Takeo Province alone since the time of independence and had returned to South Vietnam. They were replaced by Khmer Krom (ethnic Khmer residing in South Vietnam) against whom discrimination had also been practiced. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was reported to have expressed concern over the 15,000 Khmer Krom refugees who crossed the border into Cambodia in 1966. He was said to have regarded the humanitarian problems involved in assimilating these people as ranking with the influx of refugees from Communist China into Hong Kong and Macao as major contemporary East Asian refugee problems.

During the mid-1960's the government hoped to resettle increasing numbers of Cambodians on uncultivated but fertile lands in more remote portions of the country. In early 1956, in a policy speech to the National Assembly, Prince Norodom Sihanouk stated that "We later want to settle people in the frontier zones in order to prevent the Vietnamese from penetrating into our territory." Since 1960 the government has been resettling the hill tribes and some Khmer in permanent settlements in the frontier region and in other underpopulated areas.

The resettlement program, undertaken in 1960 as part of the Five-Year Plan, was first focused on large and fertile Battambang Province, but it was expanded to include other more remote underpopulated areas. Particular emphasis was placed on the resettlement of personnel discharged from the armed forces, Khmer refugees from South Vietnam, unemployed townspeople and young people unable to find occupation in trade or industry.

Comparison of the 1962 census statistics with earlier population estimates, however, indicates that the program had not progressed by 1962 to the extent of attracting a significant number of people from the traditional ricefields of the delta. No data are available for the evaluation of the success of resettlement since 1962, but it was reported that during the mid-1960's the efforts to place people on undeveloped agricultural lands probably were being hampered by the phenomenal progress of the country's educational program. Increasing numbers of young people who were leaving school and were unwilling to take up life on the farm were flocking to urban areas (see ch. 9, Education).

**STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS OF THE LABOR FORCE**

The 1962 census found the country's labor force to include 44.6 percent of the total population. Some 51.1 percent of males of all ages and 38.1 percent of all females were included. The criteria employed were conventional in that the labor force was determined on the basis of persons gainfully employed, those
temporarily unemployed but seeking employment and unpaid family workers.

About 80.9 percent was reported engaged in agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing. The 7.1 percent engaged in service activities represented the next most important occupation, followed in order by commerce with 5.9 percent and manufacturing industries with 2.8 percent. No other class of employment occupied as much as 1 percent (see table 3). These occupational classifications, however, are international ones prescribed by the International Labor Organization. Under the country's own classification system, 3.9 percent were reported to be self-employed artisans.

According to a 1959 survey about 29 percent of the labor force in Phnom Penh consisted of employers and the self-employed; 62 percent were wage earners; and 9 percent were classified as unpaid family workers and others. Corresponding figures for rural areas are not available, but it seems that most of the labor force consisted of members of farm families who worked without pay in the fields with the head of the household. Since heads of households were proprietors of their farms and the scattering of village merchants and artisans operated their own small businesses, nearly all of the rest of the rural labor force can be presumed to have been classifiable as self-employed artisans.

Table 3. Structure of the Economically Active Population of Cambodia, 1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing</td>
<td>1,125,400</td>
<td>948,300</td>
<td>2,073,700</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>147,000</td>
<td>34,500</td>
<td>181,500</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>88,000</td>
<td>62,700</td>
<td>150,700</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing industries</td>
<td>45,500</td>
<td>27,000</td>
<td>72,500</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, storage and communications</td>
<td>24,400</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>25,100</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>15,400</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extractive industries</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas, water and sanitary services</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23,500</td>
<td>13,700</td>
<td>37,200</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>1,471,700</td>
<td>1,088,800</td>
<td>2,560,500</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Approximate.

Source: Adapted from Yearbook of Labour Statistics, 1968, pp. 88, 89.

Between rural and urban areas the pattern of employment reflects the substantial difference which is to be expected. A 1959 survey of heads of households in farm villages showed that about 83 percent were farmers. Merchants and fishermen made up 4.4 and 2.1 percent, respectively. About 1.5 percent were public of-
ficials, and about 1 percent were artisans. No other rural occupa-
tion represented as much as 1 percent.

Another 1959 survey of the economically active in Phnom Penh
found that 26.6 percent were industrial workers and artisans,
24.1 percent were merchants and salesmen, and 24.4 percent were
officeworkers and service personnel. Progressively smaller per-
centages were employed in transport and communications,
professions and technical specialties, agriculture and fishing, the
armed forces and miscellaneous occupations.

Women made up about 43 percent of the labor force in 1962.
Almost half of the farm labor force consisted of women, who also
accounted for substantial portions of the employment rolls in
commerce and industry. In general, they worked beside their
husbands in the fields, assisted them in the operation of small
stores and fashioned many of the handicraft items produced in
the country. In 1967 they still constituted a minority in such
vocations as nursing and elementary-school teaching, but their
number was increasing rapidly.

The employment of persons under the age of 18 was prohibited
in state-owned and mixed business enterprises. Many farm
children helped their parents during the planting and harvesting
seasons, but by 1967 the school population had grown so large
that few of the very young were available for farm or other
labor on a regular basis. In 1967 the nearly 950,000 children
who were spending most of their time attending primary
school—the first 6 grades—included most of those in the pri-
mary-school age group (see ch. 9, Education).

Early in 1967 a spokesman for the People's Socialist Commu-
nity (Sangkum Reastr Niyum—usually called Sangkum), ex-
pressing regret that there was so little public interest in reduc-
ing unemployment, noted that during recent years there had
been unprecedentedly high registrations of idle workers with the
Placement Bureau of the Ministry of Labor. Some 2,500 had
registered in 1961; 3,000, in 1962; and over 12,500, in 1963. It
was implied that registrations during subsequent years had been
at or above the 1963 level.

The increase during 1963 was principally urban and was con-
ditioned by a variety of factors, of which the most important
probably included the start of nationalization of many business
enterprises and the end of United States aid. Some foreign firms
terminated operations; others that had not been nationalized be-
gan reducing their staffs. By the end of the following year some
of the larger private establishments had discharged as much as
75 percent of their staffs.

The state-owned business enterprises contributed to the un-
employment roll, for early in 1964 the government embarked on an economy program, which resulted in the elimination of some unprofitable public enterprises and a reduction of employees in others. In 1967 Prince Sihanouk acknowledged the existence of much unemployment and stated that the government had offered many jobs to the country's youth but that this could no longer be done because all vacancies had been filled. In general, however, there was a disposition during the mid-1960's to view unemployment as an annoying rather than a critical problem and to attribute it to the influx of young people from schools into the labor market without a corresponding appearance of new development capital.

The basic problem seems to have been the inability of the educated to find work acceptable to them. Among those with higher educational credentials, finding employment with the government in some administrative capacity was an almost universal aspiration. Young people attending trade school wished to prepare themselves to become foremen or skilled technicians rather than competent manual workers. There was still a shortage of skilled technicians in 1967, but this shortage was accompanied by a reluctance on the part of much of the labor force to accept manual labor, either in industry or in farmwork in connection with the program for colonization of new farming areas. These attitudes were so pronounced that early in 1964 a law was passed making the registration of unemployed persons obligatory and the failure to accept suitable employment offered by the government punishable by imprisonment (see ch. 21, Labor Relations and Organization).

For those willing to remain in the countryside and engage in farming and related activities there was virtually no unemployment problem. On the existing farms more workers meant lighter work, and the government welcomed anyone willing to help settle arable vacant lands in the frontier areas. There was, however, considerable underemployment. Rice growing kept the farmers busy during only about half of the year, and the handicrafts and fishing which occupied the balance of the time of those who did not seek seasonal jobs in urban areas was at best part-time employment. In addition, there was some disguised unemployment because of the inefficient methods used by the farmers.

Under the French protectorate there had been a high incidence of foreign participation in the nonagricultural sectors of the economy. The Chinese and a few Europeans played predominant roles in commerce, and the Vietnamese filled many of the positions in industry and in public and private office work.

Soon after independence was achieved the government began
attempting to correct the situation which had relegated nearly all of the indigenous population to the role of subsistence farming. Legislation enacted in 1956 prohibited foreigners from engaging in 18 occupations, including such diverse pursuits as the manufacture of salt and barbering. The following year other legislation required that 70 percent of the employees of business enterprises be citizens. In 1967 instructions issued by the Ministry of Industry to state-owned and mixed-ownership business enterprises under its jurisdiction included the requirement that only citizens be employed.

Because of the critical shortage of trained Cambodian personnel, it has been necessary to grant exemptions to the requirements. Immigration has been severely restricted, however, and there has been a gradual attrition of foreign workers through retirement or for other reasons. Foreign-owned and -operated business enterprises have been nationalized, and an impressive increase in technical education has resulted in an increase in technically skilled personnel. In the mid-1960's the government appeared to be diligently trying to effect the "Khmerization" of its labor force (see ch. 9, Education).

Agricultural Labor

Agriculture is usually a family undertaking, the important exceptions being the large rubber and pepper plantations where hired agricultural laborers do the work. The abundance of land and the traditional system of landownership, which gives property rights to the man who works the soil, in most instances have made it unnecessary for one man to work for another. Farming normally provides sufficient food for the family and a small cash surplus for clothing, taxes and festivals. Rice production is the principal occupation of most farmers, but many grow other crops also, and in 1959 a survey indicated that over 15 percent of the farmers were not primarily rice producers. The subsidiary activities of the farmer and his family, such as fishing and handicraft work, are sources of extra food or income.

There are few wealthy or very poor farm proprietors. The evenness in distribution of income of farm families can, however, be overstressed. Among the families surveyed in 1959 the per capita income of the most fortunate was as much as 10 times that of the least privileged.

The farmer frequently is heavily in debt. Originally he may not have had the money to pay for a funeral, a marriage ceremony or a trip to a festival, or perhaps one crop was poor. To obtain help for such problems as these he goes to the moneylender, who is frequently the broker or miller to whom he sells his rice. These moneylenders, usually Chinese, are reported to
charge usurious rates of interest ranging from 3 percent to as high as 30 percent a month. Once in debt he rarely returns to a state of financial solvency, often becoming little more than an agent of the moneylender to whom he is indebted. Under these conditions it is understandable that a farmer may be reluctant to adopt new practices which would require an initial outlay of money.

Since its formation in 1956 the Royal Office of Cooperation (Office Royale de Coopération—OROC) has been engaged in an effort to lessen this dependence on moneylenders by the establishment of rural credit cooperatives; there were 13 of these in 1966. The rates charged on money provided by OROC to the cooperatives were 12 percent annually for short-term loans of up to 1 year and 9 percent for 1- to 5-year loans. At that time, however, cooperative credit had yet to become a success. Total cooperative membership, including both heads of households and their families, was reported to represent only about one-fourth of the population, and the credit cooperative was only one of several kinds of cooperative ventures. Several years earlier, in 1963, it had been reported that the cooperatives had accounted for only about 15 percent of the credit extended.

Although tenant farming and sharecropping are rare, there is considerable employment of hired labor, particularly during the harvesting season. The 1959 rural survey found that somewhat less than half of the farmowners occasionally called on temporary workers and that about 15 percent hired them on a regular basis.

In general, the agricultural labor force in the mid-1960's had yet to become a very productive one. The proprietor farmer was unskilled in agricultural practices, and productivity suffered as a consequence. Although new agricultural schools and experimental stations offered hope for the future and despite the intrinsically high productivity of most of the farmland, the output of rice per unit of land was not much better than two-thirds of that in Burma and half of that in Thailand. The hired agricultural workers were reported to have a high degree of unreliability. This could have been explained in part by the fact that many were working off debts contracted by their fathers, or even their grandfathers, and that the government was intensely interested in settling such people on new lands.

