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Failure Through Neglect:
The Women' s Policies of the Khmer Rouge

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ABSTRACT

Failure Through Neglect:
The Women' s Policies of the Khmer Rouge

Zal Karkaria

From 1970 to 1979, revolution brought civil war and the radical rule of the Khmer Rouge (KR) communists to Cambodia. This thesis uses interviews with Khmer Rouge female cadres, KR documents and relevant secondary sources to evaluate the KR's policy on women during this period. The author contends that this policy represented a literal interpretation of Frederick Engels's theories on women and the family, as the Khmer Rouge attempted to sever the bonds of the Cambodian family. This study also compares the Khmer Rouge's approaches to women's issues and the recruitment of women, with those of twentieth century revolutionary movements in China, Vietnam and North Korea. This comparison reveals that the Khmer Rouge's women's programme lacked the development, sophistication and organization of these other movements and failed to attract women to its revolutionary cause. Four interconnected factors are specified for this failure on the part of the Khmer Rouge: 1) poor recruitment strategies; 2) the forced break up of families; 3) ineffective indoctrination of female recruits; 4) and a total failure to formulate an effective role for women in the revolution.

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INTRODUCTION

"During the struggle, we encountered many difficulties. For example, cadres separated from their families and not ideologically firm would sometimes decide to run back to their families and away from the revolution."[1]

-Nuon Chea ("Brother Number Two," Prime Minister, Democratic Kampuchea) in 1978.

"Because of missing home, I ran to my parents often. I always missed my parents and always wanted to escape to return home."[2]
"I reached home five times. One time, I was sick – shaking, cold, hot temperature. They [the Khmer Rouge] put me in a hammock and carried me back."[3]

-Sum Sreng (former female Khmer Rouge cadre) in 2002.

The Cambodian revolution was notable for many unfortunate reasons, most conspicuously its incredible cruelty and destructiveness to human lives.[4] From 1970 to 1979, countless Cambodians suffered terribly and millions died as the country was engulfed in violence, first during a vicious civil war (1970-1975), and then, under Democratic Kampuchea (DK), the infamous regime of the ultra-radical Khmer Rouge (KR) communists (1975-1979). Their leader was Saloth Sar, better know by his *nom de guerre*, Pol Pot.

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[1] Nuon Chea, "Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers' Party of Denmark," July 1978, (accessed 19 February 2003); available from http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/dccam.genocide/posting/Nuon_Chea's_Statement.htm.
[2] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[3] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 18 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[4] The Cambodian revolution is described here as covering the entire 1970-79 period. The Khmer Rouge used the language of war and revolution even after coming to power in 1975, and the sweeping changes the movement attempted to implement were, by most definitions, nothing short of revolutionary in themselves.

Also notable was the lack of ideological support for the revolution amongst those in whose name it was supposedly being fought – the Cambodian peasants, who composed eighty-five to ninety percent of the Cambodian population.[5] The Khmer Rouge's leaders wanted to transform Cambodia into an autarkic, agrarian utopia. Although they founded their revolutionary plans on anticipated peasant support, these plans rested on a warped perception of rural Cambodia. Like Frantz Fanon,[6] the Khmer Rouge romanticized peasants, idealizing their work ethic, their morality, and their commitment to an austere way of life. It also inflated peasant grievances, exaggerating their exploitation and their potential for revolution. The KR echoed Fanon's call for the use of violence to exorcise deference to authority; however, Cambodian peasants simply did not resemble Fanon's generalized description of rural societies as thinking "of the problem of their liberation except in terms of violence...in terms of national struggle, and of armed insurrection."[7] Peasants are essentially risk-averse as James C. Scott has pointed out: they will tolerate an exploitive system if it conforms to their "moral economy" – "their notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation" – and satisfies their basic needs, guaranteeing them a relatively stable level of minimum subsistence.[8] Such was the pre-war perception of the majority of Cambodian peasants, whose lives were difficult, but not penurious.

Peasants were attracted to the revolution, in fact, by their reverence for Norodom Sihanouk, Prince of Cambodia. He and his supporters formed an alliance with what the Prince himself had dubbed "*les Khmers Rouges*" – the Cambodian communists, who had

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[5] Craig Etcheson, *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 16.

[6] Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (The wretched of the earth) (Paris: François Maspero éditeur, 1961; reprint, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1966).

[7] Ibid., 101.

[8] James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 3.

been his sworn enemy until the rightist coup in March 1970 that ended his long rule and brought US-backed General Lon Nol to power. The alliance was called the National United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK).[9] In the civil war that followed, most peasants fought to restore the pre-war order, with their god-prince Sihanouk as the head of state – not to implement revolutionary change. In fact, peasants were confused by the Khmer Rouge's misguided communist programme emphasizing landlordism as the peasants' greatest problem – most of them owned their own land. Thus, only a minority of the poorest, landless peasants were truly committed to the KR cause, while most displayed lacklustre support for the principles of the Khmer Rouge revolution. This led to the KR's use of force to gain adherents, particularly during the final years of the war when the Khmer Rouge took control of the alliance and began systematically defaming the Prince in their propaganda and marginalizing his influence within the NUFK. Peasants were often threatened into joining the KR forces, further eroding rural enthusiasm for a revolution that offered them little except unwanted separation from their families, violence, and the ubiquitous use of terror.[10]

These points were certainly true for Cambodian peasant women, who suffered from the Khmer Rouge's radical attempt to re-define their roles and upset their social relationships. This thesis will demonstrate that the Cambodian communists failed to attract women in significant numbers, alienating them from the communist cause through harsh recruitment tactics, poor indoctrination and forced separation from their families; in fact, the KR neglected women's issues almost entirely, failing to define a credible

[9] Kate Frieson, "The Impact of Revolution on Cambodian Peasants: 1970-1975," (PhD. diss., Monash University, 1991), 58.
[10] Ibid., 249-52.

revolutionary role for Cambodian women. As a result, they had little reason to support the Khmer Rouge.

Prior to the rise of the Khmer communists, peasant women in Cambodia wielded a significant amount of influence and autonomy within their households and, to a lesser extent, within their villages. They controlled household finances and engaged in most market transactions while making important contributions to household production.[11] They were granted the right to vote in 1956 and actively exercised this privilege. Women could also hold political office, although such positions – both at the national and village level – were largely dominated by men.[12] Husbands and wives maintained positions of relative equality and numerous studies have noted the comfortable balance that characterized Cambodian peasant marriages; divorce, meanwhile, was relatively easy for women to obtain, and no stigma was attached to divorcees.[13] Also, women owned and could inherit land. While a disproportionate number of rural women were illiterate, education for girls was increasing in the years before the outbreak of hostilities.[14] Adolescent girls worked in the fields and tended to younger siblings; many took on part-time work and kept the wages they earned. Despite their responsibilities, they still had a fair degree of leisure time and their circle of friends could include both boys and girls.[15]

During the Khmer Rouge revolution, however, the role of women was left completely undefined, while what tasks they were given brought countless hardships. Based on the available evidence, the Khmer Rouge formulated no women's policy.

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[11] For a detailed breakdown of male and female tasks in Cambodia, see Judy L. Ledgerwood, "Changing Khmer Conceptions of Gender: Women, Stories, and the Social Order," (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1990), 168.
[12] May Ebihara, "Khmer Village Women in Cambodia: A Happy Balance," in *Many Sisters: Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Carolyn J. Matthiasson (New York: The Free Press, 1974), 336-38.
[13] Ibid.,328.
[14] Ibid., 310.
[15] Ibid., 312-4.

However, it exploited women's labour during the war and under DK while making the dubious claim that they had made men and women equal. Simultaneously, the Khmer Rouge decried "family-ism" and attacked the structure of the traditional Cambodian family, deliberately attempting to sever the tight bond between parents and children and direct Cambodians' loyalty to *Angkar*, or the "organization" – the secretive term by which the Khmer Rouge referred to itself. This policy was despised by peasants (women in particular) as the family was *the* central social unit of the Cambodian peasantry. The assault on family had its origins in Frederick Engels's theories of the family and gender equality, although the Khmer Rouge's application of his ideas – like its policy towards women – was crude, at best.

In contrast, some of the Khmer Rouge's communist counterparts in Asia developed sophisticated women's programmes and made effective use of women during their revolutions. Both the Chinese and Vietnamese communists attracted women to their causes through a reformist agenda that attacked rural patriarchy. They promised to raise the status of women through their respective revolutions and provide them with important legal benefits, including land rights, voting rights, and marriage and divorce rights. Women were given important roles in the wartime struggles for power, which they performed voluntarily and with pride. North Korea seemed to have made similar use of women, although far less is known about their women's policies. While in all three countries a stubborn patriarchal order ultimately slowed reforms for women, it is clear that their communist parties considered women's issues relatively important – unlike the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), the political arm of the Khmer Rouge, which ignored the needs of Cambodian women almost entirely.

The KR's neglect of women's issues is reflected in the historical literature on Cambodia. Few scholars have specifically studied the role of women under the Khmer Rouge and the many works that explore the larger history of the movement devote little attention to Cambodian women. This may partly be explained by the dearth of evidence regarding the CPK interest in women's issues: there are few known Party documents that even touch on this issue: none explore it in detail, and nowhere is a policy outlined explicitly. However, this hardly meant that women were not affected by KR actions during the revolutionary period: the very neglect that characterized the communists' attitude towards women had important consequences for them and shaped women's understanding of the regime. This thesis attempts to fill part of the gap in the historical literature pertaining to women in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge.

The paper is divided into three chapters. Chapter One is a historiographical overview of the relevant literature. First, I analyze the small but important body of work on women in Cambodia, which provides a foundation for this paper. Also surveyed are the much broader collection of studies on the growth and nature of the Cambodian revolution, with particular emphasis on analyses of peasant support for the revolution, KR recruitment methods, and intellectual antecedents of the Khmer communists. Finally, I briefly examine some of the historiography pertaining to the role of women in the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions. This last section leads directly to the comparative approach utilized in Chapter Two. Here, the sophisticated women's policies of the communist movements in China, Vietnam and North Korea are contrasted with the virtually non-existent women's policies of the Khmer Rouge. Indeed, an analysis of CPK documents in this chapter reveals that the Khmer Rouge was convinced of the uniqueness of its revolution and committed to progressing independently. In light of this stance, I question

whether the KR drew *any* lessons from the experiences of these communist states, which had some influence over the Cambodian communists at one time or another – particularly China and Vietnam.

Chapter Three contains the main arguments of the thesis. In it, I present four reasons for the Khmer Rouge failure to convince women of the rightness of its revolution: 1) poor recruitment strategies; 2) the deliberate break up of families; 3) feeble indoctrination; and 4) a complete failure to devise an effective role for women in its communist revolution.

My findings are based on a review of the literature and interviews conducted with twenty Cambodian peasant women during July and August 2002; it is their oral histories that form the backbone of this thesis. The study represents a preliminary exercise in oral history, and a modest beginning of the study of KR strategies towards recruiting and utilizing female cadres. All but two of the women interviewed lived in villages within a few kilometres of each other; the remaining two lived in a neighbouring district.[16] This entire area had been occupied by insurgents since 1970, first by Vietnamese communists and Sihanoukists, and increasingly as the war dragged on, by the Khmer Rouge; it was also the scene of intense bombing throughout the war by both the United States and their allies in the Lon Nol-led Cambodian national forces. Under the Khmer Rouge's system of regional administration, these women's villages were in region 25, which was part of the Southwest zone.[17] Historian Michael Vickery has described this area as "the zone of 'Pol

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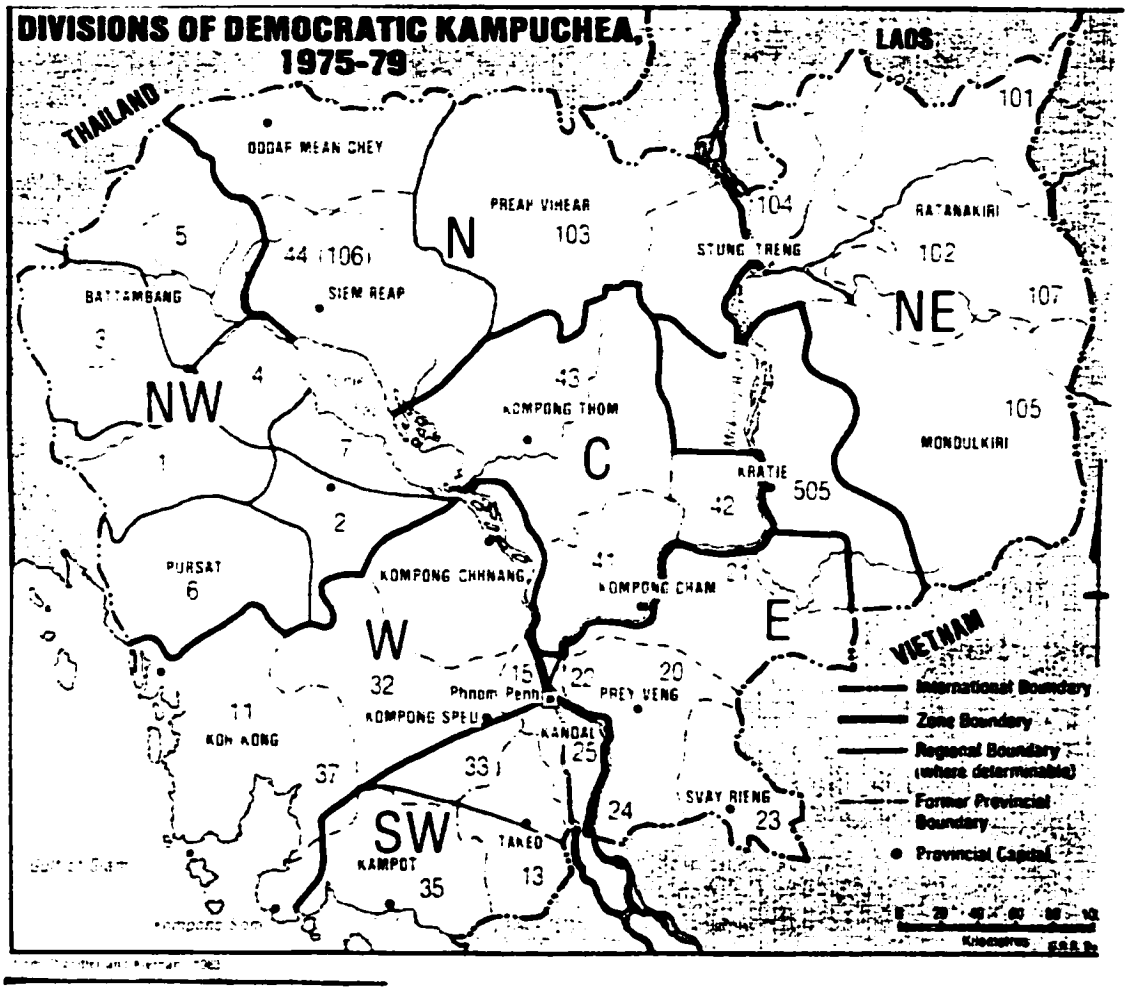
[16] For a discussion on methodology, including interviewing and the selection of informants, see the Appendix.

[17] The Khmer Rouge divided Cambodia into seven main administrative zones: North, Northeast, East, Southwest, West, Northwest and Centre. Each zone was divided into numbered regions. See Michael Vickery, *Cambodia: 1975-1982* (Boston: South End Press, 1984; reprint, Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1999), 71-4.

Pot-ism' *par excellence*, the power base of the Pol Pot government."[18] It must also be emphasized that Vickery made the important point that conditions varied widely throughout Cambodia during the 1970s: policies emanating from the centre were inconsistently applied throughout the country.

Nonetheless, because of its association with the Khmer Rouge leadership, the former region 25 represents an ideal locale to determine the KR's attitude towards women. The experiences of the interviewees may not be representative of those of all Cambodian women, but they may reflect some of the ideas relating to women emanating from the Pol Pot-controlled CPK centre. The resulting image is one of an ideological emptiness that produced confusion, loneliness and suffering for Cambodian women.

[18] Vickery, 93. Steve Heder disputes this assertion. See his, "Racism, Marxism, Labelling and Genocide in Ben Kiernan's *The Pol Pot Regime*," *South East Asia Research* 5, no.2: 131.



Map 1. Cambodia under Democratic Kampuchea.
Region 25 is located south of Phnom Penh in present-day Kandal province.
Source: David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*.

CHAPTER 1

Women in Revolutionary Cambodia, Vietnam and China: A Historiographical Overview

"'We made a revolution. The revolution in Vietnam and in France made many errors, too; many good things and many errors. We tried."[1]

-Ieng Sary (Foreign Minister, Democratic Kampuchea) in 1980.

Khmer Rouge policy towards Cambodian peasant women represented a violent break with tradition – like its extreme revolutionary course of action in almost every other realm. The Khmer Rouge attempted to weaken family bonds, substituting ties to *Angkar*. This attack on the family in areas controlled by the Khmer Rouge began during the civil war of 1970 to 1975 with, among other activities, the recruitment of women into the Khmer Rouge army.

The role of women in the Cambodian revolution has largely been ignored by scholars. While most note that the Khmer Rouge mobilized the entire Cambodian population – male and female – in areas it controlled, few have explicitly examined Khmer Rouge policies towards Cambodian women and how the women themselves felt about them. The result is that the political, social, economic and military role of women has garnered only passing mention in the historical literature on Cambodia. Many studies cite the existence of a "Women's Association of Democratic Kampuchea" and an "Association of Democratic Khmer Women" but none provide much information beyond these names, probably due to a lack of relevant documentary sources.

[1] "Pol Pot Aide Calls for World Support," *New York Times*, 1 December 1980, p. A9.

Considerable study of the growth and nature of the Cambodian revolution does exist in the scholarly literature. Academic studies of the Khmer Rouge's support amongst peasants, its intellectual antecedents and political history, its use of peasant youth, and its recruitment methods, revolutionary propaganda and indoctrination, have all been accomplished. An examination of these studies will place Khmer Rouge attitudes towards women in their intellectual and historical context.

