

**From the Khmer Rouge to Hambali: Cham Identities in a
Global Age**

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A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School—Newark
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Program in Global Affairs
Written under the direction of
Professor Alex Hinton
and approved by

Newark, New Jersey

January 2013

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Abstract of the Dissertation

From the Khmer Rouge to Hambali: Cham Identities in a Global Age

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This dissertation explores different forms of Cham identity in relation to this minority's history, society and culture. It has three goals: first, to provide the most comprehensive overview of Cham history and social structure; second, to illustrate how Cham identities have changed through time; and third, to consider whether in the aftermath of Democratic Kampuchea and the Cold War Cham became radicalized. Its theoretical position is that the group's religious, ethnic and other social identities can be classified as core (those that are enduring) and peripheral (those that are more changeable depending on new social and global contexts). Core identities include being Muslim (religious) and descendants from Champa whose indigenous language is Cham. Peripheral identities are sectarian, economic and political.

As immigrants to Cambodia, Muslims, and victims of genocide, the Cham have been associated with terrorism. In the process of constructing their peripheral identities, after genocide and especially after the Cold War, they are suspected by some Khmer, foreign governments and international observers of having links with, attempting to and committing acts of terrorism, both in Cambodia and southern Thailand. Other factors such as weak secular education, unregulated and open Islamic revival, and the strong need for overall community development, such as improved living standards and education, led to further suspicions of terrorism. Cambodia's weak rule of law, fledgling financial system, immature anti-terrorist measures, corruption and porous borders also contributed to the terrorist stigmatization of the Cham.

Terrorism is at the pinnacle of the problems facing the Cham in their attempt to revive their community and reconstruct their peripheral identities. Little has been studied about the Cham. By examining the Cham's origins in Champa, their arrival in Cambodia, religious conversion, political affiliations, and social structure, it is possible to understand better their core identities as ethnic Cham and Muslims and whether they have become radicalized. In addition, this dissertation will shed light on the ways in which their peripheral identities change over time and how these identities are affected in an age in which Islamic revival, global aid and terrorism bring fresh challenges to the community.

This research seeks to contribute to the study of identities of an Islamic and ethnic minority group in a Buddhist majority country as the group recovers from genocide, is increasingly exposed to global flows, and suffers from the threat of being pulled into global terrorism. It seeks to contribute to our understanding of the Cham which receives little scholarly attention. It also attempts to contribute to the study of identity.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this dissertation requires a lot of hard work, dedication and time. It would not be possible without the following people who have helped me along the way in the forms of encouragement, ideas and information. I would like to thank Youk Chhang for his generous support of my dissertation by providing me time and materials to conduct this dissertation. He has been a great spiritual mentor for my personal education as well as understanding Cambodian society. His pioneering documentation and research on the Cham experience under the Khmer Rouge has encouraged and allowed me to complete this dissertation on Cham people. I am greatly indebted to him.

I am grateful to my dissertation advisor Professor Alexander Hinton for his continued support for my dissertation providing valuable guidance, encouragement and academic knowledge without exhaustion for the past three years even though he has always been busy with his family and academic duties. I admire his patience in reading many of my early writings which required a lot of improvements. Most importantly, his dedication on research and understanding of Cambodian society has inspired me as a Cambodian to complete this dissertation.

I would like to thank Professor Kurt Schock of Rutgers University for agreeing to become a committee member of this dissertation, reading the final drafts until completion, even though he was very busy with his academic duties including guiding other students. I am indebted to Professor Judy Ledgerwood (Northern Illinois University) for her comments and suggestions since the very beginning of this dissertation when I first formed ideas to final editing and how to organize the final

dissertation writing in a convincing and coherent way. I would like to thank Professor John Ciorciari (University of Michigan) for his valuable guidance and time in helping me to complete this dissertation. Professor Ciorciari has a great knowledge about Cambodian politics and legal system and he has always been a great mentor in my academic progress.

I would like to thank my long-time generous English editor and friend Wynne Cougill who has expert knowledge about Cambodia, its people and culture. She was always kind and never tired whenever I requested help. I am indebted to Professor Jane Shattuc who has been passionate about Cambodia and its people. Her editing and comments for my dissertation have greatly improved the way I have been able to write this dissertation.

I would like to thank Professor Ann Martin for her patience and generosity with many of my tedious requests from DGA. I would like to thank my friend Ms. Desiree Gordon for her untiring administrative support over the years. I also would like to thank Ms. Jeannie Wang for creating a supportive environment for me at Rutgers. I especially want to thank Dean Claire Bautista for her untiring support for my study and research. I would like to thank Andrew Johnston for his final editing, and DC-Cam colleagues Nean Yin and Ky Lim for their help in locating documents.

As an outsider of the Cham community, my knowledge of the Cham people came from the following Cham friends and informants who helped me along the way. I am thankful to them: Sos Kamry, Kai Team, Sou Ly, Math Khalil, Fatily Sa, Tin Faizein,

Ysa Osman, Sorya Sim, Farina So, Sayana Ser, No Min, Sanas Min, Mousin Sos, Kae
Mat and Keo Ibrohim.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude to my family for being with me all along
this journey.

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List of Acronyms

AML:	Anti-Money Laundering
ASEAN:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRN:	Barisan Revolusi Nasional
CAMSA:	Cambodian Muslim Students Association
CFT:	Combating Financing of Terrorism
CGDK:	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea
CIA:	Cambodian Islamic Association
CIA:	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDA:	Cambodian Islamic Development Association
CMDF:	Cambodian Muslim Development Foundation
CPK:	Communist Party of Kampuchea
CPP:	Cambodian People's Party
CTED:	Counter Terrorism Committee's Executive Directorate
DC-Cam:	Documentation Center of Cambodia
DK:	Democratic Kampuchea
ECCC:	Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia
FATF:	Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering
FIU:	Financial Intelligence Unit
FULRO:	United Front for the Struggle of Oppressed Races
FUNCINPEC:	National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia
GMIP:	Gurakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani
ICRC:	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDB:	Islamic Development Bank
IIRO:	International Islamic Relief Organization
IMAC:	Islamic Medical Association of Cambodia
INTERPOL:	International Criminal Police Organization
Ji:	Jamaah Islamiyah
JIM:	Jakarta Informational Meeting
KFTU:	Kampuchean Federation of Trade Unions
KGB:	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (Committee for State Security)
KPNLF:	Khmer People's National Liberation Front
KPRC:	Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council
KPRP:	Khmer People's Revolutionary Party
KUIM:	Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia
LeT:	Lashkar e-Tayyiba
NUFSK:	National United Front for Salvation of Kampuchea
OIC:	Organization of Islamic Conference
PRK:	People's Republic of Kampuchea
PULO:	Patani United Liberation Organization
RGC:	Royal Government of Cambodia
RIHS:	Revival of Islamic Heritage Society
SBPAC:	Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center
SOC:	State of Cambodia
SRP:	Sam Rainsy Party
TJ:	Tablighi Jamaat (locally referred to as Dakwah group)
UFCDM:	United Front for the Construction and Defense of the Motherland

UNBRO:	United Nations Border Relief Operation
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF:	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNTAC:	United Nation Transitional Authority in Cambodia
WAMY:	World Assembly of Muslim Youths
WCO:	World Customs Organization
WFP:	World Food Program

Table of Transliteration

Consonants and Subscripts

Item	1	2	3	4	5
ṽKṬlmYy	k'	xç	K'	XÇ	gḡ
English	k	kh	k	kh	ng

Item	6	7	8	9	10
ṽKṬlBr	c©	qä	Ce	QÄ	jø
English	ch	chh	ch	chh	nh

Item	11	12	13	14	15
ṽKṬlbl	ḍḇ	zæ	DḐ	ZÆ	NÑ
English	d	th	d	th	n

Item	16	17	18	19	20
ṽKṬlbYn	ṭḇ	fš	TḐ	FŠ	nñ
English	t	th	t	th	n

Item	21	22	23	24	25
ṽKṬlRáM	b,	pö	B<	PÖ	mμ
English	b	ph	p	ph	m

Item	26	27	28	29	30
essvK'	yü	Rr	lø	vV	şß
English	y	r	l	v	s
31	32	33			
hḑ	TL	G°			
h	l	a			

Vowels

Dependent Vowels (23)		Examples of spelling with first series consonants (voiceless)		Dependent vowels (23)		Examples of spelling with first series consonants (voiced)		Independent Vowels (Only 13)	
Inherent vowel	a	cg	Chang	Inherent vowel	or	ng	Norg	G	a
a	a	ka	Ka	a	ea	Ka	Kea	Ga	a
i	e	xin	Khen	i	i	Xin	Khin	\	e
l	ei	kpl	Kdei	l	i	Klm	Kim		ei
w	oe	kwm	Koem	w	i	Gwum	Im	«	o
W	eu	cWm	cheum	W	eu	QW	Chheu	«u	u

u	o	m:uk	Mok	u	u	Duc	Duch]	ov
U	au	tUc	Tauch	U	ou	b(U	Bou	b _i	ruk
Y	uo	sYn	Suon	Y	uo	Tyl	Tuol	b _~	reu
e l	ae	esl	Sae	e l	eu	emll	Meul	B _i	luk
e O	oeu	esOn	Soeun	e O	oeu	eDO _n	Doeun	B _~	leu
e o	ie	eson	Sien	e o	ie	evoc	Viech	É	e
e	e	efn	Then	e	e	eBij	Penh	B§	ai
E	e	Edk	Dek	E	e	ERK	Kre	«)	ua
é	ai	éx	Khai	é	ey	éRB	Prey	« _L	ao
e a	ao	eka	Kao	e a	o	eKa	Ko		
e A	ao	esA	Sao	e A	eou	eBA	Peou		
Mu	om	xMu	Khom	Mu	um	s(Mu	Sum		
M	am	sM	Sam	M	um	nM	Num		
Ma	am	taM	Tam	Ma	oam	naM	Noam		
H	ah	sH	Sah	H	eah	RBH	Preah		
uH	oh	cuH	Choh	uH	uh	BuH	Puh		
e H	eh	esH	Seh	e H	eh	eTH	Teh		
e aH	oh	ekaH	Koh	e aH	uoh	eKaH	Kuoh		

Notes:

- Use (p) instead of (b) for the final position [Siem Reap]; with a following subscript consonant [Pracheachon]; and when it has Mousektoant (") [Pol Pot].
- Note the following exceptions: (v) is not used for Wat, Khieu, and Takeo.

Chapter One: Introduction

Between 1471 and the late 19th century, the Cham gradually lost their country to Vietnam. During this period they migrated to Cambodia, where they became a minority. In Cambodia they suffered genocide under the Khmer Rouge from 1975 to 1979. In the early 1990s, when Cambodia was opened to the outside world, the Cham community underwent dramatic religious revival and community development because of global processes such as the spread of democratic institutions, transitional justice, human rights, transnational religious connections and international aid. In 2003-2004 the Cham were accused of involvement with Islamic terrorism. Since 2004, they were linked with conflict in Southern Thailand.

Very few studies have been conducted on the Cham. Since September 11, the Bali Bombing in 2002 and the Hambali “incident” in 2003 (when Hambali took refuge in Cambodia hosted by a few Cham Muslims for a short time before his arrest in Thailand), the Cham community has become a focal point for those working on Islamic terrorism.¹ But these events raise an important question: How have the Cham changed as they have become increasingly enmeshed in the global world? Did the Cham support terrorism as allegedly illustrated by the Hambali affair and as facilitated by historical and recent upheavals including landlessness, genocide, religious revival, sectarian contradiction, political transformation and economic change? Little is known about the Cham. To answer these questions, we need to trace out their history and social structures and study how these have changed through time.

¹ Hambali is more formally known as Riduan Isamuddin in the US. See United Nations, “Narrative Summaries of Reasons for Listing: QE.J.92.02. Jemaah Islamiyah,” *Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) Concerning Al-Qaida and Associated*

This dissertation has three goals: first, to provide the most comprehensive overview of Cham history and social structure to better understand their identities; second, to illustrate how Cham identities² have changed through time; and third, to consider whether in the aftermath of Democratic Kampuchea and the Cold War the Cham became radicalized.

I. Background

The Cham Muslim community suffers from stereotypes in Cambodia. When I was young I heard about Cham people in passing, most often their abilities in black magic and warnings that Khmer should not get close to Cham. People would say that the Cham have the ability to make one's stomach "swollen" if they are made angry. A swollen stomach would lead to death without timely and proper removal of the black magic. I also heard Khmer making jokes about the Cham' use of Khmer language, sometime insulting, other times affectionate.³ Some Khmer also say that the Cham are dirty and use cheap, intoxicating "coconut" oils as perfume. They would justify their lack of cleanliness by pointing to the cramped dwellings of many Cham around Phnom Penh and in provinces.

Two historical events that affected the Cham have led me to study this community.

The first is their persecution by the Khmer Rouge from 1975 to 1979, which killed a

Individuals and Entities, accessed April 9, 2011, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE09202E.shtml>.

² In this dissertation, Cham "identity" is pluralized because it is regarded as consisting of two cores and three peripheral identities.

³ Cham people speak Khmer with a distinct accent. They only learned Khmer in the 1960s when Sihanouk imposed compulsory Khmer language education for all students.

disproportionately larger number of Cham than Khmer.⁴ The pattern of killing Cham was not uniform. In some areas they were killed based on their names.⁵ In others they were killed along with Khmer. Yet in a few areas, they led good lives during the Khmer Rouge regime. In September 2010, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia charged that the Khmer Rouge atrocities against the Cham constituted genocide. Why were the Cham persecuted by the Khmer Rouge? How is this related to their core and peripheral identities?

The second event that occurred was the 2004 closure of an Islamic mosque along National Road 6A after accusations by the Cambodian Government, allegedly after receiving intelligence from the CIA, that it was harboring Islamic terrorists. Hambali was believed to be supported by members of that mosque while he was in Cambodia in late 2002 and early 2003.

Why did these most problematic human conditions, genocide and Islamic terrorism, converge upon the Cambodian Cham who had lost their homeland to Vietnam and whose population is scattered all over the world?⁶ The Cham is witnessing the rapid and robust revitalization of their community, which began with the opening of Cambodia to the outside world in the early 1990s after the Paris Peace Agreement, especially the arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The Hambali incident took place within the context of these events and processes.

⁴ Osman Ysa, *Oukubah*, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2002; and *The Cham Rebellion*, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2006.

⁵ Cham have distinctive names borrowed from Islamic traditions that differ from those of Cambodia's other ethnic groups. See also Salahuddin Ahmed, *A Dictionary of Muslim Names*, New York: New York University Press, 1999.

⁶ Cham also live in Vietnam, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Thailand, USA and France.

The foundation of the concept of genocide is linked to the idea of identity.⁷ At the heart of terrorism stands the conflict between tradition and modernity.⁸ The focal point of rapid change is the erosion and reconfiguration of identity. All of these conditions point toward the importance of the study of Cham identities, not only within the boundaries of Cambodian history as it relates to Champa, the Cham people, and the contemporary Cambodian state, but also within the global context that influences change and the refashioning of Cham identities.

Today Cham do not only look inside Cambodia to reconstruct their way of life after the Khmer Rouge and improve their livelihood, but also outward toward Islamic countries in Southeast Asia such as Malaysia, Indonesia and southern Thailand, and further afield to Arabic and Western countries. They look outside for financial support, religious support and training, education and employment. The Cham' outward gaze is enhanced, assisted and shaped by the process of globalization: transnational connections, the politics of aid, democracy, human rights, diasporic reconstitution and religious revitalization. However, they are also active creators in the process, adding, modifying and ignoring different global flows within the constraints of their situation.⁹

⁷ Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983; Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. See also the author's article analyzing the concept of genocide, Kok-Thay Eng, "Redefining Genocide," *Searching for the Truth*, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, January 2006.

⁸ Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terrorism*, New York: Three Leaves Press, 2004; James Lutz and Brenda Lutz, *Global Terrorism*, London: Routledge, 2004.

⁹ The Imam Sann community of the Cham has sought to minimize the impact of global change. As a unique Muslim community in Cambodia and possibly in the world, they pray only once per week at noon on Fridays. With all the pressure for change and lack of global support, they remain most faithful to their creed. See Kok-Thay Eng, "Cambodia: The Cham Identities," *Searching for the Truth*, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, August 2011, p. 23.

The 2003 Hambali Incident and the Questions It Raises

Nurjaman Riduan Isamudin (a.k.a. Hambali) was in Cambodia for six months¹⁰ in late 2002 and early 2003.¹¹ He was in the country during the Eighth ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh on November 3, 2002. He then moved to another country, presumably Thailand, with the help of a 23-year-old Cambodian Cham named Sman Ismael,¹² who was then a *tuon*¹³ at a religious school in Chaom Chao, west of Phnom Penh, funded by the Kuwaiti charitable organization Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS).¹⁴ Sman Ismael allegedly provided Hambali with logistical support and accommodation, and escorted him from Phnom Penh because of the high security at the summit,¹⁵ which had just adopted the Declaration on Terrorism condemning terrorist attacks, particularly the October 12, 2002 Bali bombing.¹⁶

On May 30, 2003, Cambodian authorities cracked down on suspected members of Jamaah Islamiyah hiding in Cham settlements near Phnom Penh. One Egyptian and two Thai nationals were arrested. Sman Ismael was arrested on June 12, 2003.¹⁷

Hambali was arrested in Ayuthaya, Thailand, on August 14, 2003.¹⁸ On December 19,

¹⁰ Roderick Brazier, "In Cambodia: The Muslim Minority," The Asia Foundation, accessed September 19, 2007, <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2007/09/19/in-cambodia-the-muslim-minority/>.

¹¹ AsiaNews.it, "Islamic Fundamentalism Taking Root among Cham Muslims," accessed May 08, 2009, <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=1244&geo=16&theme=5&size=>; "2009 Report on International Religious Freedom: Cambodia," United States Department of State, accessed October 26, 2009, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4ae86153c.html>.

¹² BBC News, "JI Member Held in Cambodia," June 12, 2003, accessed March 1, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2983450.stm>.

¹³ Tuon is a local Cham word for Islamic teacher. It might have been borrowed from other language as it is also used in Indonesia.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Treasury, "Kuwaiti Charity Designated for Bankrolling al Qaeda Network," Press Release June 13, 2008, accessed December 10, 2010, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp1023.aspx>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Declaration on Terrorism by the 8th ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh," November 3, 2002, accessed March 2, 2010, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/asean/pmv0211/terro.html>.

¹⁷ BBC News, "JI Member Held in Cambodia," op. cit.

¹⁸ Council on Foreign Relations, "Jemaah Islamiyah (a.k.a. Jemaah Islamiyah)," June 19, 2009, accessed December 10, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/indonesia/jemaah-islamiyah-k-jemaah-islamiyah/p8948>; Simon

2004, the Egyptian suspect was released, but the two Thai nationals and Sman Ismael were sentenced to life imprisonment for acts of terrorism under Cambodia's Law on Punishment of the Acts of Terrorism, which was adopted in 1992.¹⁹

The main question is not about seeking justice for what Sman Ismael did. In fact, many Cambodians are not even sure what the sentence would mean to them.

Cambodia had never suffered Islamic terrorist attacks. It was not considered a target for global terrorism. The question is why did some Cham Muslims become involved with an Islamic terrorist and possibly fundamentalism? What caused Sman Ismael – and probably members of his immediate community – to be sympathetic with Hambali and his cause? Most importantly, was the charge of Islamic terrorism in Cambodia an accurate accusation?

Over the last several years many people have voiced concerns about changes that are taking place within the Cham Muslim community. Western governments fear that due to poverty and lack of security, areas inhabited by Cham could become bases for terrorist hideouts.²⁰ Former US Ambassador to Cambodia Joseph Mussomeli stated that “there are some organizations here from the Middle East that are very radical and that are very intolerant, and they are trying very hard to change the attitude and the atmosphere of the Muslim population here.”²¹ Anthropologist Bjorn Blengsli, who studied Muslims in Cambodia, observed that the use of teaching curriculums in religious schools funded by Muslim countries, mostly from Arab states, is similar to

Jeffery, “Asia's Most Wanted Terrorist Arrested,” *The Guardian UK*, August 15, 2003, accessed March 15, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/aug/15/indonesia.simonjeffery>.

¹⁹ RFA Cambodia, “Terrorists Sentenced to Life Imprisonment,” [title translated from Khmer], December 29, 2004.

²⁰ AsiaNews.it, “Islamic Fundamentalism Taking Root Among Cham Muslims,” op. cit.

those taught in the donor countries that have a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, which aims at purifying Islamic practice in Cambodia and “getting rid of the many influences from Buddhism.”²²

Other observers note that “Islamic precepts are being interpreted in new ways.

Women are increasingly wearing Middle Eastern-styled clothes.”²³ In certain communities, such as Phum Trea, which has built the largest mosque in Cambodia, women started wearing *jilbab* (long and loose-fit garments) with head-coverings (*hijab*) and face veils (*niqab*).²⁴ In such communities women are not allowed in the mosque, whereas in traditional Cambodian mosques such restrictions are less emphasized.²⁵ Another observer indicates that international charities are “discouraging participation in mainstream Cambodian society, including voting at elections, and seeking to limit women’s interactions outside the home.”²⁶ Such exclusivist tendencies run counter to the promotion of women’s rights and civic participation, which Cambodia has been trying to promote since the UN-funded election in 1993. In an interview with the *Phnom Penh Post*, Bjorn Blengsli asserted that “Cambodian Muslims are one of the fastest changing Muslim societies in the world.”²⁷

²¹ David Montero, “Why Al Qaeda Isn’t Gaining a Foothold in Cambodia,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 30, 2008.

²² Anthropologi.info, “Accused of Being CIA: Anthropologist on Fieldwork among Cambodian Muslims,” October 26, 2008, accessed June 12, 2010, http://www.anthropologi.info/blog/anthropology/2008/accused_of_being_cia_spy_anthropologist_.

²³ AsiaNews.it, “Islamic Fundamentalism Taking Root among Cham Muslims,” op. cit.

²⁴ The author gave a live screening of the Duch verdict in Svay Khleang village on July 26, 2010. Phum Trea is 15 km west of Svay Khleang village.

²⁵ This is mostly true from personal observation and interviews with informants.

²⁶ Brazier, Roderick, “In Cambodia: The Muslim Minority,” op. cit.

II. Literature Review

Very few serious academic studies have been conducted on Cambodia's Cham in recent years. One paper was produced by Mohamed Abdul, who studied Cham identity in Southeast Asia, but it was loosely researched and cited unreliable information.²⁸ Agne de Feo, a French researcher and filmmaker, conducted a short study on the influences of the international Islamic movement on Cambodian Muslims.²⁹ Many of the articles on the Cham in recent years are short; they discuss concerns and recent rapid developments in the Cham community.³⁰ In 1990, Kiernan provided an initial study on the Khmer Rouge persecution of Cham people.³¹ Similar studies on the Cham under the Khmer Rouge were followed by Osman Ysa, who published a book in 2002 on Cham prisoners at Tuol Sleng prison and another in 2006 on a Cham rebellion during the Khmer Rouge regime.³² A few journal articles provide some studies on religious changes and fears of Islamic terrorism in Cambodia, such as those by Bruckmayr and Scupin.³³ Collins provides a fairly thorough study into the

²⁷ Anthropologi.info, "Accused of Being CIA: Anthropologist on Fieldwork among Cambodian Muslims," op. cit.

²⁸ Mohamed Effendy Abdul, "Understanding the Cham Identity in Mainland Southeast Asia: Contending Views," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 21(2), October 2006, pp. 230-253.

²⁹ Agne de Feo, "Transnational Islamic Movement in Cambodia," paper presented at a Conference on *Dynamics of Contemporary Islam and Economic Development in Asia, From the Caucasus to China*, organized by the Centre de Sciences Humaines (CSH) and India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi, April 16-17, 2007.

³⁰ For examples, see media articles by Antonio Graceffo, "Four Cultures Intertwine among Southeast Asia's Remarkable Cham Muslims," *World and I*, 21(2), February 2006; David Montero, "Why Al Qaeda Isn't Gaining a Foothold in Cambodia," op. cit.; Seth Mydans, "US Fears Islamic Militancy Could Emerge in Cambodia," *The New York Times*, December 22, 2002. Since the 1990s *The Cambodia Daily* (a local English newspaper) published around 100 articles about Cham, while the *Phnom Penh Post* (also a local English language newspaper) published around 30 articles.

³¹ Kiernan, Ben, "Orphans of Genocide: The Cham Muslims of Kampuchea under Pol Pot," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 20(4), 1988. pp. 2-33.

³² Ysa Osman, *Oukubah*, and *The Cham Rebellion*, op. cit.

³³ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 23(3), 2006, pp.1-23; Raymond Scupin, "Historical, Ethnographic, and Contemporary Political Analyses of the Muslims of Kampuchea and Vietnam," *Sojourn*, 10 (2), 1995, pp. 301-28.

historical aspects of the Cham people in Cambodia.³⁴ Kersten's use of Dutch and Spanish archival materials provides a good study into a Cambodian Muslim king who converted to Islam in 1640s.³⁵ Outside of Cambodia, the most well-known study of Cham in Vietnam was conducted by Nakamura in 1999.³⁶

The concept of identity generally entails questions of who a group is in relation to others and how individuals construe themselves as a unitary entity.³⁷ Studies of identity have centered on many areas including ethnicity,³⁸ politics,³⁹ culture,⁴⁰ arts,⁴¹ religion,⁴² language,⁴³ adaptation to environment and other cultures,⁴⁴ education, life cycle ceremonies, sexuality of the group, and socialization within the group. Smith-Hefner covered socialization, religion, education and sexuality in her study of Khmer Americans in the Boston area of the United States.⁴⁵ She viewed Theravadt

³⁴ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, Phnom Penh: Center for Advanced Studies, 2009.

³⁵ Carool Kersten, "Cambodia's Muslim King: Khmer and Dutch Sources on the Conversion of Reameathipadei I, 1642-1658," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 37(1), 2006, pp. 1+

³⁶ Rie Nakamura, "Cham in Vietnam: Dynamics of Ethnicity," PhD diss., University of Washington, 1999.

³⁷ Dimitra Gefou-Madianou, "Cultural Polyphony and Identity Formation: Negotiating Tradition in Attica," *American Ethnologist*, 26(2), 1999, pp. 412-439.

³⁸ Eric Thompson, "Malay Male Migrants: Negotiating Contested Identities in Malaysia," *American Ethnologist*, 30(3), Aug. 2003, pp. 418-438.

³⁹ In this article Csordas studied the politics of identity of Navajo people. Thomas J. Csordas, "Ritual Healing and the Politics of Identity in Contemporary Navajo Society," *American Ethnologist*, 26(1), Feb. 1999, pp. 3-23.

⁴⁰ Jorge Duany, "Nation on the Move: The Construction of Cultural Identities in Puerto Rico and the Diaspora," *American Ethnologist*, 27(1), 2000, pp. 5-30.

⁴¹ Kathleen Adams, "More Than an Ethnic Marker: Toraja Art as Identity Negotiator," *American Ethnologist*, 25(3), pp. 327-351.

⁴² Bruce McCoy Owens, "Envisioning Identity: Deity, Person, and Practice in the Kathmandu Valley," *American Ethnologist*, 27(3), Aug. 2000, pp. 702-735.

⁴³ C. S. Lancaster, "Ethnic Identity, History, and 'Tribe' in the Middle Zambezi Valley," *American Ethnologist*, 1(4), Nov. 1974, pp. 707-730.

⁴⁴ Lin Poyer, "Maintaining Otherness: Sapwuhfik Cultural Identity," *American Ethnologist*, 15(3), Aug. 1988, pp. 472-485.

⁴⁵ Nancy Smith-Hefner, *Khmer American*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Buddhism as the main identity for Khmer American. As will be shown in this dissertation, Islam is one of the main identities for the Cham.⁴⁶

There is no agreed definition of the identity among scholars in the social sciences.⁴⁷

Many disciplines and subfields are producing increasing numbers of studies on the definition, meaning, development and role of identity in the process of institutional development, but there is no consensus among them.⁴⁸ There are many different forms of identities. One would see ethnic, national, racial, religious, gender, class and political identities.⁴⁹ A social group generally has multiple identities.

Sometimes members of a group claim that their identities are linked with factual information such as an event, group history and certain practices that have been handed down from generations past. This information, however, is often contested. Identities are also sometimes linked with non-factual information such as beliefs, folklore, stories and legends.⁵⁰ The identity of the Cambodian nation is linked with a story of creation about a prince and a mermaid called *Preah Thong* and *Neang Neak*, who were the male and female creators of the Cambodian nation, the Khmer lineage, the royal lineage and the culture.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the factual and non-factual

⁴⁶ Not all Cham are Muslims. But it is very difficult to locate these non-Muslim Cham in Cambodia because many Buddhists consider themselves as Khmer. Non-Muslim Cham are most easily found in Buddhist-Muslim couples in which both spouses adopt Buddhism. One such couple is in Koh Kong.

⁴⁷ Michael Horowitz, "Research Report on the Use of Identity Concepts in International Relations," Harvard Identity Project, July 2002, accessed on June 10, 2010, http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/identity_use_of_horowitz.pdf;
Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko Herrera, Alastair Lain Johnston and Rose McDermott, "Identity as a Variable," *Perspectives on Politics*, 4(4), Dec 2006, pp. 695-711.

⁴⁸ Michael Horowitz, "Research Report," 2002, op.cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *The Question of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, London: Sage Publication, 2003; Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, *Identity Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009; Komi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994; Steph Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.

⁵¹ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1993; Vittorio Roveda, *Khmer Mythology*, River Books: Bangkok, 1997.

foundations of identity do not really matter. In its absence, identity is sometimes searched for, created and institutionalized in order to inspire, collectivize and create differences. It is less about searching for the real historical truth about a group's inner identity but more about events or meanings which are most touching to them.

A group is made up of many individuals, so the group identity is different from individual identities. Members of a group are bound together by a culture, which operates as a system of rules that guides thoughts, expectations, obligations and resultant behaviors and materials within the group.⁵² Culture itself is a form of identity, as in cultural identity,⁵³ and yet culture itself is generally created on the basis of other forms of identities. Identities create and are created as the practice of culture can lead to the evolution and development of new forms of identities. Culture can form around a religion, as in traditional society. Islam not only professes articles of faith and regulates conduct in the spiritual world, but also dictates the way Muslims conduct their daily activities, do their business, assist other Muslims, and create a political system.⁵⁴

In this dissertation, Cham identity is divided into two parts. The first part is more tenacious or enduring whose time scale is century called the "core." The second part is more changeable called the "periphery" whose time scale is quantified in decades.

⁵² Sheldon Smith and Phillip Young, *Cultural Anthropology: Understanding a World in Transition*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998, p. 38.

⁵³ Bernardo Ferdman and Gabriel Horenczyk, "Cultural Identity and Immigration: Reconstructing the Group During Cultural Transition," in *Language, Identity and Immigration*, edited by Elite Olshtain and Gabriel Horenczyk, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2000.

⁵⁴ Joseph Liow and Rohaiza Asi, "Political Islam in Southeast Asia: One Ummah, Many Narratives," *Harvard Asia Pacific Review: Technology in Asia*, 9(2), Spring 2008; John Esposito, "Political Islam and the West," *JFQ*, Spring 2000; Anies Rasyid Baswedan, "Political Islam in Indonesia: Present and Future Trajectory," *Asian Survey*, 44(5), Sep. - Oct., 2004, pp. 669-690.

The core has two pillars: Islam (refers to religious boundary⁵⁵ of the Cham compared with the Khmer; Cham are Muslims even when their practice of Islam changes—sectarian change) and Chamness (also called Cham ethnic identity, is considered exclusively as having a Champa origin and using Cham language). The periphery has three main pillars: sectarian (the specific ways of following Islam among the Cham sub-groups), political (the Cham's strategy of interaction in Cambodian politics) and economic (the Cham's strategy for improving their livelihood in Cambodia). A combination of two or three peripheral identities creates other sub-identities. For example, sectarian and economic identities combine to form Cham culture as both dictate what type of rituals, social manners and daily activities the Cham do everyday.

Globalization

The global process involving the flow and exchange of ideas, knowledge, norms, beliefs, competition, goods and technologies across borders has affected the Cham in Cambodia in peculiar ways. The effect intensified after the Cold War when Cambodia opened its doors to the outside world. In such cases, the Cham have modified their peripheral identities, and not the core identities, to suit local and global conditions.

Globalization brings people much closer together and thus produces infusion, contestation, competition and fission in terms of identity.⁵⁶ The concept of globalization is fundamentally a process in which ideas, technology, media, capital and people flow in new ways across the globe. It is irrelevant to use globalization to

⁵⁵ See also Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture*, edited by Fredrik Barth, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1969, p. 15; Sun-Ki Chai, "Predicting Ethnic Boundaries," *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 21, No. 4, September 2005, pp. 375-391; George De Vos, "Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation," in *Ethnic Identity: Creation, Conflict, and Accommodation*, edited by Lola Romanucci-Ross and George De Vos, London: Altamira Press, 1995, p. 16.

describe the beginning and the end of this process, because the word only indicates a course of becoming something that does not have distinct starting and ending points. Globalization is a process rather than a finished product.

Appadurai defines globalization as: “A set of transitions in the global political economy since the 1970s, in which multinational forms of capitalist organization began to be replaced by transnational and irregular forms of organization, as labor, finance, technology, and technological capital began to be assembled in ways that treated national boundaries as mere constraints or fictions.”⁵⁷ Appadurai views the period after the Cold War as a period of one of great globalization. In this definition he clearly indicates that globalization started from the 1970s, and he, like others, mostly refer to it as a political and economic concept.⁵⁸

However, this dissertation holds that globalization, when viewed as a process of human integration, did not begin only when the global political economy flourished in the 1970s, but much earlier in history. Taken to the extreme, one could argue that globalization started when the first group of human beings attempted to migrate from Africa about eighty thousand years ago to other parts of the world.⁵⁹ The process continued when people moved to Europe, Asia and Australia about forty thousand

⁵⁶ Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003; Jan Scholt, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, New York: Palgrave, 2005.

⁵⁷ Arjun Appadurai, “Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalization,” *Development and Change*, 29, p. 907.

⁵⁸ Ibid.; Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; David Held & Anthony McGrew, *Globalization/Anti-Globalization*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002; Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, op. cit.; Susan Strange, *Retreat of the State: Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Jan Scholt, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*, New York: Palgrave, 2005; James Mittelman, *Contesting Global Order: Development, Global Governance and Globalization*, London: Routledge, 2011; Ronnie Lipschutz and James Rowe, *Globalization, Governmentality and Global Politics*, London: Routledge, 2005.

⁵⁹ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years*, London: Vintage Books, 1997.

years ago.⁶⁰ The migration to America started about fifteen to twenty thousand years ago and the final period of this global colonization ended about two thousand years ago when the last pacific islands were colonized.⁶¹ The migration to different parts of the world diversified human beings into different ethnicities. One can certainly assert that the attempt to occupy every part of the globe and diversity formed a process of globalization in the past as much as globalization integrates global societies today.

As human beings successfully colonized the globe, often surviving in harsh environments, the second stage of globalization began. This time it was an attempt to discover each other. The second period might be considered to have started around 2500 B.C., when seafarers from the Aegean islands, the seed of European civilizations, first embarked on their journey of discovery on the southern and western coasts of Europe.⁶² This probably continued with the establishment of the Silk Route from China to Persia around 100 B.C., and then the Chinese Treasure Fleet led by Admiral Cheng Ho in the early 15th century to explore the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean, and then the European exploration of Africa, the Far East and America starting in the late 15th century.⁶³ The third stage of globalization began during the industrial revolution, as Langhorne suggested, and reached its peak during the Belle Epoch period of 1870-1914.⁶⁴ Although globalization slowed during the inter-war period, it rose again in the later part of the 20th century. Thus in this dissertation's definition, the period after the 1970s is an intensification period of globalization in

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Richard Langhorn, *The Coming of Globalization: Its Evolution and Contemporary Consequences*, New York: Palgrave, 2001.

which global interconnectedness became thicker, denser and faster. But this latest period is only one significant step in a long historical trend.

Global-Local Nexus

As mentioned above globalization first diversified and then integrated human societies which had split up as humans began to migrate to many parts of the world. In today's world, globalization enhances localizing identities.⁶⁵ James Rosenau proposed this concept as an issue of "fraggementation."⁶⁶ As exemplified by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the world was unitized into states that later became the most important unit of identity and allegiance for Europe at the time. States also grouped together different ethnic groups into a single boundary under a single national government. In some countries it brought violent conflicts such as in Afghanistan.

The current state of globalization undermines state boundaries and the roles of states in general.⁶⁷ As the state loses its ability to bind people into a strong national unit as before and no longer protects its people from competition from outside in terms of business, flows of new knowledge, worldviews and ideas, sub-national groups begin seeking other forms of allegiance.⁶⁸ This means groups within a state or across states with similar identity bind together to protect themselves and to create new meanings. The result is that we now observe a world where globalization and localization occur at the same time and speed, although this process varies across contexts.

⁶⁵ Geir Lundestad, "Why Does Globalization Encourage Fragmentation?" *International Politics*, 41, 2004, pp. 265-276.

⁶⁶ James N. Rosenau, *Distant Proximities: Dynamics beyond Globalization*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

⁶⁷ Susan Strange, *Retreat of the State: Diffusion of Power in the World Economy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Analytical Framework for the Dissertation

In any event, scholars talk about the hierarchical nesting of identity which highlights the point that we all have a multitude of identities that we invoke in different contexts. In this dissertation, we focus on five aspects of Cham identity including Islamic (religious), ethnic (origin), sectarian, political and economic. Of these forms of identity, two are considered as core (Islamic and ethnic), while the other three are considered as peripheral (sectarian, political and economic). The main difference between the two groups is that core identities are more enduring while peripheral identities are more changeable. While the core changes within centuries, the peripheral changes within decades. None of them are fixed. Only three peripheral identities are studied here because of availability of materials, the limited scope of this dissertation and inclusion of smaller forms of identity into one of the three peripheral identities.

The Cham's Islamic identity is considered as core while sectarian identity is considered as peripheral because Islamic identity is compared against Buddhism and other religions while sectarian identity is compared against other sects within Islam. While Cham Muslims are forbidden to convert to other religions, they are not restricted to convert to other sects within Islam such as between Imam Sann, Tablighi Jamaat and Salafism. When one talks about Islamic revival, it is in fact the sects that are changing not Islam itself because Islam includes all other sects.

By ethnic identity, the author refers to two main factors—language and origin—which set the Cham apart from the rest of Cambodian ethnic groups. The Cham speak their

⁶⁸ Geir Lundestad, "Why Does Globalization Encourage Fragmentation?" op. cit.

own Cham language and came from Champa. These two factors are enduring whether or not the Cham change their sectarian, political and economic identities. In short, core identities set a rigid boundary in which peripheral identities are safely structured and restructured according to local and global conditions.

Toward the boundaries is where one observes more contestation and negotiation of identities. In addition, the process at the boundaries essentializes a core identity over another in certain historical period. Core identities are difficult to change, but in the medium term their importance shifts. This dissertation studies core as well as peripheral identities of the Cham. The boundary is where the direction and future of the Cham community in Cambodia is negotiated in a global world.

Hall and others conceptualize identity as situational, unstable and conflictual. Identity is always in a process of transformation and not a finished product.⁶⁹ Hall claimed, “Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a production, which never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.”⁷⁰ In this dissertation, Cham identity is viewed not only as accomplished fact (for its core) but also as changeable (for its periphery).

⁶⁹ Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,” in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for Representation of Identity*, edited by A. D. King, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997; J. Heriques, W. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn and V. Walkedine, eds., *Changing the Subject*, New York: Methuen, 1984.

⁷⁰ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *The Question of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, London: Sage Publication, 2003, p. 222.

However, Hall presented two views of cultural identity. In the first view, he proposed that cultural identity is “one shared culture, a sort of collective one true self, hiding inside the many other more superficial or artificially imposed selves which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. It provides stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of actual history.”⁷¹

In the second view, he said that “cultural identity in this second sense is a matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture.”⁷² Hall seems to be in favor of the second view than the first. But the problem with the second view is that it complicates identity as he said identity is about “becoming” as well as “being.” It is not logical to claim that an entity is static as well as dynamic. There has to be two aspects of that entity that are doing either of both. A better way to study identity is to categorize them into different aspects so that we can understand which part of it is transforming and which is more enduring. Therefore this dissertation accepts both views of cultural identity posited by Hall but seeks to classify it further. If one considers cultural identity as consisting of ethnic origin, political orientation and economic backgrounds, the ethnic part of it is enduring while political and economic parts are easier to change.

Cham and Chvea: Similarities and Differences

Most researchers tend today to lump together Cham and Chvea in their writing. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, colonial researchers tended to refer to Cambodian

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 223.

⁷² Ibid., p. 225.

Muslims as Malay,⁷³ so it is difficult to determine whether the Muslims they mentioned were Cham or Chvea. The only way to know was the location of the group being mentioned and the context of history. However, in many contemporary texts about Cambodian Muslims, they are most often referred to as “Cham.” This is erroneous because now we understand more about the Chvea and the Cham than in the past in terms of their histories, locations, population sizes and beliefs.

Among Cambodians, Malay and Chvea are used interchangeably. By name, Malay signifies the Malay ethnic group living in peninsular Malaysia and other parts of Southeast Asia, while Chvea refers to Muslims originating from the island of Java. But in historical texts as well as the present time, this distinction is conflated as it is already difficult to make distinctions between the Cham and those Muslims coming from the Archipelago. Therefore throughout this dissertation Chvea is used to refer to people coming from Malaysia and Indonesia.

Because of the lack of distinction between Cham and Chvea in secondary materials consulted and even among some informants, this dissertation uses the word Cham-Chvea when it is impossible to determine whether an individual is Cham or Chvea. Sometimes the word Cambodian Muslims is used to refer to the two groups as well as to the Khmer who converted to Islam.

The main focus of this dissertation is the Cham (and their identities) who make up the majority of Cambodian Muslims. By speaking Khmer as their first language, the Chvea are actors which help shape communication and connections between the

⁷³ G. Thomson, “Notes on Cambodia and Its Races,” *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, Vol. 6 (1868), p. 252; Frank Vincent Jr., “The Wonderful Ruins of Cambodia,” *Journal of the*

Cham and the Khmer, and between the Cham and the Cambodian society influenced by the Khmer majority. In effect the Chvea help shape the Cham identities especially before Sihanouk's Khmerization program in the 1950s when many Cham did not speak Khmer and Chvea were the only Muslims fluent in Khmer.

For many Cham and Chvea, their ethnic differences and origin are less meaningful for them than their shared religious background. They do not make special efforts to identify themselves as Chvea or Cham when describing themselves. One key reason to this is their lack of understanding of their historical origins. This leads to more difficulty in trying to distinguish between the two. But it also makes sense that many journalists and researchers conflate the two groups as a single ethnic and religious group.

III. Research Design and Methodology

Cham ethnicity in Cambodia has not been studied in depth. Primary materials are haphazard, while secondary materials are scarce. To answer the main research questions above, the author will make comparisons between Cham identity in pre-Khmer Rouge periods to those in the post-Khmer Rouge period, locate main issue areas (religious, social and political) in the community at the present time, study Cham civil society (their goals, funding, area of work and issues), forms and influences of global flows on their community, characteristic of recent changes, responses to change, and safeguarding measures against radical change.

To gather data, ethnographic fieldwork as well as secondary research were employed. Ethnographic research contained two main components: field interviews and participant observations. Secondary research also contained two components: studying the few written materials on Muslims in Cambodia, especially on their history and how they came to Cambodia; and examining interview transcripts about the Cham experience under the Khmer Rouge, which are held at the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam). In studying inter-ethnic relations, the author interviewed Khmer and surveyed their opinions.

In addition, this research followed many steps and background studies. First, because knowledge about the Cham is scarce in terms of accessible published materials, an investigation into the Cham ethnic group should start with basic premises. There is no consensus on the size of the Cham and Muslim populations in Cambodia. This research thus reviewed the range of numbers given by different sources. Total population figures have been quoted in many newspaper articles. But they are very confusing and unreliable. This dissertation research included a census of Muslims in Cambodia by surveying the population in known Muslim villages in the country through interviews with Muslim village chiefs and then calculate the number of Cham by subtracting the number of Chvea ethnic group from the total.

Second, specific Islamic practices in Cambodia and variations within regions were studied through interviews and participation in important Islamic life-cycle ceremonies such as funerals, weddings, Ramadan, Mawlid (day that commemorates important birth of Muhammad and death of Imam Sann) and Islamic New Year.

Third, the author met and interviewed as many Cham in Cambodia as possible and at the same time talked with Cham Americans and other Cham living in foreign countries who visited Cambodia. This provided opportunities to meet and interview them in a cost-effective way.

Location

Cham live in many parts of Cambodia, but the largest numbers reside in Kampong Cham, even though they are still a minority in that province. They also live in coastal areas such as Preah Sihanouk and Kampot provinces. Their next-largest concentration is along the Mekong River in Kratie and Kampong Chhnang provinces. Battambang has one of the largest Chvea communities.⁷⁴ Field trips were made to each of these areas. During each trip, the author met provincial *imam*, district *imam*, village *hakem* and *tuons*.⁷⁵ The author visited village mosques and *suravs* (a small mosque which can be used for teaching as well as praying, except Friday prayer⁷⁶) and met village elders to consult them on Cham history and culture.

Phnom Penh's metropolitan area has a large Cham community. When Cambodia moved its capital from Udong to Phnom Penh, the Cham came with the King. They settled in Chroy Changva across the Mekong river from the Royal Palace. The author visited the following areas: central Phnom Penh, Prek Bra area (southeast of Phnom Penh), Chhrang Chamres (north of the city), Prek Leab (northwest of Phnom Penh) and Ta Khmao (south of the city).

⁷⁴ Chvea is another ethnic group in Cambodia whose faith is predominantly Islam. Because the Cham in Battambang do not speak Cham, many informants assume that they are Chvea. But provincial Imam Sofiyan Toyet suggests that they are in fact Cham who lost their historical and linguistic identities. More research is needed to confirm this statement.

⁷⁵ The Cham do not have a commune *imam*. *Hakem* is local word for religious leader, while *tuon* refers to a religious teacher.

Field Interview

In the course of this research the author interviewed eightyfive Cham and met with many more. Interviews involved two main parts: life history (oral history) interviews and semi-structured interviews. Both types of interviews have advantages and shortcomings. Life history interviews allowed the author to understand and develop a relationship with informants, but took considerable time. Therefore, only a small number of Cham were chosen for life-history interviews. Interviewees were chosen on the basis of several criteria: their critical and in-depth knowledge of the Cham community, history and culture, interesting life stories, and ability to express experience. Life history interviews also allowed the author to conduct a longitudinal study of informants so as to understand the history and evolution of the Cham community.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seventy informants. The main advantage of this type of interview is that it allowed the author to meet more people in a shorter amount of time than life history interviews. Most informants such as Cham leaders and city people are generally too busy to provide long interviews. Also, any part of the day can be used to conduct semi-structured interviews as they took less than two hours and could avoid conflicting with Islamic prayer times.⁷⁷ These interviews were done with civil society members, government officials, religious leaders and others. However, when time and circumstances permitted, longer life interviews were conducted with selected interviewees. The author attempted to interview Sman Ismael, but request to meet him in jail was rejected.

⁷⁶ Author's interview with Sos Kamry, September 12, 2012.

⁷⁷ The five praying times are: 4:30 a.m. (before sunrise), 12:20 p.m., 3:30 p.m., 6:30 p.m. (after sunset) and 7:20 p.m.

Participant Observations

The author has been working for over three years with two main Muslim communities in two of the largest Muslim provinces in Cambodia: Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang, where he established good connections. These two sites served as a good base for participant observation. In addition, other locations in Kampot were selected. He attended events such as Mawlid ceremony (to mark the birth of Mohammad), and traditional weddings and ceremonies to end Ramandan. Ceremonies to mark the death of Imam Sann were also attended.

Secondary Research

A large amount of materials relating to the destruction of the Cham by the Khmer Rouge has been collected by DC-Cam. DC-Cam has also conducted a few hundred interviews with Cham about their experience under the Khmer Rouge. The majority of secondary materials written by both local and international scholars were collected. These materials were used as background information and to help answer some of the questions above. Some secondary materials on Islamic identity, Islamic revivalism, resurgence, revitalization and terrorism were also collected.

Writing up this Research

English is not my first language. Writing up an extensive academic research project in English was thus very challenging. However, in studying the Cham, the author had a luxury of being able to communicate with them well in the Khmer language.

Although Cham speak their own language within their villages, Khmer is the *lingua franca* within Cambodia, and many elderly Cham are bi-lingual. Cham men generally speak Khmer more fluently than Cham women.

Maintaining interviewee anonymity is an additional concern. The author's experience in meeting the Cham indicates that within their community, there was some caution in presenting controversial viewpoints or criticizing fellow Cham. There was also some concern when speaking about the Khmer. I was aware at all times about the need to guard the anonymity of informants who were willing to present controversial ideas or those ideas at the cutting edge of community conflicts.

Challenges and Solutions

Meeting and interviewing Cham people needs to take into consideration given that they pray five times per day: just before dawn, at midday, in mid-afternoon, just after sunset and at night. For the Imam Sann Cham group, this is not an issue as they pray only at midday on Fridays. Thus, most interviews were arranged in the morning as it allowed the largest block of time to meet Cham people. In the afternoon, there were two to three hours intervals before the next time for prayer arrives.

Another challenge when studying prospective terrorism among Cham Muslims in Cambodia is the receptivity of the people to researchers. Anthropologist Bjorn Blengsli was perceived by most prominent Cham community leaders as having negative intentions toward their community. Blengsli studied Islamic terrorism in Cambodia and wrote several negative articles in local English newspapers about the community. He was later not welcomed by several local communities. Because of recent concerns by international observers about terrorism in Cambodia, the Cham have become hyper-sensitive to researchers studying the issue. The author himself was detained for half an hour in Phum Trea Two village, Kampong Cham province

while attending an annual Ijtimas gathering, accused of sneaking into the event without permission, although he had received permission from commune and village chiefs. This experience showed that within this community there is a clear distinction between government authority and religious leadership.

DC-Cam has been working with Cham people for the past ten years and its staff members have become welcome and known by the Cham people. The author is currently Deputy Director of DC-Cam. He has been familiar with materials relating to the Cham experience under the Khmer Rouge compiled by DC-Cam. DC-Cam also published two books and numerous articles about the Cham' experience under the Khmer Rouge regime.

The author approached the Cham community through studying their experiences under the Khmer Rouge and post-Khmer Rouge periods so as to create a comfortable relationship with Cham leaders and community members. The author discussed issues of terrorism with them during the last stage of this research.

IV. Chapter Outlines

To answer the questions above and reach the three goals set forth, the dissertation looks at Cham history in which their identities were constructed and modified in order to illustrate how these identities changed in different periods and how these changes were linked to Islamic terrorism and Hambali. By understanding Cham history and identities, we can understand their general position on Islamic terrorism and whether

they have the propensity to become radicalized. Looking at their experience in the past will allow us to grasp a comprehensive understanding of this group, which has been lightly studied. Throughout the chapters, the dissertation also looks at Cham's global connections, when there is evidence to that effect, and the extent to which these connections shape their identities.

Chapter One: Introduction: Provides background of the study, statement of the problems of Cham identity, literature review and research methodology.

Chapter Two: Ethnographic Landscape: This chapter looks at all the Cham differences which construct them as a separate ethnic and religious group in Cambodia. It provides a detailed examination of current state of Cham's identities. It studies Cham's shared belonging and characteristics through examining their population size, location, occupation, language, religion and dress. However the Cham's core and peripheral identities are not only linked with their ways of lives, shared belongings and cultural practice today, but they are also intricately linked with their history which is clearly marked in the mindset of both the Khmer and the Cham themselves. Cham history is discussed further in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Cham in Historical Perspective: This chapter examines historical aspects of Cham identities. This is not to provide an exhaustive inventory of different versions of Cham history, or to critique versions of Cham history in hopes of ascertaining the true Cham history. The goal of this chapter is to provide an historical sketch that will enable us to comprehend further core and peripheral identities. This chapter also provides an examination into origin of Islam among the Cham to

understand where the Cham's religious identity came from, its sectarian changes over time and how it becomes as it is today. The chapter ends with the arrival of the Khmer Rouge. Khmer Rouge history happening thirty years ago is treated in a separate chapter because of the decisive influences it had on Cham social fabric and identities.

Chapter Four: Challenge to Core Identities: Cham Experience under the Khmer

Rouge: This chapter discusses the extent to which Cham core identities—ethnic and religious—were challenged and how. It examines Khmer Rouge policy, ideology and implementations toward the Cham. The chapter reveals that even the Khmer Rouge using killing, starvation and torture to change the Cham's core identities, these identities remained intact after the Khmer Rouge. However, aspects of Cham's peripheral identities such as their sectarian, political and economic positions were affected. The Khmer Rouge regime affected how the Khmer view the Cham and vice versa, thus altering Cham political identity. On the other hand, the Khmer Rouge regime was the only time in Cham history that the Cham were stripped of their core identities and equated with the Khmer, thus it was the only period in which Cham and Khmer shared an economic identity as slave laborers.

Chapter Five: Reconstruction of Peripheral Identities after Genocide: This chapter looks at different ways in which the Cham reconstructed their peripheral identities after the Khmer Rouge (sectarian, political and economic). Because the Cham continued to follow Islam and they were not brain-washed of their history, their core identities remained strong. The chapter examines how Cham rebuilt their community after going through the Khmer Rouge genocide and within a new Cambodian political regime—the communist, Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea

(PRK). In such reconstruction the Cham not only looked inside Cambodia for help but outside Cambodia for assistance and support. Cham people had essentially two main choices during the 1980s—by rebuilding their lives within Cambodia or in another country by escaping to the refugee camps along Cambodian-Thai border waiting for resettlement. This group of Cham would return in the 1990s. The two groups formed distinct political identities in the forms of power-holder and opposition parties in that period.

The chapter also looks at the construction of PRK's state institutions and policies affecting the Cham. Because the PRK had a policy of religious freedom, tolerance and Cham ethnic inclusion, along with single-party orientation within a framework of an ongoing conflict, the Cham had little freedom to proliferate their identities in the 1980s which only began to take off in the 1990s. The chapter also examines key institutions such as the People's Revolutionary Tribunal, the K5 program and Cham associations. These institutions affected Cham's effort at reconstructing their sectarian and economic identities after genocide.

Chapter Six: Accelerated Changes: The period from the early 1990s to the present is a time of greater modification and contestations of Cham peripheral identities and consequences. The climax of these consequences is the accusation of Islamic terrorism against the Cham. This period is studied in two chapters. In this chapter, the author discusses continued efforts to reconstruct Cham peripheral identities in an open Cambodian social and political contexts and a new global context marked by the end of the Cold War. In this period Cham community was set wide open for global religious influences, different ways of reconstruction and political platforms. This

chapter looks at three main aspects of Cham community development efforts— Islamic civil society and global networking, local political affiliations and Islamic and secular education.

Chapter Seven: The Question of Terrorism: The question of terrorism was the pinnacle of the chaos in which Cham rebuilt their identities in the 1990s and 2000s. Islamic terrorism not only symbolized such chaos and anarchic attempts at reconstruction, it also revealed the danger Cham people faced when they attempted to rebuild their sectarian identities. Terrorism was an object from which the Cham attempts to distance themselves in their construction of their sectarian, political and economic identities, yet it is a stigma that was always associated with them as they strengthened those identities. Terrorism is still a danger for the Cham today, not only that members of Cham ethnic group could become terrorists but also being further accused as terrorists. This chapter studies alleged Islamic terrorist activities in Cambodia and determines whether accusation against the Cham have strong evidence. The chapter looks at 9/11, Bali bombing in 2002 and insurgency movements in Southern Thailand in 2004 and responses from Cambodian government and the Cham to these events. It provides a discussion of the Hambali case in 2003 and an explanation why the stigma of terrorism against the Cham persisted.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion: Construction of Core and Peripheral Identities: This chapter conceptualizes the various aspects of Cham identities, in different periods, and locates them within the core and peripheral framework. This chapter also provides overall findings and discusses the significance of the dissertation.

Chapter Two: Ethnographic Landscape

This chapter provides a detailed background of the Cham community, including population figures and distribution, occupations, languages, clothing, inter-marriage, religious practices and life-cycle ceremonies, which form core and peripheral Cham identities and distinguish the Cham from other Cambodian ethnic groups. It also provides a starting point from which to discuss Cham history, the experience under the Khmer Rouge and contemporary society. The chapter begins with a discussion of the number of Cham in the country, their distribution across Cambodian regions, their occupations, the ceremonies around which their lives revolve, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and Cham dress, and finishes with a discussion on intermarriage.

I. Cham Population Figures

Muslims form the largest religious minority group in Cambodia and Cham is the largest Islamic group.⁷⁸ The press has always cited the population of Muslims in Cambodia to be between 400,000 and 600,000 people. In 2006, a report on terrorism in Southeast Asia cited a population of 500,000 Muslims in Cambodia.⁷⁹ Minister of Cults and Religions Min Khin said in 2009 that the Muslim population was 460,000.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Because most data tends to erroneously define Muslim as Cham, I start the discussion with looking at the number of Muslim in general before calculating the number of Cham.

⁷⁹ "Terrorism in Southeast Asia: The Threat and Response," Report of an International Conference Organized by the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies and Office of the Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, April 12-13, 2006, p. 5.

⁸⁰ Min Khin speech on Law and Religion at the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, United States, October 02-07 2009. Accessed January 2, 2011, <http://iclr.org/docs/Min%20Khin%20REMARK%20FINAL.pdf>.

There is a tendency to report higher numbers for the Muslim population than are actually the case. The reasons for this are not clear, but perhaps have to do with giving the Muslim community a larger role to play in Cambodia as well as in the global Muslim community, or increasing the community's attractiveness to donors and political groups.

Cambodian Census Data

A census conducted by the Ministry of Planning from March 3 to 13, 2008 found the Cambodian population to be approximately 13.5 million people, of which 48.6% are male, with an annual growth rate of 1.54% per year from 1998 to 2008.⁸¹ This represents an increase of 48% in a period of 46 years, compared to the first census conducted in 1962 by the Cambodian Government after regaining independence from France finding the Cambodian population to be 5.7 million.

The 2008 census found that Kampong Cham, where most Cham live, is the country's largest province comprising 12.54% of the total population. In contrast, Battambang, which has a reasonably small Muslim population and is considered to be the breadbasket of Cambodia, comprises only 7.6% of the total population. The smallest province is the newly established coastal province of Kep, which has only 0.3% of the total population. Kep has less than 1,000 Cham and Chvea.

The most densely populated areas are the provinces of the southern plain, located southeast and southwest of Phnom Penh, with an average of around 100 to 199

⁸¹ National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, General Population Census of Cambodia 2008, August 2009, p. 30.

persons per square kilometer.⁸² This is where most Cham live (see Map 1). The least populated provinces are those located in the plateaus of the northeast. These areas had very low population density before Prince Sihanouk created the provinces of Ratanak Kiri in 1962 and Mondul Kiri in 1964 when people were encouraged to settle there.

According the 2008 census, people who were born between 1980 and 2008 comprise 63.86% of the total population. Those who were born between 1975 and 1979 comprise 5.54%. Cambodians who were 7 years and older by the time the Khmer Rouge took control of Phnom Penh comprise of 23.31% of the population today. These are the people who can transfer their experiences and life stories under the Khmer Rouge to future generations. Certainly those who were born in 1968 and before would form a much higher percentage of the population if the Khmer Rouge had not come to power. Because these data include Cham, they also represent age groups of Cham as well.

The 2008 population census provides some categorization in term of religion. Buddhists make up 96.9% of the population, while the growing Christian population is 0.37%. Muslims account for 1.92% of the total population. This figure is suspiciously low. There could be a few problems in the way the census asked people to reveal their religious backgrounds. There is a tendency among those who live and work among the Buddhists to say that they are Buddhist rather than Muslim or Christian. Assuming Muslims do account for 1.92% of the total population, they number 260,000 people.⁸³ This is very low compared to data from other sources. This

⁸² Ibid., p. 27.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 232.

discrepancy led the author to conduct a survey of the Muslim and Cham population in Cambodia.

Population Survey

The author conducted a population survey in October 2010 with the assistance of 10 university student volunteers. The purpose of the survey was to find more accurate information about the size and locations of Cambodia's Muslim population and the Cham. The Highest Council of Muslim Religious Affairs (or mufti office is tasked with managing all Muslim affairs in Cambodia) compiled a list of Muslim villages around the country, but the office has no figure on the number of families and people in each village.⁸⁴ The list from the council indicates that there are 454 Muslim villages around the country. However, the list did not include Svay Rieng and Prey Veng provinces. Officials at the council indicated that these two provinces have the fewest Muslims in the country and that Muslim villages had not been registered on the list.

Another problem with the list, according to Sos Kamry, who is the incumbent mufti, is that the list only includes villages with approximately 20 households or more.⁸⁵ In calculating the number of Muslims, the author needed to include the approximate number of households that are not included on the list. However, there should not be too many uncounted villages with less than 20 households. It is important to note that Muslims tend to live in villages separate from other ethnic groups. Therefore, the majority of Muslim villages on the list comprise Muslims exclusively. Even in the case where Muslim families live in Khmer villages next to Muslim villages, these

⁸⁴ Highest Council of Muslim Religious Affairs, List of Muslim Villages, 2009.

⁸⁵ When providing the list, Sos Kamry explained how it was compiled.

Muslim families are counted as members of Muslim villages. This is the case of Svay Khleang village and other villages in Svay Khleang commune, Krauch Chhmar district, Kampong Cham province.⁸⁶

Another case that should be considered when counting Muslims is that today, more Muslims are moving from their Muslim enclaves, as discussed below, and live among Khmer and other ethnic groups. This is the case in the Phnom Penh metropolitan area, the border town of Poipet, Bathi district of Takeo province and elsewhere. In this situation, the total figure obtained should be adjusted to account for this irregularity.

The methodology used to obtain the figure was to ask village, commune and district chiefs and *hakems*⁸⁷ of Muslim communities around the country by using the Muslim village list obtained above as a guide. Acquiring the phone numbers of these chiefs required painstaking investigations with many rural community leaders.⁸⁸ After three weeks the author was able to obtain the full figure of the Muslim population in Cambodia. The number counted was 330,450, including Muslims in Prey Veng and Svay Rieng. An assumed 10,000 persons⁸⁹ were added to this number to adjust for migrating Muslims and villages with less than 20 families, who might not be counted. This yielded a figure of 340,450 in 2010, which is about 2.5% of the total population of Cambodia.

⁸⁶ Author's interview No Min, August 1, 2010. No Min is Svay Khleang village chief.

⁸⁷ *Hakem* is local Cham words for religious leader and head of local mosques and *suravs*. A *surav* is a small and less formal mosque.

⁸⁸ The author obtained a list of telephone numbers of district chiefs in Cambodia from the Ministry of Interior. From this list, volunteer students asked about the phone numbers of Muslim village chiefs.

⁸⁹ This is the author's own assumption based on the approximate number of Cambodian Muslims in Thailand and Malaysia, and the size of new Muslim villages along the border areas.

No specific demographic data have been collected to separate the Cham and Chvea populations. According to Osman Ysa, a Cham and researcher of Cham experiences under the Khmer Rouge, the Chvea account for approximately 20% of the total Muslim population in Cambodia.⁹⁰ Thus, the total number of 340,450 was adjusted for the 20% Chvea population to yield a figure for the Cham people. The result is a total Cham population of 272,360 persons in 2010. Adjusted for a national population growth rate of 1.54%, yields a total figure of 276,554 Cham in 2011, which is about 2% of the total population.

This demographic survey reveals that ethnically the Cham is a very small fraction of the population of Cambodia. This should help explain the way the Cham construct their political and economic identities within Cambodia. It also helps explain Cham political identity relating to the Khmer and Chvea.

II. Cham Geographic Locations

The survey results also give a picture of where Cham people live in Cambodia. Understanding this presents an opportunity to understand several other variables relating to their occupations, history and culture. The survey reveals that Kampong Cham province has the largest Cham population in the country. It has about 138,177 Cham, comprising 42% of the total Muslim population. The second-largest province is Kampong Chhnang, which has about 26,748 Cham, followed by Kampot with

⁹⁰ Author's interview with Osman Ysa, May 5, 2011. There are no specific data on Chvea population size, but their villages around the country are known. Mr. Ysa based his estimate on his own experience and information obtained from Muslim leaders who estimated the figure.

about 20,099 Cham and Chvea. Table 1 shows the distribution of Cham population by province with the approximate percentage of Chvea:

Table 1. Muslim Population by Provinces

No.	Province	Chvea	Number
1	Kampong Cham	0%	138,177 (42% of total Muslim population)
2	Kampong Chhnang	0%	26,748
3	Phnom Penh	10%	24,549
4	Kampot	70%	20,099
5	Kratie	0%	19,380
6	Kandal	15%	16,132
7	Battambang ⁹¹	70%	15,563
8	Pursat	0%	14,767
9	Preah Sihanouk	80%	11,736
10	Mondul Kiri	10%	11,267
11	Koh Kong	15%	7,853
12	Takeo	70%	6,019
13	Banteay Meanchey	0%	4,290
14	Kampong Thom	0%	4,261
15	Siem Reap	0%	3,190
16	Rattanak Kiri	10%	2,532
17	Prey Veng	0%	2,012
18	Pailin	0%	994
19	Keb	80%	850
20	Preah Vihear	0%	584
21	Kampong Speu	0%	441
	Total:	20% (approximately)	330,450

Table 2 shows some of the largest Cham districts in Cambodia. Kampot and Prey Nub districts have the largest Chvea population. Tbong Khmum district of Kampong Cham province is the largest Cham district in the country with a population of 43,075.

Among the ten largest districts, six are in Kampong Cham, and all these are Cham districts. The other four are in Kampong Chhnang, Kampot, Kratie and Preah

⁹¹ Because the Muslims living in Battambang province do not speak the Cham language, many people identify them as Chvea. However, according to the Battambang provincial *imam*, these people are Cham who lost their original language.

Sihanouk provinces. In addition, the Muslim population in the Phnom Penh metropolitan area is around 24,549.

Table 2. Eight Largest Cham Districts

No.	District Name	Province	Figure
1	Tbong Khmum	Kampong Cham	43,075
2	Krauch Chhmar	Kampong Cham	33,187
3	Kampong Tralach	Kampong Chhnang	18,004
4	Dambe	Kampong Cham	16,689
	Kampot	Kampot (30% Cham)	15,940
5	Chhlong	Kratie	14,026
	Prey Nub	Preah Sihanouk (20% Cham)	10,786
6	Stung Trang	Kampong Cham	10,253
7	Ponhea Krek	Kampong Cham	9,925
8	Memot	Kampong Cham	9,444

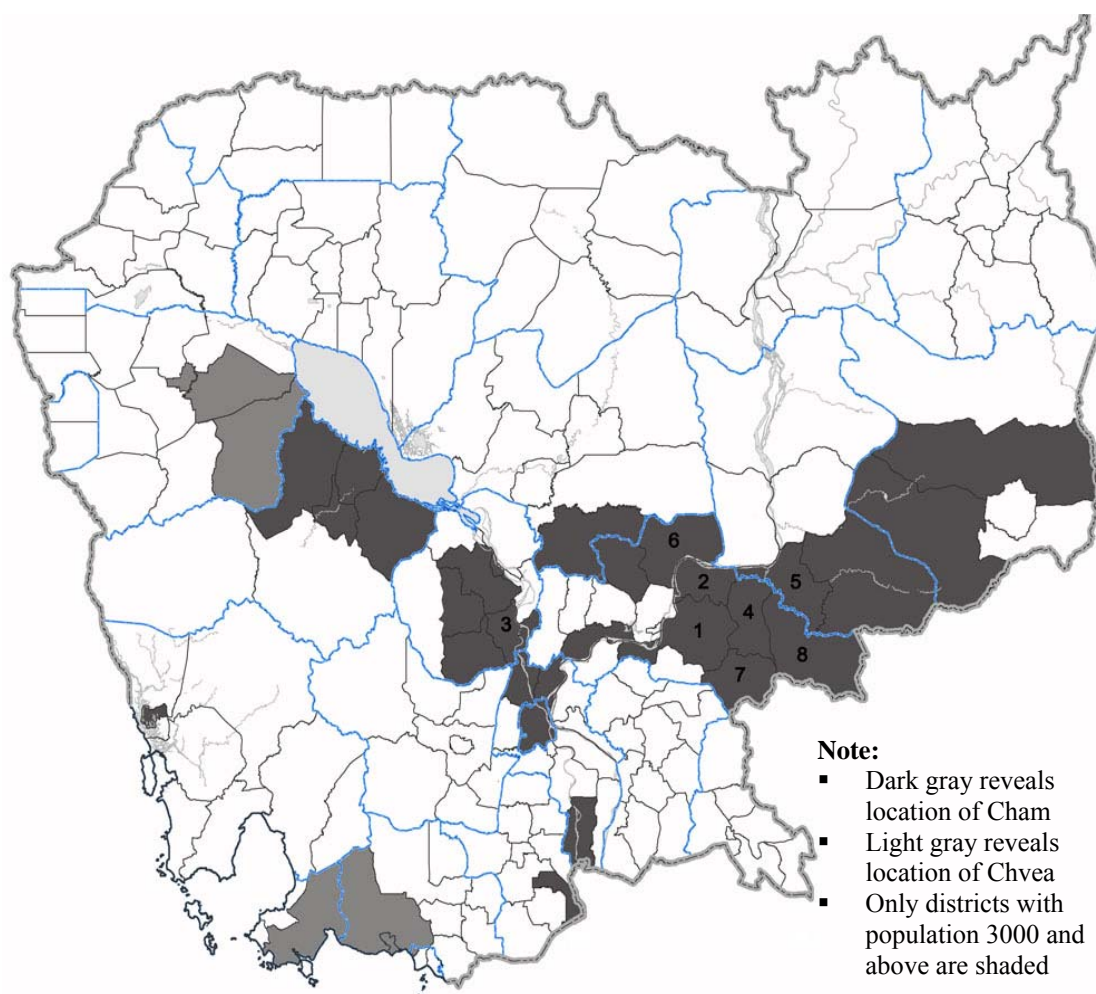
The author's survey revealed that Cham tend to live in close proximity to the water. They live along the Mekong River from Chhlong district in Kratie province in the far north, passing Krauch Chhmar in Kampong Cham and other heavily Cham-populated districts in the province, down to Kampong Tralach district (Kampong Chhnang province), in the south-central part of the country. Despite being a holy center for the Imam Sann Islamic group, Udong district has no Cham village. Passing Udong moving southward, the Cham population rises again in Muk Kampoul district (Kandal) and then goes south all the way to Koh Thom district. Some Cham also live along the coastline in Preah Sihanouk, Kampot and Koh Kong provinces. In Kampot 30% of Muslims are Cham.⁹²

Significant numbers of Cham people live along Cambodia's border with Vietnam and a lesser number along the border with Thailand. On the eastern border, the district of

⁹² Author's interview with Haji Zous Ry, February 2, 2011. Zous Ry is the *imam* of Kampot province; Author's interview with Ip Prohim, *tuon* of Kampot Province, June 14, 2010.

Memot has 9,444 persons, Snuol 4,734 persons, Keo Seima approximately 6,000 persons, and Pech Chenda district has 5,267 persons. The map below shows Cham and Chvea districts with population of more than 3000, along with the eight largest Cham districts.

Map 1. Location of Cham and Chvea in Cambodia



The location of Muslims in Cambodia today corresponds to the Khmer Rouge geographic areas of Region 21 of the Eastern Zone, the western part of Region 22 of the Eastern Zone, Regions 42 and 41 of the Central/Northern Zone, and Region 31 of the Western Zone. Based on the figures we have today, in the former Eastern Zone

alone, Cham population comprises more than 60% of the total Muslim population in Cambodia. This information is important when calculating the death toll of Muslims under the Khmer Rouge regime (Chapter Four).

III. Cham Occupations

Cham are usually known as fishermen and butchers. No Halimah said, “In the 1950s and 1960s, my father was a fisherman. In 1964, I went to Takeo to butcher and sell beef.”⁹³ In Siem Reap province where there is a fairly small population of Cham, most Cham are butchers.⁹⁴ Along the Mekong River and around Tonle Sap lake, they are generally fishermen, but are not always restricted to fishing for their livelihood. According to a community leader, in Kampot around 60% of Cham are ocean fishermen, 30% are farmers, and 10% are butchers and traders.⁹⁵ In Kampong Thom, more Cham do farming. Him Ly said, “Before the Khmer Rouge, my father was a blacksmith and rice farmer. I follow this family tradition and am not involved in trading.”⁹⁶

The fishing season officially starts on October 1 and ends on May 30, allowing ample time to plant rice and other crops during the rainy season. In Krauch Chhmar district, after the fishing season, Cham fishermen grow such crops as tobacco, vegetables and rice. For some Cham in the area, however, fishing is not a major activity. In the lower

⁹³ Farina So’s interview with No Halimah, September 27, 2005. She was 64 and lived in Koh Thom district, Kandal province.