The plantation labor force cannot be considered within the general context of farm labor. During the mid-1960's its principal element was made up of the 25,000 workers, most of them Vietnamese, employed on the French-owned rubber plantations concentrated largely in Kompong Cham Province. In addition, there were about 1,000 workers on pepper estates in Takeo and
Kampot Provinces. These estates were owned and worked principally by Chinese. Public authorities were attempting to interest more Cambodians in rubber production, both in family-size plantations and as workers on the large establishments. Toward this end a 1,250-acre, state-owned plantation had been established in Ratanakiri Province.

The law requiring that 70 percent of the employees of a business firm be Cambodians has not been effectively implemented in the rubber plantations, which require considerable training and where traditionally the working force has been made up of people imported by the French from Vietnam. In 1967 a government spokesman acknowledged that it would be only as Vietnamese workers voluntarily left their jobs that they could be replaced by Cambodians.

On the whole, plantation workers enjoy conditions of employment more attractive than those found by other workers in the country. They are protected by a labor law carried over from the time of the French protectorate which provides for specific hourly wages, working conditions and family allowances. Free medical care, educational and recreational facilities, free housing and frequently additional payments in kind are provided to attract and retain qualified workers.

**Industrial and Commercial Employees**

Although most of the data concerning the numbers of industrial and commercial workers are based on the 1962 census, interpretations differ. A Cambodian Government estimate for the census year held that 9.6 percent of the economically active population was engaged in commerce and industry, excluding handicrafts. One estimate for the early 1960's was that only 2 percent was engaged in industrial pursuits; another reported that 2.8 percent was engaged in manufacturing industries alone. Neither of these included the 25,000 workers on the rubber plantations, who devoted all or part of their time to transformation of the latex drawn from the trees into semiprocessed forms of rubber, and the part-time industrial contribution of the many seasonal workers, who were primarily farmers but who also worked in the numerous small rice mills and sawmills.

The greatest drawback to the substitution of machine-intensive for labor-intensive industry has been the lack of trained personnel. Trained personnel have, in fact, been insufficient in number properly to operate existing machinery. In 1963 it was reported that there were 600 technical job openings for which there were no qualified applicants. To overcome the shortage of technical workers the government, in addition to promoting technical education at all levels of the educational system, has...
passed legislation requiring every establishment employing more than 30 persons to hire one apprentice for every 10 workers employed.

A majority of the industrial personnel in the mid-1960's was employed in small enterprises. Most numerous among these were the more than 1,000 rice mills and 250 hand-operated sawmills. The typical mill employed fewer than 10 workers, who may have been farmers supplementing their incomes during the slack season. At the opposite end of the scale were the few state-owned or mixed-ownership business enterprises. The largest industrial employer in the country was the state-owned textile plant in Kompong Cham, which had a labor force of more than 1,500 in 1968. The largest private establishment that year was a cigarette factory that had an employment roll of 770.

In commerce, as in industry, the few large institutions tended to be state controlled, whereas the small ones were private. The village merchant (commergant), usually Chinese, might be an itinerant peddler or a self-employed small storekeeper. He was also often the moneylender. At the opposite end of the scale in business, the big employers were the state-owned National Import-Export Corporation (Société Nationale d'Exportation et d'Importation—SONEXIM), which monopolized foreign trade, and the National Import Distribution Corporation (Société Nationale de Distribution de Produits Importés—SONAPRIM), a mixed ownership organization (see ch. 22, Domestic Trade).

There are various types of specialization among artisans. For example, men dominate crafts dealing with metals, wood and precious stones, whereas women exercise a virtual monopoly over the country's weaving industry and other textile enterprises. Cambodians control operations devoted to silverwork, Chinese and Vietnamese are most prominent in jewelry work, which requires a greater initial investment. Although there is little village specialization, both pottery making and metal work seem to be somewhat localized.

Under a 1958 law, military personnel were directed to participate in civic action programs for the construction of public works. Army personnel make substantial contributions toward building roads and bridges, clearing land for municipal townsites, erecting dams, establishing model farms and constructing public buildings in the countryside. Most of this work has been accomplished in the frontier provinces of Mondolkiri, Ratanakiri and Koh Kong (see ch. 26, The Armed Forces). In 1958 Prince Sihanouk inaugurated a campaign to dignify manual labor by the participation of government employees. As a part of this program permanent civil servants of all ranks may be required to devote 2 weeks each year to manual labor in construction
work in the countryside. Personnel continue to receive their regular salaries and allowances during these times of contributed labor.

There are other important contributors to public works undertakings who are not regular members of the industrial labor force. Royal Khmer Socialist Youth (Jeunesse Socialiste Royale Khmère—JSRK) brigades are sometimes sent to rural areas to participate in various kinds of building projects. Villagers often contribute voluntary labor to the construction of public buildings, roads, bridges and dikes in their neighborhoods. This part-time participation by various sectors of the population in public works activity was typified by the formal breaking of ground on the Prek Thnot dam project in 1964, an occasion which was described as the “day of manual labor.” The first earth was turned by Prince Sihanouk, who was dressed for the occasion in khaki work clothes. This was the signal for thousands of volunteers to go to work. The volunteer force included high counselors of the throne, deputies and counselors of the kingdom, ministers and secretaries of state, civil functionaries of all classes, army and youth corps groups and country people from nearby villages. Much of this participation was symbolic, and the labor of the participants was to be limited to that single day. For some, such as the army and youth groups, it was to be of a continuing nature.

Public Employees

In 1955 there were about 14,000 civil employees in the government, the great majority of them capable of doing only routine clerical work. During the period of the French protectorate few Cambodians had been trained for or appointed to public administrative jobs, for the French had preferred to use Vietnamese, who had been longer under French tutelage and were more accustomed to French procedures.

In 1963 the number of authorized civil positions was about 48,000. This total did not include positions in the state-owned and mixed-ownership business enterprises. Workers in these organizations were under a separate employment system and were specifically prohibited from using the title “administrative official of the kingdom” (fonctionnaire de l'administration du royaume). In 1968 by far the largest group of public employees, all of whom by that time were required to be Cambodian citizens, was in the field of education, where 16,400 positions were authorized. About 14,500 of these were filled by teachers. Next in number were about 10,000 civilian positions for the support of military forces and for the maintenance of internal security. Among the other more important sectors of public employment
were public health with 3,300 positions; agriculture, 3,000; and public works and telecommunications, about 2,300.

Composition of the public rolls by type of function performed is known only through 1963. The 1967 budget, however, reflected the allocation of funds for more than 52,000 civil servant and other employee positions as compared with the 48,000 corresponding positions authorized in 1963. Most of this increase was in the number of teachers (see ch. 9, Education). Between 1963 and 1967 the number of persons engaged in teaching in the public school system at all levels grew from about 14,500 to nearly 21,000.

Civil service careers are much sought after by those with sufficient education to qualify, 12 years of schooling usually being required for regular appointments. Salary ratings are low in comparison with corresponding positions in commercial enterprises, but the civil service assignment carries with it prestige, job security and pension rights generally not available to others. There is also a better opportunity for advancement. Since the civil service provides an attractive employment prospect for young people who have a liberal arts education, the government ministries are oversubscribed with job applicants, and there remains a serious shortage of personnel trained in technical fields.
CHAPTER 5
ETHNIC GROUPS AND LANGUAGES

The ethnic Khmer are the numerically dominant group and in 1967 numbered an estimated 5.4 million, comprising 85 percent of the total population (see ch. 4, Population and Labor Force). The largest minority groups are the Chinese and Vietnamese, each constituting nearly 7 percent. The remaining 1 percent includes the Khmer Loeu and some Cham-Malays, Thai and Lao-tians, who have lived side by side with the Khmer for centuries, and a small number of more recently arrived Europeans, Japanese, Indians, Pakistanis and Filipinos. Some of these groups have managed to retain their own languages and customs, but others have been gradually absorbed by the Khmer.

Government leaders are determined to build a strong nation of people whose loyalty is solely to the kingdom, and ethnic policies are formulated primarily to achieve this goal. The term “Khmer”—once used to describe the dominant ethnic group—has become a designation of nationality. The seminomadic tribal peoples of the high forested plateaus are no longer called Phnong (savages); they are referred to as Khmer Loeu (upper Cambodians) and are said to have the same origin as the lowland Khmer. The government has taken steps to educate them and assimilate them to Khmer culture in the hope that they will identify with the national aspiration.

The Khmer occupy nearly all of the important government positions and most of the civil service jobs. The Chinese and Vietnamese, though numerically small, have played an important role in Cambodian economic life. Government efforts to gain control of economic activities have created some tension between the Khmer majority and the Chinese and Vietnamese minorities. Occasional reports of border violations have added to the strain between the Khmer and the Vietnamese.

THE PEOPLES OF CAMBODIA

The Khmer

The modern Khmer are the product of countless centuries of cultural and racial blendings. Their origins are obscure, but it is believed that at some period before 2000 B.C. they moved down
from the northwest into the fertile Mekong Delta. At the beginning of the Christian era they came into more direct contact with the indigenous peoples of Indonesian stock already living in what is now Cambodia and drove them into the less favorable mountain zones. Little more has been established other than that of the Khmer of that period generally resembled the present-day Cambodians.

Cambodia was Hinduized by successive waves of migrations from India starting in the third century B.C. (see ch. 1, Religion). This process, with its concomitant mixing of the races, reached its climax in the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. In the eighth century Cambodia underwent an Indo-Malay invasion from Java. The great Thai invasions into Cambodia occurred between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries. In more recent times the physical makeup of the Khmer has been affected by mixing with Vietnamese, Chinese and Europeans. The Khmer of today are a heterogeneous people whose ancestors were of many races but who have been assimilated to Khmer culture and have become Cambodian citizens.

The Khmer once dominated the entire Mekong Delta, but their holdings were narrowed by Vietnamese conquest. In 1967 there were minority groups of Khmer origin in neighboring countries, including about 450,000 in South Vietnam, over 200,000 in Thailand and a small number in Laos.

The typical Khmer male is about 5 feet 4 inches tall and has dark coffee-colored skin. The head is round and incisively modeled, with a slightly receding forehead, oval eyes, flared nostrils, full lips and a short chin. Both men and women have wavy hair, which they traditionally wear cut short.

The delicate royal dancing girls in Phnom Penh typify the ideal of female beauty—fair, slender and long necked. The ideal male physical type is tall, muscular and full shouldered. Wide-open eyes are considered an indication of intelligence and power. Any semblance of the Mongolian eye fold is aesthetically unappealing.

Most Khmer continue to live in semiautonomous, self-sufficient rural villages of 100 to 300 people. They live off and work their own land, often combining agriculture and fishing. A significant number of Khmer recently have moved to the cities, where they have taken advantage of opportunities for industrial employment. The Khmer are also beginning to take a more active role in some commercial activities which were formerly dominated by Chinese and Vietnamese.

The Chinese

The Chinese migration to Cambodia began at least as early as
the third century B.C., first by land and later by sea. In A.D.
1296 Chou Ta Kwan, a Chinese envoy, noted that there was a
large number of Chinese people among the Khmer in Angkor. The
Chinese migration has continued intermittently. Most came from
the southern provinces of Kwangtung, Fukien and Hainan island;
usually they migrated first to Vietnam and then gradually into
Cambodia.

In 1967 the number of Chinese was estimated (by unofficial
sources) to be between 400,000 and 450,000, or nearly 7 percent
of the total population. In 1964 over one-third of the Chinese
minority lived in Phnom Penh; most of the others were con­
centrated in other urban centers; and only a few were in rural
areas.

