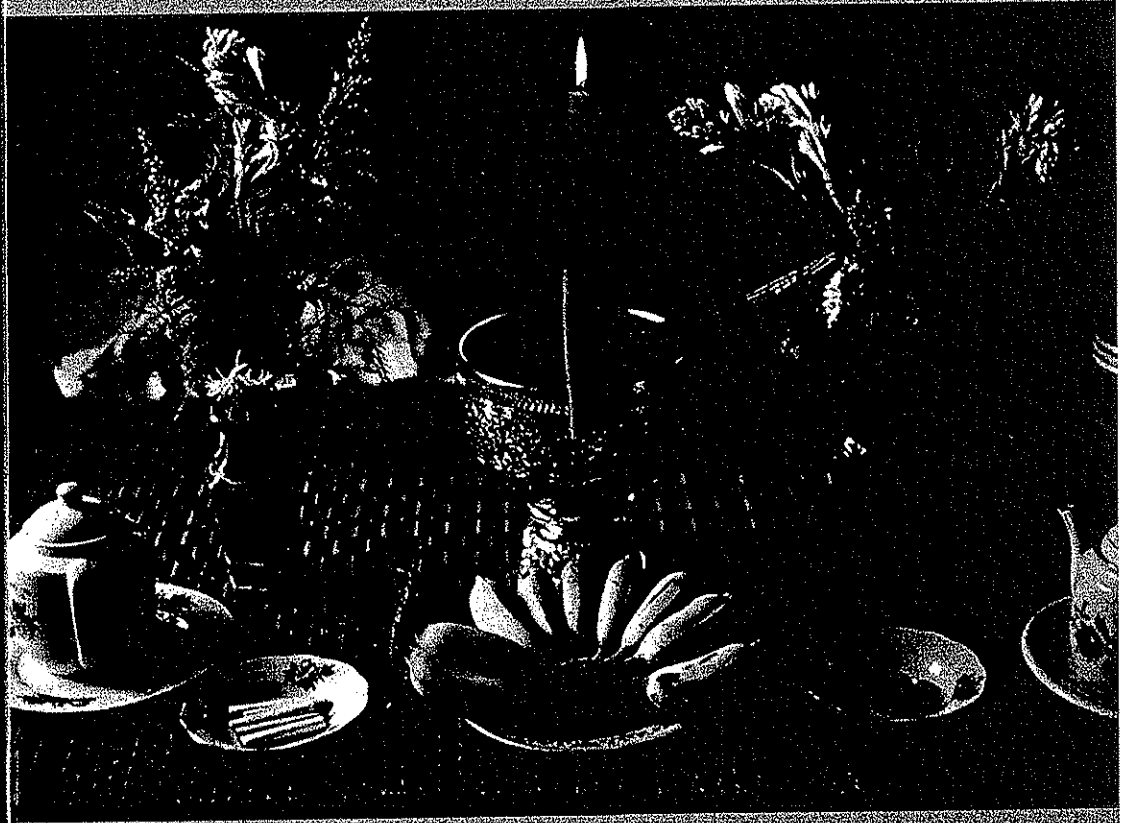


History, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements in Cambodia



Edited by John Marston and Elizabeth Guthrie

210.29

History, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements in Cambodia

Edited by
John Marston
and
Elizabeth Guthrie



0428/05



University of Hawai'i Press
Honolulu

as 1854 (Khin Sok 1991, 271). The route the founding of the sect to the society and purification, rather than to "continuing oral tradition" of the 1969, 11). Most other sources follow

décembre 1922," AEFEO box 23, Coedès à le Résident Supérieure, AEFEO à Gouverneur Général, Hanoi, de Pāli, 1909–1918]; "Ordonnance royale de Pāli, 1909–1918"; NAC box

fort to obtain credible texts from the preserved in AEFEO, as scholars

Coedès, professeur AEFEO, 28 août 1922, à la Confection d'un Dictionnaire Khmer-Français; Lomberger, "Circulaire no. 35, 30 administrative chef du 2ème Bureau à Hanoi, 12 mai 1926," AEFEO box 34, folder 2,

in a later collection of Khmer folk-songs, *Moeurs et Coutumes* titled *Pratibha* attributes his interest in production of Ind (Pang Khat 2493 [1950], i). 1 "nationalism" (*jātinīyam*) devel-

oprets this quote from *Nagarvatta*

–3–

Making a Religion of the Nation and Its Language

The French Protectorate (1863–1954)
and the Dhammakāy

PENNY EDWARDS

In 1863, as legend has it, the establishment of the French protectorate of Cambodia ushered in a ninety-year period of peace, prosperity, and stability that has been characterized as a "colonialism without clashes" (Forest 1980) and contrasted with previous centuries of war, chaos, and cultural attrition. Among the instances rupturing this mythology, two stand out: the Sivutha Rebellion of 1884–1885 and the Umbrella War of 1942.

The Sivutha Rebellion was the first protracted, armed show of opposition to French rule. Close to four thousand colonial troops were rushed in from Annam to crush the rebellion, inciting widespread fear and hatred. This episode marked a critical shift from the piecemeal character of the protectorate's first twenty-one years to a period of more sustained and direct European intervention and intrusion into indigenous theaters of power. From 1885 onward, the secular space staked out by the enforced reforms was gradually strengthened and expanded. These processes paved the way, from the early 1900s onward, for a secondary assault by the colonial government and its institutions into an area of society long deemed sacred and outside the orbit of worldly political power, namely the Cambodian Buddhist *sangha*.

In 1942, the twilight of French rule was marked by a much shorter but no less symbolic conflict, this time between the *sangha* and the colonial state. Staged in Phnom Penh, the confrontation involved a peaceful protest by more than one thousand monks, whose signature parasols earned it the name "Umbrella War" in Khmer lore, and its swift and brutal dispersal by truckloads of *sûreté* (colonial police). The monks were protesting the arrest, defrocking, and jailing of Achar

Hem Chieu, a highly revered teacher from the École Supérieure de Pāli whose crime was the alleged delivery of anti-French sermons. An estimated five hundred of the protesters came from a reform movement led by two extraordinarily talented monks, Chuon Nath (1883–1969) and Huot Tat (1891–1975?).

These two “wars,” nearly sixty years apart, were both protests against the violation of accepted parameters of conduct by the French administration in its engagement with the Khmer polity (1884) and the Khmer *sangha* (1942). The Sivutha Rebellion was an armed response to the fiscal denuding of the Khmer monarchy, the Umbrella War a collective cry of anger at the defrocking of a Khmer monk. This brute assertion of colonial and secular power echoed the persecution of those people whose religious faith, racial origin, political beliefs, or sexuality offended the narrow norms prescribed by Marshal Pétain’s Vichy regime (1940–1944). Among those affected were officials of Jewish background working in the colonial administration, most notably the energetic and erudite Suzanne Karpelès (1890–1969) (fig. 3.1). In the two decades between joining the École Française d’Extrême Orient (EFEO) in 1922 and being expelled from government office because of her Jewish lineage in 1941, Karpelès carved out a critical intellectual and institutional space for the growth of Cambodia’s indigenous Buddhist reform movement, which the protectorate referred to as the “renovation” of Khmer Buddhism.

Two colonial developments were critical. One was the progressive institutionalization of the *sangha* and its separation from the realm of state politics as a strictly “religious” entity. Another was the emergence of a reform wing of the *sangha*, known at first as the Mahānikāy *thmī* (new Mahānikāy)¹ and later as the Dhammakāy.² To avoid confusion, I refer to this group as the Dhammakāy throughout this chapter, except where I am directly quoting from sources using the term “Mahānikāy *thmī*.”

The Dhammakāy’s quest to authenticate and validate Buddhist doctrine aligned modernist prescriptions for a return to scriptural purity and a revalorization of the past with the spatial and temporal framework of the nation, making room for the emergence of a new category in Cambodia, that of *sāsanā jāti* (national religion). The intellectual roots of the Dhammakāy lay in Siam, not France. But the geopolitics of colonialism created the climate for the emergence of the Dhammakāy as a local movement, centered in Phnom Penh.

From their arrival in 1912 at Wat Unnalom, the headquarters of the Mahānikāy order, to the Umbrella War of 1942, Nath and Tat steered the growth of the Dhammakāy in ways that borrowed from the doctrinal legacy of the Dhammayut, built upon the recent refashioning of the language of Buddhism by the prominent intellectual Ukñā Suttantapṛjā Ind, and mobilized new methods for disseminating their message, notably through Khmer vernacular print media.