⁹⁴ In Siem Reap, butchers comprise of 80% of Muslim occupations; others drive mototaxis and car taxis. Author’s interview with Loh Mae, November 24, 2010. Loh Mae is deputy *imam* of the mosque in Stung Thmei village, Siem Reap district, Siem Reap province.

⁹⁵ Author’s interview with Ip Prohim, *tuon* of Kampot Province, June 14, 2010.

Mekong areas such as in Kandal, Cham also grow crops in fields that are flooded during the high water season. These fields usually require little chemical fertilizer. In Kampong Tralach district of Kampong Chhnang, many Cham grow one or two crops of rice a year.

A few Cham, especially those in Phnom Penh, conduct business across the border between southern Thailand and Malaysia, such as importing *hijabs* from Malaysia and exporting local produce such as dry fish, fish paste, and handicrafts, which Cham living outside the country believe to be of high quality.

Butchering cows is an occupation that falls upon Cham people naturally. In a community of mixed ethnic groups, cow butchers in the markets are usually Cham. The Cham have little competition from the Khmer and Chinese in this occupation. The Chinese dominate trade in pork and associated products, the Khmer sell vegetables and canned and packaged products. Each year during the Cham New Year, locally called Hari Raya, Cham people sacrifice several thousand healthy cows all over the country.⁹⁷ This practice gives them skills and resources in conducting business relating to beef and beef products. Apart from butchery, fishing and growing crops, a few Cham sell groceries retail, work as mechanics, and provide mobile rice milling services.

In metropolitan Phnom Penh, Cham still dominate the beef business, but many of them have a variety of other jobs including working in the government and non-governmental organizations. Because Cham tend to live in clusters such as in Prek Pra

⁹⁶ Sotheany Hin's interview with Him Ly, October 13, 2005. She was 72 and lived in Baray district, Kampong Thom province.

southeast of Phnom Penh, Chroy Changvar to the west, and in Chrang Chamres to the south, there are Cham markets that cater to their specific needs such as Islamic dress and objects and beef products.⁹⁸

Cham communities always have a *hakem* and several *tuons* to take care of religious festivities and teaching. These people are not paid by the government or the mufti office in Phnom Penh. Their work is recognized for its social contributions and thus gives them merit in the community. The *hakem* is also the point of contact for outside donors and people wanting to provide help to the community. However, sometimes the *hakem* asks donors to get permission from the village and commune chiefs for their activities in the area, such as the construction of mosques, food distribution, training and teaching. The *hakem* must listen to the mufti office in Phnom Penh while the village chiefs are employees of the government.⁹⁹ Although the *hakem* has a strong leadership role in the Cham community, he would need the village chief's approval for activities within the village in order to adhere to government rules and regulations. There is one exception to this general rule though. In Phum Trea Two village, where Tablighi Tamaat is based, the *hakem* seems to have more authority than the village and commune chief.

⁹⁷ Author's interview with Hakem of Kilometer 9, September 25, 2010.

⁹⁸ Author's interview with Mae You, January 29, 2011. Mae You is the chief of Prek Pra village, just north of Phnom Penh city center; Author's interview with Sen Mary, September 18, 2010. Sen Mary sells Muslim clothing in local markets.

⁹⁹ Author's interview with Nomin, August 1, 2010; Author's interview with Soh Pinyamin August 1, 2010. Nomin is chief and Soh Pinyamin is *hakem* of Svay Khleang village.

IV. Religious Practice

Almost all Cham in Cambodia are Muslims. The author has found only a few Cham who are Buddhist. “Islam” is an Arabic word meaning surrender or submission, while “Allah” is the Arabic word for God. Unlike Buddhism and the Khmer’s syncretic beliefs, Islam is a monotheist religion.¹⁰⁰ The central concept of this religion is known in Arabic as *tawhid*, meaning the oneness of Allah. Allah is the lord of the universe, the creator, the all-knowing, the lawgiver, the judge, and restorer of life and death. Allah urges Muslims to listen to his commandments, which were transmitted via the angel Gabriel around 610 A.D. to Mohammad, who was then about forty years old, in the Arabian city of Mecca.¹⁰¹ However, for Buddhists, doing good deeds is not following Buddha’s commandments, but a person’s choice after listening to advice by the Buddha and understanding that good deeds would lead to merits and the achievement of nirvana.

Angel Gabriel’s revelations would continue for the next twenty-two years. All these revelations were assembled in the Quran. Mohammad was in effect the first interpreter of the Quran to suit the circumstances and conditions of life and society in his time. His practices and words were later compiled into a book(s) called the *Sunna*. As a result Muslims base their understanding of Islam and actions in current society on the Quran and Sunna. However, the interpretation of the two texts varies among Muslim countries around the world. Islamic terrorists and extremists believe their

¹⁰⁰ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.

¹⁰¹ John Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.; Akbar Ahmad, *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History and Society*, New York: Routledge, 2002.

violent actions are sanctioned by Allah,¹⁰² while the Cham believe Islam is a peaceful religion and that Allah would punish those who murder innocent people. Imam Sann Cham believe that Imam Sann is their great spiritual leader to be worshiped along with Mohammad.

The Quran mentions 25 prophets starting from Adam and ending in Mohammad. The other prophets include Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus.¹⁰³ As in Buddhism, Muslims believe in heaven and hell, where souls are sent to reap the fruits of their worldly actions after death. Unlike Buddhism, in which religious precepts came from Buddha's enlightenment and complete understanding of the world by becoming an ascetic and through long meditation and fasting,¹⁰⁴ Islam is based entirely on messages from Allah told to Mohammad and Mohammad's interpretation of those messages. Muslims do not want to be called Mohammadans, as they believe Mohammad was not the only messenger of God.

Cham observe the Five Pillars of Islam: *shahada*, *salat*, *zakat*, fasting and pilgrimage. *Shahada* means *an act of bearing witness*. Muslims do that by reciting the following phrases during their prayers: "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah" and "I bear witness that Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah."¹⁰⁵ Because many Muslims follow the Sunna, they sometimes include a phrase that declares they believe in Mohammad's interpretation of Islam.

¹⁰² George Negus, *The World From Islam: A Journey of Discovery through the Muslim Heartland*, Sydney: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003.

¹⁰³ John Esposito, *The Oxford History of Islam*, op. cit.

¹⁰⁴ Ian Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005.

¹⁰⁵ Malise Ruthven, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University, 1997, p. 139.

Salat means prayer and Muslims are required to pray five times a day toward the direction of Mecca which is called the *Qibla*, just before dawn, at midday, in mid-afternoon, just after sunset and at night.¹⁰⁶ But the Imam Sann group in Cambodia is an Islamic rarity: its adherents pray only once a week at midday on Friday. Before the *salat*, Muslims ritually wash their hands, face, arms, head and feet. There is an elaborate way of conducting the *salat* that involves bowing, standing and kneeling with the recitation of various phrases. The most frequently cited phrase is “Allah is the greatest.”

In an effort to educate the younger generations to pray properly, Cambodia’s mufti office has published several issues of illustrated guidelines on how to pray.¹⁰⁷ Today a few devoted young Cham uses smart phone applications to remind them of the time and way to pray.¹⁰⁸ These sophisticated applications calculate the movement of the sun and moon to determine precise prayer times and the direction to Mecca.

The Cham have increasingly become influenced by the global application of Islam. In Cambodia, a Cham scholar and politician named Zakarya Adam has been tasked to determine the time for prayers and other festivities for the Tablighi Jamaat group (a Muslim group which prioritizes missionary teaching by Muslims for other Muslims and copies the practice of Muhammad), while Sles Soukry, a Cham scholar, is using more modern methods to determine the times for the Salafi followers (a Muslim group focusing on modern teaching of Islam along with secular education and

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ One such issue is in Khmer and is called *Let’s Come to Pray*.

¹⁰⁸ There are hundreds of Islamic applications for both Android and iOS mobile platforms. The most popular include Islam Adham Alarm, Islamic Prayer Times and Islamic Tools.

disagrees with missionary preaching for other Muslims). This results in a small discrepancy of prayer times between the two groups.

Before each session, a *muezzin* makes a call to prayer from a minaret. In Cambodia this is done in Arabic or Malay. Minarets exist in many Cham communities in Cambodia, the oldest of which is at Svay Khleang village in Kampong Cham province.¹⁰⁹ Hearing the calls to prayer, which are conveyed in a peculiar long, flat sound, sometimes makes Khmer in nearby villages uncomfortable. Some Khmer said the Cham are “howling,” especially when the call is done before sunrise. The Khmer royal chronicles also recorded “the season when the Malay howls.”¹¹⁰

Zakat is an Arabic term for purification. It is a way of assisting people through almsgiving. Muslims purify themselves and their wealth by giving some of it, once a year, to the poor, mosques, Islamic centers or welfare organizations.¹¹¹ Many Cham are poor, but many charitable organizations are set up to serve this purpose.

The Cham fast once a year during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. The ninth month is called Ramadan. In Ramadan, Cham refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, and having sexual relations between sunrise and sunset. Fasting is to be upheld vigorously. But there are exceptions for the old, sick, injured, pregnant and lactating women. Muslims believe that Mohammad heard the first verses in the Quran from the angel Gabriel during the month of Ramandan in 610 A.D. Thus, they fast to accentuate spiritual reflection, practice self-control and show obedience to Allah. In

¹⁰⁹ According to villagers of Svay Khleang and the author’s own observation, the minaret in Svay Khleang is the only, and probably the oldest, standing structure found in Muslim villages in Cambodia.

¹¹⁰ Cambodian Royal Chronicle called P63, commissioned by King Norodom in 1903 and continued under King Sisovath.

practice, this is a difficult task, especially for Cham workers who live in residential areas outside Phnom Penh and work in garment factories between eight to ten hours a day.¹¹²

The Quran instructs that Muslims must make the hajj, the Arabic word for pilgrimage, to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, at least once in a lifetime. They should do that when they are physically and financially able to make the long journey. The hajj occurs during the first days of the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar called Dhu al-Hijja. The hajj commemorates the sacrifices of Abraham, his wife Hagar and their son Ishmael. In Mecca Muslim men wear white clothing called *ihram*, which means a garment of dedication to Allah and the holy purposes of Islam. Muslim women wear a long white gowns and headscarves. Like Buddhist monks, during the hajj Muslims are forbidden from killing animals and engaging in sex.

The Cham do the following in Mecca:¹¹³

- Walk around the Kaaba at the center of the Great Mosque seven times in a counterclockwise direction. Pilgrims may also walk along a corridor of the Great Mosque and take water from a well called Zamzam, where Hagar finally found water for her son.
- On the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijja, Muslims stand in the plain of Arafat listening to a sermon by an *imam* from Mount Arafat at the edge of the plain.

¹¹¹ Malise Ruthven, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*. p. 139.

¹¹² Author's interview with Loh Sakiros, November 7, 2010. Loh Sakiros is a young Muslim woman working in a garment factory in a suburb of Phnom Penh. There are up to 300,000 young workers in such factories.

- The following day, they throw stones at the three pillars and sacrifice a sheep or a goat to commemorate Abraham's vow to sacrifice his son.
- The final act involves walking around the Kaaba seven times.

Cham Sunni Muslims

The majority of Cham are Sunnis. Sunnis account for more than 90% of all Muslims in Cambodia. The second group is the Imam Sann; all are Cham and account for less than 10% of Cambodian Muslims. The main difference between the two groups is that the latter prays only one time in seven days. No similar practice is found anywhere else in the world. The Cham Sunnis are an orthodox and internationally-mainstreamed group. They are influenced by global Islamic practices and have many similarities with other Muslims around the world.

In 2010, there was an attempt by a Shia donor organization to convert Sunnis to Shia in a district of Kampong Cham province.¹¹⁴ The attempt was met with strong opposition from the mufti office. The mosque and religious school in the district were subsequently shut down.

Cham Sunni Muslims are divided into four main denominations or schools of thought: Hanafi, Shafii, Maliki and Hanbali. Islamic sources reveal that globally Hanafi is prevalent in South Asia, Central Asia, Turkey, and the Balkans; Shafii is practiced mainly in Southeast Asia; Maliki is followed in north and west Africa; and Hanbali is mostly observed in Saudi Arabia. The differences among these sects are subtle.

¹¹³ Author's interview with Haji Ak Mat, June 15, 2010; Author's interview with Osman Romly, May 31, 2010. Osman Romly made a trip to Mecca in early 2002, but he does not want to be called by the title Haji.

According to some Cham interviewed for this dissertation, it is not really important to them. But the differences between Sunni and Shia are more important, as Cambodian Sunnis resist being converted to Shia. According to Soh Fiyantoyet, *imam* of Battambang province, most Cham follow the Shafii sect. In Battambang, almost all Cham are students of Shafii. 85% of Cham are Shaffii in Kampong Cham. In the whole country, about 95% are followers of the Shafii sect.¹¹⁵

According to Ip Prohim who is a religious teacher in Kampot, the majority of Cham in Kampot are Shafii followers. There are several reasons for this: After the Khmer Rouge when scholars and religious intellectuals had been killed, Cham in Kampot as well as other parts of the country received the most support, in terms of books and education, from Malaysia and Indonesia. This trend continues today. In these countries, Shafii is the main sect.¹¹⁶ Today with more students going to the Middle East and South Asia for religious education, support for the three other sects has increased.

The most important distinction between Islamic sectarian groups in Cambodia is that between the Tablighi Jamaat (locally referred to as Dakwah) and Salafi groups (both are under the Shafii main branch). This also leads to political division, even fractures, among Cham in Cambodia. While the Tablighi Jamaat group targets its support to the illiterate, rural and poor Cham, the Salafi group targets intellectual and urban Cham. Tablighi Jamaat is a rising force in Cambodian Islam because of its broad-based

¹¹⁴ Author's interview with a *hakem* during a gathering organized by DC-Cam at the Cambodian Institute of Technology.

¹¹⁵ Author's interview with Soh Fiyantoyet, June 10, 2010. He is the *imam* of Battambang province. At around 44 years old, Soh Fiyantoyet is fairly young for his position. Leadership of Cham is divided as *Imam Khet* (province), *Imam Srok* (district) and *Imam Krong* (city). The *Mufti* controls all of them.

¹¹⁶ Author's interview with Ip Prohim, June 14, 2010.

support. And because of its rural support, the country's political parties seem to court them (otherwise, they would risk losing support from major Cham districts). In 2004 there was about the same proportion of Tablighi Jamaat and Salafi followers.¹¹⁷

In the 1990s when both the Tablighi Jamaat and Salafi groups were on the rise, there were serious conflicts between them. Villages were divided, family members did not talk to each other, and mosques were partitioned. Two mosques were built in the same villages, defying the traditional rule for mosque construction. In Peus 2 village, the mosque was divided in two. In Mak village, Stung Trang district, Cham pray in the mosque at different times. In Khleang Sbek village, there are two mosques built next to each other. Similar conflicts occurred in Kampot, Preah Sihanouk and other provinces. Today the conflict between the two has stabilized, but divisions between them still exist. They simply do not engage in conversation. More specifically, the Tablighi Jamaat group has become more secretive, while the Salafi group has become more open. Further, the Tablighi Jamaat group declined a few invitations for religious debate by the Salafi group.

There are several special characteristics of the Cambodian Tablighi Jamaat:

- Disengagement from broader Cambodian society
- Strict rules for women
- Obligatory preaching mission¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Luke Hunt and Michael Hayes, "Cambodian Students Caught up in Thailand's Troubled South," *The Phnom Penh Post*, May 7, 2004.

¹¹⁸ Ya Mat, a Dakwah hakem, said, "In Dakwah, Cham conduct missionary preaching three days in one village, per month. In one year a Dakwah Cham does it 40 days and in his life he does it 4 months. We preach in villages in order to stop bad Cham from gambling, stealing, robbing, drinking, prostitution

- Adoption of traditional practices of Islam thought to be practiced during Mohammad's time
- Transnational connections with similar groups in Malaysia, Pakistan, southern Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam.

The characteristics of the Salafi group include:

- Engaged with broader Cambodian society
- Adopting an open approach to social and religious development through support of both religious and secular education
- Support the education of girls
- Transnational connections with similar groups in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Indonesia, southern Thailand and Vietnam.

The author attended a national *Ijtimas* ceremony conducted by a Tablighi Jamaat group in Phum Trea Two village, Kampong Cham province in 2012. This group has received strong criticism from the foreign media and western researchers. As a result, they have been sensitive to outsiders participating in their ceremonies. Even for such a large national event, there were no photographers or journalists present. The Cambodian Government sent provincial police as well as members of its anti-terrorism unit to observe the event as covert agents. They also strictly monitored the foreign Muslims (from India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Indonesia, southern Thailand and Malaysia) in attendance.

and using drugs, especially among young Cham.” Sotheany Hin’s interview with Ya Mat, September 28, 2005. Ya Mat was 55, lives in Koh Thom district, Kandal province.

The most interesting part of *Ijtimas* is the way in which Tablighi Jamaat leaders organized the event. Cham men arrived at Phum Trea Two by themselves along with basic necessities to support them for three days, including rice, cooking utensils, firewood and dried meat. They slept in the mosque and in tents set up on the south side of the mosque. They bathed from collective water tanks built of bamboo and plastic bags. Some of them brushed their teeth with a special twig reported to be used during Mohammad's time. The twigs were imported and sold at stalls set up around the mosque compound. In these stalls, Cham men sold religious dress, both locally made and imported, fresh fish, desserts, drinks, cooked food, religious texts and Islamic memorabilia. Security and order were maintained not by district and provincial police but by *Ijtimas* officials armed with bamboo poles about 1.8 meters long.

All women were required to wear veils and were not allowed anywhere near the mosque compound. Women who sold products from stalls were required to stay at the back of the stall. They were not allowed to talk to male customers; only their husbands could. In Phum Trea Two and some other Tablighi Jamaat communities, women are not usually allowed to continue their education beyond elementary school, resulting in their lack of fluency in the Khmer language. When asked about this I was told that the school was too far away and that the family was poor. But I found that this was not the case. In my observation, the treatment of Tablighi Jamaat women in Phum Trea Two falls far short of the gender ethics established by both the Ministry of Women's Affairs and civil society organizations. In short, Cham women in Phum Trea seem to be relegated to second class citizenship, and are susceptible to reprimand and punishment from Tablighi Jamaat men.

Imam Sann Cham

Members of this group are followers of Imam Sann, an old and devout Cham who died and was buried on Udong Mountain.¹¹⁹ He was also believed to be a close friend of the Cambodian King Norodom who reigned between 1860 and 1904. Legends have it that Imam Sann and King Norodom met in a forest where they became friends. After leaving Imam Sann in the forest on his way to the city, the king found that Imam Sann had arrived long before he did. People believe that Imam Sann not only knew Islamic wisdom but also had magic powers to distort distance.¹²⁰ But he only put his magic skills to good use. When he died, he was buried at Udong Mountain near the former royal palace.

The Imam Sann group celebrates two Mawlid ceremonies annually. The first is to commemorate the birth of the Prophet Mohammad and another is to mark the death of Imam Sann. In 2010, the Mawlid ceremony for Prophet Mohammad was conducted in late February, while that for Imam Sann was conducted in October.¹²¹ During the ceremony for Imam Sann, followers from around the country gathered at Udong Mountain. The date of the event is usually decided by a committee that generally considers whether the people are to be freed from field work.¹²²

Today this group has about 38,000 adherents.¹²³ They live mostly in Kampong Tralach district of Kampong Chhnang province, but they can also be found in

¹¹⁹ Udong Mountain and its surrounding area was the capital of Cambodia from the 17th to 19th centuries.

¹²⁰ Author's interview with Soh Rahman, October 24, 2010.

¹²¹ Compared to Buddhism, it generally occurs after the Pchum Ben (reverence of ancestors) days which happens in September.

¹²² Author's interview with Sou Ly, February 23, 2010. Sou Ly is *hakem* of Chan Kiek village which is an Imam Sann village.

¹²³ Author's interview with Kai Team, February 20, 2010. Kai Team is the mutfti of the Imam Sann group.

provinces such as Kandal, Pursat, Battambang and Kampot. According to the group's mufti, Kai Team, there are currently 53 mosques and *suravs* for Imam Sann group in Cambodia. Imam Sann group has their own mufti or Oknya (a Khmer word for that position) separate from the other group of Cham Muslims.

Other groups consider the Imam Sann to be less orthodox in their practice of Islam as they only pray once in seven days, on Friday at noon. Imam Sann Cham believe that they are already close to Allah so there is no need to pray five times a day.¹²⁴ The manner of their prayers, Islamic practices and everyday costumes are also different from other groups. For example, they do not wash their face when they pray. The men do not need to keep beards. The men's headscarf is not the cap-like style seen among orthodox Cham. Some men instead wear the Khmer *kramar* (checkered headscarf). Indeed, one can see no specific headscarf guideline among the men. Some men wear a Khmer-like white scarf around, but not covering, their heads. Old men wear a simple, white, long-sleeved shirt and long pants. Without their headscarves, they look just like Buddhist priests. During the Mawlid ceremony, single women wear green robes while married women wear black robes. However, most of them do not cover their heads or faces in any Islamic fashion.¹²⁵

The Imam Sann's practice of Islam is distinct and strong enough that it commands a devoted and loyal group of followers. Today this group is in danger of being assimilated into the Shafii group. Presumably, the Imam Sann group speaks the Cham language and writes Cham better than other groups. They also believe themselves to be the preservers of the original Cham cultural heritage, which gives them pride and a

¹²⁴ The author conducted a focus group discussion with elderly men at Chan Kiek village on September 11, 2010.

sense of purpose. According to Kai Team, their number is decreasing because of conversion to other Islamic groups.¹²⁶ Some charity organizations have provided funds to develop this community, but with some conditions for them to follow their Islamic practices, for example, to pray five times a day. Some others in the Cham community believe that their ways of practicing Islam reflects their lack of understanding of broader Islam. Osman Hassan, a Cham politician, believes that once this group understands that they are different from other Muslims in the “world,” they would change. But he did not want to force them to change or provide aid to them on the condition that they change.¹²⁷

Recently there has been emerging strife within the Imam Sann group. In Orussey commune of Kampong Tralach district, there are three Imam Sann villages: Chan Kiek, Orussey and Sre Prey. Chan Kiek has 205 families, Orussey has 160 families, and Sre Prey has 280 families. Each village has its chief and an *hakem* who oversees religious practice within their community. In the past, the Mawlid ceremony was conducted at the commune Surav in Sre Prey village where the Imam Sann mufti Kai Team oversaw the festivities. In the past two years due to internal conflict the three villages have conducted their Mawlid ceremony separately, a practice with which Kai Team vehemently disagrees. The village of Orussey has built its own surav. Chan Kiek is also building a new mosque.

¹²⁵ Author’s observation of Imam Sann groups in Chan Kiek and Orussey villages.

¹²⁶ Author’s interview with Kai Team, February 20, 2010.

¹²⁷ Osman Hassan made this comment during a conference in 2008 as part of a CMDF project with community leaders around the country.

The decision by Chan Kiek villagers to separate their festivities has caused conflict between Kai Team (the mufti) and Chan Kiek villagers led by their *hakem*, Sou Ly.¹²⁸ Kai Team said that he has no trouble with Orussey holding a separate ceremony because it abides by the law and traditional practice of separation. However, the law says that a community can build a separate mosque when that location is 2 km away from the existing mosque. When this distance is an extended field, then the new mosque must be built further than the eye can see. If this distance is covered by forest, then people in the location of the new mosque must not be able to hear the sound of the drum beat from the original mosque. If there is a river between the villages that makes it difficult to cross to the original mosque, then it is permissible to build a new mosque on the other side of the river. Kai Team said Sou Ly's decision to build a new mosque does not follow these rules as the location of the new mosque is just 450 meters from the old mosque.¹²⁹

However, Sou Ly explained that previously the villages in the commune were small. Today they have expanded several times. The old mosque is too small to accommodate everybody. He also pointed out that Orussey has already separated, so he would like to have his own village mosque. He and his villagers said that many communities are developing and changing, with funding from overseas by Kuwaiti and other charity organizations, so they want their village to have a new face and a new mosque built for them and their children, as opposed to going to the same mosque shared among the whole commune. Sou Ly added that recently a Kuwaiti organization announced its intention to provide help with the construction of his new mosque, but he said if they force him to pray five times a day he would not accept the

¹²⁸ Author's interview with Sou Ly, February 23, 2010.

¹²⁹ Author's interview with Kai Team, February 20, 2010.

donation. Sou Ly added that the conditions set up by Kai Team that prevent him from building a new mosque have no foundation in any written guideline. He stressed that they have no practical purpose and was quick to point out that the more mosques a Cham builds, the better it is for Islam.¹³⁰

This conflict is one between leader and followers, and between conservatism and modernization under the pressure of Islamic change in Cambodia. One can only hope that the conflict can lead to good results for both parties. Kai Team remains open to negotiation and would welcome the return of Sou Ly to join him in the practice of the Mawlid ceremony and Islam. It is important to note that in the leadership hierarchy of the Imam Sann sect, Sou Ly is the third deputy of Kai Team.

V. Pilgrimage to Mecca

The pilgrimage to Mecca is the fifth requirement of Islam. Mecca is a meaningful location for all Cham. The trip should be one of their lives' defining moments. Cham pray five times a day for most of their lives in the direction of Mecca; therefore, being in that city or the act of traveling toward it is fulfilling a life-long desire for Cham. However, the trip is only confined to a small number of rich Cham and those who are lucky enough to receive support from Islamic charitable organizations. In 2010, a trip to Mecca cost around USD 3,000 per person, depending on the length of travel and stay. Tour companies generally arrange for a 40-day trip.¹³¹ Considering that average

¹³⁰ Author's interview with Sou Ly February 23, 2010.

¹³¹ Author's interview with Sakarya Sulaiman, May 30, 2010. Sakarya Sulaiman is a tour operator for Cambodian Muslims. He claimed his company is the largest in the business.

income of Cambodians is just around USD 510 per year,¹³² it is understandable that the majority of Cham are unable to make the trip to Mecca in their lifetime.

Charitable organizations from countries such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE and even Syria have provided support to enable Cham to travel to Mecca. They generally arrange for a 15-day trip to cut the cost and to bring more Cham to Mecca. The actual number of days devoted to festivities in Mecca is around four. In the early 2000s, Saudi Arabian King Fahd sponsored a large number of Cham to conduct the Hajj.¹³³ In the 1950s and 1960s, the number was smaller. In 2010 approximately 300 Cham traveled to Mecca.¹³⁴

Upon returning to Cambodia, a pilgrim Cham becomes a haji. This title should be given to them by Islam as they are considered to have fulfilled one of the five pillars of Islam. But according to Osman Romly, who took the trip in 2002, those who conducted the Hajj and return home continuing to commit sins, their pilgrimage will not be considered meritorious.¹³⁵ There are two types of Hajj: The “big” Hajj which occurs during the Islamic New Year and the “small” Hajj that a Cham can conduct at any time. The small Hajj (or Umrah) is a solution to congestion in Mecca and the high cost of living in the city during the Islamic New Year. Some poorer Cham can afford the small Hajj. Osman Romly said that a pilgrim who conducts the small Hajj can collect as much merit as during the big Hajj.

¹³² World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, 2010.

¹³³ “First group of Cambodian Muslim pilgrims heads for Mecca,” *AFP*, February 28, 2001.

¹³⁴ Author’s interview with Sakarya Sulaiman, May 30, 2010.

¹³⁵ Author’s interview with Osman Romly, May 31, 2010. Osman Romly lives in Kampong Cham. He is a religious teacher as well as a part-time staff of a local NGO called KAPE working in education.

There are also exceptions in the Hajj for those who are unable to make it to Mecca at all during their lifetime. It is true many Cham can never afford a trip to Mecca. The solution is that the children of those who cannot make it can conduct the Hajj for their parents. The children would then need to do the Hajj twice, once for themselves and another one for their mother or father. Those who have no children or are physically weak, but have some money, can pay someone unrelated, even an agent, to conduct the Hajj for them.¹³⁶

Seventy-year-old Sa Math traveled to Mecca in 2003 with a group of 32 other Cham.¹³⁷ He paid USD 3,200, his life savings, to a tour company that arranged his registration in Mecca, visa fees, flight, transportation, accommodation and food for forty two days. Although the price tag seems steep, especially for someone who was retired and living in a small house, Sa Math said that the payment was a bargain. The trip was very long and he did not have to worry about making his itinerary. After all, it was the first time Sa Math traveled to the Middle East and he did not know anything about procedures at the Grand Mosque or where to go and what to do once he arrived in Mecca. Like many Cham, Sa Math had mastered basic Khmer language and can speak Cham. He can read some Cham texts, but he does not speak English or Arabic. The tour company arranged all that for him. As a result, such group tours are very popular among Cham pilgrims today.¹³⁸ Sa Math traveled through Bahrain before landing at Jeddah International Airport, which is Saudi Arabia's gateway for global pilgrims. In Bahrain he met a group of twenty six Cham.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Author's interview with Sa Math, May 30, 2010.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Two things that Sa Math was unhappy about were that the charges for a partial shortening of the hair (*taqsir*) and shaving of the head (*halq*) were a little high. He said that at the end of the festivities in Mecca all pilgrims were required to perform *halq* or *taqsir* and that they had to go to a barber for that purpose. The barber charged between USD 30 to 50. In addition, the price for a sacrificial sheep was USD 100. Each of the Cham pilgrims had to pay that money to complete the ritual. When visiting Medina, Sa Math visited the tomb of Mohammad, but he said it might be just a symbolic tomb with none of Mohammad's bones inside. He also had to get up early to arrive before the crowd.¹³⁹

Another impression Sa Math had of Mecca is that it is a sacred place. He recalled a time when his wife boasted that the mosque was small and that she could find her way around easily. Afterwards, she got lost in the mosque. Sa Math inferred that at the Grand Mosque one cannot boast, lie or cheat; otherwise, sacred spirits will punish them for that sin. Sa Math wore white clothes called *ihram* most of the time in Mecca. In such clothes one is forbidden from sexual activities and killing living things.

The author also interviewed one of the largest travel agents in Cambodia that arranges for trips to Mecca. Sakarya Sulaiman is the tour leader of his company, GYA Group,¹⁴⁰ which has been in business since the early 2000s. He became involved in arranging people's trips to Mecca in 1997 when he was studying at Islamic University at Medina. Sakarya Sulaiman spent seven years in Medina studying Sharia law and earned a bachelor's degree. As a student, he helped his uncle in arranging travel to Saudi Arabia and organizing tours in the country. Sulaiman also assisted groups of

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Author's interview with Sakarya Sulaiman, May 30, 2010.

pilgrims from Vietnam, mostly Cham Vietnamese, and Thailand. Upon returning to Cambodia he had the confidence to set up his own company and organize his own tours. Sulaiman said that a proper tour should take forty days, which includes four days for flights to and from Saudi Arabia through Hong Kong or Kuala Lumpur, eight to ten days in Medina, and more than twenty days in Mecca. The charge of around USD 3000 also includes basic health care. It is unavoidable that once arriving in Mecca for such a long time that someone would get sick. Sulaiman would take care of that too. His tour also provides pre-departure training to pilgrims about festival procedures and proper conduct in Saudi Arabia.¹⁴¹

Sulaiman indicated that in 2010, around 270-280 Cham left for Mecca. His company managed 137 pilgrims while about five other companies arranged the rest. The average number of Cham leaving for Mecca per year since 2000 is 300, according to Sulaiman. Sulaiman expects that an increasing number of Cham will travel to Mecca as the economic situation becomes better. He said that there is a sizable number of Muslims in Phnom Penh and other cities who can afford the trip to Mecca, but they have not decided to go yet as they fear flying, are apprehensive about staying in a far-flung country for a long time, and worry about their security. Others decide to delay their pilgrimage because they do not want to be bound by Islam to be more proper once returning home (e.g., stopping drinking and smoking).¹⁴²

Sulaiman observed that during the 1960s, very few Cham managed physically and financially to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. Those few who could became famous for their efforts. Having the title Haji was an honorable one. There were no convenient

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

group tours then. He/she (mostly males) had to arrange their own trips and travel mostly alone to Saudi Arabia. In the 1980s the number was also very small (less than ten Cham per year). Their numbers began to rise in the late 1990s when there were around 20 to 30 per year, and increased sharply in the early 2000s. The number has now stabilized at around 300 per year. Sulaiman attributed today's increase to Cambodia's tolerance for Islam and improved telecommunication and transportation technology.¹⁴³

The number of Cambodian Muslims making the Hajj is much lower than the allowable quota for Cambodia set by the Ministry of Hajj of Saudi Arabia.¹⁴⁴ According to the government of Saudi Arabia, the Hajj quota of a particular country is 0.01% of that country's Muslim population. In special circumstances, there are also other restrictions. In July 2009, Arab health ministers met in Cairo to take measures against the possible spread of Swine Flu during the month of Ramadan (August in 2009) and the Hajj in November of the same year. They decided to restrict the number of pilgrims younger than 12 and older than 65. According to Sulaiman, this did not affect Cambodian Muslims as their number was small and the effect of Swine Flu was limited in Cambodia.

VI. Life-Cycle Ceremonies

Throughout the year, the Cham conduct several festivals and rituals according to Islamic tradition. Many of these are practiced by the global Muslim community. It is

¹⁴³ Ibid.

important to note that although many Cham are trying to conduct their festivals and ceremonies in conformance with orthodox and global practices as much as possible, many others simply conduct them the way they have always done locally. Two main Islamic festivities are: Eidul Adha, which celebrates the close of the Hajj, and Eidul Fitri, which is a feast day celebrating the end of Ramandan. Annual festivals and ceremonies include the following:

Islamic New Year

The month of Muharram marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. The New Year begins on the first day of Muharram. Unlike the Khmer who consider the Khmer New Year as the biggest festival of the year, the Cham celebrate their New Year relatively quietly. Cham converge at a mosque, conduct prayers and recite the Quran.¹⁴⁵

Eidul Adha

Eidul Adha is celebrated on the tenth day of the twelfth month. For the majority of Cham, it is exactly 2 months and 10 days after Eidul Fitri, which takes place after Ramadan.

Eidul Adha is a “festival of sacrifice” that celebrates the trials and triumph of Prophet Abraham. According to the Quran, Abraham showed his willingness to Allah to sacrifice his son Ishmael as a testimony of his obedience to Allah. However, upon seeing Abraham’s true self, Allah stopped him from killing his son and provided a sheep for him to sacrifice instead. Cham in Cambodia celebrate this festival by sacrificing cows instead of sheep. A ritual specialist generally conducts the slaughter

¹⁴⁴ Ministry of Hajj, Saudi Arabia, *Hajj and Umrah Step by Step*, 2006. Accessed October 2, 2010, http://www.hajjumrahguide.com/hajj_stepbystep.html

¹⁴⁵ Author’s interview with Tin Man, November 7, 2010. Tin Man is a 98-year-old man living in a suburb of Phnom Penh.

of the animal, after reciting a short prayer. The meat of the cows is divided into three main parts: the family keeps one part; relatives, friends and neighbors keep one part; and the poor are given the rest. The blood of the cow is buried in a hole dug next to the sacrificial location.¹⁴⁶

In the morning of Eidul Adha, Cham wear their brightest and finest traditional clothes. They first attend the morning prayers at a local mosque. Then family members and friends exchange greetings and gifts. They also request forgiveness from each other. The family that the author visited purchased a young, healthy cow a week before the festival. They sacrificed their cow at around twelve thirty in the afternoon which is a little late as they waited for the arrival of the butcher who understandably was busy on the day. The sacrifice of an animal, known in Arabic as *Qurbani*, is to be done during the 10th to 12th days of the 12th Islamic calendar month. As the animal was being sacrificed, a person in the crowd told me that this cow was not a simple animal. It would go to heaven after the sacrifice. Islam has clear rules for sacrificial animals. The cow should be at least two years old, free of defects and diseases, and not too skinny and/or disabled (such as blind or missing a leg). The animal must be fully owned by the person offering the sacrifice, and not be stolen or taken by force from someone else. But a group of relatives can share in the purchase of a healthy cow.¹⁴⁷

Eidul Fitri

Fasting during Ramandan is a difficult and demanding Islamic rite. Completing it results in a celebration. Eidul Fitri is a ritual that serves such a purpose. Muslims

¹⁴⁶ Author's observations of the event in 2010 and 2011.

around the world take a day off to observe Eidul Fitri. It is on the first day of the month following Ramadan. Muslims make special prayer in the morning. Later in the day friends and relatives meet and seek forgiveness from each other for their misconducts. They join a dinner party and prayer in the evening together. During the day, Muslims are also required to perform Zakat Fitrah, to give an obligatory amount of alms to the poor in their immediate community. There are specific rules in Islam relating to Zakat Fitri pertaining to the donor, receiver, amount and location. The main purpose of this ceremony is to cleanse the wrongs committed during fasting. In 2011, Eidul Fitri was conducted by the majority Cham on August 30. However, the Imam Sann group conducted Eidul Fitri on September 1. In India it was done on August 31. During the event, Cham also visit the houses of friends, neighbors and relatives to ask for forgiveness. Locally they call this *som ma-as*.¹⁴⁸

Aqiqah

Islam is a religion predominantly focused on the concept of creation. The Creator Allah is responsible for worldly existence. Thus He is credited, remembered and thanked during prayers and in sacrifices. The occasion of childbirth is a quintessential moment for Islamic conceptions of creation and determinism. A child is another human being given by Allah to the parents of the child and to mankind. Therefore Aqiqah is a ritual designed to show gratitude to Allah and to introduce the child to the world.

Aqiqah is to be performed by the parents or guardians of the child. The best time to perform Aqiqah is the seventh day after birth. However, some Cham families delay

¹⁴⁷ Author's interview with Mohammad Sup, November 10, 2010. He is a 75-year old elder in Chrang Chamres who has extensive knowledge about Muslim culture.

conducting Aqiqah until later in life, probably due to war, poverty and the social problems typically experienced by many Cham born in the 1970s during the Khmer Rouge years and 1980s when Cambodia was still recovering from genocide. Families use this ritual to announce the birth of the baby in the presence of family members, neighbors and friends who celebrate the blessed occasion.

During Aqiqah two main activities are conducted: the sacrifice of livestock and removing the hair of the newborn. In the Imam Sann community, a baby's hair is sometimes cut as part of the Mawlid ceremony. The sacrifice of an animal is an act of giving back to Allah for giving the parents the child. It is also a way to request that Allah protect the child from harm in their lifetime. Some Cham families do not sacrifice a large animal during Aqiqah as it is expensive relative to their living standard, so they sacrifice a smaller animal such as a chicken instead.¹⁴⁹

Mawlid Ceremony

This ceremony is the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad, who was born on the 12th day of the month of Rabi I in the Islamic calendar. Salafi followers do not conduct the Mawlid ceremony. Cham commemorate this day by meeting at local mosques and reciting the Quran. In the Imam Sann group, people make glutinous rice cakes and beautifully decorated cakes in various shapes and sizes, with money and eggs in the middle. Villagers meet at a certain point and parade toward the mosque. The Imam Sann group also conducts Mawlid for the death of Imam Sann,

¹⁴⁸ Author's discussion with elderly Muslims at Chrang Chamres during Eidul Fitri in 2011.

¹⁴⁹ Author's observation of the event in Chan Kiek village, which was conducted during a Mawlid ceremony.

their late spiritual leader, in October every year, after community leaders have agreed on a suitable time.¹⁵⁰

Funeral Rituals

The author observed a Cham funeral in Kampong Cham. In one Cham village there are up to seven cemeteries. According to villagers, the same graves can be used again after forty years, or when space is too scarce. When a person dies, the Cham ritually clean the body of blood, blemishes and other imperfections that accompany the death. Then the body is wrapped in three pieces of white cloth. It is preferable that the body be buried the same day. If a death occurs at night, the person can be buried the following morning.¹⁵¹

The Imam Sann group conducts seven more ceremonies on the 3rd, 7th, 10th, 30th, 40th, and 100th day after a burial, and again after one year. Relatives and neighbors attend and assist the family of the dead in the ceremony.¹⁵² They also contribute money and food. Each ceremony is accompanied by the preparation of food and cakes. The ceremony on the 30th day is accompanied by “Khmer noodles,” a traditionally Khmer food. It is interesting to see how and why this has become part of an Islamic funeral for the Imam Sann group. Members of the Imam Sann group are often proud to say that they are “similar” to Khmer in some aspects of their religious practice and ways of life. Although Khmer noodle is a traditional Khmer food, it is generally prepared during special occasions to serve to a large number of people.

¹⁵⁰ The author attended the Mawlid ceremony of the Imam Sann group on three occasions. See photographs at http://d.dccam.org/Projects/Public_Info/Photo/Mawlid_Ceremony_in_Chan_Kieb_Village/index.htm.

¹⁵¹ Author’s interview with Nomin, August 1, 2010, village chief of Svay Khleang.

In some areas in Kampong Cham, no ritual is conducted after the first funeral day. There are practical variations from village to village.¹⁵³ There is a specific paragraph in the Quran that mentions how long a widow should be single before she remarries. The Quran says: “Those of you who die and leave widows behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten days.”¹⁵⁴

Ijtimas

Ijtimas is an annual gathering conducted by the Tablighi Jamaat group, usually in April. Followers of Tablighi Jamaat come from all parts of the country to pray collectively, to listen to preaching by both local and international Islamic experts, and create a small group called Chum Ah to conduct missionary missions after Ijtimas. The Tablighi Jamaat group focuses on preaching in other Cham villages around the country called Dakwah. Cham usually leave their homes for between 3 to 40 days on a trip and pay for it themselves. They bring with them rice, cooking utensils and firewood. In 2012 Ijtimas was conducted in two locations in Kampong Chhnang and Kampong Cham provinces. In Kampong Cham up to 20,000 Cham attended the event. In 2011, it was conducted in four provinces for Tablighi Jamaat supporters from Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Preah Sihanouk and Kampot.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Author's interview with Sou Ly February 23, 2010, *hakem* of Chan Kiek village.

¹⁵³ Author's interview with Nomin, August 1, 2010, village chief of Svay Khleang.

¹⁵⁴ Quran verse 2:234-235.

VII. Cham Language

The Cham language belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian branch of languages, which are spoken in Malaysia, Indonesia, Madagascar, and the Philippines. Variations of Cham are spoken by the Raglai, Rhade, Jarai, Chru and Hroi in Vietnam and Cambodia.¹⁵⁶ In fact, Cham in villages in Kampong Cham can converse fairly well with the Jarai people of Ratanak Kiri province. A variation of Cham is also spoken by an ethnic minority group on Hainan Island called Tsat.¹⁵⁷

Although the Champa and Khmer Kingdoms were close to each other, the Khmer language belongs to the Austroasiatic family shared with Vietnamese.¹⁵⁸ Cham has very little trace of Pali and Sankrit, but Khmer is heavily influenced by the two Indian languages through Hinduism and Buddhism.¹⁵⁹ Because of their close proximity, Cham, Khmer, Thai and Vietnamese influence each other. In the Cham language today, one finds considerable influences of Khmer.

The author observed that in informal conversation, the presence of the Khmer influence is almost unnoticeable. But in speeches and presentations in which a Cham needs to use formal language, one finds considerable influences of Khmer, up to thirty percent at some points. There are a few reasons why this happens. In today's Cham

¹⁵⁵ Author's interview with Haroun, April 25, 2012. Haroun is deputy commune chief of Trea commune, Kampong Cham province.

¹⁵⁶ Graham Thurgood, *From Ancient Cham to Modern Dialects: Two Thousand Years of Language Contact and Change*, Honolulu: University of Hawai Press, 1999; Graham Thurgood, "Language Contact and the Directionality of Internal Drift: The Development of Tones and Registers in Chamic," *Linguistic Society of America*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (Mar., 1996), pp. 1-31; Loup Durand, *Jarai*, Paris: Denoel, 1980.

¹⁵⁷ Roger Plant, "Indigenous Peoples/Ethnic Minorities and Poverty Reduction in Cambodia," Asian Development Bank, June 2002, p. 4.

¹⁵⁸ Dang Nghiem Van, Chu Thai Son and Luu Hung, *Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam*, Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 2010, p. 13.

language, many Cham use it only in spoken form. There are very few written Cham texts and very few people who can read and write Cham. Without a writing system, the Cham language decays. Old words are forgotten. New words are rarely developed. Because Cham people are unable to express nuance in their own language, they borrow Khmer words to fill the gap.

The author observed the use of the word genocide in the Cham language. In Khmer, genocide is translated as *bralai pouch sas*. In the Cham language, there is no equivalent word for genocide, so Cham people use *bralai pouch sas* for this term. According to thirty *hakems* from Kampong Cham province who the author spoke with about the word genocide in Cham, an equivalent word for genocide should indicate a widespread, indiscriminate killing of all groups of people in Cambodia including the Chinese, Khmer, Buddhists, intellectuals and the Cham themselves. When Cham people converse in the Cham language, they would use the word *bralai pouch sas* and not translate it into Cham.

However, there are a few other ways in which Cham people can describe the Khmer Rouge's brutality. In the Muslim world, the word *zolem* means bad deeds (the Buddhist equivalent is bad karma). *Zolem* is used to describe many types of actions that are socially and morally wrong, ranging from petty theft, cheating, and robbery to taking a person's life. Cham people in Cambodia are familiar with the concept of *zolem*. However, they also have a local term for *zolem*, called *nhak ka yas*. In order to describe the acts of the Khmer Rouge, Cham people would use the words *nhak ka yas* along with other words to give it specific meanings. For example, *nhak ka yas pom*

¹⁵⁹ Ian Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*, op. cit.

tahy pouch sas, meaning the “horrible acts of killing groups of people.” *Pouch sas* are two Khmer words for seed and race. But a Cham person can also say *nhak ka yas pom tay pche sas* by changing *pouch sas* to *pche sas*. The Cham word for *pouch* is *pche*, while the Cham word for *sas* is borrowed from Khmer. However, Cham are very comfortable using *pouch sas* when conversing in Cham. Moreover, the concept of genocide in Arabic is *ibaadati jama-'iyah* (إبادة جماعية). *Ibaadati* means destroy or conquer, while *jama-'iyah* means group.

Cham people use the Cham language to communicate with each other. Outside of their community they speak Khmer with members of other ethnic groups, in formal and informal settings, including the workplace, marketplace, office and school. The main reasons for Cham to continue using the Cham language is the preservation of their culture and as part of their historical root. Apart from that, there is little economic benefit for Cham to use their language. It is thus very difficult for young urban Cham to learn to speak Cham. In Trea village in Kampong Cham, it is reported that many of the women speak Khmer very little or not at all because of this community’s emphasis on religious devotion, following Tablighi Jamaat teachings, and stricter rules on women for interacting with outsiders.¹⁶⁰

The erosion of the Cham language is occurring in Battambang. The author met several elderly Cham in Battambang who reported that the majority of Cham in the province do not speak the Cham language. They came from Kampong Cham and other areas to the east and Chau Doc of Vietnam about two hundred years ago. When they came there were not many Cham in the province. They lived among Khmer people and thus

¹⁶⁰ Author’s interview with Sok Ly, January 2, 2010. Sok Ly is Imam of Tekeo province.

the Cham language was not successfully transmitted to younger generations. Over time it was lost. Today in Battambang the Muslims who speak Cham are newcomers to the province since the Khmer Rouge regime; the original inhabitants do not speak Cham. Because Battambang Cham do not speak Cham, they are sometimes incorrectly called Chvea or Java Ku (the people who originally came from Indonesia and Malaysia).¹⁶¹

In Kampot province, according to Ip Prohim who is a *tuon*, around 20% of the Muslim population speaks the Cham language. Most of the Muslims in this province are Chvea comprising around 60 to 70% of the total population. Ip Prohim said the Cham who do not speak Cham are generally younger; they were not taught by their parents after 1979, were not taught at school, and were not persuaded to use the Cham language in society (immediate community or wider society in Kampot).¹⁶²

In many religious gatherings in Kampot, the Khmer language is used in religious teachings. This is in line with a claim made by a Chvea woman who the author interviewed in Phnom Penh: that whenever listeners are Cham and Chvea, the Khmer language is used in communication in a group.¹⁶³ The Chvea population in Kampot speaks both Khmer and some Malay words. They also use several words in Cham in their communications as well.

¹⁶¹ Author's interview with Soh Fiyantoyet, June 10, 2010.

¹⁶² Author's interview with Ip Prohim, June 14, 2010.

VIII. Cham Clothing

Cham clothing is influenced by both Cambodian society and as members of the global Islamic society. Unlike the Khmer whose dress is strongly influenced by India and China, the Cham are more influenced by the Middle East and Muslim countries through their education, religious trainings, pilgrimages to Mecca, and business contacts in those countries.

Dress for Men

The dress of Cham men is indistinguishable from men of other ethnic groups. They only wear Cham and Islamic dress during prayer and special events. Their clothing includes loose-fitting silk robes with a round neck, which are worn in black, white and gray. They also wear a cap called a *katip* (locally the Cham calls this cap *kampir*), which has different shapes and decorations. Some men use a white scarf that is looped around their head as a cap. The Imam Sann group's caps can be Islamic ones or simply Khmer scarves folded into a loop, similar to the way Khmer men or women do when carrying baskets on their heads. Another feature of Cham men's dress is that more of them, especially the *tuon*, *hakem*, *imam* and devout men, now wear long beards. Cham men wear white robes for funerals. They also wear a combination of a sarong (similar to a skirt) and long-sleeved shirt called *kourong*, which come in white and mixed colors for Friday prayer, New Year and other events. For more casual men, a pair of pants can be worn with the *kourong*. For elderly Cham who attain a high level of holiness, white loose-fitting pants, shirts and caps are generally worn during the day and at many events.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Author's interview with Sen Mary, September 18, 2010.

¹⁶⁴ Author's observation of Muslim dress in Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang provinces.

Dress for Women

Cham dress is more distinctive and varied for women than men. During special events such as funerals, weddings, Cham New Year, the end of Ramandan, and Mawlid, one can see clear distinctions between Cham and non-Muslims. During these events there are specific dress codes, but the most interesting dress styles are the ones Cham wear every day. Cham women's dress can be divided into four groups according to their level of religious devotion:

Devout. This group usually includes adult and elderly women who want to be closer to Allah and follow strict Islamic rules. Young women are sometimes asked to wear a dress intended to hide their beauty from the watchful eyes of men and sometimes to hide their “ugliness,” to use the word of a young Cham woman, from unwanted attentions.¹⁶⁵ The dress of this group comprises a long black tunic, typically called *jilbab* in Arabic. The head is covered with a piece of black cloth intended to cover all of a woman's hair (most keep their hair long). This is referred to as *hijab* in Arabic. This dress is completed with a face-veil (*niqab*). Women of this group live in communities such as Trea commune in Kampong Cham, some areas in Kampot, Prek Bra village southeast of Phnom Penh, a few villages in Battambang, and a few Cham fishing villages in Kampong Chhnang. During prayer times these women wear white robes and cover their heads with headscarves, leaving their faces exposed.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Author's interview with El Ulvy, December 16, 2010; Author's interview with Man Salamyah, December 15, 2010; Author's interview with Math Van Sary, December 16, 2010; Author's interview with Romly Slamy, December 16, 2010; Author's interview with Sles Soupry, December 15, 2010. These are young Muslims pursuing their undergraduate education in private universities in Phnom Penh.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

Semi-Devout. This dress is generally worn by city women who interact more with people from other ethnic groups. It has no specific codes, but is generally recognized as having a head covering of many different designs, generally black with decorated and beaded edges. The shirt, pants and robes of these women are generally worn by people of other ethnic groups. It is intended that there be no distinction from the torso to the legs, except some jewelry whose design and colors can sometimes bear a close resemblance with those from Arabic traditions. Women in this group attend school and work with other ethnic groups. They wear institutional uniforms as well as head coverings. In 2008, Cambodian public schools allowed head coverings to be worn along with school uniforms.¹⁶⁷

Proper. This group reveals a particular preference and characteristics of Cham women in dress. The first dress group (devout) reflects a strict Islamic dress for women. That seems to filter down to other groups in terms of value. It is generally stated by many Cham women that they are particularly asked by their elders to wear proper clothes which include long pants, blouse, robes and shirts that cover most of the body. Women in this group are less religious than in the other two groups because they do not wear head coverings most of the time. If they do, it tends to be simply a scarf or a covering that reveals some of their hair.¹⁶⁸ The women in this group tend to have more interactions with non-Muslims than those in the two groups above and come from communities with mixed ethnicities.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Hun Sen, "Circular regarding dress of Khmer Islam students in various educational institutions," September 10, 2008.

¹⁶⁸ Author's interview with Math Van Sary, December 16, 2010; Author's interview with Romly Slamy, December 16, 2010.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Liberal. Women in this group are almost completely detached from Islamic precepts. They are most open, most influenced by popular culture. One would see them wearing short pants which are currently popular among young adult women in Cambodia and any stylish and modern dress available in the market. Their hair can be of any length and color, reflecting current styles. They do not dress as modestly, but speak fluent Khmer and English. However, the percentage of Cham women in this group is small.¹⁷⁰

IX. Buddhist-Muslim Intermarriages

Inter-marriage is the ultimate interaction between Buddhist and Muslim. It is the frontier between the Khmer and Cham ethnic groups and it is where the two groups merge. It is where the distinction between them fades and the two groups improvise means for peaceful coexistence. In addition, it is where the objective interpretation of the groups is made without prejudice or discrimination about the inferiority/superiority of either group because the main interest of the couple is to live together in ways that do not violate either religion.

In Buddhism, inter-marriage is permitted without a requirement for conversion.¹⁷¹ However, in the Islamic view, a person is born a Muslim and he/she is innocent until reaching the age of 15. At that time, the person takes responsibility for their own sins as a Muslim. Islam also views children below the age of 15 years who are born in non-Muslim families as Muslims by birth. Converting to Islam is thus merely a return

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ian Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*, op. cit.

to one's original religion.¹⁷² In conceptualizing inter-marriage, an Islamic intellectual stated: "Marrying a person of another faith does not mean that the marriage is with a non-original Muslim but he/she was originally a Muslim and we are pleased to bring them back to their original religion."¹⁷³

In *Navigating the Rift*, Osman Ysa studied intermarriage in Cambodia between Cham and Khmer. He wrote, "Islam allowed its believers to marry non-Muslims, but under the condition of conversion, so that they are returned to their original religion. Thus when a Muslim wants to marry a non-Muslim, he or she must introduce their partner to Islam before the wedding."¹⁷⁴ It is important to note that conversion occurs before the actual marriage. In a wedding I attended in Phnom Penh, the groom underwent the conversion ritual and circumcision one week before marriage.¹⁷⁵ If he refuses conversion, Islam states that Allah prohibits Muslims from attempting to marry non-Muslims. The Quran provides specific guidance on this issue:

Don't marry an unbelieving woman until they believe: A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. Nor marry [your women] to unbelievers until they believe: A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever, even though he allures you. Unbelievers do beckon you to the fire. But Allah beckons by His Grace to the Garden of bliss and forgiveness.¹⁷⁶

We will see in the next chapter that when falling in love and attempting to marry Neang Vas, Khmer King Reameathipadei I was asked to convert to Islam before

¹⁷² Osman Ysa, *Navigating the Rift: Muslim-Buddhist Intermarriage in Cambodia*, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2010, p. 63.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁷⁵ Author's interview with Set Sary and El Aminas, November 16, 2011. Set Sary and El Aminas are Cambodian Muslims, parents of the bride.

¹⁷⁶ Quran verse 2:221.

taking Neang Vas, who was a Muslim, to the royal palace with him.¹⁷⁷ But there were also other reasons for the king to agree to such religious requirements, including seeking Cham allegiance and attempting to gain forgiveness for his sins, which Buddhism would not absolve.¹⁷⁸ The king also adopted a Muslim name: Ibrahim. In a conversion ritual, two physical changes of a Khmer identity occur: circumcision and taking a Muslim name.

For all the strict requirements for a non-Muslim spouse to convert, Islam forbids Muslims to force others to adopt Islam. Still, the author has heard some resentment among Khmer Buddhists about Islamic rules on inter-marriage. Buddhists view Islam's requirement for conversion before marriage as unfair to their faith.¹⁷⁹ Some even fear the proliferation of Islam in Cambodia through marriage, feeling it would eventually overtake Buddhism. In their view, when a young couple falls in love, there is a tendency for them to convert to Islam rather than continuing with their original faith.

In a situation where Muslims are a minority in a country, the situation becomes more complex. Men are instructed to avoid non-Muslim women so that Muslim women would not be forced to marry non-Muslim men because of a shortage of Muslim men. They are also instructed to avoid inter-marriage because they are the ones who initiate it. However, Cambodia has not reached a point where inter-marriage creates a distortion in the Muslim demographic landscape. A Muslim scholar stated that:

¹⁷⁷ It is unclear whether Neang Vas was a Cham or Chvea. According to those in her village, Khleang Sbek, the villagers are Cham. Author's interview with Ser Saleh, March 28, 2012. Author's interview with Van Math, March 28, 2012. Both men are villagers of Khleang Sbek village.

¹⁷⁸ Ian Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*, op. cit.

¹⁷⁹ Author's interview with several Khmer teachers during a teacher training in Takeo province, May 2010.

There are many Muslim women of a marriageable age who are living in non-Muslim countries, and it is the duty of Muslim men to protect these women from marrying non-Muslim men, which is absolutely prohibited in Islam. If Muslim men loosely practice their right to marry Christian or Jewish women, the Muslim women in non-Islamic societies will be forced into unwanted circumstances and Muslim men will be at least partially responsible and will get their share of the punishment from Allah.¹⁸⁰

The role of women in inter-marriage is viewed in two ways. In a male-dominated society, Muslim women are instructed to avoid inter-marriage because they have less power in the family in which the husbands could influence them and their children to adopt their religion. In a society where women have some authority, Muslim women are allowed to intermarry because she would be the one who most strongly influences the husband and their children.¹⁸¹ In Cambodian society, the two systems exist. Some elderly people believe that a mother has more influence on the children than the father because of the time she has with the children.

Because of Buddhism's openness to inter-marriage and conversion, it does not have complicated rules on the matter.¹⁸² In Islam, there is also a rule for divorce.

Conversion is a precondition for inter-marriage. If a convert leaves Islam, his/her marriage is no longer viewed as lawful in Islam. Thus Islam gives the marriage and takes it back once a convert reverts to his/her original religion.

Despite these strict rules on inter-marriage, in Cambodia statistics show that in practice it is rather different. Ysa's survey of 526 inter-married couples found that 463

¹⁸⁰ Hossam Fahmy, "Interfaith Marriage," November 2001. Accessed December 2, 2010, http://issu1.stanford.edu/about_islam/articles_hussein/node37.html

¹⁸¹ Osman Ysa, *Navigating the Rift: Muslim-Buddhist Inter-marriage in Cambodia*, op. cit., p. 66.

¹⁸² Ian Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*, op. cit.

couples practice Islam (88%), fifty-four practice Buddhism (10.3%), and nine continue to practice their respective religions (1.7%).¹⁸³ Thus, one in ten couples does not follow Islamic rules. The author met a Khmer-Cham couple in Chi Phat village, Koh Kong province. Meas Phally, a Cham, is village chief of Chi Phat. After marrying a Khmer woman, he took a Khmer name and practices Buddhism. He said that most couples convert to Islam, but he adopted Khmer ways.

In addition, counter to the theory that the number of Muslim men is diminishing in a Muslim-minority society, in Cambodia Ysa found that more Cham women have married non-Muslims than Cham men have. Of the 526 inter-married couples he surveyed, 296 are Cham women and Khmer men (56.3%), and 230 are Cham men and Khmer women (43.7%).¹⁸⁴

There are many reasons for inter-marriage in Cambodia. First, inter-marriage tends to occur where Muslim and Buddhist communities are in close proximity. In such situations, both languages and cultures interact, and there is more mutual understanding. Young couples have more chance to meet in the marketplace, school and workplace. For example, young Cham women meet Khmer men in garment factories. As shown earlier, Cham children in urban areas can speak Khmer better than children living in more insular Cham villages, and some Khmer can speak the Cham language. Young urban Cham adults have more access to the internet, where they can interact with young people from other faiths via social networking sites.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 68.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 76.

Second, the Khmer Rouge regime's dispersion policy of Cham and the attempted destruction of their core identities have brought many Cham people to meet with Khmer and learn to adapt to Khmer cultural practices. Third, a few Khmer simply want to practice Islam, which they view as better than Buddhism. Fourth, since the arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia in 1991, which brought with it democratic values and education on human rights, there is less inter-faith discrimination and more interaction between Buddhists and Muslims. Fifth, Cham parents have become more liberal and offer their children more freedom to select their spouse.¹⁸⁵

X. Conclusion

This chapter reveals many aspects of Cham religious, sectarian, economic and political identities. It is benefited from a population survey the author conducted to clarify the wide range of estimates of the size of the Cham population in Cambodia. The survey found that the total population of Cham is 272,360 in 2010—about 2% of Cambodia's total population. Unlike those who have suggested that Cham form nearly 10% of the population, this survey revealed that although Cham are the country's largest religious minority, they are still a very small group.

Among Muslims, the Cham form the largest ethnic group, accounting for about 80% of the Muslim population, while the Chvea make up the rest. Population size is important for our study of Cham identities, particularly political. Being such a small

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 76.

minority, the Cham had no ability to control the government, a territory or a government institution besides those institutions specifically set up for them. Also being small means the Cham had to identify themselves with the Khmer, if not through religion, then through shared nationhood, and arrange their lives around the rhythm of Khmer society.

This population survey also revealed the distribution of Cham within Cambodia. Kampong Cham alone holds up to 42% of the country's Muslim population or nearly 50% of all Cham. The largest Cham district in Cambodia is Tbong Khmum, which holds about 43,075 Cham. The area in central Cambodia east of the Mekong River is home to more than 60% of Cambodia's Cham population. All of these figures help us better understand the Cham when we look at their history and experiences under the Khmer Rouge.

Location also reveals another aspect of Cham political identity. In such large Cham provinces as Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang, Cham are more concentrated and insular than in provinces with smaller Cham populations. The large provinces are also more globalized through their extensive connections with overseas Muslims, funding organizations and Islamic institutions that engage them in education, social development and religious missionaries.

Smaller Cham provinces have more interaction with the Khmer Buddhist community. More interaction means younger Cham men and women can speak Khmer better, take more interest in Khmer culture, engage more with Khmer people, and are more

integrated. These small provinces are more localized than larger ones as their lives revolve more around the Khmer society.

The Cham core identity as Muslims also determines their economic identity within Cambodian society. While the Chinese and the Khmer work in the pork business, the Cham work in the beef and fish businesses which are determined by their Islamic identity. They sell beef and fish not only to fellow Muslims but also Khmer and other ethnic groups. The Cham also farm during the rainy season along with the Khmer and when fishing is prohibited. A few Cham are traders who travel locally between Cham communities. Some of these traders also export local products such as rice, fish and handicrafts to Kelantan state in Malaysia, where they sell their items to fellow Cham and import Malaysian goods to Muslims in Cambodia.

The chapter also examines Cham clothing. Clothing is not only viewed as a tool signifying and enforcing Cham sectarian identity, it is also used as means to strengthen their political identity. Muslim men do not have a specific dress code that sets them apart from Khmer Buddhists in everyday life. Since the Khmer Rouge regime (discussed in Chapter Four), there is some intention among some Cham men to blend in with the Khmer through wearing similar clothes and use Khmer names, particularly for those men who work among the Khmer.

Dress for Cham women more clearly reveals their sectarian identity. Cham women's dress can be divided into four distinct categories expressing their level of religious devotion. In the devout group, Cham women wear a long black tunic called the *jilbab* along with a *hijab* and face veil. These women live mostly in strong Tablighi Jamaat

villages such as Trea 2 and Prek Pra. They have little interaction with the Khmer Buddhist community and other groups outside their immediate household and community. Therefore, they are not localized but more globalized because such dress is more prevalent in fundamentalist global Islamic communities.

In the semi-devout group, Cham women are less religious, but are equally localized and globalized. They generally wear only the *hijab*, but are consistent and very specific about this practice as they do not allow any of their hair to escape the *hijab*. They interact with other ethnic groups at the workplace, school and public spaces. The proper group is less religious than the first two. They irregularly wear the *hijab* and sometimes a headscarf outside the home. They are not concerned about completely covering their hair. Imam Sann women have a similar head-covering preference but because their Islamic practice is different, one cannot identify their degree of religious devotion through their head-covering. This group is more localized. The last group of women, the liberals, are the most modern and least influenced by Islamic practice. They do not wear headscarves and probably do not observe Islamic festivities. They are most localized with the Khmer Buddhists yet more globalized in terms of non-Islamic influences. They generally live in mixed-ethnic communities.

As mentioned in chapter one, this dissertation views the Cham's Islamic identity as a sphere which sets a boundary in which sectarian groups contest. Inter-marriage is a vehicle which can change a Cham's core identity. Inter-marriage should be considered the frontline of Cham-Khmer interaction. Today, Cham and Khmer intermarry more often than in the past due to higher level of interaction between Cham and Khmer

communities (although there is some effort to reduce interaction by some Cham) and a rising Cham population. Inter-marriage often occurs in villages where the Khmer and Cham communities are closer to each other. Young Cham and Khmer meet at school, the workplace, public areas and the cyberspace. The Cham welcome inter-marriage so long as the Khmer converts and abides by Islamic customs. The Khmer seem to be less content about inter-marriage because it requires conversion to Islam, which changes their identity as Buddhist. Being Cham¹⁸⁶ is still considered inferior by some Khmer. The Khmer also bemoan that the Buddhists are at a loss in inter-marriage because very few Cham become Buddhists after inter-marriage. Young Cham and Khmer lovers are sometimes separated because they are not able to negotiate the differences. Still there are a few cases which the Cham informally convert to Buddhists after inter-marriage.

Cham sectarian identity is now more globalized as the Cham have eliminated most traces of their earlier syncretic beliefs. It is now very difficult to find Cham who practice magic, which has made the Khmer feel more comfortable in their interactions with the Cham, thus facilitating some degree of integration between the two groups.

The Cham observe all the basic elements of Islam including the Five Pillars (*shahada*, *salat*, *zakat*, fasting and pilgrimage) and Islamic festivities throughout the year. In a globalized Cambodia today, Cham celebrate more ceremonies each year than in the 1980s and earlier, owing to advice from foreign Muslims and Cham students educated in Muslim countries. As a result, their Islamic practice is more globalized than before.

¹⁸⁶ For Khmer, Muslims and Cham are the same. When one converts he/she is called Cham by the Khmer.

The Cham experience their shared identity as Muslims (core identity) with the global Islamic community through the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Cambodian Cham have been making the trip to Mecca since the early twentieth century, but they were few in number until recently. Today, a few hundred Cham travel to Mecca each year to fulfill their Islamic obligations. They are often sponsored by foreign Muslim donors and the personal funds of pilgrims. The pilgrimage to Mecca has further globalized the Cham community through interactions with fellow Muslims, fostered a sense of equality, increased religious learning and increased transnational networks.

Chapter Three: Cham in Historical Perspectives

In *The Ironist's Cage*, Michael Roth claimed that “history becomes that place to which one turns for continuity, stability, and the possibility of acting in a meaningful, that is, in a non-arbitrary way. Without nature or a god to guide us, a *sens de l'histoire* can legitimate an identity as well as program for change.”¹⁸⁷ It is in this chapter that Cham history is studied to understand further evolution of Cham identities. The history of Champa and the Cham people have been studied widely, especially by French colonial scholars who paved the way with their study of Champa's ruins in Central and Southern Vietnam in the early 20th century. However, this knowledge has not trickled down to younger Cham generations.¹⁸⁸ Even among the elderly, the history of Champa, as researched by scholars, is poorly understood. They only remember the story of Champa as a folktale that has been passed down from one generation to the next through oral tradition.¹⁸⁹

The main focus of this chapter is to determine the origin of Islam in Cambodia, which is the Cham' most important identity, the arrival of Cham in the country, and the roles they have played in Cambodian society and politics. This allows us to understand how Cham identities have changed through time. The chapter looks back to the rise and fall of the Cham people's former kingdom of Champa, which prompted their migration to Cambodia, Champa's political structure and the Cham' hero king-general. The chapter then analyzes the adoption of Islam among Cham in Cambodia, their connection with the Chvea who had established themselves in Cambodia before

¹⁸⁷ Michael Roth, *The Ironist's Cage*, NY: Columbia University Press, 1995.

¹⁸⁸ For example, the the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO) was established in 1900 to study the ruins of both Cambodia and Champa. Many original papers on the history of Champa and the ruins at My Son and other sites in central Vietnam were published in the first half of the 20th century.

the Cham did, their involvement in Cambodian politics, and Islamic influence on Cambodia's royal families through a discussion of Cambodia's Muslim king. Last, it examines the Cham' role during the colonial period, their decline during in the first half of the 20th century, and their role during the Khmer Republic regime between 1970 and 1975.

I. Champa Political Structure

Perhaps most intriguing part of Champa history for Cambodian people is that it is a country that no longer exists and yet it has a highly interconnected history with Cambodia and its people, as clearly depicted on the bas relief of Bayon Temple in Siem Reap. The children of Champa living in Cambodia today form a marginalized religious minority with a strong history as descendents of a powerful kingdom capable of sacking Angkor city.

Throughout history, the story of Cham people has shifted, from being Hindu-Buddhist to Muslim, from being the owners of their independent land to immigrants, from a people with a rich history and architecture to having almost no historical record today, and from being massacred by the Vietnamese to being victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide. Today, Cham are emerging from victimhood and marginalization, and are modifying their peripheral identities suitable for local and global conditions. History tells many stories of Cham identities.

¹⁸⁹ There is no public education on Champa history for Cham students in Cambodia.

Champa was a maritime kingdom stretching from central Vietnam to north of the Mekong Delta. Because this is a mountainous area, the Cham people did not have a completely agricultural society. Champa is mostly known for its international trade, especially with the Southeast Asian archipelago (Java, Sumatra) and even further to China, India and the Middle East.¹⁹⁰ It is believed that initially, the Cham people were explorers and seafarers who found fertile plains along the narrow coastline of Annam and established a permanent base there. The plain provided limited opportunities for agriculture, yet was located near major seaports that gave the Cham easy access to the South China Sea and beyond.¹⁹¹

Like many other countries in Southeast Asia two thousand years ago, the Cham were under the influence of Indian culture.¹⁹² This is witnessed by inscriptions on temples in the region that were written in Sanskrit. But for the Vietnamese, it is the Chinese whose influence was dominant. In Indochina (Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam), Vietnam is an area of Chinese influence and Cambodia one of Indian influence. In between is a mix of both hegemonic cultures. In fact, early Vietnam, which is located around the region of the Red River, was occupied by the Chinese for a thousand years from the first to the tenth century AD.¹⁹³

To the west of the Red River Delta was Champa, which belonged to a very distinctive culture. The architecture at Myson and Nha Trang testifies to the changes in spheres of influence from the Red River Delta to the Annamite ranges to Cochin China.

¹⁹⁰ Anthony Reid, "An 'Age of Commerce' in Southeast Asian History," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Feb. 1990), pp. 1-30.

¹⁹¹ D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, London: McMillan, 1995, pp. 159-168.

¹⁹² Susan Brown Cowing, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, Georges Coedes, trans. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996.

Vietnamese architecture followed the Chinese style, while Cham architecture was distinctly Hindu, dedicated to the gods Shiva and Vishnu.¹⁹⁴

Such distinctions between the two cultures were bolstered by the area's geographic features as much as the origins of the two peoples. The Annamite ranges generally create pockets of fertile coastal plains which are habitable, yet make communication difficult between the peoples within each pocket. Geographical features also determined the way Champa organized its political structure and the way the kingdom was governed.

Champa was originally recorded in Chinese sources as Lin Yi. However, in the middle of the 8th century the Chinese ceased to mention the name Lin Yi,¹⁹⁵ instead calling the area Huan Hwang. It was a federation of five major, loosely unified principalities. Over the centuries the Cham capital city shifted from north to south. There were conflicts between these principalities and variations in culture, customs and religious practices. However, these internal differences were less than those between Champa and Vietnam. The strength of connection and centralization among these principalities might have contributed to Champa's demise at the hands of Vietnam. So did the frequent conflicts among the principalities, which were separated by the unevenness of the Annam coastal plains with occasional mountains protruding to the coastline.

¹⁹³ Neil Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*, London: University of California Press, 1993; Robert Templar, *Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam*, London: Abacus Book, 1999.

¹⁹⁴ Andrew Hardy, Mauro Cucarzi and Patrizia Zolese, eds., *Champa and the Archaeology of My Son (Vietnam)*, Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2009.