There is also a growing and useful body of work on the role of women in the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionary movements of the twentieth century. Both movements had well-developed strategies for gaining the support of peasant women using highly organized women's organizations. The result was that women made important contributions to the victories of both movements, although the long-term benefits of communist policies for women in these countries is the subject of much debate amongst scholars, particularly those who study China. Nonetheless, their sophisticated women's policies contrast sharply with those of the Khmer Rouge, which were simplistic, misguided and unpopular; this contrast is made all the more noteworthy by the often close relationship between the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese and Chinese communists – and the deliberate refusal of the Khmer communists to draw on their allies' experiences in the organization of women. North Korea also had close ties with the Khmer Rouge and its women's policies are examined in Chapter Two; however, the academic literature related to this topic is extremely limited, and, therefore, not covered in this historiographical chapter.

This section will provide a critical overview of the relevant literature in three areas: the policy of the Khmer Rouge towards women and the family, the growth and

nature of the Cambodian revolution, and the role of women in the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions.

In order to fully grasp the extreme nature of Khmer Rouge policies towards women and the family, it is essential to gain an understanding of both of their roles in traditional Cambodian peasant life prior to 1970. In her essay on Khmer village women in Cambodia, anthropologist May Ebihara, who spent a year (1959-1960) in a rural Cambodian village conducting field work, emphasized the importance of the family as "the most basic social unit in village life". There were no organized kin groups beyond the household, and no clubs, political parties, or other formal associations.[2] The bonds between parents and children were strong, and that between mothers and daughters especially so. Women preferred to remain close to their parents, even after marriage. According to Ebihara, Khmer village women held "substantial authority, independence and freedom"; for example, they played an "indispensable" economic role, controlling household finances and engaging in most market transactions.[3]

In a post-DK article on "Revolution and Reformation in Cambodian Village Culture,"[4] Ebihara described how DK deliberately attacked family and kin relations in an effort to engage peasants in service to the revolution. The Khmer Rouge sought to virtually eliminate the family, the village and the Buddhist religion as competing loyalties. Most striking, according to Ebihara, was DK's attack on the strongest peasant family relationship: that between parent and child. Under DK, children over seven rarely saw

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[2] May Ebihara, "Khmer Village Women in Cambodia: A Happy Balance," in *Many Sisters: Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Carolyn J. Matthiasson (New York: The Free Press, 1974), 320.
[3] Ibid., 320.
[4] May Ebihara, "Revolution and Reformation in Cambodian Village Culture," in *The Cambodian Agony*, ed. David A. Ablin and Marlowe Hood (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1987).

their parents, and were specifically targeted for revolutionary indoctrination; devotion to *Angkar* replaced loyalty to the family, and parental authority was replaced by that of revolutionary organizations. Ebihara overstated her case, however, as not all children were as thoroughly brainwashed as she implied – Khmer Rouge indoctrination, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Three, was often highly ineffective and resisted.

Kalyanee Mam's "Democratic Kampuchea (1975–1979): Women as Tools for Social Change," picked up where Ebihara's second essay left off. Mam's essay was a more sharply focused attack on the social policies of DK and represents the only in-depth study of the status of women in Democratic Kampuchea.[5] Based on her interviews with female Cambodian peasants, Mam argued that the Khmer Rouge used the rhetoric of gender equality to exploit female labour for agricultural production, destroy the nuclear Cambodian family and "bind women ever more tightly to the will of *Angkar*."[6] The espousal of gender-specific rights policies was simply a tool used by the Khmer Rouge to mobilize female labour while paying lip service to the idea that it was freeing women from the yoke of domestic responsibilities. In fact, DK's communalization of female domestic chores such as cooking and child-rearing "violated the woman's right to care for her children and family" and was a cruel attempt to eliminate a woman's role as mother – something that was deeply resented and resisted, according to Mam.[7] DK also did away with a woman's right to allocate her own labour, forcing her into the fields to serve the revolution. Communalization symbolized the obsolescence of the Cambodian family as a

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[5] Kalyanee Mam, "Democratic Kampuchea (1975-79): Women as Tools for Social Change," (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 9 November 2000).
[6] Ibid., 3.
[7] Ibid., 13.

social institution and the ascendance of *Angkar* as the sole object of an individual's loyalty.

In *When the War Was Over*, her broad, detailed account of the Khmer Rouge revolution, journalist Elizabeth Becker emphasized the devastating consequences the revolution had on the Khmer family due to the threat that it represented to the Khmer Rouge.[8] Her findings are based on a variety of primary sources: CPK documents, prisoners' confessions, interviews with CPK leaders (including Pol Pot himself), and interviews with ordinary Cambodians who survived DK. She noted that the disease, destruction and death that characterized the revolution constituted a significant blow to family unity even before the disruptive policies of the communists were implemented. On top of this, she wrote, nearly all these policies in some way led to family disbandment, as family loyalty was the greatest threat to *Angkar*:[9] the most "potent, hence the most feared, of all relationships of the former society."[10] The elimination of family life, therefore, was essential to state survival, and to counter this familial threat, the Khmer Rouge devised its own, divisive, class system meant to redirect loyalties towards the revolution. Becker wrote that the Khmer Rouge never officially banned families, but that orders issued by the CPK – for communal rather than family eating, for separate dormitories for boys and girls, and for the separation of children over six years of age from their parents – were specifically designed to break up this institution.[11] The Khmer communists hoped that individuals would happily work harder under a socialist system that freed them from the obligations of peasant life, such as trips to the market, tending the house and rearing

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[8] Elizabeth Becker, *When the War Was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution* (New York: Public Affairs, 1998).
[9] Ibid., 226.
[10] Ibid., 211.
[11] Ibid., 229.

children.[12] Instead, Cambodians "found the revolution's attack on the family insufferable."[13]

When the War Was Over also provided a rare glimpse of the CPK's view of women in Cambodia. In 1980, Becker interviewed Ieng Thirith, DK's minister for social affairs and the "First Lady" of the revolution according to the author. Thirith claimed that under DK, peasants had an easier life: "they were served," she explained. "Before the women had to work, to come home and search for fish, the rice, to cook it, care for the children. This was terrible. In communal living they only have to come home from work and eat."[14] Becker assailed Thirith's assertions, highlighting the minister's total disconnection from peasant reality: Becker noted that what was "terrible" for Thirith was actually "the joy of life for other women and men – raising their own children, caring for their homes, preparing the meals that shape a Khmer day."[15]

Ebihara, Mam and Becker argued against historian Michael Vickery's unique assertion that DK favoured the preservation of the nuclear family (if, for no other reason, than to increase the population of the country – one of the regime's stated goals). In *Cambodia: 1975-1982*,[16] Vickery wrote that cases of spousal and parent-child separation were exceptional and accidental under DK, or due to the isolated actions of a few cruel, poorly-trained cadre. Vickery's evidence was based on the "experiences related by the refugee community as a whole" through interviews he conducted in refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border, as well as his misguided and ineffectual observation that families appeared intact in refugee camps – *after* the fall of Democratic Kampuchea, and

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[12] Ibid., 184.
[13] Ibid., 225.
[14] Ibid., 172.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Michael Vickery, *Cambodia: 1975-1982* (Boston: South End Press, 1984; reprint, Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1999).

following a period of time during which refugees could reunite with their loved ones.[17] Mam's interviews and those conducted for this paper belie Vickery's findings, as do various KR documents and speeches discussed below.

As noted, research on the nature and structure of the Cambodian revolution is extensive and expansive, and two broad categories of scholars can be identified in this area. The first group – and by far the larger of the two – placed the Khmer Rouge ideology within the communist tradition, identifying Marxist-Leninist, Maoist and Stalinist influences on Khmer Rouge praxis. The second group rejected this hypothesis, and claimed alternate ideologies as being primarily responsible for driving the KR revolution. Even within this second category, however, there is disagreement over the intellectual origins of the revolution. An overview of these categories – beginning with the first – will reveal the works of the former to be both more convincing overall and more relevant to this study.

Much work on the Cambodian revolution rests on the invaluable first-hand observations of Ith Sarin, a former member of the Khmer communist movement who defected to the Republican side in 1973 after becoming disillusioned with the Khmer Rouge. His book, *Regrets for the Khmer Soul*, and his report, "Nine Months with the Maquis," are cited extensively by Timothy Michael Carney, a United States Foreign Service officer, in one of the first published studies of Cambodian communism: his 1977 paper, "Communist Party Power in Kampuchea (Cambodia): Documents and

[17] Ibid., 186.

Discussion."[18] Carney's report suggested that the Khmer Rouge had less rural support than was often claimed; it lacked properly trained and highly qualified cadre, with the result that "the party rigidly enforce[d] its new values, possibly because not even senior cadre ha[d] the experience that generates an institutional self-confidence basic to pragmatic, flexible implementation of principles."[19] The Party gained more support from the manual aid it provided farmers than from the ideology it espoused. Sarin exposed the Sihanouk-CPK coalition (under the banner of the National United Front of Kampuchea, or NUFK) as a fraud, as the communists systematically eliminated pro-Sihanouk cadre; most peasants, however, retained their loyalty to the Prince and had little affinity for communism – they simply wanted peace and a return to their normal lives.

Kenneth Quinn traced the development of the Khmer communist movement in two studies: a 1976 article covering the civil war period,[20] and his doctoral dissertation, published in 1982, examining the broader history of the movement.[21] Like Carney, Quinn was a United States Foreign Service officer, stationed in Vietnam during the war, as well as a staff member of the National Security Council. Quinn would later serve as US ambassador to Cambodia. In his dissertation, Quinn placed the Khmer revolution firmly in the communist camp. He argued that Pol Pot was greatly influenced by the Maoism of both the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and infused Stalinist terror into the Cambodian experience.[22] While borrowing from Chinese and Soviet models, Pol Pot sought to rectify the deficiencies he perceived in their revolutionary outcomes by using

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[18] Timothy Michael Carney, "Communist Party Power in Kampuchea," Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, Data Paper Number 106 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, January 1977).
[19] Ibid., 11.
[20] Kenneth M. Quinn, "Political Change in Wartime: The Khmer Krahom Revolution in Southern Cambodia, 1970-1974," *Naval War College Review* 28, no.4 (Spring 1976): 3-31.
[21] Kenneth M. Quinn, "The Origins and Development of Radical Cambodian Communism," (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1982).
[22] Quinn, "Origins," ii.

extreme violence and terror to achieve "pure communism."[23] Quinn also believed that the Khmer communists did not maintain widespread peasant support for very long, rapidly alienating rural dwellers with a terror programme implemented by young, well-disciplined, fanatical cadres drawn from among teenagers who had been separated from their families and sent away for indoctrination and training.[24]

Initially, Quinn wrote, during the period immediately following the overthrow of Sihanouk in March 1970, the peasants had supported the communist insurgency because of the cadres' exemplary conduct – in part, a product of the fact that Pol Pot's ultra-radical forces had yet to gain ascendancy within the NUFK. But most important for the Front's propaganda purposes was the movement's titular leader: Prince Sihanouk. Enormously popular amongst the peasantry (for whom he was both a political and religious leader), Sihanouk's overthrow provided the "catalyst" for building a rural-based, patriotic movement. It was a largely *nationalist* impulse to restore the monarchy, therefore, which launched and drove the peasant insurgency, Quinn contended, not communist ideology. When Pol Pot's staunchly communist faction began to take control of the Front in mid-1971, the peasants became distanced from the revolution, engendering forced recruitment and terror to gain compliance. Fiercely indoctrinated youth provided the "cutting edge" for Pol Pot, following their leader's communist plan with terrifying rigidity.

Quinn correctly highlighted the use of coercion by communist forces to ensure cooperation. However, he failed, critically, to mention enemy actions that did make the NUFK's recruitment of peasants less difficult: the devastating bombing of the Cambodian

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[23] Ibid., 181.
[24] Ibid., 228-9.

countryside by the United States that helped produce revolutionaries – communist or not – out of the remnants of its destruction.[25]

Kate Frieson's doctoral thesis in Politics, *The Impact of Revolution on Cambodian Peasants: 1970-1975*, went further than Quinn's in emphasizing the lack of committed peasant support for Pol Pot's revolution, concluding that "for a great majority of Khmer peasants, social revolution was a term they failed to understand and a goal for which they were not prepared to fight."[26] Support for the Khmer Rouge, she argued, was a peasant survival mechanism triggered by the exigencies of war. Frieson pointed out that peasant poverty was not so grim as to provoke revolutionary actions; as a result, the Khmer Rouge programme appealed primarily to a small number of very poor peasants. Through interviews with Cambodian refugees in North America and Australia, and other interviews conducted in Cambodia, she found that the vast majority of peasants "had little social or economic basis" for supporting the revolution.[27] Peasant motives for joining the revolution were, in her view, *conservative* rather than revolutionary – most joined the Front, as Quinn had pointed out earlier, to restore the *previous* regime, that of Prince Sihanouk, and not to install a new one.[28] Compounding this decidedly un-revolutionary rural climate was the Khmer Rouge's ineffective political training – the communists lacked properly trained cadres to indoctrinate peasants and convince them of the necessity of revolution. Coercion, therefore, became the primary tool for recruitment and

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[25] For a discussion of US bombing in Cambodia, see William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (London: André Deutsch Ltd., 1979; reprint, London: The Hogarth Press, 1993); Craig Etcheson, *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 95-103; and Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996; reprint, Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1999),16-25.

[26] Kate Frieson, "The Impact of Revolution on Cambodian Peasants: 1970-1975," (PhD. diss., Monash University, 1991), 14.

[27] Ibid., 28.

[28] Ibid., 80.

compliance. The policies the Khmer Rouge forced upon peasants were hugely unpopular, Frieson concluded, "because they created hardship and cruelty for people."[29]

Craig Etcheson, like Frieson a political scientist, highlighted psychological patterns amongst the peasantry that help to explain the successes and failures of the Khmer communists. In *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea*, a synthesis of secondary works on the Cambodian revolution, he came to unique and valuable conclusions.[30] Like other scholars, Etcheson stressed the importance for peasant support of Sihanouk's presence within the NUFK, but he also emphasized another symbol within the peasantry's collective conscious with which the KR forged a link: that of the religious authorities or *monachy* – mainly Buddhist monks.[31] After creating critical ties to the institutions of the monarchy and the *monachy*, the Khmer Rouge then usurped their authority.[32] Etcheson also noted the communists' reliance on youthful cadre to lead their revolution, taking advantage of their "marginally integrated cognitive belief systems" by "organizing an intensive program of youth indoctrination and recruitment"[33] from which emerged "an extremely militant corps of youthful cadres totally committed to *Angkar*'s instructions."[34] The majority of peasants, he suggested, failed to *internalize* communist ideology, a process whereby "the revolutionary cause is or becomes congruent with the individual's value system" and he or she "believes in the moral rightness of the revolutionary cause." Such "committed cadres," Etcheson wrote, "remained a precious resource throughout the period of armed struggle."[35] Like Frieson, he noted the decidedly

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[29] Ibid., 253.
[30] Craig Etcheson, *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984).
[31] Ibid., 149.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 160.
[34] Ibid., 162.
[35] Ibid., 81.

conservative, antirevolutionary character of the Cambodian peasantry and its poor understanding and shallow commitment to the Khmer Rouge's ideology.

Etcheson also touched upon the origins of the Khmer Rouge's adherence to strict self-sufficiency – an important factor for the discussion regarding the KR's disregard for its communist neighbours' revolutionary and political experiences. The KR's mistrust of foreign aid and advice, Etcheson wrote, stemmed from the lack of support it suffered from its Chinese and Vietnamese communist brethren during the formative years of the CPK, when both communist neighbours supported Sihanouk and his policy of neutrality in the Vietnam War. This taught the Khmer Rouge that "proletarian internationalism was a sham" and that "it would have to guard vigilantly against the predations of foreign parties claiming to be brothers. No one could be trusted. No one."[36]

Dutch scholar Roel Burgler's *The Eyes of the Pineapple* was a constructive analysis of Democratic Kampuchea, useful for its synthesis of previous studies, its comparative approach to examining the Khmer Rouge revolution, its emphasis on the ideology and intellectual origins of the Khmer Rouge, and its scrutiny of the relationship between KR leaders, Party cadres and the Cambodian masses.[37] Echoing Frieson, Carney and Quinn, Burgler doubted most peasants' intellectual loyalty to the Khmer Rouge's communist revolution and highlighted the movement's desperate lack of properly trained cadres able to indoctrinate conservative peasants.[38]

Burgler wrote that the Khmer Rouge was obsessed with maintaining a thoroughly self-reliant state and trumpeted, however falsely, its civil war victory as unaided and

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[36] Ibid., 82-3.
[37] Roel Burgler, *The Eyes of the Pineapple: Revolutionary Intellectuals and Terror in Democratic Kampuchea* (Fort Lauderdale: Verlag Breitenbach Publishers, 1990).
[38] Ibid., 50.

unique in the annals of history.[39] *Eyes of the Pineapple* suggested some intriguing and unique precedents for KR actions and attitudes that may have influenced the movement's leaders. Like Quinn, Burgler highlighted the KR's Stalinist form of Maoism, adding the Cambodians' extreme nationalism to the ideological equation. Burgler also looked at radical European influences. During their education in France, he wrote, some key future KR leaders (including Pol Pot) became members of the French Communist Party, which exposed them to the Stalinism of Moscow's most loyal and reactionary ally. Meanwhile, the KR's nationalist communist bent would have been encouraged by Pol Pot's 1950 visit to Yugoslavia, a communist country that under Tito, refused to blindly follow the Soviet Union's orders. Burgler also stressed a seemingly obvious, but oft-overlooked influence on the Khmer Rouge leaders: the French Revolution, particularly the radical ideas of Gracchus Babeuf, which he correctly described as bearing a "striking" resemblance to KR practice. Similarities included: the idealization of the peasantry, anti-urbanism, communal dining, the non-involvement of parents in children's education, the separation of the sexes and the nation's international isolation. Burgler also pointed out that the future KR leaders would have been exposed to the debate amongst French intellectuals on the use of violence in the Algerian revolution. Later, he speculated, they may have absorbed Frantz Fanon's[40] ideas regarding the revolutionary character of peasants and the positive potential of violence.[41]

Burgler then compared Cambodia's communist revolution to that of China and Vietnam. He specifically emphasized the difference between the limited use of terror on the part of these two movements and the widespread, institutionalized violence of the

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[39] Ibid., 58-9.
[40] See Fanon, *Les damnés*.
[41] Burgler, 195.

