INTRODUCTION
HISTORICAL ROOTS OF CAMBODIAN NATIONALISM

Cambodia, during her long illustrious history of over a thousand years, has developed a distinctive culture and civilization, arts and architecture, language and literature and religion of its own. Similarly, the political and social institutions have developed certain characteristic features of their own. The emotional oneness of the people, though separated from each other by physical barriers, is symbolized by the Monarchy and the Buddhist Church. The King, a Deva-Raja and therefore an object of veneration, was the spiritual as well as the temporal head. It was due to the physical prowess of the Cambodian monarchs that the Kingdom, in its hey-day, extended its boundaries far and wide touching the Bay of Bengal in the west, the China Sea in the east, including the greater part of Indochina and the northern region of the Malay Peninsula. (1) Monuments like Angkor, Bayon, Bantey Srei, which are today the wonders of the world, owe their existence to the royal will.

(1) B. R. Chatterji, Indian Cultural Influence in Cambodia (Calcutta, 1928) 223, 192, 211 and 282. See also R. C. Majumdar, "Colonial and Cultural Expansion" in The Struggle for Empire (Bombay, 1957) 739.
The Monarchy gave the Cambodians a glorious history and was thus a source of inspiration in times of national humiliation.

Theravada Buddhism, the religion of the Cambodians, was another symbol of national unity. The saffron-robed Buddhist monk, or the Bonze, was the Cambodian's friend and mentor. He gave the Cambodian light and learning, and also advice and guidance in times of distress, personal as well as national. The bonze was everywhere, in every corner of the country, reminding, as it were, the people of the religious oneness of the Cambodians. Every Cambodian knows the stories of the Ramayana (there is a Cambodian literary work called Ramkhmer) the Mahabharata, and above all, the Jataka stories and the Tripitaka, the sacred scriptures of Buddhism. Besides this, being unilingual — Khmer is the national language — there is no language-barrier to separate the Cambodians from each other. "Cambodia as a nation," observes David Steinberg, "is unique in its distinctive integration of people, land, religion, and king." (2) Thus, judged in the light of the usual definition of a 'Nation', Cambodia, even before the fall of Angkor, was a nation.

Struggle with Thailand and Vietnam

What is essential, however, to the growth of nationalism is national consciousness in the people. This essential element that goes to form a full-fledged nation was developed in the Cambodian mind when the kingdom was threatened by external

(2) David J. Steinberg, Cambodia: its people its society its culture (New Haven, 1957) 1.
danger. Broadly speaking, however, it may be said that the Cambodian developed this national consciousness fully about the middle of the 19th century. It is true that the kingdom was continually being threatened for several centuries by the Thais, the Vietnamese and ultimately by both. However, the task of repelling the Thai aggression, in the first instance, was confined in a great measure to a small band of the Cambodians, viz., the kings, the royal family assisted by a handful of high-officials. These people, indeed, had been meeting the Thai challenge to their national security and independence with varying degrees of success. In 1473, 1540 and again in 1560, for example, the invading Thai forces were expelled with considerable losses to the enemy. (3) But all these Cambodian successes were short-lived. She was fast losing to Thailand parts of her western and northern territory, while the Kings themselves were gradually becoming vassals. It was this national predicament that helped to rekindle Cambodian nationalist feelings.

Probably the Thai raids did not arouse as strong a national spirit of resistance as the Vietnamese aggression which started later. The Vietnamese, who settled to the east of Cambodia's frontiers sometime in the 17th century, were more aggressive than the Thais. In course of time, like the Thais,

(3) For example, when in 1473 the Thai army seized the provinces of Chantabun, Korat and Angkor, Prince Chau-Ponhea-Thommo-Reachea, son of King Prea-Srei-Reachea, organised a formidable resistance and forced the withdrawal of the Thai forces. See J. Moura, Royaume du Cambodge (Paris, 1883) 40, see also 43 and 47.
they too took away slices of Cambodian territory in the east. Like the Thais, again, they attempted at establishing their suzerain rights over the Cambodian kings by patronizing a few Cambodian quislings. But what was more, the Vietnamese, unlike the Thais, threatened to disrupt the very bases of Cambodia's life and institutions, tradition and history. It was this grave menace which gave rise to an all-out national resistance on the part of the Cambodians.

In 1841-44 it was the common people, headed by their own leaders whose names even are not known, who saved the country from full-fledged Vietnamese domination. The almost precipitate Vietnamese interference in Cambodian affairs began in the 1830's. The Vietnamese influence over Cambodia was so powerful at this time that the Vietnamese general, Ong-Kham-Mang, stationed in the Cambodian capital, imposed not only his will as regards the selection of the twenty-year old Princess Ang-Mey to the Cambodian throne, but also a system of government which was hateful to the people. (4) The Vietnamese administrators forced the Cambodians to pay exorbitant taxes, and submit to an extraordinary kind of corvée. What was more abominable in Cambodian eyes was the order of the Vietnamese general to effect a survey of the landed property and a census of the Cambodian population. (5)

(4) This was not the first time that the Vietnamese government stationed its representatives in the Cambodian capital. For instance, in early 1770's a Vietnamese resident or "protector" with the title of Bacho, was kept in Cambodia. See Moura, Royaume du Cambodge, 89.

(5) Ibid., 114.
The bonzes were also displeased with the arrogance and insolence of these foreign officials and particularly of General Ong-Kham-Mang. (6) On top of these, this general, not content with the supreme hold he already had on Cambodia, plotted an outright annexation of the Kingdom to Vietnam. For this purpose, he laid a well-calculated trap to remove the Obbaréach (Vice-Roi, Sub-King) and his faithful followers from the Cambodian political scene. He lured the Obbaréach to come to the Cambodian capital with promises of assistance in securing the throne in deference to the supposed wishes of the Cambodians. No sooner did he come than he was arrested and was sent to Saigon under cover of the night lest the news of it might arouse the Cambodians into revolt. In the same way, the devoted followers of the Obbaréach as well as the daughters of the late King Ang-Chap were sent to Saigon to join Queen Ang-Mey who was already there in Vietnamese custody.

To the already excited Cambodians this precipitate step of Ong-Kham-Mang proved intolerable. "These outrages," writes M. Moura, "against the members of the royal family deeply touched the Cambodians sincerely devoted to their legitimate princes." (7) The popular reaction was sharp. They rose en masse in 1841 and effected a general massacre of these hated foreigners, of soldiers and others alike, whoever had chanced to fall into

(6) In early 1880's a Vietnamese officer is said to have taken as "hostages" all the bonzes of a particular place on the ground that their head had assisted in the escape of some royal princes from the Vietnamese hold. Ibid., 103.

(7) Ibid., 114.
their hands. (8) To face the national crisis that had befallen Cambodia, responsible leaders of the Cambodian people were forced to seek support from Thailand which in fact was readily given as such aid would strengthen the Thai hold on Cambodia. A joint Cambodian-Thai army under a Thai commander, Chau Ponheà Bodin Dèachèa, drove away the Vietnamese only after a hard fight. (9) From this time onwards the problem of preserving Cambodia's territorial integrity, its way of life, and independence became as much the task of the king as of the people. Thus Cambodian nationalism was fully matured in this period.

The Establishment of French Protectorate

The centuries of conflict with Thailand and Vietnam taught Cambodia the futility of relying on either of the two for support. The assistance given to Cambodia in the dire hour of her need either by Thailand or by Vietnam was by no means a disinterested act. On the contrary, as observed by Paul Collard, every time they interfered they clipped slices of Cambodian territory "either as compensation for the aid requested by Cambodia or as prize of war." (10) Thus, while Thailand took possession of Korat, Chantabun, and put forward pretensions to territorial rights over Battambang and Angkor, Vietnam in its turn took

(8) Ibid., 114. See also R. S. Gundry, China and Her Neighbours (?, 1893) 20-1, and Rois de Kampuchea (Phnom Penh, 1957) 4.

(9) According to Ang-Duong's personal account, the Thai King himself had taken personal interest in fitting out the expedition. Besides ordering the raising of 5,000 Thai soldiers, he had also ordered that all provisions of war should be provided fully. See Rois de Kampuchea, 4.

(10) Paul Collard, Cambodge et Cambodgiens (Paris, 1925) 76.
Travinh, Natien, Chaudoc, etc., under its control in the south. Cambodia's independence and territorial integrity were never in such danger as in the mid-19th Century.

