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## **RESISTANCE FACTORS IN CAMBODIA: DEMOGRAPHY**

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**April 1987**

*Author: Ly Burnham*

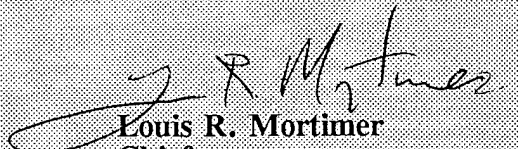
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PREFACE

This study covers the demographic aspects of Cambodia--  
general, urban, and ethnic.

## CONTENTS

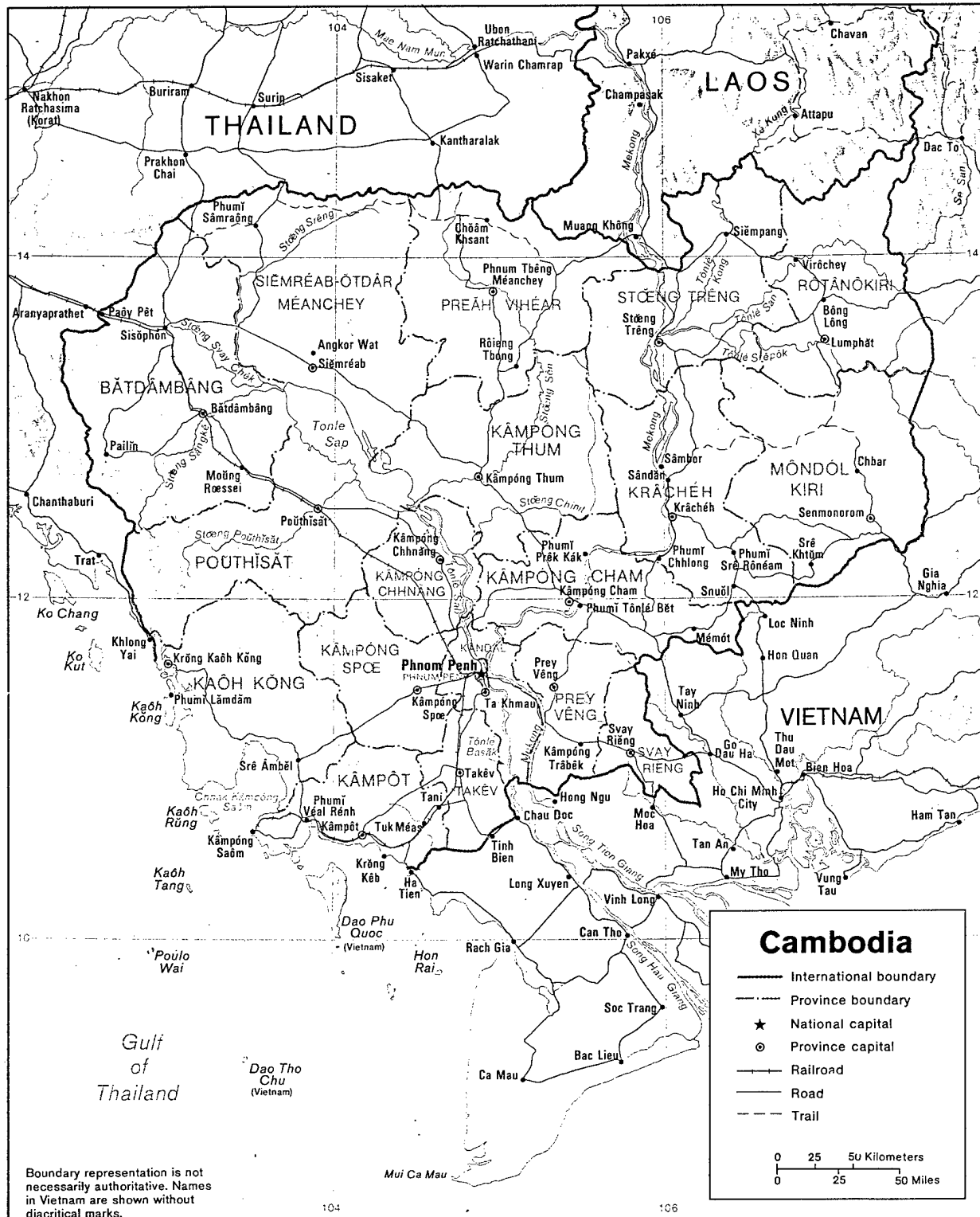
	<u>Page</u>
1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION.....	1
2. POPULATION.....	3
a. Total Population.....	3
b. Urban Population.....	5
c. Rural Population.....	5
d. Population Density.....	6
3. URBAN AREAS.....	9
a. Phnom Penh.....	9
b. Kampong Saom.....	10
c. Svay Rieng.....	10
d. Batdambang.....	17
e. Kampong Cham.....	17
f. Ta Khmau.....	17
g. Towns/Villages.....	17
4. ETHNIC FACTORS.....	18
a. General Description.....	18
b. Khmer Kandal.....	19
c. Khmer Kraom.....	23
d. Khmer Loeu.....	29
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	31

## ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Map - Cambodia.....	iv
2. Photo - Temple built by Mrs. Penh.....	4
3. Photo - Busy street of Phnom Penh.....	11
4. Photo - Sidewalk cafes in Phnom Penh.....	12
5. Photo - Street vendors selling snacks outside commercial establishments in Phnom Penh.....	13
6. Photo - Traditional open-air Markets in Phnom Penh.....	14
7. Photo - Modern buildings in Phnom Penh.....	15
8. Photo - The fishing harbor at Tumnap Protlos, Kampong Saom City.....	16
9. Photo - Ethnic Khmer.....	21
10. Photo - Ethnic Khmer in their traditional costumes.....	22
11. Photo - "Krama" used as headwear and shawl.....	22
12. Photo - Vietnamese men in traditional costumes.....	25
13. Photo - Lao women.....	28

## TABLES

1. Selected Population Data for Cambodia (1987 Estimates).....	2
2. 1987 Urban-Rural Population by Major Administrative Subdivisions.....	7
3. 1987 Population and Density by Major Administrative Subdivisions.....	8
4. Comparative Ethnic Composition Data of Population in Cambodia.....	19



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Figure 1. Map - Cambodia

## RESISTANCE FACTORS IN CAMBODIA: DEMOGRAPHY

### 1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Cambodia (People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)) is located in the southwest part of the Indochinese peninsula and shares a common border of over 2,100 kilometers with Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. It is bounded in the southwest by a 400-kilometer stretch of the Gulf of Thailand. The country covers an area of 181,035 square kilometers and is inhabited by 6,463,000 people (January 1987 estimate), mostly ethnic Khmer. It is administratively divided into 18 provinces and 1 municipality, Phnom Penh.

For the past 5 decades, Cambodia has been subjected to several types of governments--colonial, royal, republic, and communist. Each has had a considerable impact on the country's population, especially Phnom Penh's. The number of residents in the capital increased from a moderate 75,000 to a high of 2,000,000, then decreased suddenly to a virtual "ghost town," and increased again to over 500,000.

