

**MONARCHY AND NATIONALISM IN CAMBODIA:
A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled "**Monarchy and Nationalism in Cambodia: A Historical Analysis**" submitted by **Miss. Sarika Malhotra** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of **Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)** of the University, is an original work and has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or any other university to the best of my knowledge.


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SARIKA

DEDICATED TO MY PARENTS ...

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

“The Monarchy is the living incarnation, the august and the supreme personification of nationality in Cambodia”.

(Etienne Aymonier)¹

Cambodia is one of the ancient kingdoms in South East Asia. Today the kingdom is a constitutional monarchy and the governance structure locates the king as ‘Head of State for life’ and he remains inviolable² he is the supreme commander of the armed forces³, Chairman of the Supreme Council of National Defence and has the power to declare war⁴. The king shall be a symbol of unity and eternity of the nation’. But at the same time the “King shall reign but shall not govern”,⁵ the chief executive being the Prime Minister who is appointed by the King.

The institution of monarchy today has shaped in the above mentioned form and we can still trace its being a part of modern Cambodia in a very definite way. The common man still reveres the king, treats him like a father figure and believes in the special powers of the king

¹ Osborne, Milton[1965] “King – making in Cambodia: From Sisowath to Sihanouk”, *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol.4, pt.2, p.182.

² The Constitution of Cambodia, adopted in 1993 and amended in March 1999, Article 7.

³ Ibid, Article 23

⁴ Ibid, Article 24

⁵ Ibid, Article 7

which bring prosperity to the land. Probably this aspect of reverence has continued through all the ages, from the ancient to the present times, in which the monarch's assumed different roles, with same objectives.

O.W. Wolter's has observed that, The map of South East Asia which evolved from prehistoric networks of small settlements and reveals itself in historical records was a patchwork of often overlapping *mandals* or circles of kings. On each of these *Mandalas*, one king, identified with divine and universal authority, claimed personal hegemony over other rulers in his *mandala*, who in theory were his obedient allies and vassals.⁶ Only the *mandala* overlord had the prerogative of receiving tribute-bearing envoys, he himself would despatch officials who represented his superior status. The *mandala* perimeters continued to replicate court situations at the centre. The ruler was not an autocrat, he was a mediator, accessible and able to keep the peace and mobilize many dispirate groups. He needed to attract loyal subordinates to his entourage and to satisfy their self esteem. One way of doing this was by organizing exciting court occasions at which the entourage was made to feel that it belonged to his company of faithful servants.⁷

⁶ Wolters, O. W. (1982) *History, Culture and Region in South East Asian Perspectives*, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, p.16.

⁷ *Ibid*, p.19.

This is the broad framework under which kingship developed in early Cambodia. Khmer power was centered on the king who was the divine source of all authority. He was the upholder of the established order, the defender of the faith and the patron of the myriad religious foundations. The king master of all from the highest to the lowest was the pivot of the whole organization of the state, the source and sum of all authority. He performed the sacrifices, all the rituals, ceremonies that are expected to bring divine favour to the country.⁸ The king exercised enormous authority, and was not just the guardian or upholder of law, the wielder of the God of punishment, instead he is the source of law. He could abrogate or reform earlier laws and introduce new ones.⁹ Inscription of Prasat Khna, twice mentions that the king corrected the sacred texts and restored them in the capacity of the master of laws.¹⁰ The Cambodian king was not the receiver of wages for services rendered to the people, on the other hand he enjoyed the kingdom in the capacity of master.¹¹

⁸ Sardesai, D. R. (1997) *South East Asia: Past and Present*, Westview Press, Harper Collins Publishers, p.119.

⁹ Chakravarti, A., "Indian Contribution to the Political, Social and Economic Organization in Ancient Cambodia, A. reassessment", *Our Heritage*, vol. XXIX, pt. 2, XX, pt. 1.p.5.

¹⁰ Chakravarti, A., "Castes in Ancient Cambodia", *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, Calcutta University, vol. IV, pt. 1-2, p.50.

¹¹ Chakravarti, A., "Indian Contribution to the Political, Social and Economic Organization in Ancient Cambodia, A. reassessment", *Our Heritage*, vol. XXIX, pt. 2, XX, pt. 1., p.7.

It was vital for a ruler to ensure peace within by imposing on everyone, the obligation to respect the social order, which consisted in the division of the entire population into various classes and corporations. Thus we find that the Cambodian kings, particularly of the Angkor period showed themselves too much anxious for the conservation of 'Varnasrama'. It is stated that the king established, like the creator himself, the good system of caste and of the *asramas*.¹² *Varnas* were infact largely occupational divisions of the whole population with a proof that they were infact orders of dignity by royal appointment.¹³ Cambodian *Varnas* were created, maintained and maneuvered by the state to suit its purposes, administrative and fiscal.¹⁴ As a matter of fact the Khmer kings could exercise authority over the castes in three ways, first, he had the right to create new *Varnas*; secondly, the king could transfer any person from one caste to another. Thirdly, king could admit anybody in the fold of the caste system.¹⁵

Khmer kings could command respect from an justify his rule to his mass of subjects, conscription of labour was not seen a oppression

¹² Coedes, G., (1937-66), *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, v.1, p.164.

¹³ Mabbett, I. W. (May, 1977) "Varnas in Angkor and the Indian Caste System", *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXXVI, p.432.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.430.

¹⁵ Chakravarti, A., "Indian Contribution to the Political, Social and Economic Organization in Ancient Cambodia, A. reassessment", *Our Heritage*, vol. XXIX, pt. 2, XX, pt. 1., p.11.

and drew no resistance because the idea behind the massive construction was communicable and acceptable among both rulers and ruled.¹⁶ As the rulers were perceived as agents of divine power royal service could be valued as a source of religious merit.

There was a major religious dimension to kingship and the king's status was unique only because it was a religious one. These rulers did not try to develop state institutions but initiated religious cults that allowed their followers to draw from a leader's spiritual relationship with both the ancestors and the universal deity. The ruling *Rajan* was not only a political but also a religious figure, a consecrated mediator believed to extend blessings and protection over his country and subjects.¹⁷

The king at the center of the government realized his identity with the impersonal deity king in heaven. It has been mentioned in some inscriptions that the king was "like a God".¹⁸ Monarchs' power was bestowed through ceremony and the Royal Court, its activities, its style recreated a world of Gods- in theory of heaven on earth. Here all greatness and glory were concentrated by successfully fulfilling

¹⁶ Nidhi Aevsivongse, "The Devaraja Cult" in Hall, K. R. and Whitmore, J. K. (eds.) (1976) *Explorations in Early South East Asian History: The Origins of South East Asian Statecraft University of Michigan*, Ann Arbor, p.136.

¹⁷ Vickery, Michael (1998) *Society, Economics & Politics in the Pre Angkor Cambodia, 7th - 8th Centuries*, The Centre for East Asian Culture Studies for UNESCO, The Toyo Bunko, Tokyo, 178.

¹⁸ Coedes, G., (1937-66), *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, vol.1, p.34.

his role as the hypothetical focus of all sanctity and power, by integrating local religious cults into a state religious system.¹⁹

The rites enacted in his capital and religious activities in the fields of art and literature provided additional signs that people were able to read as verification that government was in the hands of one who was destined to be a prince among men in his generation.²⁰

The rulers were expected to protect all cults and encourage spiritual zeal and be educative influences, teaching their people the meaning of spiritual well-being. Beliefs about the world of Gods provided a vocabulary to describe royal power and ritual for augmenting it.

The emphasis upon symbol and ceremony whereby a ruler enshrines in his person the united interest of all his subject and is expected to sustain his kingdom's prosperity by a due and proper mediation with heaven. These are symbolic statements of unity of the realm under the ruler's authority, are emphatic corroborations of the exaltation of the ruler above the politics of contending communities beneath his sphere.²¹

¹⁹ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.6.

²⁰ Wolters, O. W. (1982) *History, Culture and Region in South East Asian Perspectives*, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, p.21.

²¹ Mabbett, I. W. (1978) "Kingship in Angkor", *Journal of Siam Society*, 66, 2, p.47.

To what extent the kings enjoyed the esteem of the people might be judged by the fact that the people were prepared to offer the merits of their austerities to the king.²² Self sacrifice for the king was considered sacrosanct. It can be pointed out that King *Suryavarman* issued edicts containing regulatin about monasteries in which it is laid down that the ascetics and Buddhist monks should offer the king the merits of their piety.²³

It was the king who was the highest judicial authority, who could be approached even in the initial stage of the complaint. He was the highest court of appeal and could punish officials, if found guilty. We have the reference that "having instituted a daily audience and working even at night, he removed in the course of a court proceeding, the appearance of guilt weighing upon the innocent."²⁴ King had a pivotal role and were expected to display the highest qualities of culture, learning, zeal, energy and concern with public welfare and was called the 'Lord of the soil'.

The king could maintain his authority by virtue of his firm grip over the subject population resulting from his undertakings of enterprises of public interest like construction and maintenance of

²² Majumdar, R.C., (1953), *Inscriptions of Kambuja*, Asiatic Society Monographh, Series No. VIII., I.K, p.344, 351.

²³ Majumdar, R. C. (1942 – 43) "King Suryavarman I of Kambuja", *Journal of Greater Indian Society*, vol. 9-10, pp. 292-293.

²⁴ Coedes, G., (1937-66), *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, vol.1, p.125.

roads, dams, irrigation canals and temples and by the successful and selective adaptation of Indian religion. The local rulers having learned of Indian culture through their interaction with India on the maritime route recognized the advantages of certain elements of Indian civilization and drew from the Indian traditions for their own benefits. According to *Wolter's* the indic religious traditions had certain teachings secular and spiritual superiors. Heroic accomplishments demonstrated an individuals superior prowess, which inturn was ideal of ascetic achievement. After consolidation his position by force, the successful South East Asian chief began to practice Hindu asceticism, further demonstrating spiritual authority.²⁵ He further notes early patronage to *Siva*, who was depicted as a patron of asceticism and as the lord of the universe. Men of achievement became recognized as *Siva's* spiritual authorities on Earth and *Siva's* authority overall that exists was absolute, their (rulers) power on Earth had to limit.

As he participated in sovereign attributes of cosmological proportions and his supporters could come to realize that obedience to their leader was a gesture of homage that implied religious rapport or *bhakti*. Their leader, a sovereign, paratook of divinity therefore could offer them the means of establishing their

²⁵ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.53.

own relationship with the divinity.²⁶ *Savisim* provided the kings with opportunities to receive the kind of worship reserved to Gods, thereby providing a divine nature to kingship. We have various references where king *Suryavarman* is eulogized as an “enduring image of *Siva* on Earth”,²⁷ ‘*isvarasya ksitau vaddha-murti*’ and as a portion of *Siva* i.e. ‘*Siva amsa*’²⁸, *Jayavarman I* was said to be ‘*Siva Amsa*’²⁹ while *Bhavavarman* participated in ‘*Sivas Sakti*’ or divine energy, which enabled him to seize the kingship. The major Hindu Gods, *Siva*, *Visnu*, *Indra* were allegedly capable of reappearing indefinitely in the person of the divine rulers, conceived as reincarnations of particular gods. The occupying ruler owed his divine status in part to the expert ministrations of the Brahman priest of the Court and in part to the occupancy of the earthly mount *meru*.³⁰

The state made great use of Indian ceremony, performed by religious specialists or Brahmans who assumed the role of priests. Royal ceremony generated the King’s powers by successfully fulfilling his role as the hypothetical focus of all society and power, and

²⁶ Wolters, O. W. (1982) *History, Culture and Region in South East Asian Perspectives*, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, p.11.

²⁷ Coedes, G., (1937-66), *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, vol.v, p.256.

²⁸ *Ibid*, vo.1, p.202.

²⁹ *Ibid*, vo.I, p.8.

³⁰ Cady, J. F. [1966] *Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia*, New Jersey, Thailand Burma Laos Cambodia, p.40.

important ceremonies were held on the occasion of putting the first plough to the earth in the year, harvesting and anniversaries of birth and coronation of the King. The services of Brahman *Panditas* were requisitioned by the kings and nobles for astrological and astronomical forecasts, sooth sayings and chanting of *Mantras* for magical effect.³¹

The state elite patronage of Hindu and Buddhist traditions from India brought them into a wider universe of symbols and attachments and provided an Indian framework for their statecraft.³² The king utilized Sanskrit vocabulary and described the world in the idiom of Hindu and Buddhist thought. As we can find in the extensive use of Sanskrit inscriptions, where the king is portrayed, not as the real individual he is, but as an imitation of the ideal king in heaven. The task of a *Prasasti* was sacramental: it was to superimpose the image of the divine upon the Earthly king and kingdom. This sacrament was part of the ritual that perpetuated Khmer psychological and cultural identity.³³ Inscriptions tell us that the Cambodian kings were “drunk in the ocean of *Sastras*” and “versed in the science of politics”, these

³¹ N. Dutt, Dutt, N. (1971 – 72) “Hinduism & Buddhism in South East Asia”, *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, vol.5, p.21.

³² Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.6.

³³ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.21.

provided the basis for the rulers' ritual sovereignty. The adoption of Sanskrit culture was not imposed, but was adopted because of the advantages it offered to an emerging indigenous agrarian-based elite, who emulated the Hindu models of kingship and order in which the monarch relied on virtue rather than force to extend his sovereignty, they depended on ritual kingship to integrate their realm.³⁴ Kingship was itself a kind of ritual serving to centre the kingdom on an individual just as a shrine could centre it on an icon. In each case the spiritual energy of Gods in the sacred world would be manifested.

The ruler thus sponsored art and architecture that expressed the Hindu and Buddhist world views. Royal monuments became cosmological symbols; states were patterned on the order of the Indic cosmos and linked the sacred and secular orders. A ruler and his capital were at the centre of the universe. The capital was surrounded by a wall and a moat, just as the universe was believed to be encircled by rock and ocean. Exactly at the middle point of capital city, stood the pyramidal temple, representing the sacred mountain, with the *linga* at the centre. The edifice was a symbol of union between king and God, establishing harmony between the microcosmos of human world and macrocosmos of the divine

³⁴ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.47.

world. Such an identity was believed to assure the prosperity of the kingdom and its people.³⁵

The king's court appears to have been ritually linked to its subordinate centres of power, as subordinate centers sought to initiate the style of the centre. This ritual unity thus generated was probably more important than the administrative control in maintaining the state's dominance over areas outside its core.³⁶

Further the Cambodian rulers merged traditional indigenous symbols of divinity and power with Indian cosmological symbolism and religious theory to form an ideological basis for their kingship. The king was filled with life sustaining energy derived from Hindu and indigenous deities. While local deities and spirits protected the monarch and his subjects, Hindu Gods suffused Khmer monarch's with their superior creative and purifying energy, enhancing further the prospects for prosperity in this and the other world (This fusion will be discussed extensively in Chapter 3).

The King was seen as the creator and director of public works designed to ensure prosperity. Thus the religious and economic

³⁵ Sardesai, D. R. (1997) *South East Asia: Past and Present*, Westview Press, Harper Collins Publishers, p.28.

³⁶ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.7.

systems were intimately bound with each other and hark back to a condition of society anterior to any impact of Indian influence.³⁷

The above discussion reveals that: "*Cambodia as a nation is unique in its distinctive integration of people, land, religion and king*".³⁸

The study basically revolves around these key aspects of Cambodian way of life and how they eventually shaped to provide strength to monarchical tradition, which indeed is the keystone of internal politics of Cambodia. Through this study an attempt is made to trace the origin and survivals of the institution; the changes and developments it has seen through the ages and how has it always been the symbol of Cambodian national unity.

The study endeavors to combine both the chronological account and the thematic one for a proper historical analysis. An attempt has been made to reconstruct a set of social, economic and political relationships and therefore periodization will logically coincide with major structural changes affecting these relationships.

Chapter 2, deals with how political integration was achieved for the first time, by the Funan rulers. On what ways the maritime trade route had a significant impact on the political and economic systems

³⁷ Hall, D. G. E. (1968) *A History of South East Asia*, 3rd edn, Macmillan, London, p.145.

³⁸ Steinberg, D. J. (1959) *Cambodia: its People, its Society, its Culture*, New Haven, p.1

of Funan. How this route gave an added advantage to Funan's emerging rulers to form political and economic alliances with locally based elites which further gave impetus to integrate and form political relations.

Through Chapter 3, an attempt will be made to establish the rise of the ruler at the helm of affairs in Cambodia. The means which led to integrate and sustain the empire via elaborate hydraulic and temple networks, selective adaptations of sectarian modes of Hindu devotionalism and system of strong social sanctions provided by the cult of God King's. How these symbols were manipulated for the advantage of the rulers.

The fourth chapter deals with a period where the Cambodian rulers had become pawns in the contest between the Thais and Vietnamese, but were still revered as God by the common man, and how the French Protectorate eroded the monarch's power but eventually enhanced his symbolic character leading to the rise of the monarch as the symbol of Khmer nationalism by assuming the leadership of the struggle for independence.

The final chapter deals with the emergence of 'Prince Daddy' i.e. the era of Sihanouk's strong, flamboyant and unquestioned leadership and his integrating the masses closely with the 'Royal Buddhist

Socialism', providing Cambodia with a stable government and a neutral foreign policy to keep out of any conflict, arising at her doorstep.

To trace these developments of the institution of monarchy, it is of paramount importance to broadly discuss the historical settings which laid the background for the emergence of the first historical state in South East Asia.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From about the middle of the last millennium B.C., there was a major development in the patterns of social organisation in some parts of South East Asian region. A number of inland sites show that much larger settlements were emerging, with presumably centralized and organized populations. These settlements demanded to be recognized as the earliest cities and they furnished the necessary social matrix for the subsequent development of the indigenous state. These settlements had a sophisticated bronze industry, iron tools, with fortifications, relatively long distance trade or exchange of some form.³⁹

There was a complex process of adjustment which led to agricultural intensification, the use of iron, the appearance of

³⁹ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford , p.51.

different levels of society and the establishment of large settlements. The process is likely to have involved a large number of interacting elements such as access to iron, the intensification of agriculture to produce surpluses, the pressure of an expanding population, larger and denser settlements with more impressive fortifications and other structures, enhanced trading and craft activities, making more goods available, social hierarchy with vertical relations of authority and subordination and the clustering of bands of followers around chiefs, control over valued resources, differential wealth and political subordination of small communities to a central one where the chief lived.⁴⁰

Simple developments in agriculture, ploughing, bunding etc, were taking place along with population growth, certain new changes were taking shape and the community could no longer have egalitarian relations, frictions and competitions began to emerge and the need to acquire a new, more centralized structure, with institutions of authority embodied in leading families was needed. When this happened, the emergence of chiefs, incipient rulers, brought about a redistribution of resources.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.60.

