

BULLETIN

OF CONCERNED ASIAN SCHOLARS

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Orphans of Genocide: The Cham Muslims of Kampuchea under Pol Pot

by Ben Kiernan

Few regimes in history, even those led by atheists, have successfully managed to abolish religion. In Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea (DK) from 1975 to 1979, all religious practice was prohibited and very effectively suppressed, sometimes with great violence. Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity were all eliminated with the same vigor applied to the destruction of both traditional cultures and treasonable heresies such as "capitalism" and "revisionist" communism. In all, over a million people died. This study explores the impact of four years of massacre and repression on a Muslim minority group that arguably suffered even more repression than the Khmer Buddhist majority in the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) period. The evidence for this, based on over 100 interviews with Cham survivors of DK, is set out in detail. The documentary case is weak, but the mass of eyewitness testimony is undeniable, and it is possible to infer the guiding intent from what happened all over the country. My conclusion is that the Pol Pot regime's attempts not only to destroy Islamic religion, but also to exterminate the Cham community as such, constitute genocide as defined under international law: various acts such as "killing members of the group" pursued with "an intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such."

I. Introduction: The Chams in History

In a remarkable essay first published in 1933, Paul Mus analyzed the religious traditions of a people he called "the lost children of Indian culture."¹ These people were the Chams. Their country, Champa, had been one of Southeast Asia's Hindu-Buddhist states between the third and fifteenth centuries, but in 1471 it was overrun and dismembered by the Vietnamese kingdom.

In 1970, 60,000 Chams lived on their ancient territory in central-southern Vietnam. But 200,000 more Chams lived in Kampuchea, where their ancestors had fled. There they had

adopted Islam and had intermarried with "Malays" in Kampuchea to form a staunch Muslim community, distinct from the overwhelmingly Buddhist Khmer. The Chams were "the largest indigenous minority in Cambodia."² Before considering their fate from 1975 to 1979, it is necessary to examine the history of the Cham people and the role they have played in the history of Kampuchea.

From the third century A.D., the Chams were among the first Southeast Asian peoples to undergo Indian cultural influence. This may reflect the relatively advanced state of their own social institutions.³ The sixth century Cham temple of Mi-Son is in fact the oldest architectural monument in Southeast Asia, and even India itself has few earlier monuments.⁴ When the Chinese temporarily conquered Champa in 605 A.D., they seized 1,350 works on Buddhism, apparently written in the Cham language.⁵

The Indian gods were "naturalized" by the Cham, while

1. Paul Mus, "Cultes indiens et indigenes au Champa," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient (BEFEO)* XXXIII (1933), pp. 367–410. Published in English translation by I.W. Mabbett as *India Seen from the East: Indian and Indigenous Cults in Champa*, edited by I.W. Mabbett and David P. Chandler, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, no.3 (Melbourne, 1975). See p. 53.

2. Michael Vickery, *Cambodia 1975–1982* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, and Boston: South End, 1984), p. 11.

3. Mus, "Cultes indiens."

4. Georges Maspéro, *Le Royaume du Champa*, Paris, 1928. Translation of chapter 1 (Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1949), p. 49.

5. Ian W. Mabbett, "Buddhism in Champa," in D.G. Marr and A.C. Milner (eds.), *Southeast Asia in the Ninth to Fourteenth Centuries* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1986), pp. 289–313, at p. 294.

local earth gods were Hinduized. The Cham goddess of Nha-trang, Po Ino Nagar, slowly came to be seen as Uma, wife of the Hindu god Siva. In Paul Mus's words, the local religion "recognized itself" in Hindu-Buddhism.⁶ Cham architecture betrays not only Indian but also Vietnamese, Chinese, Indonesian, Malay, and Khmer influences; one ninth century Cham temple complex has been described as "possibly the most astonishing aesthetic experience produced by Buddhism."⁷ Paul Mus draws attention to the remarkable Cham facility to manipulate abstractions and philosophical ideas.⁸ He says that Champa had "received from the past all that there [was] for it to receive by direct transmission," and had set to work in a new mode, transforming Cham into a literary language and producing its own cultural idiom. But he goes on: "What would it have been? This is one of the possibilities which still excite our imagination, but which has been killed in embryo by the rude hand of history."⁹

Thus, in the case of urban evacuees and Chinese, some connection with the bases worked in their favor. But it did not save the Chams, who were targeted for destruction despite the fact that they were mostly base people. These mid-1978 massacres of Chams there constituted a campaign of racial extermination.

I shall return to this point about a "murder" of Champa's intellect in 1471, merely noting here Gérard Moussay's contradictory point that "an abundant" Cham literature was still extant in the Phan Rang area no less than five centuries later.¹⁰

For much of the twelfth century, Champa was engaged in



photo by B. P. Groslier*

A Cham version of the Hindu god Siva on a sandstone altar built in the ninth century in Dong Duong in Indrapura in what is now Quang Nam in South Vietnam. In 982 the Vietnamese took over Indrapura, and the Chams fell back to Vijaya in the Binh Dinh area of South Vietnam.

**This photo and caption information are from Bernard Philippe Groslier, Indochina, translated from the French by James Hogarth (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1966), plate 65 on p. 123; pp. 77 and 271.*

6. Mus, "Cultes indiens," pp. 4, 37.

7. Mabbett, "Buddhism," p. 299, quoting Boisselier.

8. Mus, "Cultes indiens," p. 52.

9. Ibid., pp. 53, 54.

10. G. Moussay, "Coup d'oeil sur les Cam aujourd'hui," *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises de Saigon* 46 (1971), pp. 3-10 at p. 10.

11. David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1983), p. 58.

12. Claude Jacques, "Sources on Economic Activities in Khmer and Cham Lands," in Marr and Milner, *Southeast Asia*, p. 333.

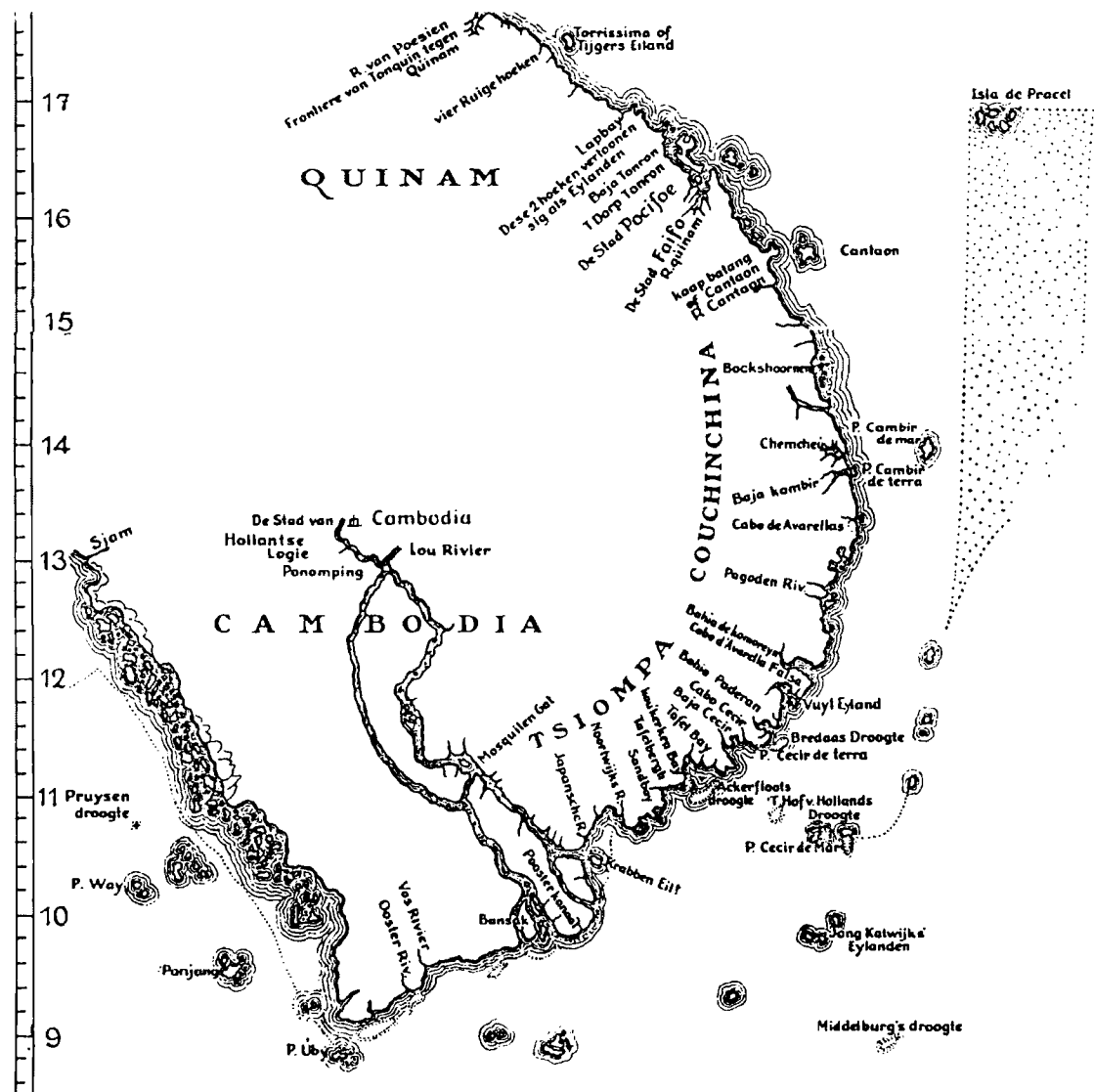
13. Chester Bain, *Vietnam: Roots of Conflict* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1967), p. 66, and Jean Chesneaux, *The Vietnamese Nation: Contribution to a History*, translated into English by Malcolm Salmon (Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1966), p. 29.

14. Maspéro, *Royaume*, p. 28.

warfare against the Khmer kingdom. In 1178, Cham armies sailed up the Mekong with the aid of a Chinese pilot, sacked Angkor, and killed the Khmer king. The Khmers regrouped and fought back, killing the Cham king "with a hundred million arrows"¹¹ and later temporarily occupying his capital. But the Cham capital lasted longer than Angkor, which was abandoned by the Khmer under Thai attack in 1432.

Champa was not a powerful centralized state. Like other Southeast Asian polities, it was a collection of regional power zones prone to fragmentation. Claude Jacques believes "that the Cham lands were more often divided than not."¹² This is not to deny Cham power at its zenith. In 1371 the Cham fleet raided and sacked the Vietnamese capital. But exactly a century later the Vietnamese turned the tables, invading Vijaya with an army of 250,000. The Cham king, Ban La Tra Toan, was captured and executed along with 50,000 of his subjects.¹³

Champa was divided by its Vietnamese conquerors into three principalities. Vietnamese peasants migrated southwards along the coast. Beginning in 1693 Cham kings were treated as local officials by the Vietnamese monarch. In 1770 shipwrecked French sailors visited the Cham court.¹⁴ "The throne of the king was a simple footstool," they reported. The Cham



This portion of a Dutch map of Indochina in 1658–59 shows Champa, spelled Tsiompa.

king joined in the Tay Son revolution that broke out in Vietnam in 1771, but later found himself at odds with both sides in the conflict. When the Tay Son were victorious their leader had himself crowned king of Vietnam at Vijaya, the site of the former Cham capital.¹⁵ This seems to have been an acknowledgment of Champa's legacy, but also an effective Vietnamese claim to its possession.

After the destruction of its court and monarchical rituals, Cham religious life continued. The original local goddess of Nha-trang, Po Ino Nagar, no longer seen as Siva's wife, Uma, "reverted to her primordial condition."¹⁶ Siva himself was replaced by Po Klaun Garai, a deified Cham king. The Hindu god Indra, for one, seems to have survived remarkably well as the Cham god (yan) In.¹⁷ But Buddhism disappeared altogether. In many ways, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Islam seems to have taken its place.

There was already a long history of Islam in Champa. Two eleventh-century Arabic inscriptions reveal the existence at the time of a foreign Muslim trading community in Champa. But it seems unlikely that many Chams were converted to Islam before the conquest of their kingdom in 1471.¹⁸ There is in fact no record of a Muslim king of Champa before 1676. At any rate, as Michael Vickery has demonstrated, very little is known

even of events in Kampuchea from the Thai seizure of Angkor in 1432 until the 1590s, when Thai armies again invaded and sacked the then Khmer capital, Lovek.¹⁹ The history of Champa in that period is hardly better known.

*This map is a copy of a map in the Archives d'État à La Haye.

15. Chesneau, *Vietnamese Nation*, p. 42; Po Dharma, "A propos de l'exil d'un roi cam au Cambodge," *BEFEO LXXII* (1983), pp. 253–66; A.B. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1971), p. 23.

16. Mus, "Cultes indiens," pp. 36, 38.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 51. On Po Klaung Garai, see G.E. Marrison, "The Chams of Malacca," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24, 1 (1951), pp. 90–98, at p. 95.

18. Pierre-Yves Manguin, in a persuasive study, "L'Introduction de l'Islam au Champa," *BEFEO LXVI* (1979), pp. 255–87, locates the Islamization of Champa at probably some stage between 1644 and 1676.

19. Michael Vickery, *Cambodia After Angkor: The Chronical Evidence for the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries* (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1977).

Meanwhile, Muslim traders had established themselves on the Kampuchean scene. There was a Malay (as well as an Arab) quarter in Lovek by the late 1590s. The 1620s saw a spectacular rise of Malay influence in Kampuchea. In this period, the Khmer chronicles record two major towns being named (or renamed) Kompong,²⁰ the Malay word for village which became the Khmer for port. Later, one of Kampuchea's major riverine centers flourished under the name Kompong Cham, or Cham port, and it is now capital of the country's largest province, to which it has given its name. One may infer that Malay traders were penetrating the hinterland, as this was a period of increased commercial activity.

In 1623 the Khmer king, Chey Chetta, allowed Dutch merchants to establish a trading center in Kampuchea, and British merchants soon followed them. He also struck a new coinage, and allowed the Vietnamese king to open a customs house in the village of Saigon. In the 1630s, the Khmer chronicles record, large numbers of Chinese arrived.²¹ In July 1639, Dutch agents in Phnom Penh bought no fewer than 125,000 deerskins for export to Japan. At that same time, there were seven Portuguese ships buying goods in Kampuchea.²²

In 1642 a young Khmer prince named Ponhea Chan seized the throne by murdering the king and his father with the help of Malay supporters.²³ Muslim influence in Kampuchea reached its zenith when the king "agreed to embrace the Cham-Malay religion," as the chronicles later put it. Ponhea Chan took the name Ibrahim.

Within a year, Ibrahim had plunged into a holy war against the Dutch East India Company. In two major battles on the Mekong in 1643–44, 156 of the Dutch were killed, 50 captured, and 80 wounded. One thousand Khmers were killed, but Ibrahim's forces captured two Dutch ships, which his Malay allies—as well as Portuguese and Japanese—sailed into battle for him.²⁴

But Ibrahim had made Khmer enemies, who eventually overthrew him with Vietnamese assistance. Kampuchea's only Muslim monarch, Ibrahim, was captured and died in Hue in 1650. Nine years later his former supporters rebelled but were defeated, and 2,000–3,000 of them, including over 700 Chams, fled across the country into Thailand. Nevertheless, Cham influence at the Khmer court lasted until the French Protectorate was established in 1863.²⁵

In neighboring Champa, meanwhile, "nearly all" the population were said to be Muslim by 1675. By the next year the Cham king, Po Saut, was a Muslim also, but it is not clear when he converted.²⁶ Pierre-Yves Manguin describes the Islamization of Champa as a process in which "the merchant population of a port town is converted to Islam and brings with it the

sovereign, who is in large measure dependent on it." In 1607 a Dutch ship visiting Champa was met by a Muslim Cham royal official (*orang kaya*) who reported that although King Po Nit was not a Muslim, his younger brother the crown prince "wished to embrace the religion of the Moors, but he dared not, because of his brother." A crucial stage appears to have been reached, but the Hinduized kingdom was not converted quickly. In 1644 the Cham king Po Ramo (r.1627–51) told Dutch travelers that the new Khmer Muslim king, Ibrahim, had acted treacherously to gain power and that the alliance between the two kingdoms was now broken. According to Cham tradition, Po Ramo ended a period of quarreling between Hindu and Muslim Chams, and instigated a practice of attendance at each other's ceremonies. Po Ramo was a Hindu, but his wife was Muslim. His successor, Po Nraup, had two wives, one of each faith. However, Po Nraup's successor, Po Saut (r.1660–92), was apparently the first king to embrace Islam.

After independence in 1954, the Chams were given a new, equally inaccurate label: the Sihanouk regime officially referred to them as "Islamic Khmers." Again their ethnic origin was denied. In the perverse sense, Chams became victims of history.

It is not certain that later Cham kings were also Muslims, but it seems likely. The late Cham statuary exhibited "a deliberate will to efface the human figure," very much in the Islamic tradition. French visitors in 1720 found that Islam was "one of the dominant religions" in Champa, but that "idolatry reigns there also."²⁷ By 1940, 6,000 of the 15,000 Chams still in south central Vietnam were Muslims; they lived in those Cham villages closest to the sea and to the old Cham capital of Phan Rang. For them, the local earth goddess, Po Ino Nagar, was no longer Siva's wife Uma, but was now identified as Po Havah, or Eve, wife of the Muslim prophet Po Adam.²⁸

Manguin describes the alleged "disappearance" of Champa after 1471 as a myth. In 1594 the Cham were still strong enough to help the Malay state of Johor resist Portuguese attack, and Cham merchants "continued to frequent the ports of Southeast Asia throughout the seventeenth century."²⁹ Champa's cultural life, as we have seen, continued to develop autonomously, and even a distinct Cham territory was not directly absorbed until 1834–35, or by one account, as late as 1883 during the French conquest.³⁰ In 1691–97, Vietnam took over the last Cham port

20. Mak Phoeun, *Chroniques Royales du Cambodge (de 1594 a 1677)* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1981), pp. 406, 131.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 278, 166–67.

22. See W.J.M. Buch, "La Compagnie des Indes Néerlandaises et l'Indochine," *BEFEO* XXXVII (1937), pp. 121–237, at p. 207.

23. Mak Phoeun, *Chroniques Royales*, pp. 185, 342.

24. Buch, "Compaigne des Indes," pp. 219–21.

25. Marcel Ner, "Les Musulmans de l'Indochine Française," *BEFEO* XLI, 2 (1941), pp. 151–201, at pp. 169, 196.

26. Manguin, "L'Introduction de l'Islam," p. 271.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 270–77.

28. Ner, "Musulmans," p. 154; A. Cabaton, "Indochina," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1971) vol. III, pp. 1208–12, at p. 1210.

29. Manguin, "L'Introduction de l'Islam," pp. 276–78.

30. Po Dharma, "A propos de l'exil," p. 254, n. 5; and M.A. Jaspán, "Recent Developments among the Cham of Indochina: The Revival of Champa," *Asian Affairs* (London) vol. 1 (1970), pp. 170–76, at p. 171.

towns, including Phan Rang, but even then Champa lasted nearly two more centuries.

