

BUDDHIST SAṄGHA GROUPINGS IN CAMBODIA

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1. Introduction

The shadow of the Pol Pot era hovers so horrifyingly over the recent history of Cambodia that it is sometimes hard to credit the fact that anything of enduring value has continued to function in the country. Cambodia actually possessed a vigorous Theravāda Buddhist culture before civil war broke out in the early 1970s, and despite attempts to extinguish most vestiges of that culture between 1975 and 1978, it soon reasserted itself in the years following the collapse of the Khmer Rouge. The purpose of this paper is to offer a preliminary survey of the re-emergence of Buddhism since that time.

Elsewhere, Jackson (1989) has successfully demonstrated that the intellectual and institutional history of Thai Buddhism over the last century cannot be understood without some knowledge of the wider political background. The same holds good for Cambodia. In this light, I offer a brief overview of relevant political changes from 1970 to the present day before indicating how specific Buddhist groupings have emerged, in part, as a reflection of these processes. The groupings are not presented chronologically but are arranged according to their beliefs and practices along a continuum stretching from modernism to traditionalism. I hope that, in this way, readers will be able to more clearly appreciate the manner in which various sections of the rapidly evolving Cambodian Buddhist monastic order (Saṅgha) have responded to the very considerable challenges of the last twenty years.

2. Historical setting

Following the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk in 1970 Cambodia gradually slid into disorder and violence, a process that culminated in the fall of Phnom Penh to extreme nationalistic communists in

April 1975. The resulting state of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) lasted only until the end of 1978 when it was overthrown by a fraternal invasion of Vietnamese communists. The devastation and horror of the DK period is well-known, at least, in general outline.

In its initial stages the persecution of Buddhism involved the intimidation and re-education of the laity resulting in a steady diminution of alms-giving, coupled with the relocation of monks to 'safer areas'. The logic of the process led rapidly to exhaustion, starvation, forcible disrobing, and execution, at least for uncooperative members of the Saṅgha. Monasteries were routinely destroyed or employed for alternative purposes. Only a handful of monks survived the period in Cambodia itself. Those who could took the chance to flee to neighbouring countries. In short, we see the virtual elimination of institutional Buddhism by an organization that in its early stages had shown some modest sympathy towards Buddhist ideals¹. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to conclude that Buddhism disappeared *in toto*. My own interviews with survivors suggest that the secret performance by defrocked monks and lay ritual specialists (*achar*) of traditional rites to comfort the sick malnourished, be-reaved and terrified was reasonably widespread².

With the overthrow of DK and the establishment of a Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)³ in January 1979 we witness a continued suppression of religion in line with the socialist emphasis on rationality, science and the dignity of work. However, in spite of initial signs of mass support after the traumas of the previous years, the regime rapidly lost its popularity and was required to look for additional support to bolster its legitimacy. The two strongest institutions in the country had traditionally been the

¹ For Buddhist elements in the ideology and practice of the Khmer Rouge, see my *Buddhism in Cambodia: A History* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press), in press.

² It might be argued that, under conditions of such extreme persecution, Buddhism reverts to this most basic apotropaic form.

³ Despite an initial feeling of euphoria popular opinion soon turned against the Vietnamese-backed regime; not surprisingly given the fact that Vietnam is regarded as Cambodia's traditional enemy.

Saṅgha and kingship, but the regime could not play the monarchist card, for Sihanouk was already forming alliances with its enemies. With only the monastic order to fall back on, Buddhism was partially restored around August 1979. Initially monks were regarded as state employees and issued with identity cards. In addition, they were not permitted to go out on alms-rounds. In contravention of the norms of monastic discipline (*vinaya*) they were also expected to engage in agricultural labour. The authorities clearly preferred the cultivation of the soil over the cultivation of potentially disruptive mental states!

The fourth congress of the PRPK in June 1981 resolved that ‘the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea must be constantly enlarged and developed and must have a political line acceptable to each social layer, in particular the monks, intellectuals, the ethnic minorities ...’ In September of the same year Ven. Tep Vong was ‘elected’ president of a Unified Saṅgha. This unification, which effectively dissolved the boundaries between the pre-1970s royalist and pro-Thai *Thommayut* and the larger *Mohanikay* monastic fraternities (*nikāya*), seems to have been modelled on prior developments in Vietnam where Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism had been unified in the early 1960s⁴. Party propaganda urged monks to uproot ‘unhealthy beliefs’, be patriotic, follow the party line, and study the example of figures like Ven. Hem Chieu who led anti-colonialist demonstrations in the early 1940s. In an interview with the *Toronto Globe and Mail* (September 1981), Ven. Tep Vong claimed 3,000 monks, and 700 pagodas under construction, nationwide. Around the same time, Pen Sovann, secretary-general of the Kampuchean People’s Revolutionary Party (KPRP), said: ‘As far as monks are concerned, our Front has a well-defined political line: to respect the traditions, mores and customs of our people. All monks who have direct relations with the people are members of the Front.’ (quoted by Kiernan 1982, 181)

Towards the middle of the decade a government-sponsored mass ordination of 1,500 monks took place in Phnom Penh (Kiernan

⁴ Vietnamese Buddhism underwent state-controlled re-unification once more in 1981.

1982, 173, 177, 181) and various restrictions on monk ordination were lifted in mid-1988. In the run-up to the establishment of the new State of Cambodia (SOC, declared April 1989), precipitated by a gradual Vietnamese military withdrawal, Hun Sen, a prominent member of the administration, apologized for earlier 'mistakes' in the treatment of Buddhism and conspicuous acts of Buddhist piety by party dignitaries started to be widely reported. The Vietnamese finally withdrew from Cambodia in September 1989 and in mid October 1991, a few days before signing the Paris Peace Accord, the KPRP changed its name to the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). In the process it renounced 'authentic Marxist-Leninism', its history of revolutionary struggle, embraced the 'free-market', and elected a new Party hierarchy.

After six months, the Party's newspaper, *Pracheachon* (no. 1061, 24 May 1992) was declaring that the CPP was the 'little brother of the *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* Party', the Cambodian experiment with anti-communist Buddhist socialism led by Sihanouk from 1955⁵. The New Political Platform of the CPP, adopted at the Extraordinary Party Congress on 17–19 October 1991 stated that:

The citizens' honour, dignity and life must be protected by laws. The death penalty is abolished. Buddhism is the state religion with the Tripitaka as basis of laws. All religious activities are allowed in the country. The traditions, customs and cultural heritage of the nation must be preserved and glorified, as well as the traditions of all the nationalities living in the Cambodian national community. (*Kampuchea* no. 623, 21 October 1991, 3–4. quoted in Frings 1994, 363).

⁵ The editorial goes on to add that this view had been endorsed by Sihanouk, 'with the brightness of a bodhisattva'. Shortly after this we hear that the CPP is the 'rightful heir (*neak bondo ven troeum trouv*) of the line of the People's Socialist Community (*sangkum reastr niyum*)' (*Pracheachon* no. 1091, 27 June 1992). As Frings (1994, 360) points out, this must have led to some consternation in the ranks for, as late as 1987, the Party's official line was that Sihanouk's experiments with Buddhist socialism were a sham for they maintained 'the prerogatives of the exploiting class' and were 'nothing more than a capitalist regime distinguished as socialist in order to build capitalism'.

In November 1991 Sihanouk returned to the country from long-term residence in China, the following month investing *saṅghareach* (= *saṅgharāja*) for each of the two pre-1975 monastic fraternities, with official restoration of both ecclesiastical hierarchies following in February 1992⁶. For the first time since the mid-1970s both *nikāya* enjoyed theoretical equivalence.

