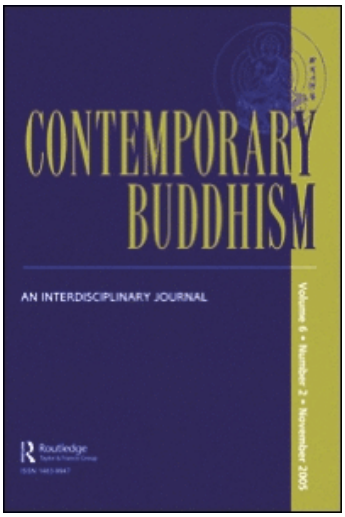

Contemporary Buddhism
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713694869

Peace, power and pagodas in present-day Cambodia

Alexandra Kent

Online Publication Date: 01 May 2008

To cite this Article Kent, Alexandra(2008)'Peace, power and pagodas in present-day Cambodia',Contemporary Buddhism,9:1,77 — 97
To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/14639940802312717
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14639940802312717

PEACE, POWER AND PAGODAS IN PRESENT-DAY CAMBODIA

Alexandra Kent

This article draws upon several ethnographic vignettes taken from fieldwork conducted in Cambodia between 2003-2004 to explore how security and legitimacy are constructed in terms of Khmer culture. I propose that the cultural logic according to which these are formulated rests upon the containment and subordination of power, in its broadest sense, to the Buddhist virtues (sel), the sacred boundary around the temple (sima) and the saffron robe of Buddhist monks. The article presents an historical background to the changing role of Buddhism in Cambodia over the centuries, paying particular attention to its revival after the devastation of the Khmer Rouge period 1975-1979. The ethnography presented reveals the fears Khmer people express today at what would appear to be power escaping the regulation of the sel/sima/robe symbolic complex; the article argues that under these cultural circumstances Khmer imagine their universe and identity to be dissolving. Both security and legitimacy would seem to be at risk.

The present paper is based upon material taken from fieldwork carried out between January 2003 and March 2004. Several ethnographic vignettes are presented as exemplifications of more widespread patterns of thought in Cambodia, and these are interwoven with historical material in a preliminary exploration of the ways in which Khmer people construct legitimacy and security.[1] Underlying my discussion is a concern to question ethnocentric assumptions and *a priori* definitions of what legitimacy and security mean in Cambodia. My contention is that both of these notions need to be understood as culturally constructed according to the moral principles of the Khmer universe. My interest is in the logic of coherence, a phrase I have borrowed but adapted from Kapferer's (1988) original usage, by which the Khmer moral universe is sustained. I propose that this logic rests upon the containment and subordination of power to the Buddhist virtues (*sel*[2]), the sacred boundary (*sima*) of the pagoda and the saffron robe of Buddhist monks. When writing of power here, I mean not only secular or political power, but power in the widest sense: the animating principle of the universe, which includes spirits and passions. In this once Hinduized universe, such power may be conceived of as potentially creative and benign or destructive and essentially amoral. The material discussed in this paper suggests that when power

Contemporary Buddhism, Vol. 9, No. 1, May 2008
ISSN 1463-9947 print/1476-7953 online/08/010077-97
 DOI: 10.1080/14639940802312717

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

escapes regulation by the symbolic complex of the *sel*, the *sima* and the robe, then the moral logic by which Khmer recognize themselves and their universe threatens to dissolve.

This logic is elegantly captured in the following passage, in which Chandler, writing of the Khmer anti-Vietnamese rebellion of 1820–21, tells us:

> The chronicle versions composed in the 1850s tended to confirm its audience's ideas about themselves, the Vietnamese, and history. 'All' Vietnamese were cruel, 'people of merit' (*nak sel*) were powerful, and Khmer could not (or at least should not) be made to fight against Khmer ... the *nak sel's* followers were rendered invincible by prayers and amulets but lost this invincibility when they acted contrary to Buddhist law by killing people themselves. Without special powers connected with non-violence, the rebels—including former monks—were all slaughtered, and when they died, 'Rain fell for seven days. It fell without stopping, night and day. The unimportant and the mighty were forced to run for shelter. In the cold air, everybody shook. There was no way of knowing when the sun set or when it rose. The nation was unhappy'. (Chandler 1998, 121; final quote from manuscript of Wat Prey Kuy, p. 58)

The chronicle Chandler cites speaks of how the Khmers *perceived themselves and their history*. It makes clear that, without the containment of power within Buddhist law, the very fabric of society and the universe falls asunder and there is no happiness in the nation. Khmer identity is distinguished from that of cruel, immoral foreigners—the uncivilized 'other'—by Khmers' obedience to Buddhist edicts. The honourable, powerful Khmer is described not as *nak meun bun*, the person who has made merit and therefore has demonstrable power, but as *nak sel*, the person who is meritorious and legitimate because he/she observes the precepts (*sel*)—most particularly, that of not taking life. The distinction is important because it alerts us to the processes by which controllers of power may receive moral legitimization and, in so doing, uphold the Khmer notion of self and nationhood.

Pursuing peace in an insecure world

One of the most pressing concerns in Cambodia today could be considered the pursuit of security—in the widest sense of the term. War is still a vivid memory and security problems continue to unsettle everyone. For Cambodians, access to food, healthcare, jobs, education and impartial arbitrators of disputes are far from assured. The newspapers report daily on kidnappings, 'random' shootings and mine accidents; and politicians frequently exploit the idea of an ever-present threat of foreign takeover. Although a great deal of reconstruction has taken place in Cambodia and efforts have been made to recover positive traditions of family, community and the role of Buddhism within the culture, some 40% of Cambodians still live below the poverty line. The dramatic changes within Cambodian society that accompanied the peace process in the early 1990s, such as liberalization of the

economy, democratization and the influx of aid, have also created new inequalities and exacerbated tensions as a large sector of society becomes marginalized—even dispossessed—and unable to participate meaningfully in or benefit from development. The struggle for security in this persistently volatile and violent world is acute.

For the majority of Cambodians, the hope of securing survival for themselves and their world is vested not in secular institutions such as the police force, the judiciary or politics. On the contrary, people may seek protection *from* such institutions, which often perpetrate violence against the people, rather than *in* them. It is more strikingly into the realm of religion that many people pour their efforts and hopes, evidenced in glittering, reconstructed pagodas scattered widely through the country, which have been built using resources from both overseas Khmers and locals. Religious festivals are growing each year and even the poorest try to contribute something to the pagoda at the annual festivals such as *P'chum Ben* and *Kathin*.[3] Hopes are pinned not only on the individual bearer of the saffron robe, who may lack legitimacy, but on the robe itself—a polyvalent symbol charged with historical references to the power of religion to protect the Khmer world from invasive, destructive forces. As one laywoman explained to me:

> We cannot tell if a monk is a good monk or bad monk but we should say all monks are good. If a monk commits something wrong he will be responsible for this himself. I think only of making merit and of receiving the results.

