values and a normative code for their daily lives. Its cultural significance has become increasingly apparent, largely through the efforts of Prince Norodom Sihanouk. He has sought to inspire a sense of national identity and unity by rejuvenating old traditions and has provided the people with a common philosophy based on Buddhist values and attitudes.

THERAVADA BUDDHISM

Buddhism had its origins in the teaching of Siddharta Gautama, who lived in the sixth century B.C. in the northern Indian of Maghada. Born the son of a wealthy nobleman, Gautama became dissatisfied with his princely life and renounced it to become a wandering ascetic. He spent 6 years in meditation and the search for salvation and finally attained enlightenment while seated under a bo tree. Thereafter, he was known as Buddha, the Enlightened One.

After Buddha’s death, the faith that he inspired was institutionalized for about 400 years in the monastic order founded by his disciples, and his teachings were orally transmitted by them. It is generally agreed that several centuries passed before the oral tradition appeared in manuscript.

Buddhism first spread throughout India and Ceylon and later was carried by monks to the countries of Southeast Asia, Central Asia, China, Korea and Japan. During the early centuries of Buddhism’s growth as a religious movement, a major schism arose among the Indian Buddhists concerning the philosophical and spiritual teachings of Buddha. As a result of the schism, Buddhism has been divided for over 2,000 years into two major concepts—the Mahayana or Greater Vehicle and the Hinayana or Lesser Vehicle.

The form of Buddhism which eventually became established in Cambodia was Hinayana. Among its followers the preferred term is Theravada, the Way of the Elders. This is the system of beliefs recorded in the ancient Pali dialect, which is felt by its adherents, as well as by many scholars of Buddhism, to represent most faithfully the original ideas and intent of its founder.

The other form of Buddhism is the Mahayana or Greater Vehicle. These beliefs and practices are based on scriptures which were originally recorded in Sanskrit. It is no longer widely supported in India, but Mahayana Buddhism is practiced in Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, China, Korea and Japan.

Details are lacking on the spread of Buddhism and Hinduism into Southeast Asia. It is certain, however, that Hinduism appeared first, introducing the worship of Siva and Vishnu and a host of other gods and eventually becoming the state religion of Fu-Nan, Champa and the Khmer kingdom in what is now
Cambodia. During the sixth century, Mahayana Buddhism seems to have flooded Southeast Asia, entering Cambodia from China by way of Vietnam. Hinayana or Theravada Buddhism arrived some time after this and eventually became dominant over Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism, but it is not certain when or how it became the state religion (see ch. 3, Historical Setting).

A Chinese envoy to Cambodia during the thirteenth century indicated in his writing that the first Theravada Buddhist king, a usurper to the throne, was ruling in Angkor Thom. It is probable that Theravada became the state religion at about this time, and Buddhism has remained the state religion since then.

**Doctrine**

Buddhism is a reaction against ancient Hindu doctrines, but some of the primary assumptions of Hinduism are vital to Buddhist theory. Initially, the Buddhist as well as the Hindu sees the universe and all forms of life as parts of a process of internal flux. The character of this flow is cyclical and recurrent. For the individual, this means that the present life is merely a phase in an endless progression of events, which neither ceases with death nor continues indefinitely in some heavenly afterlife. Life and death are merely alternate aspects of individual existence, marked by the transition points of birth and deanimation. The individual who follows this course is essentially one who is continually reborn in new guises, not all of them necessarily human. It is possible that his next existence will be that of a god or an animal. This endless cycle of rebirth in which all creatures are involved is known as *samsara* (wheel of life).

As existence proceeds, what the individual becomes is not determined by a creator god or by a capricious fate. One's future life is directly dependent on one's own conduct in this and in previous lives through the workings of an impersonal law of cause and effect called *karma*. The daily acts of the individual have inevitable consequences on an improved or impaired *karma* which will determine the character of his future existence.

The popular concept of merit is a modification of the theory of *karma*. Most people believe that the performance of good deeds and adherence to Buddha's teachings are means of earning religious merit. A favorable balance of merit will ensure an improved future existence.

Theoretically, through moral behavior and good deeds a sincere Buddhist can anticipate a constantly improving status, in social and material terms as well as in spiritual rewards. These are not the ultimate objectives of Buddhism, however, because the individual remains tied to the wheel of life in an endless round of existences. It is the complete escape from the tyranny of rebirth which is the essence of Buddha's message.
Self-emancipation in *nirvana*, the state of enlightenment and true wisdom, is the ultimate goal of conscientious Buddhists. *Nirvana* involves the negation of all that the individual experiences during the cycle of rebirth and is described by Buddhists as the extinction of greed, delusion and hate. The Buddhist continually strives to perfect himself through the many stages of his existence, conquering his worldly desires through concentration and meditation, in the effort to attain *nirvana*.

**Monastic Organization**

The Buddhist hierarchy in Cambodia is independently organized in accordance with regulations formulated in 1943 and later modified in 1948. The Chief of State is the head of the Buddhist clergy. He appoints the superiors (*sangneayuk*), the functioning heads of the monastic orders, and the monks who have been nominated to the highest ranks of the hierarchy.

There are two independent monastic orders: the Mohanikay (Great Congregation) and the Thommayut (Those Who Are Attached to the Doctrine). The Mohanikay is by far the older and the larger of the two, with over 90 percent of the permanent monks. It is the order which is more popular with the common people and is unchallenged in the rural areas.

The Thommayut order was introduced into the country in 1864 by a monk who had studied in Thailand. This group considers itself an orthodox reforming order in contrast to the more liberal Mohanikay. Despite its small number of adherents and its minor role among the common people, the Thommayut order is significant and holds great prestige because it has been adopted by most members of the royal family as well as by many important government officials.

It is difficult to estimate the total number of monks in Cambodia at any one time because of the relatively easy and continual entry and departure of men from the monasteries. All males traditionally enter the monkhood at some time in their lives. Many individuals enter the monkhood for only a short time and never intend to commit themselves for life. Those who take the monastic vows and become permanent members of a monastic order are in the minority. According to one estimate in the early 1960’s there were 63,000 permanent monks in the country, of whom about 61,000 belonged to the Mohanikay order; of the 2,700 Buddhist temples over 2,500 were under Mohanikay control.

There appears to be no real doctrinal difference between the Thommayut and Mohanikay groups, but they disagree on certain details of behavior and on adherence to doctrine. The Thommayut group criticizes the Mohanikay monks for their less strict ob-
servance of Buddha's teaching and calls for a reevaluation of the sacred texts.

The more liberal Mohanikay order is beset by factionalism. Its orthodox wing, the Thommakay, sympathizes with the views of the Thommayut order. This faction has gained a considerable degree of control in the Mohanikay hierarchy. Leaders of the Thommakay faction have avoided any formal support of the effort of the Thommayut to dominate the Mohanikay, but it is possible that the Thommakay serves as an intermediate force in aiding the Thommayut attempts to revive orthodoxy in the Mohanikay order.

An additional source of conflict within the Mohanikay sect has developed through the introduction of certain monks to scientific and intellectual knowledge and especially to the writings of European scholars on the subject of Buddhism. This has stirred a critical spirit and led to reexamination of the Buddhist scriptures. These scholarly monks comprise the modernist faction. They are opposed by the traditionalists, who prefer a reversion to orthodoxy rather than an adjustment of doctrine to modern ways of life and thought.

Under constant pressure from their Thommayut rival, the internal discipline of the Mohanikay order has been greatly disorganized. The temple officials frequently must deal with opposing modernist and traditionalist cliques within the temple unit. The divisive effects of such factionalism have resulted in confusion and even anarchy in some temples.

The Buddhist hierarchy is formed from among the monks who have taken permanent monastic vows. In both orders there are two main high ranks of the clergy, Reachea Khanac and Thananouckram. Promotion to the higher of the two, Reachea Khanac, is made by the Chief of State on the recommendation of the superiors of each order and the secretary in charge of religion. Within this rank there are four subranks. A monk must serve 20 years in the priesthood to receive nomination to the lowest of these ranks. Elevation to Thananouckram, a rank below all four subranks of Reachea Khanac, is made by the superior of the order in agreement with the secretary in charge of religion. Many monks holding the lower offices in each of the orders have achieved this rank.

Each province forms a kon (diocese) which is divided into districts. The capital city of Phnom Penh constitutes a kon for both sects. The religious head of each kon is of the Reachea Khanac rank and is directly responsible to his superior and to the secretary in charge of religion. The religious head of each district is of Thananouckram rank and supervises the temples in his district.
Religious councils are of three types: the highest council assists the superior of each order; an executive assembly assists the head of each kra; and the lowest council assists the work of each district head. Each of these three religious councils is composed of members of Reachea Khanac rank, named by the Chief of State on the recommendation of the secretary in charge of religion. The secretaries of the councils are of Thananouckram rank.

Each temple is headed by a chau-athikar (chief monk). He is assisted in managing the temple and conducting the services by one or two other monks, the kru soth. The achar or achar (lay assistant) serves as a temporal intermediary between the monks and laymen. He represents the monks in dealings with the government and leads the prayers and chants at ceremonies. The chau-athikar supervises the monks and novices and the students at the temple school, making certain that all conform to lay, as well as religious, standards. The achar and the chau-athikar are responsible for all temple grounds and buildings. It is also the duty of the chau-athikar to take the initiative in encouraging the intellectual and moral development of his subordinates.

THE MONKS

Buddhist monks are accorded great respect and deference as the living symbols of Buddhism. They are seen everywhere, plodding along the roads carrying yellow parasols, meditating in the forests or silently professing their alms bowls in the villages. In wearing the yellow robe the monk signifies that he has forsaken secular concerns. His renunciation of the world and his observance of the strict monastic vows are evidence of his nearness to nirvana, the ultimate goal of all sincere Buddhists. It is his status in this regard that entitles him to the respect and support of the layman.

To become a permanent monk a man must be at least 21 years old and unmarried. He must have studied Buddhism and understood its principles. The decision to take the permanent monastic vows (which are actually not permanent because an individual may leave the priesthood at any time) is a personal one, made on the basis of desire and conviction.

The novice or temporary monk is usually under 21, but some older men enter the monkhood for short periods at various times during their lives. Traditionally, almost all young men spend at least a few months in the priesthood before launching into full adult life. The custom is still widespread, and most males over the age of 16 have served a term in the monastery. Fewer boys, however, now become novices than formerly chose to do so. The possession of material goods and a cash income seem to be gaining significance at the expense of this religious and social tradition.
The majority of those who enter the priesthood without intending to make it a permanent profession take temporary vows for a period of 6 months to 1 year. These temporary vows are one of the most readily available means for the layman to earn Buddhist merit and thereby improve his karma.

Before he can enter the priesthood as a temporary monk, a young man must have the consent of his parents or his wife if he is married. He cannot enter the priesthood if he has killed or stolen. A non-Buddhist may become a monk because the pronouncement of the initiation vows includes the implicit renunciation of his former religion.

The ordination ceremony is colorful and ritualistic. It is held before the beginning of Vassa, the monks' period of religious retreat which coincides with the rainy season. The young men who are entering the priesthood dress in their best clothes and mount richly decorated horses that are led by dancers and musicians. This elaborate procession is a symbol representing the circumstances in which Buddha renounced his luxurious life.

**Life in the Temple**

The monks come from every walk of life and are varied in character and motivation. Some act from motives of pure spiritual devotion; others desire only to conform to the traditions of their ancestors, and some aspire to Buddhahood.