Like its neighbors, Cambodia's population density is very uneven. The delta region, where land is fertile and readily arable, is densely populated, although the mountain and forest areas which make up two-thirds of the country is sparsely populated. About 90 percent of the population live in Phnom Penh and surrounding provinces and along the Tonle Sap, constituting a population density of 120 persons per square kilometer. The remaining 10 percent live in the outlying provinces, having a population density of less than 10 persons per square kilometer. In general, the Cambodian population is young with 30 percent under the age of 14. The male-female ratio is 99.97 to 100; life expectancy at birth averages 45 years for males and 48 for females. Cambodia has one of the lowest urban population ratios in Southeast Asia, mainly because of the large number of Khmer engaged in agricultural work. The latest official census, taken in 1962, revealed that Cambodia's urban population was 10.8 percent and its rural population 89.2 percent. Recent reports have not indicated any appreciable percentage change. The majority of the urban population is concentrated in the city of Phnom Penh, which is the only city in the country with a population of over a half million. There are about 18 cities and towns in Cambodia, only two having populations over 50,000, Phnom Penh and the port city of Kampong Saom, with populations of 504,000 and 53,000, respectively. Phnom Penh is located in central Cambodia, and Kampong Saom is situated in the southwest on the Gulf of Thailand. The other lesser urban areas have a population range of 2,000 to 36,000 residents.

The city of Phnom Penh (Penh Hill in Khmer) has been the capital of Cambodia since 1434. Penh is the name of the first known settler in the area at the confluence of the Bassac, Mekong, and Sap Rivers. The name is believed to have been bestowed to the city in honor of Mrs. Penh who around 1375 built a temple on a man-made hill for Buddha statues. The statues had drifted in a hollow log to her doorstep after a rainstorm. When the old capital, Angkor, was destroyed during the war with Siam (Thailand), Phnom Penh was selected as the new capital by the last dynasty of the Angkor empire and is currently the administrative, transportational, educational, and military center of the country. It is the third largest city on the peninsula and has been the



Table 1

Selected Population Data for Cambodia  
(1987 Estimates)

Population	6,463,000
Male	3,231,000
Female	3,232,000
Density (persons per sq. km.)	36
Urban Population	725,000
as a percentage of total population	11.2
a. Cities	671,000
b. Towns	54,000
Rural Population	5,738,000
as a percentage of total population	88.8
a. Large villages (Phum, Canton Center)	2,648,000
b. Small villages (Phum)	3,090,000

fastest growing since 1979 with an annual growth rate of over 20 percent. The high growth rate is due mainly to the return of residents who were forced out of the city in April 1975 following the demise of the Khmer Republic and the emergence of the Khmer Rouge in April 1975; the country was renamed Democratic Kampuchea (DK). (See figure 2.)

The first census in 1921 showed Phnom Penh's population at 75,000, and a third census by the Royal Cambodian government in 1962 showed the population at 394,000. The high intercensal growth rate of 4.2 percent annually was attributed to the immigration of Vietnamese and Chinese who were contracted by the French because their labor was preferred over the Cambodian's. Under the Royal Cambodian government, Phnom Penh's population continued to increase but at a slower rate of 3.3 percent annually and reached a reported 450,000 in 1966. When the Vietnam War spread into Cambodia and hostility increased in the countryside, approximately 800,000 to 1,200,000 people flooded Phnom Penh, raising the population to almost 2,000,000 in early 1975. After the Khmer Rouge took power in April 1975, residents were forced to move out of the capital, which caused the population to drop sharply to an estimated low of 5,000 and high of 37,000. Later in 1977, a Khmer Rouge official claimed that the population of Phnom Penh was 200,000. After the Khmer Rouge was overturned by the PRK in 1979, the population was reported at 110,000, and at 329,000 in 1981. The very high 72.9 percent average annual increase between 1979 and 1981 was attributed to the return of new and former residents because of improved security and availability of city service. For the period from 1981-87 while the city underwent redevelopment, the influx of returnees continued, and population increased but at a declining 7.4 percent annual rate. The rate may decline even further if returnees choose to reside in a rehabilitated urban area other than Phnom Penh.

## 2. POPULATION

### a. Total Population

Limited knowledge exists about Cambodia's population before the twentieth century. The first known national census was conducted in 1921 by the French when Cambodia was a French Protectorate; it showed a total population of 2,403,000. The statistics of the subsequent 2 decades were also recorded by the French government and showed an annual population increase of 1.6 percent. Thus, according to the 1931 census, the population was 2,806,000 and 3,046,000 as shown by the statistical yearbook in 1936. A third census was taken in 1962 by the Kingdom of Cambodia when the country was independent. This census showed the country's population at 5,728,800, an annual increase of 2.4 percent since 1936. The large increase was attributed to the Chinese and Vietnamese who had immigrated and remained after fulfilling employment contracts with the French. The Cambodian government conducted a limited population survey between 1958 and 1959 and recorded a growth rate of 2.2 percent and kept growth-rate records to apply to future population estimates.

During the 1962-78 period, Cambodia's population fluctuated with the political events of the country. After the takeover of the country by the Khmer Rouge in April 1975 and during its 1975-78 reign, an estimated one to three million people were eliminated from the total population as a result of war casualties, genocide, and mass escapes to other countries. The population

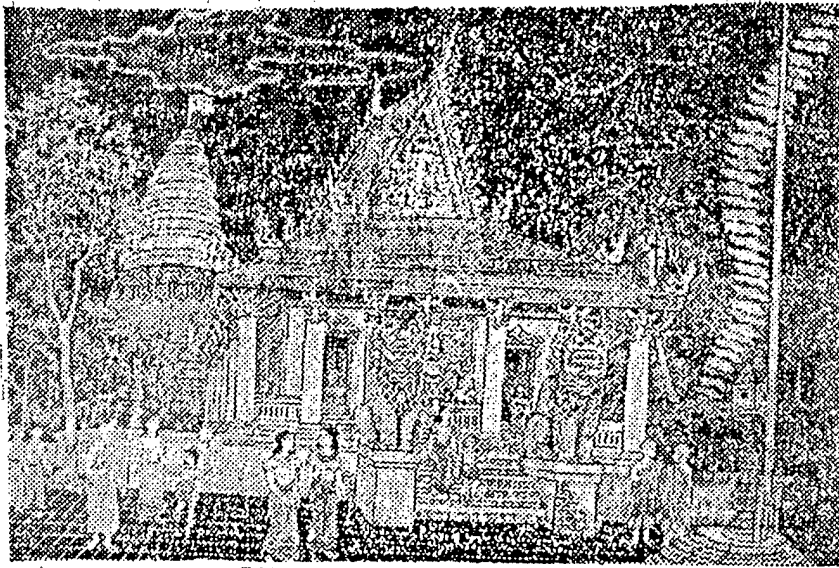


Figure 2. Temple built by Mrs. Penh

was reduced to approximately 5 million, 2 to 3 million below the mid-1970 estimates.

Since 1979 the population has risen again to an estimated growth rate of 2.2 percent due mainly to the large number of returnees, especially from Vietnam, and to improved security and good health care. Public health networks have expanded to include the commune level, next to the lowest administrative unit of the country.