¹⁹⁵ George Maspero, *The Champa Kingdom: The History of an Extinct Vietnamese Culture*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 2002.

In the 11th century, severe tensions arose between the northern and southern principalities. For example in 1050, the ruler of Vijaya sent armed forces against the principality of Panduranga. Subsequent kings of Champa ruling from Vijaya continued their efforts to thwart Panduranga principality's persistent claim for autonomy.¹⁹⁶

The northernmost and earliest known Cham principality was Indrapura. It was located around the present-day city of Hue in Vietnam. The second was Amaravati, located south of Indrapura in the area of present-day Da Nang. There, a Cham king (Bhadravarman) built the first Hindu temple around the 4th century A.D. dedicated to the god Shiva at My Son.¹⁹⁷ My Son soon became a holy site for Hindu Cham, where more temples were subsequently built. Next to My Son is the trading port of Hoi An. It was a major business center for the Cham, as it is for the Vietnamese today.¹⁹⁸

Around the 7th century, the first temple dedicated to Vishnu, the Hindu god of preservation and compassion, appeared at My Son. Mahayana Buddhism was introduced to Champa in the 9th century.¹⁹⁹ East of My Son, Cham kings established their capital. This capital was raided by the Vietnamese in the 980s and the king was killed during the attack. This was one of the first attacks by the Vietnamese, who intended to move southward under their *nam tien* (push to the south) campaign after they freed themselves from Chinese domination. In their attempt to move as far south as possible away from the Chinese and to alleviate population pressures in the north,

¹⁹⁶ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, Phnom Penh: Center for Advanced Studies, 2009.

¹⁹⁷ Ngo Van Doanh, *My Son Relics*, Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 2008, p. 55.

¹⁹⁸ D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, London: Macmillan, 1955. pp. 159-168.

¹⁹⁹ George Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968.

the Vietnamese established their *nam tien* program, which over several centuries led to the extinction of Champa. In 1402 the Cham king ceded Amaravati to Vietnam.²⁰⁰

In the year 1000, the Cham built a new capital called Vijaya. It was located at the site of the present-day town of Quy Nhon, also an important seaport. Vijaya became the political and cultural center of Champa when the northern capital of Indrapura was abandoned due to pressure from the Vietnamese. However, this new capital was overrun by the Vietnamese in 1069, who withdrew after annexing the Champa areas north of present-day Hue. The Cham occasionally brought the battle to Vietnam. In the 14th century a Cham general named Che Bong Nga succeeded in pillaging Hanoi several times and took back all of the occupied Cham territories. At its height, Vijaya controlled areas of present-day Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh and Phu Yen provinces.²⁰¹

In the 12th century, Champa was at war with both its neighbors, Cambodia to the west and Vietnam to the north. In 1145, under King Suryavarman II, Khmer armies invaded and occupied Champa for several years. However, later military generals of Champa were ingenious enough to organize a powerful fleet and sailed several hundred miles up the Mekong Delta and along the narrow Tonle Sap River to pillage Angkor in 1177.²⁰² The repulsion of this Cham fleet and army was accomplished by King Jayavarman VII, whose victory was portrayed at Bayon Temple as one of his greatest military achievements. Jayavarman VII later trained a Cham prince and

²⁰⁰ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, op. cit.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire Du Champa: Recherches Sur Les Cultes Et L'Iconographie*, Paris: Ecole Francaise D'Extreme Orient, 1963, p. 226.

allowed him to lead an army to sack Vijaya in retaliation for their attack on Angkor.²⁰³

The Khmer occupied Champa until the early 13th century. The occupation also brought further Indianized arts and architecture to Champa. War with Cambodia weakened Champa and made it vulnerable to Vietnamese attack. Vijaya was lost to Vietnam in 1471, resulting in the killings of thousands of Cham.²⁰⁴ However, this fall did not end Champa. Members of the royal family fled southward to the principalities of Kauthera and Panduranga.²⁰⁵

Kauthera was located in the area of modern Nha Trang and Khanh Hoa provinces. Here the Cham built Po Nagar temple dedicated to the goddess and protectress of the land.²⁰⁶ This temple was also a symbol of fertility (My Son, dedicated to Shiva, was a symbol of strength and power). But My Son had already been occupied by Vietnam long before Po Nagar was built. So these temples marked a shift in Cham spirituality from male potency to female spirituality.²⁰⁷ It was also a sign that the Cham were seeking alternatives to their spiritual beliefs as a solution to their downfall. Thus, this series of historical events precipitated a change in Cham religion.

Panduranga was located in the area of present-day Phan Rang in Ninh Thuan province. It was the last Cham principality to be annexed by Vietnam. This principality was the furthest from the center of power at Vijaya and was loosely

²⁰³ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, op. cit.

²⁰⁴ Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire Du Champa: Recherches Sur Les Cultes Et L'Iconographie*, p. 358.

²⁰⁵ Michael Vickery, *Champa Revised*, Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 37, National University of Singapore, March 2005.

²⁰⁶ Trang Ky Phuong, *Vestiges of Champa Civilization*, Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 2008, p. 115.

²⁰⁷ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, op. cit.

controlled by the capital. However, it was a useful sanctuary for Cham troops, who usually fled south after their defeat at the hands of Vietnam. In the mid-12th century, when the Khmer army led by Suryavarman II occupied northern Champa, Panduranga sheltered the Cham king who fled south.²⁰⁸

The Great Cham General Che Bong Nga

Cambodia had a great king and general in the form of Jayavaraman VII, who ruled from 1181 to 1200 and avenged the Cham's invasion of Angkor in 1177. But two centuries later, Champa had its own king, Che Bong Nga, who ruled from 1360 to 1390. He was the last "great" king-general of Champa. Che Bong Nga never brought terror to Cambodia except during a few interceptions of Cambodia's tribute to the Ming emperor of China. In 1387, he retained a quarter shipment of elephants sent from Cambodia through Champa to China.²⁰⁹

With his remarkable qualities as a warrior and ability to use his surroundings to succeed on the battlefield, Che Bong Nga concentrated his force against Champa's arch enemy to the north. He also exhibited remarkable diplomatic skill in keeping China out of his incessant war with Annam. Vietnamese texts characterize him as a deceitful king who manipulated the truth to his advantage and played the Ming Emperor Yuan Chang. Che Bong Nga died on the battlefield in 1390. His death resulted in a gradual downfall of Champa to the advantage of Annam, which began to expand southward from the 15th century and eventually overran Champa completely in the late 19th century.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

During the thirty years of his rule, dubbed as the thirty-year war between Champa and Annam, Annam suffered multiple defeats and humiliations at the hands of Che Bong Nga. In 1361 Che Bong Nga invaded Annam's southern port of Da Li, looted the city, massacred its people and returned to sea with booty.²¹⁰ When Vietnam responded with a small expedition against a northern polity of Champa in January 1368, Che Bong Nga hid his troops at a place called Cham Cave to ambush the arriving Vietnamese.²¹¹ They defeated the invading force and took its general prisoner.²¹²

Throughout his reign Che Bong Nga never failed to send lavish tribute to emperor Yuan Chang of China, whether it was war booty, properties he stole from others, or his country's own products. In 1369, Che Bong Nga sent elephants, tigers and forest products to Yuan Chang, who had been crowned emperor in the same year. Yuan Chang was pleased with this show of submission.²¹³ He sent an edict recognizing Che Bong Nga as "king of Champa, a seal, three thousand calendars and forty bolts of silk of various colours."²¹⁴ In 1386, Che Bong Nga's sons presented Yuan Chang with fifty four elephants, and in 1387 fifty one elephants, eaglewood and rhinoceros horns.

In 1371, Che Bong Nga, received intelligence about the defense structure of Annam from the mother of a former Annamese king who had taken refuge in Champa after a royal squabble. He then sailed to Annam's capital and entered it through the port of Dai An. Because his arrival was quiet, he easily took control of the capital. His troops "took away women and children, seized gems and precious cloths, put the imperial

²⁰⁹ George Maspero, *The Champa Kingdom: The History of an Extinct Vietnamese Culture*, op. cit., p. 108.

²¹⁰ Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire Du Champa: Recherches Sur Les Cultes Et L'Iconographie*, p. 352.

²¹¹ Ibid. p. 353.

²¹² George Maspero, *The Champa Kingdom: The History of an Extinct Vietnamese Culture*, p. 92.

²¹³ Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire Du Champa: Recherches Sur Les Cultes Et L'Iconographie*, p. 352.

palace to the torch, destroyed the archives and all that had been locked up.”²¹⁵

However, realizing that his attack was unprovoked, Che Bong Nga sent a letter to China to appease the emperor, who had suggested the two countries co-exist in peace: “Today Annam brings an army to seize my territory and plunder its inhabitants. Thus I come to pray His Majesty to send me military equipment, musical instruments and musicians. Thus Annam will see that my kingdom of Champa is a country tributary to His Majesty and will not dare molest it.”²¹⁶ Yuan Chang, probably realizing the irregularity of the letter, did not send anything to Che Bong Nga and suggested that the two neighbors pull back their troops.

In 1373, Che Bong Nga added to his regular tributes to China in an effort to eliminate pirates from the South China Sea, who were manacng communication and trade networks between China and other countries. Che Bong Nga pursued these pirates, caught some of them, killed the crews, and confiscated 20 ships and 70,000 pounds of precious wood. He presented all of them to Yuan Chang, who was delighted with this show of submission, cooperation and usefulness to China. He presented more gifts to Champa than was customary in the Chinese court. Even though he had the military skills necessary to defend his country and also to invade Annam, Che Bong Nga felt it necessary to keep China informed, both truthfully and falsely, about Champa’s relations with Annam. This would prevent any misunderstanding between Champa and China that by invading Annam, Champa was not acting against the wishes of China for peace among its vassal states. Yuan Chang wrote: “Kings must limit themselves to protecting their own borders and giving peace to their peoples. Only at this price do they enjoy perfect happiness. Putting one’s weapons into a campaign and

²¹⁴ George Maspero, *The Champa Kingdom: The History of an Extinct Vietnamese Culture*, p. 92.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

undertaking terrible wars is playing a dangerous game because victory, like defeat, is never assured.”²¹⁷

In late 1373 when the new king of Annam was rearming his country by building war ships, Che Bong Nga sent a letter to China informing the emperor of a possible attack by Annam. But China only asked the two countries to live in peace.

In 1377, exactly two hundred years after Champa's success at Angkor, Che Bong Nga inflicted a massive counter attack against Annam. Annam had been preparing for war against Champa since 1373, and was ready to fight by 1377.²¹⁸ Annam's king Kham Hoang led 120,000 men toward Champa, taking a coastal route. Che Bong Nga had sent a bribe to an Annam general, but it was intercepted. This was probably a show of panic: a trick to make Annam feel that Champa was fearful and had no response to the large army moving toward Vijaya. The army camped outside Vijaya, which was protected with palisades, preparing for the best moment to make the assault against the Cham capital. Once again a Cham, who was probably sent by Che Bong Nga, told Kham Hoang that the city was deserted and that Che Bong Nga was fleeing.²¹⁹ If the attack occurred soon, Che Bong Nga would be caught easily. Without confirming this information and against advice of his closest generals, Kham Hoang immediately marched his army toward Vijaya. He was ambushed and his men slaughtered. In the ensuing chaos and panic, Kham Hoang was killed after falling from his horse.²²⁰ Che Bong Nga defeated the remains of the expeditionary force and immediately set sail toward the Red River Delta to attack the Annamese capital. He bypassed the defenses

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 93.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 107.

²¹⁸ Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire Du Champa: Recherches Sur Les Cultes Et L'Iconographie*, p. 353.

²¹⁹ George Maspero, *The Champa Kingdom: The History of an Extinct Vietnamese Culture*, p. 107.

there and entered the capital with little resistance. It was burnt and looted. This success created fear of Che Bong Nga among Annamese people.²²¹

In 1383 Che Bong Nga conceived a bold plan to attack the Annamese capital from the mountains north of the Red River Delta. This plan was hatched after his troops were ambushed at an important gorge separating Thanh Hoa and Ninh Binh, as well as a defeat at sea. Che Bong Nga's troops emerged just north of the capital. He defeated the Annamese army there, causing terror among its population, and withdrew in 1384.²²²

Around 1390 Che Bonga Nga scored another major victory against Annam. This was a counter-attack against an Annamese expedition to Champa's northern territory. Che Bong Nga set up an ambush for Annam's army led by Le Qui Ly, who camped at a river mouth protected by ships on the coasts. But Che Bong Nga secretly hid troops and elephants upstream and took control of a dam there. Che Bong Nga opened the dam, destroyed many ships and killed much of Le Qui Ly's army, which was unsuccessful in its first attempt to locate and destroy Che Bong Nga's troops in the forest.²²³ Che Bong Nga pursued the remaining troops to the Red River Delta, causing terror in the capital. George Maspero wrote that "the fear inspired by the Cham king and his armies was so great that when this general presented himself before the old emperor, he could not contain his tears despite his courage, and the Annamese king also wept."²²⁴

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 94.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 106.

²²² Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire Du Champa: Recherches Sur Les Cultes Et L'Iconographie*, p. 354.

²²³ George Maspero, *The Champa Kingdom: The History of an Extinct Vietnamese Culture*, p. 106.

However, a defector among Che Bong Nga's army revealed important information about Che Bong Nga's royal barge. The defector told an Annamese general that "the ship of the king of Champa was easily recognizable from the green color of its decoration."²²⁵ Vietnamese ships concentrated their attack on the royal barge until they killed Che Bong Nga on his boat and seized his head.²²⁶

II. Cham Migratory Patterns to Cambodia

Cham and Malays have been living in Cambodia for several hundred years. The Malay came to Cambodia through trade and arrived in the country before the Cham did. The Malay, sometimes called Chvea, came from islands in the Indonesian/Malaysian archipelago, particularly the island of Java and the Malaysian peninsula. Malay people were already Muslims when they arrived in Cambodia. Being Muslim traders, they took advantage of Muslim trading networks among the islands and in mainland Southeast Asia, emphasizing trust among Muslim brothers.²²⁷

The Cham first came to Cambodia in 1471 when their home country of Champa was occupied by the Vietnamese. They continued to migrate to Cambodia in waves, depending on the conflict between Champa and Vietnam.²²⁸ The occupation of Champa by Vietnam was completed in the mid-19th century when the last wave of Cham, including members of the royal family, fled to Cambodia.²²⁹

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 108.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 108.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 108.

²²⁷ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, op. cit.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

William Collins identified four main waves of Cham migrations to Cambodia, which occurred in 1471, 1692, 1795-96 and 1830-35.²³⁰ Between these waves were continuous influxes of Cham to Cambodia, although in smaller numbers during insignificant historical periods. The fall of Vijaya in 1471 to Vietnam may have forced members of the royal family along with Cham commoners to flee in many directions. The first group of Cham fled south to the southern principalities, becoming internally displaced people. This group included both Hindus and Muslims.²³¹ The second group sailed to the archipelagoes where they settled in Malacca. This group comprised maritime traders who had had long connections with Malays in Malacca and convenient access to seagoing crafts. A third group traveled west across the Annamite mountain range to neighboring Cambodia. This group also traveled to Cambodia by ship and then sailed up the Mekong Delta to Chau Doc, then northward along the Bassac River to the Cambodian capital at Udong.²³²

The occupancy of Vijaya by the Vietnamese occurred at the time of Cambodia's own decline after the Angkor Empire. Cambodia itself was under threat from the Thais to the west. By the time the Cham migrants arrived in Cambodia, the country had already moved its capital to Udong. Among this group of Cham were Muslims as well as Hindus who had knowledge of firearms, which they had gained through contacts with Muslim traders. This could be one of the reasons why they were welcome in Cambodia. The Cham encountered Chvea Muslims who had settled in Cambodia long before they arrived.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Pierre-Yves Manguin, "The Introduction of Islam into Champa," *Journal of Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 58, Issue 1, 1985, pp. 1-28.

²³² William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, op. cit.

The exact arrival period of the Malays and Javanese in Cambodia has not been determined. Both Jayavarman II and Jayavaraman VII spent time overseas in Srivijaya. Because these two figures later became capable Cambodian kings, it is likely that they brought with them Javanese and Malayan customs, statecraft, and other knowledge in government and warfare when they returned to Cambodia. It was also easier for the Malays and Javanese to settle in Cambodia and provide further support to the kings. In addition, because they were maritime traders who frequently visited ports in Southeast Asia, it was easier for the Malays and Javanese to sail up the Mekong to Cambodia and simply establish themselves in the Mekong Delta.

These Malay-Javanese people might have arrived in Cambodia before the 14th century. Because all of them were Muslims and Sumatra was only converted to Islam in the early 13th century, the Malays would have left for Cambodia after this period. The Javanese followed soon after.²³³ Over time, the Malays and Javanese became a single group locally called Chvea.

The second major migration of the Cham to Cambodia occurred around 1692.²³⁴ By this time Vietnam already controlled the Mekong Delta, cutting off Cambodia's international trade links. Champa was also reduced to an enclave around Panduranga. By the late 17th century, Islamic and Malay influences had penetrated deeply into Panduranga, whose people may have converted to Islam in sizable numbers, but retained their pre-Islamic beliefs. Also at this time, Malay became an international language among traders in Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese's final move to annex

²³³ Ibid. p. 17.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

Panduranga after the failed attempt by the Cham to take back Kauthera prompted this second migration of the Cham. About 5,000 people came, led by members of the royal family. It was around the time of the reign of King Cheychetha III (1677-1709). These were the people who were reported in the Cambodian Royal Chronicle, but additional commoner Cham likely arrived in subsequent years.

The Cham refugees were allowed to settle in many areas in Cambodia. The first group of Cham settled around the capital in Udong. They consisted of the Cham royal family of the king of Panduranga. The second group settled in present-day Tbong Khmum in Kampong Cham province in central Cambodia. There were so many Cham in this area that the province was given the Malay name for river port. Kampong Cham means port of the Cham (it is located along the Mekong River). The third group settled along the Mekong down to the confluence in present-day Phnom Penh. These people would later develop expert knowledge in fishing.

The third migration to Cambodia occurred in 1795-1796.²³⁵ It occurred during the Ty Son rebellion between Vietnamese factions, which resulted in war in Panduranga. The number of people in this migration is unclear, but they were largely Muslims and were led by Tuon Set Asmit.²³⁶ At around this time in Cambodia, the Siamese installed Ang Eng (1794-1796) to the throne in Cambodia and annexed Siem Reap and Battambang provinces. These provinces were returned under the French Protectorate, but Thailand took them back during WWII. The provinces were returned in 1946. King Ang Eng later appointed Tuon Set Asmit as the governor of Tbong Khmum.

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

²³⁶ Tuon means religious teacher in Cham.

During the reign of King Ang Chan (1796-1834), the Siamese threat intensified. The King sent Cambodian envoys, including Asmit, to Vietnam to seek support. Vietnam, recognizing Asmit as a former rebellion leader in Panduranga, demanded that King Ang Chan execute Asmit in exchange for assistance against the Siamese. Ang Chan executed Asmit, but his decision created a division among his Muslim supporters in Cambodia.

In the mid-19th century, a large number of Chvea moved to Chau Doc. In a later period, one of Asmit's sons was given the title of "Samdach Chauponhea" by King Norodom (1864-1904). At least since the reign of King Ang Duong (1841-1860), eight more mandarin titles were given to Cham dignitaries including: Oknha Baupit Snêha, Oknha Bautés Montrey, Oknha Montrey Réachéa, Oknha Sêna Chahk Vet, Oknha Sêney Bautés, Oknha Tésa Norés, Oknha Visês Séney, and Oknha Visês Tésey.²³⁷

The fourth migration of Cham to Cambodia took place between 1830 and 1835.²³⁸ At this time Cambodia came under increasing Vietnamese control. Vietnam was then ruled by Emperor Minh Mang (1820-40),²³⁹ the second Nguyen ruler. Vietnam installed Queen Ang Mei (1835-41), a daughter of King Ang Chan, as the first and only female monarch of Cambodia. The Vietnamese did not occupy Cambodia as they were in the former greater Champa, but they also planned on several Vietnamization schemes in Cambodia, for example, encouraging the use of Vietnamese language and

²³⁷ Villemereuil, A.B. de, *Explorations et Missions de Doudart de Lagrée*, Paris: Tremblay, 1883, p. 72.

²³⁸ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, p. 30.

²³⁹ Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire Du Champa: Recherches Sur Les Cultes Et L'Iconographie*, p. 378.

practice of Vietnamese customs. A similar Vietnamization process was also enforced in Panduarnga, the last remaining enclave of Champa. Cham religious and traditional practices were suppressed, Muslims were forced to eat pork, and Hindus were forced to eat beef.

In 1835 Vietnam established complete control of Panduranga. This marked the extinction of Champa as a maritime kingdom. During this period Cham escaped to Cambodia in many waves, either by sea or across the plain of Chochin China. These Cham included members of the royal family and their supporters.²⁴⁰

The final major migration to Cambodia also occurred around the backdrop of Cham insurrections against Vietnamese repression and occupation. The first known rebellion was led by a Cham named Katip Sumat who returned to Cambodia from Mecca in 1833 before traveling to Vietnam. Sumat was later chosen by Cham Muslims to lead their liberation efforts from Vietnamese domination.²⁴¹ His troops included Cham highlanders as well as Cham from the plain. Sumat's rebellion failed to gain any significant victory. His weak, untrained forces were quickly suppressed by the Vietnamese. The second insurrection was led by a Cham Muslim named Ja Thak Va. Like Sumat, Ja Thak Va was also a *tuon* (Islamic teacher), but not an orthodox Muslim like Sumat. He was a member of the Imam Sann group, which kept its traditional practices along with Islamic practices. After initial successes, the rebellion lost momentum. The Vietnamese used political strategies including resolving local conflicts between Cham and injustices inflicted upon them by Vietnamese officials. Support for Ja Thak Va's movement shrank. Ja Thak Va was pursued by the

²⁴⁰ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, p. 30.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Vietnamese. It is not known whether the two rebellion leaders were arrested or if they escaped.²⁴²

Map 2. Champa and Cham Migration



III. Pattern of Religious Evolution

Champa was a Hindu kingdom. Of the Hindu temples built by the Cham in several locations in modern Vietnam, the most important are those at My Son and the Po

²⁴² Ibid., p. 33.

Nagar temple in Nha Trang. These Hindu temples show that the Cham were greatly influenced by India,²⁴³ particularly before the rise of the Hindu-Buddhist Srivijaya empire that occupied Sumatra, Western Java and much of the Malaysian peninsula from the 7th to 13th centuries.²⁴⁴ By controlling Malacca and the Sunda Straits, this empire controlled spice routes between India and China. Srivijaya was another regional political and cultural power that influenced Champa. This empire raided Nha Trang in 774 and Phan Rang in 787.²⁴⁵ Through war and peace, Srivijaya influenced Champa. In addition to religion, Champa learned government bureaucracy and architecture from India.

Islam arrived in India in the 13th century through invasions and trade. In the early 15th century, Aceh, at the tip of Sumatra, became a Muslim town. Islam then spread to the rest of Sumatra and the rest of Srivijaya. Srivijaya, which had had an ethnolinguistic kinship with Champa over the centuries, continued the spread of Islam to Champa. However, there is some evidence showing that Islam was preached in Champa in the 12th century, but it became widespread in the 15th century, as in Srivijaya. There were also Arab, Persian and Indian traders from diverse schools of Islam in Champa as early as the 8th century.²⁴⁶

Islam itself was a religious innovation practiced by those foreign traders and intellectuals. Compared to Hinduism, Islam offered a simple way of personal contact with God through prayer anywhere without elaborate ceremonies. In addition,

²⁴³ George Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, op. cit.

²⁴⁴ Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: From Early Time to C. 1500*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Pierre-Yves Manguin, "The Introduction of Islam into Champa," *Journal of Malayan Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*, 1985, Vol. 58, Issue 1, pp. 1-28.

conversion was simple. The concept of a Muslim brotherhood also hastened the conversion, as trade between islands and countries required trust and protection against potential competitors.

At around the time of the fall of Vijaya to the Vietnamese in 1471, many Cham in the north had converted to Islam. There are several reasons for this conversion. First, the Cham people became disillusioned with Hinduism as they continually lost northern territories to Vietnam. They believed that strong Hindu gods should protect them from losing their land but they never did, so they turned to Islam which did not protect them either. The massacre following the capture of Vijaya hastened this process. Second, at the time the northern principalities were annexed by Vietnam, Islam provided a spiritual outlet for Cham to renew their conviction in a new faith. Third, there were Muslim missionaries from the Middle East and Gujarat in Champa who would be ready to assist the Cham during difficult times, which are ideal times for religious conversion. Islam also allowed Cham to build more connections with maritime Muslim states. To the south, however, Panduranga remained a Hindu principality at this time.²⁴⁷

Conversion of Cham Migrants in Cambodia

Among the first wave of Cham migrants to Cambodia were those who had converted to Islam. The fact that the vast majority of Cham in Cambodia today are Muslims begs an explanation, especially when Cham were not entirely Muslims when their first large migrations to Cambodia occurred in the 15th century.

²⁴⁷ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, op. cit., p. 17.

Some researchers believe that Malay traders had influenced the Cham because the ethnolinguistic kinship between the two peoples was strong in the pre-flight period in Champa. The two peoples also enjoyed maritime trade and peaceful relations. Some Cham also lived along the Malacca straits. Malay traders were in Cambodia long before the 15th century. Some posit that Malays arrived in Cambodia in the early 13th century because those who were in Cambodia were Muslims when they arrived and Sumatra was only converted to Islam in the early 13th century. In fact, two of Cambodia's great kings, Jayavarman II and Jayavarman VII, sought refuge and training in Srivijaya before their rise to power. Srivijaya invaded Cambodia in the 9th century. So the two kingdoms established both peaceful and warlike relations.²⁴⁸ As much as Srivijaya influenced Champa in religious and cultural practices, Malay people continued to influence migrant Cham in Cambodia, especially converting them to Islam.

Once the Cham arrived in Cambodia, they would look to the Malays for help in acclimatizing to their new country. The author believes that once in Cambodia, the Cham took two routes. First, the Hindu Cham, who encountered fewer Muslim Malays in Cambodia and thus had never been converted to Islam, were long assimilated into the majority Khmer population and were considered to be Khmer. Once Hindu Cham met Malay traders, however, conversion might take place. In fact, Hindu Cham might have found it convenient to remain Hindu and assimilate more Buddhist elements from the Khmer, who by then had partially adopted Buddhism.²⁴⁹ For those who had not converted to Islam, their cultural and religious practices would have become indistinguishable from those of the Khmer. Today, Cham living in

²⁴⁸ Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: From Early Time to C. 1500*, op. cit.

Battambang province have lost their ability to speak the Cham language, likely because they encountered Khmer in this part of the country when they first settled.²⁵⁰

Another group of migrant Cham who encountered Chvea (Malays) were converted to Islam and have since remained a distinctive Muslim minority in Cambodia. This group could have comprised those Cham bureaucrats and intellectuals who remained clear about their own identities, even during flight. An encounter with Malay Muslims would have been a blessing for them as Malays and Cham share similar languages. Also, some of the Cham in this group were already Muslims.²⁵¹

IV. Cham in Cambodian Politics

Khmer and Champa relations entered crisis mode in the 12th century when Champa was at war with both Vietnam and the Khmer empire. In 1145, under the reign of King Suryavarman II, Khmer troops invaded and occupied Vijaya for several years. However, in 1177 the Cham were able to organize an elite fleet that sailed up the Mekong Delta and Tonle Sap Lake to pillage Angkor. It was a surprising victory considering the power of the Khmer empire at the time. However, the same Cham fleet was later destroyed by King Jayavarman VII. This king later trained a Cham prince and allowed him to lead his army to attack Vijaya in retaliation for the Cham's

²⁴⁹ Ian Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*, op. cit. pp. 1-49.

²⁵⁰ Author's interview with Soh Fiyantoyet, June 10, 2010. Soh Fiyantoyet is provincial Imam of Battambang province.

²⁵¹ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, op. cit.

invasion of Angkor. His victory allowed Cambodia to annex Champa as one of its provinces between the late 12th and early 13th centuries.²⁵²

The most significant aspect of Cham-Khmer relations was in the way migrant Cham intervened in Cambodia's internal conflicts. In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the Cham-Malay communities in Cambodia became sizable enough to influence Cambodian politics. For example, a Khmer King was murdered at his palace in Srei Santhor by a group of Europeans led by a Portuguese named Diego Veloso and a Spaniard named Blas Ruiz. They were a group of around 100 Europeans who terrorized locals with their firearms.²⁵³ They appointed a new Cambodian king named Paramaraja V, who reigned from 1597-1599. Paramaraja V was anti-Muslim. As a result, fighting broke out between the Europeans and the Muslims, and many Europeans were killed. The Muslims withdrew to Tbong Khmum and formed a rebellion. The leaders of the Muslim faction were Po Rat and Leaksmana. In Tbong Khmum the Muslims declared an autonomous region with Po Rat as the king. Paramaraja V was killed in an attempt to defeat the rebels. The armies of Po Rat and Leaksmana were eventually driven out of Tbong Khmum and fled to what remained of Champa.²⁵⁴

In 1782 Muslim forces from Tbong Khmum, led by Duon Set, attacked Udong in response to actions at the royal court: a Khmer official had taken the throne after a bloody struggle with a rival. During this period, the rightful heir to the throne was still an infant. The Muslim forces were able to drive the Khmer dignitary and his group out of Udong, from which they fled to Bangkok. However, after the victory, Duon Set

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, op. cit.

appointed himself as leader and took control of the capital. He appointed a number of Muslims to high positions in the capital, and settled Cham and Malays at Chroy Changva and Phnom Penh. Doun Set and his forces were later driven from Udong by a Khmer provincial governor who was able to mobilize support among Khmer elites. Doun Set was killed during the attack.²⁵⁵

In the mid-19th century Cham played their last role in a succession dispute. King Ang Duong (1848-1860) designated his eldest son Norodom as his heir. However, Norodom's younger brother Si Votha opposed his father's decision and civil war broke out. The Cham and Chvea who had earlier moved to Chau Doc returned to Cambodia and gathered the support of other Muslims in Tbong Khmum to fight against the forces favorable to Prince Si Votha.²⁵⁶ They succeeded in protecting the throne for the rightful heir. The Muslims were rewarded with high positions and wealth. After his coronation in 1864, King Norodom moved his capital to Phnom Penh in 1865.²⁵⁷ His Muslim supporters came along with him and settled at Chroy Changva, across the Tonle Sap River from the Royal Palace, and where a small population of Muslims had lived since Duon Set's reign of power.²⁵⁸

V. The Khmer Muslim King

The control of Cambodia, which is essentially a Buddhist majority country, by a Muslim king was a novel phenomenon, especially when considering that some Khmer

²⁵⁴ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, op. cit.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Milton Osborne, *Phnom Penh: A Cultural Literary History*, Oxford: Signal Books, 2008, p. 23.

were anti-Muslim at the time. Reameathipadei I, who reigned between 1642 and 1658, was the first and last Muslim monarch in Cambodia.

According to Anthony Reid, Southeast Asia was entering the age of commerce from the 15th to the 17th centuries. Starting from the 15th century, Reid observed a commercial boom radiating from major port cities across Southeast Asia. Growth in commerce contributed to social, economic and political changes. Commercial evolution was bolstered by spice and aromatic wood trade in the early 1400s along with cash cropping across the archipelagoes.²⁵⁹ Such trading activities increased demands for better shipping and navigational skills to reach every city of Southeast Asia. Some port cities rose above the rest to become cosmopolitan centers where common means of exchange were created and supported to help them become hubs of economics and culture. The social manifestations of commercialization included more advanced financial systems across the region, the growth of urban mercantile elites, religious changes with the introduction of Christianity and Islam, and advanced military technologies. The age of commerce affected Cambodia in a similar fashion. In the 16th century, Udong had traders, officials and missionaries of different races such as Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French, Thai, Japanese, Chinese, Cham and Chvea.²⁶⁰

Chvea dominated the maritime trade route between Southeast Asian polities. Chvea from the Malay peninsular established themselves in the Champa ports long before the 15th century. It was also easy for them to reach the cities of Cambodia via the

²⁵⁸ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, op. cit.

²⁵⁹ Anthony Reid, "An Age of Commerce in Southeast Asian History," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Feb., 1990), pp. 1-30.

²⁶⁰ Milton Osborne, *Phnom Penh: A Cultural Literary History*, p. 37.

Mekong Delta. A diary of the Dutch merchant Van Galen, who was in Cambodia in 1636, indicated that Phnom Penh had a great number of “Chvea from Pahang, Pattani, Johor and Jambi who were trading cloth, pepper, lead, tin, ray skins and betel.”²⁶¹ However, in his 1937 survey, Marcel Ner noted that those Chvea came from Borneo, the Minangkabau region on Sumatra or the peninsular states of Singapore and Trenganu.²⁶²

The Cham and Chvea were generally viewed as one people, as both were Muslims and shared similar languages. Original sources tend to conflate the two. In fact, the conflation of these two ethnic groups still takes place today, both among Muslims and non-Muslims in Cambodia. Although little has been written on the Cham’s trading, they had important roles in Cambodian politics and power struggles in the court, as mentioned above.

Foreigners also played important roles not only in trade but also in Cambodian politics. The Spaniard Blas Ruiz De Hernan Gonzales and Portuguese Diego Beloso Veloso tried to restore King Barom Reachea IV (1576-1594) to the throne; he had been deposed during a Thai invasion in 1594. The two were killed in 1599 when fighting against the Thai army.²⁶³

Rise to Power

Chao Ponhea Cand, who would become the Muslim King Reameathipadei I, was the third son of Chey Chetha whose two other sons included Chao Ponhea To and Chao

²⁶¹ Carool Kersten, “Cambodia’s Muslim King: Khmer and Dutch Sources on the Conversion of Reameathipadei I, 1642-1658,” op. cit.

²⁶² Marcel Ner, “Les Musulmans de Indochine Francaise,” *Bulletin de Ecole Francaise Extreme Orient*, V. XLI (1941), pp. 151-200.

Ponhea Nou (Chao Ponhea Cand was a Muslim convert after he took power, while his family members were not Muslims). Both had served as kings and died during their reigns. According to Mak Phoeun, in 1632-1634, Chao Ponhea To was killed by his uncle Outei with the help of Portuguese mercenaries after the two fell in love with the same woman.²⁶⁴ Chao Ponhea Nou was then appointed to take the throne, but he died six years later in 1640 under suspicious circumstances. His death probably also involved his uncle Outei, who later appointed his own son, Ang Nang, to take the throne. This led to a royal squabble between Outei and Chao Ponhea Cand for the next two years.²⁶⁵

Chronicles indicate that the prince acted in the year of the snake (1641) with the help of four army commanders. Although the identities of these commanders are unknown, one of them was thought to be a Muslim. He assaulted and killed Outei and his son King Botum Reachea. Court officials supported Chao Ponhea Cand because he was the rightful heir to the throne, stating that the deaths of Outei and King Botum Reachea were just. Chao Ponhea Cand took the throne in 1642 as Reameathipadei I; he had apparently built good relations with Muslims before he took the throne. The influence of Muslims in his life continued during his reign. It is interesting that his father Chey Chetha and uncle Outei had fallen in love with a Muslim woman, possibly from the Vietnamese province of Treang.²⁶⁶

Dutch sources find that Chao Ponhea Cand committed far more murders than Khmer sources state. Chao Ponhea Cand not only killed his uncle Outei but also dignitaries

²⁶³ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, op. cit.

²⁶⁴ Carool Kersten, "Cambodia's Muslim King: Khmer and Dutch Sources on the Conversion of Reameathipadei I, 1642-1658," op. cit.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

who happened to be present at the site of the attack, probably the residence of Outei. As for Borom Reachea I, he was said to have been killed during a hunting trip. Chao Ponhea Cand also continued to kill courtiers and senior officials close to both men. Three surviving sons of Outei, on the other hand, were spared. They were sent to live in a monastery, but one of them was killed less than a year later after Reameathipadei learned of his plot to rebel.²⁶⁷

In addition, Dutch accounts revealed that Chao Ponhea Cand did not act alone; he was aided by an older brother, who expected to share power with him as a result. But Chao Ponhea Cand decided to get rid of his brother. Although the account is not clear, it appears that Chao Ponhea Cand accused his brother of committing adultery with one of his wives. The Dutch sources revealed that Chao Ponhea Cand set his brother's house on fire, captured him and put him to death on April 2, 1642.²⁶⁸

According to David Chandler, Reameathipadei I was a reasonably cruel king. He was also responsible for the killing of many Dutchmen on November 27, 1643, which was after his conversion to Islam. Prior to this, relations between the Cambodian court and the VOC deteriorated over the course of 1643. Regemorte and his Dutch colleagues, along with up to 35 VOC officials, were murdered, and another 60 were taken captive. In 1643, the Dutch sent a punitive expedition of five warships to Cambodia, but they were ambushed near Phnom Penh; 120 Dutchmen were killed. Portuguese, Cham and Chvea were among those manning the Cambodian side. Relations between the two countries ceased for a decade as a result.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Milton Osborne, *Phnom Penh: A Cultural Literary History*, op. cit, p. 45.

Conversion to Islam

The royal chronicles noted that Reameathipadei I converted to Islam between 1643 and 1645. But Dutch sources revealed an earlier date: at least before November 1642, only several months after the king eliminated his potential challengers. Considering the death of Chao Ponhea Cand's brother in April 1642, the king's conversion should have occurred between April and November.²⁷⁰

The story begins when Reameathipadei visited a province called Sri Sa Jhar, most likely present-day Kandal province east of Udong, where he met a beautiful Muslim girl named Neang Vas. Sources did not indicate whether Neang Vas was a Cham or Chvea. According to a Cambodian chronicler named Dik Vil, the king immediately fell in love with her and wanted to marry her, but the girl's father, who was said to be a descendant of Champa's royal bloodline, refused. According to Cham tradition, he wanted the king to convert to Islam. But the king then decided to take her to the capital as a concubine.²⁷¹

A chronicler named Vatan Juon indicated that prior to handing over Neang Vas to the king, "The mother of Neang Vas, named Neang Mah, gathered her friends and parents as well as elder Cham. When they were all there, she presented offerings to the spirits of the dead as is tradition among the Cham. Then Tuon Zhe who possessed an ancient *kris* [ceremonial knife] presented it to the king. At the same time, he asked for permission to douse the king with water that had been charmed by a magic spell. The king consented."²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Carool Kersten, "Cambodia's Muslim King: Khmer and Dutch Sources on the Conversion of Reameathipadei I, 1642-1658," op. cit.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

Neang Vas's family continued to present the king with gifts and provide her with steady supply of magic water. She would use this for the king to drink as well as to douse him. Eventually, it is said that the love of the king grew so much that he elevated her from concubine to "August Queen of the Left" and also appointed Muslim officials to hold authority over the affairs of all Muslims in Cambodia. Neang Vas was eventually elevated to become the chief of the royal concubines. Her father Tuon Zhe was appointed as chief of Muslim affairs, while the four army commanders who assisted Reameathipadei I in taking the throne were put in charge of the nation's soldiers.²⁷³

The king's love for Muslims continued. The VJ and P63 chronicles indicated that in the "season when the Malays howl" in the year of the rooster, the king visited Neang Vas's village. This corresponds to the month of Ramadan and evening prayers were conducted there. Carol Kersten indicated that the year was probably 1645. Ramadan in this year should have occurred in October and November. "Howling Malays" is ethnocentric and derogatory term used by Khmer chroniclers to refer to the call to prayer for Muslims. So the king decided. DV and VJ chronicles revealed that upon arriving at the village: "Muslims came to bring gifts for the king, as well as magical water for him to bath in. After he washed, a religious leader spoke to the king about embracing Islam." They wrote that, under the influence of magic, the king agreed.²⁷⁴

Michael Vickery provided two main reasons for the king's decision to convert to Islam: first, he wanted to diversify support from the masses, including Buddhists and

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

Muslims. While the majority of Cambodian people were Hindu-Bhuddists, Islam was becoming popular at the time in Southeast Asia. This allowed the king to look beyond Vietnam and Siam for support and trade. The king was quoted as saying, “the Khmer have already been subjugated to me, only the Muslims have not shown me their respect and fidelity. If I accept their religion I will gain the hand of Neang Vas while at the same time the Muslims will give me their allegiance. If the surviving sons of Outei betray me, then I will have Muslims to count on.”²⁷⁵ Second, Buddhism did not provide the king with expiation for his sins,²⁷⁶ but conversion to Islam gave him much needed forgiveness. The King was worried that he would suffer a bad fate from killing Outei and Botum Reachea. When he consulted the monks, they replied that “merit and sin do not balance each other out like lending and borrowing money. Each determines its own fruits. If one performs a lot of good deeds one will have a good destiny. If one commits many bad acts, one will suffer a bad fate.” But when the king consulted Muslim religious leaders, they replied: “Islam has said that if someone embraces the religion because of its qualities, then Allah may take on one’s sins instead.”²⁷⁷

The extent of killings that took place around the time of the king’s usurpation gives more credit to the claim that he was fearful of the consequences of his sins. The royal chronicles noted that only Outei and Botum Reachea were killed, which could be viewed as just acts, as the two took power from the rightful heir. So the idea of a troubled mind is agreed by both Khmer and Dutch sources. Another reason for

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ For Buddhist concept on compensation for sins, see also Kalayan San, “Summary of Interview with Bour Kry,” *Searching for the Truth*, October 2002; Kalayan San, “Summary of Interview with Yos Hout Khemacharo,” *Searching for the Truth*, September 2002; Kalayan San, “Summary of Interview with Tep Vong,” *Searching for the Truth*, December 2001; Kalayan San, “Summary of Interview with Doung Phang,” *Searching for the Truth*, November 2002.

conversion is agreed by both sources related to the king's close friendship with Muslims. These people might have influenced the king's view on religion.

The Spread of Islam

The VJ chronicle stated that upon his conversion to Islam, the king demanded that court officials also convert; those who refused would be stripped of their ranks. The chronicle testified that Cambodian dignitaries agreed to convert en masse. Male converts had to go through circumcision; their foreskins were deposited in the mosque of a village called Khleang Sbek in Kandal province, about 30 km from Phnom Penh. Villagers from Khleang Sbek confirmed that their village is one of the oldest Muslim villages in Cambodia. Its mosque, Al Akbah Dubai Khleang Sbek, located at the northern end of the village, was built on the footprint of the oldest mosque in Cambodia. Although the structure that stored the foreskins no longer stands, villagers still remember its location.²⁷⁸

Following the conversion of his court officials, the king introduced a number of reforms. Male members of the royal court had to change their pre-Islamic dress and wear long tunics. They were ordered to carry a *kris* as well. The king wore a golden *kris* and he took his form of dress from Chvea court tradition.

The history of King Reameathipadei I's conversion revealed an interesting dimension to the Cham identities. Around the time of this conversion, the Cham were still little known. As noted above, they had not completed their migration to Cambodia. So the

²⁷⁷ Carool Kersten, "Cambodia's Muslim King: Khmer and Dutch Sources on the Conversion of Reameathipadei I, 1642-1658," op. cit.

²⁷⁸ Author's interview with Ser Saleh, March 28, 2012; Author's interview with Van Math, March 28, 2012.

identities of Muslims in Cambodia was led, formed and influenced by Chvea, who gradually came to be viewed as one with the Cham. The Cham, meanwhile, rode along with the Chvea. However, they had their own identity to exert as Cham, but it was not significant enough at that stage. Also the Cham, with their kingdom still largely intact, did not attempt to make any significant move in terms of forming strong identities in Cambodia, which was still a foreign country to them.²⁷⁹

Khmer chronicles also revealed that once becoming a Muslim, the king seemed to marginalize the Buddhists and Hindus. Yet no information has been put forward concerning the king's attempt to convert the population to Islam. The king no longer supported or attended Buddhist rituals or visited monasteries, and was not concerned about the scriptures. Given that the king was then a Muslim, it was natural that he no longer had any attachments or obligations to Buddhist institutions. The Buddhists and Hindus increasingly felt neglected. As for the Cham and Chvea, their leaders were appointed to high positions in the kingdom and mosques were built throughout the country. This was the first open attempt and proliferation of mosques in Cambodia. Today, there are more than 300 mosques around the country which were built on the foundations established during Reameathipadei I's reign.

The diary of a Dutch trader named Pieter van Regemortes revealed that on November 13, 1642, the king put forth a new rule that prohibited raising, slaughtering and selling pigs. Regemortes mentioned two prominent Malays in his diary, Inche Lanang and Inche Assam. Inche Lanang was a merchant from Pattani and played a key role in trade between Batavia (Netherlands) and Cambodia. He also participated in a Dutch

²⁷⁹ Carool Kersten, "Cambodia's Muslim King: Khmer and Dutch Sources on the Conversion of Reameathipadei I, 1642-1658," *op. cit.*

expedition to Laos in 1641-1642. His close connection with the Dutch may have given him some influence in the royal court. Inche Assam was also a Malay who had close connections with Dutch trade in Cambodia. Some Dutch sources stated that he was very influential in Cambodian international trade throughout Reameathipadei I's reign. There was also another Malay who was a close companion of the king. In 1657 Inche Assam became the most powerful merchant in Cambodia. He was also powerful in the court. He appointed Malays to various positions in the court, one of which as a correspondent with the Dutch.²⁸⁰

Reameathipadei I's Downfall

Pieter van Regemortes's diary revealed the state of mind of the king in 1642. He was writing about the murder of two Dutchmen in Cambodia at the time, but the Dutch traders still needed to work with the royal court. Regemortes noted that the king was often drunk, absent from state affairs for prolonged periods, and unwilling to deal with complicated issues. This poor state of mind was also revealed by the royal chronicles.

A report by Hendrick Indijck and Pieter Kettingh revealed that by 1656 Reameathipadei I was living on a boat because "monks" from the court advised him to avoid living in the palace for three years. This is ironic because while Reameathipadei I was a Muslim, he still sought the advice of Buddhist monks. The report also stated that the king wore a turban and Malay clothes, but even by then the king was "still frequently drunk."²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

The surviving sons of Outei, named Ang Sur and Ang Tan, had probably planned an attack since they were kept in a monastery after their father and brothers were killed. Their chance came in the transitional period when Reameathipadei I was converting from Buddhism to Islam, which would have caused both royal court officials and the general population dissatisfaction. After receiving support from Khmer soldiers and Vietnam, in May 1658, rebels led by Ang Sur and Ang Tan attacked the king. Reameathipadei I could only summon support from Portuguese mercenaries and Muslim allies. Khmer chronicles indicated that the king was abandoned by his Khmer generals on the battlefield. It seemed that one of Ang Sur's demands was that the king distance himself from Malays. But by then, it seemed, the king had fully identified himself as a Malay. His force was outnumbered.²⁸²

He was captured and killed in Saigon. The king was given a Buddhist funeral, cremated and his ashes kept in a stupa in Saigon. Ironically, it seems that members of the court still considered Reameathipadei I to be a Buddhist who, under some magic spells and temporary mis-judgement, became a Muslim by accident. Reameathipadei I's reign ended in 1658, as did the rise of Islam in Cambodia. The chance for Cham or Malays to become prominent within Cambodian society ended with Reameathipadei I's demise.²⁸³

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

VI. Cham in the Early 20th Century

By the early 20th century, the Cham had become fairly well established as a minority ethno-religious group living alongside the Khmer Buddhist majority. They lived in many parts of the country, but were concentrated in Kampong Cham, while the Chvea were concentrated in the coastal plain. In 1941 Marcel Ner found that there were three main Muslim groups, divided by their spheres of influence. One group was influenced by Malay language and culture, another was influenced by Arabic scripts and interpretation of religion, and the third by preserving the remnants of Champa's civilization through the Cham language. These groups correspond with today's Chvea, Cambodian Sunni Muslims and Imam Sann Muslims.

In Kampong Cham, Trea, Svay Kleang and Peus villages in Kroch Chmar district were the spiritual and cultural centers of the Cham. Situated on the site of an extinct volcano and along the flood plain of the Mekong River, the villages are among the most populated and fertile in Cambodia. Kampong Cham is a large province. Today it has a population of 1.7 million people. Around the reign of King Norodom (1860-1904), a few Cham rose to prominence, notably Bautes, Snaong Man and Dangkao Mat, all of whom came from Svay Khleang village.

Bautese was appointed by King Norodom as a special advisor on Cham affairs. Surviving elderly Svay Kleang villagers said that King Norodom sailed a steamship up the Mekong to Svay Kleang to officially bestow this position on him. Bautese and Dangkao Mat were wealthy businessmen who transported lumber down the Mekong to Cochin China. They built elaborate houses made from luxury woods. A few of

these houses survived the destruction of the Khmer Rouge. Bautese's house, which he built for his Vietnamese wife, is still standing. He also built an Islamic tower and a mosque at the center of the village before he died circa 1940. Being rich, these three Cham had several wives each. Bautese had three, while Snaong Man had seven. Today their grand and great grand children continue to live in the Svay Kleang and in neighboring Peus village. Some of them moved overseas to Malaysia, the United States and other countries. The three were buried in one of the seven cemeteries in the village.

During the reign of King Monivong, another Svay Kleang villager named Ta Borat was appointed as a representative of the Cambodian Cham. Ta Borat was also known as a personal friend of King Monivong. During the Sangkum Reastr Niyum period, an influential and educated Cham named Ly Musa built Islamic and secular schools in Svay Khleang village, which by then had about 1,242 Cham families living in close proximity, for a total of five to six thousand people.

Cham from this area had a tradition of connections with Malaysia. From Malaysia they continued their connections further to India and the Middle East, seeking education and knowledge from these countries. Today many young Cham are seeking manual labor jobs and studying in Malaysia and southern Thailand. Ly Musa himself spent time studying Islam in Malaysia before returning to Cambodia as a prolific Islamic teacher.

The Colonial Era

During the early colonial period, some Cambodian Cham visited Vietnam to convert Cham there to a more orthodox practice of Islam, but their efforts were not entirely fruitful as the Vietnamese Cham continued to worship their traditional Po Yang ancestors.²⁸⁴ However, Aymonier reported that some of these efforts were successful: “A few years ago, three Mohammedan villages of Parik abruptly ceased the worship of their Cham Po Yang after a foreign Haji ‘Pilgrim’ passed through, who condemned the practices.”²⁸⁵

In late 19th century Vietnam, the French attempted to repeal an assimilation campaign that the Vietnamese Emperor Minh Mang had pursued a few decades earlier, which included forcing the Cham of former Panduranga to wear Vietnamese costume, speak Vietnamese, take Vietnamese names, and celebrate Vietnamese festivals. The French protected the property rights of Cham and revived Cham customs. Cham language and script were revived and encouraged, even as a medium of communication with the colonial government.²⁸⁶

In the early 20th century, the legal position of Cham of Cambodia was debated. The Colonial Judiciary Service considered placing the Cham minority directly under French administration as “foreigners” who might be threatened by the Khmer.²⁸⁷ There were arguments against their “foreignness,” including 1) the only foreigners among the Cham were a few Malays who had been born abroad, and 2) Cham and

²⁸⁴ Antoine Cabaton, “Cham,” in Hastings’ Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethnicity, New York: Schribners, 1917-1955, p. 349.

²⁸⁵ Etine Aymonier, “Les Cham et Leurs Religions,” *Revue Histoire des Religions*, Vol. XXIV, 1891, p. 283.

²⁸⁶ Marcel Ner, “Les Musulmans de l’Indochine française,” *Bulletin de l’Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient*, Tome 41, 1941, p. 159.

Malays had also served as officials in the Cambodian Government, as Tbong Khmum, Stung Trang and Ponhea Leu had Muslim governors. The argument for foreignness was defeated. Henceforth, in the colonial law Cham and Malay were grouped as a minority, but not considered foreign.

Being grouped as a minority is fairly inclusive in the context of nationalism. It was one of the first steps toward the Cham achieving citizenship in the modern Cambodian state after having lost all their territory to Vietnam. However, the Cham still spoke their indigenous language and such foreign languages as Malay and Arabic. Their Khmer language skills were weak. This led many Khmer to make jokes about their broken Khmer skills and criticize their lack of integration. Hence, the Cham's construction of peripheral identities that were distinctly Cambodian was very limited. It was far from the level of integration one sees at the present time.

Yet the Cham people refused to send their children to French schools, where they were afraid that their long-embraced tradition and culture could diminish over time. In fact the Vietnamese program to assimilate Cham into their society in the early 19th century forced many Cham to migrate to Cambodia. Without certificates from those schools, Cham could not find professional jobs in the colonial administration. This led to a decreased role for them in the Cambodian Government and society as a whole, and an accompanying lowered standard of living.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 195.

²⁸⁸ Author's interview with Mit Mustafa, March 24, 2012. Mit Mustafa lives in Kpob Two village, Kampong Cham province. He was a friend and colleague of Ly Musa, who brought secular education to the Cham.

Lack of study in the French school system led the Cham to channel their energy into trade and vigorous Islamic learning. In the 1930s, Ner observed such learning in Phum Trea, which had two religious schools led by teachers trained in Mecca and Kelantan. Ner also observed such practices in Svay Khleang and Peus, which was extraordinary considering the number of graduates of advanced religious studies abroad.²⁸⁹

One can only imagine the reasons behind the Cham's opting for religious, rather than secular, education. Their main hope of a better livelihood without secular education might include the advancement of Islam in Cambodia to the highest level possible and connecting to the global Islamic community through trade and education. With this the Cham had little need for connections with the local community, even when they did not have the proper education and religious connections. Instead, they sought to join the government in terms of the control and administration of Islam, diversify Cambodian religion and ethnicity, and form partnerships to spur anti-Vietnamese sentiment and quell its expansionism.

Sihanouk's Khmerization Program

In the 1960s, Prince Sihanouk created a number of labels for different political, ethnic and religious groups in Cambodia based on the word Khmer. This was another attempt by the leader to integrate (at least nominally) these groups into a cohesive nationalist Khmerism. The labels he created included: Khmer Sar, Khmer Rouge, Khmer Khieu (green), Khmer Islam, Khmer Communist, Khmer Leu, Khmer Krom,

²⁸⁹ Marcel Ner, "Les Musulmans de l'Indochine Française," op. cit., pp. 151-202.

Khmer Daem and Khmer Issarak.²⁹⁰ One can also hear the word Khmer Buddhist. All of these “Khmer” were regarded as Sihanouk’s children. He used topography as well as political orientation to label the groups. For example, Khmer Leu (upper Khmer) and Khmer Krom (lower Khmer) referred to indigenous highlanders and Khmer people living in the lower Mekong Delta, respectively. Cambodia had always been divided by topography.

In the pre-Angkorean period, the country was divided into upper and lower Chenlas. This was probably due to the fact that at the center of the country lies in a huge seasonal flood plain around Tonle Sap Lake and the Mekong River system. Such geography creates a meaning among Cambodian people to identify their country in two parts: the lower part which is wet and the upper part which is high and dry. The labels Khmer Sar (White Khmer or liberalist Khmer), Khmer Rouge, Khmer Communist and Khmer Issarak (Liberating Khmer) were used to identify political groups. Sometimes this was in line with an identification with global politics. For example, Khmer Rouge means red Khmer.

Of special interest is the classification of Muslims in Cambodia as Khmer Islam. It is ironic that the word Muslim was not used in the Khmer language to refer to the followers of Islam, but Islam was used to refer to both the religion and its adherents. Thus, Khmer people today always call Cham Muslims as “Islamic brothers.” Prince Sihanouk had always been an outspoken and diplomatic politician. His naming of Muslims in Cambodia as Khmer with a different religion revealed his warm embrace of all these people, even though they were ethnically different. Prince Sihanouk was

²⁹⁰ See also Sara Colm and Sorya Sim, *Wind from the West: Khmer Rouge Purge in the Highland of Mondul Kiri*, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2010.

also acting as a reconciliatory politician who embraced all religions and ethnic groups in a society divided by economic and ethnic backgrounds.

Divisions between the rich and the poor, and the rural and the urban gave rise to the Khmer Rouge struggle. Khmer occupied farming and government positions. The Chinese and Vietnamese occupied urban businesses. The Muslims were fishermen, butchers and itinerant traders. Prince Sihanouk's embrace of equality was appealing to the Cham, whose different history and religion did not help improve their status in Cambodia from the perspective of the Khmer.

However, in creating Khmer Islam, Prince Sihanouk also based his division on some concrete ideas. As noted earlier, Muslims in Cambodia comprised the Cham, the Chvea and converted Khmer. Chvea spoke the Khmer language as often as the Malay language. Today apart from following Islam, the Chvea have no distinguishable difference (other than religion) from the Khmer who speak Khmer. Therefore the word Khmer Islam was more accurately applied to the Chvea than the Cham.

Over time, one Cham ethnic group began to reflect more connections with the Khmer culture than other Cham groups. This was Imam Sann, who pray once a week. In trying to connect to the old Cham culture, presumably created in the Indianized state of pre-Islamic Champa, the Imam Sann were coming closer to the Khmer culture in a number of ways including syncretic beliefs, dress, food, Khmer fluency and rituals.

Intra-Religious Change and Conflict

During the first half of the 20th century, by which time the majority of Cham had become Shafiis and followers of the Malay understanding of Islam, they naturally were affected by the fierce conflicts raging between the young group (*kaum muda*) and the old group (*kaum tua*) in the Malay-Indonesian world. The young group rose to prominence at an early date in the Dutch East Indies and in the Malaysian Straits Settlements.²⁹¹

The Islamic modernism that inspired the young group originated from India and Pakistan with Mohammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Rashid Rida (1865-1935). The young group attacked religious establishments in Malaysia and called for the purification of doctrine and old practices. The old practices they attempted to eliminate included: 1) making pilgrimages to the graves of Islamic holy men, 2) belief in magic spells, and 3) burial, marriage and birth rituals lacking Islamic justification. Another dispute between the *kaum tua* and *kaum muda* centered around stating or reciting one's intention at the start of a prayer.²⁹²

Stagnation in the field of literature and the inability to adapt to the modern world's challenges were blamed on a strict imitation of Mohammad and traditional forms of teaching, where students learned by rote. In contrast, the young group introduced a classroom system that was based less on rote memorization, encouraged equal education between boys and girls, and included secular subjects in the curriculum.

²⁹¹ Philipp Bruckmayr, "Cambodia's Phum Treas as Mirror Image of Religious Change," *ISIM Review*, 20, 2007, p. 48.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

The young group must have made its first inroads into Cambodia in the 1910s when Phum Trea had two famous schools, one with a modern secular-religious curriculum. Serious conflict broke out in the 1950s via Ly Musa's propagation of new ideas upon his return to Kampong Cham province after long years of study in Kelantan. Correct burial ritual was a hotly debated subject. The young group also claimed superiority because of their expertise in Arabic, whereas the old group, which learned under the *halaqah* system, still relied almost exclusively on old Malay literature.²⁹³ Both the young and old groups based their study in the Malay Muslim world, so their conflict reflected the conflict in Malay world as well.

Imam Ahmad later joined Ly Musa's young group. He had returned from studying in India and was probably influenced by an Indian reformist movement, most likely the Deobandis or the Nadwat al-Ulama. The conflicts between the young and the old groups resulted in family divisions, village divisions and violent clashes. In the end it seemed that the young group had lost.

In 1960 the Cambodian Government exiled the two *imams* to Thailand. Probably noting the need for a clearer and more centralized leadership among Muslims, in 1960, Prince Sihanouk appointed Raja Thipadei Res Lah as the first Mufti in Cambodia to lead the Cham and Chvea communities. He held his position for life. Res Lah criticized the reformist movement for creating divisions within the small Muslim community in Cambodia.²⁹⁴ Today, however, Cambodian Muslims have become less

²⁹³ Ibid., p. 49.

²⁹⁴ Ben Kiernan, "Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea under Pol Pot," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 1988, pp. 2-33.

syncretic than they used to be. Salafi preachers credit this to the works of Ly Musa and his young group.²⁹⁵

The Cham under Lon Nol

During the Lon Nol regime, the Islamic community in Cambodia was led by Haji Abdoullah bin Idres, aka Haji Res Lah. Haji Res Lah conducted annual meetings between *hakems* and *tuons* from Islamic communities in Cambodia. Two more Cham organizations were also organized during the Khmer Republic period to serve the community. The Central Islamic Association was led by Haji Mohammad Aly Haroun. The Association of Khmer Islamic Youth was led by Abdul Rached bin Idres.²⁹⁶ Cham in communist areas, as we shall see in the next chapter, also created groups with communal leadership based on communist ideology.

In 1970, for the first time, the Cham people were split between those controlled by the Khmer Rouge communists and those who were under the Khmer Republic regime professing the Western liberal, anti-communist, anti-Vietnam philosophy led by General Lon Nol. The separation of the Cham community was not by choice, which was unusual for a community that had always stuck together in Cambodia. Like many Khmer, Cham fought against each other from 1970 to 1975. Sometimes brothers were pitted against each other on the battlefield.²⁹⁷ One side believed in equality and social justice; the other believed in freedom of religion and the future of Islam, which might be jeopardized by the rise of communism.

²⁹⁵ Additional discussion on Ly Musa is found in Chapter Six.

²⁹⁶ Ben Kiernan, "Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot," p. 16.

²⁹⁷ Ronnie Yimsut, *Journey to Freedom*, translated by Kok-Thay ENG, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2006.

There were noticeably more Cham officials in the Khmer Republic than during Sihanouk's regime. There were also many Muslims in the army; according to Keo Ibrohim, they volunteered²⁹⁸ to join because they believed the Khmer communists would not allow Cham to practice Islam once they gained power. This belief must have been reinforced with news of purges against Muslim community leaders in Kampong Cham and other areas controlled by the Khmer Rouge. However, forced conscription was also taking place during the Lon Nol regime by the Khmer Republic government.

Under the Khmer Republic, a Cham named Les Kosem became prominent in the war as well as in ethno politics. The Anti-Vietnam and ethno politics of the Khmer Republic were partially accomplished by Les Kosem and his newly formed political coalition called FULRO. Being anti-Vietnamese, Lon Nol used ethnic Cham' dreams to regain Champa as a way to gain support against Vietnamese communism. In his broader vision, Lon Nol wanted to unite the Mon people in Burma and Thailand, the Khmer in Cambodia and Kampuchea Krom (the part of Cambodia annexed by Vietnam in 1949), the Cham of Cambodia and Vietnam, and the highlanders.²⁹⁹

As an ethnic leader Les Kosem wanted to unite the Cham, the indigenous highlanders and the Khmer Krom to take back the territories annexed by Vietnam. Les Kosem studied with Lon Nol at Lyceé Sisowath. He later became a close advisor to Lon Nol on Cham affairs and was appointed as a general of the Khmer Republic's army. Les Kosem was given permission to form a Cham battalion in the Cambodian Security

²⁹⁸ There is a Khmer Republic document reporting voluntary participation in Khmer Republic army by Cham and Chinese around Tonle Sap River. DC-Cam Document L006433: Recruitment of Cham and Chinese into Khmer Republic Army, August 16, 1974.

²⁹⁹ William Collins, "Cham Muslims," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, op. cit.

Forces. This force became famous for its anti-communist sentiment, destroying and exterminating communists in Khmer Rouge-occupied villages. But it was broken up later by the Cambodian Security Forces, apparently due to its excessive brutality.³⁰⁰

Ethnonationalism emerged in the 1950s. It spurred an alliance between the highland groups in the mountains between Cambodia and Vietnam. In 1964, Les Kosem held meetings with the Bajaraka movement in the Central Highlands of Vietnam to persuade them to merge with his movements, called the Front for the Liberation of Northern Cambodia and the Front for the Liberation of Champa.³⁰¹ Bajaraka had been active in the Central Highlands of Vietnam intending to seek autonomy and rights for highlanders who lost their land to increasing numbers of Vietnamese immigrants to their historical territory. The three organizations would be combined with the lower Mekong Delta organization called the Struggle Front of the Khmer Kampuchea Krom, whose ethnic Khmer followers had also been controlled by Vietnam on their historic land. The four combined to make FULRO, which remained as a political and military organ until the early 1990s when they were disbanded by UNTAC.

A document written by Y Bham Enoul, an important member and later head of FULRO, stressed the ideology of FULRO:

Since 1955, all the countries of Indochina achieved independence. But the Cham nation and people are still suffering and have become what is called a minority in their own land. To use that term is a humiliation for a group that is really lord of the land. Because this word means small people. Thus they have no right to control their country and nation themselves or they are not permitted to do so. Thus their national identity disappears and they must live as slaves of the nations which are stronger and smarter, for example, the Yuon [a derogatory

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p. 42.

term for the Vietnamese]. Because the danger in the future is so great for the Cham people thus the Cham must awaken, struggle and fight in order to serve their own nation.³⁰²

A propaganda tract of the Khmer Republic in 1974 stated, “Our Khmer Muslims have never forgotten that the ancestors of the present-day Vietnamese unlawfully occupied their country, CHAMPA, which once existed in what is now central Vietnam.”³⁰³ The tract also accused Vietnam of genocide against the Cham:

Champa was annexed by the conquering Vietnamese. The Cham that remained became Muslim in a massive, historic conversion. The present-day Cham are in physical danger of extinction. The Vietcong policy is to exterminate as many of them as possible and to Vietnamize the few who remain. The Vietcong’s plan has three stages: genocide, de-Islamization, and intensive conversion to communism.³⁰⁴

Les Kosem led a delegation of Cham Muslims to join the First Congress of the Afro-Asian Islamic Organization in Bandung, Indonesia in October 1970. General Les Kosem also organized annual trips for delegations of Khmer and Muslim members to many countries to campaign for support for the Khmer Republic regime as well as to spread the word about Muslims in Cambodia and their plight in the war. A former Lon Nol logistics officer, Keo Ibrohim, said that in 1973 he was part of a delegation to French-speaking countries such as France and Ethiopia to explain why Cambodia, which had been a neutral country, fell into the Second Indochinese War.³⁰⁵

In 1974, Les Kosem and his supporters produced a paper called “The Martyrdom of Khmer Muslims.” This propaganda paper attacked Sihanouk for collaborating with anti-religion communist forces in the forest. It also accused the Khmer Rouge of

³⁰² Ibid., p. 43.

³⁰³ Ibid., p. 45.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

executing Khmer Muslims under their control, and the communists of genocide against Khmer Muslims. To back up their accusations, the paper listed the names of Cham *hakems*, *tuons* and community leaders who had been killed by the Khmer Rouge. It also listed mosques that were destroyed by them. The paper did not identify the Khmer Rouge communist group as an independent force. It conflated it with the wider Indochinese communist groups led by the North Vietnamese. This allowed them to link the plight of the Cham in Champa with those of the Cham Muslims in Cambodia. These two were victims of a single communist enemy led by the Vietnamese communists whose ancestors committed genocide against the Cham five centuries ago.

By 1975, Cambodia had 118 mosques led by a *hakem* and two deputy *hakems*. By then Cambodia had 6 to 10 *imams* and over 1000 *hajis*. Twenty five Cham were known to have graduated from world centers of Islamic learning. Nine had completed six years of study at Al-Azhar University in Cairo.³⁰⁶ Many of these individuals were to be eliminated in the next three years, eight months and twenty days of the Khmer Rouge's ruthless policy of social purification, which resulted in the genocide against the Cham people.

VII. Conclusion

This chapter identified several key features of Cham core and peripheral identities. The Cham are descendents of maritime people who had extensive connections with

³⁰⁵ Author's interview with Keo Ibrohim, November 12, 2011.

fellow Malayo-polynesian people in Southeast Asia, particularly those living in the Southeast Asian archipelagoes. The extinction of Champa at the hand of Vietnamese expansists resulted in more Cham connections with Islamic people and their neighbors. The Cham maintained an international outlook throughout their history. They participated in maritime trade, warfare and diplomacy with partners around the South China Sea.

Another key feature of their core ethnic identity is this group's loss of land to Vietnam and their flight for asylum in Cambodia, where they became a minority and adopted a new core religious identity as Muslims. After years of war with Vietnam, the Cham lost their capital Vijaya in 1471. This resulted in the first migration of Cham to Cambodia. Champa ceased to exist as a kingdom in 1835 when the last enclaves of its territories were taken by Vietnam. Between 1471 and 1835, Cham fled to Cambodia in multiple waves. Despite a history of conflict between the two kingdoms, the Khmer welcomed Cham migrants who settled in the southeast plain (around Kampong Cham) and along the Mekong River, where they rebuilt their political identity as Muslims supportive of the Cambodian kingdom.

In Cambodia the Cham encountered Malay/Chvea Muslims who had settled in Cambodia long before they arrived. From the Chvea, many Cham migrants converted to Islam. Thus, the Cham' Islamic identity has always been connected with the Chvea who always seemed to act as intermediaries between the Cham and the Khmer, even in contemporary society. In the past the Chvea helped the Cham to settle in Cambodia and converted them to Islam. Today the Chvea, who speak Khmer better than the

³⁰⁶ Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002, pp. 255-6, p. 271.

Cham but do not speak Cham, stand between the Cham and Khmer in terms of similarities and integration into the Khmer social community. In fact, the word Khmer Islam, which is used by the Cambodian Government to refer to Cambodian Muslims, is more correctly applied to the Chvea than the Cham because the Chvea do not have an indigenous language. Thus the Chvea helped, and still do, localize the Cham with the Khmer.

Despite being a very small minority in Cambodia today, the Cham have a rich history of connection and confrontation with the Khmer, which forms the basis of the Cham's core, ethnic identity. At the height of Angkorean Empire, Champa was strong enough to successfully invade and sack Angkor in 1177. But the Khmer were quick to retaliate through their invasion of Vijaya in 1203 and controlled the capital for seventeen years until 1220. Cham and Khmer histories are also similar in a few cases. Both people have experienced land loss to Vietnam. While the Cham lost their entire kingdom, Cambodia lost the lower Mekong Delta. The extinction of Champa meant Cambodia had no buffer zone to protect it against further Vietnamese expansion.

Although the Cham lost their country, the Cham capital lasted longer than Angkor did. Angkor was abandoned in 1432 under Thai attack, while Champa's capital Vijaya was lost in 1471 under Vietnamese attack. While the Khmer had Jayavaraman VII as their great king-general, the Cham had Che Bong Nga as their heroic king, who terrorized the Vietnamese for twenty years. The Cham's history of connection, confrontation and similarity with the Khmer creates a clear ethnic boundary between Cham and Khmer. These historical facts remain strong in both Cham and Khmer consciousness as both idealize their glorious past.

During the colonial period, Cham ethnic identity was further strengthened and legitimized through colonial law designating the Cham as a minority in Cambodia but not as “foreigners.” Under Sihanouk’s government, they were considered as “Khmer” with Islamic beliefs.

The period of greatest expansion of Cham religious identity was probably the 17th century when a Khmer king converted to Islam. Reameathipadei I ruled Cambodia from 1642 to 1658. He rose to power with the assistance of Cham³⁰⁷ generals and converted to Islam to seek forgiveness for the sins he committed while trying to gain the throne, although some sources said that he married a Muslim woman and was required to convert. During his reign, Cambodia was on the verge of conversion to Islam. Courtiers and royal officials were converted. Mosques were being built across the country, including one in Khleang Sbek village which is currently named Al Akbah Dubai Khleang Sbek. Cham were appointed to high positions within the government. The king abandoned Buddhist rituals. Raising, slaughtering and selling pigs were discouraged if not prohibited. In sum, during Reameathipadei I’s reign, the Cham established the foundation of their Islamic identity as an important minority in Cambodia.

Under the Lon Nol regime, Cham political identity changed from being supportive of Sihanouk’s regime and his royal family to one divided along political lines. Those living under the control of the communist resistance took part voluntarily and sometimes were coerced into revolutionary efforts to oust the Khmer Republic, while

³⁰⁷ Historical materials do not make a distinction between Cham and Chvea; mostly they refer to Cambodian Muslims as Malays.

some Cham living in the cities were asked to join the army of the Khmer Republic. The regime also created a special Cham force led by General Les Kosem. During the war the idea of Cham ethnic identity with origin from Champa was inflamed so that they would join a political coalition of minorities called FULRO to fight against the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese communists, and take back Champa and the lower Mekong Delta from Vietnam.

Chapter Four: Challenge to Core Identities: Cham Experience under the Khmer Rouge

The Khmer Rouge held power in Cambodia for three years, eight months and twenty days, from April 17, 1975 to January 6, 1979. When we consider this time period in comparison with the rest of Cham history, it is very short. But enough happened under the Khmer Rouge in terms of Cham identities that this part of history deserves a dedicated chapter. This chapter discusses the Cham experience under the regime, pointing out that the Khmer Rouge's treatment of the Cham constituted genocide against this group. This resulted in modification of Cham peripheral identities (e.g., sectarian, political, economic) in the 1980s and it continues to affect the community today.