Khmer Rouge.[42] The Chinese and Vietnamese communists, Burgler wrote, were well-organized and enjoyed widespread peasant support. They also had many years to patiently hone their leadership skills during long, protracted wars and they emphasized political over military struggle. In the process, they acquired impeccable nationalist credentials. The Khmer Rouge, on the other hand, found itself ruling Cambodia after a relatively brief, but brutal five-year civil war. It deployed fanatical but poorly trained cadre to lead its revolution, and they in turn, engendered coercive rather than political compliance from the masses – to the point, Burlger wrote, that "terror seem[ed] to have become and end in itself."[43]

Historian David Chandler, in *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War and Revolution Since 1945*, indicted the Cambodian revolution as an example of the gross misapplication of foreign revolutionary models and theories.[44] In his view, the Khmer Rouge used Marxist-Leninism as a "blunt instrument and a destructive weapon," and applied lessons from various foreign models – everything from the French Revolution and Soviet collectivization to the Chinese Cultural Revolution and North Korean autarky – with a "literalness and speed" that "made them especially destructive."[45] The lack of revolutionary pre-conditions in Cambodia – such as a proletariat or a radicalized peasantry – did not deter the nation's rulers, as they believed such shortcomings could be overcome with revolutionary fervour. The CPK was unable to resolve the contradiction between the self-perceived "uniqueness" of its revolution and its socialist goals, as the latter aspirations implied that it belonged to an international socialist tradition and

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[42] Ibid., 242.
[43] Ibid., 273.
[44] David P. Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics War and Revolution Since 1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 237.
[45] Ibid.

responded to certain fixed laws of history.[46] Ultimately, Chandler concluded, "the Cambodian revolution crashed to the ground because of the persistence of so many counterrevolutionary ideas among rulers and ruled...and so much counterrevolutionary behavior."[47] Simply put, the revolution lacked support.

In *When the War was Over*, Elizabeth Becker also placed the Khmer Rouge revolution in the communist camp and cited the Great Leap Forward, Stalin's forced collectivization and North Korean authoritarianism as models for DK.[48] She also noted the Khmer Rouge's declared ambivalence towards foreign examples and advice.[49] However, her description of peasant support for the revolution is not presented in a cohesive manner. Becker's claim – that peasants' "ancient" distrust of the city, tax collectors and intellectuals dovetailed neatly with the Khmer Rouge's anti-imperialist doctrine – was too broad and unqualified.[50] She did not clearly distinguish – as Frieson and Etcheson did – between the poor peasants who found resonance in KR propaganda and the vast majority of peasants who did not internalize socialist doctrine. Doing so would have strengthened her more accurate assertion that the Khmer Rouge never attained an adequate power base, lacking, as it did, the necessary degree of popular support and understanding, forcing it to rule through violence and terror.[51]

The second category of monographs on the nature of the Cambodian revolution dismisses communist antecedents for the event, and consists of just two works relevant to this study. Both books make important contributions to our understanding of Democratic Kampuchea but come to flawed conclusions regarding its origins. Vickery's analysis of

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[46] Ibid., 245.
[47] Ibid., 237.
[48] Becker, 187.
[49] Ibid., 144.
[50] Ibid., 137.
[51] Ibid., 209.

the Khmer Rouge revolution, offered in *Cambodia: 1975-1982*, made numerous points that challenged then-conventional ideas regarding the Cambodian tragedy.[52] The historian argued that the Khmer Rouge revolution was "first of all, a victorious peasant revolution" that "had at first considerable support."[53] Because of this reliance on peasants, particularly extremely poor ones, Vickery asserted that Democratic Kampuchea was not truly communist (although it did identify itself as such): it was, instead, "a case in which nationalism, populism and peasantism really won out over communism"; indeed, he wrote, they formed a destructive and, ultimately, doomed ideological brew.[54] Vickery attributed DK's massive economic failures to its *rejection* of "Marxist communism."[55] He exonerated the regime's leaders who were "pulled along" by radical peasants and "did not forsee, let alone plan, the unsavoury developments of 1976-79."[56] Vickery's argument is simply untenable in light of the documentary evidence[57] linking KR leaders, including Pol Pot, to the "unsavoury developments" Vickery referred to in a classic understatement. The Khmer Rouge's Marxist line was acknowledged by the CPK, and its record of forced

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[52] A large section of Vickery's book is devoted to a critique of the refugee evidence on Cambodia used by most journalists and scholars during and immediately after DK – what he called the "Standard Total View" or STV. It held that DK "tried to exterminate all those who during the Sihanouk and Lon Nol periods had served in the military or held civilian administrative posts" as well as urban elites, intellectuals, doctors, teachers and technicians. The STV also asserted that DK "deliberately abolished schooling, medical care and religion; sought to destroy the family, in particular by tearing children from parents; and through deliberate efforts to deprive the population of an adequate diet, caused the deaths of large numbers of those people who escaped the extermination dragnet." See Vickery, 39.

[53] Vickery, 71.

[54] Ibid., 309.

[55] Ibid., 299.

[56] Ibid., 306.

[57] Some of the evidence indicting CPK complicity in atrocities committed under DK, particularly from the KR interrogation center, S-21, had yet to be analyzed extensively when Vickery first published his book in 1984; it had however, when the second edition was published – *unchanged*, save for a new introduction – in 1999. Vickery justified this rigid consistency, writing in the new introduction, that "nothing has been revealed since I wrote it which seriously undercuts the arguments made in the original text." Vickery, v. For a thorough examination of S-21, see David P. Chandler, *Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

collectivization and violent excess all had communist precedents.[58] Vickery did recognize the influence of contemporary Chinese history on CPK leaders, but limited this influence to the Great Leap Forward – he rejected the Cultural Revolution as an antecedent to the Khmer Rouge, citing its urban and student-centred focus. In doing so, however, he ignored the latter movement's radicalism and its utilization of rigorously indoctrinated youth as its vanguard – a vital feature of the Cambodian revolution as well.

Vickery's work remains, overall, a significant although seriously flawed contribution to the historiography of the period. Particularly important was his argument that conditions varied throughout Cambodia under DK and that over-generalizations about conditions within the country by previous scholars had led to an inaccurate portrait of the regime. However, his theories on the nature of the Cambodian revolution – including those related to the Khmer family discussed above – crumble in the face of the available evidence and criticism from other authors.

In *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79*,[59] historian Ben Kiernan called Kate Frieson's argument regarding meagre peasant support for the KR "too extreme,"[60] while dismissing Vickery's peasant revolution as "a myth."[61] As his title implies, Kiernan believed that the two crucial themes in the history of the Khmer Rouge regime were racism and the struggle for power.[62] In his discussion of the civil war period prior to the Pol Pot regime, Kiernan's findings did not, in fact, differ significantly from those of Frieson – for while he stated that peasant support

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[58] David P. Chandler, *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 122, 193.
[59] Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996; reprint, Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1999).
[60] Ibid., 166
[61] Ibid., 212.
[62] Ibid., 26.

for the revolution was widespread, he did not argue that the revolution enjoyed *majority* peasant support.[63] Immediately following the Khmer Rouge's victory in the civil war, Kiernan wrote, nationalism was pervasive in Cambodia (as was hope for a better future), and peasants were willing to give the Khmer Rouge a chance to rule the country[64] – until the combination of pervasive terror, insufficient food and the forced disintegration of the family erased their support for DK.

Although Kiernan rejected Vickery's peasantism, he, too, refused to place the Cambodian revolution in the Marxist tradition. Instead, Kiernan argued that "Khmer Rouge concepts of race overshadowed those of class";[65] also, he wrote that Maoism's emphasis on human willpower was more important to KR leaders than Marxist determinism.[66] However, as in the case of Vickery, Kiernan's intellectual manoeuvrings vindicating Marxism were unconvincing. Overall, Kiernan devoted very little of his book to the intellectual origins of the Khmer Rouge, thereby avoiding an uncomfortable confrontation with the KR's declared communist roots. This omission resulted in an incomplete portrait of the radical regime, as Kiernan's argument emphasizing the race factor is too weak to stand on its own.

Indeed, in a lengthy, scathing review of *The Pol Pot Regime*, political scientist Steve Heder took Kiernan to task for his examination of race and class under the Khmer Rouge.[67] Heder rejected Kiernan's dichotomy between Marxism and racism as "untenable," believing that the two were inextricably linked in Democratic Kampuchea.[68]

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[63] Ibid., 167.
[64] Ibid., 213-4.
[65] Ibid., 26.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Steve Heder, "Racism, Marxism, Labelling and Genocide in Ben Kiernan's *The Pol Pot Regime*," *South East Asia Research* 5, no.2: 101-153.
[68] Ibid., 103.

Heder demonstrated that as an ideology of modernization, orthodox Marxism contains racist "impulses."[69] According to Heder, Kiernan's "coyness" about DK's communist and Marxist roots hindered his overall understanding of the regime and the origins of many of Pol Pot's policies.[70]

This study will demonstrate that Kiernan and Vickery's dismissal of communist antecedents for the Cambodian revolution was premature; as we shall see, the ideas behind the radical KR policies on women and the family had their origins in the work of Frederick Engels; and though the KR may, indeed, have rejected the examples of its Asian communist neighbours in these domains, this had nothing to do with its racism or peasantism, and more to do with its perception of these regimes as not being communist *enough*.

An examination of other Asian communist movements and their policies on women and the family is pertinent for our purposes, and much is known about the role of women and their revolutionary associations in Vietnam and, especially, in China. Much less is known about the North Korean women's situation, but since the communist regime in that country maintained close ties with the CPK and implemented a similarly autarkic programme, it will bear examination in the future as more becomes known about this closed communist society.

According to Emily Honig, Western scholars' views on the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) women's policies underwent a change after 1975.[71] While before this year

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[69] Ibid., 105.
[70] Ibid., 110.
[71] Emily Honig, "Socialist Revolution and Women's Liberation in China – A Review Article," *Journal of Asian Studies* 44, no.2 (February 1985): 329-336.

many observers trumpeted the women's reforms the Party had made,[72] the more recent historical literature on women has dispelled this optimistic view. Since 1975, numerous works have lamented the failure of the communist revolution to dismantle traditional patriarchy and fulfill its promise of equality and liberation for women. Studies noted the active involvement of the Chinese Communist Party in organizing women politically and militarily, and the important revolutionary role women played, but also highlighted the discrepancy between Party doctrine and practice, expressing disappointment over the CCP's schizophrenic attitude towards the "liberation" of women – one which fluctuated between radical change and a reluctance to directly challenge traditional patriarchy.

Kay Ann Johnson's *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China* analyzed the women's policies of the CCP during the twentieth century, particularly those related to the family and marriage, and their effect in the countryside.[73] The political scientist concluded that their outcome has, in fact, *maintained* the traditional structure of the family – one that has long repressed Chinese women – and not reformed it.[74] She believed that the maintenance of the traditional family structure coincided with the Party's economic and political goals,[75] and that the Party failed, in fact, to consistently push for gender reform, as it feared offending male peasants and losing their support.[76] True gender reform, Johnson argued, could only have taken place if traditional patrilineal and patrilocal kinship practices had been attacked, but the government was simply unwilling to undertake such radical and potentially divisive reforms. Johnson also wrote that

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[72] See, for example, Jack Belden, *China Shakes the World* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), and Claudie Broyelle, *Women's Liberation in China* (Sussex, UK: The Harvester Press, 1977).
[73] Kay Ann Johnson , *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
[74] Ibid., 215.
[75] Ibid., 219.
[76] Ibid., 216.

orthodox Marxism provided a convenient framework to implement seemingly progressive gender reform while simultaneously placating the conservative tendencies of male peasants. Engels believed that women would be liberated through their increased economic role in society, and reliance on this idea freed the Party from having to directly implement women's reform. Indeed, Johnson wrote, this represented a case where the Chinese theoretical view coincided with the "mechanistic, materialistic, economistic mainstream of the inherited orthodoxy."[77] This is, perhaps, an exaggeration, for the CCP blueprint for women – which included "double-work" for women at home and in society at large – hardly resembled that outlined by Engels. Johnson was correct in noting the inadequacy of Engels's plan in the Chinese case, as its focus on economic reform neglected the importance of traditional kinship structures and the formidable barrier they posed to women's reform.[78]

Judith Stacey's *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution in China* presented a "feminist historical materialist analysis of patriarchy and socialist revolution in China."[79] The sociologist made observations similar to Johnson's, but was less overtly critical of the CCP. Stacey wrote that the family played a crucial role in shaping the revolutionary process and should not be seen as passively following the revolutionary directives of the Party.[80] In fact, she argued, a family revolution did take place in China, but not the one that feminists envisioned.[81] Instead, Stacey described a practical partnership between the Party and peasants during the revolution, whereby the CCP ensured the fair distribution of the benefits of patriarchy throughout the male peasantry in exchange for peasant support

[77] Ibid., 221.
[78] Ibid., 231.
[79] Judith Stacey, *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 12.
[80] Ibid., 8.
[81] Ibid., 13.

in its conflicts with the Japanese and the Kuomintang (KMT). Thus, peasants fought for a *restoration* of traditional patriarchy – albeit one modified by the CCP – that she labelled "democratic patriarchy." Women were "redistributed" to men and the family remained the basic unit of society. Stacey considered the CCP's collectivization program – following their defeat of the KMT – a deepening of democratic patriarchy, as authority was redistributed amongst male peasants in a stage she called "patriarchal-socialism."[82] The results for women of this CCP-patriarchy alliance, Stacey concluded, were mixed: "The new democratic patriarchy and patriarchal-socialism secured for most peasant women enormous gains over status in pre-Communist family and community life, but as subordinate daughters rather than equal sisters of fraternal Communist men."[83]

Anthropologist Margery Wolf's opinion[84] of the CCP women's policy was similar to that of Stacey's, but for one important point: while Stacey believed that the Party deliberately sought to maintain China's patriarchal structure, Wolf stated that this was not, in fact, intentional. Rather, the maintenance of rural patriarchy was the result of a "consistent failing on the part of the all-male [CCP] leadership to perceive and be aware of its own sexist assumptions."[85]

Sinologists Vibeke Hemmel and Pia Sinbjerg, like Johnson, appeared disillusioned with the Chinese communists' ability to liberate women. In *Women in Rural China: Policy Towards Women Before and After the Cultural Revolution*[86] they were critical of the All-China Democratic Women's Federation's inability to realize the goals outlined in

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[82] Ibid., 249-53.
[83] Ibid., 256.
[84] Margery Wolf, *Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985).
[85] Ibid., 26.
[86] Vibeke Hemmel and Pia Sindbjerg, *Women in Rural China: Policy Towards Women Before and After the Cultural Revolution* (London: Curzon Press, 1984).

Engels's strategy, despite the fact that it adopted his plan. Women would remain un-liberated, they concluded, until the Federation stopped glorifying "double-work," whereby women were encouraged to participate in communal production while simultaneously maintaining their household duties.[87] The authors argued that "double-work" was unfair: women were underpaid for the work they performed, as their domestic chores were not compensated. The necessity of these chores, however, meant that "family constitutes a barrier to women's liberation."[88] Hemmel and Sindbjerg's study was useful for highlighting the deficiencies in the Chinese women's movement that Khmer Rouge leaders may have witnessed directly; in fact, the authors' conclusions regarding the undesirability of "double-work" may have been similar to those reached by the KR leaders themselves.

Vietnam has a long history of legendary female revolutionaries; "when war comes, even the women must fight"[89] was an ancient saying in that country and, in the harsh 20th century realities of Vietnam's struggles against France and the United States, such was certainly the case. The historiography regarding women and the Vietnamese revolution is less grounded in historical theory than that on women and the Chinese revolution; it is also far less extensive. Still, much more is known about Vietnamese women's revolutionary involvement than that of their Cambodian counterparts. One recent work, as well as two others written during the Vietnam War period, provide a clear understanding of the role of women in communist Vietnam.

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[87] Ibid., 128.
[88] Ibid., 126.
[89] Vietnamese saying. From, Sandra C. Taylor, *Vietnamese Women at War: Fighting for Ho Chi Minh and the Revolution* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 9.

In a 1966 analysis of the Vietcong, Douglas Pike discussed the important role played by women during the war in South Vietnam.[90] Pike was a long-time US Foreign Service officer and a leading scholar of Vietnam. He discussed the founding of the Women's Liberation Association in 1961[91] and emphasized its effectiveness in the *binh van*, or proselytizing movement amongst enemy soldiers, which tried to convince them to switch sides.[92] The Association's propaganda stressed moral themes, according to Pike, calling on women to raise the ethical standards of their country; it contrasted these ideals with the immoral behaviour of the South Vietnamese army and their US backers.[93] The communist Party in South Vietnam made strong statements on women's issues, promising complete equality of the sexes; Pike wrote that it recognized the importance of winning women over to the cause.[94] The Association also made a determined effort to develop class consciousness amongst peasant women.[95]

The history of women's involvement in Vietnamese insurgencies was chronicled in political scientist William S. Turley's article, "Women in the Communist Revolution in Vietnam."[96] During its struggles with the French, Turley wrote, the communist Party was genuinely interested in the issue of women's liberation – and simultaneously recognized the contribution that a mobilized women's force could make to the liberation movement.[97] Turley made the important connection between the social upheavals brought by war and the changing role of women in Vietnam: war's exigencies forced women to perform tasks

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[90] Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1966).
[91] Ibid., 173.
[92] Ibid.,174.
[93] Ibid., 178.
[94] Ibid., 174.
[95] Ibid., 175.
[96] William S. Turley, "Women in the Communist Revolution in Vietnam," *Asian Survey* 12, no.4 (1972): 793-805.
[97] Ibid., 796.

otherwise reserved for men, while weakening the family and strengthening the social importance of the Party.[98] Indeed, Turley noted, the Party viewed war as an opportunity to pierce the shield of the traditionally hermetic Vietnamese family.[99]

Sandra C. Taylor's *Vietnamese Women at War: Fighting for Ho Chi Minh and the Revolution*[100] was an effort to determine how and why women helped the communists win the Vietnam War. Drawing on her own interviews, US intelligence reports and Vietnamese documents, the historian described a well-organized women's movement that drew much inspiration from the "saintly" image of Ho Chi Minh, as well as his message of sexual equality. The Women's Liberation Association was a key communist organization in South Vietnam, and was given a specific, three-pronged role to play in the fight for independence: military and intelligence work; face-to-face struggle and demonstrations against opposition troops, as well as harassment of their operations; and the covert distribution of propaganda amongst enemy soldiers, urging their defection.[101] These tasks, Taylor wrote, were "essential" for the communists' fight.[102] The communist Party stressed the importance of indoctrination at all levels of society, decreeing that even illiterate peasants – male or female, young and old – should be made aware of their class interests and exploitation. Self-criticism sessions were also an important part of the indoctrination sessions. To attract peasant women, the Association's propaganda emphasized the immoral nature of the US-backed Diem regime in South Vietnam, its soldiers, and the Americans themselves;[103] the Association also noted the unequal status

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[98] Ibid., 800.
[99] Ibid., 801.
[100] Sandra C. Taylor, *Vietnamese Women at War: Fighting for Ho Chi Minh and the Revolution* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1999).
[101] Ibid., 37-8.
[102] Ibid., 62.
[103] Ibid, 41-2.

of women in the South, promising sexual equality in every realm of society in an independent Vietnam.[104] Taylor's work effectively demonstrated the important role played by women in the Vietnamese revolution, and is an engaging work of oral history. However, it is ambivalent on what the outcome of the revolution actually meant for Vietnamese women.