#### b. Urban Population

The urban population in Cambodia, as in Laos and Vietnam, has not increased substantially over the years, especially during the French colonial era. Urban population has consistently remained below 12 percent of the country's total population. Available statistics indicate before 1941 that urban population was based primarily on the capital city of Phnom Penh. Other urban areas, such as provincial administrative centers, were considered overgrown villages because they did not have the conventional urban characteristics. The impetus for urban growth began after 1941 when the Chinese and Vietnamese settled in Phnom Penh and provincial centers and opened shops, developed light industries, and worked for the government. Urban growth was also stimulated in the 1950s when industrialization, tourism, and the addition of basic facilities were introduced. In 1950 a reported 529,000 people resided in 14 urban areas. By 1962 the numbers increased to 621,000 residents and 19 urban areas. During this period the average annual urban population increase was over 1.3 percent, and a ratio of urban to the country's total was 6.7 percent in 1950 to 10.8 percent in 1962.

For the ensuing 1963-78 period, the urban population, as did the total population, fluctuated with the political events of the country. When the Vietnam War spread into Cambodia and insurgency of the Khmer Rouge increased, people began to leave the rural areas, flooding into urban areas for better security, and the total number of urban residents increased to nearly 3 million by early 1975. However, after the Khmer Rouge takeover in April 1975, and during its 1975-78 reign, the urban population was decimated; the cities were practically unpopulated. Urban population dropped markedly and was less than 0.5 percent of the total population.

Since 1979 cities have been repopulated, and an increase in the birthrate has been reported. According to experts, the combination of a higher birthrate and better health services should raise population higher than the pre-1962 urban population. The current urban population is estimated at 725,000, 11.2 percent of the country's total population.

#### c. Rural Population

The largest segment of Cambodia's population, the ethnic Khmer, has always lived in rural areas primarily because of agriculture. Before the 1970s about two-thirds of the Khmers lived in the central plain in villages that numbered 100 to 3,000 people and cultivated rice fields totaling 2.5 million hectares. Others worked as fishermen and in rubber and pepper plantations. Most villages, the lowest administrative level in the country, are small or average in size, about 3 square kilometers. A few larger

villages that are 100 or more square kilometers have populations as high as 3,000.

Each farmland is located close to its village, because in the past village residents did not work land far from home. The rural economy deteriorated because of the political events of the 1970s, and many of the agricultural Khmers left the villages for the safety of urban areas, forcing a change in life-style; beginning in 1979 farmers moved back to areas controlled by the government. In many cases they did not inhabit the same villages from which they were displaced, resulting in overpopulation in many areas because farmland was scarce. However, recent data show that only over half of the 2.8 million hectares that was available before the 1970s had been tilled. The government introduced a new agricultural policy in 1982 to strengthen and expand the rural economy. The aim of the policy was to relocate people to arable land areas and to provide financial assistance. The policy also sought to relocate/resettle unemployed urbanites in rural areas to reclaim cultivable land and encourage residents to reclaim fallow farmland in their areas. As a result of this policy, a total of about 341,000 hectares of wasteland was reportedly cleared after 1982 which resulted in the present total of more than 1.7 million hectares of arable land. In 1986, approximately 5,170 hectares in remote areas were reclaimed by 5,530 families who resettled in 13 new villages.

#### d. Population Density

Cambodia's population is unevenly distributed; population is dense in the lowlands and sparse in the mountain areas. The lowland areas along the banks of the Mekong River and Bassac River are heavily populated and have an estimated 120 or more persons per square kilometer. The area represents the largest rurality of the country. Phnom Penh city and environs, located in Kandal Province, has an average density of 317 persons per square kilometer. The population outside the city is semirural.

Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang provinces are located immediately north of Phnom Penh. The country's main rivers and lakes which converge at the capital drain these largely rural provinces which have the most fertile land and the second highest density in Cambodia, 68 persons per square kilometer.

The population of the provinces surrounding the Tonle Sap River, except Kampong Chhnang, is very unevenly distributed. The majority of the people are concentrated around the Tonle Sap, and a small number live in the provincial centers. The provinces are largely mountainous and forested and have limited hectares of rice fields. Fishing is the best economic asset of the area. The average population density is estimated at 27 persons per square kilometer and higher in the lake area and in the south.

Population density in the provinces that make up the coastal and mountain areas is the lowest in the country. The estimated average is eight persons per square kilometer and four persons per square kilometer in the mountain area. The port city of Kampong Saom has a high population density and is the only exception in the area.

Table 2

1987 Urban-Rural Population  
by Major Administrative Subdivisions

<u>Major Subdivision</u>	<u>Urban</u>		<u>Rural</u>	
	<u>Number</u> <u>(000's)</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>of Total</u>	<u>Number</u> <u>(000's)</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>of Total</u>
<u>Lowland</u>				
Phnom Penh	504	100.0	-	-
Kampong Cham	25	3.0	800	97.0
Kampong Spoe	4	1.2	336	98.8
Kandal	25	3.6	695	96.4
Prey Veng	5	0.7	667	99.3
Svay Rieng	36	12.3	256	87.7
Takev	4	0.8	527	99.2
<u>Tonle Sap</u>				
Batdambang	28	4.1	658	95.9
Kampong Chhnang	7	3.3	214	96.7
Kampong Thum	5	1.3	374	98.7
Pouthisat	6	3.4	169	96.6
Siemreab-Otdar Meanchey	5	1.2	395	98.8
<u>Coastal Area</u>				
Kampot	11	3.2	329	96.8
Kaoh Kong incl. Kampong Saom	53	67.9	25	32.1
<u>Mountainous Area</u>				
Kracheh	5	3.8	125	96.2
Mondol Kiri	-	-	16	100.0
Preah Vihear	-	-	70	100.0
Rotanokiri	-	-	45	100.0
Stoeng Treng	2	5.4	37	94.6
Tonle Sap (Lake)	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>5,738</b>	<b>88.8</b>

Table 3

1987 Population and Density by Major  
Administrative Subdivisions

<u>Major Subdivision</u>	<u>Area</u> (sq. Km.)	<u>Population</u> (000's)	<u>Persons per</u> <u>square kilometer</u>
<u>Lowland</u>	<u>32,086</u>	<u>3,884</u>	121
Phnom Penh	178*	504	2,831
Kampong Cham	9,799	825	84
Kampong Speu	7,017	340	48
Kandal	3,680	720	196
Prey Veng	4,883	672	138
Svay Rieng	2,966	292	98
Takeo	3,563	531	149
<u>Tonle Sap</u>	<u>61,456</u>	<u>1,861</u>	30
Batdambang	19,184	686	36
Kampong Chhnang	5,521	221	40
Kampong Thum	7,602*	379	50
Pouthsat	12,692	175	14
Siemreab-Otdar Meanchey	16,457	400	24
<u>Coastal Area</u>	<u>17,238</u>	<u>418</u>	24
Kampot	6,009	340	57
Kaoh Kong incl. Kampong Saom	11,229	78	7
<u>Mountainous Area</u>	<u>67,255</u>	<u>300</u>	4
Kracheh	11,094	130	12
Mondol Kiri	14,287	16	1
Preah Vihear	20,000*	70	4
Rotanokiri	10,782	45	4
Stoeng Treng	11,092	39	4
Tonle Sap (Lake)	3,000	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>181,035</b>	<b>6,463</b>	<b>36</b>

\* Estimate

### 3. URBAN AREAS

Cambodia has six cities with population of 25,000 or more. Phnom Penh ranks first with 504,000 residents followed by Kampong Saom with 53,000. The lesser urban areas in descending order are Svay Rieng (36,000), Batdambang (28,000), Kampong Cham (25,000) and Takhmau (25,000).