The Vietnamese takeover of Phan Rang in 1693 sent 5,000 Cham refugees (including much of Cham royalty) into Kampuchea. They settled near Lovek,³¹ and their descendants today form a distinct community of Chams, who still use the Cham alphabet and practice a Hinduized form of Islam.³² But perhaps the largest Cham migration to Kampuchea occurred in the late 1790s, when King Po Ca Ci Bri led his followers there before the defeat of the Tay Son revolution in Vietnam.³³ They apparently built what is now the oldest mosque in Kampuchea, the Noor Alihsan mosque, which was erected at Chrang Chamres, seven kilometers north of Phnom Penh, in 1831. The Chams however, were not integrated quickly into Kampuchean society. When Vietnamese forces invaded Kampuchea in the 1830s, "Cham mercenaries were the only troops they could recruit."³⁴ In 1858, Muslim residents again revolted against the Khmer authorities in the eastern province of Tbaung Khmum. They were defeated by King Ang Duong "in a series of murderous battles" on the Mekong. "Most of the Chams and Malays in Tbaung Khmum were arrested and transported" to western provinces.³⁵ But after the establishment of the French protectorate in Kampuchea, an anti-French rebellion in 1865–67 attracted the support of Chams as well as Khmers and Vietnamese.³⁶

In 1874 the French carried out the first census of their protectorate and counted 25,599 Chams, 3 percent of the Kampuchean population.³⁷ In 1936 the Chams in Kampuchea were estimated to number 88,000, and by 1975, 250,000. By 1979 their numbers would normally have reached at least 260,000.³⁸

The Chams in Kampuchea have always been concentrated in about seventy villages along or near the banks of the Mekong and Sap rivers in Kompong Cham Province in the east, and

Kompong Chhnang and Pursat in the west.³⁹ Most of them were fisherfolk practicing small-scale family fishing on the rivers.

31. D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, (London, 1985), p. 462.

32. Juliette Baccot (Françoise Corrèze), *On G'nur et Cay à O Russey: syncrétisme religieux dans un village cham du Cambodge* (Paris: Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1968), 409 pp.

33. Jean Delvert, *Le paysan cambodgien* (Paris: Mouton, 1960), p. 22. See also Po Dharma, "A propos de l'exil," pp. 253–66.

34. Chandler, *History of Cambodia*, p. 216.

35. L. Loubet, *Monographie de la province de Kompong Cham* (Paris: A. Portail, 1939), p. 12.

36. Jean Moura, *Le Royaume du Cambodge* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1883), p. 163.

37. Delvert, *Le paysan cambodgien*, p. 426. For the official census figure see Porée, Guy and Maspéro, Eveline, *Moeurs et coutumes des Khmers* (Paris: Payot, 1938), translated from the French by Keith Botsford (Human Relations Area Files, 1952), p. 12.

38. The last two estimates are based upon the 1936 census figure of 73,000, adjusted for error to 88,000. (See Ner, "Musulmans," p. 180. There are no accurate subsequent estimates as the Chams were not distinguished from the Khmer in the 1962 census. J. Migozzi, in *Cambodge: faits et problèmes de population* [Paris: CNRS, 1973] gives a figure of 150,000 for 1968, but provides no source for it.) The 1975 and 1979 estimates assume a 1936–75 population growth rate of 2.7 percent per year, an average rate suggested by the research of J. Migozzi, pp. 207–12, 226, modified for the early period by the contemporary research of Marcel Ner, "Musulmans," pp. 179–80, but of only 1 percent in 1975–78.)

39. Delvert, *Le paysan cambodgien*, pp. 22–23. (By 1975 there were 118 Muslim villages [each with a mosque] in the country, including

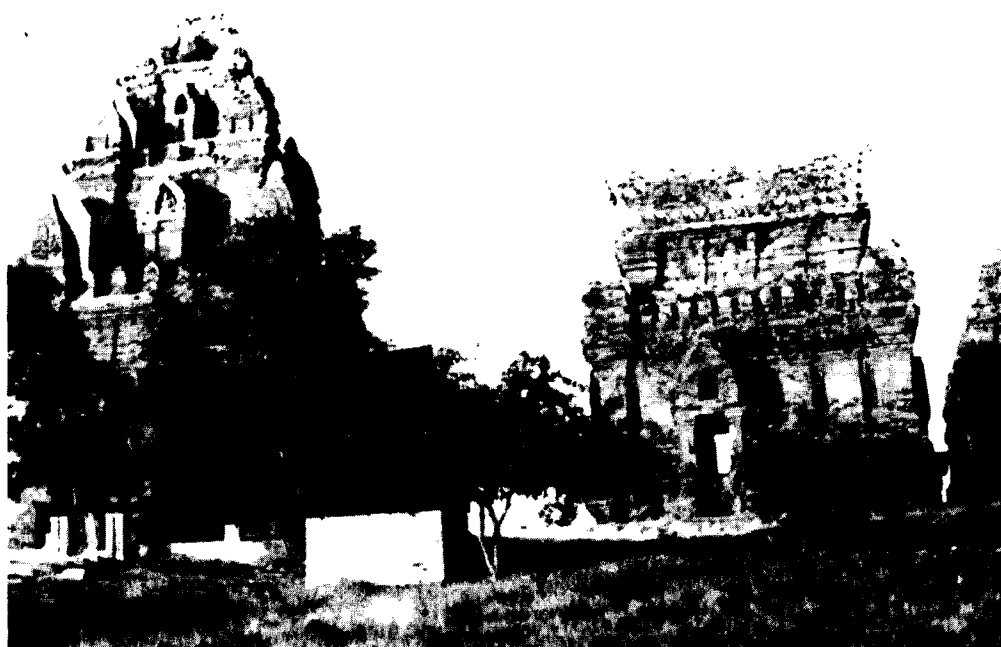


photo by Ben Kiernan, courtesy of Ben Kiernan

Thap Cham in Phan Rang in South Vietnam, 1975

Muslims formed a near majority in only one district of the country—Krauchhmar in northern Kompong Cham Province. They lived together in big villages with their houses clustered side by side. In the 1950s, the Chams there numbered well over 20,000, in “very big communities.” Jean Delvert has written of these people: “The Chams are garden farmers (tobacco, corn) and cultivate dry season ricefields; they fish as families using *chhnoch* and sweep nets. Or they are butchers and foresters; their families weave cotton and silk. . . .”⁴⁰

No Chams were placed in the third, most favored category of “full rights” (penh sith). Therefore Chams, like urban evacuees, were explicitly denied rights. Meanwhile, non-Muslim Khmers were brought to live in the evacuated Cham villages of Boeng Subdistrict.

Other Chams monopolized the livestock trade in the Phnom Penh area, including the export trade. This monopoly, however, caused little social tension. Buddhist Khmers often preferred to sell stock to the Cham. As a French writer commented, the Khmer farmer “believes he is not infringing the precepts of his religion which forbid him to kill his stock to feed himself.” The same writer pointed out the risks posed by any withdrawal of their monopoly from the Chams, who were “a perhaps onerous but surely useful intermediary” between farmer and beef consumer.⁴¹

Kampuchea’s Muslims are all of the orthodox Sunni sect, of the Shafi’i school of Islamic law. They have been described as fervent believers;⁴² in the 1930s Kompong Cham Province boasted forty mosques for a population of 33,000 Muslims.⁴³ By 1940 there were over 500 Kampuchean *hajis*, or Chams who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca.⁴⁴ By the 1970s about eighty Chams were travelling there annually on a flight chartered from Czechoslovak Airlines.⁴⁵ There were probably over 1,000 *hajis* in Kampuchea by 1975. Twenty-five Chams had also

thirty-six “Malay” villages in Kampot. Author’s interviews with Cham leaders in the People’s Republic of Kampuchea: Tep Ibrahim, Chrang Chamres, 10 January 1986, and Mat Ly, Phnom Penh, 29 January 1986.) See p. 11 of this issue for a map of Kampuchea.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 605, 610–11.

41. R. Jauffret, “Possibilités de l’élevage bovin et bubalin dans les provinces du 1er secteur vétérinaire du Cambodge (Kandal-Kompong Speu-Kompong Chhnang),” *Bulletin Economique de l’Indochine* (November 1939), pp. 1007–35, at p. 1016.

42. Delvert, *Le paysan cambodgien*, p. 23.

43. L. Loubet, *Monographie*, pp. 61, 208.

44. Delvert, *Le paysan cambodgien*, p. 23.

45. Author’s interviews with Chams at Chrang Chamres, 15 September 1980.

graduated from various centers of world Islamic learning, including nine who had completed six to seven years of study at Egypt’s Al-Azhar University in Cairo. One decided to remain in Cairo to become an Islamic scholar.⁴⁶ In 1940 Marcel Ner noted that one in fifty Cham men in Kampuchea had been to Mecca.

However, little of this was appreciated by the majority Khmers, whose Buddhist culture kept the Chams apart. Even some of the symbiotic aspects of the Khmer-Cham relationship were based on exotica. Michael Vickery has summed it up:

Many Chams claimed before the war that they were held in contempt by the Khmer and were objects of discrimination, and ill-feeling between these two sections of Cambodian society certainly existed in some localities. Many Khmer regarded Chams with a mixture of awe and fear. They were believed to be accomplished in the black arts; and Phnom Penh ladies used to cross over to Chruai Changvar, a Cham community on a peninsula where the Mekong and Tonle Sap rivers meet, to get predictions about the future, love potions for husbands and lovers, and noxious prescriptions for rivals.⁴⁷

In many rural localities, the Khmer-Cham relationship was closer. Near the former Khmer royal capital of Oudong are two Cham villages, in one of which the everyday language is Khmer. In both villages, as Marcel Ner recorded in 1940, mixed marriages of Chams to Khmers, Vietnamese, or Chinese were “extremely numerous (about 10%)” and always led to the conversion of the partner to Islam. Likewise, in Kampot Province, half of the Muslims had given up their original language for Khmer, and the rest could speak Khmer fluently. Ner commented that the Chams and Khmers in Kampot were linked by “language, lifestyle, a long shared existence and a good mutual understanding,” and “only separated by religion.” Indeed, Ner considered Khmer-Cham relations in general a happy symbiosis: “The Khmers get on well with them. They feel that they have brought an element of activity that the country needs, and I have never heard expression of the fears or irritation that they often display about other groups.”⁴⁸

In his thorough study of the Chams, Ner made another important point. He rejected the accepted view that the Chams were “an ethnic remnant in the process of disappearance,” of interest only to scholars. Ner showed how the Chams “were rapidly increasing in numbers” and would do so even faster if their high infant mortality rate was reduced by Western medicine. He suggested that official figures had underestimated their numbers by 20 percent. The Chams, he said, were “very prolific, . . . notable also for their vigour, their cohesion, and their energy.”⁴⁹

Note the words of a British scholar writing a little later, in 1950: “The Chams are now but a declining remnant . . . a disappearing race.” The same writer immediately contrasted their modern plight to a glorious history: “but the ruin of their civilisation, in the form of extensive remains in southern Indochina, is a monument to their past greatness. . . . The Chams

46. *Ibid.*, and author’s interview with Tuon Ibrahim in Phnom Penh, 19 September 1980.

47. Michael Vickery, *Cambodia 1975–1982*, p. 181.

48. Ner, “Muslimans,” pp. 169, 175, 192, 194–95.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 179–81.

. . . were once a great nation, and their past has been rescued from oblivion by the work of many archaeologists and historians in recent years."⁵⁰

This view was quite common. Antoine Cabaton also claimed that once "the Chams were one of the great powers of Indochina" but that now "only a few miserable relics of the race" remain. He lamented "the sad degeneracy of this fallen race."⁵¹ More recently, Gérard Moussay incorrectly stated that only in the Phan Rang area do Chams still use their original Sanskrit-based alphabet, claiming that it is "undoubtedly the only treasure that the Chams have retained from their glorious past."⁵² This glorious past, as archaeology rescued it from the clay, served merely to highlight their doomed future. "History" pointed incontrovertibly to a national graveyard.

O.W. Wolters has suggested that the Indianization of early Southeast Asian kingdoms has been doubly misunderstood. The backwardness of pre-Indianized Southeast Asia has been exaggerated, and so have the centralization and might of the Indianized kingdoms.⁵³ Similarly the Chams in the twentieth century have suffered from two rather widespread myths. The power and glory of the "empire" of Champa has been exaggerated, and so has their present plight.

This is not of course unique. Tasmanian Aborigines bear a comparable "burden of history." Lyndall Ryan has noted how James Bonwick, in *The Last of the Tasmanians* in 1870, "drew the Tasmanian Aborigines as ancient heroes who, when unjustly dispossessed, had died out." She adds that in the twentieth century: "Because it is universally believed that they disappeared from history, the surviving Tasmanian Aborigines have had to struggle to be recognized at all. . . . No one believed they existed. . . . To suggest they had survived and some recompense could be made for loss of land was a travesty."⁵⁴

We shall see how such a romanticized view of the Chams' doom helped deprive them of rights in 1975–79. For most of the twentieth century the Chams of Kampuchea have not been recognized as such (and so, like the Tasmanians, denied existence). They were actually called "Malays" by the French colonialists. Ner concluded his study with the following plea for the Chams: "They have been increasingly unknown or misunderstood. It has become customary to call them 'Malays,' and the most respectable and recent works propagate the most curious errors about them."⁵⁵ After independence in 1954, the Chams

were given a new, equally inaccurate label: the Sihanouk regime officially referred to them as "Islamic *Khmers*." Again their ethnic origin was denied. In the perverse sense, Chams became victims of history.

II. The Chams in Politics

Being essentially a rural population, Kampuchea's Muslims rarely rose to political prominence except occasionally in the armed forces. There do not appear to have been any Cham or other Muslim members of the country's National Assembly in the 1960s, for instance. But the postwar era of liberation movements had at least some impact on the Chams.

In February–March 1965, as U.S. ground troops landed in South Vietnam, Prince Norodom Sihanouk hosted a Conference of the Indochinese Peoples, in Phnom Penh. Communist and neutralist groups from Vietnam and Laos were invited, but so were a dozen or so shadowy committees allegedly representing Chams and various other minority groups in the region. Most were sponsored by General Lon Nol and "his deputy for these mysterious affairs, the colonel Les Kasem, of Cham origin." Charles Meyer continues:

Here we touch upon one of the "great political ideas," which was the unification by Cambodia of all the so-called Mon-Khmer peoples against the Vietnamese. The eccentric Lon Nol thus drew upon scientific research into the common cultural background of the Austro-Asiatic peoples, whom he of his own accord baptised "Austrians" (sic), to find justification for his dream. . . . His dispatch of emissaries to the Mons in Burma and to the several thousand Chams on the coast of Annam was a fruitless fantasy.⁵⁶

When Lon Nol seized power from Sihanouk five years later, he pursued his "Mon-Khmer" cause with such publicity as to cause embarrassment to his American and other allies. As the war spread, his armed forces grew rapidly in numbers, and Colonel Les Kasem was given command of a separate Cham battalion. During the 1970–72 period, this battalion "was reported to have systematically destroyed and exterminated 'Khmer Rouge' villages which they occupied. Their notoriety was such that finally the government realized they were counter-productive and the battalion was split up among other units."⁵⁷ Meanwhile many Chams had joined the communist cause.

As early as 1950, a Cham elder named Sos Man had been one of the first Kampuchean to join the Indochina Communist Party, led by Ho Chi Minh. For the next three years, Sos Man served as deputy chief of the anti-French underground Workers' Committee of Kompong Cham Province. From July 1953 to April 1954 he studied at the Tay Nguyen guerrilla warfare school in Vietnam's central highlands, graduating with the rank of major.⁵⁸ After the French defeat, he traveled to Hanoi and commenced studies in politics and Marxism-Leninism which eventually took him to Moscow and, for two years, to Beijing. Sos Man returned home in 1970 and joined the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) Eastern Zone Committee. He also established the Eastern Zone Islamic Movement which he ran

50. Marrison, "Chams," p. 90, 98.

51. Antoine Cabaton, "Chams," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* 3 (1910), pp. 341–42.

52. Moussay, "Coup d'oeil," p. 10. A similar mistaken reading of Kampuchean history by the Pol Pot regime has been discussed in Ben Kiernan, "William Shawcross, Declining Cambodia," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* vol. 18, no. 1 (1986), pp. 56–63. See also David P. Chandler, "Seeing Red: Perceptions of Cambodian History in Democratic Kampuchea," in D.P. Chandler and Ben Kiernan (eds.), *Revolution and Its Aftermath in Kampuchea: Eight Essays*, Yale University Southeast Asia Studies Monograph No. 25 (New Haven, 1983), pp. 34–56.

53. O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore, 1982), pp. 12–14.

54. Lyndall Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians* (St. Lucia, 1982), pp. 1–3.

55. Ner, "Musulmans," p. 197.

56. Charles Meyer, *Derrière le sourire khmer* (Paris: Plon, 1971), pp. 269–70. See also M.A. Jaspan, "Recent Developments."

57. Vickery, *Cambodia 1975–1982*, p. 11.

58. See Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power* (London: Verso, 1985), pp. 90, 125.

with his son Mat Ly (who had been jailed by the French and then by Sihanouk). Sos Man traveled the zone speaking to Cham communities about "the necessity of carrying out the revolution."⁵⁹

Sos Man was a "prestigious figure,"⁶⁰ but a unique one. In other zones where Chams were concentrated, such as in the Southwest and Northern zones, no Islamic political organizations were tolerated by the CPK leadership that dominated those areas even during the war against Lon Nol's Khmer Republic. In fact, the Southwest Zone, heartland of Pol Pot's Party Center faction, saw the earliest attacks upon Cham culture. At first, Cham women were forced to cut their hair short in the Khmer style, not wear it long as was their custom; then the traditional Cham sarong was banned (along with other colorful clothing favored by Khmers), as peasants were increasingly forced to wear only black pajamas; restrictions were also placed upon religious activity. These prohibitions all began as early as mid-1972 in the Southwest,⁶¹ on the orders of Pol Pot's major warlord commander and Southwest Zone CPK secretary, Mok.

The other leading warlord of the Pol Pot regime was Ke Pauk, military commander of the Northern Zone at this time. Pol Pot himself was based in the North during the 1970-75 war. In April 1973, a CPK document entitled *Class Analysis and the Class Struggle* was distributed to cadres there. It discussed the ruling classes and the oppressed proletariat, and went on: "All nationalities have labourers, like our Kampuchean nationality, except for Islamic Khmers, whose lives are not so difficult."⁶² This class analysis seems racist. Were there really *no* workers among the Chams? It is true that proportionally more Chams than Khmers tended to be independent fisherfolk and small traders. But there were plenty of Cham peasants as well, and many workers, for instance in the rubber plantations.⁶³ Probably, there were proportionally more Cham laborers than Khmer. But an image of the archetypal Cham, the small independent fisherman, apparently dominated the Pol Pot group's thinking about this entire racial group.

In my view, an underlying theme of the political world view of the Pol Pot group was a concern for national and racial grandiosity. Their early disagreements with Vietnamese communists concerned the symbolic grandeur of Angkor Wat, and the size of Kampuchea's population. In another departure from the class issues that preoccupy Marxists, Pol Pot himself once wrote under the pseudonym, the "Original Khmer."⁶⁴ His preoccupations often tended to be racial and historical. This fact had particular implications for the Chams. On the one hand they were the descendants of an old enemy of the Vietnamese, and a reminder of the glorious kindred past of the Khmers. On the other hand they were, in the eyes of the Pol Pot group, omens of a dark Kampuchean future, one that the CPK deliberately set out to erase from the historical agenda. Kampuchea would never disappear the way Champa allegedly did.