The English term 'security' embraces a broad semantic field, encompassing a whole spectrum of meanings from the innermost feelings of the person—as someone who is cared for or protected—to its most concrete expression in the deployment of violence to protect national boundaries. With the end of the Cold War, attention from the field of Security Studies shifted away from the narrow, realist understanding of security as the concern of sovereign states towards broader understandings—see Blanchard (2003) for genealogies of the concept (Derian 1995). These ultimately gave rise to the notion of 'human security', which concentrates upon material and social threats to the well-being of the individual: health, environmental and economic issues (Burgess and Taylor 2004). However, the theoretical outline of these studies continues to overlook the emic (insider's) perspective and, consequently, little attention has been afforded the problematic issue of how security may be both experienced and constructed in historically and culturally varying ways.

Despite the ravages of recent history, Khmer Buddhism still represents a vital source of ontological, physical and social well-being, concepts perhaps best captured by the Khmer term *sok* (from Pali *sukha*, often translated as 'happiness' but that literally means 'good security' and in particular refers to the absence of suffering or unsatisfactoriness, or 'insecurity', *dukkha*).[4] The ingredients of *sok* traditionally provided by the pagoda are many: education, refuge, food and resources, conflict resolution, community life, moral order, meaning, healing, guidance and solace. The *dhamma* teachings of Buddhism are themselves focused

upon the skilful attainment of calm and peaceful states of mind (Pali *pasada*) and the *sangha* provides opportunities for the laity to make merit through good karma and thereby secure a better future. Since Khmer people still look to Buddhism as a unique source of *sok*, it may come as no surprise that Cambodians today, despite their poverty, are investing fervently in the rekindling of the *sangha* and pagodas—a phenomenon that may seem puzzling to western development specialists engaged in promoting material security conceived as located in the individual.

Human and social development presupposes that people experience their world as secure and protected from dangerous powers. My intention here is therefore to explore the principles according to which the Khmer masses strive to rebuild Buddhism and thus re-kindle *sok*—experience of a coherent, distinctively Khmer moral world in which power is harnessed so that it may preserve rather than destroy the universe. I shall describe several ethnographic episodes interspersed with some history of Khmer Buddhism, all of which together throw into relief the particular leitmotif discernable in Chandler's quotation: that the security of the Khmer world is dependent upon the moderation of power by a popularly authenticated religious system.

Power penetrates the '*sima*'

Although Khmer Buddhism faces many problems today as it struggles to reinvent itself after three decades of war and destruction, the pagoda may still provide a haven from the realities of a harsh and impoverished world outside. Cambodian rulers have historically derived legitimacy through their patronage of, but also deference towards, the monkhood, creating a dynamic and 'ambiguous symbiosis' (Harris 1999, introduction) between throne and people. However, the introduction of multiparty democracy in the early 1990s, under the tutelage of the international community, brought two new factors to play: political opposition and legitimization of rulers through popular election. This has contributed to growing partisan politicization of the monkhood since monks are not only voters but they also wield great influence among the masses, who have now become the electorate. The result of this is that a new form of secular power, party politics, is intervening into the realm of the sacred. The historical pattern of negotiation between ruler, *sangha* and people is transforming as everyone, including monks, becomes engaged in macro-political processes.

The *sima*, or boundary around the temple itself (*vihear*), which is the central building of the monastery, is defined according to the eight cardinal and intercardinal points. Great ritual attention is paid to the construction of this boundary in the ground-breaking ceremony that is held to consecrate newly established or renovated temples. Ground-breaking ceremonies I have witnessed recently in Cambodia last for several days and are complex events that have strong echoes of pre-Buddhist ritual.[5] At each of the eight points, a deep hole is dug and a large white cloth is suspended into it. A ninth hole is constructed inside the

temple before the altar. On each day of the ceremony, lay people begin arriving to make offerings into the holes: money and small items such as combs, pencils and paper pads, symbolizing the securing of a good future life. The ceremony closes with the lowering of large, ritually prepared *sima* stones, one into each hole. The main sacralizing stone is that which is lowered into the central hole, inside the sanctuary. The surrounding monastery compound is thus demarcated from the sacred centre, but at the same time the perimeter of the monastery grounds is also clearly marked and invested with symbolic value,[6] thus dividing the monastery from the profane territory of the village (Choulean 1988).

Some monks are still trying to uphold a boundary around the sacred space of their pagodas, and to keep them as sanctuaries from the world of party politics. Shortly before the 2003 elections, I was taken to attend the consecration ceremony of a newly constructed building at a pagoda in a village not far from Phnom Penh. My companion, whom I call Vanna, was an elegant and reserved Khmer woman in her sixties who had been raised in Phnom Penh and attended French medium school. On the way, Vanna responded to my questions with concise answers. We drove past several ostentatious red and gold-painted pagodas on the way. I asked Vanna why she had chosen to start attending the particular pagoda we were going to, and she explained that it was because of the head monk who she felt was one of the few authentic monks around. She described him as an unassuming yet wise and sensitive man who had healing powers and knowledge that he received in dreams.

To our surprise, when we arrived, the pagoda was virtually empty and we discovered that the head monk had gone to Phnom Penh for the day. A handful of young monks gathered to see if they could help us. Vanna explained to me that the ceremony had been postponed and, when I asked why, she simply shrugged. The story did not emerge until we were in the car on the way back to the city. In the meantime I had a chance to ask the monks about their pagoda and discovered that several of them were not from the local village but had come from other parts of Cambodia specifically to this pagoda because they knew the head monk was good. When I asked what they meant by this, they explained that he knew the *dhamma* and Pali.

We left the pagoda and visited one of Vanna's distant relatives in the village, a sparkling single woman in her forties who lived in a simple wooden house just off a dusty dirt track by the river. Vanna and her relative sat in deep discussion about the pagoda and the postponed ceremony for an hour or so before we got back on the road for the return trip to Phnom Penh. It was in the car that Vanna told me what had happened. It is a telling story.

The pagoda's constituency, which included Vanna and her relative, had invested a great deal of effort and funding into their pagoda and they were proud of it. There was another pagoda at the other end of the village area that was more elaborately decorated but neither Vanna nor her relative would have anything to do with it—because, Vanna explained, 'It is CPP [Cambodian People's Party, the current ruling party]'.