The UN-sponsored elections in May 1993 arising out of the Paris Peace Accord were conducted under the principle of universal adult suffrage. This meant that monks voted for the first time in Cambodia's history. Although this decision was not supported by many who felt that monks should stand aloof from the political process⁷, the decision did lead to wide-spread politicization of the Saṅgha which has, to a certain extent, persisted down to the present as the forthcoming discussion will demonstrate.

As a result of protracted haggling following the results of the election, FUNCINPEC⁸ a royalist party led by Sihanouk's eldest son, Prince Norodom Rannaridh, were forced to share power with the CPP. The new Constitution restored Sihanouk to the throne and the two *saṅghareach* were appointed to a Royal Council charged with selecting a new king when Sihanouk dies. Violent conflict between the CPP and FUNCINPEC broke out in July 1997 to the advantage of the former. Subsequent elections in July 1998 produced a more clear-cut result in favour of the CPP.

⁶ The title of *samdech* was re-introduced for a senior monks around this time, although it had already been conferred on Son Sann (1911–2000), a political ally of Sihanouk, and would be later offered to the leaders of the CPP and FUNCINPEC (Marston 1997, 176).

⁷ A senior monk, Ven Non Nget (interview 18 November 1999), told me that both he and Ven. Bour Kry made unsuccessful representations to Yasushi Akashi, special representative of the UN secretary-general, to try to prevent monastic voting. I have also found reasonable evidence that some individual abbots dissuaded monks from voting when the time came.

⁸ Front uni national pour un Cambodge indépendant, neutre, pacifique et coopératif.

3. Emergence of Saṅgha groupings

(i) Mohanikay Modernists

The Mohanikay had grown in strength and influence during the French colonial period, particularly as a result of organizational activities of monks such as Ven. Chuon Nath (1883–1969; *saṅghareach* 1948–1969⁹) and Ven. Huot Tath (1891–1975; *saṅghareach* 1969–1975¹⁰). Both had studied critical scholarship in Hanoi (1922–3) under Louis Finot, Director of the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO), and Victor Goloubew. Consequently, they did much to modernize and 'improve' the intellectual credentials of the order in tune with the teachings of the Pāli canon and western notions of rationality. Their reformed Saṅgha grouping, the Thommakay¹¹, was vehement in its criticism of the 'corrupt practices' of the unreformed segment of the monastic order. So bitter was the resulting dispute that a group of senior Mohanikay monks lobbied King Sisowath who, in 1918, with French blessings, issued an ordinance specifically referring to the split between 'modernists' (*buak dharm thmī* = group of the new dhamma) and 'traditionalists' (*buak dharm cās* = group of the old dhamma) and forbidding 'teaching reforms or ... spreading among the faithful modern ideas which conflict with traditional religion'¹². This does not seem to have been entirely successful for, as late as January 1954, a proscription written by Chuon Nath designed to be displayed throughout the country, pointed to the importance of *vinaya*-observance and discouraged the recitation of mantras, practice of magic, water sprinkling, and healing (Bizot 1976, 20, n. 3).

⁹ For a brief biography see Leang Hap An, *Biographie de Samdech Preach Saṅghareach Chuon-Nath, supérieur de l'ordre Mohanikaya*, Phnom Penh, Institut Bouddhique, 1970 (Série de Culture et Civilisation Khmères, Tome 7)

¹⁰ Executed a few days after the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh in April 1975.

¹¹ Kiernan (1985, 3f).

¹² Quoted, without attribution, by Keyes (1994, 47). Also mentioned, without a date, by Martini (1955, 418, n. 1).

Ven. Mahāghosānanda (b. 1929) is an heir to the modernism of Chuon Nath. Born in Takeo province, he became a monk at the age of fourteen. Having studied at the Buddhist University in Phnom Penh, he traveled to India to work for a doctorate at the newly-established Buddhist University of Nālandā. While there he seems to have come under the influence of Nichidatsu Fujii the founder of the Japanese peace-oriented Buddhist sect Nipponzan Myohoji who was himself involved with the work of Gandhi. In 1965 Mahāghosānanda moved to a forest hermitage in southern Thailand under the tutelage of the *vipassanā* master Ajahn Dhammadaro, remaining there for 13 years. However, in 1978 he made his way to the Cambodian refugee camps on the Thai border that were growing rapidly as a result of the impending collapse of Democratic Kampuchea. In this new context he helped establish temples for spiritual, educational and cultural uplift of his people. In cooperation with Peter Pond, a Christian social-activist, he formed the Inter-Religious Mission for Peace in Cambodia in 1980. One of the aims of the organization was to identify, support and re-ordain surviving Cambodian Buddhist monks. To aid this process, he founded over thirty temples in Canada and the United States in these early years¹³. As a result his standing in the Cambodian exile community began to grow. It seems that he was elected *samdech* by a small gathering of monks and laity in Paris in 1988, although he regarded the position as provisional stating that he would resign when conditions in Cambodia returned to normality and a fully valid hierarchy had been established (Maha Ghosananda 1992, 15ff)

As conditions in Cambodia improved following the creation of the SOC, Mahāghosānanda took up residence at Wat Sampeou Meas, Phnom Penh. He first came to general prominence as the leader of a Buddhist peace march (*dhammayietra*) in May 1992 in which around 350 monks, nuns and lay people escorted more than one hundred refugees from the border camps back to their villages. Since that time the marches, organized by the Dhammayietra Centre

¹³ Mahāghosānanda also worked as a consultant to the UN Economic and Social Council from 1980.

for Peace and Reconciliation (CPR), based at Wat Sampeou Meas, have become annual events.

The CPR had originally been formed by Bob Maat (a Jesuit), Liz Bernstein and a Paris-based Mohanikay monk, Ven. Yos Hut, at Taprya on the Thai-Cambodian border close to Site 2 refugee camp. They then co-opted Mahāghosānanda and gradually the Dhammayietra movement was formed, although the first march was organized almost exclusively by foreigners. Indeed, as late as 1997 the \$27,000 necessary for the organization of the sixth Dhammayietra came mainly from 'Christian and ecumenical foreign NGOs [Non Governmental Organizations], International Organizations, and King Sihanouk' (Yonekura 1999, 86). More recent marches have focused on specific issues. The 1995 march was intended to raise awareness of the issues surrounding landmines, while the 1996 event highlighted the adverse impact of large-scale deforestation¹⁴. Other more localized marches have been organized against prostitution in Phnom Penh's Toul Kok red-light district and in support of stranded Vietnamese fishing families, a pariah group in contemporary Cambodia¹⁵.

Engaged Buddhism in Cambodia received more general support from a massive influx of foreign NGOs in the run-up to the 1993 elections. The activities of the German-based Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF) and its funding of a socially engaged 'development-oriented Buddhism' is particularly instructive. Since 1994 the Buddhism for Development (BDF)¹⁶ organization based at Wat

¹⁴ The sixth march in 1997 entered the Khmer Rouge strongholds of Pailin and surrounding areas in the northwest of the country. However, Mahāghosānanda claimed that he had been invited twice by Ieng Sary, ex-DK Foreign Minister, and that the movement was more generally supported by the Khmer Rouge (*Cambodia Daily*, 18 March 1997). Indeed, the marchers were greeted by Ieng Sary, Y Chhien (mayor of Pailin), and other important KR defectors on their arrival in Pailin. Interestingly, nuns outnumbered monks by 80 to 26 on the 1998 march.

¹⁵ *Phnom Penh Post (PPP)* 3/5, 11–24 March 1994, p. 1; and 3/7, 8–21 April 1994, p. 4.

