specialists-to-be attempt to depict a reality underneath institutional pronouncements. Because their fresh material is still being processed, readers might find insufficient analytical consideration or clarification in their arguments. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that their research findings on specific regions provide a good introduction to new Japanese scholarship in Cambodian studies. They should be further and fully developed to expand the new horizon of Cambodian studies in Japan. By their future contributions, contemporary Cambodian studies could also provide an arena to reconfigure of generic scheme of “Southeast Asian studies” which have long been dominated by Western perspectives and policies. As an organizer and a representative of the joint-research seminar, I therefore hope that all the papers will elicit fruitful comments and suggestions for future studies from both readers who are interested and engaged in the study of Cambodia and Southeast Asianists who are studying society and culture from an inter-regional perspective.

**Keywords:** inter-ethnic relations, mainland Southeast Asia, Cambodia, Angkor Vat, local history, Orientalist view, regional study, globalization

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## ***Kampot* of the Belle Époque: From the Outlet of Cambodia to a Colonial Resort**

KITAGAWA Takako\*

### **Abstract**

Historical studies about Cambodia have paid little attention to regional factors, and historians have been hardly able to give much perspective about the history of particular regions within the country. Therefore, this paper looks at *Kampot* as it was during the French colonial period in order to understand the foundations of present-day *Kampot*. Presently, *Kampot* is the name of a province and its capital city, which face the Gulf of Thailand. During the colonial period, it was an administrative center for the *circonscription résidentielle* that extended over the coastal region. The principal sources for this paper are the “*Rapports périodiques, économiques et politiques de la résidence de Kampot*,” from 1885 to 1929, collected in the *Centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer* in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Drawing from the results of our examination, we can recognize two stages in the history of *Kampot*. These are (1) the *Kampot* of King *Ang-Duong*, and (2) modern *Kampot*, which was constructed by French colonialism. King *Ang-Duong*’s *Kampot* was the primary sea outlet for his landlocked kingdom. After colonization by the French, King *Ang-Duong*’s *Kampot* became extinct, and the coastal region became isolated from other parts of Cambodia. The principal reason for this was the opening of Saigon Port and the exploitation of the Mekong River route. French *Kampot* became a regional administrative center and a colonial resort, which continues to the present. The appearance of the colonial city was succeeded to the provincial capital city after independence. *Kampot*’s status as a resort, which had been interrupted during the civil war period, began to be revived in the middle 1990s.

Throughout the periods of its history, the coastal region had been located on the border between inland Cambodia and the international maritime world. The delimitation of the Kingdom of Cambodia under French colonialism made *Kampot* into a state border district. The international openness of *Kampot* sometimes disturbed regional security. From the French point of view, the Chinese element had the potential to cause insecurity and, therefore, was strictly watched. The border served as a zone of refuge for thieves and pirates, and menaced the stability of the French administration. This situation continued until quite recently. Until the mid-1990s, the Khmer Rouge dominated the zone where thieves had once ranged during the colonial period.

**Keywords:** Cambodia, *Kampot*, Gulf of Thailand, colonial period

Historical studies about Cambodia have dealt with “Cambodia” as a whole and have paid little attention to regional factors within it. Historians have been unable to give much in depth information or perspectives about any particular region. Thus, historical studies could not contribute to other Cambodian studies, including those that have tried to understand the civil

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\* 北川香子

war in recent history, or tried to research current economic and social situations in order to contribute to the development of Cambodia.

Certainly, compared to other areas, the regional histories of Cambodia cannot be said to have plenty of materials. Regarding ancient history (from the seventh to thirteenth centuries), Cambodia has hundreds of Khmer inscriptions, which comprise “the hard data about Cambodian society, economy, and politics” [30: 3]. However, from the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, we have less historical materials, except for the Royal Chronicles, which were compiled in the late eighteenth century at the earliest. As for the colonial period (from 1863 to 1953), French scholars and functionaries left descriptions about geography, natural history or regional administration, so we can hope to extract some information from them. With regard to the period of independence, we should try to conduct research into oral histories. So far, we can say that it is possible to study the history of some regions with regard to the ancient age and after the colonization.

In this paper, we deal with *Kampot* and the coastal region of Cambodia during the French colonial period. Today, *Kampot* is the name of a province and its capital city, which face the Gulf of Thailand. The purpose here is to describe its paysage and its relation with the central authority, in order to explain the foundations of present-day *Kampot* and surrounding region.

The principal sources of this paper are “*Rapports périodiques, économiques et politiques de la résidence de Kampot*” from 1885 to 1929 [20; 21; 22; 23]. They are collected in *Centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer* in Aix-en-Provence, France, and contain information about the political situation, spirit of the population, ways of communication, attitudes of the Cambodian functionaries, public works, agriculture, commerce, industry, the militia, justice, education, medical assistance, and other topics.

## I The Coastal Region of Cambodia

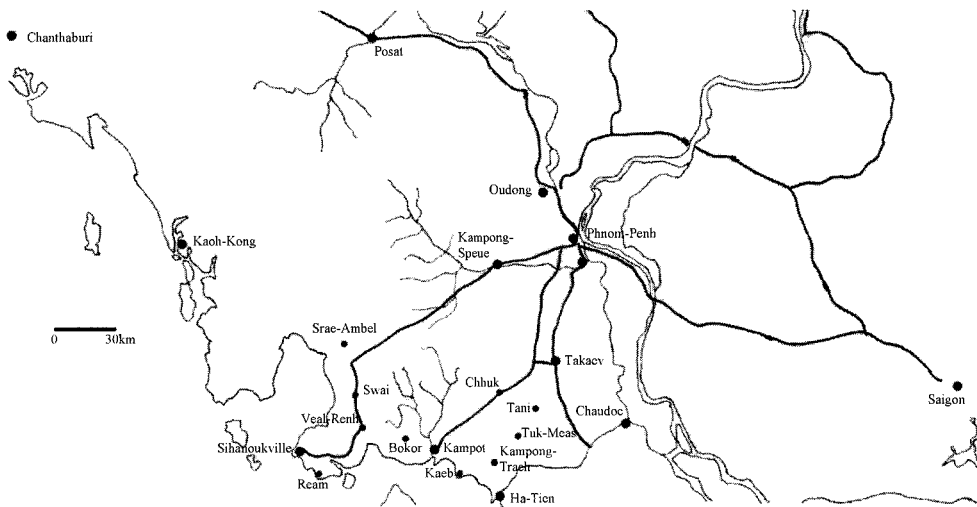
The Kingdom of Cambodia has a short coastline (about 400 km) on the Gulf of Thailand. The Cardamom Mountains (*Phnom-Kravanh*)<sup>1)</sup> and the Elephant Mountains (*Phnom-Damrei*) geographically separate the coastal region from the heart of the country. Two National Routes, No. 3 to *Kampot* and No. 4 to *Sihanoukville*, and a railway connect this region to *Phnom-Penh*. On National Route No. 3, a mountain called *Phnom-Tvea* (Mount Gate) marks the entrance to *Kampot*. *Phnom-Tvea* is literally the gate between inland Cambodia and the maritime province, which is guarded by a *Neak-Ta* (guardian spirit) named *Chomteav-Mau* (Madame *Mau*).<sup>2)</sup>

A narrow plain lies between these mountains and the shallow sea. Provincial capitals and

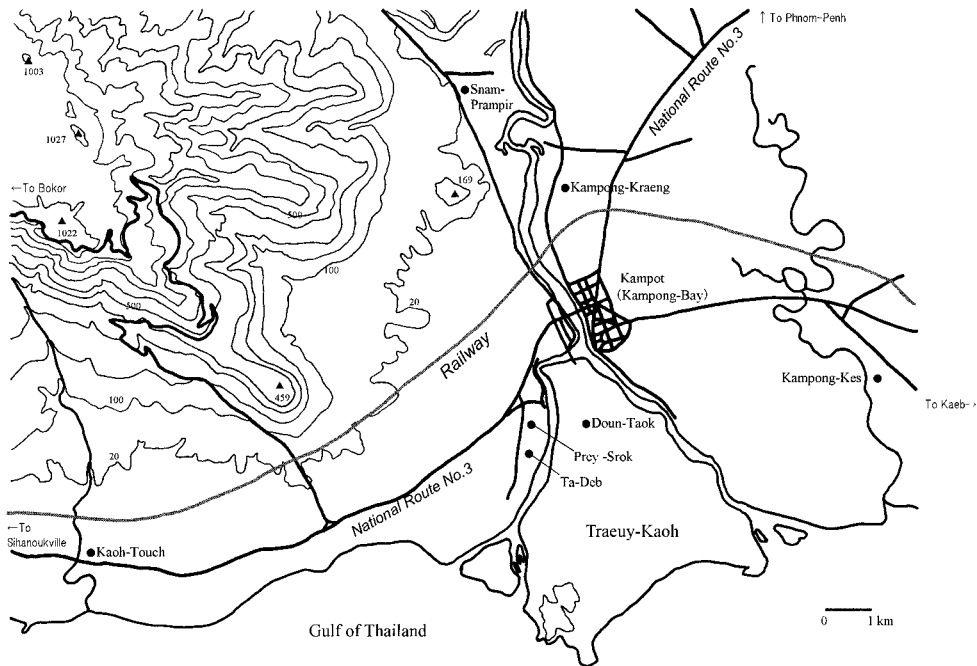
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1) The highest mountain is Mt. *Aoral* (1,813 m).

2) This *Neak-Ta* was born after the construction of the road and grew stronger as traffic on the road increased. It was believed that all travelers had to pray to this *Neak-Ta*, or they would die under a curse. Nowadays, there is another *Neak-Ta* named *Yeay-Mau* (grandmother *Mau*) at a pass on National Route No.4 and every driver offers fruit.



Map 1 Coastal Region



Map 2 Kampot

municipalities lie on this plain and are connected to each other by land and sea. Presently, the two municipalities of *Krong-Preah-Sihanouk* (Sihanoukville) and *Krong-Kaeb*, and the two provinces of *Kampot* and *Kaoh-Kong*, form the Cambodian coastal region.

During the French colonial period, the coastal region was administratively organized into a



*circonscription résidentielle* with *Kampot* as its capital. First, *circonscription résidentielle de Kampot* contained the *arrondissements*<sup>3)</sup> of *Kampot*, *Kompong-Som*, *Trang* (*Bunteay-Méas*,<sup>4)</sup> *Trang* and *Péam*), and *Kong-Pisey*<sup>5)</sup> (*Kong-Pisey* and *Pnôm-Sruoch*)<sup>6)</sup> [17: 211].

When the French installed the *Résidence*, its capital *Kampot* in administrative designation was an aggregation of 8 villages that contained 2,500 inhabitants [13: 1–2]. These villages are now included in the District of *Kampong-Bay*, the urban area of *Kampot* Province.

(1) “Cambodian *Kampot*” was on the *Prek-Kampot* River, behind “Chinese *Kampot*” and near a Cambodian pagoda. In 1889, there were only 30 inhabitants and most of them were peasants [14: 85].

(2) “Chinese *Kampot*”, which local people called *Prey-Srok* and Europeans called *Kampot*, was on the right riverbank of the west branch of the *Prek-Thom* River. Its inhabitants were exclusively Chinese. The village consisted of two ranges of houses running parallel with the river and two roads. In January 1888, there were two pagodas of brick, a market, 75 houses, and a Chinese school. The number of inhabitants was 267 (65 men, 65 women and 137 children). Most of them were merchants and some had sea junks [14: 86–87].

(3) A Vietnamese village, *Tien-Thanh*, was in front of “Chinese *Kampot*” and another Vietnamese village was on *Trey-Ka* (*Traeuy Kaoh*)<sup>7)</sup> Island. In 1888, there was a school, a market and two ranges of houses running parallel with the river. The village population was 428, including 228 Chinese, 189 Vietnamese and 11 Cambodians. There were 88 houses and 17 large sea junks. Inhabitants kept 123 pigs and yielded 450 kg of rice in 1886 and 900 kg in 1887 [14: 110].

(4) A Malay village, *Trapeang-Svay*, was below the Vietnamese village on *Trey-Ka* Island. The inhabitants were peasants and fishers. In January 1888, there was a thatch-roofed mosque, a school teaching Arabic, 33 houses and 15 large sea junks. The population was 199, including 172 Malays. Inhabitants kept 41 buffalos and 19 cattle, and yielded 9,000 kg of rice in 1886 and 16,200 kg in 1887 [14: 110].

(5) The Malay-Cambodian villages of *Khlong-Neas* and *Bang-Supream* were on *Trey-Ka* Island. *Khlong-Neas* was on the left riverbank of the *Prek-Thom* and *Bang-Supream* was inland. In January 1888, there were 358 inhabitants, including 142 Malays and 97 Cambodians. There were 53 houses and 27 large sea junks. Inhabitants kept 98 buffalos, 48 cattle and 3 horses, and yielded 12,000 kg of rice in 1886 and 22,500 kg in 1887 [14: 110–111].

3) Before the installation of *Résidence*, the Cambodian royal authority controlled these *arrondissements* separately. *Kampot* belonged to the *Dey* (Land) of *Baphnom*, which was under *Kralahom*, the King's Minister of Marine and Water Transportation. *Kompong-Som* belonged to the *Dey* of *Pursat* under *Chakrei*, the King's Minister of the Army and Land Transportation. *Péam* and *Banteay-Méas* belonged to the *Dey* of *Treang* under *Yomaréach*, the King's Minister of Justice. *Kong-Pisey* was under *Okña Norintréathipadei*, *Oparach* (the Second King's) Minister of Land Transportation [9: 211–216].

4) *Banteay-Méas*.

5) *Kong-Pisey* is now in *Kampong-Spueu* Province.

6) *Phnum-Sruoch* is now in *Kampong-Spueu* Province.

7) *Traeuy-Kaoh* is now a commune belonging to *Kampong-Bay* District, *Kampot* Province.

(6) There was a Malay-Cambodian village, *Daun-Tek (Doun-Taok)*,<sup>8)</sup> which consisted of groups from *Trapeang-Romeas*, *Daun-Tek* and *Sala-Kev*. *Trapeang-Romeas* was on the *Prek-Kandal-Romeas* River, a branch of the *Prek-Thom*. *Daun-Tek* and *Sala-Kev* were inland, but some Malays of *Daun-Tek* had boats on *Prek-Kandal-Romeas*. In January 1888, it contained 213 habitants including 140 Malays, 50 Cambodians and 23 Chinese. There were 55 houses and 7 large sea junks. Inhabitants kept 58 buffalos, 55 cattle, 9 horses and 5 pigs, and yielded 15,000 kg of rice in 1886 and 30,000 kg in 1887 [14: 111].

(7) The Malay village of *Kandal-Romeas* was on the left riverbank of the *Prek-Kandal-Romeas* at the face of *Trapeang-Romeas*.

(8) The Chinese village of *Kompong-Bay (Kampong-Bay)*<sup>9)</sup> was on the left riverbank of the *Prek-Thom*. On January 1, 1888, there were 30 houses and a Chinese school. The population was 171 (80 men, 30 women and 61 children) and increased to more than 250 in the same year. Most of the inhabitants were merchants. Some had sea junks and traded with villages on the coast [14: 87].

Other principal centers located on the east of *Kampot* were *Kompong-Trach (Kampong-Trach)*,<sup>10)</sup> *Tonhon*, *Tani*,<sup>11)</sup> *Tuk-Meas*<sup>12)</sup> and *Kep (Kaeb)*.

(1) *Kompong-Trach*, the center of *Péam* Province, was on a small river, which only small junks could ascend. The builders of this village were Chinese who arrived before the period of French colonization. They cultivated pepper and *Kompong-Trach* became a trading center for pepper. As transactions of pepper increased, the village of *Kompong-Trach* expanded. In 1907, the French built a market and after that, shops, restaurants and tailors were installed around the market [24: 11–12].

(2) *Tonhon* was a trading center for pepper, too. From March to May, ox carts loading pepper went to *Tonhon* everyday. This village was located a few kilometers east of *Kompong-Trach*, at the confluence of the *Potassy* River and the *Giang-Thanh* River. The *Giang-Thanh* River continues to *Vinh-Te* Canal, which connects *Ha-Tien* and *Chaudoc*. The inhabitants of this village were Vietnamese fishers and Chinese merchants [24: 12–13].

(3) *Tuk-Meas* was the administrative center of *Banteay-Meas* Province. It was a Chinese village on the *Tuk-Meas* River, which large junks could ascend [24: 13–14].

(4) *Tani* was another Chinese village on the way from *Kompong-Trach* to *Treang*.<sup>13)</sup> Pepper was cultivated in its surroundings [24: 13–14].

(5) *Kep* was a small port where coolies disembarked from Chinese junks heading for pepper plantations [24: 14].

8) Now *Doun-Taok* is a village of *Traeuy-Kaoh* Commune, belonging to *Kampong-Bay* District, *Kampot* Province.

9) *Kampong-Bay* is now a district of *Kampot* Province.

10) *Kampong-Trach* is now the central town of *Kampong-Trach* District, *Kampot* Province.

11) *Tani* is now a commune belonging to *Angkor-Chey* District, *Kampot* Province.

12) *Tuk-Meas* is now divided into two communes (*Tuk-Meas-Khang-Kaeut* and *Tuk-Meas-Khang-Lech*) belonging to *Banteay-Meas* District, *Kampot* Province.

13) *Treang* is now in *Takaev* Province.



The principal centers on the west of *Kampot* were *Kaoh-Touch*,<sup>14)</sup> *Preaek-Tnaot*,<sup>15)</sup> *Tuek-L'ak*,<sup>16)</sup> *Sré-Thom*, *Veal-Renh*,<sup>17)</sup> *Swai*, *Champa*, *Véal*, *Kampong-Seila*<sup>18)</sup> and *Srae-Ambel*.<sup>19)</sup> When Pavie traveled from *Kampot* to *Kompong-Som* in 1881, the itinerary from *Kampot* to *Kompong-Srela* (*Kampong-Seila*) needed four days under the best conditions [18: 99–101].

(1) *Câh-Tauch* (*Kaoh-Touch*) village was 11 km from *Kampot* on the *Prec-Câh-Tauch* River. Pavie saw some boats on the river that were loading wood.<sup>20)</sup> *Câh-Tauch* village contained 15 to 20 houses and its environs had paddy fields on which many buffalos grazed. Before, this village had been called *Ramset* and was located 15 minutes west, but because the land became poorer, the inhabitants moved to new places [14: 82; 18: 102].

(2) *Prec-Thnot* (*Preaek-Tnaot*) village was on the left bank of the *Prec-Thnot* River, 12 km from *Câh-Tauch* village,<sup>21)</sup> and about 20 Cambodian families lived there. Some Vietnamese began to settle in this village in the middle of the 1860s, and after that their numbers increased. They made planks and boats ordered by the Chinese of *Ha-Tien* or *Kampot*. The houses of the Vietnamese merchants and fishers were aggregated, and those of the Cambodians peasants were scattered in the plain. Only the land around *Prec-Thnot* was cultivated, but other parts remained absolutely uncultivated [14: 82; 18: 103–104].

(3) *Teuc-Laak* (*Tuek-L'ak*) village was on the right bank of the *Prec-Teuc-Laak* River, about 12 km from *Prec-Thnot* and 5 km from sea. The land was fertile and covered with paddy fields. There were 12 or 15 houses of métis-Chinese and many Cambodian peasants inhabited, too. The houses of the Chinese were aggregated and those of the Cambodians were scattered in the plain and the bush. The *Prec-Teuc-Laak* was navigable to a point an hour above the village. At the beginning of the northwestern monsoon, many ships from *Kampot* ascended the river to buy paddies. The crews were Chinese and Malays and they went into the country and offered cottonades, tobacco and other goods in exchange for paddies and forest products, like gamboges, resin, oil and gum [14: 79–80; 18: 104–105].

(4) *Sré-Thom* village was three hours from *Teuc-Laak* and was its dependence. After passing 2 km of cultivated land, the village appeared. This village contained about 40 houses of Cambodian or métis-Chinese at the edge of forest along the *Prec-Sré-Thom* River. Products of this village were exported by using the river. In former days, the village was located near the road, but because the land became poorer, the inhabitants cleared the forest and built a new village<sup>22)</sup> [14: 81; 18: 106].

(5) Then the road passed *Véal-Reen* (*Veal-Renh*).<sup>23)</sup> Twenty to 30 houses were at the foot of

14) *Kaoh-Touch* is now a commune belonging to *Kampot* District, *Kampot* Province.

15) *Preaek-Tnaot* is now a commune belonging to *Kampot* District, *Kampot* Province.

16) *Tuek-L'ak* is now a commune belonging to *Prey-Nob* District, *Krong-Preah-Sihanouk*.

17) *Veal-Renh* is now a commune belonging to *Prey-Nob* District, *Krong-Preah-Sihanouk*.

18) *Kampong-Seila* is now a district belonging to *Kaoh-Kong* Province.

19) *Srae-Ambel* is now a district in *Kaoh-Kong* Province.

20) According to Leclère, *Ca-Toch* (*Kaoh-Touch*) was 20 minutes from sea.

21) According to Leclère, *Prec-Thnot* was 30 minutes from sea.

22) After that, a plague killed people on two occasions.

23) *Veal-Renh* is now a commune belonging to *Prey-Nob* District, *Krong-Preah-Sihanouk*.

*Phnom-Véal-Reen* hill. The inhabitants were Cambodian or métis-Chinese and most paddy fields belonged to the Chinese or Malays of *Kampot* [18: 110]. According to Leclère, *Véal-Rine* (*Veal-Renh*) had the best paddy fields in the province [14: 75]. Pavie visited a village of an ethnic group called *Tchiong*, between *Véal-Reen* and *Somrong*.<sup>24)</sup> The population was about 40 and they lived in 7 houses amid paddy fields at the edge of the forest [18: 111–116].

(6) After *Swai* village, the road went into a thick forest and there were no villages until *Champa* and *Véal*. According to Leclère, *Poum-Soye* (*Swai*) was six hours from sea, on the left riverbank of *Prec-Thom-Véal-Rinh* (or *Prec-Soye*). This village was a dependence of *Poum-Teuck-Loak* and the last village of *Kampot* province. There lived Chinese and Cambodians who were merchants and peasants. The 12 or 15 houses of *Champa* were at the foot of *Kidauk* hill, and the country was half-cultivated and covered with fruit trees. *Véal* was 3 km from *Champa* and inhabitants cultivated paddy fields [14: 81; 18: 111, 120].

(7) *Kompong-Srela* (*Kompong-Seila*) was a half hour's walk from *Véal* and 20 km from *Swai* village. There was a fort built by the Vietnamese before the reign of King *Ang-Duong* [18: 121].

(8) The capital of *Kompong-Som* Province was *Sré-Umbell* (*Srae-Ambel*) village. The habitants of *Sré-Umbell* were Chinese, métis-Chinese or Siamese. There were about 50 houses in the village including 2 houses of Vietnamese. On houses along the water, a half dozen small sea junks were moored and traded with the ports of *Kampot*, *Chantaboun* and *Bangkok* [18: 124–125].

The west end of the Kingdom of Cambodia, on the Gulf of Thailand, consists of *Kaoh-Kong* Province. *Kaoh-Kong* was ceded from Siam to Cambodia by a treaty on February 13, 1904.

In 1910s, *Kas-Kong* (*Kaoh-Kong*) Island was deserted, covered with forest and separated from the main land by a channel of hundreds of meters. At the northern point where there was the small island called *Cône*, a roadstead of a steamer and customhouse were installed. The country behind *Kas-Kong* had mountains of 300 to 1,000 m high and was thinly populated. A few Chinese and Vietnamese settled only on the coast and fished. The port of *Kas-Kong* was not opened for commerce, but steamship postal service between *Saigon* and *Bangkok* touched usually. Siamese commercial ships also visited *Kas-Kong* to buy dried fish and *Kapik*.<sup>25)</sup> [24: 20–23].

We can see that these centers were (1) inhabited by Chinese merchants and Cambodian (Khmer) peasants, and (2) all located on small rivers flowing into the sea. Products were gathered at these centers and carried through these rivers. Eastern centers were mainly collecting centers for pepper, and most of their products were exported to Saigon through the *Vinh-Te* Canal. The western centers exported paddies and forest products to *Kampot* by using Chinese or Malay sea junks.

24) *Samrong* is now a commune belonging to *Prey-Nob* District, *Krong-Preah-Sihanouk*.

25) It is a paste made from shrimps.

## II *Kampot* before the French

### 1. *Emergence of Kampot*

According to a French geographer Jean Delvert, the author of “*Le Paysan Cambodgien*” (1958) and “*Le Cambodge*” (1983), Cambodia is a continental country and the role of the coastal region was very limited in Cambodia’s history and economy before 1955 [6: 13]. However, this idea was not entirely true. In history, Cambodian kings sought an outlet located on the Gulf of Thailand. The oldest cases involved the Pre-Angkor Kings, *Isanavarman*, *Bhavavarman*, and *Jayavarman* I, who tried to control the *Chanthaburi* region [30: 131–132, 338, 342, 350]. There remain many monuments around *Chanthaburi* and the *Banteay-Meas* District.

In post-Angkor sources, such as the Cambodian Chronicles, the coastal region appears in records starting from the seventeenth century. Vickery, who analyzed Portuguese sources of the sixteenth century, concluded that the Portuguese had knowledge about bays and inlets along the coast, but had no knowledge of a canal linking them to the *Bassac* River, so the Mekong River was the main route for Cambodia in those times [29: 401–403]. According to the Jesuit Guy Tachard who visited Siam in 1687, the mountain behind *Chanthaburi* was the border between Siam and Cambodia, and Governor of *Chanthaburi* was a Malay Muslim who was subject to the Siamese Court [27: 469–472]. Alexander Hamilton who traveled on the Gulf of Thailand in 1720 wrote that two ports, *Cupangsoap* (*Kompong-Som*) and *Ponteamass* (*Banteay-Meas*, later *Ha-Tien*) belonged to Cambodia, and Cochin-China was divided from Cambodia by a river of three leagues broad [10: 193–208]. Accordingly, we can see that the Cardamom Mountains separated Cambodia and Siam, and the mouth of the Mekong River separated Cambodia and Cochin-China in those days.

From the end of the seventeenth century, Cambodia lost control of the Mekong River route as Vietnamese power expanded into the lower Mekong. A Cambodian king in the late eighteenth century, *Outey-Reachea* III (who reigned from 1758 to 1775) allied with a Chinese, *Mac-Thien-Tu*, who had established an autonomous polity based in *Ha-Tien* and controlled the maritime network on the eastern part of the Gulf of Thailand. *Ha-Tien* was located at a point where a river linking to the *Bassac* River flows into the Gulf of Thailand. Landlocked Cambodia tried to keep its access to maritime trade through *Ha-Tien* [26].

The first description of *Kampot* in the Cambodian Chronicles refers to an event that took place from 1771 to 1775. In 1771, King *Tak-Sin* of Siam attacked *Ha-Tien* and destroyed it completely. Then, *Tak-Sin* marched to the Cambodian capital *Oudong*. Cambodian king *Outey-Reachea* III, who was allied with *Mac-Thien-Tu*, escaped from his capital and asked the Vietnamese king for reinforcements. When Vietnamese troops came closer to *Oudong*, *Tak-Sin* withdrew to his capital *Thonburi*, and left a Cambodian prince, *Ang-Non*, with Siamese soldiers at *Kampot* as a counterforce to *Outey-Reachea* III. *Ang-Non* expanded his influence over *Treang* and *Banteay-Meas*, and resisted *Outey-Reachea* III. At last, *Outey-Reachea* III grew tired of the hostilities with *Ang-Non* and ceded throne to him in 1775 [1: 614–641; 25: 107–110; 9: 22].

After *Ang-Non* left *Kampot* for *Oudong*, the Cambodian Chronicles describe no stories

relating to *Kampot* until *Ang-Duong's* entrance onto the historical stage in the 1840s. The coastal region was under the control of Siam and Vietnam. According to a description by John Crawford in the 1820s, the island of *Ko-Kong* (*Kaoh-Kong*) was the point that divided both territories. *Kampot* town was chiefly inhabited by Cambodians, but also contained a few Vietnamese and about a thousand Malays [5: 456–458].

A French *Résident* of *Kampot*, Adhemard Leclère, could get some historical information from an old Malay man in late 1880s [13: 6–8]. Until 1840s, the Vietnamese governed *Kampot* and *Péam*, but *Kompong-Som* belonged to Cambodia. The Vietnamese constructed a road from *Ha-Tien* to *Svai* village (on the border with *Kompong-Som*) via *Kampot*. There was a Vietnamese customhouse at the mouth of the western branch of the *Kampot* River and a Vietnamese fort surrounded by a huge mound with a ditch of 20 m wide at *Kompong-Bay* (*Kampong-Bay*) village. A Chinese village called *Phum-Bay* was situated along the river, 150 m from the Vietnamese fort, and contained some 50 inhabitants. Scarcely 50 people lived in the “Cambodian *Kampot*” in those times and the “Chinese *Kampot*” had not appeared yet. On *Trey-Ka* (*Traeuy-Kaoh*) Island, there were about 40 houses. The house of the Vietnamese governor was on the island, too. A Vietnamese mandarin called *Ong-De-Cai* lived in *Tien-Thang* village. He was charged to supervise the river and to administer the province. Vietnamese soldiers stationed at *Kampot* were so few that they had to organize a Cambodian militia.

When this militia and local people rose in revolt, the Vietnamese ran to *Ha-Tien*. Vietnamese troops were reinforced at *Ha-Tien* and counterattacked. The Cambodians and Malays were defeated, and the Vietnamese who could recover *Kampot* appointed *Ong-The-Su* as a new administrator. The Chinese kept neutral during this uprising.

In 1841, Cambodian governor *Oknha-Mau*, who hated the Vietnamese yoke and was supported by Siam, gathered about 3,000 Cambodians. The Vietnamese ran away to *Ha-Tien* again. The entire province rose up against Vietnam. Malays in *Kampot* also organized a troop of 100 men led by *Chu-Tia*. Then, only 200 Vietnamese soldiers were in *Ha-Tien* and they had to fight against an enemy six times more in number than themselves. The Vietnamese army resisted for one month and a half, but when the new enemy appeared from inland, they evacuated to *Chaudoc* because they could not get reinforcements. The Malay informant of Leclère said that 600 Vietnamese died near *Ha-Tien*, the Siamese lost 140, and the Cambodians lost 60. Later, the Vietnamese could recover *Ha-Tien*, but *Kampot* remained in the hands of the Cambodians and *Oknha-Kan* was appointed as its governor.

## 2. *Kampot* under King *Ang-Duong*

King *Ang-Duong* constructed a road from his capital of *Oudong*, to *Kampot*, and opened *Kampot* as the only international seaport of Cambodia. The traveling time between *Oudong* and *Kampot* was eight days by oxcart and four days by elephants [16: 121–122].

In those days, there were about 500 houses and 3,000 inhabitants in *Prey-Srok* and *Kompong-Bay*. King *Ang-Duong* welcomed European merchants, and built a house of stone and

wood<sup>26)</sup> at *Trapeang-Svay* village in *Trei-Ka* Island for them. The French Father Estrées had a church<sup>27)</sup> at *Ta-Dép (Ta-Deb)*<sup>28)</sup> village on the river's right bank. About 30 families of Christian Vietnamese lived below this church and most of them were fishers.<sup>29)</sup> There was a Royal Garden in *Kompong-Kreing* village on the left riverbank, and it sent pineapples, durians, mangos and mandarin oranges to *Oudong* every year<sup>30)</sup> [13: 9–11].

The imports to *Kampot* were “grey and white shirtings, long cloths, white brocades, turkey and other red cloths, coloured shirtings, sarongs, gambier, iron and steel, agricultural implements, and Banares opium.” The exports were “rice, sugar, peas, pepper, hides, horns, fish, tobacco, silk, dried meat, salt, gutta percha, gamboges, ivory, cardamoms, beeswax, tilseed, sapanwood, aquila wood, lard, rosin, and live stock, such as pigs and fowl.” The rice, peas, pepper, sugar, and tobacco were produced around *Kampot*. The hides, horns, gums, cardamoms, beeswax, and salt-fish were the products of inner Cambodia. A large portion of the interior products was carried to *Kampot* through the *Ha-Tien (Vinh-Te)* Canal. However, Vietnam could close this canal at will, so the Cambodian King and nobles preferred to use the land route. The trade at *Kampot* was entirely in the hands of the Anglo-Chinese merchants of Singapore and small British ships from 200 to 250 tons were employed [2: 177–179]. British merchants who visited *Kampot* in 1854 met (1) the Governor,<sup>31)</sup> (2) the Lieutenant-Governor *Sinky*,<sup>32)</sup> (3) the Chinese merchant *Chinchoo-Choow*,<sup>33)</sup> and (4) the Malay merchant *Tuanku-Tay*<sup>34)</sup> [15: 289–295]. These Chinese and Malay were the notables of *Kampot* in those days.

### 3. *Insurrection of Kampot*

Cambodia became a protectorate of France in 1863. According to the Malay informant of Leclère, “Chinese *Kampot*,” “Cambodian *Kampot*,” *Phum-Bay*, *Trapeang-Svai* and *Tien-Thanh* had about 700 houses and 5,000 inhabitants, including 900 Chinese, 300 Malays, 40 Vietnamese, 30 Siamese and hundreds of Cambodians at that time. Most parts of *Trey-Ka* Island were covered by bush. *Tien-Thanh* was a Vietnamese village on *Trey-Ka* Island and founded about 1865. King *Norodom* appointed a Vietnamese as chief of the canton and let him control the

26) This house disappeared after *Ang-Duong*'s reign, but its beton foundation remained until the 1880s.

27) Mouhot described that it was a house covered with creep and surmounted by a cross [16: 113].

28) *Ta-Deb* is now a village of *Andoung-Khmaer* Commune, belonging to *Kampong-Bay* District, *Kampot* Province.

29) This church and Christian village disappeared about 1859.

30) This Royal Garden existed in the years of Leclère as well.

31) The Governor of *Kampot* during *Ang-Duong*'s reign was *Oknha-Thong*. He was Sino-Cambodian and lived at the foot of Mt. *Phnom-Sa*. There he had a plantation of sugarcane about 55 ha 600 and a sugar mill. He made white sugar and sent 100 piculs of this white sugar to King *Ang-Duong* every year. *Oknha-Thong* died about 1860, but his sugar mill was still working in 1880s [13: 11].

32) *Sinky* was a Chinese wearing his hair in a tail wound around his head, and he was styled *Bandar-Thoam*.

33) *Chinchoo-Choow* was one of the principal Chinese merchants of *Kampot* and was son-in-law to the Governor.

34) *Tuanku-Tay* traded largely in raw silk, ivory, gamboges and sticklac. The king always employed him as his super cargo, when the king's junks were sent down to Singapore.

village and all Vietnamese in this province. The villages of *Klong-Neas* and *Bang-Supream* did not exist yet, and *Daun-Tek* (*Doun-Taok*) village was just founded by a queen who had been in *Kampot* for eight years. There were only two Chinese houses in *Trapeang-Romeas* village [13: 12].

After this period, *Kampot* began to decline. In 1870, *Kampot* had no more than 1,500 inhabitants. The main reason for this decline was because Saigon Port was opened and navigation along the Mekong River began to be exploited in the interests of French colonialism. Cambodian inland products took the Mekong Route to Saigon and stopped taking the long land route to *Kampot* [13: 13]. Finally, the insurrection from 1885 to 1887 gave quietus to ancient *Kampot*.

On the eve of the insurrection, there were a telegraph office and an *entrepôt* of opium in *Kampot*. The telegraphist was a French man named Garcerie. Another French man named Pestel and an Irishman named Resenthal were stationed at the *entrepôt* of opium. The entire island of *Trey-Ka* was French property since 1882, but had not been exploited yet [13: 14].

At the end of February 1885, a secret meeting of mandarins was held at *Treang*.<sup>35)</sup> At this meeting, *Oknha-Pusnoulouk-Chhouk*, *Sdach-Tranh* (master) of the *Dey* (land) of *Treang*, ordered *Oknha-Chhim*, the Governor of *Kampot*, to attack the three French men in *Kampot* [13: 15–16].

On the 17th of March, at noon, a band of 50 men sacked the *entrepôt* while Resenthal was having lunch at the telegraph office and while Pestel was in *Ha-Tien*. Another band of 50 men attacked the telegraph office. The telegraphist and Resenthal did not resist and fled to *Ha-Tien* by boat. The band threw the telegraphic instruments and electric piles into the river and cut the telegraph line. Then, a Vietnamese courier from *Ha-Tien* appeared at the house of *Oknha-Chhim* to ask for a boat to pass the river as usual. *Balat*<sup>36)</sup>-*Phok* of *Kompong-Trach* caught him and had him beheaded. The Chinese gathered as many of their belongings as possible and escaped to *Ha-Tien*, *Rach-Gia*, *Véal-Rinh* and *Kompong-Som*. Some fled to Bangkok, Saigon, Singapore and also to China from those places. The customhouse at the entrance of the river became a fort of insurgents. Fifty men who were armed with guns defended it. A wooden barrier was constructed on the way from the customhouse to *Kampot* town and a junk loaded with stones was sunk in the pass [13: 17].

At the beginning of April, an *avis à vapeur* “Sagittaire” and two junks appeared at the anchorage of *Kampot*. Then, the chiefs of the insurgents brought 500 partisans to the customhouse: *Mékang-Préap* led 200, *Balat-Mey* led 100, *Balat-Suon* led 100 and *Népol-Ouk* led 100. At six o'clock the next morning, two armed junks passed the barrier and reached a point 500 m from the customhouse. The insurgents had gathered on the right riverbank. Firing continued for an hour. When *Balat-Mey* and *Népol-Ouk* were shot in their arms, the insurgents

35) From *Kampot*, (1) *Balat-Soun*, a Sino-Cambodian of *Kompong-Bay*, (2) *Prom*, a Cambodian *sophéa* (judge) of *Kabal-Meas*, (3) *Ouk*, a Cambodian of *Kompong-Bay*, and (4) *Préap*, a mandarin of *Kampot* went to *Treang*. Returning to *Kampot*, *Préap* and *Ouk* called other mandarins to a meeting held at *Oknha-Chhim*'s house, and *Balat-Khuon*, *Mey*, *Um*, *Tép* and *Méas* attended.

36) *Balats* are deputies of provincial governors.



began to run. At this time, *Balat-Khuon*, leading his men and two small canons, reached *Ta-Dep* village on the right riverbank. When the fugitives appeared, *Balat-Khuon* and his men also ran away with them. The two small canons were left behind. After this battle, the French ascended to *Prey-Srok* village. The village was empty so they returned to the customhouse with two small canons of *Balat-Khuon*. About three o'clock in the afternoon, two junks ascended to *Kompong-Bay* village. Nearly 400 insurgents gathered at a pagoda near *Kompong-Bay* and 100 were stationed at the old fort on the left riverbank. After half an hour of firing, the insurgents ran away. *Oknha-Chhim* who received this news, ran to *Prey-Thnang* at the foot of *Phnom-Thvea*. Then, two French junks descended to the customhouse again. The next morning, when the French ascended the river again, a notable of the Malays named *Néak-Ving* came to propose that he and his villagers would take the French side. When his proposition was accepted, Malays of *Trapeang-Svay* returned to their village. *Néak-Ving* guided French troops to “Cambodian *Kampot*” where *Balat-Khuon* and his 200 men were stationed. With only two or three gunshots, the insurgents ran away to *Ta-Dep* village. *Balat-Khuon* fled to *Chan-Bak* village, about two hours from *Phum-Bay* [13: 17–19].

The French navy established a post in an abandoned pagoda on *Trey-Ka* Island, and later, the infantry of the marines came to replace the navy. The French *Résidence* was created, and the telegraph office and the *entrepôt* were reestablished on the island. Then inhabitants came back to the island. Many Chinese also came back to the Vietnamese village of *Prey-Srok* [13: 19–20].

The chiefs of the insurgents held a meeting at *Phnom-Tuk-Kraham*,<sup>37)</sup> and *Balat-Khuon* was appointed as *Mé kang-Thom* (commander). He reorganized the insurgents into centuries and kept two centuries for his own protection [13: 20].

At the beginning of July, a Chinese pirate named *Quan-Khiem* joined the insurgents,<sup>38)</sup> accompanied by 20 Chinese and 30 Cambodians. *Balat-Khuon* accepted him and let him build a fort at *Phnom-Sa*. *Mé kang-Préap* was stationed at a fort of *Phnom-Krakos* with 100 men. *Oknha-Chhim* was in *Trapeang-Rang*, two days from *Kampot* and came to *Phnom-Sa* with 30 men. The governor of *Kompong-Trach*, *Chén*, arrived with 100 men, and so the number of insurgents became 1,500. *Balat-Khuon* proposed to appoint *Quan-Khiem* as *Mé kang-Thom* and all chiefs accepted his proposition [13: 21–22].

French *Commandant* Klippfel's column began to march on *Phnom-Sa* on the 12th of July 1885. At *Phnom-Sa*, insurgents were encouraged because *Machas-Sâ-Ouk* (King *Norodom*'s sister) and her husband *Séna-Kham* arrived. *Quan-Khiem*'s Chinese were arranged in

37) There is a village named *Tuek Kraham* in *Kandal* Commune, belonging to *Kampot* District, *Kampot* Province.

38) At this time, a man named *Séna-Tép* who claimed to be invulnerable joined the insurgents. *Balat-Khuon* let him lead six centuries to *Kompong-Bay* and promised to follow him with 300 men. But when *Séna-Tép* reached *Trapeang-Chanbak* village, *Balat-Khuon* and his men did not appear. So *Séna-Tép* was angered and went back to his village, *Veal-Prasat*. False prince *Angk-Phim* also tried to join the insurgents. He had lived in *Phnom-Smeu-Khchey* (*Phnom-Srouch* Province) for many years and also claimed to be invulnerable. King *Norodom*'s sister, *Machas-Sâ-Ouk*, and her husband *Séna-Kham*, and 1,000 men accompanied him. But when *Balat-Um* told Governor *Chén* that the man was only mad and the real *Angk-Phim* died 40 years before, the false prince left the insurgents [13: 23–25].

front. After half an hour's firing, attacked by a French detached force from the right side, the insurgents began to run away. *Machas-Sâ-Ouk* escaped to *Phnom-Penh* on a horse. *Quan-Khiem* hid himself in *Phnom-Sa*, and later, ran to *Srok-Pouch* village. The insurgents lost three Chinese and two Cambodians. Klippfel's column lost a French soldier and a Vietnamese *tirailleur*. Another column attacked *Phnom-Krakos* on the 14th of July and broke the fort of *Mékang-Préap* [13: 25–26].

The chiefs of the insurgents gathered their partisans and met at *Phum-Chra-Pouch*. *Quan-Khiem* accused one of the chiefs, *Balat-Um* of being a traitor. However, *Oknha-Chhim* appointed *Balat-Um* as Governor of *Kampot* to oppose *Balat-Khuon*. *Quan-Khiem* and *Balat-Khuon* refused this appointment, and so the party of *Oknha-Chhim*–*Balat-Um* and the party of *Quan-Khiem*–*Balat-Khuon* were definitively dissociated [13: 27–28].

In *Phnom-Penh*, *Obbaréach* (*Oparach*, the Second King, future King *Sisowath*) recommended *Oknha-Nukol-Mey* to be Governor of *Kampot*. *Oknha-Nukol-Mey* arrived at *Kampot* on the 3rd of August, 1885 by sea. He stayed on an island about 500 m from the *Résidence* with 12 militiamen. At the same time, *Obbaréach* decided to visit *Phnon-Srouch*, *Banteay-Meas*, *Treang* and *Kampot* by himself. This news disturbed the insurgents. The party of *Oknha-Chhim*–*Balat-Um* decided to surrender. On the 19th and 28th of August, *Nop-Ross* and *Savat-Mah* of *Phum-Prey-Nop* (*Prey-Nob*),<sup>39)</sup> and Malay *Balat-Néak* and *Long-Chu-Y* surrendered to the *Résidence*. On the 11th of September, *Balat-Khuon*, *Kés*, *Mey*, *Kralapéas-Méas* and *Mâha-Sombol-Kin* surrendered to the *Résidence* with their 30 men. On the 13th of September, *Balat-Um* and *Séna-In* surrendered. *Oknha-Chhim* surrendered to *Obbaréach* at *Kus*.

But *Quan-Khiem* and *Oknha-Pusnoulouk-Chhouk* wanted to continue their war. *Quan-Khiem* gathered 250 Chinese in *Kompong-Som* and *Véal-Rinh*, and came to *Phum-Trapeang-Prang*, 15 hours from the *Résidence*. *Oknha-Pusnoulouk-Chhouk* came to *Phum-Chhouk* (*Chhuk*)<sup>40)</sup> with 200 men, including 100 Chinese. On the 18th of September, a Chinese of *Banteay-Meas* informed the *Résidence* that there was a powder magazine of *Quan-Khiem* at *Phum-Trapeang-Plang*, and 45 small barrels of powder were confiscated. After that, *Quan-Khiem* watched *Kampot* from *Kompong-Som* and *Véal-Rinh*, and *Oknha-Pusnoulouk-Chhouk* corresponded with him from the border of *Treang*. These two chiefs met at *Phnom-Sot-Chat-Chroun* on the 30th of October to arrange a counterattack [13: 28–31].

From the end of November to the beginning of December, many small bands were reorganized. On the 2nd of December, a band appeared at *Kompong-Nong* (*Kampong-Nong*).<sup>41)</sup> On the 11th of December, another band sacked *Trapeang-Kok* (*Trapeang-Kak*),<sup>42)</sup> and a small band of 50 men commanded by *Balat-Khuon* sacked *Domnak-Touk* district. On the 23rd, 30 men commanded by *Séna-Tép* attacked *Tani* village and killed a Malay man sent from the

39) Now *Prey-Nob* is a district belonging to *Krong-Preah-Sihanouk*.

40) Now *Chhuk* is a district belonging to *Kampot* Province.

41) Now *Kampong-Nong* is a village in *Koun-Satv* Commune, belonging to *Kampot* District, *Kampot* Province.

42) Now *Trapeang-Kak* is a village in *Stueng-Kaev* Commune, belonging to *Kampot* District, *Kampot* Province.



*Résident*. The next day, this band grew to 200 men and dug a trench at *Chaulong-Kangok*.

A column of 100 soldiers under *Sous-Lieutenant* Monot departed from *Kampot* on the 30th of December and swept *Kabal-Romeas*, *Anrong-Kaki* (*Anlong-Kokir*),<sup>43)</sup> *Tani* and *Au-Kassa*. This column came back to *Kampot* on the 3rd of January 1886, but Monot was killed in *Kompong-Trach* during this mission. Another column under *Capitaine* Larry departed *Kampot* on the 4th of January to sweep *Domnak-Touk*, *Truong*, *Chhouk*, *Kus* and *Kompong-Trach*, and came back to *Kampot* on the 23rd.

During the time *Capitaine* Larry was absent, insurgents tried to menace *Kampot* from behind. In this case, 150 insurgents sacked *Kompong-Kès* (*Kampong-Kes*)<sup>44)</sup> on the 6th and *Kompong-Nong* on the 12th. On the 14th, *Mé kang-Préap* arrived at *Srok-Sla* with 30 men and advanced to *Tuk-Loak* (*Tuek-L'ak*). On the 15th, *Quan-Khiem*, *Balat-Khuon* and *Nghet* appeared at *Trapeang-Plang* with 300 men.

A new column commanded by *Sous-Lieutenant* Véhel departed *Kampot* on the 15th of February. On the 4th of March, this column fought with the insurgents at *Thlok-Pring* on the right riverbank of *Prek-Thnos*, and on the 25th they fought with another band at *Phum-Da-Ko*.

On the 13th of February, *Quan-Khiem*, *Balat-Mey* and *Balat-Chan* constructed a fort at *Domnak-Trey-Ung* (*Damnak-Trayueng*).<sup>45)</sup> On the 14th, *Quan-Khiem* constructed another fort in *Bang-Po* village near *Phnom-Sa*. On the 8th of March, a band of 350 men led by *Phu-Chuoy-Buoy* appeared in *Véal-Rinh* and constructed barrages in every river of the district. On the 10th, 150 men left *Véal-Rinh* and arrived at *Tuk-Loak* on the 11th and at *Prek-Thnot* on the 12th. *Quan-Khiem*'s junk arrived at the mouth of the *Prek-Thnot* River as well. On the 30th of March, *Balat-Khuon* and *Séna-Tong* was at *Bo-Eng-Po* with 400 men and *Quan-Khiem* was at *Phnom-Pting-Ke*, an hour from *Bo-Eng-Po*, with 250 men. *Phu-Chuoy-Buoy* arrived at *Kam-Chay* with 300 men on the 1st of April.