King Ang-Duong (1841-1859), deeply concerned with the problem facing his kingdom, was fervently in search of a distant ally, preferably an European ally. A distant power, it was thought, would not be as harmful to Cambodia's freedom and interests as were her neighbours. It was this national urge of Cambodia for freedom that eventually enabled France to establish her protectorate over Cambodia without firing a shot. For the moment, however, on the suggestion of some English businessmen, Ang-Duong despatched in 1850 one Constantin Monteiro to visit England and request for her alliance. Even though "this attempt remained fruitless" (11), the King continued to cherish the desire for an European alliance. On the incessant persuasion of Christian missionaries of French origin, the King's attention turned towards France. In a letter addressed to Emperor Napoleon III of France he wrote:

For the last few years the French missionaries residing in Cambodia have been telling Me, with great fervour, that the Emperor of France adopts an entirely merciful attitude towards all nations; that instead of impairing the interests of the independent people He would defend their peace and welfare; and finally that the Emperor of France being kind would not entertain such designs as are found among other European Powers who sought to exploit others. Therefore, We shall be very happy to conclude with the Emperor of France a durable alliance which would make the Country of Cambodia great and prosperous to the advantage of all the people. (12)


(12) For the full text of this letter see Rois de Kampuchea, 3.
In 1854 the King sent a delegation headed by Chau Ponhea Kou and Pen (both of Portuguese descent) to meet the French Consul in Singapore and request him to send the letter addressed to Napoleon III. (13) Perhaps as a direct sequel to this, in 1855 M. Montigny, the French Consul in Shanghai, visited Cambodia. King Ang-Duong ordered the construction of a house at Kampot befitting the status of the visiting dignitary. He had also asked M. Miche, a French missionary, to receive Montigny, and to enter into "any relation" with the latter with the assurance of ratifying it. At Kampot M. Montigny was received with great pomp by M. Miche and a few other important Cambodian mandarins. This mission, although it established the first official contact between Cambodia and France, was a failure from the point of view of results due partly to the mistakes of M. Montigny. (14) Evidently the King was disappointed, and with his death in 1859 the pronounced eagerness of Cambodia for an alliance with France receded into the background. It was perhaps due to the fact that Vietnam by then had been defeated by the French thus removing the dangerous enemy on the east. (15)

(13) This letter, however, did not reach Napoleon III.


(15) Saigon was taken on 18 February 1859. From 23 February onward the French took possession of 50 per cent of the customs rights of the court of Hue, declared the opening of the Saigon port to all friendly nations, and also threw open the port for the export of rice till then prohibited. See Jean Chesneaux, Contribution à l'Histoire de la Nation Vietnamienne (Paris, 1956) 108.
French Interest in Cambodia

When the contacts between Cambodia and France were renewed in the early 1860's the initiative for a treaty emanated, for various reasons, more from the French side than from the Cambodian side. Like other industrialized European countries, France too was in search of sources of raw materials and of markets for her finished products. When she secured a place in the China trade in 1858, the importance of Cochinchina as a point d'appui increased. With the conquest of the latter in 1862 the strategic and commercial importance of Cambodia increased in turn. If France was to safeguard Cochinchina, inevitably she had to keep Cambodia free from external incursions, that is, from Thailand, where the British influence was predominant. Adverting to this point M. Chesseloup-Laubat, the French Minister for Marine, wrote to la Grandière:

Now, we have a great interest that the Siamese kingdom does not advance upto our frontiers. In case of war with a European power [he meant England] Cambodia would offer a possibility of preparing a diversion very troublesome to our defence. (16)

Moreover, the economic prosperity of Cochinchina, now under French control, would suffer if Cambodia chose to divert her export goods through Hatien instead of Saigon. Another reason for French interest in Cambodia was the desire to control the river Mekong as the shortest route to the coveted Yunan.

As is known there was a "constant and bitter" competition between England and France as regards efforts to enter Yunan by the

nearest route in the quickest possible time. (17) The French believed that the control of the Mekong would provide them with this possibility. Strategic and economic motives like these led the French in Cochinchina to make strenuous efforts to gain control over Cambodia. A legal base was provided when France became the successor power to Annam from 1862 onwards. "The French conquest of the Annamite province bordering on Cambodia," wrote la Grandière, "has naturally substituted us as the holder of suzerain rights of the Government of Huê." (18)

Soon after the conquest of Saigon, Admiral Charner sent Lespes, a French naval lieutenant, in 1861 to greet King Norodom, who had succeeded to the throne of Cambodia in 1860, and to impress upon him that the French had "no designs on his Kingdom." (19) In April 1863 Doudart de Lagrèe paid a visit to Oudong, the then capital of Cambodia, to study the political situation there. Two months later, la Grandière, the Governor of Cochinchina, himself visited Oudong and informed the King, through M. Miche, who acted as an interpreter, that "his interests were closely connected with those of ours, that France recognized and would defend his independence while Siam denied the same and was inclined to take away his authority." (20) The King, who was


(18) Quoted from Taboulet, La Geste Française, 623.

(19) Ibid., 621.

influenced by the sincerity of the French words entered into a secret treaty, generally known as the Treaty of Oudong, on 11 August 1863. The French representative la Granière signed the document on his own initiative without the concurrence of the Home government. (21)

The Treaty of Oudong, 1863

The Treaty of Oudong, in effect, was an agreement between two equals. Briefly, France agreed to give protection to Cambodia and defend her against external danger. Cambodia undertook not to entertain any foreign advisers without the express consent of the Governor of Cochinchina. France and Cambodia agreed to exchange "ambassadors." The treaty recognized reciprocal rights of travel, residence, trade and commerce, and the acquisition of property. France was given the locality of Quatre-Bras near Phnom Penh for her commercial and strategic purposes. Finally, Cambodia undertook to permit the French to export cattle and to exploit her forest wealth. Thus, the treaty, as pointed out recently by ex-King Norodom Sihanouk, was a "gentlemen's agreement" entered into in a spirit of mutual give-and-take.

The French Pressure on King Norodom

The few months between the signing of the Oudong treaty (August, 1863) and the coronation of Norodom (July, 1864) revealed unmistakably the strong desire of the French to bring the Cambodian King and

(21) La Granière did not inform even Doudart de Lagrée, who was responsible for negotiating the treaty, about its signing until January, 1864. See Taboulet, La Geste Française, 622; see also P. Cultru, Histoire de la Cochinchine, dès Origins à 1883 (Paris, 1910) 105.
his Kingdom under their control. Norodom, after signing the treaty in August 1863, waited for four months for the arrival of the ratified treaty from France. When there was but little hope of its arrival, the King, to some extent influenced by the rumours then current in his capital that the treaty would not be ratified by the French government, decided to restore the status quo ante with Thailand. For it would have been neither diplomatic nor a matter of practical policy to lose a neighbour, though a troublesome neighbour, and make her an implacable enemy. National self-interest dictated that in the absence of the support of a strong ally, western or eastern, he should patch up the quarrel with Thailand sooner than later. Therefore, he signed a secret treaty with Thailand almost nullifying the advantages he had conceded to France a few months earlier.

At the same time, he was exploring the possibility of an alliance with Spain which was then in possession of the Philippines. The Cambodian emissary commissioned to meet the representative of His Most Catholic Majesty was stopped by the French and thus this attempt of Norodom failed. (22) It may be noted that if the ratified treaty had arrived in time from France the king might not have signed the treaty with Thailand. Nor would he have ventured for a treaty with Spain. Whatever it might have been, after the treaty with Thailand the king was preparing himself in November 1863 to go to Bangkok to receive the royal regalia which he had left there in 1861.

