

McMASTER IN CAMBODIA: EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

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THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN DEFIANCE COLLEGE AND THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN CHILDREN'S MERCY FUND

Kenneth Christiansen

The primary partner for Defiance College in the Cambodia learning community has been Sophal Leng Stagg who, along with her husband William Stagg, is co-founder of the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund. Sophal, author of *Hear Me Now: Tragedy in Cambodia*, came to the Defiance College campus in the spring of 2003 to tell the story of how she and her family survived the Pol Pot regime, 1975-79. Sophie was nine years old when the Khmer Rouge came to power. One of their earliest actions was to force everyone living in Cambodia's cities to march into the countryside and survive or die there. Sophie was separated from her family most of the time during the next four years. She and many other children were forced to labor in farming cooperatives. Little food was made available to them and many died. Sophie was one who survived and she has dedicated her life since to doing what she can to improve the lives of Cambodia's children.

The Khmer Rouge regime, a.k.a. "Angkar," attempted to implement a radical agricultural-based society. The leader took the name Pol Pot which

means Brother Number One. Pol Pot had ties to Chairman Mao of the Chinese Communist Cultural Revolution and strongly admired what he perceived to be that revolution's successes. Yet Pol Pot went far beyond the Chinese in the extent to which the Khmer Rouge emptied the cities and executed all of the educated people they could identify. (Short, 298-300)

Published estimates of the number who were executed or died in labor camps range from 740,000 to 3,314,000 people out of a 1975 population of under 8,000,000 (Fawthrop and Jarvis, 3-4). Evidence collected during the visits to these sites indicate the presence of the remains of from 1,386,734 to 2,038,735 people (Fawthrop and Jarvis, 111-2). Civil war continued until 1992. During the civil war period hundreds of thousands of land mines were planted in rural Cambodia – a legacy that continues to kill and maim Cambodians.

In this deluge of killing very few families survived intact. Sophie's family was fortunate to learn early who the Khmer Rouge sought most adamantly to identify and execute. This included all of the teachers, lawyers, doctors, government workers and monks. Anyone who wore glasses was a target. Her father had worked for the government. That meant certain death if the Khmer Rouge found out. So in answer to any questions, he became a taxi driver. Glasses, books and papers were disposed of. By the end of the Khmer Rouge period in 1979, the family members had found each other. They exited the country across the Thai border and became refugees in the United States. (Stagg)

Sophie and her husband, William Stagg, were excellent partners for the McMaster School. Together they had formed the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund (SACMF), a small but vigorous international charity focused on educational and medical needs of children and families in Cambodia. Through SACMF connections, Sophie helped arrange for an exploratory visit to Cambodia by Dr. William Finerty, a member of the Defiance College Board of Trustees and the Advisory Board of the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity.

The schools of Phnom Penh were a primary concern of SACMF, and a McMaster School project was developed by Dr. Jo Ann Burkhardt to address teacher-training needs. Dr. Burkhardt traveled to Cambodia from December 28, 2004, to January 10, 2005, along with Dr. Finerty, two Associate McMaster Fellows, Dr. Kenneth Christiansen (Religion) and Professor Jeffrey Weaner (Social Work), and six student McMaster Scholars, Dennis Andrejko (Visual Art), Stefan Faerber (Graphic Design), Mat Hahn (Christian Education), Lori Smith (Education), Terry Studer



(History/Psychology) and Abby Sumpter (Science). Each had a project that will be described below. Sophie Leng Stagg also accompanied the group as primary guide and translator in Cambodia. Our group received indispensable logistic support inside Cambodia from Sophie Stagg's co-leader of SACMF: Yin Phanny. Phanny and her husband Thong Yu Pang own Cambodia's largest newspaper, the *Koh Santepheap Daily*, or "*Peace Island Daily*." Their daughter and son-in-law, Thong Raingsey and Chea Garuda, both of whom studied in the United States, served as additional translators and cultural guides. The security staff of the newspaper facilitated most of our transportation and provided other services.

The student projects encompassed a wide range of topics. Terry (TJ) Studer focused on mine removal through creating an educational tool for rural children. Abby Sumpter created an information and recruitment brochure for the SACMF to recruit healthcare professionals in the United States. Dennis Andrejko used his artistic talent to portray human suffering in Phnom Penh. Lori Smith and Stefan Faerber worked on a reader's guide and discussion text to accompany *Hear Me Now*. Finally, Mat Hahn worked on a guide for groups and individuals traveling with SACMF that would provide specific information to assist with travel and inter-cultural relations.