Whatever his motives are, once the monk (temporary or permanent) becomes a member of the temple community, he is expected to observe the vows of poverty and chastity. All monks must adhere to the 10 Buddhist precepts which forbid the taking of life; stealing; sinning against virtue; telling a lie; consuming intoxicants; eating after midday; participating in any activity that excites the senses, such as dancing, singing or creating music; using any personal adornments; reclining on a raised bed; and handling money. These precepts are only a part of the 227 rules for priestly conduct contained in the Buddhist scriptures. Observance of the monastic discipline is a crucial part of the priest's role as a meritorious and spiritual figure.

Monks are outside the scope of legal action and are exempt from all public duties. They can neither witness a legal document nor give legal testimony. Monks do not vote, and they cannot be tried in an ordinary court of law without first being defrocked. The suspension or expulsion of a monk can be decided by the temple head, but only on the authority of the superior of the order.

The typical temple compound consists of a cluster of buildings located inside a walled enclosure. The entrance is usually from the east and often is guarded by grotesque figures in animal or
human form. The compound includes the temple proper, several other open halls, living quarters for the monks, several tombs and a few shrines for propitiation of the spirits. The monks' quarters are simple in structure and are divided into sparsely furnished cells.

The daily routine in the monastery is designed to encourage meditation and freedom from the cares of the secular world. All food and clothing are supplied by the lay community in which the temple is situated. These lay donors earn religious merit by their offerings.

The monks rise before dawn each day and spend the first waking hours in solitary meditation and prayer. Each monk then takes his begging bowl and leaves the temple to seek alms. In anticipation of a monk's early morning visit, each housewife usually prepares an extra portion of the family meal to put in his alms bowl. This offering may consist of a small amount of meat or fish in addition to rice and vegetables. Before noon the monks reassemble at the temple with their filled alms bowls. The meal, which is communal and the last one of the day, must be finished before noon. Thereafter, the monks must abstain from all food, but they may drink liquids.

During Vassa the monks refrain from going outside the temple compound and devote themselves to meditation and study of the sacred texts. Vassa occurs annually during the rainy season, conforming to the practice of religious retreat of Buddha, and hence is considered the most sacred time of the year. During this period the devout bring their food offerings to the temple.

**Education**

The monk has traditionally occupied a unique position in the transmission of Khmer culture and values. As a literate group versed in the Khmer language and in the Pali and Sanskrit scriptures, the monks acted as teachers in the monastic schools. All boys were sent to the school in their village for at least one term of religious instruction, either as lay students or as novices. In the past the temple schools were the sole means of education in the rural areas, but they are now being replaced by secular state schools. In the few modernized temple schools the monks must meet the same requirements as the teachers in the secular schools. In these schools the monks' role as instructors in religious precepts is almost totally subordinate to their function as teachers in secular subjects (see ch. 9, Education).

Life in the temple, in itself, is regarded as an opportunity for education. All those who enter it for any length of time are assumed to be seeking a greater understanding of Buddhism through intensive study and contemplation of Theravada prin-
The monks vary greatly in the quality and type of their educational backgrounds. Some are university graduates, and others can barely read the scriptures.

There are several Buddhist institutions which train monks for their work, prepare them for higher office and provide a number of other services. The Buddhist Lycée and the Buddhist University offer opportunities for higher education to the Buddhist clergy. The Higher School of Pali provides courses on the life of Buddha, in Buddhist prayers and in foreign languages. The Buddhist Institute is a center of Buddhist studies, designed to coordinate the efforts of Cambodian scholars at home and abroad. The Institute houses the library of Buddhist literature and Oriental studies. The Commission of the Tripitaka (the three-part collection of Buddhist scripture) is currently engaged in translating the Pali and Sanskrit scriptures into Khmer.

Relations With the Lay Community

The monks have a close and interdependent relationship with the laymen of their community, but there is a certain psychological distance between them. In abstaining from secular life the monk becomes an isolated and religious figure, who in many ways is removed from the layman’s realm of experience. The priest depends for all of his material needs on the layman, who finds his best opportunity to earn merit regularly in the offering of goods and services to the monks. In addition, he is dependent on the ritual services of the monks for various ceremonies.

The monk is accorded great respect and, to most people, is above reproach. Laymen must observe a code of respectful behavior and a special honorific form of language in their relations with the monks. A monk must never be made to feel that he is an ordinary mortal. His person, especially his shaved head, is considered sacred.

Theravada Buddhism does not acknowledge the existence of a supreme being. Buddha is not a deity who may be called upon to intervene in human affairs. In this context the monk is not a religious intermediary but is concerned primarily with his own salvation. According to Theravada doctrine, the monk is not obligated to perform any duties with respect to laymen. In practice, however, most monks expound the scriptures on holy days, give advice on village matters and take part in many religious ceremonies. Some are teachers in the temple schools. They also console the sick and unfortunate and perform medical services that range from magic to genuine scientific therapy.

RELIGIOUS CEREMONY

The lives of the people are frequently punctuated by cere-
monial occasions and days with special religious significance. The temple is the center for community observance of the semi-monthly Buddhist holy days, the major Buddhist holidays and a number of local religious festivals. Many of the rituals performed in accordance with these occasions combine Buddhism and vestiges of Hindu and animist practices.

Most national holidays have a religious theme and are celebrated by special ceremonies in the temples. Among the most important are Prachum, a 3-day observance in honor of the dead; Meakha Bauja, a Buddhist holiday commemorating the death of Buddha; and Visa Bauja, commemorating Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death (see ch. 8, Living Conditions). The layman can earn a considerable amount of merit on these days by attending ceremonies, giving food or money to the monks and observing more than the usual number of precepts. Donations of money are placed in a receptacle inside the temple rather than given directly to the monks, who are forbidden to handle money.

Among the most popular religious celebrations are the community Kathen festivals held each year after the monks' rainy season retreat. Each monastery receives one Kathen festival from the members of the local lay community. All those who can afford it contribute gifts of money, food, clothing and other useful articles to the monks and the temple. Those who cannot afford to give these things may contribute their services as waiters at the festival or as laborers on temple building projects.

The Kathen festival usually attracts people from other villages, and its religious nature is combined with the atmosphere of a gay social event. It provides people with the opportunity to renew old acquaintances and to enjoy feasts, folk dancing and music. The individual or group organizing a Kathen earns great religious merit, and those who attend also receive merit, though a lesser amount. Other temple festivals are held throughout the year, but they do not have the universal significance of the Kathen.

Another periodically observed religious event is the Buddhist holy day, which occurs twice in a lunar month. Devout Buddhists refrain from working on holy days and visit the temple to hear the monks recite the scriptures. Some may stay all day, listening to sermons, prayers and recitations. Others spend the day in quiet retreat in their own homes. Older people may observe such ascetic disciplines as fasting after midday. Necessity often prevents those who are actively engaged in agriculture from regularly observing the holy days. Crops must be harvested and seedlings transplanted despite the occurrence of a holy day.
ROLE OF BUDDHISM IN CAMBODIAN LIFE

Children learn the outward forms of worship at an early age by observing and listening to their parents during temple ceremonies. Children who attend secular or temple schools from the age of 8 or 9 receive instruction in the Buddhist precepts and begin to accept them as moral guidelines. At adolescence children are considered religious adults in that they are expected to understand fully the basic principles of Buddhism, and they can begin to accumulate a store of merit.

Most people try to observe the five precepts which comprise the Cambodian moral code. These are to abstain from taking life, from stealing, from committing adultery, from telling a lie and from partaking of intoxicants.

The precept which is taken most seriously and is strictly observed is the first, which forbids killing. A devout Buddhist will not engage in an occupation which is directly or indirectly involved in the taking of life, such as the slaughter of animals for food. A man may give the task of killing a chicken to his child rather than do it himself, because children are not believed fully responsible for their sins. The slaughter of larger animals for food is done by Cham-Malay butchers. The proscription against killing does not extend to the eating of meat.

Religious piety and observance generally vary with sex and age. Women have a lower religious status than men and cannot hope to become equal in their present existence. They may not enter the priesthood and are prohibited from having close contact with monks. It is believed that devout and virtuous women may be reborn as men in the next incarnation. In order to achieve this goal and to compensate for the liability of their sex, women are usually more pious and attend more ceremonies than men.

Piety increases with age. Elderly persons of both sexes are more concerned with the next life and are usually free from the secular concerns of this one. Married children care for their aging parents and support their religious devotion just as they support the monks. During his last years a person spends most of his time in meditation and religious activities, accumulating great quantities of merit and earning the respect of all who admire his piety.

SPIRIT WORSHIP AND SORCERY

An indigenous system of animistic beliefs and practices existed in Cambodia long before the introduction of Hinduism and Buddhism. Some of these beliefs and practices have persisted and have blended with Buddhism and vestiges of Hinduism to form the sum of Cambodian religious behavior. Theravada doctrine offers a way to ultimate salvation in the distant future, but it
provides little comfort or aid for the more immediate dangers and emergencies of daily life.

In Cambodia and the other Theravada countries, security in daily affairs is sought through the propitiation of spirits, the practice of astrology and fortunetelling and the use of magical charms and spells. In rural villages, especially, people still seek the help of a sorcerer in placating the spirits, and at the same time they observe Buddhist beliefs and practices as related to their spiritual existence in the next life.

Spirits fall into several categories which include the neak ta (spirits of trees, stones, forests and villages), the house guardian spirits, a number of demonlike spirits and the guardian spirits of animals. Only the house guardian spirits are entirely benevolent; the others are said to possess an instinct for mischief and vengeance and may act mercilessly against those who fail to show proper respect. In order to secure the favor and forbearance of these vengeful spirits, the individual must perform the correct rituals and place offerings before the spirits’ shrines.

The individual who wishes to influence the supernatural often seeks the aid of a kru (sorcerer). The kru is a magical practitioner who has a number of talents, which may include curing, finding lost objects, brewing love potions and making protective amulets.

The kru is believed to be able to inject supernatural power into an amulet by drawing on his secret magical formula. Once the amulet is imbued with the desired magical properties and ownership is ritually established, the owner takes exclusive possession, guarding and cherishing his link with the supernatural world.

Other specialists are recognized as having the ability to intervene with the spirits. The achar of the local Buddhist temple is sometimes such a specialist and has extensive knowledge of various rituals, particularly those concerned with magical curing. There is a belief that some illnesses are caused by offending a spirit or by not being a devout Buddhist. A specialist in curing “spiritual” illness may be called upon in this case to perform the necessary ceremonies and make offerings to the spirits.

In many villages there are people, usually women, who act as spirit mediums called rup araks. The rup arak occasionally becomes possessed by spirits and has the ability to speak for them. Villagers may call upon the arak to perform ceremonies at various times throughout the year and to communicate with the spirit world.
CHAPTER 12
SOCIAL VALUES

The social values represent a synthesis of indigenous and foreign traditions. The Khmer embraced the successive beliefs of Hinduism and Buddhism, combining them with their own distinctive type of spirit worship. Religious ideals have been shaped by the realities of Cambodian life, resulting in cultural beliefs and values unique to the Khmer people. An agricultural means of subsistence, a tropical environment and a territory threatened for centuries by aggressive neighboring countries have shaped the attitudes of the people.

Foreign influences during the last 50 years have prompted the modification of traditional values by some educated urban groups. Modern communications and the expanding system of secular education have introduced new ideas suggesting to the younger generation that traditional beliefs and institutions are not adequate to deal with the modern world. The conflict between old and new ways of thinking has grown with urbanization, but in 1967 traditional values continued to be dominant.