¹⁶ My interview with Peter Schier, Permanent Representative of KAF in Cambodia, 11 December 1997. BDF, founded in 1990, has its origins in veteran

Anlongvil, Battambang province has received around \$750,000 from the KAF. In the field it concentrates on the training of Buddhist monks in rural development work, the establishment of rice and money banks, tree-nurseries and compost-making activities. It has also held a series of annual national seminars on Buddhism and the Development of Khmer Society. One of the BDF's senior activists, Ven. Heng Monychenda¹⁷, has written a number of books, including *Preahbat Dhammik* (1996) which aim to give Buddhist-based moral guidance to Cambodian politicians.

One final example of a reformed Mohanikay activist also has close connections with Mahāghosānanda. Ven. Yos Hut¹⁸ is the chief monk (*chau adhikar*) of Wat Lanka, Phnom Penh, and President of the Fondation Bouddhique Khmère that has offices in Cambodia and France. One of its current projects is the construction of a hospital (begun in 1996) in Kampong Trabek, Prey Veng province¹⁹. Recently a certain level of hostility between the local authorities in Kampong Trabek district and monks associated with this work has crystallized in the attempt to defrock Ven. Khot Khon, abbot of Wat Beng Bury for supposed sexual misconduct and involvement in politics. The latter charge arises from the visit of several high profile FUNCINPEC officials, including Prince Sisowath Satha, to the monastery (*PPP* 9/12, 9–22 June 2000). It seems that the chief monk of Kampong Trabek district has attempted to solve the dispute by suggesting that Khot Khon either returns to the lay life or moves to another monastery. Both alternatives indicate a level

politician Son Sann's attempts to revivify Khmer Buddhist culture in the refugee camps on the Thai border, a project also funded by the KAF.

¹⁷ Now disrobed following a brief spell as a graduate student at Harvard.

¹⁸ When the Khmer Rouge took control of Cambodia Yos Hut was pursuing postgraduate studies in Paris. After a spell in Australia he worked for the United Nations Border Relief Organisation on the Thai border until 1990. (Kalab 1994, 62f). My own interviews with him (30 November 1997, 20 November 1999) indicate that he is well-acclulturated within the NGO community.

¹⁹ Yos Hut is also planning a forest monastery, with associated educational and development-oriented features, on c. 100 hectares of land recently acquired some 25km from Phnom Penh, just off Highway One.

of government (i.e. CPP) opposition to aspects of the engaged Buddhist agenda and more generalized political interference in the internal administration of the Saṅgha.

It is unsurprising that NGOs, particularly the KAF with its Protestant Christian ethos, harbour doubts about the future of Buddhism in Cambodia unless it moves in a more socially engaged direction. However, such attitudes are also echoed by the King himself who has described such work as ‘an important contribution to the revival of the concept of “Buddhist Socialism” which ... [he] encouraged during the historic *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* period’²⁰ of the 1950s and 60s. It is in this light that we should interpret Ven. Mahāghosānanda’s appointment as Sihanouk’s special representative for the protection of the environment in 1994²¹. The post is an entirely novel creation, having formed no part of the pre-1975 monastic hierarchy, but given official opposition to Mohanikay activism, it is tempting to regard the construction of such extra-ecclesiastical roles as an attempt by the King to construct an alternative and non CPP-controlled Buddhist hierarchy. Having said that, most reformed

²⁰ *Buddhism and the Development of Khmer Society: Proceedings of the 1st National Seminar on Buddhism and the Development of Khmer Society held in Phnom Penh, 21–23 November 1994* Anlongvil and Phnom Penh, Buddhism for Development in Cooperation with the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs, 1996; p. 50.

²¹ At about the same time the King conferred the title of ‘International Patriarch’ on Mahāghosānanda. (David Channer, personal communication, 5 October 1997). Environmental concerns have been much in the air in recent years. An Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee for Environmental Education, involving the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs and some Buddhist Associations, has produced an environmental manual for primary teachers and a seminar organized by the Buddhist Institute in November 1997 produced a White Paper on the subject. Perhaps most surprisingly, Ta Mok - the most brutal of surviving Khmer Rouge leaders, is known to have expressed typically idiosyncratic environmentalist views: ‘Whoever destroys the forest is not allowed to be a leader ... Whoever blows up and shoots fish are *yuon* [a derogatory term for the Vietnamese] and have their throats cut ... Whoever burns the forest, if arrested, has to be burned alive’ (*Khmer Rouge Papers for 7 December 1997*, quoted in *PPP* 7/10, 22 May–4 June 1998).

Mohanikay monks have managed to steer clear of explicit political favoritism. For instance, when the King sent a letter to the CPR committee asking them to call off the 1994 walk for fear of violence, Mahāghosānanda ignored the advice (Yonekura 1999, 85). The march was subsequently attacked, but since that time the movement has even more strenuously sought to be non-partisan. All banners, military uniforms and weapons are forbidden on the march and the organization tries to weed out ‘undisciplined monks’.

For Mahāghosānanda and his monastic supporters social change can only be successfully achieved through radical transformations of individual minds. The arena of explicit political activity makes no sense unless it is premised on such an assumption. This ‘mysticism’ (Hughes 2000), when combined with the non-partisan nature of the movement, leads almost inevitably to a desire for the complete separation of church and state. Another prominent engaged monk, Ven Hok Savann, has made precisely that point, on the grounds that the Saṅgha will lose the people’s respect if it is seen to be involved in ‘politics instead of practicing the traditional monk’s discipline.’ (Letter to PPP 13–26 August 1993; 6)

(ii) Thommayut

The monastic order in Cambodia has been divided into two fraternities (*nikāya*) since 1855 when King Norodom imported the newly-formed Thommayut (*dhamayutika nikāya*) from Thailand through the agency of Maha Pan, a Khmer monk belonging to King Mongkut’s spiritual lineage. Norodom subsequently had Wat Botum Vaddey constructed, according to the demarcation ritual (*nadīsīmā*) of the newly formed order, adjacent to the new royal palace in Phnom Penh as the headquarters of the new order and Maha Pan was subsequently installed as its *saṅghareach* (Meas Yang 1978, 38).

In Thailand the introduction of the new order had passed off without opposition. This was not the case in Cambodia where frequent skirmishes between Mohanikay and Thommayut monks seem to have occurred with some regularity (Bizot 1976, 9). The influence of the colonial power may have been a factor here since the French regarded the Mohanikay, particularly those belonging to its reformed wing, to exercise a beneficial influence on the populace and towards

the protectorate. Thommayut monks, on the other hand, were regarded as potentially intransigent, not least because it was thought that they owed their allegiance to the Thai court (Forest 1980, 143).

There is little to distinguish the two orders in terms of doctrine yet they disagree over the interpretation of some elements of discipline, most notably the wearing of robes, of sandals, the carrying of the begging bowl, and the consumption of drinks after midday. Differences may also be noted in the two order's pronunciation of Pāli and techniques of liturgical recitation (Brunet 1967, 202). The essentially urban Thommayut has also been much smaller in terms of numbers and geographical spread²².