Although framed by two hallmark episodes of colonial violence, this story is

presented here neither as a sustained violent encounter nor one dominated by a unilateral exercise of epistemological violence wrought on Khmer domains by European dictators, but in the spirit of a conversation between Khmer sangha and European scholars. This conversation was fraught with tension and was bilingual in more than one sense. It involved reconciliation and negotiation between contesting visions of time. It required the acquisition of French by Tat and Nath and of Sanskrit and Khmer by European scholars. It was inflected by a categorical consciousness, which I believe to have been lacking from Cambodia prior to the colonial encounter. In its emphasis on the promotion of vernacular Khmer as a

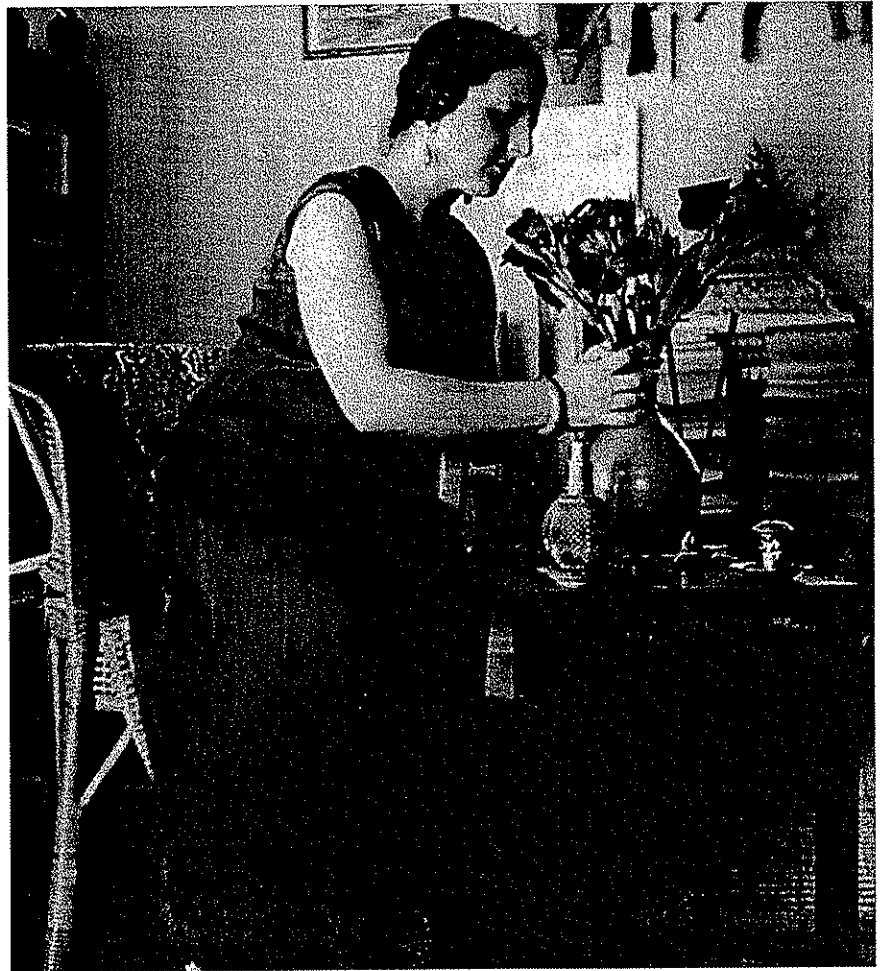


Fig. 3.1 Suzanne Karpelès (S. Karpelès)

medium for the transmission of Buddhist precepts and learning, this conversation produced a twin category to that of “national religion”: that of a “national language” (*bhāsā jāti*). Like any conversation, it was far from all-revealing. It was, at times, a strategic conversation, one involving bluff and counterbluff, points of convergence, concealment, divergence, and dissimulation by both sides.

My focus here is on the place of nationalism as a site of convergence between the colonial and monastic voices engaged in this conversation. The modern concept of the nation, I suggest, provided an intellectual and conceptual framework through which certain members of the *saṅgha* were able to synergize the disenchanting projects of modernity with their visions for the moral rectification of Khmer Buddhism. My argument owes much to existing works on nationalism and modernity and studies of the production of colonial knowledge categories elsewhere (Anderson 1991; Bhabha 1994; Chakrabarty 2000; Cohn 1996; Duara 1995).

In its focus on the reform movement, this chapter marginalizes the voices and visions of those within the Mahānikāy who were opposed to the Dhammakāy agenda for reform. Here I would like to briefly suggest that the so-called Mahānikāy-*cās*’ were driven not by an intellectual death wish, but by a desire “to keep alive a life-form in ways where the questions of modernity, while not irrelevant, [were] not central to the ways in which [they] made sense of their lives” (Ganguly 2001, 5–6). Viewed this way, the Mahānikāy-*cās*’ are as much “presentists” as “traditionalists.”

Disenchanted Times: Authenticating Buddhism, 1860–1900

Colonial regimes of discipline and subjugation were not restricted to military occupation, colonial prisons, and other violent institutions, but also included the subordination of indigenous interpretations of the world to European perceptions. A principle means of bringing the colonized into line involved the promulgation of knowledge forms, such as linear history, which simultaneously enabled and naturalized “major institutions” of colonialism while themselves becoming “seriously embedded” in a broad array of state institutions (Chakrabarty 2000, 32). Key vehicles for the transmission of these historicist narratives were new, secular public arenas, notably schools and museums, and a new form of public messaging, namely print media (Anderson 1991).

The historicist narratives introduced under the French protectorate of Cambodia comprised visions of descent from a glorious Angkorean past and prospects of ascent to a thoroughly modern future, which deviated from indigenous readings of time as at once cyclical and, in its accommodation of spirits and living beings in the same temporal space, multilayered. It was in the inscription of this disenchanted vision into the world of religion that colonialism provoked the keenest displays of anxiety and controversy.

The school of Buddhist studies that emerged in Europe during the early nineteenth century was dominated by Indologists who considered Buddhism "an historical projection, derived exclusively from manuscripts and blockprints" (Lopez 1995, 7). The resultant reification of Buddhism in European imaginations focused Buddhist studies on the pursuit of master texts. Deposited in European libraries, isolated from the popular practices in which they were embedded in local cultures, such texts allowed the European construction of Buddhism as a "transhistorical and self-identical essence" (Lopez 1995, 12). Such scientific study allowed Buddhism to enter what Chakrabarty has described as the "godless, continuous . . . empty and homogeneous" time of history, a time that offers no scope for the agency of "Gods, spirits, and other 'supernatural forces'" (Chakrabarty 2000, 32). In this vein, colonialism's knowledge project in Cambodia, like its counterparts in India, sought to shear Buddhism of its supernatural accretions and, simultaneously, to document and authenticate a material, scriptural body of Khmer religion.

The initial stages of this process, from the 1860s to circa 1900 consisted of sporadic efforts by colonial administrators to accumulate a material body of Cambodian religious culture for French institutions. Self-taught in Khmer, with no academic grounding in Orientalist disciplines, these early collectors differed from the more formally trained scholar-officials of the early twentieth century and may more aptly be described as "scholar-entrepreneurs."

The pioneer of this work was the French naval lieutenant Doudart de Lagrée. Despite basic proficiency in Khmer and the support of the king, de Lagrée's nationwide search for Khmer literature and religion in 1863 yielded only a few sūtras.³ In 1875 the French engineer Félix-Gaspard Faraut (1846–1911) collected some one hundred manuscripts, mostly poems of Indian origin and Buddhist "myths." Four years later, France's Bibliothèque Nationale commissioned Faraut to build a collection of Khmer literature. Faraut found that while the titles of works were well known in some wats, the texts were either missing or "poorly transcribed copies of originals."⁴ In the late nineteenth century, the colonial administrator Adhémar Leclère (1853–1917) produced the first European study of Buddhism in Cambodia, *Le Bouddhisme au Cambodge* (1899).

These early French attempts to procure and catalogue Cambodia's Buddhist manuscripts and relics were paralleled by indigenous movements to purify and reform Southeast Asian Theravāda Buddhism.⁵ The beginnings of these reform movements are usually associated with the establishment of the royally sponsored Dhammayut sect in Siam in the 1830s. The Siamese Dhammayut promoted the rigorous study of the Pāli canon, which aimed to "cleanse" Buddhist practice of "false" accretions and superstition and emphasized reflection rather than rote learning.