Véhel's column met *Mé kang-Préap* and his 200 men at the foot of *Phnom-Krakes*, a few minutes from *Snam-Ampil* (*Snam-Prampir*),<sup>46)</sup> and broke them on the 5th of April. *Quan-Khiem* went back to the fort of *Bo-Eng-Po* on the 7th and stayed there with 600 men [13: 31–33].

On the 8th of May, a column of 100 soldiers under *Lieutenant* de Vaubert departed *Kampot*. *Résident* Santenoy also marched to *Bo-Eng-Po* with 30 militiamen. After an hour's battle, a Cambodian militiaman of the *Résident* succeeded in penetrating into the fort of the insurgents, and French troops broke the fort in five minutes. The insurrection of *Kampot* ended [13: 33].

At the end of 1886, an interview between the King and the insurgents was held at *Kus*, and accomplished pacification. The military post of *Snam-Ampil* was abandoned in January 1887 and

43) Now *Anlong-Kokir* is a village in *Kandal* Commune belonging to *Kampot* District, *Kampot* Province.

44) Now *Kampong-Kes* is a village in *Trapeang-Sangkae* Commune belonging to *Kampot* District, *Kampot* Province.

45) Now *Damnak-Trayueng* is a village in *Samrong-Leu* Commune belonging to *Banteay-Meas* District, *Kampot* Province.

46) Now *Snam-Prampir* is a village in *Meakprang* Commune, belonging to *Kampot* District, *Kampot* Province.

that of *Kampot* was abandoned in May 1888 [13: 34].

After the insurrection, *Quan-Khiem* kept the authority of an “absolute master” in the northern part of *Kompong-Som* Province. The authority of the King did not reach his domain [20: Mars 1888]. *Quan-Khiem* himself stayed in *Prec-Yung* village and tried to reform his band [20: Octobre 1889]. In March 1890, when a band of pirates from Milieu Island menaced the region, *Quan-Khiem* assured the inhabitants of protection from the pirates. The inhabitants confided in him rather than the Governor of *Kampot* [20: Mars 1890]. The following month, *Quan-Khiem* succeeded to expel the pirates to the frontier of Siam [20: Avril 1890]. At last, the Governor of *Kompong-Som* arrested *Quan-Khiem* in May 1896. By then, he was too old and was caught without resistance [20: Mai 1896].

*Kampot* emerged after the fall of *Ha-Tien* in 1771. In the 1840s, just before King *Ang-Duong* ascended the throne of *Oudong*, territories of Siam, Cambodia and Vietnam were defined on the Gulf of Thailand, and *Kampot* came into the hands of *Ang-Duong*. He developed *Kampot* Port and tried to attract traders from Singapore. The status of *Kampot* as the only outlet of Cambodia continued until the 1860s, then the French colonized Cochinchina and Cambodia, and the Mekong Route returned to be the access route into the heart of Cambodia. In the 1880s, when the French colonial authority began to step into *Kampot* from the sea, it had to confront with the local powers that waged guerrilla warfare from surrounding mountains.

### III Scenery of the Coastal Region in the Colonial Period

#### 1. *Rhythm of Activities in Kampot*

*Kampot* was deprived of its status as Cambodia's main seaport in the late nineteenth century. After that, the hinterland of *Kampot* Port was restricted to its surroundings. The main exports of *Kampot* during the colonial period were paddy and pepper.<sup>47)</sup> In 1878, *Kampot* exported more than 15,000 piculs of rice (*riz*), 3,000 piculs of pepper, 150 piculs of tobacco, 80 piculs of gamboges, 1,000 piculs of palm sugar, 100 piculs of hide, 100 piculs of wood oil, 50 piculs of resin, and 6,000 packets of torches, etc. [18: 18–20].

With the end of the southwest monsoon, harvest season<sup>48)</sup> began and navigation was activated. Junks of *Hainam* arrived at *Kampot* to disembark coolies, fertilizer and tobacco for

47) The dimension of pepper cultivation changed according to its price. When the pepper price declined, the yield decreased because planters, especially of small property, abandoned their plantations or changed to other plants such as tobacco, potatoes, hot peppers and hevea. Sometimes, as in 1906, an exodus of Chinese coolies would occur. In 1914, because of the drought of 1911 and 1912, considerable numbers of small pepper planters in *Banteay-Meas* Province abandoned their plantations [18: 22–23; 21: Rapport économique Janvier-Février, Juillet-Août. 1907; 22: Juillet 1913– Juillet 1914, 1er Trimestre 1920, 1er, 2ème, 3ème Trimestre 1921, 1er, 3ème Trimestre 1922].

48) The harvest season for paddy began in November and ended in February. That for pepper began in March and finished in May.

pepper plantations and considerable numbers of young pigs.<sup>49)</sup> When the harvest was finished, many junks of *Ha-Tien*, *Hong-Chong* and *Phuquoc* came to *Kampot* to load paddies from *Veal-Renh* or around *Kampot*. The traffic of paddy and pepper was at its peak from May to June. The traffic of *mam*<sup>50)</sup> made from shrimps was also considerable in January and February. Large junks from Bangkok came to buy *mam* in the *Kompong-Som* region [20: Décembre 1896, Janvier, Février, Mai, Novembre 1898, 21: Rapport économique Janvier-Février, Mars-Avril, Mai-Juin 1907].

In May, as rain began to fall, land routes became troublesome. Sea routes also became difficult when the southwest monsoon began. From July to September, navigation was almost zero because the sea was dangerously rough and ships did not dare depart.<sup>51)</sup> During July, land routes by ox carts or elephants could be substituted for the sea, but from August, most parts of the land routes were inundated and the commercial activities stagnated. People of *Péam* and *Banteay-Méas* began to prepare their paddy fields to transplant in June, and in *Kampot*, transplantation began in July. From October, land routes became usable and navigation also began to be reactivated [20: Août. 1883, Mai, Juin, Août, Septembre, Octobre 1898; 21: Rapport économique Mars-Avril, Juillet-Août, Octobre 1907].

## 2. Population

The *Résidents* almost always reported that the Cambodian population had *bon esprit*. Most of them were farmers and were said to be docile and obeyed easily to the orders and suggestions of the administration [22: 2ème Trimestre 1923].

From the reign of King *Ang-Duong*, the commercial activity of *Kampot* was in the hands of the Chinese population, and Mouhot wrote that one saw 10 times more Chinese than *indigènes* in *Kampot* town. Pavie also described that *Kampot* was exclusively populated by Chinese who married Cambodian women and Sino-Vietnamese [18: 117]. Besides merchants, large numbers of *Hainam* Chinese flowed into the southern part of *Kampot*, *Péam* and *Banteay-Méas* Provinces as coolies of pepper plantations and became the dominant element.

The French authority regarded the Chinese population as an element that could possibly threaten security. In 1894, the *Résident* reported that the Chinese had been hostile to the French because they were afraid that French authority would restrain their agricultural and commercial activities, however, the establishment of order and communications by the French began to improve their attitude [20: Décembre 1894].

Coolies from *Hainam* were treated as potential vagabonds. The *Résident* reported that they constituted the floating population who did not submit, and they were living by theft and gambling because the salary from pepper plantations was low. Sometimes they left their

49) These pigs were sold at *Péam* or *Kampot* and fattened for re-export to Singapore. In 1880, 2,600 heads of swine were exported to Singapore [18: 20].

50) This is a type of paste.

51) The junks of the *Résidence* had to rest at *Ha-Tien* seven or eight days and transportations of *dépêche* was effected by land routes.

patrons after a few months of employment and patrons also never reported such quitting to the chiefs of congregations. Most *Hainam* Chinese did not have a fixed domicile and way of subsistence, did not carry any identity with them and escaped paying tax [21: Janvier 1908, Octobre 1910, Juillet 1911, Juillet 1912–Juillet 1913]. The *Résident* gave instructions to Cambodian functionaries to arrest these *Hainam* Chinese and sometimes they attacked functionaries to regain their friends [21: Octobre 1907, Août, Novembre 1908, Février, Mars, Septembre, Octobre 1909, Mars 1910].

Quarrels between Chinese groups were reported too. For example, *Hainam* Chinese and *Trieu-Châu* Chinese quarreled in October 1908, and *Inspecteur* Durand, two chiefs of congregations and six guards were sent in. By the intermediation of the *Résident*, both congregations signed a type of conciliation agreement in December. The *Résident* ordered both congregations to pay a penalty of 500 piastres per month in case of troubling the public order [21: Octobre, Décembre 1908].

The French authority in *Kampot* tried to keep a strict watch over the presence of secret societies and Chinese communications with China. In contrast to most of the Cambodian population, and even to Chinese in other parts of Cambodia, the Chinese elements in *Kampot* seemed to have been sensitive to the international situation, especially to events in East Asia. The Russo-Japanese War,<sup>52)</sup> the 1911 Revolution in China,<sup>53)</sup> World War I,<sup>54)</sup> and movement of the Kuomintang from 1925 were reported to have some impact in *Kampot*.

During World War I, the French authority prohibited the entrance of Chinese journals and gave an instruction to all authorities of the *indigènes* to arrest the propagators. But they could not prevent junks coming from China, Siam or Singapore from bringing news into *Kampot*. The Report of the 4th quarter of 1914 indicated that there was “false news” about the war in Europe among the *indigènes* from China or Siam [22]. In the 3rd quarter of 1915, Chinese from Siam or China spread rumours of a Japanese project to establish a protectorate over the Kingdom of Siam<sup>55)</sup> [22: 3ème Trimestre 1915]. Besides, some Chinese obtained information from French journals. A chief of the *Hainam* Chinese congregation at *Kompong-Trach*, *Ly-Heng* subscribed to

52) It was reported that the Chinese of *Kampot*, especially *Trieu-Châu* and *Canton* were satisfied with the success of Japanese, and expected a modification and complete reorganization of China. Some showed hope for an overturn of the dynasty [19: Avril, Juin 1905].

53) The *Résidence* of *Kampot* designated a possibility that emissaries made propaganda for the “Renovation of China” and the authority tightened its observation over the Chinese [21: Juillet 1912–Juillet 1913].

54) From the beginning, Chinese were well informed about the roles of each European country and showed confidence of the victory of the Allies. They assumed that the arms of each country had the same quality and that 180 million were opposed to 90 million so the force of numbers would decide the result of the war. They showed the idea that the war was only a temporary disturbance for their commerce [22: 3ème, 4ème Trimestre 1914]. In the 2nd quarter of 1915, tensions between China and Japan created an anxiety for conflict in East Asia between Chinese elements [22: 2ème Trimestre 1915].

55) The rumour was that Japan would declare war, Japanese ships would appear in the Gulf of Thailand and Japanese troops would land, and Siam would gather its fleet at *Pak-Nam* to reply. The Governor of *Kas-Kong* believed in this rumor and sent two reports to the *Résident*.

“l’Illustration” and “Excelsior” regularly [22: 3ème Trimestre 1915].

The events of China from 1925 were well known to Chinese in *Kampot* because many of them subscribed to Chinese journals. Applications for passports to China doubled in 1926, but most Chinese were absorbed in the cultivation of pepper or commerce, and looked with indifference to the agitations of the exterior. The *Résident* supposed that the reason was because most of them were born in Cambodia so they had never seen China, and they benefited well from pepper cultivation and commerce. However, the *Résident* recognized that Chinese societies were absolutely closed to the French, so the French could not know what their reunions decided, and the agents of *Sûreté* were negligent with political matters [23: 2ème, 4ème Trimestre 1926, 1er, 2ème, 3ème, 4ème Trimestre 1927]. On the other hand, it is reported that every order from the *Kuoming-Tang* (Kuomintang) was obeyed strictly and direction from China gave particular impulsion to education. Two adult schools of *Kompong-Trach* and *Kampot* functioned under the direction of teachers who “recently” came from China, and they propagandized in favor of the *Kuoming-Tang*. On June 11, 1928, the French authority searched these two schools and seized numerous pamphlets of propaganda. Teachers and Chinese who were interested in the propaganda were expelled [23: 1er, 2ème, 3ème Trimestre 1928]. But in 1929, because of the difficulty of the economic situation,<sup>56)</sup> the Chinese population looked as if it lost interest in events in China [23: 1er Trimestre 1929].

Fishers of the *Kampot* and *Ha-Tien* region were mostly Vietnamese. There, a chain of small islands bordered the sea, and the fishers did not leave far from their operation centers. Their activity area was limited to the line of *Phuquoc* Island — the *Ba-Lua* Archipelago. Their ships lacked the means to preserve fish, so they had to hurry to *Ha-Tien* or *Kampot* to sell their fish, and the strength of their ships did not allow them to operate in the open sea [24: 8]. According to Pavie, the Vietnamese village on *Trei-Cach* (*Traeny-Kaoh*) in front of *Kampot* contained 40 to 50 families and they lived on fishing sea cucumbers.<sup>57)</sup> During the rainy season, inhabitants prepared fishnets and their ships<sup>58)</sup> departed when the Northeast monsoon stabilized. They returned home for the festival of *Têt*, and after that, they continued fishing until June [18: 20–21].

*Rapports périodiques* give us less information about the Malay population. In 1916, it was reported that *Y-Man-Suon*, a Malay man of *Kompong-Kes*, collected silver for the “Sultan of Turkey.” The *Résident* was informed of this from *Ali-Anahari*, a subject of Turkey and a refugee from Yemen. According to the research by the Governor of *Kampot*, *Y-Man-Suon* collected 50\$00 from certain habitants of *Kompong-Kes*, *Khbal-Roméas* and *Kompong-Krang* (*Kompong-*

56) Many merchants of pepper, including *Lim-Yieu-Lin*, the manager of the *Société Nhy-Hoa* at *Kampot*, disappeared from the region.

57) Chinese bought sea cucumbers for 8 to 12 piastres par picul and sent them to Cholon. At the market of *Phnom-Penh*, sea cucumbers from *Kampot* were priced 15 to 20 piastres. Those from China were more than 50 piastre.

58) There were four or five ships in the village and five or six men went aboard each ship. The owner of the ship and nets took three parts of the catch when they took part in the fishing trip, and took two parts when they did not. Other fishers took a part.

*Kraeng*)<sup>59)</sup> and gave it to *Y-Man-Lep*. *Y-Man-Lep* used that silver to make a trip for *Phnom-Penh* to meet a bonze who was famous for the knowledge of Pali and Arabic and some Malays hoped to consult him about certain religious differences [22: 3ème Trimestre 1916].

European colons settled around *Kampot* rather early compared to other parts of Cambodia. After the insurrection, a colon from Luxembourg settled around *Kampot* about 1892, and created a plantation of tobacco and coffee at *Phnom-Thmey* in *Snam-Ampil* village. In 1895, he obtained an onerous concession at *Kep* to enlarge his coffee plantation. Another colon, Canavy, created a plantation of areca at *Kep* in 1897 [24: 26–27].<sup>60)</sup> Limestone from *Phnom-Coulang* on the *Tuk-Meas* River was exploited by Perruchot since 1891 and ceded to Henry of *Saigon* in 1916. He constructed new limekilns and supplied lime to western Indo-China and Cambodia [24: 13–14].

### 3. Security

The monograph of 1918 indicated that the Gulf of Siam was a refuge of pirates until “a few years ago.” Because of the steam ships of the administration and the service of customhouses, the region became calm, but the sporadic activities of pirates were reported annually [24: 4–5]. Mouhot, who visited Cambodia under King *Ang-Duong*,<sup>61)</sup> passed coasts infested with the pirates of *Kampot*. That was the area between *Kompong-Som* and *Kampot*. He wrote that pirates watched the sea from the heights and prepared for an attack upon seeing a sail [16: 110]. In November 1889, *Résident* Leclère alarmed that from December to March the activities of pirates would occur. Since he became the *Résident* four years before, pirates’ junks attacked ships on the Gulf of Thailand and villages at the mouth of rivers in this period. Steam ships of the marine were sent for patrol along the coast, but they could never reach the scene of piracy in

59) *Kampong-Kraeng* is now a commune belonging to *Kampot* District, *Kampot* Province.

60) According to the Annual Report from 1913 to 1914, French colons in *Kampot* “decreased” to two people, Canavy and Bouillod. Dupuy sold his concession, Apavou had died, Balliste, Morel and Perruchot had departed, and concessions of Boulloche et Cie. and Heiduska were expired. Meyer, Berthet, Ogliastro and O’Cobhia had bought many pepper plantations but they rented most of them as *métayage* to Chinese. Canavy planted 15,000 arecas but did not get income as he expected yet, because his plantation was under development. Bouillod’s concession was 150 ha of which he opened 80 ha. He planted 4,000 hevea and prepared another 12,000. Other than hevea, he planted durian and mango, and had 200 ha of paddy fields and four pepper plantations.

61) In the *Ang-Duong* reign, a Chinese named *Mun-Sui* (*Mun-Suy*) lived in *Kampot* and the King treated him as a friend. He was a former pirate and claimed to be descended from an ancient imperial family. He ran from Amoy with a hundred men and ravaged the coastal region. The owners of junks feared him and people began to adopt measures of self-defense against him. Later, he ingratiated himself with the Governor and King (Leclère’s Malay told that when *A-Chhép*, another chief of pirates attacked, he was shipwrecked and decided to retire). Fearing complaints from nearby countries, the King appointed him as coast guard and sheltered him. Later, he was loved by the Chinese, and was asked to interfere when differences happened. Pavie wrote in 1884 that he was old and poor, but respected in *Kampot*. He had the skill to treat wounds and treated people for nothing [13: 11; 16: 116–117; 18: 29]. One of the chiefs of the insurrection of late 1880s, *Quan-Khiem* was also a former Chinese pirate and the author of “the massacre of *Rach-Gia*.” He ravaged the coast from the Point of *Samit* to *Koh-Toch*, and attacked commercial junks using his two junks armed with old canons [13: 21].



time [20: Novembre 1889].

The mountains, which separated the coastal region from the interior, served as the hiding place for bands of thieves. Like other regions of Cambodia, the activity of thieves increased as the dry season began and the land route became useable. Then, bands of thieves were formed and attacked isolated villages or pepper plantations to rob their products. Their activities decreased during the season of agriculture [21: Novembre–Décembre 1906; 22: 2ème Trimestre 1920; 23: 3ème Trimestre 1927]. Unseasonable weather and bad crops also stimulated the activities of thieves [21: 4ème Trimestre 1912, 2ème Trimestre 1913; 22: 1er, 2ème, 3ème Trimestre 1922].

Bands of thieves raged relentlessly in the Provinces of *Banteay-Meas* and *Kas-Kong*, which are located at the eastern and western ends of the region. Communal authorities of these provinces were sometimes indifferent to public peace. In *Banteay-Meas* Province, the district near the border with *Treang* and Cochinchina served as a refuge for bands of thieves from both countries. The *Résidents* of adjoining *circonscriptions* organized a mission to exterminate these bands together [22: 1er Trimestre 1918, 3ème Trimestre 1920, 1er, 2ème, 3ème Trimestre 1924; 23: 1er, 2ème Trimestre 1929]. In *Kas-Kong* Province, inhabitants of the maritime region were Siamese, and French influence had not reached yet in the 1920s [22: 2ème Trimestre 1922, 3ème, 4ème Trimestre 1923; 23: 1er Trimestre 1927]. Similar situation has continued until quite recently. Until the mid 1990s, the Khmer Rouge dominated the zone where thieves once raged during the colonial period.

The distinctive character of *Kampot* since its appearance on the historical stage was first of all its openness. Although *Kampot* lost its status as the main port of the kingdom from the mid nineteenth century, it continued to take part in trade on the Gulf of Thailand independently. The Chinese population continued to handle the commercial activity and the main products of the *Kampot* region. Furthermore, *Kampot* was geographically located on the border of the inland world and maritime world, and politically located on the border of three states: the Kingdom of Siam, the French Protectorate of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and the French Colony of Cochinchina. This location made it difficult for the French authority to maintain public peace because no one could control the flow of people, things and information.

#### IV Retouches by the French

##### 1. *Route Coloniale No. 17*

In 1872, when the telegraph line was installed between *Phnom-Penh* and *Kampot*, a new road was also created. The itinerary took three days and a half by elephants or oxcarts every season, and there were six stations: *Kompong-Toul*, *Kna*, *Sla-Kou*, *Kou*, *Mac-Prang* and *Domnac-Touc* [18: 4–5].

The *Phnom-Penh–Kampot* road later became *Route Coloniale No. 17* and was paved to introduce automobiles. According to the Annual Report from 1912 to 1913, there was a

subsidized automobile service connecting *Kampot* and *Phnom-Penh*. The cars of this service always departed loading a maximum number of passengers, although two other enterprises, Rafel and Dan-Suon, also offered automobile service between *Phnom-Penh* and *Kep*, *Kompong-Trach* [21].

*Route Coloniale* No. 17 was renamed National Route No. 3 after the Kingdom of Cambodia attained independence.

## 2. *Kampot City*

In April 1885, in the middle of the insurrection, the first *Résident* Marquant arrived at *Kampot*. At first, the *Résidence* was installed on *Trey-Ka* (*Traeuy-Kaoh*) Island, and later, was moved to *Kompong-Bay* village, after the French burned the old village [13: 2, 20]. The construction of the definitive building of the *Résidence* began in 1889 [20: Juillet 1889].

Installation of the *Résidence* and the route to *Phnom-Penh* stimulated the development of *Kompong-Bay* village into an urban center. The *Résident* reported in October 1894 that the Chinese of *Prey-Srok* came to settle in *Kompong-Bay*, along the Route of *Phnom-Penh-Kampot*, and more than 30 houses were under construction [20]. In 1900, only 2 houses of local people were of tiling in *Kompong-Bay* village. But after that, a construction boom happened, and 27 two-storied shophouses of brick were constructed on the riverbank in 1901. There were many applications for construction of brick shophouses also [7]. In 1900, a market was constructed in *Kompong-Bay* [20: Janvier, Avril 1900]. In 1905, a new market was built [20: Avril 1905], and the old market was demolished. Wood and tiles were reused to construct a covered pier and a fish market in front of the new market [20: Juillet 1905]. The boulevard of the urban center was accomplished and connected to the Route of *Phnom Penh-Kampot* in February 1907 [21: Février 1907]. The present shape of *Kampot* city was completed in those days.

After that, waterworks and electricity were installed. A pipe for potable water was constructed in 1907<sup>62)</sup> [21: Février, Mars-Avril 1907]. In 1910, the pipe made of pottery was exchanged for a conduit made in a foundry, and the distribution of water to the city was installed [21: Juillet 1909-Juillet 1910]. From 1925, installation of electricity in the city center began [22: Rapport économique 2ème Trimestre 1925].

As in other *Résidentiel* centers, Bastille Day (14 July) was celebrated at *Kampot*. Periodical reports from the *Résidents* described the festival until 1919. Amusements were organized and the masses from surrounding provinces enjoyed it, and the principal functionaries among the Cambodians, Chinese and Vietnamese, and principal merchants were invited to the banquet [21: Août 1906, Juillet 1907; 22: 3ème Trimestre 1917, 3ème Trimestre 1919].

Present-day *Kampot City* continues on from its previous incarnation of the colonial age. When the Kingdom of Cambodia became independent, *Kampot City* had 5,000 inhabitants<sup>63)</sup>: *Kompong-Bay* (*Kampong-Bay*) was an administrative center of colonial style,

62) The source was a barrage of masonry constructed at the foot of the mountain.

63) The population of *Kampot City* (*Kampong-Bay District*) was 33,126 in 1998 [15: 114].



*Kampot-Toch* was the Khmer quarter, *Preisok* (*Prey-Srok*) was the Chinese quarter, and *Trapéang-Svai* was the Malay quarter. There was a wooden pier for small junks on the riverbank of *Kompong-Bay*. Many fishing boats of vivid colors animated the fishers' market installed on a terrace. Cars congested the area in front of the market and the horns of busses resounded, but upon leaving the market, the animation disappeared [4: 289–290].

### 3. *Modern Port*

The interests of French colonialism needed a deep seaport on the Cambodian coast. The reasons were to avoid the long trip around the *Camau* point at 300 km south and facilitate relations between French Indochina and Siam or Singapore, and to make a depot on the Gulf of Thailand in case of a critical situation [24: 15]. But *Ha-Tien*, *Kampot* and *Kompong-Trach* could not be chosen because bars at the entrance to their rivers prevented large ships from accessing these ports [24: 7]. The French judged that the only point suited for the construction of a deep seaport was *Ream* Bay, which is located at the middle of the Cambodian coast. They expected that the itinerary from Bangkok to Saigon, which needed four and half days, would be shortened to 40 hours<sup>64</sup> by the construction of *Ream* Port [24: 16–18].

After independence, *Ream* became the port of the *Marine Royal Khmère*. A commercial port was established in 1959 by France and was named *Sihanoukvill*. *Sihanoukvill* was connected to *Phnom-Penh* by National Route No. 4, which was constructed with American aid [4: 306–308].

### 4. *Resorts*

*Kep* as a resort began in 1910, when Dupuy, a merchant of *Phnom-Penh*, obtained an authorization from the Protectorate to construct a villa at *Kep* Beach. Some years later, he ceded the villa to King *Sisowath*, who bestowed it on the Protectorate in 1914 [24: 27]. In 1911, *Résident Supérieur* Outrey organized a commission at *Kep* to make a sanatorium and a watering place. The members were *Commandant* Tiffon of *Phnom-Penh*, Crossnard, Dr. Pannetier, Canavy (*colon*) and Fabre (*conducteur*), and they met under the presidency of the *Résident* Rousseau. In 1915, *Gouverneur Général* Sarraut permitted this project. The works began in 1916 and finished in 1917. The bungalow of *Kep* was opened to the public on March 1, 1917 [24: 27–28].

From the 3rd quarter of 1920, construction of the *Station d'altitude de Bokor* began. The road to *Bokor* was completed in 1921, and the *Bokor* Palace Hotel, which had 38 rooms, was officially opened in 1925 [19: 93–94; 22: 2ème, 3ème Trimestre 1923, 1er, 2ème Trimestre 1924, 1er Trimestre 1925; 28: 265].

During the First Indo-China War (from 1946 to 1954), *Bokor* was used as a hospital. But after that, because of the activity of a band called “*Dragon Noir*,” insecurity dominated this region. *Station d'altitude Bokor* was abandoned and burned by bands [2: 295]. In contrast to

64) The itinerary between *Saigon* and *Ream* was estimated at 12 hours by automobile. A commercial ship running 10 knots per hour took 26 or 27 hours from *Bangkok* to *Ream*.

*Station d'altitude Bokor, Station balnéaire Kep* of the years of *Sihanouk* was on its way to extension. White cabins, hotels and restaurants were situated along the beach, and many villas were under construction [2: 298–299].

Of all the constructions by French colonialism, we can see *Kampot* city and its infrastructures nowadays too. But the resort facilities were totally destroyed in times of insecurity. *Kampot*, as a resort, began to be revived quite recently. After UNTAC (from 1992 to 1993), some new hotels and guest houses were opened in *Sihanoukville* and *Kampot*. Many people of *Phnom-Penh* visit the coastal region during the Khmer New Year vacation (April). *Kampot* is animated at that time, but in other seasons of the year, it returns to the quietness of daily life.

### Conclusion

Cambodian central authority intervened in *Kampot* twice: (1) King *Ang-Duong* who made *Kampot* his kingdom's main seaport, and (2) the French colonialism who built urban center of *Kampot* as a *Résidentiel* capital and a foothold of a resort district. These interventions produced temporal flourish of *Kampot*. After colonization by the French, King *Ang-Duong's* *Kampot* became extinct forever. The principal reasons were that Saigon became the outlet of Cambodia and the age of the steam ship required deep ports. Modern *Kampot* that began in the 1880s continued to *Sihanouk* age until it was interrupted by the civil war from 1970s.

Independent of demands from the central authorities, the basic nature of *Kampot* has never changed. *Kampot* always took part in the trade activities on the Gulf of Thailand with its own resource, such as paddy, pepper, *mam* and forest products, and the Chinese population kept being the most active element in *Kampot*. This nature of *Kampot* would sometimes cause a disturbance for the French authority. The French assumed that the Chinese element had the potential to cause insecurity and strictly watched them. Additionally, mountains that separated *Kampot* from the inland, sea and the state border delimited by the French always gave asylum to insurgents, thieves and pirates who menaced the security of the region.

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## Post/colonial Discourses on the Cambodian Court Dance

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### Abstract

Under the reign of King Ang Duong in the middle of nineteenth century, Cambodia was under the influence of Siamese culture. Although Cambodia was colonized by France in 1863, the royal troupe of the dance still performed Siamese repertoires.

It was not until the cession of the Angkor monuments from Siam in 1907 that Angkor began to play a central role in French colonial discourse. George Groslier's works *inter alia* were instrumental in historicizing the court dance as a "tradition" handed down from the Angkorean era. Groslier appealed to the colonial authorities for the protection of this "tradition" which had allegedly been on the "decline" owing to the influence of French culture. In the latter half of the 1920s the Résident Supérieur au Cambodge temporarily succeeded in transferring the royal troupe to Groslier's control.

In the 1930s members of the royal family set out to reconstruct the troupe, and the Minister of Palace named Thiounn wrote a book in which he described the court dance as Angkorean "tradition." His book can be considered to be an attempt to appropriate colonial discourse and to construct a new narrative for the Khmers.

After independence in 1953 French colonial discourse on Angkor was incorporated into Cambodian nationalism. While new repertoires such as Apsara Dance, modeled on the relief of the monuments, were created, the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh reprinted Thiounn's book. Though the civil war was prolonged for 20 years and the Pol Pot regime rejected Cambodian culture with the exception of the Angkor monuments, French colonial discourse is still alive in Cambodia today. The dance has not ceased to be presented as "tradition" through the media.

**Keywords:** cultural politics, Cambodian court dance

### I Introduction

In Cambodia today, performances of court and folk dances are frequently shown to tourists and local people at hotels, restaurants, or temporary stages set up in the Angkor monuments. The costumes and choreography mimicking the bas-relief are a means for the audience to imagine that the dance is of the Angkorean "tradition." Needless to say, "traditions" have often been invented. In the case of Cambodia, the idealized Angkor has been the frame of reference for the invention of "tradition" ever since the French colonial period. The French writings glorified the Angkorean history and monuments, and this glorification affected the discourses on the dance.

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However, since the reign of King Ang Duong (r. 1847–59), the Cambodian court had been under the influence of Siamese culture. The Siamese influence is detectable in Khmer classical literature and temple murals too.<sup>1)</sup> When Ang Duong ascended the throne, the Siamese court backed him. King Norodom (r. 1860–1904) and King Sisowath (r. 1904–27), both of whom were Ang Duong’s sons, were raised at the royal palace in Bangkok. The cultural influence from Siam derived from these circumstances.

Nevertheless, most of the French works have regarded the court dance as belonging to the Angkorean “tradition.” In the following chapters, these works will be scrutinized not as “academic” writings, but as discursive formation which has had a relation to French colonialism, and even to Cambodian nationalism. On the other hand, the English handbooks on the dances in Southeast Asia described the Siamese influence from the middle of the nineteenth century. But these books did not discuss how the “tradition” had been invented in the colonial period<sup>2)</sup> [Foley 1993: 20–25; Miettinen 1992: 140–144].

Other than these handbooks, two Ph.D. dissertations on the Cambodian dances were written in English. One was written by Paul Cravath, who depicted Siamese influences such as the change in the costumes during the reign of King Ang Duong [Cravath 1985: 150–152], and mentioned that many Siamese dancers had belonged to the royal troupe of King Norodom [*ibid.*: 159]. But in his conclusion, he insisted upon the “continuity” of the ritual dance from the Angkorean period, and in an article issued in a magazine, he described only the “continuity” and paid no attention to the Siamese influence [Cravath 1986]. A powerful affinity for French colonial discourse on the “tradition” can be seen in Cravath’s descriptions.

The other dissertation was written by Toni Shapiro, who interviewed many dancers and teachers of the dance through participatory observation, and wrote an ethnography of good quality. In her dissertation, Shapiro described how well a teacher had been aware of the Siamese influence upon the court dance [Shapiro 1994: 105], but she did not discuss the reason why such an awareness had not been revealed in public, and her other articles mentioned nothing about the cultural influence from Siam [Shapiro 1995; 1999].

Thanks to Shapiro’s works we know what the dancers said about the dance, but then one begins to wonder as to why they spoke like that. In order to analyze the process of constructing narratives by the Khmers, it is necessary to discuss the kind of discourse which French colonialism created, and how colonial discourse influenced the colonized.

Angkor was politicized in the colonial period, and it has been incorporated into Cambodian nationalism. Since 1863 when Cambodia was colonized by France, the Angkor monuments had been explored by Henri Mohot, Doudart de Lagrée, and others. The stone inscriptions had

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1) The Siamese cultural influence reached Cambodia before the middle of the nineteenth century. It was pointed out that the Khmer syntax had been influenced from the Thai language until the eighteenth century [Huffman 1973: 507; Jacob 1993: 42]. But the Khmers has not been aware of this Siamese influence, because it had taken root in the Khmer language. The influence which this article will discuss is restricted to that from the middle of the nineteenth century.

2) Julie B. Mehta [2001: 44–61] cited the description of the Siamese influence from these handbooks, but she did not mention the process of inventing the Angkorean “tradition.”

been deciphered so as to describe and glorify the history of the Angkorean civilization. On the other hand, the post-Angkorean era was, and has been, considered as an age of “decline.”

Anthony Barnett remarked that these explorations and historiography had a close relationship to the justification of colonial rule, and that French-educated Cambodian elite such as Norodom Sihanouk and Pol Pot had accepted colonial historiography and a sense of “crisis” that the Khmers were to become extinct [Barnett 1990]. His article is a pioneering work criticizing the relationship between French colonialism and Cambodian nationalism. However Sihanouk and Pol Pot were not of the first generation of the Francophone elite, because the acceptance of French colonial discourse on Angkor can be traced back to the middle of the 1920s.

Penny Edwards’ Ph.D. dissertation, in which the activities of the Cambodian elite in the 1920s are mentioned, is the most comprehensive work on Cambodian nationalism [Edwards 1999]. According to her, the Angkorean studies, museums, and expositions contributed to constructing a colonial discourse on Angkor, and to justifying colonial rule. Edwards surveyed newspapers and magazines to see how the politicized Angkor influenced the Cambodian elite.

In this way, the connection between the French colonial discourse on Angkor and Cambodian nationalism was discussed in a few English articles, but these works did not mention the differences between colonial and postcolonial discourses on Angkor. Taking notice of the differences, it becomes obvious how consciously and selectively the Cambodian elite appropriated colonial discourse.

Among Cambodian culture, attention has been paid *par excellence* to the court dance. It was often depicted in French writings, and troupes were sent to the metropolis on the occasion of the Colonial Expositions. After independence, the court dance has been presented as the quintessence of Cambodian national culture. In order to discuss cultural politics in colonial and postcolonial Cambodia, and to historicize the Angkorean “tradition,” the dance plays quite an important role.

## II The Court Dance in the First Half of the Colonial Period

### 1. *Narratives of the French in the First Half of the Colonial Period*

From 1863 when France colonized Cambodia, the court dance became the subject of descriptions by the French. One of the earliest examples was Father Bouilleveux’s book, in which he reported the existence of the royal troupe, but he didn’t depict the court dance as the Angkorean “tradition” [Bouilleveux 1874: 95].

Jean Moura’s book followed Bouilleveux’s, and Moura insisted on the “similarity” between the costumes of the court dancers and the ancient bas-relief of the Angkor monuments [Moura 1883: 413]. A repertoire of the dance that Moura presented was, however, “Rama-kêan” or the Thai version of the story of Rama [*ibid.*: 414]. Because Moura introduced the contents of “Reamker” or the Khmer version of that story in his own book [*ibid.*: 444–458], the royal troupe undoubtedly performed the Thai version.

Except for the “Rama-kéan,” Moura mentioned the story of “Eynao” as a repertoire and presented a summary of the plot [*ibid.*: 416–444]. The Siamese court, where the Javanese story entitled “Panji” had been transmitted, adopted and adapted it as a repertoire of the dance by the name of “Inao” [Rutnin 1993: 11; Schweisguth 1951: 144]. As was the custom with regard to Khmer words borrowed from the Thai language, the Khmer title “Eynao” preserved only the spelling of the Thai name “Inao.” Though Moura tried to relate the court dance with the Angkor monuments, a further examination of his description reveals the Siamese influence on Cambodian court culture.

Among the works published at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, August Pavie’s book and Pierre Loti’s novel mentioned the court dance [Pavie 1898: xii–xvii; Loti 1912: 87–90]. They compared the costumes and choreography with the stone relief of the monuments as Moura did. These works which emphasized the “similarity” between the court dance and the Angkor monuments were written without any study of the dance. As noted above, the court dance in those days was deeply influenced by Siamese culture, and so the “similarity” mentioned was based on mere impressions.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Adémard Leclère too wrote an article on the Cambodian dance [Leclère 1910: 257–259]. Leclère alleged that the court dance dated back to the Angkorean period, but his argument was advanced in a roundabout way. Leclère asserted the Siamese influence on the Cambodian court. King Norodom who had been brought up at the royal palace in Bangkok had been fond of the Thai language, which therefore was used for the performances, and many Siamese dancers belonged to the troupe. Leclère, however, tried to connect the Cambodian court dance with Angkor. When the Siamese troops invaded the Angkor region in the fifteenth century, most of the Khmer dancers and musicians were forcefully taken away to Siam, where the Khmer repertoires were translated. Hence the origin of the Cambodian court dance was allegedly attributed to Angkor, even if Siamese court culture had exerted an influence upon Cambodia.

It is quite easy to point out the defects in Leclère’s argument. Even though the Angkorean dance had been brought into Siam, there must have been the possibility of acculturation. Because Leclère insisted upon the preservation of the Angkorean “tradition,” he was not able to tackle the issue of acculturation in Siam. Furthermore, Leclère could not explain the *raison d’être* of a repertoire such as “Eynao,” which had been brought from Java via Siam without any relation to Angkor.

## 2. *Marseille in 1906*

Although the Cambodian court dance had been subjected to (mis)interpretations by the French, it was not until 1906 when the Colonial Exposition was held in Marseille that the French people in the Métropole got an opportunity to see the dance. On the occasion of the Exposition to which the troupe was sent, Marseillais and Parisians paid much attention to the performances.

In December 1906, George Bois who took charge to organize the troupe and send it to France visited Phnom Penh. George Bois wrote a book in which the process of forming the



troupe was described in detail. He got permission to dispatch the troupe on the condition that the King and high officers would accompany to France. Finally, he succeeded in organizing the troupe, which consisted of the private troupe owned by the Minister of Marines named Col de Monteiro, the members of the royal troupe of the late King Norodom,<sup>3)</sup> and those of the troupe of King Sisowath [Bois 1913: 1–5].

The Cambodian court dance was welcomed with excitement in France. On March 6, 1906, King Sisowath, Col de Monteiro, the Minister of the Royal Palace named Thiounn, and the 80 members of the troupe embarked at Saigon. They arrived at Marseille on June 11, where the performances of the court dance were shown at the site of the Colonial Exposition, and more than 30,000 spectators thronged to watch it every night [*ibid.*: 6]. When they moved to Paris on June 19, their place of accommodation was surrounded by rubbernecks who wanted to get at least a glimpse of them. George Leygues, the Minister of the Colonies, planned an outdoor performance of the dance and sent five thousand letters of invitation, although the site of the performance was able to accommodate only 1,200 people. On the day of the performance the place fell into great disorder, because those who could not watch the show resorted to violence [*ibid.*: 7–8].

August Rodin, an eminent sculptor who watched the performance in Paris, joined the troupe on their way back to Marseille and sketched the dancers. George Bois got a chance to talk with Rodin, and an article written by Bois in the magazine *Illustration* carried Rodin's statement<sup>4)</sup> [Bois 1906]. Thus, we can understand the reason why Rodin was fascinated by the Cambodian dance. Rodin enthusiastically talked about the movements of the legs, arms, fingers and waists of the dancers, but he never mentioned the connection between the dance and Angkor.

For the audience, the rabble, and August Rodin, the Cambodian court dance *per se* was worth seeing. It was no matter whether the dance was related to Angkor. French colonialism certainly had a close relationship with the treatment of the dance. The Colonial Exposition, where the exoticism of the Orient stirred up the interest of the audience, was aimed at promulgating the cultural policies in the colonies and justifying colonial rule. But in 1906, the court dance was appreciated on its own merits.

A similar conclusion can be deduced from the documents preserved in the National Archives of Cambodia. Insisting on the display of the Angkor monuments at the Colonial Exposition, the executive committee in the metropolis and the Gouverneur Général de l'Indochine in Hanoi requested the Résident Supérieur au Cambodge many times to send some data on the monuments.<sup>5)</sup> But according to the minutes of the proceedings, when the president

3) AN RSC 31 (473) "Exposition de Marseille, 1905–1906," Lettre du Président du Comité local de l'Exposition de Marseille au RSC, 15 Juin 1905. Hereafter, the documents of the Résident Supérieur au Cambodge preserved in the National Archives of Cambodia will be put down as follows: AN RSC box number (file number).

4) Judrin and Laurent [1979: 67–99] compiled and published 36 pieces of Rodin's *dessins* and his statement.

5) AN RSC 23(419) "L'Exposition de Marseille, 1905–1908," Lettre du GGI à Delaporte, Conservateur du



of the Cambodian domestic committee of the Exposition mentioned a model of the Angkor monuments, the members of the committee told him that the landscape of Phnom Penh city and the floating houses on Lake Tonle Sap should be modeled too. The topics that followed digressed from the monuments, and nobody took up Angkor as a topic again.<sup>6)</sup>

In 1907 when Siam ceded the northwestern part of Cambodia, France finally obtained the Angkor monuments, but before that the Angkor region was not under the control of the colonial authority in Phnom Penh. So the monuments were not in very important position for colonial administrators in Cambodia. The 1906 Colonial Exposition which was held just a year before the cession was the last opportunity to appreciate Cambodian culture, regardless of the connection with Angkor.

### III George Groslier's Discourse and Cultural Politics

#### 1. *George Groslier's Book*

The literature of the French in the first half of the colonial period tended to regard the Cambodian court dance as the Angkorean "tradition," but narratives in these works did not as yet affect the colonial policy. In order to consider the question how the discourse on "tradition" was concerned with the cultural policies and what influence the politicized Angkor exerted, it is necessary to examine the works of George Groslier whose articles and books often referred to the Cambodian dance, *and* who deeply committed himself to cultural politics in colonial Cambodia.

On February 4, 1887, Groslier was given birth at Phnom Penh as the first French citizen born in Cambodia. During his adolescence, he went to France to study and graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Paris. In 1911<sup>7)</sup> and from 1913 to 1914, the Ministry of Public Education and the Société Asiatique asked him to go to Cambodia for the purpose of surveying the Angkor monuments [Anonymous 1946; Groslier, B.Ph. 1992: 59–60]. Groslier's return to his birthplace gave him an opportunity to explain his view on Cambodian culture as a whole.<sup>8)</sup>

Based on his research of three weeks in 1911<sup>9)</sup> Groslier wrote a book, the title of which was *Danseuses cambodgiennes anciennes & modernes (Ancient and Modern Cambodian Dancers)* [Groslier, G. 1913]. In this book, he insisted that not only spectators such as the King and

↘ Musée Khmer au Trocadéro, 2 Janvier 1906; Lettre du GGI à Baille, Commissaire Général de l'Indo-Chine à l'Exposition de Marseille, 25 Janvier 1906.

6) AN RSC 206(2207) "Exposition Coloniale de Marseille, 1904–1905," Comité local de l'Exposition de Marseille, Séance du 26 Octobre 1905, 11e réunion.

7) AN RSC 191(2007) "Société d'Angkor pour la conservation des monuments anciens de l'Indochine. Correspondance avec George Groslier," Lettre du Président du Sous-Comité Cambodgien d'Angkor au RSC, 4 Novembre 1911.

8) Ingrid Muan's Ph.D. dissertation [Muan 2001] elaborately discussed the problems of Groslier's discourse on Cambodian arts *en bloc*.

9) Conservation du groupe d'Angkor, "Rapport sur les travaux exécutés dans les groupes d'Angkor, Année 1908–1912," (conservé au Musée National, Phnom Penh), Rapport sur les travaux exécutés à Angkor pendant les mois de Septembre et Octobre, 12 Novembre 1911, p.118.

noblemen but even the dancers themselves had become unable to understand the meanings of the gestures and choreography on account of the influence of Western culture, and so Cambodian dance was on the “decline.” Groslier added that this “crisis” of “decline” extended also to the paintings and sculptures [*ibid.*: 119–123]. Paul Cravath criticized Groslier that his opinion about the “crisis” in the dance was an exaggeration. Cravath confirmed the existence of a strong consciousness of the dance at court, because between 1913 and 1914, that is, almost the same time as the publication of Groslier’s book, the Chan Chhaya dance pavilion<sup>10)</sup> had been constructed at the royal palace [Cravath 1985: 173–178].

If Groslier’s book were regarded as a mere example of the studies undertaken on Cambodian dance, one could criticize his argument as a simple exaggeration. However, the question as to how Groslier’s discourse was incorporated into French colonialism, is of vital importance. Groslier deplored that the Western influence on the colonized caused a loss of “tradition.” It can be considered as a distinct example of what Renato Rosaldo called “imperialist nostalgia” [Rosaldo 1989: 68–87]. As will be discussed later, Groslier’s nostalgia became an excuse for colonial intervention with reference to the dance.

Deploring the “crisis,” Groslier devoted himself to relating the dance to Angkor. He underscored the “similarity” of the gestures of the hands between the contemporary dancers and the female figures presented in the sculptures, and asserted that the sculptured women had represented the dancers of those days [Groslier, G. 1913: 149–150]. Groslier’s book included a few illustrations of dancers wearing the same costumes as the sculptures in the Angkor monuments. It is certain that the stone inscriptions of the Angkorean era mentioned the dancers living in the temples. The sculptures of the monuments, however, depicted a divine world, nor is there any evidence to show the kind of costumes the ancient dancers put on.

While Groslier connected the contemporary dance with Angkor, he described the relationship with Siam. Though he affirmed that many dancers had been taken away to Ayutthaya since the fourteenth century when Siam began to invade the Angkor region, yet he alleged that the Angkorean “tradition” of the gestures and ritual characteristics of the dance was still preserved [*ibid.*: 149–150]. Groslier admitted that the royal troupe of the late King Norodom had included many Siamese dancers, and even under the reign of the then King Sisowath, two Siamese teachers belonged to the troupe. But according to Groslier, it was a “mistake” to consider that the Khmer dance was brought over from Siam. He presented several reasons for the “mistake.” The gestures of the Angkorean dance were detectable in the contemporary one; the accessories and costumes originated from Indian civilization which

10) When Chan Chhaya dance pavilion was built, the Résident Supérieur au Cambodge hired a French painter to design the murals on the inner walls. This episode reveals an early example of colonial intervention on the court dance. AN RSC 870 (9755) “Construction et décoration [*sic*] du Salle de Danse (Chan Chhaya) Palais Royal, 1913–1927,” Le procès-verbal de réception de maquettes devant servir à la décoration de la Salle des Danses du Palais Royal de Phnom-Penh, 18 Mars 1913; AN RSC 2805 (23706) “Dossier général concernant les constructions du Palais Royal - salle du trône - salle des danses, 1912–1921,” Marché de gré à gré relatif à la décoration de la Salle des Danses au Palais Royal de Phnom Penh, 4 Mars 1913.

spread to Cambodia during the Angkorean period; and a repertoire such as the *Ramayana* was not a Siamese work [*ibid.*: 152].

Groslier's discourse concurred with Leclère's argument in many points. Both of them regarded the court dance as an Angkorean "tradition," and insisted that the "tradition" was preserved even through Siam. Neither of them was able to explain the existence of a repertoire of non-Indian origin, nor was the acculturation in Siam explicable. But Groslier differed with Leclère on the issue as to whether their discourses on the "tradition" affected the cultural policies in colonial Cambodia. The following sections will discuss how deep an influence Groslier's discourse exerted upon the policies towards the court dance.

## 2. *Groslier and the Cultural Policies*

On December 14, 1917, an Imperial edict (Ordonnance royale) was issued to reorganize the Ecole royale des arts décoratifs (Royal School of the Decorative Arts) which was established in 1907, and to found the Ecole des arts cambodgiens (School of the Cambodian Arts)<sup>11)</sup> at Phnom Penh.<sup>12)</sup> On the occasion of the inauguration of this school in 1918, George Groslier, who was at the front in Europe during the First World War, returned to Phnom Penh and assumed the position of the principal of the Ecole by order of the Gouverneur Général de l'Indochine Albert Sarraut [Anonymous 1946; Groslier, B.Ph. 1992: 59–60]. Since then Groslier's remarks on the Cambodian arts had been influential among the colonial authorities.