Some evidence exists to suggest that Thommayut monks suffered even greater discrimination during the DK period than their Mohanikay co-religionists; the communists certainly made a distinction between rural and city monks. In the early days of the revolution the former were characterized as 'proper and revolutionary' while the later were classed as 'imperialist', probably as a result of their close associations with Thailand²³. We have already noted that during the early PRK period institutional Buddhism was re-established under a Unified Saṅgha. Many prominent figures of the time argued that this arrangement was devised, at least in part, to eliminate the elitist and monarchical influences of the Thommayut. One senior monastic source claimed that after unification 'our monks are neither Mohanikay nor Thommayut but Nationalist monks'²⁴. It was only in December 1991 that Sihanouk once again created two *saṅghareach*: Ven. Tep Vong taking control of the

²² A 1959 survey of the country's monasteries found 1725 belonging to the Mohanikay and only 106 affiliated to the Thommayut (Chuon Nath 1976, 41). Today only around three percent of the monastic population belong to the Thommayut (Statistics from the Centre for Advanced Studies and the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs published in *Cambodia Report* II/2, March–April 1996, p. 23).

²³ Chantou Boua (1991, 229). Also see Ponchaud (1990, 234) on the Khmer Rouge's claim that Buddhism is a foreign religion.

²⁴ Yang Sam p. 86.

Mohanikay with Ven. Bour Kry becoming his Thommayut equivalent²⁵.

Like the prominent reformed Mohanikay monks mentioned in the previous section, Bour Kry had been living in the Cambodian diaspora during the DK and PRK periods. When Phnom Penh fell in April 1975 the only Cambodian monk in Paris was Ven. Yos Hut who had gone there for postgraduate studies. He was eventually joined by refugee monks who had escaped via Thailand. A house in a southeastern *banlieue* of the city was subsequently bought and Wat Khemarāram established in its garden. However, personal and political differences soon began to affect the exile community. Martin (1994, 251) notes that in the late 1980s the Khmer New Year was celebrated on three successive Sundays at Vincennes by three separate factions, FUNCINPEC, Son Sann's Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPLNF), and neutrals, each with their monastic supporters. It was only a matter of time before many of the monk residents, including Yos Hut himself, formed other Khmer monasteries mainly in and around Paris. This left Bour Kry at Wat Khemarāram.

It was around this time that Sihanouk favoured Bour Kry with a number of ceremonial titles²⁶ in recognition of the fact that one of his sons had spent time as a temporary monk under Bour Kry's tutelage. Given Bour Kry's Thommayut affiliations it is hardly surprising that he was both closer to the royal family and rather more traditional in his observance of *vinaya* than the other Cambodian monks in France. Only Wat Khemarāram, for instance, was properly delimited by *sīmā* markers. Nevertheless, Bour Kry did seem to have a reputation as a very competent astrologer at this time and, despite opposition from more traditionally-minded Khmers, he encouraged women to take a more active role in ceremonies. He also seems to have encouraged his supporters to make financial contributions to FUNCINPEC (Kalab 1994, 69).

²⁵ These dates were supplied by Bour Kry when I interviewed him on 9 December 1997.

²⁶ Kalab (1994, 61) claims that Buor Kry possessed a ceremonial fan embroidered with the words, 'Head of all monks in France'.

Today at Wat Botum, the symbolic centre of the order and home of the *saṅghareach*, Thommayut monks are greatly outnumbered²⁷ and physically isolated in a separate section of the compound from members of the Mohanikay. This situation reflects the relatively short history of the newly formed order. As we have already noted all monks at Wat Botum were part of a unified (and essentially Mohanikay) order before 1991. Official suspicion of monarchical and pro-FUNCINPEC organizations and individuals clearly remains. Hostility to foreign influence is probably another factor for Thommayut monks, although they are once more permitted go to Thailand for higher ordination (*upasampadā*), may easily be distrusted for the same reasons as fellow order members in the colonial period. A good example of such suspicion today is that, despite the re-establishment of a full Thommayut hierarchy, some high-ranking positions are actually occupied by prominent pro-government Mohanikay monks who, one assumes, are in an ideal place to feed back intelligence to the relevant authorities²⁸.

Thommayut monks do not appear to possess the developmentalist fervour of their reformed Mohanikay counterparts. This may simply be because the Mohanikay is overwhelmingly the largest order. It is also far more rural than the Thommayut. However, senior Thomma-

²⁷ Ordinations into the Thommayut seem to have gathered pace since the early 90s. 150 monks were reported to have been ordained in early July 1992 alone (*PPP* 1/2, 24 July 1992, p. 6). In November 1999, Ven Non Nget supplied me with the following figures for Wat Botum: Mohanikay – c. 600; Thommayut – c. 200.

²⁸ The second figure in the hierarchy is traditionally the *mongol tepeachar* (*maṅgaladevācārya*). This position was until recently held by Ven. Oum Som (1918–2000), a Mohanikay abbot of Wat Mohamontrey, Phnom Penh who was also Inspector General of Buddhist education and Director of the Buddhist University. Oum Som was one of the few post-DK survivors of Chuon Nath's Thommakay grouping. He claimed that he maintained the life-style of a monk, despite having been forcibly disrobed, throughout the Democratic Kampuchea period [*PPP* 9/15, July 21–Aug 3 2000). He was also one of the first group of seven monks to be re-ordained in the early PRK period. His critics sometimes accused him of being a 'communist monk'. As we shall see shortly, he was a prominent critic of the young monks' demonstrations in 1998.

yut monks who have been invited to developmentally-oriented events have shown some reluctance to attend. This can be explained in a number of ways. The order's strict observance of monastic discipline, such as the prohibition on handling money and digging the soil, may be a factor. Another possibility is that the Thommayut hierarchy are concerned about the adverse impact the receipt of international funds might have on the traditions of Cambodian Buddhism. Given their contacts with Thailand they will clearly be more aware of this as a potentially divisive issue. A final likelihood is that the feuding noted during the exile in Paris has not been entirely healed. Certainly, the Thommayut are not entirely unconcerned with wider social questions, a fact underlined by a recent well-publicized disagreement between Bour Kry and the Mohanikay *saṅghareach*, Ven Tep Vong²⁹. Following a conference for monks organized by the National AIDS Authority in May 2000 the two *saṅghareach* appeared to be at loggerheads about how best to respond to the HIV/AIDS problem. Tep Vong's view is that the scale of the problem has been greatly inflated by Cambodia's enemies in order to discredit the political leadership of the CPP. He also argues that the right course of action is a crack-down on brothels and prostitutes. For him AIDS is a form of karmic punishment and monks need not take any role in comforting the sick. Bour Kry, on the other hand, argues that monks should minister, 'moral support to the sick, so they can die peacefully—even though they have committed a bad thing' (PPP 9/12, 9–22 June 2000). He is, however, less convinced of the notion that monks might act as a conduit for the dissemination of the safe sex message, since this would involve them in employing language incompatible with their discipline. Unlike the reformed Mohanikay who actively engage in AIDS education, and the Mohanikay hierarchy who tend to view the epidemic as a foreign and ideological threat, the Thommayut appear to be steering a middle course.

²⁹ In actual fact, feuding between Tep Vong and Bour Kry seems to have been on-going since at least 1998 (PPP 7/22, 2–15 October 1998).

(iii) Young monks

Angered by the results of the 1998 election, Sam Rainsy Party³⁰ supporters organized a rally at the Olympic Stadium, Phnom Penh, on 22 August. Six days later monks led a candlelight procession close to the National Assembly. One week later a second demonstration was attended by around 7,000 people, including a significant number of monks. After the rally the crowd eventually growing to c. 15–17,000 moved off in the direction of the National Assembly where a number of anti-Vietnamese speeches were made, at least one by a young monk (*PPP* 7/19, 4–17 September 1998)³¹.