THE PHNOM PENH SCHOOL PROJECT

Jo Ann Burkhardt

The goal of this project was to assist the teachers in four public elementary schools (1-6) in Phnom Penh in developing professional capacity and skill. From the time of our initial contacts with Sophie Stagg, she emphasized that one of the biggest needs in Cambodia is for better trained teachers. While the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund could help schools and school children directly in many other ways, additional resources were clearly needed in relation to teacher training. Defiance College faculty and students could provide those resources.

How had this situation come about in Cambodia? There were no schools in the conventional sense in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge era. (There were indoctrination centers that taught why the Khmer Rouge were to be obeyed without question.) Over three-quarters of Cambodia's teachers either were executed, were subjected to working conditions which resulted in their deaths, or fled the country. Included in the death and destruction were Cambodia's college professors and lecturers. None of the professors who remained in Cambodia during the period from 1975-1979 survived (Kiernan, 2004).

Furthermore, the Khmer Rouge destroyed school buildings, scattered libraries and burned books (Kiernan, 2004). It was during this time that over half of the written materials in Khmer, the Cambodian language, were eliminated (Ledgerwood, 2005). The educational heritage of the country was essentially destroyed.

It was important to develop an understanding of the horrific effects of such a history of death and destruction on the state-sponsored school system and, even more importantly, on the teachers themselves. The rebuilding of the education system began with the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge by the Vietnamese army and the establishment of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) in January of 1979 (Kiernan, 2004). The PRK began a restructuring of the educational system but their efforts were hampered by the lack of resources and, most importantly, the lack of teachers. At this time the PRK encouraged almost anyone with any level of education to work as a teacher. These new "teachers" were given short-term training for up to a month but sometimes as little as one week (Ledgerwood, 2005).

Currently, less than 1% of the primary teachers have completed any secondary education. Approximately 60% of these teachers have completed only eight years of the state-sponsored nine year education program. (Sodhy, 2004). According to the literature reviewed, the teachers in the state-sponsored 1-9 education system were and are under-trained and underpaid, earning the equivalent of about US\$20 per month. Many survive by holding other jobs or selling produce to supplant their incomes (Neau, 2003, Sodhy, 2004).

As a result, Nagu (2005, 17) states that the teachers in Cambodia's state-sponsored schools are often "too busy taking on second jobs to concentrate on teaching." Schools also lack physical resources. Only 13% of the 698 secondary schools in Cambodia have electricity (Xinhua News Agency, 2005). These factors combined make the state of education in Cambodia one of the worst in the world (Sodhy, 2004).

The teacher-training project for Phnom Penh was developed as our understanding of the root causes of illiteracy in Cambodia evolved. The original plan was an adaptation of a project developed earlier for the directors of Colegio Shaddai in Chiquimuilla, Guatemala. (See the article later in this *Journal*.)

The teacher-training model developed in Guatemala consisted of the following components. First, a needs assessment was conducted that included an open interview format to ascertain the specific training needs. The school directors gave considerable input to this assessment, and so did many of the teachers. Second, the official state curriculum was obtained and translated into English. Third, observations were conducted by Dr. Burkhardt in the classrooms at the Colegio Shaddai to gather data pertaining to the types of pedagogy employed by the teachers at various grade levels within the school. Fourth, a template was developed to assist teachers with the alignment of the instructional goals from the state curriculum with pedagogy which promoted active learning. The template included an assessment component to help teachers determine if learning had occurred. Fifth, a teacher-training manual was developed based on the assessed needs, the state curriculum, and the skill level of the teachers. Steps four and five of the above began back in Defiance, Ohio, and were completed during a return trip to Colegio Shaddai two months after the first trip.

Our plan in Cambodia was that the local curriculum would be a vital part of the training materials as it had been with the earlier project in

Guatemala. However, attempts at obtaining the state approved (Kingdom of Cambodia) curriculum materials proved unsuccessful.

Based on information obtained from the executive directors of SAMCF, five lessons were developed for students in grades, 2, 4 and 6. The lessons included a learning goal, suggested methodology, materials needed, and an assessment method. These lessons were then translated into Khmer for use in teacher-training sessions.