Established in Cambodia in the 1850s and granted royal recognition as an official sect, the Khmer Dhammayut also encouraged monks to question the authen-

tivity of traditional Buddhist practice (chap. 2; Keyes 1994). The Dhammayut met with strong antagonism from some quarters of the Mahānikāy, but there were also Mahānikāy monks who found their teachings compelling. King Norodom (r. 1860–1904), monks, and secular literati made regular visits to Bangkok's "many institutes of learning" to peruse its "numerous Pāli manuscripts."⁶

The first Khmer typographic characters were cast in Paris in 1877 (Népoté and Khing, 1981, 61). In 1885, hoping to bring around Cambodians alienated by France's brutal suppression of the Sivutha Rebellion, the governor of Cochinchina, Charles Thomson, ordered the establishment of a Khmer printing press for the production of Khmer-language tracts promoting the benefits of French rule.⁷ The targeted audiences were the pupils of wat schools.⁸ By 1902, a second printing press had been established in Phnom Penh (Gervais-Courtellemont, Vandelet et al., n.d., 67). This was followed in 1904 by the royal Khmer printing press for the publication of sūtras, laws, and regulations (Jacobs 1996, 10).⁹ Thomson's proposed mode of inscription (print), media (flat sheets of paper for posting on walls), and content (vernacular language designed to be understood by the common public) differed sharply from traditional monastic ways of producing, circulating, and phrasing the written word. However, print media cohered with the textual bias and emphasis on scriptural "authenticity" exhibited by the Dhammayut movement and by European scholars.

The European valorization of Buddhist scriptures as historical documents, like the scriptural emphasis of the reform movements, differed from long-standing ways of seeing religious texts in Theravāda Southeast Asia. In Cambodia, as elsewhere in precolonial Southeast Asia, written texts were part of a performative tradition of Buddhist practice in which the word and art of listening were both modes of literacy and means of accumulating merit (Marston 1997, 14; Florida 1995, 11–12; Taylor 1993, 64–45, 74; Keyes 1977a, 118; Hansen 1999, 71–75).

The role of colonial scholarship in the transition from this aural tradition to a textual bias is nicely captured in a somewhat contradictory appraisal by Leclère, who enthuses about the performative life of the story of the Buddha's enlightenment, the *Brah Paṭhamasambodhi-kathā*, and at the same time effectively silences that text in its translation, scrutiny, and print production in his *Livres Sacrés* (Leclère 1906b). Leclère's enthusiastic account of a recital at a Cambodian wat stresses the "live" function of this text as a vehicle for generating merit: the monk raised his voice "high, clear, almost singsong—One felt that he knew that the Khmer letters have another value when they reproduce a word of the holy language." The audience savored each word with utter reverence and in absolute silence as if, Leclère wrote, "it really was the life of the Master, the Teacher—that they were hearing." But despite applauding such life in the delivery of texts, Leclère does not see texts themselves as something that should have a life beyond the "authentic," as reflected in his criticism of scribes, particularly those from Siam

and Burma, whose transcriptions of Buddhist texts were more "adaptations" than "translations" (Leclère 1906b, 9; Hallisey 1995, 52).

In France, the study of Asian religion gained particular momentum with the establishment and expansion of the Musée Guimet in Paris in 1889. That year also saw the establishment of the École Coloniale in Paris, signifying the emergence of a career colonial civil service. Twelve years later, in 1901, the EFEO was constituted in Saigon under the directorship of the eminent Indologist Louis Finot. The combined effect of both schools was to institutionalize specializations in Orientalist studies and colonial governance. As Said has noted elsewhere, Orientalism and its disciplines were in many respects the handmaiden of colonial practice (Said 1978). The 1900s saw a shift in the "ownership" of colonialism's knowledge projects away from figures like Leclère, increasingly discredited for his "lack" of formal Orientalist training, to three key figures: George Coedès, Louis Finot, and Suzanne Karpeles.

Reforming Buddhism from Phnom Penh, 1900–1922

The protectorate's attitude toward Buddhism during the first decades of the twentieth century differed from the laissez-faire character of the earlier years. The impetus behind this change was in part the fallout from the Dreyfus Affair (Neher-Bernheim 2002), which stimulated reflection on the need to protect religious freedom, but also triggered an anticlerical backlash, resulting in the passage in parliament of the 1905 act decreeing the separation of church and state.

The percolation of this 1905 act through to colonial Cambodia had two paradoxical effects. One was a literal application of the act through educational reforms that resulted by the 1920s in the excision of all religious subjects from the curricula of what the French called "renovated temple schools." A second effect was to allow for the creation of secular institutions of higher learning, where monks could study religion as an academic subject.

In 1904, following the death of King Norodom, the reform-minded King Sisowath acceded to the Cambodian throne, and the governor-general of Indochina (GGI), Paul Beau, launched an Indochina-wide reform of indigenous education. The Commission to Study the Reorganization of Education in Cambodia was promptly established, made up of a prince, a palace official, a Mahānikāy designate, and seven French members. The Dhammayut's lack of official representation on the committee presaged prolonged resistance by the Dhammayut order against colonial intrusion in monastic education.¹⁰ The commission recommended French-language use and practical education, Khmer manuals in "morals and sciences," and teacher training courses for monks.

Although this program did not gain substantial momentum until the mid-1920s, from its inception it represented a critical projection of the protectorate's

view of the place of Buddhism within society and its parallel vision for the place of the state, and its institutions, within Buddhism.

The retrocession of Battambang, Sisophon, and Siem Reap from Siam to Cambodia in 1907 heightened the protectorate's concern to control and monitor the traffic of monks between the two countries and to erect a clear, cultural boundary around Cambodia. The protectorate, hoping to attract the best and brightest novices and monks from the capital and provinces, inaugurated with great fanfare the School of Pāli at Angkor in 1909.¹¹ The Royal Ordinance of 1909, which established the school, also claimed that the royal printing press would reproduce Pāli scriptures "more meticulous than any Bangkok production," placed a near total ban on Khmer monks traveling to Siam for study, and appealed to royalty, ministers, mandarins, and all subjects to donate funds to the school.¹² The school failed to attract local support, funding, or pupils and closed in 1910.¹³ Khmer monks—in particular those from the Dhammayut order—their paths eased by new roads serviced by an expanding network of buses, continued to make their way to Bangkok to study (Lester 1973, 115).

It is at this juncture that a more meaningful challenge to Siamese influence on Buddhism within the protectorate's new boundaries began to assert itself from within the Mahānikāy. In 1912, the recently ordained twenty-eight-year-old Chuon Nath and the twenty-year-old Huot Tat were appointed to Wat Unnalom. They were not the only Mahānikāy monks who favored reform of Buddhism. However, it was Nath and Tat who emerged as leaders of the movement in the 1910s and who would anchor the rethinking of Buddhism in a self-consciously Khmer context.

Born and educated in central Cambodia, Nath and Tat had reached boyhood after the crisis of 1884–1885, during what might be called an enduring crisis of deepening colonial intervention in indigenous institutions.

A sense of energetic curiosity in what was new glimmers throughout Tat's narrative of their Phnom Penh experience. On their own initiative, Tat relates, they surreptitiously learned Sanskrit and Pāli from an Indian peddler and studied French at night behind closed doors. Their covert encounters with French were a rendezvous not only with a new language, but also a new medium, in the form of the modern book. In the absence of vernacular Khmer novels or of a vernacular Khmer press, these literary encounters and their subsequent training in colonial centers of learning where French was the medium of instruction may have encouraged their promotion of vernacular Khmer as a language for the transmission and explication of the Buddhist scriptures, in both print and sermons.

In 1914, the protectorate founded another School of Pāli in Phnom Penh¹⁴ and proclaimed new restrictions on travel by monks to Siam for language studies.¹⁵ Located in the palace, the school—sponsored by the EFEO, supervised by the Ministry of Public Education, and ultimately controlled by the Résident Supérieure du

Cambodge (RSC)—had sixty students.¹⁶ Its director was the esteemed and erudite Thong, a master of the Pāli language (Finot 1927, 523), and Finot, still director of the EFEO, was on the school's board of councillors (Goloubew 1935, 528).

During the same year (1914) a new *mahāsaṅgharāj*, Kae Ouk, was appointed by Sisowath to lead the Mahānikāy following the death of Dien (see chap 2, p. 53). Ouk's installation as *mahāsaṅgharāj* made him the supreme authority at Wat Unnalom. The next few years saw a battle of words and wits between Ouk—described by his detractors as stubborn, traditionalist, and not especially erudite—and Nath, Tat, and other reformist monks in residence at Wat Unnalom. The crux of this conflict was Nath's and Tat's push to replace Cambodia's ancient monastic traditions with new and unfamiliar practices drawn from new translations of the Pāli *Vinaya* that originated in Thailand and were deemed more textually authentic.