According to unconfirmed reports, another young monk was severely injured and subsequently disappeared outside the Hotel Cambodiana on 7 September, where Sam Rainsy was sheltering following a grenade attack on Hun Sen's compound. Around 300 monks, some holding posters denouncing Hun Sen, others carrying wreaths for monks missing from previous demonstrations, were in the vanguard of a march through central Phnom Penh on the following day. One of the leaders, Ven. Chin Channa³² used a megaphone to remind listeners of the example of Ven. Hem Chieu, the anti-colonialist monk of the early 1940s. Having been photographed by a pro-government newspaper in an earlier demonstration he was branded a dangerous activist and wanted posters appeared in Phnom Penh monasteries. He was subsequently spirited out of the city by

³⁰ Sam Rainsy was FUNCINPEC Finance Minister until late 1994 when, following an unsuccessful campaign against corruption, he subsequently founded his own party.

³¹ Although it is fairly commonplace for Khmer to express extreme anti-Vietnamese sentiments, yet I have been struck by the number of times they have cropped up in conversations with young monks. They are, in part, a coded criticism of Hun Sen through his alleged connections with Vietnam.

³² Born in 1975 near Sisophon Chin Channa became a novice monk at Wat Tik Thlar, in his home village, in June 1991. He was inspired by a visit of Mahāghosānanda to the wat on the first Dhammayietra in April 1992. Shortly after this event he continued his education by learning Pali in Mongol Borei before attending Wat Damrey Sa in Battambang. He came to Wat Unnalom in February 1998 to enroll at the Buddhist University.

international human rights activists. The aim of the young monks' demonstration of 8 September had been to claim the body and hold funeral services for the monk reported killed the previous day³³. However, lack of experience in organizing demonstrations combined with possible infiltration by *agent provocateur* led the event to spiral out of control (PPP, 2–15 October 1999)

On 9 September two monks were reported as having been shot by police outside the US Embassy where they had gone to gain support for an end to the post-election violence. One of them subsequently had an AK-47 bullet removed from his body and survived. He reported witnessing the shooting of another monk in the back of the leg. A body with head injuries retrieved down-river at Peam Chor, Prey Veng province, on 11 September had a shaved head and eyebrows, although curiously it was dressed in a police uniform (*Cambodia Daily*, 17 October 1998)³⁴. The demonstrations gradually died down over the next few days.

Some evidence suggests that an American-based monk, Ven. Yem Rithipol, residing temporarily at Wat Botum may have had some involvement in the organization of demonstrations (*Cambodia Daily*, 11 September 1998). Evidently he tried to persuade his fellow monks to style the 8 September event a 'peace walk', along the lines of those organized by Mahāghosānanda, rather a 'demonstration'. He was over-ruled by activists, one of whom is reported as saying: 'If the government wants to keep Buddhist monks from getting involved in politics, they should not allow monks to vote. But we do

³³ Some reports suggest that the idea for the 8 September event may have emerged among some monks connected with the Campaign to Reduce Violence for Peace, a consortium of local NGOs facilitated by westerners and some Khmer-Americans (Gyallay-Pap, personal communication, 10 December 1999). Their initial intention had been to 'beg violence', in other words to draw any aggression down upon themselves, and so defuse a potentially dangerous situation.

³⁴ On 16 September Thomas Hammarberg, the UN human rights envoy, reported 16 bodies 'including two in saffron robes' found since the beginning of the police crackdown on demonstrators. Estimates given to me by leaders of the young monks are significantly higher.

vote.’ Ou Bun Long, a prominent member of the Khmer Buddhist Society (KBS)³⁵ and a spokesman for the Sam Rainsy Party, also defended the monks’ actions saying that they were not in technical violation of *vinaya*.

Although a number of senior Saṅgha members have agreed, mainly in private, that the monks’ actions were justified, the demonstrations were almost immediately condemned by those thought to be close to the ruling party. Ven. Oum Som, for instance, appeared on national television on 10 September to say that: ‘Monks from the provinces and pagodas of the city have attended illegal demonstrations with civilians. This is against the rules of Buddhism.’ There is certainly some justification in the criticism, since this was during the three-month rainy season retreat (*vossa*), a time when monks should be largely secluded in their monasteries. However, Oum Som also accused the monks of causing their own injuries through fear and ill-discipline, a charge repeated by an Interior Ministry spokesman who also claimed that some of the monks involved in demonstrations were not ‘real monks’³⁶.

Throughout this period there seems to have been genuine anxiety among some members of the Phnom Penh Saṅgha that they were under police surveillance. Twelve monks are reported as having barricaded themselves into a room at the top of one of the buildings at Wat Unnalom and there were repeated rumours that monks had gone

³⁵ The KBS was founded by Khmer-Americans in the early 1990s. Funded partly by USAID for non-Buddhist-related development work it soon made successful bids for lavish, though poorly-audited funds, from the UN Centre for Human Rights in connection with human rights training with some rather vaguely defined Buddhist content (Gyallay-Pap, personal communication 10 December 1999). Ou Bun Long is a former director of the KBS.

³⁶ When I interviewed Ven. Non Nget (b. 1924), leader of the Mohanikay segment at Wat Botum and significant supporter of Hun Sen (18 November 1999), he repeated these charges and added that some monks had also used sling-shots against the police. His official position in the Mohanikay hierarchy is Samdech Preah Bodhivong. He is, therefore, one of the three Samdech Sangh in the *Rājagaṇa* of the First Class immediately below Tep Vong.

missing (*PPP* 7/20, 12–17 September 1998)³⁷. I am reliably informed that Ven. Tep Vong called in members of Hun Sen’s bodyguard unit and military police supplied by municipal governor, Chea Sophara, who used electric cattleprods and small arms to flush out dissidents within the monastery. ‘Unnalom monks know how to run!’ was a much repeated maxim at the time. Not surprisingly, relations between Tep Vong and young monk activists have deteriorated significantly over the last few years to the extent that the Mohanikay *saṅghareach* is variously accused of corruption, rudeness, simony, nepotism, philistinism, and lack of patriotism by his opponents.

Given the heightened tension, very few lay people attended city monasteries during the annual fortnight of offerings to the ancestors (*pchum ben*) which began on 20 September 1998, a fact borne out by a letter that the King is reported to have written to Hun Sen asking him to authorize the free movement of monks during the ceremonies. Around fifty percent of Phnom Penh-based monks attempted to leave their monasteries for the country immediately after the troubles although a significant number were ordered off trains and turned back at road checkpoints (*Cambodia Daily*, 17 September 1998 and *PPP*, 2–15 October 1998). Despite the government’s partial success in preventing the spread of monastic disaffection, it seems likely that a fairly wide circle of young Saṅgha members were radicalized across much of the country in the next few months.

Attempts to mark the first anniversary of the September 1998 demonstrations with a ceremony at Wat Unnalom were frustrated by a formal Saṅgha declaration issued by Tep Vong calling for the arrest of the organizers. However, the event did subsequently take place at Wat Botum after the Thommayut *saṅghareach* Ven. Bour Kry gave the necessary permissions. Evidence of Sam Rainsy’s connection with radical elements at Wat Unnalom also continues. On 23 October 2000 he began a hunger strike near the National Assembly to protest about corruption in the distribution of supplies to flood victims. After two days he was forced to withdraw to Unnalom so

³⁷ Various interviews I conducted with monks in autumn 1998 confirmed the widely-held view that between 5 and 17 monks permanently disappeared around this time.

that the authorities could prepare for the November Water festival and a forthcoming state visit of the Chinese President Jiang Zemin. He remained there a further three days claiming that he wished to share the people's physical knowledge of hunger, but appears to have received minimal support³⁸. Having said all of this, I do not wish to claim that young monks support Sam Rainsy in any particularly explicit manner. A more likely explanation is that implicit politicization occurs through regular discussion of grievances with the many poor students who also live in and around urban monasteries. Certainly, some of the latter are members of the Students' Movement for Democracy, others are Sam Rainsy Party activists³⁹.