The teacher-training project was implemented during a ten-day period consisting of five training sessions. The teachers selected from the three Phnom Penh 1-8 schools were organized into one group and arrangements were made for the teachers to meet for the training session at a centrally-located school, Phong Teak. The group of trainees consisted of 20 teachers in grades K-8 with varying degrees of experience teaching in the public schools in Phnom Penh and the surrounding rural areas. Also included in the training was an interpreter as none of the teachers spoke or understood English.

The training consisted of a review and discussion of the local curriculum and existing strategies for helping students to meet the instructional goals. The teachers discussed the grade-level testing program administered by the Kingdom of Cambodia. Increasingly, the daily discussions centered on pedagogy in relation to the lesson plans contained in the training materials. The teachers requested demonstrations on how to teach particular mathematics concepts.

The final day of the training consisted of an assessment of the training program. The method of the assessment was a focus group consisting of eight of the 20 teacher participants. The members of the focus group responded to questions posed in the format of an informal interview. In reviewing the data from the focus group, it became apparent that the teachers had not had the opportunity prior to these training sessions to meet informally with teachers from other schools within a format of professional exchange and discussion of common concerns and issues. They considered this one of the most valuable aspects of the training and a unique experience. They reported that they received valuable information from other teachers as well as from the training leaders.

The data also suggested that the teachers had not been familiar with pedagogy other than a form of direct instruction in which the teacher tells the students information and the students copy information from the black

board. In addition a few teachers indicated that they utilized discussion on a limited basis. The teachers were very curious about other methods of instruction and about how children learn and why certain children appear unable to learn.

The teachers also articulated barriers to delivering appropriate instruction. Although it was communicated not as a complaint but rather as a statement of fact, it was clear that the teachers lacked supplies and materials to assist with instruction. As one teacher stated, "We would like to teach more about geography other than the geography of Phnom Penh, but we have no globes or maps."

In conclusion, the teacher training project during December 2004 - January 2005 was essentially limited to an onsite component in Phnom Penh. The data gathered from the focus group at the end of that project has served as a guide for our preparation for the second series of training workshops for the teachers of Phnom Penh in December 2005 - January 2006. The plans for those workshops include providing information to the teachers regarding learning theory, reasons why children appear not to learn, appropriate pedagogy, and assessment strategies.



POETRY IN RESPONSE TO THE CAMBODIAN CULTURAL ENCOUNTER

Kenneth Christiansen

The McMaster School always works in partnership with others. Many of the greatest strengths of our projects have come from the partners. Nevertheless, students engaging in the combination of service and research for the first time often start with the perception that they are bringing their strengths to people who are fundamentally weaker. Years ago, I brought similar pre-conceptions.

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH PART I: WHO IS STRONG?

Years ago
I thought that I was strong
And the other weak
When I walked on poverty's streets.

Some even said that I was.
Quite an illusion.

What strength does it take
To grow up in a well protected home
Well supplied with needed resources
Solid walls and doors
Furnace for heat in winter
Fans for cooling in summer
Fresh, canned and frozen food
Mechanized servants to do laundry and dishes
Electricity, hot and cold running water always there
Comfortable beds for sleeping
Clocks to wake on time
Cars or buses to get to work
Efficient police and courts to deter crime
Schools and libraries to learn and grow
Designer fields for sport and play
Friends with similar "strengths"

Looking back
Or forward
It is easy to see

The "strengths" were not mine.
They belonged more to the world I lived in.

Some say the structure of the world around you doesn't matter,
that strength is all an individual thing.

Anyone who thinks about it knows better.

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH PART II: REAL STRENGTH

Visiting remote parts of Cambodia
We saw real strength
People who make lives
Out of almost nothing.

Risking destruction to
grow food in fields
shared with live mines and
bombs left from previous wars.

Eating whatever is nourishing
and being thankful for it.
Tendons, feet, fish heads for protein,
Not wasting any part of the critter.
Insects offer the taste of life when you are hungry enough.
Bananas, pineapple, mangoes and coconut gathered in the wild
provide sweet vitamins and anti-oxidants when available.
Fish sauce, tamarind and chilies can bring joy.
And then there is rice, always rice.