#### a. Phnom Penh

Phnom Penh is a modern city with a blend of Western and Cambodian architecture that stretches north and south along the left bank of the Tonle Sap where it joins the Mekong and Bassac Rivers. Government and commercial buildings are generally two to three stories. All buildings are masonry except some privately owned wooden houses located in the city's old quarters. The city's population is young with about 45 percent of the residents under 18. The area has more than quadrupled in size, from 46 to 178 square kilometers, and is divided administratively into 6 districts. Commercial activities are centrally located in the city; administrative and diplomatic missions are concentrated on the north side; and palaces, temples, pagodas, and monuments are on the south side. Phnom Penh boasts about its large hospitals, theaters, and sports stadium. The capital also has small industrial enterprises which include a textile mill, mechanical engineering factory, soft drink plant, rice mill, tobacco factory, and power plants. Almost all have been restored with foreign assistance, but none are operating at full capacity because of a shortage of skilled manpower and necessary supplies such as chemicals, oils, spare parts, and electricity.

Primary and secondary schools are located throughout the country. However, because of a teacher shortage since 1979, only two secondary schools have been opened. Both are located in Phnom Penh and have an enrollment of about 2,500 students. Schools of higher learning are located only in Phnom Penh.

Phnom Penh's communications network and transportation system have been reestablished; postal, telegraph, and telegram services are available throughout most of the country. Roads and bridges have been repaired, and the two rail lines, which cover approximately 655 kilometers between Phnom Penh and Batdambang and Phnom Penh and Kampong Saom, have been reopened. Service is frequently disrupted by guerrilla activities. The capital has the largest of 26 airports, Pochentong, and the only river port capable of receiving 8,000-ton ships during the wet season and 5,000-ton ships during the dry season.

With Soviet assistance several enterprises have been reopened or constructed in the capital. A ferro-concrete factory and an "Intersputnik" satellite ground station were put back into service, and an experimentation and seed selection center was constructed in the northern part of the city. A fourth power plant with a 15,000-kilowatt capacity that began construction in 1981 and the Pushkin Russian Language Institute, opened in 1986 as part of the Cambodian-Soviet Friendship Institute of Technology, were also established with Soviet assistance.



Phnom Penh has recently signed a cultural and economic cooperation agreement with its "sister city" in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City. Under the agreement Ho Chi Minh City will help restore consumer-good enterprises, construct a number of small industrial and handicraft workshops, apply scientific and technical progress in cultivation and animal breeding, construct a green-belt around the city, and assist in training technical and scientific personnel. So far under the agreement, Ho Chi Minh City has delivered the first 32-passenger tourist bus. (See figures 3-7, pictures taken in the 1980s.)

b. Kampong Saom

Kampong Saom, the only maritime port city of Cambodia, is located about 235 kilometers west of Phnom Penh and has an area of 68.2 square kilometers that is divided into 4 city districts and 15 villages. The city has sandy beaches and winding asphalt streets lined with one- and two-story buildings. It is the second largest industrial city and has power plants, rice and lumber mills, small brick and tile factories, an oil refinery, a tractor-assembly plant, and a refrigeration plant for storing fish. In addition to the port, which is about 3 kilometers from the city proper, Kampong Saom has an airport, Kang Keng, which was reportedly expanded by Vietnamese troops with Soviet assistance in July 1983. Since 1979, with Soviet and Vietnamese assistance, Kampong Saom has been restored to almost its pre-1975 normalcy.

In 1980 a reported 180 Soviet dockworkers brought with them forklifts, trucks, and other equipment from the Soviet Union. Some worked as longshoremen; others worked as instructors and trained 100 inexperienced Khmers to become skilled port workers. Other specialists lectured to about 200 Khmer port supervisors and stevedores. By 1984 approximately 1,500 Khmer port workers reportedly had the capability to handle 2.5 tons of cargo per day.

The city is reportedly self-sufficient in food with 14 of its 15 villages involved in crop cultivation and animal husbandry; Tunlup Polo (Tumnup Protlos), located along the port is involved in fishing. (See figure 8.) The island of Korong (Koah Rung) is located about 40 kilometers offshore and is inhabited by ten families who provide their own food by farming and fishing. The island is protected by Vietnamese troops, who also grow some of their food.

c. Svay Rieng

Svay Rieng is a small tree-shaded city about 128 kilometers southwest of Phnom Penh which features many French-colonial style buildings that were reported virtually unscathed during the war years. The city is administratively divided into four districts and has been repopulated by ethnic Khmer and Vietnamese returnees who had fled to Vietnam before 1979. Svay Rieng has formalized its sisterhood with Tay Ninh City in Vietnam.



Figure 3. Busy street of Phnom Penh



Figure 4. Sidewalk cafes in Phnom Penh



Figure 5: Street vendors selling snacks outside commercial establishments are an everyday feature in Phnom Penh.



Figure 6. The traditional open-air markets are found all over Phnom Penh. A large variety of merchandise ranging from vegetables to domestic appliances are offered.