Most Khmer still live in rural villages and have had only limited contact with modern or foreign ideas. The average Khmer has been conditioned by Buddhist teachings to believe that this life is of less importance than the next one and that material goals are not as important as spiritual goals. The Buddhist precepts provide the means for attaining an improved rebirth and also form the guidelines of socially approved behavior. The individual ideally is free to conduct his life as he pleases, provided that his actions do not violate any of the precepts.

Most people accept the status into which they were born and are not ambitious or envious of those who have wealth or high social position. There is a general feeling that one should respect and obey authority and that all people deserve respect, regardless of their status. The Khmer greatly value their independence and individuality and do not feel that they should impose their will on others. Social relationships should be warm and congenial, based on the mutual restraint and respect of all persons involved.

Many of the objectives of the country's leadership are based on the assumption that it is possible to pursue social and eco-
nomic change while keeping traditional values intact. There is a deliberate effort on the part of educators and government leaders to retain these traditional values on the premise that they are deeply rooted in the Khmer culture and are essential to its continuation and stability.

**TRADITIONAL VALUES**

Social values have been strongly influenced by the ideals set forth in Buddhist teachings. Buddhist beliefs underlie the basic outlook on life of most people, guide their daily actions and influence their emotional reactions to given situations. Ideas about the nature of man, accepted goals in life and the concept of good and evil are expressed in Buddhist terms.

Buddhist monks have traditionally interpreted religious teachings and applied their principles to social institutions and behavior. Because of their role as educational leaders and often as the only literate persons in the community, the monks have been primarily responsible for the transmission and interpretation of Buddhist values. The temple schools have been the principal medium for the inculcation of values in each new generation. Since other means of communication were lacking until recently, the temple also served as the major means of disseminating ideas and information (see ch. 16, Public Information).

Buddhist ideals are influential in all aspects of secular life and affect not only popular behavior norms, but also the country's legal decisions. Cambodian society permits a considerable degree of individual choice in matters of personal behavior, but there are also definite limits for that which is considered normal and acceptable. Individuals who consistently and flagrantly violate the Buddhist precepts leave themselves open to the criticism of the community, and in extreme cases they may be considered outcasts or criminals. Some legal decisions have reflected the injunctions of Buddhist precepts. Such people as thieves, adulterers or drunkards, who openly and repeatedly violate one of the precepts, may legally be deprived of some of their rights.

Evidence of good character is seen in the ideal behavior of the individual who attends most temple ceremonies, obeys the Buddhist precepts and makes regular donations to the temple and the monks. The person who wishes to be accepted warmly by others in his community must at least approximate this behavior. Community judgments of good character are important in the election of local officials and in such personal acts as the selection of a suitable marriage partner.

Cambodians attach no particular value to work for its own sake. Hard work does not bring them social prestige in this life, nor will it assure salvation in the next. Attitudes toward the
relative merits of work and leisure must be judged against the background of the economic life. An abundance of arable land, a benevolent climate and a usually satisfactory annual harvest have protected the country from famine and extreme poverty.

The Khmer traditionally have owned their own land and have been able to grow an abundance of food with relative ease. They work hard when the need arises, such as the busy agricultural season. Most people, however, see no reason to do more than this and feel no pressure to try new farming methods or increase their crops. The average farmer is independent and individualistic and has no high ambitions or goals. His primary concern is to produce enough food to satisfy his family's needs. According to custom he sells any surplus to a local Chinese merchant and donates some of the money to the temple.

Manual labor traditionally has been the work of members of the lower classes—the coolie laborers and pedicab drivers. Government leaders and educators are attempting to change peoples' attitudes toward manual labor. Prince Norodom Sihanouk frequently participates in projects which involve physical labor, in order to persuade the Khmer that there is no disgrace in working with one's hands. One of the major problems of educators is to instill an appreciation for physical skills, and the success of many government projects depends on the willingness of trained personnel to apply and demonstrate their technical knowledge in practical situations.

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The traditional social structure was based on Hindu principles and supported by Cambodian monks' interpretations of the scriptures. Buddhist teachings, as interpreted by the monks, have emphasized the importance of the next life and the acceptance in this one of one's status as determined at birth. Most people have tended to accept their respective roles in the society and to conform to what they feel is expected of them. There seems to be little feeling of jealousy or hostility toward those of higher social status. Most Khmer respect and obey authority and admire the man of aristocratic birth and good breeding. The ideal of submission to authority is complemented by a tradition of magnanimity to subordinates.

The tradition of order and submission has been largely unaffected by historical change. Most people accept the principle of the Khmer social system and have not challenged the validity of distinctions between royalty and commoners. Those of higher birth or greater wealth were believed to have accumulated large stores of merit in their previous existences. Prince Sihanouk is
honored as the symbol of the Khmer nation just as the kings of the ancient Khmer empire were honored.

Children are taught patterns of behavior appropriate to their class or status in society and are conditioned by their Buddhist beliefs to accept the existing social order.

Personal relationships are of great importance to the Khmer. Patterns of behavior learned within the family are extended to relationships in the larger society (see ch. 7, Family). In any social relationship, elder persons should be shown respect. Younger ones are indulged and guided, and people of approximately the same age treat each other in a courteous and friendly manner as befits equals. Ideally, each individual in a relationship respects the personality of the other. It is a congenial, warm exchange in which mutual respect exists between all persons, whatever their status.

The Buddhist precepts urge generous and congenial relationships with others—either with relatives or with those outside the family. Harmonious personal relationships following patterns learned in the family context are considered ideal. Family quarrels are believed by some people to be punished by the ancestral family spirits. Caution and restraint may prevent an argument between family members who fear that one of their number may be punished with illness or an accident sent by an ancestral spirit. Outside the family, individual conscience and community sanctions in the form of critical gossip encourage conformity to accepted ideas of proper, courteous and friendly behavior.

People prefer to have their social relations clearly defined, so that each person involved knows his relative status and the role he must play. The individual Khmer may experience considerable insecurity in an encounter if he and the other persons involved have not previously established an acquaintance and a mutual understanding of their relative positions. The rules of etiquette between persons of different status and rank are well defined, and the average person knows his appropriate and circumscribed role for every situation.

After the individual has ascertained the type of relationship and the appropriate formal courtesies have been exchanged, he may assume a more informal manner. The basic guidelines for behavior must still be observed, however. The Khmer usually cannot be comfortable in a relationship which develops from an initially personal basis. His insecurity in such a situation stems from his inability in the initial encounter to judge the status of the other person and to determine what his own role should be.

One of the individual Khmer's greatest anxieties is that he will be unable to perceive the nature of a situation and will not know
how to act or what to expect of others. He must be alert to cues, that will tell him what the situation is and what role he must adopt. These cues are sometimes revealed in such things as clothing, name or other outward symbols of rank. More frequently they are apparent in subtle clues in the course of social interaction itself, such as the manner of speech and action.

Should a person find that he has incorrectly interpreted the nature of a situation, he tries again to determine what the actual circumstances are so that he may adjust his role accordingly. Such adjustments must be made cautiously to avoid embarrassing himself and others. It is especially important to avoid giving the impression that he is overasserting himself to trying to bend the situation to suit himself.

The individual who is unable to understand the nature of a situation or is placed in a position where his role conflicts with his real status tends to withdraw completely. If he is unable to understand a social or political situation, he becomes passive, uncooperative and distant. If he feels that someone else is overstepping the boundaries of correct behavior, he may suddenly become withdrawn and taciturn as a warning to the other person that he has passed the limits of propriety. In a superior-subordinate relationship, if the superior exceeds what is considered proper authority the subordinate may simply fail to carry out the order. When abuses of authority are not repelled in this way the subordinate may show more active resentment by complaining.

The harmonious relationship is sought not by asserting one's own personality but by mutual personal restraint and submission. Great value is placed on secure and agreeable relationships in which each person maintains his dignity. This type of relationship is particularly important in the small, closely knit village community.

THE INDIVIDUAL

According to Buddhist teachings the individual is solely responsible for his own actions and controls his future through his own efforts. Buddhism stresses self-reliance and personal resolve. The actions of others are of minimal importance to one's own condition. The individual achievement of Buddhist merit and approved Buddhist behavior are the major determinants of personal status in the traditional rural society (see ch. 6, Social Structure).

Religious concepts of individual initiative form the basis of a unique Khmer individualism. Each person is theoretically free to follow or reject the prescribed paths set forth in the Buddhist precepts (see ch. 11, Religion). This individualism does not indi-
cate the ultimate right of self-assertion but is based on each person's right to seek an improved status in his own way in the next life.

Personal independence is highly valued. To the Khmer, independence connotes freedom from any obligation or commitment beyond the prescribed role of his present status and the immediate situation. Each person is expected to fulfill the requirements of the situation, but he is also free to change his status with changing situations.

Formal roles are rarely confused with informal personal roles. A formal public situation demands a formal role, which the individual must respond to properly. When such a situation ends, however, he is able and free to shift immediately to a different, more personal role performance. Every person keeps the formal and informal roles separate; he must not confuse the two and inject personal overtones into formal situations.

When these two roles are clear in the mind of the Khmer, there is generally a high tolerance of variations in personal behavior subject only to the admonitions of the Buddhist code of personal ethics. A high public official is aware of the role he is expected to fill in his official capacity, but his personal life is completely detached from this. Public officials are not judged for their private lives and are comparatively free to act as they please without fear of special censure. If a high official is censured for his private life, it is usually because he fails to observe the accepted standards of behavior for an ordinary person and not because he may bring disgrace on his office.

Most Khmer feel that the individual should be continually attuned to the Buddhist code of personal conduct. High value is placed on premarital chastity and marital fidelity, especially for women (see ch. 7, Family). Nonviolence is another important concept, and crimes of violence, such as assault, rape and murder, are rare. Temperance, diligence, thrift and self-control are emphasized. Children are taught to avoid lying, as it is incompatible with pride and Buddhist precepts.

Personal goals are conditioned by religious beliefs. The goals of the average Khmer are oriented toward spiritual enlightenment or an improved status in the next life rather than toward material success in this one. Standards of success in the rural community are not calculated in economic terms but in the degree of personal contentment with one's position in life. There is no social pressure to succeed or to accumulate material wealth. It is doubtful whether the average farmer in the traditional society had any prospect for improvement of any kind. In the past this fact of life may have more effectively repressed hopes for change than did the spiritual emphasis of Buddhism.
Any surplus that a man may have left after satisfying the needs of his family is not reinvested to improve his farm. Instead, it is donated to the temple and to the building of religious monuments. Most people appreciate the nonreligious advantages of having money, but they value it much more for religious spending. The possession of material wealth is important primarily because it can help one to earn religious merit. It is also important from a social standpoint to spend money for religious purposes because such acts are considered especially praiseworthy by other members of the community.

There apparently is a reciprocal relationship between wealth and religious merit. Ideally, merit is more to be desired than wealth, but the possession of wealth makes it much easier to obtain large quantities of merit. A wealthy person is often thought to be one who earned great merit in a previous existence and was therefore elevated to his present status.

Although the layman's greatest sources of merit are his donations to the temple, all acts of generosity, kindness and charity are considered admirable. The person who wishes to gain the affection and respect of his community must show a willingness to share ungrudgingly with others.

The Buddhist monk represents the traditional image of the ideal man, one who is detached from worldly affairs and whose life is devoted to the achievement of his own spiritual enlightenment. In secular life the ideal man is one who imitates as closely as possible the characteristics admired in the monk. The high value attached to the monastic life has traditionally inspired most men to enter the monkhood for at least one temporary period during their lives. Primary characteristics of the ideal man and also considered desirable for women are generosity, piety, tranquillity, patience, morality, wisdom, good intentions, proper behavior, sincerity and avoidance of anger and injustice.