This historiographical essay demonstrates that the specific role of women in the Cambodian revolution has yet to be examined in any detail, particularly for the civil war period: we do know that families were deliberately separated by the Khmer Rouge, leading to much distress for Cambodian women – but little beyond this point. The growth and nature of the revolution *have* been examined in the scholarly literature, with convincing evidence that it was based on Marxist-Leninist doctrine and modeled along Maoist and Stalinist lines. Studies have proven that the Cambodian revolution enjoyed only shallow support from peasants who joined it for conservative reasons, not revolutionary ones. The historical literature on women in the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutions is far more extensive than that on Cambodian women; this body of work demonstrates that women played important roles in each country's revolution as part of well-organized women's movements. However, it also shows that gender equality proved elusive following revolutionary victory.

To paint a portrait of the lives of women under the Khmer Rouge, this paper will link the topics discussed in this chapter: KR policies on women and the family; the ideology of the Cambodian revolution; and peasant support for the revolution. It will also compare and contrast the Cambodian revolutionary experience with that of China,

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[104] Ibid.,54-5.

Vietnam, as well as North Korea and hypothesize on the lessons the KR may have drawn from these countries' experiences – while noting the lessons they deliberately ignored.

CHAPTER 2

"Our Line is Different": The Women's Policies of Asian Communists in Comparative Perspective

"We don't solve the problem as some other countries do. Our characteristics are different. Our line is different. Our philosophy is different. Our standpoint is different, so solving problems takes different methods."[1]

-Communist Party of Kampuchea, Four-Year Plan, 1976.

Democratic Kampuchea inflicted radical change on Cambodian women and the Cambodian family. While other communist regimes in Asia failed to eradicate family traditions and sometimes reinforced them, the Khmer Rouge destroyed families' traditional nuclear structure and constructed a society based on communal living. The rough framework for such a society was provided by Frederick Engels in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*.[2] The Khmer Rouge attack on the family began during the civil war in Cambodia (1970-1975) when peasants – including young women – were forced from their villages by the communists to serve the revolution. While peasant women participated in the Chinese, Vietnamese and, perhaps, North Korean revolutions, none of these movements attempted the massive family transformations that the Khmer Rouge introduced and Engels advocated. Indeed, a brief survey of these three Asian

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[1] Party Centre, "The Party's Four-Year Plan to Build Socialism in All Fields, 1977-1980," July-August 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977*, ed. David P. Chandler, Ben Kiernan and Chanthou Boua (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1988), 48.

[2] Frederick Engels, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1902).

communist regimes reveals that Engels's plan was not fully implemented in any of them – it was Democratic Kampuchea that came closest to doing so.

What makes these regimes worthy of study here is precisely this failure to conform to Engels's vision of the family: these "deficiencies" may have been noted by the Khmer Rouge, and reinforced their belief that they needed to undertake truly radical change in order to create a communist society. In fact, the Khmer Rouge deliberately discounted others' experience, as it repeatedly boasted of the uniqueness of Cambodia's revolution while preaching self-reliance and rapid revolutionary progress.

Also making China and Vietnam noteworthy for our purposes, was the effective recruitment and indoctrination of women by these countries' revolutionary movements, and the important role women played in them. By contrast, the Khmer Rouge revolution appeared to have offered peasant women little, and this was reflected in the meagre level of support that they garnered.

In *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels defined the role of socialist woman and her path to liberation. He wrote that women's emancipation would only take place once all women were introduced to industrial production and the "monogamous" (or nuclear) family ceased to be the primary unit of economic production. Such a family, he wrote, produced female "slavery": men were usually the earners, ensuring them a superior position within the household, while women's domestic duties remained private and, therefore, unrecognized.[3] Communal modes of production, on the other hand, would eliminate the private household: the care of children would become a

[3] Ibid., 90.

public matter, freeing women from their domestic bonds, allowing them to fully participate in production and granting them equal status to men.[4]

Two of the twentieth century's most important communist revolutionaries built on Engels's framework. Lenin, like Engels, deplored "*petty housework*" that "crushes, strangles, stultifies" woman, and "wastes her labour."[5] He believed that the women's liberation movement should be subordinate to the revolution as a whole, as an exclusive focus on women's issues was distracting and bourgeois.[6] Women's liberation, then, would take place *through* revolutionary activity. This stance was reaffirmed by the Chinese Communist Party. While the CCP made progressive pronouncements on women's issues it criticized "feminism" as representing bourgeois politics.[7] Mao Tse-Tung advocated a gradual approach to women's rights, warning of a counter-revolutionary reaction if reforms were enacted too swiftly. He, too, subordinated women's emancipation to the larger revolutionary movement, stating that the abolition of inequalities between men and women "will follow as a natural consequence of victory in the political and economic struggles."[8]

The Chinese communists' approach to women and the family is particularly important for this study of women under the Khmer Rouge, for two related reasons. First, the CCP was the Khmer Rouge's strongest supporter for most of the latter's existence, and Cambodian communist leaders, including Pol Pot (who, himself, travelled relatively little) made numerous trips to China. Therefore, the Chinese communist experiment

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[4] Ibid., 91-2.
[5] *Women and Communism: Selections From the Writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), [emphasis in the original].
[6] Barbara Wolfe Jancar, *Women under Communism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 74.
[7] Johnson, 42.
[8] Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 1 (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967), 46.

would have a strong impact on Khmer Rouge leaders. Although the Vietnamese communists had even more direct ties with the Cambodians, having trained many of their cadres and soldiers, the Vietnamese-Cambodian relationship was characterized by a long history of mistrust and Khmer xenophobia. Second, the extremism that characterized the major ideological, social and economic events that defined CCP rule – the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and the battle for control of the Party after Mao's death – resembled the radicalism of Democratic Kampuchea and, in the case of the latter two events, took place during the Khmer Rouge's own battle to achieve and hold onto power; and during these convulsive episodes, the role of women in China was an important theme.

Prior to the upheavals of the twentieth century, Chinese women played a heavily subordinate role within their society in accord with Confucian principles. The traditional Chinese family was patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal; it granted women few rights and allowed them little authority.[9] Confucian values, including those that determined the status of women, came under attack in the dying years of the Chi'ing Dynasty (1644-1911) and during the May Fourth Movement of 1919.[10] During its second Congress in 1922, the Chinese Communist Party established a Women's Department and issued a manifesto that included voting and labour rights for women, and called for the abolition of all legislation that restricted women.[11]

The CCP's official policy on women and the family fluctuated depending on location and circumstance, but throughout its existence, it displayed strong patriarchal tendencies, despite legislation and rhetoric to the contrary. Its marriage decrees (which

[9] Johnson, 8-9.
[10] Ibid., 27-8.
[11] Ibid., 41.

gave women the freedom to choose their husbands and the right to divorce), were particularly controversial amongst the conservative peasantry: during its revolutionary struggles in the 1930s and 1940s, the Party scaled back their implementation in order not to jeopardize CCP support in its crucial rural bases. In the end, the Party preferred to follow Mao's gradual approach to reform: women's liberation would remain subordinate to the revolution as a whole and was to be realized upon victory.

Nonetheless, the CCP effectively mobilized peasant women on a large scale to support its revolution. The Party recognized the importance of mobilizing the entire family, and to this end, convincing women of the value of revolution was crucial to gaining the support of their husbands and sons. In order to win the trust of peasant women, the CCP Women's Associations engaged in activities that helped women directly. These groups were to mobilize women, and encourage them to engage in agricultural production to aid the war effort and maintain production at home in the absence of men; such activities would, according to the Party, further women's interests, improving their social and economic position and gradually redefining their role, which in some areas (particularly the northwest of the country) had called for minimal participation in production.[12]

Women also played a direct role in the military struggles against both the Japanese and the Kuomintang, working in intelligence, laying mines, nursing the wounded, carrying supplies and defending villages.[13] The CCP laws providing women with land and marriage rights attracted young women to the movement, although they were often frustrated by the laws' inconsistent application, as the CCP maintained its flexible line

[12] Elisabeth Croll, *Feminism and Women in China* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 202.
[13] Ibid., 193.

towards the liberation of women – if it sensed that its laws were causing uneasiness amongst the peasants or felt that they was distracting from the larger military effort, the Party delayed reforms and criticized the women's societies for becoming isolated from the general revolutionary movement.[14]

Despite the gap between the Party's legislation and its actions, it was able to convince women that joining the Party would improve their lives. It effectively used the progressive rhetoric of women's liberation to widen its support base. In Cambodia, by contrast, there is little evidence of feminist rhetoric on the part of the Khmer Rouge. Young women were told that they were equal to men, but the Party failed to translate this into concrete policy.

Of course, while rural Chinese women were to make significant economic, social and political gains during the revolutionary period, this may have been due more to the exigencies of war than to a real commitment to feminism on the part of the Party.[15] The CCP refused to dismantle the traditional Chinese patriarchy, but simply modified it, sticking to the belief that real change would follow victory. As Kay Anne Johnson noted, however, Mao underestimated the tenacity of peasant customs and failed to acknowledge peasants' inherent conservativeness: many fought for the *restoration* of their traditional lives – ones that had been shattered by war – and not for social change. So when the CCP attempted to execute reforms in the early 1950s – granting women land and marriage rights – they aroused significant hostility amongst the peasantry, and their implementation was quickly relaxed. Chinese patriarchy, therefore, demonstrated formidable resilience.[16] The gender equality through revolution that Engels, Lenin and Mao had predicted did not

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[14] Johnson, 55.
[15] See Johnson, 53
[16] Ibid., 31.

occur in rural China.[17] This patriarchal persistence in China may have been a sign for the Khmer Rouge that only a rapid destruction of peasant traditions in Cambodia could truly alter the family, and liberate women.

During the Great Leap Forward (GLF) that lasted from 1958 to 1960, the CCP again attempted to implement Engels's vision of female emancipation through communal production. "The fact that women can now work on equal footing with men," a CCP document claimed, "has raised their position at home and in society";[18] meanwhile, the "age-old problems" of cooking and child-rearing were "solved" by the communes.[19] In truth, the communist government struggled in these years to build nurseries and communal facilities to alleviate women's domestic burden, and it urged women to maintain a *balance* between work and family;[20] in a sharp divergence from Engels's ideas, the CCP stated that "there was no question that the family could be reunited, and they *were* united" through communal living.[21] However, following the massive failure of the GLF, construction of communal facilities slowed, and women's domestic role was re-emphasized.[22]

Later, particularly during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1970), this policy was again reversed and women were urged to engage in production as well as politics and to focus less on family and more on communal responsibilities.[23] However, the required

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[17] For a review of works on women in twentieth century China and the persistence of Chinese patriarchy, see Emily Honig, "Socialist Revolution and Women's Liberation in China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 44, no.2 (February 1985): 329-336.
[18] *Chinese Women in the Great Leap Forward* (New York: AMS Press, 1977), 28.
[19] Ibid., 39.
[20] Kyung Ae Park, "Women and Revolution in China: The Sources and Constraints of Women's Emancipation," in *Women and Revolution in Africa, Asia, and the New World*, ed. Mary Ann Tétreault (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 148.
[21] *Chinese Women in the Great Leap Forward*, 39 [emphasis in the original].
[22] Kyung Ae Park, "Women and Revolution in China: The Sources and Constraints of Women's Emancipation," 150.
[23] Wolf, 24-5.

communal facilities were again inadequate and, as during the GLF, women were burdened with the task of performing "double work": raising their children and performing domestic duties, while simultaneously participating in production. The CCP recognized this situation and gave it a positive, albeit unfair, spin – performing "double-work" became a desirable socialist virtue.[24] Evidently, as several scholars have pointed out, the CCP – despite its rhetoric and legislation – failed to "liberate" peasant women.[25] In China, Engels's vision of women and the family remained illusory.

The Communist Party of Kampuchea was no doubt aware of the social upheavals and ideological battles that China had endured, and while the CPK almost certainly borrowed from the Chinese experience (the term "Great Leap Forward," for example, was a favourite expression of the CPK)[26] the Cambodians may also have taken note of their giant neighbour's socialist "failures." With regard to women and the family, China's policy fluctuations had failed to liberate women or smash rural patriarchy, and during the Cultural Revolution and the brief ascendancy of the Gang of Four (1973-1976), the CCP itself deplored this failure, calling for the destruction of Confucian ideals, including those that repressed women.

The deficiencies of China, as well as communist Korea, were singled out in the CPK's Four-Year Plan, issued in 1976: in each country, the Plan warned, "the capitalist and private sectors are in the process of daily strengthening and expanding their base in every aspect. So long as the capitalist system exists, it will strengthen itself and expand

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[24] Hemmel and Sindbjerg, 124-5.
[25] See, for example, Hemmel and Sindbjerg, Wolf, and Honig.
[26] See, for example, Party Center, "Decisions of the Central Committee on a Variety of Questions," in *Pol Pot Plans*, 3.

and become an obstacle to the socialist revolution."[27] The CPK, on the other hand, proceeded along a much smoother socialist path: "As for us, we organize collective eating completely. Eating and drinking are collectivized...Briefly, raising the people's living standards in our own country means doing it collectively...They are happy to live this system."[28]

Tellingly, the Gang of Four period was one of increasing ties between the Cambodian communists and their Chinese counterparts.[29] While the CCP was in the process of denouncing the traditional Chinese family, the Khmer Rouge began the process of destroying the traditional Cambodian family, "liberating" women to serve the revolution whether they wanted to or not. The fact that the CCP's radicalism coincided with the CPK's ascendancy probably encouraged the latter to follow an extremist path. Indeed, Prince Sihanouk recounted the somewhat indignant reaction of two members of the CPK Central Committee (Khieu Samphan and Ieng Thirith) to advice from marginalized Chinese prime minister Zhou Enlai. In Beijing in 1975, he counselled them to proceed slowly towards communism and avoid China's disastrous attempt at a "great leap forward"; following a more moderate path, he had said, would lead to "growth, prosperity and happiness" for Cambodia. Sihanouk wrote that "By way of response to this splendid and moving piece of advice, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Thirith just smiled an incredulous and superior smile."[30] Indeed, the CPK rejected Zhou's advice outright and attempted a wholesale reorganization of Cambodian society more radical than anything Mao had attempted in China: Democratic Kampuchea, decreed Pol Pot, was to take a

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[27] Party Centre, "The Party's Four-Year Plan to Build Socialism in All Fields, 1977-1980," July-August 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 107.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Etcheson, 175-6.
[30] Norodom Sihanouk, *War and Hope: The Case for Cambodia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 86.

"*Super* Great Leap Forward" toward socialism.[31] This included an attempt to smash the cherished unity of the Cambodian family, and install *Angkar* as the sole source of authority. Traditional patriarchy was to be destroyed.

The traditional Vietnamese family, like its Chinese counterpart, was patriarchal and authoritarian, although women enjoyed a higher status in Vietnamese society than they did in that of China. The Vietnamese family represented the basic economic unit of society.[32] French colonialism actually lowered the status of Vietnamese women, as they were seen as the "slaves of slaves" – the property of Vietnamese men who, themselves, were the virtual property of their French imperial masters.[33]

However, in the revolutionary movements of the 1930s, women played key roles, carrying most of the supplies destined for revolutionary bases. Women also served in the Viet Minh, the Vietnamese coalition formed by Ho Chi Minh in 1941 to combat the Japanese. In return, the Viet Minh offered women land and voting rights and proclaimed the political and economic equality of men and women.[34] Ho himself proved an invaluable source of inspiration for all Vietnamese, including women – he was a heroic, unifying figure and an ardent nationalist.[35] His exalting presence at the head of the Vietnamese revolutionary movement was an element that the Khmer Rouge lacked in the their revolution, except for the period during which they allied themselves with Sihanouk, placing him at the head of their United Front. The Front began to lose popularity, though,

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[31] The phrase "Super Great Leap Forward" was used commonly by the CPK. For example, it appeared in the text of a speech, probably given by Pol Pot, that was published in the CPK journal *Tung Padevat* (Revolutionary Flags). "Excerpted Report on the Leading Views of the Comrade Representing the Party Organization at a Zone Assembly," June 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 13-35 [emphasis added].
[32] Mary Ann Tétreault, "Women and Revolution in Vietnam," in *Women and Revolution in Africa, Asia, and the New World*, ed. Mary Ann Tétreault (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 113.
[33] Taylor, 21.
[34] Tétreault, "Women and Revolution in Vietnam," 114-5.
[35] Talyor, 13.

when Sihanouk was shunted aside and radical Khmer Rouge cadres ascended to the forefront of the movement.

During the fight against the French, Vietnamese women were invaluable as porters and carried most of the supplies needed by fighters at the decisive battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954. They also engaged in guerrilla combat, gathered intelligence and mobilized support within their communities.[36] Most importantly, however, they maintained agricultural production at home, while the men of the household were engaged in combat. The revolution also exposed peasant women to new feminist ideas that began to loosen the traditional patriarchal bonds that had held them down.[37]

Following independence, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam continued the attack on patriarchy by passing a Law on Marriage and the Family in 1959. Among other things, it forbade forced marriages and granted women land rights. The law was deliberately meant to undermine the authority of family and clan while strengthening the role of the state in peasants' lives. However, one of the law's stated goals was building "happy, democratic and egalitarian families," – evidently the DRV government did not wish to destroy the family, as such.[38] As in China, peasant traditions remained strong and application of the law remained erratic. William S. Turley has pointed out that the evolving role of women in Vietnam was inextricably tied to war. Conservatives within the Party were prodded into modifying their perception of women's role as war with the United States increased the value of female production in agriculture and industry. The

[36] Tétreault, "Women and Revolution in Vietnam," 115.
[37] Turley, 797-8.
[38] Ibid., 799.