What does it mean to live
in the shadow of the Killing Fields?
Trying not to remember the past.
Living the Buddhist message as best one can.
Suppressing desire for what cannot be.
Forgiving the others who dropped the bombs or planted the
mines.
Forgiving the neighbor who helped run the Killing Fields.
Drinking water we could not drink.
Working hard to make life better.
Hoping for the future.

Hard work and strong commitment
In a difficult environment
May not produce an equal result.
But it does demonstrate
Extreme strength!

Our visit to Battambang discussed in the next article included a stop at the home of Mean Yon. Sophie had taken Yon under her wing when both were separated from their families and taken to a work camp during the Khmer Rouge era. Sophie was nine and Yon was five when they met and became friends for life (See the poem on the next page).



THE HOME OF MEAN YON NEAR BATTAMBANG. SOPHIE LENG STAGG, FAR LEFT;
MEAN YON, SECOND FROM THE RIGHT.

FRIENDS FOR LIFE

Two Survivors of the Cambodian Holocaust
 "The Killing Fields"
 Three Years Eight Months
 Starting at Ages 9 and 5
 Herded like cattle from home
 Many miles walking
 Separated from family
 Forced Labor
 Eating insects for protein
 Supporting each other

One now lives in Florida
 One in Battambang
 One tends an International Organization
 One tends a rice paddy
 Both Care for Others
 Both Strong Women
 Friends

INTRODUCTION TO THE MINE REMOVAL EDUCATION PROJECT

Kenneth Christiansen

The project of McMaster Scholar Terry (TJ) Studer involved researching mine removal and creating educational materials for children in rural Cambodia. Hundreds of thousands of live mines are still present in the Cambodian countryside, a remnant of the Cambodian Civil Wars. Live unexploded bombs dropped by B-52 bombers during the Viet Nam war are also a present hazard.

In advance of our trip, TJ had corresponded and met with a UNICEF official based in the United States and corresponded by email with UNICEF officials in Cambodia and officials of the Cambodian Mine Action Center (CMAC). The latter group is the primary mine-removal agency in Cambodia. Onsite in Cambodia, we all spent about an hour with two UNICEF officials and about a day and a half with CMAC personnel. Officials from CMAC informed us that in Cambodia alone about 750 to 850 mine explosion accidents happen each year, many of them fatal, in spite of continuing mine removal efforts.

Our entire learning community traveled to Battambang, a regional city about five hours by bus from Phnom Penh. Our CMAC guides brought us to three locations where mine removal had recently taken place or was currently taking place. The first was a village where four people had died and eight more had been injured by live mines. CMAC officials explained the general procedures used to conduct mine-awareness training and to clear an area of mines.

At the second stop we met two dogs trained to smell the fumes emitted by long-buried TNT. When they signal the scent of TNT, mine-removal personnel move in with metal detectors, dirt removal tools, and explosives with which to blow up any live mines that are found.

The third stop was a rural village that had been abandoned during the battles of the civil war. Many mines were buried in the area and recently there had been several mine accidents as people needing a place to live moved in and began working the land again. A team of about 26 had begun working the area in December 2004 and hoped to finish their work some time in May of 2005. It was only January 5 when we visited and already six live mines had been found in the village area. Two of the live mines were found after the CMAC team had learned of our visit, so they saved those two for us to see partially buried in the ground. Then, while we stood at a safe distance (about 100 yards), they blew them up.

LANDMINE RESEARCH AND PAMPHLET CREATION

Terry Studer

There are many things being done worldwide to deal with the landmine crisis. The situation in Cambodia is one example of how landmines can devastate a population. Despite international efforts casualties in Cambodia are still at staggering levels. Over just the first eight months of 2004 there were 671 landmine related casualties (Landmine Report 2004). Landmine casualty numbers have been declining but not at a very rapid pace. The mission to deal with this problem falls under the umbrella term of Mine Action, which encompasses several categories such as: Humanitarian De-Mining; Stockpile Destruction; Victim Assistance; and Mine Risk Education (Guide 2004). Humanitarian De-Mining is the actual process of clearing the landmines to make the previously contaminated land inhabitable. Stockpile Destruction is the demolition of mines that are unused and being stored for sale or distribution. Victim Assistance is

charged with medical care of victims, both physically and psychologically, and also trying to help victims re-enter their normal lives. Mine Risk Education is defined by the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) as: "a process that promotes the adoption of safer behaviors by at-risk groups, and which provides the links between affected communities, other mine action components, and other sectors." (Guide, 79)

Currently there are several organizations working in Mine Risk Education. Among them is the Cambodian Mine Action Center, the largest Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) working on this problem in Cambodia. While CMAC is the primary contributor to Mine Risk Education, only about 1% of their \$12 million annual budget goes for mine awareness (Landmine Monitor-Cambodia 1999). Through interviews I found that approximately 90% of Cambodians had received some sort of Mine Risk Education (Chaya 2005).