INFLUENCES FOR CHANGE

Many Khmer have received their education in secular schools, and an increasing number has been exposed to foreign influences and modern ways of thought. Many of these people are seeking to improve their lives through personal initiative and education. Young people tend to believe that traditional values derived from the ideals of Theravada Buddhism inhibit progress and prevent the acceptance of new ideas.

Many urban Cambodians have seen that birth status need not limit personal objectives and that they may achieve their ambitions in any field. The Buddhist monk is still a highly esteemed figure, but in the cities he is not the sole ideal that all men seek
to emulate. The ideal of the educated urban Khmer may be a political leader or a successful businessman.

Since the country regained its independence in 1953, modernization has become a national objective, and the government has taken many steps toward achieving this goal. The efforts include industrialization, expansion of secular education, participation of all people in national affairs and improvement of living standards. A large number of Khmer are being affected by these developments and find in them the rationale for modification of their traditional value system.

Even rural villages far from any city are experiencing contact with modern ideas and institutions, but no substantial change has occurred in the rural value system. In 1967 the widest divergence in values and in general outlook on life existed between the worldly educated urban elite and the tradition oriented, less sophisticated farmers.

Traditional values are reinforced by what seems to be an inherent tendency of the Khmer to attribute supernatural causes to incomprehensible events. Truth is a subjective concept. Legend is truth; the old is truth; truth is expressed in allegories; and truth is symbolic. Scientifically demonstrable fact is less important than what one has been taught to believe.

The rural Khmer's view of the world has been limited by poor transportation and communication facilities. Traditionally, the farmer has had little contact with people in other parts of the country and has not been involved in social or political affairs beyond the village level. Most villagers retain an insular outlook on the world and view the residents of distant and unfamiliar places with suspicion and distrust.

The Cambodian Government has introduced into rural areas many new programs which have been at least partially successful in broadening the social and political horizons of the villagers. A number of farmers in 1967 belonged to cooperatives and had begun to raise their standard of living. Material possessions have become more readily attainable in some rural areas and are being accepted as the new symbols of prestige and worldly success. This change in values affects traditional patterns of spending and stimulates people to a greater interest in a cash income.

The tradition-oriented Khmer are not entirely disinterested in money, but their interest in it has been largely confined to spending for religious concerns. This type of investment is not conducive to economic growth; therefore, the government in 1967 was attempting to interest people in money for secular uses. Most urban homes and many rural ones have a transistor radio and a bicycle, both acquired in the last few years.

The Chief of State, Prince Sihanouk, has called for economic
and social reform, but he opposes the loss of traditional values. He has attempted to instill a sense of nationality and a common philosophy in the people by extolling the traditional Buddhist values of individualism and reverence for all life. The concept of self-sacrifice for the good of the community, inferred from Buddhist teachings, is a common theme in Prince Sihanouk's speeches.

One of the most significant new attitudes concerns the nation and its leadership. The king traditionally represented a divine authority who could not be approached or questioned. By his abdication Prince Sihanouk introduced a new concept of leadership. He is not viewed as a divine authority; however, the great majority of the people greatly revere him as their religious leader. Older people clamor to touch him when he visits a village, in the belief that some of the religious merit he holds in his person will be transferred to them.

He is neither psychologically nor physically distant from the people; he identifies himself as one of them and tells them that he is the leader whom they have chosen. The relationship is often likened to that of father and children; Prince Sihanouk is fondly called Samdech Euv (Venerable Father), and he terms all Khmer as "his children." He has repeatedly told the people that he works only for their benefit and that Cambodia is their nation, belonging to all of them. This approach seems to have succeeded in winning the loyalty of the great majority of the Khmer, and it has made them aware of belonging to a nation.
Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy dominated by its Chief of State, Prince Norodom Sihanouk. The Prince, who was King from 1941 until 1955, renounced the throne to enter politics and form his own party for the political unification of the country. He and his party have been successful in the pursuit of these goals, primarily because of three factors: the ability to counter political foes through legal constitutional means, the continued reverence and support the people give to their former King and the dominant position achieved by his political party.

Prince Sihanouk has controlled political life since 1955 through his party, the Sangkum Reastr Niyum (People’s Socialist Community, popularly known as the Sangkum). His power was further solidified in 1960 through an amendment to the Constitution which provided for—in the absence of a King—the election of a Chief of State to be invested with all powers granted the King. Prince Sihanouk was immediately elected Chief of State.

Under the Constitution, promulgated in 1947 and still in effect with minor changes in 1967, all power nominally emanates from the King—now Chief of State—but the exercise of executive, legislative and judicial powers is granted to specified institutions. The combination of traditional monarchical and constitutional legitimacy represents an evolution from hereditary kingship toward democratic constitutional rule. Prince Sihanouk, in practice, remains the source of power, and his popularity enables him to govern with authority approaching that of a king.

Since 1946 the monarchical pattern of authority has been changing, at least in form, to the practice of popular participation in government. This process, first exemplified in the creation and ratification of the Constitution, was extended through periodic elections and the creation of the National Congress—originally the forum of the Sangkum—in which citizens could freely participate. In 1966 Prince Sihanouk, dissatisfied with the conservative nature of the newly elected government, created a shadow Cabinet, the “Counter-Government,” which had official standing as an ideological critic of the elected government.
The Constitution remains the basic document through which Prince Sihanouk and the small political elite rule. It provides legitimacy for the acts of government and defines the framework within which political decisions are reached.

**CONSTITUTIONAL PRECEDENTS**

The importance given the King in the Constitution derives from the history of the country, the oldest organized state of the Indochinese Peninsula. Its monarchs had an almost unbroken succession from the beginning of the Christian era to the crowning of King Sihanouk, and many ancient political concepts and practices persist to the present day (see ch. 3, Historical Setting).

The early belief in the divine nature of the King is reflected in the reverence toward the royal family still exhibited by most of the people. The early kings were worshiped as divine beings and, as such, were subject to no formal restrictions on their powers. Advising the King were the Royal Family Council, high-ranking monks and the court astrologer. These advisers, particularly the astrologer, often had a profound influence on the King's decisions, but all lawmaking and executive powers were actually in his hands.

Through the French-Cambodian Protectorate Treaty of 1863 and the subsequent Franco-Cambodian Convention of 1884, the French resident general acquired most of the lawmaking and administrative prerogatives of the King. No royal command could become law without the countersignature of the resident general who, as president of the Royal Council of Ministers, carried out the executive operations of government.

The King's powers were, in effect, limited to his spiritual role as head of all Buddhist religious activities and to the exercise of his traditional right of granting pardons. This right, however, was applied only to those who had committed offenses against Cambodian law and had been sentenced by a Cambodian court. The King's importance in the religious field remained undiminished throughout the entire colonial period and kept alive the allegiance of the people.

In 1913, under pressure from the French, King Sisowath enacted an ordinance providing for the establishment of the Consultative Assembly to be elected by restricted suffrage. Only Cambodian Government officials, retired or active, were eligible to vote for members or be elected to the Consultative Assembly. In addition, a certain number of members were appointed directly by the King. The Assembly's activities were limited to advising the King on economic and domestic matters. It did, however, provide an introduction to legislative processes and a training ground for future political leaders.
After World War II the government was given a measure of autonomy by the French and sought to consolidate it by basing it on a popularly elected government. In 1946 King Sihanouk promulgated an electoral law providing for the convening of the Constituent Assembly (elected by the direct vote of all Cambodian citizens) to consider a constitution presented by him and his advisers. The Assembly was elected in September 1946 without opposition by the French and without major incident. After several months of debate the Constitution was ratified and was promulgated by the King on May 6, 1947.

THE CONSTITUTION

The Constituent Assembly of 1946 was composed primarily of a rising middle class which wanted to protect its position. Its basic problem was that of incorporating a traditional monarchy into a constitutional democratic system. The result was a document providing for a policy of representative democracy and monarchic arbitration.

The Constitution, based on the French constitution of that time, provides for national representation, the election of a bicameral legislature (the National Assembly and the advisory Council of the Kingdom) and a change of government if two votes of no confidence are cast. The powers of the King are to be subordinate to the legislative and executive bodies, but he is granted the position of Chief of State and Chief of the Army.

The Council of Ministers is the strongest body, but it must have the cooperation of the National Assembly and the Chief of State to govern effectively. The judiciary is a subordinate branch of government; its officials are appointed by the Ministry of Justice or, in some cases, the Ministry of the Interior. The People's Tribunal is elected but always in accordance with the wishes of the Chief of State and the National Assembly.

Liberties, Rights and Duties

The Constitution provides for freedom from arbitrary arrest; freedom of expression; freedom of assembly; freedom of petition; protection of home and property; and protection against exile, of great importance because Cambodians feel that their religious life is connected with their homeland. Buddhism is established as the state religion, but freedom of religion is ensured. Certain of these rights may be suspended in time of national emergency, but only for 6 months.

The duties of citizens are to give loyalty to the King (at present, the Chief of State), respect the laws, defend the country and aid the government through the payment of taxes.
Amending the Constitution

Amendments may be initiated by the Chief of State, the President of the Council of Ministers and the Presidents of the National Assembly and the Council of the Kingdom. The latter two act after a favorable vote of the chamber over which they preside is made upon the request of at least one-fourth of its members. The rights reserved for the Chief of State under the Constitution and the provisions relating to the monarchical form of the state, the representative character of the government or the principles of liberty and equality may not be curtailed by amendments. Amendments become effective only upon approval by three-fourths of the National Assembly.

THE KING

The throne is inherited by the male descendants of King Ang Duong. The King is the supreme head of state, and his person is sacred and inviolable. He must, however, swear allegiance to the Constitution.

In 1960 a constitutional amendment enabled Prince Sihanouk to assume all rights granted the King. His father, King Sisowath Monivong, died that year, and the Crown Council could not agree on a successor other than Prince Sihanouk, who had sworn never to reassume the title of King. The problem was resolved by an amendment to the Constitution which allowed the legislature to entrust the powers of the King to an uncontested personality who would be entitled Chief of State. Prince Sihanouk was clearly that person. The symbol of the monarchy is maintained in the person of the Prince's mother, Queen Kossamak.

The Chief of State, the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly must cooperate in order to govern effectively. All power emanates from the Chief of State, but legislative, executive and judicial powers are exercised in his name by designated bodies. The Chief of State selects the President of the Council of Ministers and appoints the ministers proposed by the Council after they have been confirmed by vote of the National Assembly. The Chief of State summons and dissolves the National Assembly upon the advice of his ministers. He may initiate legislation, but his acts must bear the countersignature of the President of the Council of Ministers.

The Chief of State appoints and accredits ambassadors and envoys extraordinary, and ambassadors and envoys from abroad are accredited to him. He signs the treaties and conventions negotiated by his government. He is the Supreme Commander of the armed forces, and he creates and grants civil and military ranks. He has the authority, with the advice of the Crown Coun-
oil to name an heir to the throne and to cancel such a nomination. He appoints the magistrates and may pardon or commute sentences.

The Chief of State has another function, associated with both the legislative process and the judicial process, which is based on custom rather than the Constitution. This is to hold weekly Royal Audiences at which any citizen may present problems and petition for redress of grievances. The Royal Audience is the traditional means of popular expression that has existed throughout centuries of absolute monarchy; it has been continued by Prince Sihanouk as Chief of State. Problems and petitions are presented through the court officials to the ruler, who either pronounces judgment or orders investigation and appropriate redress.