(22) Collard, Cambodge et Cambodgiens, 125.
For their own interests the French wanted to prevent Norodom from renewing his relations with Thailand. La Grandière, the Governor of Cochinchna, warned the King in these terms:

Your Majesty is well aware of my affection for you and for Cambodia. Permit me, therefore, to say that if you go to Bangkok, you will be unable to return to Oudong, for if the Siamese wish you to do so, the French will oppose and good relations will be interrupted. (23)

Unmindful of the warning, King Norodom proceeded on 3 March 1864 to Kampot en route to Bangkok. Hardly had the king left the Capital, when Doudart de Lagrèe, the representative of the Governor of Cochinchna in Cambodia, backed by three gun-boats and a detachment of marine infantry about a hundred strong hoisted the French flag on the royal palace and other public places with a fan-fare of a twenty-one gun salute. (24) Whether the French had any right to occupy, as they did, the royal palace and other places, is an open question. However, the king was evidently upset at the news and hesitated to proceed further. On the "advice" of Father Janin of the society of Foreign Missions, who was following King Norodom, the monarch retraced his steps in haste towards Oudong. (25)


(25) Doudart de Lagrèe warned King Norodom that in case the latter did not return to the capital all of "his mandarins would be imprisoned, and that Cambodia would be made a French possession." Quoted from Thomson, "The Establishment of French Protectorate over Cambodia," 338.
Fortunately for the French, the long-awaited ratified treaty came from Paris. (26) Fortified with this document, la Grandière informed the Thai court, in clear terms, that France by virtue of the treaty as well as a successor power to Annam, had as much of right, if not more, on Cambodia as Thailand claimed to have. The royal regalia was brought to Cambodia. In the presence of the French representative, Captain Desmoulins, and the representative of Thailand, King Norodom put the crown himself on his head on 3 July 1864. (27) With this 'indirect' action on the part of the King, Cambodia with the help of France, shook off her vassalage to Thailand.

The First Great Uprising, 1864-77

The Causes

The formal establishment of the French protectorate over Cambodia opened a period of revolts which, in their intensity and duration, were almost unprecedented in the country's history. What were the causes of the first revolt? The protectorate treaty ipso facto was not the cause, but it tended to be a culminating point of what had been happening in the country for some time past. Firstly, the French missionary activity in Cambodia was disliked by the traditionalist bonzes. Secondly, the growing influence of these missionaries in the royal court threatened the long-enjoyed privileges and prestige.

(26) In Paris there were conflicting points of view and hesitation as regards the French Protectorate over Cambodia. The Ministry of Marine and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not see eye to eye on this question. See Taboulet, La Geste Française, 622.


The final settlement, however, was made with Thailand on 15 July 1867. Thailand renounced all her claims over Cambodia, and recognized the French Protectorate after obtaining the two Cambodian provinces—Battambang and Angkor. See Joseph Buttinger, The Smaller Dragon, A Political History of Vietnam (New York, 1958) 362.
of the mandarins and other vested interests. Finally, the imposition of new taxes as well as the introduction of opium in the country in the wake of the protectorate treaty affected the people in general.

The French missionary activity had been on the increase lately in Cambodia under the able direction of M. Miche, the Vicar Apostolic of Cambodia. Because of the non-interfering attitude of the Cambodian kings, notably Ang-Duong and Norodom, the missionaries were able to move freely, build churches and engage themselves in converting the Cambodians to the Christian faith. Although missionaries had been active in Cambodia for over two hundred years, they had made but little progress in gaining converts to their faith. Yet the very fact of the steady influx of an alien faith overshadowing the traditional religion of the country produced a reaction, notably among the bonzes and the mandarins. The local Cambodian officials persecuted the new converts with a view to bring them back into the fold of the old faith. The mandarins, M. Miche complained, "have moved heaven and earth to force our Christians to participate in certain superstitious practices . . . ." (28) To get over this predicament, and to consolidate the privileges tacitly conceded to them by the Cambodian Kings into concrete treaty terms,

(28) Charles Meyniard, Le Second Empire en Indochine (Paris, 1891) 357, also see 374-6.

Citing another incident M. Miche said that the grand mandarin of Battambang had obliged the Christians to draw the bier of the head of a pagoda, and also forced the Christian women to make dress for his comedians on pain of severe punishment if they did not comply. Ibid., 357.
M. Miche tried to bring M. Montigny into Cambodia. Although the Montigny mission had failed in other respects, Miche claimed that Montigny had "severely warned" the anti-Christian Cambodian mandarins, including a close relative of the King, that "severe consequences" would follow if they continued to persecute the Christians. (29) Whether there is any connection with this admonition or not we cannot say, but in 1861 Miche himself was "molested" by certain Cambodians, which incidentally gave a pretext for the French gun-boats to enter the Mekong twice in that year to "help" the Christians in Cambodia. (30)

Further the religious interests of the missionaries did not exclude their political interests. For the political protective cover of the metropolitan government's representatives in Cambodia would certainly make matters smooth for their activities. Thus the French missionaries were largely responsible for inducing the Cambodian kings, Ang-Duong and Norodom, to seek an alliance with France, and the Montigny mission itself was "intimately bound up with the activities of French missionaries in that area." (31) Moreover, the influence of Miche was on the increase in the royal court. His influence was so predominant that when Norodom fled to Bangkok in 1861 with the royal insignia, on account of some trouble with his brother, the Cambodian mandarins had to request him to use his influence to bring Norodom

(29) Ibid., 399.
(30) Taboulet, La Geste Francaise, 621.
back to Oudong. It is a tribute to his influence that Miche was able to get over the opposition to Norodom, and bring the latter back to the capital. However, as a compensation for his services, Miche tried to convert Norodom to Christianity and also induced him to take the initiative, like his predecessor, in asking for French protection. (32) While he failed to convert the king to Christianity, he succeeded in transforming Cambodia into a French protectorate. Further, as noted earlier, it was on the "advice" of Father Janin that King Norodom returned to Oudong abandoning his plan of going to Bangkok in 1863. In this way, the steady increase in the prestige of the French missionaries in the royal court and their interference in the political life of the kingdom could not but produce jealousy and discontent among the Cambodian mandarins and other high-officials.

Moreover, after the establishment of the French protectorate, Norodom had decided, presumably under French instigation, to change his capital from Oudong to Phnom Penh. (33) To meet the expenses for the construction of the new capital, the king tried to raise money by (i) a personal tax, (ii) creation of opium dens, (iii) customs duties, and (iv) a monopoly over articles of daily use like salt. M. Leclère writes in this connection:

(32) Le Cambodge, 53 (Bi-monthly) (Les Études Américaines, 1955) 12. The present writer was able to get this volume from the Bibliothèque Royal, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

(33) It would be easier for the French to keep Norodom under their control if he resided at Phnom Penh, which is near to the Quatre-Bras, than at Oudong.
The third measure of customs duties did not bring protests; the second was condemned by the mandarins who could not but view with misgivings the penetration of the evil drug freely into Cambodia, but the first measure, that is, the introduction of the personal tax created the most adverse reaction. (34)

The personal tax was hateful to the people in general and to the mandarins in particular, who felt it to be beneath their dignity to pay this tax. The system of monopolies would naturally entail considerable hardship on the people. As regards opium, was it not the firm policy of Norodom's immediate predecessor, Ang-Duong, to prohibit its circulation within his kingdom? If so, why did Norodom legalize it hardly a few years after the death of Ang-Duong? Was not Norodom himself an addict to opium, thanks to the generous quantities supplied by French representatives in Cambodia free of cost? (35) Even admitting for the moment that there was no French hand in these innovations, the timing of their introduction was not propitious for the French. The laity as well as the bonzes denounced the French, and in a way the king too.

The Course

The first great uprising was led by two Buddhist monks, namely, Achar Assoa and Pukambo alias Achar Lèak (Acharya Lakshman) of the monastery of Angkor Vat. These two leaders rode on the crest of the popular discontent. Achar Lèak assured the people that the hated taxes would soon be suppressed and that the country would revert to the customary taxation.

(34) Leclère, Histoire du Cambodge, 459; see also Moura, Royaume du Cambodge, 160.

(35) Collard, Cambodge et Cambodiens, 277. Collard suggests that Norodom's successor to the throne too was addicted to opium.
In these times of distress, they tried to revive the ancient glory of Kampuchea or at least seemed to be 'possessed' of such dreams. "These two adventurers Assoa and Leak belong to this category of prophets who, adorned with supernatural influence, dreamed of restoring the Kingdom of Cambodia to its ancient splendour." (36) They were neither "pretenders" to the throne, nor were they motivated by a desire to "usurp" the Cambodian throne. They were drawn from the common stock, as were their followers. The revolt was essentially a popular movement directed chiefly against the French and to some extent against the king.