The official CPK view of the country's national minorities was that they were numerous, but totaled only 1 percent of the population; "99 percent" were Khmers.⁶⁵ Thus Chams, Chinese, Vietnamese, and two dozen other minority groups who had long made up over 15 percent of the Kampuchean population were virtually written out of it by the CPK. In the case of the Chams, the explanation was simple: "The Cham race was exterminated by the Vietnamese!"⁶⁶ This appears to be the Pol Pot regime's only official statement about them. It was, ironically, politically convenient for the CPK leaders that "no" Chams should have survived the events of 1471-1693. Those

who did—and in 1975 there were probably more Chams in Kampuchea alone *than there had ever been in Champa*—were simply not to be recognized, even as victims.

Worse, the Chams were also potentially a weak link in the CPK state. With their distinct language and culture, large villages, and independent national organizational networks, the Chams probably seemed a threat to the atomized, closely supervised society that the CPK leadership planned to create. By 1974 they were already seen as an obstacle to the establishment of cooperatives. Another CPK Northern Zone document, dated February 1974, records the *Decisions Concerning the Line on Cooperatives of the Party in Region 31*: "Concerning fraternal Islamic Khmers, delay having them join [cooperatives]; but in the meantime, go ahead and organize them into mutual aid teams. . . . However, it is necessary to break up this group to some extent; do not allow too many of them to concentrate in one area."⁶⁷ This is the earliest record of the CPK decision to disperse the Cham people.

Likewise, the earliest case of Chams rebelling against the CPK also occurred in Region 31, and was a direct result of tension with the new cooperatives. As Abdul-Gaffar Peang-Meth wrote in mid-1974:

The Khmer Moslem fishermen were forced to register their catch with the Communist local cooperative and sell their catch to the cooperative at a low price. Later, the fishermen were required to buy back their fish from the cooperative at a much higher price. When on February 23, 1974, the fishermen expressed their resentment in a demonstration, the Communists tried to disperse them through talking. When this failed, the Communists began shooting into the demonstration, killing and wounding more than 100.⁶⁸

These events took place on the west bank of the Mekong north of Kompong Cham City. Across the river in the Eastern Zone, the CPK line also hardened. The same writer continued:

To win over the confidence of the Khmer Moslems, Sos Man continued to practise his Moslem faith. . . . By 1973, however, Sos Man and his Communist colleagues began to preach openly

59. Gaffar Peang-Meth, "Islam, Another Casualty of Cambodian War," in Douc Rasy, *Khmer Representation at the United Nations* (London: 1974), pp. 251-55, at p. 253; and author's interviews with Mat Ly, son of Sos Man, in Phnom Penh, 13 August 1980 and 29 January 1986.

60. Peang-Meth, "Islam," p. 253.

61. Kenneth K. Quinn, "The Khmer Krahom Program to Create a Communist Society in Southern Cambodia," unclassified airgram from U.S. Consul, Can Tho, to Department of State (20 February 1974), 37 pp., at pp. 23-26.

62. Document translated into English by S.R. Heder.

63. "In 1955, of 15,000 workers in all the plantations in Cambodia, 4,247 were Cambodians and 4,021 were Islamic Khmers." Delvert, *Le paysan cambodgien*, pp. 590-91.

64. Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, pp. 25-27, 30-32, 119-24.

65. *Democratic Kampuchea is Moving Forward* (Phnom Penh, August 1977), p. 6.

66. *Livre Noir: Faits et Preuves des Actes d'Aggression et d'Annexion du Vietnam Contre le Kampuchea* (Phnom Penh, September 1978), p. 6.

67. Document translated by S.R. Heder. Emphasis added.

68. Peang-Meth, "Islam," p. 253.



photo by Judy Danielson, courtesy of Judy Danielson and Eric Wright

Cham Muslims in traditional dress represented the Cham minority at a government-sponsored May Day observance in Phnom Penh on 1 May 1986. In marked contrast to the Pol Pot regime's denial of the existence of the Chams and other minorities, the current government apparently makes a point of having representatives of various groups present at government occasions. Besides the Chams one can typically see monks in their saffron robes, along with other contingents from student groups and various government ministries.

about Communism, and to open political training schools and organize cooperatives. Most significantly, they began to tell the people that the Moslems devoted too much time to religious matters and not enough time to revolution. . . .

From October, 1973, the Khmer Moslems carried out demonstrations against the Communist suppression of their religious belief, through the beating of ceremonial drums in their village mosques as a sign of protest. When the Communists stressed that they would not allow prayers five times a day as the Khmer Moslems required, the invaders who had abducted only selected villagers, began to arrest the Khmer Moslems in earnest, beginning in November 1973. To date [mid-1974] at least 300 Khmer Moslems have been arrested, a large majority of whom are from Krauchhmar District, Kompong Cham Province. Most of the arrested persons were prominent Moslem villagers and religious leaders, especially Koranic teachers.⁶⁹

Sos Man's attitude to this repression is unknown. Had he opposed it, he could have done little. He was now seventy-two years old. In September 1974 Pol Pot personally visited the Eastern Zone for a Zone Party Congress. The same month, the Eastern Zone Islamic Movement was disbanded, and Sos Man was expelled from political life and confined to a village. His dismissal coincided with the arrest, in August 1974, of seventy-one other Eastern Zone Khmer Communists who had been trained in Hanoi. Ten of the seventy-one soon disappeared, possibly executed by CPK security forces.⁷⁰

By December 1974, the arrests of Cham leaders in Trea Village of Krauchhmar District had provoked a rebellion.⁷¹ Casualty figures are unknown, but as James Fenton reported: "A group called the *Khmer Saor*, or 'White Khmers' had broken away from the Khmer Rouge and taken to the forests. The White Khmers, whose leaders are former Communist officials, are mostly Cham Moslems. They support Sihanouk and oppose

collectivization of property. They believe simply in the abolition of middlemen."⁷² Interestingly, this was the Vietnamese policy line for Kampuchea at the time; indeed the *Khmer Saor* in other regions were known as pro-Vietnamese guerrillas.⁷³ But they did not survive inside Kampuchea after 1975.

Nevertheless, Sos Man's son Mat Ly retained his post as a member of Tbaung Khmum District CPK committee; he was probably the highest-ranking Cham in the country by 1975. As elsewhere, there were severe restrictions on travel, trade, and the slaughter of livestock, all of which affected the Chams, but these were often seen as merely wartime measures, and in the East as yet there was no sign of a CPK policy to disperse the Chams—that is, to destroy them as a community. Many Chams continued to support the revolution, and even serve it as cadres. One of the Cham graduates of Cairo's Al-Azhar University, who lived in Tbaung Khmum from 1970 to 1979, recalls:

From 1970 to 1975 life was normal. There was no persecution yet. People believed in the Khmer Rouge then. U.S. bombs fell on my village in 1971, burning it to the ground and killing several people. Some of the Cham villagers joined the Khmer Rouge as soldiers. . . . In 1974 suffering was imposed in some places, like Trea

69. Ibid., p. 254.

70. Mat Ly, interviews (see n. 59); see also Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, pp. 386–87.

71. Mat Ly, interviews (see n. 59).

72. James Fenton, *Washington Post*, 24 November 1974.

73. See for instance Donald Kirk, "The Khmer Rouge: Revolutionaries or Terrorists," unpublished paper, 1974, copy kindly provided by the author.

Village. But it was not yet severe, only when Buddhism and Islam were abolished at the end of 1975.⁷⁴

III. The Chams in Democratic Kampuchea

We have seen that many Chams played a part in the Khmer Rouge movement from 1970 to 1975, and that there was also repression of Cham people and their culture in some Khmer Rouge regions in that period. But it was not until 1975 that the systematic elimination of Cham life began in earnest. This immediately provoked fierce rebellions, which as we shall see were drowned in blood. Even after these were crushed, the anti-Cham campaigns did not stop. The Democratic Kampuchea regime massacred Cham villagers, dispersed the survivors, and banned the Cham language, customs, and religion. The methods and the tempo of the repression varied from area to area and over time, in part reflecting continuing local differences within the Khmer Rouge movement. But the consistent pattern

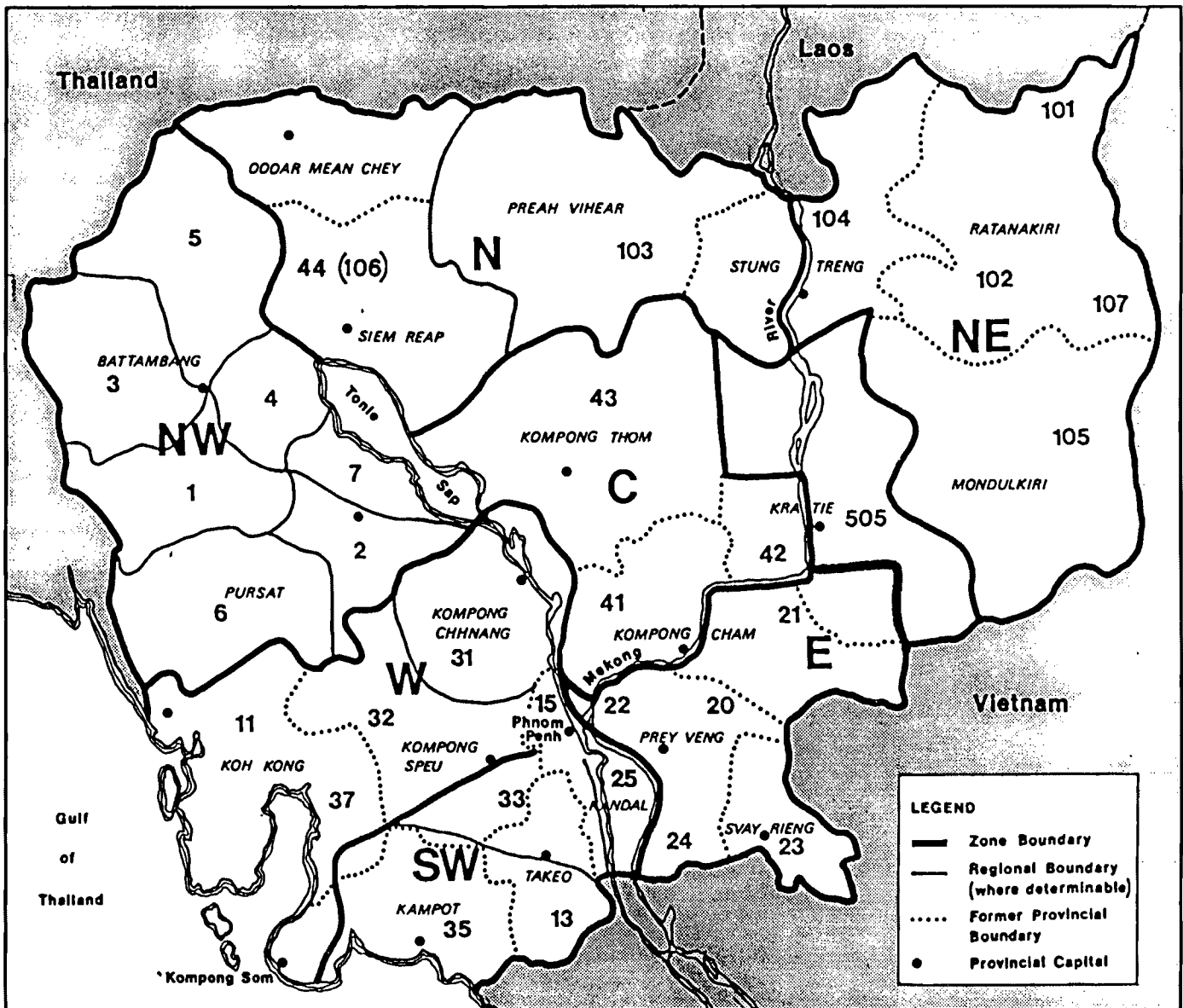
of a centrally organized genocidal campaign is clear.

A. The Eastern Zone

1. The 1975 Rebellions in Krauchmar

The largest Cham community in Kampuchea is in what was known in DK as Region 21, the area of Kompong Cham Province east of the Mekong and north of Highway 7. Region 21 included the fertile riverbank land of Krauchmar District, as well as the Chup rubber plantations and the rich ricelands of Suong, both in Tbaung Khmum District. Both districts have

74. Author's interview with Toun Ibrahim, Phnom Penh, 19 September 1980.



Administrative divisions of Democratic Kampuchea, 1975-79

courtesy of Ben Kiernan

long had large Cham communities. But Krauchhmar District of northern Kompong Cham Province was the only district of Kampuchea where Chams nearly formed a majority, numbering perhaps 30,000 by the 1970s. Here there were four very big communities of Chams along the east bank of the Mekong—at Trea, Svay Khleang, Chumnik, and Poes.⁷⁵

All these people first came under Khmer Rouge control in 1970, when the Lon Nol regime quickly lost control of the area upriver from Kompong Cham. Such “liberated zones” became known after 1975 as the Khmer Rouge “bases” (*moul-tanh*), and their inhabitants as the “base people” (or the “old people”), distinguished from the “new people” who lived under Lon Nol control in the cities until 1975. The new people, who were then evacuated from the cities, were also called “deportees” (*neak phñoe*). The area of largest Cham concentration in the country was also, until 1975, one of the strongest Khmer Rouge areas.

In his book *Cambodia Year Zero*, Francois Ponchaud reports a story told him by Mat Sleman, a forty-year-old Cham from Krauchhmar. Two Cham brothers who had joined the Khmer Rouge army returned to their village after victory.

One night the sons came home to visit their father and told him all their exploits—how they had killed Khmers, eaten pork, and liberated the country. “Come with us,” they told him, “and follow the revolution.” The old man didn’t say a word but went out of the house; he came back armed with a cleaver and killed both his sons. He covered their bodies with a big cloth and then went to tell his neighbours: “Come and see the two enemies I’ve killed!”

When he pulled back the cover his friends said, “But those are your sons!” “No, they’re not,” he retorted, “they are enemies to our people and our religion and so I killed them.” He told his story and everybody said he had done right, and they decided to kill all the Khmer Rouges in the village. They did it that night.

The next morning, according to Sleman, Khmer Rouge troops surrounded the village and massacred “everybody in it, with mortars, machine guns and bayonets.”⁷⁶

Mat Ly gives a different account of what may have been the same events. He says that in June or July 1975, the Khmer Rouge authorities in Krauchhmar attempted to collect all copies of the Koran in Koh Phol, a large Cham village in Rokar Khnaor Subdistrict on an island in the Mekong. Cham girls were obliged to cut their hair short in Khmer style. The villagers staged a protest demonstration, and Khmer Rouge troops fired into the crowd. The Chams then took up swords and knives and slaughtered half a dozen troops. The retaliating Khmer Rouge massacred many and pillaged their homes. Some villagers escaped by swimming the Mekong, and even managed to get to safety in Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge evacuated the island, razed the village, and changed its name from Koh Phol (Productive Island) to Koh Phes (Island of Ashes), Mat Ly says.

Seven days later there was another outbreak of violence in nearby Svay Khleang Village. Villagers armed with machetes killed a Khmer Rouge commander and two soldiers. The troops retaliated by massacring 70 percent of the villagers, Mat Ly claims.⁷⁷

Yasya Asmath, a Cham now living in New York, was a student at “the basic school for Islamic scholars in Kampuchea” in Chumnik Village of Krauchhmar, until the end of 1973 when he fled to Vietnam. In 1979, Asmath returned to the area and visited Koh Phol. He found that “Nobody was living there any more.” But he heard the following account from local Chams:

In the past there were around 350 Cham families on Koh Phol; it was very crowded. In 1975, the Khmer Rouge asked the Cham religious leader in that village to close the mosque and the Islamic school within one week. The people in that village were a very strong community, very strong believers, and they did not close the mosque or the school. So after a week, when the Khmer Rouge came again, there was fighting. . . . The people killed five of them. . . . The Khmer Rouge sent thousands and thousands of troops to that village, and took away all the Cham Muslim families. . . . They destroyed the village completely with artillery.

Some of the evacuated population of Koh Phol were taken south to the Damber Kauk Srok area of Tbaung Khmum District. There they told a fellow Cham, Sop Khatidjah, then a forty-nine-year-old Cham evacuee from Phnom Penh, what had happened. She says:

They resisted because they were angry. They had struggled for a long time, working with Pol Pot for many years, together in resistance to the Lon Nol army . . . so that they would have positions of power after victory. . . . The Chams in the village were Khmer Rouge. The Chams and the Khmer were on good terms. But when they won they were disarmed, and their religion was abolished. . . . The Chams were Khmer Rouge soldiers; after the capture of Phnom Penh they had been disarmed, they were said to be active . . . [?] All their guns were taken back from the Chams. . . . The local people were [also] angry that after struggling side by side [with the Khmer Rouge], they now had to eat collectively. . . . Still the Khmer Rouge were picking out the good people, the learned religious people, and taking them to be killed.

The people rose up with knives and swords against the Khmer Rouge in that village [Koh Phol]. The fighting took place one night, and 28 Khmer Rouge were killed by Chams with knives and stakes. The Khmer Rouge fired back with guns and many Chams died, more than the Khmer Rouge.

Early in the morning the Khmer Rouge tied people up and took them away to die in the middle of the river. Maybe hundreds died, 2 or 3 boatloads were taken every day. Even people who were sick in their homes were put on boats and tipped into the water. That is what I heard.

Kob Math, a Cham from Kratie Province further up the Mekong, also heard about the Koh Phol uprising. Twenty years of age at the time, Math was a base person from Chhlong District. He says that many local Chams had fought in the Khmer Rouge army and militia, and they rebelled when they learned of the DK plan to ban their religion and language, to make them eat pork,

77. Author’s interviews with Mat Ly (see note 59). This study is mainly based on twenty-nine further interviews conducted by the author with Chams who lived through the Democratic Kampuchea period. All were tape recorded in Kampuchean villages, mostly in 1980. Several dozen other interviews were conducted without being taped. An additional fifty interviews were later conducted with Cham refugees by Nate Thayer (in Thailand) and Dan Dickason (in the United States). Recordings of these conversations proved useful and will reward further study.

75. Delvert, *Le paysan cambodgien*, p. 605.

76. Francois Ponchaud, *Cambodia Year Zero* (London, 1978), pp. 153–54.

and to break up Cham communities. Math says that in the uprising about twenty Khmer Rouge were killed and fifty Chams, while many other Chams were killed in reprisals afterwards.