⁴¹ Ibid, p.56.

Michael Vickery is his recent study has concluded that it is possible to trace the gradual evolution of political institutions from the early local masters called 'PON', of small communities clustered around and identified in part by, the pond which sustained their agricultural efforts. These ponds seem to have been the artificial tanks or other water sources which were necessary to sustain the occupation of land and around which hamlets or division of larger settlements were grouped. ⁴²

With the growing networks of exchange any new demand for the resources of a particular place, on even an increase in an existing demand could bring decisive advantages to the communities living where the resources were found, leaders of these communities would be in a position to acquire power and authority. Ritual positions of seniority could turn into practical control and lead to a clear elevation of status, with chiefs commanding labour and resources.⁴³ This new labour and resources could be manipulated for new purposes: buildings, rituals, ornaments, feasts, which all marked the elevation of a chiefs status.

⁴² For a wider perspective see M.Vickery "some remarks on early state formation in Cambodia". In D. Marr and A. Milner (eds), *South East Asia in the 9th to the 14th century*, Canberra and Singapore; Research School of Pacific Studies, A.N.U., Institute of South East Asian Studies, 1996, p.95-115.

⁴³ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.59

It was during these formative times in the earliest era of maritime trade, that traders from India and China started to look at South East Asia during the first century. Historians have theorized that due to internal disturbances in the Central Asian Steppe region, Carvan routes from Central Asia no longer provided gold from Siberian deposits, which was one of the major sources of the precious metal in the Asian world.⁴⁴ Since gold was the medium of Asian trade, new sources had to be found to cover trade imbalances. As a consequence, Indian merchants began looking towards the mythical wealth of the 'Islands of Gold', '*Suvarnavipa*'; '*Suvarnabhumi*', with keen interest and embarked on a major effort to secure these riches. This quest for gold coincided with the revolution in boat construction and navigation techniques, which were marked by the development of construction of large Indian and Chinese junks and the discovery of the periodic alteration of the monsoons.⁴⁵ Giving further impetus to this trading network was the fact that the First Century marked a great age of Buddhism in South Asia; Buddhism did not view commercial activity as negatively as did some Hindu traditions, with its suppression of the barriers of caste, exaggerated ideas of racial purity and the consequent removal of the fear of pollution by contact with barbarians as a consequence of long

⁴⁴ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.36.

⁴⁵ Briggs, L. P. (1947-48) "The Hinduized States of Southeast Asia: A Review", *Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol. 7, p.379.

sea voyages, a sort of cult of the '*Dipankara Buddha*' i.e. '*Buddha of the Isles*'; protector of the seamen grew up. Until the 5th Century most of the images found in South East Asia were those of the '*Dipankar Buddha*'.⁴⁶ After the fall of the Han dynasty between A.D 190 and 225, the Chinese interest grew as there was a increasing need for a Southern maritime link between the East and the West.

In the earliest of maritime trade, ships from Indian ports touched land on the upper western coast of the Malay Peninsula, their trade goods were portaged across the Isthmus of Kara to the Gulf of Thailand, reloaded on ships and transported along the coast to ports on the western edge of the Mekong delta.⁴⁷ From these ports the goods were transported to ports in South China. Initially the role of South East Asia's ports in this International trade was simply to provide facilities for foreign merchants who were passing through on their way to India and China or laying over until the next season's winds allowed a return voyage, but soon the South East Asian merchants began to market their own spices and aromatics as substitutes for foreign commodities and then built upon this substitution to market other indigenous products. The new marketing opportunities required more formal political and economic relationships between hinterland population and coastal

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.379.

⁴⁷ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.26.

commercial communities than had hitherto been necessary.⁴⁸ The indigenous elites in South East Asia soon found that the benefits of this international trade afforded them with great opportunities and they started facilitating trade which could also be useful in reinforcing their sovereignty vis-à-vis potential rivals and subordinates. Successful rulers could organize the flow of products from their hinterland to their courts, sell the products themselves or receive a share of the profits from other sales. Additional income and exotic goods from this trade also enhanced an elites capacity to implement their gift giving 'ritual sovereignty', there by increasing their alliance and capital.⁴⁹

Thus emerged the successful South East Asian ruler, from a group of competing chiefs or land based elites. He rose above his competitors through his ability to guarantee prosperity for his followers, whether through the redistribution of the spoils of war, by developing the agrarian base of his realm, by simply bringing peace to a domain previously torn by competition for power or by negotiating and facilitating external trade between his realms ports and foreign merchants. The opportunity to share in this opportunity encouraged other chiefs and their allies to honour the

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.27.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p.40.

rulers sovereignty.⁵⁰ The development of a new state system was thus in part due to an elites successful manipulation of external and indigenous commercial networks to expand their authority vis-à-vis competing elites and the selective adaptations of Indian models by the rulers, which gave them new ideas of political organization and legitimacy which they used to expand their authority and control.

It was in this age of maritime commerce, Funan emerged, by the transformation of a simple commercial settlement into an organized political state. Funan's history provides a perspective on how the movement of international commercial trade was the critical factor in shaping the history of the region because it provided the source of and mechanism for the accumulation of capital beyond that extractable from domestic agricultural production.⁵¹ Funan was the first great power of South East Asian history, like Rome in European history, its prestige lived on long after its fall. Its traditions, notably the cult of the sacred mountain and the *Naga* Princes were adopted by the Khmer Kings of Cambodia.⁵²



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⁵⁰ Ibid, p.199.

⁵¹ McCloud, Donald, G. (1986) *Systems and Process in SEA: The Evolution of a region*, West View Press, Colorado. Systems and Processes in South East Asia, p.25.

⁵² Hall, D. G. E. (1968) *A History of South East Asia*, 3rd edn, Macmillan, London, p.34.

Chapter II

THE BEGINNINGS: POLITICAL INTEGRATION UNDER FUNAN

Evidence from archeological, linguistic and literary sources support that Funan may be best understood as the first South East Asian state. Clearly the Funan region was an economic centre with an economic base that supported a more sophisticated level of political integration than was indicated previously in the area. This integration was achieved through the attempts of Funan's first rulers to build a continuous manpower base, subordinate local chiefs to his authority as well as to that of his chosen successors. The resulting Royal Family that appears in the later Khmer genealogies said to be descended from the original Kaundinya, is evident of continuity associated with higher levels of political integration. More elaborate cultural forms evolved within Funan's realm, over a period of time pre-existing indigenous cultural and ethnic diversity were synthesized with external ideology to create a new syncretic higher order cultural base.¹

The first known polity to emerge in South East Asia was a place the Chinese called Funan, the name represents the Chinese equivalent for the Khmer Phnom, or mountain. Funan the first state of South East Asia, dominated the Indo-Chinese peninsula for five centuries and its

¹ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.62.

prestige lived on long after its fall. The pre Angkarian kings of Cambodia adopted its dynastic legends and those who reigned at Angkor traced their ancestry to the supreme rulers of *Vyadhapura*.² Chinese considered Funan as essentially an 'Indianized kingdom'.³

Through this chapter an attempt has been made to show that although Funan was not a very well integrated political system, it was nevertheless important because of the cultural forms it evolved, forms that anticipate later political systems. Its success depended not simply on outside trade and traders but more importantly on the rulers ability to see the value of and to use the selected items of Indian statecraft to consolidate their rule locally and thus control the hinterland as well. It aims to establish as to how 'the local ruler became a cultural broker as well as the principal beneficiary of profits directly derived from the commercial route'.⁴

The sources for Funan's history include archeological, epigraphic and Chinese dynastic records. There are however, two important sources belonging to the 3rd century A.D.: a Sanskrit inscription discovered near Nha Trang in South Vietnam and fragments of an account left by

² Coedes, G. (1964) *The Indianized States of South East Asia*, Honolulu, Hawaii, p.62.

³ Willmott, W.E. (1966) "History and Sociology of the Chinese in Cambodia Prior to the French Protectorate", *Journal of South East Asian History*, vol.7, p.16.

⁴ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, 1985, p.53.

two Chinese envoys to Funan, K'ang T'ai and Chu Ying.⁵ K'ang T'ai, one of the envoys, informed his emperor that the kingdom of Funan was a prosperous realm from which great merchant ships departed for China and India. Funan's authority stretched beyond the lower Mekong Delta to the upper Malay Peninsula. After a major naval expedition in the early 3rd century A.D., Funan had assumed authority over many of the trade centers on the Malay Coast, thereby consolidating its dominance over the flow of commerce through South East Asia.⁶ Peking showed considerable interest in the proud and prosperous kingdom, selected men of learning and discernment to stay in the country to send back periodic reports on its activities. They spent several weeks in sight seeing, and their comments were illuminating. They concluded their first report with the verdict that the region was rich, the people aggressive but disciplined and possessing unusual skill, ingenuity and endurance in the crafts of building at which they excelled.⁷ K'ang T'ai's report provides a contemporary glimpse of the prosperous state, informing his emperor that the people of Funan, "Lived in walled cities, places, and houses... They devote themselves to agriculture. They sow one year and harvest for three... taxes are paid in gold, silver, pearls, and perfumes...."

⁵ Sardesai, D. R. (1997) *South East Asia: Past and Present*, Westview Press, Harper Collins Publishers, p.21

⁶ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.38.

⁷ Audric, John (1972) *Angkor and the Khmer Empire*, Robert Hale, London, p.27.

There are books and depositories of archives and other things. Their characters for writing resemble those of the Hu".⁸

ADVANTAGES OF EARLY TRADING NETWORKS

In the first century of the Christian era there was an unprecedented Roman market for Asian goods, specially Chinese silk and most importantly the enhancement of a maritime route between Indian and China that passed through South East Asia. With the intensification of overseas trade, the foreigners came seeking gold and forest products such as resins, and aromatic wood. They brought with them Carnelian, (used for many inscribed seals), as well as agate, glassware, and Buddhist and Hindu icons.⁹

Funan occupied a key position with regard to maritime trade routes and was inevitably a port of call both for the navigators who went through the Straits of Malacca and for those probably more numerous who made the transit over of the Isthmuses of the Malay Peninsula. Funan may even have been the terminus of voyages from the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰ Thus we see that Funan constituted an inevitable way station for the seamen. Oc-eo was nested on a coastline that offered sailors protections from the troubled seas at the tip of

⁸ Paul Pelliot, "Le Fou-nan" Bulletin de l'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême – Orient, 3, 1903, 252, Quoted in Hall, 1985, p.48.

⁹ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.76.

¹⁰ Coedes, G. (1964) *The Indianized States of South East Asia*, Honolulu, Hawaii., p.58.

Southern Vietnam. Sometimes the traders had to wait till five months for the winds to shift. This meant that the South East Asian port often had to feed the travelers for months on end. It was this reality that ensured that a ports access to agricultural surplus was one of the most important variables in its success.¹¹ Given the trade contacts, it is easy to imagine how a ripple effect might have operated from the coast towards the inland communities, as the traders established settlements at river mouths and initiated a demand for gold and forest products obtainable from the hinterland.¹² Thus the initial contact with foreigners on the coasts produced a chain reaction of social and cultural readjustment that passed along the Mekong. The inland people, who lived on the fringes of the forest or in clearings within it, were seasoned in its way, inevitably they were drawn into the new commercially oriented culture with its demand for forest products.¹³ Their chieftains became pre-eminent in wealth and authority and their successors were the rulers of Indian principalities which eventually were to incorporate the whole Khmer territory.

Entrepreneurial advances associated with International commerce created social imbalances within societies like that of Funan, with the

¹¹ Tarling, Nicholas (1992) *The Cambridge History of South East Asia*, Vol. I, Cambridge University Press, London., p.193.

¹² Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.63.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.76.

result the indigenous economy was transformed and political entities based on redistributive exchange emerged.¹⁴ There was a pattern of simultaneous economic and political integration. External trade was a likely stimulus to local trade and the growth of domestic commerce promoted the need and the desire for a higher degree of economic integration. The need for economic integration in turn necessitated the exercise of authoritative control over areas of potential conflict, the management of economic resources of the domain and the ability to support an increased population in the area.¹⁵ As the international trade through ports such as Oc-eo developed and increased in volume, Funan rulers were subjected to a range of new experiences beyond those of their land based subordinate populations. They were exposed to new perceptions of the world, new life goals and became especially aware of new organizational possibilities. Funan chieftans oversaw the initial commercial transactions with foreign traders; as the instigators and organizers and local Malay populations.¹⁶ Soon Oc-eo was booming; port facilities were constructed, including buildings for storing goods and hostellers for merchants staying over until the next seasons monsoon winds.

¹⁴ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.58.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.61.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.53.

The Funan ruler drew income from the maritime trade in establishing his supremacy over his fellow chiefs. Revenues collected from Funan ports through usage fees collected from port facilities, flowed directly into the Royal treasury. These revenues were used to expand the Funan economic base not only in the commercial sector-upgrading ports but in the agrarian sector as well. More sophisticated hydraulic projects could be undertaken, thus making more land fit for cultivation and expanding the economic potential of the agrarian core. This added potential in turn allowed the Funan ruler to support a longer manpower base.¹⁷ In these economy's manpower was the basis of political power. Through the maritime trade the Funan ruler also gained certain rewards in the form of ceremonial regalia, beads, textiles, wealth, precious metal etc., which could be shared with clients and other such items useful to a chief attempting to stress his superiority over other similar indigenous rulers. Thus we can see that the chief had a vested interest in the continuation and expansion of this system.

The Indian Connection

Funan was a thriving market, drawing Indian and other traders in quest of profit, but perhaps the Indians were more skilful in establishing contacts. Given the number of travelers coming from

¹⁷ Ibid, p.57.

India and the length of time they were in port, it is not surprising that a cultural dialogue of profound importance to South East Asia generally developed between Funan and India. The local explanation and legitimation of this dialogue are found in a legend that was already old when the Chinese visitors reached in 240 A.D. The 'kaundinya' legend as it is known reiterated the marriage between the foreigner *kaundinya*- a great Brahman from India and the *Naga* Princess of the water realm.¹⁸

The *kaundinya Naga* myth was commonly used by later khmer rulers of Cambodia as the basis for the construction of their Royal genealogies. The khmer domain was ruled by a "Royal family" whose members were descended authentically whether by fact or by law from Funan rulers, who were themselves descended from the original *kaundinya*. This demonstrates the importance of Funan legacy to khmer kingship.¹⁹ The legend more validly symbolizes a 'marriage of interest'. *Hall* has thus pointed out to the various ways in which this legend can be interpreted; in the age of maritime commerce, various coastal rulers in South East Asia were competing to attract merchant ships to their ports. The transformation of a coastal centre into an international port depended on a local rulers initiative in

¹⁸ For a detail account of the Kaundinya legend see Audric John, 1972, p.23-24.

¹⁹ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.61.

organizing to facilitate this trade. The marriage gave a cosmopolitan character to the port, suggesting that the Funan ports became such a neutral meeting ground where foreign merchandise could be peaceably exchanged. In a way the Funan rulers offered international merchant groups a sense of security.²⁰ By marrying him, the Princes established for him actually a place within the local society. This legend might also have been used to legitimize Funans expansion and a legend that claimed a special Indian origin for its rulers would have been useful in distinguishing those it subordinated. Such a legend might also have been useful in maintaining good relations with both Indian traders and religious pilgrims, since in a way it also emphasized a friendly link between local rulers and Indian Brahmans.²¹ The Chinese sources specify that the foreign traveller drank the water of the land, which suggests that he took an oath of loyalty to the local ruler and he in some way assisted in draining of Funan's swamplands and establishing Funan's hydraulic system which increased its agricultural productivity.

While the Funan origin myth deals with the sea contacts, it is secondary focus on the land reflects the dual nature of the Funan

²⁰ Ibid, p.54.

²¹ Tarling, Nicholas (1992) *The Cambridge History of South East Asia*, Vol. I, Cambridge University Press, London, p.194.

domain, its success was not only the result of its interaction with the sea, but its wealth was equally due to its agrarian base. The impetus for initial or further agrarian development came from the maritime sector, when merchants and seamen putting in at Funan ports demanded food during their layover periods. This demand had to be met by Funan's agrarian population. With a portion of trade revenues reinserted in the development of hydraulic projects which led to an increased agricultural productivity, gave Funan a crucial advantage over other coastal ports of the area.

What this myth explains is that the rulers of Funan began a cultural dialogue with India and that the political integration of larger domains was contemporary with this dialogue. The origin myth describes the early Funan domain as being comprised of several settlements, each ruled by its own chief, local chiefs allied, with the Funan ruler by this desire to participate in his rapidly expanding economic base & prosperous redistribution network. The consolidation of the states was done by Hun P'ang-huang, a descendant of the original *Kaundinya*. By his reign the subordinate tribal centers were incorporated into an area directly ruled by the Funan monarch. The origin myth stipulates that these victories were the consequence of dissension among the rulers' enemies, the use of his ever increasing wealth either to bribe or at least to create envy

among his rival chief followers and his exploitation of weakness in the local political system.²²

He established his capital at *Vyadhapura* “The city the Hunter King”; adjacent to the sacred mountain ‘Ba Phnom’, from which the Funan state and its rulers derived their name. By localized Indian tradition, the mountain was the repository of supernatural powers that were dispensed by Funan monarchs to benefit their subjects.²³ It was the place where the heavens communicated with the Earth, which explains why, the God continually descends there. He was no doubt materialized there in the form of the *linga* of ‘Siva Girisa’ frequenting the mountain.²⁴ The mountain symbolized the rulers authority and from it, as from the monarch himself came the domains prosperity. The contact with the supernatural enhanced the superior status of Funan’s rulers and further encouraged adjacent populations to submit to the Funan monarch.

‘The great king of Funan’ promoted ship building, navigation and foreign trade, which led to the evolution of a broad based polity with an organized system that stabilized the revenue flow of its ruler. Fan Shi Man, who was selected to rule by the people of Funan, soon embarked on a campaign to extend Funans authority as he wanted

²² Ibid, p.62

²³ Ibid, p.63.