(iv) Mohanikay hierarchy

In May 1978, Heng Samrin gave a speech just inside the Cambodia's Eastern Zone where he revealed the existence of a dissident grouping within the Khmer Rouge. He called on 'all patriotic forces regardless of political and religious tendencies' including 'Buddhist monks and nuns' to join a united front to help 'topple the reactionary and nepotistic Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang' (Heder in *PPP* 8/6, 19 March–1 April 1999). Following the successful overthrow of the Khmer Rouge, the Vietnamese-supported government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) gradually reversed some of the most extreme anti-religious policies, endorsing 'the right to freedom of opinion, association, and belief'. In 1982 Heng Samrin, now General Secretary of the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP), announced that Cambodian Buddhism would 'last forever', since it was a religion in harmony with democratic principles. He also praised the positive contribution of Buddhists to society, particularly those with a nationalist outlook, such as Achar Hem

³⁸ As Olivier de Bernon (personal communication, 13 November 2000) has pointed out, Sam Rainsy recognized that his Gandhian 'mode d'expression' was inappropriate in the contemporary Cambodian political context.

³⁹ Ven Yos Hut told me (interview, 19 November 1999) that he believed some Sam Rainsy Party members had taken robes with a specific intention to infiltrate the Saṅgha.

Chieu⁴⁰. In 1984, he made the additional point that monks must be prepared to fight to protect the State against its enemies, for the existence of the State is the necessary condition for the flourishing of Buddhism itself. They should be particularly vigilant with regard to fellow monks who may be using the ordained state for acts of subversion and they should ‘completely discard unhealthy beliefs’⁴¹. Around the same time Ven. Tep Vong, then the President of the ‘Unified’ Cambodian Buddhist Saṅgha, reinforced this message when he argued that some forms of political violence could be condoned by Buddhism, specifically citing the example of the Buddhist-inspired freedom fighters (*issarak*) of the 1950s (Löschmann 1991, 24).

In September 1979 seven ‘carefully chosen’ former senior Saṅgha members had been re-ordained at Wat Unnalom by monks from Vietnam headed by Thich Bou Chon, adviser to the Central Commission of Vietnamese Theravada Buddhism. The delegation comprised a mixture of Khmer who had fled to Vietnam during the DK period plus some ethnic Khmer from southern Vietnam (a region termed Kampuchea Krom (lower Cambodia) by the Khmer)⁴². The youngest of the seven, Ven. Tep Vong (b. 1932) claimed to have been imprisoned and sentenced to four years forced labour at the beginning of the DK period (Danois 1980, 73). During the August 1979 show-trial of Pol Pot (*in absentia*), held in Phnom Penh by the PRK authorities, he had given evidence that Pol Pot had personally executed 57 monks, including three of his own neph-

⁴⁰ Foreign Broadcasting Information Service (FBIS, *Asian and Pacific Daily Report*, 2 June 1982. Ven. Hem Chieu was generally referred to by the title *achar* in the PRK period. Such laicization of Buddhist heroes has certainly been attractive to a variety of communist regimes. Ponchaud’s (1990, 232) observation that, in the modern period, it has been *achars* rather than ordained monks who have tended to be in the vanguard of the political resistance movement, needs to be read in this light. Forest (1992, 88) also confirms the association of *achars* and ‘mouvements de contestation’. The fluid nature of monkhood in Cambodian society means that the same person can be an *achar* and a monk at separate times in their life.

⁴¹ Keyes 1994, 62.

⁴² Keyes 1994, 60, n. 36.

ews⁴³. Tep Vong was subsequently elected Saṅgha President, at the same time gaining the posts of Vice-President of the Khmer National Assembly and Vice-President of the Central Committee of the Khmer United Front for National Construction and Defense (KUFNCD). There can be little doubt, then, that Tep Vong and other early ordainees⁴⁴ were held in high regard by the Vietnamese-controlled party apparatus. It has been difficult for these monks to break free from the implications of this link, so much so that a commonly heard complaint from young monks today is that Tep Vong spends too much time in Vietnam. Indeed, the original seven have sometimes been described as ‘Vietnamese monks in Khmer robes’⁴⁵.

These early allegiances have remained firm down to the present day. Following the violent conflict between the CPP and FUNCINPEC in July 1997, for instance, Ven. Oum Som is claimed to have told Saṅgha members that FUNCINPEC were in league with the Khmer Rouge and should be ‘sent out of the city’. We have also noted in our consideration of the young monks’ demonstrations in September 1998 that senior members of the Mohanikay hierarchy can generally be expected to take a very pro-CPP line. Indeed, Tep

⁴³ *FBIS, Asian and Pacific Daily Report*, 21 August 1979 quoted in Yang Sam (1987, 69). No independent evidence has ever been found to support these allegations.

⁴⁴ Ven. Non Nget, told me that he was one of the original seven to have been reordained in September 1979. He was appointed *chau adhikar* of Wat Lanka, Phnom Penh in 1981. He looks back with fondness to the PRK and SOC periods, a time when ‘there were no robbers in pagodas’. It is difficult to interpret this comment but I tend to read in the light of something else he said to me—‘Heng Samrin’s time was better than Hun Sen’s’—probably the groan of an old campaigner who feels himself rather marginalized under a new dispensation (interview, 18 November 1999).

⁴⁵ When Michael Vickery (1986, 196, n. 9) questioned Mme Peou Lida, Vice-President of the PRK Salvation Front, also responsible for Religious Affairs, on this matter she denied any explicit Vietnamese involvement in the re-ordinations. Nevertheless, his opponents do refer to Tep Vong as a ‘false monk’ and ‘a Communist ... [who] has always been devoted to the Vietminh’ (Martin 1994, 237).

Vong is closely associated with Chea Sim, Chairman of the CPP and president of the National Assembly. According to one of my informants (letter, 27 November 2000), Chea Sim⁴⁶ actually made a donation of robes and 120 million riels to Wat Unnalom monks during the kathin ceremony of 1996. Having received this on behalf of the Saṅgha, Tep Vong then, allegedly, transferred it back to another CPP member on Chea Sim's behalf. Naturally this angered and alienated many younger monks.

Another effective way of ensuring that monasteries operate in accord with the party line is through the appointment of management committees. Each monastery has such a body consisting of a majority of lay members (*achar*), many of whom are ex-monks. In the early PRK period, these placemen specifically ensured that a proportion of donations to the monastery were redirected to socially useful purposes such as hospitals, roads, schools, etc. More recently they have had a significant impact on the stifling of dissent, particularly given the CPP-oriented individuals often appointed⁴⁷. An excellent example is Hun Neang⁴⁸, prime minister Hun Sen's father, chairman of the Wat Botum committee and hardly an ideal figure to bring about reconciliation between the Mohanikay and Thommayut factions at the divided monastery.

We have already had cause to note Tep Vong's strong defense of the *karma* doctrine in the context of AIDS. Not unsurprisingly, this also has its political dimension. In a speech over the 2000 New Year period Sam Rainsy had appealed for his supporters to stop having faith in *karma* on the grounds that the doctrine is traditionally interpreted on an individualistic basis. He argued that when people habitually envision suffering as a result of their own actions this un-

⁴⁶ Chea Sim has also contributed funds towards the rebuilding of Wat Po Ampil in Takeo province. This may explain why it was the target of a grenade attack that killed one person on 26 March 1998 (*PPP* 7/7, 10–23 April 1998).