In the same year, Groslier wrote articles on the Cambodian arts, in which he emphasized the "crisis" again. The "crisis," as described by Groslier, was caused by the "decline" of Cambodia for several centuries in the post-Angkorean era, and by the Western influence of 50 years. Groslier blamed the Europhilia prevalent among the King and noblemen who internalized French culture, so as to maintain their prestige [Groslier, G. 1918a: 459–460]. The members of the royal family who had been patrons of the arts and crafts had changed their tastes, and caused the "decline" of the Cambodian arts [*ibid.*: 468]. But he asserted that the true cause of, and the fundamental responsibility for, the "decline" should not be attributed to France. According to Groslier, when the French arrived Indochina the Cambodian arts had already been on the "decline" because of the Siamese influence since the fall of Angkor. As a conclusion, he appealed to the colonial authorities for an increase in the budget allotted to his school [Groslier, G. 1918b: 547]. While creating a discourse which put value only on the Angkorean "tradition," Groslier tried to evade responsibility for the French colonization.

Groslier's arguments in these articles were obviously inconsistent with his book published in 1913. When he connected the dance with the Angkorean "tradition," he regarded Siam as the protector of the "tradition." On the other hand, when he underlined the "decline" of the Cambodian arts, Siam was denounced as the destroyer of the "tradition." Groslier's ambivalence about Siam gave rise to an inconsistency in his arguments.

11) This school had been the forerunner of the Royal University of Fine Arts, which was founded in 1965.

12) AN RSC 476(4256) "Commission des antiquités historiques et archéologiques," Ordonnance royale, N° 94, 14 Décembre 1917.

In 1920 the Musée Khmer in Phnom Penh was reorganized, and the Musée Albert Sarraut (the National Museum today) was founded. The former had been established in 1905 under the formal name of the Section des Antiquités Khmères, Musée de l'Indo-Chine [Anonymous 1905: 508–509]. Though the display was exhibited at the royal palace in the beginning, an independent building was constructed on February 1909.<sup>13)</sup> But the museum fell into disrepute among the French administrators. One of whom was the chief of the conservation office of Angkor visited the place and complained about the lack of cleanliness.<sup>14)</sup> In 1911 when Groslier stayed in Cambodia to survey the Angkor monuments, he suggested that a new museum be founded.<sup>15)</sup> Since his appointment as the principal of the Ecole, Groslier kept on appealing for its foundation.<sup>16)</sup> On April 13, 1920, Groslier's suggestion was realized in the establishment of the Musée Albert Sarraut, situated to the north of the royal palace.<sup>17)</sup> What was more, the Service des arts cambodgiens which supervised both the museum and Ecole des arts cambodgiens was set up, and Groslier was promoted as the director of the Service. The foundation of the Musée Albert Sarraut shows that Groslier acquired a much more powerful voice among the colonial authorities.

In 1922 the Colonial Exposition was held in Marseille again, and Groslier participated in the executive committee as the delegate of Cambodia.<sup>18)</sup> At the Exposition a huge model of Angkor Wat was built as the pavilion of Indochina. Since 1878 when a building copying the Angkor monuments was constructed on the site of the world's fair in Paris, Angkor had been used as the leitmotif of the Indochinese pavilion. Angkor Wat provided a theme at the 1889 world's fair in Paris, and so did Bayon at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris and at the 1906 Colonial Exposition in Marseille. However, these pavilions did not reproduce the monuments faithfully,

13) AEFEO Carton 11 dossier 12 “Musée: Musée Albert Sarraut à Phnom-Penh, 1905–1944,” Lettre du Conservateur-Adjoint du Musée Khmer de Phnom-Penh au Directeur de l'EFEO, 13 Février 1909.

14) Conservation du groupe d'Angkor, “Rapport sur les travaux exécutés dans les groupes d'Angkor, Année 1908–1912,” (conservé au Musée National, Phnom Penh), Rapport mensuel de 1er Février au 30 Avril 1909, 2 Mai 1909, p. 27.

15) AN RSC 191(2007) “Société d'Angkor pour la conservation des monuments anciens de l'Indochine. Correspondance avec George Groslier,” Lettre du Président du Sous-Comité Cambodgien d'Angkor au RSC, 4 Novembre 1911.

16) AN RSC 1658(17663) “Correspondances concernant la construction, le choix d'emplacement et l'organisation de la nouvelle Ecole des Beaux-Arts,” Rapport relatif à l'organisation du Musée du Cambodge à Phnom Penh, 7 Octobre 1918; AN RSC 171(1765) “Commission des antiquités historiques et archéologique du Cambodge—Programme des Travaux d'Angkor—Organisation du Service de Conservation des Ruines Cambodgiennes—Rapport au Ministre a.s. de la conservation des ruines cambodgiennes,” Lettre du RSC au GGI, 8 Décembre 1918.

17) AN RSC 569(5598) “Inauguration du Musée Albert Sarraut et l'Ecole de [sic] Arts,” Lettre du RSC aux tous Chefs des Services locaux et généraux, Phnom Penh, 10 Avril 1920.

18) AN RSC 846 (9532) “Exposition de Marseille 1922, correspondances entre les Résidences, 1920–1921,” Lettre du Délégué du Commissariat Général de l'Indochine à l'Exposition Coloniale de Marseille de 1922; AN RSC 2091 (20280) “Exposition Coloniale de Marseille,” Lettre de Rousseau, Résident de Kandal, Délégué du Cambodge à l'Exposition Coloniale de Marseille de 1922 au Directeur d'Instruction Publique en Indochine, Délégué du Commissaire Général de l'Exposition de Marseille, 20 Mars 1921.

because imaginary elements were partly included [Edwards 1999: 164, 189–193; Morton 2000: 234–243]. In the 1922 Colonial Exposition, the Indochinese pavilion was built as a somewhat accurate reproduction of Angkor Wat, and the performances of the Cambodian dance were shown in front of it during the nights. In an article of a magazine, the dance was mentioned only with relation to reproduced Angkor Wat [Vailat 1922]. Although the dance as such was appreciated at the 1906 Exposition, Angkor was the focal point of finding value in it at the 1922 Exposition.

Five years later, Groslier reported the “status quo” of the court dance to the Résident Supérieur au Cambodge.<sup>19)</sup> In this report presented on April 15, 1927, he re-asserted the “decline” of the dance and appealed to the Résident Supérieur for the “protection” of the troupe. The report mentioned that three quarters of the members of the royal troupe had been the Siamese dancers in the beginning of the reign of the late King Norodom, and that the Thai language was still used for the texts and nomenclature of the choreography. Groslier, however, insisted as before that Siam had borrowed and translated the Khmer texts of the dance which were derived from Angkor, and thus Siam protected the “tradition.” This report vehemently demanded of the colonial authorities to intervene in the daily trainings and rehearsals in order that the King and France would shirk responsibility for a “crisis” of “decline.” Groslier concluded that the “reform” had to be carried out in 1928 or 1929, because the next Colonial Exposition would be held in Paris in 1931.

This report reveals the reason why Groslier insisted upon the “crisis.” The troupe ought to be “protected” and “reformed” only for achieving the French purpose of sending it to the Exposition. No sooner was the report submitted from him than the Résident Supérieur took an action, and the royal palace was deprived of the troupe in the same year.

### 3. *The French Control of the Troupe*

King Sisowath in his later years was pressured into parting with the royal troupe. Thanks to the Ordonnance royale No. 40 proclaimed on June 14, 1927, the Service des arts cambodgiens of which Groslier was the director, succeeded in the attempt to undertake the management of the troupe.<sup>20)</sup>

In the same year, Sappho Marchal wrote an article on the Cambodian dance, which was an example of the opinion that the French had about the appropriation of the troupe by Groslier. In her conclusion, Marchal stated as follows:

Mr. Groslier, who is the director of the Service des arts cambodgiens and a close friend of the Khmer country, was not able to let the dancers become as it were extinct. He set out to describe the traditions and to reorganize the dance under the auspices of King Sisowath and the protectorate. The

19) AN RSC 735 (8338) “Rapport sur le Théâtre cambodgien par Groslier, 1925–1927,” Rapport du Directeur des Arts cambodgiens au RSC, 15 Avril 1927.

20) AN RSC 3055 (27678) “O.R. N° 1 du 13 Janvier 1930 — Rapportant l’Ordonnance Royale N° 40 du 14 Juin 1927 chargeant le Directeur des Arts cambodgiens du contrôle artistique et technique de la troupe théâtrale du Palais royal, 1930,” Ordonnance Royale, N° 40, 14 Juin 1927.

cause is entrusted to a reliable person, and one might say that it has already been solved<sup>21)</sup> [Marchal 1927: 227].

In February 1929, Groslier gave a lecture on the Cambodian dance at Sorbonne. The “decline” was no longer mentioned in this lecture [Groslier, G. 1929].

But on January 13, 1930, the troupe was returned to the royal palace by the Ordonnance royale No. 1.<sup>22)</sup> Regretfully, no archival source preserved in Cambodia and France reveals the details of this return. On February 6, Groslier wrote a letter to the director of the Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient, and he stated in this letter that the “reform” of the troupe was continuing, and that King Sisowath Monivong who had acceded to the throne in 1927 had tried to disturb the control of the troupe by the Service des arts cambodgiens.<sup>23)</sup> Groslier, however, did not mention any concrete example of disturbance by the King. Also, Charle Meyer, who was an adviser to the then Head of the State Norodom Sihanouk, wrote a book on the Cambodian dance in 1963. In this book, he said that the French control was unacceptable to the members of the troupe because they took pride in being bearers of court culture, and so their resistance and a shortage of talented people resulted in the French giving up control.<sup>24)</sup> But Meyer’s book is not very credible, because several mistakes such as the dates of the transfer and return of the troupe can be seen in it.<sup>25)</sup>

At any rate the French lost the troupe in early 1930, and it became impossible to send it to the Colonial Exposition which was scheduled in the next year. Then, Soy Sangvong, who was the wife of a member of the royal family but had organized a private troupe for tourists owing to antagonism at court, was singled out as a substitute. In 1931 when the Colonial Exposition was held at Vincennes in Paris, a huge model of Angkor Wat was built as the Indochinese pavilion once again. Because the inside ornaments and bas-relief were reproduced, this model became more an accurate reproduction than that of the 1922 Exposition in Marseille, and this model served as the stage for Soy Sangvong’s troupe. Although the French failed to control the royal troupe and nominated Soy Sangvong as an understudy, the dance of her troupe was introduced as the “court dance” in a French magazine [Cadilhac 1931: 564].

Soy Sangvong’s troupe was treated well at home as well as abroad. Masks and costumes made at Groslier’s school were given to the troupe. The Résident Supérieur au Cambodge

21) Hereafter, English translation of the French texts is mine.

22) AN RSC 3055 (27678) “O.R. N° 1 du 13 Janvier 1930 — Rapportant l’Ordonnance Royale N° 40 du 14 Juin 1927 chargeant le Directeur des Arts cambodgiens du contrôle artistique et technique de la troupe théâtrale du Palais royal, 1930,” Ordonnance Royale, N° 1, 13 Janvier 1930.

23) AEFEO Carton 11 dossier 12 “Musée: Musée Albert Sarraut à Phnom-Penh, 1905–1944,” Lettre du Directeur des Arts cambodgiens au Directeur de l’EFEO, 13 Février 1928.

24) Charles Meyer. 1963. *Royal Cambodian Ballet*. Phnom Penh: Information Department, pp. 18–19, cited in Cravath [1985: 191–194] and Shapiro [1994: 116–117].

25) As mentioned above, it was in the later years of King Sisowath that the troupe was transferred to the control of Groslier. But Meyer said that the transfer was carried out under the reign of King Monivong. Furthermore, Meyer told that the troupe returned about a year later, while the term of the French control actually lasted for two years and a half.

granted it a subsidy and a monopoly to perform the dance for tourists at Angkor Wat.<sup>26)</sup>

As discussed above, Groslier's discourse on the "tradition," "decline," "crisis," and "protection" affected the Résident Supérieur, which deprived the royal palace of its troupe. Discourse on the "protection" had a close relationship with French colonialism. Cambodia was "protected" by France from Siamese and Vietnamese encroachment on its "territory." Groslier's discourse had a strong resemblance to the French colonial discourse on the "protection" of the "territory." Influenced by Groslier, the French colonial authority tried to "protect" the Angkorean "tradition," but their effort were in vain. Therefore, Soy Sangvong's troupe was chosen and "protected" as a new maintainer of the "tradition." These "protections" meant nothing more than French colonial rule.

#### IV Narratives of the Cambodian Intellectuals in the Colonial Period

##### 1. *King Monivong and the Court Dance*

King Monivong who ascended the throne in 1927 received a different education from his uncle Norodom and his father Sisowath. While his predecessors had been brought up at the royal palace in Bangkok and understood the Thai language, King Monivong attended a military academy in France. A shift from the Thai-speaking Kings to the Francophone might possibly have affected the court dance.

As mentioned above, King Monivong performed an action which was considered a "disturbance" from Groslier's point of view. Norodom Sihanouk, who is a grandson of Monivong, spoke about Monivong's concern for the dance.

My grandfather on the mother's side, King Monivong, composed the words of the songs which accompanied the court dance, when he began to "re-Khmerize" that which had been "Siamized" for several decades. Our temporary conquerors from the East [*sic*] borrowed our arts as the Romans had done from the Greeks, and exerted influence upon them [Sihanouk 1972: 25].

Sihanouk admitted the Siamese influence on Cambodian dance, and it is possible to guess that the "Siamized" dance was far from valuable to the French-educated King. However, Sihanouk's statement is not a contemporary document, nor does any other document tell us what Monivong said about the dance. In the next section a book written by Thiounn, the Minister of the Royal Palace, will be scrutinized as an example of narratives by Cambodian Intellectuals of those days.

##### 2. *Thiounn's Book on the Cambodian Dance*

Thiounn was born in 1864 at Kompong Tralach, which is located in the Kompong Chhnang

26) AN RSC 140 (1429) "Requête formulée par Mme de Soysanvan [*sic*], directrice de la troupe des danseuses à l'Exposition coloniale internationale de Paris," Lettre de Soysangvan [*sic*], ex-Directrice de la Troupe des Danseuses à l'Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris, au RSC, 17 Janvier 1933. Harriet Ponder reported Soy Sangvong's troupe performing at the Angkor monuments [Ponder 1936: 235–253].



Province today. He found a job as an interpreter of French in 1883, and the turning point in his life was in 1892 when he got a position as secretary to the Conseil des Ministres (Council of the Ministers). Since then he was promoted rapidly, because his ability in the language was highly estimated by the French colonial administrators, and he was appointed as the Minister of the Royal Palace in 1902 [Forest 1980: 83]. When King Sisowath and the dance troupe visited France in 1906, Thiounn accompanied them.

Though Thiounn was promoted owing to his ability in French, his knowledge was not restricted to this alone. He was well-grounded in Siamese culture, and so he supervised a project of translating the *Ramakien* or the Thai version of the story of Rama into Khmer.<sup>27)</sup> Just as the court dance had shown, Cambodia had been under the influence of Siamese culture since the middle of the nineteenth century. For the Buddhist monks, to go to Siam to study the Pali language and texts was so common that the Thai language had become an essential condition to be numbered among the intelligentsia until the beginning of the twentieth century. Thiounn who knew both French and Thai appeared on the historical scene during the period of transition from the Thai-speaking intellectuals to the Francophones.

In 1930, Thiounn grasped an opportunity to write a book on the Cambodian dance in French, for sale at the Colonial Exposition in the following year.<sup>28)</sup> According to the colophon of this book which was published in Hanoi, 500 volumes were offered for sale at the Exposition in Paris, and another 500 were sold or distributed in French Indochina.

In this book, Thiounn insisted that the contemporary dancers faithfully followed the gestures and poses of the ancient bas-relief, and that Cambodia preserved the “purity” of the “tradition” [Thiounn 1930: 29–31]. Thiounn admitted the Siamese influence on the accessories, but asserted that the influence was not considered to be foreign because the accessories of the Siamese dancers had originated from Angkor [*ibid.*: 59]. The *Ramayana* and *Enao*, that is, what Moura transcribed as “Eynao,” were mentioned as the examples of the repertoires. Thiounn declared that *Enao* was bought from Java by way of Siam [*ibid.*: 89], but as for the *Ramayana*, he told nothing about the Siamese influence [*ibid.*: 87].

Thiounn’s argument was very similar to Groslier’s which insisted on the preservation of the “tradition” even though it was re-imported from Siam. The similarity was caused not only because of Thiounn’s ability in the French language but due to his position as the Minister of the Royal Palace, who was responsible for the affairs of the royal palace, the budget of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and the fine arts. Concerning the management of the Ecole des arts cambodgiens and Musée Albert Sarraut, Thiounn often exchanged letters with Groslier.<sup>29)</sup>

27) AN RSC 881 (9890) “Au sujet du manuscrit de “l’histoire du Ramayana” par S.E.M. Thiounn, 1923–1930.”

28) The annual report of the *Bulletin de l’Ecole Française d’Extrême-Orient* in 1928 listed the title of the books published by the Bibliothèque royale (Royal Library) in Phnom Penh. In this list, a book on the Cambodian dance written by Thiounn was put on [Anonymous 1928: 618]. But it is unclear whether the book published in 1928 was the same as that in 1930, because the former is not preserved at the National Archives and libraries in Cambodia.

29) For example, AN RSC 735(8339) “Budget de l’Ecole des Arts cambodgiens,” Lettre du directeur de ↗

Moreover, Thiounn's participation in the Commission des antiquités historiques et archéologiques du Cambodge established in 1905 gave him opportunities to obtain information regarding the French view concerning Angkor.<sup>30)</sup> This committee, which had been suspended in the early 1910s because the Cambodian domestic branch of the Société d'Angkor was founded in Phnom Penh, was reorganized in 1918. Groslier and Thiounn took part in it as permanent members.<sup>31)</sup> According to the minutes of the committee, the colonial administrators in charge of the cultural policies reported the French concern about Angkor such as the restoration of the monuments.<sup>32)</sup> Thus, Thiounn was in a position to know well about the French colonial discourse on Angkor. That Thiounn's book was written for French readers might be one of the reasons why Thiounn adopted the French discourse on the "tradition."

However, Thiounn's arguments can be differentiated from Groslier on several points. Thiounn identified the historical King Jayavarman II with the legendary King Preah Ket Mealea, who had been spoken of as the founder of Angkor Wat in Khmer oral literature and the royal chronicles of Cambodia [*ibid.*: 27]. This identification had nothing to do with the Angkorean studies by the French. The French literature written in the late nineteenth century introduced Khmer oral traditions, including the legend of Preah Ket Mealea. But since the 1920s, the important documents had been restricted to the stone inscriptions of the Angkorean era, because the studies by the French became exclusive to the Angkorean history and monuments. They neglected what the Khmers said about Angkor in their oral traditions. But for Thiounn who supervised the compilation of a new version of the royal chronicle completed in 1934, the folktale concerning Angkor Wat was worth handing down. He valued French discourse which professed to be "academic," and tried to integrate it with Khmer orality.

The attitude toward Siam was another example of the differences between Groslier and Thiounn. The latter adopted the description of Siam as a protector of the "tradition," but rejected that of a destroyer. What was more, Thiounn never mentioned that the "tradition" came to a "crisis" of "decline," and that the French had to "protect" it. Judging from these

↘ l'Ecole des Arts cambodgiens à S.E. le Ministre des Beaux-arts, 7 Janvier 1918; AN RSC 735(8333) "De [*sic*] deux bandeaux-nagas, sculpture antique de la pagode de Phsar, Province de Babor que Sa Majesté fait reconstruire," Lettre du Directeur des Arts Cambodgiens, Conservateur du Musée du Cambodge à Son Excellence le Ministre du Palais, 8 Mars 1922.

30) AOM GGI 16916 "Commission des antiquités au Cambodge, 1905," Arrêté du GGI, 3 Octobre 1905.

31) AN RSC 476(4256) "Commission des antiquités historiques et archéologiques," Arrêté du GGI, 12 Août 1919.

32) AN RSC 171(1765) "Commission des antiquités historiques et archéologiques du Cambodge—Programme des Travaux d'Angkor—Organisation du Service de Conservation des Ruines Cambodgiennes—Rapport au Ministre a.s. de la conservation des ruines cambodgiennes," Commission des antiquités du Cambodge, 7 Novembre 1919; Procès-verbal de la séance du 26 Novembre 1920 de la Commission des antiquités du Cambodge; AN RSC 476(4256) "Commission des antiquités historiques et archéologiques," Procès-verbal de la séance de la commission des antiquités du 17 Février 1921; AN RSC 871(9769) "Commission des antiquités historiques et archéologiques du Cambodge—Règlementation, classement et protection des monuments historiques," Procès-verbal de la Commission des antiquités historiques et archéologiques du Cambodge, Séance du 17 Août 1925; AN RSC 736(8370) "Parc d'Angkor—Commission des Antiquités [*sic*] historiques et archéologiques," Procès-verbal de la séance de la commission des antiquités, Réunion du 13 Octobre 1926.

differences, Thiounn's book can be interpreted as an intellectual practice of appropriating French colonial discourse selectively, orchestrating it with the existing narratives, and constructing a new discursive formation.

Because Thiounn's post was that of the Minister of the Royal Palace, his book merits reading not as his personal opinion, but as a reflection of the way of thinking about Cambodian court culture. Thiounn who had been appointed as the Minister in the later years of King Norodom, was in a position to be acquainted with court culture under the reigns of Norodom and Sisowath. Thiounn's commitment to court culture was so deep that his translation of the *Ramakien* became a theme of the temple murals along the gallery of Voat Preah Kaev Morokât, situated to the south of the palace. His book in 1930, however, did not mention the Siamese influence on the story of Rama in Cambodia. Thus, this book can be considered as evidence that the Siamese influence upon Cambodian court culture was getting less and less valued.

Monivong's concern over the dance was called "re-Khmerization" by Sihanouk. This terminology might be based on the assumption that those who had lived in the Angkorean period had been the "true" Khmers with the "authentic" Khmer culture. But Thiounn's book reveals that selective adoptions of colonial discourse constructed the French-educated Khmers' perspective of Angkor. Therefore, the reality of the "re-Khmerization" was a transition from the "Siamized" Khmers to those *à la française*. Thiounn embodied this transition individually.

### 3. *Translation of the Thai Text*

In the 1930s when Thiounn's book was published, Groslieresque discourse did not completely expel narratives influenced by Siamese culture from media such as the magazine *Kambuja Suriya* issued by the Bibliothèque Royale (Royal Library) in Phnom Penh. This library, which had been founded in 1923 under the control of the royal palace [Cuisinier 1927: 105], was transferred to the direction of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient in 1925.<sup>33)</sup> On the occasion of the inauguration in August, Suzanne Karpelès who belonged to the Ecole was appointed the *conservateur* (chief librarian). Since then, the library had vigorously published many books and magazines.<sup>34)</sup> The *Kambuja Suriya*, the inaugural volume of which was issued in 1926, was an important part of the publishing business operated by the library.

In 1936, a Buddhist monk named Preah Moha Pitou Krasem translated the Thai text into

33) Most of the previous studies other than Penny Edwards' Ph.D. dissertation [Edwards 1999] neglected or looked down the existence of the Royal Library, and misunderstood the activities of the library as those of the Buddhist Institute founded in 1930. Until February 8, 1943 when the library was merged with the Institute, the former had issued magazines and books. The reason of the amalgamation was the arrest of the librarians on a charge of organizing a demonstration against the arrest of a Buddhist monk Hem Chieu. AEFEO carton 19 dossier 23-3 "Etudes Bouddhiques: Institut Bouddhique, 1928-1953," Rapport confidentiel du Secrétaire Général de l'Institut Bouddhique au Directeur de l'EFEO, 2 Juillet 1943.

34) The annual reports of the *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* in 1928 and 1930 listed the books published by the Royal Library, and the books were consigned for sale at several cities in Cambodia and Cochinchina from 1928 [Anonymous 1928: 616-618; Anonymous 1930: 526].

Khmer, and contributed to the *Kambuja Suriya* twice.<sup>35)</sup> Apart from the translation of the Thai text, Krasem re-translated the *Hitopadeśa* or the compilation of the Indian fables from the French translation, and sent it to the magazine [Jacob 1996: 51]. Thus, Krasem who was capable of understanding Thai and French was also a member of the intelligentsia in the period of the transition, aside from Thiounn.

The first serial declared that the dance was based on an expression of emotion, and that there were two kinds of the dances in Siam, namely the folk dances handed down from ancient times and the ritual dances brought in from India. This first installment introduced the contents of a book on the Siamese dances, and concluded that both the Siamese and Khmer dances had been transmitted from India [Krasem 1936a]. In this way, the Khmer dance was mentioned briefly but nothing was said about Angkor, nor was there any reference to the cultural relationship between Siam and Cambodia.

The second serial told that manuscripts on the dances had been brought over from India to Siam, that these had been translated into Thai, and that the Thai manuscripts on the dances had been written under the reigns of King Rama I (r. 1782–1809) and King Rama II (r. 1809–24) [Krasem 1936b]. Neither Khmer nor Angkor was mentioned in this second installment.

Krasem's translation shows a great difference from the discourse on the "tradition." While Thiounn's book accepted French discourse in 1930, this kind of the new discursive formation might have been prevalent only around the royal palace. It must have been obvious for those who understood the Thai language that the Cambodian dance had a relationship not with Angkor but with Siam, and that was the reason why Krasem found some significance in translating the Thai text and contributing it to the *Kambuja Suriya*.

Until the middle of the 1930s when Cambodian intellectuals who knew both the Thai and French languages played important roles, the new discursive formation adopted from the French and the old narrative influenced by Siam, coexisted. The next chapter will discuss the kind of narrative that became dominant in Cambodia after independence.

## V The Court Dance after Independence

### 1. *The Reform of the Troupe*

Along with constructing a new discursive formation, the 1930s saw an attempt to reconstruct the royal troupe. Because many of the members had withdrawn from it when King Sisowath had passed away, and the French control had also caused a shortage of talented people, the reconstruction started from the training. Khun Meak<sup>36)</sup> who had belonged to the troupe under

35) The first serial did not mention that the text was translated from the Thai language. While the Khmer title was "the book on the dance written by Moha Pitou Krasem," the title was translated as "the Cambodian theatre by Moha Pitou Krasem" in the French table of contents. So it seemed for the French readers as if Krasem wrote this installment for himself, and discussed the Cambodian theatre. The second serial clarified that the text was translated from Thai, but did not refer to the original author and title.

36) Pol Pot's elder sister was taught the dance by Khun Meak, so the latter became acquainted with ↗

the reign of the late King gathered about 20 girls and taught them. A few years later, Sisowath Kossamak, Sihanouk's mother, took over the troupe [Cravath 1985: 204; Shapiro 1994: 115–116].

In November 1942, the Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai visited Phnom Penh, and a show of the Cambodian dance was planned for the reception. The French colonial authority recommended Soy Sangvong's troupe, but the royal palace declared that Kossamak's troupe would perform. Eventually, Kossamak succeeded in taking charge, because the reception fell on the birthday of King Sihanouk who had acceded to the throne the previous year [Cravath 1985: 214–215]. This first official performance was the starting point of the political role which the court dance would play in Cambodia after independence.

Around 1953 when Cambodia achieved independence, Kossamak modified the court dance in many points [Cravath 1985: 217–221]. Though the members of the troupe had been restricted to women since the reign of King Ang Duong, male dancers also participated in such repertoires as the story of Rama. All-night performances as court ritual were discontinued, and the performing hours became shortened. The dance was shown to foreign VIPs visiting Cambodia, and the troupe accompanied Sihanouk when he went abroad.

Among the reforms accomplished by Kossamak, the creation of new repertoires such as the Apsara dance, *inter alia*, is significant for the critical analysis of discourses on Angkor [Shapiro 1994: 125; Phim and Thompson 1999: 33–34]. That dance which imitated the bas-relief of the Angkor monuments became a *spécialité* of Princess Norodom Buppha Devi, Sihanouk's daughter. She was considered to be a reification of the Angkorean “tradition,” and her dance was frequently presented with photographs in magazines [Anonymous 1958: 17; Meyer 1964: 34–35].

Although new repertoires were created, those based on classical literature which had been influenced by Siamese culture were still performed. The National Archives in Phnom Penh preserve about 70 items of the programs for various ceremonies. *Enao* was often selected to be performed for foreign guests.<sup>37)</sup>

## 2. Nationalistic Discourse on the “Tradition”

Among the diverse narratives in the 1930s, the French-influenced discourse became the official view on the dance and “tradition.” Thiounn's book [Thiounn 1930] became the protagonist of

↘ young Pol Pot and paid the school expenses for him [Shapiro 1994: 115–116]. Chea Samy, who was the main informant of Toni Shapiro, married with his elder brother. Pol Pot had a close connection with the royal troupe [Ghosh 1998: 12–14].

37) AN DC 311 “Danses khmères exécutées par la troupe royale, le 6 Mars 1958, à l'occasion de la fête du Tang Toc”; AN DC 311 “Cambodian Dances performed by the ‘Troupe Royale,’ June 20th, 1959, in honour of the His Excellency Mr Soekarno, President of the Republic of Indonesia”; AN DC 311 “Cambodian Dances performed by the ‘troupe royale,’ Monday, February 15th, 1960, in the honour of Commander-in-Chief of Far East, Land Force-General Sir Richard Hull”; AN DC 311 “Danses khmères exécutées par la troupe royale, Samedi 2 Avril 1960, en l'honneur de Monsieur Louis Jacquinot, Ministre d'Etat, Représentant de Monsieur le Président de la République Française à l'occasion de la cérémonie d'inauguration de l'appontement du Port Sihanouk Ville.”

the construction of postcolonial discourse on the court dance.

In 1956 this book was reprinted by the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh, and an extract from it was inserted in the French version of the educational magazine in 1964 [Thiounn 1964]. Even after independence, this version of the magazine was still distributed to the teachers, because the bi-linear educational system established in the colonial period was still existed. While the French education had been gradually expanded since colonization, the French administrators in the middle of the 1920s certified local schools attached to the Buddhist temples as official educational institutions, and named them the “écoles de pagode rénovée,” where the Khmer language was used for instruction [Bezançon 1992; 2002: 175–179; Sorn 1995: 186–232]. The French-education for the elite and the Khmer one for the ordinary people were separated. The bi-linear system lasted until 1967, when it was decided that the Khmer language had to be used in all the institutions, including secondary and tertiary education [Khin 1999]. Under these circumstances the French-educated Cambodian nationals became omnipresent, and they were regarded as potential readers for the reprint or insertion of Thiounn’s book. This book had been published for the French readers visiting the 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris, but it had a circulation in postcolonial Cambodia because of the lasting colonial education system.

The governmental publications in those days carried almost the same discourse as Thiounn. In an article of a French-language magazine issued by the Ministry of Information, the court dance was presented as the “tradition” because of its “similarity” to the Angkorean relief. Although the cultural influence from Angkor to Siam was mentioned in this article, the Siamese influence was not referred to, and Cambodia was declared to preserve the “purity” of the dance [Anonymous 1958: 15]. Meanwhile the book which the same Ministry published in order to propagate Cambodian society and culture to the foreign countries stated that the Cambodian dance had been influenced by India, Java, Burma, and Siam, but the Cambodian court allegedly preserved the “tradition” because Angkorean culture had been transmitted to Siam before the Siamese influence. Adoption of the Indian *Ramayana* in the Angkorean era and its current performance were considered to be proofs of the lasting “tradition,” but nothing was said about the influence of the Siamese version of the *Ramakien* [Royaume du Cambodge Ministère de l’Information 1962: 266].

Even in the Khmer-language magazine appeared the similar discourse on the “tradition.” In the middle of the 1950s, boxed items in the *Kambuja Suriya* discussed the Khmer dance. These items described that the Khmers had played the dance since ancient times and won fame, and that the dance transmitted from then had to be protected, researched, and maintained [Chap 1954; 1956]. The expression “ancient times” here referred to the pre-Angkorean or Angkorean period. The Siamese influence after these periods was not mentioned in these items.

Both in the French and Khmer media, the official view in the Sihanouk era regarded the dance as the Angkorean “tradition.” Even if the Siamese influence was referred to, Siam was treated only as the protector of the “tradition.” Because of prevalence of this official view, there



was no room for the practice of translating the Thai text and contributing it to the magazine. As in the case of the national anthems which have been sung about the Angkor monuments, and the case of the national flags which have depicted Angkor Wat even under the socialist regimes, the idealized Angkor has been incorporated into Cambodian nationalism. Post/colonial discourses on the court dance too were utilized for the political purposes for which Angkor served the nation-state.<sup>38)</sup>

### 3. *Narratives of the French in the 1960s*

Though the independence of Cambodia put an end to colonial intervention, the French still wrote about the Cambodian dance in the 1960s. This section is devoted to a critique of two articles. One was written by Solange Thierry who has been majoring in Khmer folktales, and the other by Bernard Philippe Groslier, who was George Groslier's son and an expert on the Angkorean studies.

The same old discourse on the Angkorean "tradition" was repeated by Solange Thierry. She pointed out that depictions of the dance were to be seen on the Angkorean inscriptions and bas-relief, and argued that the movements of the dancers' bodies and fingers had preserved the "tradition" since the Angkorean era. The influence of the Indian dance upon Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Burma was mentioned in her article, but she did not refer to the Siamese influence on Cambodia, either [Thierry 1963].

While Thierry's argument was attuned to the French colonial discourse on Angkor, the most serious problem in her article is the arbitrary quotations from George Groslier's book written in 1913. She quoted the description of the dance in the Angkorean period, but the Siamese influence was excluded from her citations. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Leclère and Groslier constructed an argument that the Angkorean "tradition" had been preserved even through Siam. Nevertheless, a disregard for the Siamese influence made it easy to insist upon the direct transmission of the "tradition." Thus Thierry's article might omit a circuitous argument about the preservation of the "tradition" via Siam.

In 1965, Bernard Philippe Groslier wrote an article under the title "Danse et musique sous les rois d'Angkor (Dance and Music under the Kings of Angkor)." As might be expected from the title, this article examined only the Angkorean inscriptions, and mentioned nothing about the contemporary dance. But he pointed out that the vocabulary of the old Khmer language had been preserved in the modern one, and referred to a classical literary work named *Kakei*

38) Although nationalistic discourse was dominant in the Sihanouk period, folk dances were also appropriated by the state in order to create national culture. In the national conventions of the Jeunesse Socialiste Royale Khmère or the youth association of Sangkum which monopolized parliamentary seats, folk dances and songs were performed for the VIPs in the government. But such a repertoire as the Bassak theatre which adapted classical Chinese opera via Vietnam was not shown, probably because this theatre transgressed the national border. AN DC 310 "Programme de la soirée asiatique de la J.S.R.K., le 2 Mars 1959"; AN DC 345 "Programme des spectacles artistiques présentés par le mouvement de la Jeunesse Socialiste Royale Khmère du Royaume, placés sous la Très Haute Présidence de Leurs Majestés le Roi et la Reine et Samdech Sahachivin, au Terrain du Mén, à l'occasion du troisième rallye, le 2 Mars 1960."



which exemplified the nomenclature of the dance and music [Groslier, B.Ph. 1965].

Bernard Philippe Groslier might take up *Kakei* because this piece was thought to denote the “continuity” between Angkor and modernity. In order to claim the “continuity,” the French of the past made use of the costumes, accessories, and movements of the bodies or fingers. Groslier *films* tried to reinforce this claim by using linguistic knowledge. However, *Kakei* was written by King Ang Duong in 1815 as a translation of the Thai work entitled *Kaki* [Khing 1990: 188]. The Khmer version of *Kakei* is not so much an evidence of the “continuity,” as that of the cultural influence from Siam.

As discussed above, the articles written by the French after the independence of Cambodia still considered the dance as the Angkorean “tradition.” It is impossible to judge these articles to be academic. But the opinion by the French “specialists” guaranteed the Cambodian government to claim nationalistic discourse on Angkor from a quasi-academic point of view. Those who had once been the colonizer or the colonized, now chanted the “tradition” unanimously.

#### 4. *The Court Dance after the 1970s*

The formation of the Lon Nol regime in March 18, 1970, and the establishment of the Khmer Republic on October 9 of the same year, scarcely modified the discursive formation of the dance. Many words related to the monarchy were eliminated from the official vocabulary, and so the court dance had its name changed into “classical dance.” The royal troupe was transferred to the control of the University of Fine Arts [Cravath 1985: 233–240; Shapiro 1994: 128–130; Phim and Thompson 1999: 42]. In spite of these alterations, the official view regarding the dance and “tradition” was nothing else than those of the colonial and Sihanouk periods. Anonymous articles serially appeared on a magazine, but the contents were actually the reissue of each of the chapters from Thiounn’s book [Anonymous 1972a; 1972b; 1972c; 1972d; 1972e].

On April 17, 1975 when the Pol Pot regime overthrew the Khmer Republic, the members of the troupe were ordered off the cities along with other dwellers, and the performances were prohibited. Since January 7, 1979, when the Heng Samrin regime was established, the survivors returned to Phnom Penh, and began to reconstruct the troupe and the University of Fine Arts. Aside from these efforts at home, the Cambodian refugees organized several troupes abroad.

Since the foundation of the new Kingdom in 1993, the Ramayana festivals have been held three times at Angkor Wat, where the troupe which belonged to the Department of Performing Arts in the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, performed the court dance. From December 30, 1999, to the first of January 2000, the ceremonies which celebrated the new millennium were held at Angkor Wat again. The stage in front of the monument served for the court and folk dances. These ceremonies were telecast as live programs, in which the announcers introduced the court dance as the Angkorean “tradition.”

In 2001 Pech Tum Krael, undersecretary in the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts,

published a book entitled *Khmer Dances*. One chapter devoted to the court dance traced the origin of the dances back to the pre-Angkorean era [Pech 2001: 32–44]. This book pointed out the differences between the dances of that era and the contemporary ones, and such differences were attributed to the result that the Khmers had pursued their ethnic characteristics since the Angkorean era. Pech Tum Kravel suggested that the dance might have been popular under the reign of King Jayavarman II, because the Angkorean civilization had flowered in those days, and that the court dance might have been performed even in the post-Angkorean period. But he never revealed the documents his conviction was based on. Though the Angkorean influences to Siam and Laos were proudly mentioned in this book, the possibility of acculturation in Siam was not taken into account. He declared that Siamese culture had influenced Cambodia under the reign of King Ang Duong,<sup>39)</sup> but asserted that the origin was ascribable to Angkor, because Siamese culture had been affected by the Angkorean civilization. The flourishing national culture under the Sangkum regime was mentioned in this book, while nothing whatever was stated about the colonial period.

Pech Tum Kravel's argument is in harmony with the colonial and nationalistic discourses. Admitting the Siamese influence, he guessed that Siam had taken the role of protecting the "tradition." He did not adopt the posture of discussing the colonial period when the "tradition" had been invented. The printing and broadcasting media have not yet rung down the curtain on the postcolonial age in Cambodia.

## VI Conclusion

In *The Invention of Tradition*, a well known book discussing nationalism and modernity, Terence Ranger scrutinized a case of invented "tradition" during the English colonization of Africa. The "tradition" was invented by the English colonizers, for the purpose of differentiating themselves from the colonized, and it was imitated by the latter. Ranger concluded that a social fluctuation caused the invention of "tradition" [Ranger 1983]. Discourse which regarded the Cambodian court dance as the Angkorean "tradition" was also invented under such a fluctuation of colonial encounters.

Not only the court dance, but the discourse on Angkor as a whole was invented by the French so as to justify colonial rule. Historiography which glorified the Angkorean era and looked down on the post-Angkorean era was related to the French "protection," that is, the French discourse on colonization. Since 1907 when France obtained the Angkor monuments, the restoration had contributed to the propaganda for the renaissance of the "glory" under French rule. The more powerful the influence George Groslier exerted upon the cultural policies, the more prevalent his discourse on the "tradition" became. The "protection" of the "tradition" which had come to a "crisis" of "decline," resulted in the seizure of the royal troupe by Groslier.

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39) This book included English translation from the Khmer text, but the Siamese influence was omitted from the translated text [Pech 2001: 15].

The Colonial Expositions clearly show the process by which the court dance became the Angkorean “tradition.” Although the Cambodian dance as such had been appreciated during the 1906 Exposition, it was understood in connection with Angkor in 1922. Then, the colonial authority singled out a private troupe as the maintainer of the “tradition,” and sent it to the 1931 Exposition. The relationship between the Colonial Exposition and dance was illustrative of the colonial way of thinking.

However, Angkor had been a part of the Khmer past. Though they had to learn the history of Angkor from the French historians, Khmer folktales and the Cambodian royal chronicles had mentioned the monuments. In the 1930s, the Khmer intellectuals obtained opportunities to talk about the dance through the publishing media. Along with the translation of the Thai texts, an integration of French discourse on Angkor and the existing Khmer narratives was attempted.

After independence, the “tradition” which had been promulgated by Groslier and adopted by Thiounn became the official view towards the dance. Because colonial discourse on Angkor was incorporated into Cambodian nationalism, the court dance which had been connected with Angkor was utilized to serve the nation-state. Moreover, the French “academic” writings reinforced nationalistic discourse on the “tradition.”

Nationalism has been based on collective memories and oblivions. Since Angkor was appropriated by Cambodian nationalism, the “glorious” age of Angkor has been memorized as the “true” past of the nation. In order to share this kind of a historical view, the origin of adopting Angkor from the French colonial discourse had to be forgotten. In the case of the court dance, the Siamese influence too needed to be expelled from their remembrances. These double oblivions have been indispensable for inculcating the newly constructed “origin” of the Angkorean “tradition,” in the mind of the Cambodian nationals. Even after the civil war which was prolonged for 20 years and the tyranny under the Pol Pot regime, the national memories of this “origin” have been influential in Cambodia. Discourse on the “tradition” has been repeated and reproduced through books and TV shows.

### Abbreviations

AEFEO	Archives de l' Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris
AN	Archives Nationales, Phnom Penh
AOM	Archive d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence
BEFEO	<i>Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient</i>
BSEI	<i>Bulletin de la Société des Etudes Indochinoises</i>
DC	Documentation du Cambodge
EFEO	Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient
GGI	Gouverneur Général de l'Indochine
JA	<i>Journal Asiatique</i>
KS	<i>Kambuja Suriya</i>
RSC	Résident Supérieur au Cambodge

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## Marriage, Gender, and Labor: Female-Headed Households in a Rural Cambodian Village

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### Abstract

The “feminization of poverty” is apparent in regard to female-headed households, and Cambodia is not an exception. Due to the civil war and the aftermath of the Pol Pot regime, the population of women has exceeded that of men, and the ratio of female-headed households still remains relatively high. This paper is a case study of one rice-farming village in Takaev Province in the southern plain region of Cambodia. It will describe the present state of female-headed households and discuss how these women try to survive by selecting and utilizing various social and human resources within the milieu of their kinship and marriage system. Despite the fact that the household unit as means of livelihood was dismantled during the Pol Pot regime, family ties were not destroyed and households were reconstructed soon after the regime collapsed. Although the regime created many households with a deficiency of members, the kinship structure basically remains the same as before the 1970s. The nature of men’s migratory marriage sometimes brings about the easy desertion of wives, but the predominance of a matrilocal residential pattern provides female networks in the wives’ home villages. Nevertheless, the matrilocal preference does not always solve the problem of the “feminization of poverty.”

**Keywords:** Cambodia, female-headed household, gender, kinship, labor, livelihood, marriage, rural

### I Introduction

This paper submits a preliminary discussion to analyze how the kinship and marriage system is concerned with the formation of female-headed households and the livelihood strategies of the female-heads in rural Cambodia, from the viewpoint of a case study of one rice-farming village in the southern plain region of Cambodia.

Since Cambodia returned to international society in the 1990s and welcomed various forms of aid and investment from abroad, Cambodia’s GDP has grown steadily at an average 6.5% from 1999 to 2002 [Amakawa 2003: 35]. However, there is no clear evidence that the population of the poor decreased in the 1990s; around 30–40% of the entire population is still estimated to be under the poverty line [Cambodia, MoP 1999: 11]. Most international aid resources are distributed to the capital, Phnom Penh, and a few provinces only [Ledgerwood 1998: 133]. Therefore, Cambodia has not been successful in raising the living standard of the rural

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population in general, which accounts for 84% of the whole population. As a result, rural poverty accounts for almost 90% of total poverty [Cambodia, MoP 1999: 67].

As the theme “Gender and Human Development” in the UNDP *Human Development Report 1995* recognizes that gender has become a significant issue in development, the term the “feminization of poverty” has been often mentioned since the 1990s<sup>1)</sup> in the context of overcoming poverty in the world, especially in the least developed countries. *Human Development Report 1995* estimates that 70% of the population living in poverty in the world are women [UNDP 1995: 4].<sup>2)</sup> As many point out, behind the phenomenon of the feminization of poverty, there are various aspects of gender inequity in terms of gender norms, the opportunity of education and remunerative jobs, the condition of reproductive health, and so forth.

In this sense, Cambodia is not an exception. Attention has always been paid to its gender inequity, probably partly because of the theoretical and policy trends in development issues in the 1990s. The National Institute of Statistics (NIS) and the Ministry of Planning (MoP) of Cambodia published some reports on the statistical analysis of women/gender and/or poverty based on census data. However, not much of a qualitative analysis of the relationship between gender and poverty based on field data has been conducted. This paper is a trial microanalysis of gender and poverty in Cambodia. The author’s research in 2002 focused on conducting interviews regarding female household heads of the rural village in Takaev Province,<sup>3)</sup> where the author had collected basic data on the kinship and marriage system in 2000.

## II General Condition of Female-Headed Households in Cambodia

### *Imbalance of the Population among Sexes*

According to the census taken in 1998, about 26% of all households in Cambodia are headed by women [NIS 2000b: 65]. In general, there are various kinds of situations in female-headed households, e.g. single households, households with an unmarried mother, households that lack a husband due to separation, divorce or death, or households with a husband who is not a main income earner, and so forth. As Table 1 indicates, the female headship rate is higher among the age group of 40 and over in both urban and rural Cambodia. Because the mortality rate of men increased due to the civil war in the 1970s and its aftermath, the sex ratio (the ratio of men to women) in the population aged 45 and over is clearly low at present; there are practically three males for every four females [*ibid.*: 8]. Also, a comparison of the widowed populations of the both sexes shows widowed women outnumber widowed men among the age group of 40 and over [*ibid.*: 13]. Therefore, it can be pointed out that one of the significant factors that produce female household heads in Cambodia is the imbalance of the population

1) This term has been used for decades, especially in the context of the policy needs of female-headed households that increased among the urban poor in both advanced and developing countries.

2) Some scholars claim that this gender ratio of poverty (70 : 30) has not been scientifically proved yet [for example, see Marcoux 1998].

3) Transliteration of the Cambodian region names in this paper is based upon that of NIS [1999].



**Table 1** Headship Rates\* by Age and Sex, Cambodia, 1998

Age	Total		Urban		Rural	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Total	54.08	15.82	44.34	14.86	56.16	16.01
15 – 19	1.95	1.54	1.44	1.19	2.05	1.61
20 – 24	25.69	5.92	12.34	5.04	28.61	6.10
25 – 29	57.19	10.29	35.33	9.22	62.17	10.51
30 – 34	73.87	14.58	56.69	13.39	77.81	14.81
35 – 39	82.50	18.93	71.48	17.78	85.06	19.16
40 – 44	87.06	23.53	79.78	23.27	88.91	23.59
45 – 49	89.81	28.49	83.84	29.47	91.18	28.30
50 – 54	90.80	33.00	85.72	34.34	91.83	32.75
55 – 59	90.26	34.93	84.99	36.55	91.17	34.66
60 +	74.35	28.05	68.60	27.47	75.19	28.15

Source: [NIS 2000b: 21]

\* The number of male or female household heads per hundred of the same sex in a given group

between the sexes.

However, various other factors mentioned above of course produce female heads as well. For example, there is a certain portion of divorced women in any age group of adults, and the recent increase of young single female workers at garment factories might contribute to the number of single female households in the urban areas.

#### *Characteristics of Female Household Heads in Cambodia*

Although female-headed households seem less advantaged because of the socioeconomic conditions of Cambodian women in general, the census data tells us that poverty appears to be higher among male-headed households (37%) than among female-headed households (33%) [Cambodia, MoP 1999: 12]. One possible explanation for this rather surprising fact is that the gap of the average age between the male heads (42.3 years old) and the female heads (50.1 years old) has economic implications, i.e. poorer households tend to have younger heads than do richer ones in Cambodia [*ibid.*: 14].