This chapter first looks at the rise of Democratic Kampuchea and provides an overview of the regime before analyzing the Khmer Rouge's basic law on Islam and its intent to destroy the Cham. It continues with a discussion of the evolution of the Khmer Rouge's treatment of the Cham, beginning with their arrival in Cham villages in the early 1970s, the imposition of solidarity groups, communal eating and cooperative systems in Cham villages, and increasingly harsher treatment of the Cham as the Khmer Rouge realized that they could defeat the Lon Nol regime without assistance from the Cham. Last, the chapter analyzes Cham responses to the Khmer Rouge's prohibition of Islam and their resultant repression by the Khmer Rouge, which by this point is characterized as genocide.

I. Introduction: Rise of the Khmer Rouge

“Khmer Rouge” was the fateful name given to communist groups in Cambodia by Prince Norodom Sihanouk in the 1960s.³⁰⁸ His clearest mention of this term occurred in 1967 in relation to the presence and increasing influence of the communists in rural areas of Cambodia. In Prince Sihanouk’s Khmerization campaign, which attempted to conflate Cambodia’s myriad identity groups into one large Khmer identity, both the communists and Muslims were given a Khmer label, just like many other social and political groups in Cambodia.

For the prince, there was undeniable equality among all peoples in Cambodia, but the Khmer Rouge saw it differently. They saw economic injustice and exploitation of the poor by the rich, of the illiterate by the educated, and of rural farmers by urban dwellers. Royalism, feudalism, capitalism and modernity were to be eliminated. A new Khmer identity was needed to liberate Cambodia from its social ills and launch it into the Khmer Rouge’s own “modern and progressive” future in which everyone was equal, and there were no crimes, no social classes, no rich, no poor and no diversity.

Sihanouk tried to conflate Cambodia’s identity groups into one huge Khmer group, but he respected their subordinate identities, for example, by appending to the term Khmer a marker that differentiated whether one was a Muslim, hill tribesman, communist or liberal. However, for the Khmer Rouge, there was no such sub-identity.

³⁰⁸ Khamboly Dy, *A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979*, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2007.

Before 1970 the Khmer Rouge was considered to be a politically and militarily weak communist group. They relied heavily on logistical and political support from North Vietnam.³⁰⁹ Khmer communists and communists elsewhere in Indochina inevitably had relationships. When the first Indochina war broke out, a group was formed in 1950 called the Khmer Issarak, which was led by Khmer communists. They were closely aligned with Ho Chi Minh's communist guerillas. Even the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party received advice from Vietnam when it was being created a year later.³¹⁰

The future supreme leader of Democratic Kampuchea, Pol Pot, was still in France at this time and played no part in these early political movements. He would return to Cambodia from studying in France in 1953. The early communists in Cambodia were led by Son Ngoc Minh, Siv Heng, Tou Samuth and Chan Samay. Upon independence from France in 1953 and the end of First Indochinese War in 1954, communism became less tolerated by Prince Norodom Sihanouk. As a result, some of the communist leaders fled to Vietnam.³¹¹

The communists also created a political party called the People's Party to compete in a 1955 national election with Sihanouk's Sangkum Reastr Niyum Party. Pol Pot was then active in this process and he tasted his first political defeat.³¹² His party and the Democrat Party which he supported failed by a landslide. Prince Sihanouk emerged as an undisputed victor in the election. This gave Pol Pot a valuable lesson about the power and popularity of the Prince. He also learned about party loyalty and how to

³⁰⁹ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1993.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Khamboly Dy, *A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979*, op. cit.

enforce it when members of his communist movements began to defect to Prince Sihanouk's new regime. Siv Heng, a leader of the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party, defected in 1959.³¹³ His defection was followed by the arrests of many secret communists. But by then the communists had established a strong base in Kampong Cham and Takeo provinces. These two provinces would later be expanded to become the Eastern and Southwest Zones, the two Khmer Rouge zones where there would be disastrous consequences for the Cham.

In 1962 Pol Pot became the full-fledged leader of the communists in Cambodia with Nuon Chea as his deputy. Pol Pot immediately fled to the least inhabited northeast area of Cambodia. He would later call it the Northeast Zone. There he recruited hill tribesmen to fight for communism. He visited Vietnam, China and North Korea in 1965.³¹⁴ The visit was a revelation for him. It showed him the difference between various brands of communism. By then China and the Soviet Union had begun to show signs of serious disagreement. Pol Pot returned to northeast Cambodia after becoming disenchanted and disgusted with the prospect of a unified Communist Party of Indochina. In 1966, he formed the Communist Party of Kampuchea. As evidence of his distrust for Vietnam, Cambodian communists trained in Vietnam would gradually be alienated, imprisoned and secretly executed.

The elimination of long-term communist members inevitably weakened communist movements. It also brought in the discrepancies of interpreting and implementing communism in Cambodia. In addition, it led to variations in practice in different parts

³¹² David Chandler, *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1999.

³¹³ Khamboly Dy, *A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979*, op. cit.

³¹⁴ David Chandler, *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot*, op. cit.

of the country. Such variations further weakened the communist movement. But Pol Pot's luck changed in March 1970 when Lon Nol and Sirik Matak (Sihanouk's uncle) deposed the prince in a bloodless coup while Sihanouk was on a trip to France.³¹⁵ Not only was Sihanouk humiliated by his own subordinates, but if he returned to Cambodia he would face prosecution and imprisonment. He had no choice but to side with Pol Pot's communist movement, which by then had fairly well established armed guerrilla pockets around the country. Siding with the communists, Sihanouk also allowed Pol Pot's communist movement to take advantage of his overwhelming rural popularity. This radically changed the communist's manpower as well as its military capability.³¹⁶ But Pol Pot made sure he was the one who had the power, not Sihanouk. The coup in 1970 also plunged Cambodia into the Second Indochina War and split it into what the Khmer Rouge termed the liberated zone and the Lon Nol zone.

Like many Cambodians, the Cham were caught between these zones, and thus joined both sides. As mentioned earlier Les Kosem, along with many Muslims in the cities, were active in the Lon Nol government, while Sos Man and rural Cham community leaders were active in the National Unification Front, the official name of the Khmer Rouge group.

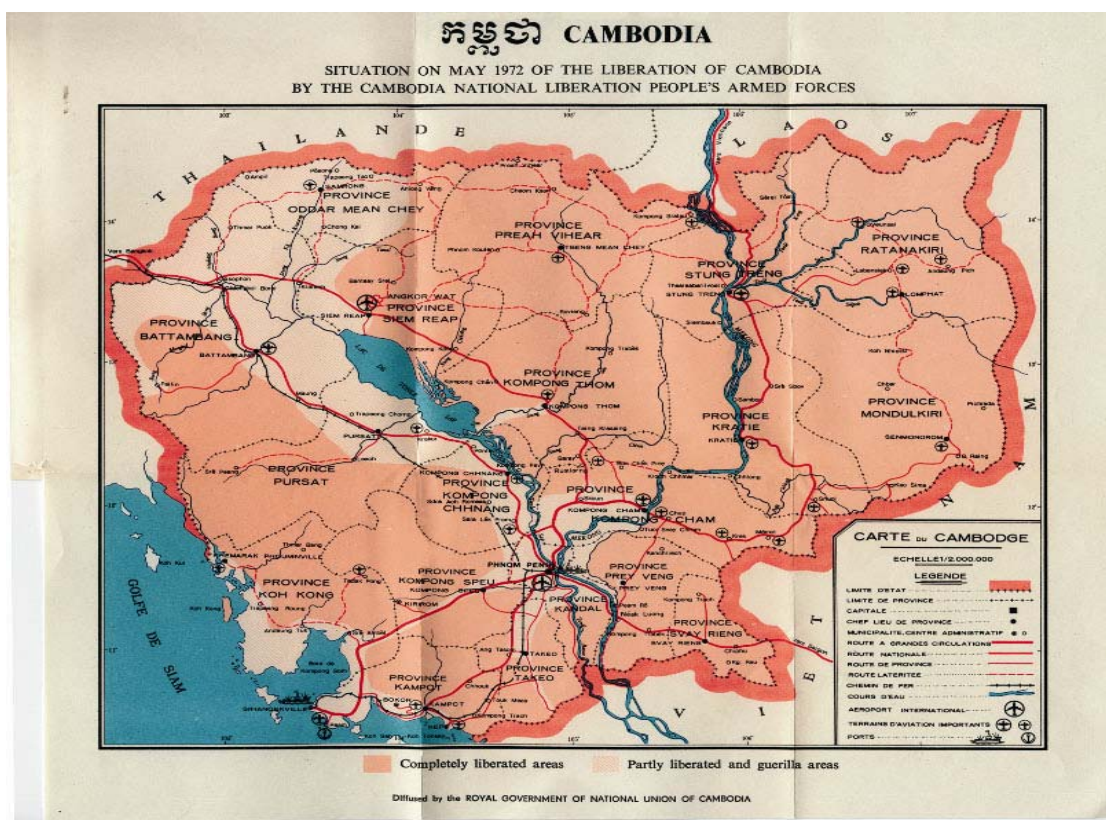
By 1972 almost 70% of Cambodia's territory was controlled by the Khmer Rouge. Lon Nol controlled the seaports, the coast, roads linking Phnom Penh and South Vietnam, and parts of Kampong Chhnang, Pursat and Battambang provinces linking

³¹⁵ Henry Locard disagrees that this was a coup, as parliament voted Prince Sihanouk from power in the same year.

³¹⁶ Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979*, op. cit.

Phnom Penh with Thailand.³¹⁷ By 1973 almost 90% of Cambodia was controlled by the Khmer Rouge.³¹⁸ Lon Nol forces controlled only the roads linking Phnom Penh with Sihanouk seaport, with Kampong Cham and Battambang. The only large visible territory controlled by Lon Nol at this time was along the Thai border in Battambang province. Several provincial towns were also still under his army's control, including Kampong Cham, Kampot, Kampong Thom, Pursat, Siem Reap, Sihanouk Ville, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, Kandal and Battambang, although these towns were isolated.³¹⁹ However, these territories were heavily infiltrated by covert communists. Even Lon Nol officers were known to have conducted business with the communists. The Cham in Kampong Cham were known to trade with people in Lon Nol-controlled zones.³²⁰

Map 3. Area Controlled by the Khmer Rouge in 1972



³¹⁷ DC-Cam Document: Khmer Rouge Liberated Zone May 1972.

³¹⁸ DC-Cam Document: Khmer Rouge Liberated Zone May 1973.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

The Khmer Rouge finally gained control of the entire country on April 17, 1975 when Phnom Penh fell in a bloodless final stage of the war. A number of radical plans were then implemented by the Khmer Rouge to keep Cambodians from rebelling and to achieve their grandiose long-term vision of a utopian Cambodia. Phnom Penh and other town centers were evacuated. Nuon Chea later mentioned during his testimony before the ECCC (Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, popularly known as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal) that this was done to control the people. Men, women, and children, and even hospital patients and the elderly, were ordered to leave by foot to the countryside. However, the Khmer Rouge did not have a specific plan of how to divide people. They just knew that towns had to be dispersed to the countryside.

In Phnom Penh, people chose to walk along major highways to the villages where they used to live or had close relatives. However, because a curfew was imposed, some people could not travel to the village of their choice. Furthermore, they expected to return to Phnom Penh within a few days. Cham northeast of Phnom Penh, such as the Chrang Chamres and Chroy Chanvar³²¹ areas, generally moved to Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang. Cham in Prek Pra southeast of Phnom Penh moved to Kandal province.³²² Their ethnic identity was no longer as a Cham or a Muslim, but simply as “New People.” The evacuation of people also had the effect, which first seemed unintentional but later more intentional, of dispersing concentrated Cham

³²⁰ Ysa Osman, *The Cham Rebellion*, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2006.

³²¹ Author’s interview with Osman Ahmad Chou, January 15, 2011, village chief of Chroy Metrey village; Author’s interview with Leb Mohammad, January 16, 2011, *hakem* of a mosque in Chroy Changvar; Author’s interview with Leb So, January 9, 2011, *hakem* of a mosque in Chroy Changvar; Author’s interview with Ly Matno, January 9, 2011, *hakem* of a mosque in Chroy Changvar.

³²² Author’s interview with Mae You, January 29, 2011, village chief of Prek Pra.

communities all over the country. This dispersion weakened the Cham core identities and infused them into the majority Khmer group.

In December 1975, Khmer Rouge leaders and officials met to discuss the creation of a new national Constitution which they passed in January 1976.³²³ In the same year Democratic Kampuchea eliminated the old administrative divisions and created new divisions based on zones, regions, districts, communes and villages. They created 6 zones with 32 regions. In 1976, Democratic Kampuchea officials also met to create a four-year plan to be implemented from 1977 to 1980 in which agriculture was the main production priority, to be achieved via collectivization, cooperative units and de-privatization.³²⁴ However, as seen below, the implementation of similar forms of cooperatives in Cham villages began much earlier. Depending on their ages, members of Cham families were separated into children's, mobiles, women's, men's and elderly units, among others.

In Democratic Kampuchea, intermarriage was enforced.³²⁵ Islam and its practice were prohibited. Prayer was prohibited. Soh Met said, "There was no prayer under the Khmer Rouge. I saw an old Cham woman who was executed for praying."³²⁶ Soh Pheak added, "They eavesdropped under our hut to see if we speak Cham and pray at

³²³ DC-Cam Document D21642: National Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea.

³²⁴ DC-Cam Document D00480: Study the Four-Year Plan.

³²⁵ In Democratic Kampuchea, both officials and ordinary people had their marriages arranged by Angkar. On some occasions, up to fifty couples were wed at a time. See also Peg LeVine, *Love and Dread in Cambodia: Weddings, Births and Ritual Harm under the Khmer Rouge*, Singapore: NUS Press, 2010.

³²⁶ Farina So's interview with Soh Met, September 26, 2005. He was 52 and lived in Koh Thom district, Kandal province.

night. My praying robe was dyed from white to black so that it was less conspicuous.”³²⁷

In cooperative dining halls, religious food prohibitions were never considered and Muslims were forced to eat pork whenever available. Sometimes pork was used as a test to judge the loyalty of Muslims to Democratic Kampuchea and shift of Cham’ attitude toward “Angkar.”³²⁸ No Halimah said:

Under the Khmer Rouge life was extremely difficult. One day a female unit chief put a bowl of pork in front of me, asking me to eat it to show I was one of them. I told her, “Comrade sister, I see pork everyday and wish that I can eat it like beef and chicken. I am not discriminating against you. Look at the mosques, they have all been destroyed. I wish I could eat it now but I have not been able to adapt yet. Please don’t be angry, doing revolution takes a long time, not one or two days.” She replied, “Comrade Nob and others have already eaten pork, except you!” I replied, “Comrade sister, they can do that I praise them. But revolution takes a long time. Today Comrade Nob does it better than me, in the future I will do it better than her.” Then she pushed aside the pork bowl and put in a bowl of morning glory pickle instead. In fact, whenever I could not eat pork, I brought salt from home and ate with porridge or rice and tried my best to avoid pork dishes.³²⁹

Women were ordered to cut their hair short. Soh Pheak revealed, “They tried to eliminate Islam. They wanted us to become ‘Khmer.’ They ordered us to cut our hair, eat pork. Even long-sleeve shirts were not allowed to be worn. Our hijabs were torn into three pieces and thrown away. They said there are no Cham anymore, only Khmer, then they cut my hair. I sat there crying as they did that.”³³⁰ Qurans were collected and destroyed. Soh Pheak added, “The village chief ordered us to throw the Quran and other religious texts into an open toilet. But my father refused. I told my

³²⁷ Farina So’s interview with Soh Pheak, October 13, 2005. She was 46 and lived in Baray district, Kampong Thom province.

³²⁸ Kok-Thay Eng, “Forgiveness is Possible for Vork TY,” *Searching for the Truth*, June 2010.

³²⁹ Farina So’s interview with No Halimah, September 27, 2005.

father to at least bury the texts otherwise he would come to cut our throats. My father eventually told the village chief he threw them into the toilet but he in fact buried them.”³³¹ Toulouh Ahmat said, “My father-in-law packed religious texts in a sack and put them in the water to hide from the Khmer Rouge.”³³²

Mosques were left to degrade, used as storehouses or most ironically, as places to raise pigs. They were sometimes simply destroyed. Of a total of 113 mosques across Cambodia in pre-1975, only five mosques remained standing after 1979.³³³ Cham intellectuals and leaders were arrested and killed. All of these were a clear attack on Cham core identities. Some of these persecutions happened before 1975.

The Khmer Rouge’s purge dramatically affected the Cham in Kampong Cham and other parts of the country. The conflict between Democratic Kampuchea and Vietnam that started in 1976 intensified the Khmer Rouge’s killing of their own cadres. In 1977 when Vietnam invaded and then withdrew from the Eastern Zone, the Khmer Rouge purged hundreds of Eastern Zone cadres including its leader Sao Phim, accusing them of having a “Vietnamese head with a Khmer body.”³³⁴ Military members of the Eastern Zone later fought back, further intensifying Pol Pot’s belief in

³³⁰ Farina So’s interview with Soh Pheak, October 13, 2005. She was 46 and lived in Baray district, Kampong Thom province.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Farina So’s interview with Toulouh Ahmat, September 29, 2005. He was 62 and lived in Saang district, Kandal province.

³³³ “Islam in Kampuchea,” National Council of the United Front of Kampuchea for the Building and Defense of the Homeland, 1987. p. 11.

³³⁴ Sao Phim committed suicide before he was arrested. He never wrote a confession, but many documents pointed toward his conspiracy with S-21 prisoners. DC-Cam Document D07211: About Phim; DC-Cam Document D07396: Confession of Chan Sarat; DC-Cam Document J00610: Confessions of Lao Sros; DC-Cam Document J00404: Confession of Tan Try aka Chhoeun; DC-Cam Document J00410: Confession of Chin Ear aka Sou; DC-Cam Document D06971: Confession of Sun of Region 20.

their treason. Hundreds of thousands were killed in purges and clashes. Thousands of people, including Khmer Rouge cadres, fled to Vietnam.

The Khmer Rouge also purged the Northern Zone (which later became the Central Zone in 1977) in 1976 and 1977. The zone's secretary Koy Thuon was arrested and executed in Tuol Sleng prison in 1976.³³⁵ During these purges Pol Pot also ordered the arrest and execution of Hou Nim,³³⁶ Tiv Ol³³⁷ and several other leaders. Vorn Vet, a long-term member of the Communist Party of Kampuchea and Minister of Economy, was arrested and killed in 1978.³³⁸ Nhim Ros, secretary of the Northwest zone, was killed in 1978.³³⁹ Thousands of Khmer Rouge cadres died in the purge. In the process, many more Cham were killed in multiple waves. They were increasingly isolated as an enemy racial group.

II. Khmer Rouge Constitution and Islam

The Khmer Rouge constitution, adopted on January 5, 1976, provides strong evidence of Democratic Kampuchea's policy toward Islam. Article 15, Section 20 of the constitution stated that: "Cambodian people have the right to believe in faith or religion and they also have the right not to believe in faith or religions. It is absolutely not permitted to have reactionary religions which destroy Democratic Kampuchea and

³³⁵ DC-Cam Document D15143: Koy Thuon aka Khuon's Brief Activities; DC-Cam Document D15572: Koy Thuon aka Khuon's Background and Activities; DC-Cam Document D23250: The Activities of the Traitor, Koy Thuon.

³³⁶ DC-Cam Document D07309: The Confession of Hou Nim aka Phoas.

³³⁷ DC-Cam Document D00049: Biography of Comrade Tiv Ol aka Penh; DC-Cam Document D04535: The Case of Tiv Ol; DC-Cam Document J00502: Traitorous Activities of Tiv Ol aka Penh.

³³⁸ DC-Cam Document D13840: The Case of Penh Thuok aka Sok or Vorn Vet, Minister of Industry; DC-Cam Document D17030: Biography and Traitorous Activity of Penh Thuok.

the Cambodian people.”³⁴⁰ Here it was clear that while the Khmer Rouge seemed to provide Cambodia’s people with the freedom to believe, they would be the ones who determined which religions were good or bad. In a normal democratic government, religion is not judged, but criminal acts are judged. In this Khmer Rouge constitution at least, religions were judged to be productive, counter-productive, dangerous or safe for the revolution. Once religions are looked at in such a way, they are no longer treated as a faith, but as politics. Islam was the same; it was targeted more than other religions as it was alien to the Khmer Rouge leadership, most of whom had been Khmer Buddhists.

Another way to look at the Khmer Rouge’s constitution is to analyze the term “reactionary,” which was used as a reservation for prohibiting religions and determined how the Khmer Rouge would react when people or institutions were considered reactionary. Reactionary, or *bratekeriya* in Khmer, is explained in the 1963 Choun Nat Dictionary as being used to refer to person(s) who oppose political changes or social progress.³⁴¹

In the Khmer Rouge monthly *Revolutionary Youth Magazine*, the word reactionary was mentioned repeatedly. This word was employed to describe the most hated of the Khmer Rouge’s perceived enemies. They included the imperialist Americans and their intelligence agency the CIA, the urban rich, landowners, wealthy business

³³⁹ DC-Cam Document D21281: Confession of Moul Oun aka Moul Sambath, June 14, 1978. Moul Oun and Moul Sambath were the revolutionary names of Nhim Ros.

³⁴⁰ DC-Cam Document D21642: National Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea.

³⁴¹ Choun Nat was a Khmer Buddhist monk and linguistic intellectual who emerged in the 1960s. He published a Khmer dictionary that has since become a baseline for understanding the root meanings of Khmer words today. Choun Nat, *Khmer Dictionary*, 1963.

persons, Lon Nol government officials, and those considered to be exploiting the labors of unskilled workers and peasants.

As noted earlier, when the Khmer Rouge arrived in Phnom Penh, they began to evacuate all city dwellers to the countryside. These people would then become “new people” (*neak thmei*). Khmer Rouge officials would then observe the former city residents as they worked in the fields to determine their *a-thun* attributes during the pre-revolutionary period (*a-thunt* was the quality of using one’s own labor to serve oneself and not using other people’s labor to gain wealth). The *a-thun* class was the decent middle class who had just enough materials to support their livelihood. They do not exploit and are not exploited. Their view towards politics and economics was just, almost indifferent.³⁴² Those who did not possess this quality were considered to be reactionaries. They were generally put in harsher working conditions, deprived of food, imprisoned and tortured, or simply executed in the field.

In an August 1974 issue, the magazine stated: “The imperialists as well as the power holders represented by the worst reactionary feudalism-capitalist groups in the country, distorted the minds of our youths so that these youths became their tools in defending and prolonging their expansion, repression, fascist authority, treason and betrayal of the people.”³⁴³ The same issue opined: “Before liberation our Cambodian youths were looked down upon by the colonialist, imperialist and repressive class who were all a handful of reactionary feudalism-capitalist people.”³⁴⁴ The July 1975 issue of the magazine stated: “In the old society which was colonialist with half-feudalism and a human society repressing humans, the reactionary capitalist, feudalism and imperialists

³⁴² DC-Cam Document: *Revolutionary Youth Magazine*, August 1974.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

lived in style and riches because they exploited the labors of the people.”³⁴⁵ The same issue continued: “They also spread their reactionary views and stances to the youths so that they hate, look down upon manual labors and cultivations. In short, they taught our youths to hate the working class who were the food producers and tool makers.”³⁴⁶ It emphasized that “after receiving political and emotional education and highest revolutionary assignment, comrade Khon understood the reasons behind the sufferings of himself and his family. He saw the brutality and fascist acts of the reactionary power holders.”³⁴⁷ It concluded, “In the old society, the imperialist US and its puppets poisoned the mind of our youths with reactionary and repressive culture and social affairs.”³⁴⁸

The February 1974 issue of *Revolutionary Youth Magazine* wrote that: “The Communist Party of Kampuchea has been leading the nation, the people and their youths to do nationalistic and democratic revolution to drive out the imperialist USA and traitors Lon Nol, Siri Matak, Son Ngoc Thanh and In Tam who are all representing reactionary feudalism and capitalism.”³⁴⁹ As we have seen, reactionary was used to refer to feudalist and capitalist groups and the Khmer Rouge enemies. Those enemies included Lon Nol, Siri Matak, Son Ngoc Thanh and In Tam. Siri Matak, Son Ngoc Thanh and In Tam were all killed by the Khmer Rouge. Lon Non, who was Lon Nol’s brother, was also killed.³⁵⁰

The next question is whether Islam was considered reactionary by the Khmer Rouge.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

³⁴⁵ DC-Cam Document: *Revolutionary Youth Magazine*, July 1975. p. 7.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

³⁴⁹ DC-Cam Document: *Revolutionary Youth Magazine*, February 1974. p. 36.

Mat Ly, former member of the People's Assembly of Democratic Kampuchea and former permanent member of the district committee of Tbong Khmum district under the Khmer Rouge, revealed that on May 20, 1975 (seven months before the constitution was adopted), Pol Pot convened a conference in Phnom Penh to approve an eight-point plan: "1) Create cooperatives from low to high level; 2) Evacuate the people from the cities to the countryside and divide people into three categories; 3) Stop the use of money; 4) Close markets; 5) Eliminate religions, as they are all reactionary; 6) Eliminate schools; 7) Eliminate hospitals; 8) Sweep away internal enemies by the roots."³⁵¹ His account provides a clear indication of the Khmer Rouge's intention. Although there is no other evidence to corroborate this, point number five is very interesting as it seems to link up very well with Article 15, Section 20 of the constitution, which was issued later in the year. Here the Khmer Rouge had decided that all religions were reactionary. As the word reactionary was attached to the Khmer Rouge's most hated social forces and enemies, Islam was considered as dangerous and wicked from the beginning. It was to be resolutely destroyed. In practice, the repression of Islam had been occurring since 1973 in Cham villages.

III. Arrival of Communism in Cham Villages

In many cases the Khmer Rouge took control of Cham villages around Cambodia in 1970, depending on the state of fighting with Lon Nol's armed forces across Cambodia and the proximity of Cham villages to major urban centers, for example,

³⁵⁰ Khamboly Dy, *A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979*, op. cit.

³⁵¹ Ysa Osman's interview with Mat Ly, March 27, 2000.

the provincial towns remaining under Lon Nol control until 1975. Some areas were under the Khmer Rouge's indirect control even before 1970. They included parts of Kampong Cham, Takeo and Kandal provinces. The Northeast Zone had been an important Khmer Rouge stronghold since 1966 as Pol Pot moved his main headquarters to Ratanak Kiri after he took control of the communist party.³⁵² Stung Treng, Mondul Kiri and Kratie fell under the Khmer Rouge much earlier than other provinces. This meant that pockets of Muslims in these provinces were also under the Khmer Rouge.

Map 4. Democratic Kampuchea Zones and Regions



³⁵² David Chandler, *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot*, op. cit.

In the Khmer Rouge's Northern Zone, which became the Central Zone in 1977, Cham villages fell under Khmer Rouge control very early as well. For example, the Cham village of Chamkar Andong (Cham Kar Leu district) was taken by the Khmer Rouge in 1970.³⁵³ The main Cham populated areas in this zone were Baray district of Kampong Thom, Stung Trang district of Kampong Cham, and Chamkar Leu district of Kampong Cham.³⁵⁴ Smaller Cham villages were scattered across the zone. Before 1975, this zone was one of the largest Cham-populated zones in Cambodia. During Democratic Kampuchea, many Cham from the Eastern Zone, especially those from Krauch Chhmar and Tbaung Khmum districts, were sent across the Mekong River to this zone.³⁵⁵ Because this zone was between Kampong Cham to the east of the Mekong and Kampong Thom to the west, Cham villages here fell under the Khmer Rouge later than those in Krauch Chhmar or east of the Mekong. Some villages were under the Khmer Rouge before 1973, particularly those in Baray district of Kampong Thom province.³⁵⁶

As for Chhit Chhoeun's (aka Ta Mok) Southwest Zone, the Khmer Rouge's control of Cham villages varied depending on their location in relation to major cities, namely Phnom Penh, Ta Khmao, Takeo, Kampot and Kampong Speu, which fell to the Khmer Rouge later than rural areas.

The Southwest Zone lay between the Bassac River and National Road 4. It covered the whole of Kampot and Takeo, Samraong Taung and Kong Pisey districts (or more)

³⁵³ Ben Kiernan, "Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot," *op. cit.*, pp. 2-33.

³⁵⁴ The distribution of Muslims in these areas was assumed based on today's distribution.

³⁵⁵ DC-Cam Document L1045: Telegram 15.

³⁵⁶ Soh Pheak said the Khmer Rouge entered her village in 1973. Farina So's interview with Soh Pheak, October 13, 2005. She was 46 and lived in Baray district, Kampong Thom province.

of Kampong Speu, and five western districts of Kandal province east of the Bassac River, including Kandal Stung, Koh Thom, Kien Svay and Leuk Dek.³⁵⁷ The Cham population in this zone was scattered across many districts. Kampong Speu province had a negligible number of Cham, while Kampot district of Kampot province had the fifth-largest number of Muslims in Cambodia. But 70% of those were of the Chvea ethnic group. Kampong Bay district, Kampot, also had a sizable Cham/Chvea population. It fell to the Khmer Rouge between 1970 and 1973.

Kandal province had a more evenly distributed Cham population, with Koh Thom and Ponhea Leu having the largest and second-largest Cham populations in the province, respectively. They were followed by Muk Kampoul and Saang districts. The Chvea held up to 80% of a district's Muslims only in Ponhea Leu district. Takeo was a more Chvea-dominated province, with up to 70% Chvea. But Takeo's overall Cham/Chvea population was comparatively small. Being close to Ta Khmao provincial town, the Khmer Rouge controlled Koh Thom district until 1972.³⁵⁸ Two notable Cham villages in this district were Cham Leu and Cham Kraom. Both came under the Khmer Rouge in 1972. However, in Takeo province the Khmer Rouge control of the Cham did not occur until 1972 or 1973.³⁵⁹

In the Western Zone, which was under the control of Chou Chet, there were some Cham villages. This zone covered Koh Kong and Kampong Chhnang provinces. It covered parts of Kampong Speu west of National Road 4. Many Cham people in Koh

³⁵⁷ Map of Democratic Kampuchea 1976.

³⁵⁸ Soh Met said that in 1972 the Khmer Rouge arranged Cham into cooperatives and they discouraged them from praying and studying Islam. Farina So's interview with Soh Met, September 26, 2005. He was 52 and lived in Koh Thom district, Kandal province.

³⁵⁹ Ben Kiernan, "Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot," *op. cit.*, pp. 2-33.

Kong today are new inhabitants, mostly from Kampong Cham, who went there for economic reasons. But Koh Kong also has old Cham/Chvea villages that were established long before the Khmer Rouge. The largest Cham/Chvea district in Koh Kong is Smach Meanchey. The Kampong Speu part of the zone has no Cham population. Only Kampong Chhnang had a significant Cham population; Kampong Tralach district was the third-largest Cham district in Cambodia. This district also included members of the Imam Sann group. Three other districts had significant Cham populations: Samaki Meanchey, Rolea Ba-ier and Teuk Phos. These districts were controlled by the Khmer Rouge in 1970.³⁶⁰ Smach Meanchey was under Khmer Rouge control in 1973.³⁶¹

The Northwest Zone was under Khmer Rouge control much later than other provinces. The zone covered Pursat and Battambang provinces. The main Cham communities in this zone were located along National Road 5, including Krakor and Kandieng districts of Pursat province; Mong Russei, and Sangke and Battambang districts of Battambang province. All of these districts fell under the Khmer Rouge after 1973.³⁶²

The Eastern Zone had the largest Cham population in Cambodia. It covered the whole of Prey Veng and Svay Rieng provinces, areas of Kampong Cham east of the Mekong River, Chhlong district of Kratie, and three districts in Kandal provinc, Ksach Kandal, Lvea Em and Muk Kampoul. Some of the largest Cham districts fell within this zone, including Tbong Khmum, Krauch Chhmar, Dambe, Stung Trang, Ponhea Krek and Memot. The Khmer Rouge controlled areas of Kampong Cham east of the Mekong in

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

1970 or earlier. Survivors talked about a Khmer Rouge hiding place named “Sleepy Forest” on the border of Krauch Chhmar and Tbong Khmum districts.³⁶³ In 1970 they often traveled to this site to participate in the war efforts of the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge began gradually moving out of this area as the war progressed.

The Khmer Rouge began controlling Cham villages in Prey Veng province in 1971. This province had only four Cham villages, Mesar Brachan, Kampong Brang, Stung Slaut Wamy and Khmer Islam. They were located close to the Vietnamese border and in two main districts of Peareang and Kampong Trabek. In Svay Rieng province, the Khmer Rouge controlled the only Cham village there soon after Lon Nol’s coup in March 1970. The village was called Takeo village.³⁶⁴

Early Khmer Rouge Treatment of the Cham

The Khmer Rouge’s treatment of Cham under their control varied depending on the place. In general, there were fewer killings before 1975 than between 1975 and 1979, especially during the purge in 1977-1978. In Krauch Chhmar, which saw at least three violent protests and rebellions, the treatment of Cham was particularly harsh, and led to harsh treatment of Cham in other parts of the Eastern Zone, the Central Zone and probably the whole country.

In 1970 in Krauch Chhmar, the Khmer Rouge formed a district leadership committee and appointed a Cham named Ta Yok to manage Muslim affairs.³⁶⁵ In the same year, the Khmer Rouge appointed a Cham named Sos Man to manage Cham affairs in the

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Osman Ysa, *The Cham Rebellion*, op. cit., p. 3.

³⁶⁴ Ben Kiernan, “Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot,” op. cit., pp. 2-33.

Eastern Zone. This was a reasonably prestigious position given the size of Cham population in the zone. Sos Man was the father of Mat Ly, who became a top leader of Muslims in 1980s and 1990s. Sos Man had been a veteran communist as part of the Khmer Issarrak since the 1950s. In 1970, he was based in Ampil village, Peus commune, Krauch Chhmar district. Sos Man (locally called Ta Man) appointed Haji Itres to serve as his personal assistant in the supervision of Muslim affairs. Sos Man also appointed Hakim Li to control the Cham in Chhlong district, one of the largest Cham areas in the country. Both Sos Man and Hakem Li were hugely respected by the locals. They had built their reputations as proper, religious and political leaders of the community since the 1950s and 1960s.³⁶⁶

Being given respect toward Islam by the communist hierarchy, Sos Man also proposed to the Khmer Rouge leadership that an Islamic leadership should be established for Muslim affairs across the liberated areas as a counterpart to Lon Nol's similar institution that he had inherited from Prince Sihanouk's Sangkum Reastr Niyum, which had created a supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, led by Grand Mufti Res Loh. He recommended Mohammad Kachi as the appropriate person. Kachi had been a long-term and respected religious teacher in Chumnik village.³⁶⁷

In addition, many of the organizational leaders in villages in Khmer Rouge-controlled areas were left the same as they had been under the Sihanouk regime. Each village had a religious leader (a *hakem*) who maintained proper religious observance, conducted ceremonies and rituals, acted as an arbitrator, and was a point of reference for religious matters in the village. The *hakem* also organized the village into small

³⁶⁵ Osman Ysa, *The Cham Rebellion*, op. cit., p. 3.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

groups of twenty to thirty families called *chum ah* with a leader called the *me chum ah*. A village also had a number of *tuons* who were responsible for teaching Islamic precepts to young children in the village.³⁶⁸

All of these Muslim organizational structures, including Sos Man's political structure to manage Muslim affairs, were dismantled by 1973. Sos Man was put under house arrest and killed³⁶⁹ (some said he committed suicide) in 1974.

In the beginning, Cham wholeheartedly supported the Khmer Rouge in their fight against the Lon Nol usurper and they wanted Prince Sihanouk to return. Their children volunteered to help the Khmer Rouge's early movement, the National Unification Front. They joined in various work units including the militia units as fighters, messengers, drivers and leaders. These young Cham soldiers were sent to Cham settlements to help villagers farm, fish and do daily chores. A Cham villager reported: "In 1971 Front soldiers came to help me carry and store water in jars and to harvest rice. They were properly behaved and addressed me as Father."³⁷⁰ Another Cham stated, "The Khmer Rouge were good people in the beginning. They distributed clothing to the needy."³⁷¹

These were examples of communist selflessness and ideals in which the young respected the old, people helped each other, and they cared more for community interest than their personal interest. This is very much consistent with the Islamic concept of almsgiving and the Cham' vision of an orderly, age-oriented society. The

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Osman Ysa's interview with Mat Ly, March 27, 2000.

³⁷⁰ Ysa Osman, *The Cham Rebellion*, op. cit.

Khmer Rouge gained wide appeal among the Cham, but these ideals would not characterize the Khmer Rouge in years to come. Islam was permitted until 1973.³⁷²

As mentioned earlier, the Khmer Rouge had nearly 90% of Cambodia's territory under their control by 1973. It is reasonable to assume that they no longer needed the support of the Cham people. Thus, they moved swiftly to implement their purge of Cham society's elites and propagandize against Islam. In Krauch Chhmar district, in 1973 the Khmer Rouge summoned members of the *hakem* committee (composed of a *hakem* and four assistants) in the villages for forty days of political training in Rokar Khnor commune. It was not known how many *hakem* committees were summoned. But three months later, members of the *hakem* committee were arrested.³⁷³

The Khmer Rouge continued arresting *hakems*, *tuons*, group leaders and learned Islamic members such as *hajjis* across the liberated zones. The Khmer Rouge also appointed a fellow Cham to persuade their community members to abolish the Islamic faith. One such person was Ta Yok, who had been responsible for Muslim affairs in Krauch Chhmar district. The Khmer Rouge began to discourage people from going to mosques and organizing public communal prayers. Qurans were collected and women were encouraged to wear short hair. The Khmer Rouge even wanted the Cham to raise pigs. But those encouragements and persuasions became coerced policies after the Khmer Rouge takeover of Phnom Penh in April 1975.³⁷⁴ Ai Yob said, "Before they controlled Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge was not strict. Cham did not have to eat pork. After April 17, they forced the Cham to eat pork. For some Cham who did not

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

know the real intention of the Khmer Rouge, they tried to eliminate Lon Nol troops. But later they learned it the hard way that after victory, their lives became worse.”³⁷⁵

A Cham survivor stated: “To win over the confidence of the Khmer Moslems, Sos Man continued to practice his Moslem faith...by 1973, however, Sos Man and his communist colleagues began to preach openly about communism, and to open political training schools and organize cooperatives. Most significantly, they began to tell the people that Muslims devoted too much time to religious matters and not enough time to revolution.”³⁷⁶

There may have been other issues besides Islam itself. In 1973, they began cleansing their party leadership of former active members of the Indochinese Communist Party of which Sos Man was a member. Many people who had connections with this party were killed at this time. However, one arrest and execution during this period began a sequence of arrests, killings and enemy-making by the Khmer Rouge, which eventually led to protests and rebellions and spiraling repression and paranoia amongst the Khmer Rouge leadership. Kiernan hypothesized a domino theory:

The [more] absolute the control sought, and the more successful the search, the greater its harmful impact on people’s lives, the larger the numbers of people affected, and the greater the numbers driven to resistance. In the end it was enemies created by the regime itself—foreign and domestic, armed and unarmed, political operatives and sullen survivors—people alienated by the regime’s attempt to destroy perceived enemies, who brought about its downfall.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ Farina So and Rachana Phat’s interview with Ai Yob, September 29, 2005. He was 49 and lived in Saang district, Kandal province.

³⁷⁶ Ben Kiernan, “Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot,” *op. cit.*, pp. 2-33.

The situation applied to Cham people across Cambodia, as in subsequent few years there were at least three violent protests by the Cham against the Khmer Rouge and thus more arrests and killings, and more radical plans by them to eliminate Cham and to attack their core identities.

The resentment of the Cham led one group to split away from the Khmer Rouge. This group, created in 1973, called themselves Khmer Sar (White Khmer). This group, whose leaders were former communist Cham, continued to support Prince Sihanouk, but they opposed the collectivization of property and abolition of religion imposed by the Khmer Rouge.³⁷⁸ This raised further distrust by the Khmer Rouge toward the Cham and increased their sense of insecurity.

Solidarity Groups and Cooperatives

In 1971 the Khmer Rouge began implementing a plan called “solidarity groups” (Krom Samaki) in some liberated areas, including Cham areas in Kampong Cham, particularly Krauch Chhmar district. Prior to this, Cham communities like others in Cambodia, depended upon a system of labor where the rich and landowners hired the poor, who were paid in money or part of the harvests. This new system emphasized mutual aid and shared labor, but it did not seem to emphasize a more equal distribution of wealth. A solidarity group was small, consisting of 10 to 15 families. A village might have more than ten groups, depending on its size. Group members retained ownership of their land and properties, but they had to “lend” labor to other farmers in the group from ploughing at the start of the season to harvest at the end.

³⁷⁷ Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979*, op. cit., p. 27.

³⁷⁸ Ben Kiernan, “Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot,” op. cit., pp. 2-33.

The landowners retained their harvest; it was not distributed among members of the solidarity group.³⁷⁹

The first year solidarity groups were implemented (1971) saw poor harvests for several reasons. First, members of the solidarity groups did not work hard enough to yield a harvest that could be shared among their members. Second, those with large plots of land could not find enough labor to farm all the land. They did not want to be over-active in their large fields, fearing other members of the group would accuse them of being greedy.

There was a sense that labor must be lent and returned equally. If things happened differently, inequality existed. Indeed it did. If a farmer owned a small parcel of land and had to farm a large parcel for others, he expected to receive more than the same return his labor would yield on a small plot. However, the Khmer Rouge continued implementing solidarity again in 1972 and as expected, the result was poor.³⁸⁰

Nonetheless, this system did spur a sense of closeness between Cham and the Khmer Rouge leadership. It was during this period that the Khmer Rouge leadership instructed their soldiers and staff to help villagers farm and do other work to express the ideals of communism. Islam and communism were then touted as one and the same. At that point, the Cham gained a political identity. Not only that they were Cham and Muslims, they were also communists. For them it seemed that, in times of social upheaval, a change in political identity was acceptable as long as it did not affect their core identities.

³⁷⁹ Osman Ysa, *The Cham Rebellion*, op. cit.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

In 1973, in Kampong Cham at least, the Khmer Rouge expanded the solidarity group into a cooperative system. A cooperative at this point in time consisted of 25 families. Its members had to give up all personal belongings, except their houses. Members were required to work together and, unlike in a solidarity group, harvests were shared. The harvest was stored at the house of the cooperative chairman, who would distribute food and other necessities on a regular basis. People cooked and ate separately. Apart from farming, activities were undertaken to supply material needs including fishing, finding wood and trading.³⁸¹

The cooperative system had many flaws. A family with able bodied workers still received the same amount of rations as families with many children. Some members clearly did not have much choice about what to cook for the day. It all depended upon what was available at the cooperative warehouse, for example, whether it was fish, meat or vegetables. Problems such as those led to theft and other activities that breached cooperative rules. This led to arrests and imprisonment.³⁸² In this period, Cham villages were not dispersed and therefore their food preferences and what was made available from cooperative warehouses were not anti-Islam. For example, pork was never available in Cham cooperatives.

At first, rich villagers were not allowed to join cooperatives as their share of property was larger and also in the Khmer Rouge's thinking, leaving them out would alienate the rich from the rest of the villagers and their "feudalist" attributes would be highlighted. Once the rich were content to share their large properties and take back

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid.

from the cooperative warehouse the same amount of rations as others, they were allowed to join, several months after the cooperative system went into effect.³⁸³ This probably occurred as a result of coercion, as by 1973, the Khmer Rouge began rooting out the prominent members of many Cham villages.

In the Khmer Rouge's cooperative system there was also a need for a "trade cooperative" that would make sure cooperative members had what they could not produce such as clothing, beverages, utensils, metals and medicines. The trade cooperatives would accept agricultural produce for these necessities. This was sometimes done with traders living in Lon Nol-controlled areas. However, after the Khmer Rouge victory in April 1975, those responsible for trading were arrested for supplying goods to Lon Nol areas.³⁸⁴

The Khmer Rouge kept expanding the size of cooperatives. In 1974, they combined two cooperatives into one with 50 families, and in 1975 combined cooperatives again to one with 100 families or more. Because the Cham population was dispersed after April 1975, cooperative members often comprised both Cham and members of other ethnic groups. In 1976 cooperatives were enlarged to encompass an entire village. At this stage communal eating was introduced, trade cooperatives abandoned,³⁸⁵ and the Cham were officially forced to eat pork. Him Ly said, "Later the Khmer Rouge created a larger cooperative. They built a dining hall for the village. During the day, they ordered us to work and when returning we ate together in the dining hall."³⁸⁶ El Man said, "Food was scarce. When meat was available it was pork. One day they

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

made pork soup for the cooperative and forced me to eat it, I refused. Then they took my ration away and gave me a long indoctrination meeting in the same night.”³⁸⁷

IV. Cham Protests and Rebellions

By late 1973, the Khmer Rouge’s slow grip on the Cham became apparent, leading to growing Cham discontent and anger. This led to protests and bold actions by the Cham. Protests and rebellions occurred in three locations in Krauch Chhmar district: Trea, Koh Phal and Svay Khleang. There were a few more cases of protests under the Khmer Rouge, but on a smaller scale; they took place in Kandal province and Kampong Som. The Khmer mounted at least one rebellion in Chi Kren district.

Trea Village Protest

A protest took place in Trea village in late 1973. This village lay in Krauch Chhmar district at a ferry crossing between Krauch Chhmar and Stung Trang districts. For the Cham, Trea village was the center of Islamic scholarship, as it is still today. Villages from Trea all the way to Svay Khleang in the north were close together and by Cambodian standards, they were as densely populated as they are today. Thus information and rumors, although inhibited by the Khmer Rouge, spread quickly.³⁸⁸

The protest by Trea villagers against the Khmer Rouge took place after a district security officer came into the village to arrest a prominent Cham man. Survivors

³⁸⁶ Sotheany Hin’s interview with Him Ly, October 13, 2005. He was 72 and lived in Baray district, Kampong Thom province.

³⁸⁷ Farina So’s interview with El Man, September 27, 2005. He was 69 and lived in Koh Thom district, Kandal province.

remember that the officer was called Mit On (comrade On). Mit On came to Trea village alone to arrest a man named Ibrahim who was wealthy and influential in the village. Upon Mit On's arrival, Ibrahim escaped through the back of his house. Mit On chased him and fired several shots at Ibrahim, but he missed.³⁸⁹

The attempted arrest outraged villagers, who demanded an explanation of the incident as well as other preceding arrests in recent months. Later in the day, villagers gathered in a prayer hall to discuss actions against the Khmer Rouge and the situation around Ibrahim's attempted arrest. They decided to march to the nearest Khmer Rouge office, the commune office. They demanded to meet the Khmer Rouge commune chief to talk about the case, but no one emerged. The villagers then burned the nearby Khmer Rouge "economic office" and left the area. A few hours later, Mit On returned with his soldiers to arrest the protesters. Survivors said that by then some protesters, anticipating the Khmer Rouge's response would be harsh, had already escaped. The Khmer Rouge further accused those who escaped as Khmer Sar, a group loyal to Prince Sihanouk.³⁹⁰ They arrested those who remained in the village and continued doing so in the following months. The protest increased the Khmer Rouge's sense of enmity against its perceived internal enemies in the village (in this case, the Cham). Further persecutions and arrests followed.

³⁸⁸ Osman Ysa's interview with Muhammad No, April 24, 2001.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

Koh Phal Protest

The Koh Phal protest occurred in June or July 1975, according to Kiernan.³⁹¹ But the author's interviews with survivors in Svay Khleang village revealed that it happened in September 1975 during the month of Ramadan. The Svay Khleang rebellion took place about two weeks later, at the end of September 1975.³⁹²

Koh Phal was a precursor to what happened in Svay Khleang. This village is located in the middle of the Mekong River, several kilometers north of Svay Khleang.

According to survivors, the rebellion in Koh Phal began with the Khmer Rouge's excessive suppression of Islam. They first collected all copies of the Quran, prevented villagers from going to the mosque to pray, and prohibited them from conducting a variety of other religious rites. Some survivors reported that the Khmer Rouge wanted the village mosque and the Islamic school closed within one week. As an island community, the spirit of solidarity was strong among Koh Phal villagers, who were ardent believers of Islam. The villagers closed neither the mosque nor school.³⁹³

The Khmer Rouge also banned Cham from using the Cham language, preferring them to use Khmer instead. They were also given Khmer names.³⁹⁴ No Halimah recalled:

One day I talked to my brother-in-law who was sick on our small house but we used Cham language. I said in Cham language, "Our hut has holes and rain falls in. Repair men are currently away building new huts somewhere else. I

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ben Kiernan, "Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot," op. cit., pp. 2-33.

³⁹² Author's interview with a group of Svay Khleang elders, October 22, 2009; Author's interview with Mat Tim, October 25, 2009, a Svay Khleang villager.

³⁹³ Osman Ysa's interview with San Sulaiman, March 12, 2001. San Sulaiman lives in Ampil village. He witnessed the Khmer Rouge killings of Koh Phal villager. Osman Ysa's interview with Sen Chi, April 23, 2001. Sen Chi lived in Koh Phal village in 2001. Osman Ysa's interview with Res Tort, November 13, 1999. Res Tort lives in Koh Phal village.

³⁹⁴ Osman Ysa's interview with Mat El, February 19 and April 23, 2001.

think they will take us somewhere soon.” Then a Khmer Rouge militia man appeared from the side with iron chain in his hand. He said, “What were you talking about? Do not use foreign language. If I hear it in the future, I will tie you with this chain.” I was shaken and stopped speaking Cham from then on. I was astounded that he considered Cham language as foreign. Another Khmer Rouge official named Chron also considered Cham language as foreign. I could not believe it. Just before the KR came to power, his mother often came to my village to sell boiled corn in front of my house; we knew each other and were friendly.³⁹⁵

Phaung Lim said, “When I spoke Cham, my group chief scolded at me. I dare not speak it again. However I could not help mixing a few Cham words when I spoke Khmer to my relatives during that time because my accent was more Cham and I could not recall some words in Khmer. I used it covertly.”³⁹⁶ Soh Met added, “One night I visited my little brother who was crying. Under the Khmer Rouge, they only allowed us to sing revolutionary songs about Angkar, group division and something like that. My little brother sang the song. I told him in Cham to stop. Then the militiamen came up to our house immediately.”³⁹⁷

It is easy to understand why the Khmer Rouge saw speaking Cham as a danger, but one can also say that their prohibition of Cham was another example of their racist behavior. In a regime full of suspicion and paranoia, coupled with the drive for central/total control of the populace and government structure, using an unknown language was thought to be linked to spy and conspiracy networks. So it was natural, in the Khmer Rouge’s logic of security, to prohibit the Cham language, especially when the Khmer Rouge also repressed their religion and culture.

³⁹⁵ Farina So’s interview with No Halimah, September 27, 2005. She was 64 and lived in Koh Thom district, Kandal province.

³⁹⁶ Farina So’s interview with Phaung Lim, February 26, 2007. She was 73 and lived in Kandeang district, Pursat province.

But Cham language is a strong pillar of Cham identity as descendants from Champa. Judging from observation today in Cham-dominated communities, pre-school Cham children do not speak Khmer. Women who do not venture much outside the home speak very little Khmer. Preventing them from speaking Cham meant asking them to abandon the old way of life and begin anew. If anything, the Cham language is the only remnant of Cham heritage from Champa. Islam and Islamic institutions are not.

Women were also restricted. It is traditional for Cham girls to wear a long hair as this, according to the Cham, goes along with the idea of covering your head with *hijab* or *kramar*.³⁹⁷ For Cham women the head needs to be covered by long hair and the hair needs to be covered by a *hijab* or other garment. It is important to note though, in my observation of Cham women today, depending on locations and sects, there is no universal perception of what a *hijab* should be. Some women wear the Khmer *kramar*, while other use *hijabs* imported from Malaysia. So in their effort to reverse tradition and culture, the Khmer Rouge forced Cham girls to cut their hair short. Having short hair was a policy set for all women around the country. Khmer women and other ethnic women do not have a religious or traditional preference for the length of hair, but this policy affected Cham women strongly.

Early in the Khmer Rouge's rise to power, they needed local support. Thus, they seemed open about Islam, a policy that Koh Phal villagers had been used to. But after their victory, the Khmer Rouge prohibited local religious practices and the villagers

³⁹⁷ Farina So's interview with Soh Met, September 26, 2005. He was 52 and lived in Koh Thom district, Kandal province.

³⁹⁸ Osman Ysa's interview with Ya Sos, April 21, 2001. Ya Sos lives in Saoy 1 village, Krauch Chhmar district.

felt both betrayed and restricted. Before open protests began, Cham community leaders learned that people were disappearing overnight.³⁹⁹

When the protest in Koh Phal began, the Khmer Rouge warned people not to continue. But continue they did, so the Khmer Rouge fired live rounds into both the air and the crowd. The Cham responded violently, slashing at the Khmer Rouge troops with swords and knives. They killed several of them. Killing members of the Khmer Rouge hardened the Khmer Rouge's belief in suppression and violence. They retaliated by killing more villagers, arresting others and evacuating them from the village. Then the Khmer Rouge ransacked homes and burned them to the ground. Some people at Koh Phal were taken about fifty km to Dambe and Kauk Srok communes, which were dominated by Khmer-Buddhists.⁴⁰⁰ This is an example of the destruction of identity through the breakup and integration in different communities.

Survivors revealed that the morning after the rebellion, Cham men were bound and drowned in the Mekong River. After this, the Khmer Rouge ironically changed the island's name from Koh Phal to Koh Phes, meaning the island of cinders and ashes, to make an example for other Cham communities that might rebel against Khmer Rouge authority. Without inhabitants the island eroded into the Mekong River. Before the protest, there were around 350 families on the island; in 2010 only three families inhabited Koh Phal. Survivors also reported that there were burial sites on the island, but over the past ten years, the bones had fallen into the torrents of the Mekong during the rainy season.

³⁹⁹ Osman Ysa's interview with Chi Ly, March 14, 2001. Chi Ly currently lives in Saoy 2 village, Krauch Chhmar district.

⁴⁰⁰ Osman Ysa's interview with Mat El, February 19 and April 23, 2001; Osman Ysa's interview with Kae Noh, April 22, 2001.

Svay Khleang Rebellion

Svay Khleang village, like Trea and Koh Phal, was located in Region 21 of the Eastern Zone and headed by Ouch Bun Choeun since 1975. Seng Hong, alias Chan, was the chief of Region 21 until late 1975 when he was promoted to deputy chief of the Eastern Zone, under Sao Phim. According to Kiernan, the troops involved in suppressing the rebellion in Svay Khleang might have come from district security forces. It is not certain whether regional and zone-level troops were involved.⁴⁰¹ However, subsequent policy against the Cham in Svay Khleang specifically and other parts of the country more broadly must have come from the highest level.

The Svay Khleang rebellion occurred at the end of Ramadan, two weeks after the Koh Phal rebellion. This made it even more important to resist the Khmer Rouge's religious repression. The village fell under Khmer Rouge control in 1970 when the influence of the National Unification Front spread rapidly across Region 21. The Khmer Rouge's first attitude toward Svay Khleang villagers was, as in Trea, hospitable. The villagers responded in kind and were pliable enough to accommodate a new revolutionary social and economic structure as long as the Khmer Rouge did not attempt the unthinkable act of prohibiting Islamic worship. As in Trea village, Khmer Rouge soldiers helped in farming and irrigation, and provided food and clothing.⁴⁰²

In 1973 all that changed. Six prominent Svay Khleang villagers were called to a meeting and arrested. This was followed by numerous arrests in early 1974, especially of those who were educated and knowledgeable, including *hakem*, *tuons* and Me

⁴⁰¹ Ben Kiernan, "Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot," op. cit., pp. 2-33.

Chum Ah. In early 1975, Khmer Rouge arrests became more widespread. In one incident, the Khmer Rouge requested a group of Svay Khleang villagers to travel to a place called Boeng Veng to prepare land for growing rice. They were also told to take lunch with them, but once they arrived at Boeng Veng, they were surrounded and accused of bringing food for potential enemies in the forest. Only a few people were ever released to reveal the story.⁴⁰³ Religious practice and expression in Svay Khleang were also restricted.⁴⁰⁴

In mid-1975, the Khmer Rouge collected Quranic texts in Svay Khleang, along with swords, knives and other potential weapons. They were successful in this effort, but villagers knew that it was unusual and so hid away what the Khmer Rouge wanted.⁴⁰⁵

Koh Phal was only ten kilometers away from Svay Khleang, but several Svay Khleang survivors said that they did not know a violent protest and reprisal occurred in Koh Phal. If they knew, they would have coordinated their actions.⁴⁰⁶ It is important to note that communication between villages at that time was restricted. Even though Koh Phal was close, it was in the middle of the Mekong to the north.

In late September 1975, about two weeks after the Khmer Rouge suppression in Koh Phal, on a day before the end of Ramadan, a group of village representatives requested permission from the Khmer Rouge to conduct a collective, obligatory prayer in the mosque the following day. The end of Ramadan is the most important day for Muslims and is celebrated with a variety of festivities. It is called the festival

⁴⁰² Osman Ysa, *The Cham Rebellion*, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2006.

⁴⁰³ Osman Ysa's interview with Sma Sa, December 16, 2000.

⁴⁰⁴ Osman Ysa, *The Cham Rebellion*, op. cit.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Author's interview with Mat Tim, October 25, 2009; Author's interview with a group of Svay Khleang elders, October 22, 2009.

of Hari Raya (Idul Fitri). So it was believed by Svay Khleang villagers that the Khmer Rouge were kind enough to let them pray as they had done a year earlier when communal prayers were said in the mosque. (It is important to note that faithful Muslims continued secret daily prayers in their homes.) The Khmer Rouge's reply to this request was unclear, so the villagers assumed it was possible.

Before dawn during Hari Raya, villagers congregated at the mosque and prayed to fulfill one of their many requirements during Hari Raya. But the Khmer Rouge had their own plan. They intended to teach the villagers a costly lesson. They did not respond because they hoped for a self-conscious reawakening by the villagers that doing so was against Angkar's orders. They did not give any warning as they recorded the names of those who attended the dawn prayer.⁴⁰⁷

A rebellion requires precise information about the oppressor and their plan to oppress. In this case, Svay Khleang survivors also claimed they knew the specific Khmer Rouge personnel sent to the village to record the names of alleged disobedient villagers. A villager somehow saw the list and found the names of his relatives there. He was certain those mentioned would be arrested. The news about the list spread like wildfire across the village. So the villagers set in motion a courageous attempt to counter the Khmer Rouge's impending arrests. They collected hidden swords and knives and other tools that could be used as weapons against the Khmer Rouge and killed one of the soldiers who came to arrest them later that night.⁴⁰⁸ By then the villagers knew that the Khmer Rouge would return with greater force. The names of many of the men who had been at the communal prayer at the mosque earlier in the

⁴⁰⁷ Author's interview with Soh Pinyamin August 1, 2010.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

morning were on the Khmer Rouge list of those to be arrested. Their killing of a Khmer Rouge soldier would make their crimes even worse. Those on the list did not expect to live. The only course of action was to fight, even though the chance of success was slim. The Cham wanted to die with dignity and did not want to disappear unjustly like many other victims before them.

The villagers recruited as many able-bodied men as possible. Some people beat drums to raise the alarm of the pending confrontation and the danger that would befall the village. Trenches were dug at key entrances to the village. Some villagers ransacked the village chief's house to retrieve confiscated Qurans and other objects. The elderly met and prayed. Young men positioned themselves in trenches armed only with hand tools such as swords, knives and axes.⁴⁰⁹

The Khmer Rouge came in the morning in large numbers. Gunboats covered the northern side of the village, along the Mekong. Survivors revealed that among the village fighters, there were only two firearms. It did not take long before men fell, houses burnt one after another, and the Khmer Rouge moved in. By afternoon, the village defense fell and the Khmer Rouge conducted a house-to-house clearance. They called out and gathered villagers on the main village road. A few villagers resisted, stabbing and killing a few soldiers who went in to make arrests. But beyond that, survivors said that the Khmer Rouge would fire artillery at the houses or B-40 rockets before they went in.⁴¹⁰ As many as thirty houses were destroyed in this manner. One woman said that her husband was dragged from her house and burnt alive on the street for putting up resistance from inside the house.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Author's interview with No Sreinob, F, 70, Svay Khleang, August 26, 2010.

Villagers were marched away in several files. They were divided into one group of men and another group of women and children. Wounded men were considered fighters, and thus taken away and executed. Other men were put in makeshift prisons including tobacco drying barns, elementary schools and pagodas. It is important to note that although Svay Khleang was a Cham village, the village was close to Khmer villages. Cham in Svay Khleang and other villages grew tobacco and drying barns were numerous throughout the area. Women were held in two nearby pagodas. Prisoners were interrogated, tortured and some were executed. They were starved, bitten by insects and emaciated. The prisoners were released about a month later and many male prisoners had been killed. Those released were sent to Stung Trang and Dambe districts and then broken into smaller groups that were then mixed with Khmer families. Some survivors said they were put in malaria areas. Many died of the disease.⁴¹¹

In 1978 when they were called back to Svay Khleang in the wake of Khmer Rouge's purge of the Eastern Zone, some of those who arrived in Svay Khleang were later killed. Svay Khleang, being an exceptionally brave village, was punished heavily. In 1970, there were about 6,200 villagers; in 1979 only 600 people, mostly women and children, returned.⁴¹² From time to time villagers still find buried Qurans, swords and other items when they dig or plow around their homes.

⁴¹¹ Author's interview with a group of Svay Khleang elders, October 22, 2009.

⁴¹² Author's interview with Nomin, August 1, 2010.

V. Evidence of Genocide: 1975-1979

Upon gaining power on April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge evacuated all city dwellers to the countryside to grow crops and work in agriculture. Cham all over Cambodia were evacuated from cities to other parts of the country. Cham from Phnom Penh were sent to Kampong Chhnang, Battambang, Kandal and further under the Khmer Rouge's secondary evacuation plans, even to Preah Vihear province where Cham had never lived.

Like all former city people, Cham were called "new people" in the countryside. They would be asked to build their own homes or live under the raised houses of Khmer "base" people. In the Khmer Rouge's thinking, these new people were revolutionarily impure. They needed to be forced into manual labor, which the Khmer Rouge believed they had never done as city dwellers. They had to be trained, educated and reeducated with revolutionary doctrines. They could not be trusted. The Khmer Rouge's perception of the Cham was even worse. Being a religious and ethnic minority, they were less understood by the Khmer Rouge than were Khmer people. Eventually, even Cham in the rural areas were relocated and they would become new people in other rural areas. This was an attempt by the Khmer Rouge to break up and disperse the Cham community.

In the meantime, Cham leaders continued to be singled out and executed. Michael Vickery stated that in 1975-1977, the CIA picked up authentic information through

sophisticated electronic eavesdropping. His CIA source confirmed that leaders in a Cham village in central Cambodia were executed on orders from Phnom Penh.⁴¹³

It appeared that during this two-year period, the Khmer Rouge made several attempts to eliminate Cham core identities. They used both soft and hard approaches to achieve this aim. Their soft approach included the prohibition of Islam, forcing Cham to eat pork, cutting woman's hair short, eliminating their traditional dress, burning the Quran, closing or destroying mosques, prohibiting Islamic prayers, prohibiting Cham language and changing Cham names to Khmer names. The Khmer Rouge also broke up Cham communities into small family units and put them in Khmer villages across Cambodia. As noted in Chapter Two, Cham people tend to live in concentrated communities with a self-sufficient Islamic and cultural infrastructure. The hard approach they employed was the execution of prominent Cham including religious teachers, *hakems*, *tuons*, *hajis* and politicians, and the killing of ordinary Cham.

The Cham protests and rebellions in late September and early October 1975 in Koh Phal and Svay Khleang had profound consequences for Cham people in Krauch Chhmmer as well as those in the entire Eastern Zone and beyond. In 1978 many survivors reported widespread, racial killings against Cham people. The Khmer Rouge's long-standing ignorance of Cham core identities played an important part in conflating those potential rebels and protesters with Cham men, women and children. The killings were also made possible through the unstoppable momentum of the purges that occurred in the Central and Eastern Zones in the same period.

⁴¹³ Michael Vickery, "Democratic Kampuchea: CIA to the Rescue," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1982, p 47.

After what happened in Koh Phal and Svay Khleang, the Khmer Rouge convened meetings all across the Eastern Zone, Northern Zone and perhaps in other zones warning Cham of the consequences of any rebellions. At the same time the Khmer Rouge set in motion a large-scale plan to evacuate Cham from the Eastern Zone to the Northern, Western and Northwest Zones. On November 30, 1975, a high-ranking Khmer Rouge cadre named Chhon wrote Telegram 15 addressed to Pol Pot and copied to Nuon Chea. It was also copied to two other Khmer Rouge officials named Doeun and Yem.⁴¹⁴

According to the telegram, Chhon was writing in response to a previous order(s) on the evacuation of Cham people from their hinterland along the east bank of the Mekong River and the entire Eastern Zone, which came directly from the Party Center in Phnom Penh. Chhon specifically referred to this as the “dispersal strategy discussed in previous meetings.” Chhon estimated that 150,000 Cham in the Eastern Zone would be sent to the Northwest and Northern zones.

However, the same telegram also suggested that the evacuation did not entirely go according to plan and prompted him to send this specific telegram to Phnom Penh. He stated that the first stage of the dispersal strategy was to evacuate Cham from Chhlong district, Kratie province, Krauch Chhmar district of Kampong Cham province, Peam Chileang district (now a commune of Tbaung Khmum district) of Kampong Cham province, and those Cham living along the Vietnamese border. This was part of a primary plan to evacuate up to 50,000 Cham. Eventually 100,000 of those remaining in the Eastern Zone would be evacuated.⁴¹⁵ According to the telegram, the Eastern

⁴¹⁴ DC-Cam Document L1045: Telegram 15.

⁴¹⁵ DC-Cam Document L1045: Telegram 15.

Zone was responsible for collecting and transporting Cham across the Mekong River, and Khmer Rouge in the Northern Zone would collect and disperse them in the Northern Zone and send them further to the Northwest. It appeared that the Northern Zone refused to admit these Cham. Chhon wrote that they would admit only Khmer people. Why was there such discrimination? No one knows. But we can guess that Cham people probably were considered more dangerous, more difficult to educate and control as they were ethnically, culturally and religiously different.

The telegram also revealed a number of clues as to how the Khmer Rouge viewed different Cham areas. Chhon stated specifically that there was an explicit agreement/order during a meeting that Cham from Chhlong were not to be sent back to their original district. As mentioned earlier, Chhlong was one of the largest Cham districts in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge knew this and probably recognized the importance of dispersion from Chhlong. They used very pleasant pretexts to evacuate them, such as telling them they were to be sent to Northwest Zone where there would be abundant rice harvests, so that communities such as Chhlong would agree to move without protest.

The telegram also revealed that the Mekong River region, especially the east bank, was Cham hinterland and that to control Cham across Cambodia, these areas needed to be dispersed much like they were doing with Chhlong, Krauch Chhmar and soon Tbaung Khmum districts. They also recognized the vulnerability of their control in this area, as Chhon wrote that “the atmosphere needed to be relieved.”⁴¹⁶ The telegram shows that learning from the Koh Phal and Svay Khleang incidents, the

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

Khmer Rouge became apprehensive about Cham' reaction to their harsh control, the implementation of their new utopian policies and executions as punishment for infractions of Angkar's orders. After all, the Eastern Zone was an early Khmer Rouge stronghold and this area used to be a hiding place for Cham revolts against Cambodian kings. To the Khmer Rouge, by controlling this Cham hinterland they could control all other Cham and Muslims in Cambodia. If racial killings were required, this would be the place to implement them.

A response to this telegram has not been found. However, according to survivors, Cham were evacuated across the Eastern Zone. Usually the Khmer Rouge left twenty to thirty Cham families in the village, particularly those with skills in fishing and blacksmithing, the families of village chiefs, Khmer Rouge members and good Cham base people.⁴¹⁷ Although the Northwest Zone was considered a destination for evacuation, many survivors mentioned that they were dispersed in Stung Trang and nearby districts in the Northern Zone.

On April 2, 1976, Secretary of the Northern Zone Ke Pauk sent Telegram 94 to Pol Pot, which was copied to Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan. The telegram reported "the situation of the enemies, the people and harvesting in Northern Zone."⁴¹⁸ Of interest is how Ke Pauk identified his enemies and described their activities. Once identified, the enemies of Angkar were usually arrested, tortured, interrogated and executed. Ke Pauk wrote that "the enemies conducted some malicious activities including propagandizing that the Revolution is too strict, saying against cooperative arrangements, talking against making rice paddy embankments and spreading words

⁴¹⁷ Osman Ysa's interview with Saleh Ahmad, May 1, 2001; Osman Ysa's interview with Ly Ysa, April 22, 2001.

about starvation.”⁴¹⁹ Ke Pauk pointed out that in Chamkar Leu district, Cham, along with former Lon Nol soldiers, still worshiped the Khmer Republic by posting Lon Nol images on a tree as well as destroying crops.⁴²⁰ The Khmer Rouge constantly targeted former Lon Nol soldiers for elimination. They were singled out from the day the Khmer Rouge evacuated Phnom Penh and other cities and searched for throughout the Khmer Rouge years. When Cham were placed alongside Lon Nol soldiers, it was very dangerous for them, particularly after they became suspect after the Koh Phal and Svay Khleang rebellions. This could be a precursor to the racial killings that would occur in 1978.

Elsewhere in Cambodia, hatred against the Cham continued to grow. On September 16, 1976, Khmer Rouge military officials convened a meeting with the secretaries and deputy secretaries of divisions and regiments. The location of the meeting was not mentioned, but judging from the backgrounds of its participants and the agenda, which included preparations to commemorate the death of Mao Tse Tung at the Olympic Stadium in Phnom Penh, the meeting was probably held in Phnom Penh. Among those attending were Comrade Pin (secretary of Division 703) and Brother 89.⁴²¹ Brother 89 gave a knowledgeable presentation on Mao Tse Tung and his understanding of Cambodian-Chinese relations. A Comrade named Pin reported on the situation in the coastal areas: on September 3, 1976, in Sre Cham village, Prey Nub district, “the Cham were sharpening their knives, stopped working and prepared to rebel against the Khmer.”⁴²² Here, there was a clear racial distinction made by the

⁴¹⁸ DC-Cam Document L1187: Letter to Respected Brother Pol.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Brother 89 was the revolutionary name of Son Sen, minister of defense.

⁴²² DC-Cam Document L1449: Minute of Meeting between Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of Divisions and Regiments.

Khmer Rouge military commander in the area. It was not Cham against Angkar but against the Khmer race. Because by then members of Angkar's leadership were Khmer, it was against both Angkar and Khmer. Sre Cham village was one village in Prey Nub district that had a large Muslim community.

Earlier in 1976, more than 30 Cham in Prey Nub district fled to the forest to rebel against Khmer Rouge authority for its prohibition of Islam and other restrictions on their community. The group attempted to seek support from Malaysia by sending four men across the gulf of Thailand in a boat from somewhere in Kampong Som.

However, assistance from Malaysia never came and the boat sunk off the coast of northern Malaysia; only one of its passengers, a man named Toun Mit, survived.

Without his colleagues and valuables, Tuon Mit was not able to convince his fellow Muslims in Malaysia to provide support and return to Prey Nub district in time for a rendezvous with his fellow fighters waiting in the forest. Many of those fighters were killed during Khmer Rouge attacks.⁴²³ Others escaped to Vietnam and joined the Vietnamese forces.

One of the bandits was Tep Yunus who was captured on May 14, 1976 and sent to S-21. He was executed a month later on June 10, 1976. Yunus's 13-page confession told of his personal journey into the forest to join up with Toun Mit's group and how they survived.⁴²⁴ Although he was forced to confess, his story links up well with the testimonies of survivors in Prey Nub district. This episode of rebellion by the Cham in Prey Nub district reinforced the Khmer Rouge's determination to isolate the Cham, disperse them and kill members of their community, particularly after similar

⁴²³ Ysa Osman interview with Lep Tort, 52, Toul Toteung village, Tuol Toteung commune, Prey Nub district, Sihanouk province, April 11, 2000.

rebellions in Kampong Cham province. In 1977 Cham in Prey Nub district were dispersed to Kampong Speu and Kampong Chhnang. The rebellion in Prey Nub also revealed the Cham' traditional transnational links with fellow Muslims in Malaysia and the region.

Another Khmer Rouge document dated May 21 provided some chilling evidence of their reaction to those Cham who refused to eat pork or complained about it. One can also interpret from this report the Khmer Rouge's measures against those speaking out in favor of the freedom to practice Islam. The document was a report of the secretary of Region 5 of the Northwest Zone sent to the secretary of the zone.