The first phase of the movement was directed from Cochinchina — a prologue of what was to come after the year 1945. With the active support of the Vietnamese the Cambodian insurgents moved freely between Chaudoc and Hatien, collected followers, arms and ammunition. Achar Assoa, a "fairly intelligent" and "imaginative" leader, attacked Kampot with a few hundred followers and took possession of it. Soon after the attack was directed against Phnom Penh itself. Unfortunately, however, Assoa was wounded in an action. Through the complicity of the Vietnamese governor of Chaudoc, Assoa was taken by the French authorities in August 1866 and was deported first to Poulo Condore, later on to Réunion, and finally to Antilles. (37)

Then Achar Leak stepped into his shoes. He established himself in the vicinity of Tayninh (now in south Vietnam).

(37) Taboulet, La Geste Française, 645.
On 7 June 1866 he moved at the head of about 2,000 Cambodians and a handful of Vietnamese to capture the Tayninh fort. We do not know how many Cambodians lost their lives in the action that followed, but on the French side, Captain Larclauze, the Administrator of Tayninh, and his assistant, Second Lieutenant Lesage, were killed. (38) Soon after, another French detachment of about 150 men under Lt. Col. Marchaisse was ambushed by the insurgents in a surprise attack. The French lost about fourteen of their men including the Lt. Col. himself. Evidently the morale of the Cambodian rebels grew high. "This unfortunate occurrence," Lt. Batz tells us "contributed to increase the prestige of Pukambo (Achar Léak) and in drawing towards him many followers." (39)

Thereafter the scene of action shifted to Cambodia proper. Since the first week of July 1866 the province of Baphnom, "the pivot of the insurrection" to the east of Cambodia, was preparing itself to join hands with Achar Léak. The Achar, at the head of about 5,000 Cambodian peasants armed with whatever weapons that were available, "beat the royal forces." Another engagement with M. Alleyron of the French marine infantry met with the same success. With renewed confidence the Achar and his followers established themselves at a vantage point somewhere between Oudong and Phnom Penh with a view to attacking either of the two at a convenient time. They moved about freely in the surrounding areas of the Mekong and the Great Lake (Tonlé Sap).

Neither the royal army stationed on the bank of the
great river, nor the constant cruising of the French
ships could prevent the unruly bands from crossing
the Mekong and the fringes of the lake and also from
coming to threaten the Oudong palace. (40)

Admittedly the French position in Cambodia had become precarious.
On 1 January 1867 Col. Reboul wrote to the Governor of Cochinchina
that "our position in Cambodia does not appear to be
bright." (41)

La Grandière, the Governor of Cochinchina, however, issued
a proclamation urging the Cambodians to assist the French in
suppressing the rebels who were devastating Cambodia in collusion
with the Vietnamese "the worst enemies of the Cambodians." It
is not known what effect the proclamation had on the people. But
with the sharp fall in the number of loyal and able Cambodians,
the others, who were called upon to support the French, were
either "incapable or treacherous." The French proceeded to spread
out their own forces in greater numbers in Cambodia, and in
association with the royal forces, tried to defend Oudong and
Phnom Penh which were in danger of an imminent attack by the
rebels. One Brière de l'Isle with two companies of marine
infantry was ordered to defend Phnom Penh, while the defence
of Oudong was entrusted to Major Domang with a strength of
a company of infantry and three to four hundred Malays.

Despite the heavy deployment of French forces, on 17
December 1866, about 2,000 Cambodians attacked Oudong and

(40) Moura, Royaume du Cambodge, 163.

(41) Quoted from Taboulet, La Geste Française, 650.
penetrated into the fort where the royal army was stationed. (42) Major Alleyron, however, drove the insurgents away. Not long after, the army under Major Domang stationed at Oudong fell suddenly on Achar Léak's head-quarters. The Achar escaped assisted courageously by his followers even at the risk of their lives.

It was evident to the French that military measures alone would not bring the situation under control. Indeed they made a few attempts at restoring order, but all of them failed because of the non-cooperation of the people. A person who was more than a match to Achar Léak not only in rallying the people but also in military abilities was needed to retrieve the situation. The French choice fell on Préa-keu-féa (the future King Sisowath) to whom the administration of Baphnom was entrusted. The superior military might of the French coupled with the efforts of the new administration in Baphnom went against the Achar's cause. In July 1867 he made one more unsuccessful attempt and withdrew to Laos.

However, the central and eastern provinces of Cambodia were still in a mood to fight. (43) Only their leader was absent from the scene. So a letter was written to the Achar requesting him to return to Kompong-Sai, the capital of Kompong Thom, where, he was assured, he would find devoted followers who would be prepared to lay down their lives for his sake. Achar Léak returned to Kompong-Sai with about a hundred or so of his

(42) Ibid., 650.
(43) Moura, Royaume du Cambodge, 167.
followers and stayed in a pagoda. At first, according to M. Moura, there was some hesitation. But in the night the Cambodian women encouraged their men to join hands with the Achar. M. Moura writes:

On the next day at the early hour, the whole population was in movement. The men roused one another and hastened tumultuously towards the pagoda (where the Achar was staying). Pukambo (Achar Léak) was standing at the foot of a sacred fig-tree, surrounded by his partisans in many rows determined to defend their chief to the last end. The struggle commenced and suddenly grew more intense. The women were on the battle-field encouraging their men, supplying ammunition, loading the guns and hastening towards the wounded. (44)

The rebels, however, lost many of their men. Yet they surrounded their leader to prevent the French bullets and native arrows from hurting him. The battle continued till the rebels exhausted their ammunition and were reduced in number. Achar Léak took to flight by crossing a marsh. He was however overpowered and brought to Kampong Thom as a prisoner.

M. Pothier, the French Resident at Kampong Thom, thought that it would be dangerous to keep Achar Léak alive. Under his instigation the head of the Achar was severed and kept in a salt bag. Later it was brought to Phnom Penh and exposed publicly (December, 1867) presumably to strike terror into the Cambodians. This unmerciful act on the part of the French served no more their interests than it had served the interests of King Edward I of England when he had cut off the head of John Balliol of Scotland.

(44) Ibid., 168. M. Adhémar Leclére gives an entirely different version. He writes that the Cambodian women joined their men to arrest Achar Léak and aided in killing him. The version of M. Moura appears to be more acceptable because he was very close to the scene as he was then holding an important office in Cambodia. See A. Leclère, Histoire du Cambodge, 457.
The barbarous execution of Achar Léak did not remove the causes of the revolt. The atmosphere remained charged as before. Some of the former collaborators of the Achar, such as A-Chrèang and A-nong, "the right-hand man of Pukambo", kept the torch of rebellion burning. In 1876 Prince Si Vatha, who had rebelled against his brother in 1860 and who was to lead the 1884 rebellion, returned to lead the people. (45) He bade his deputies, charged with the task of recruiting followers, to treat fellow Cambodians with deference, to enroll only those who would join voluntarily in the struggle and to pay in full for whatever they might consume or damage. In a situation wherein exaction and oppression of the common people was almost of daily occurrence, this novel method of Si Vatha struck the imagination of the people and gained him their admiration. In consequence, neither the French gun-boats nor the efforts of Prince Sisowath could dissuade them from joining Si Vatha. (46) The province of Kampong-Sai as before became the centre of rebel activity. On 5 February 1877, despite the supervision of Prince Sisowath, Si Vatha overran the province of Baphnom. He was received with enthusiasm by the people while the local authorities fled away without so much as a show of resistance. In spite of several attempts made by the French,

(45) The French tried through Prince Sisowath and the Thai government to persuade Si Vatha to settle down in Saigon where the French promised to provide him with all facilities and sufficient pension. But he was "evasive" in his replies. See Moura, Royaume du Cambodge, 174.

(46) Besides Prince Sisowath another Prince by name Sirivong was deputed to go to Kampong-Sai to organise defence against the rebels. The non-cooperation of the people there forced Sirivong to request for the 'taglos of Manila' or the police to assist him in his work. Ibid., 175.
the agitation continued in the northern parts of Cambodia till Si Vatha withdrew to some unknown place.