Nath and Tat enjoyed the support of some members of the royal family, one of whom offered to sponsor a daily sermon on the *Vinaya* throughout the *vassā* period. In an early show of support for the young monks, Ouk selected Nath, Tat, and a reformist monk named Um Sou to deliver the sermons. In a radical deviation from the traditional rote recital of scriptures, Nath, Tat, and Sou delivered sermons they had composed themselves, explaining the *Vinaya* to their fellow monks. The high levels of attendance and the lively debates so antagonized some senior monks that they complained to Ouk, who from this point on positioned himself against the reformists and cancelled the sermons. But the seeds of reform had been sown.

This was at first an underground movement. With the exception of Nath, Tat, and Sou, monks did not dare reveal their interests in the *Vinaya* precepts for fear of upsetting their superiors. By night, Nath, Tat, and Sou pored over manuscripts and distilled what they considered to be their true essence, making extracts and annotations in their own books. By day, they continued to debate and preach in their daily discussions with other monks. Nath's and Tat's criticism of such mainstays of Mahānikāy practice as the recitation of the *Jātakas*, their advocacy of preaching in both Pāli and Khmer, and their argument that sermons should provoke reflection and enhance understanding of the *Vinaya* gradually percolated through Mahānikāy temples in the capital and beyond. These innovations antagonized members of the Mahānikāy far beyond Wat Unnalom, notably in the central and southeastern provinces of Kompong Cham, Svay Rieng, and Prey Veng.

In 1911, the protectorate formalized a program of wat school reform under a royal ordinance that made secular subjects, and Khmer language lessons, compulsory at all wat schools (Morizon 1930, 180–181).¹⁷ These policies were revived in the aftermath of widespread peasant protests in 1916 (Porée and Porée-Maspéro 1938, 183), and in the late 1910s, newly trained secular inspectors of temple schools began monitoring development of the reforms in the central and southeastern provinces.

Alarmed by such developments, and by Nath's and Tat's agenda, a group of Mahānikāy monks petitioned King Sisowath, who summoned Nath and Tat to the palace. During this royal audience, Nath presented an eloquent defense of the reformist interpretations of the *Vinaya*, demonstrated his bilingual Pāli-Khmer mastery of scriptures, treatises, and commentaries, and stressed the value of study (Tat 1993, 17–18). Sisowath was allegedly so impressed by Nath's erudition that he dismissed the petitions. But the dispute was far from settled in the minds of Nath's detractors. In 1917 or 1918, perhaps partly in response to expanding secular intrusion into wat education, a group from within the Mahānikāy persuaded the king to combat reformist elements within the *sangha*. Issued on October 2, 1918, Royal Ordinance 71 recognized the Mahānikāy and Dhammayut as the only two lawful Cambodian sects; prohibited monks from spreading new, unauthorized religious theories; and prohibited Mahānikāy and Dhammayut monks from any breaches of the traditions established in the time of the now deceased supreme patriarchs Dien and Pān (Tat 1993; Keyes 1994, 47–48).¹⁸ Shortly after the ordinance was proclaimed, Nath and Tat completed two books on the *Vinaya*, which they then took to the Khmer Ministry of War and Education, requesting permission to publish. Within a week, the ministry had ruled that

[t]he Council of Ministers will not allow *bhikkhu* or *sāmaṇera* to study *vinaya* . . . in paper books . . . [It] will only allow the study of the *vinaya* [inscribed] on palmleaf manuscripts. Any *vinaya* in a paper book like this is considered New *Vinaya* (*vinaya thmī*), which is different from the tradition in the time of Saṃtec Braḥ Mahā Saṅgrāj Dien. (Tat 1993, 22)

This perception of the intrinsic sacrality of palm-leaf texts clashed severely with the prescriptions of Nath, Tat, and their supporters, who believed that "palm-leaf or paper books were only materials. . . . There was no difference between them" (Tat 1993, 22). The ruling triggered a flurry of clandestine copying and circulation of Nath's book by monks and novices (Tat 1993, 24–25). In late 1918, RSC François-Marius Baudoin intervened to allow the publication of *Sāmaṇera Vinaya* (*Vinaya* for novices) against the wishes of Ouk and other senior religious authorities. Sponsored by Ukñā Keth, five thousand copies were printed. Subsequent attempts by a number of monks to ban the book and to expel Nath, Tat, and Sou from Wat Unnalom for their violation of Royal Ordinance 71 failed, partly because both Sisowath and his son Prince Monivong supported the book. Despite the best efforts of those he dubbed "traditionalists" or "old Mahānikāy" to obstruct the youthful push for knowledge, wrote Tat, "they couldn't stop progress. Books for study and practice were being churned out" (Tat 1993, 17, 30–32).

Despite its checkered beginnings, the School of Pāli established by the protectorate emerged as a key site in which monks from Tat's and Nath's generation, and

the next, could embrace European, rationalist subjects such as science and geography, further their attempts to distill the essence of Buddhist teachings and articulate the correct *Vinaya*, and consolidate textual knowledge and linguistic skills to rival and, in some cases, surpass, their seniors. In 1922, in a move approved by the protectorate and the EFEO, and possibly initiated by its director, Thong, the École de Pāli was restructured as the École Supérieure de Pāli and installed in new premises with a new curriculum featuring Buddhism, Sanskrit, Pāli, French, Cambodian history, Khmer language, Khmer literature, geography, and an optional course in modern science (Finot 1927, 523).¹⁹ The new school included a custom-built library designed to hold and conserve printed works on Buddhism and Buddhist manuscripts in Pāli, Sanskrit, and Khmer and to realize the school's new function as a conservatory of "all works, documents and texts bearing on Buddhist history, literature and theology."²⁰ The year 1922 also saw the construction in Phnom Penh of Cambodia's first public library, the Central Library, which held about five thousand books, mostly in French (Lévi 1931, 197–198). These libraries consolidated the place of modern print media as tools for practice and learning and consigned palm-leaf texts and other traditional forms of manuscripts to the archives. The designation of the palm-leaf text as fragile and obsolete symbolized the dilution and fragmentation of the Khmer *sangha*'s authority over the interpretation, conservation, and circulation of scriptural materials.

In 1922, Finot met with RSC Baudoin and impressed upon him the importance of including Pāli and Sanskrit on secondary and elementary school curricula in Cambodia. Later that year, Nath and Tat set sail for Hanoi to study Sanskrit with Finot at the EFEO. Tat's later account of this journey, and of their time in Hanoi, indicates clearly that the two young monks were guided not just by religious conviction and scholarly ambition, but by a firm sense of purpose as the potential guardians of Khmer culture. A sense of solitude and alienation from the majority within the Mahānikāy is also evident. Few came to see them off, and following their departure from Phnom Penh,

some monks and lay people . . . spoke out against us and said: "Those two monks have disappeared to Hanoi, perhaps they'll never come back, the administration has got rid of them." (Tat 1993, 42–43)

Shortly after arriving in Hanoi, Nath and Tat complained to Finot about the restrictions on publishing Buddhist texts in Cambodia. Finot lobbied on their behalf and persuaded RSC Baudoin to authorize the École Supérieure de Pāli to print and disseminate books (Tat 1993, 51–53). In late 1923 Finot's protégés returned to Phnom Penh competent in Sanskrit, able to decipher ancient Khmer inscriptions, and well versed in the geography and history of Buddhism in India and China. During their sojourn in Hanoi, Nath and Tat had also experienced the

beginnings of a national and political consciousness, something later described by Tat as an "awakening" (Tat 1993, 47–48).

During the next two decades, Nath and Tat channeled their new skills and political awareness into developing the concept of Buddhism as the Khmer national religion (*sāsanā jāti*) and promoting vernacular Khmer as the national language (*bhāsā jāti*). Their popularization of these notions was paralleled by the ascendance of their reform movement within the Mahānikāy and their own journey from the margins of the Buddhist establishment to the center of the Cambodian nationalist movement. The institutional climate in which they mapped the scholarly and cultural boundaries of a *sāsanā jāti* was massively strengthened and expanded by Suzanne Karpelès.

Reforming Buddhism from the Outside In, 1922–1930

The daughter of wealthy parents who owned trading stations in Pondichère, Karpelès developed an interest in Oriental civilizations at an early age (Ha 1999, 110). After graduating from the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris, she was posted to Hanoi with the EFEO in January 1923.²¹ In Hanoi, Karpelès collated a Pāli text from Ceylon with a Khmer manuscript. She then moved to Phnom Penh in 1925 and lived in Cambodia until 1941 (Filliozat 1969a, 1–3).