The Royal Councils

The Chief of State is assisted by three royal councils—the Royal Family Council, the Crown Council and the High Council of the Throne—and the Royal Cabinet.

The Royal Family Council is composed of all the male members of the Chief of State’s immediate family. It is an advisory and ceremonial body which controls royal titles but has no political function.

The Crown Council, as described in the Constitution, selects the successor to the throne. It is composed of the President of the Royal Family Council, the President of the National Assembly, the President of the Council of the Kingdom, the President of the Council of Ministers and the heads of the two major Buddhist sects. In case the designated heir is a minor, the Crown Council may appoint a regent from the Royal Family or, if the throne is vacant, a Council of Regency of three members, the president of which must be a member of the Royal Family. In 1960, upon the death of King Suramarit, a constitutional amendment allowed the legislature to appoint a Chief of State, and the throne has been vacant since that date.

The High Council of the Throne, though not mentioned in the Constitution, is a holdover from the days of the absolute monarchy when it functioned as an advisory body to the King. It is generally headed by a trusted member of the Royal Family, and its members are usually former officials appointed by the Chief of State and responsible to him. The High Council assists the Chief of State in dealing with the Council of Ministers and advises on ministerial decrees and regulations. The five-man High Council has often been little more than an honorary group, but the appointment of a powerful political personality to it in 1966 revealed that it could also be an influential body (see ch. 14, Political Dynamics).
In 1955 a ministerial decree provided the King with a Royal Cabinet to be in charge of the Royal Guard Battalions and the maintenance of the buildings of the Royal Family. The Royal Cabinet is also responsible for organizing receptions and audiences with the King and arranging for all of his trips.

EXECUTIVE POWER

The Council of Ministers

Executive power is exercised by the Council of Ministers, which constitutes the Royal Cambodian Government and is sometimes referred to as the Cabinet (see fig. 5). The Constitution limits the size of the Council to a maximum of 16 persons, including its President and the ministers who are sometimes referred to as secretaries of state.

The selection of Council members must meet the approval of the Chief of State, the President of the Council and the National Assembly. The Chief of State, after consulting with the President of the National Assembly, the president of the Council of the Kingdom and the heads of all political parties represented in the legislature, appoints the President of the Council of Ministers. The President, in turn, selects the ministers, who must be approved by a voice vote in the National Assembly before being officially appointed by the Chief of State. Members of the Council may be selected either from within or outside the National Assembly. When, as in 1967, the Chief of State also assumes the post of President of the Council, he names one of the ministers as First Minister.

The Council of Ministers discusses all problems relating to the state and the governmental machinery. It may initiate legislation. It executes the laws passed by the National Assembly through the promulgation of decrees (kram) and regulations (kret). It directs the National Bank of Cambodia, which supervises financial and economic policies, and the National Exchange Office, which determines foreign exchange policies.

The Council of Ministers is responsible to the National Assembly for the general policies of the administration. A vote of no confidence, disapproval or censure by the National Assembly brings about its collective resignation. In this case the outgoing Council continues to administer current affairs until a new one has been accepted by the National Assembly. If the Assembly is dissolved, the Council of Ministers, except for the President and the Minister of the Interior, remains in office to carry on the functions of government. The President of the National Assembly then becomes President of the Council of Ministers and selects a Minister of the Interior.
Figure 5. Executive Structure of the Cambodian Government, 1967
The ministers are responsible for their actions to the People's Tribunal. Furthermore, the Sangkum, to which all officeholders belong, has its own code of ethics for ministers. They must be honest, must not go to such places of pleasure as dancehalls and must participate in work projects.

**Provincial and Local Government**

The country is centrally administered through the Ministry of the Interior, which controls the internal government and administration of the country through the provincial governors and district administrators, who are its employees. The Ministry approves or disapproves of the appointment of most civil servants in the local administrations and exercises control over the national and provincial police forces.

Cambodia is divided into 19 provinces and the 4 autonomous municipalities of Phnom Penh, Kep, Sihanoukville and Bokor. Fourteen of the provinces and the municipalities are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior, but Prince Sihanouk appoints their governors. The governors are responsible for the economy, law and order within their jurisdictions, and the employees are civil servants in the Ministry of the Interior.

The Ministry of National Defense administers five of the border provinces: Koh Kong, Stung Treng, Ratanakiri, Mondolkiri and Oddar Meanchey. They are largely populated by mountain groups who are being resettled and assimilated under the special Civic Action Program. The military governors in charge of these areas are responsible for improving security in these sensitive areas and for opening up the country by building roads and bridges, speeding the development of the local economy and educating the indigenous population.

The provincial government is the major unit of lower level executive government. At this level most ministries and other important agencies of the central government have representatives who oversee the execution of government orders issued from the capital.

The provinces are divided into 110 districts, whose officials are appointed by the Ministry of the Interior on the recommendation of the provincial governor. District executive government is not as fully organized as the provincial and serves principally to transmit instructions from higher authority to the town and village group mayors, who are charged with the ultimate execution of government directives. The districts are divided into 1,178 town and village groups (khum), which elect their mayors through universal suffrage.

**The Civil Service**

The civil service is exceptionally important because it assimi-
lates into government service an increasing number of educated Cambodians who otherwise might have shown a tendency to oppose the government, and it provides the skills essential to the operation of this highly centralized state.

In 1946, when Cambodia became an autonomous monarchy within the French Union, it was estimated that there were no more than 150 Cambodians capable of assuming responsibility in the government. Some, particularly at high levels, were trained in France, but the majority were trained on the job. As the country moved toward independence, administrative jobs were transferred from the French or their Vietnamese assistants to the Cambodians. In the higher levels of government, appointments were made by the King and his immediate entourage, a right which fell to the Democrat Party when it came to power. Most civil servants who were unsympathetic toward the governing party were replaced, and there was a consequent lowering of administrative standards.

In the past, government jobs were considered rewards for loyalty or service and sinecures from which the officeholder was expected to extract the maximum in benefits to supplement his modest salary. This situation is being corrected through the Purification Committee, under the personal direction of Prince Sihanouk, and the People's Tribunal; both of these bodies investigate and expose cases of misuse of office.

In 1967 the government announced the closing of the 11-year-old Royal School of Administration because the regular educational system was supplying a reservoir of educated persons to compete through open examinations for the civil service posts.

THE LEGISLATIVE BODIES

The Constitution provides for a bicameral national legislature. The lower house, which is the principal legislative body, is called the National Assembly. The upper house, whose function is primarily advisory, is called the Council of the Kingdom. In 1958 the National Congress—the forum of the Sangkum—was empowered by Constitutional amendment to recommend legislation. Provincial Assemblies were created in 1955, and although they were suspended in 1959 the constitutional statutes providing for their existence remain.

The National Assembly

Legislative power is granted to the National Assembly, the only fully elective national legislative body. All citizens, 20 years of age or more, except those who have been deprived of their civic rights, who are serving in the armed forces or who are Buddhist monks, are eligible to vote for its deputies. Candidates must be Cambodian citizens, have attained the age of 25 and be
qualified voters. Members are elected for 4 years, but seats vacant because of death, resignation or expulsion may be filled by off year elections.

Deputies are considered representatives of the whole nation and not only of the constituency from which elected. There is no restriction as to residence in the province from which elected, but a candidate cannot be a government employee while seeking the office of deputy.

The deputies enjoy parliamentary immunity and the privilege of freedom from investigation, prosecution or arrest for the opinions or votes expressed by them in the execution of their office. The removal of a deputy may be requested by the Chief of State of the Council of Ministers, however, or a deputy may be accused of criminal acts. In either case the National Assembly rules on the question, but further action toward trial or removal depends on confirmation by the Council of the Kingdom. Deputies may also be tried before the People's Tribunal.

The National Assembly is vested with all lawmaking power. Its bills must be sent to the Council of the Kingdom for approval, but it may override any objections of the Council by a majority vote. Its right to initiate legislation is shared with the Chief of State, the Council of the Kingdom and the Council of Ministers.

The National Assembly votes on the national budget and the administrative account. Under the Constitution it consulted the Provincial Assemblies on these economic matters until the Assemblies were dissolved in 1959. The National Assembly has no authority to discuss funds set aside for the exclusive use of the Chief of State.

The National Assembly meets at least twice a year, each time for a minimum of 3 months. The Chief of State issues the call for meetings and may either address the Assembly or communicate with it by messages or through his ministers. The ministers have the right to be heard on their own recognizance. Debates in the Assembly are public and are subsequently published in the Journal Officiel du Cambodge, the official organ of the government. Secret sessions, although legal, are rare.

The Chief of State has the right to dissolve the Assembly upon the advice of the Council of Ministers. It is automatically dissolved if it votes against the government twice within 18 months; new elections then must be held within 2 months. In practice, members of the National Assembly have tended to avoid making decisions; in effect, this gives their powers to the Council of Ministers.
The Council of the Kingdom

The upper house of the national legislature, the Council of the Kingdom, is convened and sits at the same time as the National Assembly. It is composed of elected and appointed members, 24 in all, who serve 4-year terms. All members must be at least 40 years of age. Two are chosen from the Royal Family and appointed by the Chief of State; two are elected by the National Assembly but may not be members of that body; seven are chosen by the Provincial Assemblies of the 14 provinces administered by the Ministry of the Interior; one is chosen from the municipality of Phnom Penh; eight members are elected by the various professions, trades, industries and agricultural workers; and four are elected from the civil service.

The powers of the Council are mostly advisory, but it may initiate legislation. It must study and review proposed legislation and may suggest changes, though only the National Assembly can vote laws into existence. Since its members are considered elder statesmen and some are members of the Royal Family, their opinions command respect and their influence on the Chief of State may be great.

The National Congress

The National Congress was created in 1955 as the forum of the Sangkum. As the Sangkum eliminated the other political parties, the National Congress became a national political institution, and it was made a constitutional body through an amendment passed in 1958 (see ch. 14, Political Dynamics).

The National Congress is an expression of direct democracy that is limited to questions of national interest. Any citizen may attend and vote; the Sangkum statutes provide a formula for choosing delegates. The Congress may discuss and recommend, and although it does not have expressly implied power, its voice is almost law as the repository of popular will.

The Congress meets twice a year, under the leadership of the Supreme Councilor of the Sangkum and the Chief of State, Prince Sihanouk. The 15-man Central Committee of the Sangkum receives copies of all questions to be discussed and presents them to the Supreme Councilor who determines the order of business. Prince Sihanouk delivers an opening statement and presides over all meetings of the Congress. The Congress determines, by a hand vote, the resolutions it wishes submitted to the National Assembly.

The National Congress is a consultative body, which by its nature cannot deal with complex problems. Nevertheless, it provides the people with a direct voice in matters of immediate concern and permits them to be directly informed about national
affairs. In December 1966 the Congress dealt with the misuse of office functions, wages, the teaching of French in the schools and the creation of the shadow Cabinet. During the July 1967 session the Congress discussed the repair of riverbanks, the digging of canals and the creation of a scientific research institute.

The Provincial Assemblies

In the 1955 election campaign the Sangkum was elected on a platform of granting to the people greater participation in government. As a result, the Constitution was amended to provide for elected Provincial Assemblies to meet twice annually in 3-month sessions. The powers of the Provincial Assemblies, as stated in the Constitution, are to vote on the provincial, municipal or village budgets, to approve the administrative accounts, to determine the rate of taxation and to be consulted on the national budget.