The document also revealed that Region 5 had the authority to take harsh measures against those considered saboteurs, traitors and enemies of Angkar. The report mentioned a thirteen-year-old boy who was a son of an April 17 (new people) family, who threw rocks on the roofs of mobile units to scare those sleeping inside, to make them think they were being haunted. The secretary of Region 5 wrote: "We have dealt with it [hinting that the boy was arrested], especially will find the traitors leading the boy to do that act. My suspicion is that they intended to cause sleeplessness among people so that we would remove the sleeping hall which took a long time to build. These traitors would continue that traitorous acts in the future."⁴²⁵

Next, the report mentioned the Cham: "April 17 Cham originally from Phnom Penh protested in the cooperative dining hall about eating in accordance with their

⁴²⁴ DC-Cam Document D02677: Confession of Tep Yunus.

⁴²⁵ DC-Cam Document L1425: Weekly Report of Region 5 Committee.

religion.”⁴²⁶ The report continued: “For this situation we have dealt with it, especially been looking for their traitorous line and their leaders for extermination.”⁴²⁷ Here the Khmer Rouge considered that refusing to eat pork was part of a larger anti-revolutionary network. This report is clear evidence that by 1977 communal eating was in full swing and that Islam was completely prohibited. Speaking out for Islam was treason. It is certain that those Cham refusing to eat pork would have been arrested and killed given the Khmer Rouge’s hypersensitivity to infractions of order and strong belief in the existence of secret anti-revolutionary activities. Cham new people, who were Muslims and a minority in this region, would appear most alien to the Khmer Rouge. Thus they were vulnerable to widespread arrests and killings. For instance, a Cham named Samas Karim was arrested and sent to S-21 for refusing to eat pork. His confession mentioned that: “I was unhappy with Angkar about having to eat food against my custom. I complained that I wanted to eat separately with my ethnic group.” Samas Karim was later executed.⁴²⁸

Sos Kamry, who is now the Mufti of the Cambodian Islamic community, revealed some evidence of the Khmer Rouge’s intention to eliminate Cham people. During the Khmer Rouge regime, he hid his ethnic identity and was trusted by the Khmer Rouge to look after children. He was invited to a meeting in 1977 in Chamkar Leu district, Kampong Cham province. Sos Kamry said the meeting was about “the plan to smash the enemy” and that the person who chaired the meeting stated “there are many enemies of the revolution but our biggest enemies are the Cham. So the plan is to

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ DC-Cam Document D02686: Confession of Samas Karim.

exterminate them all before 1980.” The next day Sos Kamry saw the minutes of the meeting, which reiterated that “the Cham must be exterminated before 1980.”⁴²⁹

In 1978 the Khmer Rouge targeted young Cham. A Cham survivor named Saleh Ahmat revealed that during a meeting in 1978 he accompanied the chief of Krauch Chhmar district to attend a meeting in Kampong Thom province. Saleh Ahmat added that the meeting was important; many district chiefs from the Central and Eastern Zones participated. He added it was chaired by Ke Pauk who said during the meeting: “You must destroy Cham in mobile forces first; they are all traitors.”⁴³⁰

Racial Killings against Cham

Not only is there documentary evidence to suggest that the Khmer Rouge intended to commit genocide against the Cham but survivors of racial killings also revealed particular instances in which the Khmer Rouge implemented their genocidal policy against the Cham people.

Chhum Kea was evacuated to Khsach Praches Kandal village, Krauch Chhmar commune and district in 1973. He said, “In 1978 they selected out all the Cham families for killing. At first they rounded up the men, telling them to go build houses in a new village. About a week after that, the Khmer Rouge invited the women and children to go to this new village and then they killed them too. After that almost no more Cham remained.”⁴³¹

⁴²⁹ Osman Ysa’s interview with Sos Kamry, April 22, 2001.

⁴³⁰ Osman Ysa’s interview with Saleh Ahmad, May 1, 2001.

⁴³¹ Osman Ysa’s interview with Chhum Kea, May 1, 2001.

Saleh Ahmad said that he survived the Khmer Rouge massacre in 1978 because he hid his ethnic identity. He claimed that during the killings in 1978 most of his villagers (Chumnik village, Chumnik commune, Krauch Chhmar district) were murdered by the Khmer Rouge who lied to villagers, saying that they were being moved to another place when in fact they were taken to be killed. Saleh Ahmad saw boats returning to the village with the clothing and belongings of his fellow villagers who never returned to the village after 1979.⁴³²

San Teimnah is an old woman in Svay Khleang village. She said that in order to survive the Khmer Rouge regime she had to lie, saying that her family had been poor and had no connection to the Lon Nol regime. She was smarter than other Cham who told the Khmer Rouge about their social and economic identity before 1975. San Teimnah said that “Some Cham from Trea village answered truthfully that before they had been well-off, had elephants or cattle. Some said they had been *tuons* or *hakems*. The Khmer Rouge killed their whole families.”⁴³³ Apart from killing, San Teimnah said the Khmer Rouge frequently announced to the Cham that “you all have the same blood, Khmer blood, so there is no need for separate eating, dress or language.”⁴³⁴ This phrase was reinforced by the prohibition of Islam and conversion of all Cham to atheism. In a harsh irony, San Teimnah along with eight other Cham, was assigned to raise pigs.

San Maisam is an elderly man from Svay Khleang village. He described a massacre against the Cham in 1978. He said that eighty Cham families were selected from among Khmer-Cham villages and gathered at a pagoda in Khsach Praches Leu

⁴³² Osman Ysa’s interview with Saleh Ahmad, op. cit.

⁴³³ Osman Ysa’s interview with San Teimnah, April 5, 2004.

village. San Maisam's family was part of the eighty families, but later a Khmer Rouge cadre took his family out of the group believing falsely that San Maisam's family was Khmer. San Maisam had hidden his ethnic identity in previous years. The Khmer Rouge had only known him as Khmer. They said. "Angkar does not allow you to go with the rest. You are Khmer."⁴³⁵ The eighty families were boarded on boats the next morning along with their children. He assumed they were all killed in a village on the far side of the river, as they never returned and mass graves littered the place.⁴³⁶

Mat Saren said that in his village of Pongro (known among villagers as Svay Ta Hen), Kang Meas district, only 20 families from among 200 survived the Khmer Rouge regime. Communal eating began in 1976 in his village.⁴³⁷ In an effort to subvert the Cham's ethnic identity, the Khmer Rouge called him and his villagers Khmer Thmei (or New Khmer), which implied Cham were new members of the Khmer group. For the Khmer Rouge in this case, the barrier between Khmerness and Chamness was cultural and religious identity. Once Islam was eliminated and the Cham were forced to live in the cooperatives, they were in effect new Khmer. Mat Saren, however, said that by 1978 the Khmer Rouge used killing to individualize Khmer identity and to speed up this process.⁴³⁸ Perhaps for the Khmer Rouge, the Cham identities were more difficult to change than they had thought. According to Mat Saren, Cham in Kang Meas and Kampong Siem districts were singled out and massacred, while the Khmer were left unharmed. The Khmer were sometimes killed for other reasons, but the Cham were killed based on their ethnicity. Some of the Cham who survived the killings in 1978 did so because there was a pause in the killing later in the year when

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Osman Ysa's interview with San Maisam, March 7, 2001.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Osman Ysa's interview with Mat Saren, May 1, 2004.

the Khmer Rouge concentrated their efforts on fighting the Vietnamese, who were a threat to the east.

In Prek Kroch village, Krauch Chhmar district, Chi Saleh was lucky to survive the killings in 1978. He was a skilled fisherman who the Khmer Rouge needed to fish the Mekong River to provide much-needed fish to the cooperatives. Chi Saleh saw the Khmer Rouge using tricks to kill hundreds of Cham families. He said the Khmer Rouge first sent away 280 Cham men to build new houses at a far-away place ahead of a future evacuation to that place. A few days later wives, children and members of the families of the men were sent there. These people never returned to Prek Kroch village.⁴³⁹

Yahya Ali lived in Stung Trang district during the Khmer Rouge regime. In 1978 he saw the Khmer Rouge bringing Cham from Rokar Khnor and Chumnik villages to a village called Boeng Prachaut, while he fished nearby. Yahya Ali said that hundreds of other Cham were brought by boats to this part of Stung Trang. He happened to ask a Cham whom he had known before the Khmer Rouge regime why the Khmer Rouge brought them there.⁴⁴⁰ He was told that the Cham were being evacuated to Battambang where there was plenty of food and farm work. In those days, Yahya Ali stated, the Khmer Rouge played loudspeakers all day in the village. After 1979 he saw mass graves and piles of the victims' clothing at that location. He realized that the Cham were tricked to think they were going to Battambang, but instead they were killed in Stung Trang district. Ya Min, who was in Krauch Chhmar district during the regime, also witnessed the killing of Cham in Boeng Prachaut village, Stung Trang

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Osman Ysa's interview with Chi Saleh, March 6, 2001.

district.⁴⁴¹ He also witnessed killings in Trea village, Krauch Chhmar district. Yahya Ali's account was confirmed by Ya Min, who stated that he saw the murders of many boat loads of Cham people in 1978 at the same location in Stung Tran district.⁴⁴²

An odd pattern was the racial killing of Cham girls and mixed Cham-Khmer girls. It seemed that after they killed a girl's parents, the Khmer Rouge found it necessary to kill the girls. According to survivors, the Khmer Rouge targeted not only pure Cham girls but those of mixed race as well. It is not clear why girls were targeted. It is possible that the Khmer Rouge did not value those of mixed race, positing that they would not be valued for the future reproduction of revolutionary children.

Ahmad Sofiyah survived the racial killing of a group of 36 girls in Trea village, Krauch Chhmar district in 1978. She said she survived because she told the Khmer Rouge soldiers she was Khmer.⁴⁴³ Other girls who told the truth were put to one side and executed. Of the 36 girls, 15 lied, saying they were Khmer (all were Cham from neighboring villages). Ahmad Sofiyah's story was also corroborated by those of No Satas⁴⁴⁴ and San Saros,⁴⁴⁵ who apparently survived the same incident in Trea village. No Satas's family of eight members had already been killed by 1978.

Mao Maisam survived the murders of a group of 240 girls at the same execution site in Trea village in 1978.⁴⁴⁶ She survived because she told the Khmer Rouge soldiers she was Khmer; her younger sisters were all killed because they did not lie about their

⁴⁴⁰ Osman Ysa's interview with Yahya Ali, April 23, 2001.

⁴⁴¹ Osman Ysa's interview with Ya Min, February 8, 2001.

⁴⁴² Osman Ysa's interview with Yahya Ali, op. cit.

⁴⁴³ Osman Ysa's interview with Ahmad Sofiyah, January 25, 2003.

⁴⁴⁴ Osman Ysa's interview with No Satas, December 25, 2000.

⁴⁴⁵ Osman Ysa's interview with San Saros, February 12, 2001.

ethnic identity. Saleh Saros survived the killing of a group of 200 Cham girls in same year. It is not clear if Mao Maisam and Saleh Saros were in the same incident. Saleh Saros also survived along with her younger sisters because when Khmer Rouge asked her, “Are you Cham or Khmer?” she said she was Khmer. But then the Khmer Rouge followed with another question to dig deeper, “if you are Khmer, why are you here with all these Cham girls?” Saros said she lived near Cham villages. She was then put to one side.

Elsewhere in Kampong Cham province, Cham in the following villages were also selected based on their ethnic identity such as names, Khmer accent and personal admission: Rokar Po Bram of Tbaung Khmum district, Koko village of Kampong Siem district, and O Trakuon village of Koh Sotin district.

Mortality Figures under the Khmer Rouge⁴⁴⁷

It is important to understand the totality of the Khmer Rouge’s killing of Cham. Researchers have presented conflicting tallies of the number of Muslims who died during the regime from disease, execution, forced labors, and starvation. Osman Ysa, a former researcher of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, found there were a large number of deaths, which he calculated through estimates obtained from surviving Muslim community leaders who remembered the size of the Muslim population before the Khmer Rouge came to power in 1975 and the estimated number of Muslim survivors in 1979. As a result, Ysa estimated that between 400,000 and 500,000 Muslims died under the Khmer Rouge from a total population of 700,000 in

⁴⁴⁶ Osman Ysa’s interview with Mao Maisam, February 6, 2001.

⁴⁴⁷ There are data on the total number of Muslims in Cambodia, but no data specifically for the Cham. The author assumes that from 1975 to 1979, the Cham made up 80% of the total Muslim population, as they do today.

1975.⁴⁴⁸ Thus half to two-third of the total Muslim population perished during the regime. His interview with Zakariya Adam, secretary of state, indicated that there were 700,000 Muslims in 1975 as Zakariya Adam saw this figure in a statistical document produced by Grand Mufti Res Lah.⁴⁴⁹ Van Math, a CPP senator, told Ysa that he heard an announcement by General Les Kosem that there were 700,000 Muslims in 1975.⁴⁵⁰ Many Muslim survivors agreed that there were 200,000 Muslims in Cambodia in 1979.

A Khmer Rouge document stated that in November 1975 there were approximately 150,000 Muslims in the Eastern Zone and Chhlong district of Kratie province.⁴⁵¹ By adding this number to a supposed Muslim population in other parts of the country, which Ysa assumed to be 80% of total Muslim population, Ysa arrived at the 700,000 figure. Although Ysa presented a new way to look at population and death figures on Muslims under the Khmer Rouge by relying entirely on the memory of Muslim community leaders, his calculation could prove erroneous in three ways.

First, the Muslim community leaders Ysa interviewed relied on hearsay: the numbers they heard about or saw may have been borrowed from unreliable sources. Media articles today, for example, quote Muslim population figures ranging from 400,000 to 600,000. Even the Minister of Cults and Religious Affairs has presented different number of Muslims on different occasions. Second, Ysa did not consider the number of Muslims who escaped to other countries and the border camps toward the end of the Khmer Rouge years. Third, according to the present population distribution of

⁴⁴⁸ Osman Ysa, *Oukubah*, Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2002, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁹ Osman Ysa's interview with Zakariya Adam, October 12, 1999.

⁴⁵⁰ Osman Ysa's interview with Van Math, April 16, 2000.

⁴⁵¹ DC-Cam Document L1045: Telegram 15.

Muslims in Cambodia, as studied in Chapter II of this dissertation, the part of Kampong Cham east of the Mekong River, along with Kratie, Prey Veng and Svay Rieng, which was mentioned in the Khmer Rouge telegram, constitutes up to 60-70% of all Muslims in Cambodia. Therefore, from a figure of 150,000 in this area, the Muslim population was unlikely to reach 700,000 countrywide.

Historian Ben Kiernan presented a different figure of Muslims deaths under the Khmer Rouge. His calculation was vigorous in the sense that it took into consideration population outflow and natural increases. Kiernan arrived at a figure of 250,000 for the 1975 Muslim population and 173,000 for the January 1979 Muslim population.⁴⁵² He concluded that that approximately 90,000 Muslims perished under the Khmer Rouge regime or about one-third of the Muslims in Cambodia. Kiernan used a French colonial administration figure of 88,000 in 1936 and projected this number to a possible 1975 figure using a population growth rate of 2.7%. He also used a 1982 figure of 182,256 to calculate an assumed population in January 1979 and a growth rate of 3%.⁴⁵³ This number was then be added to the number of people leaving Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge period. Kiernan also took into consideration the minimum amount of natural growth during the Khmer Rouge period of 10,000 babies.⁴⁵⁴ The main problem with Kiernan's calculation is the reliability of the 1936 and 1982 figures, and the population growth rates used to extrapolate these figures.

⁴⁵² Ben Kiernan, "Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot," op. cit., pp. 6 and 30.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., pp. 6 and 30.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 6 and 30; Kiernan, Ben, "The Genocide in Cambodia, 1975-79," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 22, Issue: 2. 1990.

The overall death toll under the Khmer Rouge regime is usually estimated at about 1.7 million people out of a total population of 7 million in 1975.⁴⁵⁵ Thus, nearly one-fourth of the Cambodian people died under the Khmer Rouge. This means that Muslims died at a slightly higher proportion than Khmer Buddhists if Kiernan's calculation is used (about one-third), and at a much higher proportion if Ysa's calculation is used (nearly two-thirds). Because the Khmer Rouge targeted them using a top-down approach – namely the killing of intellectuals, religious persons, community leaders and villagers and even girls – the destruction of one-third of their population is a serious challenge to their ability to maintain their core identities. According to Ysa, many Cham intellectuals died during the Khmer Rouge regime. Of 339 hakems only 45 remained in 1979. 262 (out of 300) touns were killed. There were approximately 1000 hajis in 1974 and only 30 of them remained in 1979. Of 26 known oversea students, only two remained. Grand mufti Raja Thipadei Res Lah, along with his two deputies were also killed.⁴⁵⁶ Along with destruction of Islamic schools, mosques, Quranic texts, changing their names and the prohibition of the Cham language, Cham had to work hard to restore their identities after the Khmer Rouge regime.

⁴⁵⁵ Ben Kiernan, "The Demography of Genocide in Southeast Asia: The Death Tolls in Cambodia, 1975-1979, and East Timor, 1975-1980," *Cultural Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, Issue 4, 2003, pp. 585-597; Damien de Walque, "Selective Mortality during the Khmer Rouge Period in Cambodia," *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2, June 2005, pp. 351-368; Patrick Heuveline and Bunnak Poch, "Phoenix Population: Demographic Crisis and Rebound in Cambodia," *Demography*, Vol. 44, Issue 2, May 2007, pp. 405-426.

VI. Conclusion

This chapter found that the Khmer Rouge committed genocide against the Cham because they were attacked based on their identities as Muslim and as ethnic Cham. They were forced to intermarry with people of other ethnic groups. Islam was prohibited. The Cham language was banned. Cham people were forced to eat pork. Against Cham's practice of Islam, Cham women were forced to reveal their hair and it short. Cham were given Khmer names and prohibited from using Muslim or Cham names. Cham people were dispersed from their traditional villages and mixed with people of other groups in the Khmer Rouge's attempt to weaken their sense of unity. By the end of 1978, it is estimated that more than one-third of Cham people died of starvation, forced labor, diseases and execution under the Khmer Rouge. Of the total 113 mosques in pre-Khmer Rouge time, only five mosques remained by 1979.

The Khmer Rouge's early treatment of the Cham was pleasant. But this changed as the regime grew more certain of their victory against the Khmer Republic. However, Cham people had expected a better life, freedom of religion and a continuation of their way of life under communism. Thus they resisted the Khmer Rouge's prohibition of Islam and repression. In several cases they resorted to protests and rebellions, most notably in Trea, Koh Phal and Svay Khleang villages. These protests and rebellions intensified the Khmer Rouge's conviction to kill the Cham rather than "re-educate" them. Because the Cham community was a close-knit group bound by Islam and shared origin, the Khmer Rouge, who had little knowledge about Cham culture, found it difficult to make a distinction between enemy Cham and normal

⁴⁵⁶ Ysa Osman, *Oukubah*, p. 119.

Cham. Eventually, they resorted to racial killings which saw all other members (previously only *hakem*, *tuon* and intellectuals were targeted) of the Cham community such as girls, young men and women being targeted. Cham in villages such as Rokar Po Bram (Tbaung Khmum district, Kampong Cham), Koko (Kampong Siem district, Kampong Cham) and O Trakuon (Koh Sotin district, Kampong Cham) were selected based on their core identities. Victims were asked whether they were Cham or Khmer before they were selected for killing.

The Khmer Rouge also mentioned in their constitution their intent to ban Islam. While they seemed to say that all religions were permitted, it was the Democratic Kampuchea Government that decided which religions were to be permitted. In fact, they did not permit any religion. All religions were considered reactionary, including Islam. Other Khmer Rouge documents pointed toward the Khmer Rouge's commission of genocide.

Even during times of hardship and their isolation by the Khmer Rouge, Cham people still made an attempt to connect with Muslims in other countries. For example, Cham rebels in Kampot province tried to seek help from Muslims in Malaysia to fight the Khmer Rouge. This was the case of S-21 prisoner Tep Yunus, who was a member of the rebels.

Although the Khmer Rouge committed genocide against the Cham, they were not successful in eliminating Islam, killing all Cham and inter-marrying them completely with the Khmer. At the end of the regime, surviving Cham reconstructed their identities with what was left for them. Islam was still there and Cham ethnicity was

still there, but they lost intellectuals, religious texts, and a sizable number of their population. What most affected were their peripheral identities (sectarian, political and economic) and they rebuilt them in the People's Republic of Kampuchea, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Reconstruction of Peripheral Identities after Genocide

This chapter discusses the Cham' reconstruction of their peripheral identities (sectarian, political and economic) after the Khmer Rouge genocide, their efforts to reconnect with the outside world (although the People's Republic of Kampuchea or PRK was isolated by the Western bloc), their role under the PRK and their experience at the border camps between Cambodia and Thailand.

In doing so, it first looks at global interference and the positions of Muslim countries on the plight of the Cham, and the establishment of PRK institutions and policies toward the Cham. It also examines personal efforts by a few Cham who attempted to determine the ways in which their lives should develop after the Khmer Rouge regime. The chapter then discusses the participation of Cham people and foreign Muslims in the the People's Revolutionary Tribunal, which prosecuted Pol Pot and Ieng Sary for genocide and other crimes. Mat Ly, a key figure in the Cham community, is examined separately. Last, this chapter looks at Cham' efforts to rebuild their identities outside Cambodia. This directly links with their experience in the refugee camps and global efforts to resettle them in peaceful countries.

I. Liberated from Genocide

Loh Atikah is now a 71 year-old woman. Before the Khmer Rouge she lived in Kilometer 7 village, just west of Phnom Penh with her husband and seven children. Her husband was a Cham working as a police officer of the Lon Nol government,

responsible for logistics. During the Khmer Rouge regime, Atikah and her family were evacuated from Kilometer 7 to remote Tuol Khlong village, Prek Treang district, Kratie province. This was a far-flung village at the edge of a hilly forest. Atikah talked about seeing deer next to their huts in the morning and sometimes tigers in the forest. Being in the wilderness, the village was plagued with malaria, which is consistent with the Khmer Rouge's policy of sending Cham to disease-ridden areas. Atikah's husband and children fell ill one after another. Her husband was later killed and her six children died of starvation. Atikah and a daughter survived the regime, but she became mentally ill in 1979 due to her trauma and loss during the regime. Her condition improved in the 1990s.⁴⁵⁷

Sen Saroh, Atikah's niece, was sent along with her to Kratie. She witnessed the killing of Atikah's husband. Sen Saroh said that one day the Khmer Rouge, upon learning that Atikah's husband had been a Lon Nol police officer, injected him with a syringe of "water." Sen Saroh thought it was water because it looked clear. Atikah's husband died immediately after the injection when white liquid came out of his mouth. Sen Saroh told Loh Atikah about her husband's death. His body was wrapped in a bamboo mat and buried somewhere behind the hospital. Sen Saroh's own mother died of starvation in another part of the country.⁴⁵⁸ Loh Atikah's story was told by Sen Saroh to prevent recurring nightmares for Loh Atikah.

Loh Atikah and Sen Saroh said that when the Vietnamese came, the Khmer Rouge hid them in a cave near the village, intending to herd them away as they retreated. Because hostages probably would have slowed them down and the Vietnamese

⁴⁵⁷ Author's interview with Loh Atikah, December 6, 2011.

⁴⁵⁸ Author's interview with Sen Saroh, December 6, 2011.

advance was swift in Kratie, the Khmer Rouge left them in the cave and quickly retreated. They were found by the Vietnamese soon after.

The two heard rumors about the refugee camps on the Cambodian-Thai border, but because the Khmer Rouge were heading in that direction, they instead chose to travel back to Phnom Penh, hoping to see surviving distant relatives with whom they could share their grief. They arrived in Kilometer 8 (a signpost to indicate they were 8 km from the city) in mid-1979. But they found very few relatives they knew well. When the news spread in 1980 and 1981 that some Cham were taken from refugee camps to settle in “Malaysia and other countries,”⁴⁵⁹ they wanted to travel to the border, in hopes of resettling in a more peaceful country. But by then, traveling to the border camps had become part of the smuggling business, and they would have to pay an agent in gold to bring them safely through dangerous war zones and bandits in the hills to the camps or near the border. Their ideal camp would be Khao-I-Dang, which was administered by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), offered the best opportunity for resettlement. However, the two could not find enough gold to pay the middlemen so they continued living in Cambodia.

Under the Khmer Rouge Elsaroh was evacuated from Phnom Penh to Par Preng village, Speu commune, Chamkar Leu district, Kampong Cham province. She stayed there with her family until 1977 when she became ill after giving birth to her first child. She was then sent from the district hospital to the provincial hospital in Kampong Cham. Her husband accompanied her. She was treated for three months and when she returned to her village in early 1978, she found it abandoned. A passerby

⁴⁵⁹ Author’s interview with Sen Saroh, December 6, 2011.

told her that all of the people in her village, most of whom were Cham, had been killed by the Khmer Rouge, but later the same Khmer Rouge were executed by Southwest Zone cadres during the purge. This news was chilling to Elsaroh and her husband, but the fact that no one in the village survived saved her life: no one knew she had been a resident of that village and nobody had a list of the villagers's names.⁴⁶⁰

Elsaroh and her husband moved to another village in a nearby commune in Chamkar Leu district. Life there was good at first, but as the end of 1978 approached, killings occurred every few days. Elsaroh said the Khmer Rouge executioners usually came in around 4 or 5 p.m. with a horse cart. They would fill the cart with distraught looking villagers who might have known that they were about to be killed. Elsaroh said the sound of horses galloping along the village road was terrifying. When that happened she stayed still in her hut. When the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea (NUFSK) forces arrived in the village in late 1978, Elsaroh and her husband were "liberated from hell." They left the village and showed the Khmer Rouge they were better than them through resilience and rebuilding their lives after the regime.⁴⁶¹

The stories of these two families were similar to those of other Cham in Cambodia, especially those living in the Central and Eastern Zones. As mentioned in previous chapters Cham suffered disproportionate and racial killings by the Khmer Rouge. They welcome their liberation from the Khmer Rouge.

⁴⁶⁰ Author's interview with El Saroh, November 16, 2011.

⁴⁶¹ Author's interview with Sam El, November 16, 2011; Author's interview with El Saroh, op. cit.

In December 1978 a group of former Khmer Rouge who fled the party's purge of the Eastern Zone organized a meeting at a location along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border in Kampong Cham province.⁴⁶² The group was led by Heng Samrin;⁴⁶³ also there was Mat Ly, who had been a communist Cham veteran since the Issarak movement in the 1940s. Heng Samrin declared the creation of the NUFSK, or the "Front."⁴⁶⁴ The Front would lead a liberation force, including Cham rebels from Prey Nub district and Kampong Cham, to save Cambodian people including Cham from genocide.

Earlier in the month, the Khmer Rouge had been driven from the area where the meeting took place, and it had been selected to give Cambodian ownership to the Front, which was strongly supported by a large contingent of Vietnamese forces.⁴⁶⁵ Several days later on December 25, 1978, NUFSK and the Vietnamese army began their large-scale assault on Democratic Kampuchea. Their armies penetrated Cambodia down major highways, along the entire Cambodian-Vietnamese border.⁴⁶⁶ Within two weeks the Khmer Rouge fell to the superior forces of the combined Front and Vietnamese armies led by Vietnamese General Van Tien Dung. Major Cham areas such as Kampong Cham and Stung Treng were liberated quickly. The Khmer Rouge withdrew much of its force to the Cambodian-Thai border, along with its supporters and villagers who were forced to retreat with them.⁴⁶⁷ A Cham woman said

⁴⁶² The location was Snuol district, Kratie province, bordering the Vietnamese province of Loc Ninh. A few hundred Cambodians participated in the meetings. During the announcement the Front also formed a Central Committee with Heng Samrin as president, Chea Sim as vice president, and Ros Samay as general secretary.

⁴⁶³ Raoul Jennar, *The Cambodian Constitutions (1953-1993)*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 1997.

⁴⁶⁴ This Front would later be renamed the United Front for National Construction and National Defense of Kampuchea upon the successful attack against the Khmer Rouge.

⁴⁶⁵ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (4th Edition). Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 2008.

⁴⁶⁶ Serge Thion, *Watching Cambodia*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 1993.

⁴⁶⁷ Raoul Jennar, *The Cambodian Constitutions (1953-1993)*, op. cit.

that “the Khmer Rouge had warned people that Vietnamese soldiers were blood suckers who would kill children by throwing them into the air and let them fall onto spikes.”⁴⁶⁸ Some Cham escaped with them to the Thai border.

The Khmer Rouge’s downfall was a result of many factors. Among them: 1) the Khmer Rouge’s purge of its own cadres in the Eastern and Central zones had forced some of their members to flee to Vietnam, defect and form a resistance force, 2) its own military was weakened due to massacres, lack of effective training and lack of equipment, and 3) Democratic Kampuchea’s border conflict with Vietnam and its leadership’s strong anti-Vietnamese position encouraged Vietnam to resort to a large-scale attack against the regime, assisted by a group of Khmer and Cham fighters.⁴⁶⁹

The fighting between Democratic Kampuchea and Vietnam continued throughout 1978 and by the end of the year, Vietnam had mobilized several divisions along its border with Cambodia. In April 1978 Radio Hanoi broadcast messages to encourage Cambodians to continue to defect to Vietnam or rise up to fight against the Khmer Rouge in their villages. It was true that toward the end of 1978, the Khmer Rouge had lost effective control of the purged Eastern Zone. Facing imminent death, many Khmer Rouge cadres either defected to Vietnam or resisted the Khmer Rouge’s forces sent from the Southwest Zone and Phnom Penh to capture them. Some did both. Mat Ly was a case in point. He and his communist colleagues escaped the Khmer Rouge massacre and formed a resistance force in the forest before they escaped to Vietnam.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ Author’s interview with El Saroh, November 16, 2011.

⁴⁶⁹ Khamboly Dy, *A History of Democratic Kampuchea 1975-1979*, op. cit.

It took the Khmer Rouge a few decades before they began to gain real traction toward power. They first got lucky when Lon Nol staged a coup against Sihanouk in 1970, but then fought for another five years to gain complete control of Cambodia and its symbolic city of Phnom Penh. Then their fate changed again, and the regime fell to the Vietnamese and the Front in less than two weeks. This time, however, it wasn't a turn of luck, but rather a result of the mass killings and starvation that had brought destruction to the regime from within long before the Vietnamese arrived. For the Cham people, the Khmer Rouge's downfall was a blessing, but it came a bit late.

II. Global Interference and the Position of Muslim Countries

The Vietnamese leadership had probably prepared a public relations strategy to be launched after sending their army into Cambodia. Vietnam had also been aware of grave human rights violations inside Democratic Kampuchea. Their awareness came both from the reports of refugees fleeing into Vietnam and the international media's reporting on refugees in the Cambodian-Thai border camps.

In fact, Vietnam had raised the issue of military action against Democratic Kampuchea in the UN by invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter in order to protect and save Cambodian people from an apparent genocide and crimes against humanity by the Khmer Rouge. Cold War politics, however, prevented this plea from going further in the UN. But Vietnam also probably saw an advantage in having effective control over Cambodia, considering it as a gain for global communism. It may have

⁴⁷⁰ DC-Cam Document D18108: David Hawk's interview with Mat Ly, June 20, 1983.

seen that it was still beneficial to act alone, of course with Soviet and Eastern Bloc support. Thus Vietnam made a case in the international arena that its military action was a liberation of the Cambodian people from genocide, not an invasion.⁴⁷¹ In fact, for many Cambodians, including the Cham, saving their lives came before being independent and self-reliant, which are basic principles of statehood.

For many Cambodians, stopping the genocide was the ultimate goal. Despite the long-term historical animosity between Cambodia and Vietnam, which was also the case between Thailand and Cambodia, Cambodians were pleased by the Vietnamese military action. Some people were confused, however. The Khmer Rouge's propaganda had raised the question of Vietnamese expansionism, so the Cambodian people were stuck between genocide and fear of landlessness and occupation.⁴⁷² This gave the the Khmer Rouge the opportunity to create a new front from the Thai border called the United Front for Great National Solidarity, Patriotic and Democratic.⁴⁷³

Throughout the years in which the Khmer Rouge massacred their own people inside a closed country, very few people made active political moves against them. However, one such move was made in Vietnam by some former Khmer Rouge cadres who had fled the purge including Hun Sen and Heng Samrin. But once the regime was overthrown, politics along the Cambodian-Thai border flourished. Son Sann, who had been prime minister from 1967 to 1968, created a non-communist "resistance" group called the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) in 1979. In 1980

⁴⁷¹ As Vietnamese troops pushed into Cambodia, they brought along their media crews to photograph and film evidence of the massacre in Cambodia. A few journalists found S-21 prison in January 1979 and filmed the prison. These pieces of evidence were later used in the People's Revolutionary Tribunal in August 1979, which was held to try Pol Pot and Ieng Sary in absentia for genocide.

⁴⁷² The debate on whether Vietnamese military action in late 1978 and early 1979 was an invasion or liberation is still discussed today among villagers, students and intellectuals.

Prince Norodom Sihanouk detached himself from China and the Khmer Rouge and formed a royalist faction known as the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC). Along with the Khmer Rouge, the non-communist and the royalist factions formed a coalition government in 1982 called the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK).⁴⁷⁴

Ironically, the name of this government still bore the infamous “Democratic Kampuchea” label. So history had it that genocidal communist, non-communist and royalist groups allied to fight a communist group that had stopped the genocide and was quite rightly a savior of the Cambodian people. The question is, why wasn’t any coalition government formed to overthrow the Khmer Rouge? And why did any coalition include the Khmer Rouge? Both Son Sann and Sihanouk were political veterans who hated the Khmer Rouge. Even though this was clearly a non-heroic action, politics made it expedient. For the Cambodian people, the choice was very difficult. Which one should they join? Instead of liberating them, these political factions made life more difficult for people both inside the country and in the border camps that quickly sprang up after the Khmer Rouge’s collapse.

On January 10, 1979, the Kampuchean People’s Revolutionary Council (KPRC) announced that the official name of Cambodia was the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). A week later the PRK notified the Security Council of the United Nations that it was the sole government of the Cambodian people.⁴⁷⁵ Vietnam was the first country to recognize the new regime. In February 1979, Vietnam and Cambodia

⁴⁷³ Jacques Bekaert, *Cambodian Diary: Tales of a Divided Nation 1983–1986*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1997.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

signed a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, which declared that “peace and security of the two countries are closely interrelated and that the two Parties are duty-bound to help each other against all schemes and acts of sabotage by the imperialist and international reactionary forces.”⁴⁷⁶ The two governments also signed treaties for cooperation on economic, cultural, educational, public health and scientific and technological issues. The treaties would allow Vietnam to continue its occupation of Cambodia and provide support to it in all sectors. Vietnam would withdraw from Cambodia in 1990, sooner than projected in the Treaty.⁴⁷⁷

Other communist countries of the Eastern bloc, including the Soviet Union and some pro-Soviet countries, recognized the PRK. In January 1980, twenty nine such countries recognized the PRK; however, nearly eighty others did not, instead recognizing the CGDK as the legitimate government of Cambodia. ASEAN countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore – led by Thailand, whose security was threatened by events in Cambodia and was now coping with humanitarian issues along the border, opposed the PRK. Even when Cham suffered genocide under the Khmer Rouge, major Muslim countries opposed the PRK: Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Mauritania.⁴⁷⁸ The only Muslim countries supporting the PRK were Afghanistan, Algeria, Democratic of Yemen, Libya, Syria and Chad.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁵ Margaret Slocomb, *The People's Republic of Kampuchea 1979-1989: The Revolution after Pol Pot*, Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 2004.

⁴⁷⁶ Russell R. Ross, ed. *Cambodia: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1987.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

III. PRK Institutions and Key Policies toward the Cham

Upon gaining control of Phnom Penh and to counter the international outcry against the “evil communist invasion,” the Front quickly formed on January 8, 1979 with the Kampuchean People’s Revolutionary Council (KPRC) as the transitional government, which later formed self-management committees in the villages. Led by Heng Samrin, the KPRC ruled Cambodia until June 27, 1981 when the newly established constitution replaced it with a Council of Ministers. Pen Sovan was appointed as the new prime minister with three deputy prime ministers: Hun Sen, Chan Si and Chea Soth.⁴⁸⁰ But Pen Sovan was later removed and replaced by Chan Si. Pen Sovan later claimed he had complained about long-term Vietnamese occupation in Cambodia and the settlement of large numbers of Vietnamese.⁴⁸¹ It was the KPRC which established the People’s Revolutionary Tribunal to prosecute Pol Pot and Ieng Sary for the crime of genocide and appointed Mat Ly as the tribunal’s prosecutor. In mid-1979 Mat Ly was also a deputy minister of the interior.⁴⁸²

The PRK’s constitution⁴⁸³ was written in June 1981, after the National Assembly had been established. Unusual for a constitution, it declared the PRK’s main political principles and established itself against China and the United States, saying that the PRK was against “the Chinese expansionist and hegemonist in Beijing acting in

⁴⁷⁸ Ben Kiernan, “Orphans of Genocide: the Cham Muslims of Kampuchea Under Pol Pot,” op. cit., p. 32.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁸⁰ Margaret Slocomb, *The People’s Republic of Kampuchea 1979-1989: The Revolution after Pol Pot*, op. cit.

⁴⁸¹ Pen Sovan is now a member of the Human Rights Party. He was quoted by Kem Sokha, the party leader, as saying so. See also Pen Sovan, *Brief Biography and Nationalism*, Seattle: Khmer Vision Publishing Company, 2002.

⁴⁸² “Case File of the People’s Revolutionary Tribunal for Prosecuting Pol Pot-Ieng Sary Genocidal Clique,” Ministry of Propaganda, Culture and Information, Phnom Penh, 1981.

⁴⁸³ Raoul Jennar, *The Cambodian Constitutions (1953-1993)*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 1997.

collusion with the United States imperialism and other powers.” The Constitution was originally drafted by a council led by Ros Samay. But Ros Samay’s draft was heavily revised. Under this constitution only the Khmer People’s Revolutionary Party (KPRP), which later became the Cambodian People’s Party, was allowed. The PRK’s constitution was revised in 1989 to accommodate the changing political climate toward the end of the Cold War.

The government’s top executive organ was the Council of Ministers (or cabinet) which was headed by Hun Sen in 1987. It served as the administrative center of the PRK Government. Its main role was to “prepare, facilitate, coordinate, unify and guide all activities of individual ministries and localities.”⁴⁸⁴ The Council of Ministers was headed by the prime minister as chairman, two vice chairmen who were deputy prime ministers, and twenty ministers as members. The National Assembly elected the Council of Ministers for five-year terms. In the absence of the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers reported to the Council of State.⁴⁸⁵ It also had a chief of staff who was called the Minister in Charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers, a secretary general, a director of State Affairs Inspectorate, and president of the People’s National Bank of Kampuchea. The State Affairs Inspectorate was responsible for the fiscal inspection of public institutions.⁴⁸⁶ The Council of Ministers met weekly in an executive session and on a regular basis in a plenary session. The Council of Ministers established the K5 program.

The establishment of anti-PRK guerilla forces of the CGDK forced the PRK to conduct an ambitious plan called K5, which was scheduled to be completed between

⁴⁸⁴ Russell R. Ross, ed. *Cambodia: A Country Study*, op. cit.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

1985 and 1989. It called for constructing trenches, laying barb wire, building fences and laying mines along the entire Cambodian-Thai border, which was approximately 800 kilometers long and 500 meters wide. The border areas with Thailand were largely uninhabited and ran through several mountains and forested areas.⁴⁸⁷

The program was costly for the PRK, as hundreds of thousands of workers were required to complete the project and yet it was not effective against the guerilla forces who found detours around the border. It also caused environmental problems when a large number of trees and plants were felled and uprooted during the clearing process. Being in the tropical area, the clearing required regular maintenance as undergrowth grew quickly during the rainy seasons. Maintaining clearings of this magnitude required a large number of workers who had to leave their fields for this forced labor. For Cambodians who had emerged only six years earlier from forced labor under the Khmer Rouge, the K5 program was not popular. Without a proper supply of food, equipment, medicine and lodging in remote areas, many people died of malaria and exhaustion. They also died during attacks by CGDK forces.⁴⁸⁸ Like other Cambodians, many Cham were involved in the K5 program. Apart from constructing their own society and reviving their religion, Cham contributed actively to the new socialist society. Their memory of the experience under the PRK was not critical.

The Khmer Rouge regime destroyed many religious leaders, both Buddhist and Islamic. The PRK attempted to restore religious practice in Cambodia immediately after gaining power. They reestablished Buddhism, and rebuilt and reopened Buddhist

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Margaret Slocomb, "The K5 Gamble: National Defence and Nation Building under the People's Republic of Kampuchea," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2001, pp. 195-210.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 195-210.

temples. As early as 1979, old monks were reordained in Phnom Penh. They would then reestablish pagodas and Buddhist communities throughout Cambodia. By 1980 Buddhist festivals began to be observed such as Pchum Ben and Katen Tean.⁴⁸⁹

The PRK idealized ethnic diversity. In this regime, however, the Chinese suffered more than the others as they were perceived to be the children of China, who the PRK's patron Vietnam had branded as one of their greatest enemies. Speaking Mandarin and Teo Chew was prohibited among Chinese.⁴⁹⁰ But Cham were treated much better during this period.

Islam was allowed to propagate freely in the country so long as it remained in the spiritual realm, did not violate state authority and was not used for political gain. Mosques were allowed to be restored by all means possible. By late 1980s, 200 mosques and 100 suravs were built and/or restored.⁴⁹¹ Because the PRK was not recognized by major Islamic countries, global and transnational assistance to the community was sparse.⁴⁹²

In general, the PRK's policy toward the Cham people was inclusive, considerate and non-discriminatory. But like efforts to rebuild Cambodia in many social sectors, rebuilding the Cham community was hampered by lack of public support from major Islamic countries that opposed the Vietnamese-backed PRK. The Khmer Rouge genocide was known to some degrees in the West, but politics prevented much

⁴⁸⁹ Ian Harris, *Cambodian Buddhism: History and Practice*, op. cit, p. 190.

⁴⁹⁰ Penny Edwards, "Ethnic Chinese in Cambodia," *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia*, Phnom Penh: Center for Advanced Studies, 2009.

⁴⁹¹ By 2012, this number increased to 460 mosques and 400 suravs. Author's interview with Ohna Sos Kamry, September 14, 2012.

sympathy from reaching Cambodia. Countries such as Kuwait, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, which would become major donors in the Islamic revivalism after the Cold War, opposed the PRK, but they did provide support to the Cham along the border. Along the Thai border, such sympathy reached Cham refugees in the form of resettlement assistance and other humanitarian aid.

Cham also made personal efforts to construct mosques and build *suravs* around the country. They also had to build a new religious leadership by selecting *imam*, *hakem* and *tuon* to replace those who perished under the Khmer Rouge. In some cases, these new religious officials had to be trained and taught religious precepts because Islamic practice had been abandoned in the Khmer Rouge period. Now they had little supporting infrastructure for a religious renewal. Some Cham refugees returned from Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia to provide much needed assistance.⁴⁹³

The PRK's Critiques of Treatment toward Cham

In their attempts to garner support and loyalty from Cham, the PRK pointed toward the situation of the Cham during Sihanouk's Sangkum Reastr Niyum and under Lon Nol's regime. In a speech Heng Samrin stated that:

Cham were exploited and looked down upon. Nobody cared about their rights to study their own language.⁴⁹⁴ Cham' living standard was poor. They had no rights to participate in the country's affairs. Cham had no freedom to conduct festivities according to their traditions; they had to bribe in order to do so. Moreover, the previous regimes used Islam as a tool to break unity within the Cham

⁴⁹² Charles F. Keyes, "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 Charles F. Keyes, Laurel Kendall and Helen Hardacre, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994, pp. 43-73.

⁴⁹³ Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy*, London: Routledge, 1997.

⁴⁹⁴ This was an attempt to criticize Sihanouk's compulsory education program for all Cham to study the Khmer language, but did not go so far as to advocate teaching the Cham's own language at school.

community. The previous regimes created new and old groups, in order to make it easy for them to control and exploit the Cham. They used Islam as a tool to strengthen their power, serve political gains and classes.⁴⁹⁵

These comments demonstrated Heng Samrin's knowledge of Cham history, which he used to connect with the community and gain their support. However, a few of his statements were of questionable accuracy. During the Sihanouk regime there was a compulsory education program for all Cham to study the Khmer language, but that program lacked emphasis on using the Cham language at school. Many Cham became bi-lingual as a result, but some younger generations did not use their own language. Looking back, many Cham are better off for being able to communicate well with the Khmer without heavy accents. In terms of the standard of living and participation in the country's affairs, speaking Khmer was advantageous, especially for some Cham in the countryside. But in Phnom Penh especially, some Cham living in Chroy Changvar commune had good living conditions and good government positions before the Khmer Rouge took over. However, Heng Samrin's statement was probably a PRK attempt to increase the Cham's participation in the Cambodian Government. Today one can see many more Cham holding government positions than before.⁴⁹⁶

The PRK also made reference to "old and new religious groups" (*krom thmei* and *krom chas*), which had been problematic during Sihanouk's regime in the 1960s, as mentioned in Chapter Three. Although Sihanouk broke up the conflict between the old and new groups, the PRK saw the conflict as an attempt by Sihanouk's regime to divide and rule the Cham people. The Cham's exposure to global influence then was

⁴⁹⁵ DC-Cam Document D00406: Heng Samrin Speech during a Convention with Hakem-Tuon, July 20-24, 1984.

⁴⁹⁶ DC-Cam Document D00406: Heng Samrin Speech during a Convention with Hakem-Tuon, July 20-24, 1984.

limited. Thus religious division was minimal, but in today's conditions where global influences are rampant, intra-religious difference is inevitable. Certainly conflicts bring weakness to the community, but it is mainly the role of Cham community to prevent and resolve their internal conflicts.

Another PRK source also critiqued Sihanouk's Cham policy:

Islam became confusing. Cham were led to believe in blind. There were those who tried to mislead and misinterpret Islam. They tried to cause problems by leading people to believe in fortunetelling, magic, sorcery and spirits which were not taught in the Quran. They also created different groups and sects of new and old which caused conflict to the point where Cham community was split. Such were the tricks used by the feudalists to break apart Cham community and rule them.⁴⁹⁷

The same document also critiqued another aspect of Sihanouk's treatment of the Cham. It denounced the use of "Khmer Islam," which Sihanouk coined in the 1960s as a part of a program to bring minority groups into the mainstream of Khmer society. The PRK considered that as an attempt to erase ethnic identity.⁴⁹⁸ Instead, the PRK consistently used the words "Cham," "Cham ethnics," or "Cham Muslims."⁴⁹⁹

Chea Sim and Heng Samrin's Perspectives on Cham

Just a few months before Vietnam-PRK's launch of the dry season offensive of 1984-1985 against CGDK positions inside Cambodian territories, the PRK leadership organized a five-day meeting with community leaders of the Cham including the *hakems* and *tuons* in Phnom Penh. The meeting was chaired by Chea Sim, president of the National Assembly and Heng Samrin who was then Prime Minister of the

⁴⁹⁷ DC-Cam Document D00341: Report on Activities of Cham Community since January 7, 1979, July 20, 1984.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

PRK.⁵⁰⁰ Mat Ly was an active organizer of the event. He probably oversaw the meeting's final report describing good and bad points of the Cham community as well as actions that would be taken for the community. This meeting showed the intent of the PRK leadership to reach out to the Cham, seek their cooperation, and support and guide them in their adherence to KPRP and state policies. Documents from the meeting revealed a good amount of information regarding the PRK's general policy toward the Cham. The meeting itself was a milestone in Cham-PRK relations during what they considered to be a "transitional period for reconstruction and defense of the motherland."⁵⁰¹

During the meeting Chea Sim made sure to credit the Cham for their role in Cambodia's revolution led by the KPRP. He said, "It has been more than five years since our country was liberated. Our country has moved quickly forward, changed its face and our nation has grown gradually, thereby reputation of the PRK has been raised in the international arena. All these are possible because of the active participation of the Cham people."⁵⁰²

Chea Sim listed the contributions of the Cham people in more detail. This statement reflected the main activities of the PRK in rebuilding communities across the country, but for the Cham in particular he said:

The Cham created solidarity groups in all sectors including fishery, raising animals, farming and handicrafts. They were most nationalistic

⁵⁰⁰ DC-Cam Document D00410: Chea Sim's Opening Speech during a Convention with Hakem-Tuon, July 20-24, 1984.

⁵⁰¹ DC-Cam Document D00339: Decision of Hakem-Tuon during Convention with Hakem-Tuon, July 20-24, 1984.

⁵⁰² DC-Cam Document D00410: Chea Sim's Opening Speech during a Convention with Hakem-Tuon, op. cit.

and honest in protecting and rebuilding Cambodia. After feeding themselves, the Cham have sold rice to the state more than the required quota. Cham youths have volunteered in the army, the militia and other units to protect their villages and country against the enemy who constantly attempts to destroy the PRK as well as the recovery of the Cham community after genocide.⁵⁰³

Chea Sim added that the enemy had tried to use all kinds of methods to destroy the products of the people's labor and general national achievements. They conducted sabotage, destroyed infrastructure, burned houses and most importantly, infiltrated into the Cham community through Islam. Therefore, all Cham must remain vigilant at all times in their conduct of their religion. Chea Sim pointed to religious freedoms under the PRK saying, "Today Islam and Cham tradition have recovered. The Cham can worship Islam again. They have complete freedoms just like other ethnic groups in Cambodia. The Cham are protected under the eleven principles⁵⁰⁴ of the United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea and the constitution of the PRK."⁵⁰⁵

Apart from liberating them from genocide on January 7, 1979, the day that the PRK had been commemorating for five years, Heng Samrin stated that under the PRK, things had changed dramatically for the Cham. He said,

Cham are taken good care of and considered as members of the same family. There is no racism like in previous regimes, only equality between Cham and other ethnic groups who treat each other as friends and families. Cham customs and culture are preserved. The Cham and Khmer fight together against common enemies. Religious freedom abounds. Cham living standard has improved. In the new regime, the Cham have proper place to worship.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰³ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁴ It is not known what the eleven principles were, but one of them must be the one quoted in the People's Revolutionary Tribunal's statement on minority groups.

⁵⁰⁵ DC-Cam Document D00410: Chea Sim's Opening Speech during a Convention with Hakem-Tuon, op. cit.

The PRK's Vision of Cham' Roles

Chea Sim concluded his speech by stating the PRK's reconciliatory policy toward "misled" Cham. He said,

The Cham should try to implement the PRK's principle of forgiveness, under the "Movement for Misled People," [*Chalana Chun Vungveng Plov*] to those people who were misled or misguided by accident, confused or were forced by the enemy, and they are now residing in all kinds of enemy groups. The Cham must try to persuade them to return to our society and reunite with their families.⁵⁰⁷

The PRK's policy to ask Cham to return from the Cambodian-Thai border made pragmatic sense because by 1984 thousands of Cham were residing in border camps. However, Heng Samrin proposed that the:

Cham must protect the forest and cut them down only as told by the authority. Avoid catching fish during breeding seasons. Work harder to understand the ways of the Front. Try to understand the Front's policy on Islam so as to avoid having new and old groups in religion which is harmful for the Cham community. Continue learning both Khmer and Cham languages, to improve literacy of Cham people. Cooperate in all sectors with local authority to build schools and hospitals.⁵⁰⁸

Most importantly he said, "*hakems* and *tuons* must ask their people to join the army [in greater numbers]. Fight against psychological warfare of the enemy [as the enemy criticizes the PRK] by criticizing them back and condemning them for their genocide against Cham people. Enemies include the Khmer Rouge and the CGDK who try to prevent rebirth of new life of the Cham." Heng Samrin quickly warned the Cham that "the PRK would not allow using Islam as a tool to serve personal gains or the

⁵⁰⁶ DC-Cam Document D00406: Heng Samrin Speech during a Convention with Hakem-Tuon, op. cit.

⁵⁰⁷ DC-Cam Document D00410: Chea Sim's Opening Speech during a Convention with Hakem-Tuon, op. cit.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

enemy.” He emphasized his priority on authority: “Islam is governed by the State and therefore Cham must follow state laws.”⁵⁰⁹

Another PRK document directly laid out points where the Cham should improve. It first stated that the Cham had not followed Party policies well. The Cham still believed in superstition. The Cham had not agreed among themselves on the interpretation of the Quran and religious texts. They were still split into new and old groups. During their festivals, the Cham killed too many cattle, which reduced the number of working cattle in the field. When they were ill, the Cham often turned to superstition and spirit worship. A small number of Cham were still reluctant to join the army. Some Cham women did not understand the revolution clearly enough.⁵¹⁰ Most importantly, the document also differentiated Islam from the State: “Religions are permitted by the authority. Without authority religions cannot be operated. Therefore all problems and issues arising in Islam must be discussed in a democratic way and with the authority.” Although the PRK emphasized community rights and religious freedom, here it set a boundary for such freedom.

The PRK set the following policies for the Cham in the years to come:⁵¹¹

On revolution:

- Build and strengthen the revolutionary force that can lead the revolution forward.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ DC-Cam Document D00341: Report on Activities of Cham community since January 7, 1979, July 20, 1984.

- Study, clearly and repeatedly, the policies, decisions and circulars set forth by the Party and the State.
- The Cham must encourage their husbands, wives and children to join the army, and especially encourage women to serve the revolution more robustly.
- The Cham must strengthen and expand the solidarity groups in agriculture and fishing so that Cham people will have enough to eat and live in happiness.
- The Cham must try to increase fish production, and protect the fisheries so they can play a greater role in improving the economy.

On global connections:

- Strengthen relations among Kampuchea, Vietnam and Lao.
- Strengthen and widen solidarity between the Cham community and other ethnic groups in Cambodia, and with their friends in the international arena who are willing to help Cambodia and the Cham.

On tradition and culture:

- The Cham must learn the Khmer language effectively so that they can read all policies set forth by the State, the Party and the Front.
- Gradually eliminate any traditions that are not dictated by the Quran and the State's law. Especially make sure that the Cham's religion is both pure and revolutionary. [This could be interpreted as a parallel existence between Islam

⁵¹¹ DC-Cam Document D00339: Decision of Hakem-Tuon during Convention with Hakem-Tuon, op. cit.

and revolution.] Absolutely avoid using Islam to serve individual gain and serve the enemy.

On war:

- Destroy the enemy until they can never rise again.
- The Cham must fight against and destroy the CGDK and hold anger against the genocidal clique of Pol Pot, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan who are puppets of China, America and ASEAN.
- The Cham must be aware of the enemy's trick to use Islam and psychological warfare to destroy the revolution.
- The Cham must try to persuade "misled people" by confusion, persuasion or force by the enemy to return to their families and nation. The Cham must make sure "misled people" receive the forgiveness policy of the Party by making it easy for them to return and adapt.⁵¹²

IV. Ordinary Cham under the PRK

When the Khmer Rouge regime was deposed in January 1979, Cham people crisscrossed Cambodia to find their relatives, return to their homes, find food, shelter and security, and rebuild their community. Thousands of Cham found their way to the camps along Cambodian-Thai border; others walked for weeks to Phnom Penh and other sites rumored to have provided the best opportunities for a new life.

⁵¹² Ibid.

By mid-1980 life in the villages and towns had stabilized with relief aid flowing from the Soviet Union, Vietnam and some Western countries. The population of the refugee camps rose to a staggering 300,000 people. Meanwhile, mass starvation as a result of war and a poor harvest in 1978 was averted. The PRK also managed to provide support to rural areas toward the Western border and put in place administrative control there.

Kae Mat: Becoming a Religious Teacher

Kae Mat is a *tuon* and religious teacher in Kampong Tralach district. He has been an *imam* of the district since 2008 and a member of the district council since 2009.

Located in Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Tralach is one of the largest Muslim districts in Cambodia. I met Kae Mat in 2010 when he was invited to attend a Cham minority conference organized by DC-Cam. Now 48, he has a religious school in Kampong Tralach teaching the Quran and Islamic precepts to young Cham as supplementary courses to their public education. His school teaches Arabic, Malay and English, and is called Ang Neak Meas. It is supported by the Highest Council of Islamic Religious Affairs in Phnom Penh. As a principal and teacher, he earns USD 50 a month for his teaching. Kae Mat is still seeking to improve his school and his community, but he has come a long way since the Khmer Rouge's genocide against the Cham in 1975-1979.⁵¹³

Kae Mat was born in Kampong Tralach district. When the Khmer Rouge took control of Cambodia in April 1975, his family was evacuated from Kampong Tralach to Siem

⁵¹³ Author's interview with Kae Mat, November 24, 2011.

Reap province. They were settled in a remote Khmer village in Svay Leu district, Siem Reap province, in an attempt by the Khmer Rouge to disperse and mingle Cham with Khmer. Because of lack of food and forced labor, Kae Mat's parents died in 1977. Kae Mat and his three brothers and sisters struggled on in village cooperatives. He was not called Kae Mat then; he was called Soeun. The Khmer Rouge viewed Kae Mat as merely a youngster whose core identities no longer existed and could be changed to an astute revolutionary person. Whether he wanted to or not, Kae Mat survived the regime along with his siblings.⁵¹⁴

When the Khmer Rouge were run out of Svay Leu district in January 1979, Kae Mat and his brothers were lucky to be able to find their way back to Kampong Tralach. Some Cham families in the district were herded out along with the Khmer Rouge as they retreated to the Cambodian-Thai border. Kae Mat said that very few Cham people wanted to go with the Khmer Rouge and those who went with them did so because they were forced. Kae Mat said that most Cham who had a choice opted to travel back to their home villages, as he did in January 1979.⁵¹⁵

Kae Mat and his siblings traveled for two weeks from Siem Reap to Kampong Tralach. They had to cross the Tonle Sap River to reach the district. They walked along with thousands of other villagers who flocked to the main National Road 6 back to their place of origin where they hoped to find surviving family members. For many Cham, the place of origin was a meeting point for separated family members. For Kae Mat, the loss of his parents was devastating, but his situation was less severe than other Cham because all of his siblings survived. He traveled back to Kampong

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

Tralach to look for distant relatives who could support him and his siblings. They found a few surviving aunts and uncles who adopted each of them into their families.⁵¹⁶

Like Cham communities throughout Cambodia, Kampong Tralach was barely recognizable after the Khmer Rouge. Wooden *suravs* were mostly destroyed. Only one concrete mosque remained as a bare structure in the district. The Khmer Rouge had used this mosque first as a prison, then less ironically as a hospital. Cham villagers quickly cleaned up the mosque and put it back in operation. Kae Mat said despite the loss of many Cham intellectuals and religious leaders and villagers in Kampong Tralach, surviving Cham elders were able to restore their pre-Khmer Rouge religious and cultural practices. When things were not clear, they discussed them together. They collected Qurans and *keitab* wherever they found them. They built more mosques and *suravs* whenever possible. For example, they dismantled the Khmer Rouge dining hall and used its wood to build small *suravs*. All of these efforts provided the sense of continuity they had enjoyed pre-Khmer Rouge.⁵¹⁷

Kae Mat's aunt enrolled him in a secular elementary school in 1981. Back then, religious education was still unavailable. The famous religious schools in Phum Trea village, Kampong Cham province, were also absent. Back then he said, even in public school there were no proper classrooms, textbooks, notebooks or pens. Kae Mat had one book-sized board he wrote on using charcoal. However, this education helped him learn to read and write basic Khmer.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

By 1986 religious schools were available in some parts of Kampong Cham. Kae Mat's aunt sent him to a religious school in Ponhea Krek district, Kampong Cham province. This school was run by the future Mufti of Cambodia, Sos Kamry. This was one of the earliest religious boarding schools in Cambodia after the Khmer Rouge. It is still operating as an Islamic school today. Kae Mat spent seven years there before returning to Kampong Tralach to teach Islam in 1993.

Kae Mat said during his studies in Ponhea Krek there were very few Qurans and *Sunnahs* (Muslim's most holy texts). When there was a Quran, he and his friends copied it by hand because there were no photocopy machines. Kae Mat saw two Qurans written in Malay that were smuggled from the Cambodian-Thai border in 1983. He loved it. But at his religious school in Ponhea Krek, Qurans and religious texts arrived from Vietnam. Some of them were in Arabic, others were in Malay. The People's Republic of Kampuchea was an unpopular state in the 1980s. Most Arabic and Southeast Asian Muslim countries did not recognize the PRK, so sources of religious learning were limited.

During that period, Kae Mat said, there was great respect for religious teachers and mosque *imams*. With Cambodia lacking an effective rule of law, *imams* had the credentials to resolve conflicts between villagers and the Cham trusted them. Today Kae Mat said, there is less respect as villagers are more exposed to outside knowledge and national law. When they have a conflict, they turn to lawyers and civil authorities. In the 1980s, the *imam* used Islamic principles to guide him in resolving conflicts.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

Kasem Srei Yan: the Daughter of a Prestigious Cham Family

Kasem Srei Yan, now 53, was the only daughter of an aristocratic Cham family living in Chroy Changva before the Khmer Rouge regime. Her father was a head registrar at the Phnom Penh municipal court. Her grandfather was also a head registrar at the appeals court in Phnom Penh. Now she prefers to be called Van Ny, a very distinctly Khmer name given to her by the Khmer Rouge, which she continues to use (many Cham preferred to keep their Khmer names). When the Khmer Rouge came Kasem Srei Yan's family and distant relatives were evacuated from Chroy Changva, along National Road 6, to Kampong Thom and eventually to a village north of Siem Reap town. Her father was not with her at the time. As a diligent and responsible court official, on the day the Khmer Rouge arrived in Phnom Penh, he was in his office. When the Khmer Rouge began evacuating people, he was not allowed to find his family. Kasem Srei Yan never saw her father again. She keeps a photograph of him, hoping to find him alive some day.⁵¹⁹

Under the Khmer Rouge Kasem Srei Yan and her grandparents were sent to a remote village in Siem Reap province where killing was rampant. Srei Yan said the Khmer Rouge sometimes identified urban Cham through measuring their hands and feet, and feeling the softness of their skin. The Khmer Rouge believed that city people who exploited the labor of farmers and workers had soft hands and feet, and killed them. One of the victims included Srei Yan's grandfather. Being a court official his hands were soft. The Khmer Rouge one day took him behind the village, hung him upside down and cut his head off. Srei Yan's grandmother died of illness and fright a few days later. Several other relatives died several months later.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁹ Author's interview with Kasem Srei Yan, December 6, 2011.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

Tough, loud-speaking, outgoing and never a good student, Srei Yan was able to adapt in the Khmer Rouge regime, which never valued intellectuality. She survived the regime. The only hope she had after the Khmer Rouge regime was to find her father from whom she was separated in 1975. She brought his photograph to the Phnom Penh municipal court where he used to work, but employees told him he had never returned. They said he was sent to Battambang during the regime. If he stayed in Pursat where life was harsh under the Khmer Rouge, he could have died of starvation like many other Cham sent there. But in a few regions in Battambang such as Region One, life was easy and he could survive the regime. Like many other Cham in Battambang, in 1979-1980, he could have traveled to a border camp and been resettled in a foreign country. Such is a hope that Srei Yan keeps to eventually reunite with her father.⁵²¹

El Saroh: Stay Put in Cambodia

In January 1979, Elsaroh and her family traveled to Kampong Cham provincial town. They stayed there for seven months before news came from her aunt in Phnom Penh that the “Arabs” were coming to take the Cham from Cambodia to settle in their countries. They would do that by giving the new government “petroleum” in return. For Elsaroh and her family during the early days of 1979, things were confusing. People were traveling, searching for their lost relatives, finding opportunities and/or running away from any remnant of the Khmer Rouge. In the new regime, rumors spread like wildfire about opportunities, safety and danger. However, there was no way to verify them.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

Elsaroh thought about the best opportunities for her family. She decided to leave Kampong Cham and believed that Phnom Penh was her best option. Having found most of her immediate relatives in Kampong Cham, she and her family took a truck to Phnom Penh where they settled in their current location in Kilometer 8 in Russey Keo district. She then learned that there were no Arabs coming to take Cham in exchange for oil.⁵²² Perhaps her informants misinterpreted the news along the border that the Malaysians were taking Cham to their country.

In Phnom Penh, her family was doing well. Her brother found a good business opportunity in refining and selling silver, although this business was prohibited by the authorities. In Kilometer 8 village, Cham were settling in larger number than they had in the 1960s, although before the fall of Lon Nol regime this area has been choked with Cham refugees. In 1980 their numbers rapidly increased as more Cham arrived from distant locations in the country. News about business opportunities in the border areas and opportunities to resettle in another Islamic Western countries spread in Kilometer 8 village. The village chief assigned his militia to guard people's houses at night to prevent secret departures to the border. Elsaroh said that she never wanted to go, even when there were reports of successful trips. For her life was much better than during in the Khmer Rouge regime and she believed the Khmer Rouge would not be allowed to return. Her family was also doing well in business. But her distant aunt who had already migrated to Malaysia had lost her husband and children and she simply wanted to leave Cambodia.⁵²³

⁵²² Author's interview with El Saroh, November 16, 2011.

⁵²³ Ibid.

After the Khmer Rouge regime, life for Cham was uncertain. Everybody made their own agenda to rebuild their life in a new era. At least they knew that the Khmer Rouge had gone and that the nightmare of genocide was over. Some Cham chose to remain in the PRK, seek their missing family members, and build their homes, community and continue practicing Islam after genocide. Other Cham chose the border camps, hoping to find a new life in another country, preferably an Islamic country.

During these early days after the genocide, Cham made attempts to connect to the global community and seek help from fellow Muslims. Even when there were very few Islamic countries supporting the PRK, Islamic countries provided assistance to Cham refugees at the border camps. These countries attempted to provide aid to Cham in the PRK through international organizations as discussed below. In a sense, Cham sectarian, political and economic identities were always linked to the global Islamic community, even during the 1980s.

V. The Role of Cham in the People's Revolutionary Tribunal

Part of the process of reconstruction of Cham peripheral identities after genocide was justice for the Khmer Rouge crimes. In this regard, the PRK made sure the Cham participated in the process and their misery was conveyed, at least in the People's Revolutionary Tribunal courtroom, if not in the international community. The Tribunal was carried out at Chaktomuk Theatre in August 1979, with participation from Cambodians of all ages and backgrounds, religious persons, ordinary people,

and women.⁵²⁴ A handful of members of the international press were allowed to participate. Guests and court officials from countries sympathetic to the PRK were also present.

At the end of a two-day proceeding, the Tribunal produced a verdict of guilty and gave Pol Pot and Ieng Sary the death penalty for crimes committed under Democratic Kampuchea from 1975 to 1979. Neither Pol Pot nor Ieng Sary was present. The Tribunal was considered by both Western observers and opponents of the PRK as a show trial.⁵²⁵ But it had huge implications for the Cham community as members of the new government.

Among the Tribunal officials was Mohammad Hikmed Romane, a Muslim who had been an appeals lawyer in Damasque, Syria and served as a civil party lawyer at the Tribunal. He provided his statement after witness testimonies. Romane cited the Genocide Convention in 1948 which protected national, religious, ethnic and racial groups against acts of genocide, which was the responsibility of humanity to prevent and deter. As a human being, he said, he was personally affected by the Khmer Rouge genocide as it was a serious crime against humanity. He compared the Khmer Rouge crimes with Nazi Holocaust.⁵²⁶

He made two statements on the criminal responsibility of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary and political responsibility of the states involved. He said the Tribunal's indictment was

⁵²⁴ "Case File of the People's Revolutionary Tribunal for Prosecuting Pol Pot-Ieng Sary Genocidal Clique," Ministry of Propaganda, Culture and Information, Phnom Penh, 1981.

⁵²⁵ See also Howard De Nike, John Quigley and Kenneth Robinson, eds., *Genocide in Cambodia: Documents from the Trial of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

supported by strong evidence, especially eyewitnesses who would come forward in the thousands if called upon by the Tribunal, mass graves and their contents, eyewitness testimonies from people now temporarily staying in border camps, and the international media portraying Khmer Rouge crimes. All of these, he said, were strong enough to point to the crimes of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary against both Cambodian and international law.⁵²⁷

In terms of political responsibility, Romane pointed toward China. He said that the Khmer Rouge copied a number of key political decisions from China, most notably the cooperative system which in reality was a virtual concentration camp. He also said that China could not defend itself by saying it did not know what happened in the country because it had the largest embassy in Phnom Penh with a staff of a few hundred; they were the only foreigners allowed frequent travel throughout Cambodia. The closeness of China and indifference of the country, he said, emboldened Pol Pot and Ieng Sary to continue. Interestingly, Romane pointed at Western countries, which up until January 1979 had criticized the Khmer Rouge for their reported crimes against humanity. But since January 1979, those countries had changed their position and protected Pol Pot and Ieng Sary. They based their change of view on “legal righteousness,” he said. In fact, he continued, the only righteousness was the liberation of Cham from the Khmer Rouge, who had systematically planned and massacred Cambodian people.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁶ “Case File of the People’s Revolutionary Tribunal for Prosecuting Pol Pot-Ieng Sary Genocidal Clique,” *op. cit.*, p. 206.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

Romane provided a very modern view of the cases and responsibilities in a tribunal that was considered largely as a sham. In his use of the word genocide, he made a distinction between Buddhists, Christians, animists, Muslims and ethnicities, and did not conflate genocide against Cambodians in general. As a Muslim, Romane probably provided an indirect protection to surviving Cham and support for the reconstruction of their communities.

The highest-ranking Cham in Cambodia then was Mat Ly, who in 1979 was a Vice Minister of the Interior and a prosecutor in the People's Revolutionary Tribunal.⁵²⁹ The degree of closeness between Romane and Mat Ly is not clear, but being court officials, they must have communicated. As an intelligent lawyer, Romane probably provided clear road maps and valuable suggestions to Mat Ly on the development of the Cham community and reshaping of their peripheral identities in the years to come.

As a prosecutor, Mat Ly had issued an arrest warrant for Pol Pot and Ieng Sary on July 26, 1979.⁵³⁰ The warrant said two suspects were called upon, namely Pol Pot aka Saloth Sar, former Democratic Kampuchea Prime Minister and Ieng Sary, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea. The warrant ordered the two suspects to appear before local authorities, and if they continued to hide, for the local authorities to find them. Cambodian citizens had the right to arrest these two and bring them to the police.

The fact that Mat Ly had a role in the Tribunal was intentional, perhaps as a representative of the Cham victims, to show the new regime's respect and tolerance

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., pp. 198, 180, 174.

for cultural and ethnic diversity, but it was also meaningful for the Cham that one of them issued an arrest warrant for former Cambodian leaders for crimes committed against all Cambodian citizens including genocide against Cham. The participation of Cham in the Tribunal gave the Cham a sense of seeking justice for themselves and for others.

Pol Pot's victimization of the Cham was fully acknowledged by the Tribunal and the new regime. The Cham shared a victim identity with other ethnic groups in Cambodia. To arrive at a judgment of genocide against the Cham, the Tribunal, which was an important political arena for the new Cambodian government, had to establish the Cham as a separate group that needed protection.

The Tribunal produced many reports and presented them during the proceedings on the Khmer Rouge's victimization of urban people, the crimes at Tuol Sleng prison, the destruction of Cambodia's economic infrastructure, the destruction of culture, the destruction of the education system, destruction of the public health system, and crimes against minority groups and religions.⁵³¹ Of interest to this paper was the description of minority groups (*chuncheat peak tech*), including indigenous minority peoples and the Cham. The Tribunal defined minority groups as those people who "had been living and sharing blood in Cambodia since ancient time. They live mostly in the highlands and mountains. Being only about 10% of Cambodian population, the minority groups have committed many achievements for Cambodia and contributed to building and defending the country for many thousand of years." The Tribunal quoted

⁵³¹ Ibid., p. 173.

data from the Lon Nol regime in 1970 that the Cambodian Muslim population was 700,000 people.

The Tribunal also quoted a statement from the United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea on December 2, 1978, which mentioned minorities specifically: “Respect rights and give freedoms to all ethnic groups in Cambodian society. They deserve equality in and the benefits of the nation just like the majority Khmer group.”⁵³² Apart from being victims of the Khmer Rouge which “killed two-thirds of the Cham population,” the Cham and other groups had contributed greatly to community revolution in Cambodia against the “fascist Japanese, French colonialism, US imperialist and expansionist China.” The Tribunal’s statement also described Khmer Rouge crimes against the Cham, which interestingly mirrored what was described in the previous chapter, including “forcing Cham women to cut their hair short like Khmer women,” and henceforth banning them from identifying with their previous Cham core identities.⁵³³ Cham men and women also “had their names changed to Khmer names.”⁵³⁴ Many Cham were killed by drowning.⁵³⁵ The Khmer Rouge attempted to destroy core identities by prohibiting Islam, banning Cham language and all other signs of their peripheral identities.⁵³⁶ The statement concluded that “Khmer Rouge’s genocidal crimes against Cham were clearer than other cases.”⁵³⁷ The language in the court’s statement of minority groups was plagued with political statements and can be contested, but gave an idea of how the PRK’s main policy viewed minority groups and, in particular the Cham people. These court statements

⁵³² Ibid., p. 173.