The troubled condition in the countryside made the French realize that certain reforms were indispensable to safeguard their interests which were in danger as a result of continuous rebellion. Therefore, Admiral Duperée, the Governor of Cochin-china, pressed Norodom to issue a proclamation containing a series of reforms (January, 1877). The reforms, in brief, envisaged the abolition of certain royal titles, creation of a Council of Ministers with the right of the French representative to attend its sessions, reduction in the number of provinces and correspondingly the number of officials, remuneration for the mandarins, public works, abolition of monopolies on goods other than opium and alcohol, and amelioration of the condition of slaves and prisoners. (47)

These measures by themselves were progressive, but in the words of Henri Russier, they remained a "dead letter." (48) However, the very fact of the proclamation of these reforms made the mandarins and the princely order apprehensive, since these reforms sought to curb their interests. (49) The situation grew worse in 1884 when the French forcibly transformed Cambodia from the status of a protectorate into a "virtual French colony." It will be of interest to follow the method the French adopted in bringing about this transformation.

(47) For details see Henri Russier, Histoire Sommaire du Cambodge des Origines à nos jours (Hanoi, 1929) 92.

(48) Ibid., 94.

(49) Adhémar Leclère, Histoire de Cambodge, 462. See also Russier, Histoire Sommaire du Cambodge, 92.
The Convention of 1884

The French vacillation of the 1860's ended when they forcibly established a protectorate over Tonkin in 1883. It may be noted that by that time France had recovered from the shock of her defeat in Franco-Prussian war of 1870. She had set her house in order, and was generally free from European entanglements. So a year after the taking of Tonkin, the axe fell on Cambodia. M. Charles Thomson, the Governor of Cochinchina, abruptly entered the royal palace on 17 June 1884, while a gun-boat appeared in the Mekong near the palace. There was a sense of haste in the whole affair. M. Thomson, followed by his Chief Secretary, M. Klobukowski and M. Foures, the representative of the protectorate, entered the inner chambers of the palace at about ten in the night and insisted upon being received by the King. The latter was fast asleep and it was a crime of lése-majeste to wake him up save by his prior consent. M. Thomson, however, would have no regard for these points of etiquette. As the royal guards declined to over-step their orders, the Governor grew evidently impatient, looked at his watch and exclaimed to his subordinates: "Gentlemen, the French representative cannot afford to wait for more than a quarter of an hour." (50) At once, Paul Collard tells us, he forced his way into the royal bed-chamber with an escort of infantry. The unilaterally prepared Convention was forced upon the King for his signature at the bayonet's point. Col. de Monteiro, the King's interpreter and chief secretary, translated the French text to the king. In astonishment he

(50) Collard, Cambodge et Cambodiens, 111.
exclaimed: "Sire, it is not a Convention that is proposed to Your Majesty— it is an abdication." (51) Monteiro was immediately threatened with four bayonets, while the King helplessly signed the fateful Convention.

The Convention imposed upon the king acceptance of "all administrative, judicial, financial and commercial reforms which the French Government thinks necessary in the interests of the Protectorate." The Cambodian officials were placed under the direct control of the French officials in the provinces. They were also excluded from collecting taxes and customs, and public works, and, in general, from "those services which needed special direction or the employment of engineers and Europeans." (Art. 3) The Residents or deputy-Residents appointed by the French Government were charged with the maintenance of public order and control of the administration of local mandarins. The Resident-General (Resident Superior) was to have direct access and private audience with the king. (Arts. 4-5) The King was provided with a civil list. The land, so far considered as the private property of the king, was made henceforward alienable. (Art. 9)

M. Thomson, evidently jubilant over the Convention, declared: "Gentlemen, Here is a page of history." Paul Collard commenting on this stated: "It is a page of history, in fact, with its tableau of vicissitudes." (52)

(51) Ibid., 111.
(52) Ibid.
The Causes

Ignoring for the moment the Cambodian reaction to the peremptory demands of Governor Thomson, if the reforms of 1877 and 1884 are taken together into consideration, certain causes of the uprising will become apparent. The King, in the first place, was reduced to a state of impotency being relieved of all his time-honoured powers and authority. The reduction in the number of the provinces and the provision for remuneration for the mandarins, their exclusion from collecting customs and taxes affected the traditional privileges and rights enjoyed by the upper classes. Worse still, they were made subordinate to the newly-arriving alien masters. The Cambodians in general were still concerned about the circulation of opium and the proposed land reorganisation. They shared the general feeling of apprehension, anti-foreign sentiments and the desire to return to tradition and freedom. A band of leaders largely composed of the mandarins took the field. Si Vatha was again at the head of the insurrection "this time", as Lieutenant Batz says, "clearly to liberate the country from our Protectorate" with the "tacit support of Norodom." (53)

The Course

Rumours of an impending insurrection were afloat from the end of 1884. In February, 1885, emissaries from the capital trekked to various parts of the kingdom to spread the news of the imminent insurrection and calling for resistance to the French. Particularly the mandarins, actuated by a

pervasive fear of losing their traditional privileges under French rule, took the lead. The mandarins of various parts of the country met separately and discussed the methods and preparations necessary for attacking the French. The targets of attack were the telegraph posts and lines, the opium dens, and the French nationals in their respective localities. (54)

There were, however, some among the mandarins who cautioned their associates against a sudden collision with the French. In Kampot, for example, one Governor Chîm is said to have cautioned the mandarins against killing the French nationals without adequate preparations.

By killing two Frenchmen, you will not be killing all of them; and those whom you cannot kill would come here with their rifles... and the country would be miserable and burnt down. If the French capture you, they would cut your heads because you killed three of their nationals. (55)

The majority, however, silenced such doubters. The preparations went ahead and rebels came to the field with archaic weapons such as swords, spears, darts, etc. Besides, forts came into existence in many places.

The French forces were placed initially at a disadvantage. During the course of the rebellion they had to meet the enemy from all directions. (56) Unacquainted with the geography of

(54) Adhémard Leclère, Histoire de Kampot et de la Rebellion de cette Province en 1885-86 (Hanoi, 1907) 17. Here is a detailed account of the 1894 rebellion so far as Kampot is concerned.

(55) Ibid., 16.

(56) A. Dufour, "Insurrection du Cambodge en 1885," Cochinchine Francaise: Excursions et Reconnaissances, 13(Saigon, 1887) 6. M. Dufour gives a detailed account of the French military measures and the difficulties faced by them during the rebellion. He mentions about five theatres of war:

...(contd. on next page)
the country, the French soldiers had to fight the "invisible enemy." The disruption of the telegraph lines was an added disadvantage to them. On the other hand, the rebels well acquainted with the geography of the country subjected the French soldiers to innumerable guerrilla attacks. (57) Moreover, what the insurgents could not do to the enemy was done by the humid tropical climate and disease. Paul Collard gives a vivid picture of the plight of the French soldiers at this time:

Victims of climate, tired, walking painfully, the soldiers could not speak. Worn out by fever or the intestines spoiled by bad disease some were scarcely able to carry their rifles. Yet others, with heavy-boots on shoulders preferred to drag their bare and tender feet on the route rather than bear the heavy-boots scarcely suited for campaigns in the Far East. All of them wished only an ambulance to stretch themselves on small bedsteads. (58)

In May 1885 about 5,000 rebels who surrounded the capital were expelled by the French marine infantry supported by the police. In the interior, however, the rebellion was in full swing. Prince Si Vatha himself attacked Sambaur, to the north of Kratie, killing Lt. Bellanger. (59) In Kampot the rebels harassed the

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(i) northern region comprising the provinces of Stung-Treng, Kampong Siem, Chung-Prey, etc., (ii) Eastern and Northern region comprising Baphnom, and Thbang Khmoni, (iii) the region between Tonlé Sap, the frontiers and the foot of the hills, (iv) the region between the two rivers; and (v) western and south-western region comprising Kampong Luong, Kandal, Theang, Kampot, etc.


(58) Collard, Cambodge et Cambodgiens, 114.