Party also recognized that wartime disorder represented an opportunity for it to "saturate" and destabilize the family with Party propaganda.[39]

During war, women in the North were given three responsibilities: first, they were to run the household in their husbands' absence; second, they were to maintain production to feed the soldiers; and third, they were to fight in their husbands' absence.[40] The family was to be maintained, albeit in a form modified from Confucian principles.

In the South, war also meant major changes for female peasants as they became heavily involved in the National Liberation Front (NLF), the broad-based communist movement that aimed to overthrow the US-backed South Vietnamese government. In 1961, the NLF formed the Women's Liberation Association, whose primary function was to propagandize about the revolution. It published letters, manifestoes and other documents for distribution inside and outside the country and was an integral part of the *binh van* movement that proselytized amongst enemy soldiers in an effort to convert them to the revolutionary cause. To attract women, the Association emphasized the immorality of the opposition and criticized the feudal, "bourgeois" family system that burdened and oppressed women in the South. It appealed to women's religiosity and shrewdness in economic matters – Vietnamese women controlled household finances, as did Khmer women – and emphasized the democratic reforms that had already improved the lives of their sisters in the North. The Association attempted to develop class consciousness amongst peasant women in the South[41] and one of its major tasks was to teach Marxism-Leninism and the ideas of Ho Chi Minh to *all* peasants, so that even the illiterate knew

[39] Ibid., 798-801.
[40] Taylor, 9.
[41] Pike, 173-75.

what it meant to be communist.[42] Sandra C. Taylor has argued that the Women's Liberation Association actually replaced the patriarchal family as the primary affiliation group for some women, while the men of the family were away fighting the war.[43]

Women in the South also had a three-pronged task, with one of these duties being participation in the *binh vanh* movement. The others were: engaging in military struggle in a variety of ways, including intelligence gathering, nursing the wounded and providing soldiers with food and clothing; and harassing the enemy through demonstrations, disruption of its troop movements and the lobbying of government officials.[44]

Mary Ann Tétreault believes that as in China, patriarchy triumphed over revolutionary doctrine following the communist victory in Vietnam; powerful male leaders of the country were simply uninterested in jeopardizing their positions in order to further women's liberation, and they willingly allowed patriarchy to return in order to ensure peasant support.[45] Tétreault does, however, note the significant recent gains Vietnamese women have made in the job market and in education.

Again, these failures may have been noted by Khmer Rouge leaders during visits to Hanoi, and they may have scornfully rejected the advice of their neighbour with regards to policies on women and the family. These speculations aside, the well-organized Women's Liberation Association and its effective activities and recruitment campaigns contrast the haphazard women's policies of the Cambodian revolutionaries. Compared to their Vietnamese sisters, Cambodian women were given few ideological, economic or

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[42] Taylor, 40.
[43] Ibid., 37.
[44] Ibid., 37-8.
[45] Tétreault, "Women and Revolution in Vietnam," 129-31.

social reasons to support the Khmer Rouge, while their Marxist-Leninist indoctrination was inconsistent, at best.

Relatively little is known about the women's policies of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Its relationship with Democratic Kampuchea is also unclear, although it was clearly quite friendly. Pol Pot visited North Korea in 1977[46] and North Korea is known to have provided aid to Cambodia.[47] The similarities between the two regimes – particularly their secretiveness and autarky – indicate the need for further study of their ties.

There is a lack of specific information on female military units during Korea's independence struggles against the Japanese prior to and during World War II, although the military exploits of female communist fighters have been praised by Kim Il Sung, the country's founding president and "Great Leader." He stated that women fought side by side and on an equal footing with men; indeed, his wife, Kim Jong Suk is revered as a revolutionary hero for her fighting talents. In the period from 1910-1945, there is evidence of patriotic women's organizations in Korea that promoted nationalist sentiment and anti-Japanese feeling. Korean feminist organizations at this time advocated the emancipation of women.[48]

Traditional Korean society adhered to neo-Confucian doctrine that held women to be inferior to men. As in Vietnam and China, then, the communists had to deal with an entrenched patriarchal system, and they, too, passed legislation – in 1946 – providing women with significant land and marriage rights and enshrining equality between men

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[46] Chandler, *Brother Number One*, 137-8.
[47] Kiernan, 131-2.
[48] Kyung Ae Park, "Women and Revolution in China: The Sources and Constraints of Women's Emancipation," 164-5.

and women. This policy, however, was imposed "from above", as women themselves had little say in the matter.[49] According to one observer, North Korea's women's policies had three main goals: freeing women from the patriarchal family and social systems, liberation through social labour and the creation of a socialist woman.[50]

While complete communalization was achieved in the years following the Korean War, the nuclear family remained the social ideal in North Korea – it was the "cell of society" according to Kim, and was protected by the state.[51] This point was reiterated by a high-level women's delegation during a visit to North Korea by a pair of Western scholars in 1977. The delegation also referred to cooking as a woman's "natural" and "traditional" duty.[52] Engels's model, therefore, was rejected by yet another Asian communist state. Indeed, according to the doctrine of *Juche* (the fundamental ideology of North Korea that is usually translated as "self-reliance"),[53] foreign values or ideologies must be *adapted* to the indigenous situation and not just blindly applied.[54] North Korea did just that with regard to its policies towards women and the family, which came short of conforming to Engels's radical vision.

Kim promised to provide extensive services to free women from domestic chores and permit them to fully participate in production, but ultimately, the familiar situation of "double-work" emerged.[55] While the government did build thousands of nurseries, Kim

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[49] Sonia Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion: Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 35, no.3 (2000): 330.
[50] Kyung Ae Park, "Ideology and Women in North Korea," in *North Korea: Ideology, Politics, Economy*, ed. Han S. Park (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996).
[51] Ibid., 334.
[52] Jon Halliday, "Women in North Korea: An Interview with the Korean Democratic Women's Union," *Journal of Concerned Asian Scholars* 17, no.3 (1985): 53.
[53] Han S. Park, "The Nature and Evolution of *Juche* Ideology," in *North Korea: Ideology, Politics, Economy*, ed. Han S. Park (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 10.
[54] Ibid., 14.
[55] Ryang, 334-5.

decreed that women had a crucial *domestic* role – the education of children: "At present," he said in 1961, "our mothers are charged with the important duty of rearing their children into fine builders of communism. All mothers must be more keenly aware of their weighty responsibility and the honour of raising the future masters of communist society."[56] This situation is in direct contrast to that of the Cambodian revolution: Im Chan, one of the women cadres interviewed for this paper, was forbidden from visiting her parents because, as her superior told her, if "We returned home we could organize a plot with our parents" against the regime.[57] Indeed, the Khmer Rouge specifically *plucked* children from their homes for indoctrination, both before and after the Civil War, and kept them from their parents; it was unthinkable for a regime as paranoid and insecure as Pol Pot's to entrust such an important task as ideological education to the family – which it had realized early on competed strongly with *Angkar* for peasant loyalties.

As in China and Vietnam, then, North Korea's policy towards women and the family did not conform to orthodox Marxism-Leninism, although the regime does appear to have created a fairly extensive – although incomplete – communal system to ease the domestic burden of women. The CPK's collectivization was a far more complete – albeit crude – system that may have borrowed elements of the North Korean family programme. As the nature of the CPK-North Korean relationship is uncertain, it is difficult to ascertain the level of cooperation or admiration between the two regimes. Their highly autarkic character, however, indicates that North Korean ideas may have influenced and even inspired the Khmer Rouge leaders who were quite convinced of the correctness of their revolution and their ability to go it alone.

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[56] Kim Il Sung, *On the Work of the Women's Union* (Pyongyang, Korea: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1971), 16-7.
[57] Im Chan, interview by author, 17 August 2002, Pratheat village, interview transcript.

This survey demonstrates that the communist regimes of China, Vietnam and North Korea all failed to liberate women along the lines outlined by Engels in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Instead, during their revolutionary uprisings, they used Engels's rhetoric to attract women and reformers to their cause, but abandoned his ideas once victory had been achieved and power had to be consolidated. Turley's point, that women's changing role in Vietnam was tied inextricably to war, was true for the other countries as well – including, as we shall see, Cambodia: the exigencies of war demanded that women participate fully in the revolutionary movements and they performed invaluable work (in China and Vietnam, at least) as soldiers, porters, nurses, guards, propagandists, farmers and in other positions. As Tétreault noted, however, "Revolutionaries pay tremendous attention to who gets to run the state after the shooting is over," with the result that there are often major continuities between pre and post-revolutionary societies and cultures.[58] In peacetime, then, the regimes studied here were more interested in their own survival then in implementing reforms for marginalized groups such as women. As a result, they were unwilling to launch a risky, full-scale attack against the formidably entrenched patriarchy that Confucian ideology had bestowed upon their peasant societies and instead, the patriarchy was modified just enough to allow women to participate in production, while urging them to continue to fulfill their domestic duties: the burden of "double-work" was glorified, while simultaneously stymieing women's reforms.

In Cambodia, both during the civil war and following victory, the Khmer Rouge implemented communalization, putting men, women and children to work in fields and factories, disrupting family life and increasing the unpopularity of the regime. Through

[58] Tétreault, "Women and Revolution in Vietnam," 129.

this process, the CPK claimed that it had "liberated" women. Indeed, it appeared to have implemented Engels's doctrine in its purest form: women produced, therefore they had been freed. Since, during their brief tenure in power, the Khmer communists did not experience an organized backlash against their family policies as the other communist regimes did, their destruction of the family appeared total; they had achieved Engels's communal plan more quickly and completely than China, Vietnam or North Korea.

The Khmer Rouge had the opportunity to learn from the revolutionary experiences of China, Vietnam and North Korea, including each country's use of women and their policy towards the family; however, it made an explicit choice not to. As Pol Pot said, "we don't think of foreign help."[59] Instead, "independence, mastery and self-reliance" became the bedrock of Khmer Rouge policy, according to the Party's Four-Year Plan: "We don't solve the problem as some other country's do. Our characteristics are different. Our line is different. Our philosophy is different. Our standpoint is different, so solving problems takes different methods."[60] The Khmer Rouge was convinced of the uniqueness and eminence of its own revolution: "Our revolutionary movement is a new experience, and an important one in the whole world, because we don't perform like others...Ours is a new experience, and people are observing it. We don't follow any book. We act according to the actual situation in our country."[61] As such, the Khmer Rouge was determined to develop Cambodia independently, "because we have been the slaves of others for a long time now."[62] Indeed, independence was deemed vital in the revolution's perceived

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[59] Party Centre, "Preliminary Explanation Before Reading the Plan, by the Party Secretary," 21 August 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 162.
[60] Party Centre, "The Party's Four-Year Plan to Build Socialism in All Fields, 1977-1980," July-August 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 48.
[61] Ibid., 49.
[62] Party Centre, "Preliminary Explanation Before Reading the Plan, by the Party Secretary," 21 August 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 162.

success. The nation's supposed progress in irrigation, agriculture and industry, the CPK claimed, "blossomed and sprouted as a result of standing on the line of independence-mastery-self-reliance at the highest level. In the light of the great movement which is the first step, we see a very bright future, shining and clear, for the building of socialism in our Kampuchea."[63] The Khmer Rouge deliberately distanced itself from other communist revolutions. The Plan noted the fact that China, Vietnam and Korea all took many years to fully develop socialism. "As for us," it boasted, "we have a different character from them. We are faster than they are. If we examine our collective character, in terms of a socialist system, we are four to ten years ahead of them...nothing is confused as it is with them."[64] Cambodia made such incredible progress, according to the Plan, because "we leaped from a people's democratic revolution into socialism."[65]

Indeed, a major factor that differentiated the Cambodian revolution from its Asian counterparts was its incredibly swift progression – the Khmer Rouge swept to power just five years after its military campaign was launched against the "imperialist" enemy. The Chinese, Vietnamese and North Korean communists all fought much longer wars before achieving complete victory and had much more time in which to hone their policies, make effective use of their limited resources and determine the best way to stay in power. The Khmer Rouge's rapid rise to authority in Cambodia was paralleled by the speed with which it implemented radical reform, and the result was that the movement lacked the nuance and sophistication of its predecessors. Of course, the KR itself did not see it that way; for its leaders, speed was essential for building the revolution: "we want to build

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[63] Party Center, "Summary of the Results of the 1976 Study Session," (undated), in *Pol Pot Plans*, 171.
[64] Party Centre, "The Party's Four-Year Plan to Build Socialism in All Fields, 1977-1980," July-August 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 46.
[65] Ibid.

socialism quickly, we want our country to change quickly, we want our people to be glorious quickly."[66] In fact, according to the 1976 Plan, Cambodia was already a socialist society.

The comparative approach undertaken in this chapter must necessarily be limited by the notable differences in the traditional status of women in Cambodia on the one hand, and in China, Vietnam and North Korea on the other. Cambodian women enjoyed greater freedom and authority than rural women in the other three Asian societies; rural Cambodians were largely Buddhist and their society lacked the rigidly entrenched Confucian patriarchy of the other societies. Women could even own land.

However, the comparison remains useful because it is by no means certain that the Khmer Rouge made note of structural and cultural differences in other societies and adapted their policies accordingly; a grasp of nuance and subtlety was hardly a Khmer Rouge strong point. For example, its analysis of rural economic conditions in Cambodia was borrowed from Mao and the Vietnamese communists, but was utterly inappropriate for the Cambodian situation: like the CCP and the North Vietnamese, the Cambodian communists declared war on landlordism, citing it as the primary grievance of Cambodian peasants – despite the fact that the majority of peasants owned their own land, and it was debt that constituted the largest economic burden borne by peasants. Similarly, the Khmer Rouge may have transferred the patriarchal repression of Chinese, Vietnamese and North Korean women to Cambodian women, prescribing a harsh dose of Engels's ideas for a social ailment they did not actually suffer from.

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[66] From a speech probably made by Pol Pot, *Tung Padevat* (Revolutionary Flags), "Excerpted Report on the Leading Views of the Comrade Representing the Party Organization at a Zone Assembly," June 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 25.

CHAPTER 3

Neglect, Coercion, and Failure: The Women's Policies of the Khmer Rouge

"Already we are breaking down the habits of thought which have survived from before the Revolution. We have cut the links between child and parent, and between man and man, and between man and woman."[1]

-O'Brien, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

"*Angkar* is the father and mother of boys and girls, as well as all teenage boys and girls!"[2]

-Khmer Rouge slogan.

Under the Khmer Rouge, women's issues in Cambodia were not tackled with anything approaching the rigour and organization displayed by Chinese and Vietnamese communists during their respective revolutionary struggles. A crude application of orthodox Marxism substituted for a truly progressive movement, while peasant women's cherished family traditions were demeaned or ignored. Coercive recruitment methods engendered hostility towards the regime, and indoctrination was shoddy where it existed at all. Finally, Cambodia's organized women's movement was practically non-existent and leaderless.

This chapter is based on my interviews with Cambodian peasant women recruited by the Khmer Rouge during the Civil War in 1974 – many, although not all, recruited forcibly. The women, all farmers prior to the Democratic Kampuchea regime, were

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[1] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1949; reprint, London: Penguin Books, 2000), 279-80.
[2] Henri Locard, *Le "Petit Livre Rouge" de Pol Pot ou Les Paroles de l'*Angkar (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1996), 82.

recruited from Prek Sdei commune, about ninety kilometres south of Phnom Penh. Their experiences followed a common pattern. Following recruitment, they underwent brief training sessions lasting from two to six weeks before being sent to the battlefront where they were used as porters, carrying rice, ammunition and wounded soldiers. Some received no training at all: few claimed to have fired a gun. The terror of the battlefront and the painful separation from their families resulted in these women running back to their villages without first receiving permission from their unit commanders. They were inevitably caught and returned to the front. Some ran away and were caught numerous times. After the Khmer Rouge victory in April 1975, *Angkar* sent all these women to Presyar prison camp, a division of the dreaded S-21 interrogation centre, where they remained for the duration of Khmer Rouge rule (1975-1979). Their crime was having run away without authorization. During the chaos that followed the 1979 Vietnamese defeat of the Khmer Rouge, the women fled as refugees to the Thai border along with thousands of other Cambodians. Ultimately, they returned to their villages – some within months, others only after many years in refugee camps. The focus in this chapter will be on their initial experiences with the KR before April 1975: their recruitment and training, and their experiences at the front.[3]

These women's stories reveal why the Khmer Rouge failed to convince large numbers of peasant women of the merit of its revolutionary cause. There were four interconnected factors for this failure: 1) poor recruitment strategies; 2) the forced break up of families; 3) ineffective indoctrination of female recruits; and 4) a total failure to formulate an effective role for women in the revolution.

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[3] For a discussion of the methodology and circumstances of these interviews, see the Appendix.

Recruitment

Numerous deficiencies characterized the Khmer Rouge's recruitment strategy. First, the communists frequently resorted to coercion and terror to gain adherents. Lo Sim, a farmer, said that she was 19-years old when the Khmer Rouge came to her village in 1974 and forced her to leave with them: "If we refuse to join we cannot live peacefully, they push us. If we refuse they come to insult us, they say 'why stay here, others have already joined?'... If we are not able to go they will carry us. We get killed if we refuse."[4] Im Chantha described the situation at the time in similar terms: "Even if they did not force, you still had to go. Because they needed you, you must go." She added that if she had refused to join the KR, they would tie her up and hit her.[5] This initial treatment at the hands of the Khmer communists certainly represented a poor introduction to the revolutionary movement for Lo and Im, and did not bode well for the KR's attempts at transforming them into dedicated converts to their cause. Their experiences are in accord with Kate Frieson's assertion that peasant support for the revolution "was not given out of commitment to the movement but out of a basic human desire to survive the exigencies created by the war."[6]

The treatment Lo and Im endured appeared to have been fairly widespread in Cambodia by 1974: according to Kenneth Quinn, the period from 1973 onward saw the Khmer Rouge accelerating its radical program, increasing the use of terror and drastically reforming traditional Cambodian society. This meant that the communists' most effective recruitment tool amongst the peasants – their identification with Prince Sihanouk – was

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[4] Lo Sim, interview by author, 17 July 2002, Pratheat village, interview transcript.
[5] Im Chantha, interview by author, 9 July 2002, Pratheat village, interview transcript.
[6] Frieson, 16.

now unceremoniously set aside.[7] Sihanouk was the traditional political leader and religious authority in rural Cambodia, and his presence had been essential in attracting large numbers of peasants to the joint KR-Royalist cause.[8] While the Prince's royal presence was certainly ill-fitted to the communists' programme, the Khmer Rouge was poorly placed to replace him – its communist platform offered little of interest to peasants. Moreover, cultivating the image of Pol Pot as a wise, revered, secular leader with whom peasants could identify – along the lines of Mao Tse-Tung or Ho Chi Minh – does not appear to have been considered by the communists. The result was a crude, brutal system of forced recruitment.