²⁴ Coedes, G. (1964) *The Indianized States of South East Asia*, Honolulu, Hawaii, p.40, p.61.

to assume direct control over the trade centers and solidify Funan's dominance over the flow of commerce through South East Asia. Fan Shi Man's key conquest on the Malay Peninsula was an entrepot known to the Chinese as Tun- Sun and P'an P'an, from where Funan's new Indian mannerisms came. P'an P'an was said to have been inhabited by "numerous Brahmans who have come from India to seek wealth by serving the local kings, with whom they are in high favour".²⁵ The most dramatic consequence of the presence of these Indians as far as Funan was concerned appears to have been the growing use of Sanskrit in Funan, the first known Sanskrit inscription in Funan was issued shortly after Fan Shi Man's death in the 3rd century A.D.²⁶

It was under Fan Chan's reign that regular diplomatic contact between Funan and both India and China was said to have been established, more because of commercial interest than political ambition. The Chinese envoys K'ang T'ai and Chu Ying visited Funan in the reign of Fan Hsun, when Funan's commercial prosperity had reached its zenith. They had pointed out that an Indian vocabulary was in use and there is evidence to Indian technological influence.

²⁵ Wheatly, Paul (1961) *The Golden Khersonese: Studies in the Historical Geography of the Malay Peninsula before A. D. 1500*, Kuala Lumpur, p.47-51.

²⁶ Coedes, G. (1964) *The Indianized States of South East Asia*, Honolulu, Hawaii, p.40.

In the 5th century A.D. patterns of international trade shifted away from Funan towards to Strait of Malacca. As ship building and navigational skills evolved, coastal sailing was replaced by direct routes across the south china seas, thus reducing the revenues available to Funan from entrepot activities.²⁷ Deprived of this major source of Royal income, the rulers as well his followers, including subordinate chiefs, their supporters found their prosperity diminished. Such a decline in Royal income could well have touched off a dynastic crises as well. This decline in revenue from trade forced the Funan leaders to develop a broader agricultural base as the principal source of Royal revenue; and stimulated a parallel adoption of Hindu trappings of state which provided the stronger legitimizing paraphernalia ritual, and legal codes required by an agrarian state.²⁸

Thus, the Chinese report of a 'Second *Kaundinya*', "who changed all the rules according to the customs of India".²⁹ The people of Funan had become embroiled in another succession dispute remarks the Chinese report, and that the new ruler felt it was necessary to establish the legitimacy of his line by imposing substantially new patterns of state administration upon Funan,

²⁷ McCloud, Donald, G. (1986) *Systems and Process in SEA: The Evolution of a region*, West View Press, Colorado, p.24.

²⁸ Ibid, p.24.

²⁹ Paul Pelliet "Le Fou-nan", quoted in Hall (1985) p.69.

which would also clearly distinguish the Funan monarch from other Funan elites in the state polity. These Indian characters included the extensive use of Sanskrit as the official language, the addition of Sanskrit honorific title *varman* to the names of the rulers, an attempt to consolidate and construct an official genealogy for the Funan Royal line to the marriage of the first *kaundinya* and the *Naga* Princes, introduction of an Indian dating system, the laws of *Manu* were put into force along with the central Indian alphabet, the worship of Indian deities and the presence of Brahman bureaucrats.

Funan adopted the Indian traditions of Royal pomp. Indian Royal customs were known and practiced, as the Chinese tell us, “when the king sits down, he squats on one side, raising the right knee, letting the left knee touching the earth. A piece of cotton spread before him, on which are deposited the gold vases and incense burners”.³⁰ Buddhist monk *Nagasena* reported in China that the state religious cult was addressed to the Hindu God *Siva* and that Buddhism was also strong. In 539 A.D., an embassy reported that Funan possessed a hair relic of the Buddha³¹.

Funan rulers began to refocus its state craft in the 5th century A.D., by selectively adopting Indianized patterns to meet their political

³⁰ Paul Pelliet “Le Fou-nan”, quoted in Mabbett and Chandler, 1995, p.73.

³¹ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.75.

and economic goals. With the virtual elimination of revenue derived from trade, Funans state craft took a more Indian character, with its focus on the land. The Indian celestial deities provided the sacro religious legitimacy that the Funan rulers required Funan monarchs worshipped the *Siva linga mahesvara* and stressed the *linga* as the source of the lands fertility, although this was in synthesis with existing fertility and ancestor cults of the monarch. The Funan monarch was known in the inscriptions as the king of 'Vyadhapura' who personally received benefits of the God *Mahesvara's* powers, which he then bestowed on the entire population. The king was the personal benefactor of a number of Brahmans who conducted Indian rituals and he called on Indians and those who had become students of Indian civilization, to assist him in the efficient administration of the Royal court³².

The Transition

Significant changes were taking place in the International trade routes. In the second half of the 4th century, the Chin dynasty no longer had the access to the Central Asian Carvan routes and by the 5th century China was not trading with Funan's intermediary ports. The Isthmus of Kara portage had fallen into disuse and ships

³² Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.76.

leaving Srilanka and India were sailing via the strait of Malacca.¹ With the transition to the sea passage through the Strait of Malacca Funan ports became peripheral to the mainstream of International Commerce. To participate in International trade, Funan's traders had to travel to other trade depots.² The competition from the South, from the Seamen of the ports of Sunda Straits region, eventually deprived Funan of its predominance in the International trade and by the 6th Century its realm was contracting.³

By the reign of *Rudravarman*, the capital had been moved from *Vyadhapura* to Angkor Borei and ultimately efforts to reorganize the state did not succeed and by the mid 6th Century it was severely weakened by internal power struggles and recognizing Funan's internal crises, its neighbours applied increasing pressure, and Funan's vulnerability was exposed when it was taken over by Zhenla/Chenla, its inland tributary. Although some traders continued to use the Kra portage, its special position was gone.

Late in the 6th century, Funan disappears from the Chinese records and its place is taken by the state of Chenla. Historians believe that for virtually all the Chenla period there was no one major kingdom

¹ Ibid, p.72.

² Ibid, p.41.

³ Tarling, Nicholas (1992) *The Cambridge History of South East Asia*, Vol. I, Cambridge University Press, London, p.196.

of the khmers, but an arena of principalities in competition.⁴ Where the minor *Rajas* competed for hegemony. This formative stage lasted to the rise of Angkor in the 9th Century. A different hypothetical model, is that Funan and Chenla were never separate states. They may have represented different centres, even congeries of centres within Cambodia, linked to loose political relationships and at times rivals.⁵

The most influential pioneering work on the transition from Funan to Cambodia was carried out by Coedes who saw king *Bhavavarman* as a descendant of Funan Royalty, who married into Khmer Royalty, became a Khmer ruler in the North and conquered Funan. After *Bhavavarman* we have only few rulers who accomplished some merit, like *Mahendrarvarman*, who was responsible for the endowment of a number of shrines containing *Lingas*, along the Mekong and King *Isanavarman*, who came in for considerable comment. To the Chinese visitor he appeared omnipotent, possessing a power and authority which far exceeded that of previous kings. They wrote of him as a Supreme being who received instant obedience akin to adolatry, was not only a ruler but one to whom the highest of all high priests deferred with object demeanour.⁶ A large number of temples of *Visnu* and *Siva* were

⁴ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.79.

⁵ Vickery, Michael (1998) *Society, Economics & Politics in the Pre Angkor Cambodia, 7th – 8th Centuries*, The Centre for East Asian Culture Studies for UNESCO, The Toyo Bunko, Tokyo, p.377.

⁶ Audric, John (1972) *Angkor and the Khmer Empire*, Robert Hale, London, p.35.

erected and near the modern Vietnamese border an inscription refers to him as over lord.⁷

According to the Chinese sources, in the 8th century the kingdom is represented as having split into two – a Land Chenla and a Water Chenla in 706 A.D. Whether the Khmer states were few or many, they were sophisticated and cosmopolitan, their masters could afford to live instyle and their wisemen could plumb the secrets of Sanskrit religious texts.⁸ This division was said to have remained in effect until 838 A.D. when steps had already been taken towards the unification of the Khmers under one ruler. In the last quarter of the 8th Century, the *Sailendras* raided Cambodia, which acted as a catalyst to Khmer unity. The divided Khmers rallied under the leadership of *Jayavarman II*, who brought the dissident groups together in a common polity.⁹

⁷ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.82.

⁸ Ibid, p.85.

⁹ Sardesai, D. R. (1997) *South East Asia: Past and Present*, Westview Press, Harper Collins Publishers, p.26.

Chapter III

ANGKOR

THE KING: THE KINGDOM

“Angkor does not only symbolise our victories in war, but also and above all, the high point of our civilization expressing itself not only in an incomparable burgeoning of great monuments affirming the mastery of our rulers, but also in immense engineering works, irrigation systems, communication networks, works of art, hospitals, libraries, etc...”

(Norodon Sihanouk)¹

In the later part of the 8th century, Cambodia was in disarray and the task of *Jayavarman II*, was not only to unite the khmers but also to rebut the claims over them made by the Javanese. In the wake of his military victories, he introduced several centuries of khmer history when the institution of kingship retained its prestige.² The notion of Khmer kingdom, a throne that commanded the loyalty of all Cambodians, did not serve as the instrument of a totalitarian state, what it did, rather, was to serve as the focus or

¹ Realities Cambodgiennes, 22 Jan 1960, Quoted in Osborne, M. E. (1966) “History and Kinship in Contemporary Cambodia, *Journal of South East Asian History*, VII, p.5.

² Wolters, O. W. (1973) “Jayavarman II’s Military Power: The Territorial Foundation of the Angkor Empire”, *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 1-2., p. 30.

symbol of an increasingly durable community. As time went on, however, the fall of a Khmer ruler was less and less likely to signal the fragmentation of Cambodia into independent principalities; even after years of war, it was increasingly likely that the Khmer state would be reconstituted.³

The rise of Angkor did not, all at once mark a quantum leap into a new type of society ; but a programme was articulated, an aspiration declared. The Khmers were to be brought under a single independent regime, free from claims of any foreign power. The changes which were taking place in the Khmer sense of political identity must consider practical, mundane factors such as economic and demographic expansion, the ability to acquire booty for the gratification of warriors and the manipulation of patron client networks.⁴ The process of unification might have been a stressful one, that demanded a redefinition of loyalties and the Cambodians needed a way of representing such a redefinition of themselves.

Loyalties were defined in ritual terms. We observe a definite pattern; the *Devaraja* cult, the hydraulic works, the temple networks and the the monumental architecture were all defining and redefining ritual connections which underlay and shaped the power base of the

³ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.21.

⁴ Ibid, p. 88.

rulers of Angkor. A regular order of Royal priorities becomes discernable in the activities of all the Angkorian kings from *Jayavarman II* to *Jayavarman VII*, it is evident enough of the goal, that mainly focused on construction of a state dominated political system replacing the previous one built on a series of personal alliances. For this purpose Indic patterns were utilized to enhance local religious views to the advantage of the elite whose ritual magic was presented to their subjects as being greater than that of earlier practice.

The sources available for the study of Indochinese history between the 6th and the 13th century are in the main epigraphic material and Chinese texts. The epigraphic material consist for the most part of charters relating to the foundation of religious establishment, which help us to draw a thematic and chronological framework for our study.

THE DEVARAJA CULT

In Cambodia 'Mount *Mahendra*' became the home of the *Devaraja* cult of *Jayavarman II*, in the early 9th century, a cult that extensively subordinated worship of local deities to the king's worship of *Siva*. As the traditional abode of ancestor spirits, the mountain was already considered sacred by indigenous tradition. By incorporating the external Lord *Siva*, who was known in Indian

philosophy as the 'Lord of the mountain' and for his association with fertility, the king's position was reinforced. It remained for Cambodian kings to associate themselves with the mountain and thereby symbolize their ability to guarantee the flow of life power from the realm of the ancestors to their subjects.⁵ Worship of *Siva* became formalized in the *Devaraja* (God King) cult of *Jayavarman II*, which was based on a mountain top that became the site of his realm's principal temple at the centre of the Royal Capital.

In the Brahmanical concept of the universe, a circular central continent *Jambudvipa*, was surrounded by seven oceans and continents. In the centre of this continent was Mount *Meru*, around which the sun, the moon and the stars revolved. On its summit was the city of the Gods, where *Indra*, the Lord of heaven reigned. On the slopes of the 'Mount *Meru*' was the lowest paradise (*Lokapala*) where the guardian of the world resided. *Jayavarman II*, accordingly centred the cult of *Devaraja* and his capital of *Hariharalaya*, South of Angkor on the edge of the great lake (Tonle Sap) in central Cambodia on the summit of Mount *Mahendra*, the Khmer equivalent of 'Mount *Meru*'.⁶

⁵ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.5.

⁶ Hall (1985), p.138. For different historical interpretations of the *Devaraja* Cult, see Khmers: Mabbett and Chandler, 1995, p.90.

While building a Khmer state through a combination of conquest and the formation of a network of personal alliances, *Jayavarman II* also consolidated the worship of regional deities into the Royal cult. He incorporated the veneration for mountains, subordinated local ancestor spirits to the worship of *Siva* and then proclaimed himself *Siva's* representative on earth. By associating himself with *Siva*, the Royal mountain symbolized his ability to guarantee the flow of life power from the spirit realm to his subjects. The establishment of the *Devaraja* cult tied *Jayavarman* spiritually to his supporters and the cult became an emblem of the unification of the Khmer realm. Henceforth, although there were struggles for power within the Royal domain, struggles for local independence were denied religious sanction.⁷

The Royal Capital and its realm were thus under the protection of the 'Lord of the Heavens' and the king, his representative on earth, who was the lord of the mountains, the guardian of law and order, the protector of religion, the defender of his land against external foes and the sum of all authority on earth. From the summit of 'Mount *Mahendra*' the *Devaraja* entered into a relationship with the divine world. The Royal temple, was dedicated to the living monarch- the God-King and it became his mausoleum when he

⁷ O.W. Wolters, "Jayavarman II is military power: The territorial foundations of the Angkor empire" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1973, p.29-30.

died. *Wolter's* has pointed out that *Jayavarman II* realized that his achievements had guaranteed his status as an ancestor among all those Khmers who were connected with his kinship group. He therefore made arrangements for the perpetuation of the cult to enable future kings to invoke additional supernatural protection from their deified ancestor. The consequence he had in mind was that Cambodia would always have a '*Cakravartin*', as he had become on '*Mount Mahendra*'.⁸

Kirsch has observed that the elite presented a special problem for the integration of ancient Khmer society. High ranking officials, priestly families and some independent kings or princelings would marry their womenfolk to the *Devaraja*. This procedure helped to ensure their loyalty and support to the king, while it also provided them with a bridge to the centre of power.⁹

Thus we find that the elaborate Royal cults developed by the Khmer monarchs helped to integrate subordinates with the centre. Territorial unification was not sufficient to sustain the realm. This came about through the integration of indigenous folk traditions,

⁸ Wolters, O. W. (1982) *History, Culture and Region in South East Asian Perspectives*, Institute of South East Asian Studies, Singapore, p.7.

⁹ Kirsch: "Kinship and genealogical claims..." in Smith, R. B., and Weston, W. (eds.) (1979) *Early South East Asia – Essays in Archaeology, History and Historical Geography*, O. U. P., New York, Kuala Lumpur, p.196.

symbols and religious beliefs into a cult that was visibly concentrated in the centre.¹⁰

The Khmer monarchs from the time of *Jayavarman II* could monopolize temporal power that was justified by a Royal cult in which he alone could represent *Siva* or any other Indian deity. The blending of the indigenous cult of ancestor worship with the Indic religious forms gave the monarch magic properties that conferred immortality upon him. Statues and *Lingas* of Gods placed in the Central temples of the Khmer's realm were portraits and symbols of Kings, their names a fusion of monarchs personal titles with the names of the God's. **(See Chart)**. To link a God and a man in the name and form of a statue was to establish continuity between the divine and human that people found easy to accept.¹¹

Jayavarman successor, *Indravarman I*, constructed a stone temple to shelter the Royal *Siva Linga*, '*Indraesvara*', in which the *Devaraja* resided and he thus became associated with *Indravarman*.¹² King *Indravarman* installed three statues of *Siva*, having the likeness of himself; there was a wide spread belief in South East Asian countries

¹⁰ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.159.

¹¹ Mabbett, I. W., "Devaraja", *Journal of South East Asian History*, vol. X, no. 2, p.223.

¹² Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.139.

that the image having the likeness of a particular King or Queen preserves the Soul of the dead King or Queen and immortalizes it.

The favour *Suryavarman I* accorded to Buddhism earned him the posthumous name of '*Nirvanapada*'. His sponsorship of Buddhism in no way, interrupted the continuity of the worship rendered to the *Devaraja*, during his reign says the inscription of Sdok kak Thom, the members of the family (of the priests of *Devaraja*) officiated for the *Devaraja* as before. In the early 12th century *Suryavarman II*, assumed an intimate relationship with *Visnu* and built the Angkor Wat to honour this union. He thus became the *Visnuraja* rather than the *Devaraja*. '*Parama-Visnuloka*', was the appropriate posthumous title of *Suryavarman II*.¹³

Famous are the smiling faces of the *Bodhisattva Avolokitesvara*, whose head is sculpted with four faces gazing North, South, East, West from the any towers of *Jayavarman VII's* Bayon Shrine, representing the omnipotence of *Jayavarman* who surveyed his capital and empire.¹⁴ The idea is taken from the ideology of Mahayana Buddhism, according to which the *Bodhisattvas* eyes send rays of all seeing compassion into the whole of space, filling it with the light of his boundless merit. In the same way *Jayavarman*

¹³ B.R. Chatterjee: 'Recent advances in Kambuja Studies', *Journal of Greater Indian Society*, vol.7, p.46.

¹⁴ Audric, John (1972) *Angkor and the Khmer Empire*, Robert Hale, London, p.145.

VII saw himself as a presiding angle, taking a share of his subjects suffering and bestowing upon them a share of his inexhaustible treasury of merit. The bodily suffering of men became the suffering of his spirit and afflicted him all the more "for it is in grief of their subjects that cause the grief of kings and not their own griefs".¹⁵ Coedes has identified the Bayon temple images as '*Bodhisattva Lokeswara Samantamukha*' who has faces in all directions. The inscriptions engraved at the entrance of the chapels of the Bayon reveal further that it was a sort of pantheon where the family cults of the king and the provincial cults of the country were centered. ¹⁶

Thus we find that a cult such as the *Devaraja*, should be seen as having signified to its worshippers the King as the ritual embodiment of the patron God. To proclaim their legitimacy, *Jayavarman II* and subsequent Khmer monarchs merged the worship of Indic deities such a *Siva*, *Visnu* and Buddha with the indigenous deities and ancestor spirits and even installed the local spirits, deities in the kings Hindu temples to represent his control over the traditional protective forces of his realm.