Vanna said that the head monk of her pagoda was firmly against involving Buddhism in politics. However, she continued, 'There is trouble. The village chief told the pagoda committee that they must invite Prime Minister Hun Sen to attend the consecration ceremony for the new building that the people have constructed.' The head monk and the committee were against this but did not want problems, so they sent off an invitation. It never reached Hun Sen but landed on the desk of a low-ranking politician who agreed to come. This did not satisfy the village chief, who then told them to postpone the ceremony.

Vanna related all this calmly, although with evident despondency. She explained that we had come in the afternoon in order to avoid the politicians, who she knew were supposed to have been there in the morning. 'They bring gifts to give to the villagers[7] and their assistants take note of who attends and who does not', she explained.

Vanna told me how her relative and other locals had done all the work on this pagoda and, with help from supporters like Vanna, had contributed all the funds, and now the government wanted to jump in. I interjected: 'So, the politicians are hijacking the people's production?' Vanna suddenly lost her reserve and became animated. 'Yes', she responded. 'You have chosen exactly the right word. They are hijacking the people's efforts!'[8]

The conversation became lively and Vanna talked almost uninterrupted the rest of the way back to the city. She explained how she had worked as an election observer and how she believed the poor people felt afraid and vulnerable, and that their votes can therefore be purchased or won by intimidation. When people come to the pagoda and receive gifts, she said, they may feel morally bound to show loyalty to the donor and they are afraid to break or refuse such a contract.

I asked how things used to be in the 1960s, before the war and before democratization. Vanna responded that although Cambodian villagers have never known justice, in the 1960s they were largely left alone to get on with their lives. They had enough to eat, she said, and there were schools and rudimentary healthcare. Now, she lamented, the politicians are interfering in village life, constantly trying to take over pagodas and, through them, the people. Vanna is well versed in certain western social science theory, and she used it to explain that the patron–client system is now only operative within the elite circle. From her point of view, the politicians—whom she described as former guerilla soldiers—are obliged to one another, while the rural people are a mass that has become a potential threat to their privilege. In their pursuit of legitimacy within the international community, she felt, the powerful woo, co-opt and coerce their people but do not protect them. Vanna's regrets typify a common Khmer nostalgia about a past that certainly was rosier for most Cambodians than the decades of conflict. Such nostalgia seems to be not simply a longing for an idealized past, but also expresses the mourning of a lost coherence. Vanna's description of how party politics is attempting to occupy the sacred space of the pagoda captures a process of the disruption of order; it betrays

a persistent awareness of central ideals about Buddhism and its moderating role in the Khmer world.

Buddhism and the shaping of the Khmer universe

The rural pagoda has long constituted the heart of a characteristically flexible communal life in Cambodia (Choulean 1990; Ebihara 1968). It provided an articulate spatial representation of village culture, where the village-based monastic system bound a doctrine of enlightenment to engagement in the community and containment of its spirits. The pagoda was the traditional seat of scholarship and a storehouse of local knowledge of agriculture (Chay 2002) and medicine (Bertrand 2004). The pagoda lay committees often provided credit and other facilities, and thus operated as a form of wealth redistribution and insurance (Aschmoneit et al. 1997a, 1997b). The pagoda was a focus of social and cultural activities, and the rural monks were strong protectors of local tradition and custom. In general, some three-quarters of men over the age of 17 years would have spent a period of one or two years in the *sangha* as novices or monks (Keyes 1994, 46), and this created direct ties between almost every family and the monkhood.

The traditional form of Theravada Buddhism found throughout rural Cambodia from the late thirteenth century onwards made use of Pali or Khmer vernacular texts and oral transmission for its perpetuation (Harris 2005, 83). Bizot's (1976, 1981, 1988) unique works, carried out in the period just prior to the Khmer Rouge takeover in 1975, give an account of the 'esoteric' (Harris 2005) Buddhist tradition as it was practised in Cambodian villages. This tradition involved initiation by a monk or qualified lay person into a discipline of meditation that enabled the initiate to internalize the qualities of the Buddha into his/her own body. The initiate could be either male or female, monk or lay person, which in fact meant that lay people could initiate monks. It made use of Pali as a source of sacred syllables and formulae rather than as a rational moral teaching. Its methods were applied both to the pursuit of *nibbana* and to mundane ends such as healing and invincibility (see Crosby 2000, 141–142). They could also be used to provide the practitioner with power over others, and even to kill enemies. Bizot claims that the rites practised in this tradition functioned as cosmic regenerative rites, in which the human body was a central metaphor and symbols of the womb and foetal development figured prominently. It appears to have been a relatively egalitarian tradition, which evolved in intimate relation to village life, provided the people with the autonomy and means to regenerate a coherent macrocosm and, by incorporating the *dhamma* into their own bodies, to physically and experientially reconstitute themselves as microcosms within it.

The strands of Cambodian Buddhism that preserved these practices continued within the Mohanikay Order (*nikaya*), which remains to this day by far the larger of Cambodia's two *nikayas*. A second, smaller Cambodian order, known as the Thommayut, emerged in Cambodia in the latter part of the nineteenth

century under the patronage of royalty and endorsed by urban elites. This order, which arose in Cambodia through the importation of courtly Buddhist practice and thought from Thailand, utilized the Pali canon as a didactic instrument and tool of authentication. The Mohanikay/Thommayut schism was, however, cross-cut by the emergence of 'traditionalist' and 'modernist' developments. The traditionalists may be described as those monks who opposed the Thommayut as a foreign threat to Khmer unity and religious identity. However, influential members of the Mohanikay order began promoting modernization of Buddhism through a rationalist reform that tallied with Thommayut developments. This caused considerable tension as it invalidated the powers that the traditions of the rural people cultivated—a pattern that, as Crosby (2000) notes, has tended to recur among scholars of Buddhist society as well. Rightful control of the Khmer universe, then, was claimed and contested in Buddhist terms.

Modern Buddhism as danger

Keyes (1994) and Harris (2001, 2005) have described more fully the political developments of Buddhism in modern Cambodian history, but I shall here briefly outline what they say as an orientation to the ethnography I present later.

It was traditionally the magico-religious side of Khmer Buddhism, cultivated in the esoteric tradition, that presented the most vigorous popular resistance to external influence. Monks have been associated with uprisings against threatening powers throughout the history of the Buddhist world, and in Cambodia monks have time and again spear-headed resistance movements against foreign powers and elite abuses of power: Vietnamese, Thai and French. In the early part of the twentieth century at least two ex-monks who possessed magical powers are recorded as having led uprisings against the French.

