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Chad Raymond

Salve Regina University, chad.raymond@salve.edu

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REGIONAL GEOGRAPHIC INFLUENCE ON TWO KHMER POLITIES

By Chad Raymond*

This paper examines the effects of Cambodian geography in two Khmer polities: Funan, an empire that occupied the southeastern portions of modern-day Cambodia and Vietnam during the early centuries A.D., and Democratic Kampuchea, a Cambodian state that existed from April 17, 1975, until the Vietnamese invasion of December 25, 1978. The terms "Cambodia" and the alternative English transliteration "Kampuchea" refer to the modern Southeast Asian state located between Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam, while "Khmer" is used to denote the language, culture, and nation of the people who are ruled by that state.

The territory of modern Cambodia can be thought of as a shallow saucer with a broken rim on the lower right or southeast side.¹ The Cardamom mountains along Cambodia's southwestern coast form a barrier with the ocean while the Dangrek mountains along Cambodia's northern border separate the country from the Khorat plateau of Thailand. Highlands are located in Cambodia's extreme northeast. Most of Cambodia's interior is flat. The Mekong river, which enters Cambodia from the north, traverses an alluvial plain in Cambodia's southeast before entering Vietnam to eventually empty into the South China Sea.

GEOGRAPHY AND MYTH OF FUNAN

Funan is the name applied by Chinese writers to the first historically documented Khmer polity. Funan consisted of a network of commercial centers that stretched from the Malay peninsula in the west to the Mekong delta in the east during the first to the seventh centuries A.D.² Funan's existence is known primarily from Chinese accounts written from the third to the sixth centuries A.D. and from archeological studies. Archeologists have

*Assistant Professor, Political Science, Gardner-Webb University, Boiling Springs, NC 20817. Professor Raymond's main research interests are: Economic Development, non-Western politics, and Southeast Asia.

located brick walls, pottery, and precious metal artifacts in several locations in southeastern Cambodia and in southern Vietnam. These discoveries, along with a large canal network that is believed to have linked the ancient settlement of Angkor Borei with more coastal settlement sites,³ indicate a high degree of political organization. The archeological evidence of Funan's scope is supported by Chinese texts that describe Funan as a maritime empire with settlements containing houses raised on stilts. According to these texts, the people of Funan cultivated rice and sent missions to China with tribute of gold, silver, ivory, and exotic animals.⁴ Buddhist artifacts were also exchanged between Funan and the Liang dynasty of southern China.⁵

The Chinese texts also recount the mythological origins of Funan as the land of the Khmer people. The earliest known account of this myth was recorded by the Chinese official Kang Tai, who traveled to Funan in the middle of the third century A.D. A tenth-century history of Kang Tai's journey states that he learned that the original sovereign of Funan was a woman named Liu-ye. A man named Hun-tian – a Chinese transcription of the name Kaundinya – from the land of Mo-fu dreamt that a god gave him a bow and asked him to take to the sea. The next day, Hun-tian discovered a bow in a temple devoted to the god, and he boarded a ship that sailed to Funan. Liu-ye attempted to attack and plunder Hun-tian's ship, but "Hun-tian raised his bow and shot an arrow which pierced through the queen's boat from one side to the other. The queen was overtaken by fear and submitted to him." Hun-tian then ruled over the country of Funan.⁶ A similar account is contained in the *History of the Chin*, compiled in the first half of the seventh century A.D.⁷

The Chinese texts that refer to the Khmer foundation myth are generally regarded as chronologically accurate, but they concentrate on China's diplomatic and commercial relations, making them a discontinuous and biased historical record;⁸ however, Chinese accounts of the myth do contain references to names found on stone inscriptions dated prior to 1000 A.D. An inscription dated 657 A.D. at the Champa site of Mi Son in Vietnam describes a warrior named Kaundinya starting a dynasty with Soma, the daughter of the king of the *naga* serpent gods.⁹ The Baksei Chamkrong inscription outside of Angkor Thom, dated 947 A.D., describes a dynastic line originating from "from Sri-Kaundinya and the daughter of Soma."¹⁰