¹⁵ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.208-209.

¹⁶ Coedes, G. (1964) *The Indianized States of South East Asia*, Honolulu, Hawaii, p.175.

Whether the *Devaraja*, *Visnuraja* or *Buddharaja* the Khmer King was the intermediary between man and the divine power, the upholder of the established order handed down by his ancestors, the intercessor with the spirit world for the fertility and prosperity of his realm. The *Devaraja* cult should not merely be seen as a description of a Royal cult but also as a form of kingship.

As pointed out by Mabbett, *“that the ritual architecture and statutory God-kingship are not part of a political programme, they are a sort of language, where the words are not arbitrary symbols but potent forces that will produce for the king’s manipulations, the results he desires, if the grammar is right”*.¹⁷

HYDRAULIC NETWORKS

In the Angkor era the king was the creator and director of public works that were designed to ensure prosperity. As agriculture was the most important pillar of the kingdoms prosperity, the rulers of wet rice states therefore attempted to increase the agricultural output under state supervision, the construction of water tanks and irrigation systems were undertaken and economic development in general was encouraged.

¹⁷ Mabbett, I. W., “Devaraja”, *Journal of South East Asian History*, vol. X, no. 2, p.217.

In Cambodia, with the absence of natural conditions which would have allowed the development of an economic base, an artificial base was constructed by the state. An elaborate system of state controlled irrigation works was constructed around the Khmer capital, these works doubled the amount of cultivated land in the Angkor region and provided the necessary economic wealth, for the dramatic expansion of the Khmer state at that time. A network of water works that irrigated some 12½ million acres, constructed around the Khmer capital at Angkor and in a number of regional domains. Without this hydraulic system, the water supply was irregular and thus limited agricultural productivity. The 'Naga' water spirit, was widely portrayed in Khmer art and was an central figure of popular religion. Chou Ta Kuan, the Mongol envoy to Angkor in 1296 reported that the Khmer people believed that their ruler slept with a 'Naga' princess, and that the result of this union was the country's prosperity.¹⁸ This report implies that the Khmer monarchs enjoyed a ritual relationship with the spirit of soil that released the fertility that guaranteed the earth's fertility and productivity.

When *Indravarman I* undertook the construction of a huge artificial lake North of the capital for the storage of water needed for irrigation during the dry season, he was doing something of supreme

¹⁸ Tarling, Nicholas (1992) *The Cambridge History of South East Asia*, Vol. I, Cambridge University Press, London, p.230.

importance to the subsequent development of Khmer monarchy. The priority he gave to irrigation set a fashion followed by his successors. *Indravarman I's* successors continued to attach prime importance to the irrigation works laid out to keep the land surrounding the capital under cultivation, and devoted careful attention to the development of a network of canals in the Angkor region.

In the same tradition *Yasovarman I*, constructed an artificial lake: Eastern Baray, *Yasodharatataka* north east of his new capital city of *Yasodhapura*. According to the inscription reporting this event, the king wished to facilitate an outlet for his abundant glory in the direction of the underworld. This underworld, also depicted as the place from which Khmer monarchs judged the dead, was the abode of the *Naga* the source of fertility. Another inscription notes that *Yasovarman* “resplendent with glory” made the lake “beautiful as the moon to refresh human beings”.¹⁹

A 1980, examination of the Angkor era water management system demonstrates the *Yasovarman's* lake was a critical source of water for the Angkor regions agricultural production in a technical sense, though as the focus of Khmer religion it was important symbolically

¹⁹ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.147.

in the Khmer system of 'theocratic hydraulics'²⁰ Archaeological evidence demonstrates that Angkor itself was not a major centre of this water management network but rather the hill Phnom Kulen, which was located upriver from *Yasovarman's* lake. Phnom Kulen was near the head waters of the Siem Reap river, which flowed from that area through the Angkor to Tonle Sap. A network of small earth dams regulated the flow of water downstream from Phnom Kulen to Angkor.²¹

One striking feature of the water management network at Phnom Kulen is that its dams, in addition to their effectiveness in managing water, all were constructed running East-West and North-South, the water management network was consecrated by the traditional symbols of fertility. A number of *Lingas* were carved in the rocky riverbed between Phnom Kulen and Angkor, suggesting the sanctity of the water that flowed from the mountain region to Angkor.²²

Most conspicuous among *Suryavarman's* public works was the Western Baray, which was the greatest of the reservoirs that adorned the centre of the empire, mirroring the heavens and its

²⁰ W.J. Vanliere, "Traditional Water Management in Lower Mekong Basin". *World Archaeology*, 11, 3, 1980, p.274.

²¹ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.147.

²² Tarling, Nicholas (1992) *The Cambridge History of South East Asia*, Vol. I, Cambridge University Press, London, p.231.

construction added an enormous increment to the supplies of water furnished by the state, whether for domestic or agricultural use. The extension of water resources of the capital reflects an expansion likely to have been typical of the empire as a whole- an increase in economic activity, an elaboration of land owning system an increase in population.

Jayavarman VII, built his reservoir, the *Jayatataka*, the Neah Pean design symbolizing the celestial lake, 'Anautapata', source of India's four sacred rivers above which rises the 'Mount *Meru*'. The lake is associated with the myth of sun light and in Buddhism with enlightenment.

Historians have long supported that these reservoirs were politically important in a practical way. *Bernard Groslier* argued that these reservoirs and the elaborate system of canals with which they were linked, fed an irrigation system that yielded multiple crops fields downhill from the storage. The location and scale of the hydraulic works powerfully suggest that there works were directed in part to the needs of agriculture. Though for the critics, the reservoirs must have been part of the ritual apparatus of kingship, with its cosmological symbolism that assimilated the ruler to the Gods watching over the earth and the surrounding waters. The ritual interpretation can be supported by an examination of the

base of Royal legitimacy, which depended upon massive labour intensive activities as a manifestation of the spiritual power concentrated in the person of the ruler.²³

Thus we find that a king's legitimacy was secured by the protection of the undifferentiated public interest, a function with religious significance and this involved the perpetuation of peace and the undertakings of public works. As is noted, with reference from the inscriptions of many king's, from the time when they received the Royal power, they made this promise, 'In five days from today, I shall begin to dig'.²⁴ Signifying that the hydraulic system thus constituted the lifeline of the Khmer economy.

MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE

'Monuments belonged to the apparatus of cosmic harmony by which each ruler strove to make his kingdom in all the details of its architecture administration and ritual organization match symbolically the world of Gods'.²⁵ These monuments represent a pattern that was to recur often in the quest for legitimacy.

²³ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.155.

²⁴ Coedes, G., (1937-66), *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, vol. 2: pp.17, 31.

²⁵ Mabbett, I. W. (1985) "A Survey of the Background to the Variety of Political Traditions in South – East Asia", in Mabbett I. W. ed., *Patterns of Kingship and Authority in Traditional Asia*, Croom Helm: London, Sydney, Dover, p.77.

Indravarman I, started a long record of monuments built by kings to fulfil a systematic programme. His first major foundations at Preah Koh, a group of shrines dedicated to his parents, the maternal grandparents, to *Jayavarman II* and his queen, with a stature of the bull *Nandin*. The second was the Bakong, the first of the state shrines set on pyramids that became the hall mark of Angkor kingdom, which may be approached along a causeway guarded by a great *Naga* serpent that lifts its seven heads to the sky.²⁶ He further founded a city named *Sivapura* and built a temple of *Siva* in the city.²⁷ The name of the capital was changed to *Isanapuri*, which means the city of *Isana* i.e. *Siva*.²⁸

The centering of Angkor upon an artificial mountain of the Gods was more grandly performed by king *Yasovarman*, after a period of fratricidal strife. The capital site chosen by him, enabled him to place a real hill, the Phnom Bakheng, at its centre. Symbolically it was mountain of the God, Mount *Meru* at the centre of the cosmos and the kingdom was the centre of the world. From the steeply pitched terraces of the Bakheng monument, one could command a king's eye view of the great city of *Yasodhrapura*, which for

²⁶ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford,, p.96.

²⁷ Jash, P. (1979) "Ethnic Background and the Development of Saivism in Southeast Asia", *Journal of Indian History*, vol.5, p.18.

²⁸ Saran, M. K. (1974) *Studies in Sanskrit Inscriptions of Ancient Cambodia*, Abhinav Publications, p.236.

centuries was to mark the home territory of Khmer Kings.²⁹ *J. Fillizoat* pointed out that from any one side we can see 33 tower shrines, including the top most sanctum, these are 33 Gods, who supposedly inhabit Mount *Meru*, thereby creating the effect that the ordinary inhabitants of *Yasodhrapura* walked with Gods.

King *Rajendravarman*, put together the empire and restored *Yashodhrapura* as his capital and built many temples of which two pyramidal *linga* shrines the Pre Rup and East Mebon deserve particularly to be mentioned as ritual statements of Royal power. Under him the great Palace became the hub of bureaucracy that extended its control into the further reaches of the empire,. And the five proud towers of the Eastern Mebon stood for the authority of the Royal icon, *Siva Rajendresavara*, over the world.³⁰

Suryavarman I, further extended the programme of monumental constructions within the Indic framework, he constructed the four important *linga* shrines, in the provinces, situated in the four cardinal directions to symbolize his dominion over the four quarters of universal space, the four great shrines to North, East, South, West of the capital thus representing *Sivas* protection of the empire as a totality.

²⁹ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford,, p.97.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.100

Suryavarman II was the builder of Angkor Wat, the most spectacular of all monuments that remains to attest the empire's glory. Cambodia's National shrine's original foundation was in honour of *Visnu* and had its ceremonial approach from the West because of the association of West with *Visnu*, who presided over the beginning and the end of each world cycle. Its importance as a ritual statement has to be highlighted for the sake of it, with its moats and linked water ways making a significant contribution to the hydraulic resources of the capital districts, made it an expression of Royal power that most Khmers had to respond to, it extracted their labour in its construction, it promised divine favours for the kingdom as a result of the ruler's piety and it commanded their admiration.³¹

The bas relief's of Angkor Wat shows the departure from the present and deteriorating age: the *Kali Yuga* in Indian cosmology and a return of the first or Golden age, *Krta Yuga* that was represented by *Suryavarman's* reign. According to this depiction, the new age began when *Suryavarman II*, seized the throne from two kings, put down a civil war and went on to regenerate a *mandala*.³² The message of the Angkor Wat bas relief was that it was a privilege

³¹ Ibid, p.103.

³² Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.146.

to live in *Suryavarman's* generation. Further we notice that *Suryavarman* is depicted as 'Yama' the judge of the dead which was consistent with Khmer views of a sovereign's power, where obedience or disobedience to one's overlord has consequences in the afterlife.

Monument of such vastness and intricacy reflected a considerable degree of economic and political vitality as well as creative genius of the people who contributed to its construction.

THE TEMPLE REALM

The massive public works projects directed by Khmer Monarchs required a degree of economic and social integration high enough to provide the economic resources necessary to fund and carry out these projects. They could not be supplied by a simple redistributive economy. To achieve these ends, goods and services from the Khmer agrarian system had to be channeled into the hands of those representatives of the state i.e. temples, who were responsible for the achievement of broad political goals. In these times temples were not just religious centres but were important links in the state's economic and political networks. With the temple network as its base, Khmer society went beyond primary redistributive integration and reached a higher level of centralized economic level.

The temple network came to integrate the Khmer realm in two ways. On the one hand, temple linked disparate agricultural regions horizontally into an ever expanding economic network whose wealth fueled the Khmer state. On the other hand, temples were the locus for the manipulation of cultural symbols to vertically integrate the higher and lower levels of the Khmer society and economy.³³ The extension of agriculture into previously uncultivated lands and the construction of hydraulic networks to facilitate the production of rice surplus were central to the development schemes of Khmer kings. Khmer temples at the state and regional levels fulfilled three economic functions in the agricultural development process. Firstly, they were centres of investment, the source of investment capital and management. Donors gifts were re-distributed to individuals or groups of peasants and bondsman cultivators as capital investments (eg. Seeds, livestock, land to be cultivated), which stimulated the agrarian sector. Secondly, temples were repositories of technological information and knowledge, directly or indirectly supporting scholars, astrologers, and artisans whose expertise and literacy could be drawn upon by the cultivator. Thirdly, Khmer temples were supervisory agencies that involved agricultural laboures in the development process, offering sufficient returns to encourage them to remain on land; as lands assigned to temples for

³³ Ibid, p.137.

development were often unpopulated, requiring the assignment of a labour force with no previous claim to the lands production.³⁴ The Angkor state developed regionally based hydro agricultural networks that facilitated the extension of wet rice cultivation. Supervision of the construction and operation of these regional irrigational networks was vested with regional temples. *Coedes* and *Dupont* in 'les steles de sdok kak thom' mention a case, where the heads of a family and its branches acted through their family temple as managers of land, clearing forests, erecting dwellings for new inhabitants, building dikes and reservoirs and setting slaves to work on land assigned for development.³⁵ Endowments to temples represented the mobilization, organization and pooling of economic resources (capital, land, labour and so forth) to support portions of the overall ritual process of the temple.

With the temple networks as its base, Khmer society went beyond primary re-distributive integration and reached a higher level of centralized economic control. In the absence of a bureaucratic system for collecting large amounts of income for the state treasury, temples were viewed as important centres of economic accumulation that could be tapped to finance the kings patronage

³⁴ Ibid, p.161.

³⁵ See footnote 83 of Hall (1985) page 312, .

of religion.³⁶ Noteworthy was the development of Khmer temples as centres of re-distribution and the continuous and massive movement of products from villages towards temples. We have the reference that single temple foundations possessed assets including 35 diamonds, 40,620 fine pearls, 4,540 precious stones, 967 violes de chine, and 512 silk beads.³⁷ These goods were redistributed according to the wealth, power or prestige of the recipients. Central Temples were constructed to an increasing extent near or at the political centres. Accordingly they became more and more the focal point of magico-political, 'force-field' emanating from the political centre of the kingdom. ³⁸

While the re-distribution of economic capital was central to a temples existence, the mobilization of symbolic capital was also critical, as temple endowments generated one or more ritual contexts in which honours rather than material returns were distributed to and received by donors. In this way economic capital was converted to culturally symbolic capital, honours that had enhanced the statue of the donor in the minds of his kin and clients. The gift was a means by which the group or its leaders

³⁶ Tarling, Nicholas (1992) *The Cambridge History of South East Asia*, Vol. I, Cambridge University Press, London, p.239.

³⁷ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.175.

³⁸ Kulke, Hermam (1993) *Kings and Cults; State Formation and Legitimation in India and South East Asia*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, p.287.

could formally and publicly receive recognition. Rulers were patrons and protectors of temples, ensuring the continuance of a temple services, resources and rules. They were not rulers of temple, however, but were servants of the temple deity, human agents of the lord of temple - a stone image that could not arbitrate in the real world on its own behalf - who protected and served the deity. This issue of who was the ultimate servant of the temple lord had political significance and explains the attempts by Angkor's monarchs to subordinate the deities of local temples to those of the royal temples or to integrate these local deities into Royal cults.³⁹ For example, we have the reference, of a local deity of *Sambhupara* was placed under the protection of the central shrine of *Jayavarman VIII* realms at Angkor's Bayon.⁴⁰ Osborne demonstrates a similar pattern of integration at *Isanapura* where regional and provincial deities were subordinated to central deities, but were integrated into Royal cults in an important urban centre within the Khmer heart land.⁴¹

Similarly, by the height of Angkor era, local temples and their cults were integrated into a statewide network of temples that were ultimately tied to the king's central temple. The priest from the local

³⁹ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.160.

⁴⁰ Coedes, G., (1937-66), *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, vol.2 pp.82, 87.

⁴¹ Osborne, "notes on Early Cambodian Provincial history: Isanapura and Sambhupura", *France-Asie/Asia*, 20, 4, 1966, p.436-439.

temples participated in rituals at major Royal temples, that were constructed at strategic points through out the state. They as well as their aristocratic patrons derived legitimacy from this participation, in turn local temples helped to finance the activities of the central temples by assigning to them a portion of annual collections. Therefore, we find that under the guise of religion, the Khmer monarchs who dominated central temples and their staff, could draw a part of the wealth of their realm to the Royal temple without creating an elaborate secular bureaucracy to collect revenues in the states name.⁴² The economic diversity of local temples is reflected in variety of donations, for the service of the property assigned: domesticated animals, goats, buffaloes, cattle, coconut, palms, fruit trees, areca nuts, betel leaves, clothing, threshing floor, etc. ⁴³ The type and size of gifts to temples indicate the developing institutional capacity to utilize and administer this production by the rulers.

As we have seen that these local temples were subordinated to the Royal temples, they had to share the production received with the central temple and thus with the King, who had made the original

⁴² Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.137.

⁴³ Coedes, G., (1937-66), *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, vol., 2:21, 2:22, 2:23, 2:37, 2:123, 2:135, 2:154, 2:200

assignments. What developed through this pattern of land assignments was a network of private and temple land holding rights that were subject to the supervision of the monarchy. The Khmer monarchs thus assumed the role of patron placing land under exclusive control of favoured families and their temples. The aristocracy, drawing their livelihood from the land, theoretically owed their continued prosperity directly or indirectly to Royal favours.⁴⁴ This system facilitated the Khmer monarchs manipulation of the regional landed aristocracy – themselves integrated into the Royal bureaucratic order by having official religious and secular titles bestowed on them.⁴⁵

A complete examination reveals that the income from the local temples covered only a small percentage of Royal expenses and this revenue sharing was more symbolic than critical to the financial well being of the state temple. The demands appear to be more political and social than economic. Royal interest in local temples, aside from guaranteeing the financial well being of allies, and limiting the economic resources of potential rivals, was more concerned about a local temple ritual being in harmony that of the

⁴⁴ Tarling, Nicholas (1992) *The Cambridge History of South East Asia*, Vol. I, Cambridge University Press, London, p.235.

⁴⁵ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.159.