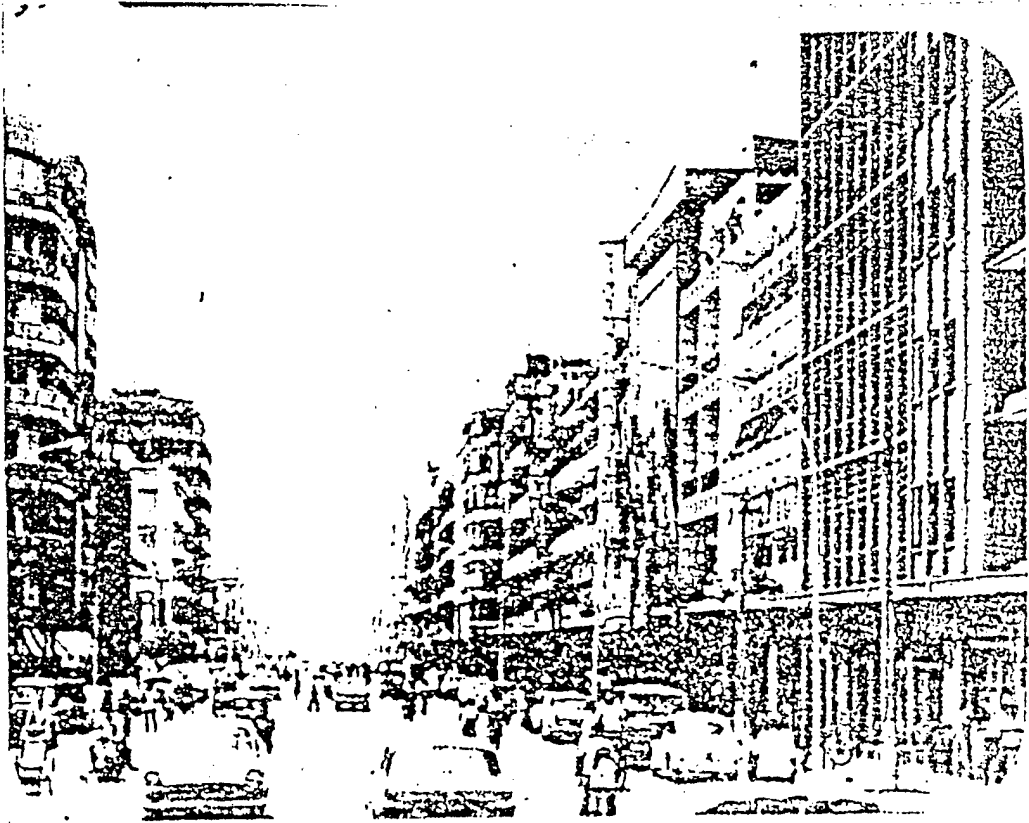


Figure 7. Modern buildings in Phnom Penh

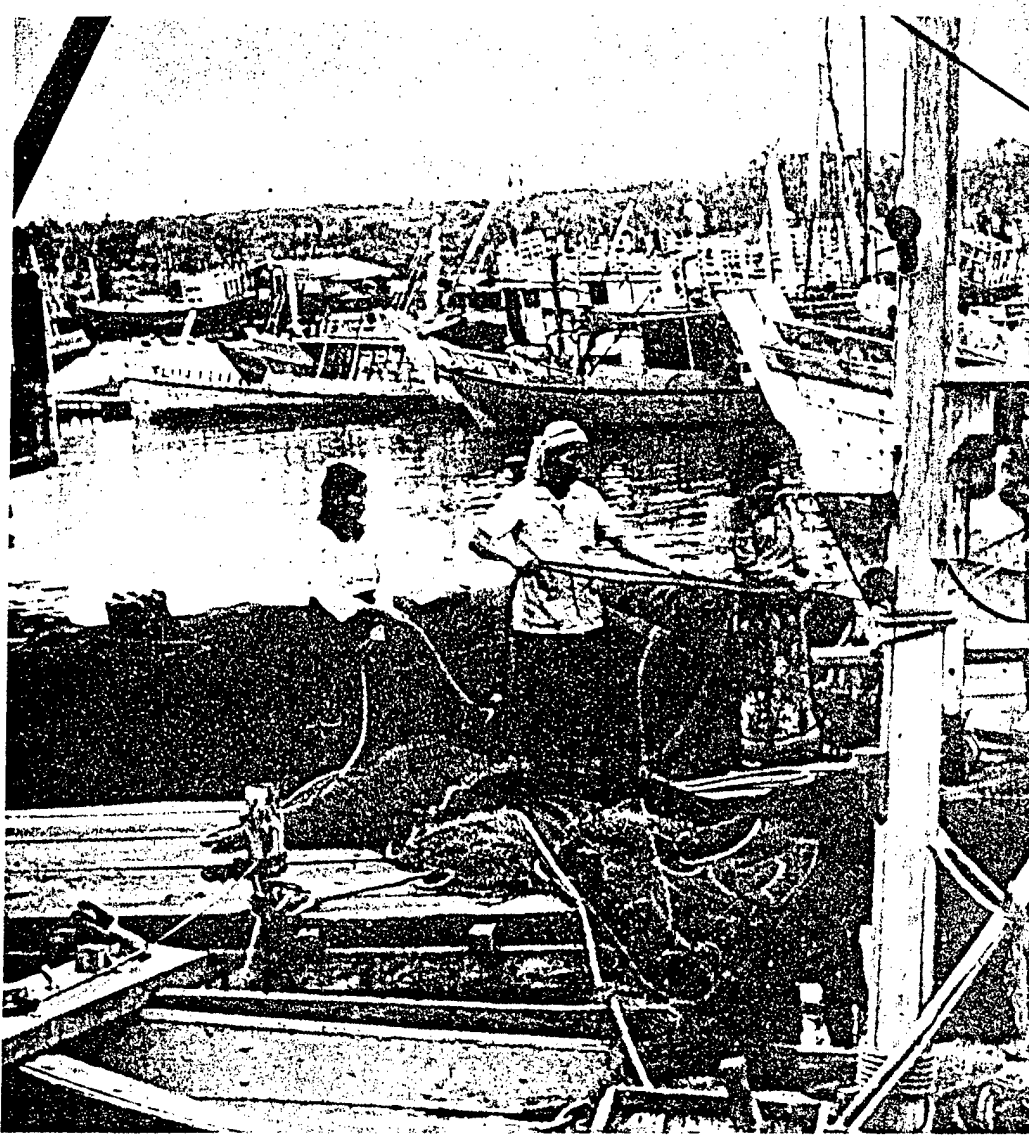


Figure 8. The fishing harbour at Tumnup Protlos, Kampong Saom City

d. Batdambang

Batdambang, administrative center of Batdambang Province, has an area of about 10 square kilometers stretching along the Stung (River) Sang Ke. It is the largest western city of Cambodia and, according to 1962 census, ranked second only to Phnom Penh in population size. Because of its strategic location, the area is not entirely secure; consequently, the population is less than half of its number in the 1960s. In 1983 it was reported that 2,400 urbanites fled to a refugee camp near the Thai border.

Batdambang City has all customary urban services including water works, a power plant, a hospital, and schools. Its small industries include farm implement repair shops, textile mills, and an auto and tractor repair plant. The city is served by an airport and railroads. The main rail line connects the city with Phnom Penh, and two smaller lines connect the city with provincial districts Sisophon and Ta Ngou.

e. Kampong Cham

Kampong Cham, a small city with an area of 3.5 square kilometers, is located on the west bank of the Mekong River. It is the administrative center of Kampong Cham Province (the richest province of Cambodia) which lies in the midst of great havea plantations. Formerly, Kampong Cham was the capital of tobacco and cotton cloths and also was an important educational center. According to the 1962 census, its population size ranked third in Cambodia. Because the city was ravaged by war between communist insurgents (Khmer Rouge aided by North Vietnamese) and government troops as early as the early 1970s, city residents fled. The city's hospital, university, and textile factory were the main strategic targets; however, reconstruction presumably has been undertaken including the expansion of its airport.

f. Ta Khmau

Ta Khmau, selected to be the administrative center of Kandal Province in 1962, has an area of about 13 square kilometers, half of which was reserved for industrial zoning. The housing zone occupied three-eighths of the total area and the administrative zone, one-eighth. Ta Khmau was selected because of its location which is adjoined to the south border of Phnom Penh and convenient for relocation of industries that were concentrated in the capital. Because of decentralization laws, industries were forced to build their workshops and warehouses outside the capital. Additionally, Ta Khmau could make use of important hydro-electrical resources supplied by the dam at Kanchay. In the 1960s, the city was an important industrial center in the country. In the reign of terror of the Khmer Rouge (1975-1978), Ta Khmau was one of the few cities the Khmer Rouge claimed to have maintained its industries and kept them running, albeit with less manpower. The "Kor-1" tire factory, which was manned by 1,000 workers before 1975, was reduced to less than 200 workers.

g. Towns/Villages

The remaining urban areas are small in size, area, and population and serve mostly as provincial administrative centers. In the past, these towns



and villages had most of the urban facilities that the larger urban areas had. However, since 1979 reconstruction of these facilities has not been completed and population has not grown significantly.