Not all women in Prek Sdei, however, required threats to join the Khmer Rouge. Nam Sokha, just 13 or 14 years old at the time, admitted that she willingly joined the Khmer Rouge when they came to her village in 1974. "I volunteered to follow them thinking that it was fun to go with them. When all of us joined them, why should a few of us stay?"[9] Sum Sreng, youngest in her group, also described the initial impression of the KR recruitment drive as one of "fun."[10] Sum and Nam's naïve attitudes may be attributable to their youth: both were just 14 years old in 1974. Another woman, meanwhile, Tuy Son, volunteered in order to avoid an unwanted marriage.[11]

The initial enthusiasm of these recruits, however, was squandered by the Khmer Rouge, as it failed to strengthen it through effective indoctrination. All of the women described extremely brief training sessions that do not appear to have firmed up their revolutionary resolve, as we shall see. Indeed, Chandler observed that many Cambodians

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[7] Quinn, "Political Change," 6.
[8] Etcheson, 129.
[9] Nam Sokha, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[10] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[11] Tuy Son, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.

were willing to risk waging a revolution for a while but then drew back: "most of the people," he wrote, "failed to catch fire."[12] This was largely a consequence of the break up of the Cambodian family, the second major reason for the Khmer Rouge's failure to earn female peasant support.

Figure 1. Lo Sim

[12] Chandler, *Tragedy*, 237.

Separation of Family Members

"From the beginning of our struggle, whether during the political or during the armed struggle, or during the war, private property affected the interests of the revolution. For instance, those who thought of their family interest, always separated from the revolution. They abandoned the revolution, lived apart, seeking well-being in their family instead of the party."[13]

> - From the CPK journal, *Tung Padevat* (Revolutionary Flags), Special Issue, September-October 1976.

The leaders of the Khmer Rouge revolution did not look favourably upon the familial loyalties described above; they wanted their revolution to seep into every part of society, including the close-knit Cambodian family: "The socialist revolution encompasses everything," wrote a CPK leader, most likely Pol Pot.[14] Collective living was imposed and Cambodians were forced to work, eat and raise their children collectively; it was a despised policy, however – a poor substitute for the intimacy of family. Being away from their loved ones caused Cambodians to gradually lose any faith they had in the revolution. As Nay It – one the interviewees who joined the KR voluntarily – described, "After joining them [the Khmer Rouge], they do not let us go back to visit home. That way, they make me completely not believe them."[15] Parents and children were separated for weeks at a time, if not permanently, and, as Kalyanee Mam demonstrated, the Khmer Rouge even forced Cambodians into marriages they did not

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[13] "Sharpen the Consciousness of the Proletarian Class to Be as Keen and Strong as Possible," in *Cambodia 1975-1978: Rendezvous with Death*, ed. Karl D. Jackson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 285.
[14] Party Centre, "Report on Activities of the Party Center According to the General Political Tasks of 1976," 20 December 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 183.
[15] Nay It, interview by author, 18 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.

want with partners they may not have even known.[16] The attempted destruction of the Cambodian family began during the civil war.

However, assaulting kinship ties was a critical miscalculation on the part of the Khmer Rouge and a key factor in the failure of the Cambodian revolution; it was, according to Ben Kiernan, the most intolerable aspect of the Khmer Rouge regime.[17] May Ebihara's observations of rural Cambodian life revealed why. The family constituted the most basic social unit for Khmer peasants – there were few clubs, associations or political parties in the villages. As a result, "the bonds between husband and wife, siblings, and *especially parents and children* are the strongest and most enduring relations found in village social organization".[18] The bond between mother and daughter was particularly strong.[19] Young women were very attached to their parents who, in turn, were highly protective of their daughters, so much so, that newly married couples usually chose to live with the bride's parents in the years immediately following marriage – at least until the husband had sufficient resources to build a house of their own.[20]

Attachment to family was part of peasants' generally *conservative* outlook – one that was decidedly un-revolutionary.[21] Peasants supported the Khmer Rouge revolution in order to restore the pre-war societal order; quite simply, they wanted an end to the war so they could get back to living their everyday lives,[22] ones that included strong, close-knit families.

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[16] Kalyanee Mam. "Democratic Kampuchea (1975-79): Women as Tools for Social Change." (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 9 November 2000).
[17] Kiernan, 215.
[18] Ebihara, "Khmer Women," 320 [emphasis added].
[19] Ibid., 325.
[20] Ibid., 319.
[21] Etcheson, 80.
[22] Frieson, 247-8.

The behaviour of the women interviewed here reflected this conservative outlook, specifically with regards to the family. After being sent to the frontlines of battle where she laboured as a porter, Sum Sreng, like the other interviewees, was understandably fearful for her life, and her subsequent actions, as she described them, matched those of the other women: "Because of missing home, I ran to my parents often. I always missed my parents and always wanted to escape to return home."[23] Each time she ran, however, fourteen year-old Sum was caught and returned to her unit at the front, regardless of her condition: "I reached home five times. One time, I was sick – shaking, cold, hot temperature. They put me in a hammock and carried me back."[24] Nam Sokha endured similarly harsh treatment, as she described how she ran home once because she missed her parents and was "sick and skinny. My belly was swollen and I had the flu. I went home as fast as I could. After arriving home, they said they had to take me back."[25] Both were punished for their transgressions. Nay It was told by her leaders not to bother returning home because her parents had been killed by the Vietnamese; she later discovered that this was not the case: "They lied. They lie to us not to return home...They didn't want us to return home."[26] In fact, as mentioned above, she cited the Khmer Rouge's rigid refusal to allow her to visit her village as one of the reasons she stopped accepting what the KR had to say. All of the women interviewed made an attempt to return to their villages, most citing a longing for their parents as the reason.

Women like Nam and Sum demonstrated the determination of peasants to maintain their familial bonds, despite – or perhaps *because* – of the hardships of war.

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[23] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[24] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 18 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[25] Nam Sokha, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[26] Nay It, interview by author, 14 August 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript. Henri Locard wrote that the Khmer Rouge often lied to young cadres by inventing stories about their parents' being killed in bombing attacks. See Locard, 83.

Their repeated, stubborn attempts at escape provide a striking contrast to Ebihara's description of a thoroughly indoctrinated Cambodian youth under DK, alienated from family and wholly devoted to various revolutionary associations:

> Youth were a special target for indoctrination into revolutionary ideology...Such indoctrination, combined with actual organization into distinct work teams and youth associations, as well as physical separation from home, would produce alienation from family ties and development of primary loyalties to other groups such as the association, the army, the party and the revolutionary state in general.[27]

Although such adolescents surely existed, it is evident that they were not the rule, as peasant traditions died hard amongst Cambodians of all ages; Mam, for example, documented courageous acts by parents that demonstrated their strong attachment to their children. She interviewed mothers who, while living under DK, attempted to maintain their bonds with their children by stealing food for them[28] – a brave but dangerously un-revolutionary acknowledgement that *Angkar* could not provide sufficient rations, and had failed in its duty after usurping the traditional role of parents.

The Khmer Rouge demanded the unquestioning support and loyalty of the Cambodian people; revolutionary fervour required it, as Khieu Samphan, who was the CPK "President" at the time (Pol Pot remained the true leader of the country) remarked in a 1978 speech marking the third anniversary of the Khmer Rouge victory:

> We are all determined to draw our inspiration from the noble and lofty revolutionary heroism of our Revolutionary Army by always holding loftier and make as strong as steel our revolutionary patriotism and our revolutionary pride towards our nation, our people, our Revolutionary Army, our revolution and our Party by *resolutely putting the interests*

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[27] Ebihara, "Revolution and Reformation," 29.
[28] Mam, 25.

of the nation, the class, the people and the revolution over the personal and family interests...[29]

Former KR cadre Ith Sarin described this quest for popular submission as a "dictatorial condition of the party over the individual, an unbounded authority of the party over everything";[30] the state wanted control over decisions previously made on an individual, or family basis, so the authority of both had to be eradicated.[31] According to *Angkar*, Ith wrote, "The individual, is inept, is deficient."[32] Indeed, the peasant women interviewed only proved this woeful personal inadequacy through their repeated truancy – an offence committed because, in the eyes of *Angkar*, they were contaminated by individualistic thoughts. Im Chan was aware of the danger of revealing her inner beliefs regarding the revolution. Following her recruitment she "was always mad. But I kept it inside. If I let go of my feelings, they [the Khmer Rouge] could maybe punish me. At that time, if we spoke out, [with] one word we could live, one word we could die."[33]

Nuon Chea, "Brother Number Two" behind Pol Pot, and for awhile, Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea, acknowledged the existence of the disease of "family-ism" during the Civil War. In a statement to the Communist Workers' Party of Denmark in 1978, he remarked: "During the struggle, we encountered many difficulties. For example, cadres separated from their families and not ideologically firm would sometimes decide to run back to their families and away from the revolution." Ideology, he continued, was the "key factor" in attempting to shore up this lack of a "firm

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[29] Khieu Samphan, "Speech by Comrade Khieu Samphan, President of the State of Democratic Kampuchea at the mass meeting held on the occasion of the Third Anniversary of the Glorious April 17 and the Founding of Democratic Kampuchea," (Documentation Center of Cambodia), 5 [emphasis added].
[30] Ith Sarin, "Life in the Bureaus (Offices) of the Khmer Rouge," in Carney, 48.
[31] Becker, 211.
[32] Ith Sarin, "Life in the Bureaus (Offices) of the Khmer Rouge," in Carney, 48.
[33] Im Chan, interview by author, 17 August 2002, Pratheat village, interview transcript.

revolutionary standpoint." The emphasis on ideology continued after the 1975 "Liberation." In the same statement, Nuon Chea explained that in "cadre education, we place stress on destroying old society ideological standpoints which remain powerful"; including, no doubt, those that cherished the maintenance of a close family.[34]

While as Elizabeth Becker noted, the Khmer Rouge never *officially* banned the family as such,[35] almost all of the Khmer Rouge's directives led to the separation of family members.[36] They even banned the use of the traditional terms that Khmers used to address members of their own family – terms that were highly respectful of elders.[37] One of the most direct criticisms of the institution appeared in a Party document listing some of the CPK's own shortcomings: it lamented the fact that some cadres' consciousnesses still favoured "family-ism," along with "private property," "authority," "notoriety," and "jealousies."[38]

Plucking young women from their families in Prek Sdei and forbidding them from visiting their parents was part of a larger systematic process on the part of the Khmer Rouge aimed at undermining rival sources of authority. The KR's harsh, rigid family policies are an example of their use of Marxism-Leninism as a "blunt instrument and a destructive weapon," as they implemented Engels's ideas on productive female labour with a fearsome inflexibility;[39] however, the above-mentioned Party self-criticism demonstrated the persistence of cherished family bonds, in however weakened a state.

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[34] Nuon Chea, "Statement of the Communist Party of Kampuchea to the Communist Workers' Party of Denmark," July 1978, (accessed 19 February 2003): available from http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/dccam.genocide/posting/Nuon_Chea's_Statement.htm.
[35] Becker, 229.
[36] Ibid., 226.
[37] Ibid., 182
[38] Party Center, "Summmary of the Results of the 1976 Study Session," undated, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 171.
[39] Chandler, *Tragedy*, 237.

By contrast, the CCP and the Vietnamese communists gave women a revolutionary role *within* the family; it was their duty to maintain the home while their husbands were at war. Meanwhile, in North Korea, leader Kim Il Sung proclaimed the importance of the family in strengthening the revolution. While the reformist tendencies in these movements were muted, peasant traditions were respected; the wisdom of such a course of action was evident to revolutionary leaders.

To the ultra-communist Khmer Rouge, such compromises were heresy and they were determined to create the purest socialist regime possible: indeed, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, they believed they had already done so. They paid the price for their radicalism, as they failed to engender loyalty to the regime and from their point of view, their inflexibility proved highly unproductive; from the point of view of Cambodian women, these policies were an incomprehensibly cruel attempt at destroying their most cherished relationships and sealed their hostility to the regime. Nam Sokha's anguish at her and her family's treatment has still not diminished: "All my parents and many others died. There were eighteen people in all that died. Very painful. I want to kill all the Khmer Rouge who killed my parents. If killing them could return my parents, I'd kill them right away."[40]

[40] Nam Sokha, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.

Figure 2. Nay It.

Indoctrination and Education

"We must further strengthen socialist consciousness so that it becomes the rippling sinews of the collectivity."[41]

-From the CPK journal, *Tung Padevat* (Revolutionary Flags), 1976.

Despite continual affirmations such as the one quoted above, the Khmer Rouge was utterly unable to convince peasant women to forget their families and sacrifice for the

[41] From a speech probably made by Pol Pot. *Tung Padevat* (Revolutionary Flags). "Excerpted Report on the Leading Views of the Comrade Representing the Party Organization at a Zone Assembly," June 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 19.

revolution. The revolutionary education it provided was crude and confusing, often very brief and sometimes, non-existent. The KR, therefore, failed to live up to this oft-repeated goal of awakening the political consciousness of the masses. Political meetings often consisted exclusively of directives to peasants to "work hard" without providing a reasonable reason for doing so – except the threat of punishment, including death, if they refused. The CPK simply could not make its autarkic, communist ideology relevant to peasants, and it also lacked an educated corps of cadres that could explain its ideas effectively.

The first problem with Khmer Rouge indoctrination was its perfunctory nature; this was especially acute during the latter stages of the civil war when the informants for this study were recruited by the Cambodian communists. The Khmer Rouge purged or used as cannon-fodder some of its best trained cadres, many of whom had spent years training for revolutionary action in Hanoi: their long association with the Vietnamese meant that these cadres were anathema to the xenophobic, anti-Vietnamese Khmer Rouge leadership. Intellectuals who joined the revolution were also mistrusted.[42] Timothy Carney described the resulting situation: "In contrast to their Vietnamese neighbours, the party rigidly enforces its new values, possibly because not even senior cadre have the experience that generates an institutional self-confidence basic to pragmatic, flexible implementation of principles."[43] Nam's family was victimized by such inexperience, which was lethally combined with raw ambition and cruelty. She recounted:

> the worst were the people who informed and told stories to the leader for names and reputations. Like my parents, they were not Chinese, but they [the accusers] said they [her parents] were Chinese, Vietnamese. They accused, informed. *Especially the young*

[42] Burgler, 212.
[43] Carney, 11.

leaders, who just joined the ranks and wanted to be big, they said my parents were Chinese or Vietnamese and took them away to be killed. They even wanted to kill my [younger siblings] also, still too small and who didn't understand anything.[44]

The directives of the Vietnamese communists were explicitly designed to avoid such behaviour: their recruitment policy was *selective*, in order that their larger goals not be subordinated to the ambition of ideologically weak individuals. Sandra C. Taylor explained: "the Party cautioned against taking in too many members, over whom it might lose control. 'Opportunism' or 'voluntarism,' allowing the group to move the way its members wanted, rather than following instructions from the Party, was to be avoided."[45] Unfortunately for the Prek Sdei women, the leaders they were forced to follow exhibited precisely the insensibility, rigidity and poor leadership Carney observed, as they were unable to empathize with their cadres and find some way to compensate for their loneliness and fear.

The depressed condition of these women was partially the product of their cursory indoctrination, which only produced a shallow commitment to the revolutionary cause. This, in turn, left them incapable of handling the hardships and loneliness of the battlefield. Sum, only fourteen years old when recruited, was particularly vulnerable. After leaving her village, she was given about a month and-a-half of military training, but does not remember being taught about the *nature* of the revolution, and what its benefits would mean for her and her family. She just carried supplies to the front, and almost immediately realized she had made a mistake – that joining the revolution was not the "fun" she had thought it would be: "I knew right away that I was wrong, yes. I made a

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[44] Nam Sokha, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript [emphasis added].
[45] Taylor, 42.

mistake that was impossible to correct. I just wanted to run away."[46] She claimed that she had "been tricked by their [the Khmer Rouge's] politics. They took us to join the army. We were not mature yet. We were tricked. We were small."[47] Disillusioned and confused, the young women resisted whatever training was provided, according to Sum: "We never wished to learn anything, we only discussed how to run home. We ran, they caught us and took us back" upon which they "guided us to have high fidelity and struggle forward, but not to go back [home]."[48] Now, when asked why she fought, she replied "I don't know. Just fight until the front line is broken. I don't know, just fight."[49]

Nam's experience was similar. "[I] never trained. I went all the way carrying rice, never had time to study. They allowed me to enter the battlefield and I never had training." But once there, she was expected to think only of the revolution: "In the army, they asked us to struggle. We did not think of back home. They didn't want us to think of our parents."[50]

Lo Sim said that she, too, was given no training. However, she initially believed in the little she was told about the reasons for the fighting – "for the nation and for the territory" as she described it – and this seemed "acceptable." She kept thinking about "liberation" and "at the beginning I believed them [the Khmer Rouge], I believed in their political view." That soon changed, however: "At the beginning I believed, but later, why believe? They just talk but do not do what they say."[51]

Nor were these memories invented long after the fact. The London *Daily Telegraph* interviewed a young woman in 1974 who described a similar experience to

[46] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[47] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 18 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[50] Nam Sokha, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[51] Lo Sim, interview by author, 17 July 2002, Pratheat village, interview transcript.

those recounted above: "I was taken from my village nearly a year ago. The men who came to take me said they would kill my family if I refused. I had two or three days training with the American rifle, the rest of the time I dug bunkers and carried supplies...I was there because I could only obey orders"[52] Evidently, then, indoctrination for many young women was sketchy, at best. They may have been taught slogans and songs, the basics of party policy and how to fire a gun, but little else.[53]

Even worse, the Khmer Rouge displayed a reckless disregard for the welfare of its combatants. According to a dissident, Hanoi-trained communist cadre, KR leaders "would say we should attack right away no matter how many got killed, as long as we won, not to worry about how many got killed because it didn't matter." He added: "Once there was some path of attack, that would be it. There would be a single path of attack."[54] This is in line with the Khmer Rouge's obsession with revolutionary expeditiousness; indeed, the CPK noted, post-victory, its swift defeat of the enemy: "The Party has all the duties of leadership. If the Party is strong, *it can seize victory quickly*. The Party promised this before the war."[55] While the Party may, indeed, have delivered a relatively swift victory, the consequences for its men and women on the battlefield were atrocious.