⁴⁷ The imposition of CPP appointees appears to be more prevalent in Phnom Penh than in country districts where elders are in a better position to block unwelcome interference.

⁴⁸ Apparently, Hun Neang had been a monk who disrobed around 1945 to join the anti-French resistance (Mehta & Mehta 1999, 15, 22f).

dermines the responsibilities of corporate organizations. This can, in turn, lead to poor governance and associated social ills. This fairly explicit attack on the actual government led some prominent CPP members to accuse Sam Rainsy of treason, in the sense that he seemed to be attacking the state religion or, more accurately, undermining the governing party's dependence on a carefully choreographed form of institutional Buddhism⁴⁹. Tep Vong's interjection may be seen as part of this wider CPP campaign to discredit its political enemies.

(v) Unreformed Mohanikay

As well as the explicit or 'exterior path' (*phlūv krau*) described in the writings of the Pāli canon, and upon which the reformed Mohanikay has taken its stand since at least the time of Chuon Nath, a 'hidden' (*lāk*) or the 'interior path' (*phlūv knuñ*) is also attested in the traditions of Southeast Asian Theravāda Buddhism (Bizot 1992, 33ff). Adepts of this unreformed Mohanikay tradition distinguish themselves from their reformed brethren in a variety of ways but most especially by their use of a series of 'non-orthodox' ritual and meditative techniques termed *mūla kammaṭṭhāna*⁵⁰. One of the criticisms regularly levelled by the modernists—those who know Pāli (*anak ceḥ pālī*)—against the traditionalists—those who adhere to the ancient rites (*anak kān' purāṇ*), whom I shall refer to by the simplified rendering *boran* from now on⁵¹—is that, despite their emphasis

⁴⁹ Letter of Bora Touch in *PPP* 9/18, 1–14 September 2000.

⁵⁰ Ordinarily the word *kammaṭṭhāna* refers to the traditional list of subjects for meditation; Buddhaghosa lists forty of these at *Vism* 110. However, in Cambodia it refers to special 'tantric' practices.

⁵¹ The Thai equivalent *burana* has the sense of 'reconstruct, rehabilitate, repair, or restore' and is often used in the context of rebuilding temples, etc. Its companion term, *watthana(kan)*, on the other hand, invokes growth or increase. Rhum (1996, 350f) has pointed out that in pre-modern Thailand, to say something was 'traditional' simply meant that it formed part of a class of things deemed 'good'. Nowadays, when it is necessary to legitimate something by reference to its fit with the internal workings of society it is termed 'traditional'. The term 'modernity', on the other hand, tends to validate by reference to external factors.

on palm-leaf manuscripts, they have merely memorized them by rote and have no fluency in the sacred language. However, this rather misses the point. In this tradition palm-leaf manuscripts are rarely read for their literary, didactic or intellectual content. Many monks are rarely literate in that sense. It is the power of the words themselves that is regarded as the primary factor inherent in such texts⁵².

It seems that the *boran* movement began to re-establish itself around the beginning of 1989 after state control of religion was significantly diminished and the country was moving away rapidly from doctrinaire communism towards the warm embrace of capitalism. The tradition had flourished particularly in the provinces of Siem Reap and Kompong Cham before the 1970s, a significant figure from the earlier part of the century being Ven. Mony Ung Choeum, chief monk of Kompong Cham, who appears to have had a number of run-ins with Ven. Chuon Nath (Marston 2000, 3). One of the most active figures in the movement to re-establish these initiatory and ritual traditions has been Ven. Daung Phang, originally the chief monk of Kroch Chmar district, Kompong Cham province. He is said to have the power of prophecy and is adept at various magical practices. In addition, Daung Phang is closely associated with Hun Sen who also comes from Kroch Chmar⁵³. Having already held a number of annual traditional monastic rites of probation (*parivāsa*)⁵⁴ at his home monastery of Wat Velo Vanaram, in February 1997 he organized a similar event at Wat Prek Barang⁵⁵, Kompong Luong, quite close to Phnom Penh. This seems to have

⁵² The printed works first produced by Buddhist reformers clearly had a profound impact on the concept of monastic literacy in Cambodia in the first half of the twentieth century. However, one of the problems with these Khmer texts was that they were actually printed in Vietnam. This made them even more unattractive to traditionalists (Marston 1997, 18ff).

⁵³ A rumour circulates to the effect that Ven Daung Phang has a direct phone line to Hun Sen (Marston 2000, 8).

⁵⁴ Unlike normal Theravāda usage, which envisages *parivāsa* as a period of suspension and penitence for an individual monk who has infringed certain rules of discipline, in the unreformed Mohanikay of Cambodia the term refers to a collective rite of purification through asceticism.

⁵⁵ Ven Daung Phang is now the abbot of this monastery.

provoked considerable opposition from modernizers. Indeed, when Ven. Daung Phang held a repeat of the rite the following year at Wat Champuskaec he was sternly rebuked by Ven. Non Nget⁵⁶, the dispute becoming so heated that unsuccessful attempts to adjudicate were made by the Ministry of Cults. Either in an attempt to reach a compromise or, perhaps, as a way of opening up a breach between himself and Non Nget, Tep Vong was a major participant in similar *parivāsa* rituals in 1999 and 2000. The latter was a rather grand affair within the precincts of Angkor Thom—an event clearly designed expressly to establish a connection between the traditionalists and the ancient Angkorian state (de Bernon 2000, 6–8).

Wat Champuskaec, some ten kilometers south of Phnom Penh on the eastern bank of the Bassac river, is another centre for the traditionalists. Its *chau adhikar*, Ven. Om Lim Heng (b.1964), seems to act as a quasi-official chaplain to Hun Sen who lives in nearby Takhmau. His photograph, prominently displayed in a rather magnificent thousand Buddha hall within the monastery compound, shows him wearing a medal, conferred by Hun Sen, hanging from monastic robes⁵⁷. Yet another monk with magical powers, Om Lim Heng specializes in mass lustrations. Indeed, so many people can gather at the monastery during peak times that he is obliged to use a power hose to accomplish this task. Another speciality is his protective lustration of expensive motorcars. Given the high incidence of

⁵⁶ Non Nget appears more hostile to the political affiliations of the *boran* movement than to its ideals and practices, a point reinforced by his own claim to possess supernatural abilities. He also admitted to having both Thai and Khmer teachers in the past, although ‘the Khmer have more magical powers’ (interview, 18 November 1999). Disputes between traditionalists and modernists can occur within the same monastery. The current situation at Wat Bo, Siem Reap is a case in point. Likewise, in Kompong Cham, there is evidence that the laity will only feed monks that champion its own particular viewpoint (Marston 2000, 4).

⁵⁷ Despite his relative youth, Ven Om Lim Heng has a senior position in the national hierarchy of the Mohanikay (*Rājagaṇa* of the Second Class). Although I have not been able to confirm this, it is widely rumoured that he bought the position from Ven Tep Vong.

car-theft and general lawlessness in the country, this is particularly appreciated by his followers.

Wat Champuskaec must be one of the wealthiest religious establishments in the land. The inauguration of its ceremony hall on 18 March 2000 was a particularly lavish occasion. Hun Sen appears to have contributed \$110,000 dollars to the Wat's \$600,000 building programme. Other major donors include Hok Lundy, Head of Police, Cham Prasith, Minister of Commerce, and Moeung Samphan, a three star general and father in law of Hun Sen's eldest daughter (*PPP* 9/6, 17–30 March 2000). We have already seen how, in the late 1980s, Hun Sen apologized for earlier 'mistakes' in the treatment of Buddhism. Opulent pietistical acts by party leaders were also widely reported after this time⁵⁸. The resurgence of conspicuous merit-making by the *nouveaux riches*, most notably high ranking politicians and members of the military who, it is claimed, have often appropriated enormous amounts of State property and land following the end of the communist era, has now become a significant feature of lay Buddhist activity.