French forces. M. Marquant, who came to Kampot in April 1885 with a company of marine infantry, found himself facing "a task difficult to manage." (60) The Cambodian rebels killed several French soldiers contributing "to the long list of their dead." (61)

For nearly two years, from 1885 to 1887, several columns of troops and reconnoitring parties were led to any place wherever necessary by Col. Miramond, the Commandant of the troops in Cambodia and by Lt. Col. Badens who succeeded him as the Resident General. (62)

The French predicament was, however, solved by certain weaknesses of the rebels. In the first place, there was no unified command or direction. In fact, the rebels were united by sentiment and xenophobia, which in themselves were not bad, but there was no definite and compact organisation, nor a constructive approach. Even if at times they were well organised and disciplined, the leaders themselves were the victims of personal jealousies over the question of command. The affair of Kampot provides us with a case study. As in other parts of Cambodia, Kampot also organised resistance to the French but there was a lack of unity. One Khun Khiem and another Khoun quarrelled over the command. Chhim, the Governor of Kampot, tried to bring them to terms. According to A. Leclère he said: "It is unnecessary that Cambodians should fight among themselves. The French would laugh at us and would take advantage of our discords and

(60) Leclère, Histoire de Kampot, 20.
dissensions and defeat us." (63) Despite such counsels, divisions and dissensions continued to exist throughout the course of the rebellion.

Moreover, the enthusiasm of the rebels was unmatched by their resources as regards arms. The principal weapons of attack were archaic darts, swords, spears and some guns. Evidently they were not a match for the well-equipped and well-disciplined French army. The weakness in arms, however, was attempted to be recompensed by invoking magic. (64) To make matters worse, there were some 'quislings' among the rebels who assisted the French in tracing the rebel arms-depots and their hide-outs. In the meantime the telegraphic posts and lines were restored. Above all, the orders from the King to the rebels to surrender to the French as well as the tours undertaken by Prince Sisowath in the troubled areas assisted in the quick restoration of order. The forts were demolished.

However, several rebels such as Khun Khiem and Chhouk of Kampot refused to submit. Prince Si Vatha himself withdrew to the forests to the north of Kempong Thom, where he lived, according to Paul Collard, a miserable and yet a noble life till his death. Paul Collard concludes: "We repeat, he was a figure in this country which has not precisely the peculiarity of producing such (personalities) for a long time."

(64) Ibid., 21.
(65) Paul Collard, Cambodge et Cambodgiens, 86 and 84. He writes that in Si Vatha's new settlement there was community-living. Young and old, high and low, including the mother of Si Vatha, toiled on the land. He commanded great respect among the Cambodians.
the Great Uprising collapsed in 1887 and with it the second popular attempt to oust the French power receded into the background to reappear with greater force during and after the World War II.

The driving force of Cambodian nationalism so far seen was the desire to preserve the existing pattern of the political, social and religious set-up from getting polluted through alien intervention. It was, as Rupert Emerson put it, "a xenophobic defence of the existing order." (66) There was therefore little that was positive and constructive in its approach. However, the transformation from the traditional form of nationalism to the modern form of progressive nationalism was to take place under the French tutelage of about fifty years which was to follow. While the nationalist sentiment remained as before, its content as well as its approach to freedom witnessed a perceptible change during this period of gestation. Until the coming of the second World War however the overt manifestation of Cambodian nationalism was mostly absent. This was due largely to French policy and administration in Cambodia to which we now turn.

French Policies and Administration

France, though exhausted, emerged triumphant from the shock of the two formidable uprisings because of its superior armed forces and organisation, and the reluctant assistance given by the king and such princes as Sisowath. From 1887

onwards the French remained the unquestioned masters over Cambodia for about half-a-century.

The Resident Superior became an all-powerful figure in Cambodia whose authority extended to cover "all public services in the Kingdom without distinction." The king, though allowed the outward symbols of power and authority, was in fact reduced to the status of a glorified cypher. He could, for instance, appoint and revoke the appointment of Cambodian functionaries, and grant pardon, but all these had to be carried out with the concurrence of the Resident Superior who was the king's "protector and tutor." (67) While the powers of the king over finance, currency, army and police passed into the hands of the Resident Superior, the king himself was provided with a carefully regulated and restricted Civil List the control and execution of which was entrusted to a French officer called the Controller of the Civil List. (68) It may be noted that the king had not the power to exceed any of the items of expenditure or incur any expenses not foreseen and provided for in the List. This close supervision was thought to be necessary to safeguard against any possible subversive acts against French domination. Besides this, in order to "keep the king away from meddling in

(67) A. Silvestre, *Le Cambodge Administratif* (Phnom Penh, 1924) 30 and 56.

(68) M. Silvestre and René Morizon suggest that the king had asked for and obtained the Controller from the French administration. It appears as though the king was not capable of managing his own finances. See Ibid., 32; Rene Morizon, *Monographie du Cambodge* (Hanoi, 1931) 44.
politics the office of a Minister of the Palace was created. (69) Furthermore, it is suggested, that even in such minor matters as dress and the choice of particular brand of wine the monarch had no free choice. (70) The council of ministers, into whose sessions the Resident Superior had the right of entry, and the Cambodian Consultative Assembly, came definitely under French control. The latter body (created in 1913) was forbidden, on pain of dissolution, from discussing matters of a political nature. While it could give an opinion on administrative matters, it was only "consulted" on budget receipts and expenditure. (71)

For the sake of administrative convenience the number of provinces was reduced from 57 to 8, and the number of districts from 57 to 36. In the local administration a notable change was made by creating communal organisations as basic units of the country's administrative set-up. But it may be noted that this measure was taken at a time when it was discredited in Vietnam, and was on the verge of being given up there. In provinces, i.e., in residencies, the Resident became "the permanent controller of the indigenous administration." (72)

(69) Virginia Thompson, French Indo-china (New York, 1942) 346-7. Ironically enough the Minister's power increased gradually at the expense of both the King and the Resident Superior.

(70) Ibid., 345. The encroachment of the Resident Superior was such that he could even make use of the royal table to entertain his own personal guests.

(71) A. Silvestre, Le Cambodge Administratif, 53. The debates were secret. The king was so subservient to the French that he was to dissolve the Assembly whenever it attempted to discuss matters of interest to Cambodia.

(72) Ibid., 69.
Like the Resident Superior, the Resident also enjoyed the same rights and powers in his jurisdiction. His control was so comprehensive that in the administration of justice, for example, the native judges were to submit to him details of the cases that were under trial, the nature of the dispute, etc. (73) The Resident, moreover, could consult as of right any dossier of the Cambodian civil courts he might desire. (74)

In the Municipal Council again there were only three Cambodians as against ten French and a few foreign Asian nationals who invariably supported the French.

It was, however, in the financial and judicial spheres that the French control was supreme. The native officials were forbidden to collect customs and other taxes. The formulation of economic policies was in the hands of the French-dominated Mixed Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture. The control over expenditure was so tight that the local officials had to obtain the prior permission of French officials before spending money even on small items. (75) Besides this, Cambodia's public finance was linked with the General Budget of the Indochinese Union. Consequently, much of her income was "siphoned out" of the country. While she contributed a considerable part of her revenue to the Union Budget, she...

(73) Morizon, Monographie du Cambodge, 66.
(74) Thompson, French Indo-china, 349.

(75) For example, the Cambodian Minister of Justice had to request the Resident Superior to provide one Luong Thoreu Toch, who was commissioned to conduct judicial inquiry in the countryside, with two requisitions of to and fro travel. Paper No. 303 dated 31 July, 1900. This paper and similar other papers are found in the dossiers of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Phnom Penh. As these are not properly processed the author is unable to give a proper citation.
received proportionately far less or nothing in return. According to F. Baudoin, a former Resident Superior, Cambodia received between 1922 to 1925 from the general budget only one-twentieth part of a total of 34,234,000 piastres whereas her population accounted for one-seventh of the total Indochinese population. (76) During this period, it may be noted, Cambodia paid about 20,000,000 piastres by way of indirect taxes alone. For the years 1915-21 she practically received nothing. (77)

The reforms on the judicial side were made "exclusively" in the interest of French nationals. The Cambodian judicial system was supervised and controlled by a French Judicial Counsellor. The extra-territorial jurisdiction covered not only the French, European and foreign Asian nationals, but also the so-called 'assimilated' Cambodians like the Phnongs, a hill-tribe, and the Malays. Cambodian courts were competent to try cases arising between the Cambodians alone. However, such Cambodians who violated the customs and forest laws and those who were involved in disputes with the French administration were excluded from the jurisdiction of the native courts. Dr. Pannetier commenting on this situation stated: "In the Kingdom of Cambodia today any status is preferable to that of the Cambodian. The native has decidedly become a 'pariah' in his own country." (78) Moreover, during the French


(77) Ibid., 25.