Despite evidence of poor KR indoctrination and horrific battlefield conditions, much of the existing literature portrays Cambodian peasant youth as fiercely loyal to *Angkar*, both before and after the Khmer Rouge victory. Indeed, the CPK itself acknowledged the fact that youth formed the vanguard of its revolution and boasted that it specifically targeted children and adolescents for recruitment, launching then nourishing

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[52] Frieson, 221.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Becker, 158.
[55] *Tung Padevat* (Revolutionary Flags), "Excerpted Report on the Leading Views of the Comrade Representing the Party Organization at a Zone Assembly," June 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 24 [emphasis added].

their revolutionary fervour.[56] In an oft-cited passage from one of the earliest examinations of the Cambodian revolution, Kenneth M. Quinn described the process by which rural youth were transformed into militant Khmer Rouge cadre. His description is worth quoting at length for the contrast it provides to the accounts discussed in this study:

> The KK [Khmer *Krahom* or Khmer Rouge] began a program of intensive political training for young men and women which involved taking them from their home hamlets to remote indoctrination centers for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. While there is no information about the nature and content of this training, it seems to have achieved significant results. According to all accounts, youths (age 16-18) returning from these sessions... were fierce in their condemnation of religion and the "old ways"; rejected parental authority; were passionate in their loyalty to the state and party; were critical and contemptuous of customs; and had a militant attitude which expressed confidence in mechanical weapons...these youths stopped working on their family plot and instead worked directly for the youth association on its land. The association thus seemed to become a new point of identification for the youth, at least partially replacing the family.[57]

The youths Quinn described appeared to have undergone a far more intensive indoctrination than that of the Prek Sdei women interviewed here – it would have to have been if a lifetime of tradition was really wiped out in just two or three weeks of training. The Khmer Rouge program, it appeared, then, could be terrifyingly effective.

Quinn's descriptions were almost certainly quite accurate, and were based on extensive interviewing by the experienced US Foreign Service officer. However, there are two factors that Quinn's analysis overlooks: first, as Michael Vickery underlined, there was significant geographical and temporal variation in conditions throughout Cambodia's upheavals in the 1970s; therefore, what was true at one place or time was not necessarily true at another.[58] Quinn's interviews were conducted between July 1972 and January

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[56] See Carney, 31-3.
[57] Quinn, "Political Change," 12-13.
[58] Vickery, 88-92.

1974, *before* most of the women interviewed by me had joined the Khmer Rouge.[59] Presumably, when Quinn conducted his research, there were more well-educated cadres conducting indoctrination sessions than there were later, as the radical element within the Khmer Rouge (led by Pol Pot) had still not had a chance to liquidate all of its perceived rivals. Meanwhile, Quinn's informants were from various parts of Cambodia and it is unclear from what part of the country their observations arose. Second, while the youth Quinn described returned from indoctrination centres thoroughly radicalized, their revolutionary mettle had yet to be tested in the fires of the battlefield – the true test of their commitment to the Khmer Rouge revolution.

Craig Etcheson analyzed the depth of peasant support for the Khmer Rouge's ideology and concluded that very few cadres were able to *internalize* it, framing their worldview with it so that "the individual believes in the moral rightness of the cause."[60] Peasants did not understand communist policy and were not committed to achieving the Khmer Rouge's aims.[61] Most of the women interviewed remained confused about the reasons that they fought; they had a vaguely nationalistic concept of fighting for their country, but were unable to cite anything approaching a communist revolutionary ideology. Nam explained that she was only taught "to be mentally strong for struggling against the enemy." She said that she was not clearly told why there was a war; when asked, she replied: "I don't know. They asked me to go, I went. I didn't understand. For many years now. We were afraid and we followed."[62] By 1973, the Khmer Rouge desperately needed bodies to fight the brutal civil war, but did not have the time or the

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[59] Quinn, "Political Change," 25-6.
[60] Etcheson, 81.
[61] Ibid., 160.
[62] Nam Sokha, interview by author, 18 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.

resources to effectively indoctrinate peasants such as Nam; coercion, often brutal, had to be used to gain compliance.

Indeed, the breakneck pace that the KR set for the Cambodian revolution, both during the civil war and under DK, undermined efforts for a proper revolutionary education: Pol Pot, himself, said in a speech that "we want to build socialism quickly, we want our country to change quickly, we want our people to be glorious quickly."[63] To maintain this untenable position, the KR leadership deluded itself into believing that it was widely supported by a scrupulously indoctrinated mass of young peasants, brimming with revolutionary zeal, and throughout their brief reign, they continuously repeated the centrality of an ideologically "correct" structural base to the Party's success. An excerpt from a brief history of youth in the Party, published in the KR's youth journal, is typical:

> Because of receiving a progressive and revolutionary ideology from the party, the revolutionary struggle movement of youth surged increasingly stronger in both the cities and the rural areas and united with the movements of the people as a whole under the leadership of the party. Which is to say in the combat movement of youth which the party began in 1962...became the right arm of the party under the direct aegis of the party.[64]

In another example, Ieng Sary, Democratic Kampuchea's foreign minister, explained to *Le Monde* in 1972 the importance of proper ideology and political consciousness for his movement's revolution:

> ...pour faire triompher la revolution, il est indispensable d'avoir à chaque échelon un noyau dirigeant composé d'hommes fermes sur les principes, sachant appliquer d'une manière créatrice, dans les conditions nationales concretes, notre ligne politique, avec des

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[63] *Tung Padevat* (Revolutionary Flags), "Excerpted Report on the Leading Views of the Comrade Representing the Party Organization at a Zone Assembly," June 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 25.
[64] "The Communist Party of Kampuchea and the Problem of Khmer Young Men and Women," in Carney, 33.

objectifs biens précis...Le facteur déterminant de la victoire, c'est l'homme, c'est le peuple, politiquement conscient du combat qu'il doit mener.[65]

While the CPK leaders boasted of their "success" and described a revolutionary Cambodia that did not exist, their uneducated cadres on the ground went about systematically alienating the masses – youth included – forcing them to work in an ideological vacuum, substituting terror for actual doctrine. The common experiences of Nam Sokha, Sum Sreng and their colleagues, were proof of this situation: instead of being treated for their infliction with "family-ism" through a systematic process of indoctrination, they were simply punished – they were all imprisoned following the Khmer Rouge victory in 1975, and their prison biographies listed their crime as "running away." They were, therefore, castigated – but not *treated* – for their misplaced loyalties. Only after they had been driven from power by the Vietnamese in 1979 did the Khmer Rouge finally admit that its personnel on the ground may not have had the exemplary ideology leaders thought they did: "Mistakes might have been made by some cadres" in rural areas, admitted Ieng Sary later that year at the United Nations. Alluding to the numerous atrocities attributed to his Party's rule, he added the claim that "some acts occurred without our knowledge."[66]

The hopelessness of life under the Khmer Rouge is unintentionally captured in one of the Party's own journals. The following passage – dripping with unintended irony – is actually meant to describe life under the KR's capitalist predecessors. Sadly, it reads like an uncharacteristically frank assessment of the bleakness of its own regime:

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[65] Claude Julien, "Personne ne nous imposera un compromis, nous déclare un 'chef historique' de la revolution khmère," *Le Monde*, 15 January 1972, p.1

[66] "Cambodian Killings Denied," *Washington Post*, 12 October 1979, p. A22.

Our young people in their youth are comparable to flowers which are budding and brilliantly blossoming. But, in the society of the oppressor class, our youth of all strata are withered and blighted, stifled and muffled, in difficulty and suffering, because of the oppressors' wickedness and because of the threats and intimidation of the fascist, despotic regime of the oppressors. The future of our youth is black, null.[67]

The Role of Women under the Khmer Rouge

"Men and women are fully equal in every respect."[68]

-Article 13 of the Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea.

During the chaos and upheaval of the civil war, the Khmer Rouge struggled to win the support of the Cambodian peasantry; as we have seen, through its confusing policies, coercive tactics and institutionalized brutality, it alienated much of the countryside, succeeding in mobilizing support to only a shallow degree amongst the majority of Cambodians.

Rural women were alienated for these same reasons, as well as one other: neglect. Quite simply, the Khmer Rouge did not formulate a cohesive policy on women: it produced no specific directives on how to mobilize their support; it failed to analyze their pre-revolutionary status and propose practical, popular improvements in line with its autarkic, Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist policies; it espoused a simplistic, ill-thought-out formula on women's rights based on a literal interpretation of Engels's theories of female labour; it exploited female labour while passing it off as progress for women; and it never made women's issues a priority within the Party, thereby unintentionally writing off the

[67] "The Communist Party," in Carney, 33.
[68] Etcheson, 225.

support of half the population. The lack of a cohesive policy meant that the Khmer communists stumbled badly in their attempts to attract the support of rural women, dealing a significant blow to their revolutionary cause.

Anthropologist May Ebihara spent considerable time in rural Cambodia and her observations are our main window into the lives of peasant women before 1970. She supported the assertion put forth by others that "Khmer women...possess substantial authority, independence and freedom."[69] This is most evident in the economic sphere, as women actively contributed to household wealth through cultivation and other part-time work. As mentioned above, women also traditionally controlled the household finances, as well as market and commercial transactions. Ebihara noted that these responsibilities brought women into contact with the world outside their village.[70] These freedoms were largely true for adolescent girls as well. Ebihara observed that young women worked in the fields, earned money (which they could keep) through secondary employment in neighbouring villages, and could even own property. Still, the life of a female adolescent was fairly leisurely.[71] She noted that it was important for female adolescents to remain virtuous, and described how one family forbade their daughter from venturing out at night unaccompanied. Ebihara also, of course, described the family as the primary social unit in rural Cambodia, and underlined the extremely tight bond between parents and children.

Evidently, much of rural women's traditional lives did not conform with Khmer Rouge practice, and without a concerted effort at addressing these inconsistencies, it is unsurprising that the KR was unable to garner female support. There were many such contradictions. First, women's independence and freedom did not make them ideal cadres

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[69] Ebihara, "Khmer Women," 338.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid., 312-3.

for a regime that quashed individuality and demanded unquestioning loyalty. Second, women's commercial role was not conducive to communist economic policies under the Khmer Rouge. The KR abolished money and markets and imposed collectivized production. As a result, under DK, women found the source of much of their clout and authority taken away from them – something that must have bred resentment. Pol Pot observed these two contradictions in a 1976 speech in which he criticized their presence in other socialist countries that remained "individualistic," continuing to pursue the accumulation of money for personal wealth. The CPK's plan, however, would "not follow this path at all. We will follow the collectivist path to socialism."[72]

A third contradiction was the strong family bond between parent and child – and mother and daughter in particular – that was severely compromised by the KR's forced separation of families. Most of the women interviewed in Prek Sdei recalled their parents' distress as they left their villages with the Khmer Rouge. Nam, who voluntarily joined the communists, lamented her attitude at the time and recalled the reaction of her parents when she left: "They cried. Because we were young and followed others. Never knew why. Never thought of the worries of parents. Others raised hands, we just raised also."[73] Sum's parents also cried when their daughter left,[74] as did those of another young villager, Nop Lai.[75]

Pol Pot, however, had little sympathy for parents' distress: "mothers," he decreed, "must not get too entangled with their children."[76] In fact, too much affection amongst

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[72] Party Center, "Preliminary Explanation Before Reading the Plan, by the Party Secretary," 21 August 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 156.
[73] Nam Sokha, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[74] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[75] Nop Lai, interview by author, 12 July 2002, Chong Prek village, interview transcript.
[76] Party Center, "Preliminary Explanation Before Reading the Plan, by the Party Secretary," 21 August 1976, in *Pol Pot Plans*, 158.

family members was considered a threat by the Khmer Rouge: the minutes of a 1976 CPK meeting decried the presence of such sentimentalism within the Party itself: "Up to now in the ranks of our Party it has generally (been a case of) family-ism, sibling-ism, relation-ism. This problem is a very dangerous one because it flouts the Party's criteria."[77] Such chilling disregard for family bonds demonstrated the Khmer Rouge's complete disconnection from peasant reality. It failed to adequately study the contradictions between its communist programme and women's traditional lives, and was unable to produce a women's policy that addressed these issues. The result was poor female support for the revolution.

The interviews conducted in Prek Sdei reveal that the Khmer Rouge reduced their women's policy to a simple formula. Roughly, it stated that because women do the same work as men, men and women are equal. Mam came to similar conclusions in her study of women in Democratic Kampuchea. This idea resonated with some interviewees, but met with confusion and contempt from most, as the Khmer Rouge only preached an equal role for women as long as one worked hard and went to battle. Nay It, who was lied to about her parents' death, believed that the KR wanted to destroy the family, although she is not sure why. Overall, she said, the KR treated women badly by sending them to the front, adding that before the Revolution "We had rights. But when we became soldiers we didn't have any. We went to the front line we had no rights at all."[78] Sum remembered being taught little about women's rights. While in prison camp she attended meetings but

[77] Party Center. "Summary of the Results of the 1976 Study Session." (undated). in *Pol Pot Plans*, 176.
[78] Nay It, interview by author, 14 August 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.

"only heard about how to work hard"[79] and she believed that these gatherings were "only to motivate us to work."[80]

Nam Sokha, however, spoke at greater length about women's issues, and despite the hardships and loss that she suffered at the hands of the KR, spoke positively of the empowerment women earned through their work at the front: "About equal rights, men could carry guns and we also could carry guns. If we could carry guns and had the same strength, nobody looked down [at us], we were the same. Men could carry guns, we also could carry guns; that way we all struggled."[81] She stated unequivocally that "We had equal rights. Women even asked for that. We all struggled and carried guns with strength. Women may be stronger than men. Men were leaders, women were also leaders."[82]

A 1973 wartime propaganda piece produced by the NUFK embassy in Beijing – and probably reflecting the ideas of the Sihanoukist element in the United Front alliance joining the Khmer Rouge and Sihanouk forces – demonstrated how the KR *could* have proselytized amongst women. It described some of the sources of pride for women that Nam touches upon. This piece represents one of the few documents that are known to discuss women's revolutionary role in Cambodia. Parts of this document paralleled Nam's testimony regarding women's rights, as its praise for women's revolutionary efforts highlighted their military exploits. It also resembled Vietnamese propaganda used to recruit women. It depicted Cambodia locked in a Manichean struggle with an immoral opposition. It was designed to appeal to rural women's sense of virtue and it initiated readers into the menaces confronting Khmer village women:

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[79] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 18 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[80] Sum Sreng, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[81] Nam Sokha, interview by author, 10 July 2002, Pothi Reamea village, interview transcript.
[82] Ibid.

In the areas provisionally controlled by the enemy, apart from fascist repression, women are still obliged to cope with the high cost of living, a lack of necessary elementary provisions, notably rice, and find it very difficult to make ends meet. To this are added other worries: their husbands and their sons could be conscripted at any moment at all, their daughters could be kidnapped and raped by the troops of Phnom Penh and Saigon. The American way of life, a depraved society, and prostitution have poisoned the minds of so many girls and women.[83]

There was hope, however: "More than ever, Cambodian women know that the only possible way to free themselves from this thrall-ring is to join in the struggle with the men, without hesitation or compromise, against the American aggressors and their valets for the national liberation."[84] The document listed many of the revolutionary duties of women, including combat, medical work, making booby-traps, village defence and agricultural production. It also praised them for their efforts: "Just like men," the document trumpeted, "Cambodian women, yesterday and today, have contributed greatly to the struggle against foreign aggression in defence of the fatherland."[85] The anonymous author of this document also gave women a sense that they were part of a larger struggle, and depicted them in heroic, virtuous terms: "For arming themselves with their high revolutionary morality and demonstrating supreme revolutionary heroism, they have achieved exploits which our people hold in high esteem. They are thus contributing to tearing apart those backward perceptions of women which still have currency in the world."[86] The document concluded by recounting a story that described how a group of cunning revolutionary women lured a group of Lon Nol soldiers into a trap, liberating a village. The story may actually have had its source in Vietnam, as it resembled one used

[83] "Cambodian Women in the Revolutionary War for the People's National Liberation (1973)." (Kingdom of Cambodia: National United Front of Kampuchea, 1973). Cambodia Genocide Program Database, accessed 18 February 2003; available from http://www.yale.edu/cgp/kwomen.html.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.

by communist Vietnamese propagandists in describing the exploits of Ut Tich, a popular revolutionary heroine of the independence war against France.[87]

The document is a relatively sophisticated piece of women's propaganda by Khmer Rouge standards, as it directly addressed issues important to village women and how they were affected by war. It acknowledged the threat war posed to the family and the virtuousness so important to peasant women, and then linked the fight against these threats with the revolutionary cause. Notably, there was no mention of communism and Sihanouk was still described as the Front's leader. The propaganda piece also exemplified a limitation common to the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodian communists: women's reforms were linked tightly with their wartime service and were not portrayed as being worthy in their own right. This tract was clearly produced during an early, more moderate phase of the revolutionary movement, at a time when Sihanouk's presence attracted a high number of peasant recruits to the Front.

But while such propaganda may have worked in attracting women to the revolutionary cause, it was not capable of hardening women to endure the danger and adversity of the battlefield. That could only come from sustained indoctrination, a process that was sorely lacking by the time the interviewees were recruited. Also, in striking contrast to the CCP and the Vietcong, the Khmer Rouge gave women nothing concrete to fight for: long-term revolutionary benefits for women – such as political equality, maternity leave, or access to education – were virtually non-existent in the KR programme.

