

IJAPS, Vol. 5, No. 1 (January 2009)



Conflict and Change in Cambodia

Edited with an Introduction by Ben Kiernan. Consulting Editor, Caroline Hughes. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. i–xix. pp. 139. Contents, Introduction by Ben Kiernan, Documents, Contributors, Index.

This edited volume deals with conflict and change in Cambodia and given the developments in Cambodia since the early 1970s it is a very relevant topic. The volumes deal with developments from the 1940s to the 2000s with a focus on developments in the 1990s. The contributors include established experts on Cambodia and less established scholars. The volume deals both with conflict trends, political development, and issues related to logging.

The volume is structured in the following way. First, an introduction on conflict in Cambodia between 1945 and 2006 by Ben Kiernan (pp. vii–xix). Then Chapter 1 on the collapse of the "Pol Pot Regime" in early 1979 that is primarily a English language translation of an account on the experience of the Chinese diplomats to Democratic Kampuchea (DK) (pp. 1–25). Chapter 2 by David Reports is devoted to Cambodian politics 1991–1999 (pp. 26–44). Chapter 3 by Caroline Hughes also analyses Cambodian politics with a focus on the 1998 general elections and the role of international intervention (pp. 45–68). Chapter 4 by Philippe Le Billon is devoted to the issue of forest exploitation in Cambodia (pp. 69–92). Chapter 5 by Ruth Bottomley also looks at forest exploitation by analysing local responses to logging in Ratanakiri Province (pp. 93–112). Finally, in the Documents section Helen Jarvis (chapter 6) and Ben Kiernan (chapter 7) provide background information relating to the process of establishing a tribunal try leaders from the DK period (pp. 113–130).

The most original part of the volume is the English language translation of an account on the experience of the Chinese diplomats to DK in the connection with the overthrow of DK by Vietnamese troop sin early January 1979 and their experiences in the remote southwest of Cambodia in early 1979. It gives an interesting account of the conditions in which the diplomats had to survive and also the military pressure of Vietnamese troops against the DK leadership in the area.

The main strengths of the volume are the two chapters on political developments in the 1990s. In particular Hughes' chapter displays the policies of the Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique et Coopératif (FUNCINPEC) and the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) in connection with the 1998 general elections in a very informative way, in particular the explicit anti-Vietnamese rhetoric of both FUNCINPEC and

SRP. The chapter displays how the views and policies displayed by the two parties were in contradiction with the democratic values promoted by the International Community. Adam Roberts' chapter deals more broadly with Cambodian political developments during the 1990s.

Chapter 4 and 5 on various issues and dimensions of logging and forestry politics in Cambodia at large and in the province of Ratanakiri, respectively, add a very relevant dimension to the book and do complement each other.

The introduction chapter by Ben Kiernan is a useful overview of the patterns of conflict and change in Cambodia over six decades raging from the mid-1940s to the mid-2000s. It is the only part of the volume dealing with the conflicts in the 1970s, with the period of DK 1975–1978, and with the period of the so-called Cambodian conflict 1979–1991. Given the importance of these developments and their considerable impact on Cambodia the volume should have included dedicated chapters on them. The latter would have been more relevant than the documents section in which only the contribution by Helen Jarvis ought to have been included based on its own merits.

An intriguing feature of the volume is that there is an "Editor"—Ben Kiernan—and a "Consulting Editor"—Caroline Hughes. This raises the question why Hughes is not a co-editor as is customary for books with more than one editor? The normal approach would have been to list them as follows "Edited by Ben Kiernan and Caroline Hughes".

With the exception of the Introduction by Ben Kiernan the research chapters (2–4) are all limited to developments in the 1990s. This is not satisfactory in a book published in 2007. Both political developments and issues relating to logging are not static and thus updating them for inclusions in the volume ought to have been a priority. As it appears these four chapters have only been re-printed from the journal *Critical Asian Studies* (CAS). Given that CAS is readily available the volume derived from it should have featured revised and updated contributions dealing with developments into the 2000s.

To summarise the volume is recommended reading and the scholarship is of high quality dealing with relevant issues and developments. The main weaknesses are twofold, first, that most chapters have not been updated to deal with developments in the 2000s and second that the conflicts and developments in the 1970s and the 1980s up to the resolution of the Cambodian conflict in October 1991 are only addressed in the Introduction and not in any of the full fledged chapters. The latter limits the overall relevance of the volume in addressing the conflicts that affected Cambodia in recent decades. Thus, readers are advised to consult the existing literature on the Second Indochina Conflict, the Third Indochina

Conflict, on the Cambodian Conflict as well as the developments inside Cambodia during the DK—period of the second half of the 1970s.

Ramses Amer
Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

October 2008