The size of the Chinese minority seems to fluctuate according
to economic and political conditions in Communist China and
Cambodia as well as in neighboring countries. For example, the
influx of Chinese into Cambodia between 1948 and 1953 can be
traced to political unrest in Vietnam, where many had settled in
the port of Cho Lon as traders on temporary visas and subse­
quently had moved to Cambodia. Direct migration from Com­
munist China has decreased since 1950 because of the changing
Chinese domestic situation.

The Chinese excel as bankers, moneylenders, speculators, con­
tractors and retail merchants, and they are prominent in the
field of transportation. They are found wherever there is mer­
chandise to be sold and money to be made, and they prosper in
Cambodia as in many other parts of Southeast Asia. Even the
immigrant Hainanese coolies often make a successful living.
Relatively few have turned to the cultivation of staple crops as
their primary means of subsistence. The Cantonese are vegetable
gardeners, and, as fishermen, they have virtually monopolized
coastal fishing. The Hainanese are pepper planters and rice­
growers in Kampot Province.

The Chinese occupational guilds (bang), formed on the basis
of dialect groups, are mutual benefit societies which were organ­
ized primarily as a defense against the trade restrictions first
imposed by the French and later by the Cambodian Government.
The head of each guild is elected by popular vote and acts as an
intermediary between the government and the members of the
bang. Control within the bang is maintained in conformity
with Chinese customary law. They are usually completely self­
sufficient groups. The government has reportedly attempted to
dissolve these guilds and to deal with the Chinese directly.

The Khmer have ambivalent attitudes toward the Chinese,
whom they admire for their economic talent but whose wealth
they often envy. Resentment against the Chinese has grown as the Khmer have become increasingly conscious of their own economic impotence. The Khmer farmer frequently finds himself in debt to a Chinese moneylender—a situation which heightens Khmer-Chinese antagonism. Nevertheless, because of their reputation for industry and financial shrewdness, Chinese men are eagerly sought as marriage partners by Khmer families that desire greater financial security and higher socioeconomic status for their daughters. Although the Chinese regard the Khmer as indifferent farmers, poor traders, uninspired fishermen, unreliable laborers, inferior cultivators and chronic vagrants, they have sought Khmer girls as wives, primarily because the Chinese population in Cambodia, until recent years, has been predominantly male. The frequent occurrence of such marriages has done much to smooth relations between the two groups.

The Chinese are law abiding and carefully try to avoid any adverse criticism. They cling to their cultural heritage, maintain their traditional ancestor worship and Mahayana Buddhism and usually send their children to their own private schools to learn the Chinese language and customs. Although the Chinese are usually indifferent to local conditions and customs, they are always respectful of the religion and culture of the Khmer (see ch. 11, Religion).

The Khmer believe that the offspring of a Khmer-Chinese marriage combine the best qualities of both groups. Many such offspring are proud of being Sino-Cambodians, children of Chinese fathers and Khmer mothers, and socially they rank above the French-Cambodians.

There are no available statistics on the number of Sino-Cambodians in the country. Government ethnic policies deny citizenship to those who claim to be Chinese and require that individuals of mixed parentage identify themselves as either Chinese or Sino-Cambodian. The children of marriages between Chinese and Cambodians may petition for citizenship, but neither first generation Chinese nor their descendants may become citizens.

In the past 20 years intermarriage between “pure” Chinese and “pure” Khmer has been decreasing, primarily because Chinese women have started coming into the country. The younger generation of Chinese men prefers to marry only the Sino-Cambodians or “pure” Chinese. Consequently, the Sino-Cambodians are being absorbed, largely by the Khmer, but also, to an extent, by the Chinese population.

The Vietnamese

The earliest Vietnamese colony dated from the late seventeenth century, when the empire of Annam, in what is now part
of North and South Vietnam, occupied large areas of the country. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century they migrated into Cambodia in a steady stream and settled the more fertile agricultural areas along the riverbanks from Phnom Penh to Stung Treng and from Battambang to Chau Doc of present-day North Vietnam, incurring the resentment—usually passive—of the Khmer farmers.

The French halted Vietnamese military aggrandizement by establishing a protectorate over Cambodia in 1864, but they provided legal cover and economic incentive for large-scale Vietnamese migration into Cambodia. This policy reportedly was designed to fill the ranks of a French colonial civil service in Cambodia and to secure a labor force for the French-owned rubber plantations.

According to the 1966 unofficial estimate there were over 400,000 Vietnamese in Cambodia, or about 7 percent of the total population. It is difficult to estimate the number of Vietnamese in the country at any one time. There are frequent reports of refugees crossing the border, but it is not known how many seek temporary refuge and later return to Vietnam.

No figures are available on the distribution of Vietnamese throughout the country. Like the Chinese, they are primarily an urban population, and it is probable that their distribution follows somewhat the same pattern as that of the Chinese. In 1966 an unofficial estimate indicated that 28 percent of Phnom Penh’s population was Vietnamese.

The Vietnamese are smaller in body structure than the Khmer and are typically Mongolian in hair color, eye fold and facial features and have broad heads and high cheekbones. Their average height is slightly less than that of the Khmer.

Vietnamese dress is distinctive. Men and women wear wide, loose trousers reaching to the ankles and a long robe split at the sides. For formal dress the robe hangs down over the trousers to the knee for the men and to the ankle for the women. The woman’s robe fits tightly over the shoulders and breast and is loose at the waist. The man’s robe hangs loosely from the shoulders. In the fields a Vietnamese farmer wears black trousers, a short jacket and a pointed straw hat.

The rural Vietnamese generally learn to speak Khmer in addition to their own language. Those living in the cities often speak French and Vietnamese, but they usually are not fluent in Khmer.

Most of the urban Vietnamese work as skilled artisans, petty merchants, doctors, dentists and domestics. Those who live in the rural areas, unlike the Chinese, are primarily engaged in rice farming, plantation work and fishing. They are industrious
fishermen and ply their trade mainly along the banks of the Mekong River.

About 25,000 live in colonies on the shores of the Tonle Sap in floating dwellings supported by pontoons or sampans. Even though they migrate during the dry season to deeper water in the center of the lake, they maintain the established order of their daily community life.

The Vietnamese of pure Vietnamese parentage are not legally eligible for Cambodian citizenship, but they—unlike the Chinese—appear to seek it actively. The descendants of Cambodian and Vietnamese mixed parentage may become citizens by petition, and it is probable that many who are eligible to do so take advantage of this provision of the law to change their status.

The friction between the Khmer and the Vietnamese has been bitter and continual. The Vietnamese are usually commercially ambitious and push themselves forward in a way that annoys most of the Khmer. Although the Khmer have accepted, to some extent, commercial exploitation by the Chinese, they find highly objectionable the same action by the Vietnamese.

Dislocation and discrimination rather than social assimilation and integration have been the standard ethnic pattern of the Vietnamese settlements, particularly in rural districts. Khmer farmers have often abandoned their traditional settlements in the face of Vietnamese encroachments. The wedge that has been driven between the two peoples has inhibited cultural exchange. Despite centuries in Cambodia, the Vietnamese have maintained their ethnic identity. In recent years the difficulties placed in the way of their obtaining citizenship have made it almost impossible for them to assimilate to Cambodian society.

The Khmer Loeu

The forested highland plateaus and intermontane valleys are sparsely populated by ethnic groups collectively known as the Khmer Loeu. There are no population statistics available for some of these groups, and others are inadequately reported. In 1966 the total number of Khmer Loeu was variously estimated to be from 80,000 to 60,000. The heaviest settlement is along the northeastern and eastern frontiers, but other groups live in the mountain chains of western Cambodia.

Many scholars believe that the Khmer Loeu came from the Malay Peninsula or the Indonesian archipelago; others, that they are related to the tribes of southern China and Assam. All agree that a preponderant Asian influence is reflected in their customs and languages. Some of these languages are similar to the Malay and Polynesian languages, whereas others seem more closely related to the Mon-Khmer language group.
Some experts have divided the Khmer Loeu population into an Indonesian type, characterized by comparatively light skin, a long head, wavy or straight hair and absence of the Mongolian eye fold; and a Negroid type, characterized by dark skin, woolly hair and somewhat shorter stature than the Indonesian type.

Personal decorations, more than anything else, distinguish the Khmer Loeu from the Khmer. They take various forms, such as piercing and elongating the lobes of the ear, in which heavy ivory earplugs may be inserted; wearing heavy copper or brass bangles on the wrists and ankles; extracting or filing teeth; and having extensive tattoos on arms, chest and forehead. These practices are diminishing, particularly among men who have had outside contacts and among children who have attended school.

Clothing is simple and consists of a breechcloth for the men and a short skirt made of coarse cotton or grass cloth for the women.

Most Khmer Loeu live in scattered village groupings of 20 to 30 persons. Each settlement is an independent and largely self-sufficient unit. Some groups are governed by a village headman or a council of elders; others appear to have no permanent political offices. Members of the group farm and hunt together and divide their harvests equally.

The Khmer Loeu subsist primarily by growing dry rice, which they cultivate by the slash-and-burn method (see ch. 19, Agriculture). Some corn, yams and tobacco are also raised, and most villages have a few pigs and chickens that may be slaughtered for food. Men perform the heavier work associated with slash-and-burn agriculture, whereas women plant the fields and gather the produce from the wild plants. In many groups hunting and fishing are important means of supplementing the diet.

There are many types of housing, varying according to tribal custom. Some groups seem to prefer light, thatched houses supported by 5- to 10-foot-high bamboo poles. Other groups build more substantial homes, which are heavily thatched and are sometimes 50 feet long. These are usually mounted on log piles that stand 4 to 6 feet high. The space underneath the house may be used as a pigsty or a chicken coop and for storage.

The Khmer Loeu are animists. Religion is usually centered in the family, in which most rituals are performed. There is little communal religious activity except in time of crisis, when all members of the family may participate in offering sacrifices to the spirits. The main religious practitioner is the village sorcerer, who is believed to have supernatural powers for dealing with the spiritual world.
Little agreement exists among those who have attempted to classify the various Khmer Loeu groups according to group names and ethnic distinctions. Some authorities state that there are 13 separate groups, but only fragmentary information is available on some of them. The principal groups are the Rhade, Jarai, Stieng, Kuoy (Kui), Biat (Biat Phnorr), Pear (Samre or Pol) and Krol. In addition, the names of Saoch, Prea, Brao, BuNeut and Rehong Khmon are mentioned in some writings.

According to a 1964 estimate there were 100,000 to 115,000 Rhade living in Cambodia and South Vietnam. Most Rhade in Cambodia live in Stung Treng Province; the majority are in South Vietnam. The Rhade have long heads, prominent cheekbones, straight and low foreheads, black and wavy hair, bronze skin and brown eyes; the Mongolian eye fold is rare. Their language is a dialect of Cham.

The Rhade have a matrilineal extended family organization. Descent is traced through females on the mother's side of the family, and property is inherited by females. A man becomes part of his wife's family when he marries and goes to live in her family's house. The typical residence group consists of a mother and her family, her female relatives and their families grouped in one long-house dwelling. The village is composed of a number of these extended kin groups. Occasionally the Rhade live with the Khmer in small villages.

The Jarai are similar to the Rhade in physical appearance, language and basic culture. There were an estimated 200,000 Jarai in South Vietnam and Cambodia in 1964. The Jarai territory in Cambodia is in eastern Stung Treng Province and extends as far north as the Laotian frontier, but the majority live in South Vietnam. Like the Rhade they reckon descent through the female line, and their family groups live in long-house dwellings. In the past they served as foot soldiers and horsemen for the French army.

