CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION
Funan which came into existence at the beginning of Christian era, a dominant power for five centuries in the Indo-Chinese Peninaula, ceased to be a great power in the second half of the sixth century. Chenla was divided into two and the Water Chenla became a tributory to Java. Jayavarman II, a vassal of Java took power and asserted the independence of Khmers in A.D. 802. Construction of massive temples, laying of roads, irrigation networks and engagement in wars by his successors Suryavarman I (1002-1050), Suryavarman II (1113-1150) and Jayavarman VII (1181-1218) exhausted the resources of Cambodia. Thus, the Khmer power which was holding supreme from beginning of the ninth century to the middle of the thirteenth century, spreading its authority to the South China sea in the East and touching the Indian Ocean in the West, began declining. Then, the Khmer authority was challenged from the middle of the thirteenth century by the Thais from the West and by the Vietnamese in the East. In order to avert the threat from its powerful neighbours, Ang Duong (1847-1859) tried to obtain help from a European power. Cambodia, instead of protecting its sovereignty, became of French Protectorate in 1863 and eventually a French colony in 1884. The foreign rule and the clubbing of Cambodia with Laos and Vietnam gave scope for the rise of freedom movement and subsequently the growth of Communism.

With the establishment of Indo-Chinese Communist Party (ICP) in 1930 for the three Indo-Chinese states to fight unitedly
against the French. Cambodia was brought within the fold of the Communist politics. The CIP was against a separate Cambodian Communist Party, but favoured to have the right to self-determination after the defeat of France. As a result of the ICP decision in May 1941, the Khmer Issarak came into existence. With the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN) in North Vietnam in 1945, and the re-establishment of the French authority in the rest of French Indo-China, the ICP allowed the Khmer Communists to organize their own Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP) in September 1951. Cambodia became independent in November 1953 and its independence was authenticated at the Geneva conference of 1954. The Communist's efforts to create a "Free Zone" in Cambodia failed. Therefore, nearly 5,000 Khmer Viet Minh moved to Hanoi. Even though, the Vietnamese Communists greatly influenced the Communist activity in Cambodia till 1954, the radical elements opposed to Vietnam, began to return to Cambodia from France and took control of the Communist activity in the country. After independence, the Prince adopted 'neutrality' as his country's foreign policy, opposed to the US manoeuvres in the area and sympathetic to the cause of the Vietnames liberation. Therefore, the DRVN was sympathetic to the Prince. But, the Khmer Rouge followed hardline towards the Prince. Thus, the changed perceptions among the Communist ranks eventually led to its division.

During 1960-1970 period, the Khmer Rouge sought to assert
their independence from the Vietnamese control and clandestinely floated the Worker’s Party of Kampuchea (WPK) in September 1960. It became the Vanguard party of the Khmer Rouge. Tou Samouth, who was pro-Vietnam, was eliminated in 1962. It helped Pol Pot to rise in the party ranks who became Secretary-General of the party in 1963. The Pro-Vietnam elements slowly started losing ground. Anti-Vietnam group began to dominate the Communist ranks in Cambodia under the leadership of Pol Pot. They began to oppose the Prince’s Government. Meanwhile, it had also rejected the US aid. The armed forces were unhappy and were alienated from the Government. The situation became ripe for the Communists. At this juncture, the disgruntled forces revolted against the Government in 1967 at Samlaut. It was capitalized by the Khmer Rouge and launched armed rebellion against the Government. Even though the revolt was suppressed, the unrest continued. The country’s economy was in bad shape due to the rejection of the US aid and the smuggling of taxable Cambodian rice to Vietnam. Finally, in a rightist coup of March 1970 Prince Sihanouk was removed from power.

Following the March 1970 coup, the Prince joined hands with the Khmer Rouge and established the Government-in-Exile in Peking. In order to fight the Lon Nol forces, National United Front of Cambodia (NUFC) was formed. The Prince’s Government was supported by the PRC, DRVN and North Korea. The Khmer Rouge began to control the rice-growing areas. They cut routes to Phnom
Penh and provincial capitals. Effective propaganda was organized by the Khmer Rouge. Gradually more territory came under the control of the Communists. By the beginning of 1971, the Khmer Rouge was in a position to challenge the authority of Lon Nol. Large number of people began to sympathize with the Communists. In the liberated Zones, the Khmer Rouge implemented their radical programmes. The Khmer Rouge ranks swelled. The pro-Sihanouk and pro-Vietnam cadres were systematically liquidated. Despite the massive assistance extended by the US to the Khmer Republic, Lon Nol was unable to resist the Khmer Rouge onslaught. There was widespread corruption in the ranks of the Lon Nol Government. Finally, on 17 April 1975 Phnom Penh was liberated by the Khmer Rouge. It became possible because of the propaganda carried out at the diplomatic front by Prince Sihanouk and the guerrilla war conducted in the countryside against the Lon Nol forces by the Khmer Rouge.

The Khmer Rouge won the war against Lon Nol and established the first ever Communist government in the history of Cambodia. The people welcomed the arrival of the Khmer Rouge. But to their dismay they played havoc with the lives of the Khmer people. Immediately after the seizure of power, the Khmer Rouge began to implement its policies and programmes. They had evacuated all towns and cities and the people were asked to go to the countryside and work in the fields and herded in communes. Communal kitchens were established. Men and women were
Children were sent to separate communes. Factories were closed. Schools, currency, shops, posts and telecommunications, hospitals with modern medicines were made disfuncioned. Literates were attacked. Religion lost the patronage of the government. Economy was centrally planned. All foreigners were evacuated. Officials of the Khmer Republic were executed. The Khmer Rouge did all this as part of their ideology. They have professed "self-reliance" as their policy. Cities should not dominate villages. In brief, they wanted to develop such means to ensure human participation in agriculture, where machinery or any foreign assistance was neither sought, nor used. Thus, the Khmer Rouge after purifying their populace through their participation in agriculture wanted to erect a pure egalitarian classless society with the "Year Zero". The country was closed for outsiders. As a result of the Khmer Rouge policies more than one million people lost their lives. The deaths occurred due to long working hours, poor ration, lack of medicine, epidemic, torturing of literates, former officials and alleged agents of foreign power. The Khmer Rouge as part of their hatred towards the Sihanoukists and the Vietnamese, began persecuting them. It followed anti-Vietnam policy and wanted to restore the territories lost to its neighbours in the past. It strained its bilateral relations with its neighbours. Relations with Vietnam got strained. The PRC supported the Khmer Rouge fully. Prince Sihanouk who waged the war at diplomatic front
against Lon Nol kept under house arrest by the Khmer Rouge after his resignation in early 1976. The Khmer Rouge hardly found any utility in retaining Prince Sihanouk as ceremonial head of the country. Division within the Khmer Rouge ranks and the strained relations with Vietnam created conditions for the establishment of the Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUFNS). With the help extended by the Vietnames military, the KNUFNS overthrew the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary group from power. The struggle for power within the Khmer Rouge ranks and leadership, their anti-people policies, the proxy war between the Chinese and the Soviets and above all, the 'Genocide' of the Khmer Rouge resulted in the ouster of the Khmer Rouge from power which helped to save the Khmer race from total extinction.