During the French protectorate (1863–1953), however, several key monks began a process of modernizing the Mohanikay order. In particular, the scholar monk, Venerable Chuon Nath (1883–1969) and his close friend Venerable Huot That, both of whom were schooled in French and in rational, critical approaches to the study of Buddhism, began reforming Cambodian monasticism. These monks and their modernist followers were starkly opposed by the nationwide traditionalist *sangha*, whose practices they discredited as degenerate.

This reform movement received endorsement from the French because it was well suited to their intellectual agenda for Khmer Buddhism and their desire to resist growing Thai influence over modernization of the *sangha*. However, these modernizing monks met fierce resistance from the Patriarchs of both orders and Buddhist traditionalists generally. Any explicit cooperation with the French was seen as a threat to traditional Khmer Buddhist authority, and the modern printing techniques promoted by the modernists were felt to undermine the magico-religious power embodied in the palm-leaf texts. Insult was added to injury with the translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka texts from Pali into Khmer, further antagonizing the traditionalists by creating a Khmer canon that rejected as

non-Buddhist forms of customary religious practice that were intimately tied to Khmer identity and continuity with an Angkorian past.

The modernist phalange of the *sangha* received support from not only the French, but also from some aristocratic families and the royalty, and this sealed the fate of the traditionalists. In 1938 and 1943, under Ven. Chuon Nath's supervision, the first ever officially approved Cambodian dictionary appeared in two volumes, thus altering traditional orthography and later even vocabulary. Ven. Chuon Nath eventually became supreme patriarch of the Mohanikay order and he continued his mission of cleansing Buddhism of popular rituals and 'superstitious' practices. The autonomy and integration of the pagodas in daily village life began to weaken as pagodas fell increasingly under the control of a bureaucratizing, elite-endorsed *sangha* that restricted the various duties of monks by ordinance. With the constraint of magico-religious practice and formalization of rational and foreign doctrine by an urban-based, cosmopolitan elite that furthered French interests, powerful traditions of egalitarianism and autonomy that had long bound together Khmer communities and their local spirits, with monks nurturing and controlling these in the precincts of the pagoda, faced a daunting challenge.

The tables turn

The tensions that arose between so-called modern and traditional Buddhism and the oppression of the former by the latter did not, however, undermine the coherence of the Khmer universe as I have outlined it above. On the contrary, when French power began to seriously undermine the authority of the *sangha*, the robe was aroused in defence of Khmer culture. During their rule, the French had attempted to sanitize and modernize Khmer Buddhism through such efforts as the establishment of the Buddhist Institute, the founding of the first ever Khmer-language newspaper and the dissemination of Buddhist literature. Ironically, their goal was to use Buddhism as a tool in uniting the Khmer people and nourishing a sense of nationhood.

In the early twentieth century, modern Buddhism was transformed from a tool of oppression of rural Khmers, working in tandem with colonial power, into a tool of nationalism, in opposition to the French. The early stirrings of Khmer nationhood were fed by several incidents in which the colonial authorities flouted the sanctity and authority of the *sangha*, which then began to grow into an oppositional force. On 20 July 1942, some 1,000 people took to the streets of Phnom Penh in a protest action—the renowned Umbrella War (Edwards 2004). Around one-half of these were monks and the modernist grouping was well represented among them. The French responded with harsh oppression and continued reforms, thus further radicalizing the monkhood. The modern, rational Buddhists and the 'enlightened', educated elite that they had so fondly fostered now turned against them in the name of patriotism and defence of their right to control Khmer culture. The French had clearly failed to position themselves within the Khmer moral universe. Once their attempts to control Buddhism were

perceived to outweigh their efforts to support, protect and respect it, they lost the assistance of the elite for governing the kingdom. In March 1945 King Sihanouk declared Cambodia independent, although the French did not in fact agree to grant the country independence until 9 November 1953.

Although Sihanouk's subsequent rule was actually marked by considerable repression, the period is remembered today by urban and rural Cambodians alike as a golden age when people's needs were met and their lives contented. The historical accuracy of such accounts is less interesting than what they tell us of people's notions of their well-being as having been nourished by Sihanouk's ritual and rhetorical elevation of central Khmer values and traditions to a supreme position with his Buddhist socialism (Chandler 1998, 199). Sihanouk's artful manipulation of symbols dear to the hearts of his people recalls motifs from the idealized Buddhist kingdom of the Emperor Asoka, who 'went to' the *sangha* (Gombrich 1988, 129) to find guidance for his rule—a theme echoing the rule of Jayavarman VII in thirteenth-century Cambodia. For the masses, Sihanouk's displays of deference towards the *sangha* resonated well with popular understandings of the proper ordering of relationships between religion and power, and thus his rule promised to maintain a distinctive sense of 'Khmerness'.

The eclipse of Khmer culture

It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the historical complexity of the unravelling of Cambodian society that took place in the early 1970s, after the overthrow and exile of Sihanouk, with the incompetent Lon Nol Government and the illegal overspill of American aggression towards Vietnam into Cambodia. Suffice it to say that these factors together primed the country for its dramatic takeover in 1975 by disenchanted and radicalized Khmer Rouge forces, which had been biding their time in jungle hideouts awaiting just such an opportunity to take power.

Although Cambodia's history has been one of repeated political disruption and strife over the past 200 years, the Khmer Rouge era was unique in its attempt to establish a complete cultural break with the past and was the only one that broke apart the fundament of Cambodian rural life. The forced movement of people during the Democratic Kampuchea period severed the links between villagers and their guardian ancestors, which were intertwined with the religious system of the pagodas. Ponchaud even cites a farmer who claimed of the spirits 'Since they didn't do anything against the Khmer Rouge, I don't trust them any more' (Ponchaud 1989, 168). The cultural system for upholding a protective boundary around the everyday world of the Khmers was dissolved by the new regime.

Prior to the Khmer Rouge era of 1975–79, there were an estimated 88,000 Buddhist monks in the country. It is believed that over one-third of monks were executed by the Khmer Rouge cadres when they came to power in 1975, but only a few per cent of the original figure are believed to have survived the era, many having died of starvation and disease. Reports suggest that over one-half of the

country's temples may have been razed and others damaged or desecrated during the years of Khmer Rouge rule and subsequent civil war.

After the defeat of the Khmer Rouge by the Vietnamese in January 1979, some pagodas began to engage in reconstruction of roads, schools, medical and social services, although the state apparatus maintained tight control of the *sangha* throughout the 1980s. Some of the surviving village elders began spontaneously reconstituting lay pagoda committees, monks were ordained, and temple festivals and Buddhist rituals began to be revived. Despite the silencing of Buddhism during the Khmer Rouge reign of terror and its muting during the decade of Vietnamese occupation that followed, it burgeoned as soon as restrictions were lifted in the early 1990s.