The Stieng live primarily in the eastern part of Kratie Province. According to one 1964 estimate there were about 40,000 Stieng in Cambodia and a smaller number in South Vietnam, though the actual total may be somewhat less than this. They have dark-brown skin, black hair and deep-brown eyes. Their language is a member of the Mon-Khmer language group. The Stieng villages are governed by a council of notables or senior heads rather than by a single chieftain. Although they cling to their traditional animist practices, they are rapidly becoming assimilated to the Khmer culture. For many years they have been employed on the rubber plantations at Mimot and Snoul and on
other farms in the area, where some have learned to speak French and Khmer.

The Kuoy, estimated to number about 10,000 are widely distributed in northern Cambodia from Siem Reap to Stung Treng Provinces. Their settlements are often interspersed with the Khmer settlements. Most Kuoy have adopted Cambodian customs and have become devout Buddhists. They are industrious, and in Khmer villages they have earned a reputation as iron forgers.

The Biat are members of the large Mnong group, which has various subgroups scattered throughout Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam. In 1964 the Biat numbered about 12,000. They speak a Mon-Khmer language and prefer to live in houses built on the ground rather than on posts or piles. Most of them live in eastern Mondolkiri and Kratie Provinces. Many Biat were educated in French schools established in their region between 1939 and 1953. A Biat-French lexicon prepared in 1986 has been used effectively to teach many of the Biat to read and write their own dialect.

The Pear are the only Khmer Loeu in the western mountains. They have Negroid features and relatively short stature. Formerly the Pear were a large group scattered throughout the Cardamomes and Elephant Ranges, but there are only 200 to 400 left, according to some estimates. Contrary to the Khmer Loeu in the eastern regions, they assimilate rapidly to the Khmer culture, adopting new customs and rejecting animist beliefs in favor of Buddhism.

The Krol live in and around Sre Cnis and to the south. There are no statistics available on the size of the Krol population. Some still speak their own language, but otherwise they have been assimilated to Khmer culture. They live in permanent settlements, have Cambodian-style houses, grow rice and, to some extent, have adopted Buddhism.

**Government Policy**

The French colonial policy was not one of active control of the Khmer Loeu or any vigorous interference in their tribal matters. Some resettlement projects were attempted, but they were few in number and had only limited success. French army commanders looked upon the Khmer Loeu as an excellent source of manpower for the army outposts and recruited many of them. Many have continued this tradition by enlisting in the Cambodian army.

The government has undertaken a broad civic action program—for which the army is responsible—among the Khmer Loeu in the provinces of Koh Kong, Stung Treng, Ratanakiri and Mondolkiri. This program is being carried out in accordance with the national policy of educating the Khmer Loeu and assimilating them to Cambodian culture.
Many thousands of Khmer Loeu have been resettled in Srok Chlong and other areas in Kratie Province. There has also been resettlement in Stung Treng and Ratanakiri Provinces. It has been government practice to offer inducements to the Khmer Loeu to move to new settlements. The authorities usually provide a small amount of money, land, clothing and seeds of various kinds and give aid in building houses. Each male over the age of 12 is taxed from 15 days' to 2 months' labor per year for building roads and constructing government buildings and schools. In addition, men are hired and paid in cash for day labor after the labor tax has been deducted.

The government, in an effort to assimilate the Khmer Loeu, has provided schools where Khmer and French are taught as well as Cambodian history and religion. Buddhist monks are sent to live in their communities, and groups of Khmer are resettled in their villages. Each large village has a resident government representative whose function is not only to govern but to disseminate information and encourage the Khmer Loeu to learn the Cambodian way of life.

The Cham-Malays

The kingdom of Champa once extended over much of southeastern Indochina, but in the fifteenth century the Chams were conquered by the Vietnamese, who then annexed their territory. Thereafter, many of the vanquished people preferred living in Cambodia to enduring servitude and humiliation under the Vietnamese. They were later converted to a vigorous Moslem orthodoxy by the invading Malays, who penetrated Kampot Province and the interior regions. Their long adherence to the Koranic law that prohibits marriage outside the Moslem community has resulted in the evolution of the Cham-Malay type, which is noticeably different from the Khmer. Recent estimates of the number of Chams are unavailable. In the late 1950's there were about 80,000 Chams in Cambodia and a smaller number in South Vietnam.

The Cham-Malays have coarse skin varying in color from dark to reddish brown. Their hair is auburn or black, and they have more facial and body hair than the Khmer. Of all the Asian groups in Cambodia, the Cham-Malays are most nearly occidental in profile. Only in height are the Cham-Malays and Khmer similar; both average about 5 feet 4 inches.

A sarong, similar to the Khmer sampot but called the batik, is the main item of Cham-Malay clothing and is worn knotted at the center of the body. The women wear over the batik a closely fitted black or dark-green tunic which has tight sleeves and is open at the throat. Men's clothing includes a shirt and an ankle-
length robe. Flamboyant colors, such as red and green stripes on a white background, are popular for men.

Some Cham-Malays live in urban areas where they engage in trade and industry, but most live in compact villages in Kompong Cham Province. Chrui Changvar, located near Phnom Penh, is a typical community and is considered the spiritual center of the Cham-Malays. Several high Moslem officials live there, including the supreme chief of the Chams.

The Cham-Malays in the rural areas are engaged primarily in farming and are considered adept at raising buffalo. They are also fishermen and engage in boat construction.

The traditional Cham language is used in the home. Malay and Arabic are used in religious contexts, and the Arabic alphabet—learned in the Koranic school—is used in writing both languages. Khmer is the language of trade and commerce, and most Chams speak it fluently, although often with a "pidgin" quality.

Under the Cambodian Constitution, the Cham-Malays and other religious minorities are guaranteed the right to worship in their own manner. By all indications—the care of their mosques, the exactitude of their prayers, their fidelity to Koranic precepts and their direct links with the Islamic world—they are devout Moslems.

The Cham-Malays maintain close contact with the Khmer Loeu with whom they trade. They have also had relatively favorable contact with the Khmer and have adopted many aspects of Khmer culture. Although they have maintained their religious beliefs and practices, most have turned openly to the Khmer and have become culturally assimilated.

For historical reasons the Cham-Malays seem to enjoy special royal favor, despite their minority status. The supreme chief of the Chams is appointed by the king and is considered to be a member of the Royal Court. Most Khmer, however, tend to regard them as cultural and religious inferiors.

The French

The European French population constitutes a nonpermanent group made up of military personnel, government advisers, commercial executives, teachers and plantation administrators. French influence, however, is much greater than the number of French residents would indicate. The long years of French rule and the introduction of the French educational system have had a profound influence, particularly on the aristocratic elite. Admiration for French culture is deeply rooted but mixed with some resentment. Many members of the royal family and other aristocratic families have studied in France and have learned
the French way of life, but they have been careful to safeguard Khmer culture and to be identified with everything Khmer.

The educated class has become increasingly critical of the French in recent years. They charge that French emphasis on the revitalization of traditional Khmer culture has been at the expense of progress toward modernization.

The Eurasians

The traditional attitude toward intermarriage is that some racial strains strengthen the Khmer stock, whereas others weaken it. The status of Eurasians is affected adversely by the widespread belief that marriage with Europeans results in a thinning of racial vigor. In this matter their position contrasts with that of the Sino-Cambodians, whose prestige is enhanced by the prevailing view that the Chinese strain contributes to the physical stamina of the individual so that a community is felt to be invigorated by the inclusion of families of such dual ancestry.

The size of the Eurasian population in Cambodia is not known. The earliest Eurasians were probably the offspring of Portuguese and Filipino mixtures driven out of Malacca in the seventeenth century. Their descendants have lost all trace of European physiognomy but retain Portuguese and Spanish family names, such as Men de Diez, Col de Monteiro and Norodom Fernandez. They consider themselves Khmer and play an influential role as civil servants.

Eurasians of more recent origin are almost exclusively the offspring of French fathers and Khmer mothers, although some—who are also called Eurasians—have French-African fathers. They are exclusively city dwellers and are most often employed in white-collar occupations. Eurasians have generally pressed for equality with and acceptance by the French, who do not always regard them as compatriots, and have tended to reject identification with the Khmer. As in other parts of Southeast Asia, they are marginal members of society. Only the Catholic missions have consistently and unconditionally received them at orphanages and educational institutions.

Others

About 20,000 Thai and Laotians live as farmers in the northern provinces of Siem Reap and Battambang. They rarely live in the same communities with the Khmer, who have been more or less indifferent to them.

In Pailin, 10 miles from the Thailand border in Battambang Province, and in Bokeo in Stung Treng Province, there are two Burmese settlements. The inhabitants retain Burmese citizenship and earn their living as prospectors, jewel cutters and gem merchants.

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There are about 2,500 Indians, most of whom migrated to Cambodia from French enclaves on the Indian subcontinent. They have generally not been well regarded by the Khmer because they are identified with French rule. During the colonial period Indians were given favored positions in the government and business. The commercial practices of the Indian money-lenders have heightened their unpopularity.

**LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION**

Khmer, the national language, is one of the most widely spoken of the Mon-Khmer languages. At one time it was predominantly used throughout an area that encompassed the entire Mekong River valley as far as Burma, present-day Thailand, most of Cambodia, Laos and a portion of South Vietnam. The boundaries of this language area have dwindled since the thirteenth century under the impact of the Thai cultural invasions and as a result of the Vietnamese annexation of what is now South Vietnam. The Khmer language area extended in 1967 beyond the Cambodian borders for a short distance into Laos and into southern Thailand. To the east, it was still spoken among the Khmer minority living in South Vietnam.

Khmer is the primary language of daily social intercourse and is spoken by over 90 percent of the country’s population. French, however, is the accepted language in intellectual and professional circles and is used in several semiofficial publications. It is also the language of most secondary and postsecondary education (see ch. 9, Education). There has been a continual effort on the part of the government to replace French—regarded as a symbol of colonial rule—with Khmer. Use of the various minority languages, Chinese, Vietnamese and those of the Khmer Loeu, is discouraged in the hope that Khmer will become the common language of all Cambodians.

Members of the ethnic minorities are usually bilingual and in some cases multilingual. In addition to the language of their own ethnic group—often reserved for use within the family and among others of the same ethnic background—most can speak Khmer and some, especially the educated Vietnamese, speak French as well.

Most Chinese are able to speak Khmer and use it primarily in commercial intercourse. Various Chinese dialects, often mutually unintelligible, are spoken within the Chinese community. The predominant one is the Ch’ao-Chou dialect, a branch of Cantonese which is used by 60 percent of Cambodia’s Chinese population. About 20 percent of them speak Cantonese; 7 percent, Fukienese; 4 percent, the Hakka dialect; and 4 percent, the Hainan dialect.
Many officials probably are able to speak English as a result of education in the United States. Generally, English is not widely used, however.

Pali and Sanskrit are sacred languages; their use is confined to the Buddhist temples (see ch. 11, Religion). Pali is the sacred language of Theravada Buddhism and appears in religious texts and rituals. Some people understand Pali, but only a few, who are permanent members of the Buddhist monkhood, are able to write it. Sanskrit is reserved almost exclusively for religious purposes. Pali and Sanskrit serve as sources for the formation of new technical and scientific terms.

Language differences create few obstacles to communication. In the hill areas the language diversity among the Khmer Loeu is more pronounced and tends to prolong traditional differences between groups. Increasing numbers of the Khmer Loeu, however, are learning to use Khmer as a lingua franca as state education is extended into more remote communities. The surge of nationalism will probably make it more necessary for members of minorities to learn Khmer if they are to participate fully in the national culture.
In 1967 Cambodian society was characterized by the increasing social and geographical mobility of its people. Traditional lines of social stratification were being blurred by new means of status achievement. Since the country gained independence, many Cambodians had left their farms to seek urban employment. In the cities and in many rural areas as well, occupational achievement and economic success had become important determinants of status. Education was expanding to awaken even remote villages to the possibility of change and participation in national life.