The problem is not education; it is much more complex than that. For adults, landmines are something that has to be dealt with for survival. Some adults dig out landmines and disarm them to sell them for scrap metal to raise money to live. This of course is a very dangerous undertaking, especially with no formal de-mining training.

Another way that adults knowingly encounter mines is through subsistence farming. Much of the rural farmland in Cambodia, especially in the western provinces bordering Thailand, is heavily saturated with mines. Farmers basically have two choices. They can not farm and not be able to feed their families, or they can take their chances with the landmines. Most often they choose the latter.

For children the primary cause of landmine accidents is through carelessness or forgetfulness. Kids being kids will play or walk in areas that they should not. This was key information I used to develop the landmine awareness pamphlet. Targeting the adults would have been extremely difficult with the resources I have available since it would require a change in the overall economic situation. The children however, just need a reminder of what they already know. The literacy rates for children were relatively high, almost 70%, and so text was used along with pictures (CIA World Fact Book 2004).

PROCEDURES FOR DEVELOPING THE PAMPHLET

In preparing the pamphlet, it was valuable to see Mine Action in progress, specifically Mine Risk Education, and to personally ask questions

suggested by the literature review to individuals working in the field of Mine Action. This step helped me to gain an understanding of the procedures through direct observation.

The last step came after we returned from Cambodia. I developed a draft pamphlet using Mine Risk Education creation guidelines put forth by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian De-mining. This draft was then taken to several graphic design experts in order to help me make the material most appealing to the audience of children. The pamphlet then was presented for approval to McMaster Fellows from the Cambodia trip and the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund (SACMF). Following this, the final changes were made and the finished product was sent to SACMF for translation, printing, and distribution.

FRONT PAGE OF MINE EDUCATION PAMPHLET CREATED BY TERRY STUDER
(Final wording will be in the Khmer language.)

Beware of minefields



Mines could be near your home



Stay on paths



Beware of open fields

EXPLORATIONS OF CAMBODIAN BUDDHIST PRACTICES

Kenneth Christiansen

The story of the lotus flower is a good entry point for understanding Cambodian Buddhism (and Buddhism elsewhere in Southeast Asia). The lotus grows in very dirty water. It roots in the muck on the bottom. It pushes its way past debris and obstacles as it moves toward the surface. Then it blossoms into a most beautiful flower.



The symbol of the lotus flower and actual lotus blossoms grace major temples in Cambodia. As an object of meditation, the lotus gives people hope as they deal with the detritus and obstacles in their own lives. The lotus serves as a reminder of the ephemeral nature of life, and of the possibility of hope and beauty in our lives if we gently persist.

The story reinforces the First Noble Truth of Buddhism, that suffering is a part of all of life. The experience of Cambodians from the Viet Nam War to the present has certainly reinforced that part of the Buddhist message. Accepting what you cannot change and doing whatever good you can has been a healing prescription for many in Cambodia and elsewhere.

As Sophal Leng Stagg put it, "We believe in reincarnation. So that when we give, when we do good deeds, the only deed that follows us to the next lifetime is the goodness that we accomplish in this lifetime. So if this lifetime you do bad things, you never give anything, next lifetime you will not be getting anything. If we give during this lifetime, it is the only thing you can take with you to the next lifetime. Not the jewelry. Not the beauty, or anything like that." (digital recording 1/3/05).

We encountered physical manifestations of Buddhist religion everywhere we went in Cambodia. Most ubiquitous were the "Spirit Houses" that seemed to adorn every family dwelling or business. These devotional centers ranged from small and humble to very elaborate. They serve as constant reminders of the transitory nature of life and the need to focus one's thoughts and actions.