(78) Quoted from Norodom Sihanouk, Le Roi Norodom Ier (Phnom Penh, ?) 17.
rule, the Cambodian civil and criminal courts, law and procedure were reformed. The reforms, on paper, were indeed progressive, such as, for example, the prohibition of judges from engaging themselves in private trade and business, and from trying cases in which their relatives up to the third degree were involved. Nevertheless, the success of any measure rested on how efficiently it was executed. Because of ignorance or lack of experience or due to the defective understanding of law and procedure, the native judges generally abused their powers. A report of the French administration stated: "The mandarins could, in fact, easily abuse their authority over a docile population still ignorant of their right of recourse to the superior authority for redress." (79) Moreover, the replacement of the 52 criminal courts by a single court established at Phnom Penh made the "litigants spend more time, money, and energy than heretofore." (80)

Most of the reforms, except financial and judicial, were, as observed by Virginia Thompson, only "a stream of paper regulations." (81) If this was so, the condition was no better in the economic and industrial advancement and social reforms.

(79) Gouvernement-General, Reorganisation de l'Administration et de la Justice Indigène au Cambodge (Impr. d'Extreme-Orient, 1922) 158.

(80) Thompson, French Indo-china, 349.

(81) Ibid., 347. The reasons adduced for this state of affairs were (i) the quick succession of Residents Superior in Cambodia, (ii) the directives from the Metropolitan government advising caution; and (iii) the fact that Cambodia was only a "ballast" in the scheme of French colonisation of Indochina.
As regards industrial development, while the possibility of large-scale industries was unthinkable, there were only a few medium-sized and small-scale industries. In 1951, for example, there were only 47 rice-mills, 22 palm gur refineries, 8 power-driven and 170 hand worked saw-mills, one paper production plant and 2 silk-weaving and a few other small concerns. (82)

Concerning the development of transport and communication facilities, the total road-length under French rule was not more than 7,000 Km, and the length of the rail-road was about 339 Km. (83) According to Robequain:

The difficulties of water transport for fish products and even more for rice from Battambang, where the harvest is over in February, necessitated the construction of a railway from Mongkolborey to Phnom Penh. (84)

French capital was largely employed in rubber plantations and to some extent in rice cultivation such as in the Battambang area, the requisite labour for which was brought largely from Vietnam. (85) As a result of these factors an industrial working class developed very slowly in Cambodia.

As regards agriculture, the condition again was not better. In Cambodia, where more than 85 per cent of the people are farmers, the need for the development of irrigation system need not be over-emphasized. This was, however, so badly


(83) Ibid., 87 and 85.


(85) According to Robequain annually about three to four thousand Vietnamese entered Cambodia to work in the plantation and other French establishments. In May 1938 there were about 10,868 Vietnamese working on the red lands of Cambodia. Ibid., 214.
neglected that Cambodia depended entirely on the vagaries of
the climate. Year after year almost invariably cultivable lands
were visited by floods, followed by famine. The problem in
certain years grew so acute that the villagers were forced to
abandon their homes to migrate into relatively prosperous
neighbouring provinces in search of food. In 1912, for example,
the people from the provinces of Kandal and Takeo migrated to
Kampot and Kampong Cham where the "harvest was not so bad." (86)
Even three decades later the condition remained much the same. (87)

Equally defective was the attention paid to social
services like education and medical relief. Regarding education,
for example, for a population of about three million in 1938
there were about 1,165 primary schools including pagoda schools.
It is suggested that even in 1945 there was only one Cambodian
doctor and one engineer. (88) As for medical relief, just
before the last war there were only 14 hospitals with about a
thousand bed capacity, and three dispensaries. (89) The
inadequacy of the number of hospitals as also of the bed
capacity for a population of over three millions is obvious.

(86) Administrative Report presented to the Session
Ordinaire, 1912 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Dossier No. 3834-3850).

(87) In 1921-22 once again there was a failure of crops
which in a way resulted in a demonstration in Kampong Speu.
See Rapport Sur la Situation du Cambodge, 1921-22 (Hanoi, 1922)

(88) Martin F. Herz, A Short History of Cambodia

(89) Annuaire Statistique Retrospectif du Cambodge,
What was the moral effect of French colonialism on Cambodia? First of all it affected the age-old respect for authority. Because of the inroads made on the power and authority of the monarchy, it gradually lost the traditional obedience and loyalty due to it from its subordinates, especially the mandarins, who used to function as the king's "arms, eyes and ears." By controlling the powers of appointment, promotion and dismissal, the French administration tried to win over the Cambodian functionaries to its side. (90) For example, the elections to the Consultative National Assembly was "carefully restricted to the Cambodian officials and others whose loyalty to the French rule was assured." (91) Complaining about the collusion of French administration in Cambodia with the "enemies" of the monarchy, Prince Yukanthor (1860-1934), son of King Norodom, said:

You know that this Cambodian council of ministers functions under the control of the Resident Superior without the presence of the king, who has no more than a platonic right of veto over the decisions which no one submits to him any more and that they were carried out without his approval. This council is composed of only the enemies of the king. . . . (92)

As the old set of restraints receded into the background without new codes of conduct to take their place, the evils of rapacity

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(90) Prince Yukanthor gave an instance—before the French cabinet of how one Suphea Khuoun, the Governor of Kampong Thom, was relieved of his office for expressing his loyalty to the king. This governor, on a visit to Phnom Penh, expressed his desire to the Prime Minister to pay his respects to the king. The Prime Minister, Yukanthor complained, has said: "There is no more a king. There is no other authority except that of mine and that of the Resident Superior. I forbid you to see Norodom. . . ." Rois de Kampuchea, 7.

(91) Virginia Thompson, "Nationalism and Nationalist Movements in South-east Asia" in Rupert Emerson, etc. Government and Nationalism in Southeast Asia (New York, 1942) 111.

(92) Rois de Kampuchea, 7.
and venality gained the upperhand. These evils were aggravated when the native official learned to ape his western master. "The French Administrative Report of 1916 pointed out with regret that "after half-a-century of the Protectorate the native administration of Cambodia presents vices serious enough to justify popular discontent." (93) The women, too, to some extent came under the influence of western ways of life. Of greater significance was the introduction of opium as a good source of income to the protectorate government. Its introduction affected the physical and moral fibre of an otherwise sober and healthy people. The corrupting influence of this drug was so serious that among the French administrators themselves there were some like A. Leclère who took strong exception to its introduction. Leclère, a Resident in Cambodia, in a letter to the Resident Superior, after recounting the evil effects of this drug on the Cambodians, strongly pleaded in these terms:

I am convinced that we are unfaithful to our civilizing mission, that we will be committing a grave fault, that we will be serving badly the French interests here as also that of the Cambodians, whom we cannot neglect, that I have the honour to request you to put my proposal for consideration and to propose to the Governor-General to close all the opium houses in Cambodia and prohibit the opening of new ones on pain of one or two years of imprisonment. (94)


(94) Adhemard Leclère’s letter to Resident Superior in Cambodia dated 30 December 1900 (No. 908, Bibliothèque Nationale, Phnom Penh). This letter is a very interesting one in that it traces with meticulous care all the evil effects of opium on the Cambodians. There is also the marginal comments of the Resident Superior on this letter, which clearly proves how strongly the Protectorate government was committed to its opium policy. Even one year before the final abolition of opium from Cambodia, the French administration was unhappy to see the sale in opium declining, and took serious steps to retrieve the situation.
The righteous indignation of Leclère evoked no more than derisive laughter and scathing comments from his superiors. The circulation of opium however was forbidden in 1907 largely in deference to the growing volume of world opinion against it. The evils of lottery and gambling continued to exist.

The survey that is attempted above is not to make an inventory of the failings of French colonialism in Cambodia, but only to bring out how much the country had suffered on account of French domination. Despite the French administrator's claims of bringing the blessings of a *mission civilisatrice*, one cannot miss the basic motives of French domination in Cambodia. However, French colonial rule did bring in certain changes in the country, but they were largely, as Rupert Emerson calls, its "unintended tasks." It stopped the danger to Cambodia from Thailand besides helping the recovery of the lost provinces, namely, Battambang and Angkor, in 1907. (95) A few gadgets of modern civilisation like radio, automobiles, cycles, cinema, cosmetics, French-style restaurants etc., gradually found their way into the Cambodian daily life. Furthermore, certain reforms like the reduction in the number of provinces and districts, the codification of laws and procedure, the introduction of rubber, to mention only a few, contained in them the seeds for future development. However, more than the work and the claims of achievement of the French colonial administrator, it is the patient, silent and disinterested work of the French scholars that has conferred lasting cultural benefits on Cambodia.