Despite these developments, modern Cambodian society reflects a basic stability and historical continuity. During the last 500 years the culture has demonstrated its ability to remain substantially intact and, at the same time, to adapt successfully to changing political and social circumstances. The great majority of the people share the same cultural heritage. They practice Theravada Buddhism, speak the Khmer language and most have a rural background. The culture has been relatively free of strife between diverse social groups and has developed without class conflict or social upheaval.

Social stratification originated in the Hindu caste system, though the principles of caste were never strictly applied, even in the days of the ancient Khmer empire. The egalitarian philosophy of Buddhism had a moderating influence on the social structure. It was possible for any individual to attain high social status and the respect of his neighbors by joining the Buddhist monkhood or by showing exceptional religious knowledge and piety. In 1967 this traditional Buddhist individualism and modern education combined to facilitate increasing social mobility.

Through the society runs the major distinction between royalty and those of common birth. Other criteria for determining social status have emerged, but the two extremes of royalty and commoners are still important. Prescribed patterns of address, speech and behavior exist among members of different occupational groups and between royalty and commoners. Within a single urban socioeconomic group and also in the rural village,
the individual's status is dependent on his relative age and religious piety.

Social and economic changes and new values introduced during the period of the French protectorate (1864-1949) had little impact on the society outside of Phnom Penh. Since independence, however, the expanding educational system and increasing employment have influenced the motivation of people in all parts of the country. More and more individuals are becoming aware of the possibilities for changing and improving their position in life.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The present-day social system is not entirely dissimilar from that of the nineteenth century, though modifications have occurred. Some elements of the traditional society have disappeared, and some new ones have emerged.

The social structure at the beginning of the period of the French protectorate was a formal hierarchical class system in which heredity played the most important, but not the exclusive, role. At the top of the social order was the royalty, which included the king, his immediate family and members of junior royal lines. Membership in the royalty was to end after five generations, unless it was renewed by the king.

Others in the upper social levels were the nobility—royal descendants more than five generations removed from any sovereign—and the descendants of Brahman priests. The great mass of ordinary people formed the commoner class. Within this group there are several different social ranks. The highest rank was held by important government officials known as montreys, and below them were the freemen, most of whom were farmers. At the bottom of the social order was a diversified class of slaves, which included debtors, captured Khmer Loeu hill peoples, criminals and the descendants of rebels.

The king was an absolute monarch and, in theory, the owner of his country and his people as well as the guardian of the Buddhist religion. Members of the royal family held most of the important civil and military positions and formed the core of the government and of the social aristocracy. After five generations, membership in the royal family ceased automatically. Descendants more than five generations removed were members of the hereditary titled nobility.

Children inherited membership in the nobility and an accompanying title from their mother, provided that she was of noble birth and the first-rank wife of a nobleman. During the period of the French protectorate the custom of inheriting titles apparently fell into disuse. In 1967 the titles carried no privileges, but they were still a source of prestige to members of title-holding families.
Outside of the royal aristocracy high social rank depended on royal preferment. Such was the case with the *montreys*, who were members of the commoner class and were appointed to high government office by the king. *Montreys* had usually acquired a reputation for great learning or for military prowess as freemen and were selected on the basis of either qualification. These appointive positions were temporary rather than hereditary and could be terminated at any time by the king.

The *montreys* served the king in a number of capacities and were sometimes called his eyes, ears and arms. They governed the provinces, adjudicated certain legal matters and supervised the palace and the army. Some *montreys* became very powerful, especially those who governed provinces far from the royal capital. Those who became too powerful had their authority reduced by the king, for his power was absolute.

The *montreys* had no fixed salary, but they kept a share of the taxes and revenues received from specified lands. This income was shared with numerous subordinates, who also shared the responsibility for maintaining public order, collecting taxes and assigning *corvée* (unpaid labor) service and military levies.

Commoners or freemen constituted the great bulk of the population. Included in this group were the farmers, craftsmen and small businessmen. The royal government and the aristocracy depended on the freemen for support in the form of *corvée*, taxes and military service. The freemen usually selected a patron from among the *montreys*. The patron assisted them in time of need, protected their interests and collected their taxes and *corvée*. During the protectorate period the freemen gradually ceased to exist as a distinct group. Their descendants probably form the majority of the modern ordinary citizenry.

At the bottom of the social order were the slaves. Slavery could be temporary, as for debtors who sold themselves to masters who would pay their debts. The period of servitude was theoretically equivalent in value to the debts paid by the master. Other slaves were bound in perpetual servitude, a status which was passed on to their children. Most of these slaves were prisoners of war, captured hill tribesmen, criminals, rebel leaders and their descendants.

A man's personal wealth could be calculated by the number of slaves he owned. Slaves were formally registered under the names of their masters and were considered absolute property. Whether temporary or permanent, they owed respect, obedience and service to the master and his family. Slavery was abolished during the period of the French protectorate. Since then the descendants of slaves have been assimilated into the ordinary citizenry.

Relations of commoners with royalty were regulated strictly
by an extensive system of sumptuary laws. The privileges and symbols of rank were numerous for members of royalty and for important government officials. Prescribed rules of etiquette and elaborate ceremony surrounded the personage of the king and reflected his omnipotence. The royal family and other members of the aristocracy had the privilege of traveling in slaveborne litters, accompanied by an elaborate retinue. Members of this class adorned themselves with cosmetics and jewelry, wore hair styles different from those of commoners and lived in larger, more elaborate houses.

Social mobility was restricted but not impossible in this highly structured system. Achievement of high status was available to any man, except slaves, through membership in the Buddhist monkhood. Another avenue of mobility was that of appointment to the position of montrey. A well-educated commoner could hope to receive such an appointment if he possessed intelligence and had good fortune.

The stability of the traditional social order carried it through the period of the French protectorate, unchanged except for some decline in vitality. The ruling aristocracy was replaced by a civil bureaucracy, but the king continued to be the supreme symbol of authority despite his subservience to the French. He retained his position as the head of the Buddhist hierarchy and presided over the normal court routines.

The locally elected village headmen exercised the actual authority during this period and served as a link between the people and higher administrative offices. They were responsible for collecting taxes, keeping vital statistics, directing local police and performing a number of other duties.

The society remains substantially based on tradition. There is still a major distinction between royalty and commoners, although additional factors have gained importance in determining social status. The royal family forms the core of the aristocracy at the apex of the social structure.

Descendants of the traditional titled nobility gradually lost their status during the period of the protectorate, but they still constitute the upper social levels of the country. The remainder of the population consists of all the ordinary citizens, both urban and rural, who are stratified on the basis of occupational, economic and educational criteria.

**RURAL CAMBODIA**

Cambodia is still basically a country of rural farming communities. New criteria of social status exert considerable influence in the urban setting, but the traditional values and ways of the rural majority give the society its dominant characteristics.
There are few status distinctions in the individualistic atmosphere of the rural village; these distinctions depend on individual qualities rather than membership in a particular social group or class. The primary components of status and prestige are age, sex, moral behavior and religious piety. Differences in wealth are apparent but are not pronounced and count little in status determination. Wealth alone is not an indication of authority or prestige, but it is often a valuable instrument for achieving them. Because one gains both prestige and religious merit from donations for religious concerns, the accumulation of money to spend becomes important. The greater the amount of money given to the temple and the monks, the greater is the respect accorded the giver.

Relative age continues to be a major determinant of status in the rural social structure. Social etiquette demands respectful behavior toward all persons of greater age, and speech forms reflect age distinctions. The oldest man in the village will not necessarily have the most prestige and authority, but his advanced age automatically entitles him to a certain amount of these things.

Good character and a reputation for piety are also essential for high status. The quality of religious devotion, which is admired in the Buddhist monk, is equally respected in a layman. If he does not possess exceptional piety, a man cannot gain an exalted position in his community, no matter what other admirable qualities he may possess.

Cambodians traditionally view the Buddhist monk as an individual living outside the normal status hierarchy as the personification of an ideal. Deferential speech forms used toward the monks, as well as numerous other courtesies performed with regard to them, reveal the honor accorded their special status.

In their relations with people outside the local status structure, villagers accord respect and honor to those who possess authority or prestige. High-ranking monks, important government officials and wealthy aristocrats are in this category. Villagers rarely interact with such persons and therefore have no basis to judge the personal qualities which normally determine status.

**URBAN SOCIETY**

The likelihood of a stratified social order is more apparent in the cities than in rural communities. A system of occupation-based status and prestige began to emerge during the period of the French protectorate. The expansion of commerce and industry opened new areas of employment and introduced secular education to people in the cities.

The traditional social structure allowed little mobility between
groups, so that most people probably never considered the possibility of improvement. Buddhist teachings also helped to maintain the status quo by emphasizing acceptance of one's status in this life as it was determined by birth and anticipating improvement in the next existence (see ch. 11, Religion). Only recently have people become aware that change is possible in this life also, through education and occupational advancement.

Except for the very highest level, the urban social structure is one of achieved status rather than of truly stratified classes. The core of the modern elite consists of the descendants of the traditional governing elite and their families who continue to hold the nation's highest political and religious power. The families of the traditional aristocracy had the opportunity and the money to prepare for their position in the modern urban elite.

Membership in the traditional royalty is not an automatic qualification for membership in the modern elite, and it is not the only qualification. This relatively new segment of society is open to all who can qualify on the basis of economic success, advanced education, high occupational status and high political, military or religious rank.

The elite group emerged during the period of the French protectorate and since then has evolved in response to a modernizing society. In effect, this group bridges the traditional social gap between royalty and commoners. The distinction between commoners and royalty is still officially recognized, but, in practice, considerable social equality exists between them.

Membership in the elite tends to be insecure because those in high positions may be removed from office or reduced in rank by royal decree. This is less true for the royal aristocracy forming the core of the elite. This group tends to be self-perpetuating because the opportunities to gain education and to manipulate wealth and power are inherent in it.

In the middle strata are the white-collar workers, professionals, businessmen and teachers. There are relatively few Khmer in the professions or in business in comparison to the number of Chinese and Vietnamese. Until they achieved independence the Khmer showed little interest in professional training or in following business careers. The Chinese were able to gain dominance in many areas of business and commerce, and they still have a unique economic role (see ch. 22, Domestic Trade). Their relations with the Khmer have been relatively harmonious, and they have assimilated more readily than the Vietnamese into Cambodian life. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the Chinese do not participate fully in the society.

White-collar workers and clerks are predominantly Khmer. Many are employed in the government administrative services,
which comprise the largest segment of the urban middle group. Teachers form a growing percentage of this group because of educational expansion. Opportunities for advancement through education and the comparatively high wage scale have raised the status of teachers. People who have an advanced education are honored and respected. Most highly regarded in the teaching profession are the professors in the Faculty of Law and Economics in Phnom Penh.

The lowest level in the urban social structure is composed of skilled and unskilled laborers and some small shopkeepers. Members of this group include coolie laborers, pedicab drivers and all others whose occupations involve manual labor. Many people in this class are unskilled, uneducated migrants from rural villages. Most city dwellers consider farmers to be part of the lower class, though they are actually outside the urban social structure. The feeling among many urbanites is that rural people are backward because they lack sophistication, work with their hands and lack many of the amenities of urban life.