SPIRIT HOUSE AT
AN UPGRADE RESTAURANT



SPIRIT HOUSE ON A POOR
FAMILY'S PORCH

Cambodia practices Theravada Buddhism, a form of the religion wherein Monks live an intensely religious life and the responsibility of others are much less formalized. One obligation of non-monks is to offer food to the monks in the morning, which is the only time of day they are allowed to eat. The monks in return offer blessings to the givers.

During our visit to the Bret Eign Temple where Sophie Leng Stagg's grandmother is buried, we learned that the temple was involved in a major project: the building of a crematory to aid poor people in their care for the dead. We donated \$50 toward the project. In turn we were given a service of blessing led by the head monk. About ten other monks were present who lived in the adjacent monastery and belonged to the *sanga* associated with the temple. Twenty or so local residents who had come to the temple for Buddha Day (every tenth day) also joined in.

After touring the adjacent cemetery and the site where the crematory was under construction, two Defiance College students asked about getting their heads shaved just like the monks. They were offered the chance to be fully ordained as monks for a day, entitled to wear the saffron robes, if they were willing to also have their eyebrows shaved. They settled for just the hair.

According to Harris 2005, the Buddhist community (*sangha*) has for centuries been the only institution with broad and deeply rooted levels of

support in all geographical areas of Cambodia (230). For this reason it has played a large role in nearly every governmental period since the reign of Jayavarman VII (r. 1181 - c.1220), the great builder of the Angkor temple complex.

Jayavarman VII stressed Mahayana Buddhism, the less institutionalized and more varied form of the religion. Not long after his death the Theravada form that emphasizes the role of monks took hold (Harris, 226). Monasteries and temple complexes multiplied. Monasteries were centers of literary development. However, the material upon which the monks would copy scripture and other writings was typically palm leaves which have not proved durable over the centuries, particularly in the warm and often humid climate of Cambodia. Additionally, it was customary to burn "old manuscripts on the funeral pyres of ecclesiastical dignitaries as a merit-making activity" (Harris, 82).

The religious establishment also organized the education of the greater populace. "Pagoda schools" were a traditional form of education for centuries. The curriculum was not set, but typically included the memorization of helpful passages from scripture and practical arts like carpentry (Harris, 124).

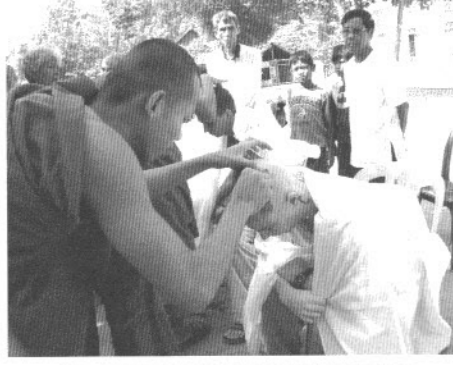
During the French Protectorate (1863-1953), Cambodian educational activities became more and more secular. Between 1908 and 1911, Pagoda schools were ordered to "cultivate the minds" of young students, not just have the youth memorize religious precepts. Parents of boys over eight who were not in school could be fined (Harris, 125).

As the 20th Century progressed, state-controlled secular education became much more prevalent. A few universities were established. Subjects taught increasingly resembled the full curriculum of schools in Europe. By the 1950s and 60s strong attention was also given to the education of girls (Harris, 150-1).

During the time of the Khmer Rouge over 25,000 Buddhist monks were intentionally killed out of a population of about 50,000. A report also asserts that many others died of starvation and disease (Fawthrop and Jarvis, 15). One study examined a specific group of 2,680 Buddhist monks from eight of Cambodia's 3,000 monasteries that existed before the Khmer Rouge era and found that only 70 still survived in 1979. Official figures suggest that only 12 monks remained in robes at the end of the Khmer Rouge era (Harris, 179).



THE HEAD MONK LEADING
BLESSING SERVICE.



SHAVING OF THE HEADS IN PROGRESS!