After the Vietnamese withdrawal in 1989, the new government relaxed restrictions on Buddhism in a bid for legitimacy and the number of monks increased rapidly reaching some 50,000 today.[9] Contributions from the rich within Cambodia and from overseas Cambodians have enabled the restoration of many temples and repopulation of the *sangha*. In the 1990s, laymen began utilizing villagers' temple donations to found elementary Pali schools in Phnom Penh.[10] However, the almost total destruction of the clergy and their literature during the Khmer Rouge era, and the constraints on reconstruction under the Vietnamese occupation, mean Buddhism must be largely reinvented rather than reconstructed. In this context there are particular difficulties in finding continuity with past expertise and restoring not only the outward form of the *sangha*, but also its content of knowledge, discipline and moral authority and its crucial ability to control power.

In 1979, the Vietnamese occupants re-ordained seven Khmer former monks in an attempt to earn some legitimacy in Cambodia. The youngest of these, Venerable Tep Vong, was then appointed head of a unified *sangha* but subsequently also as Vice-President of the Khmer National Assembly and Vice-President of the Central Committee of the Khmer United Front for National Construction and Defence. The party that evolved under Vietnamese supervision and later succeeded them (see Gottesman 2003), the Cambodian People's Party, has since continued to support Ven. Tep Vong and he therefore continues to be popularly viewed as the religious mouthpiece of a Vietnamese-friendly government[11]—and thus as an extension of a foreign threat to Khmer integrity and interests.

The second important development since the end of the Vietnamese occupation came with the Paris Peace Accords of 1991, which, in enshrining the right of universal adult suffrage, included monks in the Cambodian electorate for the first time ever. This provided a formal framework within which tendencies towards partisan political fissioning among monks already noted among exiled Khmer monks during the 1980s (Harris 2001) might deepen and crystallize. Evidence of how the reinvention of Buddhism is taking place hand in hand with procedural multiparty democracy peppers the landscape of Cambodia today: colourful, sometimes gaudily renovated pagodas are interspersed with large signs on the roadside and outside houses advertising political parties.

Re-inventing Khmer Buddhism: source of purity and protection

The role of monks as domesticators of dangerous spirits and powers is a theme permeating Khmer culture (Choulean 1986, 1990). Buddhism was grafted onto a pre-existing animist background, populated by a range of spirit beings, and the two systems operate symbiotically in the popular milieu. Some of the spirits derive from the dangerous jungle areas, outside ordered village life, and indeed the Khmer Rouge soldiers are sometimes also described as having emerged from the jungle—the realm of uncivilized spirits. Others are the spirits of ancestors who may both protect the community and rice cultivation but may also turn against people. The village tutelary spirit, or *neak ta*, can be found at the northeastern limit of the habitation area and an analogous *neak ta* can generally also be found at the northeast limit of the pagoda compound, suggesting that the sacred geography of the pagoda may symbolize a microcosm of the world of its constituency.

Similarly, collective effort may be mobilized to chase away but also to tame and co-opt the powers of maleficent spirits or *bray*, often the spirits of women who have died a violent death or died in childbirth. Many pagodas possess a pirogue or racing boat that is lodged in its compound and used to race in the annual water festival. The pirogue is inhabited by a *bray*, a capricious guardian spirit. The potentially maleficent *bray* is, however, tamed within the confines of the pagoda, and in her controlled form becomes known as *parami*, a word designating the 10 perfections of Buddhism. This dynamic recurs also in the annual celebration of *P'chum Ben*, when the hungry ghosts of those who have died lacking merit come to the limits of the pagoda building and can receive food from their living relatives. Thus, the pagoda and monks protect their constituency from disturbance by restless souls, and they transform dangerous power into benign power.

An urban, well-educated woman informant graphically captured this when she claimed that the random violence (much of which is understood to be politically motivated) and social disorder in Cambodia today testify to the fact that the country is populated by the reborn, restless spirits of those who died under the Khmer Rouge and were not cremated in the presence of monks. This suggests that the welfare of the whole fellowship of Cambodia is today threatened by the spirit of brutality, which has yet to be laid to rest by the custodians of traditional moral order and authority.

No matter how much the monkhood visibly grows, however, the question remains as to what extent its religious legitimacy can be rebuilt in a globalizing context in which the guiding principle is to cultivate rather than still desire. What chance does Khmer Buddhism have to tame the spirit of capitalism or domesticate dangerous power when those who monopolize it not only care little for precepts of non-violence and resist containment within a Khmer Buddhist order, but indeed brutalize and coerce its representatives?

Looking for leadership

The reconstitution of Khmer Buddhism taking place now is beset with problems. Today's pagodas, like those of the past, attract young men seeking food, security, accommodation and education. Many Cambodians complain, however, that the education monks receive today is secular—'computers and English'—and that the monks are not taught to practise discipline. Lack of leadership is frequently blamed for this state of affairs by monks and lay people alike.

In 2004 I interviewed a monk in his early twenties, at his monastery in Battambang town. He and some of his co-monks were studying Thai, hoping one day to be able to go there to study Buddhism. What they told me articulates views shared by many intellectual young Cambodians. We sat talking on the concrete veranda of the monk's cottage and, as we talked, more novices and monks gathered around us, intrigued by our conversation and, later, keen to participate. All of them came from poor, rural backgrounds and had entered the monkhood primarily to access free education and some food security in order to offload some of the burden from their family's resources.

One of the monks explained that village parents encourage their sons to become monks, partly in order to make merit and secure a better future, but also so that they will learn discipline and be less likely to fall in with gangster groups. I asked whether a period of time in the monkhood actually does prevent people from becoming gangsters. The monk replied that gangsters are the result of poor leadership, and if there is poor leadership in the pagoda then gangsters will be gangsters even in the monkhood. Indeed, one pagoda in Battambang town is reputed to house violent and criminal youths who are exploiting the opportunity for free food and accommodation, and some lay people actually refuse to give alms to particular monks on these grounds. Similarly, a pagoda boy from another temple complained to me that the rich monks in his pagoda were often brought there by parents hoping to find a way of disciplining their wayward offspring but that the opposite usually happened; they would bring their ghetto-blasters and video machines with them into the pagoda, watch pornographic films and bully or corrupt other monks. I therefore asked this monk to explain to me what the qualities of a good leader are.

The monk then showed me one of his notebooks in which were written, in Khmer and English, the Buddhist sublime states: loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity. The monks began eagerly telling me of their desire for leadership with these qualities, formulating their concerns in the light of these Buddhist tenets. They explained that head monks are not always elected by the monks but may instead be instated through the support of local politically supported officials. Some head monks, they continued, do not act to help younger monks with their hardships (*banyhah*), but only select those monks who support them to attend ceremonies at which they may receive lay donations. This, they said, was compounded by the fact that young monks who are occupied with their

studies are rarely visible to the laity and therefore do not attract the donations necessary for survival.