⁵³³ Ibid., p. 181.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., p. 181.

⁵³⁵ Ibid., p. 181.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., p. 183.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., p. 183.

protecting Cham people in 1979 had long-term implications on the PRK's policy toward Cham people.

VI. Mat Ly, Community Revival and Global Connections

From the beginning, Cham enjoyed strong support and inclusion from the PRK. As a son of Sos Man, the veteran communist killed by the Khmer Rouge in 1975,⁵³⁸ Mat Ly joined the Khmer Issarak underground communist movement in 1948. Under Sangkum Reastr Niyum, he was imprisoned for 13 years for opposing the Sihanouk regime. When released in 1970 by the Lon Nol government, he immediately resumed political activities. In 1976, he was appointed as a member of the standing committee of the Democratic Kampuchea assembly. He fled to Vietnam in mid-1978 and became one of the 14 founding members of the United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea.⁵³⁹

From January 1979 to March 1982, Mat Ly was Deputy Minister of Agriculture. In May 1981 he was elected to the PRK's newly established National Assembly for Kampong Cham province. He also became a Vice President of the Assembly in the same mandate. In October 1985, he was elected to the political bureau of the People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea. And in January 1986, he became Secretary

⁵³⁸ In an interview with David Hawk, Mat Ly said his father was poisoned by the Khmer Rouge. DC-Cam Document D18108: David Hawk's Interview with Mat Ly, June 20, 1983.

⁵³⁹ DC-Cam Document D38615: Politburo Profiles, October 1985; Justin Corfield and Laura Summers, *Historical Dictionary of Cambodia*, New York: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

General of the United Front for the Construction and Defense of the Motherland (formerly UFNSK).⁵⁴⁰

In 1981 an Indonesian journalist named Sabam Siagian published a report on consequences of genocide on the Cham community. He interviewed several Cham. One of those was the newly-appointed *imam* of the Kilometer 7 mosque whose preoccupation was to rebuild his religious institution. He requested funds from Indonesia to rebuild destroyed mosques, publish Qurans, train religious teachers, and make a pilgrimage to Mecca.⁵⁴¹ Most of the Cham leadership agreed with his sentiments. So in the early 1980s, Mat Ly took a number of initiatives to revive Islamic religious learning and the Cham community.

To attract foreign donors, in 1979 Mat Ly established the Cambodian Islamic Association, which functioned as an intermediary to control aid coming into Cambodia from Muslim donors. In April 1980, Mat Ly sent a Cham delegation to visit the headquarters of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Despite this country's opposition to the PRK, Mat Ly made sure to make a distinction between political and humanitarian aid. The delegation brought evidence of genocide against the Cham by the Khmer Rouge and requested humanitarian aid from both organizations. In response, the IDB sent a delegation led by Seddik Taouti to visit Cambodia in 1981 and 1982.

⁵⁴⁰ Justin Corfield and Laura Summers, *Historical Dictionary of Cambodia*, op. cit.

⁵⁴¹ Agne de Feo, "Transnational Islamic Movement in Cambodia," paper presented at a Conference on *Dynamics of Contemporary Islam and Economic Development in Asia, From the Caucasus to China*

The visit provided the IDB with further evidence of the Khmer Rouge's near-destruction of Islam in Cambodia. The IDB provided a subsidy of \$500,000 for the Malaysian Government to facilitate the entry of Cham refugees into that country.⁵⁴² It eventually became the first large-scale donor to the Cham in the PRK. It provided \$1 million to rebuild mosques and classrooms, and to buy school materials and religious books in Arabic and Malay.⁵⁴³

In 1988, Mat Ly and his Cambodian Islamic Association won the support of two businessmen from Dubai, Hisham ibn Nasir and Mahmud Abdallah Qasim, who contributed to the construction of 20 mosques in Cambodia. They also financed the annual hajj trip. One of the mosques is the International Dubai Mosque of Phnom Penh at the edge of Boeng Kak Lake. His other mosques bear the name Dubai.⁵⁴⁴

Mat Ly was not only a religious person, he had also always been an active political campaigner. This benefited both the Cham community and his party. While the Cham received full protection and support from the new communist government, the party received strong support from the majority of Cham. In fact the PRPK's most recent incarnation, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), still receives such support today. History has shown that Cambodian Cham always supported incumbent political leaders. Toward the end of the 1980s, Mat Ly undertook several political activities to engage members of his community.

organized by the Centre de Sciences Humaines (CSH) and India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi, April 16-17, 2007.

⁵⁴² Philip Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 23(3), 2006, pp.1-23; Seddik Taouti, "The Forgotten Muslims of Kampuchea and Vietnam," in *Reading on Islam in Southeast Asia*, edited by Ahmad Ibrahim et al., Singapore: ISEAS, 1986.

⁵⁴³ Seddik Taouti, "The Forgotten Muslims of Kampuchea and Vietnam," op. cit.

⁵⁴⁴ Philip Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," op. cit., p.1-23.

In June 1989, Mat Ly attended a provincial meeting of party cadres in Kampong Chhnang. Most of those present were Cham. By then Mat Ly was a member of the Party's Central Committee Political Bureau, Vice Chairman of the National Assembly and Chairman of the Kampuchean Federation of Trade Unions. The PRK had already renamed the country State of Cambodia (SOC). During the meeting Mat Ly spoke about politics, including discussing the meeting between Prime Minister Hun Sen and Prince Sihanouk. He praised fellow Cham in Kampong Chhnang for their efforts in defending and building their communities in order to raise their living standards. Land distribution was an issue in the SOC at the time, especially when preparations were underway for a move from public to private land ownership. So Mat Ly talked about land use, land clearance and ownership for Cham peasants. He also encouraged fellow Cham to defend their villages and encouraged "misled persons" to return to their community.⁵⁴⁵ After the meeting Mat Ly presented medicines and goods to Cham in Rolea Pier and Kampong Tralach districts.

Most notable about Mat Ly's speech in this meeting was the absence of discussion on religious matters. It was as though the main preoccupation of the Cham community was "building and defending the Cambodian state" against attacks and sabotage by "the Pol Potists who are the most dangerous enemy of the people." Mat Ly discussed implementing key resolutions of the Second National Congress and the extraordinary session of the National Assembly taking place earlier in the year,⁵⁴⁶ setting in motion a five-point plan relating to agriculture, small industries, handicrafts and transportation. It was true that for the SOC at the time, the most urgent matter was

⁵⁴⁵ DC-Cam Document D19654: Mat Ly Meets with Muslims in Kampong Chhnang, June 1989.

effectively replacing Vietnamese personnel and their “volunteer troops,” who would be withdrawn completely by September 1989. Thus Mat Ly praised the Cham for their cultivation efforts in the 1988-1989 season and their provision of that harvest to the state. He also praised the Cham for their “sense of responsibility, mastery and self-reliance in national defense and reconstruction,” which were most urgently needed in the void left by Vietnamese withdrawal.

Mat Ly did not mention openness to outside Islamic assistance which was to come in the ensuing years. Perhaps this was the reason why the Cham were not prepared for what was to come. However, Mat Ly was not to be blamed. As a key leader in the SOC, he talked about his main preoccupations during the meeting. They included amendments to the SOC Constitution and the outcomes of the fourth Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM IV) between Hun Sen and Sihanouk. Thus, for the Cham people in general, the greater reconstruction of Cham identities did not occur at this point.⁵⁴⁷ Instead, Mat Ly urged them to focus on:

- Strengthening the armed forces with available means and technologies.
- Continuing to attack the Pol Potists until there was an agreement on peace.
- Consolidating solidarity and unity around party leadership and inner ranks.
- Implementing constitutional amendments.
- Attempting to farm all available land and avoiding in engaging in non-productive professions.
- Taking all requests and suggestions from the people seriously, and avoiding exploiting them.

⁵⁴⁶ The National Assembly meeting was held in April 1989, as Mat Ly mentioned in his speech. DC-Cam Document D19726: Mat Ly Receives US Scientists’ Group Leader, January 1990.

- Resolving people's complaints quickly and fairly.
- Holding soldiers, policemen, cadres, party members and other people equal before the law.
- Avoiding the abuse of power and making people afraid of the party and state authority.

In many cases Cham cadres served their own communities rather than others. But Mat Ly emphasized inter-ethnic cooperation whenever possible by encouraging Cham cadres to engage with people of other ethnic groups and help them according to the guidelines above. Finally, Mat Ly raised the issue of fair pay among Cham cadres. He had no effective answer for them, but stated “now there is one important problem: the pay of our cadres does not match the cost of living. So authorities must help them with their daily lives.” Although the intent of this statement was not clear, it seemed Mat Ly was encouraging local authorities and the community to assist in paying the cadres on a mutual assistance basis.

In August 1989 Mat Ly met a US delegation led by David Hawk. His team focused mainly on documenting Khmer Rouge crimes against the Cambodian people, particularly making a case that they had committed genocide against the Cham ethnic group. On that matter David Hawk had interviewed Mat Ly in 1983 on his political activities before the Khmer Rouge and the crimes of the Khmer Rouge against the Cham from 1975 to 1979.⁵⁴⁷ The topic of discussion between Mat Ly and David Hawk at the National Assembly building has not been revealed, but a report of the

⁵⁴⁷ DC-Cam Document D19656: Mat Ly Speaks at Provincial Cadre Congress, June 1989.

⁵⁴⁸ The author obtained a copy of the transcript. David Hawk founded the Cambodian Documentation Commission in the early 1980s. Throughout the 1980s, his team interviewed survivors and collected

meeting stated that Mat Ly told the delegation about “the crimes of genocide of the Pol Pot clique, their destruction of society, economy and infrastructures.” He also talked about the SOC’s new efforts to “rebuild infrastructure and institutions, make peace and prevent a return of genocide.”⁵⁴⁹

Even at this stage, making a case of genocide against the “Cham and Cambodians in general” was still a relevant topic. Vietnam had made such case when they brought their armies into Cambodia in late 1978 to justify their military action. Now that Vietnam was planning to withdraw in a month’s time, reference to genocide by the Khmer Rouge was perhaps mainly about voicing concerns for justice and hatred against the Khmer Rouge and to discredit them in future political competition. Apparently, Mat Ly did not consider that genocide occurred only against the Cham, but to the Cambodian people in general. This consideration provided a sense of shared victimhood and unity among the Cham, Khmer, ethnic Vietnamese and other groups. It was a shared identity that the Cham preferred.

In January 1990, Mat Ly received James Dixon, who was then Chairman of the US National Academy of Science, at the National Assembly. Once again Mat Ly discussed constitutional amendments that “increased roles of the Council of State, Council of Ministers.” It was not clear what James Dixon was looking for in coming to Cambodia at the time and what he would mention to Mat Ly as a key politician of the SOC and top figure of the Cham community. But being responsible for both entities, Mat Ly’s tack was similar to the one he took in his meeting with David Hawk: “Cambodian people are fighting against attacks by the three reactionary groups

Khmer Rouge materials both in the camps and the PRK. He later donated those documents to the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

and that the SOC would never allow the Pol Pot genocide to return to Cambodia.”⁵⁵⁰

He praised his people’s efforts and sacrifices “to defend and rebuild the country while overcoming debilitating effects of KR genocide.” He also said that “Cambodia has sufficiently built a legal basis to support Cambodian society with honor, dignity, and the people’s right to self-determination.”⁵⁵¹

VII. Cham Rebuilding their Identities in another Country

During the war in 1970-1975 and throughout the Khmer Rouge regime, some Cham made it to the border and successfully resettled in other countries. At the breakup of Democratic Kampuchea, many Cham fled to border camps, although the exact number was not known at the time. Kasem Srei Yan said that in the early 1980s there were many stories of Cham going to the Thai border to relocate to Malaysia and other countries. The journey to border camps was dangerous, prohibited by the PRK Government which considered those Cham leaving as “misled persons,” and required money to hire an agent. Kasem Srei Yan added that many of her relatives left to the border and were successful in relocating in other countries. Now they are living in Malaysia, USA, New Zealand and France.⁵⁵²

In Kampong Tralach district, Kae Mat noted that many Cham went to the Thai border after the Khmer Rouge regime. Many left when they returned to their home villages

⁵⁴⁹ DC-Cam Document D19547: Mat Ly Receives US Documentation Group, August 1989.

⁵⁵⁰ DC-Cam Document D19726: Mat Ly Receives US Scientists’ Group Leader, January 1990.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Author’s interview with Kasem Srei Yan, December 6, 2011.

and found few or no relatives living there.⁵⁵³ For those people, life in another country, ideally a peaceful Muslim country, was the best way to start anew after the devastation of genocide. They went to the border in 1980-1983. More people left Kampong Tralach when they heard about the relief operations offered by the Malaysian Government. Some Cham went to the border not specifically for relocation but to smuggle goods and find lucrative business opportunities there.

Some Cham were trapped in border camps after PRK offensives pushed them across the border with other refugees. Kae Mat said that before being selected to go to Malaysia, candidates were asked to recite some pieces from the Quran to prove they were Cham.⁵⁵⁴ This could prove difficult because they had not recited for nearly four years during the Khmer Rouge time. Nevertheless, many Cham were selected for resettlement from 1979 to 1984.

In 1980 and 1981, Elsaroh said that rumors about opportunities to resettle in a modern Muslim country or other countries spread in Kilometer 8 village. She was tempted to make the dangerous journey to the camps, but because she was afraid of the authorities and remembered how terrible life was during the Khmer Rouge period, she decided to stay put in Cambodia. Elsaroh said the village chief assigned his militia to guard people's houses at night to prevent secret departures to the border. But some Cham families did leave for the border. Elsaroh said that a family kept lanterns in the house alight and kept many belongings there to deceive the authorities and left with only their valuables in small bags during the dark of the night. Some Cham left by boat and traveled up the Tonle Sap River 20 km to Prek Kdam before boarding a truck

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

to Banteay Meanchey province.⁵⁵⁵ Once they arrived, they would pay someone to guide them through the minefields, checkpoints and war zones to Khao-I-Dang camp.

Elsaroh's distant aunt made it through this way. She left Phnom Penh in 1980 and sent Elsaroh a letter back from the camp in 1981. The letter said: "my illness has been treated." These were code words she had given Elsaroh before she left, meaning that the trip and the route she took were successful and that she was fine. A year later Elsaroh's distant aunt was resettled in Malaysia. She lived in Terranganu until she died in 2009. Elsaroh also heard that after leaving to resettle, some Cham never returned home, they simply disappeared. She also heard that many refugees were dumped at Preah Vihear by the Thai authorities. Some were killed by landmines or starved to death. Others went on to another camp and some returned to Phnom Penh.⁵⁵⁶

Cham left for many reasons. Some were afraid that the Khmer Rouge could return and continue to kill more Cham under the PRK regime. For Cham who lost many of their relatives, living in Cambodia reminded them of their family members and therefore a totally new life in another country was a better way to cope with what happened. Others simply left to find food and money because of the opportunities created across the border as a result of relief funds. Some Cham were simply trapped at the border and were unable to leave as it was too dangerous around the camps. For yet others, life in Cambodia remained the best choice despite what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime. Elsaroh and Kasem Srei Yan did not want to go and they never regretted that decision. For them, life in the PRK was much better than during in the

⁵⁵⁵ Author's interview with El Saroh, November 16, 2011.

⁵⁵⁶ Author's interview with El Saroh, November 16, 2011.

Khmer Rouge regime and they believed the Khmer Rouge would not be allowed to return. Elsaroh's distant aunt went to Malaysia because she lost her husband and children and she simply wanted to leave Cambodia.

Dumped at Dang Rek Mountain Range

Mat Sarifin was one of the Cham who made the trip to the border after the Vietnamese invaded. But he was also among those who failed to find security in a foreign country. In June 1979, Thailand expelled between 43,000 to 45,000 Cambodian refugees at a border area in Preah Vihear province. It was reported that up to 3,000 of the refugees were killed during the trek back through the minefields and up to 7,000 were unaccounted for.⁵⁵⁷ It was unknown why they were sent to Preah Vihear rather than a place where it would have been safer to cross. Several more waves of people were sent to back to Cambodia until December 1979, including 850 who were sent through a hilly crossing north of Aranyaprathet. There were reports of Thai soldiers shooting refugees in the back as they forced them to move forward through the minefields.

Mat Sarifin, 45, and his family were sent to Battambang province under the Khmer Rouge regime. In 1973 they were at Prek Kdam, Kandal province. Because there were bombings at the time, his parents moved to Pailin, a small gem-mining town along the Cambodian-Thai border. His parents chose Pailin because they had connections with diamond miners in the town. Sarifin said several Cham families settled in Pailin until the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh in 1975. By that time, they were sent back from Pailin to Region 1 in Battambang along with several other Cham families.

⁵⁵⁷ Kok-Thay Eng, "Teacher Workshop: Working Group on Reclaiming Cambodian History in Preah Vihear Province," Documentation Center of Cambodia, December 25, 2010.

Sarifin said life in Region 1 was very good. They had porridge in the morning and rice with fish for lunch and dinner. They were sent to work in an orange plantation, which of course gave them plenty of oranges and the vitamin C that the fruit provided. Sarifin said his younger sister did not eat oranges that had dropped to the ground; she chose only tree-ripe fruits. Her experience epitomized the abundance of food in the region. In nearby regions such as Regions 2 and 3, life was totally different. People were starved and death was widespread. Word of the abundance of food in Region 1 spread all the way to Kampong Cham and many other places. Sarifin's family was later sent to work in a sugar factory managed by Chinese technicians. When Democratic Kampuchea fell to Vietnamese forces in January 1979, Sarifin and his family moved to Battambang town and stayed there for a few months.⁵⁵⁸

As a border province, Battambang saw the highest outflow of Cambodians to border camps at the time. Sarifin said that so many people left for the camps that his village was quiet. Many reasons led them to travel to the border at the time. Although they had enough to eat under the Khmer Rouge, they never wanted the Khmer Rouge to return. Many people were afraid the Khmer Rouge could return one day and kill everyone living in Battambang. Rumors flourished that the camps provided them with food, security and above all, an opportunity to resettle in a peaceful and prosperous country. For Sarifin and his family, the news of possibly living in a Muslim country was enticing. In addition, the quietness of the village was scary and the fact that so many people had left gave them little reason but to leave as well. Sarifin's fathers paid gold to a middleman who knew the road to Nang Chan camp. They were robbed along the way by Thai bandits who Sarifin said were later sought and shot by Thai

⁵⁵⁸ Author's interview with Mat Sarifin and his family members, December 6, 2011.

paratroopers. There were good and bad Thai soldiers along the border and at the camps. Sarifin saw women being raped and stripped naked to search for valuables.⁵⁵⁹

Sarifin's family arrived at Nang Chan camp after a few days of trekking through the bushes. They stayed at the camp for nearly a month. During this time Sarifin said Muslim aid workers recorded their names and had them fill out papers in preparation for resettlement. Sarifin met a Malay man who intended to take his family to Malaysia. They hoped they could resettle in another country. But one day, at around 8 a.m., Sarifin saw hundreds of buses coming to pick up refugees. Everyone thought they were taken to other countries, as they had hoped, so they squeezed into the buses quickly. Each bus was manned by a soldier with a rifle. Some were driven by Muslims who appeared to not know the plan. Sarifin rode with his family and relatives in a bus driven by a Muslim man who was shocked upon being told they had to drive away from the direction of Bangkok and to a border area. The convoy was led by military vehicles. When arriving at the border at around 6:30 p.m., they were asked to disembark and sleep for the night. During the night, more buses arrived, filled with people. The next morning, Thai soldiers, speaking Khmer (Sarifin said they were probably Khmer Sarins),⁵⁶⁰ kicked them awake, fired into the air and ordered everybody to climb down the hill and walk across the border to Cambodia.

Sarifin said the location where Thai army dropped them was around 8 km from Preah Vihear temple⁵⁶¹ at the western edge of the Dang Rek mountain range. There was still a dangerous cliff to climb down. Young people could climb down through

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Khmer Sarin are Khmer people living in areas controlled by Thailand.

the vines. Some old people, weak and ill, dropped like stones to the bottom of the cliff. Others found safer ways around the cliff. Meanwhile, the Thai soldiers were throwing rocks from the top of the cliff forcing people to go faster, but the rocks killed many people, said Sarifin. The cliff, the fall and forest animals were not the only dangers: mines had been laid in the area by the Khmer Rouge to prevent people from escaping to Thailand from 1975 to 1979. Sarifin said many people were maimed and killed in the minefields. People died at water holes that were mined. Sarifin's uncle was a former Lon Nol soldier. He used his basic military knowledge to guide the family through the minefields. Sarifin's family was in the middle of the line. His uncle identified mines above ground and possible locations of those below ground. Once he found them he tied grass and broke twigs next to them or put a piece of plastic or clothes next to the mines. He also walked where explosions had already occurred. About 30 km from the border they met a group of Vietnamese soldiers who provided them food and blankets, and guided them to Khmer villages in Preah Vihear province. The Vietnamese soldiers also protected them from bandits and Khmer Rouge attacks.

Arriving at Kampong Thom, refugees were divided into groups of Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer and Cham, and put in different trucks to their home villages. Not knowing how they would be treated by the PRK Government for fleeing to the border and after experiencing racial killings by the Khmer Rouge, Sarifin said they were apprehensive after boarding the trucks in different ethnic groups. But the trucks took them to Phnom Penh.

⁵⁶¹ Preah Vihear is currently the location of the temple that Cambodia and Thailand are disputing for ownership. The International Court of Justice handed this temple to Cambodia in a 1962 ICJ court

During their experience at Dangrek mountain range, none of Sarifin family members stepped over a mine or were killed after they were forced to trek back inside Cambodia. Although some people returned to the border, Sarifin decided that it was enough and lived with his parents and siblings in Phnom Penh. They never understood why the Thais dropped them in the area. Sarifin's father hated the Thais until the day he died for their treatment of them at the border.

Global Assistance for Cham at the Camps

The first Thai-Cambodian border camp emerged in 1975. It is estimated that approximately 20,000 people reached the border during the Khmer Rouge years. By December 1979, the UN estimated that as many as 680,000 Cambodians were placed in eight camps just inside Thailand, stretching from Pursat province in the west to Preah Vihear province in the north.⁵⁶² After the June 1979 deportation of Cambodian refugees through Preah Vihear, Thailand was severely criticized by the international community and forced to accept refugees, pending solutions by the United Nations. After June 1979, Thailand opened the border for three months when Cambodian refugees could choose to go to camps run by political factions or "holding centers" run by the UNHCR such as Khao-I-Dang camp several kilometers north of the border crossing at Poipet.⁵⁶³

After this three-month period, only those in the holding centers were considered refugees, protected under the UNHCR and given a real prospect for relocation

hearing.

⁵⁶² Michelle Vachon and Kuch Naren, "Life between Borders," *The Cambodia Daily*, January 31-February 1, 2009.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

overseas.⁵⁶⁴ Those in other camps were considered “displaced persons” by Thailand, which meant illegal immigrants. In effect, their camps were placed under Thai martial law, which gave authority to Thai rangers called Task Force 80.⁵⁶⁵ From 1979 to 1992, the Thais called those camps “sites” to differentiate them from “refugee camps.” However, humanitarian aid workers and international media continued to consider everyone as refugees. By 1987, the camps had grown massively in size and number. Most were within ten kilometers of the border.⁵⁶⁶

The administration and provision of humanitarian support were tasked to United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO). It began operations in 1982 and was officially shut down in 2001. UNBRO was created by the General Assembly with a specific mandate to provide emergency assistance to Cambodian refugees affected by Indochinese conflicts, particularly the war between Democratic Kampuchea and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. As a UN organization, UNBRO relied on funding from donor countries whose representatives met twice a year. It is important to note that the conflict in Cambodia also affected Thai civilians living near the border. UNBRO was also tasked to help them. Before UNBRO, a group of international organizations known as the “Joint Mission,” consisting of UNICEF, ICRC, UNHCR and WFP, provided support to refugees.

After the Vietnamese-PRK dry season offensive in 1984-1985, the number of refugee camps was reduced as smaller camps consolidated into larger camps.⁵⁶⁷ From 1982 to

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ Task Force 80 was infamous for its violence against camp people, which began in 1980. It was replaced by the Displaced Persons Protection Unit in 1987.

⁵⁶⁶ Michelle Vachon and Kuch Naren, “Life between Borders,” op. cit.

⁵⁶⁷ “Records of the United Nations Border Relief Operation (Cambodia),” Fonds UNHCR 64. Accessed October 20, 2010, <http://www.unhcr.org/4a3267fc6.html>; Charlotte Benson, *The Changing Role of*

1984, UNBRO supervised 85 camp evacuations, 65 during shelling by Vietnamese forces. The 1984-1985 offensive pushed 200,000 people deep into Thai territory.⁵⁶⁸

Site II had a population of 190,000. It was controlled by KPNLF, which was later divided between Son Sann and General Sak Suthsakhon. Site 8 had a population of 30,000, and was controlled by the Khmer Rouge, who opened this camp to the UN and other aid staff. Site B or Green Hill had a population of 41,000, and was controlled by FUNCIPEC. It had a very nice location surrounded by trees, streams and hills.⁵⁶⁹

By June 1980, there were approximately 8,000 Muslim refugees in the camps, out of a total of 680,000 Cambodian refugees.⁵⁷⁰ Like the survivors whose testimonies are summarized above, the Cham sought refuge in the camps to find food, security, and shelter, and to settle in a peaceful country, ideally a Muslim country. Some were successful in their attempts, crossing many dangerous obstacles along the way to the camps and inside the camps. Others simply disappeared during their journey. Yet some other Cham were repatriated into Cambodia in a horrific manner, as exemplified by Mat Sarifin and his family. Those who remained at the camps sought every possible means to find a better life away from the conflict in Cambodia.

So, during a meeting of Islamic Foreign Ministers in Islamabad in early May 1980, the camps sent a Muslim delegation to Islamabad to seek help.⁵⁷¹ There they

NGOs in the Provision of Relief and Rehabilitation Assistance: Case Study 2 Cambodia and Thailand, Overseas Development Institute, Regent's College, 1993.

⁵⁶⁸ Michelle Vachon and Kuch Naren, "Life between Borders," op. cit.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ "KL Asked to Take Khmer Muslims," *Bangkok Post*, May 29 1980 (DC-Cam Document D33889).

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

submitted an appeal describing their plight under the Khmer Rouge, the current situation at the camps and their present needs. One of those needs was a request for resettlement in a Muslim country.⁵⁷²

The Islamic Foreign Minister Meeting then proposed that the Malaysian Government accept Cham temporarily, before arrangements were made to resettle them in a Muslim country. As a member of ASEAN, Malaysia had earlier promised to take some Cham refugees, but not much had been done so far. There were reports by refugees at that time that Muslim aid workers had been making a list of Cham at the camps. In late May 1980, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Conference Habib Chatty visited Thailand, where he asked the Thai Government not to turn back any Cham refugees from the border, as they had in June 1979, before the organization made any plan to resolve the refugee crisis.⁵⁷³ Mr. Chatty also talked to the Malaysian Government to reinforce the request made during the foreign ministers' meeting earlier in the month and to speed up Malaysia's action on taking Cham to Malaysia. Mr. Chatty's assistant had visited the camps a week earlier and wrote a report about Cambodian Muslims in which they suggested a resettlement of Cham in Muslim countries.⁵⁷⁴

Malaysia was one of the five ASEAN nations opposing the Heng Samrin government in 1980, but it was also very active in providing support to Cham refugees. By July 1980, more than 1,800 Cham had arrived by train and were housed in a camp on the east coast after the request made in Islamabad. Malaysia said it would accept a total of

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

5,000 Cham in transit to other Muslim countries, which it did.⁵⁷⁵ An additional 3,000 Cham arrived in Malaysia by September 1980.⁵⁷⁶ The camp was across the Gulf of Thailand from Cambodia. This proximity allowed the Cham to adapt easily to their new surroundings. On top of this assistance, on July 1, 1980 the UNHCR provided USD 1,000,000 for the maintenance of Cham refugees in Malaysia after an agreement was reached between three main organizations coming forth to assist the Cham, namely UNHCR, Red Crescent Society and Perkim.⁵⁷⁷ Perkim was an Islamic welfare organization based in Malaysia, then run by former Prime Minister of Malaysia Tunku Abdul Rahman.⁵⁷⁸

Amidst the bright promise of resettlement in peaceful countries, a *Bangkok Post* journalist named Dawson wrote in September 1980 that “Khmer Muslims are losing their identity. While the Khmer Islam may physically survive now in third-world countries, they are virtually certain to lose their national identity.” He continued, “Cham are losing what little identity they had managed to grasp.” Dawson was comparing Cham ethnic identity formed during their seafaring Champa kingdom before the fall to Vietnam with the ethnic identity of the Cham in Cambodia who might have preserved some fragments of their origins. With genocide, flight and resettlement in other countries, it seemed, Dawson’s pessimistic view was credible. His observation drew attention to recollecting, rebuilding and preserving Cham history and religious identity in addition to the provision of food, shelter and security in a new country.

⁵⁷⁵ “India Silent on its Khmer Policy,” *AP*, July 1, 1980 (DC-Cam Document D34265).

⁵⁷⁶ “Khmer Muslims Are Losing Their Identity,” *op. cit.*

⁵⁷⁷ “India Silent on Its Khmer Policy,” *op. cit.*

The Malaysian Government and international organizations did their best part to help the Cham. Dawson reported that during the Khmer Rouge period, several thousands Cham fled into Thailand. Approximately 1,600 of them were resettled in northeastern Malaysia between 1975 and 1978.⁵⁷⁹ Malaysian officials proudly claimed that the Cham were doing well and had become “self-sufficient farmers.” Although some Middle Eastern countries had agreed to take the Cham, most of them ended up in Malaysia.⁵⁸⁰

Cham refugees were first put in a Malaysian refugee camp called Taman Putra just outside Kota Bharu, the capital city of Malaysian state of Kelantan. Refugees were provided orientation courses on Malaysian culture and society before they were granted a red identity card for permanent residence. The courses took six months to complete.⁵⁸¹ They covered religious instruction, language training, and vocational training (carpentry, tailoring, hairdressing, simple mechanics and cottage industries). New arrivals were isolated for three months; during this period their mail was checked and their activities closely supervised. Those who earned red identity cards were given jobs in the oil plantations in Pahang State. Reports from Malaysia indicated that Cham could travel, work and worship freely. In stark contrast to their lives in Cambodia, 30% of Cham residents owned cars by then.⁵⁸² Some with little education worked as laborers, farmers and fishermen. Others took up their old profession as doctors, teachers and technicians. Fifteen young Cham were accepted for study at Medina University in Saudi Arabia. Being in the pious Islamic state of

⁵⁷⁸ Seddik Taouti, “The Forgotten Muslims of Kampuchea and Vietnam,” in *Reading on Islam in Southeast Asia* edited by Ahmad Ibrahim et al., Singapore: ISEAS, 1986.

⁵⁷⁹ Brian Eads, “Cambodia’s Moslem Refugees Get Chance for a New Start in Malaysia,” *London Observer*, 1979 (DC-Cam Document D16731).

⁵⁸⁰ “Khmer Muslims Are Losing Their Identity,” op. cit.

⁵⁸¹ Brian Eads, “Cambodia’s Moslem Refugees Get Chance for a New Start in Malaysia,” op. cit.

Kelantan, Cham refugees were blessed. Here, helping a refugee was described as “a ticket to heaven.”⁵⁸³

As a country directly affected by the Cambodian conflict, the Thais had political views about the Cham exodus. The Thai Foreign Ministry said that the new Cham exodus took place “because they are victims of a catastrophe and were forced to leave their homeland in order to escape danger, famine and insecurity as a result of the occupation of Kampuchea and the suppression of its people by the Vietnamese forces. The suffering is similar to the plight of the Muslims in Afghanistan, whose occupation by the Soviet forces is by no means different from the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea and the subsequent repression of the Kampuchians.”⁵⁸⁴

However, none of the accusations of alleged suppression was true for those Cham opting to stay behind and rebuild their lives in Cambodia. None of the Cham I met had any complaints about PRK suppression on their livelihood. But such a negative assessment of the PRK actually benefited those Cham already staying in the camps who received sympathy from countries opposed to the PRK. Dawson’s article was also positive for the Cham at the camp. He concluded that, “Khmer Islam community in Kampuchea is fragmented and dying its last death,”⁵⁸⁵ although in truth they were regrouping and rebuilding their community, not at an ideal pace or way, but certainly they were not dying. This can be attributed to the resilience of the Cham or political pragmatism of the PRK, which sought to do what the Khmer Rouge did not toward the Cham or probably their genuine desire for religious and ethnic diversity in the

⁵⁸² Ibid.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ “Khmer Muslims Are Losing Their Identity,” *op. cit.*

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

PRK. Having said this, Cambodian Cham also received sympathy from the global Muslim community.

News about assistance to Cham refugees along the border certainly reached the Muslim leadership in the PRK. The PRK then established a Committee to Receive Aid from Islamic League, which had the roles of proposing relief funds, distributing aid and implementing programs set by Islamic donor institutions.⁵⁸⁶ This committee was chaired by Yos Por who was also the Secretary General of the KUFNCD National Council. Although there were political obstacles from major Muslim countries opposing the PRK and which were major funders of the Organization of Islamic Conference whose affiliate was the Islamic Development Bank, the IDB did make visits to the PRK in the early 1980s. They had sent observers to the country to observe the living conditions of the Cham as well as their plight under the Khmer Rouge. To balance their efforts in supporting the Cham, in February 1982, the IDB sent a delegation led by Abd al-Azi to sign a funding agreement worth USD 1,000,000 and 14 tons of educational materials to help Cham rebuild their mosques, schools, *suravs* and hospitals.⁵⁸⁷ Yos Por was the Cambodian counterpart.

Torn between the Muslim countries supporting the CGDK and the non-aligned Islamic nations that preferred not to be involved in Cold War politics, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) was frequently criticized for not doing enough for both refugee Cham and those living in the country. At a non-aligned summit in New Delhi in March 1983, it was reported that the OIC was asked to persuade non-aligned Islamic countries to support the CGDK (which consisted of

⁵⁸⁶ DC-Cam Document D35871: Islamic Development Bank in Phnom Penh, February 3, 1982.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

FUNCINPEC, KPNLF and Democratic Kampuchea, the latter of which had committed genocide against the Cham).⁵⁸⁸ The decision to come to the PRK in 1982 to provide similar amounts of support to Cham was an attempt by the OIC to balance its position.

VIII. Conclusion

This chapter examined how Cham peripheral identities were transformed by DK, the PRK's own policy on the Cham and the various ways in which Cham rebuilt their peripheral identities after genocide. Here the author considers in the Khmer Rouge genocide only peripheral identities were affected, core identities were not. Core identities are only considered as affected only when the Cham are completely destroyed and/or none of the survivors continues to follow Islam.

Cham peripheral identities were greatly transformed by the Khmer Rouge. First, after DK the Cham political identity began to change from supporting the royal family to supporting non-royalist political platform. This trend continued into post-Cold War period. In the early 1970s Cham joined the Khmer Rouge because of Sihanouk's call for them to run to the forest to join the communist guerillas, but under DK they still suffered from persecution and had no protection from the king.

Second, Cham population was split into two: those living inside the PRK with limited sectarian and economic revitalization and those living in refugee camps waiting for

⁵⁸⁸ "Islam and Cambodia," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 24, 1983 (DC-Cam Document D36442).

resettlement and reconstruction of identities in another country. The split further dispersed the Cham population from Cambodia since they migrated to this country after losing Champa to Vietnam in the 19th century.

Third, the Cham had limited sectarian revitalization under the PRK but less sectarian diversity. In addition, there was no conflict between the old and the new groups after DK as in the 1960s and 1970s for three reasons: 1) the PRK did not support such division; 2) the resulting smaller population of Cham due to death and emmigration forced them to seek unity rather than conflict; 3) lack of inflow of diverse schools of religious scholarship; and 4) the high number of death of Cham intellectuals and religious leaders.

Fourth, many Cham were reluctant to reveal their core identities as Muslim or Cham among the Khmer because of continued fear from the Khmer Rouge regime who targeted the two identities. They kept their Khmer names given by the Khmer Rouge and hid their Muslim and Cham names. Also they learnt to speak Khmer more than they ever did before the Khmer Rouge regime. Only recently have many Cham begun to reveal their true identities as Muslim and Cham among Khmer majority.

Fifth, the Khmer Rouge killing changed the Cham's political identity in terms of their relations with the Khmer. The killing had the effect of bringing the Cham with the Khmer closer together more than before because both Cham and Khmer were killed under DK; forced to live, work and eat together during the regime; and the political stance of the PRK was supportive of minorities and anti-genocide which recognized the Cham as a victim of the Khmer Rouge genocide.

In general, the PRK's policy towards the Cham was inclusive, considerate and tolerant. Practicing Islam was legal and Cham were permitted to meet and revive their customs. Despite this policy, only a small number of Muslim countries supported the PRK. As a result, global Muslim aid for Cham who survived the Khmer Rouge genocide and lived inside the PRK was scarce. Most of the aid that was provided went to Cham living in refugee camps. However, there were a few cases in which the global Islamic community brushed aside global politics and helped the Cham in the PRK.

In the wake of a Vietnamese-led military action which overthrew the Khmer Rouge and effectively ended their atrocities against the Cham, Cham from across Cambodia trekked back to their homes, seeking relatives and rebuilding their lives in an uncertain future. Some Cham traveled to the Cambodian-Thai border camps to seek shelter and food and to eventually resettle in another country, ideally a Muslim country. Others traveled back to their pre-Khmer Rouge homes to find lost relatives and rebuild their community, respective religious sects and what remained of their identities. With the killing of many Cham leaders and intellectuals, such efforts were very difficult. For Cham inside the country, their identity reconstruction remained local and was directly linked with the social development and religious revival efforts of the PRK. The peripheral identities of Cham in the camps were in transition. They were more connected with the global community as they prepared for resettlement, although only a handful were selected to settle in Malaysia, United States, France, Australia and other countries.

The People's Revolutionary Tribunal provided a venue in which Cham could express their grievances and share the identity as victim (a political identity) with the Khmer Buddhists. Most importantly, a few Cham were made court officials, directly taking part in seeking justice for their fellow Cham, the Khmer and other people. Mat Ly was appointed prosecutor of the court. Foreign Muslims also took part in the Tribunal, allowing the Cham to connect with Muslims from other countries even during this period of near-absent global connection.

During the PRK regime the foundation of Islamic sectarian revivalism was laid. Although the Cham community was still backward in terms of religious scholarship, community development and poverty, it was ready for future development in the 1990s, during which myriad forms of global influences took them up into an unknown but hopeful future.

Chapter Six: Accelerated Changes

This chapter attempts to unravel the myriad ways in which the Cham have changed since the end of the Cold War when Cambodia opened to the outside world. In so doing, it looks at several key factors within the Cham community, including the changes brought about by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), Islamic civil society, global and transnational networking for education and Islamic revival, local political affiliations, and education within the Cham community. In discussing education among the Cham, the author looks at the division between *Kaum Tua* and *Kaum Muda* (old group vs. new group), the Islamic school system, and Cham education within the state public schools. Islamic terrorism is discussed in the next chapter.

I. Introduction

Cambodian politics entered a new stage in the 1990s. When the Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Cambodia prepared itself for dramatic changes in the years to come. Political parties were reshaping and transforming themselves to fit the new challenging circumstances. In September 1989, the Vietnamese volunteer troops had already withdrawn. The KPRP renamed itself to a less communist-sounding name, the Cambodian People's Party, which proved to be very successful in political battles in the coming years against the royalist FUNCINPEC and the opposition Sam Rainsy Party. The PRK was then changed to the State of Cambodia to

reflect the intention of the Cambodian state to reform itself into a new democratic face, abandoning the long-held communist ideology.

This dramatic change and defeat of communism must have proved devastating to Mat Ly. He had been a life-long supporter of this ideology, which he saw as the answer to Cambodian inequalities and social injustice. But over the course of his previous political career, he had seen that communist ideology had brought more misery to the Cambodian people and Cham than happiness and prosperity.

Social changes brought about at the demise of the Cold War were enormous, almost incomprehensible to both Buddhists and Muslims. For the Cham, the changes took many directions. They had more sources of change from overseas than the Buddhists, and they did not know what the new directions would lead them to. But the Cham were ready for such change as at least in a future democratic state, Islam would be allowed in a more open way. The Cham would modify their peripheral identities based on both local and global change.

The end of the Cold War also brought about a new resolution to the Cambodian conflict. The 1991 Paris Peace Agreement and subsequent UN resolution established a transitional monitoring agency to manage Cambodia's first democratic election in more than thirty years. The UN established the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) "to ensure the implementation of the Agreements on the Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodian Conflict, signed in Paris on October 23, 1991. The mandate included aspects relating to human rights, the organization and conduct of elections, military arrangements, civil administration,

maintenance of law and order, repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons, and the rehabilitation of Cambodian infrastructure.”⁵⁸⁹ In doing so UNTAC deployed a contingent of multinational peacekeeping soldiers and civilian police. Most interestingly, some of these people were from Islamic countries such as Algeria, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Senegal and Tunisia.⁵⁹⁰ Cambodia hosted many Muslim humanitarian staff from some of these countries, but the arrival of large number of humanitarian personnel was unprecedented. Their influence on Islam in Cambodia was huge.

Some Muslim personnel were positioned in Cham-predominant areas. In Siem Reap province, UNTAC soldiers contributed part of their salaries to build a mosque in Stung Thmei village.⁵⁹¹ In Kandal province Indonesian troops raised nearly USD 10,000 to build another mosque in a local village.⁵⁹² Such contributions surely occurred in other parts of the country where Muslim peacekeeping forces were present.

By that time, the state of Cambodian Islam was still relatively backward. Very few Cham were able to go to Mecca to fulfill their life-long and religious obligation of making the Hajj. Mosques were few and far between, and thus inconvenient for praying five times a day. In the opinion of Dakwah group, Cham view praying at the mosque as 27 times more meritorious than doing so at home.⁵⁹³ Surely more mosques were needed to arrive at a standard that a Muslim community should have, and the

⁵⁸⁹ United Nations, United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (February 1992 and September 1993). Accessed June 23, 2011, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/untacfacts.html>.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ Philipp Bruckmayr, “The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism,” *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 23(3), 2006, pp.1-23.

Cham knew this. UNTAC Muslim soldiers realized this and so did the Islamic charitable delegations that began to arrive in Cambodia to provide assistance along with a few economic and business developers from their countries, in particular, Malaysia. Malaysia at the time saw Cambodia as having lucrative agricultural and industrial development potential.⁵⁹⁴

The opening of Cambodia through UNTAC was a tremendous publicity event, allowing the outside world to learn about and understand the good, the bad and the most urgent areas of development in the country, which had suffered from twenty years of civil conflict which most observers believed did not start inside Cambodia and was caused by the global Cold War between East and West. Now the global community wanted to repay Cambodia through UNTAC and subsequently, humanitarian aid. Islamic countries and organizations took part in this opportunity. UNTAC also established a new Cambodian Constitution and legal systems that enable and ensure respect for basic human rights, political freedoms, freedom of speech and above all for Cham, the freedom of belief.

Because Islam had by then become a global religion of tremendous political import, the CPP continued its support and encouragement for Cham, just as it did in the 1980s. Even a future possible reinvention of Islam did not sway the CPP's belief that followers of this faith would not act against them in the coming years. They were right, although some Cham later supported FUNCINPEC led by such prominent Cham figures as Ahmad Yahya and Tol Loh, who returned from overseas. With the

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., pp. 48-9.

⁵⁹⁴ K.P. Waran, "Cambodian Projects Running Smoothly," *The New Strait Times*, October 23, 1996; Leela Barrock, "Cambodia Eyes more Malaysia Investment," *Business Times*, October 23, 1996.

new constitution and political backing, Islam was free to change almost without stricture. Islam itself would determine where this change would lead to and what would be good for the Cham community.

Another interesting phenomenon in these early years of the new uncertain era for Cham was the definition and determination of what the Cham community needed. After genocide and ten years of limited religious revival between 1979 and 1989, it was not certain whether Islam should be developed aggressively or cautiously. It was not known whether the Cham preferred the new teachings and practices coming from the global Islamic networks. Nobody knew about this, not even Mat Ly and other Islamic leaders in the country. The Highest Council for Muslim Religious Affairs, which controls all Islamic affairs in Cambodia, was not established then. No opinion poll was conducted. The government itself did not know how to handle change and direction for the Cham. The result was that the change was allowed to take its natural course. As in many other sectors of the Cambodian state, opinion and preference would be shaped as development and change progressed. Everyone would be learning and institutions would be formed in reaction to problems as they arose.

II. Islamic Civil Society Institutions and Global Networking

In the early 1990s, the Cambodian population's needs, the political environment and sometimes publicity stunts determined the direction of development. The proliferation of global civil society in the period was thus no accident. Although no policy making organ existed to determine which way to develop and choose, like in market economy

which Cambodia began to embrace almost blindly, Cham needed to determine what development direction to take.

In the 1980s, as mentioned earlier, Cambodia was closed to the outside world.

Because of Vietnamese military action against Democratic Kampuchea, the PRK was considered a pariah state. It was not recognized in the Western world, but it had good friends in the Eastern bloc. Few Cambodians traveled to such countries and even fewer Cham traveled outside Cambodia except for those in the border camps who were slowly being resettled in foreign countries. Even fewer made the obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, which was a US ally state. In terms of religious needs, this absence of travel represented a clear example of the backwardness of the Cham in the eyes of global Islamic community. This was a very basic religious need for Cham. Thus, one of the first acts of assistance provided by the Islamic world was helping them travel to Mecca on a regular basis. The first Cham NGO to be set up in Cambodia held that goal as a priority.

Mat Ly found the Cambodian Islamic Association (CIA) in 1988. Although his organization provided support for the Cham community in a variety of development fields, its main focus remained the expensive pilgrimage to Mecca. Most of the cost of such travel was for airfare and accommodation. By supporting this, the Cham would be able to make do with other costs involved by themselves. During those early years the Cambodian Islamic Association received generous funding from two wealthy Dubai businessmen named Mahmoud Abdallah Kasim and Hisham Nasir.⁵⁹⁵ Among other things, the two funded accommodation and airfare for 30 Cham to make the

⁵⁹⁵ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," *op. cit.*, p. 9.

pilgrimage to Mecca.⁵⁹⁶ It was not sure if they were able to provide funding in subsequent years, but it was reported that the CIA arranged more trips in following years.

It is important to note from this early assistance that it was the Arab states and philanthropists who supported the Cham in the early years. But it appeared that their support did not come in exchange for religious proselytizing. Therefore, their credit for the development of Cambodian Islam was not as well known as it should be. They should be recognized as the lead transformer of Cambodian Islam, rather than Malaysian organizations. Because of subsequent funding from Dubai, the CIA contributed to the construction of more than 30 mosques.⁵⁹⁷ The Dubai charity organizations quickly learned this time that assisting Cham to make the pilgrimage to Mecca was meritorious in the face of Islam, but spending money on flights and accommodations disappeared from the public view as soon as it was spent, and they did not receive much favorable publicity. Thus, in the subsequent construction of mosques, the names of each mosque funded from Dubai would be named with a Dubai prefix, hence the names Dubai Phnom Penh, Dubai Khleang Sbek and Dubai Koh Kong. Dubai Phnom Penh was built in 1994 costing \$350,000 and was a national focal point for all Cambodians.⁵⁹⁸

The establishment of the CIA and its charitable efforts was followed by the arrival of the head master of the Cambodian Dakwah movement. Sulaiman Ibrahim arrived in

⁵⁹⁶ Agne de Feo, "Transnational Islamic Movement in Cambodia," op. cit.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Murat Karaali, "The Face of Islam in a Buddhist Land," *The Phnom Penh Post*, January 27, 1995.

Cambodia in 1989,⁵⁹⁹ probably after learning about new political developments and speculations on the needs of the Cham. He returned after wandering and studying Islam for ten years in Vietnam, Thailand, the United States, Egypt and Malaysia between 1979 and 1989.⁶⁰⁰ With Sulaiman Ibrahim, Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) arrived in Cambodia in full swing.

The precursor of Sulaiman Ibrahim was the arrival in 1987 and 1988 of Pakistani and Indian TJ experts in Prek Pra village near Phnom Penh.⁶⁰¹ This was one of the reasons why Prek Pra became a spiritual center of TJ⁶⁰² and holds the most ardent followers of TJ today. It was probably due to random selection and the close proximity of Prek Pra to Phnom Penh that this village was selected by early TJ experts as the venue from which to launch their first TJ preaching in Cambodia. In the late 1980s Cambodia's roads and other means of travel were extremely limited. The road from Phnom Penh to Kampong Cham was only 150 km, but it sometimes took two days to reach due to Khmer Rouge harassment and poor condition of the road. It was probably for the TJ experts then that preaching should start with the easiest way to reach the Islamic community. Yusuf Khan, who was a TJ leader in Southeast Asia, also visited Prek Pra, as did many other members from Malaysia and southern Thailand.⁶⁰³

However, this view was not shared by Sulaiman Ibrahim. Being a native of Kampong Cham province, he was not hindered by road conditions or taking his preachings to

⁵⁹⁹ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," *op. cit.*, pp.1-23.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰² Tablighi Jamaat and Dakwah are used interchangeably. Detail of TJ movement is mentioned in chapter two of this dissertation.

the most convenient areas to reach. Sulaiman Ibrahim chose Phum Trea as a spiritual center for his proselytizing efforts. It was not the Pakistanis and Indians who were credited for spreading TJ to Cambodia. Sulaiman Ibrahim with his persistent efforts and life-time dedication made Phum Trea and many other areas of Cambodia a stronghold for TJ. He built one of the first madrasa in Phum Trea in 1992 with reported funding from Malaysia and Cham living overseas who had fled Cambodia in the 1970s and early 1980s.⁶⁰⁴ Today TJ is a sprawling movement with main spiritual centers in Phum Trea, Prek Pra, Ou Chrov (Sihanouk province), the floating village of Koh Mno (Pursat province) and many centers in other provinces.⁶⁰⁵ In Ou Chrov, the madrasa was blessed with a mosque built in 2000.⁶⁰⁶

Cambodian TJ members have connections with southern Thailand's Malay community, particularly Yala city's Madrasa Markaz Tabligh, where Cambodian TJ teachers were sent for training and returned to teach fellow Cham in Cambodia.⁶⁰⁷ Some observers claimed that the Cham also attended madrasas in Pakistan, but it is not certain how popular such training is among TJ members in Cambodia. Despite being banned in two states in Malaysia, Sabah state in 1985 and Malacca state in 1992,⁶⁰⁸ TJ is a huge spiritual force in Cambodia and is supposedly causing more transformation in Cham society than the Arab charitable organizations do. Similarly in Thailand, TJ is permitted without harassment from authorities, which has made southern Thailand a strong spiritual center for TJ in Southeast Asia. Here we have two

⁶⁰³ Author's interview with Tin Matsen, February 10, 2011. Tin Matsen is a *imam krong* (municipal imam) living in Prek Pra.

⁶⁰⁴ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," op. cit.

⁶⁰⁵ Author's interview with Mae You, January 29, 2011. Mae You is village chief of Prek Pra. As a government official he was more open than the *hakem* of the village who did not grant interviews.

⁶⁰⁶ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," op. cit.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

cases of Buddhist countries with a similar percentage of Islamic population (less than 10% in each) becoming spiritual strongholds for one of Islam's greatest movements.

The involvement of global Islamic networks in the development of Cambodia's Cham community inevitably led to the proliferation of locally-founded NGOs funded by supranational institutions, along with regional, state and private donors. Another area of urgent need for the Cambodian Cham community was education of young Cham. It was acknowledged that like the Cambodian state in general, which suffered from the destruction of its intellectual community and lack of strong revival in education in the 1980s, the Cham community also desperately needed educational improvements in both the religious and secular spheres. Prioritizing one of the two spheres, scientific versus religious, is a matter of debate among Cham community leaders today as well as for Cham students.⁶⁰⁹ Without much encouragement, Cham students prefer secular education over religious training.

Realizing educational demands as the most important development need, a group of Cham intellectuals founded the Cambodian Muslim Students Association (CAMSA) in 1997.⁶¹⁰ Its funding comes from Arab states, private donors, Malaysia, Germany and other sources. The main focus of this organization is not religious, but the development of young Cham in secular education through providing them accommodation and tuition fees at schools in both Cambodia and overseas, and helping graduates find jobs. According to Sos Mousin, its current president, CAMSA has sent more than 100 students for college education to Malaysia and Arab states,

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ In Kpob Two village, Krauch Chhmar district, Kampong Cham province, Ly Musa Khifah and Osman Romly took their nieces from Phnom Penh so that they could send them to the village's secular and religious schools. They reasoned that in Phnom Penh, the girls could only attend a state school.

and has assisted more than 1,000 students in obtaining an education locally. Today, CAMSA has two hostels for female students near Boeng Kak mosque and in Chroy Changvar,⁶¹¹ providing accommodation to nearly 200 poor Cham students. A majority of these students pursue undergraduate education at Norton University in Phnom Penh, supported by Ahmad Yahya's CIDA (see below).

Through feedback and knowledge gained in the process of building Cham society, CAMSA broadened its scope to providing assistance to the Cham community on a broader scale, namely building schools, mosques, and wells, and providing sacrificial animals during Qurban and other rituals. CAMSA also provides training in such skills as sewing and computers, along with English language training. Because CAMSA's mission is not religious, it has been able to receive funding not only from global Islamic networks but also non-Islamic donors who are the source of funding for non-Islamic NGOs.⁶¹²

A similar Cham NGO with a focus on education for Cham students was created by Ahmad Yahya in 1994.⁶¹³ The Cambodian Islamic Development Association (CIDA)'s objectives have been improving education in the secular field for Cham students and secondarily, improving the welfare of Cham in general. At present, CIDA has been most prominent in sponsoring Cham students to receive college education at a local private university (Norton University⁶¹⁴) and on rare occasion

⁶¹⁰ Author's interview with Sos Mousin, January 10, 2012.

⁶¹¹ Author's interview with Sos Mousin, January 10, 2012.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," *op. cit.*

⁶¹⁴ Norton University is one of the first private universities in Cambodia to open in mid-1990s. Today Cambodia has at least 97 registered private universities.

studying in Malaysia.⁶¹⁵ CIDA developed a more sustainable program by asking students with poor grades to contribute to paying their tuition fees. For poor students with strong high school performance, the organization provides full scholarships, but for others it provides partial funding.⁶¹⁶ Like CAMSA, CIDA's main focus has not been proselytizing but supporting the Cham community through education and welfare programs.

Kuwaiti charitable organizations have attempted to work in both fields. In 1996 the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) set up its first elementary school in Chaom Chao, Phnom Penh. RIHS's regional leader Yamal Yusof Hatat had come to Cambodia in 1993 when he met Mat Ly to ask about the most pressing needs of the Cham. Mat Ly apparently suggested that he open schools along with providing humanitarian assistance for Cham.⁶¹⁷ Because of the Cambodian genocide and subsequent conflict, many Cambodian children were orphans. This was probably noted to Yamal Yusof Hatat. Within six years of establishing its first elementary school, RIHS opened branches in provinces around the country but also transformed the Phnom Penh elementary school into a secondary school in 2000. In 2003 it became a high school called Reaksmei Islam Kampuchea High School (Islamic Light of Cambodia High School) accepting students from grades 7 to 12,⁶¹⁸ teaching Islamic and secular subjects. Both CIDA and RIHS are Salafi organizations.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁵ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," *op. cit.*

⁶¹⁶ Author's interview with El Ulvy, December 16, 2010; Author's interview with Man Salamyah, December 15, 2010; Author's interview with Math Van Sary, December 16, 2010; Author's interview with Romly Slamy, December 16, 2010; Author's interview with Sles Soupry, December 15, 2010.

⁶¹⁷ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," *op. cit.*

⁶¹⁸ Author's interview with Sen Im, principal of secular education at Reaksmei Islam Kapuchea High School.

It seems that later, Cham organizations became more systematic in their focus and more generous in their provision of assistance to the community. In 1997 the Cambodian Muslim Development Foundation (CMDF) was created by three main Cham leaders: Kamaruddin Yusof (the future Mufti of the Islamic community), Osman Hassan (Secretary of State of the Ministry of Labor and personal advisor to Prime Minister Hun Sen on Muslim affairs), and Zakariya Adam (Secretary of State of the Ministry of Cults and Religion).⁶²⁰ All three are supporters of TJ. CMDF has as its objectives to provide both secular and religious education, and to improve the welfare of the Cham community. In the words of CMDF's Vice President Zakariya Adam, the main objectives are improving Cham' daily lives, seeking the right way of beliefs, and human resource development.⁶²¹ CMDF's main funding comes from many sources including Arab states, Malaysia (Council of Islamic Affairs of Terengganu state), Brunei, Indonesia, Muslim Aid,⁶²² Cambodia Government funds and private donations.⁶²³ CMDF is also a recipient of the Islamic Development Bank as well as a counterpart organization for an IDB scholarship program for Muslim communities in non-member countries.⁶²⁴

Even for CMDF, educating the younger generation of Cham students remains a high priority. So far CMDF has built more than 15 mixed-syllabus schools for boys and girls where the sexes are segregated. The schools are equipped with computers and

⁶¹⁹ Salafi is an Islamic sect among the Cham. It is mentioned in chapter two.

⁶²⁰ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," op. cit.

⁶²¹ "Islamic Leader Teaches Respect for Other Religions," *The Phnom Penh Post*, November 4, 2011.

⁶²² Muslim Aid set to open field office in Cambodia.

<http://www.khmerfuture.com/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2327>.

⁶²³ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," op. cit.

⁶²⁴ IDB Scholarship Program for Muslim Communities in Non-Member Countries (SPMC). The program was launched in 1983 to improve the socio-economic conditions and to preserve the cultural

language training is given in Malay, English and Arabic. Surveys of students indicate that they prefer learning English compared to Arabic and Malay, as English proficiency provides the most convenient access to the job market and broader opportunities for the students.⁶²⁵ The schools also offer general education up to grade 12. Agne De Feo claimed that the schools and most activities of CMDF mimic educational and development practices in Malaysia, as Malaysia has experienced the revival and institutionalization of Islam since the 1970s.⁶²⁶ Certainly Malaysia offers many good examples from its experience, but its Muslims form the majority, while in Cambodia Muslims are a small minority.⁶²⁷ Certificates from CMDF schools are recognized by a number of local and international universities including the famous Al-Azhar University in Saudi Arabia and Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia (KUIM).⁶²⁸ Students from CMDF schools take the same graduation examination at the same time as public high schools around the country.

In mid-2011, CMDF received 10,200 copies of the Quran, though written in Malay, and 1,000 prayer rugs from Malaysian Defense Minister Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi. There was a plan in September 2011 to print an additional 100,000 copies of the Quran translated into Khmer. The translation was complete and the distribution will begin in 2012 and last for five years. At present there is only one Quran for every six Cham families in Cambodia. This distribution showed a focus on improving religious piety and interest from Malaysian institutions, particularly from the Defense Ministry,

and religious identities of Muslim communities in non-member countries through developing their human resources. Cambodia became a beneficiary country only recently.

⁶²⁵ Author's interview with El Ulvy, December 16, 2010; Author's interview with Man Salamyah, December 15, 2010; Author's interview with Math Van Sary, December 16, 2010; Author's interview with Romly Slamy, December 16, 2010; Author's interview with Sles Soupry, December 15, 2010.

⁶²⁶ Agne de Feo, "Transnational Islamic Movement in Cambodia," *op. cit.*

⁶²⁷ In Malaysia, Muslims form 60% of the total population, while in Cambodia they form 2.5%.

⁶²⁸ Philipp Bruckmayr, "The Cham Muslims of Cambodia: From Forgotten Minority to Focal Point of Islamic Internationalism," *op. cit.*

an unlikely source. This ministry also formed the World Quran Endowment Program, which receives funding from public sources as well as private Malaysian citizens. The publication of the Khmer Quran is a collaboration between the World Quran Endowment Program and the Yayasan Restu Foundation.⁶²⁹

More recently CMDF has looked even further into business development for Cham. Once again, they look to Malaysia for cooperation. In mid-2011, CMDF and the Malaysian financial institution Yayasan Restu agreed on a venture to set up a micro-finance enterprise with USD 1 million in start-up capital.⁶³⁰ The venture aimed to provide loans to small and medium Islamic enterprises. It is important to note that the banking sector in Cambodia is still developing, but micro finance institutions are flourishing. Today there are up to twenty micro-finance companies in the country.⁶³¹

The Islamic Medical Association of Cambodia (IMAC) arrived relatively late. Opened in 2001, IMAC has been partially funded by the IDB. Its main activities include providing free mobile medical assistance in rural areas and building local clinics. Another NGO that opened more recently is the Cambodian Muslim Intellectual Alliance (CMIA). Among other things, CMIA has the objective of improving education, welfare and understanding of the Islamic community in Cambodia. In February 2012, through CMIA, a number of Malaysian charitable organizations provide food and monetary assistance to 22 orphans. They included

⁶²⁹ "100,000 Qurans for Cambodian Muslims," *The Muslim Observer*, September 19, 2011.

⁶³⁰ "Micro Finance Form to be Established," *The Cambodia Daily*, August 2, 2011.

⁶³¹ Micro Finance Institutions, National Bank of Cambodia. Accessed April 3, 2011, <http://www.nbc.org.kh/fin-ins-mr.asp#mf>.

GPM, Wadah, FGN, PKPIM, Hayrat, ABIM, KBI, TAQMIR and Open University Malaysia. Each of the 22 students receives \$500 per year⁶³² to support their education.

Saudi Arabian organizations include Om al-Qura International Organization, Al-Basar International Foundation, World Assembly of Muslim Youths (WAMY), International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) and Al-Haramayn Foundation. Om al-Qura International Organization, which arrived in 1998, became embroiled in terrorist accusations. The organization established a school in Kandal province that was shut down in 2003 for allegedly providing safe haven to Hambali and his accomplices. Today this school is refurbished and renamed the Cambodian Islamic Center. It is controlled directly by the Highest Council of Muslim Religious Affairs and offers both secular and religious education. Several Salafi followers informed the author that the incident in 2003 was an attempt by the TJ followers to thwart the growth of Salafism in Cambodia. WAMY arrived in Cambodia in 2002.⁶³³ These organizations bring Salafi teachings to Cham.

In the process of research, the author counted nearly thirty Cham civil organizations, foundations and associations. Although all of them serve the same humanitarian purposes for the Cham community (and other Muslims), they are divided by two distinct Islamic philosophies: Tablighi Jamaat and Salafism. Competition among the two groups has sometimes led to divisions and conflict among Cham. In Khleang Sbek village, Cham broke the rule for mosque construction by building two mosques

⁶³² “22 Orphans Received Aids from Malaysia,” *Daem Ampil News*. Accessed February 6, 2012, <http://www.dap-news.com/typography/the-news/35936-2012-02-05-08-06-11.html>.

⁶³³ Agne de Feo, “Transnational Islamic Movement in Cambodia,” op. cit.

only 250 meters from each other.⁶³⁴ The Salafi mosque named Al Akbah Dubai Khleang Sbek was built with fund from Dubai on an old mosque location.⁶³⁵ The new one serving TJ followers is called Al Hidayah. Sectarian conflict between TJ and Salafi followers has diminished in the past few years. In the 1990s they did not talk to each other.⁶³⁶

These institutions not only bring global Islamic aid and influence to Cambodia but also field knowledge from Cambodia as a case study for the global community. For example, Islamic micro-financing between the CMDF and Yayasan Restu Foundation will serve as a good lesson for similar practices in other countries, particularly those with a small Muslim minority. Through these institutions the Cham were able to connect with their fellow Muslims in the global field during their pilgrimage to Mecca, their education in those Islamic countries, their business contacts, and sharing of grief in times of war and crisis. Being Muslims and receiving so much assistance from the Muslim world, the Cham will always be connected to Islamic affairs in other countries, including the 9/11 attacks, Bali bombings, subsequent US intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, and most recently, the political upheavals in Egypt, Syria and Lybia.

A few of my informants received their educations in Lybia. Whether or not they supported the rebels who recently toppled Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime, they were connected to events happening in that country. They have their personal views

⁶³⁴ According to Kai Team, who is the mufti of Imam Sann group, a new mosque must be at least 2 km away from the existing one.

⁶³⁵ Author's interview with Ser Saleh, March 28, 2012; Author's interview with Van Math, March 28, 2012; Author's interview with Saroh, March 28, 2012; Author's interview with Saleh Musa, March 28, 2012. All of these interviewees are villagers of Khleang Sbek.

on US and European politics in Lybia (the Khmer majority does not seem similarly concerned). Thus, the Cham bring global Islamic affairs to Cambodia and play an increasingly vocal part in those affairs. In so doing they raise the relevance of Cambodia in global fields through inter-state and transnational contacts.

III. Local Political Affiliations

During the Lon Nol period, the Cham were divided between rural and urban populations. Those living in urban areas joined the new Khmer Republic regime, while those living in the rural areas joined the communist movement led by the Khmer Rouge. Their affiliation depended upon their geographic locations. Because Cham were strong supporters of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in the 1950s and 1960s, and because of their strong affiliation with Cambodian courts, rural Cham had little choice but to join the Khmer Rouge. A good example of this is Sos Man, who was a veteran revolutionary. His son Mat Ly also joined the Khmer Rouge. It seemed that Cham did not have that much choice about their political affiliations then.

According to Keo Ibrohim, 63, now living in the US, many Cham in the cities were most apprehensive about the Khmer Rouge for their prohibition of Islam once they gained power.⁶³⁷ Keo Ibrohim was the son of a rich and honorable Cham in Kampong Cham named Haji Osman Phong (his official royalist title was Bautes Sena, given to him by King Sisowath). In hindsight he was right. He said that during the period from 1970 to 1975 a greater number of Cham were in the Khmer Republic army, through

⁶³⁶ Author's interview with Muhammad, March 27, 2012. The name is altered because the informant requested that his name not be revealed because of the sensitivity of the issue.

forced conscription and their own will. Keo Ibrohim himself was a general responsible for logistics. At present one of his grandsons is a two-star general in Preah Vihear province (the site of ongoing border conflict between Cambodia and Thailand) and another is a three-star general in the Ministry of Interior. However, Keo Ibrohim did not mention how many Cham were in the Khmer Republic Army, although Les Kosem's battalion was famous for its bravery and tactical skills. They were victorious in many battles. During that period, it was certain that Cham fought each other on both sides of the conflict.

In the 1980s there were not many choices for Cham living inside Cambodia. Mat Ly was the most prominent Cham in the PRK Government; he was responsible for several government positions as well as Islamic affairs in Cambodia. Because the PRK permitted only one political party – the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party – one can assert that most Cham were members of the KPRP, even though Prince Sihanouk, the royalist figure who had been the Cham' patron, was a member of the CGDK, the coalition with the Khmer Rouge. This was a political reversal. Whereas in the past, Cham supported the royal family, during the PRK period, they supported the KPRP and subsequently its Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Perhaps because of the Cham' affiliation with the non-royalist party for more than ten years and their sense of liberation from the Khmer Rouge genocide, the majority of Cham are now members of the CPP. However, in the 1990s when there was a two-horse race between the CPP and FUNCINPEC, Cham were more politically divided. In Cambodia's current political climate FUNCINPEC is almost totally dysfunctional and the CPP is enjoying

⁶³⁷ Author's interview with Keo Ibrohim, October 2, 2011.

greater and more legitimate power than they have since UNTAC's general election in 1993.

UNTAC 1991 arrival brought with them several Cham politicians who were members of FUNCINPEC (led by Sihanouk's son Rannaridh). At that time, there were only two main parties: FUNCINPEC and CPP. Sam Rainsy was a member of FUNCINPEC and became Minister of Finance after the 1993 election. Those Cham probably joined the royalist party since it was based along the border. Another reason was probably the affiliation of these Cham with Prince Norodom Rannaridh's former wife Marie Rannaridh, who is a half-Cham and half-Khmer and was raised in Chroy Changvar in Phnom Penh. She became President of the Cambodian Red Cross from 1995 to 1998.⁶³⁸ Her presence within the royal family added another layer of connection between Cham and the royal court whose connection dates back to 1471 when the Cham first migrated to Cambodia. King Reameathipadei I also had a Cham wife.

The most significant Cham figure within FUNCINPEC was the late Tol Loh who, after armed fighting in July 1997, became Secretary General of the party. After the 1993 election Tol Loh became Minister of Education. During his tenure, he attempted to bring drastic change to the education system from high school to university in the form of a stringent examination process which up to 90% of all test takers failed. In 2002, Tol Loh was a Deputy Prime Minister. He was a dedicated member of the royalist party, but less outspoken in the public arena. Another Cham member of FUNCINPEC was more outspoken. After the 1993 election, Ahmad Yahya was a

⁶³⁸ Princess Marie filed for divorce in 2006, followed by a legal complaint in the same year against her husband for breaking the monogamy law.

lawmaker in the party. As a parliamentarian he was quoted numerous times in both local and international newspapers on legal and political issues.

Born in Kampong Cham in 1945, Ahmad Yahya sought refuge in France and the United States in the 1970s and became a supporter of FUNCINPEC in the 1980s when the party was still based along the Cambodian-Thai border. In 1992 Ahmad Yahya was appointed as a member of the Steering Committee and Political Coordination Bureau. During the UN-sponsored election in May 1993, he represented FUNCINPEC in Phnom Penh, after which he won a seat. When the National Assembly was created, he was named Chairman of Commission for Public Works, Transport, Communications, Industry, Energy and Trade. He was also a member of Commission for Parliamentary Procedures. After the fighting on July 5-6, 1997, Ahmad Yahya fled to Thailand and returned in 1998, still a member of FUNCINPEC.⁶³⁹ He switched to the Sam Rainsy Party in March 2003, followed by seven prominent party members, four months ahead of the national election. He was quoted as saying, “I have no hope for Prince Norodom Rannaridh and in the end I am happy to join the Sam Rainsy Party.”⁶⁴⁰ He later joined the CPP. Currently he is Secretary of State of Ministry of Social Affairs and a Member of Parliament representing Kampong Cham as a member of the CPP. When Prince Sihanouk returned in 1993, although he was a member of FUNCINPEC, Ahmad Yahya was against the idea of a king with executive power. He said, “If the king was to be a real king, he must not be involved in politics.”⁶⁴¹ He is also a Salafi follower.

⁶³⁹ Justin Corfield and Laura Summers, *Historical Dictionary of Cambodia*, London: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

⁶⁴⁰ “Senior Cambodian Royalist Defect to Opposition in Run-up to Poll,” *AFP*, 19 March 2003.

⁶⁴¹ “Sihanouk’s Return as Cambodian King is Weighed,” *The New York Times*, September 3, 1993.

Other Cham formerly supporting FUNCINPEC include Nan Sy, former Ambassador of Cambodia to Brunei (originally from Kampong Chhnang), Sit Ibrahim, Lot Van Math (deceased), Sabu Bacha⁶⁴² and Ismail Osman. Ismail Osman has been an active politician. After the 1993 election he was Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Religion. He is currently a member of the CPP. Nan Sy was appointed as Cambodian Ambassador to Brunei. He was apparently recommended by the Highest Council for Muslim Religious Affairs and later appointed by the government. Subsequently, there was disappointment from the Cham community over Nan Sy's lack of concern for the community during his term as ambassador.⁶⁴³ Recently he was dismissed from his position over a corruption charge involving a huge sum of money. The case remains unresolved.

Osman Hassan and Zakarya Adam are the two most prominent Cham leaders within the CPP. Osman Hassan runs a string of private companies, has one or more NGOs and a political position. As such he is one of the richest Cham in Cambodia and supposedly the most powerful. Zakarya Adam is considered to be an intellectual.

Most Cham today are members of the CPP. This does not mean Cham have broken their traditional support for the royal family. It is simply that there is no viable royalist opposition party, although Prince Norodom Rannaridh is rejuvenating his party and preparing for the upcoming national election. Sam Rainsy Party has remained the strongest opposition party. A few Cham are members of this party, including Saleh Salah, who is running as a representative.

⁶⁴² Sabu Bacha retired from his position as a member of the senate in March 2012.

⁶⁴³ Andi Faisal Bakti, "Islamic Religious Learning Groups and Civil Society: Contributions of the Cham Majlis Taklims to Civil Society in Phnom Penh, Cambodia," Department of Communication and

One of the CPP supporters is Kamarudin Yusof, the Cambodian Mufti appointed to his position for life in 2001. When asked about why he supports the CPP, he was quoted as saying, “I have been part of the CPP since its inception. Thanks to God, the CPP has become the ruling party and has the majority. As a minority Muslims need the support of the majority. Members of the minority can always come to me for help, and I can ask for the government’s help.”⁶⁴⁴ The mufti’s words quite clearly capture the essence of the survival strategy of Cham in Cambodia. Not only do Cham remain active in politics in many political regimes and parties, they tend to support the political institutions that are most legitimate. This reveals their intention to be active, supportive and participatory in Cambodian affairs, but to be on the most powerful sides of Cambodian politics. As many Cham repeatedly stated over the years since UNTAC, Cham do not aspire to political autonomy or majority control of the Cambodian Government. They are attached to Cambodia, its state and government, but as a different religious and ethnic group.