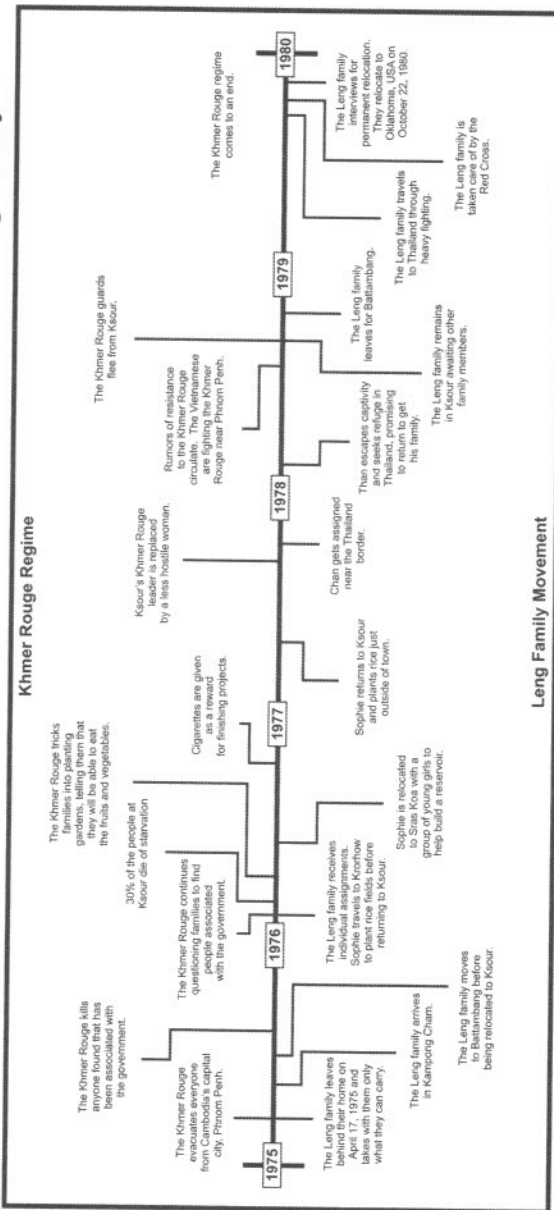
Nonetheless, the ethos of Buddhist monastic thought pervaded Khmer Rouge values. The moral rules laid down by Khmer Rouge, the “Angkar Commandments,” and revolutionary slogans endorsed typically Buddhist ascetic attitudes. Examples of their slogans include: “Physical beauty is an obstacle to the will to struggle” and “Comrade, don’t touch women” (Harris, 182).

According to Harris, the recovery of organized Buddhism after the Khmer Rouge was slow largely because of the destruction that had taken place. Nonetheless, the new regime, backed by the Vietnamese liberators, recognized the need to be seen as legitimate by the Buddhist monastic orders. While some tensions remained between traditional and modernizing elements within the Buddhist orders, the role of Buddhism in the recreation of Cambodian culture was never in question (Harris, 29-230).

A TIMELINE TO ACCOMPANY *HEAR ME NOW: TRAGEDY IN CAMBODIA* BY SOPHAL LENG STAGG

Stefan Faerber

Activity of the Khmer Rouge Regime and Movement of the Leng Family



Other Important Dates:

- 1983 - Sophie Leng and William Staggs are married
- 1997 - Sophie and Bill found the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund
- 1998 - Pol Pot, the leader of the Khmer Rouge regime, dies.



MEETING MEDICAL NEEDS IN CAMBODIA

Abby Sumpter

Traveling to Cambodia through the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity was an experience that I hope impacted those I met as much as it impacted my life. The people of Cambodia have a tragic history that has led to many health care concerns for the general population. There is little access to medical supplies, doctors are poorly trained, and the hospitals that do exist are hardly a place to regain health.

With these factors in mind I set out to create a pamphlet for the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund that would help students involved in the SACMF address the medical needs of the Cambodian people. I conducted preliminary research before leaving for Cambodia so I would know as much as possible about their major healthcare concerns. One of the major areas that I thought I could be of help was in general sanitary practices. With help from a fifth grade class in the United States I was able to collect 125 pounds of soap and medical supplies to take with me to Cambodia.

While in Cambodia we distributed those supplies at the Giving Ceremony for children of schools assisted by the SACMF, and to women at the Women's Crisis Center. We visited a hospital where numerous additional

needs were determined. Once home I created the pamphlet, the first page of which is shown below. This pamphlet will be distributed in the United States to help raise money and supplies for the hospitals in Phnom Penh. These supplies will be distributed through the Southeast Asian Children's Mercy Fund.

SACMF

Southeast Asian Children's
Mercy Fund



*Bringing Medical
Relief to the
Children and People
of Cambodia*

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