

POU SOTHIRAK / GEOFF WADE / MARK HONG (eds.), *Cambodia. Progress and Challenges since 1991*. Singapur: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2012. 423 pages, US\$ 49.90. ISBN 978-981-4379-82-3

A review should introduce the content of a particular book. But the volume edited by Pou Sothirak, Geoff Wade and Mark Hong to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreement that paved the way for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) is different if only because of its list of contributors. Many contributors in this volume are larger than their contributions and only a few engage in real scientific analysis of progress and challenges in Cambodia since 1991. Although most papers lack intellectual depth, their value lies in the portrayal of how politicians and policy makers framed their own agendas and responsibilities for policy decisions during the UNTAC mission and the years thereafter. Some are rather polemic and extremely biased, but the editors are to be congratulated on the wide range of contributors, most of whom have held important economic and political positions in the past 20 years.

In particular the first two sections on economic, foreign and diplomatic relations and UNTAC-related politics between Cambodia, Singapore and other ASEAN states bring together various politicians and policy makers. Contributors include Sok An, a high-ranking CPP politician, who praises Singaporean-Cambodian relations during the past 20 years; others are former ambassadors or chairmen at the National University of Singapore, who have been politicians for much of their lives and took part in the Paris negotiations. Most of these papers deal with more or less comprehensible subjects, and many authors digress into personal memories about chairing ASEAN delegations or travelling in Cambodia. The most interesting aspect of these papers is how these politicians memorize history, talk about policies and call for political cooperation, especially since the Cambodian voices are drawn not just from the government or the opposition, but from almost every well-known or almost forgotten political wing. Correspondingly, every contribution is either overtly positive or negative on the Cambodian government's role in the process. Unfortunately, this also means that many of these political contributors are simply playing politics, calling for closer political and economic cooperation between ASEAN countries and Cambodia, or praising their own efforts in Cambodian post-war reconciliation.

Some scholars do provide concise histories of foreign relations. Charlyle Thayer recalls all anti-Vietnamese riots, border actions, and violent outbursts against Vietnamese, mostly instigated by members of the old resistance factions of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). A series of events leads to the dismantling of a border stone by Sam Rainsy and his subsequent flight into exile to avoid a twelve-year prison sentence. His informative paper shows how political and economic relations with Vietnam have improved in the 20 years since the CPP consolidated its power. Similarly instructive is Thayer's paper on relations with the US, which are increasingly brokered in a

multilateral framework within ASEAN. Julio Jeldres, the official biographer of former King Sihanouk, sketches Cambodia's increasing political and economic dependence on China as a result of massive investments by the Chinese government, especially in infrastructure. He points out the risks of being in thrall to China, as illustrated by the recent deportation of Uighur refugees. Against the backdrop of China's rise, Jeldres explains the simultaneous downturn of French influence in his second contribution. Lam Peng Er and Yukio Imagawa together with Pou Sothirak, himself former ambassador to Japan, praise Japan's comprehensive support for the UNTAC mission, which brought peace to the war-torn country and improved the judiciary: outstanding achievements made possible by Japanese support. Furthermore, Sothirak and Imagawa highlight improvements in roads that help people visit beauty spots around Cambodia.

The third section marshals yet another group of interesting *encomia*. Whereas UNTAC special representative Yasushi Akashi lauds UNTAC's successes in building political institutions and bringing peace, he only indirectly touches on the mission's failure to demobilize the warring factions, which left UNTAC virtually a force presiding over war rather than peace, ultimately resulting in Hun Sen's coup in 1997. In a similar vein, Son Soubert, the son of Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) leader and former prime minister Son Sann, highlights the role of KPNLF military forces during the peace process. He also points to UNTAC's problems with demobilizing military forces, in particular the Khmer Rouge, but makes no such observations in respect of the KPNLF or the royalist Funcinpec party. From an Australian perspective Ken Berry criticizes UNTAC's unclear goals and lack of resources and the absence of effective international political support. Jean-Marc Lavergne, a judge at the current Khmer Rouge Tribunal, tries to defend the odd success of the hybrid international court, despite major criticisms of corruption and political interference.