The CPP has made efforts to secure Cham support. In the 1998 national election, the CPP fielded seven Cham candidates in five constituencies with substantial Cham (and Chvea) populations in Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Pursat and Kampot to run for seats in the National Assembly. This inclusion of Cham candidates followed the CPP’s three-point policy to: 1) develop human resources for Cham, 2) increase living standards for Cham, and 3) promote and preserve Cham mores and

Dakwah, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta. Accessed November 13, 2011, <http://www.andifaisalbakti.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/CambodiaPaper.pdf>.

⁶⁴⁴ Andi Faisal Bakti, “Islamic Religious Learning Groups and Civil Society: Contributions of the Cham Majlis Taklims to Civil Society in Phnom Penh, Cambodia,” Department of Communication and Dakwah, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, p. 7.

customs. These points also included special efforts to improve education among the Cham by reducing the dropout rate.⁶⁴⁵

Table 3. Political Affiliation of Key Cham Leaders in 3rd Mandate (2003-2008)⁶⁴⁶

No.	Name	Position	Political Party
1	Osman Hassan	Secretary of State, Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training	CPP
2	Zakarya Adam	Secretary of State, Ministry of Cults and Religion	CPP
3	Sith Ibrahim	Secretary of State, Ministry of Cults and Religion	FUN
4	Dr. Sos Mousine	Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Rural Development	CPP
5	Sem Sokha	Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Social Affairs and Veterans	CPP
6	Madame Kob Mariah	Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Woman Affairs	CPP
7	Msas Loh	Under Secretary of State, Office of the Council of Ministers	CPP
8	Paing Punyamin	Parliamentarian representing Kampong Cham	CPP
9	Sman Teath	Parliamentarian representing Pursat	CPP
10	Ahmad Yahya	Parliamentarian representing Kampong Cham	SRP
11	Van Math	Senator	CPP
12	Sabo Bacha	Senator	FUN
13	Sem Soprey	Vice Governor of Kampong Cham	CPP
14	Saleh Sen	Vice Governor of Kampong Chhnang	CPP
15	Ismail Osman	Advisor to Samdech Krompreah Norodom Rannaridh	FUN

Within this list, no Cham has a position higher than Secretary of State within a ministry. In the second mandate, Tol Loh was Minister of Education. He was second-highest ranking Cham within the executive branch, after Mat Ly.

⁶⁴⁵ “Co-Premier Says His Party to Field Seven Islamic Candidates in Polls,” *BBC Monitoring Services*, 28 January 1998.

⁶⁴⁶ Farina So, “The Study of Quran vs. Modern Education for Islamic Women in Cambodia,” Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2009.

IV. Islamic and Secular Education

As much as it is important for the Cambodian nation in general, education is the key to Islamic revival, improving Cham' overall living conditions and cementing the right identities for the group.⁶⁴⁷ Much of the Cham's education development principles have been copied from systems practiced in Malaysia and other countries in Southeast Asia. Thus, an important context for understanding Cambodian Islamic schools is Malaysia's Islamic education system and evolution.

In pre-colonial times, religious instruction in the Malay Peninsula was conducted in Quranic schools located in mosques, prayer houses and houses of religious experts. This informal school provided basic Islamic teaching to young children especially on Quranic recitation and memorization.⁶⁴⁸ The Quranic school was followed by the Pondok school. It was another level of Islamic education beyond memorizing the Quran. It was popular until World War I, after which it began to decline for a number of reasons. After World War I modern education provided by the British was more suitable for the job market in the colonial government and the advancement of knowledge in the colonial period. Students also sought training in English language. Also, contributions from the religious community to support Pondok schools decreased.⁶⁴⁹

In the 1920s Pondok declined further and gave way to the madrasas brought to Malaysia through Islamic graduates from Mecca, Medina and Cairo who had been

⁶⁴⁷ "Cambodian Muslims Need Help in Education, Says Mufti of Cambodia," *Bernama Daily Malaysian News*, December 2, 2001.

⁶⁴⁸ Richard Kraince, "Reforming Islamic Education in Malaysia: Doctrine or Dialogue?" in *Making Modern Muslims*, Robert Hefner, ed., Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009, p. 112.

educated with “modern” Islamic thought and education systems that mixed Islamic education with secular subjects in the same school.⁶⁵⁰ The madrasas grew steadily until the 1950s when more focus was placed on constructing a modern Malaysian identity toward the end of colonial rule. This somehow distracted from the continued strengthening of Islamic institutions. The madrasas began to decline. In the late 1960s, when Malaysian Islamic institutions merged with national institutions, madrasas began to merge with public schools systems to offer both Islamic teachings and modern scientific subjects.⁶⁵¹ The public school system also drew Islamic teachers away from the madrasas, leading to a further decline of the madrasas.

A number of Cambodian NGOs copied the education system from Malaysia for their Islamic schools including CMDF and CAMSA. Since the late 1990s, Cambodia has seen a proliferation of private educational institutions starting with English language private schools to universities providing advanced degrees. In addition, the Cambodian Government permitted the establishment of Islamic and mixed-curriculum schools. The Cambodian Islamic Center offers both public education for high school students and religious and Arabic training. Students from this school take the same national examination as students from non-Islamic public schools. Graduates from the Cambodian Islamic Center can attend universities just like other students. This can be considered as a parallel system organized to accommodate Cham students who desire secular as well as religious training. But because Cambodia is a Buddhist country and Cham form a small minority, we do not expect the creation of Islamic universities or a

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 112.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 113.

⁶⁵¹ Richard Kraince, “Reforming Islamic Education in Malaysia: Doctrine or Dialogue?” in *Making Modern Muslims*, Robert Hefner, ed., Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009, p. 114.

national system that offer Islamic advanced degrees as seen in Malaysia. For such education the Cham enroll in Arab, Pakistan and Malaysian universities.

In the Muslim Philippines, Islamic schools are generally divided into three categories and a few hybrids in between. The community school house is small village school established by local community leaders. It is mostly set up to supplement public education for young children and is usually organized to adapt to the program in the public schools. This school runs during the weekend and has less than one hundred students. The level of Islamic education is basic. Community madrasas generally locate in available buildings in the community such as a community center, large vacant house, *musalla* and mosques. This group of schools includes larger Islamic schools set up by wealthy and powerful politicians at district levels.⁶⁵²

The next type of school in the Muslim Philippines is Quran-reading school. This school is exclusively designed to teach students to read and memorize the Quran, while analyzing the text, understanding what is written, and learning the Sunna and the Hadith are relegated to other, more advanced schools. This type of school provides basic education to young Muslims and has been the traditional institution in the Muslim Philippines.⁶⁵³

The last Islamic school in the Muslim Philippines is the comprehensive Islamic academy, which provides a much broader and more systematic Islamic education. Up to a thousand students attend this type of school, which offers courses ranging from

⁶⁵² Thomas McKenna and Esmal Abdula, "Islamic Education in the Philippines: Political Separatism and Religious Pragmatism," in *Making Modern Muslims*, Robert Hefner, ed., Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009, p. 216.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., p. 217.

Islamic studies to secular subjects, computer skills and English language training. Its students come from different provinces instead of the same community as seen in community madrasas and Quran-reading schools.

The arrangement of Islamic schools in the Muslim Phillipines provides interesting insights into the development of Islamic education in Cambodia. Here we can see similar institutions set up at the village level (for example, teaching at the house of a *tuon* or village *surav*), at the district level (for example, those madrasas in Kampong Chhnang with purpose-built school buildings), and at the national level such as the refashioned Cambodian Islamic Center in Kandal province and RIHS's school in Phnom Penh with nearly one thousand pupils.

Before looking at the Cambodian Islamic school system, it is important to look back at the development of religious schools brought from Malaysia, southern Thailand and other countries. In particular, Ly Musa is a clear example of the influence of Islamic education and thought from neighboring countries, which continues to cast influence on religious learning in Cambodia today.

Ly Musa and Kaum Muda Education

The story of Islamic education in Cambodia began in the 1950s when Ly Musa brought the Islamic education prevalent in Malaysia and southern Thailand to Cambodia. Ly Musa was a famous Cham intellectual before the Khmer Rouge time. He started his religious career in Cambodia after he returned from Malaysia between 1945 and 1950.⁶⁵⁴ Ly Musa was born on November 20, 1918 in Ampil village, Peuh 1

⁶⁵⁴ Author's interview with Ly Insan, February 11, 2012. Ly Insan is Ly Musa's second youngest son. Ly Musa had seven children: Ali Imran, M, who died in the Pol Pot regime; Ali Musdek, M, who died

commune, Krauch Chhmar district, Kampong Cham province to a poor Cham family. He was the oldest son.⁶⁵⁵ At just 12 years old he left his village with unknown adults to the border town of Poipet, probably to work as a child laborer at this busy border crossing. Soon after that a generous Thai man adopted him, took him to Bangkok and provided him with a proper education. The influence of his experience in Bangkok might have been a major contributor to his intellectual development as a foundation for his learning of Islam in southern Thailand and Malaysia. One of those influences is that Ly Musa spoke, read and wrote Thai fluently.⁶⁵⁶ He probably learned business practices from his adopted father as well. When he was in southern Thailand Ly Musa operated a small business importing and exporting construction goods between Kota Bharu and Patani province.⁶⁵⁷

Ly Musa became an Islamic intellectual when he was in Malaysia. In Kota Bharu he attended Nik Saleh Pondok, where he met his future religious colleagues, including Son Ahmad who had come from Kampong Cham. Unlike Son Ahmad who continued his advanced Islamic education in India, Ly Musa was educated solely in Malaysia. Son Ahmad later became known as Imam Ahmad India and a close partner of Ly Musa in Cambodia.⁶⁵⁸ Like several members of the Cambodian communist movements at the time who were influenced during their time spent in gaining an education overseas, Ly Musa was influenced by the religious revival movement in Malaysia called the Islah movement, which attempted to bring change to the way

in the Pol Pot regime; Ali Hucha Tilah, F, alive, living in Mondul Kiri province; Ali Khosiya Tilah, F, alive, living in the United States; Ali Khifatalah, F, alive living in Kpob 2 village; Ali Insan, M, 47, living in Phnom Penh; and Ali Khideah, M, living in the United States.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Author's interview with Ly Insan, February 11, 2012.

⁶⁵⁷ Mohamad Zain Musa, "Dynamics of Faith: Imam Musa in the Revival of Islamic Teaching in Cambodia," in *Islam at the Margins: The Muslims of Indochina*, edited by Omar Farouk and Hiroyuki Yamamoto, Center for Integrated Area Studies, Kyoto University, 2008. Muhammad Zain Musa admits that he was one of Ly Musa's students.

Muslim Malaysians interpreted and practiced Islam.⁶⁵⁹ The leaders of this movement had been educated in the Middle East. The movement led to a division of the Islamic community in Malaysia into *kaum muda* (new group) and *kaum tua* (old group). The *kaum tua* were defended by older people and Malay lords who were practicing Islamic teachings mixed with ancestor worship and animism. The *kaum muda* attempted to eliminate this. They were successful and Ly Musa wanted to bring the ideas of *kaum muda* to his fellow Cham in Cambodia. He might have thought that such a conversion would be easy as Malay and Cambodian Islam were viewed as being similar.

When Ly Musa brought Islamic modernization to Cambodia, his teachings were seen as original and practical, as they relied on a rational interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah. Ly Musa was so confident in his knowledge about Islam and modern subjects and in its superiority among local Islamic practices in Cambodia that he immediately presented his opposition to the old teachings outright.⁶⁶⁰ Ly Musa lived in Krauch Chhmar district, Kampong Cham after returning from Malaysia. He was a religious man, but a modern and different religious person. When the villagers wore sarongs, Ly Musa wore trousers or even shorts. When the elderly shaved, he kept his long hair and grew a beard. While a dress code signified piety and intellectuality, Ly Musa was initially considered a badly-influenced young man who lived too long outside his home country. Ly Musa even kept a dog in his house; dogs are considered dirty animals in a Cham home.⁶⁶¹ Today one can observe that some Cham houses

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁰ Author's interview with Mit Mustafa, March 24, 2012.

⁶⁶¹ Mohamad Zain Musa, "Dynamics of Faith: Imam Musa in the Revival of Islamic Teaching in Cambodia," op. cit.

keep dogs. This probably is a more visible, though trivial, legacy of Ly Musa. Ly Musa also showed his difference during prayers.

Without delay, Ly Musa began teaching his new religious interpretation and practice to members of his immediate community. He taught fellow villagers, including adult and children, in the evenings between Maghrib and Isha prayers, to memorize the Quran and interpret the Quran and Sunnah. There were also classes for those who had advanced knowledge of Islam. Students challenged him and he was able to reveal a different yet reasonable knowledge to them. He even taught them secular subjects such as history, economics, politics and geography, including how to read maps.⁶⁶² His knowledge about the world and his comprehensive knowledge about Islam became a revelation to his students and followers. This created a foundation for his success and further expansion of the new interpretation of Islam, which later formed the *Kaum Muda* in Cambodia. His informal religious education spread throughout the community. Classrooms were set up in village houses, mosques, *suravs* and community centers. The first school for the *Kaum Muda* was built in 1973 in Svay Khleang village.⁶⁶³ Overall he built five schools in Kampong Cham and Kratie provinces: three in Krauch Chhmar district and two in Chhlong district.⁶⁶⁴ Religious books were brought in from Kelantan. Some were hand-copied. One of Imam Musa's followers was Zakarya Adam, the current Secretary of State of the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs.

⁶⁶² Author's interview with Mit Mustafa, March 24, 2012. Mit Mustafa is a former colleague of Ly Musa. Today he lives in Kampong Cham province, just a few hundred meters from Ly Musa's youngest daughter, Ali Khifatalah.

⁶⁶³ Author's interview with Ly Insan, February 11, 2012.

⁶⁶⁴ Author's interview with Mit Mustafa, March 24, 2012.

Unfortunately for Imam Musa, the establishment of the ad hoc *Kaum Muda* led to a division within the Cham community and then to violence. Ly Musa did not fully anticipate resistance to change from elderly Cham. He had assumed that rational thinking would triumph over local customs and that the status quo would change. He was wrong. Imam Musa was accused of practicing deviant Islam, and probably fundamentalism. A major debate between the new group and the old group occurred in 1955. The new group was led by Imam Musa, while the old group was led by Tuan Haj Ali from Moat Chrouk, Vietnam, assisted by Tuon Kachik⁶⁶⁵ from Chumnik village, Kampong Cham. Because the new group based their knowledge on the Quran and Sunnah, and a literal interpretation of the two texts infused with modern rational thought, they won the debate. The old group was able to explain many of their interpretations of Islam and practices that were linked to animism and customs.

Not only did Imam Musa teach religion he also attempted to produce social mobility and improve the Cham community through secular education. In 1953 Imam Musa and his immediate followers created the Sangkum Ly Musa (Ly Musa Society), two years before Prince Norodom Sihanouk created the Sangkum Reastr Niyum (People's Socialist Community).⁶⁶⁶ The society built primary schools for public education, raised funds, and attempted to improve the overall well-being of the Cham community. The teachers for the school were Cham who were paid by the government. The curriculum was that of the Cambodian Government. Ly Musa's development of secular education in the Cham community was a reaction to a belief by Cham parents that sending their children to government schools would erode

⁶⁶⁵ Mohamad Zain Musa, "History of Education among the Cambodian Muslims," *Malaysian Journal of History, Politics, & Strategic Studies*, Vol. 38 (1) (2011), pp. 81-105, p. 92.

⁶⁶⁶ Mohamad Zain Musa, "Dynamics of Faith: Imam Musa in the Revival of Islamic Teaching in Cambodia," op. cit.

ethnic identity.⁶⁶⁷ This decision apparently contributed to poverty and illiteracy in the Cham community, which Imam Musa seemed to recognize and addressed. However, today Khmer language literacy among Cham is still low.

Before fully realizing his vision, Ly Musa died in the early 1976 in a Khmer Rouge prison.⁶⁶⁸ His contribution to the Cham community was huge. He attempted to address the perceived backwardness of his community through religious and secular education. Although he died nearly forty years ago, his impact on the Cham community remains. Variations of his school exist. A recent Salafi supporter of the teachers' training school in Phnom Penh stated: "Imam Musa came from Thailand to Cambodia in 1943 in order to proselytize the correct religion. At that time, all Cham disagreed with Musa, but these days almost all Cham follow his teachings. Musa worked the good way; he even initiated new schools for proper religious education. The traditionalists did not like internal trouble among the Cham, and they complained to the government that Musa's teachings split families and villages."⁶⁶⁹ The teacher considered Imam Musa a good model for his group's attempt to purify Cambodian Islam through Islamic philosophy coming from the Middle East. Although Imam Musa never admitted it, his literal interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah and anti-syncretic stance made him a Salafi Muslim.

Kaum Muda and Transnationalism

The time that Imam Musa left Cambodia to southern Thailand and then to Malaysia was the early age of transportation development in Southeast Asia brought from

⁶⁶⁷ Author's interview with Mit Mustafa, March 24, 2012.

⁶⁶⁸ Author's interview with Ly Insan, February 11, 2012.

⁶⁶⁹ Bjorn Atle Blengsli, "Islamic Education and Politics in Contemporary Cambodia," in *Making Modern Muslims*, Robert Hefner, ed., Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009, p. 187.

Europe through British colonization. The French also built reasonably good infrastructure in Cambodia around that time. This allowed Imam Musa and fellow itinerant Islamists to travel between Cambodia, Thailand, the Malay Peninsula, South Asia and all the way to Mecca in the Middle East. A French observer reported that by 1940 up to 500 Cham had made pilgrimage to Mecca.⁶⁷⁰ Another French researcher claimed that in the 1930s a large number of Cham students were in southern Thailand and Malaysia studying religion and finding work.⁶⁷¹ Those who attended religious schools found themselves learning from important Malay scholars such as Imam Nawawi, who had written extensively on Quranic exegesis and Mohammad bin Daud from Patani. These were forerunners of the Kaum Muda movement in Malaysia and southern Thailand, which spread to Cambodia through their students such as Haji Sam Sou, Imam Musa and Imam Ahmad India.

Haji Sam Sou arguably created the first formal religious school in Cambodia; he copied curricula and borrowed materials from Malaysian Pondok boarding schools in 1948.⁶⁷² While abroad these scholars not only learned Arabic, Malay and Quranic interpretation but also Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), *hadith* and Islamic mysticism.⁶⁷³ These Cambodians studied Malay and Arabic because Cambodian Cham did not have a sophisticated Cham writing system. The language, although spoken widely in local communities, did not lend itself to scholarship usage. Malay and Arabic took up that role. This is still true today where religious students learn both Arabic and Malay.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

The *Kaum Muda* movement did not originate in the Malaysian Peninsula, but in Egypt through the work of the Egyptian Islamic scholar Mohammad Abduh and his fellow reformists as a reaction to the economic and cultural domination of the West.

Mohammad Abduh saw the backwardness of Egypt as a result of contaminated beliefs in Islam and tried to purify its practices. He criticized locally influenced Islamic rituals and interpretations, and rites of passage relating to birth, marriage and death. He also attempted to eliminate the local veneration of spirits and ancestors that was so widespread in his country.⁶⁷⁴ All of these impure beliefs were widespread in different forms among Southeast Asian Muslims. The Cham had many of these practices. If this reform movement gained appeal and relevance in Egypt, Malaysia, southern Thailand and other parts of the world, it would be a large force of change in Cambodian Islam. Cambodian students of the *kaum muda* created a large number of dedicated followers before all proselytization ceased in 1975 with the arrival of the Khmer Rouge.

Before he died under the Khmer Rouge, Raja Thipadei Res Lah, the Cambodian mufti appointed in 1960 by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, criticized the *kaum muda* for causing social unrest and polarizing the Cham community. This criticism was particularly relevant in a country descending into civil war in 1970 and politically divided, in desperate need of unity.

The Current Cambodian Islamic School System

Despite the Highest Council for Islamic Religious Affairs' efforts to control Islamic education, there is no centralized Islamic education system, system of quality control,

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

standardization, curriculum design or pedagogy, as there is in Cambodia's public education system. Today there are several Islamic school networks in Cambodia running more than a hundred Islamic schools around the country. They are the Malaysian, Arab, Dakwah and independent schools.

The Malaysian school network is generally known as SMU Annikmah Al Islamia. Today it has more than 15 schools located throughout Cambodia. The first of these schools was established in 1996. Originally they offered only Islamic education along with Malay language training. Today, the schools offer both secular and Islamic education, and copy their curriculum from Malaysia, which in turn was copied from Egypt. Graduates from these schools can continue their education in SMU schools in Malaysia. In 2005, up to 57 students from these schools were continuing their education in Malaysia.⁶⁷⁵ Teachers in the SMU schools are generally trained in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. The SMU school network receives funds from many donors including foreign Cham, but most notably Yayasan Islam Kelantan.⁶⁷⁶

The Arab school network is generally dominated by two main organizations, the RIHS and Umm al-Qura. When Umm al-Qura was banned from Cambodia after alleged terrorist activities in 2003, RIHS remained the sole leader of this network. Before its closure, the Umm al-Qura school in Kandal was a busy education center with a teaching staff from several Muslim countries, funded by Saudi Arabia. Both RIHS and Umm al-Qura follow Salafi Islam. The Arab schools' teaching is viewed as: "anti-syncretic and delocalized."⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

Students of the Salafi sect believe that the Imam Sann's interpretation of Islam – that Islam should be adapted to the needs of the people – lay far from the truth. For the Salafist, it is Muslims who must listen to the Quran and the Sunnah, following the words, sayings and acts of Mohammad. The Salafi believe that TJ is a religious innovation. Innovation is prohibited in Islam. TJ asks the Cham to travel to preach using their own means. Their teaching is a form of *taklim* (sitting together to explain and share knowledge), which is done by word of mouth rather than from established religious texts. Traveling to preach, although good, is an innovation.⁶⁷⁸ The Salafi group believes that TJ originated in India with a scholar named Mohammad Yyes, but it is not where Islam originally came from.⁶⁷⁹

The RIHS established its first elementary school in Phnom Penh in 1996 for orphans and poor children. This elementary school was transformed into a high school in 2003, accepting students from grades 7 to 12. Elementary schools were relegated to six provincial branches in Takeo, Kampot, Koh Kong, Battambang, Kampong Chhnang and Kampong Cham (Chumnik and Veal Tach). Only the school in Kampot offers secondary education, while the one in Veal Tach admits only girls. All of these schools are boarding schools that accept two types of students of both sexes: orphans and the poor. In 2012, the Reaksmei Islam Kampuchea High School had 850 students (200 female) coming from all corners of Cambodia who live and study for free.

Principal for Religious Studies Sos Safiah selected these students and said “every day people brought their children to my school but I had to turn them away as we do not

⁶⁷⁷ Bjorn Blengli, “Trends in Islamic Community,” *The Phnom Penh Post*, June 6-19, 2003.

⁶⁷⁸ Author's interview with Ser Saleh, March 28, 2012. He lives in Khleang Sbek village, which is divided into TJ and Salafi groupings. The village has 337 families, 60 of which are followers of TJ who worship at a separate mosque recently built only 250 meters from the historic Al Akbah Dubai Khleang Sbek mosque in the village.

have enough space.” In keeping with the quality of education and reasonable living conditions at the school, Sos Safiah decided that he could not admit every orphan and poor student.⁶⁸⁰

Each year, about 70 to 100 students graduate from the high school. Graduation allows these students to pursue a college education in Cambodia and some universities in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, southern Thailand and Indonesia. Ironically, Kuwait, the donor country, has rarely admitted RIHS students to its universities in the past. Up to five or six students are admitted to Saudi Arabia each year to study for a bachelor’s degree, mostly in Arabic and Islam. Target universities in Malaysia include UAE and Bukari. Indonesia has begun admitting RIHS students only recently.

All RIHS boarding schools offer both secular and religious education. In Reaksmei Islam Kampuchea High School, secular subjects are taught in the afternoon from 1 to 5 p.m., following programs offered by the Ministry of Education, while religious subjects are taught in the morning from 7 to 12, in Arabic. In 2012 there are 19 *tuons* and 19 teachers of general education. Most of the *tuons* received advanced education in Saudi Arabia, while secular education teachers were selected from the government list of teachers and Royal University of Phnom Penh.⁶⁸¹ In most cases these teachers are Muslims, except one physics teacher who is a Buddhist. Although the teachers are Muslims, they are asked to teach their students in Khmer so that the students’ competitiveness for higher education opportunities at local universities remains

⁶⁷⁹ Author’s interview with Saleh Musa, March 28, 2012. Saleh Musa is a *tuon* in Khleang Sbek village.

⁶⁸⁰ Author’s interview with Sos Safiah, February 8, 2012. Sos Safiah is principal of religious education at Reaksmei Islam Kampuchea High School.

⁶⁸¹ Author’s interview with Sen Im, February 8, 2012. Sen Im is vice principal of secular education of Reaksmei Islam Kampuchea High School.

strong. Each year about 85% of Reaksmei Islam Kampuchea High School's students graduate, while it is up to 90% at the Cambodian Islamic Center. When asked about this Sen Im, vice principal joked, "At my high school students are selected based on the condition of being orphaned and poor. CIC students are selected based on merit and they pay for their education."⁶⁸²

RIHS's efforts to provide free education for poor and orphaned adolescents have made an enormous contribution to the Cambodian education system in general and the Cham community in particular. However, in 2007 a few RIHS centers in Cambodia were flagged by the US State Department as having links with terrorist organizations. This is a very serious allegation for the charitable organization, which has helped so many orphans and poor children. There has been no official response from RIHS in Phnom Penh on this matter, but because RIHS has been most systematic in its provision of educational assistance, parents and guardians still send their children to RIHS.⁶⁸³

In Cambodia RIHS is called Angkar Piphup La-or Kampuchea (Cambodia Good World Organization). Beside boarding schools, it operates a teacher training center in Kilometer 7 village in Phnom Penh. Recently the center closed and is not expected to reopen due to four reasons:

- First, the two-year certificate it offered is inferior to the foreign certificate or degree.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

- Second, upon graduation from high school, students prefer to pursue science degrees, which they believe could give them better jobs and higher pay after graduation than being religious teachers.
- Third, the training center does not offer a bachelor's degree, which the students now expect as a standard achievement after high school.
- Fourth, donations to the school have dried up because students were older and expected to pay.⁶⁸⁴

Sen Im said this teacher training center is being transformed into a vocational college capable of offering religious as well as science degrees. Students will have to pay tuition fees in this school.⁶⁸⁵

The Dakwah school network was established after the arrival of Dakwah Tabligh in Cambodia in 1992. Sulaiman Ibrahim set up the first Dakwah school in 1992. Since then, the Dakwah movement has established several more schools throughout the Cham community. The schools teach only Islamic education, focusing primarily on memorizing the Quran and key Islamic interpretation characterizing the Dakwah movement such as the Islamic brotherhood, selflessness, importance of attire, behavior for women, dangers of modern society and importance of compulsory preaching missions.⁶⁸⁶ Students generally come from the local community. They also have an opportunity to continue Islamic education in southern Thailand and Malaysia. Teachers are former students of the schools. Some of them are also trained in southern Thailand and Malaysia. Funding for these schools comes from the Cham community, foreign Cham, Thai and Malaysian private and public organizations. Bjorn Blengsli

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

claimed that a few students from these schools were sent to “Deobandi madrasas in India and Pakistan.”⁶⁸⁷

The independent schools are set up by local community leaders. They are not under the control of any of the above networks, although they may copy their teaching programs and curricula. They may also receive partial funding from the networks.⁶⁸⁸

The Cambodian Islamic Center is an independent school. It is formerly an Umm al-Qura school, but when it reopened in 2004, it was led by the Cambodian Islamic Council. Independent schools can be local village schools built with convenient local materials with a few classrooms. These small schools mostly focus on Quranic memorization. Independent schools can also be large, inter-provincial schools built with modern materials equipped with a mosque, sport area and many classrooms. Such schools offer both Islamic and secular subjects. The Cambodian Islamic Center is the largest of the independent schools and offers both Islamic and secular education. Students at these schools are local as well as inter-provincial. Teachers are trained in Malaysia, Thailand and local schools. Funding comes from many sources, but the local community has increasingly contributed to small community schools.

The Cambodian Islamic Center was refashioned before it was reopened in 2004. Under the Umm al-Qura organization, the school offers both secular and religious education. The dean of religious education was an Arab who never returned after 2004. The dean of secular education was Pich Solin, a former high school biology teacher and police officer in Battambang province. Pich Solin continued his job as

⁶⁸⁶ Author’s interview with Kae Sary, July 15, 2011. Kae Sary is village chief of Phum Trea 2 village.

⁶⁸⁷ Bjorn Atle Blengsli, “Islamic Education and Politics in Contemporary Cambodia,” *op. cit.*, p. 192.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

dean after the school was re-opened in 2004.⁶⁸⁹ Also in 2004, the school's ownership was transferred from Umm al-Qura to the Highest Council of Muslim Affairs led by Kammaruddin Yusos Kamry under Sub-Decree 408.⁶⁹⁰ Within this sub-decree it was renamed the Cambodian Islamic Center and is jointly managed by a council of Muslim dignitaries including Osman Hassan, Sos Kamry and Zakarya Adam. The three were able to convince the government to open the school with a new face in 2004, exactly a year after it was closed, and offers both secular and religious subjects from grades 7 to 12.

Today the Cambodian Islamic Center has 700 students (230 females). Without Arab donors and because of the terrorist allegation, the CIC found it more difficult to attract foreign donors. To operate, the school required students to pay an annual fee depending on their performance. Male students pay a maximum of USD 175 per year, which covers tuition and fees, food and accommodation. Top male students study for free.⁶⁹¹ CIC has a stringent policy relating to gender. Female students do not mix with male students in the classroom. Female students live and study in a nearby village. Therefore they pay for their own food and accommodation on a case-by-case basis. Both secular and religious teachers walk to the village to teach female students. Male and female students only meet during awards ceremonies.

Pich Solin said that his school ranked second in the country in 2011 in terms of percentage of passing the 12th grade graduation examination.⁶⁹² The number one school was Srey Pheap High School in Ta Khmao town, Kandal province. In the same

⁶⁸⁹ Author's interview with Pich Solin, February 10, 2011. Pich Solin is dean of secular education.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

year 61 out of its 63 students passed the examination. Since 2004 his school has ranked first terms of rate of lower secondary education. Pich Solin attributes this achievement to strict disciplinary control, hard work on the part of its students, and a strong emphasis on student morality. Having a police background, Pich Solin works closely with local authorities to eliminate crimes among adolescents in the community. Students are not allowed to repeat a grade. When they fail an examination, they are asked to take it again. If they fail a second time, they are asked to quit.⁶⁹³

Currently CIC has 25 teachers for secular subjects and 18 *tuons*. The *tuons* are former students at CIC and overseas graduates from Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and other countries. All of them speak the Cham language. Many of the religious teachers speak Arabic. Mat Manan, who is the Dean of Religious Education, completed high school in Malaysia and received his bachelor's degree in Sharia law from Saudi Arabia. The school teaches four main religious subjects to grades 7 to 12, with increased levels of difficulty.⁶⁹⁴ They are:

- Quranic recitation and memorization
- “Belief” subjects, which include the interpretation of the Quran and prophet Mohammad’s words and sayings
- Sharia law covering topics such as proper behavior for a Cham in speech, relationships with fellow Muslims, parents, spouses and siblings, eating, and doing business.
- Arabic language emphasizing conversation, grammar, usage and writing.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴ Author’s interview with Mat Manan, February 10, 2011. Mat Manan is dean of religious education.

The Cham language is not a required subject, but many *tuons* use it in communications with their students in the classroom.⁶⁹⁵ The CIC is different from the RIHS school in Cham Chao in that it requires students to pay a fair amount of money to continue their studies, but it seems that students receive a good education for their years at CIC. RIHS, however, is more generous and offers good opportunities for poor students. Both schools offer a good example of how a mature Islamic school in Cambodia should be run and the subjects to be taught.

Cham Education in the State School System

In 2007 Bredenberg conducted a study of educational marginalization within the state school system; his subjects were Cham students from grades 1 to 9 in Kampong Cham province.⁶⁹⁶ The primary aim of this study was to determine the extent to which educational services were provided to Cham children and to explain why such services did not meet their needs. The study had several interesting findings and laid a good basis for understanding Cham parents' attitudes toward secular education, the problems Cham children face at school, teachers' attitudes, and overall educational indicators for the Cham population.

As noted earlier, Kampong Cham province has the largest Cham population in the country. This study then should be representative of Cham children and the Cham population in Cambodia, but as also noted earlier, Cham in smaller provinces have

⁶⁹⁵ Author's interview with La Ny, January 20, 2011. La Ny is a student at Norton University. Earlier, he studied at the Cambodian Islamic Center.

⁶⁹⁶ This study was conducted by Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE), based in Kampong Cham, which Kurt Bredenberg led at the time of the study.

more opportunity to interact with other ethnic groups. In those provinces they are less insular.

Bredenberg's study found that in Kampong Cham province, Cham teachers on the government teaching staff made up only about 1% of state teachers. In terms of parents' expectations about the provision of educational services for Cham children at school, he had several interesting findings. Cham parents wanted school instruction in and about the Cham language, the teaching of Islam at school, the ability of the teachers to speak Cham, and segregated seating between boys and girls.⁶⁹⁷ Many of these expectations are met at Islamic schools in Kampong Cham, but these schools were not regulated by state educational authorities. The author viewed the increasing number of Islamic schools as the emergence of a parallel school system that "threatens nation-building function of the state schools."⁶⁹⁸

Although the Cambodian Constitution supports freedom of religion, Buddhism is the state religion. Khmer is the official language of Cambodia. Therefore, there is a strong emphasis among state leaders, a majority of whom are Khmer, to teach Buddhism and Khmer in the state schools, even when these schools are in Cham majority communities. Although the Cham is technically a distinct ethnic group, it is only recognized by state leaders as a distinct religious group, Khmer Islam. The Cham are happy to be recognized as such. Their language and cultural practices are not recognized as distinct. Therefore, no provisions for the Cham language and Islam are made in state schools (educational officials, however, have recognized bilingual needs in the education of hill tribe children). Bredenberg's study found that 80% of

⁶⁹⁷ Kurt Bredenberg, "Educational Marginalization of Cham Muslim Populations: A Report from Cambodia," *Journal of Education for International Development*, 3(3), p. 1.

respondents viewed the teaching of Islam as very important and 69% viewed the teaching of Cham language as very important.⁶⁹⁹ These data directly correspond to another finding: that up to 98% of Cham children in Grade 1 speak Cham as their primary language.⁷⁰⁰ Although the Cham prefer to be called Khmer Islam and call themselves by this name, within their community they use the Cham language; thus, members of the community who have little contact with outsiders, such as children and women, cannot speak Khmer fluently at all.

According to data from the Provincial Teacher Training Center of Kampong Cham, from 2001 to 2004, the number of Cham students entering the Center was extremely small. In general it was less than 1%,⁷⁰¹ which did not represent the proportion of the Cham population in the province. This also speaks to the fact that very few Cham complete high school. Bredenberg surveyed the percentage of Cham teachers among state schools in Kampong Cham. He found that Cham teachers made up from 0% to 3% of all state teachers in this province. This did not represent the Cham population of 8% to 18% in districts in which the schools are located.⁷⁰² The reasons for this lack of representation included little interest in education, location of primary and secondary schools in relation to where Cham live, and high dropout rates for Cham students, which may be caused by lack of instruction in Cham, no teaching of Islam, mixed seating, and prohibition of headscarves for women.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 1.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 14.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., p. 16. In 2001 and 2002 among 241 and 222 intakes respectively, there was no Cham student. In 2003 and 2004, among 283 and 119 intakes respectively, there was 1 Cham student in each of these years.

⁷⁰² Ibid., p. 16.

⁷⁰³ This issue was resolved in 2008 when the government permitted Cham women to wear headscarves at school.

The study found that Cham parents were increasingly sending their children to Islamic schools. In 2007 there were about 86 Islamic schools operating in Kampong Cham, with about 256 *tuons* and 23,665 pupils. These students were between 7 and 16 years old. These schools were opened in the mid-1990s. 70% of these schools were opened with permission from the Provincial Office of Education, but rarely had further contact with the Ministry since then. 60% of these schools were established with foreign funds, especially from Malaysia. The average education for the *tuons* ranged from primary school to grade 12. None of them received a post-secondary education. Only 20% of the schools reported providing a teaching methodology to the *tuons*.⁷⁰⁴ The majority of the schools did not pay the *tuons*, who taught five and a half days per week. The schools taught an average of five hours per day. Operating costs for the schools came from community donations. Islamic studies were the main subject and Cham was the language of instruction.⁷⁰⁵ Other reasons for learning at the schools included: boys and girls sat in separate classrooms or on separate sides of the room, flexible school hours, and distance to Islamic schools.

Bredenberg critiqued the Islamic schools. These schools did not receive accreditation to ensure minimum standards of educational practice in teaching subjects, quality and accuracy of education, and teaching methodology. Many *tuons* in these schools received varied levels of education, with many unable to complete Grade 12, whereas Cambodia's overall policy for teachers was to raise the basic level of education of primary school teachers to 12 years or more. Many *tuons* were not trained in teaching methodology for children.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰⁴ Kurt Bredenberg, "Educational Marginalization of Cham Muslim Populations: A Report from Cambodia," p. 18.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

In recognizing the religious sensitivity of Muslims, the Cambodian Government allowed Cham girls to wear *hijab* at school in addition to their usual school uniform. Prior to this, many schools viewed school uniforms, which are usually a white shirt and blue skirt or trousers, as compulsory for all (the new directive allows Cham students to wear headscarf on top of compulsory uniform). They identified them as students and did not discriminate or favor any ethnic or religious groups. Furthermore in the 1980s and 1990s, the Cham women in Cambodia were not consistent in wearing the *hijab*. Many school teachers viewed this as a new phenomenon; they did not understand its importance and felt they did not have to grant special privileges to the Cham students. Despite this controversy, Prime Minister Hun Sen showed his sensitivity to the needs of Cham and persisted with his decision allowing this difference in attire.

V. Conclusion

After the Cold War, changes within the Cham community accelerated. Today there are up to 460 mosques and 400 suravs accross the country, which is a two-fold increase from the number in late 1980s. Most notably was the enrichment of Islamic sects such as the spread and crystallization of TJ and Salafism, the decreased popularity of Imam Sann group and the continued elimination of syncretism. Other areas of the changes include the early 1990s bifurcation of Cham political identity between royalism and socialist-oriented CPP inherited from the PRK and the unification of Cham political identity into support for a single party, a pattern which

we saw in Sihanouk's Sangkum Reast Niyum in the 1950s and 1960s. But this party was not royalist, instead it was a socialist one. Another change was overall improvement of Cham's economic prosperity as a result of freedom of education, free-market economy, global Islamic aids and a growing Cambodian economy.

All these changes were brought about by the Cambodian Government's attempt to open itself to the outside world and the country was facing a new global political platform. For the Cham community, the opening of Cambodia meant that global Islamic institutions and individual philanthropists could easily reach out to them, providing aid for communal development, sponsoring schools, building mosques, sponsoring trips to Mecca, and granting scholarships to Cham students to pursue their education both locally and in Muslim countries, mainly Arabic and Southeast Asian nations. They also brought with them different forms of Islamic interpretation, mainly Tablighi Jamaat and Salafism.

In the early 1990s, many Islamic non-governmental organizations were set up to work on a variety of sectors for the Cham community. These NGOs were, and still are, directly linked with global Islamic institutions, in effect serving the agendas of these institutions. During the same period, several Cham people became active in Cambodian politics at the highest level. These political Cham seemed to be divided not only on political lines (between FUNCINPEC and CPP in the beginning and later Sam Rainsy/FUNCINPEC versus CPP) but also on religious philosophies between TJ and Salafism, in other words between Malaysian and Arabic groups. Many of those belonging to the CPP seem to be members of the TJ group, while those in the opposition parties are followers of Salafism. Prominent Cham in the CPP include

Osman Hassan, Sos Kamry and Zakarya Adam. Therefore, religious conflicts sometimes lead to political conflict or vice versa. Sometimes political conflicts between Cham leaders are simply veiled religious conflicts. One such conflict was the close down of Um al-Qura school in Kandal province and its branches, and the subsequent arrest of teachers at the RIHS schools in Phnom Penh in 2003 and 2004, which is discussed in the next chapter. All those schools or organizations were suspected of having links with terrorism and belonged to the Arab/Salafi/opposition. Today conflict between Islamic groups has lessened considerably. Coincidentally, this is because there is only one main party for the Cham now, the CPP.

Cambodian Islamic education has taken many forms, namely Arabic, Malaysian and independent schools. The main aims of Cham parents today is to provide the best education for their children whenever possible, which includes both Islamic and secular education. The establishment of different forms of Islamic schools in Cambodia, although it seems somewhat chaotic, is still a blessing for Cham students as today increasingly more Islamic schools provide both Islamic and secular education, including the CIC in Kandal province, the Chaom Chao high school in Phnom Penh, and provincial schools. There are also efforts to enable Cham students to continue their college education locally as well as overseas through scholarships. Cham students in the public school system still have limited access, however, due to such factors as lack of Khmer language proficiency, lack of Cham language instruction, and lack of Cham instructors at public schools.

The father of Islamic education in Cambodia is Ly Musa, who brought the earliest form of Islamic education in a controversial manner to Cambodia in the 1950s, but

this form became fairly widespread in the 1960s and 1970s. Although he was opposed during his time, Ly Musa's influence on the Cham community today is huge but difficult to measure. One clear example is the gradual disappearance of syncretic Islamic practices among both rural and urban Cham, which Ly Musa tried so hard to eliminate. The modern ideas he brought to the Cham community still remain.

Cham's three main peripheral identities—sectarian, politic and economic—were again modified during this period (1990s and 2000s) from what they were in the 1980s. Whereas in the 1980s there were many changes to these identities as a result of the Khmer Rouge genocide and the PRK's own policy on the Cham, in the 1990s and 2000s such changes accelerated. It led to sectarian conflict, different forms of political identity, improved prosperity and uncertainty. In many areas these changes brought the Cham community more social and economic improvement than they had experienced in their history in Cambodia due to availability of both secular and Islamic schools; global aids; global Islamic revivalism; and freedom to travel between Muslim countries for education, job and trade, and convenience of such travel brought about by telecommunication and transportation technology. But these changes did not bring to the Cham only positive results; they also brought with them many dangers including conflict with the Khmer majority group due to unpredictable and broad reconfiguration of Cham sectarian identity, being linked with Islamic terrorism and being accused of supporting conflict in Southern Thailand. The perennial question of whether the Cham was involved in or had any links with Islamic terrorism is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: The Question of Terrorism

This chapter takes a closer look at Islamic terrorism in Cambodia. It attempts to answer the question of whether Cham committed or participated in Islamic terrorist activities, particularly by linking with regional or global terrorist organizations. In doing so, this chapter looks back at the impact of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States and their impact on the Cham, and the Bali Bombing in October 2002. It then analyzes the repercussions of these two attacks, which started far away and became increasingly closer to Cambodia, and on the Cham people and their image in Cambodia and Thailand. The chapter also looks at the role of the Cham in the southern Thailand conflict and explains why they were linked with this violence as well.

I. Introduction

As shown earlier, the Cham suffered genocide under the Khmer Rouge. In 1979 only 20 *imams* remained out of 100 *imams* who were counted in 1975.⁷⁰⁷ Cham survivors from the Khmer Rouge did not have clear conceptions of their sectarian identity and practices. Since the early 1990s, Cham have been trying to construct and reconstruct their identities. Because of this, they were open to myriad influences from global Muslim communities. In an interview with the *New York Times*, anthropologist Bjorn Blengslis stated:

⁷⁰⁷ Author's interview with Osman Ysa, October 1, 2006.

This country is ripe for Muslim missionaries. They had to start all over again. They had no religious leaders, nothing. They lost almost everything: their script, their rituals, almost all their written materials. They were left with a couple of myths. That's why today a purification movement is so easy. They are very vulnerable, and a lot of people are coming into Cambodia and telling them how to change.⁷⁰⁸

The search for new identities, better knowledge of religious practices, and financial support to develop their communities have left Cham open to influences from Islamic fundamentalism and eventually, as it is feared, Islamic terrorism. Did the Cham engage in terrorism or were they simply accused of such acts?

Here, Islamic revivalism in Cambodia is divided into two periods. First, the 1990s, when revivalism started, saw the proliferation of and set the stage for the next decade. Second, the period from around year 2001 to 2010 was a turbulent period for the Cham as many of the accusations against them with regard to fundamentalism and terrorism were made during this decade. This period saw attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in the United States, the Bali Bombing in 2002, and the rise and fall of southern Thai insurgency and subsequent "terrorist-related" events in Cambodia. After the second period, there has been a stabilization within the community in terms of decreased internal conflict, reduced fear of terrorism, and a willingness to coexist between the TJ and Salafi groups.

⁷⁰⁸ Seth Mydans, "US Fears Islamic Militancy Could Emerge in Cambodia," *The New York Times*, December 22, 2002. Accessed July 2, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/22/world/us-fears-islamic-militancy-could-emerge-in-cambodia.html?pagewanted=1>

II. September 11, 2001

On September 11, 2001, at 9 p.m. Cambodian time, 21-year-old Sayana Ser was in Phnom Penh watching Paula Zhan on CNN broadcasting live footage of World Trade Center towers burning and a passenger airplane crashing into them, which collapsed 30 minutes later, creating thick gray smoke enveloping lower Manhathan.⁷⁰⁹ Even though New York City was far away for her, the sight was hard to believe. Elsewhere in America two passenger airplanes crashed into the ground and the US military headquarters, the Pentagon. Like many people watching TV at the time, Ms. Ser was shocked to see the events being unfolded simultaneously. The United States was being brought into chaos and thousands of people were apparently being killed. Studying at Phnom Penh's National University of Management for a bachelor's degree, she was one of the few Cham in Cambodia who had the opportunity to reach that level of education. For her, New York city was a familiar name although she had never visited it and as a university student she was fairly exposed to global affairs. News of global events hardly reached the majority of rural Cham.

Still a question emerged in her mind: who did this and why? A few days later she saw in the news that a group known as Al Qaeda was responsible for the attacks and its leader was Osama Bin Laden. They were known as Islamic terrorists who used Islam as a political ideology to garner support for their cause and recruit fellow Muslims into terrorism. Osama Bin Laden was based in Afghanistan where Al Qaeda personnel were sheltered by another extremist Islamic militant group called the Taliban, which seven years earlier gained political control of Afghanistan. All of these events seemed

⁷⁰⁹ The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, New York: Norton and Company, 2004.

far away and unconnected to Cambodia, especially for rural Cham. Ms. Ser did not realize that what she saw on TV on September 11, 2001 would have turbulent repercussion on her community in the years to come.

By 2001, Islamic revivalism was in full swing in Cambodia. It had no specific direction and was uncontrollable. Cham leadership did not have a policy on the types and sects of Muslim charitable organizations coming to Cambodia. Many Cambodians saw foreigners as generous people who could contribute to building their society by bringing knowledge and funding. Thus, foreign Muslim teachers were generally seen as benevolent, knowledgeable in Islam, and sometimes the source of funding. They were welcome by the Cham whenever they came and wherever they were from. These foreign Muslim teachers and preachers freely visited the country and traveled between Cham communities in Cambodia to propagate the versions of Islam in which they believed.

After September 11, however, it seemed that apprehension began to take hold. Several media articles started to appear criticizing the undirected ways in which the Cham were reviving their faith after years of civil war. The Cham were also aware of the way some Buddhist majority Khmer traditionally viewed them and the latest events would deepen such a view: apprehension, discrimination and lack of understanding from the Khmer. They began taking every possible opportunity to differentiate themselves from the terrorists, to condemn them, to share grievances with foreign Muslims against terrorism, sympathize with those Muslims caught in the US war on terror, and seek the government's trust in their loyalty to Cambodia. Several Cham leaders emerged and provided their opinions.

Ismael Osman, Under Secretary of State of the Ministry of Cults and Religions, said: “Unlike some Muslim followers in other Southeast Asian nations, Cambodia’s Cham would not protest US-led military actions against the terrorists and those who harbored them. We need to find a way to explain to Cambodian Islamic people so that they understand that the US only targets international terrorism organizations, not followers of the Islamic religion.”⁷¹⁰ Ahmad Yahya said: “This issue should not be connected to Cambodian Islamic people. If the US fights, it will fight in Afghanistan, not in Cambodia.”⁷¹¹ Osman Hassan said, “Cham are now focused on giving their children an education and on building businesses, rather than on political activism. Many in rural areas are unaware of international events.”⁷¹² After the US began its war in Afghanistan and the War on Terror in general, several Muslim groups in Southeast Asia and other regions protested against the attack on Afghan targets and against what they believed to be a war against Muslims. But the Cham remained silent. No anti-US rally took place.

Sos Kamry, leader of the Highest Council for Islamic Religious Affairs, stated, “I think that Khmer Muslims would rather be peaceful than create problems, because they are poor and education is still at too low a level for understanding world issues.”⁷¹³ It is ironic to see a lack of action and opinion from Cham who had been believed to receive strong support from transnational and international Muslim institutions and Islamic government agencies. If Cham were closely linked with

⁷¹⁰ Kay Kimsong and Matt Reed, “Islamic Cambodians Stand behind the US,” *The Cambodia Daily*, October 3, 2001.

⁷¹¹ Ibid.

⁷¹² Jon Bugge and Richard Sine, “A Peaceful People: Why Cambodia’s Cham Communities Reject Islamic Extremism,” *The Cambodia Daily*, October 27-28, 2001.

⁷¹³ Vong Sokheng, “Cham Muslims Accept US Stand,” *The Phnom Penh Post*, October 12, 2001.

global Islam, they should have been more active in voicing their concerns against US military action.

When the US and its Western allies began the war in Afghanistan in early October 2001, Prime Minister Hun Sen laid down a clear position of the Cambodian Government on the matter. He, too, differentiated Muslims from Islamic terrorists, condemned the September 11 attacks, and offered moral support for the war effort. The following were his key points:⁷¹⁴

- Support US-led attacks against Afghanistan
- Support overall anti-terrorist measures
- Willing to provide assistance in de-mining efforts of a future Kabul government
- Terrorism is not Islam, Christianity or Buddhism.

On November 5, 2001 the Ministry of Interior banned the wearing of Bin Laden T-shirts, saying the ban was in line with Cambodia's anti-terrorism policy and that wearing such T-shirts encouraged potential terrorists. Imported from Thailand, the T-shirts were later confiscated from clothing and souvenir shops; no criminal charges were filed against the owners.⁷¹⁵ One of the reasons for this was that Cambodia was trying to show strong support for the US Government in its fight against terrorism, one of the few issues on which the two governments agreed. Such support would prove beneficial in 2003 when both Cham and interantional Muslims were arrested in

⁷¹⁴ "Cambodian PM slams his minister over directive to Muslims," *AFP*, October 12, 2001.

⁷¹⁵ "Cambodia Bans Bin Laden T-Shirts," *Reuters News*, November 5, 2001.

Cambodia and the US employed a “persistent presence” policy⁷¹⁶ with the Cham. In supporting the US, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) was careful not to upset the Cham community in any unnecessary way.

In an apparent lack of communication, the Ministry of Cults and Religions took a more extreme stance against both the Cham and foreign Muslims. On October 2, 2001, it issued a circular laying down key prohibitions against the Cham. The approximate messages of the circular were as follows:⁷¹⁷

- Seek government approval when meeting with foreign Muslims.
- Seek government approval when organizing religious meetings.
- Cham must not demand anything that could create social and public disorder.
- Cham are not allowed to provide shelter to and cooperate with foreign Muslims who distribute religious propaganda.
- Cham are not allowed to assist foreign Muslims suspected of having terrorist links.
- Cham are prohibited from using mosques as venues for political gatherings.
- Offices of foreign Muslims should raise only the Cambodian flag.

One intent of this circular was apparently to prevent the Cham from holding anti-US rallies. It was also reported that US embassy officials met with Chea Savoeun, Minister of Cults and Religions, before the circular was released. However, it was not certain how much input the ministry received from those officials. It seemed that the

⁷¹⁶ “Cambodia’s Vulnerable Muslim Minority: Embassy Efforts to Bridge the Gaps,” US Embassy Phnom Penh, January 5, 2010.

⁷¹⁷ “Cambodian PM Withdraws Statement Aimed at Muslims after US Attacks,” *Agence France-Presse*, October 6, 2001.

circular was released too soon and that Prime Minister Hun Sen's cabinet, which had been supportive of Cham development and was taking a careful positive stance toward the Cham, had not been consulted.

Born in Kampong Cham's Stung Trang district just opposite Krauch Chhmar across the Mekong River where many Cham live, Prime Minister Hun Sen has always been in close contact with the Cham. He viewed September 11 as a burden on the Cham and that the circular created unreasonable pressure on them. He immediately withdrew the circular on October 5, 2001.

Hun Sen said: "Muslims in many places are demonstrating in front of US embassies. Even in Thailand, there were Muslims staging demonstrations. There is none in Cambodia. Thus it is not right to stir up something. Events are taking place somewhere else and we are putting pressure on Cham in Cambodia who seriously suffered in the Pol Pot regime."⁷¹⁸ Hun Sen was suggesting it was unnecessary to ban Cham gatherings or rallies in Cambodia. But the circular itself, with its restrictions on Islam and its followers, Hun Sen believed, could lead to demonstrations. He said, "Muslims in some areas were worried that this [circular] was the policy of the government and also the policy of Prime Minister Hun Sen. This was too dangerous. I expected demonstrations to occur in Phnom Penh very soon. So I had to put down the circular." Although he took a strong stance against terrorism, he emphasized that his policy did not mean the government was against its Cham population. Hun Sen stressed, "Do not put Muslims in Cambodia in the same package as Muslims in other countries. Our support against terrorism does not mean opposition to any race or

⁷¹⁸ "Hun Sen on Anti-terrorism Support, Cambodian Muslims' Right to Hold Meetings," *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 12 October 2001.

religion” Other government officials quoted the following reasons for Prime Minister Hun Sen to annul the directive from the Ministry of Cults and Religions:⁷¹⁹

- The statement does not agree with the RGC’s position on ethnic minorities.
- The Cham are fully integrated into Cambodian society.
- The Cham have no reason to support international terrorism and they only ask to live in peace.⁷²⁰
- The RGC does not oppose religious activities.
- The statement could negatively affect Cambodia’s relations with friendly Muslim countries.
- The statement was unconstitutional and an attack on freedom of expression.
- The statement puts too much pressure on Muslim compatriots.

III. The Bali Bombing and Om al-Qura Organization

September 11 brought the Cham in the focus of global anti-terrorism and by their reaction, to the attention of the Cambodian Government, and became a topic of discussion among Cambodians in general. The Bali bombing on October 12, 2002 in Indonesia, which killed over 202 tourists, brought global Islamic extremism and terrorism even closer to Cambodia. This had a much stronger impact on the Cham than September 11. In September 2002 after receiving intelligence reports from interrogating detained Asian terrorists that Cambodia was one the countries to be

⁷¹⁹ “Hun Sen Annuls Ban on Anti-U.S. Rally by Cambodian Muslims,” *Associated Press*, October 6, 2001.

⁷²⁰ “Hun Sen on Anti-terrorism Support, Cambodian Muslims’ Right to Hold Meetings,” *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 12 October 2001.

targeted for terrorist attacks, the US, British and Australian embassies were closed for two weeks and on heightened security afterwards.⁷²¹ The Bali bombing confirmed such reports.

It then became relevant for the Cham to share their grief with families of the Bali bombing victims. A week after the bombing, a group of a few hundred Cham gathered for a Friday prayer at Norul Eshan mosque in Russey Keo district, Phnom Penh; prayers were dedicated to the victims of the bombing and participants asked Allah to help the families of the victims in this period of grief. At the same time Cham used the opportunity to differentiate themselves from and condemn the terrorists.

Mohammad Ali Musad, a local Cham in Russey Keo district who went to Mecca twice, said: "Islam does not allow them to do that. Although they are Muslims as we are, we do not support them. They are Muslims, but they use Islam to do the recent tragedy, to kill people, to build up turmoil in the world. We do not support them."⁷²²

After the US commenced Operation Iraqi Freedom, Cham did the same.

Approximately 300 Cham gathered at a Phnom Penh mosque to pray for innocent Iraqis caught between Iraqi troops and US-led forces.⁷²³

Meanwhile, Cambodia was to host the Eighth ASEAN Summit on November 3, 2002. A main question was raised regarding Cambodia's ability to provide security for heads of state and dignitaries from 15 countries. Cambodia had by then been seen as a country lacking control on the illegal use of weapons, having a porous border and a

⁷²¹ Phann Ana and Kevin Doyle, "Cham Muslims Pray for Victims of Bali Attack," *The Cambodia Daily*, October 18, 2002; "Cambodian Security Seen Sorely Tested by ASEAN Summit," *AFP*, October 20, 2002.

⁷²² Phann Ana and Kevin Doyle, "Cham Muslims Pray for Victims of Bali Attack," *The Cambodia Daily*, October 18, 2002.

⁷²³ "Muslims Pray for Iraqis," *The Cambodia Daily*, March 29-30, 2003.

culture of impunity, leading to what foreign diplomats believed to be a gaping hole in its security. However, Cambodian officials tried their best to assure foreign diplomats that they were able to ensure the security of all involved in the summit. Despite concerns, Cambodian officials had always been confident in providing security in the country. Foreign Minister Hor Namhong came out to silence the fear, “I can tell you that we are confident that at the summit there will be no problems, and there will be no security problems during the summit.”⁷²⁴ The summit went smoothly without incident, and adopted a Declaration on Terrorism condemning terrorist attacks, particularly the Bali bombing.

Hambali brought global Islamic terrorism to Cambodia and the Cham, at least indirectly. Hambali, the man believed to be responsible for the Bali bombing, was indeed in Cambodia around the time of the Summit. He was arrested in Ayuthiya, Thailand, on August 14, 2003 after crossing the border from Cambodia. He was believed by US intelligence to be hiding or planning attacks in Cambodia, with collaboration from local and foreign Muslims in the country, in late 2002 and early 2003. Hambali is currently being held at the US incarceration center at Guantanamo.⁷²⁵

Islamic terrorism arrived in Cambodia, at least symbolically, when the Om al-Qura religious school in Kandal province was raided and closed on May 28, 2003 under charges of having links with Islamic terrorism, particularly Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Two Thai and one Egyptian teachers were arrested and charged with attempting to commit acts of terrorism in Cambodia. All foreign teachers and their dependents at

⁷²⁴ “Cambodian Foreign Minister Assures Security for ASEAN Meet,” *AFP*, October 29, 2002.

⁷²⁵ United States Department of State, “Country Reports on Terrorism 2008,” April 2009.

the school were asked to leave Cambodia within 72 hours.⁷²⁶ Cambodian teachers became unemployed, and all the students had to go home and their education suspended. In light of this accusation, the Om al-Qura organization was outlawed in Cambodia and thus its other school in Kampong Chhnang province was also closed. The property of the organization was confiscated and handed over to the Cambodian Government pending new rulings on allocating them. Unlike other schools, Om al-Qura was a Salafi organization based in Saudi Arabia. This swift action of the Cambodian Government was reportedly based on information provided by the US Government.⁷²⁷

Two weeks later, on June 12, 2003, another arrest was made. This time it was a Cambodian Muslim named Sman Ismael who was working at Chaom Chao orphanage, west of Phnom Penh, for links with Hambali.⁷²⁸ It also happened that Chaom Chao orphanage was a school supported by RIHS, a Salafi organization based in Kuwait. It was reported that evidence for this arrest was also provided by the US Government, although the evidence was never revealed to the public or in any future Cambodian court hearings.

Terrorist Trial

More than six months after the arrests of the four suspects, a trial date was set for February 2, 2004. A judge from the Phnom Penh Municipal Court said that the reason for the delay was that there was insufficient evidence to support the charges against

⁷²⁶ “Hun Sen Appealed to Cham Muslims for Calm after Arrests,” *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, May 29, 2003.

⁷²⁷ Phann Ana Ana and Kevin Doyle, “3 Muslims Arrested on Terror Charges,” *The Cambodia Daily*, May 29, 2003.

⁷²⁸ Bill Bainbridge and Vong Sokheng, “Terrorist Arrested,” *The Phnom Penh Post*, June 20, 2003; Suy Se, “Fourth Alleged Jemaah Islamiyah Member Arrested in Cambodia,” *AFP*, June 12, 2003.

the suspects. The judge said he had sent requests to the government and the US embassy to provide more evidence.⁷²⁹ In fact, the court hearing occurred on February 27, 2004. But it was adjourned without any meaningful deliberation. Defense lawyer Kao Sophea walked out of the courtroom because the judges refused to read out the article of law under which his clients were charged. He said his clients had been charged with international terrorism, but the article under which they were charged with was Article 2 of the 1992 Law on Terrorism pertaining to kidnapping and illegal detention.⁷³⁰ By this time the press began to criticize the process for lacking evidence and muddled proceedings. Six local human rights NGOs complained that the suspects were not being treated fairly. The men were being held without trial for eight months.⁷³¹

The Phnom Penh Municipal Court held another trial on December 30, 2004. There, the judges handed down a verdict that immediately released the Egyptian teacher Mohammad Khadir Ali, but sentenced to life imprisonment the two Thai and one Cambodian teachers: Abdul Azi Haji Chiming, Mohammad Yalaludin Mading and Sman Ismael.⁷³² Reactions from Cham community included disbelief, shock and a sense of injustice, although they would express this in a discreet and polite manner.⁷³³ Pech Solin, who had been a principal of the secular education program at the former Om al-Qura school, said: "It is a good judgment [that the Egyptian was released] but it is not good enough as innocent people are still in prison. The court should

⁷²⁹ Phann Ana, "Trial Date Set for Suspected Islamic Militants," *The Cambodia Daily*, January 14, 2004.

⁷³⁰ Phann Ana and Kevin Doyle, "Trial of Jemaah Islamiyah Suspects Suspended," *The Cambodia Daily*, February 28-29, 2004.

⁷³¹ Sam Rith, "NGOs Probe Jemaah Islamiyah Case," *The Phnom Penh Post*, March 12, 2004.

⁷³² Phann Ana and Lee Berthiaume, "Cham Decry Verdict, Call Trial a Show," *The Cambodia Daily*, December 31, 2004.

⁷³³ "Cambodian Muslims React to Arrest of Suspected Jemaah Islamiyah Members," *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, May 30, 2003.

investigate more seriously. If it does, it would find out they are not guilty. Many Muslims in my community are not happy with the verdict and the way the trial was conducted. They believed the trial lacked any evidence.”⁷³⁴ Defense lawyer Kao Sopha described the verdict as unacceptable and he planned to help his clients appeal, which he did on January 12, 2004.⁷³⁵

Four years later on March 12, 2008, the Supreme Court held a trial in which it upheld life sentences for Sman Ismael, Abdul Azi Haji Chiming and Mohammad Yalaludin Mading. A five-judge panel ruled that the three helped Hambali to plot attacks against the British embassy and UNICEF office in Phnom Penh. The defense lawyer, however, described the decision as “unacceptable” for two main reasons. First, the Court did not hear any witness testimony to prove that the three were conspiring with Hambali or international extremists. Second, the defense lawyer said the Court used only a piece of paper provided by the US Embassy to prove guilt.⁷³⁶ Human right groups based in Thailand criticized the closed court proceedings and alleged the conviction was based only on evidence provided by the United States.⁷³⁷

The wives of the two Thai convicts had been following the case for five years. After the Supreme Court verdict they planned to ask the Cambodian Government to allow their husbands to serve their sentences in Thailand, from where they would request a royal pardon,⁷³⁸ and sent written pleas to US embassy in Bangkok, Thai Princess

⁷³⁴ Phann Ana and Lee Berthiaume, “Cham Decry Verdict, Call Trial a Show,” *The Cambodia Daily*, December 31, 2004.

⁷³⁵ Phann Ana, “Trial Date Set for Suspected Islamic Militants,” *The Cambodia Daily*, January 14, 2004.

⁷³⁶ “Court Upholds Life Term for Islamic Militants,” *AFP*, March 21, 2008.

⁷³⁷ “Where Are They Now? Two Thai Muslims Convicted in Cambodia on Terrorism Charges in 2003 Back Home in Yala,” US Embassy Bangkok, October 5, 2009.

⁷³⁸ “Court Upholds Life Term for Islamic Militants,” *AFP*, March 21, 2008.

Sirindhorn and vice-governor Grisada.⁷³⁹ It seemed their pleas were heard. In early 2009 Thai Foreign Minister Kasit sent a request to the RGC and the King to consider clemency for the two Thais. In July 2009 the two Thai nationals were quietly returned to Thailand. The release was also part of a prisoner exchange agreement between Cambodia and Thailand. The two were held for questioning for two weeks in Bangkok and Yala province before they were released to join their families. Thai authorities had no grounds to charge them for offenses in Thailand. Princess Sirindhorn also intervened in the release of the two. Both men are now teaching in the private Islamic school where they worked before going to Cambodia.⁷⁴⁰

As for Sman Ismael, the future looks bleak. Apart from sympathetic comments among Cham and the press, there has been no action to assist his release. One of the author's informants who is a member of the Salafi group admitted that Sman Ismael met Hambali in Cambodia and helped him in different ways, perhaps including providing or finding short-term accommodation for Hambali and other logistical support. But the main point was, the informant claimed, Sman Ismael who was his teacher at Chaom Chao, did not know that the person he assisted was the Hambali, a high-ranking member of JI and responsible for the Bali bombing. Since the two Thais who had been charged with the same crimes in Cambodia are now free in Thailand, Sman Ismael should similarly be released in Cambodia.

The whole saga of terrorism trials created a bad image for the United States, especially among the Cham. The media accused the United States of being hypocritical in this case. On the one hand, it has been implementing projects in

⁷³⁹ "Where Are They Now? Two Thai Muslims Convicted in Cambodia on Terrorism Charges in 2003 Back Home in Yala," US Embassy Bangkok, October 5, 2009.

Cambodia to build a strong respect for human rights and the rule of law that are the foundation for democracy. But on the other, when it came to anti-terrorism, particularly the trials of the three suspects, the US seemed to turn a blind eye to the rule of law.⁷⁴¹ Evidence to support the case was insufficient and the proceedings were irregular.

Marriage Tie

It was reported that one of the few techniques used by Hambali and possibly his colleagues to gain the trust and support of local Muslims was marriage. Sman Ismael spent three years studying Islam in a madrasa in southern Thailand, where he met Ibrahim, who intelligence reports alleged was a JI operative accompanying Hambali during at least part of his stay in Cambodia. On one of his visits to Cambodia, Sman Ismael introduced Ibrahim to his sister Sman Khat Ti Yah, who was living in Kampot province.⁷⁴² With the provision of some money, the family agreed to marry Sman Khat Ti Yah to Ibrahim, who it seemed they all knew almost nothing about, apart from being a friend of Sman Ismael.⁷⁴³ It is important to note that marrying a daughter to a foreign man was at that time a normal affair. Khmer, Chinese and Cham alike married their daughters to Cambodian men who have been living overseas for many years, who are locally called *anika chun*, including Westerners, South Koreans and others. The bride's family often knows very little about the background of the men and most of the time, it seemed, the men treated the bride well.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁴¹ Rafael D. Frankel, "Arrests Anger Cambodian Muslims, Anti-Terrorist Drive Seen as Political Game," *The Boston Globe*, July 13, 2003.

⁷⁴² Ethan Plaut and Thet Sambath, "Questions Linger Over Approach to Islamic Terrorism," *The Cambodia Daily*, April 9, 2007.

To the poor and uneducated family of Sman Khat Ti Yah, Ibrahim must have appeared sophisticated, educated and reasonably wealthy, and thus an attractive choice for their daughter. Sman Khat Ti Yah said, “I don’t know anything about him. Maybe I don’t want him anymore.” She said Ibrahim went away in late 2002. Police said, “The family is ignorant, they did not know much about the personal background of the groom. The poor family was hooked by a small amount of money.”⁷⁴⁴ But police believed Sman Ismael was in Cambodia with Hambali, Ibrahim and another operative named Zaid to plan an attack, and that he should have known what the marriage meant. If Sman Ismael was the first Cambodian Muslim to have been persuaded to join JI, the JI’s approach to reach him was very strong: providing close support and teaching during a vulnerable and homesick period overseas; and establishing unbreakable marriage tie. But what was Sman Ismael’s motive for such action? It is reported that JI had a plan to establish an Islamic caliphate in Southeast Asia spanning Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, southern Vietnam, East Timor, the Philippines and Cambodia.⁷⁴⁵ Did Sman Ismael aspire to such a caliphate? There has been no evidence to suggest this despite the fact that Sman Ismael was already convicted.

An August 2003 report by the International Crisis Group, “Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged but Still Dangerous,”⁷⁴⁶ claimed that JI used school and marriage as a strategy to recruit new members and keep their allegiance. The report stated, “The JI network is held together not just by ideology and training but also by

⁷⁴³ Phann Ana and Kevin Doyle, “Putting Down Roots: Radicals Try to Strengthen Ties in Cambodia,” *The Cambodia Daily*, September 13-14, 2003.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁵ “Terrorism in Southeast Asia,” CRS Report for Congress, August 13, 2004; “Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged but Still Dangerous,” International Crisis Group Report No. 63, August 26, 2003.

an intricate network of marriages that at times makes it seem like a giant extended family.” The report added, “In many cases, senior JI leaders arranged the marriages of their subordinates to their own sisters or sister-in-law to keep the network secure.” In this scenario, by marrying Sman Khat Ti Yah, Ibrahim could stay in Cambodia longer and obtain a forged or legal Cambodian passport which attracted less attention than a passport from a Muslim-predominant country in the post-Bali period.

However, Sman Ismael’s family continued to deny that he knowingly took part in JI and assisted their operatives in Cambodia. Sman Ismael was a hardworking student. He completed 9th grade in Kampot province before coming to Phnom Penh to continue his studies. He later received a scholarship to study in southern Thailand in a madrasa for three years⁷⁴⁷ before returning to Cambodia as a pious Islamic teacher at Chaom Chao orphanage. Some reports claimed that he was a TJ follower, but Chaom Chao orphanage was run by Kuwait’s RIHS, which was a Salafi institution. Hoping education would raise the family’s living conditions, his family tried their best to find money to support him in southern Thailand. Sman Khat Ti Yah said, “My mother sent him there and each year sold a cow to send him money. Neighbors helped him too. We wanted him to do well in his studies. My mother still owes some debt for sending him to study. The debt has not been paid back. My mother and grandmother cried everyday.” Although she became a widow because of the marriage her brother brought to the village, Sman Khat Ti Yah was not angry with him. She said, “I can

⁷⁴⁶ “Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged but Still Dangerous,” International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 63, August 26, 2003.

⁷⁴⁷ Phann Ana and Kevin Doyle, “Putting Down Roots: Radicals Try to Strengthen Ties in Cambodia,” op. cit.

say this arrest is completely wrong. We don't believe he is like what they say. The allegation is unbelievable.”⁷⁴⁸

IV. Links with Southern Thailand: Islamic Militancy or Scapegoat?

The Cham were not only linked to Islamic terrorism in the mid-2000s; they were also linked with Islamic militancy in southern Thailand, which started to intensify in early 2004. In the past several years there has been a sharp increase in exporting Cambodian workers overseas to countries in Southeast Asia, the Far East, and even the Middle East. From October 2009 to October 2010,⁷⁴⁹ there were a total of 122,731 migrant workers in four countries: 94,564 in Thailand,⁷⁵⁰ 19,588 in Malaysia, 9,082 in South Korea and 97 in Japan. According to the Minister of Labor, on average an unskilled worker could earn between USD 250 and 300 per month in Thailand, USD 600 in South Korea, and USD 900 in Japan. Many Cham took part in this outflow of labor. Being Muslims they preferred working in southern Thailand and Malaysia to South Korea or Japan, although these countries pay less. Their main destinations in Thailand are usually Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces bordering the northern Malaysian state of Kelantan, which is a traditional Cham-Malay destination for work and study. However, in 1999 approximately 10,000 Cham were deported back from Malaysia.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ Chun Sakada, “Minister Faces Assembly on Migrant Workers,” VOA, October 21, 2010.

⁷⁵⁰ A report by the *Cambodia Daily* on Monday 16, 2011 quoted Mr. Andy Hall of the Human Rights and Development Foundation in Bangkok as saying that there are currently (May 2011) 30,000 registered Cambodian workers. On the same day, the *Phnom Penh Post* quoted a different figure from the International Organization for Migration, putting the number of registered Cambodian workers in Thailand at 103,826 by February 2011.