Another fact is that the ratio of female-headed households is higher in the urban areas than in the rural areas. It should be noted that the urban female-headed households include single households of young women and households headed by an unmarried mother. However, the ratio of such households is probably less in the rural areas due to the marriage system and customs that will be described later in this paper. In the rural areas, where the ratio of ever-married population is very high among adults [NIS 2000b: 13], most female household heads are considered to be women who lost a spouse and became a single parent and/or a lone income earner. This condition is contrastive to that of male household heads, because the ratio of currently married males is apparently much higher than that of currently married

females.<sup>4)</sup> In other words, it can be assumed that most male-headed households may include more than one income earner, while most female-heads tend to be a lone income earner. Furthermore, female heads are disadvantaged in terms of occupation and education [*ibid.*: 65]. For example, more than a third of them are aged 50 years and above, more than half are illiterate, and more than 70% of female heads in the rural areas did not complete primary level education or had no education at all [*ibid.*: 23–24].

### III Kinship and Marriage System of the Study Site

#### *Outline of the General Condition of Village S*

The study site, Village S is located in Kdanh Commune of Prey Kabbas District in the northern Takaev Province in the plain region<sup>5)</sup> — about one hour and 40 minutes' drive from Phnom Penh along national route No. 2, and then along an unpaved road to the east. Besides Phnom Penh, Takaev Province has the second highest population density in the country, at 222 people per km<sup>2</sup>, and that of Prey Kabbas District is even higher [NIS 1999: 253–254]. Concerning the situation of women, the sex ratio of Takaev Province is slightly lower (91.2) than the national average (93.0), while the percentage of female-headed households (26.5%) and the percentage of female heads of household aged 40 and over (61.7%) in Takaev Province are both almost the same as the national average (25.7% and 62.1%, respectively) [NIS 2000b: 26, 29]. Thus it appears that taking Village S in Takaev Province for a case study of female-headed households of Cambodia is reasonable, but we have to note that this area has the particularity of a high population density.

Most people in this district are basically engaged in agriculture, mainly in paddy rice cultivation. For many generations women have passed on the traditional silk textile industry in Prey Kabbas and the neighboring districts in northern Takaev.<sup>6)</sup> Generally speaking, rice is mainly for personal consumption, and textiles for cash income.

The population of Village S mainly consists of Khmers, the majority group of Cambodia, with some Khmer-speaking Chinese-Khmers.<sup>7)</sup> The latter are not new immigrants and are considered as the descendants of those whom settled in this area at least three to four generations ago. Although some Chinese Khmers celebrate seasonal festivals according to the Chinese calendar, there is neither practical distinction between the Khmers and the Chinese-

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4) The percentage of currently married males aged 20 and over is 79%, while that of females is 66% (if aged 50 and over, the ratio is 89% and 55% respectively), according to the author's calculation based on the data in NIS [2000a: 77, 87].

5) *General Population Census of Cambodia 1998* divides the country into four natural regions: 1) plain region, 2) Tonle Sap region, 3) coastal region, and 4) plateau and mountain region [NIS 1999: 30].

6) In the plain region, Kampong Cham and Takaev are famous for their silk textile production. In Takaev, the northern districts including Prey Kabbas are the main production areas.

7) Although almost no Chinese-Khmers in Village S can speak Chinese or read Chinese characters, some still have the Chinese vocabulary of kinship terms (probably in the Chaozhou dialect) when speaking at home.

Khmer nor discrimination of each other. Both are Theravada Buddhists, supporting together a Buddhist temple located in the village through the organization of a lay people's temple committee. Ethnic factors probably have no relevance to the kinship and marriage system in the Village.

Due to the shortage of farmland to be reclaimed even before the civil war, in the past some groups of people migrated to other provinces with the lower population densities, such as Bat Dambang. At present there are those who became migrant workers, mostly men, to earn cash income in the urban/rural areas. On the other hand, although working for a garment factory on the outskirts of Phnom Penh is becoming more and more popular among young women in the plain and Tonle Sap region, this trend had not reached Village S women by 2002.

During the Democratic Kampuchea period (the Pol Pot regime), the land ownership system was broken down, and the population was restructured as units (*kâng*) based on age and potential physical strength. No opposition or resistance was possible; the villagers had to obey the new system that was administrated by what they called *ângkar* (literally, organization). Some families were accused of being rich or not loyal to the new regime and were taken to a distant province, mostly to the northwestern region of Cambodia. The relationships between a mother and an infant child and between married couples were not separated, but other people had to belong to a *kâng* and were forced to work with other members in the same *kâng* who might not be one's own family members. Young people in general were considered as the most reliable labor force, so many of them in Village S, both men and women, were sent to the construction site of a barrage for irrigation in Angkor Borei District, where the working conditions were extremely severe. Younger children and elderly people did not have to move to a different district, but they were still forced to move fairly often to other communes, villages or houses, according to the villagers, probably because *ângkar* tried to make the people give up the feeling of ownership of a house and other things. A few young men and women were taken away to the mountain region in the east and conscripted into the Khmer Rouge (KR) army. Thus, although family ties were not completely destroyed, the household as a livelihood unit was dismantled during this time.

As soon as the Pol Pot regime collapsed, most villagers came back to the home village, mostly on foot from other villages, communes, districts, or provinces, except those conscripted people who could not escape from the KR camp until the 1990s. There were also so-called *procheachon thmei* (new people) who were evacuated from Phnom Penh area to this region. Villagers say that most of them were taken to other provinces during the regime, and consequently almost nobody remained in this village.<sup>8)</sup> Although many families lost more than one member by disease or execution, the villagers resumed their family lives relatively soon.

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8) There is one case of the adoption of a *procheachon thmei* child. The child was born in Phnom Penh, became an orphan after she was taken to Village S, and then she was given shelter and adopted by one childless couple of Village S.

*Households of Village S*

The author has previously written a detailed description of the present systems of kinship and marriage of Village S [Takahashi 2001: 222–238], so only brief outlines of the findings are shown in the rest of this section.

The population of Village S in 2000 was 824. Table 2 shows that the sex ratio is generally low among the population aged 30 and over, and the population under 20 accounts for more than half of the whole population. These conditions are similar to the nationwide tendency.

**Table 2** Population of Village S by Age and Sex, 2000

Age	Total	Males	Females	Sex Ratio
0 – 9	195	94	101	93.1
10 – 19	213	99	114	86.8
20 – 29	114	58	56	103.6
30 – 39	106	45	61	73.8
40 – 49	75	32	43	74.4
50 – 59	61	27	34	79.4
60 – 69	39	19	20	95.0
70 + *	21	7	14	50.0
Total	824	381	443	86.0

Source: The author's research

\* The eldest is a 99-year-old male.

The number of households<sup>9)</sup> is 161, so the average household size is 5.1, which is identical to the average household size of other rural areas [NIS 1999: 10]. Table 3 shows the number of households classified by the types of household formation. The nuclear family type (Type B) is the most common at 64.0%, and the extended family types (Types C and D) account for 31.0%. Type C includes both patrilocal and matrilocal formations. Type D includes a variety of member compositions, which indicates the flexibility of the household formation in this village or this area. However, a joint family type of household, which is comprised of two or more (currently) married siblings living together, was not found.

The inclinations of Village S are similar to Village Svay where M. Ebihara conducted research before the civil war;<sup>10)</sup> 75% of all households were nuclear or lineal family types, and the majority of the rest were extended family types with various kinds of collateral members [Ebihara 1968: 106–107]. If we suppose these two villages are typical in the southern plain

9) "Household" in this paper means a unit of the living where the members share food and livelihood. A Khmer word, *kruosar*, is roughly equivalent to "family," but it should be noted that *kruosar* can mean either (1) a unit of married couple with/without children, (2) one's spouse, or (3) a household or a group of household members, according to the context. (1) signifies that one household may consist of more than one *kruosar*. In the author's view, terms such as *phteah* (literally, meaning "house") or *neak phteah* (meaning "house resident(s)") have a closer meaning of "household."

10) Village Svay is located in Kandal Province which adjoins Takaev Province. The distance between Village S and Village Svay is around 30 kilometers.

**Table 3** Households by Formation Types, Village S, 2000

	Types of Formation	Number of Households	Ratio (%)
Type A	Conjugal family	4	2.5
Type B	Nuclear family	103	64.0
Type C	Lineal family	34	21.1
	2 Generations	2	
	3 Generations	31	
	4 Generations	1	
Type D	Collaterally Extended family	16	9.9
	Type B Extended	6	
	Type C Extended	10	
Type E	Single person	4	2.5
	Total	161	100

Source: The author's research

region of Cambodia in terms of household formation, it can be presumed that little has changed even after the experience of household dismantlement during the Pol Pot regime.

While the naming system has a patrilineal tendency,<sup>11)</sup> the kinship recognition is basically bilateral. People have a relatively wide range of recognition in collateral relatives; for example, they have the term “third cousin.”<sup>12)</sup> It does not necessarily mean that people remember an individual's name, but they recognize the relationship.

### *The Marriage System of Village S*

First of all, Cambodian marriage in rural areas is monogamous, both in terms of the custom and the law. Roughly speaking, there are two forms of marriage<sup>13)</sup>: 1) introduction to future spouse, mostly by one's parents, relatives, or acquaintances, and 2) according to one's own preference (mostly a man's), which includes so-called “love marriages” but these are rather rare. The case of 1) clearly outnumbers 2), partly because villagers consider that, after all, the parents or elders of one's family should approve the marriage, and that pre-marital romantic or sexual relationship is a sort of moral deviation. In either case, in order to make a legitimate match, the male side [the man and his parent(s) or elder relative(s)] should propose marriage to the woman's parents. In most cases, the wedding ceremony and party are held at the bride's house, no matter where the newlywed couple resides after the ceremony.

11) A Cambodian person's name consists of two parts. In most cases (there are some variations), the first part is derived from either part of the father's name or the paternal grandfather's name, and the second part is given newly when the person is born. However, people (except the royal or aristocratic family members) do not recognize that the first part of the name should be passed down from generation to generation. Sometimes members of one family do not hold a common name as the first part. Thus the first part of the name, in most cases, is neither a “family name” nor a “lineage name.”

12) This is the relationship of the people who have common great-grandparents.

13) There was another kind of marriage system, so-called “forced marriage,” which occurred during the Pol Pot regime. There are in total 18 such cases among the people born in Village S.

The marriage between relatives appears in 110 cases of marriage, which accounts for around one third of the total number of marriages in Village S that could be traced back.<sup>14)</sup> It seems that being a relative is considered as a crucial point for a trustworthy union; elders often try to make a match even between the two relatives who have never met each other. As written above, a “relative” includes a wide range of collateral relationships. In the total number of marriages between relatives, the percentage of cousin marriage is 32%, second cousin marriage 44%, and the rest are marriages between a distant relationship and between relatives through in-law relationships. Cousin marriage occurs collaterally; no particular lineal preference was observed.

Tables 4 and 5 show the geographical range of marriage. We can observe that 1) Marriage between Village S inhabitants occurs most frequently; 2) More men marry into Village S from outside than women do; 3) More women born in Village S stay in Village S after marriage than men do; and 4) More men born in Village S marry out and move farther to marry out than women do. The phenomenon of 4) includes cases of migrant male workers who are from Village S finding a spouse where they are working. Overall, men move more than women in marriage.

This inclination is reflected in the residential pattern after the wedding. There are three patterns of residence in Village S: patrilocal, matrilocal, and neolocal.<sup>15)</sup> Out of total 319 cases of

**Table 4** Geographical Range of Inter-Marriage: Inhabitants of Village S, 2000

Wife→ Husband ↓	A*	B	C	D	E	F	n.d.**	Total
A*	45	8	5	5	14	0	6	83
B	9	1	1	0	0	0	0	11
C	26	0	2	1	2	0	2	33
D	8	0	1	0	1	0	0	10
E	17	0	0	0	1	0	2	20
F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
n.d.**	48	0	6	0	2	0	—	56
Total	153	9	15	20	20	0	10	213

Source: The author's research

\* “A” to “F” indicates birthplaces as follows:

A = Village S, B = other village in the same commune, C = other commune in the same district, D = other district in the same province, E = other province in Cambodia, F = other country

\*\* No data

- 14) The data includes marriage cases of both 1) all the ever-married people who resided in Village S when the research was conducted, and 2) the villagers' family members who were born in Village S and then married out from Village S.
- 15) The author could not obtain clear information of residential patterns of all the 319 couples. Therefore, in the case of marry-in/marry-out couples, “patri- or matrilocal” here means the residence in the husband's or the wife's “village” rather than “house.” For example, if the husband moved to Village S from outside for marriage, it is counted as “matrilocal,” and vice versa.

**Table 5** Geographical Range of “Marriage-Out” from Village S, 2000

	Males	Females
B	8	5
C	9	13
D	9	5
E	36	15
F	0	1
Total	62	39

Source: The author’s research

Note: “B” to “F” indicates the place of present residence as follows:

B = other village in the same commune, C = other commune  
in the same district, D = other district in the same province, E  
= other province in Cambodia, F = other country

marriage, the author obtained data of 225 cases in total about the residential pattern. The result can be summed up as: 77 patrilocal cases, 134 matrilocal cases, 13 neolocal cases, and 1 other case.<sup>16)</sup> Thus there are all three patterns, but matrilocal residence is definitely dominant.

### *Divorce and Remarriage*

Due to the lack of diachronic data on the villagers’ life cycle including divorce and remarriage, the author is not able to discuss these matters sufficiently here. For instance, no data on the transition of the number of divorce cases in Village S has been gathered. In addition to this, the author has not yet fully explored Khmer people’s views on divorce in terms of gender. Yet, no disparaging term or phrase in Khmer for divorced women has been observed so far. As Ebihara reports that a relatively young divorcée would find another husband within a short while in Village Svay [Ebihara 1968: 497], presumably there have been few social obstacles for women to remarry in rural Cambodia. It should also be noted that a Khmer term, *me may*, which means a woman who was once married but now has no husband, indicates both a widow and a divorcée with no distinction.

While remarriage in Village Svay was relatively easy, it seems that there are fewer remarriage cases in Village S. There are only 4 couples by remarriage among all the inhabitants in Village S, but there are as many as 69 people (both female and male) who are currently widowed or divorced (47 widowed, 22 divorced). On the other hand, the fact that divorced women (15) outnumbers divorced men (7) suggests that it may be easier to remarry for men than for women. During the interviews, the female household heads as young divorcées did not deny the possibility of their future remarriage, but some also mentioned the difficulty of remarriage due to their poverty.

16) The last case is exceptional. A man who had adopted a son remarried a woman who had a daughter by a former marriage. Later the adopted son and the daughter married, and all of them live together at present. Therefore, this could be called a crossover case of patrilocal and matrilocal residences.



*Land Distribution and Inheritance*

With the end of the socialist land system in 1985, the so-called *krom samakki* (solidarity group) system was completely demolished.<sup>17)</sup> Farmers started to obtain tenure of farmland that was distributed to each household.<sup>18)</sup> The area of distributed land depended upon the number of household members, i.e. 15 ares per one person regardless of his/her age or health condition. For example, a household which had 5 members gained 75 ares of farmland. Thus the household turned into a unit of labor and livelihood again just as it was before the Pol Pot regime.

Traditionally, the land of parents is evenly divided and given to children when they marry. The child who lives with the parents for the longest is likely to inherit the house and the cattle. In most cases, this child is the youngest daughter, but there is no strict norm; a son or elder child could also inherit. It depends, as the villagers say, both on the situation and on the parents' preference. As we saw before, daughters are less likely to marry out to far places than sons, so the daughters, even after marriage, tend to live relatively close to their parents' house. Therefore, generally speaking, the relationship between sisters and between parents and daughters can be kept close.

#### IV The Livelihood Situation of Female-Headed Households in Village S

*Who Are Female Household Heads?*

The Khmers call a householder or a representative of a household *me kruosar*<sup>19)</sup>; they are basically the eldest person of the household's members. But in the case of a married couple, people consider that the husband has priority over the wife even if the husband is younger. So, a female *me kruosar* is mostly the eldest and also a husband-less woman of the household's members. In this paper, however, the author defines that a female household head is a woman who takes responsibility for managing the household's livelihood. Therefore, a female household head in this paper is not completely equal to a female *me kruosar*. For example, an elderly widowed woman living with her daughter and her husband (son-in-law) might not be a household head if the responsibility for the household's livelihood was already transferred to the daughter and/or the son-in-law.

Therefore, households with a divorced or widowed woman 1) who has other dependants in her family such as single children, elderly parents, and other members, or 2) who lives alone with no dependants, is regarded as a "female-headed household." According to the author's research in 2000, there were 12 cases of fatherless (single mother) female-headed households among Type B (nuclear family) households.<sup>20)</sup> In examining the data such as marital status,

17) The year that the land distribution started varied from region to region in Cambodia.

18) As to the transformation of the land ownership system after the *krom samakki* period, see Amakawa [2001].

19) *Kruosar* here means "household" (see footnote 9).

20) There is only one mother-less (single father) household among Type B households.

age, and household structure, 30 households in total are judged as female-headed, which accounts for 18.6% of all the households in Village S. Excluding some cases of marital status change after 2000, the author conducted interviews and could obtain data from 18 female-headed households in 2002. (The summary of each household's condition is shown in Table 6.)

#### *Formation of Female-headed Households*

Roughly speaking, the younger household heads are divorced women, and the older heads are mostly widowed. Not all widowed female household heads lost their husbands during the Pol Pot regime, so not all these cases particularly reflect the social turmoil in the 1970s. Concerning divorce, some cases of divorced female heads indicate how livelihood situations can be differentiated.

[Case 2]<sup>21)</sup> I (28 years old) got married in 1994 and divorced by agreement in 1998. I live with my 6-year-old son. At present I have 30 ares of land; 15 is originally mine, and my parents gave me another 15 when I married because they had enough land. The rice harvested from my land is not enough; I have to buy rice for 3 months worth of rice. But my livelihood is not so bad, because I can produce silk textiles of good quality, which sell at a higher price. I earn 600 dollars<sup>22)</sup> a year. Until two years ago, the selling price for one *kben*<sup>23)</sup> was 30 dollars, but the price went down to 20 dollars, so the net profit is only 5 to 6 dollars a *kben*. Because I can weave the *phtei muk pi*<sup>24)</sup> type of textile, my *mouy* (client/middleman) extends credit to me for the silk materials. I sometimes borrow money from villagers at the interest rate of 600 riel per 10,000 riel. Unlike EMT,<sup>25)</sup> this person does not demand any written contract or pledge, so it is easy to borrow. I want to concentrate more on weaving, but it is difficult when I am busy with agriculture. For farming, I do *provas dai* (labor exchange) only, but no *chuol* (labor employment). *Provas dai* partners change depending on the situation; they may be my sisters' husbands, cousins, or neighbors. After my divorce, labor management and other things became tougher for me, but my mind became somewhat stronger, so I never stopped making the effort to support my son and myself. I need money for my son's education. There is absolutely no support from or

21) Case numbers are identical to those in Table 6.

22) The exchange rate for US\$ was about 4,000 riel in 2002.

23) A Cambodian unit of textile size. One *kben* is 1 meter × 3.8 meter, from which two pieces of *sampot* (Cambodian traditional long skirt) can be made [Kojin 2003: 146].

24) Women in Village S recognize two kinds of textiles: *phtei muk muoy* and *phtei muk pi*. The latter is thicker, has more elaborate pattern designs, needs higher skill to weave, and therefore sells at a higher price.

25) A financial firm specializing in micro finance in Cambodia. EMT is an acronym of "Ennatien Moulethan Tchonnebat" (in Khmer), which used to be one department of a French NGO, GRETE (Group de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques). EMT has micro finance activities in nine provinces including Takaev. Client targets are "people who live in the rural area and have non-farm income." Seventy-five percent of the clients are women, according to the interview at the head office in Phnom Penh in 2002.

communication with my ex-husband. He never visits here to see his son after the divorce. When we divorced, I returned the ox that was given from his parents. He and I built this house together, but it was left for me. I have parents and two sisters in this village. There is no regular aid from them, but we sometimes bring food to each other, help with festival expenditures together, and sometimes I can borrow a small amount of cash with no interest from my sisters to buy food. I have a dream of starting a business (opening a shop), but I do not have enough funds yet.

[Case 4] In this house, I (32 years old) live with my two children (the elder is a 14-year-old boy) and my mother (75 years old). My parents were born in Village S. My father died of *chumngeu pih* (disease of tumor) at the age of 49 just before the Pol Pot regime was over. At present we have certain difficulties due to the lack of male labor support, but when my father died, the situation at that time was much tougher. We had no house, so we used to sleep under a mango tree. There were only three of us then: my mother, her elder sister who also became a widow during the Pol Pot regime, and me; all women. I am the youngest child of my parents; that's why I take care of my mother. The eldest and second brothers are living in this village. I am close to them and to their wives. Other brothers and one sister live in other provinces. I got married in 1987 and divorced in 1990. My ex-husband is from this village, but he is not my relative. He remarried and lives in another commune now. I think he was not satisfied with his marriage to me probably because I am too poor. I have never received any financial support from my ex-husband because he is also poor. We have 45 ares of land: 15 of my mother's, 15 of mine, and 15 of my elder son's that used to belong to my ex-husband. We have some shortage of rice; we have to buy 2 to 3 *tav*.<sup>26)</sup> As my children grow, they eat more. I earn an income from weaving. I weave 2 *kben* of *phteï muk pi* type silk textile, which brings me 20 dollars of income. This amount is not enough, so I borrow some from EMT. Usually my *mouy* extends me credit so that I can get the material for the textile, but when they themselves do not have enough cash, I have to borrow some from EMT and buy the material from the *mouy*. I always feel difficulty in paying back the money with interest. But I have never borrowed money from my brothers or sister, because they are not rich either. I would like to produce more textiles, but I cannot spare time only for weaving. My son is the only assistant in growing rice. I utilize both *provas dai* and *chuol*. Sometimes I rely on my brother's help in labor, too.

[Case 13] I (55 years old) have to support my daughter (about 23) and one grandson. My son married out and had two children, but he returned to this house with one of the children when he got divorced. (The other child went to the wife's side.) My son and my single younger sister are working outside the village at present. My son is working in the

26) A unit of amount in Khmer. One *tav* equals about 18 liters, but there are some regional variations. In the study area, 1 *tav* of rice weighs 15 kg.

Table 6 The Situation of Female-Heads and Their Households of Village S, 2002

No.	Age of the Female-head	Health Condition	Marital Status*	Place of Residence at Present	Family Members** (age)	Close Relatives in the Village	Area of Rice Field (are)	Cattle	Rice for Personal Consumption	Cash Income (US\$)
1	23	○	D	Village S	S(3)	mother, younger sister	15	0	lack 5 months worth	textiles (142?)
2	28	○	D	Village S	S(6)	parents, sisters	30	0	lack 3 months worth	textiles (600)
3	31	○	D	Village S	S(9), D(6), D(2)	2 aunts, 1 elder brother, 1 elder sister	0	0	lack 100% (buy all)	sales of cakes, casual aid from aunt
4	32	○	D	Village S	M(75), S(14), D(7)	2 elder brothers	45	2 for sale	lack 2-3 <i>tav</i> ***	textile (280)
5	32	○?	D	Phnom Penh	F(74)	3 siblings	15	0	lack 6 months worth	(textiles abandoned) sales in Phnom Penh, casual aid from siblings
6	33	○?	D	Kandal Province	M(77), sister(45), brother(40), S(9), S(9),	1 elder sister, 1 mother-side aunt	60	2 for breed	lack 2 months worth	(textiles abandoned) sales in Kandal Province, aid from eldest brother
7	36	○	W	Village S	D(14), S(9), S(5)	3 younger sisters	30	1 for breed	lack ? <i>tav</i>	textile (270)
8	39	○	W	Village S	sister(29), S(19), D(14), S(8)	1 elder brother, 1 female cousin	75	3	lack 2 months worth	textiles (180), casual aid from husband's relatives
9	39	△	W	Village S	S(16), S(14), D(12)	F, 1 younger sister	42	0	lack 15 <i>tav</i>	(textiles halted) sales of small livestock and fruits
10	47	○	①W②S	Village S	D(19), S-in-law, D(13), D(9), D(8)	2 sisters	45	1	lack ? <i>tav</i>	textiles (100), midwife fee (100)
11	53	○	D	Village S	S(13), niece	2 elder sisters	45	1	sufficient	textiles (192?)
12	54	○	W	Village S	D(23), D(21), D(19), D(16), D(15), grand S(6), grand S(3)	5 sisters	50<	1 for breed	lack 2 months worth	textiles (360)
13	55	△	D	Village S	sister(46), S(25), D(23), grand S,	2 female cousins	45	0	lack ? <i>tav</i>	textiles of subcontract (?), casual aid from the family members working outside
14	57	○	W	Village S	D(31), S-in-law, 2 children	sister's husband, 1 niece, 1 elder sister	45	1	lack 7 <i>tav</i> (6 months worth)	textiles (130?)

15	57	○	W	Village S	none	1 elder brother, 1 elder sister, nephew, niece, cousins	15	0	sufficient	textiles (400)
16	59	○	W	Village S	D(36), S(22), grand S(7)	3 sisters	45	2	sufficient	textiles (120)
17	61	○	①W②D	Village S	D(19), S(17)=monk	children by ①	45 (15)#	2	lack 5-6 months worth	?
18	65	○	W	Village S	none	3 children	30	?	lack 20 <i>tav</i>	textiles (180)

Source: The author's research

\* D = divorced, W = widowed, S = separated

\*\* S = son, D = daughter, M = mother, F = father. The underlined persons are temporarily living separately.

\*\*\* *tav* = a Khmer unit; 1 *tav* = 18 liters. The price of 1 *tav* of paddy is 14,000 to 15,000 riel (= 3.5 to 3.8 dollars).

# Only 15 ares of land out of 45 ares is suitable for rice cultivation.

cornfield in the northwestern region. I just came back from my visit to him, and feel sick now. I am afraid I caught malaria. I cannot rely on their income, because their jobs are not regular. They sometimes come back to this village and give me some money. My husband sold some land to make money (when he was still married to me) to hold the wedding ceremony with his second wife. Yes, he found her before he divorced me. The villagers accused him of the abandonment, because I was in my third month of pregnancy with my second child then. But he still left me. Now he is living in the next village with his present wife and his new children. I was left alone, so I used to take my babies to the rice field and work alone. I have two female cousins in this village. Sometimes their husbands or son help me for free of charge or for a little money. Otherwise I utilize *provas dai* and *chuol*, but when I am not well, I cannot exchange labor, which is a trouble. But my daughter helps me some. I always have a shortage of rice. One of my younger sisters lives in the neighboring village, so if I really have no rice to eat, maybe I could ask help from her. I have never borrowed money because I am afraid I will not be able to pay it back. But I sometimes buy medicine on credit. I am not so healthy. I had 60 ares of rice field in total, but now 45 remains because I sold 15 last year. This year I think that I might give up rice planting but do sowing due to the lack of water. I could have pumped the pond water near the rice field, but other people have pumped it out already; we have to pay 5,000 riel per hour for the usage of the pump machine, but I could not make the money in time, so it is too late now. I weave silk textiles, but by subcontract, because I do not have my own loom. I get the warp from the loom owner, buy the weft by myself, and weave. When I produce two *kben*, I hand one *kben* to the loom owner, and sell the other by myself. My textile is the *phtei muk muoy* type. Its price is 15,000 riel per *kben*.

Among the nine cases of divorce, most occurred when the couple's child/children were still infants or when the wife was pregnant. Mostly the husband leaves alone, leaving the child/children behind with the wife. Moreover, the father-child relationship is also cut off, and neither financial nor moral support from him is expected. Most of the ex-husbands remarried relatively soon, while the ex-wives remain single. These pieces of information about divorce may seem rather one-sided since the author did not interview any ex-husbands. Therefore, the causes of divorce are not discussed here. However, looking at the present situation of these households, it appears that most divorce cases occur with the husband's abandonment of his family and the desertion of the responsibility as a parent in particular.

The cases of divorce occurred among the households of both neolocal and matrilocal residences, but the common point is that the husbands are from outside Village S (except Case 4) and the wives are from Village S or have been Village S residents since before marriage (except Case 3). After divorce all the ex-husbands left Village S and started a new life. This fact suggests that the moral obstacles to divorce may be rather small for the husband as an "outsider," because even though he is criticized about his divorce in Village S, he is able to leave Village S.

Marriage to an “outsider” has another disadvantage in terms of land ownership. When a husband marries into Village S, he usually leaves his own portion of land in his home village and does not gain a new portion in Village S, except rare cases of the expanding of land by purchase after marriage. Mostly, this type of marriage usually brings no additional land to the couple. This is in contrast to the marriage to a man who is from Village S. When they marry, the area of the couple’s land becomes the total of the husband’s and the wife’s at least. If the husband dies earlier, the wife inherits his portion of land. Therefore, as far as widows are concerned, the marriages to an inhabitant of Village S are more advantaged than those to an “outsider.” In the case of divorce, however, the wife is not likely to gain her husband’s land no matter whether he is from Village S or outside.

Regarding the dependent members, while six female household heads have only one child, nine female heads have other dependents besides their children, such as elderly parents, single or currently unmarried siblings or younger relatives, a divorced or widowed child and grandchildren. Two have no dependents and are living alone, and the one other has both a married child and a single child who are both young. Almost all the cases lack of full labor support by an adult male. Some even have physically incapable adult member, and at least two female household heads are not so healthy. In general, the more members the household has, the heavier loads the household head should bear.

#### *The Livelihood Situation of the Female-headed Household*

Overall, most Village S households have some shortage of rice for personal consumption. It can be presumed that the female-headed households are in a more serious condition. Only 3 households out of the 18 answered that they can produce a sufficient amount of rice. Some households lack the amount of almost half a year’s worth. Recently divorced female heads, especially, tend to have less area of land. One reason is that marriage with an “outsider” husband does not bring about any land expansion, as mentioned above, and the other reason is that land distribution ceased by 1989 in this commune. Therefore, the children who were born after that period cannot hold land, which means that in the future they will have difficulty in producing enough rice.

Even if a household holds enough area of land for growing their staple food, another problem is the lack of labor force. Out of 18 female-headed households interviewed, 8 do not have any member who can provide full agricultural labor besides the household head. The male-headed households usually have the mild division of labor based upon gender. Men are responsible for overall agriculture including farmland maintenance and cattle care. Women are in charge of house chores, childcare, smaller animal care such as fowl and pigs, general agriculture, and weaving silk textiles for cash income. Although both men and women get involved in rice cultivation labor, especially in the busiest seasons, those who pull the plow over and level a rice field with cattle force are mostly men. Agricultural mechanization has not been introduced to Village S yet (except rice polishers and water pumps), so the amount of manual labor is still crucial for basic livelihood, i.e. production of food. In Village S, if a household has



both male and female adult labor forces with enough land, and their division of labor works out, then it may sustain its livelihood well enough. Female-headed households definitely lack these conditions. Female heads mostly have the difficulty in balancing food production and earning enough cash income from their limited labor resources.

## V Livelihood Strategy of Female-Headed Households

### *Supplement of Agricultural Labor Force*

One of the difficulties of female-headed households is the constant lack of labor force. If the selling price of silk textiles were high enough, some women might be able to abandon rice growing and concentrate on weaving textiles. However, in reality, even the women who can earn relatively high income by weaving, such as in Case 2 and Case 11, have not stopped rice cultivation. Thus growing rice is the most reliable and important occupation to support livelihood, and silk textiles are considered the second in most households (except in the landless Case 3). The heads of Case 5 and 6 abandoned both agriculture and weaving and moved to an urban area to earn cash income. These are the exceptional cases in Village S so far, but their households also still hold a rice field and keep managing the rice cultivation.

During the cycle of rice cultivation, the busy times are as follows: 1) plowing and leveling the rice field, 2) pulling out the seedlings from rice nurseries and replanting them in the rice field, and 3) harvesting and threshing. While 1) needs one adult male and a pair of cattle with a plow, 2) and 3) require an intensive labor force in a short period of time. Therefore, in the non-mechanized agricultural areas in Cambodia, most households need a larger labor force than can be provided by its family members during the busy seasons. In order to fulfill the required labor force, one out of the three measures below or the combination of any are utilized, according to each household's situation in terms of the number of household members, the area of land, and the amount of cash that can be spent, etc.: (1) *provas dai* (labor exchange), (2) *chuol (ke)* (labor employment), (3) *chuoy* (help, meaning that the labor supply is free of charge).

People utilize measure (1) only when they can pay back the same amount of labor; for example, if two members of Household A provided labor for planting in the rice field of Household B for two days, Household B should pay back to Household A with the same amount of labor (2 persons  $\times$  2 days) within the same season. There is no payment in cash for (1), but the labor-supplied household should provide a big lunch with liquor to the people who came to work on the day. In the case of a female-headed household, if there is enough labor force in the household, they can select (1).

When female-headed households need to plow the rice field, if the household selects (1), the half-day of plowing and leveling labor by a man can be exchanged for two days labor for rice planting, or if the household prefers (2), they pay cash to the man who provides the plowing labor. The payment of all labor by (2) is fixed in the village and neighboring area. For example, the labor of plowing and leveling by a man plus a pair of cattle for half a day is 4,000 riel plus

breakfast and lunch. One-day labor of rice planting is 4,000 riel per person. Harvesting labor is paid by the piece: 700 riel for one *phlon*, which equals 40 wisps, and one-night labor of threshing is 500 riel. There are two cases among the female-headed households in which all the agricultural labor is managed by the female head's own labor and by measure (2), because they can afford to make all the payment in cash.

In the single female households (Cases 15 and 18), the women adopt other measures. They let a son or a nephew in the neighborhood cultivate all the land and split the harvest and the expenditure for fertilizer. This is one way of utilizing kinship resources.

Measure (3) can be adopted when one has healthy parents or close relatives who are living nearby. Due to the predominance of matrilineal residence, a woman is likely to have her own parents, sisters, or daughters in the neighborhood. As Table 6 shows, 14 female heads mentioned their female relatives as close relatives in the village in the interview. These relationships enable a female head to ask for labor help not only from her female relatives but also from, for example, her sister's husband, her sister's son, her daughter's husband, and so forth. However, as the term *chuoy* (help) indicates, this kind of labor supply is considered a casual one, and it should be paid back in some way in the long run. Between close relationships, people also borrow and lend small amounts of money or rice to each other, share festival food, etc. fairly often, but these exchanges should be reciprocal as well. While parents and close relatives are suitable for (3) and sometimes for (1), they are not for (2), whereas cousins and other more distant relationships are considered suitable for (1) or (2) but not (3).

As already mentioned, a divorced woman cannot expect any labor support in the form of (1), (2), or (3) from her ex-husband or his relatives. Widowed female heads sometimes maintain relationships with the deceased husband's parents or relatives, but there were no labor supply cases among these interviewed households.

### *Cash Income*

No households in Village S make a living only from agricultural products or income. Even a household that harvests sufficient rice for personal consumption needs cash to cover various expenses for other foods, children's school fees, clothes, medicines, ceremonial occasions and so forth. The most common means to earn cash income is by weaving silk textiles. This is a local industry, traditionally sustained by women for generations.<sup>27)</sup> At present silkworms are not bred in this region, so raw silk, the main material of the silk textiles, is brought in from foreign countries.<sup>28)</sup>

Textile production consists of many processes. To sum up, there is the preparation of warp and weft, coloring, and finally weaving with the loom. Mostly one weaver does all these processes alone at her home. In Village S there is no factory-like studio or workshop where many people work together on the basis of the division of labor. However, there are a few cases

27) Weavers are mostly women, but the author saw at least one man who weaves regularly in Village S.

28) According to Kojin's research, recently textile retailers in Phnom Penh do more business with middlemen who deal with Vietnamese silk thread [Kojin 2003: 154].

in which women specialize in the starting process only and then sell this half-processed material to other weavers (Case 11). Silk textiles are classified into *phthey muk muoy* (ordinary quality) and *phthey muk pi* (high quality). The price of the latter is higher. It requires materials of better quality, which are more expensive, and higher skill to weave. Thus the women who have the skill and can afford to buy the expensive material can weave textiles of high quality. Basically, a weaver buys the material from a *mouy* (client, who functions as middleman),<sup>29)</sup> and when she finishes weaving, the *mouy* buys it from her, and goes to Phnom Penh to sell it. If the weaver regularly produces much *phthey muk muoy*, she can soon buy the materials from the *mouy* by credit. There are several *mouy* in Village S and its neighboring villages. The *mouy* and the weaver do not always have a long-term fixed relationship. The *mouy* requires neither a due date nor a fixed workload from the weaver. Whenever the weaver finishes one *kben* or more, the *mouy* comes to buy it.

In 2002, women were saying that the selling price of silk textiles was falling to two-thirds or one-third of the former price. This price decline dealt a blow to the weavers who produce the textiles of ordinary quality only, because a low price makes a low net profit. According to the interviews in 2002, while 1 *kben* of ordinary quality sells at about 15,000 riel,<sup>30)</sup> which makes a net profit of 2,000 to 5,000 riel, 1 *kben* of high quality sells at about 20 dollars, which makes the net profit of 5 to 6 dollars. They say one person can produce 3 to 5 *kben* of the ordinary quality kind a month, which makes a net profit about 10,000 to 25,000 riel (which roughly accounts to 2 to 6 dollars). For the high quality kind, one person can produce 1 or 2 *kben* per month only, but makes a net profit of 5 to 12 dollars a month. Therefore, the skillful weavers naturally try to produce high quality textiles for greater profit. It is relatively easier for a married woman, who has a husband taking care of agriculture, to concentrate on weaving. A female household head, however, needs to borrow some cash not only to buy the materials of high quality textiles but also to pay for the labor employment of agriculture in order to spare enough time for weaving.<sup>31)</sup> Thus the female heads who make best use of loans to gain more profits can be successful in keeping a higher income (as in Case 2).

## VI Conclusion

This paper has described how female household heads who have to support themselves and/or their dependents try to sustain their livelihood in Village S, a rural village in Cambodia. Most of the female heads have some difficulties due to the lack of land, the lack of labor force, or

29) There are both male and female *mouy*. A female *mouy* is also sometimes a weaver herself.

30) The price varies, depending upon the quality and the design of the patterns of the product.

31) The most common forms of borrowing in Village S are as follows: 1) borrowing a small amount of cash with no interest from a parent, sibling or other close relative; 2) borrowing from a moneylender in the village with the interest of 600 to 700 riel per 10,000 riel; or 3) borrowing from EMT (see footnote 25) with the interest of 400 riel per 10,000 riel. One person can borrow up to 200,000 riel in a year by submitting an IOU with a pledge for 3). The way of 2) or 3) is usually taken to make purchases for the materials of the high quality textiles.

both. Land distribution, which took place in the 1980s, was reasonable in that the land was distributed according to the number of household members in those days. However, now young female heads have to support children who do not receive the benefit of the land distribution. Further, there are no institutional aid systems to support the poor on any administrative level, so there is almost no way for an individual female head to make ends meet with very limited resources.

Fortunately, however, the female heads in this village have at least two advantages in terms of resources of which they can make use: one is the predominance of matrilocal residence; the other is earning income through producing silk textiles.

The former brings about human resources for mutual aid, either in the form of labor exchange, labor employment, or plain help. This mutual aid is supplied among the local people in general, but the parents and close relatives living in the same village also play a significant role, especially the relative's networks of sisters and daughters. However, at the same time, matrilocal residential patterns may sometimes bring about some insecurity in marital life, especially in the case of marriage with a husband who comes from another village.

The latter has provided an important income source to the women in Village S for generations. In the case of a female head, if she can 1) fulfill the lack of agricultural labor force sufficiently, she can 2) have enough time to weave, and 3) have the ability to produce silk textiles of high quality. If she also 4) does not have many dependants, then she may be barely able to sustain her household by the cash income that she earns. However, it is getting more and more difficult these days due to the decline of the selling price of the textiles. If any among these four factors is absent, she may fail to balance the labor, the income, and the debt, and the livelihood of her household is likely to deteriorate shortly. At least two female heads have already given up making a living in the village and gone to other places alone to earn more cash income.

In this paper, the author did not analyze other labor such as housework, child rearing, religious activities, etc. In order to discuss labor from the viewpoint of gender, all the activities of daily life should be studied in detail. In addition, the author dealt with rice growing and weaving textiles as "labor" on the same level. Both are traditional activities, which the local people have passed down from generation to generation, but the two are very different in nature. Weaving textiles has an artistic aspect, which requires not only concentration and mature technique but also creativity in the pattern design and colors; each piece of work reflects its creator's originality to some extent. The amount of "effort" in productivity is also directly reflected in the profits that the weaver gains. These aspects probably provide some sort of self-esteem to the women as weavers, which may make a difference in the meaning of labor and gender. The author could also not explore this point.

Although their living is not so easy, female household heads, especially among the young generation, have told the author about their future business dreams. One woman wants to expand her pig raising into business; another is thinking of the possibility to breed silkworms to produce raw silk by herself; and another would like to open a shop. Women in Village S have

inherited the tradition to earn cash income by their own ability, so there is the hope that their creativity can pioneer new income sources which would lead to a better future.

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## **The Relationship of Socio-Economic Environment and Ethnicity to Student Career Development in Contemporary Cambodia: A Case Study of High Schools in Phnom Penh**

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### **Abstract**

As a means of analyzing present and future socio-economic trends in Cambodian society, I will present my findings concerning the orientation patterns of a selected population with regard to education and occupation.

I will analyze the social process which affects the development and differentiation of such orientations in light of socio-economic and ethnic variables. I chose Chinese Cambodians as the secondary ethnic group in this study for two reasons. First, amidst the pluralistic milieu of Cambodian society, the Chinese have developed a particularly distinct ethnic community, and second, they were historically the first to form a merchant class in Cambodia. The data deployed in this paper are derived from a consciousness survey which I conducted in Phnom Penh.

I developed three types of questionnaires for this survey: one for senior high school students, one for their parents, and one for their teachers. From the results of these surveys, I aimed to derive propositions regarding the orientation of senior high school students, their parents, and their teachers toward the students' career development.

It has become apparent that there is a gap between the occupations of the parents' generation and the desired occupations of senior high school students. Some occupations appear to be gaining in popularity while others are losing ground. A typical occupation which is losing popularity is farming, while an example of an increasingly popular occupation is that of office work. Professional work is an occupational category which seems to be stable from one generation to the next.

Differences in orientation due to gender and locale are also evident. The better off the parents, the better the learning environment for female students. The orientation patterns of male students are more independent of economic factors. Students in suburban districts are deprived of social and economic resources. These handicaps are countered somewhat in cases where parents have a high level of schooling (a cultural resource) and/or strongly support their children's education.

**Keywords:** education, occupation, orientation, socio-economic environment, ethnic environment, inter-generational mobility, social stratification

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## I Introduction

The present administration (1993– ) adopted a democratic political system and introduced a market economy. Differentiation of occupations and changes in labour markets are precipitating social mobility. Under these circumstances, Cambodian society is undergoing profound structural changes in the socio-economic sphere.

In this paper, I will analyze the aforementioned process of change in terms of two main variables—education and occupation. Education is a significant variable which can enable an individual to acquire a higher socio-economic status. Occupation is a variable which effectively reveals the socio-economic status of an individual. In the following pages, I offer an interpretation of the orientation patterns on education and occupations held by the selected research subjects.

“Orientation” refers to the means of achieving the goal of a social act. An individual is motivated to achieve a desired goal, and chooses the most appropriate alternative under the given social circumstances. Orientation, then, is an indicator for explaining the social act, which encompasses both personally desired goals and the surrounding social circumstances. In this paper, I will analyze the aspirations for career development through the use of two sets of variables—desired level of institutionalized education and desired future occupation. In the process, I hope to determine which variables affect the orientation of the social acts of Cambodian youth.

I conducted a consciousness survey in order to ascertain the orientation outlined above. The orientation of a young person will be derived from interactions between personal desires and the influence of the individual’s external environment. In this field of interaction, two possible changes may be observed: first, an individual’s desired goals and the means for achieving them may be revised, and second, through the actions of the individual, the degree of impact of the surrounding social circumstances may be modified. For these reasons, one may expect that an analysis of factors affecting the orientation of these youths will reveal the structure of the social system of Cambodian youth.

As occupation is a major variable relating to orientation, it was necessary to establish a means of categorizing occupation in a manner suitable for this study. In designing the survey, I set up two separate occupational classifications: one for high school students and the other for their parents. I did not employ the classification scheme commonly used in Cambodia. Each occupational carries with it an associated social status, and as changes occur in the society at large, this social status also changes. The conventional classification did not allow for such inferences, which are a key focus of this study.

There are two sets of factors which generally bring about changes in the social status of an occupation. One is the institutionalization of educational prerequisites. Occupations often develop particular requirements with respect to educational level and/or professional certification: prerequisites which become closely associated with the occupation. As these prerequisites are formalized, the recruitment process also becomes institutionalized. When

such a development occurs, the occupational title is directly reflective of a certain level of education. Generally speaking, occupations requiring higher levels of education will tend to have a higher social status. In the conventional classification, this point is obscured. I anticipated that in an analysis of students' consciousness of occupational status, education was bound to play an important role. For this reason, I decided to modify the criteria for occupational classification.

Another factor is the emergence of wage employment. In 1999, only 15% of the labour force was engaged in wage employment. While this figure may seem low, the rate of wage employment increased 71% during the period between 1996 and 1999 [Godfrey *et al.* 2001 : 36]. Such a drastic change in occupational diversification must be reflected in career choices made by high school students.

A major factor relating to an individual's choice of occupation is work environment. It seems that employment in corporations and/or organizations is generally more attractive to students, as compared with manual labour or employment with a small business, and students are motivated to acquire the skills and qualifications necessary for this type of work. For this reason, I set up an independent category of "civil service" as an option for occupational choice. (The civil service is a good example of a reasonably attainable occupation for Khmer students within the larger area of corporations/organizations.)

I thus established seven categories of occupations taking three factors into consideration: level of education, social prestige of the occupation and work environment. The categories are: "professional work," "semi-professional work," "skilled work," "office work," "civil service," "business" and "other." These occupations are defined as follows.

Professional work, semi-professional work and skilled work are classified in terms of the holder's level of formal education. Professional work requires a post-secondary education and/or equivalent training. Qualifications for semi-professional work are not necessarily as clearly defined, but a high level of education and/or training is preferred. Skilled work requires a secondary education and/or an equivalent level of training.

The term "office work" is used here to refer to such white collar positions as are typically found in corporations and/or organizations; it is a type of wage employment.

In reality, the work done by civil servants may include professional work, semi-professional work, skilled work, and office work. But since the purpose of this survey was to explore students' consciousness of social status, I deliberately avoided naming the type of occupations included. Instead, I wanted to know what image students had of the occupation "civil service." This choice is due to the fact that despite a modest salary level, the civil service offers advantages not necessarily offered by other occupations in Cambodia: fringe benefits and a pension.

The category "business," which covers commercial activities, includes two different Khmer concepts. One is "Chumnuonh," which refers to private, independent sales activities. The other is "Luakdo," which refers to sales activities in general, with no specification as to their nature. Generally the former enjoys a higher level of social prestige than the latter, but there is

no clear boundary between the two.

In the classification scheme for occupations of students' parents, I added "farming" and "factory work" to the above seven categories.

## II The Social Environment of Cambodian Education

### A. *An Outline of the Education System*

In Cambodia, the educational system and educational goals have undergone changes over the years as a result of changes in the political sphere. Consequently, educational opportunities and educational qualifications have varied depending on the time during which an individual was of school age.

Those born in the first half of the 1960s, for example, were of school age during the period when domestic conflicts were at their peak in the 1970s. They suffer from the highest illiteracy rates. At every level of schooling, whether elementary, secondary, or post-secondary education, only a small percentage of this cohort was able to participate in the educational system.

Those educated in the 1980s were of school age at a time when Vietnamese was the dominant language in the industrial and administrative sectors. This group later found it necessary to learn English in order to compete in these fields. This change was due to the fact that the People's Republic of Kampuchea (the Heng Samrin Regime) came to an end in 1989 and Cambodia subsequently opened itself up to the wider world. In this way, changes of administration resulted in different educational and job opportunities for Cambodians.

The senior high school students I studied were born during the period of the 1980s baby boom. The boom occurred after the collapse of Democratic Kampuchea (the Pol Pot Regime) in 1979. Their school years correspond to a period of transition from an agricultural economy to a market economy. This generation has grown up during a time of significant social reconstruction.

The contemporary Cambodian education system is based on Chapter VI, Article 68 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (1993), which says "The State shall provide free primary and secondary education to all citizens in public schools. Citizens shall receive education for at least 9 years."

The education system is comprised of pre-school (kindergarten), primary school, junior high school, senior high school, vocational school, secondary technical school, university (undergraduate-level), as well university graduate programs. Education is compulsory up to the junior high school level. Occupational differentiation is not introduced during the years of compulsory schooling as the system is linear in nature.

At the end of junior and senior high schools, students must take the national examinations. Those who pass earn their diplomas for the corresponding levels. No entrance examination is required for students entering senior high school. Students are expected to

attend the high school<sup>1)</sup> in their residential district. In theory, therefore, there should be no significant differences between schools in terms of academic level. In reality, however, there are socio-economic and cultural differences between residential districts which affect students' level of academic achievement.