Karpelès was unusual among Orientalists of the time in that she saw Cambodians not as purely the "object" of her research, but as its main audience. Karpelès' personal religious orientation is unclear, but we do know that she, like her mentor George Coedès, came from a Jewish background (Ha 1999, 110). In 1923, Karpelès visited the National Library in Bangkok for final training in librarianship and to conduct research on collating Khmer and Pāli manuscripts. After meeting with its chief curators George Coedès and Prince Damrong, Karpelès began to lobby for the establishment of a national library in Cambodia (Filliozat 1969a, 1). With backing from RSC Baudoin and King Sisowath, Cambodia's Royal Library was established in 1925 to research, collect, conserve, and reproduce the "ancient manuscripts scattered in temples and individual homes [and] often kept in material conditions detrimental to their conservation."²² Impressed by Karpelès "erudite zeal and energy," Finot appointed her as director (Goloubew 1935, 528). Sponsored by the Cambodian government, the Royal Library housed Khmer, Siamese, and Burmese works in print and on palm leaf, alongside modern Asian and French works (Lévi 1931, 197–198; de Pourtalès 1931, 113). As one *sûreté* report later declared, the protectorate hoped that the Royal Library would "eliminate the need for monks to visit Bangkok" and that, together with the École Supérieure de Pāli, it would "curb emigration and check Siamese influence."²³

This new investment in elite education triggered fresh interest in colonial reform of temple schools at the primary level. In the early 1920s, a new gloss was

put on "educational reform" with a nationwide program for "renovated wat schools" (Porée and Porée-Maspéro 1938, 183). This renovation involved the bifurcation of religious and secular arenas *within* temple grounds through the insistence that wat schools keep religion out of the classroom and adhere to an official curriculum.

Karpeless' portfolio as director of the Royal Library included a series of Khmer tales and historic texts²⁴ and encompassed the publications of the École Supérieure de Pāli.²⁵ In 1926, the library sold over nine thousand volumes "suited to national tastes, at modest prices" (Teston and Percheron 1931, 338, 526). In 1927, Karpeless launched Cambodia's first Khmer-language journal, *Kambujā suriyā* (Cambodia sun), a monthly journal of Khmer Buddhism, culture, and history (Jacobs 1996, 214–217). Also in 1927 the Société Anonyme d'édition et de publicité indochinoises launched *Sruk Khmaer*, the Khmer edition of the Indochinese monthly *Extrême-Asie*, featuring articles on Buddhist literature and poetry as well as agricultural advice and local news.²⁶ Compiled by French and Khmer staff, *Sruk Khmaer* reached a circulation of two thousand in its first year.²⁷ Between 1927 and 1930, close to sixty thousand of the Khmer texts produced by the Royal Library were sold through the Buddhist Institute's bookstores, which numbered fifty-seven by 1930, and via a "book-bus" purchased in 1930 (Teston and Percheron 1931, 338, 526).

These journals and works on Cambodian history, culture, and religion consolidated the transition from a scribal to a print culture in Cambodia. They also provided vital arenas for the formulation of new ideas about Buddhism and nation, allowing Tat, Nath, and other reformists to translate their prescriptions for Khmer Buddhism into a body of thought and literature that, popularized through libraries, preaching, and outreach activities, enabled the Dhammakāy to project their vision of Buddhism as the authentic model. These claims to authenticity and purity resonated with emerging proto-nationalist preoccupations, which had crystallized by the late 1930s into a nationalist discourse celebrating the pure (*suddh*), authentic (*bit*), and original (*toem*) Khmer.

Importantly, except where they were reproducing historic texts or Buddhist verses, these publications adopted a prosaic style of journalism and reporting in vernacular Khmer. They thus represented a significant step toward establishing a reading public among Khmers in Cambodia and were equally critical in consolidating the emergence of vernacular Khmer as a field of national meaning.

As the vernacular literature on Khmer Buddhism expanded, so did its target audience. Locked out of Cambodia's geographic borders but conversant in many facets of Khmer culture, the Khmer Krom—ethnic Khmers living in Cochinchina—became a target of both the Royal Library's activities and educational reform from the late 1920s onward, when Tat carried out a number of tours of wats in Khmer Krom communities²⁸ and GGI Pierre Pasquier made a much-publicized

visit to Khmer wats in Cochinchina.²⁹ In 1927, Henri Gourdon, the honorary inspector of public education in Indochina, recommended expanding Cambodia's program of "renovated education" to serve Cochinchina's three hundred thousand-strong Khmer population.³⁰ The protectorate of Cochinchina duly launched a campaign of wat school reform, promoting professional teacher training and "rational teaching tools" in Khmer-speaking areas (Gastaldy 1931, 99). In May 1928, the Ministry of War and Education launched a new series of Khmer language school texts.³¹ In 1929, following her own fieldwork among Buddhist communities in Southwest Cochinchina and Laos, Karpeles proposed the creation of a Buddhist Institute (Filliozat 1969a, 2).

The Buddhist Institute and the Dhammakāy, 1930–1942

On May 12, 1930, the Institut Indigène d'Études Bouddhiques de Petit Véhicule was inaugurated at a ceremony held at the Royal Library by King Monivong of Cambodia, King Sisavong Vong of Laos, Pasquier, and Coedès, who had succeeded Finot as director of the FFEQ (Teston and Percheron 1931, 338). Addressing some two thousand monks from Cambodia, Cochinchina, and Laos, Monivong described the institute as "a house of Franco-Buddhist friendship" for French, Lao, and Cambodian intellectuals.³² The founding mandate of the institute was to rescue Cambodian Buddhism from "degeneration." A corollary aim was to foster cooperation between Cambodian and Lao monks and the French administration, apparently so as to replace the Khmer and Lao *sangha*'s long-standing orientation toward Siam with loyalties toward Indochina (Teston and Percheron 1931, 338; Chandler 1992, 18). Studying "minor differences" between Cambodian practices and those in Siam was one means of severing the *sangha*'s links with Siam (Ghosh 1968, 198–199). A more immediate means involved redirecting the attention of Khmer *sangha* to Khmer communities in Cochinchina. Speaking as the secretary of the institute, Karpeles defined its zone of action as Cambodia, Laos, and "a large part of the provinces of Southwest Cochinchina, where more than 200,000 souls who have remained deeply Cambodian and profoundly attached to the land of their birth, continue their fervent practice of Buddhist precepts despite a number of obstacles."³³

The Khmer population of Cochinchina was estimated at 320,000 in 1931, including 3,900 Khmer pupils enrolled at an estimated 229 wat schools (Gastaldy 1931, 98, 101). By this stage, the staff of the Royal Library and the Buddhist Institute enjoyed a mobility, autonomy, and freedom of association unmatched by other official organizations in the protectorate. That year, thirty monks who had been trained at the École Supérieure de Pāli were dispatched to wat schools in Cochinchina (Marquet 1931, 157). The Royal Library's book-bus also ensured the dissemination of Buddhist Institute publications to Cochinchina.³⁴ In 1931 Cam-

bodian troops in Saigon and Cambodia were included on Buddhist Institute preaching tours, and the Buddhist Institute founded several special libraries at military cantonments in Cambodia and Saigon. Nath applauded the success of these efforts in making troops and militia "fervent adepts of Buddhism" and improving the morality of the Cambodian military.³⁵ The ascendancy of the Dhammakāy in Cambodia was accelerated by the institutional and logistical support provided by French colonial authorities as well as the proselytizing activities of Nath, Tat, and their colleagues.

In 1930, the Buddhist Institute established the Committee for the Translation of the *Tipiṭaka* and began production of a complete Khmer-Pāli edition (Khing 1993; Jacobs 1996, 76–77). In August 1931, *Sruk Khmaer* heralded the printing of the *Tipiṭaka* in Khmer and Pāli as "a matter of interest for all 'true' (*bit*) Khmers, that is, those who love their country (*sruk*) and race (*jāti*) and have a strong belief in Buddha" and argued that printing the *Tipiṭaka* would ensure Cambodia's status in the region as a world-renowned center of Buddhism on par with Burma, Siam, and Sri Lanka.³⁶ In November 1931, two thousand monks gathered in the royal palace to witness the presentation of the final manuscript of the first volume of the *Tipiṭaka* to France's visiting minister of colonies.³⁷

In a speech on this achievement, Nath praised the École Supérieure de Pāli and the Royal Library and applauded Karpeles' dedication.³⁸ Several years later, the Franco-Khmer poet Makhali Phal (aka Pierrette Guesde) dedicated her poem celebrating the first Khmer volume of the *Tipiṭaka* to "S. K. [Suzanne Karpeles], who loves my country" (Phal n.d., frontispiece). However, not all Cambodians shared these sentiments. Karpeles' projects were held in disdain by several French-educated members of the Cambodian elite and by the Dhammayut. Where the Francophone elite resented Karpeles' crusade as an obstacle to Cambodia's modernization, the Dhammayut apparently begrudged the access to higher religious learning that her institute offered the Mahānikāy. Both groups were united by a prejudice against the Khmer language, which they saw respectively as outmoded by French and Siamese.