Villages in Cambodia vary in size and form in different regions of the country and are noted by the presence of pagodas. A village is a collection of houses in an entire inhabited area. To the peasant, a pagoda is the true communal house. There they gather for all kinds of activities, and the children receive their rudimentary instructions. Generally there are several pagodas in each district (khum) and one pagoda in each village (phum). Some large villages may have two pagodas, and several small villages share one pagoda. The houses usually belong to the same family; children group around the paternal house. A typical village in Cambodia consists of 10 to 50 houses. Traditional Cambodian peasant houses are thatched huts on stilts. In the last 3 decades, regrouping of scattered dwellings into larger villages occurred as a measure for security. In the delta region villages are square or rectangular and surrounded by farming areas. Villages that are located on rivers, lakes, and the coast are arranged linearly.

#### 4. ETHNIC FACTORS

##### a. General Description

Cambodia is a multinational country comprising about 12 different ethnic groups. All inhabitants are known as Khmer, however there are three distinct Khmer groups: the Khmer Kandal (Khmer of the plains); the Khmer Loeu (mountain Khmer); and the Khmer Kraom (the nonindigenous Khmer or immigrants, which include Cham-Malay, Vietnamese, Chinese, Lao, Thai, and Burmese).

Cambodia's present population composition is a result of genocide, war casualties, the exodus of the last decades, and more recently, the large number that immigrated from Vietnam. Since 1979, an increasing number of Vietnamese citizens have resettled in Cambodia to rejoin their relatives and help the government with administrative and technical problems. The ethnic Khmer account for 85.4 percent of the total population, which is about the same as in 1936, 85.2. Conversely, the number of Vietnamese account for 7.7 percent of the total population against the 6.3 percent of 1936. The next largest ethnic group is the Chinese. Their population has declined because of their exodus, assimilation through intermarriage; children of Sino-Khmer marriages were reported adopting Khmer nationality. In the early 1970s, there were about 100,000 Sino-Khmers, some considered themselves Chinese and others considered themselves Khmer. The Cham/Malay population has also declined, mainly because of the wars, genocide, and their exodus from the country. The Khmer Loeu are the autochthons of the country. They have lived in and roamed the mountain areas for generations. They were not as affected as the other groups by the wars and the changes that were precipitated by the people of the plains.

Table 4

Comparative Ethnic Composition Data  
of the Population of Cambodia  
(in thousands)

<u>Ethnic Groups</u>	<u>1921</u> (1)	<u>1931</u> (2)	<u>1936</u> (3)	<u>1987</u> (4)
Khmer Kandal	1,978	2,352	2,597	5,520
Khmer Kraom				
Cham-Malay	59	68	73	50
Vietnamese	140	176	191	500
Chinese (5)	159	148	106	300
Lao	21	18	20	10
Thai				10
Burmese	9	7	5	3
Other (6)				17
Khmer Loeu	37	37	54	53
Indonesian Subgroup (7)				43
Negroid Subgroup (8)				10
Total	2,403	2,806	3,046	6,463

- (1) Annuaire Statistique de l'Indochine 1923-1929  
(2) Annuaire Statistique de l'Indochine 1931-1932  
(3) Annuaire Statistique de l'Indochine 1936-1937  
(4) Estimated  
(5) Includes Sino-Khmer  
(6) Includes French and Indians  
(7) Includes Rhade, Jarai, Stieng, Mnong, and Brao tribes  
(8) Includes Kui, Pear, Saoch, and Samre tribes

b. Khmer Kandal

Location and Size. An estimated 5,520,000 Khmer Kandal live in Cambodia. They comprise the majority of the population but occupy the smallest land area in the country. The Khmer Kandals are concentrated mainly in the delta region along the Mekong River.

Appearance. The Khmer Kandal are from the Austroasiatic family. They have large noses, brown skin, dark brown eyes, straight or wavy black hair, low foreheads, and thick lips. Males average 1.61 meters tall, and females average 1.5 meters in height. Their cephalic index averages 84.5. They are easygoing, prefer casual, colorful clothing, especially the women, sleep on wooden floors and have little need for furniture. The typical item of clothing are the Sampot, a wraparound that is tied between the legs and the

Krama, a shawl woven of fine white, marine, and dark red cotton threads. The pattern is often Scotch plaid with small squares. In addition to serving as a shawl, the Krama can be used as a turban, belt, food basket, bath towel, and baby hammock; soldiers on campaign carry their rice bowls in it. Generally, dark clothing is worn for daily activities, and colorful clothing is worn for festive occasions. Men and women as well as children usually go barefoot. The modern Khmer Kandal wear western type clothing, especially those who live in urban localities.

Language. Khmer, which comes from the Mon-Khmer family, is the official language of Cambodia. It is guttural and toneless, and in pure Khmer the words are monosyllabic. The modern language is a mixture of Sanskrit and technical Pali words, using some Malay, French, Chinese and Vietnamese vocabulary. The syntax is very simple--subject, verb, object. There are no moods or genders, and nouns are not declined. Verbs are only used in the infinitive and the subjects are conjugated only in the third person. Written Khmer is of Pali origin. There are two varieties of consonants; vowel sounds vary depending on whether the initial consonant is voiced or unvoiced. Written Khmer is not perfectly adapted to spoken Khmer. In script, the symbols for numbers end with five, whereas in the spoken language, numbers can be as high as nine. Until 1953, written Khmer script was not official in Cambodia nor widely used. French was the primary language and was used in education and in official and international affairs. In the late 1960s, English was promoted and was used instead of French because it provided easier communications with other nations. The Russian language was introduced recently; however, it is not used widely.

Religion. The Khmer Kandal practiced a mixture of different religions--Mahayana Buddhism, Brahmanism, and animism. Currently Theravada Buddhism, with some animism, is practiced almost exclusively. The sacred language of the religion is Pali. All ceremonial activities, including funerals, are held in the pagodas. It was a Khmer tradition for sons of Khmer to perform pagoda duty and serve as novices in the pagoda for 6 months or a year. However, practice of Buddhism was abruptly stopped during the 1975-78 period under the Khmer Rouge when the bonzes were forced to defrock and marry and the pagodas became inactive. Reportedly, Buddhism virtually disappeared from the country, with its near 2,850 or more pagodas and 70,000 bonzes. After the current government took power, Buddhism was revived but not to the extent it was before 1975. Reports show only 510 active pagodas and 1,553 bonzes in 1980. A subsequent government decree permitted bonzes over 50 years old to redon the saffron robes and return to the religious life in the pagodas. Bonzes under 50 had to remain secular. The decree also discouraged the tradition of young boys 12 to 15 years old serving as novices in the pagodas and amended the law on religion; Buddhism is no longer the state religion as it was before 1975. Before 1975, there were several thousands Christian Cambodians. Most were descendants of Filipino or Portuguese-Khmer and lived mainly in the cities of Phnom Penh and Batdambang. The few Christians that are in Cambodia today are mostly Vietnamese.

Position. The majority of Khmer Kandal work in agriculture, and a few work in rubber plantations. The urban Khmer Kandal work in government, scientific and technical fields, small light industries, and trade and services. There is a shortage of skilled Khmer Kandal workers.