Cambodian high schools have two identical programs: one in the morning and another in the afternoon. Students can attend the program of their choice. According to regulations, schools are required to offer 13 mandatory courses as the core of the curriculum.<sup>2)</sup> In reality, not all of these courses are offered if the school does not have the means to do so. There is a particular shortage of professionally trained teachers for the teaching of specialized courses, and their absence affects the learning opportunities of students.

There are four categories of post secondary institutions: university (i.e. undergraduate level programs), including polytechnic institutions; post-graduate programs (master's-level programs); advanced teacher training school; and the Faculty of Pedagogy, an independent governmental organization which offers a one-year program for university graduates. The Faculty trains teachers for the senior high school level or above.

According to official statistics [EMIS Center 2002b], 87.0% of school age children in Cambodia are registered in primary schools, 18.9% in junior high schools and 7.4% in senior high schools. There is virtually no difference between urban and rural districts at the primary school level. At the secondary school levels, the gap between the two types of districts becomes evident. At the junior high school level, the proportion of registered students in urban districts is twice that of rural districts. At the senior high school level, the figure is five times higher in urban districts. During the past decade (1993–2002) the number of registered students increased 66.8% at the primary school level, 56.8% at the junior high school level and 84.4% at the senior high school level. These statistics are a reflection of the popular demand for institutionalized education. The effect is most conspicuous at the senior high school level.

#### B. *Education in the Chinese Community*

Most Chinese in Cambodia hold Cambodian citizenship and have integrated into their host society. Chinese Cambodians are the largest ethnic minority in the country. Amongst the various ethnic groups present in Cambodia, they are known for their distinct ethnic community and have traditionally constituted the merchant class in Cambodia [Willmott 1967: 94]. Until recently, the great majority of the Khmer were farmers (about 80%). Prior to the arrival of the Chinese, Cambodia had no merchant class. It was the Chinese who became mediators between the upper class and the peasant class. They secured a near-monopoly on commercial activities, hence there was little conflict of interest between the Chinese and the Khmer.

Cambodia is currently experiencing a time of change. The Chinese, also, are experiencing changes within and outside of their ethnic community. In this study, I have tried to analyze the

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1) From this point forward, if not specified, the term “high school” will be used to refer to the senior high school level.

2) Technical and home economics classes can be offered separately for each gender.

career aspirations of Chinese students as a means of exploring the nature of these changes.

The national organization for Chinese people is the Association of Khmer Chinese in Cambodia. There are five separate branches of this organization based on language groups. Each of the branches has established Chinese schools for the education of their children. Accordingly, the administration of each school varies according to its governing branch.

In Cambodia, 18 provinces and cities out of 24 provinces and cities have Chinese schools, with a nationwide total of 78 schools. The schools provide education at the pre-school, primary school, middle school and college level. Only 20% of the Chinese schools have programs beyond middle school. Following the model of Cambodian public schools, the Chinese schools offer identical programs in the morning and in the afternoon. Some schools offer night programs as well.

Chinese schools are not officially acknowledged by the government, thus graduates cannot obtain diplomas from the Department of Education. To circumvent this problem, some students attend Cambodian school in the morning and Chinese school in the afternoon or vice versa. Some families do not value institutionalized education and limit their children's participation in the Cambodian public school system to the primary school level. This choice made by a student's parents can greatly affect his or her career development.

### III Survey Outline

#### A. *Procedures*

The consciousness survey mentioned earlier was comprised of two parts: I conducted the preliminary survey<sup>3)</sup> in September and December of 2002, and the main survey in May, 2003. The former consisted of in-depth, unscheduled (open-ended) interviews with a selected subset of the study population, while the latter consisted of a questionnaire-type survey aimed at systematic data collection. This paper will provide an analysis of the quantitative data from the questionnaire survey, supplemented by information collected through the in-depth interviews.

#### B. *Survey Target Groups*

The goal of this survey was to conduct an analysis of orientation patterns regarding education and occupation in contemporary Cambodia. For this purpose, a relatively large sample size was required. For the subject of education, it was necessary to survey a large number of students, while for the subject of occupation, a high degree of differentiation was needed. In order to satisfy these two conditions, I selected the national capital of Phnom Penh as the survey site.

As target groups, I chose third-year high school students, their parents, and teachers at these high schools. High school is perceived as a transitional educational institution which acts as a bridge between compulsory education and labour markets or post-secondary educational

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3) The results of the preliminary survey are found in Sakanashi [2003].

institutions. Third-year high school students need to make realistic decisions as to whether they should enter the labour market or attend a post-secondary educational institution.

I added the students' parents and their teachers to the study population for the following reasons: in an industrialized and/or industrializing society, education can include two aspects — informal and formal education. Informal education is carried out in the family and community while the school system is responsible for formal education. As representatives of the family I chose the students' parents and as representatives of the school system, high school teachers.

I selected four high schools as target groups. In Cambodia, the school district system is prevalent and there is no entrance examination for high school. In theory, there should be no difference in the overall level of student achievement among high schools. In reality, however, the students are from the given socio-economic background of their parents, hence, the socio-economic structure of the given school district should be reflected in the students' learning environment. There will therefore be differences among high schools based on the socio-economic level of the given school district.

I selected three Khmer high schools with mutually different socio-economic backgrounds and a Chinese school<sup>4)</sup> to emphasize the ethnic factor. The three Khmer schools were Chumpou Voan High School (which I will call "School C"), located in a suburban farming district; Samaki High School ("School S"), located in a peripheral urban district; and Preah Sisovath High School ("School P"), located in a central urban district. Tuon Hua High School, the Chinese school, is located in a central urban district ("School T").

### C. *Research Method*

I used the questionnaire method for each of the target groups: high school students, their parents, and their teachers. I also organized a research team comprised of some of my colleagues at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. I asked them to translate the English version of the students' and parents' questionnaires into Khmer and to give instructions to the high school students in their native tongue. Due to time limitations, it was necessary to use a slightly different method of data collection for the individual target groups.

While I used the original Khmer-language versions of the questionnaires at the Khmer schools, this was not possible at the Chinese school. Only one third of the teachers had a significant degree of facility in Khmer, and over half could neither speak, read, nor write the language. Discussing the matter with the principal, we agreed at first that a member of the survey team would explain the questions individually and ask the teachers to mark their

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4) The Chinese school, which is one of the target groups of this study, is Tuon Hua School (Sometimes this is written as "Duon Hua"). The sponsoring group is the Association of Chinese Teochew in Cambodia, which founded the school in 1926. The school was closed during the period of domestic conflict but was re-opened in 1992. It is the largest Chinese school in Cambodia with respect to the number of students. The language of instruction is Mandarin. The school offers a two-year high school program. For the purposes of this study, I focused on second year students. At this level, the students learn Chinese language, Chinese composition, accounting, computer skills and other business skills.

responses on the answer sheets. The principal later changed his mind and volunteered to translate the questionnaire into Chinese with the help of the dean. We deeply appreciated his offer and accepted.

To represent the target group of high school students, we selected two classes from Schools C and S, and four classes from Schools P and T. All the students who were present on the day of the survey were asked to come to a room. Members of the research team explained how to fill in the questionnaires and asked the students to complete them within one hour. Because the instructions were given in Khmer, the students' mistakes were minimal.

Members of the research team instructed students to bring home the questionnaire for parents and to place the completed form into the envelope provided. Students were expected to submit them to the school within three days. In cases where parents were illiterate, students were asked to help them by reading the questions aloud and marking the responses on the answer sheets. At the end of the questionnaire, we included a question asking the respondent to indicate who had actually filled in the form.

All teachers at the selected schools who were teaching senior high school courses were surveyed. The team asked the principal of each senior high school to distribute and collect the questionnaire for teachers. As teachers came to school on different days of the week, the team asked the principals to collect the questionnaires over a period of five days.

#### D. *Completed Forms*

The completed questionnaires were tabulated according to the following definitions: the population of students was defined as the number of officially registered students;<sup>5)</sup> the population of parents was defined as those parents whose children had filled in the student questionnaire; and the population of teachers was defined as the total number of teachers teaching senior high school subjects.<sup>6)</sup>

**Table 1** Students

School	Officially Registered Students	Total	Male	Female	Proportion of Female Students (%)	Proportion of Completed Forms (%)
Chumpou Voan (School C)	118	83	56	27	32.5	70.3
Samaki (School S)	103	72	36	36	50.0	69.9
Preah Sisovath (School P)	176	100	43	57	57.0	56.8
Tuon Hua (School T)	132	125	53	72	57.6	94.7
Total	529	380	188	192	50.5	71.8

5) According to teachers in the Khmer schools (with the exception of School P), the level of students' attendance on the survey day was average. At School P, many students were absent in order to prepare for their graduation exam, which was to take place two months later. At School T, the number of students in one class was so small that we surveyed all of the students.

6) The number of teachers teaching senior high school courses at the Chinese school totaled only 12, and we included 38 junior high school teachers. As a result, we collected 100% of completed questionnaires from senior high school teachers and 90.5% from junior high school teachers.



**Table 2** Parents

School	Population	Total	Father	Mother	Proportion of Mothers (%)	Proportion of Completed Forms (%)
Chumpou Voan (School C)	83	65	42	23	35.4	78.3
Samaki (School S)	72	57	35	22	38.6	79.2
Preah Sisovath (School P)	100	73	40	33	45.2	73.0
Tuon Hua (School T)	125	90	50	40	44.4	72.0
Total	380	285	167	118	41.4	75.0

**Table 3** Teachers

School	Population	Total	Male	Female	Proportion of Female Teachers (%)	Proportion of Completed Forms (%)
Chumpou Voan (School C)	51	40	28	12	30.0	78.4
Samaki (School S)	45	40	30	10	25.0	88.9
Preah Sisovath (School P)	164	136	70	66	48.5	82.9
Tuon Hua (School T)	54	50	34	16	32.0	92.6
Total	314	266	162	104	39.1	84.7

#### IV Views Held by the High School Students

##### A. Profile of Students

In the three Khmer schools, the students' ages ranged from 16 to 22. This was due to the fact that some students found it necessary to repeat grades while others were able to skip grades. This class (in their third year of high school) was the last cohort to pass through the old five-year system<sup>7)</sup> of compulsory education. If they followed the normal pattern, they would be 17 years old. In the Chinese school, the students' age range was between 15 and 23. This large range was due to the fact that some students attended the school only for the purpose of learning the Chinese language.

Among the three Khmer schools, there were certain differences among schools C, S, and P in terms of certain variables. A gender difference between School C and School S was observed. The highest frequency (mode) for the age distribution of students at Schools C and S was 20 years old, while at School P, it was 17 years. At Schools C and S, the mode for the age distribution of male students was 20 years, while the mode for female students was 18 years. In the suburban district and peripheral urban district, students were less likely to complete their high school education without interruption. This may have been due to the poorer socio-economic conditions of households in these districts.

At School P, the mode was 17 years. The proportion of female students was higher than

7) In 1996, the primary school system was extended from five years to six years.

that of male students. In the central urban district, it appeared that students had less disruptions in their schooling and were financially better off. In particular, when female students did well academically, parents actively encouraged their daughters and were willing to invest further in their education.

At School T, the mode was 18 years old on average. The mode of male students was 18, but that of female students had two peaks: 17 and 19. Generally, the range of students' ages showed a fairly equal distribution between 17 and 20, and there were no remarkable differences between genders.

There was a certain degree of correlation between the students' age distribution and their levels of academic achievement ( $r=.207$ ,  $p=.01\%$ ). The older the student in relation to his or her peers, the lower his/her level of academic achievement tended to be. There may be social and economic reasons why students postpone their high school education. For example, the student may have to stop attending school in order to contribute to the household economy if the household's overall income is insufficient. In addition, when parents are involved in their children's school education, there may be an effect on children's school attendance.<sup>8)</sup> The range of the students' age distribution (an intervening variable) is extended due to these types of independent variables. Students who fall behind their peers generally tend to have lower levels of academic achievement and cannot proceed to post-secondary institutions or occupations which require high levels of training. In brief, the students' age composition (an intervening variable) in a particular school is a predictor for their future career development (a dependent variable) of students at that school.

#### B. *Learning Environment: Attendance at Cramming Classes*

Cramming classes can be considered as a good indicator of the students' learning environment. There are two patterns in the scheduling of cramming classes. Some of the schools offer one-hour classes every day, while others organize sessions during long holidays. The main subject offered is English, which is considered beneficial for students' career development. Some other subjects such as mathematics and physics are also offered; these are helpful in preparing for university and college entrance examinations. The amount of tuition charged varies according to the teacher: highly reputed teachers charge more. The most highly reputed cramming classes are concentrated in the city center.

Among the three Khmer schools, the figures for students who attended cramming classes were as follows: School C, 24.1%; School S, 27.8%; and School P, 65.0%. Virtually all students at the Chinese school attended cramming classes — an astonishing figure of 96.0%.

There were gender differences in the proportion of cramming class participants. At School C and School S, 12.8% and 11.1% more male than female students attended cramming classes respectively. At Schools P, 16.1% more female students attended cramming classes than male students.

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8) It should be noted, however, that details about the students' family situations were not covered by this survey.

As mentioned earlier, school districts reflect local socio-economic conditions. The differences in conditions appeared to affect female students more strongly than males. In the suburban farming district, only 14.8% of female students attended cramming classes. In the urban peripheral district, the proportion rose to 22.2% and in the urban central district, the figure was 71.9%.

If we count learning at a cramming class as part of a student's total learning time, female students at School P had the most favorable learning environment. Female students in the suburban farming district could not find cramming classes in the vicinity, and attendance costs both time and money.

At the Chinese school, there was no gender difference in this respect. According to information collected by in-depth interviews, Chinese parents encouraged their children to learn foreign languages. The cramming classes the students attended were mostly language classes.

### C. *Students' Goals for Post-Secondary Education*

Except for School P students, the most popular goal among high school students was to attend university.<sup>9)</sup> The proportion of students wanting to attend university was 55.4% at School C, 58.3% at School S, and 49.6% at School T (the Chinese school). At School P, 58.0% of students chose "graduate programs" as their first choice. If "university" and "graduate programs" are combined, School P students had the highest total (93.0%), with School S (75.0%), School T (71.2%), and School C (62.6%) following in descending order.

For choices ranked second and lower, differences among both schools and genders were observed. Similar proportions of male students at Schools C (28.6%) and S (33.4%) wanted to attend vocational schools and/or secondary technical schools. At School P, students chose "university" as their second preference and at School T, "graduate programs" was the most popular second choice.

It should be noted that at School T, 13.2% of male students wanted to finish their formal education at the high school level. In the three Khmer schools, the proportion was between 0 and 2.8%: an almost negligible percentage. Even at School T, only 5.6% of female students wished to finish their education at the high school level. According to the survey results, the proportion of female students hoping to attend post-secondary institutions was generally greater than that of males.

There were statistically significant correlations at some of the Khmer schools between students' future goals and their levels of academic achievement,<sup>10)</sup> but there was none at the Chinese school. Among male students at School C, the correlation coefficient was .334 ( $p=5\%$ ). Among female students at School P, the coefficient was .265 ( $p=5\%$ ). In the other

9) In this study, the term university will be used to refer to the undergraduate level only.

10) I established three categories for the levels of students' academic achievements: high group, intermediate group, and low group. The high group included the top 25% of the student body and the low group consisted of students who had failed one or more subjects. The intermediate group consisted of students with results between the two.

groups, non-academic factors must play a more important role than the academic achievement of individual students.

In order to delve into this question, the relationship between students' academic achievement and their preferred future occupation needs to be considered. To summarize the findings, there is a startling contrast between the cases of School C female students and School P male students. Among School C females, 30.0% of high achievers, 12.5% of middle achievers and 0% of low achievers expressed a desire to enter the workforce immediately after graduating from high school. Among School P males, all students expressed a hope of going to university, regardless of the level of academic achievement.

High-achieving female students at School C gave various reasons for their desire to begin paid employment immediately. They were: "to earn income for my family," "my family's budget cannot pay for my post-secondary education," and "my family wants me to work immediately after graduation." In the suburban farming district, the survey indicated that family obligations and limited economic resources strongly affected the career development choices of female students. Among male students at School P, academic achievement was less significant than future economic incentives. The socio-economic factors of the different districts affected males and females in a different manner.

Students at School C were facing general difficulties in proceeding to higher educational institutions because of their parents' limited economic resources. In the same student group, males were trying to use their high levels of academic achievement to leverage their career development, but females were under the pressure of non-academic factors. If the difficulty were purely economic, the female students would be able to receive scholarships and/or earn some income through part-time work. When the ethos of a family exerts a strong pressure, female students whose levels of academic achievement are high as those of their male counterparts, are subject to forces from outside (i.e. familial or social) groups. When the economic resources of a household are limited, investment in education varies according to the child's gender. This proposition is supported by information collected in the preliminary survey.

Generally, in contemporary Cambodia, two variables affect investment in education for female children: the parents' economic resources and the students' level of academic achievement. When the values of these two variables are high, families will tend to invest in higher education for females. In the case of female students at School P where values for these variables were high, there was a greater chance that female students would proceed to a post-secondary institution.

#### *D. Desired Occupations of High School Students*

Students' desired occupations will be analyzed according to the classification of occupations I have developed. In the questionnaire, students were freely able to write their desired future occupation in an open-ended question. The responses were sorted into appropriate categories.

In the three Khmer schools, "professional" was the most popular occupational category chosen by students of both sexes. At School C, 34.9% of students wanted to be professionals

while at School S the figure was 37.5%, and at School P, 51.0%. Lower-ranking but still popular choices of occupation varied according to school. At School C, male students wanted to pursue “technical work” while females chose “semi-professional.” At School S, male students chose “technical work” and “office work” while female students were interested in office work. At School P, the secondary choice for male students was “civil service” and the choice for females was “office work.” Office work has become an important alternative in urban areas where there has been development and differentiation of industries.

It is interesting to note that at School P, 13.0% of students had not decided their possible future occupations. At School C, 7.2% of students belonged to this category, while at School S, the total was only 4.2%. This indicates that, for the most part, students at School P did not intend to enter the workforce immediately after graduating from high school. Their highest priority was to obtain a diploma from a post-secondary institution. Only after that would they choose an occupation appropriate to their field of study. Apparently, students at School P acknowledge the value-added aspect of higher-level education.

At School T, 41.6% of students wanted to engage in business regardless of gender, with office work (28.8%) ranking second. Males tended to be more interested in professional work and females in office work. Another finding was that at this school, the “undecided” group comprised 12.8% of students. At School T, the gender difference in notions held by students was negligible.

At the three Khmer schools, there was a statistically significant co-relation ( $\chi^2=152.3$ ,  $df=42$ ,  $p=.000$ ) between the students’ choices for their future desired occupation and the level of schooling which they wished to complete.<sup>11)</sup> This co-relation did not exist at School T. Khmer school students tended to regard post-secondary education as a means of gaining a higher-level entry point into the labour market, but Chinese school students were less concerned about the economic merits of higher education.

There is little difference between Khmer and Chinese school students regarding desired educational levels, but there is a significant difference in the desired occupations of these two groups. Khmer students aspire to become professionals while the Chinese school students are to become businessmen or businesswomen. The aspirations of these high school students echo the actual distributions of these occupations in society at large.

Public school students plan to attain their desired occupation through optimal use of the Cambodian educational system. Chinese school students, on the other hand, regard business (the traditional occupation of this ethnic group) as the best means by which to establish themselves. This difference in orientation is derived from their view of the social foundation on which they should base their lives. Khmer school students regard Cambodian society as the foundation, while Chinese school students put their faith in the Chinese socio-economic network.

About 90% of the students of School T attend public schools, which in theory places them in a position equal to Khmer school students for acceptance into universities. In addition,

11) In other words, students chose preferred levels of schooling appropriate to the occupation they had in mind.

Chinese school students have access to the Chinese socio-economic network through Chinese education and the acquisition of practical skills learned at Chinese school. In Cambodia, citizens generally have equal rights and opportunities. With this in mind, I would conclude that Chinese school students have a rather limited level of commitment to Cambodian society.

In sum, many Chinese school students enjoy the privilege of having access to their own ethnic socio-economic network in addition to the universal rights and opportunities available to all Cambodians. They appreciate the merits of participating in a network employing the Chinese language and practical skills.

## **V Views Held by Students' Parents**

### *A. Profile of Parents*

#### *1. Parents' Academic Careers*

According to census statistics for Phnom Penh, the breakdown for levels of schooling for males was as follows: university graduates totaled 6.9% and graduates of vocational and technical schools totaled 2.5%, followed by senior high school at 26.9%, junior high school at 28.8% and primary school at 26.9%. The average level of schooling for females was lower than that of males: university graduates totaled 1.5%, followed by those of vocational and technical schools at 1.1%, senior high school at 10.3%, junior high school at 25.3%, primary school at 36.6%, and "no schooling" at 24.6%.

The fathers of School S students had academic careers which most closely paralleled the city average. Fathers of School C students also presented similar patterns. The only noticeable difference was that more fathers at this school had a senior secondary education and all indicated that they had at least some level of schooling. In the suburban farming district, 12.6% of the total adult male population had finished senior high school while the percentage of senior high school graduates among the fathers of school C students was 38.5%. Fathers of School P were different from those of the other two Khmer schools. The percentage of those who had completed a university education was much higher, at 42.5%. The proportion of those who had graduated only from junior high school (5.5%) and primary school (6.8%) were much lower than the city average.

School T follows a different school system and it cannot be compared directly to the Khmer schools. Only 2.2% of students' fathers had completed a university education. Those who were graduates of senior high school, junior high school, and primary school, showed patterns similar to the city average. Apparently the socio-economic well being of the Chinese families surveyed depended on variables other than education.

The academic careers of the high school students' mothers varied according to school. The mothers of School S had patterns of schooling which closely matched the city average. Mothers of School C had higher than average levels of schooling, that is, 21.5% of them had finished senior high school (a total twice as high as the city average) and those who indicated "no school education" totaled 4.6% (one fifth of the city average). Mothers of School P

students had received the highest levels of schooling. Those who had completed a university education totaled 16.4%, and those who had completed senior high school totaled 31.5%. The modes for mothers' level of schooling in each of the three schools were: School C—junior high school; School S—primary school; and School P—senior high school. Mothers in the suburban farming district had higher levels of education than the district average. In the economically deprived area (i.e. outside of the central urban area), the parents' academic careers tended to affect the levels of their children's schooling. When one or both parents had a high level of schooling, there was a greater tendency for them to encourage their children academically. The parents' educational background can be considered as one of the family's cultural resources.

Schooling patterns for the mothers of Chinese school students were different from those of Khmer school mothers. None of them had completed a university education, while 42.2% had finished only primary school. Those mothers who indicated "no school education" totaled 6.7%: one fifth of the city average.

Generally speaking, however, the mothers of students at the high schools surveyed in this study had higher levels of schooling than the city average. On the other hand, the academic careers of students' fathers closely paralleled the city average. From the above, it seems that high school students are generally from households in which the mothers have received higher than average levels of schooling. The mothers' views on the value of school education positively affect their children's schooling.

## 2. *Parents' Occupations*

My classification of occupations is different from that of the national census, so the results of this survey do not correspond to the census data. I have purposely taken a different approach in order to be able to discern differences among school districts. In the census data, the Phnom Penh region is divided into urban and suburban areas. In the urban area, the two most common categories of employment are the civil service and office work, while among females, business was ranked first, followed by manufacturing.

The suburban area is divided into three districts, but in this paper I will discuss only one district: the district in which School C is located. According to census statistics for this district, almost half of male residents were engaged in farming (43.1%). The second largest group consisted of civil service (17.3%). More than half of female residents were engaged in farming (55.2%), followed by manufacturing (26.8%) and business (11.1%).

Fathers of School C students were mostly engaged in farming (27.7%) and the civil service (26.2%) while the top categories for mothers were farming (30.8%) and business (23.1%). In this district the census showed that within the general population, only 1.2% of female residents were professionals while 9.2% of students' mothers were in this category.

Among fathers of School S students, the three major occupational categories were business, farming, and the civil service. This particular peripheral urban district is large and sparsely populated, and there are differences in occupational composition among the three



suburban districts. This explains why some fathers of School S students were farmers. The students' mothers were engaged in occupations similar to those of fathers.

Among fathers of School P students, the three most common occupational categories were the civil service, the professional sector, and business. The proportion of professionals was much higher than the city average. Many students' mothers were working in the fields of business (21.9%) and the civil service (19.2%). A high proportion of students' mothers chose the option "no occupation" (35.6%). Due to their economic prosperity, these women do not have to work outside of the home and are full-time homemakers.

In School T, the occupational patterns of students' fathers and mothers were very similar. As mentioned earlier, the most common occupational field among students' parents was "business": 71.1% of fathers and 64.4% of mothers were engaged in this category. The "no occupation" category among students' mothers was 24.4%, reflecting their prosperous economic situation.

Generally, a higher proportion of students' parents were engaged as civil servants and professionals compared to the city average. The high proportion of professionals indicates the socio-economic status of students' households within their school district. This was definitely the case for School P. Differences in the parents' occupational patterns were reflected to some extent among all the Khmer schools.

#### B. *Expectations Regarding Children's Academic Careers*

Expectations concerning the academic careers of boys and girls were examined separately. In some households, the parents did not have both boy(s) and girl(s). In the following section, the population was defined as the total responses received, minus the above cases where there were children of only one gender.

The most popular choice for "expected school career for boys" among the parents of Schools C, S and T was "university," while in School P it was "graduate programs." In School C 62.9% of parents wanted to send their boys to university; in School S the proportion was 50.9%; and in School T, 46.9%. In School P, a smaller number of parents wanted to send their children to university (24.2%) while more parents chose "graduate programs" (69.4%). In other schools, however, the proportion of parents who expected their children to enter graduate programs was much smaller: in School C, the total was 10.0%; in School S, 25.5%; and in School T, 22.2%. In brief, the urban population considered graduate programs to be an accessible new option for boys.

Expectations regarding academic careers for girls roughly corresponded to that of boys. Parents wanted to send their daughters to university and graduate programs but the proportion was several per cent less than for boys. Except for parents of School P students (4.4%), the proportion of parents at the other three schools who wanted their daughters to end their academic careers at the high school level was about 10% higher than the percentage given for boys.

Among the three Khmer schools, there were differences between the parents' own

academic careers and expectations regarding academic careers for their sons and/or daughters. There was no correlation between the parents' academic careers and their expectations for their sons, but there was a correlation with their expectations for their daughters. The correlation coefficient between fathers' academic careers and expected academic careers for daughters was ( $r=.166$ ,  $p=.05$ ) and that of mothers' academic careers and expectations for daughters was ( $r=.182$ ,  $p=.05$ ).

Parents' expectations for their daughters were high. The higher the parents' level of schooling, the higher the expectations for their daughters. This relationship was particularly true for mothers. Highly educated mothers tended to choose spouses with high levels of schooling ( $r=.406$ ,  $p=.01$ ). These highly educated mothers wanted their daughters to be highly educated as well.

There was no correlation between expected academic careers for sons and parents' academic careers. This was because parents with any level of education expected their sons to complete at least an undergraduate degree, or an even higher level of training.

There are two reasons for this gender difference. First, the parents' views reflect social norms of differential treatment for males and females in Cambodian society, and second, their views reflect attitudes about school education in general.

### C. *Expectations Regarding Children's Occupations*

As noted earlier, respondents' expectations regarding occupations for their children were distinguished by gender. The most frequently chosen option regarding expectation for boys was "it depends" (i.e. upon the child's own will). The percentage of parents who selected this option was 53.2% for School C, 49.1% for School S, 69.4% for School P, and 75.3% for School T. Khmer school parents preferred that their children become professionals followed by civil servants. Overwhelmingly, Chinese school parents preferred their children to engage in business while a much smaller number selected other occupations.

I examined the relationship between responses regarding expected occupations for children and occupations of students' fathers. Those fathers who wanted their sons to pursue the same career as themselves chose "professional" and "office work" most frequently. The majority of fathers who were civil servants wanted their sons to become professionals and about half that number wanted their sons to become office workers. In sum, the category "professional" was considered highly desirable by both parents and students.

In the case of daughters, parents' wishes showed a similar pattern, i.e., "it depends" was the top choice. In the case of School C parents, 55.0% chose this response; in School S, 53.6%; in School P, 66.2%; and in School T, 82.1%. The most frequently chosen occupational category in the Khmer schools was "professional." In School C, the second most frequently chosen occupation was "civil service," while in Schools S and P the most popular second choice was "office work." Chinese school parents wanted their daughters to engage in business first, followed by office work. In short, office work was considered an appropriate occupation for city girls.

As pointed out earlier, the response most frequently chosen by parents for the expected occupation of their children was “it depends.” There are two reasons for the popularity of this response. First, compared to their own generation, their children’s generation has access to a greater variety of occupations. Second, parents tend to assume that the pursuit of higher education will have socio-economic merit and may well open doors to a larger number of career options. For this reason, most parents want their children to attend post-secondary institutions.

In my preliminary survey, many parents expressed their wishes for their children by explaining that they did not know what kind of occupations were available in the workplace, and therefore, they were unable to give their children adequate advice concerning their futures. They reasoned that if their children received a “good education” now, they would be able to develop better judgment and make an informed career choice. From the parents’ viewpoint, it was most important to give their children a “good education.” This seemed to be the most typical opinion of parents. Their expectations for their children were most strongly projected in the area of education.

## VI Views Held by High School Teachers

### A. *Profile of Teachers*

#### 1. *Varieties of Teaching Certificates*

Cambodian school regulations generally do not permit an individual to teach at a senior high school without a certificate for teaching senior high school subjects. There is one exception to this regulation. For several years, beginning in 1979, many schools were unable to find qualified teachers. These schools employed less qualified teachers during this period of reconstruction caused by the Pol Pot regime, thus, some junior high school teachers were engaged to teach senior high school subjects. Many of these teachers still remain at the senior high school level.

The proportion of qualified teachers varied by school. In School C, qualified teachers totaled 62.5%; in School S, 95.0%; and in School P, 87.9%. The qualified teachers were mostly in their 30s. In suburban areas, the schools had difficulty in attracting young, qualified teachers. In urban areas, however, the relative abundance of socio-economic resources enabled schools to employ both young and old qualified teachers.

Chinese school teachers differed from Khmer school teachers in many ways. For example, the percentage of Chinese school teachers trained in Cambodia totaled 44.0%, those who were sent from China totaled 10.0%, and those who had applied for teaching positions from China and were subsequently employed totaled 40.0% (“no answer” 4%, “other” 2%).

In terms of the types of teaching certificates represented, the body of teachers at School T can be broken down into several groups. Only 40.0% of the teachers had a teaching certificate for either junior high school or senior high school. The majority (60.0%) of the teachers had not received any teacher training courses, but about half of them had bachelor’s degrees. Besides teaching the Chinese language, they also taught subjects corresponding to what they had

studied at university.

I asked the Chinese school teachers to evaluate their own competency in speaking, reading, and writing the Khmer language. Those who did not have any significant knowledge of the Khmer language totaled 52.0%. Those who could speak Khmer totaled 48.0%, and of this group, 36.0% could also read Khmer. Of the latter group, 32.0% could write Khmer as well. Most of the students had knowledge of both Chinese and Khmer but the language of instruction at School T was Chinese. It is abundantly clear that School T is culturally and ethnically a Chinese school.

## 2. *School Subjects and Teaching Hours*

At School C, 60.0% of teachers taught only one subject, while the figure was 77.5% at School S, and 97.8% at School P. The wealthier the school district, the more easily schools could assign teachers to teach only one subject. At School T, 42.0% of the teachers taught three subjects, and 32.0% taught two subjects. Only 16.0% of teachers taught one subject.

According to Cambodian educational regulations, teachers are expected to teach 16 hours per week at the senior high school level and 18 hours at the junior high school level.<sup>12)</sup> The actual situation is far different from the prescribed timetable. At School C, 57.5% of teachers were teaching 16–20 hours per week; at School S, 60.0% of teachers were teaching 6–10 hours; and at School P, 45.6% of teachers were teaching 11–15 hours. School regulations in contemporary Cambodia are not in congruence with local realities. At School T, 54.0% of teachers were teaching 16–20 hours per week and 32.0% were teaching for 21 hours. As most of the Chinese school teachers were expected to teach more than one subject, their teaching hours tended to be longer.

## B. *School Environment*

In this survey, I presented six issues and asked the respondents to rank the four options provided for each question as “most important,” “important,” “unimportant,” and “most unimportant.” The issues were: “improving school facilities,” “improving teaching materials and equipment for classes,” “assigning the most appropriate (or qualified) teachers for each subject,” “increasing teaching hours,” “revising the school curriculum,” and “professional development of teachers.”

Teachers at Schools C and S placed a high priority on improving school facilities and teaching materials, a medium priority on revising the curriculum and adequate allocation of teachers, and lowest priority on increasing the number of teaching hours and professional development.

Teachers at School P gave priority to the professional development of teachers. At School P, both the number of subjects taught and the number of teaching hours were the lowest among the Khmer schools. Generally, School P teachers enjoyed a better school environment,

12) Teachers with home room responsibilities teach three hours less than the normal regulated teaching hours.

and their answers focused on improving their own teaching skills.

Two conditions may have caused attitudinal differences among Khmer school teachers. First, in the suburban farming area and the peripheral urban area, the school facilities are inferior to those of central urban schools. Teachers in these schools tend to emphasize the improvement of physical facilities for this reason. Second, in the suburban farming area, the student-teacher ratio is fairly stable and non-competitive. In School C, therefore, both teachers and students tend to accept the status quo.

These results indicate that the teachers' evaluation of the school environment focused mainly on physical factors as opposed to pedagogical factors. This tendency was reflected the socio-economic conditions of each school district.

At School T (the Chinese school) 18.0% of teachers tended to regard the improvement of teaching materials as being unimportant. Among the Khmer schools, only 1.4% of School P teachers responded in a similar manner. School T had superior school facilities and equipment compared to the Khmer schools.

### C. *Problems Regarding Classroom Instruction*

I presented six questions regarding classroom instruction: "number of students per class"; "accessibility of textbooks"; "contents of textbooks"; "differences among individual students' learning abilities"; "the regulation requiring students to take all courses"; and "students' attitudes and behavior in class." The following discussion is a summary of how teachers in each school felt about these issues.

In the three Khmer schools, teachers were most concerned about the number of students per class and the students' ability to obtain textbooks; they showed a medium level of concern about the regulation requiring students to take all courses, and the students' behavior in class; and finally, they assessed the contents of the textbooks and the students' learning abilities as being of low priority.

Many teachers (64.3%) at School P indicated that the regulation requiring students to take all courses and the students' behavior in class were very serious problems. School P is one of the four largest schools in the City of Phnom Penh and the backgrounds of the students are as a result highly diversified. According to the information collected through the in-depth interviews, teachers felt that the students' behavior in class was relatively poor. They regarded this issue as being one of the major problems in teaching contemporary urban youth.

As the students' backgrounds are diverse, it is impossible to assume that they all have the same needs. The teachers believed that the school should provide courses corresponding to students' needs: a view which necessarily runs counter to the regulation requiring all students to take the same courses. As increasing numbers of young people enroll in high schools, this problem will become ever more acute.

At the Chinese school, the problems faced by teachers were different from those in the Khmer schools. They had concerns regarding the number of students per class and students' learning abilities. In the other four areas, they did not see any serious problems. In School T,

the school system per se seemed to be functioning smoothly.

#### D. *Factors Affecting Students' Career Choices*

How do teachers assess the factors which affect their students' career choices? My questions addressed five issues in this regard: "the reputation of the high school," "students' own academic achievement," "level of student motivation and effort," "parental support and involvement," and "economic level of students' households."

Among Khmer school teachers, the reputation of the high school was ranked as being of the lowest priority. In Cambodia, there is no entrance examination for high schools and entrance to university is not based on high school grades. Students who want to enter national universities must take the National High School Graduation Test, the results of which are ranked according to five levels. Those who achieve the highest level can enter a national university and take public courses without paying tuition fees. Those with lower levels of achievement must pay tuition fees to take private courses at a national university or attend private universities which charge higher tuition fees.

This being the case, there is no objective measure to assess the reputation of each high school. Teachers tend to believe that the reputation of the school, if it exists, will not affect the students' decisions.

There seemed to be a general consensus amongst the Khmer school teachers surveyed that two factors—parental involvement and the economic level of the student's household—were the most important factors affecting career choices. They also agreed that students' level of academic achievement and their level of motivation and effort were the least relevant factors influencing students' decision making.

Despite the general consensus, there were slight disparities on this subject among the three Khmer schools. At Schools C and S, the teachers emphasized the significance of the parents' economic resources over the level of parental involvement, while at School P, the order was reversed. Another slight difference was that teachers at Schools S and P considered the level of student motivation and effort to be more important than their level of academic achievement, while at School C, the order was reversed.

At School P, the age composition of students for each grade showed a narrow distribution, allowing learning to proceed with greater ease. The parents of some students had moved to this school district in order to send their children to School P. These parents were anxious to give their children a "good education" and were actively involved in making decisions about their children's education. In other words, in addition to the benefit of greater economic resources, these parents were proactive in promoting their children's career development.

At School C, teachers readily acknowledged that the economic factor strongly affected students' decision making. The same teachers also appreciated that students' academic achievement contributed positively to their career development.

At School T, teachers ranked the students' levels of motivation and effort as being of the highest priority and gave academic achievement the lowest ranking. These teachers perceived

that individual factors were more important than environmental factors such as economic resources and group factors such as parental involvement. In other words, students at School T had a higher degree of autonomy in making their own decisions regarding career development.

## VII Summary and Conclusion

This study has examined students' orientation patterns and the factors affecting their orientation for the acquisition of social positions. In order to analyze inter-generational mobility, I focused on the occupations of the students' fathers as well as the students' own desired future occupations. I did not include mothers in this context, because about one third of them were not participants in the labour market and it was therefore difficult to infer orientation patterns for this group.

At School C, the greatest difference appeared in the farming sector. Farming fathers constituted 27.7% of the samples, but none of their children wished to pursue the same occupation. Instead, 35.7% of their children wanted to become professionals and 25.0% wanted to be technical workers. Other fathers were civil servants but only 22.2% of their children wished to pursue the same career and 33.3% of their children wished to become professionals. On the other hand, 42.9% of the children of professional fathers also wanted to become professionals themselves. In groups where a high percentage of children pursue the same career path as their fathers, the degree of social mobility is low. From the above results, it is likely that the social status of farming will deteriorate but the social status of professionals will be well maintained.

Unlike School C, at School S there were no large discrepancies between the fathers' occupations and the students' desired occupations. The two job categories for fathers with the lowest percentages were "professional" and "office work," but children of these fathers ranked these two occupations as being the most desirable. Fathers who were civil servants had children who aspired to be professionals or office workers. When fathers were in the business sector, their children aspired to become professionals, semi-professionals, and office workers. Students at School S were generally oriented toward the types of occupations prevalent in a modern industrialized society.

At School P, there were two clear trends: the decline of civil servants and the rise of professionals. Those fathers who were professionals, civil servants, and/or office workers, had children who almost unanimously wished to become professionals. A strong inter-generational similarity was observed in professional families: 72.2% of children wanted to pursue careers in the same job category as their fathers. Inter-generational mobility in professional families proved to be low, hence the social stratum will be well maintained. The fathers' high levels of education and their occupations were contributing factors in maintaining this social stratum.

At School T, 71.1% of fathers were employed in the business sector, but a smaller proportion of their children (41.6%) wanted to do likewise, and 28.8% of their children wished to pursue office work. These results suggest a strong likelihood that the business sector among the



Chinese population will be well maintained. According to information collected during the preliminary survey, those students who wanted to do office work tended to consider this type of work as being less risky than a business enterprise. In business there is a risk of losing personal assets and property, although office workers face the threat of unemployment. As the degree of industrialization increases and the jobs available in various sectors diversify and increase, more students will opt for careers in the wage-employment sector. At present, Chinese people are predominantly engaged in business, but beginning with their children's generation, new employment patterns will most likely emerge.

In summary, there are differences in occupational structure between the fathers' and the children's generations. Compared with their fathers, students are faced with a more diversified labour market. Professionals and office workers who once comprised a limited share of the labour market will soon experience a remarkable increase in their numbers. Farming, on the other hand, will almost certainly decline.

Differences between genders and differences among school districts were also a major focus of this study. The appearance of gender differences tends to depend upon economic conditions. A wealthier household offers a more rewarding learning environment for female students, which in turn motivates them to aspire to higher levels of achievement, and vice versa. In this context, the cases of female students at School P and School C come to mind. Male students are also affected by the economic condition of their household, but it is not a decisive factor. Male students at School C considered their academic achievement to be a means of acquiring better employment.

There were differences between the suburban school district and the urban school district. Residents in the suburban school district were handicapped in terms of occupational stratification, infrastructure, and distance to the central urban area. Accordingly, they could invest only a limited amount in their children's education. They generally suffered from poorer social resources. The factor which motivated them was their children's academic careers. Those parents who sent their children to high school had relatively high levels of schooling compared to the average for the district. This shows that when parents have a high level of schooling, they make a greater effort to raise the level of their children's schooling as well.

The location of the student's household also influences the children's schooling. Families of School S students who were living in the peripheral urban district enjoyed certain advantages even if they were as poor as those of School C. The conditions of urban areas helped to counter disadvantages imposed by the lack of economic resources. For example, the proportion of certified teachers at School S was almost comparable to that of School P. Students were exposed to a diversified labour market in their daily lives and had a better awareness of the career options open to them. The parents of School S students had a lower level of schooling than those of School C, but their children were more strongly motivated to attend post-secondary institutions than their School C counterparts.

In conclusion, the most significant factor affecting the orientation of high school students is the economic level of their household, as measured by the principal breadwinner's occupation.

When economic resources are limited, social resources (the district or location of the family's residence, etc.) will compensate for the disadvantage to some degree. When both of the above resources are limited, the cultural resources of the family (e.g. one or both parents having a high level of schooling) will help to increase the motivation levels of their children.

This survey of inter-generational mobility shows that Cambodian society is presently in a phase of socio-economic change. Since the social structure is still unstable, the level of social mobility is high. If society becomes more stable as a result of the education of its children, the social stratification of Cambodian society will become more rigidly institutionalized.

Changes inside and outside of the Chinese community are affecting the socio-economic status of this ethnic group. Within their community, young people are oriented toward obtaining professional work, and as a means of achieving this goal, they wish to pursue a higher education. Outside of their community, in Cambodian society at large, the range of available occupations has diversified and social mobility has increased.

At present, there are no conspicuous conflicts or severe competition between the Khmer and Chinese for desired occupations. This is largely due to the fact that many Khmer school students aspire towards professional work while Chinese school students are still mainly interested in business.

But if educational opportunities continue to become more abundant and the rate of entry into university increases, a new middle class based on the possession of advanced knowledge and skills will be formed. If Cambodian society reaches this stage, the current balance of occupational differentiation among ethnic groups will be jeopardized. It will be the task of researchers to observe and understand how the Khmer and Chinese will compete in the domestic labour market of this future society.

Another research task will be the study of the relationship between the education system and changes in society. School education was completely destroyed under the Pol Pot Regime. The education system has been reconstructed since the collapse of the regime, but it shares many similarities with school systems in other developing countries. Through ethnographic studies of the unique process occurring in Cambodia, researchers should be able to gain significant theoretical insights into the functioning of school systems in their social context.

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## An Ethnographic Study on the Reconstruction of Buddhist Practice in Two Cambodian Temples: With the Special Reference to Buddhist *Samay* and *Boran*

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### Abstract

This paper aims to contribute an understanding of the historical experience and current situation of Cambodian rural society by throwing light on changes and reconstruction of Buddhist practice in two temples in the central region of Cambodia. It is well known that the country suffered extraordinary societal upheaval during the rule of Democratic Kampuchea (1975–79). However, intensive field research of these changes has been scarce until now. Theravada Buddhism, which was declared the state religion since Cambodia's independence from French colonial rule, was one cultural aspect most harshly suppressed by the regime. All Buddhist monks were forced to return to secular life in 1976 and Buddhist activities came to complete cessation during this era. However, since the collapse of the Democratic Kampuchea regime in 1979, Buddhist practice started again spontaneously. This paper, based on long-term rural fieldwork, describes the specific situation of the demise and rebirth of Buddhist practice in the local community.

At the same time, this paper also focuses its attention on the history and actual conditions of division within village Buddhism. In fact, two differing styles of Buddhist practice, which are indicated by local people through the words *samay* (new/modern) and *boran* (old/ancient), have been observed in the research area. The so-called *samay* practice, which has its origin in the reformist monks' movement that began in the center of national Sangha in the 1910s, was introduced to one of two temples studied in the 1940s. On the other hand, the other temple studied upheld traditional practices called *boran* until the 1960s, but accepted a part of *samay* practice in its reconstruction process in the 1990s for the first time. In other words, the confrontation between Buddhist *samay* and *boran* emerges in a more complex manner at present than in pre-war times. This paper analyses local people's varied attitudes toward the division of Buddhist practice, with careful consideration of the relationship between temples and their communities in light of the recent socio-economic changes of the local people's lives.

**Keywords:** Reformist practice, discontinuity, reconstruction, village Buddhism, modern, tradition

### I Introduction

Over two decades has passed since the demise of the Democratic Kampuchea. It is well known that Cambodia suffered extraordinary societal upheaval under the rule of the regime. Although this era was short, the changes were extreme. Since its collapse in 1979, many journalistic and

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academic studies have reported on the specific conditions in Cambodia at the time. However, those analyses have scarcely extended beyond generalizations to review the situation before and after the disaster. In this paper, I try to make up for the gaps in understanding regarding the experience of Cambodian society by throwing light on the historical changes and the reconstruction of Buddhist practice in two neighboring Buddhist temples.<sup>1)</sup> To provide the context for my research, I will first sketch out a brief history of Cambodian Buddhism, which has experienced demise and rebirth in recent years.

Some form of Theravada Buddhism spread among the people of Cambodia in the thirteenth century [Chandler 1996: 69]. Although the historical process of the adoption of Buddhism by Cambodian culture remains a topic to be researched, it is believed that Buddhist *vatt* (temple-monastery) were established by the end of the fifteenth century in most villages throughout Cambodia<sup>2)</sup> [Keyes 1994: 44]. It was widely observed in the nineteenth century that Cambodian people offered food to monks begging for alms, and numerous Khmer males customarily spent time in temples as monks [e.g. Leclère 1899]. And it is important to note that a movement for the development of a Cambodian Sangha began at the center of the country when King Ang Duong (1798–1859) invited a Khmer monk named Pan (1824–94) from Vatt Bovornnivet, the central temple of Thammayut Nikay in Bangkok<sup>3)</sup> [Edwards 1999: 263]. Then, the practice of Thammayut Nikay, the recent Buddhist practice promoting strict adherence to Buddhist precepts that was initiated by King Mongkut (1804–68) in Siam, was introduced to Cambodia and two differing sects in Cambodian Buddhism originated, the Thammayut Nikay, which enjoyed royal patronage, and the Maha Nikay, which traditionally attracted broad popular support [Leclère 1899: 122; Edwards 1999: 275]. While the Buddhist practice in each part of the country in those days is thought of as carrying on arbitrarily, several religious and literary institutions were established by the beginning of the twentieth century under the rule of French Protectorate, and institutional Cambodian Buddhism started to prosper.<sup>4)</sup> After Cambodia became independent in 1953, Theravada Buddhism was declared as the state religion and the number of monks in the country increased to 65,062, while Buddhist temples numbered 3,369 in 1969.

The situation of Cambodian Buddhists began to decline in 1970. In April of that year,

1) The fieldwork in the research area was conducted in March 2000, June 2000, September 2000, and from December 2000 to April 2002. It was financed by research grants from the Matsushita International Foundation, Japan.

2) Transcriptions in this article are based upon the simplified version of Franco-Khmer transcription system developed by Franklin E. Huffman. For details refer to Heder and Ledgerwood [1996: xvii]. As for transcriptions of place name, I follow those seen in the official census [Cambodia, NISMP 1999].

3) The Khmer court at the time was subject to Siam, and Ang Duong's sons, the future King Norodom (1834–1904) and Sisowath (1840–1927), were both ordained at Vatt Bovornnivet [Edwards 1999: 263].

4) It is said that French administrators aimed to eliminate Siam's influence from Cambodia and officially sponsored the establishment of institutions such as the École Supérieure de Pāli (1922), the Royal Library (1925), and the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh (1930) [e.g. Edwards 1999: 312].