In 1931, the French-educated Prince Arenu Iukanthor lampooned Karpeles as a "blue-stocking" (*bas bleu*, a pejorative term for a lady of learning, with connotations of feminism) of common origins and aristocratic aspirations whose exoticist attempts to structure a traditional culture represented a "public danger." In a convoluted comparison between the Maid of Zion and the Maid of Orleans (Joan of Arc), Iukanthor also appeared to link Karpeles' Jewishness to lack of patriotism. Iukanthor's mother Princess Malika and the scholar-administrator Guillaume Monod allegedly shared Iukanthor's views of the Buddhist Institute (Iukanthor 1931, 278, 419, 428).

In 1932, internal colonial reports began to register strong antipathy to the Buddhist Institute among the Dhammayut sect, especially in the western prov-

inces.³⁹ A 1933 *sûreté* report noted a virtual Dhammayut blockade against Royal Library publications, particularly in Battambang, Siem Reap, and Sisophon, and attributed this to Dhammayut fears that the Royal Library and the École Supérieure de Pāli were giving the "primitive" Mahānikāy access to knowledge considered Dhammayut terrain and to the Dhammayut's disdain of the Khmer-Pāli version of the *Tipiṭaka* as inferior to the Siamese edition.⁴⁰

The expansion of Khmer print production was paralleled by several campaigns aimed at creating a vernacular, Khmer-speaking universe. In 1931, Louis Manipaud was appointed to the Department of Education to "create a monastic teaching corps," a task that he energetically pursued, with particular emphasis on the use of vernacular Khmer as the medium of instruction.⁴¹ Manipaud created a team of Khmer-speaking French inspectors to monitor adherence to the official syllabus. In 1934, he championed the "systematic diffusion of Khmer" through renovated wat schools in areas where ethnic Khmers formed a minority, including the Gulf of Siam, Battambang, and Pursat, and the following year he sent two monks to establish a Khmer school for the Thai-speaking Cambodian population in Koh Kong (le Graucunde 1935, 19).⁴²

In the 1930s, Karpelès drafted a number of Khmers from Cochinchina into her project to reanimate Cambodian Buddhism and culture (Becker 1985, 50–51). The most prominent recruit was Son Ngoc Thanh (1908–c. 1975). Born in Cochinchina and educated at a wat school, a colonial secondary school, and a French high school and university, Thanh joined the Royal Library as a clerk in 1933. In 1935, he moved to the Buddhist Institute, where he worked on the Committee of Cambodian Mores and Customs (Chandler 1992, 18).⁴³ He also used his position to ensure that monks dispatched on preaching tours by the institute were "strongly nationalist, good talkers and skilled in persuading the soldiers, using the Buddhist style of enlightenment, to love their country" (Mul 1982 [1971], 117–119). Vernacular Khmer was the medium of these sermons.

A June 1937 article in the journal *Nagaravatta* described the Royal Library as "the heart of the Khmer country," a fecund site of Khmer customs and social mores and a "meeting place for Khmer scholars who disseminate these precepts to the Khmer nation."⁴⁴ The seminar series begun in 1927 continued into the late 1930s, bringing together institute and library staff, *sangha*, and secular intellectuals such as *Nagaravatta*'s editor, Pach Choeun (like Son Ngoc Thanh a Khmer Krom), people from Phnom Penh and the provinces, and French Orientalists. Buddhist Institute publications were circulated among the audience.⁴⁵ In 1937, Karpelès launched a Buddhist Institute radio program, which was given provincial airplay by the mobile book-bus.⁴⁶

This extended field of religious institute activities expanded the influence of reformist monks and intensified regional discord between the Dhammayut and Dhammakāy. Touring the western provinces in July 1933, King Monivong

impressed upon the *sangha* the "sacrifices" made by the French administration to "renovate Buddhism" and urged the *sangha* to drop their divisive differences.⁴⁷ In July 1937, a front-page column in *Nagaravatta* implicitly blamed the feuding between the Dhammayut and the Dhammakāy for fracturing Cambodia's Buddhist unity. Warning that such factionalism could lead to the decline of Buddhism, the paper urged its readers not to worry about who was a Dhammayut, a Dhammakāy, or an "old-school Mahānikāy," but as the "Khmer race (*jāti khmaer*), united in one Buddhism, and making merit with Buddhist monks in [the name of] Buddhism."⁴⁸ In early 1938, a *Nagaravatta* editorial implicitly endorsed the reformist movement in the *sangha*, urging its readers to discard the ignorance and prejudices of olden times.⁴⁹ In 1938, the ascendance of the reformists within the Mahānikāy was reflected in the election of a Dhammakāy as Mahā Sangharāja of the Mahānikāy order (Coedès 1938; Kiernan 1985, 4). The following year saw the formation of a Buddhist Association modeled on a new wave of secular associations and dedicated to transcending factionalism within the *sangha* by spreading knowledge of Buddhism among the "disciples of Buddha" in Cambodia.⁵⁰

On July 3, 1940, the GGI, Jean Decoux, issued a decree confirming the Cambodian Buddhist Institute's responsibility for directing and coordinating studies of Theravāda Buddhism in Indochina, and especially in Cambodia and Laos.⁵¹ Issued weeks after the fall of France to Germany and Decoux's declaration of pro-Vichy loyalties, the decree may have been an early attempt to reinforce Indochina's geo-cultural boundaries and thereby strengthen the *sangha*'s immunity to political overtures from Siam. In September, Decoux's government, unable to reinforce its military position, allowed Japan to station troops in Indochina (Brötzel 1986, 176). But ideologically, Indochina's colonial administration remained Vichy territory, as reflected in its enforcement of the Vichy Statute on the Jews of October 3, 1940. The statute prohibited all Jews—defined as those possessing two or more grandparents of the Jewish "race"—from public office (Neher-Berhnheim 2002, 1097–1100). Application of the statute was selective.

Undermined militarily by the presence of Japanese troops, Vichy Indochina focused its energies on a cultural struggle to gain and retain indigenous allegiance. Specifically, Decoux's administration sought to prevent Japan from stimulating anticolonial nationalism through cooptation of the *sangha* through such organizations as the Buddhist Association. Citing Coedès' expertise and ability to combat Japanese influence in this sphere, the Résident Supérieur of Tonkin granted him an exemption from the statute (Raffin 2002, 369). Retained in office, Coedès spearheaded a "highly erudite cultural team" tasked with galvanizing local cultural nationalisms, Vichy style, in the service of greater France (Goscha 1995, 80).

Coedès' special treatment made the dismissal of Karpelès an ideological necessity for Decoux's government to prove its pro-Vichy credentials. She was an easy target. As an educator involved in publishing and the highest female officeholder

in the French protectorate, Karpelès not only violated the Vichy statute, but also subverted Vichy gender ideologies, which held that a woman's place was as a reproducer of a pure French race and confined the place of female educators to home economics (Edwards 2001).⁵² Karpelès was among fifteen Europeans forced from office in Indochina for being Jewish (Raffin 2002, 369). Stripped of her post and fearing for her security, she left Cambodia in 1941 and retired to the country of her childhood, Pondichère.⁵³

The following year, Decoux's government announced plans to romanize the Khmer language through the enforced adoption of a system of romanization devised by Coedès. Both secular intellectuals and members of the *sangha* saw the proposed romanization as an attack on their elite status (Keyes 1994, 49; Chandler 1991, 170). But the strength of opposition and the depth of feeling on the issue indicates that more than social privilege was at stake. To many, romanization threatened the erasure of the very essence of Khmer culture in its violation of one domain—the Khmer language—which, largely due to the activities of Nath, Tat, Karpelès, and others, they now conflated with the Khmer nation. Where the so-called “traditionalists” had vetoed modern print media, all factions rallied against this campaign, which threatened to strip the Khmer language of all vestiges of indigeneity and religiosity.

The most outspoken opponents of the campaign were Achar Hem Chieu, a teacher at the École Supérieure de Pāli, and Achar Nuon Dong, a graduate of the school. On July 18, 1942, the *sûreté* arrested Achar Hem Chieu and Achar Nuon Duong for preaching anti-French sermons to Khmer troops, and the “Umbrella War” ensued. The subsequent internment and exile of key agitators broke the backbone of the nationalist movement. *Nagaravatta* was shut down.

The defrocking of Achar Hem Chieu and the discharge of Karpelès from government office both bore the imprints of a new absolutism, which used modernity's categories of religion, gender, and nation to extraordinarily destructive ends.