Figure 9. Ethnic Khmer



Figure 10. Ethnic Khmer in their traditional costumes



Figure 11. "Krama" used as headwear and shawl

General Ethnic Character. The Khmer Kandal are gentle, simple, kind-hearted, and hospitable. They keep promises and follow the saying "it is better to lose money than disavow a promise." They respect elders and bonzes, and as part of their greeting, they join the palms of their hands in front of the face and slightly bow the head. The higher the hands are held, the more respect is displayed for the person greeted. It is considered taboo to pat someone on the head because they believe the head contains the essence of life or soul.

c. Khmer Kraom

(1) Cham-Malay

Location and Size. An estimated 50,000 Cham-Malay live in scattered villages along the Mekong River and the Tonle Sap in Kandal, Kampong Cham, and Kracheh provinces. Some live in urban localities.

Appearance. The Cham-Malay are of the Indo-Malaysian family. They average 1.60 meters tall, and their cephalic index averages 83.5. They have light brown skin, facial features that are more European than Mongolian, and dark brown hair and eyes. The basic piece of clothing is the Batik which buttons in the middle and is similar to the Khmer Sampot. Women wear a black or dark green, tight-fitting, open-necked, long-sleeve blouse; they always wear a kerchief. Men's clothing consists of a short shirt, an ankle-length tunic, and a round, white skull cap or a black, velvet calot. Typical Cham-Malay clothing design is red or green stripes on white.

Language. The Cham-Malay language comes from the Malayo-Polynesian family and is nontonal. The written language is derived from an ancient South Indian script. Koranic schools that teach written Malay or Arabic are preferred over Khmer public schools. Very few Cham-Malay are able to read their native language. Teachers (Haji) and some professors are more proficient mainly because of long sojourns spent in Mecca. Malay in Arabic script is used mostly for religious literature. The Cham-Malay are fluent in spoken Khmer.

Religion. The Cham-Malay are orthodox Sunnite Moslems. Their religious headquarters is the Chrouy Changvar area where all high Moslem officials congregate.

Position. The main occupation of the Cham-Malay is animal husbandry, with an emphasis on sheep. Cham-Malay also work in slaughterhouses for the ethnic Khmer who are prevented by religion from killing animals. They are involved in trade, farming, and fishing. They also work as lumberjacks and woodsmen.

General Ethnic Character. The Cham-Malay have religious practices and beliefs that differ from the ethnic Khmer. They have maintained their customs and traditions and live in tightly knit, closed communities. The Cham-Malay observe a strict abstinence from drinking alcohol and eating pork. The women live a more sheltered life than the Khmer women. Because of religion, inter-marriage between Khmer and Cham-Malay is discouraged.

General Public Attitude. The Cham-Malay have lived apart from the mainstream of ethnic Khmer society mainly because of religious differences, one of the reasons the Khmer Rouge committed atrocities against the Cham-Malay. In 1979 the new government, recognizing the importance of religion to all ethnic groups and the possible future role they would have in politics, instituted a policy of solidarity and religious freedom. As a result, the Cham-Malay, as well as other ethnic groups, reportedly participated in the Khmer public affairs. Currently, they serve on local and national administrative councils and as officials in independent organizations for national defense and construction.

## (2) Vietnamese

Location and Size. The Vietnamese, estimated to number approximately 500,000, live mainly in Phnom Penh, the Tonle Sap area, and other urban localities.

Appearance. The Vietnamese are of the Austroasiatic family. The average height is 1.59 meters, and the cephalic index averages 81.0. They have light-tan skin, straight, black hair, high cheek bones, and almond-shaped, dark-brown eyes. Traditional clothing consists of a long tunic (Ao Dai) worn over loose pants. The tunic is shorter when worn at home or work. Formal headwear is turban-shaped and made of cloth--black for men, bright gold for women. Rural residents wear cone-shaped straw hats. Typical footwear is wood sandals. Modern Vietnamese wear conventional Western clothing.

Language. The Vietnamese language is from the Viet-Muong family. It has some Mon-Khmer and Thai derivatives and many uses of French and Chinese vocabulary. The language is monosyllabic and has six tones. It often uses compound words, and its syntax is subject, verb, object. Verbs are not conjugated and take the future or past tense with auxiliary words. In the 13th Century, the Vietnamese borrowed Chinese characters to adapt to the language. The process was so difficult that less than 1 percent of the population was literate. In the 17th Century, a Portuguese missionary developed written Vietnamese (Quoc Ngu) using Latin alphabets. This form became popular and is used today. It has 28 alphabets and 5 diacritical marks. The letters f, j, w, and z are not used and the f character is replaced by ph.

Religion. The Vietnamese religion involves a belief in animism mixed with Confucianism and Mahayana Buddhism; they mainly practice ancestry worship. Vietnamese Christians are few.

General Ethnic Characters. Although many of the Vietnamese have been in Cambodia for many years, they have kept their traditions and customs. They have their newspapers and private schools and live in adobe or wooden houses with huge twin-paneled thatched roofs. Their houses are built at ground level, whereas Cambodian houses are on stilts. Vietnamese have not tried to assimilate nor has the Cambodian government encouraged them. Inter-marriage is uncommon.

General Public Attitudes. The Cambodians have always mistrusted the Vietnamese and consider them a dangerous political group, a "fifth column" of



Figure 12. Vietnamese men in traditional costumes



the Vietnamese government. The Vietnamese have never been a popular group in Cambodia and, as a result, were persecuted and forced back to Vietnam twice in the past decades. However, their labor skills and knowledge of administrative and technical matters have been vital to the economic development of Cambodia. They were sought out by the French colonial government and at present are "invited" to return to Cambodia with relatives. Vietnamese presence in Cambodia is expected to persist. They are content in their adopted country and are productive citizens.

### (3) Chinese

Location and Size. An estimated 300,000 Chinese live primarily in Phnom Penh and other urban localities.

Appearance. The Chinese are of the Mongoloid race. They average 1.60 meters tall and have light-yellow skin, straight, black hair, and slanted, dark-brown eyes. The traditional rural apparel consists of a two-piece outfit called a Duan Ao, a short, high-collar top that opens on the right and is worn over loose-fitting pants, and a large hat made of *Latania* leaves. This outfit is worn with sandals made of wood or rubber. The urban Chinese, especially the men, wear conventional Western clothing.

Religion. In general, the Chinese practice a mixture of Buddhism and Confucianism and, like the Vietnamese, adhere to ancestry worship.

Language. The Chinese language is derived from the Sino-Tibetan family. It has many dialects and is monosyllabic and tonal. Words are invariable, and its syntax is subject, verb, object. Written Chinese characters are understood by all Chinese; however, the different dialects are not understood by all. The Chinese in Cambodia are divided by origin and dialect into five groups: Cantonese, from Guangzhou City and northwest Guangdong Province; Chaozhou, from eastern Guangdong Province, especially the Shantou area; Fuzhou; Hainan; and Hakka. Most Chinese study Khmer as a second language.

Position. The Chinese are reportedly involved mainly in trade and professional occupations such as banking, pawnbroking, contracting, commodity speculating, retailing, and distributing. Some are farmers, plantation workers, and fishermen.