Cambodia was plunged into five years of internal warfare,<sup>5)</sup> and the following state Democratic Kampuchea (hereafter, DK) marked the beginning of societal upheaval for the Cambodian population. Religion was one of the aspects of culture most harshly suppressed by the regime.<sup>6)</sup> Although some monks remained during the first year of rule, all were forced to renounce their yellow robes by the beginning of 1976. Temples were no longer sacred and parts of them were destroyed for DK building projects. Buddha images were daubed over with coal, and daily acts of faith were banned. After the ouster of the DK's rule from most of Cambodian territory in January 1979, a socialist government was formed under the initiative of Vietnam. Various Buddhist rituals had resumed spontaneously, but what was important at this time was the lack of any Buddhist monks in Cambodia. As a rule, ordination in Theravada Buddhism requires the presence of a minimum of five monks, and one of those monks, called *upachchhe*a in Khmer, assumes the role of precept-giver. To become a monk, one must receive 227 precepts from the *upachchhe*a in ritual. And on September 19th 1979 the government held an official ordination ceremony at Vatt Unnalaom by inviting Theravada monks from the part of Vietnam known as Kampuchea Kraom, the homeland of a Khmer population in the downstream region of the Mekong delta<sup>7)</sup> [Keyes 1994; Hayashi 1995a; 1995b; 2002]. Buddhist monks officially reappeared in Cambodia at this time. At the same time, however, the socialist government set the ordination age restriction and did not allow men under 50 years old to become monks. This policy, which continued for the next 10 years, illustrates the government's desire to control the revival of Buddhism.<sup>8)</sup> It was only from the beginning of the 1990s that Buddhist practice in Cambodia was set into full revitalization. As is seen in Table 1, the number of monks dramatically increased after the abolishment of the age restriction in 1989. Restoration of public order after the national election in 1993 contributed in a major way toward the vitalization of various religious activities in rural life.<sup>9)</sup> In 2001, the number of temples increased to 3,798, apparently more than pre-war times.<sup>10)</sup>

However, apart from the physical recovery of Buddhist temples and monks, Buddhist practice in present-day Cambodian rural society has never been studied well until now. Furthermore, it was difficult to get approval for intensive field research in rural villages since

5) The rural way of life was severely threatened by fighting and bombing during the civil war. According to one report, 997 monasteries were destroyed from March 1970 to June 1973 [Yang Sam 1987: 58].

6) Chantou Boua [1991] reported there were a number of Buddhist monks killed in the beginning of the DK era.

7) Hayashi [1995a; 1995b; 2002] uncovered that another official ordination ceremony was held in the suburb of Phnom Penh prior to the ceremony by the *upachchhe*a of Kampuchea Kraom. In the former case, an ex-monk had renounced the world in front of the survived Buddha statue without any participation of *upachchhe*a monk. It is important to notice that the monks in the former case also had a certification of the ordination, which was approved by the authorities.

8) The government wanted to ensure that the young male population did not avoid national military service requirements by ordaining as a monk.

9) The resurgence of Thammayut Nikay came about with the return of Sihanouk to Cambodia in 1991.

10) This means 3.5 villages on an average in Cambodia have a *vatt*. There were estimated 13,406 villages in the country in 1998 [Cambodia, NISMP 1999].

**Table 1** Number of Theravada Temples and Monks in Cambodia, 1969–2001

Year	Number of Temples	Number of Monks
1969	3,369	65,062
1970–75	n.d.	n.d.
1975–79	n.d.	n.d.
1979–81	n.d.	n.d.
1982	1,821	2,311
1983–87	n.d.	n.d.
1988	2,799	6,497
1989	2,892	9,711
1990	2,900	19,173
1991	n.d.	n.d.
1992	2,902	25,529
1993	3,090	27,467
1994	3,290	39,821
1995	3,371	40,218
1996	3,381	40,911
1997	3,512	45,547
1998	3,588	49,097
1999	3,685	50,081
2000	3,731	50,873
2001	3,798	53,869

Source: Interview with Mr. Tan Sokhan, the director of Buddhism department,  
Ministry of Religions and Cults

Notes: The number of monks includes novices.

No data is available for the period of 1970–79, 1983–87, and 1991.

the end of the 1960s until the Khmer Rouge ceased to be a political force in 1998. Most Cambodia scholars still make reference to the American anthropologist May Ebihara's research during the period of 1959–60 as the only one major comprehensive ethnographic study in Cambodia [e.g. Ovesen *et al.* 1996: 2]. Ebihara conducted her fieldwork in a village southwest of Phnom Penh and presented her analyses on social structure [1968: chapter 3], residence patterns [1977], village religion [1966; 1968: chapter 5], status of women [1974] and other themes. But, my reading of Ebihara's works leads me to the conclusion that we must be aware of the rationale behind her descriptions that shaped and limited her understandings.

At first, I think that her analyses of Cambodian village life should be reviewed with reference to the development of anthropological theories concerning lowland rice growing societies in mainland Southeast Asia. Starting with the Cornell-Thai project that studied a community near Bangkok called Bang Chan since 1948 [Sharp *et al.* 1953], many American anthropologists have conducted research in Thailand, Burma, and Laos. Consequently, analytical concepts such as “the loosely structured social system” [Embree 1950], and “the syncretism scheme of Buddhism and animism/folk religion” [e.g. Brohm 1963; Kirsch 1977] were introduced as models for understanding each society in the region. And these concepts actually affected Ebihara's descriptions of a Cambodian village. From another perspective, I



think her descriptions should be carefully reconsidered today in light of the upheaval of society that occurred after the completion of her research: the civil war, the rule of the DK regime and socialist policies in the 1980s. All make us aware of various changes in contemporary Cambodia. Ebihara herself revisited the village in the 1990s and made reports on some aspects of social change and on villagers' narratives of life during the DK era [Ebihara 1990; 1993a; 1993b; 2002], which are crucial but do not supply much empirical data.

In this article, I explore the issue of the historical changes and the reconstruction of Buddhist practice in two rural Cambodian temples. The fundamental concern is in documenting basic facts regarding the changes observed and presenting one analytical basis to study the division in village Buddhism in rural Cambodian society. I use the term "village Buddhism" to show the attention focused on the Buddhist practice as a part of local people's lives. Although a number of studies have been done on Buddhist activities in Cambodia since the mid-1990s [e.g. Bertrand 2004; Guthrie 2004; Marston 2004; Poethig 2004], they are almost never based on long-term fieldwork and lack the full consideration of local community conditions. My study, based on over a year of rural fieldwork, is unique in this sense; therefore, I try to interpret the issues comprehensively, putting them in the specific social context of the research area. Moreover, I also try to examine the issues from a historical perspective, which is quite contrary to some other recent anthropological studies that conceptualize Cambodian culture as a changeless entity.<sup>11)</sup> In the following sections, this paper will firstly describe the setting of the research area and the visible differences in Buddhist practice between the two temples. And then, I will focus on the fact that the local residents currently indicate these differences in Buddhist practice with the contrastive adjectives *samay* (new/modern) and *boran* (old/ancient). This paper then starts to review the historical background of the differing practices in the local community. After that, it will turn its attention to the contemporary context again and analyze the actual processes of reconstructing Buddhist practice under way since the beginning of the 1990s. In the last part, the discussion of this paper will develop the analysis of people's varied attitudes toward the so-called *samay* and *boran* style of Buddhist practice. Finally, the paper will illustrate the reconstruction of village Buddhism, regarding the Buddhist temple not as the harmonic center of the community, but rather as a place of conflicts and compromises in local people's lives.

## II Buddhist Temples and the Community in San Kor Commune

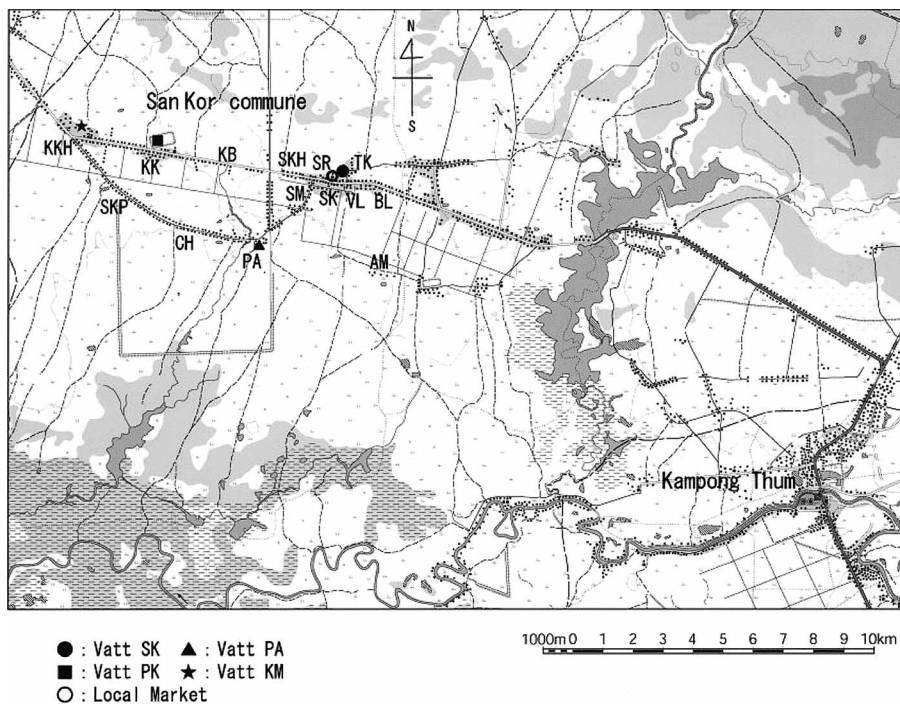
This paper focuses on the Buddhist temples and community in San Kor commune, Kampong Svay district, Kampong Thum province, located east of Tonle Sap Lake. In 2000, all of the 212

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11) For example, Alexander Hinton [1996; 1998a; 1998b] recently studied murderous behaviors that had been seen during the DK period by using theoretical concepts of psychological cognitive anthropology such as "psychological dissonance" and "cultural model" and discussed the behaviors generated from violent ethics in Cambodian culture. My standpoint for studying cultural practice is quite different with him.

temples in the province are Maha Nikay.<sup>12)</sup> There are 23 temples in Kampong Svay district, but five of the nine communes in the district only have a single temple.<sup>13)</sup> The other 18 temples are concentrated in four communes including San Kor, which is about 20 km from the provincial capital along National Route 6A.

San Kor commune consists of 14 villages, with four temples (see Map 1, and Table 2). VL village, where I stayed during the research, is located along the National Highway, and had 149 households according to my own count in March 2001.<sup>14)</sup> On the other hand, PA village, which I also surveyed, lies about 2.5 km south of the Highway, and had 94 households in June 2001. Most households in both villages rely on wet-season rice cultivation,<sup>15)</sup> but VL village has



Map 1 Research Area

- 12) According to the provincial officials of Ministry of Religions and Cults in Kampong Thum, there were some temples of Thammayut Nikay in the pre-war time. Some have been reconstructed as Maha Nikay temples, and others have not yet been reconstructed.
- 13) Among the 21 temples of Kampong Svay district I surveyed in 2000, 18 temples had been reconstructed in the 1980s. The latest case of reconstruction in the district is in 1993 due to greater security in the region.
- 14) I use the concept "household" as the group of family members who share social and economic responsibility, which is often referred to by Khmer word *bontuk* (load, burden, responsibility, duty, function [Headley 1977]). It includes the persons who are studying or working outside their villages as long as they maintain relations such as remittance.
- 15) The paddy fields in the area could be roughly classified into two types; paddy fields near the hamlet and floating rice paddy fields about 3 to 8 km far south in the flooded area of Tonle Sap Lake.

**Table 2** Basic Population Data of Villages in San Kor Commune in 1998

Village (in code)	Population		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female
KKH	1,797	881	916
KK	1,456	685	771
KB	1,636	785	851
SKH	1,897	905	992
SKP	404	193	211
CH	555	277	278
PA	579	292	287
SM	1,345	625	720
SR	1,007	457	550
SK	643	276	367
VL	846	410	436
BL	592	296	296
TK	377	183	194
AM	352	165	187
Total	13,486	6,430	7,056

Source: [Cambodia, NISMP 2000]

Phnom Penh. However, Table 4 shows PA village households did not have many people residing outside of the village. This suggests the uneven development of village household economic activities within the commune.<sup>19)</sup> Likewise, as seen in Table 5, the penetration rate of manufactured products is higher among the households of VL village than PA village. Here, I focus on Vatt SK and Vatt PA, because they are the oldest of the four temples in San Kor commune, and provide a rich environment for examining local social history.<sup>20)</sup>

Both temples were reconstructed in 1981.<sup>21)</sup> Vatt SK is located near the local market. In the Buddhist Lent season of 2001, two monks (*phikkho*) and 22 novices (*samaner*) and some

a small population of schoolteachers, policemen, and traders in the market along the National Highway.<sup>16)</sup> In PA village, other than rice cultivation, village households were engaged primarily in small-scale fishing. Tables 3 and 4 show the population composition of village households of both villages by age group and sex.<sup>17)</sup> These tables illustrate that the majority of village population at present was born after the DK era. And Table 3 demonstrates that VL village households had many people, especially young females, residing outside of the village.<sup>18)</sup> This feature was brought about starting in 1998 when many young village girls began to work at garment factories in the suburbs of

16) According to the commune chief, the number of traders engaging in business in the market is about 150 families; some sell goods in stalls, some operate fresh vegetable and fish stands in the open air.

17) This number of village population is different with that in the official census in 1998 as shown in Table 2, because of the difference in both the time of research and the definition of village households.

18) Table 3 also shows that in the age group of 0 to 9 years old male population is quite more than female. It may seem to be unnatural, but I don't have any answers to explain this.

19) The socio-economic development of villages in research area has accelerated since the mid-1990s. For example, the rice mill machine was first introduced to VL village in 1995, and increased up to 11 in 2001. For more details, see Kobayashi [2004].

20) The local population estimates that Vatt SK and Vatt PA were constructed at the end of nineteenth century at the latest. On the other hand, Vatt PK was originally constructed in 1965 through the assistance of Vatt PA and reconstructed in 1991. Vatt KM was newly constructed in 1991.

21) In this paper, I consider the "reconstruction" of temples to be when a temple can facilitate the continued residence of Buddhist monks. Buddhist activities by laypersons generally restarted from 1979, prior to the revival of Buddhist monks.

**Table 3** Population Composition of VL Village Households

Age Group	A, Population in Village			B, Population out of Village			Percentage of B in A+B
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	
0-9	196	109	87	0	0	0	0
10-19	200	113	87	63	22	41	24.0
20-29	93	37	56	68	37	31	42.2
30-39	104	58	46	11	6	5	9.6
40-49	72	27	45	2	1	1	2.8
50-59	51	18	33	0	0	0	0
60-69	43	21	22	0	0	0	0
70-79	12	5	7	0	0	0	0
80-89	4	0	4	0	0	0	0
Total	775	388	387	144	66	78	15.7

Source: Author's research in March 2001

**Table 4** Population Composition of PA Village Households

Age Group	A, Population in Village			B, Population out of Village			Percentage of B in A+B
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	
0-9	135	69	66	0	0	0	0
10-19	129	65	64	10	8	2	7.2
20-29	67	31	36	14	6	8	15.4
30-39	63	28	35	1	1	0	1.6
40-49	44	20	24	0	0	0	0
50-59	29	10	19	0	0	0	0
60-69	21	8	13	0	0	0	0
70-79	12	8	4	0	0	0	0
80-89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	500	239	261	25	15	10	4.8

Source: Author's research in June 2001

**Table 5** Penetration of Manufactured Products among Households of Two Villages

Item	VL Village (149 households)		PA Village (94 households)	
	Households in Possession	Penetration Rate (%)	Households in Possession	Penetration Rate (%)
Car	2	1.3	0	0
Motorcycle	43	28.9	8	8.5
Bicycle	129	86.6	72	76.6
Radio	93	62.4	34	36.2
Television	23	15.4	7	7.4
Sewing machine	19	12.8	1	1.1
Clock	85	57.0	22	23.4
Gasoline engine	19	12.8	13	13.8

Source: Author's research in March 2001 and June 2001

laypersons were in residence.<sup>22)</sup> The head monk (*chavathikar*) of Vatt SK was the 75-year-old Monk KS who was born in PA village. He was ordained once at Vatt PA when he was 21 years old. After returning to secular life 6 years later, he married and earned a living for his family by rice cultivation. He was ordained again at a temple in Santuk district, Kampong Thum province in 1989, but has resided in Vatt SK as the head monk since 1990. Although badly damaged in the DK period, the reconstruction of buildings in the compound steadily progressed since the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>23)</sup> The *sala chhan* (meeting hall) with cement posts was newly constructed in 1993. And the three-storey *preah vihear*, the building with *seyma* (a sacred boundary), once finished construction in 1970, had its top floor and roof repaired during the period of 1998–99.

On the other hand, Vatt PA lies at a distance of about 3 km south of the National Highway. It is surrounded by paddy fields, and the floodwaters of the Tonle Sap Lake reach the south end of its compound at the height of the rainy season each year. There were 8 monks, 26 novices and some laypersons present during the Buddhist Lent of 2001. The head monk of Vatt PA was the 28-year-old Monk TK, who was born in CH village. He was ordained in 1991. After staying at the temple for one year, he traveled to several temples in Kampong Cham, Kandal, Pousat, Bat Dambang province and Phnom Penh. He came back to the temple in 1996 and was promoted to the head monk in 1997. The temple's *preah vihear*, constructed in 1964, survived through the 1970s.<sup>24)</sup> When I first visited the temple in March 2000, there was only a wooden *sala chhan* that had been built in 1985. However, it was replaced by a new larger one with cement posts in April 2001.

A temple is recognized as a sacred space by the existence of a monastery organization, the disciplined order of Buddhist Sangha. This is evident from the behavior of Cambodian people, who take off their hats before entering the temple compound, carefully avoid drinking alcohols inside, and maintain other respectful behavior. The monastery's organization in a temple is characterized by a hierarchical structure in which a head monk presides over the other monks and novices serving under him.<sup>25)</sup> Furthermore, it is important to note that this hierarchical relationship in the monastery extends to the national Sangha's organization in parallel to the secular administrative structure.<sup>26)</sup> Specifically, the head monk of each temple is supervised by an *anukon* (district-chief monk) in each district, who is also under the supervision of a *mekon*

22) In Cambodia, it is usual to see some laypersons living inside the temples, such as *daun chi* (women disciplinants who hold 10 precepts) and *kaunses lok* (young boys who give assistance to monks).

23) It is interesting to note that the government troops and Vietnamese soldiers were stationed in the compound of Vatt SK until 1989.

24) It survived through the DK era because of its function as a rice storehouse.

25) Two other senior monks are often appointed to assist the head monk, called *krou sautr sdam*, and *krou sautr chhveng*. According to my observations, the head monk is referred to simply as *lok krou* (teacher) or *lok krou thum* (big teacher) in everyday conversation, and other constituents of monastery are *kaunses* (students) of him.

26) The relation and duties of head monks, the district-chief monks, and provincial-chief monks were clearly written as the rule of Cambodian Sangha in 1962, and reaccepted in 1993 again [Cambodia, National Sangha of Maha Nikay Sect 1994].

(provincial-chief monk) in each province. Therefore, it is vital that a Cambodian Buddhist temple-monastery be studied not only as situated in the surrounding community, but also in the context of its affiliation to the national Sangha.

In Cambodia, the Buddhist temple has often been regarded as the center of the community or of village life<sup>27)</sup> [e.g. Delvert 2002; Ebihara 1968]; however, the concrete relation between the temple and its community has rarely been discussed. Theoretically, a temple is open for everybody and it is a matter of choice for villagers to visit a given temple.<sup>28)</sup> I therefore use the term community not as a rigid geographical entity or membership association, but as an unbounded social group, which becomes actualized by the accumulation of interactions based on preferences for a certain temple. In fact, the community in the above sense is often referred to by Khmer word *chamnoh* (subordinate, dependent) of the temple. As seen in Table 6, the villages that are recognized as *chamnoh* of Vatt SK and Vatt PA by the local people show overlap. For example, VL village is considered as *chamnoh* of both the temples. Thus, there are villagers who support the temples in various activities such as joining rotating groups that prepare food for monks in the temple. Additionally there are several special figures among the *chamnoh*, such as *achar vatt* and *kanakammekar vatt*, who organize certain temple activities.<sup>29)</sup> The former is “the layman who arranges a ceremony in a Buddhist temple” [Headley 1977] and performs important functions in organizing religious rituals, whereas the members of *kanakammekar vatt*, literally “temple committee,” serve to handle secular affairs. In short, the community of a Cambodian Buddhist temple called *chamnoh* consists of a few *achar vatt*, *kanakammekar vatt* and an unspecified number of villagers.

**Table 6** *Chamnoh* Villages of Temples in San Kor Commune

Temple	Vatt SK	Vatt PA	Vatt PK	Vatt KM
<i>Chamnoh</i> villages	SR, SK, VL, BL, TK, AM	KB, SKH, SKP, CH, PA, SM, SR, SK, VL, TK	KK, KB	KKH

Source: Author's research

27) On a theoretical basis, this perspective seems to have its origin in the structural functionalist's viewpoint for analyzing so-called bilateral kinship societies in mainland Southeast Asia, which is especially often seen in the anthropological works in the 1950–60s. Nowadays, the perspective is frequently found in the reports of the development agencies and NGOs.

28) For example, it is not unusual for a person to receive the Buddhist lay precepts in a temple on a Buddhist Sabbath day and then receive it at another temple on the next Sabbath day.

29) It is to be noted that the Khmer word *achar* basically indicates the person who has a special knowledge and skill of some kind in the broad sense as the instance of *achar kar* (person who leads wedding rituals) and *achar khmaoch* (person who leads funeral rituals), so that it is usual to find several figures who are called as *achar* by villagers in a village. According to the instruction of Ministry of Religions and Cults, a temple should have two or three *achar vatt* elected by votes of the people of *chamnoh*, and ranked by names such as *achar thum* (big *achar*) and *achar rong* (vice-*achar*). As for *kanakammekar vatt*, it sometimes includes female members.



Considering the situation of overlapping of *chamnoh* between the neighboring temples, it is obvious that the comparative review of the Buddhist practice in each temple is significant for understanding the reality of village Buddhism in Cambodian rural society. However, as far as I am aware, there are no studies focusing closely on this relationship. May Ebihara noticed the overlapping *chamnoh* but didn't pursue the issue further. For instance, she describes a kind of factionalism between the villagers of her study evident in the different attitudes toward the neighboring two temples: one was Maha Nikay and another was of Thammayut Nikay [Ebihara 1968: 377–382]. It is noteworthy that she reported that the villagers failed to organize one annual festival held in the post-harvest season during her research, because they had been split in their opinions regarding which temple's monks should be invited to the occasion [*ibid.*: 184]. Although her descriptions did not include much more account of these phenomena and only emphasized functions of the temple as a moral, social, and educational center in village life, I believe that the consideration of overlapping temple communities is a key to the study of village Buddhism. Here I would like to start to pursue this observation by focusing on the example of *pithi kanbin* in Bon Phchombin, one of the largest Buddhist annual festivals in Cambodia.

### III Same Festival, Different Practice: The Example of *Pithi Kanbin*

Bon Phchombin is widely recognized by Cambodian people as one of the country's most important traditional Cambodian Buddhist festivals.<sup>30)</sup> However, the reputation of "traditional" does not mean that the ceremony is culturally uniform across the country. It is held annually for 15 days in the last half of the month of *pheatrobot* of the Khmer lunar calendar.<sup>31)</sup> During this season, people visit temples to join various rituals and offer food and money to monks in the hope that such merit-making deeds will benefit the spirits of dead relatives.<sup>32)</sup> To be more precise, in the case of rural temples, 13 groups of *chamnoh* are formed, and each group is assigned to perform one day's *pithi kanbin* activities in the temple.<sup>33)</sup> Based on my own observation with the villagers of VL village, the order of practice of *pithi kanbin* in Vatt PA and Vatt SK in the year 2000 season can be summarized as shown in Tables 7 and 8. Here, we can see the similarities and differences in the same festival of two neighboring temples.

In both cases, the ritual of *pithi kanbin* began in the evening. It is common practice in Cambodian Buddhist rituals to start with laypersons' chant of *nomosekar* (adoration for Buddha, dharma and monk) toward the Buddha image, secondly shifting to *som seyl* (request for

30) The final day of Phchombin is a national holiday and a lot of school students and factory workers in the cities return to their home to celebrate with their families.

31) This corresponds to the season of September to October in Gregorian calendar.

32) It is commonly said that people ideally visit as many as seven temples to participate in merit-making rituals during the season in order to transfer merit to their ancestral spirits.

33) Thirteen groups organize the *pithi kanbin* for 13 days during the season, except for 2 Buddhist Sabbath days. In this manner we can see concrete relationships between a certain temple and villagers of *chamnoh*.



**Table 7** Summarized Order of *pithi kanbin* in Vatt PA

September 25th, 2000

Time	Events
18:00	Monks and novices are invited to the <i>sala chhan</i> (meeting hall) and villagers offer them some tea with sugar. The <i>achar vatt</i> leads villagers to face the Buddha statue and chant <i>nomosekar</i> (adoration for Buddha, dharma and monk). Then, the <i>achar</i> leads others to chant the word of <i>som seyl</i> (request for Buddhist lay precepts) toward a monk. Monks and novices chant <i>preah parit</i> (protective prayer of Buddha) all together.
19:10	Monks and novices get out of the <i>sala chhan</i> .
19:33	Villagers specially invite a monk to the <i>sala chhan</i> for <i>tesana</i> (preaching the sermon).
20:08	The preaching is finished, some villagers prepare mosquito nets on the <i>sala chhan</i> for sleeping, others sit in a circle and chat over a cup of tea.

September 26th, 2000

Time	Events
4:00	Most of villagers begin to get up, some women have already cooked sticky rice.
4:50	The ritual called <i>chap baybin</i> starts. Villagers squat on the <i>sala chhan</i> , face to east and raise the bowl with sticky rice over the head, and then they repeat the prayer in Khmer after the <i>achar</i> . Finally they gather around a large tray and pick the rice with their fingers and drop it on.
5:07	The <i>achar</i> leads villagers to face the Buddha statue and chant <i>nomosekar</i> .
5:22	One monk and four novices are invited to the <i>sala chhan</i> , the <i>achar</i> leads others to chant the word of <i>som seyl</i> .
5:35	Putting the tray with a heap of rice in front of the monk, villagers pray the prayer of <i>proken</i> (offer to the Sangha) after the <i>achar</i> . The monk and novices scatter the water with fingers over the tray, while recite the word of blessing.
5:48	Villagers walk down the <i>sala chhan</i> with the tray carried on the shoulder at the head of them, they arrive at the east of the <i>preah vihear</i> (building with sacred boundary) and squat with the face to east, and then repeat the prayer all together after the <i>achar</i> .
5:53	After finished the prayer, each villager grasps a handful of rice on the tray and walks around the <i>preah vihear</i> three times as doing <i>bâh baybin</i> (throwing the piece of rice into the dark bush).
6:40	Monks and novices are invited to the <i>sala chhan</i> for offering of porridge for breakfast.

Source: Author's research

Buddhist lay precepts) toward a monk, and ending with listening to *tesana* (preaching the sermon). All of these were marked by the lead of *achar vatt* of each temple. However, the *pithi kanbin* in two temples were characterized by some clear differences. For example, the order in Vatt SK lacked one step of *bâh baybin* (throwing the piece of rice into a dark bush) which took place in the morning of the second day in the case of Vatt PA (see Photo 1). It is widely believed among Cambodians that *chidaun chita* (literally, grandparents) and *praet* (evil spirits, ghost [Headley 1977]) appear in this ground in the season of Phchombin. The participants in Vatt PA provided interpretation for me saying that this deed is for the purpose of feeding those spirits hiding in the darkness. They claimed that this is the way passed down from their *chidaun chita* as their own national custom (*propeiney cheat*). However, when I asked Mr. PP (1940–), the prominent *achar vatt* of Vatt SK who was ordained as a novice in Vatt SK in 1955

**Table 8** Summarized Order of *pithi kanbin* in Vatt SK

September 27th, 2000

Time	Events
18:40	Monks and novices are invited to the <i>sala chhan</i> (meeting hall) and villagers offer them some tea with sugar. After this, monks and novices get out of the <i>sala chhan</i> .
19:13	The <i>achar vatt</i> leads villagers to face the Buddha statue and chant <i>nomosekar</i> (adoration for Buddha, dharma and monk). Then, monks and novices are invited to the <i>sala chhan</i> again. The <i>achar</i> leads others to chant the word of <i>som seyl</i> (request for Buddhist lay precepts). After this, monks and novices chant <i>preah parit</i> (protective prayer of Buddha).
20:10	Most of monks and novices get out of the <i>sala chhan</i> . The head monk is invited for <i>tesana</i> (preaching the sermon).
21:08	The preaching is finished, villagers prepare mosquito nets on the <i>sala chhan</i> for sleeping, or sit in a circle and chat over a cup of tea. Some of them go back to sleep their home.

September 28th, 2000

Time	Events
4:30	Villagers begin to get up. A group of <i>daun chi</i> (women disciplinant) invites others to sit in front of the Buddha statue and chant <i>nomosekar</i> and other various prayers all together. Most of participants are women and the <i>achar vatt</i> don't join in.
6:00	The chanting is finished.
7:36	Monks and novices are invited to the <i>sala chhan</i> for offering of porridge for breakfast.

Source: Author's research

and was appointed as the head monk during 1966–69, he explained the reason of the lack of *bâh baybin* in Vatt SK as that:

If one wishes to transfer merit to the dead, rice should be offered to a monk as a source of merit. In Buddha's sacred words in the Tripitaka, we could not find any explanations about *bâh baybin*. Such practice is really meaningless, because merit must be transferred through Buddhist monks. Dogs eating rice on the field can't help anything.



**Photo 1** *Bâh Baybin* in Vatt PA

For him, the popular Buddhist notion of *praet* counts for nothing. Instead, he emphasized the importance of following Buddhist doctrine more strictly.

Moreover, some other differences between the *pithi kanbin* in two temples can be pointed out from the perspective of participant observation. In the case of Vatt SK, many villagers including *achar vatt* and *kenakammekar vatt* returned home from the temple after listening to

*tesana*,<sup>34)</sup> and a group of pious women conducted the predawn chanting of various Buddhist prayers that lasted for more than an hour.<sup>35)</sup> In Vatt PA, most villagers spent the night in the temple chatting about the teachings of Buddha, or exchanging village rumors. The *achar vatt* and *kenakammekar vatt* of the temple stayed overnight at the temple as usual during the season despite their exhaustion from fatiguing works conducted every night. It is also important to understand the differences in *pithi kanbin* ritual in the two temples in San Kor commune, where there is an obvious gap in the amount of monetary contribution toward the temples during the season. As seen in Table 9, the sums of money collected by the *chamnoh* people to contribute toward the building projects in the temple, called *pachchay kâsang* in Khmer, was much greater in Vatt SK than in Vatt PA.<sup>36)</sup> The table also shows the clear disparity in the amount of money among the *chamnoh* villages of Vatt PA. More specifically, the amounts of the days charged by the villages of SKH, SK, SR, SM, VL, all of them located in the vicinity of the market, were higher than other villages.

Finally, I must add one more observation on Buddhist practice in the two temples in San Kor commune described above. In practice, the local people in San Kor commune use the Khmer word *samay* (new/modern) and *boran* (old/ancient) to refer to the differences in the Buddhist rituals in the two temples. Thus, such as Vatt SK is *vatt samay* (the temple of new practice) and Vatt PA is *vatt boran* (the temple of traditional practice).<sup>37)</sup> Sometimes the people express their ideas about the different practices, such as “I don’t like *samay*.” More interestingly, these two expressions, *samay* and *boran*, were also frequently found in the local people’s offhand remarks toward others: in some cases in a self-effacing manner, but quite often as open criticism of the other’s religious attitude, such as “They are too *boran*.” In fact, these perceptions are primarily based on retrospective recognition of change, and the contrast refers to various objects and ideas in village life. This paper will focus more closely on these

34) In this case, I think geographical proximity between the village and the temple might be less important than the fact of the absence of rituals in predawn.

35) The chanting of women in the early morning was led by a few *daun chi*, who were the active members of ANLWC (Association of Nuns and Laywomen of Cambodia), which was founded in 1995 with the support of the government and foreign agencies.

36) The money offered from laypersons to Buddhist Sangha is called *pachchay* in Khmer. In the occasion of *pithi kanbin* in the temple of research area, three kinds of *pachchay* were collected: *pachchay bangsokaul* handed to the head monk, *pachchay tesana* offered toward the monk that preached the sermon at the night, and *pachchay kâsang* for the building projects in the temple. The money to buy food and materials for using in the festival was also called *pachchay* but was not included in *pachchay kâsang*.

37) After finalizing the first draft of this paper, I happened to learn of the existence of a recent article in Spanish by Dr. John Marston[2002], which analyses about the trends of Buddhist *boran* in the post-socialist Cambodia, and received the unpublished manuscript of an English version of the article by courtesy of the author. He focuses attention on *boran* as a way of considering what form religious movements take in Cambodia after the end of socialism, and examines three cases of *boran* temples. Although there is a gap between his interest in Buddhist *boran* and the scope of this paper as the ethnographic study on the reconstruction of Buddhist practice in understanding of the division in village Buddhism in Cambodian rural society, I try to incorporate it into the concluding part of this paper.

**Table 9** *Pachchay kâsang* Collected during the Season of Bon Phchombin in 2001

Day	Vatt SK		Vatt PA	
	Villages in Charge	Amount in Riel	Villages in Charge	Amount in Riel
1	VL	132,900	(c)	23,700
2	VL	120,500	PA	49,500
3	VL	135,500	CH	55,000
4	SR	151,400	SKP	30,700
5	SR	172,200	KB	25,000
6	TK	147,000	KB	34,000
7	SK	182,400	SKH	116,500
8	SK	151,600	(c)	34,600
9	SR	120,400	SKH	70,400
10	(a)	125,000	SK	139,200
11	BL	145,200	SR	201,300
12	(b)	150,500	SM	123,900
13	SK	158,400	VL	177,600
14	SK	158,500	SM	180,000
15	(c)	347,700	(c)	572,500
Total		2,399,200	Total	1,833,900

Source: Author's research

Notes: (a): The day was charged by the group of teachers of the elementary school near the market.

(b): The day was charged by the villagers of BK and TB village in the neighboring commune.

(c): The days were charged by the whole *chamnoh* people of the temple.

At an exchange rate of US\$ 1 = 3,900 riel.

contrasting expressions in Buddhist practice in San Kor commune in the following sections. At first, I will examine the origin of the issue in the pre-war historical context.

#### IV The Reform of Vatt SK in the 1940s

When and how was the so-called *samay* style of Buddhist practice brought about in Vatt SK? Based on narratives of elderly people, the Buddhist practice in Vatt SK had been conducted in the traditional manner by the beginning of 1940s. Furthermore, they unanimously related that the change of practice in Vatt SK had been guided by the hand of Mr. LH (1906–46), who was reputedly the richest person in San Kor commune at the time.<sup>38)</sup> He worked as a paddy-rice wholesaler, among other roles, and frequently traveled to Phnom Penh and sometimes further to Saigon. Although the details are not clear, he enhanced the personal exchanges with monks in Vatt Unnalaom in Phnom Penh, and finally built the two-storey *kot* (building where monks

38) Mr. LH was born in San Kor commune. His father is a Chinese immigrant from Fujian province and mother is a Cambodian-Chinese (“Sino-Khmer”) born in San Kor. According to his daughter, he had spent no time as a monk in his youth.



**Photo 2** *Kot* built by Mr. LH in Vatt Unnalaom

live) in the temple compound with his own resources<sup>39)</sup> (see Photo 2).

Vatt Unnalaom can be considered as the center of institutionalized national Buddhism in Cambodia. Since King Norodom (1834–1904) relocated the capital from Odongk to Phnom Penh in 1866, past and present *sāṅgkheareach* (the highest ranking monk in the national Buddhist Sangha) of Maha Nikay sect had continuously resided in the temple. And as a matter of further interest, it is at Vatt Unnalaom that a group of Maha Nikay monks led by the two outstanding religious figures, Samdach Chuon Nath (1883–1969) and Samdach Huot Tat (1891–1975), embarked on the reform of popular Buddhist practice, which they claimed were based on the strict interpretation of the Tripitaka<sup>40)</sup> [e.g. Edwards 1999].

According to Huot Tat [1993: 11–12], their reform, begun in the 1910s, resulted in a division between the reformist monks and the adherents of tradition in and around the Sangha of Maha Nikay. The latter group upheld traditional popular practice without reconsidering it according to Buddhist scriptures. They also referred to the reformist monks, who intently study texts and chant Buddhist prayers in not only Pali but also in Khmer, as *thoa thmey* (new dharma). Furthermore, the traditionalists expressed open hostility toward the reformists.<sup>41)</sup> I cannot pursue a discussion of this movement at the center of national Sangha here, but it may be useful to quote historian Penny Edwards' conclusion that Nath, Tat and other reformist monks tried “to translate their beliefs and ideas about the true and proper shape of Khmer Buddhism into a coherent body of thought and literature which, by the 1930s, had emerged as the authentic, national model of Khmer Buddhism” [1999: 301].

Focusing on the changes in practice in Vatt SK in the 1940s again, it is understandable that Mr. LH imported the new style Buddhist practice from the capital to the rural temple. The specific contents of change that took place in Vatt SK at the time as described by Mr. PP and others are listed as Table 10. Mr. PP insisted that the main assertion of the instructions was the return to Buddha's teaching in the Tripitaka, emphasizing the causal circle of *kāmm* (Pali.,

39) The *kot* was specially dedicated toward a superior monk named Prach Pāl in Vatt Unnalaom. Nowadays we can see it standing as it had before the civil war.

40) Samdach Chuon Nath was appointed to the highest rank of Maha Nikay sect during the period of 1948–69 and Samdach Huot Tat acceded to the rank until 1975. Nowadays Nath is recognized as a national hero in Cambodia for projects he helped to put in place: the Khmer translation of Tripitaka, the first Khmer language dictionary, and other efforts.

41) The reformist practice is also referred to as *thoa prae* (dharma in Khmer translation). And the conflicting situation at the time can be understood from Tat's description of how bricks and stones were thrown into the residence of Nath and Tat in Vatt Unnalaom at night when they started to claim the practice different from tradition [Huot Tat 1993: 13].

**Table 10** Specific Contents of the Reform in Vatt SK in the 1940s

Item	Before the Reform	After the Reform
Place for meal of monks and novices	Separated with different lines by monks and novices	Both monks and novices form one line
Chanting of monks and novices	Separated in place and time by monks and novices	Carried out by monks and novices all together
Language for chanting	Pali only	Pali with Khmer translation
Texts for learning	Palm leaf texts	Printed books
Targets of offering	Buddha, dharma, monks and other spiritual entities	Buddha, dharma, monks only
Offering items	Flower, candle and other traditional offerings	Flower and candle only

Source: Author's research

kamma; Skr., karma) in life, and denying reliance upon others such as spirits. Thus, these changes demanded that pleas for help in popular Buddhist rituals be discarded. As for monks, it leveled the hierarchical principle between monks and novices, encouraging them to learn and enhance Buddhist knowledge all together, and required them not only to memorize the sacred Pali texts but also to receive lessons about them in Khmer. For example, it considered that the recitation of Pali phrases was insufficient, and strongly asserted that the translation in Khmer should be presented together. Those changes covered everyday monastic practice as well as the contents of popular rituals, and should be regarded as a kind of reform of the temple.

However, the reform of practice in Vatt SK provoked a controversy and conflict among the local people despite the legitimate interpretation upon which the changes were based. Although the incident occurred half a century ago, the seriousness of the break is clear from the fact that some of the monks residing in Vatt SK had moved to Vatt PA as a consequence of the reform. At the same time, Vatt SK seemed to lose a great number of *chamnoh* as was demonstrated by villagers — some of whom did not offer food to the monks of Vatt SK, avoided the temple or did not walk in the compound of the temple after it changed. Further evidence of this change is seen as a majority of men in VL village between the ages of 60 and 69 were once ordained in Vatt PA, and they explained that the reason for their choices was that their parents disliked Vatt SK at the time.<sup>42)</sup> Getting another perspective on the conflict, it could be largely attributable to the personal attitude of Mr. LH. Allegedly he used to say that he could afford all food and money for monks in Vatt SK without anyone's participation, when he encountered objection from others. His words are seemingly against the nature of the Theravada Buddhist temple as an open place for everyone, and indicate that Mr. LH implemented the reform by using his financial power without sufficient negotiation or compromise.<sup>43)</sup>

42) In the population of VL village, the number of men of the ages 60–69 years old who had spent time in monkhood was 16. Actually, half of them had been a monk or novice in Vatt PA.

43) The local people also remembered that he built a small hut in the temple compound when ↗

In short, when Mr. LH initiated the new practice in Vatt SK, a large number of local people in San Kor felt the new practice was too confining, and directly opposed participating in it.<sup>44)</sup> There are plenty of historical narratives in the community alluding to this conflict, and it likely continued until the end of the 1960s. According to Mr. PP, when he was the head monk of Vatt SK, the local families that ardently participated in Buddhist activities in the temple numbered only around 20, and the 13 rotation groups that organized *pithi kanbin* at the time consisted of one to two families.<sup>45)</sup> Most villagers in the vicinity of the temple rarely invited the monks of Vatt SK for Buddhist rituals at home. However, the temple at the time used to receive support from other *vatt samay* outside of the commune. Some of these temples helped to find a well-educated monk to invite as a teacher, and some gave financial assistance to construct a new building for the study of Pali and so on.<sup>46)</sup> It is in this historical context that the differentiation of the Buddhist practices of *samay* and *boran* was created in the commune.

## V The Recent Changes in Vatt PA

After the coup d'état erupted into warfare in 1970, San Kor commune fell under the control of the communists. Local residents recalled that their livelihood activities were partly suspended by American bombing, but various religious activities continued with very little changes until 1973. As the communists conducted propaganda campaigns targeting the local people, some monks decided to return to secular life because Buddhist monks were being criticized as parasites of society. Other monks were fascinated with the justice the propaganda claimed and traveled to join large meetings in different regions.<sup>47)</sup> However, it is in February 1974 that most of residents in San Kor, including monks and novices of Vatt PA and Vatt SK, were forced to move to the city of Kampong Thum by the government military.<sup>48)</sup> The commune had quite a

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↘ approaching death and did not allow his wife and children to get close to his deathbed, because he was a man of extraordinary devotion and did not want to have a fixation for this world. This story leads us make sense of his strong faith for Buddhism.

44) It is said that the people despised the supporter of Vatt SK in the way of saying of *kihiq* at that time. In my opinion, this saying was from the title of book named *Kihiq padebat* (the practice of laypersons) that was published by the reformist monks since the 1920s.

45) The local group supporting the temple at the time consisted of several wealthy figures in SK village who had kinship relations with Mr. LH, and some of their relatives in surrounding villages. In addition, a large number of monks in the temple in those days were not natives of San Kor, for instance Mr. PP who was born in Tbaeng commune, adjoining west of San Kor.

46) According to Mr. PP and others, there were several temples that experienced the reform of practice prior to Vatt SK in the vicinity of the provincial capital, including temples in Kampong Svay commune of Kampong Svay district, or some part of Stoung district. The penetration process of reformist practice to the region is an issue for future research.

47) One ex-monk who resided in Vatt PA at the time recalled that he traveled to attend a large meeting of Buddhist monks held in the top of Kulen Mountain in Siem Reap province in 1973. As for the communists' effort to organize Buddhist monks, Kiernan wrote about the case in Prey Veng province [1985: 345].

48) The relocation operation of local residents by the government force was targeted to the broad area in the west and northwest of the provincial capital.



small population during this year and some revolutionary monks resided in Vatt SK, but they had to earn their living themselves.<sup>49)</sup> In the same year, Vatt PA, where the communists' base was situated, suffered air attacks from American forces and a fire destroyed a great amount of palm leaf texts in the temple. In April 1975, the people returned from the provincial capital to their homes, but most of them were not allowed to live in villages and were ordered instead to settle in the wastelands. All religious practice was banned. All the Buddhist monks in the region were forced to renounce their yellow robes by the beginning of 1976, causing a downturn in Buddhist practice. Vietnamese troops came to the area in January 1979, and most of the villagers in the commune returned to settle in their villages for the first time since 1975. Buddhist activities started again spontaneously. Elderly people would gather in the temple compound and chant in front of the surviving Buddha image on every Buddhist Sabbath Day, after which respected ex-monks blessed them. Then, in 1981 four local men over the age of 60 were ordained at a temple in the provincial capital and returned to reside at Vatt PA and Vatt SK. These newly ordained monks brought about the revival of the Buddhist monkhood in the commune, but because of ongoing fighting in the region various religious activities were not conducted in an orthodox manner.

Turning from the pre-war historical narratives to the contemporary context again, a group of old men and women who participated in Buddhist rituals in Vatt PA consistently told me that the present practice in Vatt PA was not like that in old times, and complained in Khmer that: *samay haoey* (changed to the new/modern one). This suggests that the usage of the contrastive expressions of the Buddhist practice *samay* and *boran* had shifted focus. Based on their explanations, the recent changes in Vatt PA can be characterized as shown in Table 11. The

**Table 11** Representative Contents of Recent Changes in Vatt PA

Item	Until the 1960s	In the 1990s
Place for meal of monks and novices	Separated with different lines by monks and novices	Both monks and novices form one line
Chanting of monks and novices	Separated in place and time by monks and novices	Carried out by monks and novices all together
Language for chanting	Pali only	Pali with Khmer translation
Texts for learning	Palm leaf texts and printed books	Printed books
Targets of offering	Buddha, dharma, monks and other spiritual entities	Buddha, dharma, monks and other spiritual entities
Offering items	Flower, candle and traditional offerings	Flower, candle and traditional offerings

Source: Author's research

49) One of ex-monks who stayed in Vatt SK at the time explained that they would plow a rice field and climb a palm tree to make sugar by themselves.

changes in practice are clear. For example, monks and novices in Vatt PA used to be strictly separated in the place and time for chanting and eating, but now they do these activities together. Chanting was done only in Pali before, but now it is followed by Khmer translation. And interestingly, these changes in practice correspond to the reformist's perspective that once provoked a severe antagonistic reaction from the *chamnoh* of Vatt PA. In short, *samay* and *boran* now referred to the difference not only between Vatt SK and Vatt PA, but also the division inside Vatt PA itself.

How did these changes come about in Vatt PA? Mr. SS (1968- ), who had been the head monk in charge of Vatt PA during 1991-96, was a key figure within the early stage of the reconstruction process in Vatt PA. When I asked about those changes in practice, he explained that: "Excessive conservatism is unnecessary, and any practices not found in the Tripitaka need not be carried out, even if they were once standard in prior times." I consider this statement to be quite agreeable from the perspective of Theravada doctrine, but I also think that there is room for further analysis. The life story of Mr. SS, as an example of young monks in post-socialist Cambodia, raises two factors that are keys for understanding the restoration of Cambodian Buddhism.

The first factor is related to the absence of empirical observation of traditional practice during their boyhoods. Once Mr. SS related: "When I became a monk, it was difficult for me to use monk's language properly, because I couldn't learn it by imitating elderly monks."<sup>50)</sup> The basic traits of speech etiquette for a monk might be the object of learning for a Cambodian youth in any other era, but his story indicates that young monks who were ordained in the very early stage of the reconstruction were especially estranged from the traditional Buddhist context.<sup>51)</sup> Mr. SS and other 13 young men aged 18-21 spent two months at Vatt PA to learn the basic prayers for ordination, and then participated in the ordination ceremony in December 1988 at a temple in Stoung district, about 20 km west of San Kor commune. This was the second group to be ordained from the commune since 1979. Because the group of young men, including Mr. SS, was born in the end of 1960s, the eve of civil war, they had grown up in wartime without the experience of participating in traditional popular Buddhist rituals until their adolescence.

The second factor is related to the rule of the Cambodian Sangha since its reconstruction in 1979. After spending one year at Vatt PA, Mr. SS and fellow monks departed from Vatt PA because security in San Kor commune had deteriorated in 1990.<sup>52)</sup> They found sanctuary at Vatt

50) For example, the Khmer first person pronoun changes from *khnhom* to *athma*, once men become monks.

51) In addition, the texts used by the young monks in learning were different. While monks and novices in Vatt PA in pre-war times had used palm leaf texts, which were handed down through generations, for their studies, monks use printed texts after the reconstruction. I could not find any cases in which monks use palm leaf texts in their studies in the 39 temples in Kampong Svay and Stoung Saen district, Kampong Thum province, although the palm leaf texts have not vanished completely from the religious scene in the country.

