

DAVID P. CHANDLER, *A History of Cambodia*. 2nd ed. Updated. St. Leonard's, NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1996. XVI, 287 pp., \$ 19.95

This book is an updated version of the second edition of *A History of Cambodia*, which remains the standard text on Cambodian history for students of the country and of Southeast Asia in general. I have personally relied on this book in previous editions for both its structuring of Cambodian history and for Chandler's even-handed discussion of issues and historiographical arguments concerning key episodes in the Cambodian past, particularly regarding the shadowy period between the last decades of Angkor and the seventeenth century.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters, of which the first is a general introduction to the country. The remaining twelve chapters provide a balanced focus on the Angkorian, early modern, French, and post-colonial periods. A useful bibliographic essay is also provided and will certainly serve as a useful tool to beginners and intermediate students of the history of Cambodia.

Those interested in the cultural and technological evolution of coastal mainland Southeast Asian polities in the early modern period, however, will be disappointed by the somewhat brief discussion of the sixteenth century. Tantalizing references to important developments are not followed through with a more thorough discussion. Chandler's suggestion, for example, that the late sixteenth century brought the "introduction of firearms, particularly naval cannon, which played a major part in all subsequent Cambodian wars" (p. 86), begs further explanation and leaves unanswered the question of how this innovation challenged traditional forms of Cambodian warfare, organization, and maritime relations. In view of the book's strengths, however, this is a relatively minor drawback and indicates more, perhaps, about the paucity of sixteenth century indigenous source materials available, as Chandler himself implies (p. 81).

As a historian of Burma as well as of Cambodia, I am somewhat confused about the availability of good, up-to-date overall surveys of Cambodian history such as this one, and a complete lack of such a survey for Burmese history, aside from a few colonial-era histories and Maung Htin Aung's outdated 1967 piece, *A History of Burma*. Likewise, I am surprised about the lack of comparative work on Cambodia and Burma, as their modern histories contain many similarities: a difficult post-colonial history, extremist dictatorships (the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and the military in Burma), and a difficulty in coping with the demands of modern economic development, a difficulty which has been faced much more successfully by their shared neighbor, Thailand. As Chandler explains so clearly, modern

Khmer leaders including Sihanouk, Lon Nol, and Pol Pot, have been misled by an overconfidence emanating from Angkor's "greatness" (p.244). Burma's military dictators, perhaps less sincerely, have shrouded themselves in a fantasy of the past as well, in this case to justify military authoritarian rule. I suspect these commonalities stem from Burma and Cambodia's similar experience under Western colonial rule more than anything else, but a good comparative study is needed before we can begin to make any conclusions.

Thankfully, Chandler pulls no punches and is quite frank about the many faults of Cambodia's series of political regimes since the end of the Second World War. This honesty allows the reader to see the very real problems that Cambodia has faced and still faces today. This book is well worth its modest price and will be a valuable contribution to any academic library.

Michael W. Charney

BEN KIERNAN, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*. New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1996. 477 pp., \$ 35.00. ISBN 0-300-06113-7

Anyone who has studied modern Cambodia should be familiar with the numerous contributions that Ben Kiernan has made to our understanding of the history and plight of the country. Fortunately, his fairness and the consistently high quality of his work have carried into this, the latest of his investigations and analyses of Cambodia's often tragic past.

Kiernan's book is by far the most detailed history of the Khmer Rouge revolution that this reader has yet come across. It provides extensive biographical information on all of the major participants in this historical 'event', granting new insights into the mind of the Khmer Rouge and its victims. In addition to assembling the accounts of one hundred refugees from the Khmer Rouge period now resident in France, and of four hundred Khmer survivors of the period living in Cambodia, Kiernan has also painstakingly analyzed the numerous 'confessions' of the political prisoners at Tuol Sleng, the Khmer Rouge's interrogation center (1975-1979).

Kiernan emphasises two main aspects of the Democratic Kampuchea regime in Cambodia. First, he argues that race, not class, predominated in Khmer Rouge thinking. As evidence, Kiernan points to the upward mobility within the higher echelons of the Khmer Rouge of French-educated elite Khmers, while non-Khmers, such as the Chams, who perhaps fit the Khmer