Lacking, then, a level of depth that came even close to matching the women's policies' of communist China and Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge use of women in the war

[87] Taylor, 11.

was *exclusively* exploitative – no argument could be made for their liberation; it was a brutally rudimentary application of Engels's ideas, forcing women to accept their "liberation" as they were thrust into the military or production, and it foreshadowed the KR's abuse of female labour during Democratic Kampuchea, as described by Mam: "the Democratic Kampuchea regime used gender-specific policies only to offer an appearance of providing equal rights for women. In actuality, these policies aimed solely to mobilize the labor of over half the population."[88] After numerous interviews with Khmer women, Mam asserted that the communalization of child-rearing and domestic tasks did not liberate women, nor make them more equal to men, but simply permitted DK to better exploit their labour for public tasks; women resented the loss of their traditional role – a source of pleasure and pride – which was replaced by onerous duties for a revolution they did not believe in.[89]

Indeed, the CPK's neglect of women's issues ensured that women would never become devoted revolutionaries in large numbers. The bungling of women's issues is reflected in the little that we know about the Party's women's group, the Women's Association of Democratic Kampuchea, and its president, Khieu Ponnary, who was also Pol Pot's wife. In *The Pol Pot Regime*, Ben Kiernan described a bizarre visit to DK by a delegation from the Vietnamese Women's Union in 1977.[90] The Union had been invited by a group of Cambodian women who had visited Vietnam the previous year. The Women's Association of Democratic Kampuchea was represented by Ieng Thirith, Ponnary's sister and wife of DK foreign minister, Ieng Sary. Mysteriously, Ponnary never made an appearance and was never even described as president of the Women's

[88] Mam, 4.
[89] Ibid., 26.
[90] Kiernan, 159-63.

Association, although nobody else was either; Thirith, meanwhile, said very little about the Association. The leader of the Vietnamese delegation was puzzled: "I got the impression there was no real Women's Association, or if there was, they were trying to do away with it."[91] Khieu Ponnary, Kiernan wrote, was said to have gone insane in 1975;[92] Becker wrote that she began to lose her mind during the years of isolation she spent with her husband in the maquis before and during the revolution.[93] "Ieng Thirith," Becker claimed, "was to become the 'First Lady' of the Revolution."[94]

This was an unfortunate development for Cambodian women, as Thirith – like her counterparts in the upper echelons of the DK hierarchy – was badly out of touch with peasant reality, including that of peasant women. In a 1980 interview with Becker, she defended DK's policies, in the process demonstrating her total misunderstanding of what was important in the lives of Cambodia's peasant women: "Before, women had to work, to come home and search for the fish, the rice, to cook it, care for the children. This was terrible. In communal living they only have to come home from work and eat."[95] As Becker pointed out, what was "terrible" for Thirith were the pleasures of everyday life for many women: raising their children and tending their home.[96]

Little else is known about the Women's Association. The Prek Sdei women wrote the obligatory biographies while in prison camp, most of which stated that they had belonged to something called "Women's Youth"; none of them, however, were clear on what exactly that meant and they did not remember belonging to any formal women's association as such. Carney noted that during the civil war, the NUFK did create

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[91] Ibid., 162.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Becker, 146.
[94] Ibid., 171.
[95] Ibid., 172.
[96] Ibid.

organizations to mobilize the peasant population, including the Patriotic Youth of Kampuchea and the Patriotic Women of Kampuchea. Part of their function, he wrote, was for internal and external consumption, as they demonstrated support for the revolution and the Party then recruited candidates from these associations.[97] No known evidence exists, however, of a definitive women's policy emerging from these or any other such organizations. It is clear, then, that for the Khmer Rouge, *effectively* organizing women was simply not a priority. This mistake, like countless others the regime made, ignored the realities of the Cambodian masses.

The Khmer Rouge's approach to women reflected four main deficiencies. First, the KR relied heavily on coercive tactics to gain recruits, threatening young women if they refused to join the ranks of the communist fighters. Thus, many women joined the revolution from fear, and not out of any commitment to the cause. Second, the KR caused the separation of family members, deliberately severing cherished family bonds and attempting to usurp familial authority. This caused extreme resentment amongst young women who saw their prohibition from visiting their parents as an intolerable cruelty. Third, the KR provided women with poor indoctrination and training. Often, they gave none at all. Women were, therefore, unprepared to endure the hardships of the revolution and were not given a relevant political ideology that they could fight for. Fourth, the KR failed entirely to formulate an effective women's policy that specifically spoke to Cambodian women and addressed what was important to them. It also failed to organize women in any meaningful way. Instead, the KR based its policy on a primitive reading of Engels's theory on women, thrusting women into the military or production, and declaring

[97] Timothy Carney, "The Unexpected Victory," in Jackson, 27-8.

that through their work, they would become liberated and equal to men. These deficiencies ensured that the support the Khmer Rouge garnered from Cambodian women was weak and superficial – where it existed at all.

CONCLUSION

"Mistakes might have been made by some cadres."[1]

-Ieng Sary, (Foreign Minister, Democratic Kampuchea) in 1979.

The Khmer Rouge's failure to gain the support of women was part of the massive overall failure of Democratic Kampuchea as a state and the Khmer Rouge as a movement. Tragically ambitious agricultural polices, extreme paranoia and systematic terror – all characterized the rule of the Khmer Rouge, while careful planning, an effort to nurture a positive relationship with peasants and flexible leadership were all sadly absent. *Angkar*'s voice was the only one permitted under the Khmer Rouge, but little of what it said resonated with peasants in general, and, as this thesis has argued, with women in particular.

The Khmer Rouge was unable to effectively recruit women for its cause. It squandered the initial enthusiasm of women who joined voluntarily, and immediately alienated those who did not, by forcing them from their homes. This was an intolerable hardship for many women, whose bonds with their parents represented their most important and cherished relationship. They demonstrated their commitment to their families by repeatedly running away from the war front and home to their parents, ignoring the Khmer Rouge's demands for undying and unquestioning loyalty to its revolution.

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[1] "Cambodian Killings Denied," *Washington Post*, 12 October 1979, p. A22.

The KR decried this persistence of "family-ism" in Cambodia, yet it was utterly unable to provide a viable alternative. To peasants, *Angkar* represented an amorphous, bewildering, but terrifying entity that mostly brought unwanted change and hardship; it simply did not effectively translate its political ideals. Often, it did not even bother to try, as inexperienced cadres resorted to terror rather than doctrinal persuasion to gain compliance on the ground. Indoctrination, therefore, was weak, and sometimes absent altogether. Here, the Khmer Rouge ignored Fanon's warning that the various groups of peasants must be "enlightened", "educated and indoctrinated": politics, he continued, must not be used as a "means of mystification, but as the only method of intensifying the struggle and of preparing the people to undertake the governing of their country clearly and lucidly."[2] The Khmer Rouge practice of ignoring grass roots politics was self-defeating and belied its own theories of the importance of political training, particularly for the country's youth, as outlined in the Party's youth journal: "A nation which has a youth strong in revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary political principles...will win over the enemy aggressors."[3] The reality in Cambodia, however, was weak "revolutionary consciousness" existing alongside a decidedly conservative peasant outlook; and the hardships that peasants suffered under the Khmer Rouge only reinforced the value of tradition – particularly the traditional family.

Women, too, of course, lacked "revolutionary consciousness" because the Khmer Rouge provided nothing to spark it or nurture it along. Still, the KR was committed to upholding women's rights: Article 13 of the Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea

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[2] Fanon, 108.
[3] "The Communist Party of Kampuchea and the Problem of Khmer Young Men and Women," in Carney, 32.

stated unequivocally that "Men and women are fully equal in every respect."[4] However, there was no elaboration on this point – a lack of attention to detail that matched the perfunctory rhetoric to which female cadre were subjected. In their interviews, women recalled learning little more than the platitudinous phrase, "men and women were equal." Some agreed, but expressed little satisfaction that such was the case: to them, it simply meant that they had to work as hard as men, performing the same backbreaking labour in terrifying wartime conditions they were woefully unprepared to deal with. Other women, however, described this rough form of gender equality in positive terms, expressing pride in the difficult work they performed at the front on equal terms with men. Such sentiments, however, existed in an ideological and political vacuum, and were left undeveloped, lacking reinforcement through indoctrination. Consequently, the exigencies of life at the front and the loneliness caused by separation from their families easily overcame any commitment to the Khmer Rouge cause that may have existed.

Women in revolutionary China, Vietnam and North Korea, however, operated within a solid ideological framework that offered tangible benefits in exchange for service to the revolution. The rights of women to vote, to divorce their husbands, and to own land became part of the communist parties' platforms. Women's responsibilities were expanded during wartime struggles and they performed well in their new roles, making valuable contributions to the communist cause while men were fighting at the front. At the same time, though, the communist leaders in these countries hesitated to radically change certain peasant traditions, including the family: patriarchy was a powerfully entrenched force in all the three Confucian societies. Attempts were made, particularly in China and North Korea, to communalize certain domestic tasks (thereby freeing women

[4] Etcheson, 225.

to enter communal production) but the nuclear family remained intact and important to all three Asian communist regimes. Women's liberation was identified as a goal, but its attainment was to take place through revolutionary activity. This idea originated with Frederick Engels's belief that women could only be "liberated" once they were fully involved in industrial production. Engels, however, went further than the communist parties in China, Vietnam and North Korea were willing to go to liberate women: he saw the nuclear family as enslaving women, and called for its abolition, with domestic tasks such as child-rearing becoming public, communal responsibilities.

Engels's radical ideas are most clearly evident in communist-controlled Cambodia, where an awkward but devastating attempt was made at mass communalization that was supposed to render the family obsolete; they also dovetailed nicely with the Khmer Rouge's desperate need for labour and military personnel. The experiences of the women interviewed here provide an early example of this policy, as they were punished severely for their attachment to their families and "disloyalty" to *Angkar* when they ran away from the front during the war. The Khmer Rouge wanted to implement the most purely communist programme yet attempted; indeed, the Cambodian communists liked to brag of the uniqueness of their revolution, and Engels's family theories provided a rough blueprint for some of the truly radical change they hoped would be a model for revolutions around the world.[5] As such, the experiences of their Asian communist brethren may have served as important examples – not for their relative successes, but for their failure to enact the truly drastic social change Engels prescribed.

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[5] Chandler made the point that the KR leaders hoped that "larger nations would learn from its revolutionary experience." See David P. Chandler, *Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 107.

This attempt to "go it alone" on the part of the Khmer Rouge was, of course, a dismal failure. Its leaders were simply unprepared to govern the country effectively,[6] and important details such as a well-defined women's policy were never considered. Complex social, agricultural and economic reforms were to be implemented through "revolutionary fervour"[7] and not careful planning that responded to actual circumstances. Just as agricultural production was to be boosted through hard work alone, women were to be liberated through their backbreaking labour. The result, Chandler wrote, was that "Cambodia soon became a gigantic prison farm"[8]. Ironically, this situation did mark the achievement of gender equality in Cambodia: ultimately, the cruelty of Pol Pot's regime did not discriminate between men and women, and all Cambodians suffered from its violent excesses and tragic policy failures.

[6] Etcheson, 225.
[7] Chandler, *Tragedy*, 239
[8] Ibid., 238.

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APPENDIX 1

Methodology

This essay is the product of archival research and interviews with Cambodian women; it represents a modest effort at oral history. Most of the primary source research was conducted in Cambodia from June to August 2002 under the auspices of the Phnom Penh-based Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), whose mission is to record and preserve the history of the Khmer Rouge regime and compile evidence of crimes committed by the regime for use in future legal proceedings. The meagre Khmer Rouge documentation on women's issues currently available makes the personal accounts of Cambodian women, by default, *the* critical source of information for the topic covered here. An attempt has been made to corroborate my findings with existing documentary sources and the relevant secondary literature. My findings are further reinforced by the fact that the interviewees' stories corroborate each other: all had very similar stories to tell.

Oral history presents unique opportunities and challenges for the historian. Paul Thompson wrote that it turns the "objects" of study into "subjects" making for a history that is "not just richer, more vivid and heartrending, but *truer*."[1] John Tosh was far more cautious about the benefits of oral history, writing that it is "naïve to suppose that the testimony represents a pure distillation of past experience."[2] Both scholars agreed that a

[1] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 90.
[2] John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (London: Longman, 1991), 213.

clear advantage to oral history is the voice that it provides to large sections of society – such as minorities and women – often ignored in written documentary sources.

Oral testimony presents to the historian the very real and exciting possibility of making entirely new discoveries by exploring the lives of people who have yet to be scrutinized by the practitioners of history.[3] Such is the case for the subject matter covered in this thesis: the women's policies of the Khmer Rouge. This topic has largely been ignored by scholars of the Cambodian revolution because very few official Khmer Rouge documents on it exist. A re-creation of the Khmer Rouge's women's policies can only take place through the words of Cambodian women themselves. Therefore, it is the testimonies of peasant women that form the backbone of this study. Its form is what Thompson calls "cross-analysis: the oral evidence is treated as a quarry from which to construct an argument":[4] analysis and arguments are interwoven with brief quotations, and informants' testimonies are compared.

All KR cadres and prisoners were required to complete a form listing detailed biographical data, including date and place of birth and family members' names. The informants, twenty women in all, were selected from two such sets of records: fifteen came from the prisoner biographies of Preysar, a concentration camp that was run by the *Santebal*, the Khmer Rouge secret police; and five were chosen from a collection of biographies of Khmer Rouge cadres. The women discovered through the Preysar records provide most of the evidence for this essay. Of the twenty informants, all but two still live in present-day Koh Thom district, Kandal province in the same villages mentioned in their biographies, located within a few kilometres of each other. The remaining two live in

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[3] Thompson, 211.
[4] Thompson, 205.

neighbouring Sa-ang district, closer to the capital. The fifteen informants selected from the Preysar records all live in the same commune, or sub-district, Prek Sdei, which is located about ninety kilometres south of Phnom Penh, near the border with Vietnam. A concentrated geographic cluster of informants was preferable because of time constraints and because informants' answers could be cross-referenced; as Tosh noted, this increases the reliability of individuals' testimonies.[5] All the women came from peasant backgrounds and are farmers today.

DC-Cam organized and funded the research trips for this project. The research team would usually comprise four members: two DC-Cam researchers – one who acted as an interpreter, the other a junior researcher – a driver, and myself. The team would first visit the chief of the village in which we wished to conduct interviews in order to obtain permission to carry out our work there, and he was usually able to direct us to the informants. The interviews were conducted in the villages themselves, either at the home of the informant or that of the village chief. The chief's home was considered a preferable location because it allowed greater isolation of the informant while remaining a familiar, comfortable environment. Group settings may discourage candour and were avoided as much as possible. A questionnaire was used in the interviews, but was not rigidly adhered to: the informants were allowed to tell their stories with as few interruptions as possible. The interviews were emotional for the informants and most cried as they recalled painful episodes in their lives. Follow-up interviews were conducted in order to fill any gaps in women's testimonies; the informants were generally more comfortable with the interview process the second time around, and often more forthcoming with their responses. Questions were open-ended so as not to lead the informant into a specific answer. If the

[5] Tosh, 211.

informant was visibly uncomfortable or if relatives' presence was deemed overly intrusive, the interview was terminated or eventually discarded. The interviews were tape recorded and detailed notes were taken by the author. Khmer-language transcripts of each interview were later made at the DC-Cam offices; from these, English versions of the transcripts were later produced by a translator in Montreal, and are the source for quotations of informants' testimonies.

Scholars have pointed out the pitfalls of oral testimony, particularly the fallibility of memory; Tosh, for example, emphasized the fact that informants' recollections have been filtered through experience, distorting their perception of the past as it really was.[6] While noting the usefulness of oral history, he stressed the necessity of cross-checking informants' testimony with all other available sources.[7] The reality for the historian of the Cambodian revolution is that we have few written documents pertaining to KR policies on women as a distinct group.

The leaders' of the Khmer Rouge were notoriously deluded regarding their accomplishments, and their grand and thoroughly inaccurate vision of the Cambodia they briefly ruled is reflected in Communist Party documents and the testimonies of the leaders themselves.[8] So while these "traditional" sources are useful for depicting the illusory country the CPK wished to create, only interviews with Cambodians can be used for a historical snapshot of women in the Cambodian revolution. This thesis takes a first step in that direction.

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[6] Ibid., 213.
[7] Ibid., 215-6.
[8] See, for example, *Pol Pot Plans the Future*.

APPENDIX 2

Informants

Table 1. Informants selected from Presysar records

NAME	AGE TODAY	VILLAGE	COMMUNE	DISTRICT	FUNCTION WITHIN KHMER ROUGE	CURRENT OCCUPATION
Im Chan	43	Pratheat	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Lo Sim	46	Pratheat	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Im Chantha	47	Pratheat	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Patt Leang Chi	43	Pratheat	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Nay It	49	Pothi Reamea	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Nam Sokha	42	Pothi Reamea	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Tuy Son	48	Pothi Reamea	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Uy Kong	44	Pothi Reamea	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Sum Sreng	46	Pothi Reamea	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Tep Tai Kry	43	Pothi Reamea	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Veng Phal	47	Pothi Reamea	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Kong Iev	47	Pothi Reamea	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Orn Ser	44	Chong Prek	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Nop Lai	45	Chong Prek	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer
Chin Leang	45	Prek Sdei	Prek Sdei	Koh Thom	Porter	Farmer

Table 2. Informants selected from records of Khmer Rouge cadres

NAME	AGE TODAY	VILLAGE	COMMUNE	DISTRICT	FUNCTION WITHIN KHMER ROUGE	CURRENT OCCUPATION
Cheng Sarocun	46	Khal Chraoy	Po Ban	Koh Thom	Factory Worker	Farmer
Chap Thai	49	Trapeang	Chheu Khmao	Koh Thom	Farmer/Factory Worker	Farmer
Chann Len	45	Chroy Takeo	Chroy Takeo	Koh Thom	Farmer/Factory Worker	Farmer
Chim Ret	46	Prek Ta Prakk	Ta Lun	Sa-ang	Farmer/Driver	Farmer
Phok Khan	47	Thom	Kraing Yauv	Sa-ang	Farmer/Factory Worker	Farmer