**STATUS MOBILITY**

Except for the hereditary royalty, which remains a closed class, social mobility is becoming more fluid. Commoners cannot become members of royalty, but the king may bestow the honorary title of *samdech*, which is equivalent to court status, upon selected commoners. Recipients of this honor are usually the highest ranking monks of the Mohanikay and Thommayut orders and the most important government officials. The *samdech* does not become a member of royalty, and his children do not inherit his title.

In both urban and rural societies the traditional mode of status mobility, the Buddhist hierarchy, remains intact. The opportunity to improve one's status in the Buddhist monastic orders is open to all males, dependent only on merit and achievement. The son of a poor rice farmer can hope to build an illustrious career through successive promotions within the Buddhist hierarchy.

Religious behavior is still very important in status determination and affects the popularity of national leaders. Prince Norodom Sihanouk fulfills the criteria which the people expect in a Buddhist leader. He apparently is devoted to Buddhism and has entered the monkhood a number of times, in accordance with Khmer tradition. He has espoused the individualistic ideals of Buddhism and has thereby encouraged social mobility for even the poorest farmer.

New means of status achievement have emerged in the form of education, occupational advancement and wealth. Through a series of competitive examinations, the individual with ability may
advance through the school system. The state schools are free to all who qualify and are being expanded, with the hope of providing universal education. As a means of status achievement, such education has the effect of preserving a large degree of social mobility.

A number of students are educated abroad and return to assume positions of responsibility in various fields. The success of these people has made the urban population increasingly aware of education as a means of advancement. Frequently, however, such individuals have become the discontented, unemployed intellectuals, unable to find jobs that have the prestige they expect as educated persons (see ch. 4, Population and Labor Force).

Traditionally, the possession of wealth was not a criterion of high social status; it was an integral part of membership in the hereditary upper social levels. In recent years the means of acquiring wealth have become more accessible to the ordinary person. In the urban society, economic success has gained ascendance as a means of bettering one's social position and can even lead to membership in the elite group.

Women are not excluded from most avenues of mobility. Traditionally, they had a prominent role in the society. Even before the time of the French protectorate women had gained a reputation as merchants; they also had worked as palace guards, servants and skilled entertainers. Some had attained high status as judges and court secretaries. In daily life their position is almost equal to that of men, but they have lower religious status. A woman may advance her social position through education and occupational achievement and may hold public office. In 1967 a number of women were in high government positions, and one woman was serving as the minister of public health and labor in the royal government.

In theory, any person may plan his career along culturally approved lines. Most of the population are tradition-oriented farmers, however, and have not been motivated to change or improve their lot in life. The influence of Buddhism is partially responsible for this conservative attitude. The Buddhist emphasis on improving one's next existence, rather than the present one, has conditioned people to accept their ascribed status. Only in urban areas has the introduction of foreign values caused substantial change in the patterns of status achievement. As it has done often in the past, the society shows much perseverance in its manner of adjusting to changing circumstances.
The family pattern which predominates throughout most of the country is that of the rural Khmer. Many characteristics of the typical family are part of a general pattern that exists throughout Southeast Asia. The major variations from the general pattern occur among the hill peoples, the Khmer Loeu, who often differ in the manner of tracing descent, in the size and composition of the household or family unit and in the relative status of the sexes in marriage (see ch. 5, Ethnic Groups and Languages).

The typical family consists of a single independent, self-supporting married couple and their unmarried children. It is the primary kin unit both in terms of affection and in terms of function. The Khmer, unlike the Chinese, the Vietnamese and some of the Khmer Loeu, are little concerned with complex kinship structures, genealogy, lineage or kin ties beyond the family. The main responsibility of the family is not veneration of the past but rearing the new generation. Its obligations to the older generations are narrowly defined in space, in time and in the closeness of family ties. Ties between related families tend to be loose and informal and shaped more by circumstance and personal preference than by rule.

Relationships within the family of parents and children, however, are precisely defined by tradition and law. Tradition, supported by Buddhist precept, places great emphasis on formality and on the respect paid to those of senior age or generation. Law, supported by tradition, affirms the mutual obligations of parents and children for maintenance and support. The legal aspect of these family relationships is incorporated in numerous articles of the Civil Code. The Code covers marriage, divorce, the legal rights of wives, the status of plural wives, adoption, guardianship, parental authority and inheritance.

Within this framework of religious precept, secular tradition and national law, the Khmer family is a relatively conservative and stable institution. Nevertheless, in 1967 it was feeling the impact of changing times, particularly in urban areas where the influence of a modernizing economy and society was most apparent. The alternatives formerly open to the individual were
limited and easily defined; and the family, both urban and rural, was the institution best able to establish the individual’s role in the larger society. Other institutions, such as the national school system and government-sponsored youth movements, were assuming an increasingly larger responsibility for socialization of the new generation.

**FAMILY STRUCTURE**

The ideal family consists of a married couple and their unmarried children. It is not always possible, however, for a newly married couple to establish immediately their own separate residence, either for financial or for other reasons. Under these circumstances it is not unusual for the couple to reside temporarily with either the husband’s or the wife’s parents. In some villages it is customary for a married daughter and her husband to live with her parents until the birth of the first child. The parents occasionally may request that a married child remain in the household to care for them in their old age. This is with the understanding that the house will belong to the young couple when the parents die.

Polygamy is legally sanctioned; but polygamous marriages are rare; and in the rural areas, almost nonexistent. Few village men have the money to support more than one wife. Polygamous marriage is socially acceptable and constitutes a status symbol for a wealthy man. Opposition to the custom is voiced primarily by a small group of well-educated urban women. The rural woman sometimes is also reluctant to allow polygamy and may thwart her husband’s attempts to take a second wife.

Concubinage occurs more frequently than second-rank marriage (marriage to a second and succeeding wives). Concubinage is recognition of the fact of union and can be broken without divorce. The concubine has no legal contract and does not have the right to receive alimony after separation.

A family of five to seven children, with more boys than girls, is considered ideal. Children may be adopted, and according to law the adopted child has the same rights and obligations as children born into the family. The legal restrictions governing adoption are incorporated in the Civil Code.

The Khmer have a bilateral kinship system and trace descent equally through the father’s and the mother’s lines. There is normally no difference in the relationship with relatives on either side of the family, and no distinctions are made in the terms used to refer to them. In general, the ties between generations and between related households are loose and informal. Individuals have little interest in their remote ancestors and rarely remember them beyond a few generations. A married couple expects to give
aid or financial assistance to needy parents, brothers or sisters of either spouse, but there is often a conscious effort to avoid involvement with more remote relatives. Friction among kin is not sanctioned by society, and in some rural areas it is believed to be punished by supernatural beings.

The kinship ties of the royal family are similar to those of other Khmer. For purposes of succession to the throne and inheritance of titles, however, descent is traced in the father's line for five generations. Relationships are maintained with a wide range of paternal and maternal relatives.

In 1910 an official decree made it mandatory for children and wives to take the name of the head of the family as their family name, but the practice never gained wide acceptance except among the educated, who sometimes use the family name preceding their given name.

According to the Civil Code, descendants are first in the order of inheritance, followed by ascendants and then by other family members. Among the descendants the legal sons and daughters may inherit equally the real and personal property of their parents. In practice, the parents often dictate unequal shares because of personal favoritism. They may give a larger share to the child who has taken special care of them and a smaller share to the child who has made a prosperous marriage. Division of parents' property is directed by their written or verbal will. The common practice in rural areas is for parents to inform their children verbally of their wishes regarding the future division of their possessions. Sons usually inherit the family land, and daughters receive the movable goods. After marriage a wife may continue to own her inherited property and may dispose of it as she sees fit.

Death of one of the spouses does not automatically cause the dissolution of the family. If the first-rank wife survives her husband she assumes his duties as head of the family and administers the family property as long as the children remain within the household. It is only when she renounces her position or dies that the estate is divided, and the children receive their share.

**FAMILY LIFE**

The legal head of the family is the husband and father, but the wife's authority actually is almost equal. Family relationships are determined first by generation and then by age among members of the same generation. The husband often addresses his wife as "little sister," signifying his authority over her. She, in turn, may address him as "big brother," in deference to his higher status.

The husband and wife fill complementary roles within the family. They have equally important responsibilities and duties.
The wife is expected to defer to her husband and is subordinate to him by law. She has a voice in household affairs, however, and her consent is required in major decisions affecting the family. The husband cannot sell or mortgage goods contributed to the marriage by his wife; he cannot adopt a child without his wife's consent; and he cannot take a second wife without the consent of the first. As a result, the rights of the head of the family are limited, which makes the family a more balanced partnership.

The husband is responsible for housing and feeding all members of the family. In rural areas he does the heavier work involved in preparing the fields for seeding and cultivating the crops. In cities the pattern is somewhat different. Houses are usually built by others, and food is purchased in the marketplace instead of being grown in family fields. The major responsibility for the family's support, however, is still borne by the husband.

The wife occupies a key position in the household, and in many ways the prosperity, well-being and reputation of the family revolve around her. Her ethical and religious influence over the younger generation, particularly the daughters, is very important. As a mentor of the social and moral values of the Khmer culture, she is highly regarded in the society. She is usually a more devout Buddhist than her husband, and she has the sole responsibility for training her daughters, whose good conduct will bring prestige to the family. It is generally the wife who controls the family budget.

When a man has more than one legal wife he usually provides a separate residence for each one. The relationship between the wives is often far from friendly. Apart from the tensions caused by emotional attachment to the husband, the status of each wife is determined by tradition, law and ceremony. A first-rank wife enters into marriage with an elaborate wedding ceremony and receives expensive gifts which symbolize her primacy among the wives. Traditionally, the second-rank wife is entitled to neither the elaborate ceremony nor the gifts. Second-rank wives have fewer rights than first-rank wives and theoretically must respect and obey them. Because of this difference in status, a man who takes a second wife or subsequent wives must declare what rank his prospective bride will have in the household.

All children are welcome in the family, but boys are preferred to girls. Children are breast fed until they are 3 and sometimes 4 years old, depending on when the next baby arrives. Feeding has no schedule; the child is fed when he cries. Children are treated affectionately but are not pampered. They are encouraged to be independent and to care for themselves at an early age. Nevertheless, they are allowed to be children and are not con-
stantly goaded into adopting adult attitudes or behavior. Affec­tion for a child is shown by the Khmer kiss, which consists of pressing the nose close to the cheek and strongly inhaling. The child’s head is considered sacred and is never touched (see ch. 11 Religion).

Children have no real responsibilities in the household until the age of 12 or 13. A girl learns from her mother how to perform such household duties as cooking, sewing and caring for the younger children. She also learns marketing by joining her mother on trips to the marketplace. A boy learns the techniques of agriculture by working in the fields with his father and older brothers.

The authority of parents over children is absolute and normally continues until children are married, even though an individual who has reached the age of 18 is legally an adult. Parents usually exercise their authority sparingly, preferring to teach approved behavior by means of examples set by adults and older children. Sharp reprimands and physical punishment are avoided as much as possible, and children are seldom afraid of their parents. On the few occasions when rebellion or opposition arises and an open break appears imminent, the parents usually forgo the punish­ishment rather than sacrifice a child’s happiness.

Children learn to show the proper forms of respect toward their parents, both in behavior and in terms of address. The parents use the familiar form of address toward their children as an expression of their affection.

Traditionally, a boy enters the Buddhist temple at the age of 11 or 12 to serve a period as a novice monk (see ch. 11, Religion). A primary duty of parents to their son is to prepare him for this period. When the son joins the procession with the other monks, it is a moment of rich reward—for the parents.