The Assemblies, created in 1955, were dissolved in 1959 on the direction of Prince Sihanouk and by the vote of the National Congress and the National Assembly. It was felt that the Assemblies had interfered in an irresponsible manner with the work of the provincial and local governments. The provisions for the Assemblies remain in the Constitution, but their activities were still suspended in 1967. Consequently, their constitutional functions in acting on the budgets and of electing eight members of the Council of the Kingdom remain unfulfilled.

THE JUDICIARY

Under the French protectorate the administration of law was divided between French courts and the Cambodian judicial system. Cambodians who perpetrated crimes against fellow citizens or who committed other violations of Cambodian law were tried by Cambodian courts. Cambodians—and all foreigners—who violated French laws or committed crimes against non-Cambodian nationals were tried by French courts under French law.

After full independence was achieved, the French courts were abolished, and all foreign nationals were brought within the jurisdiction of the Cambodian courts. Extraterritoriality had been particularly annoying to the Cambodians because the Chinese, Vietnamese and Indian inhabitants of Cambodia—as well as the Europeans—had enjoyed almost complete immunity from Cambodian law.

The Court System

At the lowest level there are local courts (sala lahoulk) which are presided over by conciliatory justices who may have jurisdiction over a group of villages, a municipality or, in some cases, one or more districts (strok). In a few places, where the popula-
tion is sparsely distributed, the district chief (chawaysrok) simultaneously handles the duties of the conciliatory justice. In Phnom Penh the Chief of the Municipal Police presides over the local court. The authority of the local court is very limited and in many ways is comparable to that of the United States justice of the peace. The presiding official may impose only small fines and brief prison sentences, and even these may be appealed to higher authority. He also acts as sheriff. He makes inquiries and searches and effects seizures and arrests for higher authority if the accused is located within his jurisdiction (see ch. 25, Public Order and Safety).

At the next higher level are the provincial tribunals of the first instance (sala damsoung), presided over by three magistrates appointed by the national government. The magistrates have jurisdiction over all criminal and civil cases. In 1962 a six-man jury system was introduced into these courts.

Serious crimes are referred to a criminal court (sala okret) for trial. In 1962 the number of such courts was increased from one in Phnom Penh to eight, which are distributed throughout the country. Three magistrates and six jurymen judge cases brought before this court.

The court of appeals (sala ouitor) has appeal jurisdiction in civil cases. The court of review (sala vinichhay) is, in effect, the supreme court for all criminal and civil action. Its authority is particularly important when judgments are contested on charges of procedural error. The court examines the facts and determines whether or not the statutes have been properly adhered to.

The Constitution provides for the High Council of Magistracy to guarantee the discipline and independence of the judges in conformity with the law. It is essentially a disciplinary court, dealing especially with offenses of members of the court system. The Council, presided over by the Chief of State, is composed of the Minister of Justice, two members appointed by the Chief of State, two members elected by the National Assembly and two members elected by the magistrates.

In the case of crimes affecting the security of the state, the accused—even a civilian—may be tried by specially constituted military tribunals.

The People's Tribunal

In 1963, at the sixteenth National Congress, Prince Sihanouk proposed the creation of the People's Tribunal to replace the High Court of Justice which had proved ineffective in dealing with corrupt officials. The National Congress approved this suggestion, and it became law after approval by the National Assem-
bly in January 1964. The law was written into the Constitution as Articles 110, 111 and 112.

The People's Tribunal has a president and two vice presidents, selected by the National Assembly from a list approved by the Chief of State. These three men, who must be lawyers, direct and assist the popularly elected assessors, who may be laymen. The 40 assessors are elected by universal suffrage from the provinces and the independent municipalities of Phnom Penh, Kep and Sihanoukville. The provinces of Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear and the municipality of Bokor are not represented. Each province submits a list of no less than 5 or more than 20 names to the Council of Ministers. The list is compiled by mayors and local authorities and consists of individuals with reputations for honesty. The Council of Ministers selects three from each list, and the people then elect two of the three by popular vote.

The People's Tribunal is brought into action by the Council of Ministers, a majority vote of the National Assembly or a majority vote of the assessors themselves. In a complex case the assessors may form a commission of instruction of four to six members. The Tribunal may judge all persons without distinction, and ministers may be held penal responsibility for their work. Formerly, the ministers were held responsible to the High Court of Justice.
CHAPTER 14

POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Political power was largely exercised in 1967 by Prince Norodom Sihanouk or, when held by others, usually derived from him. He was Chief of State, a position granting him all rights allowed the King under the Constitution. He was also Supreme Councilor of his party, the People's Socialist Community (Sangkum Reastr Niyum, usually referred to as Sangkum), to which all persons who wish to participate in political life should belong. He was also President of the Council of Ministers, or chief executive, and President of the Royal Khmer Socialist Youth (Jeunesse Socialiste Royale Khmère—JSRK), which organizes and leads the nation's young people. His strength was further legitimized by his former position as King, a factor which, combined with his paternal rule, made him an object of reverence.

From 1947 through 1955 political parties competed for power in periodic elections, but the situation was altered by the gradual consolidation of power by Prince Sihanouk, first as King and, after 1955, as Supreme Councilor of the Sangkum. He overwhelmed his opponents, obtained for his adherents the primary political offices and concurrently won the reverence and allegiance of the majority of citizens.

Such exclusive political control finds its origins in the country's long history of absolute monarchy, which was only slightly altered by short periods of foreign domination. The contemporary pattern of periodic elections and representative government is supported by a majority of the citizens. Its principal opponents are a small group of younger, French-educated citizens who feel that more democracy should be permitted. Lacking any base of power and split by internal rivalries, they represent little threat to the system as it existed through 1967.

POLITICAL STABILITY

Prince Sihanouk, who represents the connecting link between traditional and modernizing forces, is the dominant element in the political dynamics of the country. He seeks to preserve the monarchy and the Buddhist values of the nation, but he also rigorously favors a program emphasizing education and state
enterprise. Thus, he preserves the position and belief of the traditional leadership while actively pursuing goals also sought by the members of the young elite who have had a Western-type of education.

In 1966 two focal points of opposition to the Prince's policies emerged in the National Assembly: a pro-Communist China leftist group and a moderate group that believes in a stricter adherence to neutralism. The conflict resulted in a number of Cabinet changes under the direction of the Prince who, through 1967, successfully balanced the opposing forces in the party and the government.

There is little opposition to the government from outside the political sphere. No economic group is sufficiently organized to oppose the Prince. Theravada Buddhism, the state religion, is practiced by approximately 85 percent of the people and has not been a source of conflict. The ethnic minorities are in no position to challenge the government, and the Vietnamese and Chinese, though influential in the economic field, are denied citizenship.

Each of the three basic social classes supports the Prince. The upper class, which consists of the Royal Family, the related aristocracy and the highest ranking officials in governmental, religious and military institutions, derives its power through prestige, wealth and, sometimes, education. The middle class, comprised of teachers, civil servants, politicians, professionals and military officers, is loyal to the Sangkum. The positions of this class, in fact, may depend upon this loyalty, but other than those active in politics most have no strong political orientation. The farmers and unskilled laborers who comprise approximately 80 percent of the population and make up the lower class strongly support their national leader and former king. Their source of public information is controlled by the government, and the countryside is sufficiently rich to satisfy their basic needs.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Nationalism became a strong force only after World War II because Cambodians realized that the French protectorate had safeguarded their independence from two powerful neighbors and the French had respected Khmer traditions. Nationalism, first articulated by the Buddhist monks, was abetted by the political instability that occurred during World War II.

The groundwork for the independence struggle and the political disputes which occurred between 1946 and 1955 was laid in 1945 when the Japanese were forced to relinquish control over Cambodia. Son Ngoc Thanh, an anti-French nationalist who was installed as prime minister by the Japanese, was determined that Cambodia should be independent at the end of the war. Conse-
quently, just before the Japanese capitulation, he arrested all the pro-French ministers in the Cabinet and asked King Sihanouk to proclaim independence, which he did. Within months the French returned, arrested and deported Son Ngoc Thanh and attempted to resume their prewar administration.

In 1946 the French granted Cambodia internal autonomy within the French Union. From then until 1955 domestic political issues were largely concerned with the differences of opinion between the followers of Son Ngoc Thanh who demanded immediate independence and King Sihanouk who, supported by the Royal Family and the traditional leadership in the country, chose a policy of gradual evolution toward independence through negotiation. The militant nationalists formed the Democrat Party to function within the legal political framework, but they also maintained contact in the northern provinces with a group of rebel bands known as the Khmer Issarak (Free Cambodia). Both looked to the exiled Son Ngoc Thanh for leadership.

Also in 1946 King Sihanouk promulgated an electoral law for the convening of a consultative assembly to consider a constitution to be presented by him and his advisers. Delegates to the Assembly were selected in the first national election, won by the Democrats who gained 50 of the 69 seats. The ratified Constitution represented a compromise between the Democrats, who advocated a government run by a popularly elected legislature, and the king and the royal family, who wanted to retain many of the powers of the monarchy. Legislative power was given to an elected legislature, but this power was checked by an advisory upper body and a requirement which empowered the King to approve the Council of Ministers, the executive branch of the government (see ch. 13, The Governmental System).

In 1947 the first elections to the legislature were held, and the Democrats gained 55 of the 75 seats. They repeated their victory in the 1951 elections and won 54 of the 78 seats. Victory was deceptive, however, because the Democrats, who should have been able to achieve their legislative goals, accomplished little. The Democrat Party was composed of a young French-educated elite that was supported by the civil servants, rising middle-class townspeople, bureaucrats and teachers and part of the Buddhist clergy. They struggled more for personal power than to represent any particular constituency. Factionalism and the exploitation of the functions of their office for personal gain rendered them ineffective. Twenty-two Cabinets fell between 1947 and 1953.

Faced with an inept legislature, increased activity by the Khmer Issarak and invasion by the Viet Minh (an illegal Vietnamese group), King Sihanouk dissolved the National Assembly, placed the operation of government in the hands of trusted ad-
visers and left for France in March 1958 on a mission to negotiate independence. By November he had succeeded, and at the 1954 Geneva Conference his ministers obtained an agreement calling for the withdrawal of the Viet Minh. By 1955 the Khmer Issarak had been reduced to impotence.

In 1955 King Sihanouk called for a national referendum to approve or disapprove of his period of government since 1953. A 99.8-percent affirmative vote confirmed his popularity. Fearing a return to anarchy in the party, he decided to abdicate, form his own political party and enter politics. The Sangkum, designed as a political movement without party affiliation, was formed.

THE SANGKUM

Entry into the political system meant membership in Prince Sihanouk's political movement—the Sangkum. Its first members were high officials and colleagues of the Prince in the independence struggles, dissident Democrats and, after the 1955 election, most of the civil servants. The majority of the population joined, expressing their confidence in the leadership of the Prince. Initially, the Democrat leaders did not join, but on seeing their power eroded away they became members, and by 1957 their party was no longer a political force.

The Sangkum has served as the principal political instrument of Prince Sihanouk. Its name has become practically synonymous with that of the country, making opposition to the movement equivalent to opposition to the nation. It operates outside the framework of the Constitution, yet it upholds democratic ideals. Political differences are tolerated, but only within the Party. Prince Sihanouk has permitted his critics to assume positions of importance within the party and the government if they have proven capabilities.

The Sangkum is looked upon by the Prince as the embodiment of the will of the "little people" as well as their guide and initiator into national life. He makes a great effort to explain his policies to the people and tries to stimulate their feelings of loyalty to the nation. Decisions are made at the highest level of government, but a unique institution, the National Congress, permits all citizens to present their views to the country's leaders and have them voted upon (see ch. 18, The Governmental System).