52) The withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from the region in 1989 resulted in the deterioration of security. At that time some wealthy villagers spent daytime in village and went to sleep in the ↗

SY, where the *anukon* of Kampong Svay district resided, and learned *thoa* (Pali, dharma) and *viney* (Pali, vinaya) under the *anukon* for one year. During this time Mr. SS became more familiar with the reformist practice, not the traditional one once practiced in Vatt PA, because the *anukon* in the district is known as a strong advocate of reformist thought and practice. However, what is more important is that no monk in the district except for the *anukon* could supervise the ordination ceremony as *upachchhea* then and now. In other words, the privilege of *upachchhea* in Cambodian Buddhism was once widely given to monks with adequate knowledge and over 10 years' experience in the monkhood in pre-war times, but since the rebirth of Cambodian Buddhism in 1979 the title and role were approved only for particular government-appointed monks, so that the government could secure control over the ordination processes.<sup>53)</sup> Even after the official declaration announced the return to the rule of the Sangha as it was in the pre-war era in 1993, in Kampong Svay district, the *anukon* continued to serve as the *upachchhea* at every ordination ceremony in the district. All of the succeeding monks and novices in Vatt PA consequently have a relationship with the *anukon*, and are influenced by him to varying degrees.<sup>54)</sup> That is, even as monks' practice in Vatt PA has been reconstructed, the freedom to choose an *upachchhea* aligned with the temple's tradition as it had been in the pre-war time has not existed. This is a result of both regional circumstances and also the government's intentional regulation.<sup>55)</sup>

## VI Reconstruction of Buddhist Practice in the Two Temples

As described above, the historical experience of the local society in the 1970–80s resulted in the elicitation of different attitudes among the people regarding Buddhist practice. First and foremost, the discontinuity of rural life from the status quo ante caused by warfare and the DK rule is of primary importance and affects various spheres of social life as a matter of

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↘ provincial capital every night. The market of San Kor commune was burned out once in a battle between Khmer Rouge army and the government in 1990. The instability in the region continued until 1993.

53) This insight from fieldwork is also supported by relevant government documents. Based on the government *sarachâr* (circular) No. 02–82: KRS. SR in 1982, the socialist government of the day approved the roll of *upachchhea* only for government appointed monks [Li Sovi 1999: 11], and the following circular in 1989, which asserted the abolishment of age restriction, still upheld restriction over the title and roll of *upachchhea*, requiring appointment by the state [*ibid.*: 16]. Finally in March 1993 government circular No. 02/93: KChS changed the description of the qualification of *upachchhea* from government appointed to follow the rules of Cambodian Sangha in the pre-war time [*ibid.*: 30].

54) Some monks and novices in the district customarily visit the *anukon* before entering the Buddhist Lent season. The act is called as *thvay krou* (pay homage to the teacher) and helps us understand the continuous relation with the *upachchhea* and fellow monks.

55) My survey conducted at 19 of 21 temples in Kampong Svay district demonstrates that the issue of the changes in monks' practice after the DK era was also an important concern in other temples. This trend may partly come from the situation that the provincial officials of Ministry of Religions and Cults, the *mekon* of Kampong Thum province, the *anukon* of Kampong Svay district at present are all adherents of *samay* style. The comparative study in different regions is a topic for future research.

**Table 12** Statistics for Men of VL Village Who Were Monks or Novices

Age Group	A, Number of Males in Village	B, Number Who Were Monks or Novices	Percentage of B in A
15-19	37	0	0
20-24	17	1	5.9
25-29	20	1	5.0
30-34	27	1	3.7
35-39	31	0	0
40-44	13	0	0
45-49	14	3	21.4
50-54	8	5	62.5
55-59	10	4	40.0
60-64	11	8	72.7
65-69	10	8	80.0
70-74	4	3	75.0
75-79	1	1	100
Total	203	35	17.2

Source: Author's research

Notes: Males who are monks are uncouned.

Males under 14 years old are omitted because ordination as a novice is not common for them.

generational gap between the old and the young.<sup>56)</sup> Particularly clear in this context is the complete cessation of Buddhist practice during the DK era. As seen in the case of VL village (Table 12), in the male population today, monkhood experiences are different according to age group.

The process of reconstructing Buddhist practice since the beginning of the 1990s in the case of Vatt PA resulted in some visible changes. In other words, the everyday monastic practice of young monks changed to the so-called *samay* style that the reformist monks had maintained. This means that the scope designated by the word *samay* was extended in the temple. However, I think the historical narratives and the remarks about the present situation must be analyzed comprehensively in order to realize under what conditions the reconstruction of Buddhist practice in these temples is progressing today. Additionally, if one pays attention to the local people's present participation in the two temples in, for example, the rotation group of *pithi kanbin*, it is apparent that Vatt SK currently draws many more local people than in pre-war times. In order to comprehend this interesting phenomenon, it is helpful to reconsider the varied attitudes of participants.

The first instance is Monk KS, the head monk of Vatt SK. He was ordained in Vatt PA in pre-war times, but resides in Vatt SK today. When asked about the practice of *boran*, he related

56) As for the aftermath of the DK regime, I do not deny the opinion that argues the harsh life experience at the time affected the people's cognitive processes. However, this paper concentrates on analyzing it within the context of social change, instead of approaching a certain individual from the psychological perspective or of using analytical concepts such as "social memory."

that he accepted these practices when he first became a monk but began to question them through his own study of Pali scriptures.<sup>57)</sup> Nowadays he emphasizes the importance of *kāmm* in life at every occasion of preaching the Buddha's teaching, and strongly criticizes the practice of *boran* as Buddhist practice mixed with Brahmanism (*promanh sasana*). His case corresponds with others like Mr. PP, who has been a monk for relatively long time and has enough knowledge to explain the practice of *samay* using appropriate Buddhist idioms.<sup>58)</sup> The second attitude toward the issue is seen in the person who simply disagrees with the effectiveness of *boran* practices, such as Monk TK, the young head monk of Vatt PA. He speaks some English,<sup>59)</sup> and although he has a good knowledge of Pali scriptures, he prefers to discuss social issues such as "social development" and "human rights" in his preaching. This type of attitude can be found in both monks and laypersons, young and old. Some interpret the invalidity of *boran* practice through use of the scientific knowledge, and some talk about it according to personal experience.<sup>60)</sup> The third could be described as the majority of the local people. They are close-lipped about the issue. They know the difference between the two kinds of practice in their actual sense, but seem to be indifferent. If one asks why they repeatedly participate in a certain temple's activities, they might simply describe their choice with emotional words such as like (*chaul chett*), and happy (*sabbay*). The last instance is the person who somehow professes adhesion toward the practice of *boran*. Some strongly stress this preference with the word "national custom" or with theoretical knowledge of Buddhism that they claim to be traditional. Sometimes they talk of *boran* practice with a somewhat nostalgic air. In sum, the local people participating in Buddhist activities in two temples can be considered as lying on a spectrum. Here, the self-claimed Buddhist *samay* are on one end, the self-confessed Buddhist *boran* are on the other end, and the majority of *chamnoh* people are situated between.

As for *boran* and *samay* distinctions in contemporary Cambodian Buddhism, John Marston [2002] presents his consideration through a sketch of three Buddhist temples in Kampong Cham and Kandal provinces, which have a reputation as *vatt boran*. According to him, "contemporary *boran* represents the memory of *boran* Buddhism as it existed prior to 1975 and the idea of continuity with the traditional practices of specific wats and spiritual leaders. Insofar as this memory is partial and shaped by the contemporary political and social landscape,

57) When he was ordained in his youth, he had traveled to reside in a temple in Kampong Cham province for three years. He said the practice of the temple was *boran* but had a good teacher of Pali. According to him, the temple in Kampong Cham didn't have a Pali school for official education of monks in those days.

58) As for the *anukon* of Kampong Svay district, the monk once told the local people the reason of his strong assertion of the reformist practice of emphasis on the causal circle of *kāmm* and self-help in his preaching at the large festival I observed as that: "If you believe spirits would help you out of the mess, what were they doing during the Pol Pot period? All of the agony of the Pol Pot period came from our *kāmm*."

59) He learned English, when he resided in the temples in Phnom Penh. Today it is very popular for young monks in Phnom Penh and other cities to attend private foreign language or computer school, in addition to the learning of Pali.

60) Some old persons told me during the research that: "The traditional rituals had been stopped for many years. And our life may not change so much if we do or not."

the re-emergence of *boran* is a new phenomenon.” I think his standpoint for studying *boran* in present-day Cambodian Buddhism, as a new movement, is quite agreeable. While he also notes that “at the core of our discussion is the ironical fact that *samay*, what once ‘reform’ Buddhism, becomes the religion of tradition as remembered from the pre-1975 years, and *boran*, in claiming to be more authentic, implies a reform of *samay* — although not consciously in the direction of the modern,”<sup>61)</sup> I think the contraposition of the concepts *samay* and *boran* is too clear-cut, because, if one hopes to focus on them for the purpose of studying village Buddhism, one must start from the realization that elements of so-called *samay* and *boran* in fact co-exist in local people’s lives.

Then, why does Vatt SK attract many more people today in comparison with pre-war times? Considering the variety of the participants I categorized into four types, it is essential to focus on the third category, the majority of *chamnoh* who keep silent about the issue of the differences of practice. And a review of the socio-economic setting of the research area seems to be the crucial key to understanding the phenomenon. At first, one should keep in mind the general mood of economic vitalization in Cambodian rural society after the national election in 1993. As apparent from the case of VL village, which had begun to send many young girls to garment factories in the vicinity of the capital in 1998, the expansion of village household economic activities in recent years steadily affects the lives of villagers.<sup>62)</sup> In addition, in the case of the research area, the uneven development of the village economy within the commune can be understood from the example that the villages in the vicinity of the market collected much larger monetary contributions than the remote villages (see Table 9). The two Buddhist temples and the local life of *chamnoh* people in San Kor commune are situated in this kind of rapid socio-economic change and differentiation. This affects how *chamnoh* people participate in the temple. In the last instance indicated in Table 13, it is clear that Vatt PA draws most of its monks and novices from its own *chamnoh* villages, but Vatt SK does not. Among the total 24 monks and novices in Vatt SK during the Buddhist Lent season of 2001, 15 were not San Kor native. Ten of 15 came from Damrei Slab commune in Kampong Svay district, and 4 other novices came from Prasat Balangk district, both of which are remote and forested areas located north of San Kor commune.<sup>63)</sup> The present *chamnoh* temple community of Vatt SK includes a number of wealthy families, many more than the community of the remote temples. Few of their children are ordained and reside in the temple, but they eagerly join the activities and make offerings to the monks in the temple in the hope of making merit.

61) As for this statement, I must add to notice that Marston argues that the socialist government’s emphasis on the scientific integration of religion into social life, as a part of the state project of modernity, meant that *samay* was emphasized to the exclusion of *boran* and the issue of *boran* and *samay* began to re-emerge in 1989. Basically he discusses *samay* and *boran* as analytical concepts, while this paper focuses them as a way to describing the division of village Buddhism.

62) For example, weddings in VL village in recent years marked a large increase of expenditure for the reception banquet in inverse to the abbreviation of ritual procedures.

63) Both Damrei Slab commune and Prasat Balangk district have local temples, but, according to some novices and their parents, they are ordained and reside in Vatt SK because of the better dietary and education condition.

**Table 13** Distribution of Birthplace of Monks and Novices of 4 Temples in San Kor Commune

Birthplace	Vatt SK	Vatt PA	Vatt PK	Vatt KM
<i>Chomnoh</i> villages	6	32	9	9
Other villages in San Kor commune	3	1	3	0
Other communes in Kampong Svay district	10	0	0	0
Other districts in Kampong Thum province	5	0	0	6
Other provinces	0	1	0	2
Total	24	34	12	17

Source: Author's research during Buddhist Lent season of 2001

One more unique characteristic of the so-called *samay* practice of Vatt SK is relevant here. Although the explanation of the theoreticians, who I categorized as the first type, about their own practice leaves us with an impression of continuous assertion of the primary importance of Buddhist doctrine, it doesn't mean that there is no room for stretching the interpretation. To cite a specific instance, the discussion of *som seyl* (request for Buddhist lay precepts) in Vatt SK suggests this. Upholding *seyl* (Buddhist precepts) is definitely one of the primary means of making merit for Theravada Buddhists. And there are two kinds of lay precept: *seyl pram* (literally, five precepts: do not kill, do not steal, remain celibate, do not lie, do not drink intoxicating beverages) and *seyl prambey* (literally, eight precepts: add three more precepts with *seyl pram*, do not eat after noon, do not listen to music or attend occasions of entertainment, do not decorate the body with perfumes, jewels and others). Then, both precepts are given from a monk to laypersons through the recitation of request on every Buddhist Sabbath day. However, the situation of *som seyl* is quite different between Vatt SK and Vatt PA in these days. All of the participants on Buddhist Sabbath day in Vatt SK request *seyl prambey*, but most of the people request *seyl pram* in the case of Vatt PA.<sup>64)</sup> This difference between the two temples could be attributed in the conception of *som seyl* in each temple. When I asked why they do not request *seyl prambey* on Buddhist Sabbath days in Vatt PA, the participants in the temple answered that: "it is too heavy to uphold, because if one is to hold *seyl prambey*, one must stay at the temple the entire day in order to keep it properly." At once, the participants in Vatt SK do not deny these difficulties of upholding *seyl prambey* and do agree that it is the traditional way their parents once practiced. However, the *achar vatt* of Vatt SK constantly gives the instruction that: "it is less necessary to stay at the temple, but rather it is essential to keep it wherever you are."<sup>65)</sup>

The question is not which idea of *som seyl* is correct, but I think we can understand from this example why so-called *samay* practice of Vatt SK attracts the local people today. Mr. PP, the *achar vatt* of Vatt SK, is always confident with his interpretation of the practice, and leads

64) There were only a few old men and several women who requested *seyl prambey* among the participants numbering about 50 in Vatt PA. Even the *achar vatt* of the temple requests *seyl pram*.

65) This instruction of *som seyl* in Vatt SK began from the 1980s, under the guidance of the former *achar vatt* who were the head monk of the temple in the 1950s.



the participants on every occasion. Then, indeed, most of the participants on Buddhist Sabbath day in Vatt SK, who I categorized as the third type, go back to their business at home immediately after finishing the recitation of *som seyl* in the morning. His instruction is agreeable because the local people around the market have come to enjoy more developed livelihoods in recent years. Of course, the instance of Vatt SK is one specific case of so-called *vatt samay*, and the explanation introduced above cannot be applied simply to all temples called *samay* in present-day Cambodian rural society. As Marston related what *boran* means today does not imply the same thing for all temples that identify themselves as *boran*, and the meaning of *samay* today also differs depending on the circumstance in each case.

In the case of the reconstruction of Buddhist practice after the discontinuity in San Kor commune, the existence of strong adherents to *boran* practice, the fourth category I asserted, cannot be overlooked, either. Because they often talk about their faith in very personal terms, or simply say that it is their tradition, persuasive analysis might be possible after the careful examination of life history narratives, which is impossible to do here. However, from another perspective, it seems to be helpful again to consider the socio-economic setting of research area with regard to some contrasting expressions pointing to individual distinctions such as *neak phsar* (people residing in market area)/*neak srae* (literally, rice-cultivator, means people residing in rural area in the broad sense), *neak mean* (people of wealth)/*neak krâ* (people of economic difficulty), *kaun chen* (literally, children of Chinese)/*kaun khmaer* (literally, children of Khmer), all of which appear frequently in the daily conversations of local people. Then, indeed, some of villagers in PA village often told me that their lives are different from *neak phsar* living in the vicinity of the market of San Kor.<sup>66)</sup>

The word *samay* or *samay haoey* has a multiplicity of meanings in contemporary Cambodian society. At first, one must be conscious of the fact that the indication of *boran* and *samay*, ancient and modern, has a kind of special function to provide a reference to a turning point in various historical changes in their life, like the *mun kraoy* (before after, in Khmer) contrast, which is very often related to experiences resulting from warfare and the rule of the DK regime, not only in the local people's narratives but also in academic descriptions of contemporary Cambodia. Moreover, the indication of *boran* and *samay* emerges in a more complicated manner in reference to Buddhist practice, because it shows another association with the reformist Buddhist practice that originated from the central of national Sangha in the 1910s. Thus, Buddhist theoreticians frequently speak out about what is *samay* and what is *boran* according to their own Buddhist knowledge. However, if one respects the perspective that it might make sense when situated in the specific context in which the contrastive expressions are used, one must be aware that the indications are also used for differentiating one from others. Furthermore, I believe that the socio-economic gaps in the local residents' everyday lives are primary sources of the conflicting identification of others. The existence of

66) As Michael Vickery reported in his pioneer study of post-DK Cambodia [1986: 128–130], economic discrepancies in the form of market/village contrast emerged from the very early stages of societal reconstruction of Cambodia.

strong adherents to either *boran* or *samay* Buddhist practice might, in a way, demonstrate a sense of rivalry in the local people's lives.

At last, in addition to the multi-layered spectrum of the participants in Buddhist rituals, the overlapping situation of the *chamnoh* temple community should similarly be regarded as a reality of great importance. As mentioned in the second section, a Buddhist temple is open to everyone. And even the *achar vatt* of Vatt SK joins and supervises the Buddhist rituals in Vatt PA according to circumstances.<sup>67)</sup> When Mr. PP participated in the rituals in Vatt PA, he always emphasized: "We all are Buddhist. Dharma of Buddha is only one." And actually, people can join the activities of either temple for their fundamental concern—merit making for this life and the next. This basic situation gives us the impression of a harmonious Buddhist temple. And indeed, May Ebiara once described the Cambodian temple as the social center of the village life. However, this paper's close analysis of the ethnographic conditions in and around the two neighboring Buddhist temples lead me to conclude that the Buddhist temples in present-day Cambodia is characterized by tension and negotiation among the participants of varied background, young monks and old laymen, the rich and the poor, the so-called modernists and the so-called traditionalists. The divisions sometimes emerge as criticism, and sometimes appear as compromised lament toward the current situation, while on the surface they are draped with the Buddhist ideals of peace. Although these issues require further elaboration, I hope that this paper contributes to the understanding of the reconstruction of Buddhist practice in contemporary Cambodian rural society.

## VII Conclusion

It is well known to contemporary Cambodia scholars that the country has undergone extensive social change, but comprehensive studies of this change are relatively few in number. This paper, as an ethnographic study based on long-term fieldwork, explored the historical changes and the reconstruction of Buddhist practice in two rural temples in the research area. Firstly, this paper discovered some visible differences in the Buddhist practice of those temples, and the differences described by the local residents in terms of *samay* and *boran*. According to the social history of the research area, Vatt SK, one of two temples studied, had experienced a series of changes in its religious practice in pre-war times. The new practice, which originated from the reformist movement of traditional popular Buddhist practice in the center of institutionalized national Sangha in the 1910s, had been installed in the temple by the initiative of one local rich person in the 1940s. It caused a severe controversy among the local people concerning about their Buddhist tradition and resulted in the break of the *chamnoh* temple

67) One such circumstance is Bon Kathen, a common Buddhist annual festival in Theravada culture. It occurs around the month of November and aims to offer the monk's yellow robes called *kathina* in Pali toward each monastery. In the case of Bon Kathen of Vatt PA of the year 2000, Mr. PP led the recitation in the ritual of offering *kathina* to the monks by the request of the *mchas bon* (literally, owner of the ceremony, means a certain family or group which plays a central role in organizing the ceremony).

community. Elderly people remembered that at the time most local residents around Vatt SK opposed the new practice, and instead supported the practice of Vatt PA, the other temple studied here. It is at this time that the indication of Buddhist *samay* and *boran* began to be used in the area in order to differentiate one's religious attitude. Thus, Vatt SK became to be called *vatt samay* against Vatt PA called *vatt boran*.

Moreover, this paper also illustrated the recent changes of practice in Vatt PA, and the shift of the local people's attitudes regarding the Buddhist practice of *samay* and *boran*. In the early stages of reconstructing Buddhist practice in the temple, the newly ordained young monks did not hesitate to change their practices according to the circumstances they faced. Because they grew up during the period of civil war and the rule of the DK regime, they did not have the experience of learning by observing religious practice. The old palm leaf texts of the temple burned in the fires of the civil war. And the religious policy of the socialist government in the 1980s and the local condition of continued warfare in the beginning of the 1990s provided the connection of the group of young monks in the temple with the so-called *samay* style of Buddhist practice. However, the practice in Vatt PA did not completely change to reflect the interpretational legitimacy claimed by the reformist theoreticians. Some rituals in the temple are still carried out in accordance with the so-called traditional way, and many old people complaint about the recent *samay* practice of the monks. In sum, the picture of confrontation of the Buddhist *samay* and *boran* in recent years is emerging not only between the temples but also inside the temple.

Finally, this paper analyzed the reconstruction of Buddhist practice in these two temples by considering the multi-layered spectrum of the participants and the overlapping *chamnoh* temple community. The present-day local society is characterized by varied attitudes towards *samay* and *boran* Buddhist practices. The participants in rituals can be considered in the multi-layered gradational spectrum with the self-declared Buddhist *samay* on one end, the self-professed Buddhist *boran* on the other end, and most local people situated in-between. The majority of local people seem to have shifted their preference in recent years from the *boran* style of Buddhist practice to the *samay* style: however, this does not mean they share the same notion of what *samay* is. Considering the setting of the research area and the pattern of the people's participation in the temples, the different features of Vatt SK and Vatt PA can be understood in light of local socio-economic changes that have accelerated since the mid-1990s. Meanwhile, the *chamnoh* community is not defined by exclusive membership, but rather overlaps between temples in the same geographical area. At once, Buddhist ideals encourage the people to participate in the rituals together, as fellow Buddhists. However, this paper's focus on the expressions of *boran* and *samay* uncovered the existence of conflicts and compromises behind what is often presented as the harmonious Cambodian Buddhist temple atmosphere.

I present this paper as the first ethnographic study of Cambodian village society and religion after the DK era. The insights from this community study provide a basis for a deepened understanding of contemporary Cambodia. At the same time, it also has relevance for other societies that suffered warfare or totalitarian state rule, where generational gaps have

resulted from the discontinuity of traditional life. Therefore, the Cambodian experience provides a valuable comparative perspective with regard to revitalization of Theravada activities among Thai people in Yunnan province of China, or Buddhists in Laos. Moreover, the religious activities observed must be analyzed within the political and socio-economic contexts of reconstruction of each country. Thus, I believe that this paper's ethnographic descriptions of a rural Cambodian community make a useful contribution to the understanding of religious dynamics in contemporary mainland Southeast Asian societies.

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## **Impact of Economic Liberalization on Rice Intensification, Agricultural Diversification, and Rural Livelihoods in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam**

Jean-François LE COQ\* and Guy TREBUIL\*\*

### **Abstract**

In the late 80s, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam embarked on bold economic liberalization policies. The ensuing market, price, credit, and land tenure reforms allowed very reactive small farmers to use new technologies and to improve their livelihoods thanks to a dramatic agricultural growth, especially in irrigated rice production. This was particularly the case in the Mekong Delta and this article analyzes the impact of the economic liberalization reforms on this crucial agricultural system. The process of rice intensification is explained in detail, and an analysis of the closely related dynamics of diversification into non-rice activities is also provided.

The intensification of rice-based production systems with more fixed capital, working capital, and labor led to an increase in family incomes. But the evolutionary pathways of farming households reveal that, depending on their initial endowment in productive resources, the pace of capital accumulation has been unequal among farmers. Consequently, economic reforms are leading to an increased differentiation among farming households in terms of types of production system and income level.

At a time of increasing use of chemical inputs and renewable natural resources, and as social inequalities lead to labor migration, several key technological, environmental, and socioeconomic issues regarding the sustainability of rice intensification and agricultural diversification processes are discussed.

**Keywords:** economic liberalization, rice intensification, agricultural diversification, farmer differentiation, Mekong Delta, Vietnam

### **I Introduction**

During the past 15 years, the process of economic liberalization profoundly transformed most of the countries under State planned economies. If most of them have experienced a decline in their economic growth during the years following the implementation of their liberalization policy, Vietnam has enjoyed a rapid, vigorous acceleration in its economic growth and an

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increase in the well-being of its population. This growth was particularly strong in the agricultural sector. A rapid increase in rice production allowed the country to reach food self-sufficiency and to become the second largest exporter in the world rice market, with annual rice exports reaching more than 3 million tons. Besides rice, the backbone of Vietnam's agricultural sector, non-rice farm products also experienced rapid growth rates in the 90s. Such a dramatic increase in agricultural production, the overall increase in household income, and the reduction in the rate of poverty positioned Vietnam as a successful case of liberalization policy. The Mekong Delta is a key region for agricultural growth in Vietnam because it is an essential "rice bowl" of the country, accounting for more than half of national rice production, with the highest growth rate of rice production recorded since 1985. Intensification of rice production and the diversification of farming activities led to a rapid agricultural growth in the Mekong Delta during the past 15 years and these key processes are examined in this article.

As paddy areas tend to stagnate since 1985, the growth in rice production resulted from a vigorous process of rice intensification leading to increased rice yields and a higher cropping index, which captures the average number of crops planted on the same piece of land per calendar year (ratio of the total sown area to the total area of paddies). From 1985 to 2000, the average rice yield in the Mekong Delta jumped by 39% to reach 4.2 tons of paddy per hectare, while the cropping index increased by 66% over this period to 1.9. At the same time, farming of non-rice products increased sharply and the share of paddy area out of total farm land decreased from 81% to 70% from 1985 to 2000.

Several authors described the rapid evolution of agriculture in the Mekong Delta. Tanaka [1994] and Nguyen Huu Chiem [1994] analyzed changes in cropping patterns following the launch of the economic liberalization. They showed the adoption of semi-dwarf high-yielding rice varieties (HYV) of the Green Revolution that have been introduced since the early 70s [Vo Tong Xuan 1995a]. The impact of the liberalization reforms of the early 80s on the growth of rice productivity was described by Pingali and Vo Tong Xuan [1992], and the analysis of the impact of the liberalization policy conducted by Nguyen Tri Khiêm [1994] showed that the increase in rice production was due to the expansion of irrigated rice areas. More recent research carried out by Kono [2001] underlined the key role played by the development of a network of canals and hydrological infrastructure in the intensification of rice cultivation in the Mekong Delta.

This article analyzes the major changes affecting farmers in the Delta following the implementation of liberalization policies in the late 80s and explains the responses of farming households to these profound transformations of their economic environment. It describes the linkages among major changes in the farm socioeconomic environment, farmers' behavior, and the adoption of new technology. Finally, the authors explain how and why economic liberalization led to both the intensification of rice production and agricultural diversification, and quantify the impact of these key processes on economic differentiation among farming households.

To assess the impact of economic reforms on rural livelihood systems, the authors rely on



a case study carried out in Omon District in the central plain of the Mekong Delta. A historical and systemic approach was used to determine the factors and conditions contributing to the agricultural development processes under study. Original data were collected during farm surveys and the transformations of the socioeconomic environment at the regional and country levels were analyzed through the available literature. Open interviews with key informants were used to assess the socioeconomic transformations and the related changes in local production systems before and after the liberalization process. In-depth interviews with 70 diverse households from two villages of Omon District were carried out to understand farmers' choices of production systems and their management strategies. A complementary sample description survey of 256 randomly selected farming households in Thoi Long village in the irrigated rice ecosystem and Dong Thuan village in the deepwater rice area was used to assess the distribution of each main type of farm according to its amount of productive resources, the characteristics of its production systems, and its economic results in 1995. Among these 256 households, a sub-sample of 80 farms was selected and surveyed in 2003 to analyze more recent changes in production systems and their economic performances.

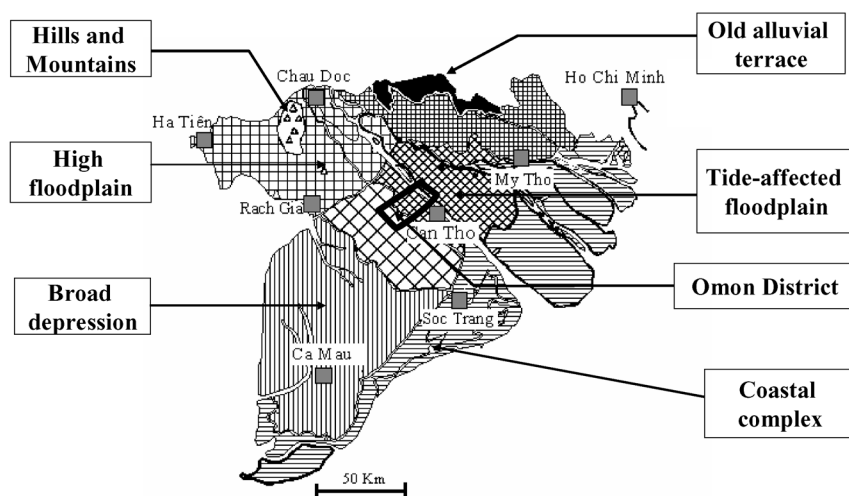
Following an overview of the key characteristics of Omon District, this article examines its agricultural situation before the economic reforms. The analysis of the rice intensification process by farmers in close relationship with the implementation of the economic reforms follows. Its linkages with current agricultural diversification are elucidated. The impact of these agricultural dynamics on the extent of farmer differentiation in terms of type of production system and level of income is quantified. Finally, recent changes are presented and several key issues regarding the sustainability of this agricultural development are discussed.

## **II Omon District: An Overview**

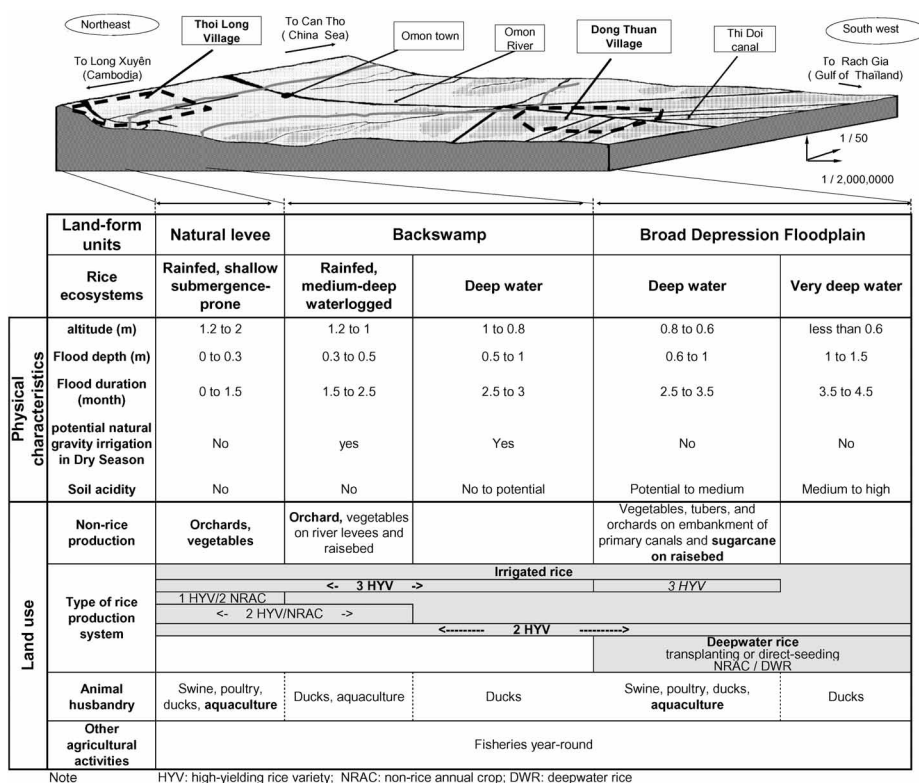
### **II-1 *Location and Physical Characteristics***

Omon District is located in the tide-affected central floodplain of the Mekong Delta (Map 1). It is characterized by a medium depth and duration of the flood, the absence of salinity throughout the year, and a relatively low level of soil acidity [Nguyen Huu Chiem 1993].

Omon District extends from the riverbank of the Bassac River (Hau River) to the lowlands of the Trans-Bassac floodplain. It is composed of three main subunits of the tide-affected floodplain: the natural levee (NL), the back swamp (BS), and the broad depression floodplain (BDFP). It is representative of the diversity of biophysical conditions of rice ecosystems in the central plain, including rainfed and deepwater ecosystems (Fig. 1). The irrigated ecosystem covers the northeastern part of the District and now accounts for two-thirds of the District area. The deepwater rice ecosystem still occurs in the southeastern part of the District. The NL is characterized by a shallow and short flood, no access to water by gravity during the dry season, and no soil acidity. The BS is characterized by an intermediate to high depth of flood, its medium duration, potential water intrusions at high tide during the dry season, and no soil acidity. The BS area is naturally connected to the Bassac River hydraulic network through



**Map 1** Location of Omon District in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam  
Source: [adapted from Nguyen Huu Chiem 1994]



**Fig. 1** Geo-morphological Units, Physical Conditions, and Land Use in Omon District in 1995

rivers such as the Omon and Bang Tang. The BDFP is characterized by a deep and long flood, as well as strong soil acidity. It was not connected naturally to the Bassac River, but, thanks to a network of man-made canals, dug at the beginning of the twentieth century but only completed in the late 70s and 80s, it is now linked to it.

## II-2 *Evolution of Agricultural Production under the Implementation of the Liberalization Policy*

The evolution of agricultural production in Omon District is a relevant illustration of the rapid changes in the Mekong Delta production systems in recent years. This region registered an impressive growth in rice production following the implementation of the economic reforms, with an annual growth rate of around 17% from 1985 to 1995. In 1985, the average rice yield was 3.51 tons of paddy per hectare and the annual land physical productivity was 5.3 tons of paddy equivalent per hectare. In 1995, average rice yield reached 4.29 tons per hectare and annual land productivity jumped to 9.56 tons per hectare. During the same period, rapid agricultural diversification occurred in the central plain of the Mekong Delta. It was characterized by the expansion of orchards and fruit production areas on the natural levee and to a lesser extent in the BS, and by the growth of sugarcane production in the BDFP during the early 90s. In Omon District, the area planted to orchards expanded to an annual growth rate of 11.9%, and from 2,781 to 4,890 ha from 1990 to 1995.

## II-3 *Current Characteristics of Agricultural Production and Land Use in Omon District*

The central plain of the Mekong Delta presents two original characteristics in terms of agricultural production: a high level of rice intensification associated with a relatively high level of agricultural diversification. With 9.6 tons of paddy produced per hectare and per year (compared with an average of 6.5 tons in the Mekong Delta), the central plain achieves a high level of physical productivity on its rice land. In Omon District, rice productivity increased to 10.6 tons of paddy per hectare and per year in 1995 as a consequence of a higher average yield per crop cycle (4.8 tons per hectare) associated with a higher cropping index (2.2 in 1995), and reached 13.2 tons of paddy per hectare and per year in 2002 with a average yield per crop cycle of 5 tons per hectare and a cropping index of 2.6. But cropping intensity varies according to land form units and rice ecosystems. Rice production systems with 2 or 3 crops of irrigated HYV per year on the same plot of land occupy the entire rice lands on the NL and in the BS. In the deepwater rice (DWR) areas, while the DWR cropping system was still present in 1995, production systems with 2 crops of HYV per year were already predominant and, in 2003, DWR was totally replaced by HYV-based cropping systems (Fig. 1).

This part of the Delta displays a relatively high level of diversity of its agricultural production. The total non-rice production area represents 17% of the total farm land (compared with an average of 16% for the whole Mekong Delta). The main non-rice type of production is orchards, covering 45% of the non-rice farm land. In Omon District, orchards are particularly frequent on the NL and, to a lesser extent, on the natural levees of rivers in the BS. Other significant non-rice crops are annual industrial crops of the following three kinds: grain legumes

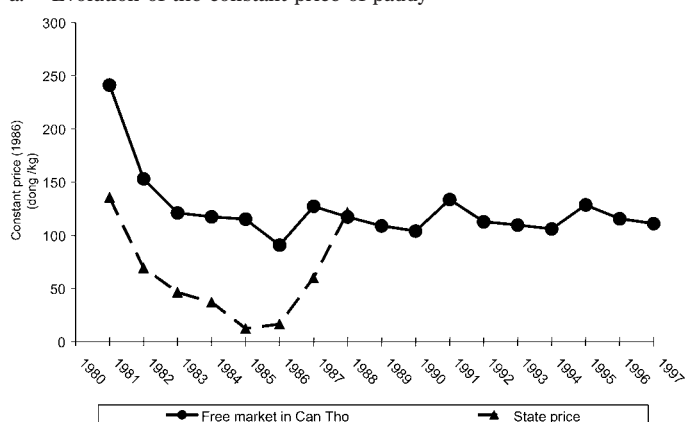
such as soybean and mungbean cultivated in rotation with HYV of rice in the irrigated ecosystem of the NL; tubers, especially sweet potatoes, produced in rotation with DWR in the BDFP; and sugarcane, which is mainly cultivated on raised beds in the BDFP (Fig. 1).

### III The Agricultural Situation before Economic Liberalization

#### III-1 State Control over Agricultural Products and Trade in Inputs

After the reunification of the country in 1976, trade in rice and agricultural inputs became a state monopoly. According to the contract 100 system that was put in place countrywide in

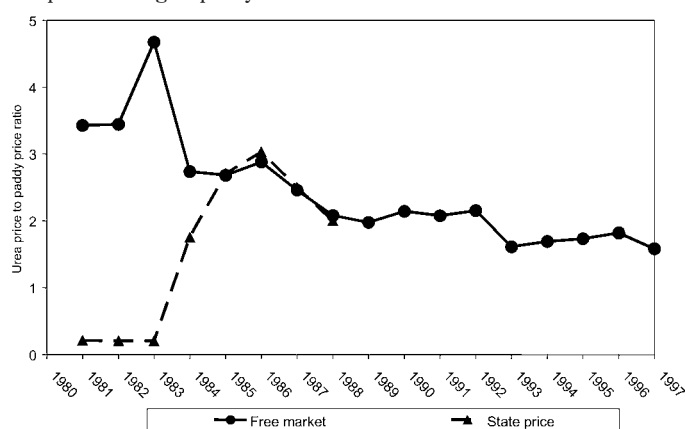
a. Evolution of the constant price of paddy



Source: Price committee of Can Tho Province

Note: Inflation rate was used as deflator to calculate constant price.

b. Evolution of the ratio between the price of 1 kg of urea and the price of 1 kg of paddy



Source: Price committee of Can Tho Province

Fig. 2 Evolution of Price Systems from 1981 to 1997

1981, farmers had to sell their rice to the state commercial system to reimburse inputs previously provided by the state distribution network [Pingali and Vo Tong Xuan 1992]. Under this system, farmers had to sell a contractual amount of their production to the state. Although their surplus could be sold on the free market, the level of the contractual amount to be delivered to the state was high and farmers had limited surpluses to sell on the free market. In 1985, the state price was a mere 20% of the free-market price (Fig. 2a).

The markets for key agricultural inputs such as chemical fertilizers (Urea, Di-Amono-Phosphate, etc.) and pesticides were also controlled by the state. The state supplied subsidized fertilizers to farmers organized in “production groups” called “*tap doan*” or cooperatives called “*hop tac xa*.” Because of its disorganization, this state supply system encountered shortages, could not procure inputs on time, and saw products move away from the official commercial system to the free market, where at that time prices were 10 times higher. Even if some fertilizer could be found on the private market, farmers could not afford to buy it at a very high price and were not motivated to do so because of their low expectation to be able to sell their product at a price allowing the recovery of such a high cost of inputs. Even if they could buy fertilizer and sell their rice surpluses on the free market, the ratio between the price of urea and the price of paddy was high and provided no incentive to intensify (Fig. 2b). Under those conditions, farmers were applying low rates of chemical fertilizers that limited the level of rice yields. As a result of this low price of rice and low level of rice productivity, farmers’ investment capacity was very limited [Le Coq 2001].

### III-2 *Collectivization of Production Factors*

After 1976 and the integration of South Vietnam in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, land became the property of the state and farmers had no guaranty of land tenure since their farm land could be taken away from them at any moment and re-allocated among farmers in “production groups” as observed during the late 70s and early 80s. With the creation of “production groups,” means of production such as draft animals and moto-mechanized tools (e.g., pumps, hand-tractors, etc.) were taken away from their owners to become the property of the group. They were scarce and their collective use led to mismanagement and poor maintenance. In those days, farmers had no incentive to buy such farm equipment.

### III-3 *Low Level of Farm Incomes and Limited Differentiation among Farming Households*

Farming household incomes were low because of the poor productivity of their production systems, the official pricing system in place, and the scarcity of off-farm and non-farm employment opportunities due to state control over commercial activities and the ban on private ownership of heavy equipment. Under those conditions, differentiation among farming households remained limited since production factors, especially land, were quite evenly distributed. Within “production groups” and cooperatives, rice fields were re-allocated among households according to their number of family labor units. Almost all the farmers had some land to cultivate, but all were smallholders. In the villages located in the NL and the BS, where

population density was high, one main family labor (*lao dong chinh*) received 0.13 to 0.15 hectare of land. In the villages located in the BDFP, where the population density was lower, farmers received 0.2 to 0.25 hectare per family labor [Vo Tong Xuan 1995b; Le Coq 2001]. After the payment of taxes and in-kind advances of the contract system, the potential for income generation in rice production was about the same among the local farms and close to the subsistence level. Some differentiation among households was due to differential access to non-rice fields, such as orchards in the NL and sugarcane plantations in the BDFP, because those kinds of land were usually not re-allocated among farmers under the production groups system. Nevertheless, differences in income levels among households due to this were still limited because non-rice production areas per farm were still at a low level while poor access to markets limited the potential incomes from those productions.

#### IV An Impressive Intensification of Rice Production

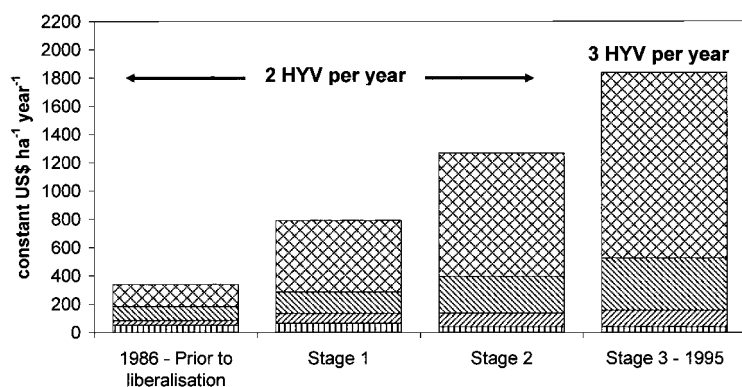
The economic reforms launched in the late 80s deeply modified the socioeconomic environment of farms in terms of changes in the conditions for the exchange of inputs and products through market liberalization and in production conditions thanks to the privatization of production factors. These profound changes initiated a tremendous process of rice intensification during the last decade and across the different ecosystems: the intensification of HYV systems in the irrigated ecosystem on the NL and BS, and the expansion of the HYV system in the former DWR ecosystem in the BDFP. To provide a better understanding of the specific effects of market liberalization and the recognition of private ownership, we separate the intensification process into two steps: intensification of input use and yield increase on the one hand, and intensification of fixed assets and an increase in cropping intensity on the other.

##### IV-1 *Trade Liberalization and Intensification of Input Use*

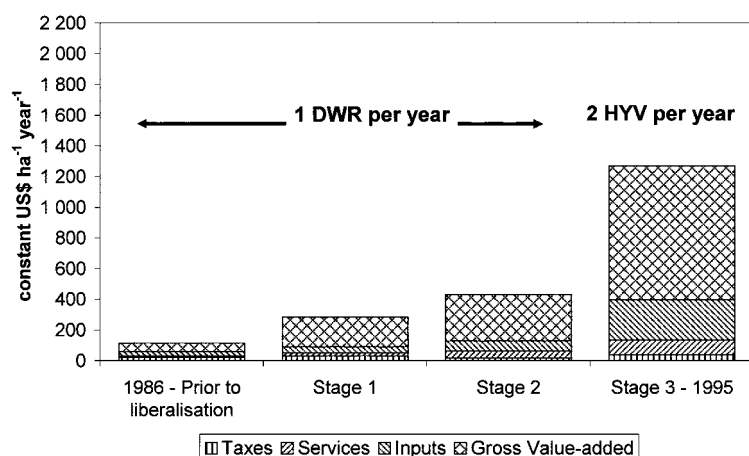
In 1988–89, the state suppressed its partial monopoly on rice and domestic trade in agricultural products [Pingali and Vo Tong Xuan 1992; Vo Tong Xuan 1995b; Dao The Tuan 1997]. Private trading was authorized and farmers were free to sell their rice on a unified market. By selling all their production on the free market, farmers got higher benefits from their rice production. Without any change in their cropping practices and production systems, but just thanks to this increase in gross product, farmers could obtain a higher level of added value per hectare from their rice crops at constant prices (Stage 1 on Fig. 3). This benefited mainly farmers exploiting the irrigated rice ecosystem (Stage 1 on Fig. 3a) more than those cultivating in the DWR ecosystem (Stage 1 on Fig. 3b).

The liberalization of the domestic market, coupled with the opening of international trade, allowed farmers to export the rice surpluses from the Mekong Delta that were formerly transferred to the northern and central parts of the country through the state commercial system. Barter trade helped Vietnam to rapidly increase its imports of key chemical inputs such as urea. Vietnam, which was a net importing country until 1988, suddenly started to export

**a. Irrigated rice ecosystem**



**b. Deepwater rice ecosystem**



**Fig. 3** Steps in Rice Intensification and Corresponding Changes in Rice Productivity for Irrigated and Deepwater Rice Ecosystems in Omon District, Mekong Delta, during 1986–95

Sources:

1986: Amount of fertilizer used estimated according to the contract system recommendation. Yield level, pesticide use, and services estimated through farmers historical interviews (CTU-CIRAD, 1995). Paddy price based on State price according to the price committee of Can Tho Province.

Stage 1: same level of yield, fertilizer, pesticide and services as in 1986 but under the free market price system in 1990 according to the price committee of Can Tho Province

Stages 2 and 3: based on survey of 256 households (CTU-CIRAD, 1995)

Notes: The rate of inflation was used as deflator to calculate constant prices.

HYV: high-yielding rice varieties



more than 1.5 million tons of rice after 1990. From 1990 to 1995, the volume of mineral fertilizer imports climbed almost threefold from 460,000 to 1,260,000 tons per year. At the country level, the amount of chemical fertilizer available per hectare of farm land jumped from 89 kg in 1990 to 214 kg in 1995 (data compiled from GSO and FAOstat). Thanks to the improved availability of chemical fertilizers, the constant price of fertilizer on the unified market decreased significantly. If the constant price of paddy remained rather stable on the free market after 1985 (Fig. 2a), the ratio between a kilogram of urea and a kilogram of paddy decreased from 2.8 in 1985 to around 1.5 in 1995 (Fig. 2b). This provided a strong incentive to farmers to increase their use of mineral fertilizers. At the District level, the average rate of application of mineral fertilizers jumped from 192 kg per hectare in 1985 to an average level of 350 kg per hectare in 1995 on the 256 farms surveyed in Omon District in 1995. In the same fashion, the liberalization of the pesticide domestic market led to an increase in their availability and use at the farm level. Farmers increased their use of pesticides to control pests and to limit crop losses. This overall increase in key input use, especially mineral fertilizer, led to a rapid growth in rice yields and land productivity (Stage 2 on Fig. 3). This increase was particularly important in the irrigated ecosystem, where the planting of fertilizer-responsive HYV was already well established.

Market liberalization generated a first step of rice intensification based on an increase in the use of chemical inputs allowing strong growth in the physical productivity of the land through yield improvement. But market liberalization alone cannot explain either the tremendous increase in rice production observed since 1988 or the present high level of land productivity in Omon District.

#### IV-2 *Privatization of Production Factors and Intensification of Rice Cropping Patterns*

In parallel with market liberalization and in agreement with the resolution No. 10 of the Vietnamese Politburo, the Vietnamese authorities recognized the status and role of household-based production units in agriculture and private ownership of land and farm equipment. After an initial set of reforms towards liberalization in the early 80s, this policy change provided a strong signal for more radical de-collectivization. This led to the dismantlement of the “production groups” that were previously managing the production equipment and the farmers’ access to production factors (delivery of chemical fertilizers and marketing of agricultural products) according to the Contract 100 system. In 1988, the means of production were either auctioned back to individual farming households or given back to their former owners. This recognition of private ownership of the means of production created another incentive for farmers to invest in the acquisition of farm equipment for rice intensification. Imports of second-hand engines from neighboring Asian countries rapidly increased the availability of pumps and hand-tractors and small-scale production units of axial-flow threshers mushroomed across the Delta. Farmers with enough capital to buy such equipment used it for their own cropping activities and made these investments even more profitable by renting out the machines to more-deprived farmers. This process led to a rapid improvement in the availability of farm equipment for all farmers.