Ponchaud reports another account from the same area. In November 1975, he says, the Chams in Trea Village of Krauchhmar District rebelled. "Then the Khmer Rouges tore the village apart with B-40s and smashed the heads of any survivors with pick-handles. The corpses were thrown aside and left. They even stuck heads on pikes and exposed them along the banks of the Mekong."⁷⁸

This does not appear to be an eyewitness account, and it must be stated that it has not been possible to obtain one. One result is that the troops actually involved in the various incidents of repression have not been identified. They would have been Eastern Zone troops, but whether they were zone- or region-level forces is unknown. Hem Samin, then a political prisoner in the zone, blames the Eastern Zone CPK secretary directly: "The affair of the Cham nationals, the Moslems in the areas along the riverbank around Trea and other places, was a matter of orders from So Phim. He was a real savage."⁷⁹

On the other hand, the Region 21 administration must bear much of the blame. It was headed by Seng Hong (alias Chan), who in late 1975 was then promoted to deputy zone secretary, apparently by Pol Pot in preference to So Phim's own candidate, in a significant revamp of the Zone Party Committee. Seng Hong was the only Eastern Zone leader to survive the DK period without rebelling.⁸⁰ After his promotion in late 1975, a new member of the Region 21 Party Committee was Ouch Bun Chhoeun, who rebelled in May 1978. Chhoeun's 1980 account avoids any mention of the violence of the 1975 anti-Cham repression, but admits the severe difficulties faced by the people of Krauchhmar District: "In the Eastern Zone it was hard, too, especially for the people who lived along the river, with very inadequate living conditions. . . . The toughest area of all was Chhlong/Krauchhmar, especially Krauchhmar." When asked specifically about the Chams, Chhoeun replied as follows:

There was no policy of [allowing] minority nationalities. Everyone was mixed together. There was only one race—the Khmer . . . from liberation in 1975. Pol Pot was very close to the Jarai and other [upland] minorities but he scattered the Islamic race.

The reason for this was that the Muslims had an organization called "FULRO Champa," to defend the interests of the Muslims, led by Les Kasem, a colonel in Phnom Penh during the Lon Nol period. So Pol Pot did not trust the Muslims. After 1975, in the eyes of the state organization there were no Muslims at all.⁸¹

78. Ponchaud, *Cambodia Year Zero*, p. 153.

79. Stephen Heder's interview with Hem Samin, Phnom Penh, 8 July 1981. Typescript kindly provided by Heder.

80. See Ben Kiernan, "Wild Chickens, Farm Chickens, and Cormorants: Kampuchea's Eastern Zone under Pol Pot," in Chandler and Kiernan, *Revolution*, pp. 136–211, esp. p. 153 ff.

81. Author's interview with Ouch Bun Chhoeun, Phnom Penh, 30 September 1980.

82. Michael Vickery, "Democratic Kampuchea: CIA to the Rescue," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* vol. 14, no. 4 (1982), pp. 45–54 at p. 47.

83. Author's interview with Ieng, Koh Thom, 1 August 1980. See also section IIIA4, below.

The extraordinary upheaval along the Mekong in 1975 was the Cham people's response, in the area where they were strongest, to the Democratic Kampuchea government's campaign against their religion, including the assassination of their leadership. The CIA station in the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok claimed to have intercepted radio transmissions from Phnom Penh ordering the execution of Cham leaders in a village in "central Cambodia."⁸² This may or may not explain any of the violence in Krauchhmar, but it suggests that the Pol Pot leadership in the capital was directly involved in the repressions, even at the village level.

In May 1978, when Pol Pot's elite Center and Southwest Zone forces moved in and violently suppressed the Eastern Zone, they had a dramatic impact on Krauchhmar District. Ieng, a local Khmer who had worked for the Khmer Rouge since 1970, says that persecution began in 1975, but the arrival of the Southwest Zone forces in May 1978 meant brutal repression. They began by arresting "all the cadres" and decreeing "death to people who kept salt or corn in their houses." "They chased people through the jungle, hunting them down."

Despite the anti-Cham repression of 1975, it appears that an unnamed Cham had remained a member of the Krauchhmar District committee thereafter. Ieng appears to credit So Phim with this.

So Phim was a good man. The problems before 1978 were caused by some district chiefs, following Pol Pot's orders. . . . Some district chiefs were good, some bad, before 1978. In my district, Krauchhmar, Ta Iem and a Cham were members of the district committee. They loved the nation and the people. . . . Everyone liked [Iem] in Krauchhmar, there was never any quarrel with him. . . . The two were all right, moderate (*kuo som*). . . . When the Southwest Zone forces came, they burnt the two to death.⁸³

Table 1
Death Toll among Islamic Leaders in
Democratic Kampuchea

<i>Hakkem</i> (community leaders)	20 survived out of 113
<i>Hakkem rong</i> (deputies)	25 survived out of 226
<i>Haji</i> (pilgrims to Mecca)	approx. 30 survived out of more than 1,000
Religious teachers at Koranic schools	38 survived out of approx. 300
Graduates of foreign Islamic institutions	2 survived out of 25
Members of the Islamic Central Organisation of Kampuchea	1 survived

Source: Author's interviews with Cham officials in the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

2. Tbaung Khmum

As we have seen, Pol Pot's ally Seng Hong (alias Chan) was CPK secretary of Region 21 until his promotion in late 1975. With the repression of the mid-1975 Krauchhmar uprisings, Region 21 had seen the first mass slaughter of Chams by the Khmer Rouge regime. The other district of Region 21 which was home to many Chams was Tbaung Khmum.

When Pol Pot's CPK leadership had disbanded the Eastern Zone Islamic Movement in 1974, its president, Sos Man, had been placed under virtual house arrest in a village of Tbaung Khmum District on Highway 7. According to Man's son, Mat Ly, from 1970 to 1974 Sos Man had had the confidence of Eastern Zone CPK leader So Phim, but "later Phim obeyed Pol Pot and withdrew his confidence, but built a house in which Sos Man would live quietly." Man was told he was "too old" to work for the revolution. However, in September 1975, his son says, two strangers arrived on a motorcycle at Man's house and offered him "medicine." Sos Man took it and died that night. He was seventy-three.⁸⁴ Like the Cham in Krauchhmar, Mat Ly continued until May 1978 as a member of the Tbaung Khmum District Committee, but according to Ouch Bun Chhoeun, a member of the Region 21 Party Committee, Ly seemed "like a phantom—he had no freedom."⁸⁵ If so, he was no worse off than other Chams in the area.

In October–November 1975, religious practice was abolished in Tbaung Khmum District, communal eating introduced, and Cham villages in the area dispersed. Although no killings had yet taken place in Kor Subdistrict, according to Toun Ibrahim, a local Cham who had studied in Cairo in the 1960s, the evacuation and dispersal of Chams from the twelve villages in Kor shows that "Pol Pot wanted to wipe out the Cham race." Over twenty Cham families were moved out of Kor Village, which had been entirely Cham. Five of those families were sent to Thnong Village, three kilometers away, which was entirely Khmer. Ibrahim comments: "It was like a foreign country. There was no contact with people back home at all, except when we were ordered to go back for meetings." In addition, some of the 100 Khmer families from Thnong were sent to Kor and mixed with the Chams remaining there, who included two *hajis*, both of whom survived the next four years.

However, most of the Chams from Kor Village were sent right across the Mekong to the Central Zone. These included nine *hajis*, one of them Haji Sa'e, a former teacher of Toun Ibrahim's. Sa'e was killed in the Central Zone along with his family, and all eight other *hajis* evacuated from Kor Village perished there as well. Ibrahim later heard that one of the six members of his own family had died there too.

Meanwhile, in Kor Subdistrict, Chams who had joined the Khmer Rouge and had become village chiefs, village committee members, or work-team heads were all removed from these posts during 1976. In the middle of the year, killings began, although no particular ethnic or occupational group was singled out for execution. At the end of 1976, Ibrahim's brother was taken away from Thnong for execution.

In late 1976 people were taken away in horse-carts; in late 1977 they were taking people away by the truckload. 1977 was the most fearful year. . . . The killings were simply general. . . . After all the killing in our subdistrict in 1977, the Khmer Rouge could afford to relax things a little in 1978 as they went off to oppress other subdistricts.

One neighboring subdistrict was Damber/Kauk Srok, where Sop Khatidjah arrived in June 1975 with her husband, two sons, two daughters, son-in-law, and grandson. Her elderly mother and sixteen-year-old son had both died on the fifty-day journey from Phnom Penh. In May the family had passed through two Cham villages in the east of Tbaung Khmum District, Boeng Pruol and Chirou. There had been two mosques there, but they were now destroyed. Locals told Khatidjah that they had been dismantled by the Khmer Rouge when they took over the area in 1973–74; the timber had apparently been used to construct communal eating halls. Chirou was her mother's village: all 120 Cham families there had been evacuated and dispersed. The same had happened to the 280 families of Chams of nearby Tham Tou Village. The *hakem* from Boeng Pruol Village, Haji Ismael, and his wife were sent east to Damber/Kauk Srok Subdistrict along with Khatidjah's family and a number of other Chams. Later they were joined by Chams evacuated from Koh Phol in Krauchhmar District.

They were sent to Veal Andaeuk, a "pure Khmer" village, but at first the Chams could at least practice their Islamic religion. Despite a general Khmer Rouge prohibition on prayer, local officials told Khatidjah that Chams could pray privately so long as their work performance was not affected. Khatidjah was put to work tending rice seedlings, in return for rations of rice. Haji Ismael, for his part, was even exempted from work; because of his religious devotion he was considered "crazy" by the Khmer Rouge, who also asked his wife to stay at home to care for him. It was still possible for them all to speak Cham to one another privately, at the risk only of a lecture (*khosang*) if the Khmer Rouge overheard them; and they could wear traditional Cham clothing.

In August 1975, Khatidjah's husband and son-in-law were killed. The two were arrested on the same day and taken "to study" in a nearby village, but never returned. Khatidjah says the Khmer Rouge assumed they had been Lon Nol soldiers or police because of their khaki clothing; in fact, they had left Phnom Penh wearing the khaki uniforms of the garage where they had worked as attendants. After they were taken away, Khatidjah says, "I asked the locals, my neighbours (what had happened to them). They said: 'Don't hope, auntie. They didn't go to do anything (like "study"). They went to a stake and a hoe.'" Khatidjah and her daughter were now widowed; they had to care for a grandson aged four, another daughter of Khatidjah's aged eleven, and her two sons, eight and four.

After about a year in Veal Andaeuk Village, the situation suddenly worsened again. Sometime in the first half of 1976, a meeting was called of everyone—Khmer, Cham and Chinese—living in the area. Many local Khmer Rouge officials presided, even the district chief. The crowd was told: "Now we are in 1976, we have to go by a different plan"; and "there are to be no Chams or Chinese or Vietnamese. Everyone is to join the same, single, Khmer nationality." There was to be "only one religion—the Khmer religion," although Khatidjah notes that the Buddhist was were nevertheless emptied and "no religion at all" was permitted any longer. Movement between villages was banned.

84. Mat Ly, interviews (see n. 59).

85. Ouch Bun Chhoeun, interview (see n. 81).

It was also expressly forbidden to speak Cham: "We were not allowed to use the [Cham] words *yas* [mother] or *chik* [father] to address our parents. We had to use the [Khmer] words *me* and *puk*." Further, communal eating was now introduced, and the Chams were told that they had to eat the same food, "equal" to everyone else. Every Cham was obliged to help raise pigs; Cham teams rotated weekly at one piggery, Khmer teams at another. However, older Chams were allowed to refrain from eating pork, so long as they did not use their relative lack of nutrition as a reason to work less hard. Khatidjah herself did not have to eat any dishes containing pork because her nephew was chief of her work team. It was also forbidden to teach young Chams to avoid pork. Cham women were forbidden to wear their hair long. Traditional Cham clothing and funerals were also banned. When asked what was the background to these changes in policy on the part of the Khmer Rouge, Khatidjah mentioned the rebellion at Koh Phol the previous year.

Khatidjah's single daughter was enlisted in a girls' work team, and was away from home for two to three months at a time. The young children were also taken away; she would see them only every few weeks. Khatidjah herself worked mostly at harvesting rice for the rest of 1976, and in 1977 she planted rice and also tended vegetables. Food rations were lowest of all in 1977. She was then fifty-one years old, but she had to work very hard, "carrying water thirty times each morning and thirty times each afternoon." One fellow worker, a sixty-two-year-old woman, fell dead of exhaustion while digging the ground with a hoe.

Khatidjah's widowed daughter was sent off to cut timber in the forest. In late 1977, she was hit by a falling tree. After coughing blood for nine months, she died of her injury. Family members were not even allowed to claim her body from the hospital. This harsh regime aside, there were no executions of villagers after the two killings in August 1975. But once, Khmer Rouge soldiers discovered Khatidjah at prayer. "They watched me and said: 'Grandma, do you like guns or do you like praying?'" Only Haji Ismael was allowed to continue his daily prayer.

Despite the general suppression of Cham culture, the Chams had to attend separate meetings from the Khmers, who were in turn divided into base people and new people. (The Koh Phol Chams were obviously no longer considered base people.) At their meetings, Khmers were told, in Khatidjah's words: "Don't trust the Chams. They are like enemies who have been defeated by us. . . . It is normal that enemies who have been defeated will not lie still. . . . In their hearts they are still traitors to us."

Around May 1978, a helicopter flew overhead and dropped leaflets in the village. The leaflets proclaimed that the Eastern Zone Khmer Rouge had to be eliminated because they were working with the Vietnamese—"helping them with medicine, cloth and hoes." Southwest Zone forces arrived, replaced many of the local officials and militia, even schoolteachers, and executed them. One of the new officials now decreed that *hakkem* Haji Ismael was defying the ban on religion and therefore should be used for fertilizer. He and his wife were both executed.

In July 1978, Khatidjah and her family were moved again, back to Tham Tou Village in Thmar Pich Subdistrict. But the killing continued there. Over the next six months 12 families of Chams were executed, thirty people in all. Tham Tou was

a former Cham village that had been emptied, but was now resettled by "maybe 2,000 families," mostly Chams, probably recent arrivals like Khatidjah. Even some of the Khmer Rouge there were Cham, and those Chams who did not wish to eat pork were allowed to exchange it with Khmers. (In nearby Peuk Village, on the other hand, Chams were forced to eat pork.) It was still forbidden to speak Cham or practice religion, but the new regional rulers, the Southwest Zone forces loyal to Pol Pot, raised food rations and also provided new clothes. Khatidjah points out, though, that 1978 was the worst year for Chams in terms of killings and that Chams were singled out for execution more than Khmers. She holds the Southwest Zone forces responsible for the increased killings.

After the Vietnamese invasion of January 1979, Khatidjah discovered that her twenty-four-year-old son had also been killed, in the Central Zone in 1977, along with all of his in-laws. Her brother too had died of starvation in the same zone in the same year, and she had also lost several nieces and nephews in Siemreap Province during the Democratic Kampuchea period.

In December 1978, the Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett visited a refugee camp for Kampuchean in Vietnam's Tay Ninh Province, in the shadow of the "Black Virgin Mountain." The 8,000 refugees there included 600 Chams. Burchett asked Sen Mat, thirty-five, "a big, well-built Cham" who had fled Kampuchea in March 1978, why he had left. Mat replied that "Chams were to be exterminated" by the DK regime. He cited the Koh Phol events, in which he claimed 1,108 Chams had been murdered after being assembled by the Khmer Rouge for "consultations" and then gunned down en masse with artillery and heavy machine guns. Eight people survived and escaped that night, after being left for dead on the spot, he said.

Mat also claimed that the DK authorities had "forced us to eat pork on rare occasions when meat was available." Significantly, he added, they also "accused us of wearing our hair long like Vietnamese, and being under Vietnamese influence." Ironically, the DK regime's preoccupation with the perceived historical relationship between Chams and Vietnamese was actually provoking a new one. "Right at the frontier," Mat said, "the Vietnamese gave us everything we needed, even money to buy a forge." Burchett watched Mat and six other Chams smelting down bomb and shell casings and beating them into axeheads and sickles. "Really swords into ploughshares," he commented. Towering above them was the mountain named after the "Black Virgin" (*Ba Den*), the Vietnamese name for the ancient Cham earth goddess, Po Ino Nagar.⁸⁶

3. Peareang

In 1975 El Yusof, then forty-five, was evacuated from Phnom Penh and made his way to Maesor Prachan in Peareang District of Prey Veng Province (Region 22). He learned that two prominent Chams had also arrived in the vicinity. These were Imam Haji Res Los, the grand mufti of Kampuchean Islam, and Toun Haji Srong Yusof, *hakkem* of the Noor Alihsan mosque north of Phnom Penh. In July or August 1975, these

86. Wilfred Burchett kindly provided the author with the typewritten record of his interviews at Tan Chau, Tay Ninh, on 7 December 1978. On the "Black Virgin," see Thai Van Kiem, "Thien-Y-A-Na, or the Legend of Poh Nagar," *Asia* vol. 4 (1954), pp. 406-13, at p. 408.

Table 2
Names of Islamic Officials Who Perished in
Democratic Kampuchea

Name	Position	Cause of Death	Place, Date of Death
Imam Haji Res Los	Grand Mufti	Thrown into boiling water and then struck on the head with an iron bar	Konhom, Peam Chisor, Prey Veng, 8 October 1975.
Haji Suleiman Shoukri	1st Mufti	Beaten to death and thrown into a ditch	Kahe, Prek Angchanh, Kandal. August 1975.
Haji Mat Sles Suleiman	2nd Mufti	Tortured and disemboweled	Battambang, 10 August 1975.
Haji Mat Ly Harun	Chairman, Islamic Association of Kampuchea	Died of starvation in prison	Anlong Sen, Kandal. 25 September 1975.
Haji Srong Yusof	Lecturer in Islamic Studies	Killed	Peamchor, Kandal. 19 October 1975.
Man Set	Chrang Chamres, President, Islamic Youth Association	Unknown	Unknown

Source: Author's interviews with Cham officials in the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

two Islamic dignitaries were killed at Snaypol in Rokan Subdistrict, Yusof claims.

El Yusof did not claim to be a witness, and the details may be unreliable (note the discrepancies in tables 2 and 3), but there is no doubt that Res Los and Srong Yusof perished in a nationwide campaign from August to October 1975 to exterminate the country's Islamic leadership (see also table 1).

In 1980 Frances Starner of *Asiaweek* interviewed Srong Yusof's widow, Soss Sar Pitah, at the Noor Alihsan mosque. Starner reported:

When their father was taken away, her three eldest children—all in their twenties—and their twelve-year-old brother tried to escape. But Khmer Rouge soldiers, she said, pursued and slaughtered them. Subsequently, when she saw friends taken away 'with hands tied for execution,' she fled with her remaining children into another district.⁸⁷

El Yusof had arrived in Maesor Prachan Village with thirty

to forty other new people from Phnom Penh, joining 300 families of local villagers, or base people, who had long lived under Khmer Rouge rule. The subdistrict chief, a part-Chinese Khmer named Eak, proclaimed: "Now we are making revolution. Everyone becomes a Khmer."

This unusual definition of "revolution" was ominous for the Cham people. Nevertheless, another new arrival, Bunheang Ung, recalls that Eak was "strict [but was] sympathetic to the plight of the evacuees."⁸⁸ El Yusof adds that in 1975 the Khmer Rouge "used persuasion to some extent," although there were

87. Frances Starner, "The Chams: Muslims the World Forgot," *Asiaweek* 21 November 1980, pp. 24–25.

88. Martin Stuart-Fox and Bunheang Ung, *The Murderous Revolution: Life and Death in Pol Pot's Kampuchea* (Sydney: APCOL, 1985), p. 42.

occasional killings from 1975 to 1977, of people who did something "wrong," mostly new people. He continues that in 1976 Khmer Rouge pressure on ordinary Chams began. Religion was banned, as was the Cham language. "They said to us: 'Chams who eat pork, and are prepared to raise and slaughter pigs, will be spared.'" El Yusof dates this development at early 1976, but it appears to have coincided with the introduction of communal eating. According to Bunheang Ung's account, communal eating began in Maesor Prachan Subdistrict, on 6 September 1976. Ung has recounted to Martin Stuart-Fox the impact on the Chams who lived there.