The stayed objectives of the Sangkum are to unify the country, to instill patriotism and loyalty to the Khmer tradition, to inspire opposition toward injustice, bribery and corruption, to develop a regard for the little people and to maintain loyalty to the monarchy or Buddhism—both considered essential for the achievement of the party's goals.

The Sangkum is organized into the Central Committee, Units,
the Provincial Congress and the National Congress. The Central Committee is composed of 16 members: the Supreme Councilor, Prince Sihanouk, whose role is to lead the movement and maintain cohesion; the secretary general, who serves as chief administrator; and 14 councilors.

Units are organized on the provincial, district, town and village level. Theoretically, Unit officers are elected each year, but this provision has seldom been followed. Provincial governors and government officials usually serve as Unit chiefs. Under the Unit chief is an elected committee director and bureau.

The Provincial Congress, whose delegates are members of the provincial Units, meets three times a year to discuss the orientation of the Units and to confirm candidates for election to office in the Sangkum. The National Congress, which is open to all citizens, meets twice a year to raise questions of domestic policy. Its status has been confirmed by the Constitution, and it is now considered a national legislative body (see ch. 18, The Governmental System).

To become a member of the Sangkum an individual cannot belong to another political party or have been deprived of any of his civic rights. He must agree to work to achieve the goals of the movement and be disciplined and devoted to the people. In 1967 over 2 million persons were members, and nearly a million more belonged to the JSRK, a youth group affiliated with the Sangkum.

THE ROYAL KHMER SOCIALIST YOUTH

The Sangkum created the Royal Khmer Socialist Youth (Jeunesse Socialiste Royale Khmère—JSRK) in 1957 to channel the energies of Cambodian youth into constructive national projects and to develop a sense of duty and national social solidarity. The JSRK teaches independence, neutrality, nationalism and loyalty to the throne, and its principal activities include sports, paramilitary and civic action training and social welfare projects. Legally, it has no political power, but a membership comprising virtually all the nation's youth and many of the younger working people makes it an important national force.

The JSRK is established by government statute and sponsored by Queen Kossamak, the Prince's mother. Its president, Prince Sihanouk, determines policy with 10 other officers. Financial control is exercised by the Council of Ministers. A committee director, assisted by a general commissariat, constitutes the executive organ. The committee director is required to attend all meetings and participate in all decisions. Each JSRK branch is organized into a team, group, company and sector.
Since 1955 the Sangkum has won all the seats in the National Assembly and controlled every political office in the country. Ministers of state and students must participate in work projects; the armed forces and the JSRK are engaged in social welfare and public works; mass literacy programs have been inaugurated; and the citizens are allowed to participate directly in their government through the National Congress. These programs are strongly supported by the majority of the people and have contributed to national stability.

Discontent has come primarily from within the government itself; 20 governments fell between 1955 and 1966. Contributing problems were personal and class rivalries, competition for positions in the Prince’s entourage and lack of a dominant personality in the National Assembly. The basic issue, however, has increasingly become foreign policy.

The principal points of dispute within the government are based upon differing positions of foreign policy, which have led to the formation of opposing groups at the highest levels of government. One of the Prince’s principal efforts has been to reduce the area of disagreement between these groups and to eliminate any power they have because he feels that national unity is essential for the preservation of the nation’s neutrality and independence. In his view loyalty to the nation means loyalty to his policy of neutralism, and anyone who deviates too far from it weakens the country.

The two poles of dissenting opinion on foreign policy are identified by Prince Sihanouk as the Blues and the Reds. The Blues are a moderate group, which is skeptical of Communist China and favors a strict adherence to neutralism. The Prince criticizes this group, which includes some top-ranking military officers and government officials, whenever he feels they assert themselves too much.

The Reds are radical leftist socialists who are pro-Communist China. Most are young and French-educated and maintain close ties with the farming community. Members of the Faculty of Law and Economics at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, the Association Générales des Etudiants Khmers and some delegates to the National Assembly share these views. The most influential person of the radical left is Chau Seng, who in 1967 was rector of the Buddhist University, secretary of the JSRK, secretary of the Sangkum, president of one of the major state enterprises and editor of various government periodicals as well as his own newspaper.

The conflict between the Blues and the Reds was fought openly after the 1966 elections, in which competition within the Sang-
kum was permitted. The new National Assembly, the most conservative elected by the Sangkum, selected Lon Nol, long-term Minister of National Defense and Chief of Staff of the Royal Army, as President of the Council of Ministers. The new Cabinet, although approved by Prince Sihanouk, was considered by him to be too conservative, so he agreed, on the urging of Chau Seng and the other leftists, to create a shadow Cabinet which would serve as an ideological critic of the government. This accomplishment did not satisfy the leftists who feared the attitudes and influence of the Lon Nol government.

In the spring of 1967 a rebellion broke out in Battambang Province, and Lon Nol was persuaded to resign. Prince Sihanouk implicated five leftists in the rebellion and then appointed two of them, including Chau Seng, to an emergency Cabinet which he formed. Six months later he dismissed the two men for their strong support of Communist China. He then threatened to resign and turn over the government to the armed forces, which he said would turn to the West for help. Outside observers considered the threat to be a tactic to keep the government balanced.
CHAPTER 15
FOREIGN RELATIONS

In 1967 Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who is responsible for foreign policy and implements foreign relations, continued his announced policy of neutralism and independence which was originally adopted in 1954.

The Prince's interpretation of these principles was manifested in 1967 by his continuing relations with Communist China (formally recognized by Cambodia in 1958), despite his allegations of Peking-instigated subversion in Cambodia, while making little effort to restore relations with the United States. Moreover, the Cambodian Government not only recognized and exchanged ambassadors with Communist North Vietnam but also recognized the so-called "National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam," the political arm of the Viet Cong, the Communist military force in South Vietnam, as the "legitimate government" of South Vietnam.

The Prince maintained that his government's foreign policy was justified by political conditions in the whole of Southeast Asia. He said that he viewed three factors as basic determinants—Cambodia's military weakness in relation to other nations; the presence of nations, which he considered unfriendly, on his country's borders; and his conviction that Communist China would become the future dominant power in Southeast Asia. Since the most important of the nations he considered unfriendly were South Vietnam and Thailand, a fourth factor was an even more important determinant—opposition to the military presence of the United States in the area. He openly expressed support for the military activities of the Viet Cong and North Vietnam.

Prince Sihanouk maintained that the basic goal of foreign policy and foreign relations was the survival of his country as an independent nation, and the consistent efforts of Cambodian diplomacy were directed toward obtaining international legal guarantees of neutrality. The policy of neutralism, adopted in 1954, continues to be espoused by Sihanouk as the means for safeguarding Cambodia's independence and non-involvement in the Vietnam conflict. By 1967 he had set aside his quest for formal inter-
national guarantees of the legal status of neutrality and sought to obtain recognition of Cambodia's borders from all nations.

At the end of 1967, however, the neighboring nations had not given Prince Sihanouk the satisfaction he desired. The Soviet Union, Communist China, North Vietnam, North Korea, the so-called political "Front" of the Viet Cong Communists in South Vietnam, France and a few African and other Asian nations announced that they would respect his country's territorial integrity. The government of South Vietnam, the United States and the countries joining it in resisting aggression in South Vietnam, with the exception of the Philippines and Australia, did not grant such guarantees.

THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

The conduct of foreign relations is the formal responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1967 the minister of foreign affairs, Norodom Phurissara, assumed increasing prominence because he made frequent trips to visit other foreign ministers, particularly in the Communist nations. However, Prince Sihanouk remained the major source of policy, and at times his personal relations with leaders of other nations have assumed major importance.

Cambodian neutralism, designed to permit satisfactory relations with foreign powers without involvement in their conflicts, became the central theme of foreign policy in 1954. In the 1960's it was coupled with the quest for the status in international law of national neutrality in the hope it would provide a deterrent to being drawn into the Vietnam War.

In 1953 and 1954 Cambodia unsuccessfully sought guarantees from France and the United States that they would come to its defense in case of aggression. Membership in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was precluded under the terms of the 1954 Geneva Agreements. The agreement stipulated that the states of Indochina would not maintain foreign military alliances. Subsequently, Cambodia was included under a protocol of the SEATO treaty that afforded a degree of collective security, and in 1955 a military assistance program was signed with the United States.

In late 1954 a major reorientation of policy occurred after a visit to Phnom Penh by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India, at that time the leading exponent of neutralism. In December 1954 Cambodia first announced its policy of neutralism, and Prince Sihanouk later acknowledged his indebtedness to the opinions of Prime Minister Nehru. Aid agreements with France
and the United States were continued, however, and the SEATO protocol remained in effect.

Neutralism became more pronounced after the 1955 Bandung Conference, at which Communist China and North Vietnam were represented by their foreign ministers. Chou En-lai personally persuaded the Prince that Communist China was willing to pursue a policy of peace and friendship, and the North Vietnamese foreign minister, Pham Van Dong, pledged respect for Cambodia’s independence and sovereignty.

These assurances led to Cambodia’s adherence to the Panch Shila, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which had been agreed upon the year before by Communist China, India and Burma. The Five Principles were: mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, nonaggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. The Panch Shila was referred to consistently as the basis of Cambodian-Communist Chinese relations between 1955 and 1967.

In 1957 the National Congress, at the Prince’s suggestion, voted to have neutrality written into the Constitution as law. The text states that:

The Kingdom of Cambodia is a neutral country. It abstains from any military or ideological alliance with foreign countries. It will not undertake aggression against any foreign country.

Although the text was not, in fact, written into the Constitution, the principles it embodies are frequently cited as the basis of foreign policy.

In 1959 the conflict in South Vietnam and Laos intensified until the presumed neutrality of Laos seemed questionable to Prince Sihanouk. He viewed the possibility of the alliance of Laos with a Communist nation as a threat to Cambodian neutralism; he feared most the conquest of South Vietnam and the creation of a unified Communist Vietnam on Cambodia’s borders.

The Prince sought support for a new Geneva conference to guarantee the neutrality of Laos. The parties involved believed they could achieve their respective goals without a conference, but they finally went to the conference table. The Geneva Conference on Laos, which negotiated intermittently in 1961 and 1962, finally agreed to neutralize Laos; North Vietnam violated this agreement within a few months.

The Prince believed that the situation would remain threatening unless Cambodian neutrality was formally recognized by major foreign powers as well as by neighboring states. A letter was sent to the Geneva participants requesting the recognition of boundaries and the guarantee of Cambodian neutrality and
territorial integrity, but it was impossible to obtain unanimous agreement (see ch. 2, Physical Environment).

In 1963 the Prince again attempted unsuccessfully to initiate a conference. After 1964 a Communist Chinese-inspired provision, agreed to by Cambodia, that the government in Saigon could not represent South Vietnam at any conference to discuss Indochinese problems, blocked hopes for a new conference.

In July 1967 Prince Sihanouk announced that he would “freeze” diplomatic relations with all nations that did not recognize his nation’s borders by September. This did not denote a break in diplomatic relations but a Cambodian withdrawal of its diplomatic personnel from countries that did not comply. The Prince has stated that recognition is a useful indicator of nations which want to pursue friendly relations with Cambodia and those which do not.