Apart from Henry Mouhot, who rediscovered Angkor, savants like E. Aymonier, Georges Groslier, Georges Coedes and others have not only brought to light the artistic and architectural glories of the great civilisation, of the days of yore but have helped also to reconstruct Cambodia's ancient history. In this connection the work of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient needs special mention. Besides this, under French rule, such institutions as the École Supérieur du Pali, the Institut Bouddhique, the Administrative School etc., came into existence which in a way helped in the educational progress of the Cambodians.

Checks on the Growth of Nationalism

Cambodian nationalism in its modern form was rather slow in taking shape. This was in a large measure due to the care taken by the French to avoid as far as possible offending the national susceptibilities. First, by outwardly avoiding disrespect to the institution of monarchy, they tried to minimize the chances of anti-French sentiments manifesting themselves. The monarchy was utilized as a sure bulwark for their domination. As a mark of regard and respect for the monarchy, the Royal Palace was renovated, a new Throne Hall and a Dance Hall were built at a cost of about a million piastres. These "sacrifices in the political interest," as M. Baudoin observed, "were necessary and worth-making." (96) Secondly, every care was taken

(96) Baudoin, Le Cambodge pendant et après la Grande Guerre, 14.
to avoid, on the one hand, the rise once again of Si Vathis and Yukanthors and on the other hand, to gain "valuable collaborators" for the Protectorate from the ranks of the royal princes. Offices of trust and responsibility, as also honours and titles were given lavishly to those princes whose good-will towards France was above suspicion. (97) Moreover, the throne itself was held out as a prize for those princes who gave their unqualified support to French rule. M. Baudoin could confidently write in 1927: "Here is an élite whose loyalty is assured to us." (98) Similarly, leading Cambodian officials were won over to the French side by conferring offices and such other favours.

Thirdly, under the semblance of maintaining the old administrative frame-work, substantial changes were made in actual practice wherever necessary. The Kings, Sisowath and Sisowath Monivong, were so well managed that superficially it appeared as though the kings were still the source of power and authority. The native officials, too, were controlled so skilfully that outwardly they appeared to be free from French control. The Kings as well as officials were dexterously interposed between the protectorate government and the Cambodian masses. Every good result of a particular measure was shown to the Cambodians as a blessing coming from the benevolent French rule, while the bad effects of the same were shifted on to the

(97) One of the sons of King Sisowath was made the head of the Ministry of Marine. The late King Suramarit was also a Minister of Marine in 1938-9. See Protectorat du Cambodge, Rapport sur l'Exercice du Protectorat pendant la période juin 1938-1939 (Phnom Penh, 1939) 11.

shoulders of the native officials. Thus, the careful handling by the French of the Cambodian traditional 'power elite', viz., the king, royal family, and the mandarinate, the scarcity of leaders coming from the newly educated and professional class, and, above all, the so-called indirect rule - these and a few others hindered the quick pace of Cambodian nationalism during this period.

The Revivalist Phase

Despite these manipulations and superior military force, the French could not be a match for the "intangible forces" of the religion and soul of the ruled. The thoughtful among the Cambodians, even though their number was small, were not lured into accepting the French rule. Whenever an opportunity presented itself anti-French feelings broke out. During the first World War, for instance, the French had to meet a formidable resistance of the masses as regards recruitment. Besides the Cambodian's reluctance to violence, it was worse than death for him, on religious grounds, to leave his native place for overseas service. When the King under French compulsion issued a proclamation asking Cambodians to join war-service, the indignation of the bonzes, local officials and of the people was beyond control. While the local Cambodian officials left their posts in protest, the people themselves did not hesitate to take the unprecedented step of tearing away the posters of the Royal proclamation. The resistance was so formidable that the French administration realized the "absolute necessity to delay"
recruitment operations. (99)

While information regarding the impact of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904 and the Chinese Revolution of 1911 on the growth of Cambodian nationalism is lacking, the Cambodian intelligentsia seems to have been perceptibly influenced by the anti-French propaganda of Germany in the Far East during the World War I. The French authorities in Cambodia had to take the trouble of using counter-propaganda to regain their position in the estimation of this intelligentsia. But the Cambodian "volunteers," of the 20th Battalion of Indochina, about 2,000 strong, who went for war service in France, returned with ideas of freedom in their minds. One among such was Pach Chhoeun, a nationalist and an editor of the Nagaravatta founded in 1936.

From 1935 onwards, the French-educated Cambodian intelligentsia attempted to modernize Cambodia's social and other institutions and to revive the country's ancient glory as a source of inspiration. In 1935 a cultural organisation called the Friendly Association of the Old Students of the Sisowath College (L'Association Amicale des Anciens Elèves du Collège Sisowath) was founded under the inspiration of the Cambodian intellectuals like Pann Yung, Huy Kanthoul, Penn Nouth, Thon Ouk, who were to play a leading role in the nationalist movement. The aim of this Association was to aid the old students of the College to find suitable jobs and help deserving students

with financial assistance to pursue their studies. Women became, though not in an appreciable degree, conscious of their place in society. Co-education was actively encouraged with fairly good results. Girls participated side by side with boys in various cultural activities like dramas, games, etc. In 1937 the first girls' scout association was organised in Battambang. In 1941 the women's organisation, the Samakom Khmera Sahachivini, or Association of Cambodian Women, was started with a view to inculcating in them the spirit of initiative, interest in physical culture and house-hold arts. (100) A newspaper in the Cambodian language, the Nagaravatta, or Angkor Wat, came into existence in 1936. Under the energetic editorship of Pach Chhoeun this paper used to bring the grievances of the people to the notice of the French administration in Cambodia asking for quick redress. The cry of "Cambodia for Cambodians" was very much in the air. The rising national consciousness was reflected in songs and poems like for example the following couplet written by a Cambodian youth in 1935.

Into the unfathomable depths our Country is plunged
Angkor, temple and palace, has become a Hypogeum. (101)

Noticing the change that was coming up in the Cambodian mental out-look, the French attempted to show a few concessions here and there. During the year 1936-7 control over local

(100) Cambodge (Phnom Penh) 21 October 1948.

(101) The couplet is found in the Bulletin de Liaison de l'Association Amicale des Anciens Elèves du Collège Sisowath (Phnom Penh, 1935) 44.
administration was relaxed a little. A certain latitude of initiative was conceded to the provincial mandarins. To some extent even control over local budgets such as those of the khums was given to the local officials. (102) Moreover, the traditional system of education was officially integrated in 1937 with the modern system of education. The Cambodians were assured of encouragement to desiring students by giving them financial and other help to pursue their higher studies.

This relaxation of control over Cambodian administration, the French held, would not ipso facto guarantee an immediate return to self-government. On the contrary, a "period of transition" was indispensable for ensuring a peaceful and orderly government. Why? M. Thibadeau, the Resident Superior in Cambodia, pointed out that the Cambodian youth was not upto the mark so as to take charge of national responsibilities. He complained that even though adequate encouragement was given to them, the youth were apathetic to take to liberal professions like teaching, medicine and law. He further complained that the youth, instead of loving a life of adventure, preferred to stay in their country and do traditional jobs like those of mandarins. Regarding the slogan of "Cambodia for Cambodians" he observed: "This concise expression indeed crystalises the aspirations and implications of the people, but is it enough to proclaim platonically such an aspiration so that it becomes a positive reality?" (103) The Cambodians did not hesitate to


point out that if the Cambodian youth did not come forward, it was because that there was no sufficient incentive for undertaking such work and that financial assistance was either not given or, if given, was not encouraging. The spirit of enquiry and of criticism had begun to appear in the Cambodian public life.

At a time when the French officials were realizing that at least a partial relaxation was necessary to come to a compromise with the growing spirit of nationalism, war descended upon the world in 1939. The repercussions on Cambodia consequent to the establishment of the Vichy regime in France under Hitler's domination, and the southward drive of Japan resulting in the occupation of the Kingdom hastened the growth of Cambodian nationalism.