When communal eating was introduced they were forced to eat the same as everyone else, including rice gruel sometimes containing a few morsels of pork fat. Two old [Cham] men in Maesor Prachan refused to eat with the rest of the hamlet. After a week of boycotting communal dining, the two were arrested and shot. . . . Later a Cham youth caught cooking a chicken in his home was arrested and sent to the gaol of Snaypol. Like others sent for re-education he was never seen again.

Stuart-Fox writes that in this area, "Repression of the Cham steadily increased during the next two years" (1977-78), as it did for other ethnic minorities. "Anyone could be arrested for using a language other than Khmer, a rule which applied even in private and which affected mostly Chinese and Chams."⁸⁹

In 1978, Peareang saw some of the worst massacres in the country. El Yusof says that on 17 August 1978 "over 100 families of Chams and Khmers" were murdered near his village by Pol Pot's elite Southwest Zone troops. (He remarks ruefully that even those Chams who had agreed to eat pork were killed in the end.) Bunheang Ung puts the total number of victims from six villages of Maesor Prachan Subdistrict at 1,500, all killed in five days in July or August 1978. Bunheang lost thirty relatives in that massacre, including seventeen children. The victims fell into two categories. Firstly, new people or former urban dwellers, apart from some who had relatives among the base people; and secondly, "Chinese and Chams were preferentially selected" for execution, "though for the most part only those Chinese who were 'new people'."⁹⁰

Thus, in the case of urban evacuees and Chinese, some connection with the bases worked in their favor. But it did not save the Chams, who were targeted for destruction despite the fact that they were mostly base people. These mid-1978 massacres of Chams constituted a campaign of racial extermination.

4. Kompong Trabek

Four hours upstream from the Vietnamese border and the Plain of Reeds, past shores lined with groves of mango, banana, coconut, bamboo, water tamarind, and sugar palm, a small village of thatch huts is strung out alongside the Trabek River, serene in the quiet, golden, late afternoon sun. The mud-brown waters are almost undisturbed by the woman standing at the stern of her long narrow wooden boat and punting slowly upriver hugging the western bank. In front of each hut she passes are bamboo fish cages and timber contraptions of various kinds

and sizes, pulled up clear of the water or half-submerged and camouflaged with twigs.

This is Khmaer Islam Village, in Kompong Trabek District of Prey Veng Province. It is a village in Region 24 that I have visited several times, and I conducted a local survey of the death toll during DK. In 1970, over 100 Cham families had lived in this village, making a living by fishing along the Trabek River. The *hakkem*, or community leader, Haji Ismael, seventy, was born in the village. He was a fisherman, and had a wife and four children. He became *hakkem* in 1968, and thus led his people through a decade of disaster.

Haji Ismael says the Khmer Rouge first came to the village in 1971, but that they did not persecute or kill people until four years later. Meanwhile, the village was bombed several times by American and Lon Nol-regime aircraft. In August 1972 a bombing raid damaged the mosque and at least seven villagers were killed. One hundred houses were destroyed by bombs and the fires that they started. "Then the people all ran away," Haji Ismael says. "They ran into the ricefields and stayed with relatives" in other villages. Some of their sons joined the Khmer Rouge army, while many took refuge in the capital, Phnom Penh. When the Khmer Rouge conquered it and won the war, the people of Khmaer Islam Village went back to their homes.

What awaited them there were four years of deprivation and death. Haji Ismael estimates that about thirty or more entire families had perished by 1979, including eighteen or nineteen families in 1978 alone. By January 1986 there were only seventy-four families in Khmaer Islam Village, living in forty-nine households. Haji Ismael says the Chams "were persecuted even more than the majority population" in Democratic Kampuchea.

A December 1986 survey, carried out by anthropologist Gregory Stanton and me, of thirty-three of the forty-nine Cham households in the village, revealed that those surviving households, which numbered 223 persons in 1975, had lost fifty-four family members by 1979. The death toll was 24 percent; most cases of death were attributed to murder by the Khmer Rouge. The thirty-three families had thirty-six of their members murdered. At least twenty-three of these were murdered in 1978 alone, and at least fifteen more died of other causes in the same year. Haji Ismael and his wife survived, but three of their four children perished in Pursat Province in 1978.

Further, as Haji Ismael pointed out, about thirty other families left no survivors at all. One old woman, Ai Sah, seventy-three, who said she was now mentally disturbed, claimed to have lost "eighty grandchildren" in the DK period, including three entire families of twelve, ten, and nine members. The death toll in the village of Khmaer Islam in the Democratic Kampuchea period seems to have been 40 to 50 percent of its population, or about 300 out of 650. Females in 1986 made up 56 percent of the population (207 out of 371), and undoubtedly made up over 60 percent of the adult population. Many were widows.

Haji Ismael notes three major features of the first two to three years of Khmer Rouge rule: the destruction of religion, the introduction of communal eating, and the harsh work requirements. The last year of the DK period, 1978, was notable mainly for massacre.

Haji Ismael identifies the commencement of Khmer Rouge persecution of his people with their destruction of the partly damaged mosque and their prohibition of religious practice, in 1974-75. In 1974, the dispersal of the Cham population also

89. Ibid., pp. 87, 128.

90. Ibid., p. 146.

began, although in large measure the 1972 bombings had achieved that. When the war ended in 1975 and the people of Khmaer Islam returned to their village, a strict dispersal was immediately enforced. As Ismael tells it: "In the Pol Pot period, we Chams were not allowed to live together. We were dispersed into every village. Four or five families were sent here, four or five there. . . . Ten families were sent to some villages, three families to others."

Also in 1975 were the first Khmer Rouge killings of villagers. Several were executed for being "recalcitrants" (*s'tec sompoon*) in that first year. Ismael recalls: "Once they banned religion, people gave it up. . . . There was no resistance here as in Krauchmar and Peareang. . . . We did not dare to continue religious activity because they came and watched us, and would take us away and kill us, if we did."

Killings increased with the introduction of compulsory communal eating in 1976. Family cooking was prohibited. Several more Muslim people were executed in 1976 or 1977 for stating that they would not eat pork. In 1978, at least as many more were killed for the same reason. In all, five men and three women from the village were executed for their opposition to eating pork. The tragedy is that pork was rarely if ever served in the communal mess halls anyway; it appears to have been opposed by Muslims on principle: "In fact we never saw pork, but it was an excuse for the Khmer Rouge to kill people who said they would not eat it." Meanwhile, everyone was required to work hard in the fields. "They used us to grow rice and dig canals, on only two spoons of rice per day."

From mid-1976 to mid-1977, the Pol Pot regime purged this southern Prey Veng area, known as Region 24, one of the five Regions of the Eastern Zone of the country. The region CPK secretary, Suas Nau (alias Chhouk) was arrested on 20 August 1976 and later executed in Tuol Sleng prison. His deputy, Nav Chey, followed him there in July 1977. Well before then, the region was under the firm control of the Southwest Zone forces of Mok, Pol Pot's senior military commander.⁹¹ Mok soon turned his attention to the Eastern Zone leader, So Phim. Haji Ismael compares the two factions:

In the Eastern Zone forces there were Chams, sons [of ours] who had joined after 1970, and some Chams were cadres. The Eastern Zone forces were led by So Phim. They abolished religion and established communal eating in 1976; that was harsh. But [otherwise] they were not much of a problem. . . . So Phim was not responsible for much persecution or killing. It was Pol Pot and the Southwest Zone who were killers. They killed the Cham cadres and the other Eastern Zone cadres, who were all killed during the time So Phim was taken away. [So Phim committed suicide to avoid arrest on 3 June 1978.]

It was also under Southwest Zone rule that the Cham people of Khmaer Islam Village, along with the bulk of the area's Khmer population, were evacuated to the northwest of the country in November 1978. They could not be trusted to oppose Pol Pot's enemy, Vietnam, and were even seen as traitors, like So Phim. Haji Ismael says: "The Eastern Zone people were called 'Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds.' Chams were also accused of this, there was no distinction." Haji Ismael continues: "Many thousands of people were taken.

Only a few families stayed here to fish for the Khmer Rouge: three families, Mat, El, Liti and their families. All other Chams were evacuated. We all went together but were (again) separated when we got to Pursat."

One of Haji Ismael's sons was killed by Southwest Zone troops before the evacuation in 1978. Two others were killed in Pursat in early 1979, a few days before the regime was overthrown. They had been put to work in a rice warehouse in a hilly area known as Phnom Strap. One day they were summoned to a large meeting of 150 people, involving some from every local household. Haji Ismael thinks it was around 2 January 1979. When they arrived, they found Southwest Zone troops waiting for them.

There were three or four soldiers standing there with three AK rifles. They had only said a few words when they began shooting. Many people died. Out of 150, only three survived to come back here. None of the over forty Chams in that group survived. They were all children of this village, young men and women who had been cooks for the Khmer Rouge.

The Khmer Rouge said the Muslim Khmers were all enemies, recalcitrants. We did not know what that meant, just that you were killed if you were it. . . .

Another villager puts it this way:

They could beat us if they felt like it, even if we had obeyed their laws. There were no laws. If they wanted us to walk, we walked; to sit, we sat; to eat, we ate. And still they killed us. It was just that if they wanted to kill us, they would take us off and kill us.

Haji Ismael continues:

They were killing very strongly as the Front [Vietnamese and Heng Samrin forces] advanced. Phnom Penh was liberated on 7 January 1979, Pursat on 17-19 January. The Khmer Rouge had nearly killed everyone by then.

By 20 January, Haji Ismael had already made his way back to Khmaer Islam Village. He was the first to return. "The place was empty . . . I slept under a tree; there was nothing like a house left to live in."

Over the next year about thirty families returned, and later others when they heard that relatives had survived and gone home. They built rudimentary houses, and with the new government's help, they constructed a small wooden mosque on stilts with a bamboo-slat floor. On the lintel, in Khmer, they have pasted up a sign that may testify to their determination to survive as a community. It says *Voppethoam rolum cheat roleay*—"When the culture succumbs the nation is dissolved." Haji Ismael says there have been 100 Cham babies born in the village since 1979.

5. Romeas Hek

Probably the smallest and most isolated Cham community in Kampuchea is one of twelve families near the Vietnamese border in the north of Svay Rieng (Region 23), the only Chams in that province. Nine Cham families live in Takeo Village, Kompong Trach Subdistrict, Romeas Hek District, and three other families live nearby. They are rice farmers and blacksmiths. In this area before 1970, thirty-two Cham families had lived side by side rather harmoniously with more than 100 Khmer families. Some of the Chams were fisherfolk, some were market gardeners, and some were rice farmers. Their *hakkem*, Ta Los, was a native of Kompong Trabek, and took up his position in Kompong Trach in 1968.

91. See Ben Kiernan, "Wild Chickens," pp. 175-86.

Sen Osman, thirty-nine, was born in Takeo Village and in 1970 was a student of Ta Los and of a teacher named El at the village Muslim school. Soon after the Lon Nol military coup that overthrew Prince Norodom Sihanouk, hundreds of Khmer Rouge came to the village and established an insurgent administration. But as in Prey Veng, the Khmer Rouge did not harm the people over the next five years. "There was no persecution, no communal economy, and no killing," Osman says. But there was war, and American aerial bombing, bringing fear and hardship to the village. B-52s struck nearby, killing several villagers and leaving bomb craters. Troops of Nguyen Van Thieu's Saigon army landed in helicopters and carried off young village women: "They kidnapped people alive from here. We don't know whether they lived or died. Tanks fired on people. Many troops came through here. Some of the population fled, and as many died. . . . Most of the persecution was by the U.S. and Thieu-Ky forces."

Sen Osman estimates that at least thirty villagers were killed in the bombing, but none of the victims were Chams. The majority Khmer population seems to have suffered greatly. In fact, Osman says that no Chams perished or disappeared in the 1970-75 war, but that by the war's end only fifty families remained in the village, more than half of them Chams.

Those who survived in the village appear to have become Khmer Rouge supporters partly as a result of their ordeal. They joined "mutual aid teams" (*krom provas dai*) set up in 1973 at Khmer Rouge instigation. Osman claims: "At that time (until 1975) the Khmer Rouge were easy on us, not a problem. The people liked whoever came and did not kill them."

Religious and social life continued "normally" as before. Sos Man, the Hanoi-trained veteran Cham communist (see Sections II and IIIA2 above), visited Takeo Village at one stage during the war to meet the *hakkem*, Ta Los. Osman recalls: "[Sos] Man was the representative of the Islamic Religion in the Eastern Zone. The Chams here believed in him. They followed [his] political standpoint."

After the Khmer Rouge victory in April 1975, there was a smooth transition to peace in Takeo Village, Osman says. However in early 1976, two important changes were imposed. The village Islamic school was closed, and prayer was prohibited. The Khmer Rouge also banned Buddhism. "They said religion is treachery, treason against the revolution, against the Leninist line, a feudal system. So it was no good, and had to be abolished."

Secondly, communal eating was introduced as part of a new economic system of "cooperatives" (*sahakor*). This system demanded hard work "day and night like torture . . . without enough food or clothes or sleep or medicine." Most importantly for the Chams, however, in the communal mess halls, "the Cham people had to eat and drink what they were not supposed to eat and drink, according to their religion." But these new impositions were not yet enforced by violence.

In the meantime, this province of Svay Rieng, known as Region 23 in DK, was falling under the control of Southwest Zone cadres, like Region 24 in next door Prey Veng. The two regions were slowly brought under Mok's aegis and became known as the "Twin Regions."

From early 1977, Chams were "really forced" to eat pork. Res San, then a local elder, takes up the story:

Pork was served to both Khmers and Chams, in the gruel. The food was poor; we couldn't eat the pork but could not find it [to remove it] anyway. Chams were "put aside" if they did not eat it,



photo by Nguyen Van Ku, courtesy of Kathleen Gough

Cham Muslim woman nursing her baby in the early eighties. A strong, healthy Cham baby such as this one would have to have been a particularly welcome sight to the Chams at that time, considering that during the Pol Pot regime (April 1975 - January 1979) an estimated 90,000 Kampuchean Chams—one-third of their population—died at the hands of the Khmer Rouge. After the fall of Pol Pot, the Kampuchean birthrate rose dramatically and there were suddenly an enormous number of babies.

meaning they were to be killed. . . . We were called "protestors," and "enemies" if we did not eat the pork. *Hakkem* Los was one who was killed for refusing to eat pork.

Sen Osman describes this period as "a search for internal enemies and agents—enemies in words, enemies at work, inactive [people]": "So if you said something a little wrong like 'We are all tired,' they would take you away and kill you. Ta Los, Ta Mit, the teacher El, and all their families were taken away—nearly 30 people, one after another."

Almost immediately, the Cham community of Takeo Village was dispersed. Beginning in January or February 1977, "everyone" was evacuated, scattered to about six different villages in the district, "say two or three families to each village, but even they were separated from each other in those Khmer villages." The Khmer families of Takeo were also dispersed, and others were brought to live there from Ta Khup Village nearby. Osman comments sadly: "So that was the end of living side by side, looking after and caring for one another. It was

broken off completely. There was no more trust. We were just to think of the Pol Pot line, that's all. That's how it was."

Osman was sent to Prek Cheay Village. He says that about sixty Takeo villagers disappeared in 1977 or 1978 after being evacuated to other villages and have not been accounted for. "The torture of the Islamic people just kept on increasing." "They had never eaten pork. . . . Anyone who refused to eat it was called an enemy, 'a class enemy' is what they said. 'You are not shedding the customs and habits of the feudal system. This means you are resisting the revolution.'" Res San, for his part, was sent to Prey Svay Village. In late 1977, he says: "I was accused of waiting for the Vietnamese to come, to kill cattle for them to feast on. I did not say anything." He was arrested along with two Khmers, one of them an old man, and put in prison for two weeks. There were no killings where San was.

According to Osman, 1978 was the year when the greatest number of Chams and Khmers died or disappeared. This was the year of the second forced evacuation, to the Northwest Zone of the country. One day in late 1978, five families were evacuated from Prek Cheay; three days later six or seven families followed. They walked to Phnom Penh and then travelled by train to Maung Russei. Osman travelled with his parents and one brother. Over the next three to four months there, he saw people being publicly bound by Khmer Rouge in front of a crowd, and he discovered that other victims were apprehended secretly. Osman's father, Tam Sen, recalls that "many, many people died; thirty or forty families in as many days." However, "We could get away with not eating pork. . . . But we were not allowed to practise religion. The Khmer Rouge would say: 'What do you want to pray for? For the Vietnamese to come?'"

Because of his skill as a blacksmith, Tam Sen and his family survived intact, and so did two other Cham families from Takeo, including Res San's. When Vietnamese forces arrived in the area, San made his way back to Svay Rieng. He became the *hakkem* of the Muslim survivors of Takeo Village, and was able to have a small wooden mosque built in 1984. Now the Cham children of Takeo learn Khmer in the village school each morning, and Res San teaches them the Arabic script in the afternoons.

Here we conclude our study of the Chams in the Eastern Zone. It is a chilling story, but before passing to events in other zones it is worth recording the opinions of two more Chams who lived through it. Savee bin Kasim was fifteen years old when the Khmer Rouge evacuated him from Phnom Penh to the Eastern Zone, where he spent a year before being again evacuated to the Northwest Zone. In 1984, in the Nong Samet camp on the Thai border, Kasim told Nate Thayer in an interview that Cham base people in DK had been treated better than new people such as himself, "especially in the Eastern Zone." This corresponded, Kasim said, with the Khmer Rouge favoritism towards peasant base people in general.

Kut El is a young base person from the Eastern Zone. He was a sixteen-year-old rubber plantation worker when the Khmer Rouge won the war in 1975. El continued to live in the Eastern Zone after it was taken over by Southwest Zone forces in 1978. His village in Region 21 had eighty families, of whom fifty were Cham families. From 1975 to 1977, six villagers were killed by the Eastern Zone Khmer Rouge, mostly for allegedly failing to work hard enough. But 1978, when the Southwest Zone forces took over, was the worst year, because of a severe reduction in rationing, and also because the worst spate of

killings took place towards the end of 1978, when the Southwest Zone authorities killed thirteen families in the village. Kut El told Nate Thayer that in his view the Eastern Zone forces, in his own village "and generally," had treated the Chams better than the Southwest Zone forces did.

As we have seen, many Chams from the Koh Phol area of the Eastern Zone were forcibly evacuated to the Northern Zone, or to other parts of the East. In both cases they were deprived of their status as "full rights" (*penh sith*) base people. In other Cham areas, such as Kompong Trabek, the population had fled to Phnom Penh during the 1970-75 war, and in DK this fact deprived them of "full rights." However, during our census of the Kompong Trabek community, one Cham peasant woman did claim to have had "full rights" status elsewhere in Region 24, and others confirmed that some Chams had. As we shall see, there is no evidence that Chams enjoyed such status in other zones. There all Cham base (and of course "new") people were apparently deprived of "full rights" as a matter of DK policy.