Royal temple. *Suryavarman I* reign represents a critical phase in the development of an integrated Khmer economic and political order, with the Khmer temple network assuming a major role in the development process as, prosperity upon the control over the production of land and manpower came to depend more and more upon Royal favor.⁴⁶ The system of linking local, provincial and few major temples at the capital with the imperial temple of the ruling king was highly developed in the reign of *Jayavarman VII*. The economic ties which linked these temples substituted for the “Resource transfer of a political nature”.⁴⁷

At the end of the 12th century the extended core area of Angkor might have been covered by about 3000-3500 temples, all fulfilling important ritual, economic and administrative functions. This socio-cultural heritage of these extended core areas of the Imperial Kingdoms again played a most important role in a more recent political process which scholars of political science refer to as a “Nation building process”.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Tarling, Nicholas (1992) *The Cambridge History of South East Asia*, Vol. I, Cambridge University Press, London, p.234.

⁴⁷ Kulke, Hermam (1993) *Kings and Cults; State Formation and Legitimation in India and South East Asia*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, p.290.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.293.

New Developments

Economic leadership in commercial sphere provided a new source of income for Khmer monarchs in the 10th and 11th centuries and enhanced the states political accomplishments. Merchants activities in the Khmer domain shared in this prosperity and these accomplishments. The King's utilized merchants special ability to mobilize the distribution of various goods, acquired through the indigenous marketing networks that the merchants controlled. Khmer Kings thus came to recognize the benefits to be derived from commerce- directly via the flow of goods to their court and indirectly from the prosperity generated by the developing marketing system that encouraged local production and in the end owing to the Kings right to receive set percentages of local production, brought additional revenues to the treasury.⁴⁹ *Suryavarman I*, himself took an active role in furthering Khmer commercial aspirations and attempted to establish regular commercial intercourse with the South India *Cola* state, and the *L'y* state in Vietnam. He benefited merchants activity by establishing standard of weights and measures.

⁴⁹ Hall, K. R. (1985) *Maritime Trade and State Development in early South East Asia*, Honolulu, p.172.

As late as the 13th century the Chinese were still writing of the kings of Angkor, as the wealthiest and mightiest monarchs in all South East Asia.⁵⁰ The commercial intensification of the 13th to the 15th centuries created a new social magnetism, attracting urban populations to the coast and thus playing a part in the decline of the old inland agrarian society of Angkor and the rise of Phnom Penh.⁵¹ The great irrigation system fell into neglect and decay and with it production declined. At the same time the intensively cultivated land showed signs of exhaustion. Some historians argue the tremendous expenditure on religious foundations in Angkor had short term beneficial effects in stimulating economic activity but in long run inhibited the development of the economy because it did not promote new sorts of production or create new wealth.⁵² A new system of Buddhism penetrated the country and was adopted by peasants and rulers alike. It destroyed the concept of God-Kings and there was a transition from one set of state religious elite to another, which necessitated a structural change in the relationship of the king to his elite.

The Khmer empire began and ended with the relationship between the ruler and sacred soil of his kingdom. So long as the imperial

⁵⁰ Tate, D. J. M. (1971) *The Making of Modern South East Asia*, Vol. I, O. U. P., London, p.469.

⁵¹ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.182.

⁵² Ibid, p.175.

state could compel the loyalties of most of the Khmers in the once independent communities dotted about the countryside, it could command an apparatus of government more unified and powerful than those of neighbouring kingdoms. When the magic was lost, Cambodia reverted to the status of a regional kingdom engaged in a struggle for survival with its neighbours.⁵³

⁵³ Ibid, p.217.

Chapter IV

DECLINE OF MONARCHICAL ABSOLUTISM

"The history of Cambodia in the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th centuries is an immense, intense and painful tragedy. Our people and the majority of our kings, princes and princesses suffered and split their blood to maintain national integrity".¹

(Norodom Sihanouk)

During 1432-1864, the history of Cambodia is largely an account of efforts to avoid subjugation by its aggressive neighbours, Siam and Annam and of its relations with Europeans. The sources undergo an almost complete change, instead of inscriptions, iconography, architecture, sculpture etc, there appears chronicles of Cambodia, its neighbours, writings of missionaries and early travellers treaties of European powers affecting Cambodia and studies of scholars.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, following the voyages of MarcoPolo, trade increased between Europe and South East Asia. The consequent general increase of trade in the area seem to have affected Cambodia, for there was a great demand upswing in trade beginning in the 15th century, notably in porcelain, textiles and

¹ Realities Cambodgiennes, 7 June, 1958 Quoted in Osborne, 1966, "History and Kingship in Contemporary Cambodia", *Journal of South East Asian History*, p.7.

rare metals.² This burgeoning of trade coincides with the entry of foreign traders in substantial numbers in Cambodia and the founding of Phnom Penh as the capital by king Ponhea – Yat in 1434. The establishment of the capital of Phnom Penh indicates an essential change from an almost self-sufficient economy to one dependent foreign trade. Situated at the junction of four navigable rivers, a geographical location rarely found, Phnom Penh is a trading city par excellence, its choice as capital suggests that Ponhea-Yat depended upon trade to an extent unknown to his predecessors. Although the capital moved several times after this, it was seldom far from Mekong on the trading city of Phnom Penh.³

Cambodia in the 16th and 17th century was, at least periodically, strong enough to hold its own against pincer plays from the Thai and Veitnamese, to engage in active trade relations with various countries and even from contacts with foreign powers. The shift of the capital from Angkor, to locales like Phnom Penh, Lovek, Oudong near the ‘Quatre Bras’ confluence of the Tonle Sap and the Mekong rivers may reflect not only the ascendancy of new rulers but Cambodia’s transition in the 16th century to a trading kingdom, with an increasing involvement with the outside world. The political history of these two centuries is notable for its succession of kings

² Willmott, W.E. (1966) “History and Sociology of the Chinese in Cambodia Prior to the French Protectorate”, *Journal of South East Asian History*, vol.7, pp.15-23, p.22.

³ *Ibid*, p.23.

and conflicts over the throne, alternate periods of alliance and struggles with the Thais, Veitnamese and Loations and the first forays of European penetration into the area. *Chandler* and *Vickery* suggest that the crisis were periodic rather than perpetual and affected some parts of the country but not others. It is likely that Cambodia experienced an oscillation towards one pole or another: some periods evidently have powerful rulers and higher degrees of concentration; some saw a wobbly balance between the central power and local lords and still other saw the latter holding primary sway.⁴ The kings power was not absolute, while there were stronger or weaker monarchs, greater or lesser degrees of centralization and decentralization; Lacking an institutionalized bureaucracy or mandarinat, administrative responsibilities such as tax collection, levis of corvee labour, mobilization of troops, adjudication of legal cases etc. lay in the hands of a staggering array of dignitaries and title holders appointed by the king. The kings appointment to title and office were a critical means of enlisting and rewarding support and loyalty to the throne. Just as the king could appoint at his pleasure, so could he revoke at his displeasure and reduce an official to an "nombre des simples habitants" or even in some extreme cases to slavery.⁵

⁴ Ebihara, May, [1984] "Societal Organisation in 16th & 17th Century Cambodia, *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, 15 Sept. vol. 15, p.282.

⁵ Ibid, p.285.

Societies characterized by the tributary mode, typically have religious system in which domination is inscribed into the structure of the universe, power holders have supernatural validation and those who are ruled are invited to win merit by maintaining order through the regulation of their own conduct. Certainly Cambodian Kingship was reinforced by Theravada concepts of merit and power that legitimated both the authority and those in high positions and the modest conditions of the lowly. Theravada Buddhism, as a moral symbolic system gave ideological legitimation to the social political order. There were important connections between the members of the Sangha and royalty. The king was, theoretically, an absolute ruler, to whom respect, deference and obedience were due on pain of death. Indeed disrespectful or disobedient behaviour towards the kings emissaries on even servants of royalty was also punished. The same moral/ religious codes that validated high rank also sanctioned paternalistic rather than despotic rule for both kings and officials, power carried with it at the level of norms, responsibility for peoples welfare.⁶ The normative poems known as 'Chhbab' that also date from the 16th and 17th centuries convey moral values that included unquestioning respect for those with higher social positions and the muted suggestion that privileged people

⁶ Ibid, p.284.

have a duty to protect less fortunate khmers⁷ From the peasants point of view the primary function of the Cambodian king was to enact, as in a dance, the moral victories appropriate to a monarch as reflected in classic and popular stories. King was patron of the agricultural year, each spring, ploughed a ceremonial furrow on the Palace grounds, initiating the agricultural cycle throughout the kingdom. In November he held ceremonies to mark the end of the rainy season. His patronage to Buddhism and his enormous fund for *Karma* were other aspects of the monarchs "image" for his people.⁸

By portraying his subjects as "dust under the Royal feet" or "slaves of the lord", court language and its accompanying etiquette kept the ruler at a distance from others.⁹ There was indeed sacred and social distance between the king and the ordinary people, but evidently not an unbridgeable gulf. Nor was the king totally inaccessible, a 16th century Portuguese source comments that king Ang Chan held audiences for common folk to submit their cases and was kept informed of the least "faitle geste" of his subjects. *Chandler* believes that the kings were out and about the country side during the 16th, 17th centuries more than in the 19th century. There are also numerous instances in the 'Chbap Tumnin Pi

⁷ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.226.

⁸ Steinberg, D. J. (1971) *In Search of South East Asia*, Praeger, New York, p.66.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.60.

Bawran' of the king being consulted on and drawn into a surprising large number of legal proceedings.¹⁰

Since the population often viewed the monarchs as God-like, an imminent Buddha, Buddhist monarchs occasionally proclaimed themselves God. The Palace crowned the kingdom, its construction still repeated the symbolic design of Hindu cosmos. The monarchy provided the ultimate coherence for societies organized socially, politically and linguistically on hierarchic lines, justifying by its existence the wisdom and permanence of that kind of organization.¹¹ There were however, an intriguing tributary relationship, involving periodic ceremonial exchanges of various items, between the 17th century Khmer monarchs and so called 'kings of Fire and Water', who were political leaders among the Jarai and other highland groups. Such presentations evidently symbolized military political alliances between Cambodian rulers and tribal people.¹² A feature that was constant through out the Cambodian history did continue in this period also, at the upper levels of royalty there were recurrent struggles through the 16th and 17th centuries, there was contention for the throne, because of

¹⁰ Ebihara, May, [1984] "Societal Organisation in 16th & 17th Century Cambodia, *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol. 15, p.284

¹¹ Steinberg, D. J. (1971) *In Search of South East Asia*, Praeger, New York, p.60.

¹² Ebihara, May, [1984] "Societal Organisation in 16th & 17th Century Cambodia, *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, 15 Sept. vol. 15, p.293.

the concentration of the kingdoms riches there, as well as the lack of clear enforceable rules of succession.

By 1700, Cambodia, for the first time in its history was menaced on two sides by more powerful, potentially hostile neighbours. One effect of this development was that factions at the court and in the provinces, soon tended to split along pro-Thai or pro-Vietnamese lines. Between the mid 17th century and the arrival of the French, was a period of invasions from Vietnam and Siam, preceded and followed by civil wars. In the process the king's authority and his ability to rally followers decreased.¹³ What ever idle rules existed for the designation of a new king in traditional Cambodian practice, the years preceding the years of the French protectorate, were so unsettled that it is impossible to speak of an established system having operated with regularity. Kings and Queens were placed on the Cambodian throne according to the wishes of outside powers, Thailand and Vietnam, with little, if any regard for the wishes of the court officials who were to serve the new sovereign.¹⁴ The pressure of its neighbours, principally by reducing sources of revenue, loosened the power of the Cambodian court. By middle of the 18th century, the court was small, fractured and

¹³ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.227-228.

¹⁴ Osborne, Milton[1965] "King - making in Cambodia: From Sisowath to Sihanouk", *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol.4, pt.2, p.169.

institutionally brittle, its members and their clients were engrossed in the politics of personal and dynastic survival. The prices paid to the neighbouring states were large in terms of territory, tribute and the loss of freedom, and the size of political debts incurred by each new monarch on his way to the throne frequently crippled his capacity to rule.¹⁵

As Cambodia's territory shrank along with the availability of manpower for warfare and production, so too did the range of options available to the court. A 'Vietnamese' or a 'Thai' monarch would assume the throne in Cambodia surrounded by advisers, helpfully provided by his patron state. The court has little leisure in which to act out its traditional role. Cut off from the access to the sea by Sino-Vietnamese adventures, the court was isolated both from outside observers and from the benefits and hazards of extensive foreign trade. Royal expenditures were light, since goods and services commanded by the palace were seldom paid for.¹⁶ As the court slipped further into dependent status, the cycle continued.

During these turbulent years we have the references to episodes which demonstrated the position of the monarch in Cambodia and how passionately the people still felt about the institution. In 1840,

¹⁵ Steinberg, D. J. (1971) *In Search of South East Asia*, Praeger, New York, p.64.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.65.

King Ang Eng was captured by the Vietnamese and exiled to Hue. This was followed the next year by the banishment of Queen Ang Mey herself, together with other members of the Royal family and her ministers, to the same place. The exiling of the Royal family became the signal for a national uprising. The length and breadth of the country Cambodians set upon and killed all the Vietnamese they could lay their hand on.¹⁷ In times of crisis, such as a famine or invasion, villagers built models of the Palace out of sand, attempting to gain for themselves the harmony with sky, earth and under-earth that the king commanded.¹⁸

Centuries of experience with Thailand and Vietnam taught Cambodia the futility of relying on either of the two for support. King Ang Doung, overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems of his kingdom, sought for a distant ally, 'preferably a European ally'. Since British policy seemed especially aggressive in South East Asia, he turned to France. Norodom Sihanouk, has given a detailed account of how and why the Cambodian kings sought French protectorate. He has pointed out to the fact that, King Ang Duong, had heard that the French had intervened in Annam, He therefore decided to propose an alliance to emperor Napoleon III, hoping that an alliance would free Cambodia once and for all from the

¹⁷ Tate, D. J. M. (1971) *The Making of Modern South East Asia*, Vol. I, O. U. P., London, p.471.

¹⁸ Steinberg, D. J. (1971) *In Search of South East Asia*, Praeger, New York, p.66.

oppressive and humiliating guardianship of its neighbours and at the same time lead to the recovery of the lost Khmer provinces.¹⁹ The letter He wrote to Napoleon III, showed, Sihanouk remarks, "Our kings never asked France to establish its protectorate and suzerainty over our country", "it was not all a question of our looking for a new master".²⁰ Napoleon did not reply to Ang Duong's letter, but the French busied themselves for their own account in Cochin-China.

The French Rule and the Monarchy

*The French protectorate over Cambodia eroded the monarch's power during the 90 years of its operation, it seems almost as importantly to have enhanced the rulers symbolic character.*²¹

With devastating suddenness in 1863, Cambodia was brought face to face with French power and forced to accept French protectorate. This development was the direct outcome of the French occupation of Cochin-China, which had begun in 1859.²² Following the assertion of the French authority over Annam and Cochin-China, the French in 1863, offered protectorate status to

¹⁹ Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.33.

²⁰ Ibid, p.34.

²¹ Cambodia: Country without Parties, *Journal of South East Asian History*, vol. 18, Pt. 1, 1967, p.44.

²² Tate, D. J. M. (1971) *The Making of Modern South East Asia*, Vol. I, O. U. P., London, p.473.

Cambodian king Norodom, in return for an array of traditional concessions demanded by European imperialism. These included access by the French to land and natural resources, freedom from tariffs for French commerce and legal extraterritoriality. King Norodom insecure in the face of revolutionary activity by dynastic rivals that promised to serve as the pretext for Thai military intervention, accepted the French offer.²³ Norodom still uncrowned, agreed to accept French protection, assuming that this would involve military assistance and no interference in his style of rule. He was crowned in Udong, with French navy officers in attendance, in mid 1964. During these years, French officials sought to limit Norodom's powers and to expand their own.²⁴ Norodom Sihanouk, speaks of the difficulty in sketching a moral and political portrait of this very controversial figure. In trying to discover the truth about king Norodom, Sihanouk, asks first: "If another man had been king during the colonization of Cambodia by France in the period of 1863-1884 or even if Cambodia had been a republic, would this colonization have been avoidable? Is it fair to blame king Norodom, when more powerful countries than ours were unable to safeguard their sovereignty?.... A Crime is imputed to the king for having signed, though with the greatest reluctance, the treaty and the

²³ Under development and economic nationalism in South East Asia, 1969, p.420.

²⁴ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.231-232.

conventions of the protectorate. But no one says what he might have done in the greater interest of his country".²⁵

In summing up king Norodoms character, Sihanouk states a general rule as to how a king of Cambodia must act. Those who have the heavy duty of holding the helm of the Khmer state, he declares, must be "neither capricious, nor fickle, nor unfaithful to true friends. But above all things, they (must be) faithful to their country", They must, as I have written, "act and react in following the course of events that are imposed on them", our acts or inspired only by the ambition necessary for (national) survival.²⁶ The abilities of King Norodon are gauged against the energy of the builders in Angkorian times, "A worthy successor to the great builder kings, King Norodom erected and bequeathes to the nation the most beautiful, the most rich.... And the most celebrated of the modern temples, the Silver Pagoda".²⁷

The relations between king Norodon and the French fall into two distinct period as marked by Sihanouk. The first extending from 1863 to 1884, was relatively calm. The second running from 1884 to 1904, was marked by a dramatic deterioration of relations that eased only with the coming of Sisowath. These two French

²⁵ Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.35.

²⁶ Ibid, p.36.

²⁷ Realies Cambodgines, 12 July, 1958 Quoted in Osborne (1966),

protectorates were quiet distinct in letter and in spirit and are discussed here as they give a good idea of the institution of monarchy under the French rule. The treaty of August 11, 1863, was acceptable in all respects. It symbolized a protectorate respectful of the dignity of the protected state. It might be characterized as a gentleman's agreement, a "correct exchange of services".²⁸ French rule was acceptable in large measures because it protected Cambodia against Vietnamese domination. The French rulers interfered little with the traditional tempo of Cambodian life, paid deference to the dignity of the Buddhist, supporting royal establishment and restored many of the ancient monuments of Khmer greatness at Angkor, while at the same time maintaining peace and a moderate degree of prosperity.²⁹ The French destroyed a few Cambodian institutions, removed some and froze others into place. The traditions of provincial autonomy, debt bondage and dynastic warfare, for eg: were slowly eroded. While the machinery of tax collection, royal monopolies and Palace administration was rebuilt to meet French needs. On the other hand the Buddhist Sangha the local judicial system, village education and the non administrative aspects of kingship were allowed to function undisturbed.³⁰ French efforts there consisted largely of ineffectual attempts to curb Nonodom's

²⁸ Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.36.

²⁹ Cady, J. F. [1966] *Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia*, New Jersey, p.14.