I asked why the *sangha* does not see to it that the monks are treated fairly and supported, and the group became lively. Together they responded that the government commits sin (*bap*) and corruption, and that religion simply copies the government—and this means that 'neither can help the other'. I pursued this further, asking why religion follows the government. The monks hesitated, but a layman close by said 'Because of the leader of the monkhood (Ven. Tep Vong)'. Not wishing to pursue such a sensitive issue where others might overhear, or to put the monks in any compromising situation, I asked them for examples of good monastic leadership. They mentioned two local senior monks and the modernist monk of the early 1900s, Ven. Chuon Nath. These people show scholarship, discipline and integrity, they claimed, while so many of today's monks practise magical rites to earn money at the behest of wealthy patrons, who often do not even know how to address a monk correctly.[12]

These tales are shot through with the theme of how Buddhism degenerates rather than regenerates when it becomes subservient to secular interests and powerful leaders. They tell of how, if the values and upholders of Buddhism fail to check the deployment of power, and indeed assist those who are perceived as violent towards fellow Khmer, a keystone of Khmer civilization will be loosened. These monks' reinvention of Ven. Chuon Nath shows how understandings of the past may become a rich source of ideals for building the future. These disenchanted young men from poor families may be the seedlings of a new intelligentsia that is again looking to modern Buddhism and Thailand for inspiration in the reconstruction of a Khmer moral identity.

'Breaking' the precepts

Significant efforts have been made recently in Cambodia to create ostensibly 'apolitical' forms of Buddhism. However, as Pericles noted as early as 430 BCE, 'Just because you do not take an interest in politics, this does not mean that politics will not take an interest in you'.

Shortly before a trip I made to Cambodia in March 2003, a widely respected monk named Venerable Sam Bunthoeun was shot as he was crossing the boundary to enter Wat Langka pagoda in Phnom Penh. He died later in hospital. Ven. Sam Bunthoeun was born in 1957 in Kandal province. He decided to devote his life to the monkhood and was ordained in 1980. His life story, which has been published in Khmer by the Vipassana centre he founded in Oudong, repeatedly emphasizes his dedication to study of Pali, insight (Vipassana) meditation and *dhamma*. Because of his achievements, the story relates, he was implored by his teacher and lay people to begin teaching young monks as well as the laity. He continued both to study and teach and began to amass a following. This prompted the Patriarch Ven. Tep Vong and some of the officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 1996 to recognize the pagoda he stayed at in Phnom Penh as a learning centre, and Ven.

Sam Bunthoeun became its president. The centre soon outgrew its premises and it eventually moved to a large rural site at the foot of the mountain of Oudong, where the stupas of the ancestors of the royal family are situated.

In May 2000, he became a student at the Buddhist University in Phnom Penh, where his main interest was in Buddhist philosophy. When I visited his Vipassana Meditation centre at Oudong, shortly after his death, I was astonished by the dimensions of the construction work. The site is 15 hectares, four hectares of which are filled land. Six huge concrete buildings were still under construction, an 80 metre × 60 metre pond was almost complete and edged with an impressive Buddha statue. There are large concrete gates, electricity generators, kitchens, libraries, study and meditation halls, brick-built cottages for monks and nuns with toilets and more. Funding is evidently plentiful and informants at Oudong told me much of this comes from overseas Khmer. Ven. Sam Bunthoeun published numerous *dhamma* books and his Vipassana teaching attracted a broad following from all over the country.

Ven. Sam Bunthoeun was clearly influential. Rumours abound about his death and, in the absence of an efficient and independent police force or judiciary, it is unlikely that a reliable picture of what happened will ever emerge. Some believe he was not killed by the bullets, but was taken to hospital where a lethal injection was administered. Some say his death was commissioned by the jealous husband of one of his female devotees. Some contend that the murder was politically motivated since he supposedly encouraged monks to use their vote in national elections[13] (Falby 2003; McDermid and Sokha 2005). A former monk from Phnom Penh believed that, just prior to the shooting, during a major ceremony in Phnom Penh in early 2003 Ven. Sam Bunthoeun had commented on the wrongness of the magico-religious practices[14] carried out by many monks in Cambodia—and that this was why he had been killed.

These rumours have particular resonance in present-day Cambodia in the light of the fact that the police and judiciary are corrupt and untrustworthy. But the comments also have a political dimension. To ensure political survival, politicians eagerly patronize temples and some even spend time as monks. By performing righteous deeds (*bun*) such as donating to the temple or giving alms to monks, they gain access to the power of transcendent virtue, a sacred force or energy known by the Buddhist technical term *parami* (perfection, see above). Politicians make their own power and merit visible through the success of the temples they support (Guthrie 2002). These are *nak meun bun*, people with demonstrable power. Today, the Prime Minister and many of the top officials are demonstrably sponsoring all variety of pagodas, particularly those housing monks specialized in the magico-religious practices by which officials may augment their power. They are also considered to favour pagodas headed by leading monks in the *sangha*.

I visited one such pagoda, which is filled with ostentatious new buildings yet the young head monk told me that none of the monks study at the Buddhist university because they lack the funding. I was not able to speak with him for long as he was called away to perform a blessing that consisted not simply of

water-sprinkling but of hurling buckets of water over a seated couple. The large majority of Cambodian people, much of whose energy is taken up trying to ensure their daily livelihood, seek from the pagoda not moral critiques or didactics but practical assistance with everyday concerns. They may ask a monk to chant mantras over water and sprinkle it on them for healing, they may ask for amulets or wish to make donations in order to accumulate merit and thereby ensure a better next life. Consequently, when politicians patronize monks who specialize in magico-religious rites, these leaders simultaneously demonstrate their merit and power to large numbers of villagers and other lay supporters. They are providing something villagers value: an efficacious form of power. In response, the villagers, as clients, may perhaps offer their votes to the rich patrons of their local pagodas.

Whether or not Ven. Sam Bunthoeun was in fact assassinated is perhaps less interesting than the fact that his death clearly fuels a belief that the powerful leaders are buying off monks, exploiting for their own ends the powers that monastics should rightfully manipulate, and silencing legitimate representatives of peace and order among the people.