B. The Northern (Central) Zone

Across the Mekong River from the Eastern Zone is the slightly less densely populated Northern Zone, which was renamed the Central Zone in 1976. It comprised the northern part of Kompong Cham Province (CPK Region 31 in 1970-75), and Kompong Thom and Preah Vihear provinces. Many fewer Chams lived there. However, they were concentrated in specific areas, and in 1973-74 the CPK campaign against Chams had begun there; further, as we have seen, many Chams from the Eastern Zone were evacuated there after the Krauchhmar uprisings in 1975.

1. Kompong Cham

The three major areas of Cham settlement were on the north bank of the Mekong opposite the Eastern Zone; in the rich "red soil" plantation area of Chamcar Loeu District; and further north in Baray District of Kompong Thom Province. Smaller groups of Chams were to be found in other districts as well.

One Cham leader told me in 1986, "Chams died in the largest numbers of all in six or seven subdistricts along the Mekong's north bank in Kompong Cham. . . . Not a family survived, only one or two people. This was a region that was really tortured."⁹²

In 1940, Marcel Ner reported that there were 380 Cham households in three riverbank villages of Kang Meas District of northern Kompong Cham Province. These communities supported two Muslim schools with fifty students each.⁹³ Normal population increase would have brought these Cham communities to a total of about 1,200 families by 1975. By 1975 the three Cham villages had increased to five.⁹⁴ They were included in what was now called Region 41 of Democratic Kampuchea.

92. Author's interview with Tep Ibrahim (see note 39).

93. Ner, "Musulmans," pp. 175-76.

94. These five villages were Antung Sor, Angkor Ban, Khsach Sor, Svay Tahen Krau, and Svay Tahen Khnong. See *The Destruction of Islam in Former Democratic Kampuchea* (Phnom Penh, 1983), p. 13.

In 1979, there were “no survivors” from the village of Antung Sor. Its people had been dispersed in the DK period and only one Cham had survived, a man who went to live alone in a Khmer village and took the Khmer name Chhouk (the lotus).⁹⁵ In 1983, a People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) report on the Chams said of the 1,200 Cham families in these five villages on the Mekong: “After having dispersed some of them, the Pol Potists massacred the remaining population on 1 August 1978. Up till now, only four have been found to have survived.” Dr. Tin Yousos Abdulcoyaume, now a PRK official, claims to have witnessed a Khmer Rouge in Kang Meas District burn five Cham children to death.⁹⁶ Unfortunately no further information could be obtained on Kang Meas District, possibly because of the extent of the extermination of Chams there.

The neighboring district of Kompong Siem was also part of Region 41 on the north bank of the Mekong. Ner reported in 1940 that there were 3,800 Chams in the district, supporting one school.⁹⁷ By 1975, the Cham population had reached 2,000 families, in seven villages. “All have perished,” the PRK government claimed in 1983.⁹⁸ It has not been possible to confirm this statement, but the one independent account available from Kompong Siem District is suggestive. In the village of Chronieng, twelve Khmers were killed in the 1975–78 period, of whom eight were new people. But in 1977 alone, thirteen families of Chams were murdered, over eighty people in all. They too were new people, and had been associated with the Lon Nol armed forces. They were evacuated from nearby Kompong Cham City in 1975, brought to the village in 1976, and all massacred in 1977.⁹⁹

Samah Ni, a Cham fisherman and farmer from Chrang Chamres in the northern suburbs of Phnom Penh, was evacuated from the capital in April 1975. Three of his children were killed by Khmer Rouge during the evacuation. With three brothers and sisters, and his remaining eldest son and daughter-in-law, Ni made his way to Batheay in Choeng Prey District of Kompong Cham (Region 41). He says the Khmer Rouge district chief there, known as “friend Sao,” was a tolerant man who “never killed people.” Sao insisted on adequate rations for the population, and permitted freedom of movement in the district. Further, Ni adds:

My father was a holy man; when he first arrived he kept praying and would not give it up. The lower-level team and section chiefs informed friend Sao that there was an old man who was still religious, a Muslim Khmer who was still praying to Allah. “What should be done? Don’t let him.” But Sao said: “Let him do what he wants, according to his religion and custom. Let him do it, don’t forbid him.”

But the idea of the Pol Pot agents was to abolish religion. . . . In 1977 Sao was killed. He was accused of treason. . . . Pol Pot said, no religion, no markets, no money.

Ni claims that there had been no killings under Sao’s authority in 1976, but from January 1977 “the killings began.” Ni’s fourth son and three brothers and sisters were all killed in 1977. Then in 1978, he says, 105 Muslim families from Tanup in Choeng Prey were massacred. “No one survived. My cousins who had made the Haj, my aunts, etc., were all rounded up and killed. They were put on oxcarts and taken to Chamcar Loeu. . . . They were killed and dropped into ditches at Chamcar Andong.”

Tes Osman, thirty-two, was born into a Cham family of Chamcar Andong Village, in Chamcar Loeu District (Region 42). The Khmer Rouge had taken over the village in 1970, and thus the 500 Chams in the village became base people. However,

in 1975 they were evacuated from the village and dispersed. Only twenty Cham families were allowed to remain, “section leaders, militia, etc., the ignorant ones,” Osman claims. These remained base people, while the vast majority of the 500 Cham villagers were classified as new people, like the population of Phnom Penh, because they had now been evacuated from their homes. Worse, the death rate in subsequent years was such that “only twenty families survived to 1979.”

Tep Ibrahim was an employee of the state import company Sonaprim when the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh in 1975. He was then thirty-four years old, with a wife and two children. They walked for one month to Chamcar Loeu District, and with 150 other families of Cham evacuees, went to the large Cham village of Speu, home of 5,000 families of Cham base people. After two weeks, all but seventy of these Cham families in Speu were dispersed. The mosques were closed and religion banned. Ibrahim’s family was placed in the nearby hamlet of Speu Kor, and organized into mutual aid teams. Ibrahim notes that ethnic Chinese, unlike Muslim Chams, “were not so badly off.” Two kilometers away was a village of ethnic Chinese, who were not dispersed.

In early 1976, large numbers of Chams and Khmers from Trea and other parts of Krauchmar District and the Eastern Zone were brought in trucks to the Chamcar Andong rubber plantations. Ibrahim saw “ready-made pits” where they were to be buried. He believes “hundreds and hundreds” of Chams were massacred there. In March–April 1976, small cooperatives were formed, and collective eating introduced. “We were no longer allowed to go looking for food (they said there was ‘no time’), so we had less to eat. For the first two months there was plenty of gruel. Some people ate seven dishes in a sitting. But later there was only a couple of watery spoonfuls each. . . . We were forced to eat pork; some could not, and vomited it up.” By mid-1976, those base people who had supported the revolution became disillusioned, not only because of the lack of food but also because of the heavy work requirements. The working day began at 4:30 a.m. (or even 3:30 a.m. for the strongest workers), with a seven- to fifteen-kilometer walk to the worksite. Working hours were from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and in the harvest season at night as well. The 1976 crop was good, but was loaded onto trucks and carted away. As a result there was a good deal of starvation in 1976–77.

The year 1977 was a particularly tragic one for Ibrahim. People were existing on bananas and sweet potatoes. Ibrahim’s two children, and his brother’s two children, all died in 1977. Worse, his aunt was arrested, and her son, Ibrahim’s cousin, was told by the Khmer Rouge to visit his mother in the hospital. There they killed him. “They slashed his stomach and dumped him in a well”; Ibrahim says he witnessed this himself. Later the man’s children were taken away as well. So were half a dozen Cham cadres, including several from Speu Kor Village.

95. Tep Ibrahim, interviews (see n. 39).

96. *The Destruction of Islam*, pp. 13, 19.

97. Ner, “Muslims,” p. 176.

98. *The Destruction of Islam*, p. 13. The seven villages are all named there.

99. Author’s interview with Nop Sophon, who lived in Chronieng Village, Trien Subdistrict, in the DK period. Phnom Penh, 18 January 1987.



photo by Nguyen Van Ku, courtesy of Kathleen Gough

Cham Muslim woman in the early eighties. Note what she is doing—it looks to us as if she's making yarn using an inverted bicycle as a spinning wheel.

In early 1977, Ibrahim was working in a mobile fishing detail in Stung Trang District on the Mekong, opposite Krauchmar. He says there was a second roundup of Chams, from both sides of the river. "They spread the rumour that Malaysia was exchanging petrol for Chams. When we heard that, we all got together and wanted to go. . . . The trucks came and stopped by the water every day. They had our group go back home. But we didn't get to the truck in time. . . . I even tried to run after the truck." Many people were waiting to board the trucks, but luckily for Ibrahim, he did not. Those Chams who did were taken across to the Chamcar Andong rubber plantation. So were Chams in Chamcar Loeu District itself.

After being rounded up they were told they could go to Battambang Province, and so on. Some were told they were being taken to Malaya in exchange for petrol. They were taken away one night. There are none left of those who went from Speu Village where I lived. Two days after they had left, their scarves and shirts were brought back and distributed to the children. That's how they disappeared. . . . They were taken and thrown into Chamcar Andong, killed off very quickly.

I also lived near Chamcar Andong. I went to cut bananas there one day. The whole district was smelling. There was nobody there.

Of 150 families of Cham new people who had arrived in Speu in 1975, only forty-three decimated families survived in 1979.

In December 1978, a third massacre occurred. "Boat after boat" brought evacuees across from the Eastern Zone. "Tens of thousands" of them were landed on an island off Krauchmar, then taken by boat to Stung Trang, then by truck to Chamcar Andong rubber plantations. This massacre was part of the massive DK suppression campaign against the Eastern Zone that commenced in May 1978. In the Northern Zone itself, a similar purge had occurred around the end of 1976.

The leaders of this earlier local purge were Ke Pauk, Northern (now Central) Zone CPK secretary, and his younger brother-in-law Oeun, Region 42 CPK secretary. Ibrahim de-

scribes Pauk as "big, fat, and dark," and Oeun as "short and fat." He saw Pauk only once, in September 1976. "He brought Chinese guests from Peking to see the rice growing. They came to film the rice; they had guns. No one was allowed to move from place to place at that time. . . . He came to see the big rice plants grown by our Phnom Penh group; ours was the best rice, and he came to see it and draw experience from it." Not long afterwards the purges began in earnest.

Chea Much, a one-time Khmer leftist, was working as a laborer in Kompong Cham City at the time, and was able to observe the internal dissension within the Khmer Rouge. He says that in late 1976,

They disbanded all the old troops and sent them home. . . . They were replaced by new troops who were all very young, from the Southwest Zone. The old cadres and military leaders were accused of being traitors, "Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds." These accusations began in early 1977. . . .

Before 1977 the Reds only persecuted Lon Nol soldiers to some small extent; some were killed, others spared. Then after a time they took away all the soldiers, till there were none left. Then the Southwest Zone cadres came and persecuted the Chams, who only know how to be Chams, and Khmers as well. Both groups began to disappear.¹⁰⁰

This account suggests an association between the persecution of Chams and that of Khmers accused of having "Vietnamese minds." The racism seems explicit in one case, introverted in the other.

2. Kompong Thom

Boeng Subdistrict, in Baray District of Kompong Thom Province, includes three Cham villages, which had a total population of about 450 Cham families in 1975. But in this area the dispersal of the Chams had already begun by then (see section II, above). According to Os El, a local Cham peasant, in August

1973 ten Cham families were selected from each of the three villages and sent north to Kravar Subdistrict.

In 1974 or 1975, another local peasant, Ya El, recalls that his daughter, who was pregnant, became ill and her body swelled up. Accused of malingering, she was executed along with her husband and four children. "There was no meaning to their persecution and starvation of us," El complained sadly.

Ya Mat went to work as an artisan for the Khmer Rouge in Chaeung Daeung Subdistrict. He claims that "in 1975 there was a phrase that they used to instruct us."

There was a document saying that now, if we did not eat [pork], they would not let us "live in the revolution." They would abolish us (*romleay caol*). There was no Cham race or Cham country. Absolutely not. In Vietnam they had all been abolished. In Champa they had all been abolished too. We had come to live in Kampuchea, but there were [to be] no Chams, no Chinese, no nothing.

In October 1976, according to Os El, the people of the three villages were all evacuated thirty kilometers to the north and dispersed over four subdistricts, ten to fifteen Cham families to each village. They were mixed with the base people there, but although they were base people themselves, they were no longer recognized as such. They were now placed in the same category as urban evacuees, the new people or deportees (*neak phñoe*), and called "deportee peasants" (*kasekor phñoe*) or, an intermediary category, "candidate peasants" (*kasekor triem*). No Chams were placed in the third, most favored category of "full rights" (*penh sith*). Therefore Chams, like urban evacuees, were explicitly denied rights. Meanwhile, non-Muslim Khmers were brought to live in the evacuated Cham villages of Boeng Subdistrict.

Ya Los, a Cham mechanic, was one of those evacuated to Bak Sna Subdistrict. He says that from late 1976 on, "many people were taken away, many were beaten (to death) and there was little food." One Cham family were told they were going to "find new land" for growing rubber in Chamcar Andong, but they were taken by truck to the Security office in Kompong Thmar, where they disappeared. Ya Los says that beginning in 1976, Chams were obliged to eat pork, under threat of the accusation of "not making revolution." "Villagers higher up didn't have to eat pork and crab meat. . . . We ate it, and vomited it up again. They would not give us salt, or anything else, even gruel, in its place. But next morning they would use us to work again."

Ya El says that from 1974 to 1979, each year had been "equally hard." However when a listener voiced the opinion that 1977 had been the worst year, El said:

"In 1977 they dug some ditches. I asked them why. They said the earth was to be taken to make roof-tiles. But it was to bury us, after they had killed us." Ya Los recalls how things came to a head in 1977. "The district security chief, Von, called a meeting in 1977. . . . He said that the Chams were not to be spared. . . . In three days we were to be rounded up and got rid of, he said. I was not there, but our team chief (*protean kong*) told me about it."

Another local Cham claims that the team chief even told him the reason Chams "were not to be spared," which was to be found "in the history of the country Vietnam." Los believes the local Chams were saved when, the next morning, a messenger came to take Von away, and Von was executed by his superiors. Like the execution of Sao in nearby Choeng Prey District, this event appears to have marked the arrival of Khmer Rouge from the Southwest Zone. But their policy was no more lenient to the Chams.

in July 1977 in Kravar Subdistrict, twenty families of Chams were loaded onto Security trucks from Kompong Thmar and Svay Tong, and driven off, never to return. Ya Mat, who had relatives among this group, pointed out that they had "eaten pork and so on, and still they were killed." Mat explained this by reference to a "1978 document" produced by the Khmer Rouge leadership, "about the Constitution of 1975-76 in Phnom Penh," as Mat described it. He recalled that it discussed "subversion," and went on:

It was Document No. 163, page 163 [?] It said we will not spare the Chams, because if spared they will resist, (and produce) revisionism. . . . It said that the Cham race is not to be spared because it has a history of resisting the socialist revolution, and also in the Champa period. . . . "So we undertake a policy of discarding them (*leah bong*) now. . . ." They were hand in hand with the Vietnamese, so they must all be killed off. It said that the Chams had already rebelled once, in the Eastern Zone. There was CIA-KGB resistance in the forest. . . . It said we had fled persecution in our Vietnamese country, and could not be trusted. . . . The document said that "Now, they must be smashed to pieces (*komtech caol*). Whatever department they are in, they must be smashed to pieces."

Mat's account was corroborated by Os El, who claimed to have seen the mysterious "Document 163" in June 1978. The document belonged to Yong, El's supervisor of public works, who was based in nearby Chan Lehong Village, in Chhouk Khsach Subdistrict of Baray District. El said he secretly read the document in Chan Lehong, which significantly is the native village of Ke Pauk, the then CPK secretary of the Central Zone. (El also said that Yong's direct superiors there were the cadres Oeun and Bin—Pauk's brother-in-law and nephew—and Poch, a Southwest Zone cadre who had arrived in early 1977.) It has not been possible to obtain a copy of this document, or even confirm its authenticity.

In 1979, 364 families of Chams from the three villages of Boeng Subdistrict had survived the DK period. One hundred and twenty Cham families had perished, the villagers told me in 1980. Yasya Asmath, thirty-two, is a native of one of the three villages, Trapeang Chhouk. His father, Imam Yasya, was the religious leader there in the 1960s. As mentioned above, Asmath lived under the Khmer Rouge from 1970 to 1973, then went to Vietnam. He now lives in New York, but before fleeing to the West he managed to visit his native village in March 1979, soon after the Vietnamese overthrow of DK. He found that his parents and two brothers had survived the Pol Pot period, but two other brothers had been killed (one beheaded, the other disemboweled) by the Khmer Rouge. Asmath had also lost many relatives and friends. Two of the three village mosques had been destroyed, and the third used first as a pigsty, then as a warehouse by the Khmer Rouge. According to a PRK report, a village dignitary, Haji Yousos Aony, "had been condemned to live and eat with pigs in a pigsty until his death in July 1975."¹⁰¹

3. Preah Vihear

The most remote part of the Northern/Central Zone was Preah Vihear Province, a vast forested area north of Kompong

100. Author's interview with Chea Much, Prey Totoeng, 4 August 1980.

101. *The Destruction of Islam*, p. 10.



photo by Nguyen Van Ku, courtesy of Kathleen Gough

Cham Muslim woman in the early eighties. When the Khmer Rouge instituted collective eating, everyday cooking utensils like the ones at the end of this porch were confiscated, and people were allowed to have only one spoon each.

Thom on the Thai border. There were no Cham base people there, but new people came in large numbers in 1975.

Sim Sakriya, forty-three, had left Phnom Penh in April 1975 for Cham Leu Village of Koh Thom District, Kandal Province, south of Phnom Penh along the Bassac River near the Vietnamese border. In July 1975, however, he and 710 families from the district were evacuated again. They were sent by boat from south to north across the country, to Kompong Thom Province and then by road to Samrong Village in Preah Vihear (Region 103). The 710 families, all new people, included 100 families of Chams and over 60 families of Chinese. The rest were Khmer.

By 1978, only seventy-one people were still alive, Sakriya claims. Forty-five Chams including himself, were the only survivors of 100 families. Only three families of Chinese survived; "the Chinese died most of all," he says, but these figures suggest that proportionally the greatest toll was among Khmers. Chams do not seem to have been singled out, although at least two-thirds of them died because of their forced evacuation to an inhospitable area.¹⁰²

Here it was deportees or new people who were singled out for the most oppressive treatment irrespective of their race. Most Chams in base areas however, were, as we have seen,

singled out for classification as deportees, by fiat—for reasons of race rather than by virtue of their place of origin as was the case for other races.