³⁰ Steinberg, D. J. (1971) *In Search of South East Asia*, Praeger, New York, p.184

power and to tidy his fiscal procedures, with a view to siphoning off some of his revenue to pay French administration. Nonodom balked at the reforms and in 1884, when he refused to allow the French to administer Cambodian custom fees, France presented him with a 11 point ultimatum, disguised as a convention, which permanently limited his powers. The protectorate of 1884, was a severe blow to Cambodian pride. According to *Paul Collard*, the convention was forced on King Narodom, at gun point and with little regard for Royal protocol. The text of the convention was read to the king by his interpreter and private secretary who having finished, said to the monarch, "sire, it is not a convention they propose to your majesty but an abdication". The convention took from the state of Cambodia for all practical purposes " all personality, all life, and all honour. It had no more government, administration, services or finances. Yet the bloodless state had to bear the expenses of the protectorate".³¹ Narodom climbed down and signed away his birth right forever, and agreed to accept whatever reforms in the administration which the French might consider necessary. The French Resident General was given the right of private and personal audience with the King and he was entitled to override or ignore the wishes of the council of ministers if he choose. Each province was to be placed under a French official with general powers to supervise the work of Cambodian hierarchy and their councils and with direct authority to

³¹ Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.37-38.

collect land revenue, custom duties and indirect taxes. In return for all this, the king was provided with a fixed civil list and was permitted to retain his court ceremonial and other royal prerogatives.³²

Under the imposition of a parallel French government for Cambodia, which the naval authorities at Saigon established in 1884, the Cambodian king was reduced to little more than the symbolic role as the embodiment of nationhood, religion and authority. But this continued presence was, nevertheless, a potent and valuable political asset. For the villager, the Royal palace continued to be the repository of divinity sanctioned authority, the magical center of the universe and the abode of the God-King. The immaculate sacred sword was revered as the tool of *Indra* and the counseling spirit which allegedly inhabited the seven tined parasol above the throne was still regarded as the source of both wisdom and power. Popular obedience to the king's commands fell within the limits of traditional authority and were presumed to be dedicated to the national welfare and the promotion of the Buddhist religion.³³ The traditional ways of village life tenaciously maintained, tied up as always with the observance of religious holidays, festival observances, and the annual rhythm of paddy cultivation and the fish harvest.³⁴

³² Tate, D. J. M. (1971) *The Making of Modern South East Asia*, Vol. I, O. U. P., London, p.477.

³³ Cady, J. F. [1966] *Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia*, New Jersey, p.112.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.113.

Paradoxically, as the French reduced the powers of the king, the stability, the French brought to his realm, had the effect of gradually increasing his prestige. Although Norodom was, in effect, a hostage of the French, they made no effort to diminish the ceremonial and religious aspects of the monarchy, which were the ones that linked Norodom directly with his people. By reducing the king's freedom of action, the French increased the effectiveness of the Cambodian monarchy as an ongoing institution.³⁵

The French officials operated behind this useful Royal façade in carrying through essential administrative reforms. They encountered only one feeble armed protest when the assumed power in 1884, which the French never forgot, the one occasion when there had been an outright clash between their wishes and those held by king Norodom. More over quit apart from the question of Norodom's own involvement in the revolt, the French reluctantly recognized that those who rose against them did so, essentially, in terms of support for the king.³⁶ The French experience during the 1885-86 years of revolt led them to appreciate the vital role that the Cambodian ruler played within the kingdom, providing an essential and central point of unity. The French in Cambodia recognized that an attempt to abolish the

³⁵ Steinberg, D. J. (1971) *In Search of South East Asia*, Praeger, New York, p.184.

³⁶ Osborne, Milton[1965] "King - making in Cambodia: From Sisowath to Sihanouk", *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol.4, pt.2, p.172.

monarchy would present them with more problems than it would solve. With this in mind they came to attach a great deal of importance to the question who should occupy the throne. For the French there was the ever present fear that a hostile king might undermine their control of Cambodia. The French, worked to ensure that Norodom's successor should be a man whose wishes would not run contrary to those of the French colonial administration.

The designation of Sisowath was made by a council that met under the chairmanship of the French Resident Superior, a fact that demonstrated where power in the kingdom lay. Sihanouk has pointed out that "All his life, all through his reign, the sovereign devoted himself body and soul to assuring the peace, education, prosperity and happiness of the mass of his subjects. If His Majesty Norodom was venerated by his people, King Sisowath was truly adorned".³⁷

In terms of Cambodian nationalism, the most significant institutional innovation, was the Buddhist Institute, founded in Phnom Penh in 1930, under the patronage of the Cambodian monarchy, the king at Luang Prabang in Laos and the French. It had the effect of intensifying the relationship between the Cambodian Monarch and his people. Using printing equipment supplied to it by the French, the Institute soon began to issue editions of Buddhist texts in Pali and

³⁷ Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.39.

Cambodian, collating material sent to it from provincial monastic libraries. As the institutes reputation grew, enhanced by frequent conferences it became a rallying point for an emerging intelligentsia.³⁸ French assumed, that the Cambodian Sangha's loyalty to the monarch was indistinguishable from the monarch's loyalty to the French. The idea that the Buddhist institute might provide a platform for Cambodian Nationalism seems to have been overlooked.³⁹

The office of the king remained important for the members of the Royal family throughout history and beyond is abundantly clear. For the royal family the office of the king may have been shorn of its temporal power's but the throne still remained the pinnacle of ambition for a Prince. To be king was still to embody the identity of the kingdom.⁴⁰ The throne being viewed by the members of the Royal family as an institution still holding a mystical attraction, the ultimate dignity and honours to which a Cambodian Prince might aspire. Whatever the limitations the French had placed upon a king's temporal power in the kingdom at large, his power within the closed world of the Royal court remained of great importance. Favouritism could be promoted and largesse dispensed. In these circumstances, there need be no surprise that there should have been dynastic rivalry over who occupied the

³⁸ Steinberg, D. J. (1971) *In Search of South East Asia*, Praeger, New York, p.331.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p.333

⁴⁰ Osborne, Milton[1965] "King – making in Cambodia: From Sisowath to Sihanouk", *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol.4, pt.2, p.171.

exalted and in a very special way, powerful office.⁴¹ Thus we find that for the Cambodian Royal family and the French colonial administration in Indo-China, the throne and who occupied it were important issues when Sihanouk was designated king of Cambodia in 1941.

SIHANOUK AND INDEPENDENCE

Admiral Decoux, the then governor of Indo-China, remarked that “Be that as it may, it appeared to be indicated that if there was to be an end to this (dynastic) rivalry, a Prince must be brought to the throne, who could claim at the same time descent from both the elder branch (Norodom) and the Cadet branch (Sisowath). Such was the case with young Prince Norodom, great grandson by his father of Norodom and great grandson by his mother of Sisowath”.⁴² Sihanouk continues to quote from the Admiral, “Having received from his parents solid principles and good education... this Prince seemed to be a serious young man to possess the qualities necessary for a future sovereign”.⁴³

French policy towards Cambodia was forced into a more positive stance by the Indo-China war of 1940-41, when the loss of sizable portions of territory to Thailand forced the French to renegotiate the

⁴¹ Ibid, p.171.

⁴² Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.42.

⁴³ Ibid, p.43.

loyalties of protected monarchs. In Cambodia, where the newly installed king Sihanouk was considered more malleable, the new policy took the form of increasing the king's visibility to his people,⁴⁴ and to bring him in touch with the similarly protected monarchs of Vietnam and Laos. Within Cambodia, Sihanouk's increased activity consisted largely of sponsoring the paramilitary youth organizations. The groupings, the first of their kind in Cambodia, gave Sihanouk ideas about political organizations, that he used after the kingdom gained independence. Under the policy that brought him face to face with his people, the young king's self-confidence increased. Although, he was still hemmed in by protocol and by French and pro French advisors, it is likely that in those years Sihanouk glimpsed the kind of power and prestige the French had allowed to reside in the institution of the monarchy.⁴⁵

On 12 March 1945, three days after Japanese forces had swept the French from power in Indo-China, Cambodia's young king Sihanouk, declared his country's independence, noting as he did so that it would now be known in French as 'Kampuchea' rather than as Cambodge.⁴⁶ Aside from changing the French spelling of the kingdom's name, the

⁴⁴ Steinberg, D. J. (1971) *In Search of South East Asia*, Praeger, New York, p.328.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.333

⁴⁶ Chandler, David P. (1986) "The Kingdom of Kampuchea, March – October 1945: Japanese – sponsored Independence on Cambodia in World War – II", *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol. XVII, no.1, p.80.

government declared null and void a pair of laws which had made the Romanization of Cambodian script compulsory in official correspondence, and had shifted Cambodian calendar from a Buddhist system of reckoning to a Gregorian one. According to Sihanouk's memoirs, as pointed out by *Chandler*, the Royal family opposed the two reforms and the young king earlier in the year, even had to be dissuaded from abdicating over the issue. Discussing the abrogation in a speech in April 1945, Sihanouk declared "We are a people known for honouring old laws and customs from ancient times... The French laws would make us devoid of customs and devoid of history. Anyone who thinks, he can force the Cambodian people to abandon their calendar or to adopt French script is incorrect... Such declarations would make people forget their moral training".⁴⁷

On 13 April 1945, at the Buddhist new year celebration, Sihanouk pleaded for continuing cooperation with the Japanese, promising that Cambodia would soon regain the greatness it had enjoyed as the "city of Angkor Wat". Under the French, Cambodian had not felt responsible for their actions and had remained asleep.⁴⁸ He proposed phasing out French language instruction in school to be replaced by

⁴⁷ Royal Chronicles of Norodom Sihanouk, p.507.

⁴⁸ Chandler, David P. (1986) "The Kingdom of Kampuchea, March – October 1945: Japanese – sponsored Independence on Cambodia in World War – II", *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, vol. XVII, no.1, p.84.

Khmer. The king after the war, had resolved to change the government from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy as rapidly as possible.⁴⁹

In order to put the Cambodian Royal family in the mainstream of the Nationalist movement, Sihanouk asserted that the protectorate of 1863, had been an alliance between the French and Norodom, while the agreement of 1884, had involved the cession of Cambodian territory to the French. "At the time when Cambodia fell under French control in 1884, the French deceptively altered the Cambodian chronicles, to say that the King in 1863 had asked France to come and protect Cambodia."⁵⁰ On July 20, Cambodians celebrated a new national day, large crowds assembled outside the Royal palace to cheer King Sihanouk, independence and the Japanese. In 1945, Sihanouk and most of the elite, however, had gained a taste of independence.

Between this seven months interregnum period of French control, the significance of monarchy as the symbol of Khmer Nationalism emerged. Though Sihanouk reluctantly welcomed the French protectors back; he assured his people that he had not forgotten their aspirations for independence. The French administrators returned in 1945, but the protectorate was not re-established. The French

⁴⁹ Vandenbosch, Army and Batwell, Richard (Eds.) (1967) *The changing face of South East Asia*, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, p.222.

⁵⁰ Royal Chronicles of Norodom Sihanouk, p.545

confronted by the awakened political consciousness of the Cambodian Royalty, bureaucratic elites, proposed a period of dyarchy leading to eventual independence and in January 1946, a modus vivendi was signed by which Cambodia became an autonomous state within the French union.⁵¹

During the period of tutelage Sihanouk shrewdly capitalized on the strength of the Khmer tradition of ruler worship to capture the leadership of Cambodian nationalist movement in completion with revolutionary elements. Change came with king Sihanouk's emergence into political maturity in 1951, with a small number of trusted, old advisors he succeeded in devising a formula which at once negated party rivalry, left his own power unrestricted and by taking personal control of the government of the country he set the pattern for years to follow. In 1951-52, king Sihanouk became more popular and more active and more self confident. As he moved closer to genuine power, he overrode the 1947 constitution, claiming to be within his rights because as king he had promulgated the document. In 1952, the king dissolved the democrat government and closed down the assembly , ruling by decree until the kingdom gained its independence. In effect, his move turned the 1947 constitution into

⁵¹ Underdevelopment & Economic Nationalism in SEA, 1969, p.420.

an instrument of Sihanouk's will and put an end to political pluralism in the country.⁵²

Sihanouk patiently asserted his leadership, a uniquely personal process in which political institutions and Royal prestige were exploited to wield the Khmers into a unified political instrument.⁵³ The process of mobilizing and unifying Khmer nationalism culminated in 1953, in what is known as the "Crusade for independence". Recognizing that his position was imperiled by the strength of popular nationalist sentiment, Sihanouk moved to master it and make himself the spokesman of it.⁵⁴

In January Sihanouk went to Paris to convince the French that independence was imperative, his plea was snubbed by the French and he returned to Cambodia via a grand tour in which he publicized French intransigence in newspaper interviews in various countries. After Sihanouk's request to raise the Cambodian case was not considered, Sihanouk instead of going back to Phnom Penh, established himself in the province of Battambang and vowed to remain out of the capital until France satisfied his terms for independence. He declared "If Cambodia does not obtain independence by peaceful means, she will have to recourse to other

⁵² Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.239.

⁵³ Underdevelopment and Economic Nationalism in SEA, 1969, p.421.

⁵⁴ Tarling, Nicholas (2001) *South East Asia: A Modern History*, OUP, U.K., p.143.

methods, for that she is ready to sacrifice even her existence”.⁵⁵ This stance won him support from all sections of the Cambodian people, including Khmer Issarks and Son Ngoc Thanh. The Cambodians thus presented a united effort under the leadership of Sihanouk and independence on Nov 8, 1953.

Since Geneva, Sihanouk has provided strong, flamboyant and unquestioned leadership and the development process and economic nationalism display his strong political stamp.

⁵⁵ Hammer, J. E. (1954) *The Struggle for Indo China*, Stanford, California, 1954, p.296.

Chapter V

REDEFINING THE ROLE OF MONARCHY

“We recognize that King Norodom Sihanouk is truly a very enlightened and highly respected king. One did not all expect to see this young sovereign so loyal to France, become from one day to the next a wonderful adversary with energy and extraordinary competence forcing the French Government to capitulate little by little... It is because this sovereign saw his people suffer and decided to struggle for independence, and the reestablishment of security in his country, that he never hesitated to lead the life of a soldier in the forest and in the mountains. He dared to bring himself close to the little people in order to better know their sorrows and troubles. Such a king, inspite of his youth, compels the admiration of the old and the young. It is incredible that Cambodia had such good fortune and good luck”.

(Dan-Ta, Daily, Saigon)¹

It is indeed what the masses felt about Sihanouk's role to win independence which was attested by the result of the referendum held in 1955 that the Cambodians were grateful to Sihanouk and no one else for the attainment of independence.

The keystone to Cambodian internal politics has been the survival and strength of monarchical traditions, buttressed by Buddhist

¹ Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.70-71.

monkhood, which in turn is closely allied with and dependent upon the monarchy. Sihanouk abdicated as king in order to become the actual political leader of his country. But it is exactly the sacred aura of traditional kingship combined with Sihanouk's personal magnetism and manipulative skills, that have proved such a strong anchorage for independent Cambodia.² His position was as stated in the Royal Declaration of 1953 that if Cambodian people were sure that they were clearly defending Cambodian national interests, they would rally around the monarchy.³

SIHANOUK'S EMERGENCE AS A LEADER

Capitalising upon the traditional position of the monarchy and his own personal achievement of independence, Sihanouk dominated the political process in Cambodia from 1955 to 1970. Before taking any other step Sihanouk decided to consult public opinion. Accordingly, the long promised referendum on Sihanouk's personal assumption of full power was held in Feb 1954. The king sought the approval of the public for his decision in 1952 to dissolve the National Assembly on the ground that it was paralysed by party bickerings.⁴ In all the populace was asked to express an opinion about his crusade for

² Baston, John and Benda, J. H. (Eds.) (1968) *A History of Modern South East Asia*, New Jersey, p.170.

³ Christie, Clive (2001) *Ideology and Revolution in SEA, 1900– 1980*, Curzon Press, U. K., p.136.

⁴ The Statesman, New Delhi, 9 Feb 1995.

independence. One ballot bore his picture and the word for 'yes', the other coloured black, had the word for 'no'. Nearly a million 'yes' votes were cast. It became clear without doubt that the Cambodians were grateful to Sihanouk and no one else for the attainment of independence.

After a satisfying demonstration of public support the king turned to the question of normalizing political life. He set up an interim government to prepare for a national election to be held in April 1955, under the supervision of the international control commission. On this issue of general election, Cambodians from all parts of the country, requested king Sihanouk for cancellation or postponement. They confided to the king that they had lost their faith in the government by party because the legislators once elected to power woefully neglected their constituencies and misused power to promote their own personal or party interest.

Sihanouk was anxious to educate his people and enable them to shoulder responsibilities themselves. While he saw that for some time "his decision would have to prevail", he was convinced of the importance of the need to arouse public interest in participating political affairs.⁵ He realized that "new governmental structure would have to be created to cope with domestic problems, a stable and

⁵ Taussing, H.C., (1957) "Neutral Cambodia", Eastern World, London, Sept 1957, p.33.

sensitive mechanism would have to be devised that could relate the people's interest and demands to political power and a political consensus would have to be attained"⁶

All these led him to propose a number of constitutional reforms urged at greater governmental stability. The changes according to him, were aimed at establishing a democracy that would be easier for people to understand. Claiming that he was acting under pressure of popular demand, he said he wanted to eliminate the political party system and introduce in its place a process of indirect elections on an individual non party basis to an assembly that would be powerless to remove governments.⁷ He said that he wished to save the people "from the kind of democracy that weighs them down".⁸ However, Sihanouk could not get support for his proposals either from the international control commission or from the politicians at home. In view of the opposition he encountered on all sides, Sihanouk decided to reconsider his proposals.

It can be said that in the decades between 1945-1955, Sihanouk tried to raise the 'Les humbles' out of their somnolence by giving them a sense that the destiny of the country lay in their hands, while at the

⁶ Roger M. Smith (1967), "Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia", *Asian Survey*, June 1967, p.396.

⁷ George Mc Turnan Kahin (1964), *Government and Politics of South East Asia*, New York, 1964, p.620.