Whereas the Cambodian minister of finance and economy, Hang Chon Naron, sketches a bright future for Cambodia, other contributors point to lasting shortcomings in poverty reduction (Pou Sothirak), rural education (Pou Sovachana), good governance (HRH Norodom Sirivudh) and the unequal "human development" between men and women (Ing Kantha Phavi / Winta Ghebrea). Others overstate their case to counterbalance the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) government and engage in clearly misplaced anti-Vietnamese sentiments and conspiracy theory. For example, the researcher Wolfgang Sachsenröder cites in a footnote a Wikipedia entry that states that 33 percent of the Cambodian population is ethnic Vietnamese (instead of the official figure of five percent). This reflects a common theory among anti-Vietnamese groups in Cambodia that these hidden Vietnamese were given citizenship by Hun Sen in order to vote for him so as to keep him in power and infiltrate the country.

Sachsenröder and Minister Naron mark the politically highly biased, but colorful extremes of the volume. With some notable exceptions, the contri-

butions are studies in current Cambodian politics rather than analyses of recent Cambodian developments. Among the exceptions are papers by Ian Harris on Cambodian Buddhism after 1991 and its subsequent politicization since the coup and Milton Osborne's call for a better transnational regulation of the Mekong hydropower plans that threaten the livelihood of people living in the Lower Mekong Basin.

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PASCAL COUDERC / KENNETH SILLANDER (eds.), *Ancestors in Borneo Societies. Death, Transformation, and Social Immortality*. (NIAS Studies in Asian Topics, 50). Copenhagen: NIAS, 2012. 432 pages, photographs, £ 19.99 (pb) / £ 50.00 (hb). ISBN 978-87-7694-092-8 (pb) / ISBN 978-87-7694-091-1

The name of early French anthropologist Robert Hertz, a student of Emile Durkheim, may not be as familiar to *nicht Eingeweihten* (unconsecrated) anthropologists as that of Durkheim, but his eminence as a theorist of death and its rituals in primitive communities seems to have been sufficient to endure without major challenge for a century. One is referred to his 'Contribution à une Étude sur la Représentation Collective de la Mort' (*L'Année sociologique*, 1907), though perhaps even more embedded in the collective anthropological consciousness, thanks to an authoritative English translation, is his theory of the almost universal dichotomy in human cultures between the right hand and the left, symbolizing respectively virtue (or "the sacred") and negative things (or "the profane"), such contrasted values being mirrored even in the structure of the cosmos.

At any rate, after a century a certain restlessness might be expected to have set in among the fraternity, prompting one or more to revisit such a seminal influence in order to either "build on" the master's insights or "reinterpret" them. There was a special issue of *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* in 2007, edited by Eric Venbrux and dedicated to "Hertz's seminal essay and mortuary rites in the Pacific region". And now we are offered the no less high-powered collection edited by Pascal Couderc (of France) and Kenneth Sillander (from Finland), under the informal patronage of doyen of Borneo studies, Bernard Sellato – dedicated to reaching out beyond the relative fixation of the Hertzian theory of death on mortuary rites and the conclusive journeys which begin there (associated in some cases with ancestor worship among surviving kin), towards an interest in ancestors in an ongoing, benevolent or authoritative/ advisory capacity for the living in Borneo societies. The editors call their new conception of the role of the dead, "ancestralship". After a sophisticated 61-page theoretical survey, encompassing the gamut of admittedly inspired ethnography since Hertz (not least Jacob Malinckrodt, *Het Adatrecht van Borneo*. Leiden, Dubbeldeman, 1928; Hans Schärer, *Die Gottesidee der Ngadju Dajak in Süd-Borneo*. Leiden,