Entrance into the temple partially ends family supervision, but from the time the boy becomes a novice monk, and sometimes even younger, he comes under the scrutiny of his teacher (guru). The guru functions almost as a second father and gives the boy as much guidance on social matters as on religion.

Supervision is more strict for girls, who must always be above reproach if a favorable marriage is to be arranged. Parental supervision over adolescent girls in the higher social circles is especially strict.

Parents prevent young children from gaining much knowledge about sex, feeling that too much knowledge can lead to desire and eventually to trouble. Adolescent children acquire bits and pieces of information from peers in their play group, but parents discourage curiosity and usually give inaccurate answers to direct
questions about sex. A girl often receives little information until the last night of her wedding feast, when her parents and the achar (lay assistant to the monks) of the local temple explain the basic facts of sex.

The expansion of the modern educational system is changing the traditional methods of child rearing. The school has assumed much of the responsibility for providing social instruction and to some extent has supplemented the role of parents and monks in the socialization of children.

The relationship pattern among siblings is based on age. Older brothers and sisters use the familiar form of language in referring to younger children and use their given names in addressing them. Younger brothers and sisters are taught to use the respectful form of language and refer to their older brothers and sisters as "big brother" and "big sister." The use of these different language forms indicates the behavior patterns of each age group toward the other. Parents insist that children learn at a very young age to use the proper forms of respect. The reputation of a family depends greatly upon the behavior of children toward their elders. The members of the younger generation regardless of age, are required to use the respectful form of language and appropriate behavior toward all members of the older generation.

THE LIFE CYCLE

The major events of the life cycle require the participation of all members of the family and are occasions for readjustments between them as well as with the spirits who are believed to live in and near the house (see ch. 11, Religion). Each time the individual experiences a socially recognized change in status, it is marked by a ceremony. The ceremonies which take place at such times reveal the important social values of the Khmer. Ceremonial details vary regionally and sometimes differ from one village to another, but the basic features are similar. Birth, puberty and marriage ceremonies are primarily temporal in nature, but death rites are strongly religious.

Birth and Puberty

The traditional birth rites are no longer practiced in all parts of the country. Members of the educated younger generation in the cities do not observe them strictly, but they usually continue to take note of the baby's horoscope in the belief that it will have an important influence on the baby's future. In many rural areas birth ceremonies are still customary.

Birth rites are symbolically concerned with establishing harmonious relationships between the newborn child and his parents
and the surrounding spirits and with keeping the child alive. When labor pains begin, the mother is placed on a wooden slatted bed under which a fire is kept burning to drive away harmful spirits. A candle and incense sticks are lighted and placed near the bed. The midwife aids the delivery by massage. In some villages, after the child is born, the midwife asks, "Who is the child for?" and the mother or some other elder relative answers, "For me," and takes the child. Seemingly, the spirits and the people who are present are being told symbolically that the child belongs to the mother or to the family.

Soon after the delivery an achar of the local temple is called. He puts chalk crosses at the four corners of the house and a pine-apple leaf on the door as a warning sign to keep strangers from entering the house. The mother does not see outsiders for 2 or 3 days after the child’s birth.

On the third or fourth day after birth, relatives and friends are invited to a ceremony for naming the child and celebrating his birth. In some villages part of this ceremony is devoted to "asking forgiveness of the midwife" for her trouble and presenting her with small gifts for her services.

The father usually suggests several possible names for the child, and the mother chooses one of them. It is believed by some people that the names are suggested to parents in dreams. Often a horoscope is cast to determine a suitable name. Whatever method is used to select a name, the astrological sign under which the child is born is of considerable importance. The child is often given the nickname of a grotesque animal to frighten away dangerous spirits. If a baby becomes sick, his name is sometimes changed in an attempt to confuse the spirit responsible for his illness.

The traditional puberty rites are no longer extensively practiced. The ideas associated with the rites, particularly the value attached to premarital chastity among women, still persist. Traditionally, there were prepuberty rites which applied to both boys and girls. The central feature of these rites consisted of cutting the top tuft of hair at age 11 or 12 to symbolize passage from childhood to adolescence.

The true puberty ritual, known as "entering the shade," is only for girls. At the first sign of menstruation the girl is isolated from her family and from the community. The seclusion continues for a period of several days to several months, depending on the social and economic position of the family.

In general, the higher the social position, the longer is the period of isolation. During her seclusion the girl is hidden from the glances of men, whether they are kin or strangers. Foods that do not have a rice, fruit or vegetable origin are considered taboo
for the length of her seclusion. After leaving the “shade” a ceremony is held to celebrate the girl’s new status as a young woman.

Courtship and Marriage

A modern courtship may begin when a young man remarks on the beauty of the sky or of a banyan tree. To speak directly of a girl’s beauty would be considered very poor taste. The relatively sophisticated young man may next turn to writing love letters. Finally, if his intentions are serious and the girl seems to return his affections, he may visit her home and begin formal courtship procedures.

The search for a potential spouse is a major preoccupation of most adolescents. Young people of the same village see each other often in a variety of situations and have many chances to become acquainted. Premarital sex is apparently unusual in the informal relationships which may develop between adolescent boys and girls. Village morality emphasizes the importance of premarital chastity for girls. A pregnant bride brings great shame to her family.

Ideally, a young man who has decided upon a particular girl asks his parents to begin marriage arrangements. His family selects a go-between who makes inquiries and conducts negotiations with the girl’s family. Each family carefully searches out the good and bad points concerning the character, relative social status and financial position of the other. The girl herself has the right to veto any proposed marriage.

In reality, children often have little choice in the selection of their future marriage partner. It is not uncommon for the parents to select a spouse for their son or daughter, since they feel that it is their responsibility to arrange a suitable match. The strength of family ties, plus the respect and obedience which are owed to elders, usually cause young people to acquiesce to their parents’ wishes.

The engagement period may be short or last up to 2 years. During the engagement, the boy’s family presents the girl’s family with a number of small gifts of betel nut, fruit, food and clothing. Shortly before the marriage, the young man may also present them with a substantial gift of money, the amount having been agreed upon in the engagement negotiations. In some villages this is called “the price of mother’s milk,” or repayment for the mother’s early care. It was once customary for the young man to “do service” for his future bride’s family, helping them with various farm and household tasks, in order to prove his worth. The practice is no longer common, perhaps because the future bride and bridegroom now often come from different villages and live a considerable distance apart.
A man usually marries between the ages of 20 and 25, and a girl between 18 and 22. According to law, the minimum age for marriage is 14 for girls and 18 for boys, though special exceptions to this are sometimes allowed. Minors below the age of 18 cannot marry without the consent of their parents.

Marriages within the circle of blood relatives are forbidden, but first cousin marriages occasionally occur. Sexual relations and marriage are prohibited between aunts and nephews, uncles and nieces, brothers and sisters, and half brothers and half sisters. There is some historical evidence that these taboos against incest did not always apply in the case of royalty. One ruler is known to have had a child by an aunt, and brother-sister relations appear in old legends.

The meaning of the Khmer marriage ceremony is essentially the establishment of a new family and the formation of new relationships involving the family members of the bride and bridegroom. In present-day society this can be most easily accomplished through a civil marriage. This involves the declaration of the marriage to the civil court officer of the area in which the bride resides and the presentation to him of the birth certificates of the bride and bridegroom. Nevertheless, the traditional marriage ceremony remains more important to the young couple and their families and is the most common form of marriage.

The date of the wedding is determined by consulting the horoscopes of the engaged couple. Both the propitious time for the ceremony and the success of the marriage are believed to be determined by the astrological signs under which the participants were born.

The traditional wedding is a lavish and elaborate affair lasting for 3 days. It is accompanied by feasts for the invited guests and much celebration. In rural areas, several days before the wedding date, the bridegroom and his family construct a large shed, which they decorate lavishly, and another smaller one to serve as a kitchen. For the first 2 days of the wedding ceremony the bride and bridegroom and the guests gather in the large shed and are feasted. When the bride's relatives arrive, the go-betweens go back and forth between the two groups. The families exchange small gifts, one of which is a scarf, "to fix the words and tie the hearts" of the young couple. Buddhist monks are invited to participate with their prayers, but the achar plays the principal role and directs the ceremony (see ch. 11, Religion).

In the most important part of the ritual a helper encircles the couple with a cotton thread. He then passes from one hand to the other a candleholder with three lighted candles, fanning
the flames toward the couple. Taking the end of the bride’s scarf, the bridegroom follows her into another room where she offers him a set of new clothes and “invites” him to their first meal. Each eats a banana and a cake, the bride serving her new husband first as a symbol of her new role. After this ritual is completed, the bride and bridegroom return to the main room to serve the wedding guests.

In the city, marriage patterns have been greatly modified by Chinese, Vietnamese and French influences. Traditional ceremonies, once marked by ancient symbolism, have become much simpler. Marriage banquets, which formerly were prepared by the parents of the bride and bridegroom, are now often held in a restaurant. Sometimes the invited guests number between 200 and 1,200 people, each one bringing a gift of money. Part of this money is used to defray the costly wedding expenses, and the rest is given to the young couple to help them get established.

**Divorce**

Divorce is legal and relatively easy to obtain, but it is not particularly common. A married couple may be divorced in cases of incompatibility, prolonged absence without good reason, failure to provide or adultery on the part of the wife but not the husband. Some grounds apply equally to both husband and wife; blows, wounds or grave injuries to them or their children, conviction on a criminal charge, immoral or dishonest conduct and nonintercourse for more than 1 year.

Divorce is legalized by a letter endorsed by the magistrate and is granted without difficulty. When a first-rank wife is divorced, the second-rank wife may be elevated to her position. This is accomplished by a declaration before a civil court officer in the presence of two witnesses. A divorced woman cannot remarry for 10 months after the date of her divorce, but a divorced man may remarry at any time.

Each spouse retains whatever property he or she brought to the marriage, and anything gained through common effort is divided equally. Second-rank wives may keep only their own property, but they also have the right to receive alimony for subsistence if they were not the cause of the divorce.

In case of divorce the Civil Code gives the court the power to grant custody of the children to either parent, in accordance with what they judge to be in the children’s best interests. Usually the child is given to the mother until he is 15 years of age. Thereafter, a girl lives with the mother and a boy with the father until the age of 16 is reached, at which time the child may live with the parent of his choice. The parent who does not receive custody
of the child has the obligation to pay the costs of education and rearing.

**Death**

According to the Buddhist belief of the Khmer, death does not represent the end of life but an alternate aspect of existence. After death the Khmer expects to be reborn in another life. The traditional death rites are believed to aid the deceased by paving the way to a better incarnation. It is an obligation of the survivors to perform these rites to the best of their ability. Funerals, next to weddings, are the second most elaborate life cycle ceremonies and often entail large expenditures of money.

If death seems imminent, an image of Buddha is placed before the dying person, and worldly possessions and objects are hidden from his sight so that his soul may easily take leave of its earthly attachments. Monks are invited to come and recite prayers, together with relatives and friends. They join in chanting “Arahan, arahan” (one who has achieved enlightenment), in the hope that it will help the dying individual to turn his thoughts to holy matters and thus help to prevent his rebirth in an inferior state.

An areca (Asian palm) leaf is placed between the person’s fingers, and a fig leaf on which the achar has written a verse is placed on his lips. A candle is placed near the head of the bed, and a rice-filled basket and several other ritual objects are arranged near the foot. A flag with a long white streamer is stuck into the basket of rice. Immediately after death the achar lights the candle, which is later used to kindle the funeral pyre.

Death places the household in danger of harmful spirits. Breath is closely associated with the spirit of a person, and in case of death the breath-spirit must be placated lest it return to haunt the living. When a person dies, an achar is consulted, and his recommendations are followed scrupulously so that evil can be avoided.