⁸ Vandebosch, Army and Batwell, Richard (Eds.) (1967) *The changing face of South East Asia*, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, p.223.

same time maintaining and indeed tightening the traditional links that bound monarchy and the people. In essence, Sihanouk sought to strengthen his control over Cambodia by converting a traditional patriarchal polity into a modern populist polity; a process that was completed in 1955, when he abdicated the monarchy, but maintained and even increased his absolute control over the political system.⁹ The reason officially given for the abdication was that the projected constitutional reforms had been obstructed.¹⁰ The opposition by the elite to his proposals had served to convince the king that “only by stepping down from the throne – which by custom is above politics – and being an active participant in the political arena could he work effectively towards his announced objectives”¹¹

In his abdication speech, he marked out the purposes and aims he set out to achieve, *“I abdicated at the moment when, having succeeded in winning Cambodian’s independence,... my people gave me an overwhelming vote of confidence in a free referendum... I wanted by my abdication to set an example for our men of state, to teach them that in their work the portfolio of a minister must not be their aim and their ideal, but that they must always work with a single goal of national fulfillment. I wanted to prove to our young people, especially our young*

⁹ Christie, Clive (2001) *Ideology and Revolution in SEA, 1900– 1980*, Curzon Press, U. K., p.135.

¹⁰ The Statesman, New Delhi, 3 March 1955.

¹¹ Roger M. Smith (1967) “Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia”, *Asian Survey*, June, p.396.

students, that my efforts for Cambodia were in no way related to the desire to remain indefinitely His Majesty the king, attached to the throne, with all its pageantry and splendor, its pomps and privileges, as some of our politicians have claimed".¹²

He further remarked that *"the social problem, which consists of coming to the aid of the little people, the indigent and the country folk, imposes on a statesman who has determined to give himself to these people to serve and assist them; That is the only condition under which he will be able to see clearly for himself the abuses from which they suffer in the villages, the countries, the provinces and the cities, therefore, if I remained on the throne, shut up in my palace, no matter how great my affection for my people and my desire to aid them, I could never have understood the true situation of the people, or the abuses of which they might be victims...*

Because Cambodia is today recognized by more than forty states, the king's day is entirely taken up with the audiences that he must grant to the foreign personages who come to visit our country, with the banquets, receptions, ballets...that are organized in their honor. Thus he does not find one moment of leisure to visit the interior of the country....

¹² Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p. 44.

Because of all these impediments, I thought if I remained on the throne I would never be able to help the people and lighten their sufferings... That is why I came to decide definitely to abandon the throne power, in order to give my full time and energy and devote myself body and soul to the single service of the people and their well-being....

As you see, this social problem is of great importance and merits that I sacrifice my throne without regret and my life in the service of the nation. I take my chances in this supreme fight that I must try to carry on with my last ounce of energy, because if opportunity should favor me I would be able perhaps to help our people attain the objectives that conform with their aspirations".¹³

The man who stepped down from the throne in favour of his father continued to embody the monarchy in a country which had a tradition of religious reverence towards the throne.

He saw no future for the monarchy in Cambodia, if it stood apart from the inevitable changes and political developments that independence had brought with it. He concluded that "Politics should not be left to the anti-monarchist, but should be led by the monarch himself".¹⁴ Sihanouk was at the peak of his popularity when he abdicated, but soon realized that the loyalty of the people and their support for him

¹³ Ibid, p.45-46.

¹⁴ Denis Warner (1966), Reporting SEA, Lndon, p.278.

would not necessarily guarantee the high degree of unity needed to the consolidation and development of a newly born country. He thought it necessary “to neutralize the monarchy and to link the people to a conception of government that combined both conservatism and social and economic reform”.¹⁵

THE SANGKUM DAYS

Sihanouk achieved this goal 20 days after his abdication by forming the ‘Sangkum Reastr Niyum’ on the popular socialist community. The Sangkum, according to its constitution, was not a political party, but “a mass movement, which, besides serving as a personal following of the Head of the State, seeks to include in its compass all fascets of Khmer opinion in an attempt to moderate and channel contention”.¹⁶ Later commenting on the organization Sihanouk said, “I invited existing parties to bury their differences and put themselves inside the organisation, which I conceived as a front or a movement, rather than a political party. The aims was to give birth to a truly democratic , equalitarian and socialist Cambodia, to restore the past greatness of our mother land”.¹⁷ In view of his active participation as leader in the functioning of the

¹⁵ Roger M. Smith (1967), “Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia”, Asian Survey, June 1967, p.396.

¹⁶ Michael Liefer (1963), “Cambodia in search of neutrality”, Asian Survey, Jan 1963, p.55).

¹⁷ Sihanouk, N. (1973) *My war with CIA*, London, p.162.

Sangkum several of the political parties willingly merged themselves in the organization.

Sihanouk's description of the factors which should constitute the Cambodian socialism pursued by the Sangkum appeals both to the past for guidance and to the period after the decline of Angkor as a reflection of mistakes. "During the Angkorian period, people were without doubt very united, very well disciplined and very dynamic, since they were able to make Cambodia a great Asian power on the cultural, artistic, economic and military plane. Our individualism i.e. individualistic outlook was born from the post Angkorian decadence. Four centuries have lessened the force of our character. The intoxication of recovered liberty incited us to place our rights before our obligations, although the first gave rise to the second. Today we must find again the source which gave the grandeur and prosperity to our country during many centuries. The source is made by union, discipline freely accepted, self denial, and mutual help. Our socialism will flow from this source.¹⁸ Appeal to an even wider concept, that of National harmony about the ruler, may be discerned in this passage.

Sihanouk, found a way to integrate socialism into Cambodian traditions. The value of the term in modern international relations

¹⁸ Realities Cambodiennes, 28 August, 1958 Quoted in Osborn (1966), p.6

was apparent in the 1950's, for foreign consumption the name of the party was rendered as 'Popular socialist community'. It was not to be marxist socialism, but rather a 'Royalist-Buddhist Socialism', without class conflict and depending on the ancient Cambodian practice of the sovereign providing for the welfare of the people. And since the sovereign by definition always provided for the peoples welfare, any kind of criticism was seen as subversive or anti-monarchical.¹⁹ When revolutionary forces were threatening a newspaper representing Sihanouk's new coalition of the right maintained editorially that the country should be ruled by its natural leaders, who are rich and powerful.

It can be rightly pointed out that, the issue of internal unity became Sihanouk's principal concern. His solution had the virtues of simplicity and the attractions of being proposed by the nations ruler, with all the charismatic and cosmological associations that surrounded the king, who, in the eyes of many of his subjects was still little removed from divine status. With such aims as maintaining National independence, following an international policy of neutrality, promoting the economic development of the country and preserving the monarchy, there were few Cambodians who, did not find it possible to join the movement. The rural population

¹⁹ Vickery, Michael (1984) *Cambodia - 1975 - 1982*, George Allen & Unwin Publishers, Australia, p.22.

embraced the opportunity, which Sihanouk gave them, through the Sangkum, to feel a vital part of the national community.²⁰ Which was attested by his overwhelming victory in the elections to the National Assembly in 1955, Sihanouk's campaign was supported by the Church and the traditional administration in Cambodia. In thousands of Buddhist temples "75,000 Buddhist priests in bare foot and yellow robes, offered prayers of thanks giving for the victory of the ex-monarch".²¹

In the months that followed, Sihanouk further reduced the power of political parties, setting up in this place a National Congress of the Sangkum, which was to meet twice a year in Phnom Penh, just outside the Royal palace, to discuss and approve, en masse, government policy and practice.²² To mould rivalries, participants in the Congress were selected from every social stratum by the Sangkum directorate and the sessions convened under the king's personal chairmanships. They provided a forum for the airing of popular grievances and policy proposals, occasionally calling the ministers themselves to account.²³ At the Congress members and provincial delegates may castigate the government, lay charges publicly against any official or even minister and ask to see the

²⁰ Cambodia: Country without Parties, *Journal of South East Asian History*, vol. 18, Pt. 1, 1967, p.42.

²¹ Indonesian Observer, Jakarta, 13 Sept., 1955.

²² Steinberg, D. J. (1971) *In Search of South East Asia*, Praeger, New York, p.355.

²³ Cady, J. F. [1966] *Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia*, New Jersey, p.18.

Nation's accounts. The cabinet must be present to face the music. The hero of the day is always Sihanouk, who may dress down his administrative aides there are then. In Cambodia all is done by mirrors- the mirrors of a million dusky faces that reflect the will and wishes of the 'Monseigneur', back upon himself, investing him at these Congresses with the collective authority of the nation.²⁴

The importance of the meetings of the National Congress held in the Royal Palace and the men ground or the funeral ground, next to the palace are of much significance to the Cambodian people. As this area is sometimes described as the area of 'Preah Meru', the great sacred mountain, it has for sometime been the site of the ceremony of the 'Sacred Furrow', and has been the area in which the funeral pagodas of the departed kings have been built. That the Congress of the National political party should be held where a king was cremated and that cremation ceremonies should have their links with ancient cosmologies is significant, as it links the assembly of a mass political organization with the site of kings cremations with all their accompanying religious and cosmological implications.²⁵

Beginning in 1958, the Prince-Premier, turned party boss, took a further step by appointing a special commission to select the

²⁴ Bloodworth, Dennis (1970) *An Eye for the Dragon – 1954 – 1970*, U. S. A., p.121.

²⁵ Osborne, M. E. (1966) "History and Kinship in Contemporary Cambodia, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*., VII , p.13.

candidates for election within the Sangkum party. Acting on Sihanouk's orders, the commission gave preference to the European educated youthful elite, whose training and abilities the Prince apparently wished to exploit and whose potential opposition leadership he obviously desired to circumvent. In the 1952, election, the vote for the well-regulated Sangkum was virtually hundred percent.²⁶

For Sihanouk, it was politically vital, not only that he should regain the complete sovereignty of Cambodia, but also that in his foreign policy, he should have a free hand to protect Cambodian National interests. Alignment, he argued in 1958, would expose Cambodia not only to retaliation from the rejected bloc, it would also divide Cambodia internally and encourage its citizens to become tools of one bloc or another. Therefore, ultimately, Sihanouk's non-alignment stance was pragmatic, it was dedicated by his sense of Cambodia's geo-political vulnerability and his fear that the immature political establishment of Cambodia could easily be manipulated by foreign interests and seduced by ideological formulas.²⁷ Acceptance of economic assistance from both Communist and American sources was cleverly executed and tended to improve the economic outlook of Cambodia. Prince Norodom Sihanouk's most widely recognized

²⁶ Cady, J. F. [1966] *Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia*, New Jersey, p.18.

²⁷ Clive Christy *Ideology and Revolution in South East Asia*, 2001, p. 136.

success has been his capacity to prevent Cambodia from experiencing the disruption and tragic cost of war, in a situation where bitter conflict exists on Cambodia's doorsteps. Foreign affairs remains an area of activity where Sihanouk clearly outthought and out maneuvered his critics in the past. His skill remains, and with it a readiness for any new departure, if he believes it to be in Cambodia's vital interest, as one of the strongest factors to bolster the personalist system which he so successfully maintained.²⁸ His resistance to foreign interference sharpens the image of him as a dedicated patriot, striving to develop his realm as a land increasingly capable of dealing with its problems.²⁹

Following his father's death in 1960, the problem of the succession to the throne was solved by the creation of a new office 'the Chief of State'. By a popular referendum the electorate was asked to choose among him and Son Noge Thann, the communist and blank ballot. More than 99% of the voters requested that Sihanouk continue in office and he assumed power as Chief of State. He placed the ceremonial functions of the monarchy in the hands of his mother, Queen Kossamak.

²⁸ Cambodia: Country without Parties, *Journal of South East Asian History*, vol. 18, Pt. 1, 1967, p.50.

²⁹ Vandenbosch, Army and Batwell, Richard (Eds.) (1967) *The changing face of South East Asia*, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, p.226.

As 'Chief of the State', the Prince headed the Kinglese monarchy, supported by popular veneration of monarchy, but having attained his political position by means other than the accident of birth. In 1962 Sihanouk encouraged some of the most outspoken younger critics of his leadership to stand for office under the sponsorship of the Sangkum. There was value as he saw it, in having his opponents within the party he almost single handedly led.³⁰ The domination by Sihanouk of Cambodian politics was almost complete, a fact attested by his victories in the elections of 1955, 1958, 1962, 1966. As observed his campaigning serves two purposes, firstly he wins support for his policies – consent is the operative word in his concept of democracy and secondly, he educates his people politically. They came to understand Cambodian problems and Sihanouk's solutions for them. Perhaps no Head of the State has ever worked harder to inform his people and win their consent, and certainly none has been given so large a proportion of his people to see him in person.³¹

Nearly seven centuries ago a peripatetic Chinese wrote of the customs of Chenla "twice each day the king holds an audience, whoever desires to see the king either officials or any private person may approach and sit down on lions skin. When all matters are disposed

³⁰ Ibid, p.225.

³¹ Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.20.

off, the king retires. This is a popular audience, of the Khmer tradition which still bring the ruler of Cambodia face to face with his subjects, to listen to their complaints about lazy corrupt officials, sore high seed prices or the inequities of local soldiery. The prince talks it out with a line of indigent plaintiffs and the dialogue is broadcast live to the Nation in cacophonous Khmer. Later a special complaints bureau is handed most of the moaning, but the tradition remains very much alive.³² Sihanouk presides and those of his ministers involved in the cases on the agenda attend.

In continuing to hear grievances in the Royal palace, Prince Sihanouk was not continuing a traditional practice for traditions sake. The grievances days were attended by members of the cabinet who are charged with investigating the matters raised by petitioners, if the matter cannot be resolved on the spot. But the fact that the audiences take place in the Palace, the center of the kingdom in cosmological terms, appears to be significant both as a survival of customary methods with their imprint of tradition and mystical significance and for their adaptations to contemporary affairs.³³

Another notable example of the way in which Sihanouk's contemporary role echoed the traditional conception of kingship was provided at the celebration of the ploughing of the 'sacred furrow', a

³² Bloodworth, Dennis (1970) *An Eye for the Dragon – 1954 – 1970*, U. S. A., p.120.

³³ Osborne, M. E. (1966) "History and Kinship in Contemporary Cambodia, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*., VII, p.12.

ceremony observed each year at the time when the major crops are planted in late May. The ceremony is essentially a fertility rite, in which the king himself ploughed the sacred furrow, but for sometimes, it became customary for a court official to take the part of the king. The ceremony thereby losing its effect and worth. Sihanouk returned back to the original version, by playing the part of the plough man, his primary concern being the need for increased agricultural production. The means which he used, as the use of an old ceremony and the symbolism of a national leader assuring a good harvest through his association with the ritual act. The prestige and cosmological significance of monarchy has been blended with the constitutionally non monarchical role of the Chief of the State, to give greater meaning to an ancient ceremony performed in a modern setting.³⁴ Cambodian elite always sought to reemphasize religion as a technique for representing the new desires for social mobility. There were attempts to associate the monks with nation building. Thus in one of Sihanouk's glossy magazines, a photograph of monks at work on a road or dike construction site was accompanied by the caption, "monks within the framework of our Buddhist socialism participate in the work of nation building".³⁵

³⁴ Ibid, p.12 (for details of the ceremony see P.12 and its footnotes).

³⁵ Vickery, Michael (1984) *Cambodia – 1975 – 1982*, George Allen & Unwin Publishers, Australia, p.11

Fifteen years that followed the 1955 elections are often referred to as Sihanouk's era. They were marked by political stability, except towards the end, and by considerable economic advances. The period was stamped with Sihanouk's volatile, patriotic, narcissistic personality. Taxes gained from exports, supplemented by foreign aid, paid Cambodian bills, improved its infrastructure and allowed the prince to direct Sangkum budgets towards education and public health projects, as well as towards ostentatious public works.³⁶

THE PRINCE DADDY

Sihanouk's Cambodia could perhaps be described as a modern version of a 'theatre-state', with the whole world forming the audience. In addition to his God-like status, he possessed a fine, handsome presence, a tremendous personality and truly remarkable record of personal achievements. He had qualities, not of king who also happened to be a statesman, but of a statesman who also happened to be a king.³⁷ Taking full advantage of his princely status and his personal attractiveness in both physical appearance and personality, he rode the wave of reviving sense of Cambodian nationalism.

³⁶ Mabbett, Ian and Chandler, David (1995) *The Khmers*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, p.240.

³⁷ "Cambodia and King Norodom", *Eastern World*, March 1955, p.278.

Informally titled 'Samdec ou' – literally 'Prince Daddy', Sihanouk always liked to refer to his Khmer people as his children and they for their part, cherished and revered him, but in the wider sense the relationship went far beyond that of parent and offspring, to that of a superman style hero and his audience.³⁸ As observes he speaks to them openly and frankly of his personal feelings and his personal problems, when he returns from abroad he reports to the nation on what he said and what was said to him. He is also accustomed to make known, in the most frank manner, his observations and opinions of men and events, which are always cogent and often penetrating,³⁹ "It is Cambodia they insult, when they insult me". Sihanouk has brought politics to the people. His provincial tours have many characteristics of a Royal progress, but they have always been more than this, presenting the issues of the day in terms which have meaning for the peasants, using language and rough humor which strike instant responses among the peasants, Sihanouk involves the masses in the nation's political life.⁴⁰

Sihanouk has a knack for communicating with the ordinary people. He goes out to meet them, to discuss with them their grievances and

³⁸ Shaplen, Robert (1962) *Time Out of Hand*, Harper & Row, New York, p.304.

³⁹ Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.78

⁴⁰ Cambodia: Country without Parties, *Journal of South East Asian History*, vol. 18, Pt. 1, 1967, p.44.

to explain to them what his government is trying to do. He also takes the airwaves and talks to his people as a father talks to his children. He is father to his people – an almost irreplaceable father.⁴¹ Excitable, voluble, inexhaustible, Sihanouk was a beloved prince, who would dig with the peasants and share their most unsavory food and jokes and who talked and talked to the masses with frankness and spontaneous charm.⁴²

The personal attention of Norodom Sihanouk in many ways is the hallmark of the changes that are taking place in Cambodia today. Sihanouk interests himself in and has first hand knowledge of nearly everything that goes on in the country. No corner of Cambodia is too remote to escape his tireless scrutiny. His method of establishing popular opinion was to organize a referendum and he had produced a exotic political hybrid, whose name suggested that he had successfully crossed three political concepts simultaneously, for he called the result 'Royal Buddhist Socialism'.

In a more historical and sophisticated sense he looked upon himself as an Asian Knight errant engaged in a sacred mission to save his nation from the infields and barbarians which included in varying

⁴¹ Vandenbosch, Army and Batwell, Richard (Eds.) (1967) *The changing face of South East Asia*, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, pp.226-227

⁴² Bloodworth, Dennis (1970) *An Eye for the Dragon – 1954 – 1970*, U. S. A., p.127.

degrees both communists and the Americans and their allies.⁴³ Sihanouk was a Cambodian patriot. He was neither pro-west nor a pro-communist. He leans one way or the other not because of ideological considerations but because he believes that national security, indeed national survival demands it.