Portraying power in the hands of politics

One of my lay informants in Phnom Penh provided me with graphic imagery of how these power relationships are being fashioned. He is a softly-spoken, thoughtful man in his mid-forties and has a degree from a foreign university. He has become increasingly sceptical towards the pagodas in recent years as he feels so many of the monks are ignorant or corrupt. His suspicion is compounded by the fact that he has heard that many of the high-ranking government officials are now paying monks generously to perform what he described as secret and sinister occult rituals for them. He has heard it rumoured that the Prime Minister himself, for instance, is in possession of three *goan grok* (a desiccated human foetus cut from the body of a live woman) (Harris 2005, 61). He believed that monks had chanted over these amulets to charge them with magical power, and he has heard that many officials have shrine rooms in their homes in which they practise various forms of what he called 'black magic'. He concluded:

> High-ranking officials want to paralyse Buddhism. They corrupt even the spirits with their money. Still, Buddhism is the only remaining hope for the people. But it could be a delayed bomb that could explode because of the internal divisions between those practising magic and those practising morality.

Like several of my informants, this one argued that today's leaders fear and hate the monkhood, which has always represented a font of subversive ideas.[15] The violent suppression of monks who protested at the disappearance of a young monk, who was shot outside the Hotel Cambodiana on 7 September 1998 in the wake of the election, is used as a case in point. Newspaper pictures showing police beating monks starkly portrayed the disregard of power-holders for the moral authority of robe. Several told me they could not believe that the police

who so brutally attacked the protesting monks were Khmer. One monk who had been present said he was close enough to the attackers to see that they were Vietnamese and that he had heard reports from friends of large numbers of Vietnamese being brought into the city by the government just a day or so before. Statements such as these render the widely held Cambodian perception of the government as a 'foreign' threat that is waging war on the pillars of Khmer culture.

The fear that is stirred by the government's patent disregard for the sanctity of the robe effectively silences the budding islands of criticism it clothes. One of the monks I spoke to in Battambang told me how, in the village he comes from, people are even afraid to listen to radio channels supported by the opposition parties in case the village chief hears what they are listening to. The pagoda, however, is largely free from prying and he can listen to what he wants there. In this sanctuary, he has access not only to critical media but also to Buddhist teachings that nourish the critical consciousness he and his young, disenchanted friends are cultivating. However, he dares not explain what he has learned as a monk about the abuse of power to his family members back in the village for fear of becoming labelled an activist monk and having his life endangered. Rebuilding the cultural architecture of Khmer Buddhism and *sok* is, tragically, a potentially fatal enterprise—and fear may be an effective tool of censorship.

The search for peace and happiness

Although tremendous hope is clearly vested by Cambodians in the regeneration of their Buddhism, the Buddhism that we witness emerging has yet to restock its accounts in religious expertise. It may simultaneously be losing some of its grass-roots anchorage and its concomitant ability to act as a buffer or mediator between the people and their leaders. The politicization of the *sangha* through its leadership, and its involvement in democratization, may also hamper its recovery. Without the vital ingredients of religious legitimacy, the *sangha* may become subsumed by the 'rampant liberalization and unrestrained greed' (Ovesen, Trankell, and Öjendal 1996, 83) and the political opportunism that are increasingly defining Cambodia's destiny. If this happens, the fundamental cultural logic of the Khmer moral universe will presumably collapse.

Although there is a newly emerging Buddhist intelligentsia that is gathering members from backgrounds of both raw poverty and privilege, its members live dangerously—the more successful their efforts to construct a world based upon *sok*, the greater seem to be the risks to their own security. A well-functioning pagoda may provide a seat of learning about self-control, the importance of which can hardly be overstated in a war-ravaged society where the folk model of 'disproportionate revenge (*karsângsoek*)' (Hinton 1998) is prevalent. But as some urgently pursue *sok* and the merit of rebuilding a cohesive Khmer cosmos, for others demoralized Buddhism, leached of religious legitimacy, continues to furnish an efficacious tool with which to secure mundane and individual interests

alone. Unchecked power can then run riot while the still debilitated symbolic complex of *sima*, robe and virtues is unable to subdue it.

Perhaps a non-elite quest for a (nation-)state of Khmer virtue may be discerned in the activities of Ven. Sam Bunthoeun and the young monks in Battambang, although the tools they turn to seem to be parting company with traditional, apotropaic, Khmer Buddhism and instead recall those that once served as instruments of first Thai, later French and modernist, domination. Nevertheless, the history of Buddhism in Cambodia perhaps shows how flexible it is as a cultural system since these selfsame tools ultimately forged nationalism.

Khmer Buddhism may take the form of an historically and culturally rooted set of traditions and ideas or it may become disembedded and modernist in orientation. Yet I am proposing that, in order for Khmer civilization to persist, Buddhism, in whatever form it takes, must maintain its ability to check and control power in all its forms—to domesticate such power for the protection and nourishment of the people and their world. Today, Cambodia is becoming absorbed into a global culture that is not of her making, a culture that promotes consumerism and democracy and that relegates religion to the optional and private realm of belief. Cambodia's numerous poor are sorely vulnerable to the dangers and temptations of greed, vengeance and violence. The extent to which these new values and their systems may hinder the rebuilding of the logic of coherence of the Khmer universe remains to be seen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was originally presented at a symposium organized by Professor Ian Harris, The Becket Institute, Oxford University, entitled 'Buddhism, Power and Political Order in South and Southeast Asia', 14–16 April 2004. I thank Ian Harris warmly for the invitation. I thank the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation for sponsoring the research that forms the basis of this paper. I also thank Mr Touch Seakhai for his research assistance.

NOTES

1. I have explored these themes further elsewhere (Kent 2006).
2. Transliterations are approximate and are based on Khmer pronunciation as I noted it.
3. *P'chum Ben* is the annual 15-day Cambodian festival of the dead during which lay people gather daily at the pagoda in the early morning to make offerings to deceased ancestors. *Kathin* is celebrated at the end of the rainy season retreat by the laity making offerings of robes and other items to the monks.
4. I thank Kate Crosby for the etymological explanation of the Pali terms *sukha* and *dukkha*.