The Umbrella War and Vichy ideology triggered a reassessment of protectorate policies vis-à-vis the Buddhist Institute and the École Supérieure de Pāli. The institute's greatest crime, in the eyes of both RSC Gaultier and the head of the information department, J. Desjardins, was crossing the line between religion and politics. In December 1942 Gaultier openly accused the institute of breaching its mandate and espousing political sympathies in its texts, thus catalyzing the July demonstrations.⁵⁴ Ordered to stay outside of politics, the institute was also warned not to become a school of theology.⁵⁵ Once favored as a buffer against Siamese influence, the Dhammakāy were now condemned as an “anti-French minority” and the Buddhist Institute was accused of spreading Dhammakāy influence in Cambodia via its publications.⁵⁶ Monks attached to either the Buddhist Institute or the École Supérieure de Pāli were henceforth banned from preaching. But so as not to alienate the *sangha* completely, and in line with the Vichy regime's empha-

sis on such official emblems of nation as flags and anthems, in 1942 the protectorate commissioned Nath to write the words and music of Cambodia's first national anthem (Harris 2000, 12, 16ff).

Conclusion

The path from Nath's ordination in 1912 to his role as an official architect of nation in 1942 was also a journey from the margins of the Mahānikāy to a position as moral custodian of a national culture. This linkage between moral authority and national identity was itself a sign of transition in Cambodian religious life, which had witnessed the gradual conflation, under colonial rule, of a belief system—Buddhism—and the idea of a racially pure group—"the Khmers"—into a new category: "national religion" (*sāsanā jāti*). As the founding director of the Royal Library (1925–1941) and the Buddhist Institute (1930–1941), and as chief publications officer for the École Supérieure de Pāli (1925–1941), Karpelès had engineered an institutional framework for the documentation and codification of this category. The language in which these new categories were framed and articulated—that of vernacular Khmer—acted as the thread linking new discourses of Buddhism to new imaginings of a Khmer nation. As we have seen, language itself—its manner of inscription, its content, and its dissemination—was a major domain through which the Dhammakāy managed the tension between the *appeal* of scientific, rationalist explanations of the world and the latent *threat* of erosion of indigenous cultural sovereignty. From the 1910s onward Dhammakāy projects promoted and effected the transformation of the language of religious education by broadening the scriptural reproduction and delivery of Buddhist sermons from Pāli to include Khmer. In their insistence that meaning, and not the style or medium of reproduction, was everything, Nath and Tat ostensibly divested the scriptures of the magico-religious aura of the sacred writing at the same time that they sought to purify Mahānikāy sermons and texts such as the *Jātaka* tales from what they considered an excess of superstition and hyperbole. They also favored the replacement of the scribe with the reliability and clarity of the printer's block. These engagements with the technology and vocabulary of modernity imprinted history's "Godless, empty" time into the domain of Buddhist scriptures. That transformation was, apparently, completed through their insistence on the use of Khmer, which furnished their "rational" school of Buddhism with a national "Khmer" flavor. However, as we have seen, this process did not empty the Khmer written script of its meaning. Instead, the Khmer vernacular, produced in print media, emerged as a modern form in which the words of Buddha were fused with the magico-religious aura of a new divinity: the nation.

The crystallization of the notion of the nation as both a spiritual domain and ethnocultural site occurred through a gradual process from the 1900s to the 1930s.

Through their print projects and their spells of study and teaching at the protectorate's schools and institutions, Nath and Tat helped to forge the common vocabulary for a conversation centering on notions of the nation and the national, which dominated Franco-Khmer exchanges between European scholars and reformist monks in the late 1920s and 1930s, and which also framed a series of exchanges between Khmer monks across factions and Khmer intellectuals. The performance and dissemination in research institutes, schools, textbooks, and newspapers of this vocabulary of the national helped to cement notions of a nationally framed Khmer cultural and religious collectivity.

The passage from Ind's notion of *jāti* to that of *jāti* (as used by the 1930s in such compounds as *jātisāsana*) was a journey not only from the local to the national, but from more stylized renderings of Khmer to a vernacular Khmer. In this, Nath and Tat were not complete pioneers, but were heirs of Ind's refashioning of the language of Buddhism. Where Ind had developed a universal and trans-local discourse of *jāti* with local implications (see chap. 2), Nath and Tat developed a specifically national language of Buddhism with particular geographic and historic dimensions. These developments, while increasing intimacy between reformists and European scholars, were matched by a rising antagonism between figures such as Nath and those within the Mahānikāy who sought to make sense of their world differently, through their continued engagement with present practice, and those in the Dhammayut who considered Nath's and Tat's Khmer vernacularization of Buddhism demeaning. In their sustained conversation with secular Khmer intellectuals and colonial scholar-officials, Nath and Tat proved extraordinarily versatile cross-cultural negotiators who staked out a central space for their interpretation of Buddhism within the dominant discourse of Khmer nationalism as it emerged in the 1930s.

Superficially, the Buddhist reform movement and colonial attempts to replace Buddhist cosmologies with a scientific cognitive grid cohered in their renunciation of those things held to be beyond the pale of reason: notably magic and superstition. However, as we have seen, modernity's apparent erasure of the "magico-religious aura" (Népote and Khing 1981) of the written word through the processes of print production championed by the reformists was a *trompe l'oeil*, as was the reformists' claim to be against superstition. By the Umbrella War in 1942, the reformists had consecrated a new superstition in the form of the Khmer nation, whose divine status was now located in the Khmer language. The lure of that superstition lay in its constant reiteration—not as an "irrational" leap of faith, but as a modern, rational ideology that enjoyed a solid basis in documented "tradition." Religion was seen to offer a respectable base for that tradition and was also seen, by European administrators, as a domain in which the cultivation of good relations would procure mass support for colonial projects.

But where this reform movement broke faith with secularism was in its refusal

to dispense with the magico-religious elements enshrined not only in the Khmer script, leading prominent reformists to oppose romanization, but also in the very fabric and clothing of Khmer monkhood, as epitomized in the reaction to the defrocking of Achar Hem Chieu. High colonialism and the machinery of modernity—print media, secular research institutes, libraries, museums, and “renovated” temple schools—never quite managed to disrobe indigenous religion.

Notes

I would like to thank several anonymous readers for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper, and John Marston and Elizabeth Guthrie for generously sharing their wisdom and information. I gratefully acknowledge funding from the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research in the form of a Postdoctoral Fellowship, which allowed me to develop this chapter for publication.

1. The term “Mahānikāy cās’” was used in reformist and colonial texts to refer to Mahānikāy monks who were opposed to the Buddhist reforms promoted by the Mahānikāy *thmī*. By using these terms, my intention is *not* to validate hegemonic paradigms of the Mahānikāy cās’ as a “backwards-looking” sect. Rather, I suggest that the very notion of such bipolar categories was largely a colonial legacy.

2. The Cambodian Dhammakāy movement should not be confused with the Thai Thammakāi sect based at the Wat Phra Thammakāi near Bangkok. See Jackson 1989, 199–221.

3. Archives d’Outre-Mer (AOM) GGI 24210 RSC Huyn de Vernéville to GGI March 30, 1895, 1–6; Migot 1960, 303.

4. AOM GGI 24210 RSC Huyn de Vernéville to GGI March 30, 1895, 1, 3, 6.

5. The rationalist framework of Southeast Asia’s Buddhist reform movements parallels similar reform movements in Enlightenment Europe and was, in part, inspired by them (Hallisey 1995, 48).

6. *Brah rājātipay nae samtec brah mahāsaṅgarāj sanniyuk* [Speech by the Venerable Supreme Patriarch and chief of monks]. *Kampujā suriyā* 1.7 (1927):7–13.

7. AOM INDO GGI 11804 Badens to Messieurs Guiland and Martinon, January 16, 1886.

8. AOM INDO GGI 11804 Governor, Saigon to Representative of Cambodia, September 5, 1885.

9. AOM FP APC 46 1 (file 5) Son Diep to Auguste Pavie, May 13, 1904.

10. AOM INDO GGI 1579, November 15, 1904.

11. “École de pāli d’Angkor,” *BEFEO* 9 (1909):824. This was not purely a colonial creation; Mahā Sangharāj Dien, head of Wat Unnalom, was also credited with the initiative (Flaugerges 1914, 175–182).

12. “École de pāli d’Angkor,” *BEFEO* 9 (1909):825.

13. “La section de Phnom Penh de la Société d’Angkor,” *BEFEO* 11 (1911):252–253; *BEFEO* 14 (1914):95.

14. “École supérieure de pāli,” *BEFEO* 35 (1935):463.