⁷⁵¹ “Illegal Workers to Be Repatriated from Malaysia,” BBC Monitoring Service: Asia-Pacific, 29 June 1999.

The three border provinces of Patani, Yala and Narathiwat became part of Siam in 1909. This region was approximately the size of the former Malay sultanate of Patani. Despite Thailand's efforts to instill Buddhist elements in the area, it is still dominated by Malay-Muslims who make up 80% of the population.⁷⁵² Bangkok's assimilation policy has given little attention to local culture, history and religion. Thus, it has never been successful in incorporating the region into a coherent Thai state and society. Since its inclusion into the Kingdom of Siam in the early 20th century, the region has experienced on and off resistance and conflict. Two notable events were the Dusun-yor incident (April 26-28, 1948) in which hundreds of Muslims were killed in Narathiwat and subsequent arrest of prominent Islamic cleric Haji Sulong by the Thai police. Haji Sulong never returned.

A number of resistance groups emerged in the 1960s, including the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO) and Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN). Islamic militants aspired to create an "Islamic State of Patani." In the 1980s and 1990s the conflict subsided due to the successful engagement policy of Thai Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanond (1980-1988). He provided amnesty to jailed militants, set up new government structure, granted political privileges to Malay-Muslim elites, and provided development funds in the area.⁷⁵³ He also set up a body to administer the region called the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC), giving it some degree of autonomy.

⁷⁵² Imtiyaz Yusuf, "Faces of Islam in Southern Thailand," East-West Center Washington, March 2007.

⁷⁵³ Ibid., p. 29.

Since early 2004 the situation in southern Thailand has deteriorated. The conflict has killed more than 3,000 people on both sides, with no end in sight for the foreseeable future. Several factors contributed to this upsurge:⁷⁵⁴ international Islamic inspiration and the war in Iraq, poverty and under-development, change in government policy toward the south, deterioration of human rights, and the war on drugs. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's administration (2001-2005) made a number of key errors regarding southern politics. Thaksin dissolved the political arrangements set up by Prem Tinsulanond and put in a police force in charge of security of the southern provinces, which was highly unpopular. The International Crisis Group reported: "Two of the most significant [reasons] are the disbanding of key government institutions and a human rights deterioration leading to a loss of faith in the rule of law. The fear and resentment created by arbitrary arrests and police brutality have been compounded by government failure to give victims and their families justice. This feeds into a well of historical grievance, which can be manipulated into sympathy and support for militant groups."⁷⁵⁵

Amidst the failures to suppress and resolve the conflict, a few members of the Thai Government attempted to internationalize the conflict, claiming there was support from militant Muslims outside Thailand who provided fighters, military training, weapons and ammunition. Two of the reasons for the Thais' suspicions of international involvement were the sophistication of fighting tactics and the more sophisticated bombs used by insurgents.⁷⁵⁶ In July 2005, retired army general Kitti Rattanachaya asserted that at least seven Indonesian Muslims had provided military

⁷⁵⁴ "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad," International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 98, May 18, 2005.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

training to Muslim insurgents in the south. JI was thought to be involved in the Southern Thai conflict as a result of suppression of the group in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. The confession of a Singaporean JI member Arifin bin Ali, alias John Wong Ah Hung, implicated three Thai Muslims in Narathiwat and Yala provinces. Two of the men were arrested in 2003 but because of lack of evidence beyond the confession, the Bangkok Criminal Court released the three in 2005.⁷⁵⁷ Fighters from South Asia were also believed to be involved.

Since 2004 Cham traveling to southern Thailand to seek work or who cross southern Thai border checkpoints to Malaysia have also been accused of helping or joining southern Thai insurgents. In May 2004, when approximately 50 Cham students left an Islamic school in Patani province and the Thai authorities failed to track them, they were suspected of joining insurgents in a recent raid of an army camp in Narathiwat province. Thai police quickly made a link. One of them was quoted as saying, “Muslim extremists in the South might have links with international terrorists. Some religious teachers from Pondok schools in southern border provinces were recently caught in Cambodia by western intelligence who suspected they might have connections with the Al Qaeda terrorist group.”⁷⁵⁸ He was referring to the arrests of suspected JI members in Cambodia in 2003. It seemed at this point, one accusation of a Cham being involved in Islamic terrorism followed another.

The Thais’ suspicion of international involvement in the southern conflict was reinforced by the implementation of a policy under which the Thai Government

⁷⁵⁶ Neil J. Melvin, “Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency,” SIPRI Policy Paper No. 20, September 2007, p. 24.

⁷⁵⁷ “Thailand’s Emergency Decree: No Solution,” International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 105, November 18, 2005, p. 21.

ordered raids on schools and mosques and shut down several Islamic schools in Yala and Patani. Many Cham students in these schools were forced to return home.⁷⁵⁹

Returning students said the Thai authorities made it difficult for them to reapply for visas to return, or for new students to study in the south. The Thai embassy denied this. While conducting strict screenings and checks of 100 Cham heading to the south in early May 2004, the Thai newspaper *The Nation* reported that an Islamic cleric told a Cham about the creation of an “Islamic State of Patani,” where Muslims can live and work freely.⁷⁶⁰ Strict monitoring processes were put in place to check Cham crossing into Thailand, even when they had proper travel documents. Such screenings usually involved taking extra photos of Muslims, photocopying passports, and asking detailed questions about the journey. In some cases their fingerprints were taken.

Ahmad Yahya conceded, “Lots of Cham are going every day across Thailand to the south and to Malaysia. They go to study, to work; some are legal, some are not. But the Muslims in Cambodia do not support that fight for independence.”⁷⁶¹ Some Cham overstayed the tourist, work or student visas they had used to get into Thailand. But according to people familiar with Cham traveling to Thailand, they stayed in Thailand just to find jobs.

By May 2005, up to 600 people had died during the violent unrest in southern Thailand. During this period a Thai official at the border checkpoint at Poi Pet reported that more than a hundred Cham a day had crossed the border into Thailand, about ten times more than usual. The official said the Cham’s reasons for going were to visit their relatives and traveling further to Malaysia to seek religious education.

⁷⁵⁸ “Violence in the South: Security Fears over Cambodian Muslims,” *The Bangkok Post*, May 2, 2004.

⁷⁵⁹ Luke Hunt and Michael Hayes, “Cham Students Caught up in Thailand’s Troubled South,” *The Phnom Penh Post*, May 7, 2004.

⁷⁶⁰ “Cambodian Muslims Seek Promised Land,” *The Nation*, May 3, 2004.

The official said, “We fear that these Cham Muslims might have been lured by the southern insurgents to take part in their activities.”⁷⁶²

In July 2005, *Thai Rat* newspaper quoted a Thai intelligence source that “Cham Muslims were sent to live by Islamic clerics along border areas between Patani and Narathiwat provinces. The group in charge of the exodus of the Cham Muslims is associated with insurgent movements operating in the three southern border provinces. Thai Buddhists are being harassed and forced to leave their villages. According to their plan, Muslim immigrants from Cambodia, Burma, Malaysia and Indonesia will be resettled in Patani province in preparation for an Islamic state of Patani in the future.”⁷⁶³ In the same month, Thai authorities conveyed their suspicions to Cambodian authorities that the Cham might be involved in the Thai Muslim separatist movement.⁷⁶⁴

In November 2005, nearly 700 Cham crossed into Thailand.⁷⁶⁵ Among them, 86 Cham (36 women) who were detained by Thai military officials from the Southern Border Provinces Peacebuilding Command, even when they had proper travel documents. Thai border officials had already permitted them to cross, but the military detained them saying that they provided conflicting information about their reasons for coming to Thailand.⁷⁶⁶ Vann Math, president of the Cambodian Islamic Association, intervened, “I ask the Thai Government to clearly examine this case, and if they find that the group is involved in violence in the Thai south, let the government

⁷⁶¹ Luke Hunt and Michael Hayes, “Cham Students Caught up in Thailand’s Troubled South,” op. cit.

⁷⁶² “Cambodian Muslims Flocked to Thailand’s Troubled South,” *THAINS*, May 23, 2005.

⁷⁶³ “Cambodian Muslims Migrate to Southern Thailand,” *Thai Rat*, July 1, 2005.

⁷⁶⁴ “Thai Police Ask Cambodian Forces to Help Monitor Muslims Crossing Border,” *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, July 20, 2005.

use the law against them. If they find the group is not involved, please let them go.”⁷⁶⁷

They were later released and followed closely on their way to southern Thailand. A principal from a religious school in Pattani province explained that no more than 1,000 Cham were studying in the three provinces and that they came because there were few Islamic schools in Cambodia and that many Cham intellectuals had been killed during the Khmer Rouge regime. He added that Cham had been coming to study in southern Thailand for more than a century.⁷⁶⁸

In September 2006, 80 Cham (51 women) were arrested at the Aranyaprathet immigration checkpoint for attempting to transport medicines and potentially explosive materials into Thailand. The medicine was found to be mostly antibiotics.⁷⁶⁹ It is important to note here that Cambodian people, Muslims and Buddhists alike, usually bring medicine with them while traveling. After years of war which destroyed infrastructure and created shortages of basic necessities, Cambodians have learned to become self-sufficient when making long journey across provinces and between far-flung villages, and even to more developed countries. This habit seems to explain the Cham carrying antibiotics to southern Thailand, which they would use for personal treatment while working for long periods there. The suspected explosive material was two kilograms of potassium nitrate, which could be used to improvise a homemade bomb, but is also used for fermenting fish and meat to preserve protein. Thai authorities continued to observe the movements of the Cham as

⁷⁶⁵ “Concern Raised Regarding Cambodian Muslims Coming to Thailand,” *THAINS*, November 30, 2005.

⁷⁶⁶ “Some 86 Cambodian Muslims Detained in Thailand,” *AFP*, November 27, 2005.

⁷⁶⁷ “Muslim Leader Urges Thailand to Release Cambodian Muslims,” *AFP*, November 28, 2005.

⁷⁶⁸ “Defense Minister Denies Thai Insurgency Linked to Cambodian Muslims,” *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, November 28, 2005.

⁷⁶⁹ “Thai Authorities Arrest 80 Cambodian Muslims with Explosive Substance,” *The Nation*, September 11, 2006.

potential collaborators with Islamic insurgents, as more than 1,700 people had died in the conflict since 2004.⁷⁷⁰

On May 17, 2007, General Watanachai Chaimuanwong, senior security advisor to the Thai Prime Minister, told reporters that “intelligence reports pointed to specialists from Indonesia and Cambodia training rebels in southern Thailand, but the government cannot prove or confirm their nationalities because we don’t have clear evidence yet.”⁷⁷¹ Cambodian government spokesman Khieu Kanharith said that Thailand was trying to find a scapegoat for the separatist violence in the south. However, Thailand’s supreme commander General Boonsang Niempradit said that Thai authorities were investigating the case. He said, “As for Cham Muslims entering Thailand, we’re examining what they came here for. Sometimes, we wonder why the numbers of the people entering and leaving the country is not equal.”⁷⁷² However, General Watanachai made more explicit claims. He was quoted as saying, “Even though I do not know where they are, I can say Cambodians with alleged JI links are now in the southern part of Thailand.”⁷⁷³ He also based his fear of Cham’s JI connections on a report that Hambali was in Cambodia before his arrest in Thailand and that three JI suspects were in Cambodian custody.

In 2005, 8,488 Cham entered Thailand through the Poi Pet checkpoint, while only 586 returned. In 2006, 7,270 entered the country, but only 698 returned. In first half of

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁷¹ “No Proof of Foreign Fighters, Thailand Backs away from Previous Claims,” *Today Singapore*, May 22, 2007.

⁷⁷² “Thailand: Claims of Cambodian Muslims in South Being Examined,” *THAINS*, May 24, 2007.

⁷⁷³ “Cambodians in JI Terror Link: Khmer Muslims Joined Insurgents in South,” *The Bangkok Post*, June 9, 2007.

2007, 2,790 entered Thailand and only 266 returned.⁷⁷⁴ General Watanachai was also quoted as saying that some Cham had joined the GMIP (Gurakan Mujahideen Islam Pattani) insurgent group.⁷⁷⁵

General Watanachai's comments sparked an angry rejection by Prime Minister Hun Sen who said that because of Thailand's failure to bring peace to southern Thailand, they started to blame international Muslims. Regarding future relations between Cambodia and Thailand on the issue, Prime Minister Hun Sen set out three points:⁷⁷⁶

- Cambodia respects Thailand's independence and sovereignty.
- Cambodia wishes to appeal to the Thai Government or military leadership to stop internationalizing Thailand's internal affairs through blaming other people including those from Cambodia.
- Cambodia is prepared to negotiate with Thailand at all levels including prime ministerial, foreign ministerial, defense ministerial and interior ministerial, to resolve terrorism issues.

The Prime Minister reiterated his long-term position against terrorism in Cambodia or overseas. He said, "If there are JI terrorists in Cambodia, they would not be allowed to manifest in Thailand. We would eliminate them outright. The question of terrorism is not a separate issue of Thailand, but a problem of Cambodia too."⁷⁷⁷ He added that although Cham were poor, they would not be stupid enough to serve as mercenaries in

⁷⁷⁴ "Cambodians in JI Terror Link: Khmer Muslims Joined Insurgents in South," *The Bangkok Post*, June 9, 2007.

⁷⁷⁵ "JI-Linked Cambodians in Thai Religious Schools," *The Straits Times*, June 10, 2007.

⁷⁷⁶ "Cambodia PM Hits Back at Thai Army over Terror Links, Alleged JI Training," *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, June 11, 2007.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

Thailand. Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong demanded that Thailand present any evidence that Cham were collaborating with Muslim insurgents or were involved with JI.⁷⁷⁸ Since this incident Thailand has not presented any evidence and in fact, backtracked on its claims. Cham continued studying and working in the south or using southern Thailand as a transit point to study or work in Malaysia.

The Reality of Cham Workers in Southern Thailand

The majority of Cham who go to southern Thailand for work or study generally come from Kampong Cham province, which is a Cham hinterland with historical ties to southern Thailand and Malaysia. However, very few Muslims from Battambang have gone to work in Thailand in recent years. The same is true with Muslims from Banteay Meanchey province. This is interesting considering that these two provinces are located near the border with Thailand. Soh Fiyantoyet, provincial *imam* of Battambang, indicated that the main reason is that jobs are available on the farms in Battambang and that the danger and separation from family members is not worth the journey to Thailand. On the other hand, in Preah Sihanouk province, an assistant to the provincial *imam* indicated that almost all villages have family members going to work in southern Thailand and Malaysia.

Ly Mat of Svay Khleang district, Kampong Cham province talked about his experience working as a deckhand on a fishing boat in southern Thailand's Patani province.⁷⁷⁹ He made two trips to Thailand. During the last trip, he spent seven years in southern Thailand. The first time he went was in the early 1990s when he stayed for seven months on a fishing boat. Cham from Cambodia worked in construction,

⁷⁷⁸ "Cambodian Leader Lashes out at Thailand Over Accusations of Insurgency Link," *Associated Press Newswire*, June 11, 2007.

metallurgy, boat repair, and fisheries in the south. He said many Cham worked in fisheries because they are paid more quickly than in construction (it often takes two or three months before a worker is paid). Also Ly Mat chose to work on a boat because he had been a skilled fisherman when he was in Kampong Cham. He indicated that the main reason for Cham workers being in the south was economic. Upon gaining a reasonable amount of money, they would send part of it home or return home themselves as the south was generally characterized by conflict, drug smuggling, lawlessness, prostitution, gang culture, murder and religious militancy. Separation from family members was another consideration for Cham workers.

On his second trip in 2001, Ly Mat went to Thailand alone without paying an agent in Thailand or Cambodia, as he already knew the way. He also did not bring anyone from his village with him, as he was afraid that if they did not return home, villagers would blame him for their safety and at worst he could be accused of kidnapping. Ly Mat bought a short-term tourist ticket that allowed him to cross the Cambodian-Thai border at the Poipet checkpoint. Once in Thailand he bought a minivan ticket to Bangkok, from where he boarded a bus that traveled a day and a night along the Thai coast to Patani province. The whole trip cost him less than 2,000 Baht (USD 60) to complete. The ticket in Poipet was supposed to allow him to shop in a border market, called Long Kleu, on the Thai side, not all the way to Patani. This was one of the ways many workers chose to get themselves to the south, as the visa application process costs a lot of money and an applicant was not guaranteed an employment visa once they applied.

⁷⁷⁹ Author's interview with Ly Mat, August 26, 2010.

Ly Mat had a friend in Patani who he could rely on. His friend was from Stung Trang district in Kampong Cham. He provided Ly Mat with short-term accommodation and food until he could find a job. A few days later, his friend recommended him for a job on his fishing boat. Ly Mat said, in many fishing boats, the workers were Cambodians and most of them were Cham, but the managers (called *chiv*) were mostly Thai Buddhists. On his boat the owner and manager were kind. They stocked their 100-ton fishing boat with meat, fruits and medicines so that all 29 workers on board, all of whom were Cham, were well-fed and healthy. Every three days a supply ship would bring in fresh vegetables and fruits. Sick workers would be sent to hospital via supply ships. Ly Mat said his boat owner would only hire Cham workers, not Khmer because he said the Khmer killed and ate “dogs and cats on the boat,” which the owner hated. The owner did not eat pork, although he was a Buddhist. This is a preference that implies a religious and cultural sensitivity toward workers. Ly Mat was lucky to have worked for a generous owner who he said paid workers regularly, provided bonuses and fed them well. On some boats workers were not so lucky. Some were never paid for their labor. Others found a cruel owner and manager who would kill or abandon them at sea.

Back on land in Patani, Ly Mat talked about drug abuse among his fellow Cham workers, but he said he never knew anyone who was engaged in politics with an Islamic militant group. A few people he knew were addicted to a drug called “Rofi-in,” which is available in liquid form for injection. He said a few people had returned home to Kampong Cham looking skinny, and then fell ill and died; they had used the drug in Thailand. In his village, two people have died from illness after returning from Thailand. Ly Mat said that a worker injected the drug into a blood vessel in his hand

and died the next morning. He said that some people used the drug for entertainment; others did it so that they had “super-human” strength to work the next day.

Ly Mat related that two Cham workers were shot by a boat owner. The two Cham were middlemen who brought workers from Cambodia, but on that occasion they took the money from the boat owner and never provided them any workers. Ly Mat said in Pattani, the police did not want to deal with rich boat owners. Prostitution was also widespread. Women came from northern Thailand, Lao PDR, Vietnam and even Cambodia. As far as he knew, Ly Mat said the women were not smuggled in; they did that on their own will.

When Ly Mat returned home in 2008, he did not have proper documents for being in Thailand. He returned with a group of Cham and Khmer workers. They bribed the Thai soldiers who prepared their paperwork, paying them 3,000 Baht for each returnee. The soldiers took them from Pattani to the border crossing at Poipet and announced their status as deportees. The trip in 2001 was the last trip he made to Thailand. Now 48 years old, Ly Mat wants to lead a quiet and less adventurous life with his wife and children in a house that was built with the money he earned from seven years of hard labor in southern Thailand.

Reasons for Traveling to Malaysia through Southern Thailand

Because of the many dangers in southern Thailand, many Cham prefer to work or study in northern Malaysian states. They would go there as domestic workers, factory workers, plantation workers, small businessmen and manual laborers. According to an informant knowledgeable in arranging for Cham workers to travel overseas, Cham

generally find work in northern Malaysian states. This is especially true in Kelantan where there is a sizable number of Cham who have been living there since the early 1980s through Malaysia's resettlement programs.⁷⁸⁰ The informant added that flying directly to Malaysia through Kuala Lumpur is expensive and sometimes they are denied entry for no clear reason. Airport security is able to identify Cambodian workers, who mostly travel in groups and do not speak English, making it difficult for them to enter even when they have proper documents. Stories of illegal immigration into Kelantan have created extreme caution and discriminatory checking among these immigration officials. Thus for some Cham, going to Malaysia through southern Thailand is the cheaper (costing less than 3,000 Baht) and less complicated choice, although they must travel by car for a day and a night.

Another reason for traveling through southern Thailand is that today there is no visa requirement for tourists to either Thailand or Malaysia. A Cambodian tourist is permitted to stay in Thailand for 14 days without a visa and in Malaysia for 30 days. This makes it convenient for Cham to bring local produce such as fish paste, dried fish, palm sugar and handicraft products from Cambodia to sell to fellow Cambodians in Kelantan. To avoid complications they would stay in Malaysia for 30 days before they returned to Cambodia and prepared for another trip. In addition, going to Malaysia this way would allow them to bring larger amounts of local products than traveling by air. Border checkpoints are generally easier to cross with these products than crossing customs and immigrations at international airports in Malaysia.

⁷⁸⁰ This was discussed in Chapter Five.

V. The Overall Question of Terrorism in Cambodia

In October 2004, the United Nations Security Council's Committee Concerning Sanctions against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban issued a press conference report which stated that: "Cambodia's Muslim community in the south had been discriminated against, and that there had been reports of violence in that part of the country."⁷⁸¹

Cambodia is shaped in a circle and does not have a distinctive southern region as do Vietnam and Thailand. The region of concentration for Cham is in the center of the country, not the south. Even in this region, Cham still form a very small minority. Most importantly, there has been no violence in this part of Cambodia or the southern part of the country. A *Straits Times* journalist correctly stated that this is a "grossly inaccurate" determination of the conflict region in Southeast Asia.⁷⁸² The report was referring to the situation in southern Thailand where conflict and violence were occurring. But this is another example of how the Cham are increasingly seen as a potential source of extremism, even though there had been little proof to confirm that fear, much less Islamic terrorist attacks in or from the country.

Even the RAND Corporation's report on the evolving terrorist threat to Southeast Asia in 2009 did not identify the mistake in the Committee's report. It quoted in full the entire section about Cambodia. The RAND report stated: "In October 2004, the chairman of the UN Security Council 1267, Harold Munoz, warned that Cambodia was in danger of becoming a breeding ground for terrorists due to a lack of counter terrorism capacity. He went on to claim that the country's Muslims had become increasingly radicalized as a result of discrimination, noting several reports of

⁷⁸¹ October 22, 2004, Press briefing by Chairman of the Security Council's 1267 Sanctions Committee.

violence in the nation's south." Five years after a gross mistake by the Committee, the RAND research team in a way continued to perpetuate fear about the Cham, who had not committed a terrorist act or even engaged with terrorism, even the JI group.

A 2006 report on terrorism in Southeast Asia identified Cambodia as the "Wild West" for terrorism. It said, "With poor governance and lax border control the country could become a place where radical teaching, covert training, planning and recruitment occur. The community could easily become a safe haven for regional and international terrorists."⁷⁸³ The report perpetuated the Thai authorities' fear that the Cham had a link with the southern Thai insurgency. The report continued, "Cambodian Muslim youths go to Kelantan in Malaysia and to Pakistan to study Islamic teachings, and Thai authorities have noticed an increase in the number of Cham entering Thailand on their way to the South."⁷⁸⁴

After its initial mistake, the RAND report came to a positive conclusion about the Cham. With the turbulent years of fear against Islamic terrorism in Cambodia already passed, presumably between 2000 and 2009, the report had the benefit of hindsight. It concluded that "In reality however the international terrorist threat in and to the country is minimal and is likely to remain so."⁷⁸⁵ The report continued that there is no evidence to suggest that militant jihadism has taken root in Cambodia. It attributed the absence of terrorist attacks in Cambodia to the RGC, which on the one hand took a

⁷⁸² Verghese Mathews, "Weeding out Terrorist Camps in Cambodia," *The Straits Times*, October 27, 2004.

⁷⁸³ "Terrorism in Southeast Asia: The Threat and Response," Report of an International Conference Organized by the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies and Office of the Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism, April 12-13, 2006, p. 5.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵ Peter Chalk, Angel Rabasa, William Rosenau, and Leanne Piggott, *The Evolving Terrorist Threat to Southeast Asia: A Net Assessment*, RAND National Defense Research Institute, 2009, p. 212.

tough stance against terrorism by cooperating with US and UN anti-terrorism bodies, and on the other forged close ties with the Cham.

Several other documents pointed to Cambodia's propensity toward Islamic terrorism, saying that "Cambodia's Cham live in extreme poverty and have low education levels, high illiteracy rates, and poor health indicators. Cambodia also has porous borders, rampant corruption, easy access to forged documents and black market weapons and weak rule of law."⁷⁸⁶ All of these are "poisonous brew" extremists can easily use to establish roots in Cambodia. Cambodia also has a fledgling banking system⁷⁸⁷ in which terrorist financing can flow into the country undetected. However since 2008 the RGC has put in place a mechanism in which all global finance activity aimed at assistance to the Cham community must go through government inspection.⁷⁸⁸ The question is, will these elements combine to form Islamic terrorism in Cambodia? The answer is that such an outcome is extremely unlikely and many US documents also concluded that the likelihood of Islamic terrorism in Cambodia remains very low.

There are several key factors in Cambodia that prevent the seeds of Islamic militancy from sprouting in the country:

First, genocide against the Cham under the Khmer Rouge and thirty years of war have discouraged Cham from taking up arms again.

⁷⁸⁶ "Cambodia's Vulnerable Muslim Minority: Embassy Efforts to Bridge the Gaps," US Embassy Phnom Penh, January 5, 2010.

⁷⁸⁷ "Engaging Cambodia's Muslim Minority through Dialogue and Diplomacy," US Embassy Phnom Penh, April 29, 2009.

Second, there has been no clear cause for them to be anti-western and anti-US. In fact, in a 2008 study conducted by the American Institutes for Research found that 83% of the Cham had a favorable view of the United States.⁷⁸⁹

Third, since the Khmer Rouge regime, the West is not seen in Cambodia as evil and exploitative, as is the view in some Middle Eastern countries. In the same survey, 89% of the Cambodian people have a favorable view of the United States.

Fourth, the Cham have no aspirations for autonomy within Cambodia or Indochina. The FULRO movement created in the 1960s to liberate Champa and the lower Mekong Delta from Vietnam died down in the early 1990s. Since the genocide and subsequent war, Cham have become tired of armed conflict and any hope of regaining Champa has diminished. The Cham' main aspiration today is developing an ideal political identity that links them with both Cambodia and the global Islamic community, and less with Champa.

Fifth, the Cham have no aspirations for political control of the Cambodian Government. Their main aim today is more active participation in the government. Their political activities have been limited to serving their community.

Sixth, the Cham enjoy freedom of religion, tolerance and acceptance within Cambodian society. Although there is subtle discrimination from among the Khmer and other ethnic groups, such a pattern is often accepted as normal between ethnic groups within a state, the RGC has taken measures to integrate them including

⁷⁸⁸ Osman Hassan Speech in a Conference with Muslim Leaders in 2008.

⁷⁸⁹ "Cambodia's Vulnerable Muslim Minority: Embassy Efforts to Bridge the Gaps," op. cit.

allowing Cham students to wear the *hijab* at school,⁷⁹⁰ creating prayer rooms at the Phnom Penh International Airport,⁷⁹¹ building male and female prayer rooms at the Council of Ministers⁷⁹² and appointing Cham to high-level government positions.⁷⁹³

Seventh, it is generally acknowledged that the Cham community is deeply integrated into mainstream Cambodian society. This might not be entirely true, but it is generally admitted by both the Cham and the Khmer that the Cham have integrated well. Since Sihanouk's creation of the Khmer Islam concept, both Cham and Khmer would like to have a nationalist view that both are the same Khmer people with only religious differences. In Cambodian political discourse, only the word "Khmer Islam" is used rather than the more accurate Cham.

Finally, there are several other factors that superficially could put Cham in the context of terrorism but in fact, do not. Being one of the victims of the Khmer Rouge, there have been no grievances against Cambodians in general. They share a poor standard of living with rural Khmer. Their low educational achievements are also shared with the Khmer, but this last factor is a result of the Cham' own choosing not to participate much in secular education, opting instead for Islamic education. There has been no discriminatory policy against Cham in Cambodia. Cham' global world view has not reached a point where they identify themselves more with the global or the regional than the local. TJ has been active in Cambodia and has probably brought radical thinking into Cambodia but they have been detaching themselves from politics,

⁷⁹⁰ Royal Government of Cambodia, *Circular: Regarding Dress of Khmer Islam Students in Various Educational Institutions*, September 10, 2008.

⁷⁹¹ Brendan Brady and Thet Sambath, "As Muslim Community Grows, So Do Kingdom's Ties to Arab States," *The Phnom Penh Post*, September 4, 2008.

⁷⁹² Author's interview with Sos Kamry, September 13, 2012.

⁷⁹³ "Cambodia's Vulnerable Muslim Minority: Embassy Efforts to Bridge the Gaps," op. cit.

instead focusing on reducing women's role in society, reducing secular education, and disengaging from the wider Buddhist society.⁷⁹⁴

VI. Anti-Terrorist Measures by the Cambodian Government

The Cambodian Government has taken strong measures against any potential terrorist activities in Cambodia and it works closely with the US Government to suppress religiously oriented terrorism in the country. In 2005 Cambodia established the National Counterterrorism Center, originally chaired by the Prime Minister, now chaired by his eldest son Hun Manet, who was educated at the military academy of West Point. The Center would improve coordination and information sharing among government agencies.

The Ministry of Interior imposed strict controls on the use of weapons and explosives. The RGC has also taken action in the finance sector. In June 2007, it promulgated a law on anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT),⁷⁹⁵ which was carried out by the National Bank of Cambodia in May 2008. The government established the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) to implement the law. The FIU monitors suspicious transactions coming from Muslim countries and organizations, and it works closely with the Financial Crimes Investigation Unit of the Ministry of Interior. The US Government has provided training to the RGC on border

⁷⁹⁴ Author's interview with Villagers of Phum Trea 2.

⁷⁹⁵ Welcoming Speech by the Under Secretary of State of the Ministry of Interior of Cambodia, Sieng Lapresse during the Visit of the UN Counterterrorism Committee's Executive Directorate.

control systems in airports in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, crime scene investigation and countering money laundering.⁷⁹⁶

Cambodia has also cooperated with regional governments to fight against future terrorism. The Australian Government provided training on the implementation of the counterterrorism law and money laundering law. Cambodian officials were also trained in China, India, Malaysia and Singapore on cross-border terrorism.⁷⁹⁷

From May 5 to 9, 2008, the UN Counterterrorism Committee's Executive Directorate (CTED) conducted an on-site visit to Cambodia to monitor the country's implementation of Resolution 1373, which was established in 2001 after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City. This was part of the Committee's visit to member states to monitor implementation as well as evaluate the nature and level of technical assistance that member states may need. During the visit the CTED focused on counterterrorism legislation, measures to prevent the use of assets for criminal purposes, effectiveness of law enforcement services, machinery for international cooperation, territorial control, and technical assistance. The CTED generally carries out such visits using experts from the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF).⁷⁹⁸

On April 5, 2010, Cambodia's National Assembly adopted a law that allows the government to join the ASEAN Convention on Counter-Terrorism, aimed at

⁷⁹⁶ United States Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2008," April 2009, p. 36.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 36.

⁷⁹⁸ United Nations, "Counterterrorism Committee Executive Directorate: Country Visit." Source: <http://www.un.org/sc/ctc/index.html>.

strengthening local and international cooperation in the fight against global terrorist activities.

In 2008, the US Department of the Treasury designated the Kuwaiti-based organization RIHS as providing financial support to Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda affiliates, including Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LeT), JI, and Al Itihaad al Islamiyah. It also identified four Islamic organizations in Cambodia as having received funding from RIHS: the RIHS Cambodia-Kuwait Orphanage Center, the Kuwaiti-Cambodian Orphanage Center, the Kuwait-Cambodia Islamic Cultural Training Center, and RIHS Chaom Chao Center.⁷⁹⁹ This US Government designation led to the freezing of RIHS assets under US jurisdiction. However, according to the US Government, RIHS-HQ used other methods to continue its activities including providing funds to its affiliates in foreign countries through other charitable organizations and individual couriers to avoid the scrutiny of the international financial system. In some countries RIHS branch offices have changed their names to continue operations.⁸⁰⁰ It is impossible under the scope of this dissertation to assess the credibility of the US reports on these designations.

Today, the Chaom Chao Orphanage Center is run under the name Reaksmei Islam Kampuchea High School (Islamic Light of Cambodia High School). It has provided educational support and room and board to thousands of Cambodian orphans, and is now entirely run by Cham. I have met several students and teachers in the process of this research and found no sign of radicalism among them.

⁷⁹⁹ U.S. Department of Treasury, Kuwaiti Charity Designated for Bankrolling Al Aqaeda Network. Source: <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp1023.htm>.

VII. Conclusion

In this chapter the dissertation tries to answer whether the Cham had become radicalized and how much they were involved with Islamic terrorism. This research found that despite frequent accusations against the Cham, only few evidence has been uncovered that links them to terrorist plots or acts of terrorism in Cambodia, Thailand or other countries. Rather, Cham were simply accused of involvement with terrorism by virtue of their changing sectarian identities in the new age of Cambodian society's openness to global influences. Their unguided attempts to revive their community and religious sects have led many observers to believe that terrorist organizations are coming to Cambodia using the Cham as their new recruits or simply utilizing the Cham community as a residence while they are preparing for more attacks in other countries. The situation in Cambodia, including porous borders, widespread corruption, lack of rule of law, a weak banking system, little respect for human rights, and the trafficking of illegal weapons, has fueled accusations against the Cham.

Since the Om-al Qura organization and its two religious schools in Kandal and Kampong Chhnang provinces were closed down, accusations that the Cham were involved in terrorism and violence increased rapidly. It seems that one accusation fed the next, as exemplified by the arrest of two Thais and one Egyptian in 2003, which led to the arrest of a Cham in the same year. These arrests led a few members of the Thai Government and media to suspect that Cham were involved in the insurgency in southern Thailand. Such incidents led many to draw negative conclusions about the

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid.

danger of Islam in Cambodia. In hindsight, none of these accusations were supported by strong evidence.

The Cambodian Government has taken the right approach to preventing and combating possible terrorism in Cambodia. Amidst the accusations against the Cham, the RGC became more open to them by allowing Cham students to wear the *hijab* at school, creating a prayer room at Phnom Penh International Airport, two prayer rooms at the Council of Ministers and appointing Cham to positions in the upper reaches of government. Prime Minister Hun Sen repeatedly defended the Cham against Thai accusations and put a policy in place that clearly differentiated Islam and Cham from terrorism and Islamic terrorists.

In addition, the RGC collaborates with global anti-terrorism efforts by the United Nations and the United States. It also established anti-terrorism units as well as legal mechanisms to prevent terrorist financing. As a result, Cambodia has not experienced any Islamic terrorist attacks against a local or foreign institution.

Chapter Eight:

Conclusion: Construction of Core and Peripheral Identities

This dissertation has sought to explain Cham identities using a core-periphery model. Core identities are difficult to change and long-term. Peripheral identities are short-term and changeable, and are related to core identities. They are formed within the framework of core identities, continually contested and negotiated over short historical period. The contestation process takes place at the boundary; it creates priorities for some core identities and makes them essential.

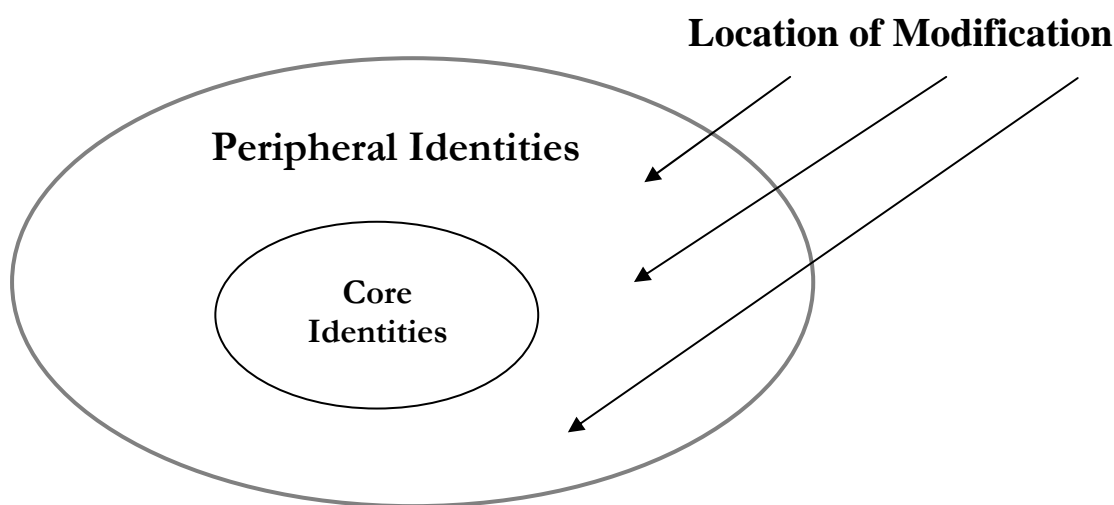
In times of transition or during social upheavals, certain core identities become less important than others, while peripheral identities shift and/or change. The Cham identities in this dissertation have been explained within the core-periphery framework to avoid conflation of complex and multiple Cham identities into a single identity which is static and dynamic at the same time, as stated by Hall in his theorization of cultural identity as “a matter of becoming as well as of being.” Hall also views identity in general as “a production which is never complete.” Cham peripheral identities conform better to Hall’s idea of identity as a production process.

There are two main core identities of Cham in Cambodia; they are related to their descendency from Champa and Islam. In historical context viewed since their conversion to Islam, Cham have identified themselves with the extinct nation of Champa as well as Islam. The peripheral identities have been related to factors such as Islamic sects, Islamic revival, political orientation, genocide, migration, cultural revival and reconstruction, and religious and secular education (as explained below).

Peripheral identities are classified into three main groups: sectarian, political and economic.

The worldview of Cham has always been that they are both local and global citizens as opposed to the worldviews of many other Cambodians, who view themselves as more geographically linked with the Cambodian state. Being Muslims as well as immigrants, the Cham naturally view themselves not just as Cambodians (or as Khmer, which is a normative term for all Cambodians) but also as members of the global Islamic community.

Figure 1. Core and Peripheral Identities



I. Religious Identity

In this dissertation the Cham have two core identities – religious and ethnic – that set them apart from the other Cambodian ethnic groups, particularly the Khmer. Because Khmer constitute the majority of the population, these two Cham identities were

contrasted with the Khmer's religious and ethnic identities. The Cham' religious identity is Islam, while their ethnic identity is Cham, descendants of the extinct kingdom of Champa.

This dissertation also argued that unlike the discursive approach to identity, which states that identity is an ongoing process rather than a state of being, identity of the Cham consists of core and periphery. While the Cham peripheral identities change within the decades, their core identities do so within centuries. The dissertation takes the view that Islamic identity is a much broader category that sets boundary between the Cham and the Khmer. No matter what sects individual Cham believe in, they are still Muslims. An overall Islamic identity is different from sectarian identity (as shown below) because it is compared and contrasted with Buddhist identity of the majority Khmer. There is unchanging boundary between these two even when there are changes inside Islam. Sectarian identity exists because there are different sects in Islam, and that followers of these sects have different sub-Islamic identities. These sub-Islamic identities are viewed as peripheral and they have been changing, particularly in the last century.

The Cham adopted Islamic identity since their conversion to Islam from Hinduism in the early stages of their flight to Cambodia in the 15th century. Islam sets the Cham apart from the Khmer in a clear, categorical manner. The distinction is so great that mutation between Cham and Khmer is rare and extremely difficult. The only mode of mutation that exists between the two ethnic groups is intermarriage.

Cham pray to Allah, their one God, and listen to the messages of God as told by the Prophet Mohammad, while the Khmer follow the teachings of the Buddha, who reached enlightenment through meditation, fasting and adopting an ascetic life. In Buddhism, followers are taught not only to understand all the messages in the holy book, the Tripitakak, but is also asked to reach a state of understanding of heaven, earth and the workings of human society. Muslims, however, strictly follow the words sent to them by Allah, which were given to the Prophet Mohammad via Angel Grabriel. The aim is to reach an equivalent form of enlightenment but in Islam there is much more emphasis on word by word recitation and saying who the God is than in Buddhism. Khmer Buddhists find this very strict obedience to one God to be strange. They follow the Buddha and his teachings, but are also free to believe in spirits and other gods. They never have to remember who the Buddha and all of his incarnations are. The Buddhists take on syncretic beliefs more openly than the Cham, who are increasingly purifying their religion and eliminating all traces of syncretic beliefs.

The Khmer go to the pagoda while the Cham go to the mosque. While the Khmer prays to a statue(s) of Buddha and other deities disregarding the direction in which they pray, the Cham prays facing the city of Mecca. Khmer pagodas are adorned with statues, paintings and artistic carvings, while Cham mosques are largely undecorated. The pagoda is a place rich in statues and art, while the mosque is a symbolic place where Muslims pray together. Very few Khmer understand why Islam is practiced this way.

It is interesting that the Khmer are open to religious syncretism, but only with Hinduism and animism, not with Islam. They sometimes view Islam as a strange

religion, looking at the Cham as a “secret” group which they find difficult to understand and fear they practice black magic.

Buddhism permits intermarriage and religious conversion, while Islam permits intermarriage only on the condition that the non-Muslim converts to Islam. This is a cause of resentment for some Khmer Buddhists, who view this as unfair to their ethnic group and religion, and fear the future domination of Islam in Cambodia.

As Muslims, the Cham have different transnational connections from the Khmer. The Cham looked to Malaysian Muslims for assistance during the Khmer Rouge regime. Next, they looked to the Organization of Islamic Countries for help in the early 1980s. They received support from the Gulf countries for religious revival, education and community development in the 1990s and today. Even in the first half of the 20th century, the Cham have always looked to these Muslim countries for education and social development. The Khmer, however, rarely connect to or request assistance from any of these countries in time of need.

The annual pilgrimage to Mecca is a strictly Islamic practice that confounds the Khmer and thus sets the Cham clearly apart from them. Muslims are obligated to make a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Islam, Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The Khmer understand that their religious origin is in Nepal, a former region of India. But the Khmer Buddhists are not obligated to conduct festivities in this country or in India, which have always been sources of their religious and social learning. There are a few rich Khmer Buddhists who build pagodas today in India, but this is not an obligation.

Being Buddhists, the Khmer adopt words from Pali and Sanskrit languages, the original languages of Buddhist texts, while the Cham use Cham, Javi and Arabic in their religious texts and for communication. Before Sihanouk's Khmerization program, which was harshly criticized by Cham leaders, many Cham spoke very little Khmer. After this program, more Cham now speak Khmer than before, except in rural and other insular communities, where women and children have very limited knowledge of Khmer. When Cham issue the call to prayer in Arabic, the Khmer say they are "howling." To some of them, the intonation is soft and eerie.

In short, of all the ethnic groups in Cambodia, the Cham is the one that is the most different from the Khmer in terms of religion. It is a paradox that with all these differences that set the Cham apart from the Khmer, the two groups have co-existed for several hundred years without a serious religious conflict. The Cham's religious identity is so strong that even the Khmer Rouge's attempts to eliminate Islam by prohibiting prayers, destroying mosques, burning the Quran and other religious texts, killing religious leaders and slaughtering Muslims, the Cham remained Muslims after the genocide. No conversions have occurred afterwards and their numbers have gradually increased after the Khmer Rouge regime.

II. Ethnic Identity

Another core identity of the Cham is the fact that they are descendents of Champa and speak Cham. This makes them different from the Khmer and other ethnic groups in Cambodia. This ethnic identity has its origin in the former kingdom of Champa, from

which the Cham first migrated to Cambodia in the late 15th century. This identity is reinforced by the Khmer's wall carving and inscription on Bayon Temple of the Cham's sacking of Angkor in 1177. The Cham's ethnic identity is defined by their history, which sets them apart from the Khmer and other ethnic groups; it remains a strong core identity today because of the past connection between the Khmer kingdom and Champa.

Being an ethnic Cham means being a descendent of Champa, a now-extinct kingdom in Central Vietnam. Today these descendents are spread across Indo-China, with the largest concentration in Cambodia. While the Cham are thought to be seafaring people with Malayo-Polynesian blood, the Khmer were originally Austroasiatic people. Cham language is more closely related to Malay, Javanese and other islandic peoples in the Archipelagoes (Austronesian family). Khmer language belongs to Austroasiatic family and spoken by many groups in mainland Southeast Asia.

Starting off in the same region of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, both the Cham and Khmer were originally influenced by Indian culture and religion. Today there is evidence of Hindu temples across central and southern Vietnam that were built by Hindu Cham kings. At about the same period, the Khmer were also Hindu and built large temples dedicated to Hindu gods. But while the Khmer continued, the Cham lost their country to Vietnam and became culturally and geographically dislocated after they migrated to Cambodia. During this period of great vulnerability, the Cham changed their religious identity to Islam. Islam, in turn, created a barrier that has safeguarded the Cham from becoming subsumed into the Khmer group, thus protecting their ethnic identity.

Geographically, the Cham ethnic group often lives in different areas from the Khmer. The Cham are concentrated along the Mekong River and around Tonle Sap Lake, while the Khmer live in the central plain. Occupations differ, too. Most Khmer farm rice, while the Cham are involved in fishing, short-term farming along the river banks, and cattle slaughtering and products. These occupational and geographic differences set the Cham apart as a distinct ethnic group.

One of the Cham groups that regards itself as the protector and preserver of Cham ethnic identity is the Imam Sann. This group follows a different sectarian strain of Islam with flavors of syncretic religious and cultural practices; it also tries to keep the Cham language and history alive. They have made attempts to preserve the Cham language through creating projects to make Cham language dictionary and compiling evidence of their Champa history. Their Islamic practices are different from those of other Cham, the most prominent of which is that they pray only once a week.

The Cham language is another strong indicator of Cham ethnic identity. It is a language that reminds both Cham and Khmer of the origin of the Cham people in Champa, a kingdom separate from Cambodia that had an advanced army and culture. Cham still speak their distinctive language today as a way of preserving their ethnic identity. However, in Cambodia, speaking the Cham language has not brought with it employment opportunities for young Cham or economic benefits to the Cham community in general. According to the author's interviews with undergraduate Cham, their main languages in the workplace are English first and Arabic second. English provides them jobs in the open market and allows them to compete with the

Khmer. Arabic allows them to find education and jobs in Gulf countries and in Arabic organizations. These young people only speak Cham within their community for the purpose of preserving their ethnic identity and origin.

Many Khmer remember the Cham as a group of people who used to invade the Khmer kingdom. This memory sets the Cham apart from the Khmer. The Khmer associate themselves with the grandeur of Angkor, as the people who built these magnificent temples and had so much power that at one point their kingdom spread to southern Thailand. In this collective historical memory, the Cham invaded Angkor in 1177 and controlled it for a few years. The Cham's success came before the Thai invasions and the gradual decline of Angkor. This success is ironically carved into the Khmer memory on the temple of Bayon, thus remaining a clear factor in delineating the Cham from the Khmer as a separate ethnic group.

Another factor in the Cham's ethnic consciousness is their talent for war. Like the Khmer who idolized their king-general Jayavaraman VII, the Cham idolized their king-general Che Bong Nga, who terrorized the Vietnamese for the thirty years from the beginning of his reign until his death in 1390. Che Bong Nga was a general and king with remarkable tactical skills and leadership qualities. With small armies, Che Bong Nga was able to defeat the Vietnamese on many occasions. Without his leadership, Champa would have rapidly declined at the hands of the Vietnamese. Cham people had remarkable war skills. The invasion of Angkor from the river was a remarkable military success. Cham people were also used by the Siamese army as auxiliary troops. Their reward for courage and skills was an allotment of land in Bangkok by the Thai King. Now this community is known as Ban Krua. They also

came to Cambodia and leveraged their ability to provide tactical support in wars to convince the Khmer king to let them stay in the country. The rise of Cambodian King Reameathipadei II was also supported by Cham, who helped him eliminate his competitors and gain ascendancy to the throne.

Interconnection between the Two Core Identities

The Cham' ethnic identity was so strong that even the Khmer Rouge's attempts to eliminate them through mass killings, dispersing populations, intermixing Cham with other ethnic groups, and banning the Cham language failed. This genocide impacted the Cham' peripheral identities rather than their core identities. For example, Osman Ysa found that after the Khmer Rouge regime, fewer Cham children speak the Cham language. Because so many Cham intellectuals died during the regime, their sectarian identity was open to reconstruction after the Khmer Rouge period.

The two core identities set them apart from the rest of Cambodian ethnic groups including the dominant Khmer ethnic group. Religious identity constructs boundaries between the Cham and other groups. Included within this boundary are the Khmer who converted to Islam and the Chvea ethnic group. But the Cham's ethnic identity creates language and historical boundaries between them, Muslim Khmer and the Chvea. The core identities are almost a state of being that has remained enduring over a long historical period. They change but their life span is much larger than peripheral identities. For the Cham, their Islamic identity has existed for more than six centuries. Their ethnic identity has lasted much longer. This is contrasted with the conclusions of Hall and other proponents, who view identity as an ongoing process formed

through discursive practices without categorizing different type of identities and considering time.

The two cores are highly interconnected. Being Cham is being Muslim. The two identities are used interchangeably among the Khmer. Competition between the two core identities occurs at different times. Today ethnic identity is cited less in Cham political and social discourse than religious identity, which has gained much relevance. However, among Cham living in the United States, France, Vietnam and other countries, ethnic identity remains a marker that identifies them as a single group. During the Lon Nol period, ethnic identity became important because it became relevant for the Cham to form political organizations to liberate Champa from Vietnam.

III. Peripheral Identities and Contestations

It is the peripheral identities of the Cham that conform better to Hall's theorization of identity as an ongoing process or as a state of becoming. In this dissertation the author examined different types of Cham identities that are peripheral in comparison to the core identities. These peripheral identities are at the forefront of the Cham' battle to create and recreate themselves based on changing Cambodian social milieu and through different periods of history as examined in this dissertation. The peripheral identities, although are changing and being reshaped, follow the "guidelines" set forth by the two core identities. The Cham revert back to the core identities in times of

trouble and use them as a baseline to restructure their existing peripheral identities and create new ones.

In addition, contestation in the process of restructuring peripheral identities leads to the temporary prioritization of one core identity over another. This is clearly shown in the dissertation over two main historical periods. During the Lon Nol regime, because of the new social and political environment, namely war between the US-supported Lon Nol group and the Vietnam-backed communists, the Cham prioritized ethnic identity over religious identity through creating various political organizations to liberate their historical homeland from Vietnam. On the other hand, since the 1990s the Cham have prioritized religious identity over ethnic identity because the current global trend favors Islam over nationalism. In addition, Cambodia's close connection with Vietnam does not favor anti-Vietnamese sentiment.

The dissertation has studied different Cham peripheral identities that are still in the process of change, negotiation and affirmation. It also looked at both core and peripheral identities through different time periods to understand how the Cham have come to their current situation.

Sectarian Identity

This dissertation views sectarian identity as different from core religious identity, which is Islam for two main reasons. First, Islamic identity is a higher category of identity than Islamic sects. Islamic identity is compared against Buddhism and other religions while sectarian identity is compared against other sects within Islam. While Cham are forbidden to convert to other religions, they are not restricted to convert to

other sects within Islam such as between Imam Sann, Tablighi Jamaat and Salafism. When one talks about Islamic revival, it is in fact the sects that are changing not Islam itself because Islam includes all other sects.

Second, global Muslims of different ethnicities and histories identify themselves as belonging to the same group whether they are Sunnis, Shias, Sufis, Dakwah or Salafi followers. This shared religious identity is clearly experienced by the Cham when they conduct pilgrimages to Mecca where they meet Muslims from different countries and social classes. The pilgrimage to Mecca forces a realization that Cham are not only linked with fellow Muslims in Cambodia, but they are also connected with a much broader global community where they can receive spiritual and development supports. Therefore even when Cham follow different teachings within Islam, they share a religious identity, different from other groups in Cambodia.

Sectarian identity refers to the specific practice of Islam among the Cham. This identity is important for them because it determines what kind of help the Cham will receive from global Islamic groups and who they will receive that assistance from. It also determines spiritual patterns, social and economic development within Cham community, and individual Cham philosophy. Because of these importance and global Islamic conditions, the Cham have battled to restructure their sectarian identity throughout their history. This has sometimes led to violence and divisions within their community. This sectarian identity keeps changing and is difficult to crystalize because it is dictated by local, regional and global conditions. The Cham can only adapt to these conditions and refine their religious beliefs.

Starting in the 1950s up to 1975, the two Islamic factions, known as the *kaum tua* (old group) and *kaum muda* (new group) were at odds. Before this period, there was another form of sectarian identity which was syncretism. The Cham settled their sectarian identity by formulating a system of syncretic beliefs that borrowed from the religious practices of the Khmer and Hinduism into their Islamic practice. The Cham also believed in animism, praying to guardians of the land and natural environment in addition to the one God in Islam. The benefit of this strain of identity is that it allowed the Cham to coexist peacefully with the Khmer group, which controlled the government and at one point debated on whether to consider the Cham as foreigners in Cambodia. Such sectarian identity also allowed the Cham to interact more with the Khmer religions. But their sectarian identity did not exist in isolation. Even during the early 20th century, a few Cham were able to travel between Cambodia and Malaysia, and in a few cases beyond Southeast Asia, like Imam Ali Musa and his intellectual colleagues. These Cham made sure that the sectarian identity of the Cham did not deviate much from their co-religionists in Malaysia and beyond. At around the same time, Malaysian Muslims also mixed their Islamic practices with those of local religions.

Starting in the 1950s, the Cham began to question their sectarian identity in which Islamic practice was linked with Hindu and Animist superstitions. This change was brought into Cambodia by itinerant Cham intellectuals, namely Imam Ali Musa and Imam Ahmad Indias, and their Malaysian colleagues. These intellectuals gained their new understanding of Islam through changes that took place in Malaysia, which started to purify Islam at around the same time. This led to the division of the Cham into the old group and the young group. As revealed in this dissertation, the main

difference between the two groups was tradition and purification. Ali Musa tried to purify Islamic practice among the Cham in many ways including asking men to grow beards, keeping hair as opposed to shaving and encouraging them to wear modern dress while the old group led by Haji Res Loh sought to keep both heads and beards shaved for men.

The young group also supported both secular and religious education. They were open to learning scientific subjects and using Khmer as a second necessary language so that Cham could progress in society. The old group disagreed and attempted to preserve Cham cultural identity through not learning Khmer; it was also opposed to extensive secular education. The conflict between the old and the new groups led to divisions in the Cham community, perhaps for the first time since they had arrived in Cambodia. It is interesting to note that religious conflict between Cham and Khmer Buddhists did not exist, although Cham fought among themselves. Imam Ali Musa and his colleagues were exiled to the border with Thailand. He was a victim of attempted murders, but he eventually died under the Khmer Rouge.

Although the young group seemed to lose the battle of sectarian contestation among the Cham, its influences remain among the Cham in Cambodia today. Now the Cham have abandoned much of their syncretic beliefs and purified their practice of Islam. Many Cham have become more educated today and almost all of them speak Khmer fluently, except the women and very young children in isolated Cham communities. Although the young group contributed much to changes in the Cham' sectarian identity, it is never acknowledged because by extension, the young group's

interpretation of Islam served as the foundation of Islamic practice among Salafi Cham today.

With the opening of Cambodia to the outside world at the end of the Cold War, Cham sectarian identity took another turn. During the 1980s due to political and ideological conflicts that divided both the Cambodian populace and the Cham, differences in sectarian identities were never questioned. But in the early 1990s when political boundaries were removed, Cham sectarian identities took many new forms. It seemed that the Cham had subconsciously agreed to the teaching that Ali Musa brought to Cambodia, the purification of Islamic practice. But the contestation continued, particularly between the Tablighi Jamaat (Dakwah) and Salafi groups. The main difference between the two groups is whether Muslims should conduct missionary preaching to fellow Muslims. Those in the Dakwah group support this idea and believe it has helped change the lives of many Cham, especially those who are young, jobless and addicted to drugs. To the Salafi group, however, missionary work should not be carried out to fellow Cham, but to non-Muslims. They consider missionary work as a waste of time and resources, as Cham must support themselves during preaching missions rather than contributing to economic production at home.

The Dakwah group appeals to poor, uneducated, rural Cham who find new meaning in preaching and becoming useful to their community, thus providing them a peripheral identity linked with power and status that they have never experienced. The Salafi group appeals to young educated, urban and wealthy Cham who have access to global teachings on Islam, especially Islamic scholarship from Gulf countries where Salafism originated. The source of the Dakwah interpretation of Islam is India,

Pakistan and Malaysia. In the early 1990s the difference between the two groups led to violence and divisions among the Cham community. Friends and neighbors became enemies and did not talk to each other. Mosques were divided. Where there was only one mosque in a village, the two groups did not pray together. New mosques were established in the same village, violating traditional rules on mosque construction. Today such tension has lessened, but differences remain and Cham sectarian identity is still being contested and negotiated. This sectarian conflict led to political conflicts among the Cham, which are summarized below.

A separate Cham sectarian group is the Imam Sann group, who live mainly in Kampong Cham province. This group's main difference with mainstream Islam in Cambodia is their schedule and manner of prayer. They pray only once a week, on Friday at noon time. In addition they conduct two Mawlid ceremonies: one for Imam Sann and another for Prophet Mohammad. The Imam Sann group is different from both the Dakwah and the Salafi groups, but they consider themselves as very close to the Khmer Buddhists, as they still incorporate certain cultural features of the Khmer group such as eating similar foods and wearing similar dress. They identify themselves with Champa more than with Islam and they resist the changes their fellow Cham seek to force on them, such as praying five times a day, and preserve the vestiges of Champa culture and history through preserving texts, language and history. However, even among this small Cham sectarian group, there are conflicts. In Kampong Chhnang province, members of the Imam Sann group tried to build two mosques in the same village. This group is under immense pressure to change as a result of global processes. Global Islamic aid that flows to Imam San group comes

with conditions that they change their sectarian identity. As a result, some villages have converted en masse to praying five times a day.

Political Identity

Because the Cambodian political context is changing, the Cham political identity changes as well. But throughout their history in Cambodia, the Cham have generally supported the rightful royal heir or political faction when there was a good chance that heir or faction would succeed. When the conflict was symmetrical, that is, when the two opposing sides are of equal or similar power, the Cham took sides. This testifies to the Cham' political identity, which stems from the fact that as a minority within Cambodia, they did not want to bluntly oppose the Khmer, but instead wanted to gain their trust. Although during the Lon Nol period the Cham aspired to the liberation of Champa from Vietnam, they never wanted autonomy within Cambodia. Their political identity indicates that the Cham want to be viewed as Cambodian citizens with unchangeable separate ethnic and religious identities.

As explained in this dissertation, the Cham took part in royal squabbles in 1597-1599, in 1782 and in the 1860s. All of these interventions were in support of powerful Cambodian princes and kings. In the early 20th century, the Cham still maintained close connections with the Cambodian royal family.

During the Lon Nol regime when the battle between communism and capitalism was in full force, the Cham took both sides. Although Communism was opposed to religion, it did not deter some Cham from supporting the communist side of the conflict because Prince Sihanouk was with the communists. In effect, the Cham

political identity at the time remained royalist rather than communist, which contradicted their core identity as Muslims. Cham who sided with the Khmer Republic did so because of their belief that the Khmer Rouge would commit atrocities on them because of the communist prohibition of Islam.

Under the Khmer Rouge, Cham became political prisoners. They were not able to construct their political identity in the way that they had done in previous periods. Much like the Khmer and other ethnic groups, they had no choice. For the first time in Cham history in Cambodia, their core identities as Cham ethnics and Muslims were challenged by existing Cambodian power holders and prohibited by them. They were no longer Muslims and Cham, but workers and laborers in Khmer Rouge agricultural field just like the Khmer. For the first time the Cham shared identities with the Khmer, lived with them and ate the same food. The Khmer Rouge experience had the effect of strengthening and infusing the Cham political identity with that of the Khmer in later periods.

Under the People's Republic of Kampuchea in the 1980s, the Cham again had two choices of political identity. Those who stayed behind in Cambodia under the PRK supported the regime's political ideology, while some of those who escaped to the Thai borders to live in refugee camps supported guerilla war against the PRK. These Cham became insurgents and members of political organizations set up at the camps. Under the PRK the Cham's sectarian identity became rather mute. Because it was war time, Cham political identity took precedence over sectarian identity, but the two Cham core identities were reinstituted and they were able to rebuild what was left of the two identities after the Khmer Rouge genocide.

At the end of the Cold War, sectarian identities were revised and political identities were renegotiated and challenged. Under the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991, political organizations from the border camps were permitted to take part in the first democratic election in Cambodia in 1993. Cham refugees were being repatriated and thus a new political platform was formed to challenge Cham political group that had existed since the 1980s. This group was led mainly by Mat Ly. Those who came from the camps supported the royalist FUNCINPEC and opposition Sam Rainsy parties. Cham members of these two parties contested against Cham in the Cambodian People's Party. The rural base for the CPP's political identity was much larger than that of the two opposition parties. Because of the failure of FUNCINPEC and Sam Rainsy parties, which began to decline in the second and third democratic election mandates (1998 and 2003), Cham political identity gradually fused into one political group, the CPP.

In addition, Cham politicians tried to gain support from sectarian groups by supporting their religious activities. For example, the Dakwah gathering of Ijtimas is attended each year by Cham politicians who had previously opposed their religious teaching because the Dakwah's rural base has expanded rapidly over the years.

Economic Identity

Economic identity is another area of Cham's peripheral identity that is constantly changing. It is an area where Cham continually fight to construct and maintain a level of prosperity for their community. But their economic identity is always in process; it is never complete because Cambodian and global economic conditions are also

changing. The chronological approach in this dissertation reveals that the Cham economic identity has changed over different periods. Today they are still constructing an economic identity that they see as befitting their religion and social status in Cambodia.

In the past sixty years, Cambodia went through many political regimes that have favored different economic systems. When in Champa the Cham were seafaring people who traded through Southeast Asia. They were also viewed as people with great tactical skills in war, for example, Che Bong Nga, who epitomized this status of the Cham and was the most powerful Cham king. As shown in this dissertation, when they arrived in Cambodia, the Cham were also viewed as being welcome by Cambodian kings because of their knowledge in war. As they reached Thailand, Cham were welcomed because they provided auxiliary troops to the Thai king in their fight against the Burmese. The Cham also successfully defeated Angkor in 1177 by taking their troops up the Mekong River.

The Cham' status as warriors and close connection with the Cambodian royal court stopped with the arrival of the French, who established stability in Indo-China and protected Cambodia against encroachment from her neighbors. Thus the Cham' economic identity was changed. As warriors, the Cham had been better off economically than the Khmer. But in the French protectorate, their status in Cambodian politics declined. The Cham refused to send their children to Khmer school and secular education systems, fearing that their core identity as Cham would be eroded over the years. Their traditional identity as warriors was no longer maintained and strengthened under the French. Their failure to send their children to

secular schools led many observers to believe that lack of proper secular education in the French system led to a gradual fall of Cham economic status.

Today many observers believe that the Cham economic status is at the lowest rung of the Cambodian economic ladder. But this dissertation revealed that the Cham have about the same economic status today as the Khmer. The majority of the Cham live in Kampong Cham, which is a fertile agricultural area. People living in this province are generally better off than people living in provinces with little agricultural potential. Only a small number of Cham lives in new villages at the fringe of development such as border towns and deforested areas. But Cham living in such new villages do so because they are looking for economic betterment.

The Cham are now constructing their economic identity in a way that compliments the Khmer economic identities. Because the Cham do not consume pork, they left professions centered on this product to the Khmer and Chinese. Instead, they dominate the beef and beef products business. They also take up businesses associated with fish and have formed many fishing villages along Tonle Sap Lake. Traditionally the Khmer know the Cham as fishing people. In Kampong Cham, the Cham grow seasonal crops such as tobacco, rice, beans and sesame along the Mekong River. They have also established companies and restaurants associated with Islam. For example, they arrange tours to Muslim countries and trips for pilgrims traveling to Mecca, and set up restaurants selling halal-certified food. In addition, they sell Islamic products such as women's clothes, religious books and other necessities catering to the needs of Muslims, and import and export products between Cambodia and Malaysia and other Muslim countries. Cham of both sexes travel to Thailand, Malaysia, South

Korea and other countries in East Asia to find jobs mainly as laborers. Urban Cham find occupations in non-Muslim institutions, such as government, non-profit organizations and private companies with extensive global links. Many Cham set up non-government organizations that receive financial support from around the world to provide assistance to fellow Cham. These people routinely travel between Muslim countries around the world.

Cham parents view education as a way to improve their children's economic status, thus redefining their economic identity. They send their children to both secular and religious schools whenever possible. To meet this need, they sometimes send their children from urban to rural areas where Islamic education is better. There is contestation over how the Cham should define economic identity for their children, and what kind of education to provide for them. Those who believe that secular education for women is not important only send them to primary school. Some parents send both boys and girls to only religious school, hoping their children will become good religious teachers when they complete their education. Yet other parents send both boys and girls to universities and overseas for other education, dramatically expanding their economic possibilities.

Identification with Terrorism

Terrorism is an object which the Cham try to avoid in their efforts to form a peaceful, coexisting identity within the Khmer society and in trying to revive their religion in an aggressive way. However, because of the uncontrolled ways of reviving Islam among the Cham, they were linked to terrorism, although as examined in this dissertation there is few evidence linking the Cham with acts of terrorism and international

assistance to terrorist groups both in Cambodia and foreign countries. For the Cham, terrorism is a negative aspect of their sectarian identity. It is an aspect that is always linked to them, even when they seek to avoid it.

Why were Cham frequently identified with Islamic terrorism when there is few evidence to support such a claim? This dissertation found several possible reasons for this. First, the Cham's socio-economic status in Cambodia is generally viewed as being at the bottom of Cambodian social groups. They are viewed as poor and marginalized, when in fact they enjoy inclusion and freedom of religious worship. There is little evidence of racial discrimination from the Khmer. Second, the Cham' background as homeless people makes them look as if they were vulnerable to negative Islamic influence. An examination of their history shows that the Cham had been warmly welcomed by the Cambodian Government since they first arrived in the 15th century. They were never used as scapegoats for Cambodian downfall. They are well-established and have constructed a political identity as loyal and supportive of Cambodian leaders. Third, the Cham's lack of education as a result of their refusal to send their children to secular school was also attributed to their vulnerability to terrorism. This is also not true. While some Cham parents send their children to only religious schools, the level of education among the Cham is similar to that among the Khmer. Fourth, some people view the Cham' experience under the Khmer Rouge as creating many grievances against the Cambodian government and Khmer people. But instead, the Cham used their experience under the Khmer Rouge as a way to fuse their identity with the Khmer, sharing with them victim identity.

Yet the ways in which the Cham have constructed their peripheral identities have also been used to link them to Islamic terrorism. This includes their uncontrolled connections with the global Muslim groups, their Islamic revival, which has brought fundamentalist Islam to Cambodia, their transnational links with global fellow Muslims, their need for education and funding, and their search for a global support as local Cambodian assistance to them has been limited despite the government's position of tolerance, religious freedom, and allowing Muslim participation in government affairs. In addition, Cambodian Muslims can be blamed for their lack of promotion of their faith within Cambodian society and lack of engagement with mainstream Khmer society. Certain sectarian groups, particularly the Dakwah, have withdrawn completely from open and public dialogue with their co-religionists and the Khmer public.

The final question is: was the Hambali case an aberration? The answer is yes, it was an aberration because it appears that no Cham were intentionally involved with Hambali. The Cham have not become radicalized, although certain groups within the Cham have become fundamentalist.

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Appendix: Muslim Population by Districts

No.	Province	District	Figure	Total
1	Banteay Meanchey	Ou Chrov	2,039	4,290
		Serey Sophorn	1,292	
		Mongkol Borei	859	
		Malai	100	
2	Battambang	Kamrieng	386	15,563
		Battambang	4,321	
		Ratanak Mondul	514	
		Sangke	5,682	
		Banan	264	
		Mong Russei	4,396	
3	Kampong Cham	Cheung Prey	247	138,177
		Prey Chhor	1,152	(42% of
		Chamkar Leu	2,526	total
		Kong Meas	3,823	population)
		Srey Santhor	833	
		Kampong Cham	2,692	
		Koh Sothin	3,712	
		Kampong Siem	619	
		Stung Trang	10,253	
		Krauch Chhmar	33,187	
		Tbong Khmum	43,075	
		Dambe	16,689	
		Ponhea Krek	9,925	
		Memot	9,444	
4	Kampong Chhnang	Baribaur	226	26,748
		Kampong Chhnang	516	
		Rolea Ba-ier	2,071	
		Tek Phos	1,817	
		Samaki Meanchey	4,114	
		Kampong Tralach	18,004	
5	Kampong Speu	Chbar Mon	441	441
6	Kampong Thom	Santuk	512	4,261
		Baray	3,749	
7	Kampot	Angkor Chey	110	20,099
		Kampot	15,940	
		Kampong Bay	4,049	
8	Kandal	Ta Khmao	1,925	16,132
		Muk Kampoul	3,621	
		Sa-ang	2,322	
		Koh Thom	4,303	
		Ponhea Leu	3,961	
9	Keb	Keb	850	850
10	Koh Kong	Smach Meanchey	6,201	7,853
		Mondul Seima	125	
		Koh Kong	198	
		Botum Sakor	540	
		Sre Ambil	789	

11	Kratie	Sambaur Kratie Chhlong Snuol	175 445 14,026 4,734	19,380
12	Mondul Kiri	Keo Seima Pech Chenda	6,000 5,267	11,267
13	Pailin		994	994
14	Phnom Penh		24,549	24,549
15	Preah Vihear	Kulen Tbeng Meanchey	89 495	584
16	Prey Veng	Pea Reang Kampong Trabek	1,566 446	2,012
17	Pursat	Bakan Kandieng Sampov Meas Krakor Phnom Kravanh	1,556 4,976 1,418 5,859 958	14,767
18	Rattanak Kiri	Kaun Mom Ban Lung Lum Phat Ou Yadav	794 227 608 903	2,532
19	Siem Reap	Kralanh Puok Siem Reap Saut Nikum	153 165 1,438 1,434	3,190
20	Sihanouk	Mittapheap Prey Nub	950 10,786	11,736
21	Takeo	Bati Angkor Borei Daun Kaev Treang Borei Chulsar Koh Andet Kiri Vong	381 364 375 1,131 2,805 874 89	6,019
			Total:	330,450
			Cham:	272,360
				(80%)
			Chvea:	58,090
				(20%)

Curriculum Vitae

Citizenship: Cambodia
Gender: Male
Date of Birth: November 10th 1980
Email: truthkokthay@dccam.org

COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

2012

- Research Director and Deputy Director at DC-Cam, December 2006-Present

2004

- Leader of DC-Cam's Project Curriculum Development on Democratic Kampuchea, March-September 2004.
- Editor-In-Chief of *Searching for the Truth*, English Version, January-September 2004.

2003

- Co-Editor-In-Chief, DC-Cam monthly magazine *Searching for the Truth*, English Version, April 2003-December 2003.
- Translator, from Khmer to English for publication in *Searching for the Truth*, Khmer Rouge telegrams, prisoners' confessions and other Khmer Rouge related articles and documents.
- Translated responses to the DC-Cam national survey, "*Reconciliation In Cambodia*" for inclusion in its research paper of the same name, 2003.

PUBLICATION/RESEARCH

- "Is 7 January a Day of Liberation or Invasion after the Khmer Rouge?" Reaksmei Kampuchea Daily, January 7, 2010.
- "Can Murderers Be Forgiven?" Phnom Penh Post, October 14, 2010.
- "The Meaning of Forgiveness and Reconciliation after Genocide," Reaksmei Kampuchea Daily, November 14, 2010.
- Translated the book *The Journey into Light*, by Ronnie Yimsut, a Cambodian American whose childhood dream and family were shattered by the Khmer Rouge. The translation was published in July 2006.
- "Redefining Genocide," *Searching for the Truth*, February 2006, also on Genocide Watch website.
- Master's Thesis: Interest-based Analysis of Conflict Across the Taiwan Strait, submitted August 2005.
- "Denials and Genocide Education," *Searching for the Truth*, Editorial, First Quarterly, May 2004.
- "Khmer Rouge History: Educating the Young Generations," *Searching for the Truth*, English Version, Third Quarterly, September 2003.

- “Family Fears for the Tuol Sleng Prison Chief,” *Searching for the Truth*, July 2003; & *The Cambodia Daily*, issue July 31, 2003

EDUCATION

- November 2007-2012: PhD Candidate, Global Affairs, Rutgers University (Dissertation Topic: Cham Identity in a Global Age).
- 2005-2007: MS in Global Affairs, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, under the Fulbright Scholarship.
- November 2005: MA in Peace and Reconciliation Studies, with Merits, Coventry University, UK.
- 1998-2002: Bachelor of Education in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (B.Ed/TEFL), Royal University of Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- 1998-2002: Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), Norton University, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.