The corpse is washed and dressed in certain accouterments by relatives and close friends. It is then wrapped in a white sheet; the legs are bound together with cotton thread; and another thread is placed around the neck. This thread is wrapped around the body and is allowed to extend outside the coffin. The members of the immediate family of the deceased shave their heads and dress in white mourning clothes.

The funeral takes place as soon as possible after death, usually the following day. The coffin is escorted to the funeral pyre by a procession of monks, relatives, friends and neighbors. When the procession leaves the house, two bamboo poles are raised over it,
and the achar performs a series of rites to prevent evil spirits from returning to haunt the family.

Cremation is the usual culmination of the death rites, though in some rural areas suicides are buried hastily with little or no ceremony. Occasionally, burial is specifically requested. The funeral pyre is built in a field or in a cleared area in the village. The procession is announced by the music of an orchestra and is led by a monk from the village temple. Following the monk are the achar, the family of the deceased, friends and neighbors. The coffin is carried on a cart decorated with flowers and escorted by several monks.

Some of the more elaborate funeral processions in the cities may appear as celebrations rather than mourning, but to the Khmer every part of such a procession is meaningful for the dead and for the living. The splendor of the procession is not an attempt to display one's wealth or social status; instead, it is an expression of concern for the welfare of the deceased.

When the procession reaches the area where the cremation is to take place, the achar raises the lid of the coffin and shakes coconut water on the dead person's face. He lights a torch with the candle brought from the house and then ignites the pyre. If the cremation fire burns quickly, it is taken as a sign that the departed leaves the world without sorrow, to be reborn in his new existence. If the fire is slow to consume the pyre, however, it is believed that there has been some omission or lack of respect by a member of the family and that misfortune may result.

After the cremation the monks throw water on the ashes. Any remaining bits of bone are collected and put into an urn, which may be placed next to the household statue of Buddha or in a tomb at the village temple.
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CHAPTER 8
LIVING CONDITIONS

Living conditions during 1967 reflected the traditional nature of the society overlaid by the nationalistic socialism of the post-independence government. During the years since independence, foreign influences had been substantially reduced, and further reduction was anticipated. Other changes also were evident.

Most rural people still lived in simple thatch houses, but numerous wood, tile and masonry homes had been constructed. Traditional clothing continued to be worn in rural areas, but urban people were turning increasingly to Western clothes. Although rice and fish were still the principal foods in the national diet, such items as condensed milk and carbonated beverages had made their appearance. The asceticism of the Buddhist religion continued to influence the lives of the people, but there was an evident increase in appreciation of material possessions and worldly pleasures.

Achievement of independence brought with it a crisis resulting from the departure of most of the European medical personnel from a country that had inadequate medical facilities and very few trained workers of its own. Since then the numbers of Cambodian doctors, nurses and other medical and paramedical personnel have grown substantially, and a great many hospitals and infirmaries have been built.

In 1967 additional medical facilities were under construction, and still more were planned; schools were graduating increasing numbers of medical personnel of all kinds; and the number of qualified young people anxious to undertake study to prepare themselves for careers in medicine exceeded the ability of the schools to absorb them. Both hospital facilities and medical personnel, however, were still in short supply and would remain so for many years. As a consequence, public health services were decentralized, and emphasis was placed on preventive medicine and on instruction in modern health and sanitary practices.

The public health program has received popular support. People have been willing to contribute time and money to the building of hospitals and health centers and have been anxious to use these facilities when they were built. There was little evidence of
reluctance on the part of the rural population to accept modern medical and sanitary practices, although a persistent belief in folk medicine and magical practices has accompanied the acceptance of spraying with DDT and of performing vaccinations.

Welfare institutions were few. Only civil servants, retired military personnel, the police and employees of a few industrial and commercial enterprises were covered by pension plans. The need for public welfare was not acute in a country where care for the aged and infirm was an unquestioned family and village responsibility.

The improvement of general living conditions is important to Prince Norodom Sihanouk and his People’s Socialist Community (Sangkum Reasr Niyum—usually called Sangkum). His political strength derives from his support by most of the population, urban as well as rural. The Prince’s efforts to improve the well-being of all of the people through his paternalistic socialism were receiving enthusiastic popular endorsement.

**POPULAR BELIEFS**

Many generations have practiced the ancient methods of combating illness suggested by monks, sorcerers and diviners. In some instances these methods have proved to be useful by modern medical standards. For example, chaulmoogra oil is used in the treatment of leprosy; herb teas, for intestinal ailments; and frequent bathing, as a basic hygienic measure. It is not clear, however, to what extent bathing is regarded as a health measure or merely as a rite associated with many ritualistic and customary practices. In general, the traditional treatment consists of protective magic designed to propitiate the good spirits and drive out the evil ones, and in this it differs little from hereditary practices followed in other Southeast Asian countries.

The good spirits, though mainly beneficent, are believed to be sensitive about their rights and capable of causing illness in persons who do not show the proper respect or propitiate them at the right times. Evil spirits are thought to be malevolent; by entering the body they may cause illness and can be driven out only by a sorcerer. Various preventive or curative measures which combine magic, prayer and specific medicinal potions are used. Amulets are sometimes worn on the body as popular means of warding off the spirits or of hastening the cure. When evil spirits are suspected of being the cause of an illness, a sorcerer (kru) is summoned. The treatments are varied; one involves making a small raft or basket and filling it with a crudely made doll and an egg that has been rubbed over the sick person. This treatment of sickness is losing favor to prescriptions calling for the boiling of water and the adequate cooking of meat. Prayer and native
medicines also have their part in healing. The remedies include special plants, oils and potions and may combine symbolic, magical and medicinal properties.

Traditional ideas about health and disease are often dominated by superstition. Large, protuberant bellies in undernourished children, resulting from a combination of underfeeding and intestinal parasites, are considered by many mothers as evidence of feeding too much fish. Solid foods are not ordinarily given to infants until they are at least 10 months old in the belief that these foods are too rich for the baby's stomach. Health education is doing much to combat these superstitions.

**INCIDENCE OF DISEASE**

Public health problems fall into three general categories: contagious diseases which are unrelated to faulty sanitary conditions or a lack of basic health education on the part of the population; diseases caused by poor sanitary conditions and poor hygiene practices; and disabilities and deaths resulting from lack of adequate medical services.

In the first category are malaria, dengue fever, diphtheria, whooping cough, filariasis, leprosy, trachoma, tuberculosis and smallpox. The second category includes diseases transmitted by water, food, filth and flies; typhoid fever; intestinal parasites; scabies and other skin infections; and malnutrition. The third category consists of such ailments as respiratory infections resulting in pneumonia, untreated appendicitis, unset fractures which often heal with deformity, maternal and newborn baby deaths caused by lack of health supervision during pregnancy, and acute infectious diseases (such as meningitis), which are curable with adequate treatment but are sometimes fatal without treatment.

Mosquitoes bearing malaria, filariasis and dengue fever are found in the foothills and also near the streams and rivers after the rainy season when the flow of water becomes sluggish. The common housefly, a transmitter of filthborne disease, is ubiquitous and most prevalent during the rainy season. Rats are numerous and are the hosts of fleas which carry plague, typhus and other diseases. Leeches are found in wet places during the rainy season and can cause sores which heal slowly.

Crocodiles inhabit the southern part of the country and are responsible for a number of deaths annually. There are also venomous snakes, including the coral snake and several varieties of cobra.

As many as 15 percent of the people have annual attacks of malaria, the areas of greatest incidence being in the plateaus and foothills. Lack of adequate refrigeration is conducive to the prevai-
lence of food poisoning. Both amoebic and bacillary dysentery occur. Only about 100 cases of typhoid fever are reported annually, but the figure is probably only a small fraction of the total number of cases. About 80 percent of the schoolchildren examined have intestinal parasites.

Accurate annual mortality rates for the entire population are not available, but official estimates indicate that the number of deaths between April 1958 and April 1959 was 95,000, or a rate of approximately 20 per 1,000 population for this period. The causes of death are difficult to ascertain since the majority occur in the home and the type of illness may not be reported or even known to the family of the deceased. Estimated figures for 1965 show the country's health record to have been at its worst in infant mortality; its rate of 127 per 1,000 live births was among the highest in the Far East.

HEALTH AND SANITATION PROGRAMS

Colonial Period

The first medical service in Indochina was created by the French in the 1860's to meet the needs of the French troops; its services were soon extended to the indigenous peoples. In 1890, at Louis Pasteur's request, the Pasteur Institute of Paris was established in Saigon, and three other branches were set up in Vietnam to serve all of Indochina. The people of Indochina had the benefits of the world-famous work done in the Institute, including the invention of antivenom serum, the BCG test for tuberculosis and the discovery of the plague bacillus and of the role of fleas in its transmission.

The Public Health and Medical Services of Indochina, organized in 1914, covered both the civil and the military populations. A local health officer assigned to each province was responsible to the health director of one of the five Indochinese territories. An inspector general in Saigon was administrative head of the Public Health Services; in 1931 he was relieved of his military duties so that he might concentrate on civilian health control, seaport and airport health services, vaccination, health inspections and general sanitation and hospital work. The Public Health Services also reviewed local state plans and budgets and cooperated on research with the Pasteur Institute.

During this period hospitals were established in Phnom Penh and the provincial capitals. Infirmarys, maternity centers, dispensaries and first aid stations were set up in rural areas. There was some training of nurses, midwives, public health officers and other medical personnel. The available personnel, however, was limited; visits by provincial and territorial health officers to rural areas were infrequent; money and supplies were
low; and there was no permanent provision for continued educa-
tion in hygiene and health practices. Nevertheless, positive health
gains resulted from the French efforts. In 1936, 600,000 people
were immunized against cholera; later in 1936 and in 1937, even
though there was a severe cholera epidemic in Thailand, no cases
of cholera occurred in Cambodia. Smallpox vaccination has also
been effective.

**General Government Policies**

The regulation of health and sanitation in 1967 was patterned
on the French system. The Cambodian Sanitary Code, adopted
on November 7, 1930, and later modified, continued to be the
basic sanitary law.

Public health services operate, as they did under the French,
on a basis both of private regulation, affecting only individuals,
and of public regulation, affecting all the people in a particular
category. Their authority extends over the entire country; they
set standards for entrance into nursing and technical schools,
initiate curricula, give examinations for licenses, make staff ap-
pointments of doctors and other medical personnel, authorize
transfers of an individual doctor's or dentist's office from one
area or one province to another, issue licenses for the sale of cer-
tain drugs and promulgate municipal ordinances on sanitary
measures.

The public health problems and responsibilities remain basic-
ally the same as they were during the time of the French
protectorate, and the government is making an energetic effort
to improve conditions. Late in 1967 public health activities were
being carried out under direction of the Ministry of Public Health
and Labor. The government has instituted a program strongly
supported by foreign aid which has as its objectives the improve-
ment of mother and infant care, advances in rural hygiene, pro-
tection against epidemics and an all-out struggle against malaria,
yaws and tuberculosis.

An indication of the growth of government interest in public
health in the years after independence was seen in budget figures.
The 1955 allocation of 83 million riels (see Glossary) grew
steadily to 385 million riels in 1962. At that point, the alloca-
tions ceased to grow. Varying by only a few million riels each
year, the allocations were only about 360 million riels for 1967.

A number of health facilities were constructed during the
1962-67 period, and the number of public health personnel grew
substantially. A possible explanation for the decrease in public
health expenditure is that an increasing amount of the cost was
being borne by voluntary contributions of funds and services from
private individuals. During the mid-1960's the focus of govern-