15. AOM FM INDO NF 570 RSC Baudoin to GGI Au sujet de la surveillance des bonzes au Cambodge Phnom Penh, April 2, 1916, 1-9.
16. BEFEO 14 (1914):95.
17. AOM INDO GGI 2702 RSC to GGI, March 24, 1916, 2.
18. AOM INDO GGI 65502 RSC to GGI, June 3, 1927.
19. "Cambodge," BEFEO 22 (1922):428; "École supérieure de pâli," BEFEO 35 (1935):463.
20. BEFEO 22 (1922):428.
21. Ibid., 444. Karpelès is likely to have met with scholars-in-residence Tat and Nath during this time.
22. AOM INDO GGI 65502 RSC Report First Trimester 1925, April 17, 1925, 5.
23. AOM INDO GGI 65539 *Sûreté* Phnom Penh, "Sectes Religieuses au Cambodge," July 20, 1933, 2.
24. "Bibliothèque royale du Cambodge," BEFEO 30 (1930):212.
25. "École supérieure de pâli," BEFEO 35 (1935):464.
26. *Société Anonyme d'édition et de publicité indochinoises: Les éditions d'extrême Asie: Extrait des statuts 1928*. Phnom Penh: Imprimerie S.E.K., 1928, 1.
27. "Why you should read *Sruk Khmaer*," *Sruk Khmaer* 1 (1927):1.
28. Tat, "Tournée d'inspection dans les pagodes cambodgiennes du Sud-ouest de la Cochinchine," *Kambujā suriyā* 3 (1929):39-62; Tat, "Suite et fin," *Kambujā suriyā* 3 (1929).
29. *Sruk Khmaer* 3.27 (1929):2.
30. AOM INDO NF 259 Dossier 2226, 39-40.
31. "Sictiṃ jūn ṭamṇiṃ aṃbī sīevbhau vijjā Khemarābhāsā" [Information about Khmer-language educational books], *Sruk Khmaer* 11 (1928):3.
32. "Bibliothèque royale du Cambodge," BEFEO 30 (1930):212; BEFEO 30 (1930):185.
33. "Rapport du Secrétaire de l'Institut," BEFEO 31 (1931):337-338.
34. Ibid.
35. "Discours du vénérable Nath, représentant du clergé cambodgien," BEFEO 31 (1931):339.
36. "Aṃbī poḥ bumb *Tipiṭaka*" [About printing the *Tipiṭaka*], *Sruk Khmaer* 21 (1931):1.
37. "Le voyage ministériel en Extrême-Orient," *L'Illustration* 21 (1931):364.
38. "Discours du vénérable Nath, représentant du clergé cambodgien," BEFEO 31 (1931):339-340.
39. AOM INDO RSC 321 "Annual Report of Resident of Siem Reap," June 1, 1931-May 31, 1932, 3, 13.
40. AOM INDO GGI 65539 *Sûreté* Phnom Penh, "Sectes Religieuses du Cambodge," July 20, 1933, 2.
41. AOM INDO RSC 269 RSC Lavit to Chef Local du Service de l'Enseignement à Phnom Penh, November 12, 1931, 1-2.
42. AOM INDO RSC 269 "Louis Manipaud, le Délégué de SM à l'Enseignement Traditionnel, Rapport annuel," 1933-1934, 9, 20.
43. "Pravattikār nae rājikār Khmaer" (History of the Khmer administration), *Nagara-vatta*, June 26, 1937, 1-3.

44. "About the Radio at the Royal Library in Phnom Penh," *Nagaravatta*, June 12, 1937, 1.
45. "Sictiy gāp prasoer rapas' anak srī kramuṃ karpīlaes jā sakaniyuk nīy braḥ rāj baṇṇalāy" [The goodness of Miss Karpelès, head of the Royal Library], *Nagaravatta*, April 9, 1938, 1–2.
46. "About the Radio at the Royal Library in Phnom Penh," *Nagaravatta*, June 12, 1937, 1.
47. AOM FM INDO NF 577 RSC Sylvestre Confidential Report to GGI no. 499-SPK, titled *Voyage de SM Monivong dans les Provinces de son Royaume*, July 18, 1933, 2.
48. *Nagaravatta*, July 10, 1937, 1.
49. "Pariya thñai sau Dhammayut niñ Mahānikāy" [Saturday report: Dhammayut and Mahānikāy], *Nagaravatta*, January 29, 1938, 1.
50. "Sictiy jūn ṭaṇṇiñ aṃbī buddhikasamāgam" [News about the Buddhist Association], *Nagaravatta*, January 21, 1939, 1; "Sictiy camroen nae buddhikasamāgam" [The progress of the Buddhist Association], *Nagaravatta*, July 29, 1939, 1.
51. AOM INDO RSC 464 GGI Arrêt, July 3, 1940, article 1.
52. The disappearance and deaths of numerous Karpelès are recorded at Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, Yad Vashem, Israel.
53. J. Filliozat, personal communication, June 10, 2002.
54. AOM INDO RSC 464 Letter from RSC to Secretary General of Buddhist Institute, December 18, 1942.
55. AOM INDO RSC 464 RSC to Secretary General of the Buddhist Institute, June 22, 1943, 2, 5, 8.
56. AOM INDO RSC 464 M. Desjardins Chef de la Service Local d'Information de la Propagande et de la Presse to RSC, April 22, 1943.

Contributors

Didier Bertrand, Ph.D. in cultural psychology, is currently working on a psychosocial study of child victims of unexploded ordnance accidents in Laos for Handicap International Belgium. His research has focused on mental health and mental health care in societies where psychiatry is not yet developed (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos). This has brought him into contact with local therapists, especially the traditional therapy of possession cults. He has also conducted research with Southeast Asian refugees in France and the United Kingdom. He recently completed a mental-health situation analysis for the World Health Organization in Laos.

Penny Edwards is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, Australian National University. Her main interests are ethnicity, gender, heritage, and identity in Cambodia and Burma, and she has also edited two volumes on the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia and Australia. Her book manuscript, *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860-1945*, is forthcoming.

Elizabeth Guthrie completed a Ph.D. at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. Her Ph.D. research topic was the iconography and text of the Buddhist earth deity, Nāṇ Gaṇhīn Braḥ Dharanī, a beautiful female deity who wrings water from her hair at the time of the Buddha's enlightenment. Although this episode is absent from the Pāli canon, images of the hair-wringing earth deity are found throughout Theravāda Buddhist mainland Southeast Asia, in Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Burma, and Sipsong Panna (PRC). To date, her publications have been concerned with the presence and absence of the earth deity episode in the Buddha's biographical tradition; tracing the earth deity motif in the Buddhist kingdoms of Arakan, Pagan, and Angkor; and the contemporary cult of the earth deity in Cambodia and Thailand. She lives in Dunedin, New Zealand, with her husband and three children.

Buddhism / Southeast Asia

This volume showcases some of the most current and exciting research being done on Cambodian religious ideas and practices by a new generation of scholars from a variety of disciplines. The different contributors examine in some manner the relationship between religion and the ideas and institutions that have given shape to Cambodia as a social and political body, or nation. Although they do not share the same approach to the idea of "nation," all are concerned with the processes of religion that give meaning to social interaction, which in some way includes "Cambodian" identity. Chapters touch on such far-reaching theoretical issues as the relation to religion of Southeast Asian polity; the nature of colonial religious transformation; "syncretism" in Southeast Asian Buddhism; the relation of religious icon to national identity; religion and gender; transnationalism and social movements; and identity among diaspora communities.

While much has been published on Cambodia's recent civil war and the Pol Pot period and its aftermath, few English-language works are available on Cambodian religion. This book takes a major step in filling that gap, offering a broad overview of the subject that is relevant not only for the field of Cambodian studies, but also for students and scholars of Southeast Asian history, Buddhism, comparative religion, and anthropology.

"A book of extraordinary breadth—from historical studies to chapters on the Khmer diaspora—that is unfailingly accessible and perceptive. It should be very useful for courses on Buddhism and comparative religion." —David Chandler, Monash University

"Together the contributions in this impressive book make possible the tracing of the vicissitudes of the religions of the Khmer in both time and space, from Cambodia at the time of Angkor to the present day and from Cambodia to the Khmer diaspora. The book should also be read by those interested in the sociology of Theravada Buddhism for perspectives on the Khmer Buddhist encounter with French colonialism, the linking of Buddhism to nationalism, and the fragmentation of religion in the wake of the reign of terror of Pol Pot." —Charles Keyes, University of Washington

John Marston is professor of Southeast Asian studies at the Center for Asian and African Studies, El Colegio de México, Mexico City.

Elizabeth Guthrie received her Ph.D. from the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Cover art: Religious Paraphernalia (John Marston)

University of Hawai'i Press

Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822-1888
www.uhpress.hawaii.edu

ISBN 0-8248-2868-2