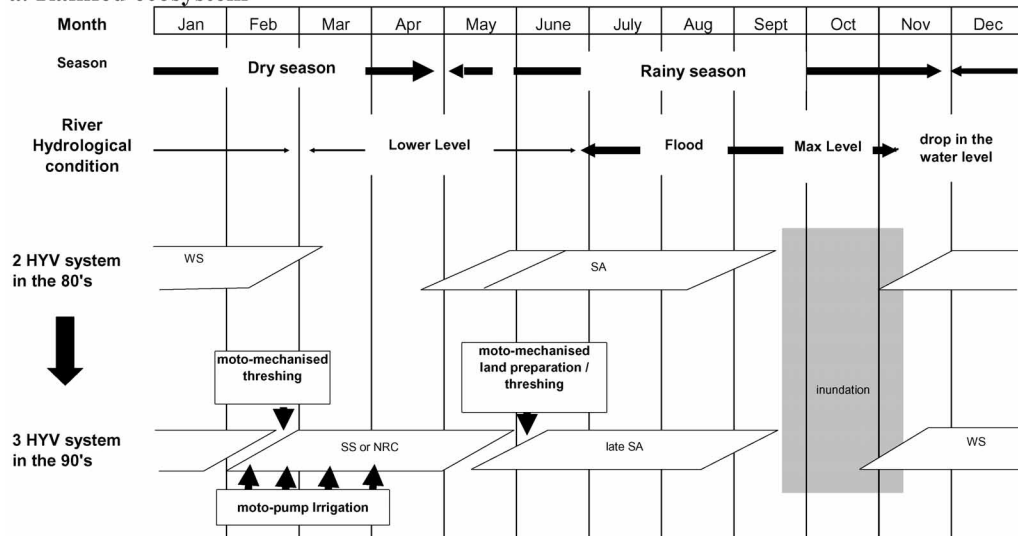
By using those moto-mechanized tools for irrigation and soil preparation, farmers significantly improved their water management, especially in the irrigated ecosystem. Rice yields of the HYV-based cropping systems increased as well as labor productivity thanks to the adoption of the direct-seeding technique for crop establishment. The moto-mechanization of farm operations became even more important when associated with the recognition of farmer land-use rights. In 1988, a first land reform provided individual farmers with land-use rights. This new land tenure system was reinforced in 1993 with the proclamation of a new land law granting long-term land-use rights to farmers. These rights could be considered as land property rights since they could be exchanged, mortgaged, and transferred through inheritance or sale. This better security of land tenure was another incentive for farmers to invest in labor and capital for land improvement.

Kono [2001] described the inherited large-scale hydraulic network developed for drainage purposes under the French colonial regime and its improvement and completion for irrigation during the collective regime of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the late 70s and 80s. Farmers performed complementary land improvement operations at the field and individual household scales. In the favorable parts of the rainfed and deepwater ecosystems of the NL and BS, they leveled the land and raised the dikes to improve water control. And, in the very deepwater ecosystem of the BDFP, farmers undertook important investments. They leveled the fields and built ditches, furrows, and dikes surrounding the plots to control water at the field scale. Such land improvement operations could take place more rapidly thanks to the availability of heavy earth-moving equipment such as modified four-wheel tractors used like small bulldozers. The combined effects of land improvement and an increased availability of moto-mechanized tools for irrigation, land preparation, and rice threshing contributed to another increase in paddy yields and labor productivity. But they also facilitated the adoption of new production systems and an increase in the local cropping index as shown in Fig. 4.

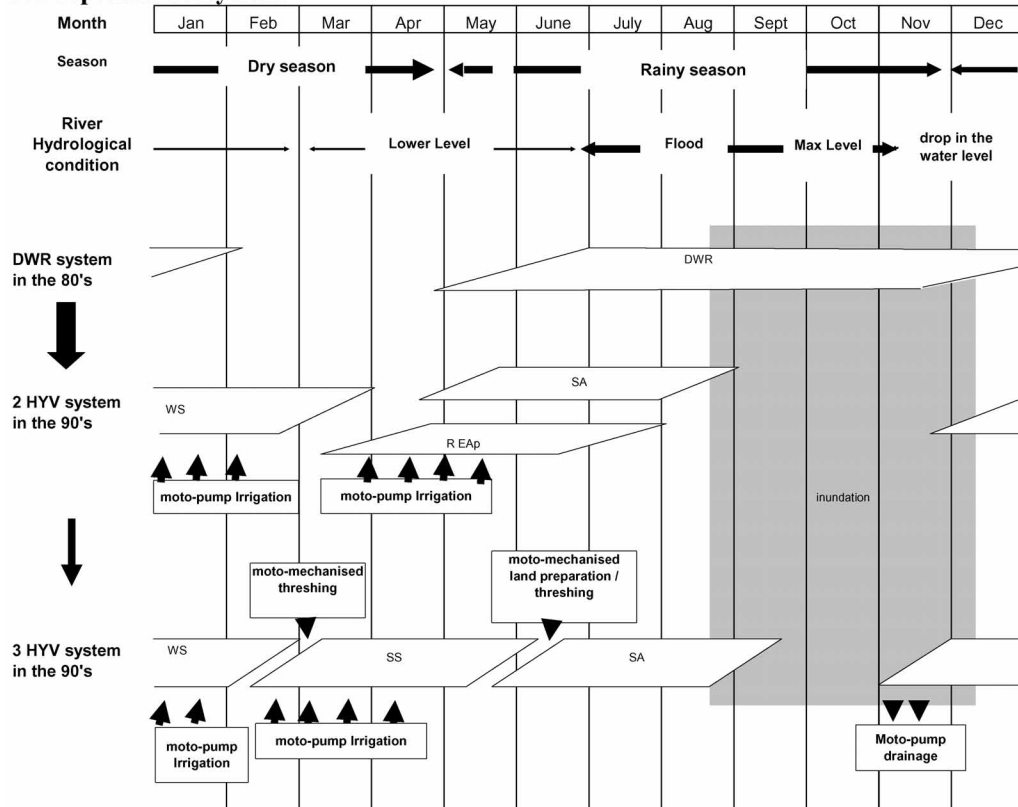
In the irrigated rice ecosystem, the availability of pumps allowed farmers to irrigate in the dry season and to insert a new rice crop cycle during that period of the year. The moto-mechanization of land preparation and threshing operations reduced the work load between two successive crop cycles and facilitated the implementation of cropping systems based on three HYV crop cycles per year. A higher cropping index enabled farmers to obtain a further increase in the added value per ha of rice land and per year (Stage 3 in Fig. 3a).

In the DWR ecosystem, pumps were also available to irrigate during the dry season as irrigation by gravity is not possible in these areas after the flood. This allowed an expansion of cropping systems based on two HYV crops per year. Equipped with a pump and a system of dikes around their fields, farmers could drain water out of their rice field to begin the first rice crop earlier than before and begin to introduce an intensive cropping system based on three HYV rice crop cycles per year. As a consequence, the added value per land unit increased dramatically (Stage 3 in Fig. 3b). Simulation shows that the return on investment in land leveling, in building dikes around the fields, and in small irrigation at the field level to switch from the traditional DWR cropping system to the irrigated two or even three HYV-based

### a. Rainfed ecosystem



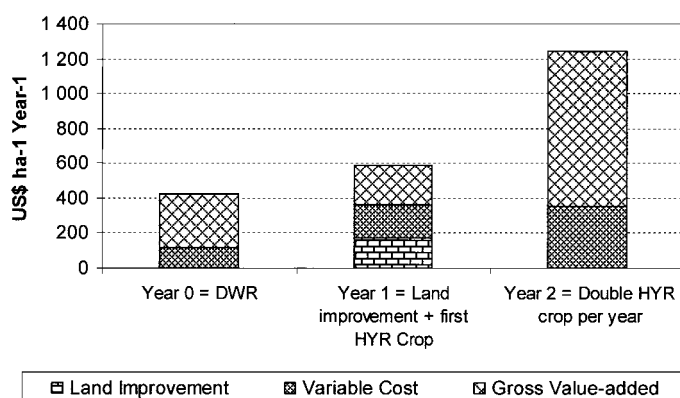
### b. Deepwater ecosystem



Note: DWR = deepwater rice; HYV = high-yielding rice varieties; WS = winter-spring rice season; SS = spring-summer rice season; SA = summer-autumn rice season; NRC = non-rice crop; ESA = early summer-autumn rice season

Fig. 4 Changes in Cropping Patterns in Omon District

cropping systems was less than one year. The cost of such land improvement amounting to US\$174 per hectare was less than the far higher gross product obtained from the first HYV rice crop. Following a slight reduction of the gross value-added during the first year of land improvement (Year 1) compared to the DWR system (Year 0), the gross value-added increased dramatically as soon as the following year (Year 2) as seen on Fig. 5. The new cropping systems required more agricultural inputs and labor. If labor productivity per day decreased



**Fig. 5** Changes in the Economic Results of Rice Production from Deepwater Rice (DWR) to the Irrigated Rice System

Source : Household survey CTU-CIRAD 1995

**Table 1** Economic Results of the Main Cropping Systems in Omon District, 1995 Crop Year

	Rice-based Cropping Systems					Non-rice Systems		
	Rice Monoculture			Rice and Non-rice System		Non-rice Systems		
	Deepwater Rice (DWR)	Irrigated Rice Systems 2 HYR Crops per Year	3 HYR Crops per Year	Sweet Potato/ DWR	2 HYR / Mungbean	Sugar Cane	Orchard* in Production	Average in 10 years
Gross product (US\$ ha <sup>-1</sup> year <sup>-1</sup> )	423	1,247	1,837	1,951	2,139	1,268	2,021	1,213
Variable cost (US\$ ha <sup>-1</sup> year <sup>-1</sup> )	114	350	486	318	577	444	269	229
Added value (US\$ ha <sup>-1</sup> year <sup>-1</sup> )	310	897	1,350	1,633	1,561	823	1,753	984
Labor (day ha <sup>-1</sup> year <sup>-1</sup> )	49	169	260	448	469	285	354	301
Value-added per day labor (US\$ day <sup>-1</sup> )	6.3	5.3	5.2	3.6	3.3	2.9	5.0	3.3

Source: Survey of 256 farmers by CTU-CIRAD in Omon District, 1995

Notes: Gross product, value-added, variable cost for 256 farms

Labor estimates based on interviews of selected farmers

\* Citrus production

from US\$6.3 to US\$5.3 vis-à-vis the traditional DWR cropping system, farmer total income from rice production increased markedly from US\$310 to US\$897 per hectare and per year thanks to an impressive increase in land productivity (Table 1).

#### IV-3 *State Support for Rice Intensification*

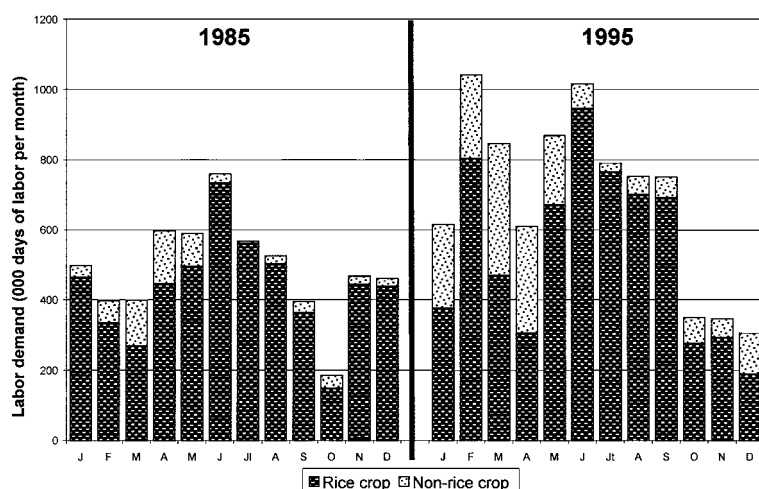
Even if the impetus toward rapid acceleration of rice intensification was the state withdrawal from market and production functions and the recognition of the farming household economy, state institutions still played a facilitating role in the process. Their involvement was threefold: (1) the continuation of rice research, especially breeding of potentially high-yielding semi-dwarf cultivars, and their dissemination through extension services; (2) the reform of the credit system to improve small farmers' access to loans; and (3) further development in hydraulic infrastructure.

The process of rice intensification was supported by active research programs in cooperation with international centers, particularly the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), and the dissemination of new short-duration (85–90 days) varieties, adapted to different environments (such as soil acidity) and resistant to a broader spectrum of insect pests and diseases [Vo Tong Xuan 1995a]. Since new technology was disseminated through the “production groups” during the “collective period,” a new agricultural extension service dedicated to supporting individual farming households was created in 1993. Although the resources of this new extension system remained scarce, it contributed significantly to the intensification process by disseminating HYV seeds and by providing technical advice for rice production, e.g. fertilizer and pest management, through demonstration plots, training courses, technical leaflets, etc.

During the collective period, the procurement of credit was supporting only the production groups. In 1990, the Vietnam Agricultural Bank (VAB) was created to provide credit to farming households. Initially, VAB provided mainly short-term loans for rice production. Although access to formal credit was conditioned by the availability of land titles, called “*bang khoan dat*,” this reform helped most farmers in acquiring increased amounts of key agricultural inputs.

Although the state withdrew itself from the agricultural production sector, it continued to invest in improving the hydraulic infrastructure. It invested directly in the construction of primary canals. It was also involved in the organization of the cleaning and re-digging of secondary canals through the collection of the 10-day duty services, the preparation of work plans, and their negotiations with landowners [Kono 2001]. From 1985 to 1995, in Omon District, 120 kilometers of canals were dug in the BDFP, 20 kilometers in the BS, and 5 kilometers in the NL [Vo Tong Xuan *et al.* 1995].

The recent rice intensification provided impressive agricultural growth over a short time and a tremendous increase in the added value per year and per area unit due to rapid increases in both yield and cropping index (Stage 3 in Fig. 3). The moto-mechanization of the main farm operations and the increasing use of pesticides (including herbicides) boosted labor productivity and reduced the demand for labor per crop cycle. But, the expansion of new multiple-cropping



**Fig. 6** Changes in Agricultural Labor Requirements for Rice and Non-rice Production in Omon District before and after the Economic Reforms

Notes: Estimation for labor demand per crop cycle and per hectare in 1985 and 1995 based on authors' survey in 1995

Cropped areas at the District level in 1985 and 1995 based on data from the Omon District statistical office

Rice, citrus, sugarcane, and sweet potato are taken into account, as well as the timing of planting and harvesting periods for each rice cycle according to household survey (CTU-CIRAD, 1995).

systems increased labor demand at the regional level and provided employment opportunities for family labor in productive activities year-round as shown in Fig. 6.

## V The Diversification of Agricultural Production

On top of rice intensification in the Mekong Delta, the diversification of agricultural production in the central plain also played an important role in explaining the rapid agricultural growth observed in this region of Vietnam during the decade following the adoption of the liberalization policy. The implementation of the economic reforms increased cash income across the whole spectrum of the Vietnamese population. The development of industrial and service sectors in urban areas led to changes in food consumption patterns. The demand for food products of urban consumers and, to a lower extent, of rural consumers became more diversified [Figué and Bricas 2003] as the share of non-rice products increased. New market opportunities for fruits and vegetables, sugar, animal products, etc., appeared and farmers started to seize them at a time when the price of rice remained stable.

### V-1 *The Multiple Faces of Crop Diversification*

The pattern of agricultural diversification differed according to local agroecological characteristics. In such a deltaic region, the characteristics of the flood (its depth, duration,

etc.) strongly influence the possibility of growing non-rice crops. Two main types of crop diversification patterns are possible: non-rice annual crops in rotation with rice or the production of perennial crops.

Farmers selected two main categories of annual crops to be produced in rotation with rice. In the BDFP zone, sweet potato in the dry season followed the DWR crop. In the NL, farmers planted more upland crops such as soybean, mungbean, or various fruits and vegetables such as watermelon. The moto-mechanization of land preparation facilitated the production of tubers on the heavy clayey soils in the BDFP, while small-scale furrow irrigation expanded thanks to the availability of pumps. The adoption and expansion of these cropping systems were easy as they were already familiar to the local farmers. But, under the new economic conditions of their farm environment, they enabled farmers to increase the added value by land unit. The “upland crop–deepwater rice” (UC-DWR) cropping system allowed this added value per land unit to increase by 427% compared with DWR only. In the NL zone, the “two HYV rice crops–upland crop” (2HYV-UC) system increased the value-added per land unit 74% vis-à-vis the production of two HYV only as shown in Table 1. Compared with rice monoculture systems, the new ones required higher variable costs (for planting materials, seeds, pesticides, etc.) and much more labor for manual land preparation (to make furrows, raised beds, etc.), especially for tubers, daily irrigations, and manual harvests. These new cropping systems were so labor-intensive that their labor productivity (added value per day) was lower than with rice monoculture. If the use of extra family labor was necessary during the peak of labor demand at harvest, farmers often adjusted the area planted to non-rice crops to their capacity to implement daily irrigations. For mungbean and soybean on the NL, one labor unit can irrigate some 0.10 to 0.25 ha with manual tools, and up to 0.3 ha with motorized pumps. For sweet potato on the BDFP, one labor unit irrigates up to 0.13 ha in 4 hours with a watering bucket. For crops with higher water needs such as watermelon, one labor unit irrigates a maximum of 0.05 ha in 4 hours with manual tools and 0.3 ha with motorized pumps.

Because perennial species cannot tolerate any submergence, crop diversification based on them required significant land improvement techniques. The construction of raised beds required 150 to 350 working days per hectare depending on the topography and the height of the beds. The lower the field and deeper the flood, the higher the raised beds to avoid submergence. High beds in low-lying areas also have a smaller useful area for crop production compared to the total field size. This proportion varies from 75% in the NL and the rainfed ecosystem down to only 55% in deepwater areas. Avoiding submergence in the BDFP zone is costly and difficult to secure. The higher depth of submergence implies the construction of bigger ridges while the potential soil acidity requires the implementation of labor-intensive soil management techniques i.e. the construction of raised bed in two phases to put the top soil at the surface of the raised bed. As a consequence, orchards are widespread on the NL, where submergence is easier to avoid, while sugarcane plantations are more common in the lower and more acidic BDFP, where some flooding cannot be avoided. Farmers plant sugarcane because it is more tolerant to acidity and is harvested once a year before the flood, whereas flooding



leads to the death of fruit trees, especially citrus species.

Sugarcane production was used to avoid redistribution of the land in the BDFP zone during the early 80s, but planted area expanded in the early 90s and allowed an increase of 116% in the added value per land unit compared with DWR. Sugarcane production is much more labor-intensive than DWR because it requires several manual operations (such as furrowing at plantation time, repeated irrigations, and cane harvest) and the variable costs are also higher than in rice production. As a result, under current prices, sugarcane production had a lower added value per hectare than the two HYV-based rice cropping system (Table 1).

Fruit production in the NL of the Mekong River is an old activity, and an expansion of horticulture occurred during the 70s to meet the increased urban demand during the Vietnam War. Later on, because of the lack of market opportunities, most of the mixed orchards were abandoned if only used for family consumption. During the last decade, new market opportunities were created and prices for horticultural products climbed. The replanting and specialization of existing orchards as well as the creation of new ones on rice land occurred. In this second case, costly investments had to be made for land improvement to secure good water control: the construction of raised beds for drainage, and of dikes around the orchards for flood protection. Numerous irrigations and maintenance operations made the management of orchards more labor-intensive than rice monoculture. After reaching their productive periods and under the price levels observed in the mid-90s, orchards were providing the highest added value per land unit and per year than any other cropping system, and a level of labor productivity almost as high as the ones obtained by the 2 and 3 HYV-based rice cropping systems (Table 1).

Whatever the type of non-rice production selected by the farmers based on local ecological conditions and their investment capacity, they all participated in the search for an increased added value per land unit and per year. This expansion was facilitated by easier access to the moto-mechanization of tedious operations and the increased availability of cheaper and more diverse key agricultural inputs. The adoption of non-rice production resulted in labor intensification compared with rice monoculture. The specific long-term investments in fixed capital required by the adoption of non-rice cropping systems were usually low since most of the equipment was also used in rice production (pumps, hand tractors, sprayers, etc.), except when prior earth-moving land improvement was necessary in the case of fruit and sugarcane production in low-lying areas.

#### V-2 *Complementarities between Rice and Non-rice Production*

Rice intensification and the diversification of agricultural production in Omon District were two very interdependent processes. As stated above, rice intensification allowed farmers to improve their capacity for accumulation and use it to expand non-rice production. This is particularly obvious in the case of orchards in the NL, where the farmers who established large plantations benefited from larger rice lands. But, in the BDFP, greater income brought about by the adoption of the UC-DWR system and/or sugarcane production was gradually invested in land

improvement of paddy fields to expand high-productivity HYV-based rice cropping systems.

At the household level, rice intensification allowed farmers to maintain food self-sufficiency. When farmers decided to convert part of their rice land into orchards, they also expanded the three HYV-based rice cropping pattern to harvest enough paddy to meet family needs. Financially, since non-rice cash cropping is relatively risky because of price fluctuations, crop diseases, or floods, rice intensification was providing a kind of “safety net” for small farmers when they decided to diversify their combination of production. At the same farm level, rice intensification and diversification into non-rice cash crops were also complementary regarding the management of working capital and the use of family labor. By increasing farmers’ cash income, the expansion of non-rice crops allowed farmers to improve their technical and economic performances in rice production. Consequently households managing a mixed production system, including rice and orchards, tend to achieve higher rice yield thanks to their better capacity for investment compared with other smallholders involved in rice monoculture only (Table 2).

**Table 2** Economic Results of HYV-based Rice Cropping System by Type of Production System

	2HYV Rice Crop System				3HYV Rice Crop System			
	on NL		on BDFP		on NL		on BDFP	
	Rice Monoculture Only	Mixed Production System	Rice Monoculture Only	Mixed Production System	Rice Monoculture Only	Mixed Production System	Rice Monoculture Only	Mixed Production System
Yield (tons ha <sup>-1</sup> year <sup>-1</sup> )	9.1	9.9	9.5	10.2	13.3	14.1	13.8	14.5
Standard deviation	1.6	1.5	1.6	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.4	2.0
Variable cost (US\$ ha <sup>-1</sup> year <sup>-1</sup> )	361	352	331	394	502	528	559	566
Standard deviation	13	28	37	33	48	41	64	58
Value-added (US\$ ha <sup>-1</sup> year <sup>-1</sup> )	798	925	904	946	1,219	1,307	1,239	1,315
Standard deviation	69	65	116	83	85	129	159	121

Source: Survey of 256 farmers by CTU-CIRAD in Omon District, 1995

### V-3 *Toward Intensification at the Whole Production System Level*

In the local context of small-scale household-based agriculture on tiny holdings, diversification corresponds to farmers’ main strategy of seeking greater land productivity. Closely combined with rice intensification at the field and farm levels, crop diversification generates more intensification of land and labor uses, as well as increases in working capital and fixed assets. At the District level, the combination of diversification with rice intensification produced a large increase in agricultural production, agricultural added value for the community, and local demand for labor throughout the year, as displayed in Fig. 6.

### V-4 *Is the Diversification Process Sustainable?*

While diversification contributed to the intensification of whole production system in the 90s,

recent observations show that this process is difficult to sustain because of technical and market problems.

Following the rapid expansion of citrus plantation on the NL in the late 90s, the epidemic of greening disease, combined with floods, led to a major damage to citrus trees. Although safe roots stock was released by the extension system, most of the farmers decided to grow other species such as longan, mango or sapodilla. Consequently, the expansion of orchards slowed down from 11.9% per year during the 1990–95 period to a mere 0.3% from the 1995 to 2000. In some situations, farmers decided to abandon fruits trees and return to rice production.

On the BDFP, the pace of crop diversification was also strongly reduced in the late 90s with the collapse of the sugarcane production. While sugarcane provided better income than DWR, its economic performance was lower than HYV-based cropping systems that expanded in this zone thanks to the availability of pumps, and land improvement and irrigation canals. Facing strong price fluctuation and economic losses in sugarcane production, farmers switch to irrigated rice and sugarcane areas dived from 127,000 to 43 hectares from 1995 to 2002. At the same time, for the same reasons, sweet potato has been gradually replaced by less risky HYV-based monoculture. Sweet potatoes areas in Omon District decreased from 458 in 1990 to 20 hectares in 2002.

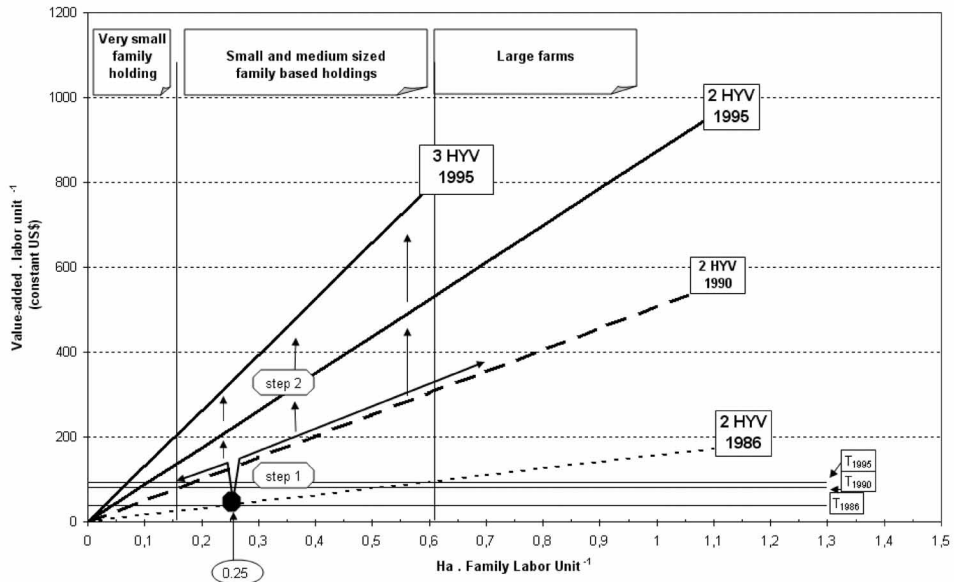
While in general the pace of crop diversification slowed down in the recent years at the District level, in the BDFP it was even reduced.

## **VI Dynamics and Extent of Differentiation among Farming Households**

### **VI-1 *Abolition of Collective Production Groups and Initial Differentiation among Farmers***

The recognition of family-based agriculture by the state and the abolition of the collective production groups (*“tap doan”*), “linkage production groups” (*“lien tap doan”*), and cooperatives between the late 80s and the beginning of the 90s created inequalities in the endowment of production factors among the local farming households through the reallocation of land and fixed agricultural assets. The land was redistributed to farmers according to the land ownership situation before the collectivization. Many farmers recovered the fields they owned in the early 80s. These corresponded roughly to the land received under the “Land to the Tiller Reform” initiated in 1971 [Callison 1983]. But another land distribution was necessary in the early 90s because of the re-emergence of a class of landless farmers and the existence of holdings of more than 3 hectares of land. In those days, the ratio of land per family labor varied from 0 to more than 1.5 hectares. This land redistribution in the early 90s led to a rapid and extensive differentiation among farm holdings in terms of income levels from rice production and capacities to accumulate capital. While some farming households were able to produce rice surpluses and improve their capacity for capital accumulation without changing their existing rice production system, other smallholders could not generate enough cash income from rice to meet their basic family needs. Based on our estimates of the added value produced by each main cropping system, and with an average ratio of 1.7 family members per labor, households

a. Irrigated rice ecosystem



b. Deepwater rice ecosystem

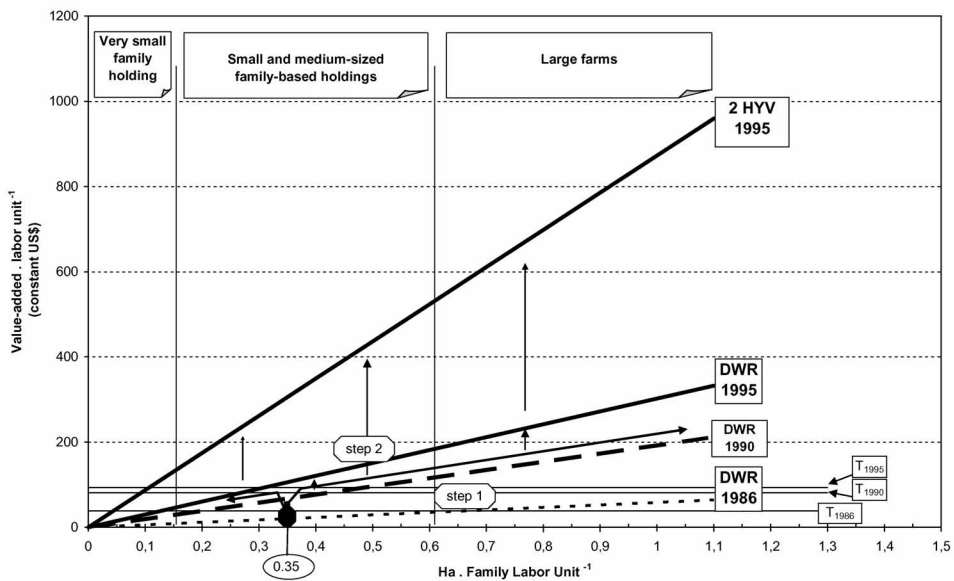


Fig. 7 Dynamics of Labor Productivity in Rice in Omon District from 1986 to 1995

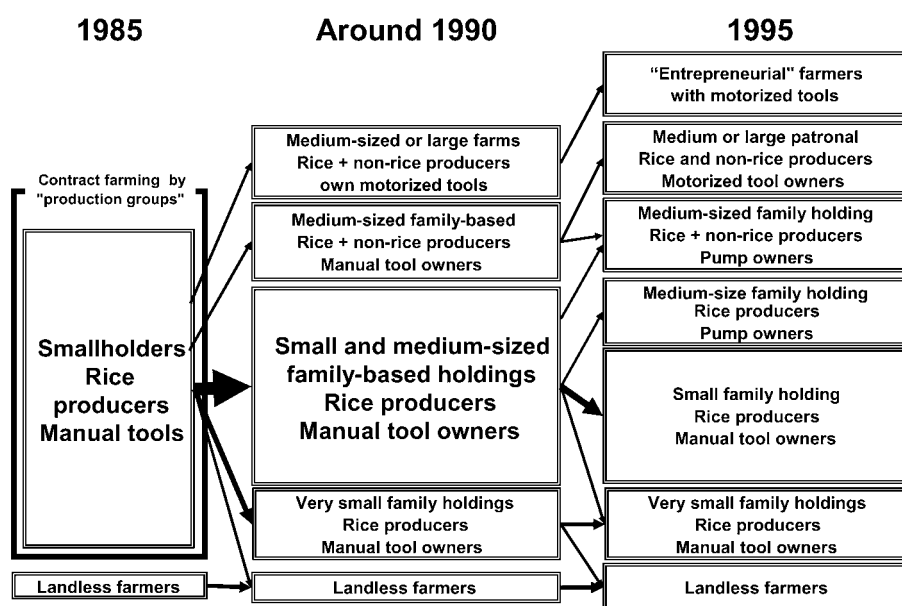
Source: Household survey by CTU-CIRAD in Omon District, 1995

Notes: T1986, T1990, and T1995 correspond to an income threshold, respectively, in 1986, 1990, and 1995. This represents the necessary equivalent income for 1 family labor unit to provide rice and non-rice food for its family. It is based on an equivalent of needs estimated at 424 kg of paddy equivalent per family member per year and 1.7 total family members per family labor unit.

DWR: deepwater rice system; 2 HYV: 2 HYV rice cropping system; 3 HYV: 3 HYV rice cropping system

practicing the two HYV-based rice crop system on less than 0.15 hectare of rice land per family labor (equivalent to a total farm size of some 0.40 ha) on the NL or in the BS zone could not satisfy their basic needs. This was also the case of small farmers relying on DWR cultivation with less than 0.45 hectare per family worker (equivalent to a total farm size of 1.2 ha) in the BDFP zone. These farming situations are displayed as step 1 in Fig. 7.

When a collective unit was dismantled, its farm equipment either was given back to the former owners or was sold to group members at a low price or through auctions. Most of the farm machinery, such as pumps, hand-tractors, and four-wheel tractors, was often in poor condition, but its ownership was still a significant factor in the economic differentiation among local farmers. Heavy equipment was used in the owners' fields to increase productivity and decrease the demand for labor, but it was also rented out to other farms for a fee, thus increasing the income of its owners thanks to such contractual farm services. Fig. 8 displays the five main types of farms created by the above-mentioned reallocation of farming assets: landless farmers, very small family-based holdings of rice producers with manual tools, small and medium-sized family-based holdings of rice producers with manual tools, medium-sized family-based producers of rice and non-rice products with manual tools, and medium-sized or



**Fig. 8** Differentiation among the Main Types of Farms in Omon District from 1985 to 1995

Source: Survey by CTU and CIRAD in Omon District, 1995

Note: In 1985, although there has been a land distribution in the early 80s when the "production groups" were established, some landless farmers did not receive land, especially in highly populated areas where land was too scarce to allow the allocation of 0.10 to 0.13 hectare per family member. The administration requested them to settle on recently reclaimed land. However, due to the poor living conditions in those areas, some landless farmers decided to stay in their villages and made a living as seasonal wage earners and from traditional non-farm activities such as fishing.

large-sized producers of rice and non-rice products with motorized farm machinery.

#### VI-2 *An Increasing Differentiation among Farmers through the Diversification of Production Systems and Off-farm Economic Activities*

Different access to key production factors such as land quantity and quality and farm equipment created an unequal pace of capital accumulation among farmers. Depending on farmers' capacity to balance rice and non-rice production, they take rapidly advantage of new market opportunities for agricultural products and for off-farm employment.

The analysis of the evolutionary trajectories of each main type of farm helps to understand their different use of productive resources and different trends for their accumulation. In the context of relative land scarcity and limited access to financial markets of the early 90s, access to land and land rights was the driving force of differentiation among farmers. Access to institutional credit was expanding and was effective in facilitating rice intensification. The institutional credit system for farming households of Omon District was initiated in 1991 and 47% of farmers were using it in 1995 according to the farm survey carried out by CTU-CIRAD on that year. But it did not modify existing differences in the capacity for accumulation among farmers since credit was mainly limited to short-term loans to buy farm inputs, their amounts depending on the area of rice land (the land-use right was the sole collateral required by the bank). These loans could not help to develop new production requiring more costly and long-term investments for the acquisition of farm equipment and/or land improvement. In a context characterized by low endowments in working capital and limited access to institutional credit for investments, land became a major source of capital since it could be mortgaged against "private" loans. Farmers who benefited from the land reform and obtained larger holdings could sell a plot of land or mortgage it to mobilize enough capital for investments in leveling paddy fields in the BDFP to expand their rice area under the intensive HYV-based rice cropping system, or in creating orchards on the NL. Usually, the larger farms invested in non-rice cash crops and most of them managed mixed production systems.

As the gold price of paddy land increased at the annual rates of 15, 21, 20% for lower, medium and upper fields respectively between 1989 and 1994 [Le Coq *et al.* 2004], landless farmers and very small holders could not access more land. Even when these tiny farms managed to intensify their cropping patterns (with the three HYV-based rice cropping system in the NL or UC-DWR in the BDFP) by renting moto-mechanized tools and using credit (from whatever sources), they could achieve economic performances allowing them to sustain their families from agricultural production only. As they were very vulnerable to natural disasters, price fluctuations, and the poor health of family members, the vicious circle of indebtedness was common among them and could force them to sell their land.

Small and medium-sized family holdings that benefited from reforms were able to intensify their agricultural production system and to increase their income. Part of their cash income from agricultural production was invested in pumps to secure water control in their rice fields and some of them managed to develop non-rice production on raised beds. As they remained

vulnerable to variable prices for their non-rice products and to climatic shocks, most of the small holdings practiced rice monoculture because of their lack of capital to invest in other production or after failing to sustain such cash-cropping activities. Most of the medium-sized farms developed a mixed production system in a more sustainable way since the volume of their rice production provided a more stable source of cash income.

Medium- and large-sized producers of rice and non-rice crops who could rapidly develop a higher capacity of investment invested in motorized pumps for irrigation and drainage in their fields and for rent to poorer neighbors. They were also in a more favorable position to rapidly take advantage of new market opportunities and they replanted their orchards with more lucrative citrus species. As their cash income increased markedly, they were able to expand the non-rice component of their production systems and had to use more hired workers in labor-intensive fruit and sugarcane plantations. Some of these entrepreneurs also invested in land accumulation, in the development of large-scale trading activities, or in the acquisition of more moto-mechanized farm equipment for contractual services on smaller farms. Among this category of well-off households, two types emerged: large “patronal” farmers focusing on agricultural production and entrepreneurs gradually developing their non-farm economic activities.

### VI-3 *Current Extent of Farmer Differentiation and Trends*

The above-described processes of capital accumulation, or lack of, increased the differentiation among farmers in terms of land and farm equipment availability, production, and livelihood systems. In 1995, five main types of farming households could be distinguished: landless farmers, very small family holdings, small and medium-sized family farms, “patronal” farmers, and entrepreneurs. Their respective key characteristics and economic performances are displayed in Table 3.

Landless farmers represented about 10% of the total number of households in Omon District. They were either farmers who lost their land during its redistribution following the dismantlement of the production groups or smallholders who sold their tiny plots of land after the economic liberalization. They had to rely on non-permanent agricultural wages for their living. Thanks to the dual processes of rice intensification and crop diversification, men found employment mainly in transporting rice or other agricultural products, in land improvement activities (construction of raised beds and dikes, digging of canals), or in land preparation for sugarcane and sweet potatoes, while women were hired for hand-weeding in paddy fields and rice or sugarcane harvesting. Although the intensification of land use increased the demand for hired labor, landless households could not find income-generating opportunities throughout the year in their own villages. To find such opportunities, they moved within the countryside to follow the periods of peak labor demand at rice harvesting throughout the Mekong Delta. Some relied on fishing or petty trade activities to complement their meager income. Their average income remained low at around US\$157/labor/year in 1995. In the late 90s marked by the reduced pace of diversification and a decrease of labor demand in rice due to new crop



**Table 3** Characteristics of the Main Types of Farms in Omon District, 1995

Farmer's Type	Landless	Very Small Family Holdings	Small and Medium Family Holdings	"Patronal" Farmers	"Entrepreneurial" Farmers
Frequency (%)	10	15	55	9	11
Main types of production systems	–	Rice	Rice (+ non-rice)	Rice + non-rice	Rice + non-rice
Percentage of farmers practicing exclusive rice monoculture (%)	0	75	52	33	30
Average cultivated area (ha/household)	0.05	0.44	1.22	2.71	1.70
Standard deviation	0.05	0.21	0.69	1.30	1.38
Main type of equipment owned	Manual	Manual	Manual (or motorized)	Motorized	Moto-mechanized
Percentage of farmers owning motorized tools (%)	0	19	43	66	100
Type of off-farm activities	Hired farm laborer	Hired farm laborer and/or small scale fishing	Hired farm laborer and/or small scale fishing, trade or handicrafts	Small scale trade or handicrafts	Agricultural services, large scale trade, product processing
Percentage of family income from off-farm activities (%)	95	48	25	5	50
Family income (US\$ labor <sup>-1</sup> year <sup>-1</sup> )	187	225	329	584	488
Standard deviation	179	134	195	405	366

Source: Survey of 256 farmers by CTU and CIRAD in Omon District, 1995

Note: The sample was randomly chosen among a list of farmers having a homestate plot of land according to 1992's cadastral data. This sample corresponds to 12% of the total number of farmers in this list and in 2 hamlets in each of Thoi Long and Dong Thuan villages.

management techniques (land preparation and herbicide use), labor requirements were not enough to fully employ wage-earners from landless and very small holdings. These workers started to rely on off-farm employment in urban areas, especially in Ho Chi Minh City, through seasonal or permanent migrations of a family worker or by moving the whole household to the city.

In 1995, the very small family holdings made up around 15% of the total number of farming households in Omon District. They had access to only small plots of rice land after the dismantlement of the production groups and farmed less than 0.15 hectare per family labor, that is to say, less than 0.8 hectare of farm land per household. They managed to intensify their rice-cropping systems by using hired motorized equipment. In the irrigated ecosystem, most of them adopted the three HYV-based rice cropping system which is less risky than the 2HYV-UC system, requires less investment, and provide a stronger food security at the household level. In the BDFP, most of the smallholders had not developed HYV-based rice cropping

patterns yet in 1995 because of their lack of cash for land leveling. In this agroecological zone, most of these very small holdings still managed the UC-DWR cropping system instead. Facing low market price in the late 90s, they introduced multiple HYV-based rice cropping systems. With very limited cash flow, they had to sell rice quickly at harvest and reaped low prices. They also had to pay for agricultural services and, sometimes, financial constraints forced them to reduce input use in their rice fields. If they could rely on seasonal credit from official sources for rice production, they usually had to find more informal sources in the BDFP, where the availability of credit was less developed. Because of their lack of capacity for investment, they could not establish orchards or sugarcane plantations, or rear more animals. Very often, their low agricultural income was not sufficient to cover the basic needs of their families and they needed to seek complementary sources of cash from employment as hired laborers or from fishing. On average, these off-farm activities contributed to more than 50% of the total annual cash income of this category of farmers.

The family-based small and medium holdings correspond to the most frequent situation as they made up some 55% of the total number of farms in 1995. They farm from 0.15 to 0.6 hectare per family labor and can satisfy their basic needs from their farming activities. They usually produce a small capacity for the accumulation of productive resources. They obtain complementary earnings from off-farm employment as temporary wage earners, fishing, petty trading, or the manufacturing of handicrafts. Those activities could amount to around 20% to 25% of their total annual income. Depending on the characteristics of their production systems, they display contrasting situations. Farmers practicing rice monoculture tend to intensify their production systems without owning motorized machinery. In 1995, most of them were still managing DWR-based systems in the BDFP zone, but some had begun to experiment with the high productivity of two or even three HYV-based rice systems by hiring heavy farm equipment. In 2003, those farmers had fully adopted the intensive HYV-based rice systems. On the NL and in the BS, this category of farmers usually chooses to develop two or three HYV-based rice cropping systems depending on the local ecological conditions.

In 1995, the remaining share of farmers (40% on NL and 70% on BDFP) had developed mixed production systems comprising high-productivity multiple rice-cropping systems and non-rice production. They usually had access to more land and working capital to develop land, establish industrial or fruit crop plantations, and acquire heavy farm machinery. In the irrigated rice ecosystem, most of them had adopted the three HYV-based rice cropping system, and also introduced HYV-based rice cropping systems in the BDFP zone. Their perspectives are diverse. The economic performance of farms with rice and orchards depends on the age of the fruit plantations. If farmers were already harvesting the products, they could invest more in improving their cropping systems. But, in the case of young tangerine orchards, the situation was more critical as the *huang long bing* greening disease could still destroy their plantations. In 2003, most of them had replanted their orchards with new species such as longan, mango and sapodilla. In the BDFP, because of the decreasing and very fluctuating price of sugar, the trend toward improving water control and adopting HYV-based rice cropping systems observed

in 1995, reinforced the specialization in high productivity rice production.

The “patronal” farmers were an important category representing around 20% of the total number of farming households. With more than US\$450 per family labor, they registered the highest level of average annual net income and amount of fixed assets. Having access to an average of 2.45 hectares of land, they managed larger holdings with mixed combinations of crop production. Particularly, they planted relatively large areas to non-rice crops and used many hired laborers during periods of high labor demand for weeding and rice, sugarcane, and fruit harvesting. In 2003 on the NL farmers still manage mixed combination of crops (multiple HYV-based rice cropping system and new fruit trees on raised beds) while on the BDFP, large farmers abandoned sugarcane production and specialized in intensive rice production. They also increase their incomes through expansion of their off-farm business activities, the introduction of rice-fish systems, or the production of high quality aromatic rice.

## VII Concluding Remarks

The economic reforms launched in the late 80s have established a radically new socioeconomic environment enabling small farmers to embark on a rapid intensification of their production systems in fixed capital (motorization and moto-mechanization), working capital (agricultural inputs), and labor. This explains the impressive growth in agricultural production observed during the decade following the adoption of the liberalization policy. If the impetus for rice intensification was provided by these economic reforms allowing farmers to recover a capacity for investment, it also benefited from the inheritance of previous investments in hydraulic infrastructure that was completed and further improved during the period of liberalization. The impressive pace of agricultural and economic changes was due to a rapid mobilization of capital toward productive investments in farm equipment by the well-off farmers that indirectly benefited all farmers through an increased access to the mechanization of labor-demanding farm operations, leading to higher land and labor productivities. A spillover effect between relatively large farms and smaller-scale producers took place and enabled most farming households to benefit from economic reforms. If the moto-mechanization of farm operations increased labor productivity, it also created new job opportunities thanks to the intensification and diversification of rice and non-rice production systems. These processes allowed the distribution of the increasing added value created among the rural population thanks to a higher demand for agricultural labor and new employment opportunities for disadvantaged households. Particularly, the widespread increase in household cash income in the countryside led to a sharp increase in local small-scale trading activities.

Nevertheless, in 1995, farmers' income remained low and the average daily net income per capita was still below the symbolic threshold of US\$1. Although land productivity increased dramatically during the past decade, the tiny size of the farms, the stagnation of the rice price, combined with a relatively low increase in labor productivity limited the rise in income for a majority of the households in the countryside of Omon District. During the same period, the

gap between income of urban and rural dwellers has been widening [Cours 2001]. In the countryside, we showed that the policy of liberalization led to a significant level of differentiation among farming households depending on their endowments in production factors and types of production systems. The perspectives of a quarter of the total number of farming households struggling on landless or very small holdings looked bleak since they could easily be excluded from the agricultural sector.

In general, if the economic liberalization policy could be considered as a successful experience in terms of agricultural production, the increase in farmers' income, and the well-being of a majority of the rural households in Omon District, important new environmental and socioeconomic issues are emerging that could damage the sustainability of the recent transformations of the farming sector. Rice intensification relied heavily on a rapid growth in the use of chemical inputs. In the Mekong Delta, farmers sprayed insecticides more than three times per rice crop during the mid-90s [Heong and Esclada 1997], most of the time in an inefficient way, and this overuse of pesticides has affected the local resource base. Combined with more fishing activities, the use of pesticides led to reduced natural fish stocks in the rivers and canals that represent the main source of protein for local families in the Mekong Delta and a key source of complementary income for very small and landless farmers. Crop intensification also relied on an increase in the water demand for agricultural production of both rice and non-rice crops during the dry season. The increasing intensive use of water for irrigation in the central plain, especially during the dry season, could lead to a reduction in the availability of freshwater in the more downstream areas of the Delta, which could negatively affect their potential for agricultural production.

But the main socioeconomic issue deals with the future of landless rural people and very small farms. Based on the level of differentiation among farmers assessed in 1995, the continuation of the same trend leads to even more important social inequalities. During the early stage of the process of liberalization, all farmers had a common interest in the adoption of cropping systems maximizing land productivity. Later on, well-off "patronal" and "entrepreneurial" farmers emerged who are less interested in further intensification of their production systems if the economic return is lower than an investment in labor-intensive activities. While earlier moto-mechanization of tedious farm operations increased the cropping index and the local demand for farm labor, further mechanization of the already highly intensive cropping systems, particularly at harvest, could lead to a reduction in the employment of hired workers in rice. This will negatively affect the income and well-being of landless rural families and very small farms. This could accelerate their elimination from the agricultural sector and give way to a process of land concentration as described by Yamazaki and Nguyen Duong Ngoc Thanh [1997]. This process could increase the exclusion of landless and small farmers from agricultural production and feed the migration of poor rural people toward urban centers.

Agricultural diversification helped to boost the production of added value and job creation in the countryside as mentioned by Izumi [2001]. But due to technical and marketing problems, this process slowed down in the Omon District in recent years putting its sustainability into

question. Since the reactivity of local small farmers to new opportunities is very high, fluctuations in the market price of non-rice farm products are important. Late adopters of new production tend to get lower benefits and may even register financial losses from such new activities, especially if their technical skills are limited. Particularly, this has been the case among citrus growers facing the *huang long binh* greening disease [Cao Van *et al.* 1997]. In the BDFP, where ecological conditions are not favorable to perennial plantations, the specialization in intensive rice monoculture has only been counter balanced recently by the introduction of rice-fish system.

To cope with those key emerging issues, more attention should be paid by researchers and policymakers to promoting a more efficient use of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and water in the local high-productivity and multiple-cropping systems. To limit the negative effects of the migration of resource-poor farmers toward cities, the development of rural non-farm activities and agro-industries could be promoted to generate more value-added from agricultural products, to reduce economic risks, especially for non rice products, and to create new job opportunities. In this sense, the adoption of more integrated mixed production systems (including rice, fish, orchard, small animal rearing) should be encouraged. The promotion of new kinds of farmer organizations is needed to better adapt agricultural products to supply chain demand (seasonality, quality, etc.). These professional organizations could also improve the dialogue and coordination between government agricultural agencies and producers. These seem to be a necessary condition to maintain a broad distribution of the benefits of rapid agricultural growth and to limit the disparities in cash income among the farming households of Omon District.

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