General Ethnic Character. The Chinese, unlike the Cham-Malay and Vietnamese, are not easily discernible, especially those that immigrated before 1934. They married Khmers and readily adopted the Khmer lifestyle. Many of their Sino-Khmer descendants claim the nationality most favorable to the situation; being a Khmer is an advantage in government positions, and being a Chinese is helpful in the trading business because of dealings with counterparts in Hong Kong and Singapore. Regardless of the choice of nationality as an adult, as children they attend Chinese schools where they also learn Khmer language. Nationality on identification cards is frequently modified to suit the situation, and reportedly the only way to tell if a person is a Chinese or a Khmer is at funerals; Khmers are cremated and Chinese are buried. Nevertheless, they follow Chinese mores; they celebrate Chinese New Year and practice ancestry worship. The Chinese that immigrated after

1949 have not been assimilated because of the large number of women in the group and because they were refugees from Vietnam with temporary passports. They publish their own newspapers and, like the Vietnamese, live in houses built at ground-level rather than on stilts like the Khmer.

General Public Attitude. The Chinese as a group is not much of a political concern to the Cambodian government; however, they are a strong economic factor. They control most of the commercial activities and are loyal to their adopted country. During 1975-78, they were treated harshly by the Khmer Rouge. Many fled the country and those that remained cooperated with the present government. Many present-day Chinese are Sino-Khmers, and many government officials have traceable Chinese ancestors.

#### (4) Lao

Location and Size. The estimated 10,000 Lao live in valleys of the provinces of Stoeng Treng, Kampong Thum, and Rotanokiri near the Laotian border. Some live in the provinces of Prey Veng, Pouthisat, and Batdambang.

Appearance. The Lao in Cambodia are of the Lao-Thai family. They average 1.60 meters tall, and their cephalic index averages 83.0. They have light-tan skin, straight, black hair, and dark-brown eyes. The Lao women wear their hair in chignon on the right side of the top of the head, go barefoot and wear a short blouse and sarong similar to the Khmer.

Language. The Lao language is of the Lao-Thai family. It is tonal and monosyllabic. The written language is similar to Thai which was derived from the Khmer.

Religion. The Lao practice Theravada Buddhism mixed with animism. They have their own bonzes.

Position. They work primarily in the agricultural industry growing rice. They also raise buffalo, fish, and trade elephant hides.

General Ethnic Character. The Lao in general have kept their original characteristics.

General Public Attitude. The Lao are easygoing, having adapted well to the Khmer lifestyle. Reportedly, they were not spared by the Khmer Rouge; some were victimized and some fled to Laos. Those that remained are cooperating with the present government.

#### (5) Thai

Location and Size. The estimated 10,000 Thai that are in Cambodia live in the provinces of Kaoh Kong, Preah Vihear, and Batdambang.

Appearance. The Thai are of the Lao-Thai family. They average 1.62 meters tall and their cephalic index averages 85.0. They have light skin, black, slightly wavy hair, and dark-brown eyes. Thai women, unlike the Lao, wear their hair short like the Khmer.



Figure 13. Lao women

Language. The Thai language is of the Lao-Thai family. It is tonal and monosyllabic. The written form was derived from Khmer and was revised to adapt to the Thai language.

Religion. The Thai, like the Lao, practice Theravada Buddhism mixed with animism.

Position. Most Thai work in coastal fishing and the wood and farming industries.

General Ethnic Character. Like the Lao, the Thai blend well into Khmer life, having much of the same culture and many of the same traditions.

General Public Attitudes. Similar to the Lao group, the Thai were also affected by the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge and fled back to Thailand. Present-day Thai in Cambodia cooperate with the current government and continue to practice their trades.

#### (6) Burmese

Location and Size. The Burmese, estimated to number about 3,000, live primarily in the provinces of Rotanakiri and Batdambang.

Appearance. The Burmese are of the Tibetan-Burman family. They average 1.60 meters tall and have the same general physical features as the Khmer. Their apparel consists of a short blouse and a sarong.

Language. The Burmese language is of the Burman family. Written Burmese originated from Pali, southern India.

Religion. They practice Theravada Buddhism.

Position. They specialize in mining and processing precious stone.

General Ethnic Character. Like the Khmer, the Burmese are kindhearted and hospitable. They respect elders and bonzes, and as part of their greeting, they join the palms of their hands in front of the face and slightly bow the head.

General Public Attitude. The Burmese were also affected by the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge. They cooperate with the current government and continue to practice their trades.

#### d. Khmer Loeu

The Khmer Loeu are the Proto-Indochinese autochthons and live in the mountain areas of Cambodia. They comprise numerous small tribes, and because of negligible ethnic differences, the tribes are often considered as one group for ethnic study purposes. For ethnic classification, they are divided into two groups, Indonesian and Negroid.

(1) Indonesian Group

The Indonesian group, estimated at approximately 43,000, is subdivided into two linguistic groups, Malayo-Polynesian and Mon-Khmer. They average 1.60 meters tall and have dark-brown skin. Their cephalic index averages 78.0. The Malayo-Polynesian subgroups include the Rhade, Jarai, and Stieng. These tribes are related to the Tay Nguyen people in Vietnam. They live mainly in the provinces of Mondol Kiri and Rotanokiri and speak a Cham dialect. Their livelihood is by slash-and-burn farming, hunting, and fishing. They follow a matriarchial system and practice animism and shamanism. The Mon-Khmer subgroup practices animism and follow a patriarchial system. This group includes the Mnong and Brao who have relatives in Laos and Vietnam. The Mon-Khmer are considered Kha by the Lao, Phnong or Mnong by the Vietnamese, and mostly Mnong by the Cambodians. They live on both sides of the Cambodian-Vietnamese border. The Mnong includes the Biat, Rohong, Bu-nor and Tioba tribes. The Biat, Rohong, and Bu-nor tribes live in light forest and make a living by slash-and-burn farming, fruit picking, and hunting. The Tioba tribe live near the Vietnamese border and specialize in the capture and domestication of elephants. The Mnong in general have been decimated by malaria. The Brao, which includes the Krung and Tampuon tribes, live mostly in Stoeng Treng Province near the Laotian border. They have been influenced more by the Lao than by the Khmer and are often considered Kha by the Lao.

(2) Negroid Group

The Negroid group includes the Kui, Pear, Saoch, and Samre tribes. The current population is estimated to be 10,000. They are small in stature and have chocolate-brown skin and kinky hair. They average 1.58 meters tall, and their cephalic index averages 82.0. They live in the Angkor area north of Kampong Thum Province and in the provinces of Preah Vihear, Kaoh Kong, and Pouthisat. Most of the identified tribes in this group, especially the Kui and the Pear, have adopted Khmer customs. They have pagodas, cremate their dead and like to be considered ethnic Khmers. The Kui live on crops grown on burnt land and are traditionally blacksmiths. The Pear hunt and pick fruit and berries. The Saoch are shorter and darker, averaging approximately 1.53 meters tall, and have rounded heads. The Samre live in the province of Siemreab-Oddar Meanchey. They have never constituted a distinct group and do not exhibit any particular characteristics of their own. They are not yet Khmerized, and their primary occupation is farming.

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