As Evans (1993, 133) has noted, the rapaciousness associated with many modern forms of Southeast Asian governance, whether it be monarchical, military dictatorship or socialist, has meant that the only safe and emotionally satisfying (since it may be viewed as a means of expunging previous misdeeds) means of channelling surplus wealth is through the sponsorship of religious rituals. *Boran* wats in Cambodia appear to prosper disproportionately in this sort of climate. Wat Samraung Andeth, near Phnom Penh, is another example. The magical powers of its *chau adhikar*, Ven. Roth Saroeun, attract many donations from politicians and businessmen keen to advance their careers through contact with his special powers. The success of his entrepreneurial magic means that the monastery has become a refuge for large numbers of orphans and poor students

⁵⁸ Hun Sen was frequently to be seen after the 1993 elections personally sponsoring village works of one sort or another. Indeed, he even wrote songs inspired by these events which were broadcast on the radio. One of the more popular, 'The Life of a Pagoda Boy' tells the story of his life as a pagoda boy at Wat Neak Von, Phnom Penh, in the mid-1960s.

from the provinces who can be assured of basic food supplies and lodging⁵⁹. Clearly, such wealth distribution has been an important feature of institutional Buddhism throughout its history.

Another feature of the *boran* movement is its view that Buddhist modernists are merely ‘adepts of insight meditation (*vipassanā*)’. In this connection, Ven. Daung Phang has claimed that *vipassanā* practice is ‘foreign’ and ‘different from the traditional Khmer *kammaṭṭhān*’ which he teaches. Modernist influences, then, come from outside the country while traditional practices are an expression of true khmeritude. The reformed segment of the Saṅgha, it seems, has been seduced into following an alien and unpatriotic path. In a recent study of the role of Buddhist ideals in the Burmese political context, Houtman (1999, 307f) has argued that *vipassanā* practices have been preferred by members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) as a means of coping with the psychological stresses of imprisonment and repression⁶⁰. The military, on the other hand, are inclined towards a more magical, concentration-oriented (*samatha*), practice ‘since it permits power over [the external world] *loka* ...’ The crux of Houtman’s position is that mental culture is not just about private psychological spaces. Initiatory practices of the *samatha*-type are certainly about the cultivation of a hierarchy of interior states, but such states reflect and endorse traditional hierarchical and non-democratic forms of social order. Insight meditation (*vipassanā*), on the other hand, places its emphasis on bare awareness, analytic (as opposed to synthetic) reasoning, the dissolution of hierarchy and a consequent suspicion of traditional power structures. It is, therefore, more in tune with the democratic ideals of the NLD.

There are clear parallels here between the Burmese and Cambodian religio-political contexts. The unreformed Mohanikay in Cam-

⁵⁹ When I interviewed Roth Saroeun (16 November 1999) he assured me that it was necessary to generate income equivalent to 150kg of rice per day to supply the 350 monks, 150 nuns, 100 orphans and an unspecified number of students living at the monastery.

⁶⁰ Jackson (1989) has also noticed that Thai *vipassanā* traditions both deny traditional cosmology and point to the possibility of a non-supernaturalistic *nibbāna* realized in democratic modes of thinking and behaviour.

bodia is now well-patronized by a non-democratic kleptocracy fascinated and charged through their contact with these skilled magical manipulators of power. Their reformed counterparts, on the other hand, rely on the support of modernizing forces both within the country and further afield, reinforced by adherence to forms of mental culture that sustain liberal political norms.

4. Conclusions

This preliminary survey of the forms of Buddhism that have emerged in Cambodia since the 1980s will be superseded as more information becomes available. To a certain extent, the boundaries between the five groupings outlined above are rather fluid and specific individuals may move from one to the other with considerable ease. Having said that, I hope that I have been able to demonstrate the way in which certain constellations of belief and practice arrange themselves around specific political outlooks. Clearly the reverse is also the case.

Evans' (1993, 133) study of the forms of Buddhism that have developed in the two very different economies of Thailand and Laos is instructive in this regard. In the former instance rationalist forms that place an emphasis on individual salvation have emerged in large numbers. In Laos on the other hand, economic stagnation and socialist control of the Saṅgha has signally failed to produce any significant forms of Buddhist modernism. The situation in Cambodia is probably mid-way between those in Laos and Thailand. Over a relatively short space of time the country has shifted from a uniquely extreme and nationalistic communism to a strange amalgam of authoritarianism and the free-market influences. As a result religious groupings covering the entire of the spectrum from modernism to traditionalism have become well-established. They may be differentially arranged across a series of parallel continua, each reflecting some dimension of this basic polarity. Table 1 (p. 102) illustrates the situation.

By and large, the groups on the left of the diagram are associated with leading figures who were out of the country during the DK and PRK periods. On the right we find individuals who either survived

MODERNIST

TRADITIONALIST

	Reformed Mohanikay	Thommayut	Young Monks	Mohanikay Hierarchy	Unreformed Mohanikay
<i>Political connections</i>	Non party-political	FUNGINPE C	Sam Rainsy Party. FUNCINPEC	Doctrinaire CPP	Non-doctrinaire CPP
<i>Outside Links</i>	Cosmopolitan Various NGOs	Thailand	Minimal. US-based exiles. NGOs [?]	Vietnam	None

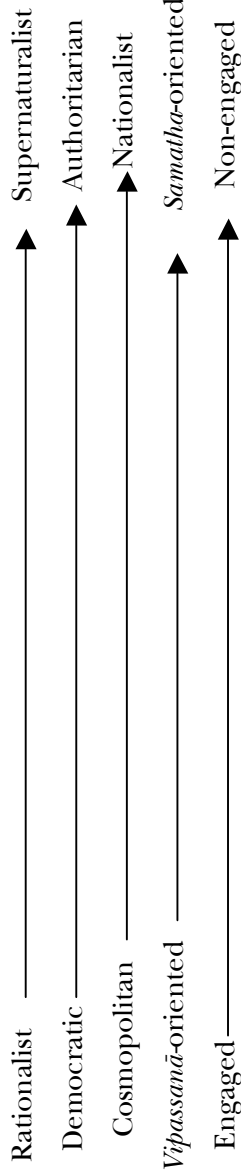


TABLE I

DK in a disrobed state in Cambodia, or escaped to Vietnam, subsequently rising to positions of influence during the PRK. The young monks are anomalous, in the sense that they tend only to have been born around the DK period.

Similarly, the left-hand groupings have generally suffered some form of suspicion, sporadically developing into outright persecution, from the ruling party. In the case of the young monks, again this has been especially severe. On the right side we have two groupings with specific relations to the CPP. I have differentiated them in the diagram by designating the Mohanikay hierarchy and the unreformed Mohanikay as doctrinaire and non-doctrinaire respectively. What I mean by this is that the former group has is largely composed of older ‘revolutionary monks’ who have sought to advance the party line through the reconstruction of a carefully choreographed form of State Buddhism. The non-doctrinaire grouping, on the other hand, appears to be less interested in fighting the battles of the past and generally further removed from the paraphernalia of the State. They have, nevertheless, benefited significantly through allying themselves with wealthy ex-communists and the mushrooming business sector.

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