Sihanouk's government was popular because the masses participated in the politics of the realm and have clearly endorsed the Prince's leadership. Sihanouk's government probably has 80% consent and it is perhaps best inferred by the absence of powerful repressive forces. Traditional authority which is accepted may indeed be well suited to provide just that element of reassurance and continuity which is of some comfort in the transition to the modern world.⁴⁴

From 1945 until 1970, Cambodian history was dominated by one man and to a large extent shaped by his personal style, to the extent that it has been said often enough that 'Sihanouk is Cambodia'.

*"He set the tone, He supplies the initiative, He sets the example, He makes the decision, He works extremely hard and most of all provides the drive, He pulls and pushes at the same time."*⁴⁵

⁴³ Shaplen, Robert (1962) *Time Out of Hand*, Harper & Row, New York, p.304.

⁴⁴ Hunter, Guy (1966) *South East Asia, Race, Culture and Nation*, OUP, London., p.166.

⁴⁵ Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.22.

A political commentator has rightly remarked “*Just as Tito forged the independence of Yugoslavia, Nehru incarnated India, Sihanouk, built and in a real sense personified Cambodia*”.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Sihanouk, N (1980) *War & Hope*, Pantheon Books, U.S. A., p. XXXVI

CONCLUSION

The creation of 'Khmer nationality' is something that must be accounted for historically. It was the work of kings and no one ruler built it. It was a gradual process that evolved through the ages.

In the earliest times, there was no unified kingdom of Cambodia, there were a multitude of chieftaincies or principalities. They did not begin to feel themselves to be one people, the 'Kambujas' until a series of powerful rulers had created a unity that was at first fragile and fitful but eventually came to underpin a durable sense of peoplehood. The process was started by the Funan Kings who integrated the chieftaincies under one rule for the first time. Though during their period the regional chiefs did enjoy a fair deal of independence. During the Angkorian period, the monarch was elevated to the position of a 'God-king', with the succeeding centuries much of this concept remained, despite the gradual diminution of territory. The appointment of the monarch depended more on the wishes of the Thais and Vietnamese during the middle ages, while there were frequent struggles to gain the throne, the position of a monarch remained of great importance with deep mystical significance. The French protectorate by preserving the monarchs position enabled the emergence of a leadership, both before and after independence which was closely linked with the king, making him a 'National hero' who

fought for the independence of his country. Sihanouk made strenuous efforts. during the pre-independence years to involve his countrymen in an awareness of problems which Cambodia faced thereby contributing immensely to develop a sense of National identity. In the post independence era, with changing times, the monarch assumed the new role of the political leader.

But during all these centuries to the present times, the only real consistency of the kings has always been their ambition to conserve Cambodia and to this end they used various means, from promoting trade to agricultural production by means of hydraulic works and integrating the realm under temple networks; to using diplomacy, by recognizing both the Thais and Vietnamese overlordship; to work under the French for a peaceful independence; to change their role with the changing times and feel the pulse of the Nation to become the political leader.

Today the constitutional monarchy has lost much of its influence on Cambodian politics, but the king still enjoys a high degree of traditional legitimacy. King Sihanouk remains popular, if not powerful in political or military terms, because of 'who he is'. There is still a myth though waning among young Cambodians that 'without a king the kingdom is shattered'. Some observers though have remarked that the present Prime Minister, Hun Sen does not enjoy a high degree of

traditional legitimacy. Hun Sen can take advantage of king Sihanouk's traditional legitimacy, by showing him respect and manipulating the king in public. For staunch royalist, however the monarchical rule seems to be the only way out for the war torn traditional society. To them, king Sihanouk is the only leader who enjoys the legitimacy to bring peace and stability to his people. His was not an 'Golden Age', but it was the only age of peace.

For some observers though, the monarchy remains the most competent institution to deal with the Khmer Rouge.

Today monarchy is not an crumbling structure. As rightly remarked by king Sihanouk, "The day when our monarchy, by order of the popular will or international contingency, ceases to be a harmonious and useful framework, I would not hesitate to take the initiative myself in sacrificing it and orienting the Nation towards other roads and assist it to accomplish in peace and without bloodshed the revolution of its choice ; in as much as I am convinced in my heart and soul that the throne is still an indispensable institution in Cambodia"¹.

There is vast mass of common people, grown up in the traditions, who see monarchy as a unifying force of the community . They extol the virtues of the Angkorian age as a guide for modern actions. The

monarch through the ages changed his roles, but at the basic level was desire to see the well being of the nation, to keep it out of war, to promote the welfare of his people. To this date people look up to the monarch in times of crises, they still have the belief in his fertility powers which brings economic well being to the land. The connection between the king and his people is more like that between a father and family, a clans elder and clansmen, than that between a politician and citizen. The claims to authority given to a ruler by his position are not confined to any particular sphere of life but extend into morals, values and religion. The authority is broad and deep, but is vague and general.

To conclude we can say that inspite of all the changes that have taken place, the modern Cambodian society reflects a basic stability and historical continuity. Today Cambodia is an constitutional monarchy but the great achievements of the past rulers provide both an ideal and a rallying point for contemporary Cambodians. As a matter of fact though Cambodia has no official state ideology due to the frequent changes of political regimes in recent decades, one theme that has emerged strongly in Cambodia's contemporary history is that the state rests its political foundation on a set of ideas related to the motto of the constitution : 'Nation, Religion and King'.

¹ Armstrong, J.P.(1964) *Sihanouk Speaks*, Walker & Company, New York, p.50.

The National Anthem states *“May heaven protect our king
and grant him happiness and glory
May he reign over our heart and our destinies
He who hier to the monarch builders
Governs the proud and ancient kingdom....”*

The National Anthem prominently features the King, the ancient temples and Buddhism as a part of the National soul. The people wish the king glorious victories and ask to live under the shadow of his might. The very fact that the Anthem begins with a prayer for the King, signifies how the people are attached to him. The National flag has superimposed on its red and blue bands a representation of the façade of Angkor Wat with its distinctive central towers, as Angkor Wat is treasured as a symbol of National capabilities.

Architecturally Angkorian and even pre Angkorian motifs may be found in contemporary state architecture. The most striking is the independence monument at Phnom Penh, which dominates one end of the city’s thoroughfare. It is conceived in Angkorian style is significant as this most important contemporary monument should revert to the Angkorian style. The *Naga* spirit, which is frequently represented at Angkor and which has its roots in Hinduism and Buddhism and in legends concerning the foundation of Funan, forms a significant part of the decoration of the Cambodian National Bank

building. Bank notes use Angkorian motifs and folk lore concerning Angkor and its Kings is an integral part of Khmer life.

The circumbulation of the capital formed and still forms, one of the most essential parts of the coronation ritual. The participation of the Cambodian Chief of State in events which have both royal and cosmological significance provides the contemporary observer with an insight into the internal dynamics of the state, in which the past glory forms a significant feature of the present.

The extent to which the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh functions as a centre for National life is noteworthy, although of modern construction, it has a spire, which is shown as a survival of the symbolism of 'mount meru'. The Royal Palace also served as a site for the National Congress of the Sangkum and continues to be a site for the exhibition of National character. While Sihanouk's father was the King, the grounds of the Palace were thrown open during the celebrations of his birthday. Possibly most significant in linking the palace and the King with the general population were and are the weekly audiences in which the King received petitions from his subjects and sought to resolve disputes between them. The fact that the audiences take place in the palace, the centre of the kingdom in cosmological terms, appears to be significant both as a survival of

customary methods with this imprint of traditional and mystical significance and for their adaptations to contemporary affairs.

The cult of worship was dominant and persists today in a mixture of awe and affection with which the Khmers regarded their Royalty. The stability, order and executive confidence in Sihanouk's Cambodia, was in large measure attributed to this cultural legacy.

In the fields of social welfare and education we have many appeals made to the Angkorian times, to the extent that modern Cambodians are aware of the system of hospitals and roads which extended throughout the country in the reign of *Jayavarman VII*. It is therefore not surprising to find in official publication of the government listing the details of Angkorian hospitals, along side an account of contemporary efforts in public health.

Thus we find that till date, by inculcating new ideas into old traditions i.e. in their own special ways the Cambodians have stayed attached with their King's and their greatness which is evident of the fact that the institution of monarchy has stood the test of time in Cambodia from being an absolute monarchy to the present constitutional form and has upheld its position as the single most unifying factor for the Cambodians. It has been the oldest institution to command the degree of respect, it does from the common man of Cambodia, even today.

APPENDIX 1

Chronological Survey of Angkor's Rulers

Jayavarman II	(c.770- c.834)	normally regarded as the founder Angkor, began his career as an exile and, return to Cambodia, extended his dominion in a series of campaigns that led him from the lower Mekong to the north and west of the Great Lake. According to a much later inscription he had a series of capitals, the last being at Hariharalaya (Lolei), a new miles to the south-east of Siemreap. Claims to suzerainty over the Khmers by a Malay power were formally rejected when in 802, at Mahendraparvata in the Kullen hills, he consecrated the ideal of Khmer unity and independnece. Historians used to date his reign from 802 to 850, but it now appears necessary to set it back at each end.
Jayavarman III	(c.834- c.870)	Little is known about him except that he liked to hunt elephants. It is possible that his empire shrank, and was restored against by his successor.
Indravarman I	R c.877- 889/890	Appears to have been linked to Jayavarman II's line, though his genealogical claims do not make the connection explicit. He was reasonable for the Preah Koh and the Bakong at Hariharalaya.
Yasovarman I	c.889/890- c.910/912)	Whose accession may not have been peaceful moved the capital to the north of where Siemreap now is, and where most later kings remained. His capital

Yasodharapura, was centered on the Bakheng hill, which gives its name to the monument moulded to its peak, Yasovarman's central shrine. His empire was claimed to extend to the south of Cambodia, to Champa, into Laos, and into Thailand. He was responsible for the great reservoir known as the Eastern Baray. Among other major works, he also built a massive embankment around his capital city and a causeway linking it to Hariharalaya.

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| Harsavarman I | (c.910/912-
c.923) | Came from Yashovarman's immediate family. Possibly after the death of yasovarman the empire crumbled, with the kings at Angkor controlling a restricted area. |
| Isanavarman II | (c.923-
c.928) | is mentioned in some inscriptions: as far as these show, his empire may well have been confined to Angkor and the region of Battambang in the west. |
| Jayavarman | (928-c.941) | Had a power base to the north of Angkor, at Koh Ker (referred to in an inscription as Chok Gargyar, Island of Glory). Here, at least since AD 922 (the date of an edict issued by him), he had been exercising power as a governor, vassal or rival of the previous king Isanavarman II. He ruled over territories in Battambang, Siemreap, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham and Ta Kev. |
| Harsavarman II | (c.941-944) | Jayavarman's immediate successor, came to the throne in obscure circumstances, possibly amid conflict. |

Rajendravarman II	944-c.968	Restored Angkor after a period of neglect and consolidated the empire. He claimed descent from the rulers of Bhavapura, and brought together under his rule a number of territories not previously assimilated. His empire was claimed to extend to Vietnam, Laos, parts of Thailand, Burma and even China. In 950 he despatched an at least partly successful military expedition to Champa. His religious monuments include the Eastern Mebon and the Pre Rup
Jayavarman V	(c.968-c.1000)	In consistent versions of the date of succession to Rajendravarman may reflect strife. He built the Ta Kev monument at the western end of the Eastern Baray as the centre of his capital Jayendranagari. His younger sister married an Indian brahman Divakarabhatta from Mathura.
Udayadityavarman II	(1050-c.1066)	Like other rulers, he becomes larger than life in the portraits of him offered by his inscriptions: He excelled in seducing women to his will by his beauty, warriors by his heroism, sages by his good qualities, the people by his power, brahmans by his charity. Endowed with many noble qualities, when Suryavarman went to the skies, this prince of great energy was sworn universal monarch by his ministers. His temple mountain was the Baphuon, a great pyramid originally possessing a gilt tower. Udayadityavarman patronized

the family of priests attached to the devaraja cult. The property bestowed upon the family at this time lay in the north-west of Cambodia, suggesting perhaps that migration and settlement were intensifying in the direction of Thailand.

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| Harsavaram II | (1066/1077
-1080) | According to Chinese sources, Angkor and Champa were jointly required to help China fight the Vietnamese. Subsequently there was war with Champa, in which the Chams claimed to have taken a city and offered prisoners and booty to a Cham national temple. |
| Jayavarman VI | (1080-
c.1107) | Came from a family said to have been ruling at Mahidhara, possibly in Thailand, and his succession books more irregular than most; he can be seen as the initiator of a new dynasty, sometimes identified as the Mahidhara line. He was probably responsible for the great religious foundations at Phimai (up the Mun River in Thailand), where many Indian and local territorial gods, but especially the Buddha, were honoured. |
| Dharanindrava
rman I | 1107-1112 | Was the older brother of the previous ruler; little is known about his short and doubtless unstable reign |
| Suryavarman
II | 1113-c.1150 | Is most famous as the builder of Angkor Wat, which was his central national shrine and probably continued the palace and administrative buildings within its enclosures. He was also active in war: successful campaigns against the Chams led to the installation of his own nominee |

		on the Cham throne at Vijaya. It was during his reign that the Sung dynasty fled south; embassies were sent from Angkor to China in 1116 and 1120.
Yashovarman II	c.1150- c.1165	Whose end, at the hands of the usurper Tribhuvanaditya, one of his officials, was probably violent.
Tribhuvananditya	(c.1165- 1177)	It is possible that his palace was at the site of the subsequent Preah Khan temple complex, which contains a shrine to the god Tribhuvanavarmesvara. His reign ended when a Cham fleet made its way unexpectedly up the Tonle Sap to the Great Lake and scored a rapid and devastating victory that gave power at Angkor to the Cham ruler Jaya Indravarman IV.
Jayavarman VII	1181-c.1218	The main features of whose reign are detailed above. After expelling the Chams he fought his way to dominance and inaugurated his reign as Khmer emperor. His empire extended to the lower Kemong, into Laos to the north, and into the Khmer parts of Thailand. He constructed a new capital city, Angkor Thoms, centred on the Bayon shrine which the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. He built 102 'fire-bouses' and constructed roads linking Angkor with the outer parts of the kingdom. The chronology of the end of his reign is quite obscure.
Jayavarman VIII	(1243-1295)	Sponsored the last known royally endowed temple, for the benefit of the priest Jayamangalartha, said to have lived to the truly ripe age of 104. There is

evidence of a phase of resurgent Hinduism that inspired the defacement of some of Jayavarman VII's Buddhist sculpture, and it is thought that this unusually intolerant episode of Hindu fundamentalism took place in the reign of Jayarman VIII, although it has been suggested that Indravarman II might have been responsible, and that he could possibly have been the leper king of folk memory.

Indravarman III (c.1295-1308)

Was reigning at the time of the visit of Chou ta-kuan, who offers a great deal of concrete information about Angkor at the time. He reports wars against Thai invaders; in subsequent reigns the problem became worse. However, for the time being, Angkor was still the centre of a bustling kingdom.

APPENDIX 2

Chronology of Main Events and Rulers after the Twelfth Century

1190	Introduction of Theravada/Hinayana Buddhism
1295	Shrindravarman – Visit of the Chinese envoy Chou Ta Kuan
1307	Shrindrajayavarman – Arrival of Chinese Embassy
1313	Start of Thai attacks on Angkor
1327	Jayaramaparameshvara
1432	Angkor abandoned by the Khmers/Cambodians
1441	Suryavarman
1553	Arrival of Portuguese Dominican missionaries
	Ang Chon – Discovered the ancient city of Yashodharapura
1566	Paramaraja
1594	Thai conquest; start of Thai claims to suzerainty
1596-9	The Spanish episode
1602	First Dutch traders in Cambodia
1603	Thai overlordship re-established
	Suryavarman – Paramaraja IV
1618	Cambodians reassert independence
	Jayajettha – Dutch established a factory at Phnom Penh
1642	Ramadhipati
1654	English factory in Cambodia
1659	Cambodians acknowledge overlordship of Hue

1679-1749	Cambodians lose Mekong Delta to the Vietnamese
1700-1749	Cambodian cockpit for power struggle between Thais and Vietnamese
1779-96	Eng Eng Supported by thais
1796-1806	Thai regency
1794	Thais install Ang Eng on throne in Cambodia; occupy Battambang and Siemreap
1802	Thai install Ang Chan II on throne of Cambodia
1803	Ang Chan sends mission of homage to Hue
1806-34	Ang Chan (II) installed by Thais; supported by Hue
1807	Cambodia formally under Hue' protection
1812-13	Thais and Vietnamese intervene in palace dispute; Ang Chan restored with Vietnamese help; Vietnamese garrison at Phnom Penh
1831	Thai invasion: Ang Chan flees for Vietnamese help
1833	Ang Chan restored by Vietnamese; start of Vietnamese policy of assimilation
1834	Queen Ang Mey put on throne by Vietnamese
1834-41	Ang Mey (queen) imposed by Vietnamese
1835	Rebellion at Kompong Som crushed Vietnamese
1841	Queen Ang Mey deposed by Vietnamese; outbreak of general revolt; Thai Intervention
1841-59	Ang Duong compromise candidate recognized by both sides
1845	Thai-Vietnamese compromise; Ang Duong recognized as Cambodian king under joint protection of the two powers
1856	Montigny's mission at Kampot
1860	Death of Ang Duong; accession of Ang Votey as Norodom

1860-1904	Norodom
1861	Si Votha's revolt; Norodom flees to Bangkok French establish their power at Saigon
1862	Norodom restored in Cambodia with Thai help; mission of Doudart de Lagree to Udong
1863 April	Doudart de Lagree takes up post as French resident in Cambodia
1863 July	De la Grandiere visits Cambodia
1863 August	Treaty accepting French protectorate over Cambodia
1864 March	French prevent Norodom's departure for Bangkok
1863 June	Norodom crowned king of Cambodia under French auspices
1866	Pu Kombo' revolt
1867	Franco-Thai agreement recognizing French protectorate over Cambodia
1877	French tighten control over Cambodian government
1884	French impose new convention on King Norodom
1885-92	Si Votha's second rebellion
1907	Battambang and Siemreap handed back to Cambodia as result of Franco-Thai Treaty

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