In 1975, Yusof, then sixty-seven, was a trader living near Takeo market in the Southwest Zone. For a month after the Khmer Rouge took the town in April, Yusof lived in a Buddhist monastery. (Interestingly, it was called Wat Champa.) But food ran out, and "we were sent empty-handed" to Koh Thom in Kandal Province. He stayed there four months, then was again evacuated, again empty-handed, by boat to Preah Vihear Province. Yusof arrived there with 1,500 other Cham and Khmer new people in late 1975, several months after Sim Sakriya's group, and was sent to a different district. There they were split up; only four families of Chams went to Pal Hal Village with Yusof, as well as 300 Khmer and Chinese new people. They joined about 100 peasant base people who were supporters of the revolution, including four or five families of the Kouy minority ethnic group. (Yusof says there were also a number of middle-ranking Kouy cadres in the province.) The Kouy "were living like Khmers, with no separate culture." "They spoke Khmer with us, but only Kouy among themselves." There does not appear to have been any ban on their language, or on that of the Chams.

In fact Yusof suggests that the local Khmer Rouge cadres were "good to us to some extent." "They were not so tough; they didn't insult us." The first year, 1976, was "still soft enough, all right"; fairly adequate rations were distributed and meals were eaten freely at home. There were what Yusof called "normal killings": "Small numbers of people were taken away" by the Khmer Rouge.

In 1977 conditions worsened. There were more killings; children were taken to live separately from their parents; the rice crop was "all sent away"; collective eating was introduced; pots, pans, spoons, and plates were all confiscated, and people were obliged to eat rations of "bamboo in soup, boiled with a little rice and banana," or soup made from salt, banana stalks, and tiny fish. They ate their rations with the one spoon each person was allowed to keep. "That is why people got sick and died. When people fell sick, they picked coconuts and injected themselves with coconut milk. It only made me sicker."

From late 1977, Yusof claims, the base people no longer favored the revolution because everyone was undernourished, and both base people and new people were being arrested. The year 1978 was even worse. Large areas were flooded, and starvation rose to a peak. "People planted potatoes and corn to eat instead of rice."

Around mid-1978, the local cadres were arrested and killed. Later in the year, the Southwest Zone CPK secretary, Mok, arrived in the area and propagandized against Vietnam. "We never saw him, but we were afraid just when we heard his name. . . . He ordered many killings, of truckloads of people. People were afraid just at the sound of the truck motors." Yusof gave no figures of the death toll in Pal Hal Village. However, he and his family survived, and it seems clear that Chams were not singled out for persecution there; as in Samrong Village, the deplorable living conditions were shared by all races.

102. Author's interview with Sim Sakriya, Chrang Chamres, 2 January 1987.

C. The Southwest Zone

I interviewed members of three major communities of Chams in the stronghold of the DK regime, the Southwest Zone. These were in Kandal Province, on the lower Bassac River in Koh Thom District; in Takeo Province, in the ricelands of Treang District; and in the Phnom Penh area. An important point to note here is that Takeo Province, the original base area of Pol Pot's loyal military commander, Mok, saw the first known use of the term "deportee," and that the term was originally used there to identify Cham base people separately from Khmer villagers.

1. Koh Thom

Two riverbank settlements, known as Cham and Upper Cham villages, were the homes of about 500 families of Chams in the early 1970s. Khmer Rouge forces first came to Cham Village in 1972. According to a local Cham, "They did not persecute us much. They let us eat our fill in those days. There were not many killings. We worked together." However, after the 1975 victory, "they really did it." Private property was confiscated, and money abolished. People worked "day and night" on inadequate rations.

Disaster fell around April 1976. The Khmer Rouge closed the mosques, banned Islam, and prohibited Cham as a "foreign language." Worse, the two Cham communities were dispersed; some were sent to neighboring villages in Koh Thom District, others to the northwest of the country as far as Pursat and Battambang. In local communal eating halls, Chams were forced to eat meals that included pork. Killings for infractions of regulations commenced in 1976, and reached a peak in 1977, when the Khmer Rouge searched homes for gold. Half a dozen Cham families escaped to Vietnam; their relatives were persecuted by the Khmer Rouge. "In 1978 no one could escape, it was too tight."

One hundred Chams died in the district between 1976 and 1979. Over 100 more died after being sent to the northwest provinces. According to a PRK study published in 1982, eighty-three Koh Thom Muslim families perished in Pursat alone; the only survivor was Haji Ahmad. The father, mother, and three brothers of Math Toloh all died in Battambang. Toloh, now deputy village chief, claims that the nearby village of Po Tonle was turned into a vast torture and execution center where 35,000 people were murdered, including about 20,000 Chams.¹⁰³ These figures are probably exaggerated, but the claims of mass murder at Po Tonle are supported by Cham refugees from Koh Thom interviewed in Thailand.¹⁰⁴ Local Chams also claimed that "We were persecuted much more than Khmers" in the DK period. In 1980, the two Cham villages had regrouped into one, and 222 families survived where there had once been 500. By late 1982, the population had increased from 1,060 to 1,131 people, in 234 family groups.¹⁰⁵

2. Takeo

About ten villages of Chams in Treang District of Takeo Province were taken over by Khmer Rouge forces in 1972-73. In 1973 the new rulers led all the inhabitants to the mountains in Angkor Chey District of Kampot Province, and they spent a year there.

Nao Gha, a Cham peasant woman from Smong Village,

was then thirty-eight years old. She was sent to Kampot with 100 village families. "They did not persecute us there. . . . Our leaders were from among us Chams. . . . They still treated us well, let us work and fend for ourselves. They said good things. . . . In 1974 they sent us back home . . . over 100 families." Two other Cham villagers added that before 1975 the Khmer Rouge had made a good impression and were in fact very popular. They fetched water and gathered manure for the peasants. "They helped us a lot . . . like fathers and sons," one claimed.

What seems very significant about the 1970-75 period was the relocation of all these Southwest Zone Chams. As we have seen, in 1973-74 there were similar evacuations of Cham populations in the Northern Zone (but apparently not in the Eastern Zone). In Angkor Chey District, the Southwest Zone Chams were officially called "deportee base people" (*moultañh phñoe*) by the Khmer Rouge. This is the earliest known use of the term deportees. It predates both the 1975 evacuation of Phnom Penh whose population became the archetypal deportees, and the 1976 evacuations of Cham villages in the North and East whose inhabitants were then labelled deportees. In the Southwest Zone, heartland of the Pol Pot faction, the Chams seem to have been the prototypal deportees. Most significantly of all, these Southwest Zone Chams were *still* called deportees even after they had returned to their home villages in 1974. This suggests that the classification was originally intended for Chams, for racial reasons rather than as an indication of their geographical relocation.

It was after the victory of April 1975 that Nao Gha says "the persecution began." Some Chams and Khmers from Phnom Penh came to live in a local Cham village after the city's evacuation. Villagers were now obliged to work "night and day" on irrigation projects. Killings began; Khmers were executed for minor infractions, at least one every couple of months. Religion was banned completely. Kung Mun, then fifty-nine, recalls the Khmer Rouge decreeing that only production was allowed, no useless festivals.

In 1976, communal eating was instituted and private gardening and foraging forbidden in the Cham villages. Pork was served in some dishes, but the elderly people were simply unable to eat it. The Cham village chief of Smong, a man named Sim, "allowed us not to eat pork," a local peasant recalls. Kung Mun adds that the local Cham cadre "looked after the people."

However, in the same year Sim was dismissed as village chief. He was accused of "leading the Cham minority people not to eat pork." Now it became compulsory to eat pork. Those who refused to do so were served only water. Several people feared starvation and attempted to flee to Vietnam. They were captured and executed by the Khmer Rouge. "The Khmer Rouge accused the Vietnamese of killing people whom they themselves had killed," says a peasant who was a relative of the victims. The sacked Cham village chief, Sim, did manage to escape to

103. *La Communauté Islamique au Kampuchéa* (Phnom Penh, 1983), pp. 29-31. In this book the two Cham villages are called Anlong Sor Loeu and Anlong Sor Krom.

104. Nate Thayer's interviews with Mat Sman, 20, and Saleh, 21, at Nong Samet, 10 September 1984.

105. *La Communauté Islamique au Kampuchéa*, p. 29.

Vietnam in 1977, and he returned home after the overthrow of DK in 1979. Other Cham cadre were not so lucky. Some disappeared in 1976–77 after being transferred from their posts by the Khmer Rouge. Others were executed in 1978.

In 1977, the Cham language was banned. Nao Gha recalls that Khmer Rouge cadres said that now only the Khmer language was allowed: “There are no Vietnamese, Chinese, Javanese—only the Khmer race. Everyone is the same.” Nao Gha claims that the Khmer Rouge “hated” Chams. She quotes the Treang district chief, Soeun, who told several large meetings in 1977 and 1978 that the Chams were “hopeless.” He went on: “They abandoned their country to others. They just shouldered their fishing nets and walked off, letting the Vietnamese take over their country.” These racist pronouncements, based on a selection of events from the fifteenth century, left Nao Gha cold. She volunteered this comment: “I don’t know about that, it happened long ago. I don’t know which generation it was.”

Soon the Khmer Rouge announced that the Chams had “to mix flesh and blood with the Khmer.” The Chams were then evacuated from their homes. Of course this was for the second time, but this time the ten Cham communities were dispersed, over at least three subdistricts. Nao Gha’s village of Smong was actually burnt down by the Khmer Rouge; its inhabitants were divided among eight villages in Tralach Subdistrict. Four or five families were sent to some villages, six or eight to others. “We were not allowed to live together,” says Nao Gha, who went to Kantuot Village with five Cham families. “The Pol Pot regime did not trust us. They did not let us do anything; they did not let us into their kitchens. . . . They were afraid we would poison the food or something.” Obviously, popular prejudices against Chams were alive in the Khmer Rouge movement, fueled by the more educated prejudices and policies of the movement’s leaders.

All Chams were called deportees, Nao Gha says, “even the base people.” This was because they were a “minority” nationality. “The Khmers were “full rights” and “candidates,” she adds, presumably excepting those Khmers evacuated from the towns, who would have been deportees. But Chams were classified in that group out of racial discrimination.

Kung Mun says that “all the *hajis* died in 1977.” There were five educated *hajis* native to Smong Village. Mun says they were taken by the Khmer Rouge to the hills near Tani in Kampot Province. They disappeared, and presumably were killed there. Kung Mun himself lost four relatives in 1977–78; some of them starved to death rather than eat pork. Nao Gha lost three brothers from starvation. In her group of five Cham families in Kantuot Village, there was one death from illness, and in other villages, at least four Chams were killed for refusing to eat pork. “They were accused of being holy men (*sangkriech*) in the old society,” she says. In 1978, four whole families of Chinese in Kantuot Village were also executed by the Khmer Rouge. This massacre coincided with the execution of former Cham cadres who had continued to live in the area after dismissal from their posts.

People worked hardest in 1978. Nao Gha worked in the fields for thirteen hours per day. Rations were inadequate—sweet potatoes and water vines rather than rice. Yet pork was served twice a month in 1978, and had to be eaten on pain of execution. Some Chams who did eat pork vomited it up again. The period of greatest persecution was 1977–78, Nao Gha says.

3. Phnom Penh

The former village of Prek Tapeu (Prek Pra) south of Phnom Penh near the suburb of Takhmau, was the home of over 3,000 Cham Muslims in 1975. In 1979, only about 600 survived, according to the *hakkem* Toluos Math. (The 1940



photo by Ben Kiernan, courtesy of Ben Kiernan

Cham Muslims at Chrang Chamres mosque near Phnom Penh, 1981. Chrang Chamres is now the center of Cham life.



photo by Ben Kiernan, courtesy of Ben Kiernan

Cham Muslims at the Noor Alihsan mosque in Chrang Chamres, 1980

population reported by Marcel Ner, when he attended a festival in the village, was 800.) "More than four-fifths of our fellow villagers had been cut down by the Khmer Rouge," Math said in 1983. He cited population dispersal, forced labor, exhaustion, hunger, disease, and mistreatment, including the obligation to eat pork, "as a simple method of persecution." The worst massacres were committed in 1978, including the killing of the *hakkem* Haji Idris, who Math said was hung by the feet from the branch of a tree and smothered with buckets of boiling water. By late 1980, the survivors of Prek Tapeu had increased in number to 1,005, and by 1987, to about 1,300.

The largest Cham community in Phnom Penh was established at Chrang Chamres, in the northern suburbs of the capital. We have already noted the death toll among 150 Cham families from this area who were evacuated to the Northern Zone in 1975: only forty-three incomplete families survived in 1979. Others went to the Southwest and Western Zones, as we shall see. A survey of twelve surviving Cham family groups in Chrang Chamres Subdistrict No. 2 in 1986, carried out in collaboration with Gregory Stanton, yielded the following results: There were 111 people in the twelve families in early 1975. At least seven of these people died in the first year, including two who were murdered; four died in 1976; thirteen died in 1977, including five murdered; two died in 1978; and thirteen others died at some point in the 1975-79 period, making a total of thirty-nine deaths in four years, or 35 percent of the 111 family members. The sample includes one family of nine who fled to Vietnam in 1975 and all survived. Of the other eleven families, only one had suffered no loss of members in the DK period.

In 1940, Marcel Ner reported that there were 340 Cham families in Chrang Chamres.¹⁰⁶ By 1975 there were over 1,000. In 1986, only 280 local families remained there. (But they had been joined by 1,600 Cham families from other parts of the country. These people, having concentrated in what is now the center of Cham life, would presumably account for up to 10,000

Chams missing from other villages.)

The other large Cham community in the capital was Chruï Changvar, across the Sap River east of Phnom Penh. In 1940, Ner reported 300 Cham households there (plus two households headed by Malays from Singapore).¹⁰⁷ By 1975 when the village was evacuated by the Khmer Rouge, they may have numbered about 900 families. In 1979 and 1980, only 70 families returned there. By 1985, a total of 80 Cham families had returned to Chruï Changvar.¹⁰⁸

D. The Western and Northwest Zones

The Southwest Zone had originally also included the provinces of Kompong Speu, Kompong Chhnang, and Koh Kong. But in mid-1975, this area north of Highway 4 was separated from the Southwest and a new Western Zone was established. Its party secretary was Chou Chet (who had clashed with Mok during the war). The Western Zone is the poorest part of the country. As Pol Pot said in a speech to the zone's cadres in June 1976, "there are mountains everywhere and the soil does not have much fertility."¹⁰⁹ Inhospitable coastline, mountains,

106. Ner, "Muslimans," p. 166.

107. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

108. Michael Vickery, *Kampuchea: Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Frances Pinter and Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1986), p. 164. Vickery's informant put the 1975 population at only 150 families, which seems unlikely. There were at least 400 Cham households there. See Vu Can, "The Community of Surviving Muslims," *Vietnam Courier* 4 (1982), p. 31.

109. See Chanthou Boua, David P. Chandler, and Ben Kiernan (eds.), *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-77* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies Council, forthcoming 1988, Document No.2).

and forests in the west dominate low-rainfall, sandy-soil plains in Kompong Speu and Kompong Chhnang; the latter province is watered by the Sap River, which has great fishing potential but floods large areas for several months each year.

There is only one large Cham community in the Western Zone. It consists of three villages of Kompong Tralach District in Kompong Chhnang Province, which numbered about 5,000 Chams in 1940. Marcel Ner described them as "the most faithful in Cambodia to the Cham traditions," having undergone very little Malay influence or intermarriage. "In their mosques and Koranic schools the teaching and sermons are in Cham, and knowledge of Arabic is restricted to the alphabet and some formulae. They jealously preserve some Cham manuscripts which tell of their history; several people can read them, and even appear to know long passages by heart. The women maintain the authority that Cham customs accord them."¹¹⁰

1. Kompong Speu

Sah Roh was born in Kompong Tralach District in 1949. By 1975 she was married and living in Phnom Penh. Her husband, also a Cham, was a teacher. With her husband, four children, and younger sister, Sah Roh was evacuated to the west of the capital in April 1975. The seven of them went to Kompong Speu Province with three other Cham families. They spent four months there. Meanwhile, two families of Chams from Kompong Tralach had also arrived in Kompong Speu, after being expelled from their native villages by the Khmer Rouge even though they were base people. Worse, on 5 May 1975, Sen Mathay's father, brother, and sister were murdered for speaking Cham and for praying to Allah, and on the same day Ros Samath's father and brother were murdered for refusing to eat pork.¹¹¹ However, Sah Roh had a happier experience.

Roh's husband was put to work as a blacksmith, making agricultural tools. The rest of the family had to work in the fields, but were given rations that they cooked and ate privately. They had also brought some food with them from Phnom Penh, and so they had adequate nutrition. The Khmer Rouge knew Roh's husband's background but did not harm him. In fact, Roh says, "The Khmer Rouge in Kompong Speu were a bit soft . . . not very tough. . . . There were no killings. . . . The base people were quite good. We could ask them to help us."

2. Pursat and Battambang

However, in September 1975 the four families of Chams were "selected" to go to the northwest of the country, along with many Khmer families from the area. The move proved to be a disaster. Of the twenty-six Chams who had left Phnom Penh together, only thirteen were to survive the next three years.

On arrival in Bakan District of Pursat Province, the newcomers were divided up, one family to each cooperative. Sah Roh's family were sent to Talo, a cooperative of over 1,000 families. "As soon as we arrived we had to hand over all our goods, and received in return only two sets of clothes each. No property was allowed. . . . We ate collectively, gruel and banana leaves, and watermelons." In mid-1976, after revealing that he had been a teacher, Roh's husband was taken away "to

study." "No one has heard of him since." Six months later, two of Roh's children and her sister all died within a month of one another. In 1976, more than ten people were killed in Sah Roh's village, but "in 1977 there were many, taken from everywhere." Seven out of thirty women in Roh's work team died in 1977. And 1978 saw huge massacres of 3,000 new evacuees from the Eastern Zone. Roh was then privileged by being raised to the status of a base person. "They put me aside and above temporarily, while they persecuted the Eastern Zone people." There seems no evidence in Roh's account of Chams being singled out for discriminatory treatment the way the Easterners were. Yet her fate was tragic and it is worth recording her poignant comment: "My husband was picked up first of all. He died, disappeared forever. I was seven months pregnant. It was very, very hard, transplanting rice in the flooded fields. . . . I am left over from that story."

Pin Yatay, in his memoir, *L'Utopie Meurtrière*, records some of the activities of the Chams in Pursat in the DK period. He describes them as "the favourite targets of the sadism of the Khmer Rouge" and explains how they "organised themselves into groups to loot the cornfields" in order to survive.

Their fishing community (they lived around the Great Lakes) had been uprooted by the new regime. For that reason they bore a fierce hatred for the Khmer Rouge. In spite of their dispersal by the country's new masters, the Muslim Khmers had succeeded in establishing a real underground network. They went in small groups to steal the ears of corn from the fields.

Nevertheless, Yatay makes the point that if the Chams were singled out for special discrimination, it only brought them closer to their Khmer fellow-sufferers.

We were famished slaves. . . . Among the new people there was every kind. The persecuted were from all backgrounds. There were Chams or Islamic Khmers, Chinese, even Vietnamese who had not gone back to their country. We no longer had any concept of difference. We were the new people lined up against the old. We shared the misery and the silent complicity. We did not denounce one another.¹¹²

To Hosan was also born in Kompong Tralach, but had moved to Battambang by 1975, when the Khmer Rouge took over. He was then nineteen years old, and with his family of nine people, he was evacuated into the countryside of Battambang Province. They went to Kang Hat Village in Sangker District, where they knew there was a small wooden mosque. The local Muslim community had left the area, but eleven Muslim families also came to Kang Hat, from Pailin City, including three Chvea ("Javanese") families. The rest were Cham. For the first three months or so, they were all allowed to practice Islam, but then the mosque was closed and all religion prohibited by the Khmer Rouge.