5. Wright (1990) suggests that the Thai *sima* ceremony is a survival of a much earlier, pre-Buddhist rite that has strong local anchorage; he makes a compelling case for an association between today's *sima* consecration rites of the *sema* with a prehistoric, regenerative earth cult in which human sacrifice seems to have figured. The argument holds for Cambodia as well.
6. I have, for instance, heard several stories of treasures or relics being buried beneath the main entry gates to monastic grounds and also of how disaster has befallen those who have tried to dig these up.
7. These are apparently usually monosodium glutamate and the characteristic Khmer headwear or scarf.
8. In the context of Cambodia's politicized social landscape, Vanna's reactions here could equally be interpreted as implying support for the opposition rather than for political neutrality.
9. As well as some 10,000 nuns, according to estimates (Löschmann 2000).
10. The first of these was a Buddhist primary school that was opened on 2 December 1989 by Chea Sim, then a member of the Central Bureau of the Communist Party, President of the National Assembly and Chairman of the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation, at the monastery of Wat Toul Tum Poung in Phnom Penh (Venerable Khy Sovanratana, personal communication).
11. Several of my informants spoke disparagingly of the links they believe the government has with Vietnam. One contended that Prime Minister Hun Sen built his residence close to the Vietnamese border in order that he could easily escape Cambodia should events turn against him. Some complained that illegal logging is being carried out by Vietnamese companies that have paid off Cambodian officials for the privilege of devastating Cambodia's natural resources.
12. This is probably a reference to the modern widespread loss of familiarity with traditional Khmer hierarchical language that has a distinctive vocabulary for addressing and referring to monks.
13. Supreme Patriarch Venerable Tep Vong openly forbade monks to cast their votes in the 2003 elections, claiming that monks should remain apolitical.
14. This tension between modernist-oriented Vipassana meditation and traditionalist meditation practices is widespread in Southeast Asia.
15. In 2003, a group of monks was threatened with expulsion from their Phnom Penh pagoda for having voted for the Sam Rainsy Party (Frommer 2003).

REFERENCES

ASCHMONEIT, W., K. KALYAN, N. SOVANN, and T. THAT. 1997a. *Traditional organizational landscape in Cambodia: Elements of a Khmer approach to development*. Kampong Thom: GTZ Self Help Team.

ASCHMONEIT, W., C. SOTHEAVY, N. SOVANN, T. THAT, L. KUNLAM, and K. KALYAN. 1997b. *Pagoda committees and community life in Kampong Thom Province Cambodia*. Kampong Thom: GTZ Self Help Team.

BERTRAND, D. 2004. A medium possession practice and its relationship with Cambodian Buddhism. In *History, Buddhism and new religious movements in Cambodia*, edited by J. Marston, and E. Guthrie. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

BIZOT, F. 1976. *Le Figuier à Cinq Branches: Recherche sur le Bouddhisme Khmer*. Paris: École Francaise D'Éxtrême-Orient.

———. 1981. *Le Don de Soi-Même*. Paris: École Francaise D'Éxtrême-Orient.

———. 1988. *Les Traditions de la 'Pabbajja' en Asie du Sud-est*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.

BLANCHARD, E. M. 2003. Gender, international relations, and the development of feminist security theory. *Signs* 28 (4): 1289–312.

BURGESS, P. J., and O. TAYLOR. 2004. What is 'human security'. *Security Dialogue* 35 (3): 345–72.

CHANDLER, D. 1998. *A history of Cambodia*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books. (Originally published 1983).

CHAY, N. 2002. Society and culture in a village in central Cambodia: A search for sustainable agricultural development., Masters diss., Graduate School of Asia and Pacific Study, Waseda University.

CHOULEAN, A. 1986. *Les Êtres Surnaturels dans la Religion Populaire Khmère*. Paris: Cedoreck.

———. 1988. The Place of animism within popular Buddhism in Cambodia, The example of the monastery. *Asian Folklore Studies* 47: 35–41.

———. 1990. La Communauté Rurale Khmère du Point du Vue du Sacré. *Journal Asiatique* 278 (1–2): 135–54.

CROSBY, K. 2000. Tantric Theravada: A bibliographical essay on the writings of Francois Bizot and others on the Yogavacara Tradition. *Contemporary Buddhism* 1 (2): 141–98.

DERIAN, J. D. 1995. The value of security: Hobbes, Marx, Nietzsche, and Baudrillard. In *On security*, edited by R. D. Lipschutz. New York: Columbia University Press.

EBIHARA, M. 1968. Svay: A Khmer village in Cambodia., Ph.D. diss., Faculty of Philosophy, Columbia University.

EDWARDS, P. 2004. Making a religion of the nation and its language: the French protectorate (1863–1954) and the Dhammakāy. In *History, Buddhism, and new religious movements in Cambodia*, edited by J. Marston, and E. Guthrie. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

FALBY, P. 2003. To vote or not to vote: Buddhism's monks debate their rights. *Phnom Penh Post*, 11 December, 12 (11).

FROMMER, J. 2003. Wat threatens pro-SRP monks. *Phnom Penh Post*, 21 December, 12 (21).

GOMBRICH, R. 1988. *Theravada Buddhism: A social history from ancient Benares to modern Colombo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

GOTTESMAN, E. 2003. *Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge: Inside the politics of nation building*. New Haven, Conn. Yale University Press.

GUTHRIE, E. 2002. Buddhist temples and Cambodian politics. In *People and the 1998 national elections in Cambodia*, edited by J. Vijghen. Vol. 44. Phnom Penh: Experts for Community Research.

HARRIS, I., ed. 1999. *Buddhism and politics in twentieth century asia*. London: Continuum.

———. 2001. Sangha groupings in Cambodia. *Buddhist Studies Review* 18 (1): 73–105.

———. 2005. *Cambodian Buddhism: History and practice*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

HINTON, A. L. 1998. A head for an eye: Revenge in the Cambodian genocide. *American Ethnologist* 25 (3): 327–51.

KAPFERER, B. 1988. *Legends of people myths of state: Violence, intolerance, and political culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

KENT, A. 2006. Reconfiguring security: Buddhism and moral legitimacy in Cambodia. *Security Dialogue* 37 (3): 346–61.

KEYES, C. F. 1994. Communist revolution and the Buddhist past in Cambodia. In *Asian visions of authority: Religion and the modern states of East and Southeast Asia*, edited by C. F. Keyes, L. Kendall, and H. Hardacre. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

LÖSCHMANN, H. 2000. The revival of the *Don Chee* movement in Cambodia. In *Innovative Buddhist women: Swimming against the stream*, edited by K. L. Tsomo. Richmond: Curzon.

MCDERMID, C., and C. SOKHA. 2005. Chronicle of a death foretold. *Phnom Penh Post* 14 (24).

OVESEN, J., I. -B. TRANKELL, and J. ÖJENDAL. 1996. *When every household is an island: Social organization and power structures in rural Cambodia*. Vol. 15. Uppsala: Department of Cultural Anthropology, Uppsala University and SIDA.

PONCHAUD, F. 1989. Social change in the vortex of revolution. In *Cambodia 1975–1978: Rendezvous with death*, edited by K. D. Jackson. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

WRIGHT, M. 1990. Sacrifice and the underworld: Death and fertility in Siamese myth and ritual. *Journal of the Siam Society* 78 (1): 43–54.

Alexandra Kent, Bryggaregatan 1B, 432 42 Varberg, Sweden. E-mail: alix.kent@swipnet.se