The Communist countries, France, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Cuba, Indonesia, Burma and the United Arab Republic recognized the borders. The United States and its allies in South Vietnam, South Korea and Thailand (except the Philippines and Australia) did not recognize the borders. West Germany and Japan satisfied Cambodian demands by recognizing nonaggression at the border. The split between those who recognized the borders and those who did not followed closely those who opposed United States involvement in Vietnam and those who did not, and the result was to align Cambodia more closely with the Communist nations.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

North Vietnam

In 1967 Cambodia formally granted de jure recognition to North Vietnam, and the two countries exchanged ambassadors. In the mid-1960’s relations with Communist North Vietnam had been characterized more by friendly gestures than by substantive acts. North Vietnam repeatedly expressed peaceful intentions toward Cambodia; formal greetings were sent on special occasions; and sports teams were exchanged. In 1967 a token present of rice was sent to Hanoi, and the Cambodian press commented favorably.

National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam

The evolution of the Vietnam War transformed the so-called National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, the political arm of the Viet Cong, from a military threat into a diplomatic ally. In 1960 Prince Sihanouk expressed concern about the Viet Cong and sent troops to the border to prevent incursions into Cambodian territory. He did not deal with the “Front” until he
was notified by North Vietnam in 1964 that any discussion concerning the Cambodian-South Vietnamese border would have to be held with the "Front."

In 1965 Cambodia invited the "Front" to send representatives to the Indochinese People's Conference, designed to gain support for a plan to neutralize Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam. The "Front," supported by North Vietnam and Communist China, prevailed upon Prince Sihanouk to refrain from presenting his plan.

In 1966 Cambodian and "Front" representatives met to negotiate a border settlement, but no agreement was reached because the "Front" refused to meet Cambodian demands, to ensure governmental representation of the 500,000 Khmer in South Vietnam or to recognize the Paris Accords of 1954.

In June 1967, after a similar act by the Soviet Union, the "Front" recognized Cambodia's borders and declared respect for its territorial integrity. Immediately thereafter, Cambodia raised the "Front" mission in Phnom Penh to the "official" level.

Official friendliness with the "Front" existed in November 1967, but in fact an unpublicized competition was being conducted along the mountainous part of the border to gain the loyalty of the Khmer Loeu and the mountain tribesmen. The mountain peoples, led by the Rhade ethnic group, had created an autonomous national movement called the Front for the Relief of the Oppressed Races (Front Unifié pour la Libération des Races Opprimées—FULRO). Its loyalty was sought by Cambodia, and it was also a target of the propaganda of the Viet Cong "Front," which had created a High Plateau Autonomy Movement Committee avowedly to set up an autonomous minority zone in the South Vietnamese highlands.

South Vietnam

Cambodia's relations with South Vietnam have been affected by longstanding and deep-seated ethnic and cultural differences and a history of competition for the lands of the Mekong Delta. The Vietnamese are of Sino-Malay origin and are indebted to China for their ancient culture, whereas the Cambodians are Mon-Khmer and have a cultural tradition heavily influenced by India and Theravada Buddhism. The two peoples fought for control of the Mekong Delta from the fifteenth century until the late nineteenth century, when the French assumed control of the area (see ch. 3, Historical Setting).

Since 1954 the traditional distrust between the two peoples has manifested itself in disputes over navigation rights on the Mekong, Vietnamese blocking of funds claimed by Cambodia, rival claims to offshore islands, the alleged implication of a Viet-
namese official in a plot to overthrow the Cambodian Government and what the Cambodians called violations of its borders.

Diplomatic relations were broken by Cambodia in 1968 over alleged border violations by the South Vietnamese and alleged repression of the Buddhists and the Khmer in South Vietnam. Economic relations have never been broken, however, and Cambodians used the Mekong River for transportation. In November 1967, however, the South Vietnamese Government required river traffic bound for Phnom Penh to go in convoys.

**Thailand**

Thai-Cambodian relations in 1967 were determined by the opposing positions each had taken concerning the struggle in Southeast Asia and the distrust existing between the two countries. Diplomatic relations were broken in 1961 after a name-calling incident between Prince Sihanouk and Premier Sarit Thanarat, which had resulted from Cambodian charges that Thailand had violated Cambodia’s borders, intervened in its internal affairs and laid claim to a Cambodian temple located on the Thai-Cambodian border.

The tensions between Cambodia and Thailand are based more on recent occurrences than on traditional enmity. The Japanese cession of Cambodian territory to the Thai during World War II was regarded more as an incident involving the Thai and the French than one in which Cambodians were concerned intimately. Relations were relatively friendly between the end of World War II and independence. Culturally, the Thai were considered kinsmen, and until recently Cambodia’s Buddhist monks looked to Thailand for higher Buddhist education.

**Laos**

In the late 1950’s Laos was becoming a battlefield between the Laotian Government and the Communist-supported Pathet Lao. Prince Sihanouk appealed for the reconvening of the Geneva Conference in order to make Laos a neutral buffer state. The Soviet Union and France supported the proposal, and it was accepted by the United States in 1961. The conference, which Prince Sihanouk initiated, arranged a cease-fire and created a tripartite government to be headed by the neutralist Laotian Premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma, and to include representatives of the Pathet Lao and right-wing factions. Diplomatic relations between Cambodia and Laos were established, and Prince Sihanouk, who maintained cordial relations with Prince Souvanna Phouma, assured him of Cambodian support for Laotian neutrality.

By 1967, however, the Pathet Lao leader, Prince Souphanouvong, and Prince Sihanouk exchanged letters of congratulation on their respective anti-imperialist stands, and the Cambodian press
adopted an unfavorable attitude toward the neutralist government of Prince Souvanna Phouma. Cambodian-Laotian diplomatic relations were lowered from ambassadorial to chargé d'affaires level.

OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES

Communist China

Communist China, recognized in 1958, often has been referred to by Prince Sihanouk as Cambodia's "number one friend." It has provided a large amount of economic aid, and each year since 1968 Cambodia has been one of China's sponsors for admission to the United Nations. In September 1967 Chinese Communist activities in Cambodia brought a sharp reaction from Prince Sihanouk, but by November relations appeared to have been restored despite persistent suspicions.

Between 1958 and 1955 Cambodia, seeking alignment with the West, made no attempt to establish diplomatic relations with Communist China. Cambodian fears of Communist Chinese intentions were eased at a dinner given by Foreign Minister Chou En-lai for Prince Sihanouk during the 1955 Bandung Conference, at which the Communist Chinese Foreign Minister stated that his country had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of Cambodia. The good relations established between Chou En-lai and the Prince were important factors in the maintenance of friendship between the two nations from 1955 through 1967.

In 1956 Prince Sihanouk visited Peking, where he publicly renounced SEATO's protection of Cambodia. He returned with praise for Communist China's achievements and with the draft of an economic assistance treaty. He clearly indicated, however, that his country would not benefit from instituting the Chinese Communist example, which he described as being incompatible with Buddhism and giving little importance to human life.

Diplomatic relations were established in 1958, but in 1961 Prince Sihanouk stated that his confidence in Communist China was limited to the same degree that one should limit one's confidence in all powers larger than Cambodia. He stated later that he was aware that if the United States did not maintain its presence in Southeast Asia the Communists would have no more reason to woo him—they would simply swallow him.

Cambodia has sought consistently to attain good relations with Communist China through official statements and treaties. In 1955 both nations accepted the Panch Shila, and the following year a Cambodian-Communist China communique was released requesting all Chinese in Cambodia to respect the nation, abide
by its laws and refrain from political activity. It also reaffirmed
the observance of the principle of peaceful coexistence. In 1960
the two nations signed a treaty of friendship and nonaggression,
and in 1967 Communist China officially recognized Cambodia’s
borders.

Events in the fall of 1967 shattered the harmonious relations
between the two nations. Chinese students in Cambodia displayed
Maoist badges and publicly shouted Maoist slogans, and Sihanouk
denounced a statement from Peking to the disbanded Sino-
Cambodian Friendship Association as evidence of subversive in-
tent. Prince Sihanouk threatened to resign and turn his govern-
ment over to the army which, he said, would turn to the West
for help. He also recalled his diplomatic mission from Communist
China on the grounds that foreign personnel were not safe in
Peking and stated that he would not tolerate activities which
would split the nation.

Communist Chinese Foreign Minister Chou En-lai sent a per-
sonal note of apology, promised that the events would not recur
and reiterated his nation’s adherence to the Panch Shila with
regard to Cambodia. In November 1967 the diplomatic mission
was still in Peking, but the Prince discontinued his statements
of warm regard for China and instead issued warnings against
all powers which tried to interfere in Cambodia’s internal affairs.

India

Indian cultural influence, nationalism and neutralism are com-
mon bonds underlying the friendly relations with Cambodia. India
recognized Cambodia immediately after independence, and
an exchange of visits between the heads of state in the subse-
quent 18 months influenced the Prince in the development of his
policy of neutralism. In 1955 a joint statement cited the historical
and cultural affinity between the two nations and proclaimed
their support of the Panch Shila and the principles of peaceful
coexistence.

Relations were strained by Communist China’s military pene-
tration of India’s frontier in 1962. Prince Sihanouk avoided
taking sides in the dispute, and at the Colombo Conference, called
to stop the border conflict, he played an active role in shaping
the decision of the Conference to issue a mildly worded com-
unique that urged both sides to stop fighting and negotiate.
Prince Sihanouk visited India in January 1963, but again he did
not issue any statement critical of Communist China.

In 1965 Prince Sihanouk, at a dedication ceremony naming a
road for Nehru, noted India’s respect for democratic principles
and the following year sent a gift of 100 tons of rice to counter
the famine there to demonstrate the solidarity between the two nations. In late 1967 relations, although limited, were friendly.

Japan

Hostility to the Japanese presence during World War II was offset by Japan’s help for Cambodia’s declaration of independence from France. At the 1951 peace conference held in San Francisco, Cambodia protested the imposition of severe conditions on Japan and waived its rights to reparations.

Diplomatic relations were established after independence, and an exchange of visits between the heads of state in 1955 and 1956 led to cultural and economic agreements. Relations in the 1960’s were primarily economic. Japan extended the equivalent of $4.2 million in economic aid between 1959 and 1966 and was one of Cambodia’s most important trading partners through 1967 (see ch. 28, Foreign Economic Relations).

Friendly relations were jeopardized in October 1967 when Cambodia threatened to cut off all trade if Japan did not recognize its borders. Japan’s premier canceled a proposed visit but stated that his nation would respect Cambodia’s borders. Prince Sihanouk replied that he wanted recognition, not just respect, but he accepted a declaration that Japan would recognize non-aggression at the border.

Other Asian Countries

Until 1967 Cambodia’s relations with the Philippines were cool because of the participation of the Philippines in SEATO. Prince Sihanouk visited the Philippines in 1956 but reacted adversely to alleged attempts to persuade him to join SEATO. Diplomatic relations were established in 1963, and in 1967 the Philippines recognized Cambodia’s borders, which elicited a statement of praise from the Prince.

Burma, like Cambodia, is a Theravada Buddhist nation, an adherent of neutralism and a supporter of the Panch Shila. Relations, although limited, have been uniformly friendly. In August 1967 the Khmer-Chinese Friendship Association criticized Burma, which elicited a pointed response from Prince Sihanouk that it was a friendly nation.

Cambodia’s relations with Indonesia have been friendly. Both countries participated in the Bandung Conference; in 1962 a declaration of mutual friendship and support was issued; and in 1967 Indonesia recognized Cambodian borders.

Cambodia maintains cordial relations with Singapore, which was the first nation to recognize Cambodia’s borders, and it participated at Phnom Penh in the 1966 Games of the New Emerging Forces, an athletic association created to compete with Western associations.