Then in early 1976 cooperatives were established, with communal eating, and it was made clear to the Muslims that they would have to eat any pork dishes served. These were rare, but Hosan says: "If a sick pig died, we got pork for three days." The reason Chams had to eat pork was a decree that classes and living conditions were to be the same for everybody.

110. Ner, "Musulmans," p. 170.

111. *The Destruction of Islam*, pp. 11-12.

112. Pin Yatay, *L'Utopie Meurtrière* (Paris: Laffont, 1979), pp. 231-32, 253. (See also the English translation, Pin Yatay, *Stay Alive, My Son* (Bloomsbury and New York: Free Press, 1987).)



photo by Ben Kiernan, courtesy of Ben Kiernan

Cham Muslims in Kompong Tralach, 1980

Work was collective, Buddhism and Islam alike were abolished, and "whatever the Khmer people did, the Islamic Khmers had to do the same."

There was one man, called Sman, a holy man from Khleang Sbek, who was shot for refusing to eat pork. He said he would absolutely prefer to die rather than eat pork. He was the very first, and we all waited and watched what would happen. Everybody was fearful. Then they used him as a lesson. They killed him because he was the first to protest. . . . So we all started to eat pork little by little. We were scared.

When the cooperatives were established in early 1976, the Khmer Rouge called a meeting and the cooperative chief Hâm announced that only the Khmer language would be tolerated from then on. Hosan adds: "Not only Cham but any language, e.g. Chinese or Lao, was forbidden. You could not speak Cham secretly at home, either. If they heard you, you would disappear. Even at night the militia would come by the houses and listen. . . . Some Chams were killed for speaking Cham."

The first harvest under the cooperative system was confiscated. "They would not let us eat it, although production was high. They took it all away in trucks." As a result, starvation struck from about March–April 1977. "Nearly half" of the sub-district perished, over 400 people out of a population of 900 families. Of the twelve Cham families, four people died of starvation and disease, including one relative of To Hosan.

The year 1978 saw less starvation, but a harsher work regime. A dam project on the Sangker River claimed "at least ten deaths every day" for most of the year. There were also "many secret killings." The result was that in 1979, only about 600 adults had survived out of the 900 families in the sub-district in 1975. The twelve Cham families had lost four of their members: they do not appear to have suffered more than the Khmer, although they were obviously singled out for special treatment, such as the harsh enforcement of the ban on their language and dietary customs.

3. Kompong Tralach

Hamat was born in Kompong Tralach District in 1943, but later moved to the capital and became a fisherman at Chrang Chamres. When the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975, "the whole village of Chrang Chamres was evacuated" to Kompong Tralach. However, Chams like Hamat from the district were not allowed to return to their native villages. The Cham new people were divided into groups and dispersed to various villages and cooperatives. Hamat was sent to a cooperative called Stung Snguot. (His mother was separated from him and sent elsewhere.) In Stung Snguot there were forty Cham families; the Khmer families included about ten families of local base people.

In August 1976, "all the Chams were executed in Stung Snguot," Hamat says. "Not one family remained. . . . I saw people taken away, whole files of them. . . . If I had not left, I would have died too." Hamat was felicitously transferred to a fishing detail at Longvek, and only returned to Stung Snguot in 1978. He found that even the Cham children there had followed their parents to their deaths. "Dig up the grass, dig up the roots," Hamat remembers the Khmer Rouge saying. He was the only survivor of the forty Cham families.

Sok Sokhun, a Khmer evacuee from Phnom Penh, lived in the same village, Stung Snguot, throughout the DK period. He claims that between September and November 1976, 10,000 Cham and Chinese new people were executed in the sub-district of Ampil Tik in Lower Kompong Tralach District.¹¹³ But Khmers also suffered tragically. Hamat says that of 17,000 new people who arrived in the sub-district in 1975, only 3,000 survived in 1979.

113. Author's interview with Sok Sokhun, Phnom Penh, 10 July 1980.

The neighboring subdistrict of Chhouk Sor experienced a similar disaster even though its population was largely base people. Of a 1970 population of 8,500, only 3,300 survived in 1979. Four thousand of the inhabitants were killed in 1977–78 alone.¹¹⁴ It is important to record the background to this tragedy.

The Khmer Rouge first took over the area in 1970, according to Ka Chu, a local Cham blacksmith who was then forty-five years old. He recalls:

From 1970 to 1972 they used politics, not killing. It was good. . . . The people really believed them. They wanted freedom, happiness and food. . . . The Khmer Rouge said that if we don't struggle, our religion and nation will all disappear. . . . The U.S. imperialists would take our country and abolish our religion and race, turning us into American nationals.

They said that if we don't struggle hard, "be careful or you'll end up like Champa. . . . Now that you have come to live in Kampuchea, you must struggle hard." They said: "Do not follow the example of Champa, which did not struggle. That is why you have no country."

U.S. B-52s carried out bombing raids in the subdistrict in this period. In Chhouk Sor, twenty Chams were killed in the B-52 bombardments, and others were killed and wounded in smaller-scale air raids. It was at the height of the U.S. bombing in June 1973 that the Khmer Rouge cracked down. The local cadres were replaced, and the villages evacuated. Members of Ka Chu's group were sent thirty kilometers into the forest, where all their possessions and labor were collectivized. Starvation began, and continued in 1974 when communal eating was introduced, with "only one pot for the whole village." By 1975–76, the Chams were being forced to eat meals that included pork, on pain of death or withdrawal of the salt ration.

Also in June 1973, religion was abolished, and Cham girls were forced to cut their hair short like boys. Finally, June 1973 also saw the proclamation of a Khmer Rouge plan to the effect that "enemies all have to be smashed, . . . not just the Lon Nol enemy but enemies in the subdistrict instead." The latter were called internal enemies by the Khmer Rouge. As Ka Chu recalls it, "If they asked you something and you said something bad or in protest, you would disappear that day forever."

In 1974 and 1975, all Chams who had previously held positions such as cooperative chief or work team leader, were dismissed from their posts. Ka Chu says: "They lost their rights. Even those Chams who had fought for the Khmer Rouge were withdrawn [from the armed forces] and put on fishing detail. No Chams had freedom or rights then."

Around the same time, the Cham communities were dispersed, scattered over eight or nine subdistricts in Kompong Tralach, in groups of "two, five, or up to twenty families per village," according to Sos Men, another local Cham peasant then in his twenties. "No large groups were allowed," Ka Chu concurs; only twenty to thirty people were left in each Cham village. Sos Men adds:

Therefore from year to year we saw their plans get tighter and tighter, but the people of Chhouk Sor Subdistrict could find no way to avoid their yoke. . . . In January 1974 [we had to work] fourteen hours per day. There was no time to rest between 4 a.m. and 10 p.m., except for eating gruel. People's strength withered. Young people all became old.

Local Muslim leaders began to be killed from 1974 onwards. Sos Men names two victims, Mit and Kop. Ka Chu

adds the name of his *hakkem*, Met, and another dignitary, Ron. They were both killed in 1975 after interrogation about their religion. In 1975, about 500 new people, both Chams and Khmers, arrived from Phnom Penh and Battambang town, and over the next four years about ten *hajis* were executed. Ka Chu claims to have compiled a list of 150 learned men from Chhouk Sor Subdistrict who were killed in the 1970s.

In mid- or late 1976, children were separated from their parents. After their first year of life, babies were placed in jungle centers and fed on gruel and milk. At three years of age they were taken "to study," learning to plant crops, raise dikes, and "not much reading and writing." Sos Men recalls:

After many days, children would miss their parents and family, and run back to play with them. The Khmer Rouge would catch them and beat them. There was no pity at all. Some children were beaten ten or more times for this. Few did not run back [home], because they only got a little gruel to eat and had to work like adults.

However, the hardest years were 1977–78. "They would not let us eat our fill . . . and there was no rest from work." In the planting season ten people were assigned to cover each hectare. If the work was not completed, individual targets were set. "If you could not do that, you were accused of being KGB." It was in this period that 4,000 people were killed in Chhouk Sor Subdistrict.

IV. Conclusion

How does one describe the fate of the Cham and other Muslim people of Kampuchea during the Pol Pot period? Firstly, they obviously suffered a horrific death rate. In those four years their numbers fell from about 250,000 (perhaps more) to about 173,000,¹¹⁵ a statistical loss of at least 77,000, to which must be added at least another 10,000 Chams born during the Democratic Kampuchea period even at an assumed very low population growth rate of 1 percent per year—a third of the previous normal rate. It seems inescapable that over one-third of the Chams, about 90,000 people, perished at the hands of the Pol Pot regime. The scale of this statistical conclusion is certainly corroborated by the many individual accounts presented in this study. It is a scale of human destruction proportionally higher than the estimated death toll among all Kampucheans (over one million dead, out of seven to eight million in 1975).

The question remains whether the Chams were discriminated against or persecuted *for being Chams*, that is, for racial reasons. Democratic Kampuchea claimed to treat all its subjects, irrespective of their race, in similar fashion. And this claim was even accepted by a minority of Chams. Of the forty-six Cham interviewees questioned on the subject, thirty said that Chams were discriminated against during the Democratic Kampuchea period in some way, but sixteen said that Chams had not been. Most of the latter appear to have believed that

114. Author's interview with Ka Chu, Chhouk Sor, 5 September 1980.

115. In December 1982 the Cham population in the People's Republic of Kampuchea was counted at 182,256. (*La Communauté Islamique au Kampuchéa*, pp. 17–18). Assuming a population growth rate of 3 percent per year from 1979 to 1982, the Cham population in January 1979 would have been 161,350, plus 11,700 who had fled abroad. See "Les Cam," by Po Dharma, in *Introduction à la connaissance de la péninsule indochinoise* (Paris: 1983), pp. 127–31. See n. 38 for a discussion of pre-1975 Cham population figures.

Table 3
Some Names of Islamic Intellectuals
Who Perished in Democratic Kampuchea

Name	Higher Education	Country	Position	Place of Death	Date
1. Haji Idris	(15 years)	S. Arabia	<i>Hakkem</i> , Kandal Province	?	Sept. 1978
2. Toun Mohammad Sen	Medina; Al-Azhar University, Cairo, 1963-67	S. Arabia Egypt	Muslim leader in Battambang	Bauk Rotes, Sangker, Battambang (suicide)	1976
3. Toun Srong Yusof	Al-Azhar University, Cairo	Egypt	<i>Hakkem</i> , Kilo No. 7, Phnom Penh	Krahom Kor, Maesor Prachan Prey Veng	mid-1975
4. Toun Imam Suleiman Yusof	Al-Azhar	Egypt		Trea, Krauchhmar, Kompong Cham	1976
5. Toun Issak Hossan	Al-Azhar	Egypt		Kratie	?
6. Toun Em Koban	Al-Azhar	Egypt		?	?
7. To Hakkem Vissa Haji Ismael	Al-Azhar	Egypt	Angkor Ban, Kompong Cham	?	?
8. Toun Imam Sin Asmath		India		?	?
9. Toun Mohammad Ahmad		Malaysia		Speu, Chamcar Loeu, Kompong Cham	1976
10. Toun Imami Musa		Malaysia, India		?	?
11. Toun Son Mohammad	Tinpan University	India		Krauchhmar, Kompong Cham	1976

Source: Author's interviews with Chams in the People's Republic of Kampuchea.

**

special persecution of Chams did occur, but did not consider this to constitute *discrimination*, as it was intended to make them behave exactly like Khmers.

The first point, then, is whether the Cham people were persecuted. The fact that other races were also persecuted is of no relevance. It is, surely, possible to commit multiple genocide. (For example, the Nazi crime against the Jews was no less genocidal for the fact that Gypsies also suffered Nazi genocide.) When asked whether Muslim Chams had been forced to eat pork, forty-one interviewees said yes, and only six said no. Similarly, when asked whether use of the Cham language had been prohibited by the Democratic Kampuchea authorities, thirty-six said yes, and only one said no. When asked whether

Cham populations had been dispersed or broken up, fifty-one interviewees said yes, and none said no. It is obvious that Chams were persecuted, and that one specific target was their cultural distinctiveness. If this was merely the application of the same regulations to all citizens of Democratic Kampuchea, it must be conceded that the all-embracing nature of these regulations and their strict enforcement represented a serious attack on minority groups such as the Cham. The DK abolition of all religions could be called "nondiscriminatory," but it is oppressive nonetheless.

Prevent the continued seating of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge at the United Nations.

Urges the provision of humanitarian and development aid to Kampuchea.

Urges that the U.S., China, and the U.N. should actively seek an internationally monitored political settlement guaranteeing that Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge leadership will not be allowed to return to Kampuchea.



O.A. photo Kampuchea 1988

Prevent the Return of the Killing Fields

JOIN A VIGIL AT THE U.N. IN NEW YORK CITY



F. David Hawk 1979

Wednesday
October 5, 1988
12 Noon-2 PM

VIGIL
Dag Hammarskjöld
Plaza (47th & First Avenue)

MEMORIAL SERVICE
The Ralph Bunche
Memorial (43rd & First Avenue)

Cambodia 1979
Kampuchea 1988



The Name Has Changed But The Need Remains

An Oxfam America flier for a vigil, march, and memorial service at the U.N. in New York City in the fall of 1988 urges the unseating of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge at the U.N., humanitarian and development aid to Kampuchea, and encouragement of the U.S., China, and the U.N. to actively seek an internationally monitored political settlement guaranteeing that Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge leadership will not be allowed to return to Kampuchea. It appears there are at least some who care!

But a strong case can be made that the Chams were not only persecuted, but also discriminated against, that is, *persecuted for being Chams*. There is of course no record of any members of the majority group, the Khmers, being forced to eat pork. Chams were obviously specially supervised in this respect. Secondly, and more importantly, the Khmer language was not prohibited; rather, speakers of other languages, particularly Cham, were forced to communicate only in Khmer. Is this not discrimination? And finally, while Khmer urban communities were dispersed, it cannot be said that most Khmer village populations were. But *all Cham communities, urban or rural, new or base, were dispersed*. And Cham villages were not scattered willy-nilly, but were very deliberately broken up

into small groups of fixed (although regionally varying) numbers of families, and it was ensured that these groups could have no contact with one another. Again the discrimination is evident, for most Khmer village communities were not so dispersed. Had *all* Kampuchea's villages been deliberately dispersed, and had *all* Kampucheans of whatever race been forced to behave in ways they were all equally unaccustomed to, such as to eat *bread* and speak only *English*, only then might one conclude that there was no racial discrimination in DK policies towards the Cham. But there was such discrimination.

We have seen that Chams among the new people (or deportees) evacuated from the cities were not always singled out for harsh treatment *as Chams*. Rather, they received harsh treatment as new people due to their urban origin, apparently irrespective of their race. However, we have also seen how Cham base people (the vast majority of Chams in the country) were deliberately evacuated and dispersed from their villages and demoted to deportee status *because they were Chams*. As Stephen Heder has noted, the deportees "were last on distribution lists, first on execution lists, and had no political rights."¹⁶ For this treatment, Cham base people were deliberately singled out because of their race, and discriminated from ethnic Khmer base people, who conversely were spared such treatment because of their

Table 4
United Nations Voting on the
Kampuchea Question 1980-81
(Muslim Countries)

Against the Seating of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea	Abstentions (or "No Vote")	For the Seating of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Afghanistan 2. Algeria 3. Democratic Yemen 4. Libya 5. Syria 6. Chad 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lebanon 2. Mali 3. Tunisia 4. Tanzania 5. N. Yemen 6. Iran 7. Iraq 8. Jordan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bahrain 2. Bangladesh 3. Djibouti 4. Egypt 5. Indonesia 6. Kuwait 7. Malaysia 8. Maldives 9. Mauritania 10. Morocco 11. Niger 12. Nigeria 13. Oman 14. Pakistan 15. Qatar 16. Saudi Arabia 17. Senegal 18. Sudan 19. Somalia 20. Turkey 21. United Arab Emirates

race. Therefore, there are strong grounds for the case that Democratic Kampuchea pursued a campaign of racial persecution against the Chams.

As previously mentioned, the International Genocide Convention of 1948 defines genocide as various acts such as "killing members of the group" pursued with "an intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such." Now there is no doubt that the Democratic Kampuchea regime intended to destroy the Cham Muslim religious group "as such." Not only were the Cham group dispersed among the Khmer but they were also forbidden, by the threat of force, to practice their Islamic religion. (The fact that Khmers were also forbidden to practice Buddhism is irrelevant to this particular point.) The systematic extermination by the Democratic Kampuchea authorities of Cham community and religious leaders (see tables 1, 2, and 3), let alone the large-scale massacres of tens of thousands of ordinary Chams, are further evidence of the genocidal intent of the regime.

The overthrow of the Democratic Kampuchea regime by the Vietnamese armed forces, and the establishment of the People's Republic of Kampuchea in January 1979, did not bring an end to the Chams' plight. The genocide was stopped, Islam was revived, but like all Kampucheans the Chams have suffered from the international political stalemate that has obtained ever since. In 1979, 1980, and again in 1981, the United Nations Organization decided that the Democratic Kampuchea regime is the so-called legitimate representative of the Kampuchean people. Thus in 1988 DK, an ousted genocidal regime, still occupies Kampuchea's seat in the world forum. No Western nation has opposed DK's tenure of the U.N. seat, and most, including the United States, have voted for it. Muslim countries have only a slightly better record. Six have voted against DK, and eight have abstained, but twenty-one have actually voted in favor of Pol Pot's regime.¹¹⁷ The three categories are set out in table 4.

In 1974, during a different U.N. debate on Kampuchea, Gaffar Peang-Meth made the following comment which still seems relevant today:

Those who know the fate of the Khmer Moslems cannot but wonder what certain Arab delegations were doing at the United Nations last year when they voted in support of the seating of the so-called Sihanouk Government controlled by the Communists. . . . It is high time that the Moslem world react in support of its Moslem brothers.¹¹⁸

If that was true in 1974, it unfortunately also applied in 1988. In 1980, Toun Ibrahim had requested of "the Egyptians and all the Arabs": "Please do not recognize those that made us eat pork, the Pol Pot group."¹¹⁹ This and other similar pleas went largely unanswered.

The survivors of the Cham people are not merely "orphans of genocide." They are also the disinherited of the Muslim world, the "lost children" now of Islamic culture. But like their original earth goddess, Po Ino Nagar, who has survived right up to the present day in the guise first of the Hindu deity Uma, then of the Muslim prophet Eve, and even of the Vietnamese "Black Virgin," the Cham people and their culture in Kampuchea have also survived. ★

116. Stephen R. Heder, *Kampuchean Occupation and Resistance* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1980), p. 6.


117. See Anthony Barnett, "The Pol Pot Fan Club: Still Open for Business," in *Aftermath: The Struggle of Cambodia and Vietnam*, by John Pilger and Anthony Barnett, (New Statesman, London, 1982), pp. 135-41.

118. Peang-Meth, "Islam," p. 255.


119. Toun Ibrahim, interview with the author, Phnom Penh, 19 September 1980.

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