Similar versions of the same myth also appear in modern Cambodian folklore. One version states that a man named Preah Thaong arrived by ship at an island marked by a giant *thlok*, a tree that is native to Cambodia. On the island Preah Thaong discovered the subterranean home of the *nagas*, where he met the king's daughter, Neang Neak, whom he married with her father's

blessing. The couple returned to the land of men, and the *naga* king drained waters surrounding the island, bestowing the name of Kampuca Thipdei upon the new realm, a title that in Sanskrit means "king of Kambuja" (*kambujadhipati*).¹¹ Preah Thaong's wife was impregnated by the god Indra, and she gave birth to a son named Ket Mala who assumed the throne and established a dynasty. In some variants of the story, Preah Thaong encountered the *naga* princess on the shore of the ocean.

Another version of the myth from Cambodian folklore states that Preah Thaong arrived at the land of the *thlok* tree only to find it under the rule of a Cham king. Through trickery and war Preah Thaong overthrew the Cham king and gained the throne. In some variations of this story, the Cham king retreated to Champassak in modern-day Laos, where he gathered a Laotian army and forced Preah Thaong to retreat. Preah Thaong then counter-attacked and besieged the Cham king. Through the intercession of Cham mandarins, the Cham king agreed to divide his kingdom, and Preah Thaong was granted "the place of the *thlok* tree."¹²

Royal Cambodian annals that date at least to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contain similar explanations for the origin of the Khmer. One story in the annals identifies Preah Thaong as an exiled son of a foreign king and credits him with defeating the native king who had ruled the land of the *thlok*. Upon his victory, Preah Thaong married a *naga* princess, and the king of the *agas* created a kingdom called Kambuja for Preah Thaong by swallowing the sea.¹³ A variation on this account, also found in the annals, describes Kambu Svayambhuva, the king of a land called Aryadesa, who wandered in sorrow through a land of sand and rock after the death of his wife. Kambu stumbled upon a cave, entered it, and discovered the *naga* underworld. Kambu married the daughter of the *naga* king, who turned the desert into a beautiful land that became known as Kambuja.¹⁴

The Khmer origin myth is remarkably consistent over many sources and time periods, and it reflects significant geographic influences on the early Khmer polity of Funan. In the myth, a man traveling by sea indicates a coastal area, and his arrival at a place inundated by water where serpent gods control floods and fertility suggests that agriculture in this location depended on the floodwaters brought by the annual monsoon. A complex society like Funan, with its high population densities, ceramic and metallurgical technology, and a hierarchical social structure, would have required food-surplus rice agriculture.¹⁵ Van Liere believes that surplus food production first arose in the region approximately two thousand years ago in the flood-prone alluvial plains of the lower Mekong river, near the coast of the South China Sea, with the use of broadcast rice. Rice production further inland to the north and west

was avoided until the eighth century A.D. because of the effort required to clear densely vegetated interior lowland forests.¹⁶ Even today Cambodia's zones of productive agriculture are restricted to lowland areas, where flooding maintains soil fertility but makes careful control of water for banded-field irrigation difficult.¹⁷

The ability of the Khmer between two thousand and fifteen hundred years ago to produce a surplus of food in the alluvial plain of the Mekong made it the most important location of early Khmer settlement and permitted the development of a complex society like Funan. Inscriptions dated prior to 1,000 A.D. indeed indicate a concentration of Khmer in this area – “the modern provinces of Takeo, Prei Veng, Kompong Speu, and Kampot, with an extension northward along the Mekong through Kompong Cham *as far as* Kratie.”¹⁸

Versions of the Khmer origin myth that discuss water covering the land, the defeat of a Cham king, and the *thlok* tree point to a geographic factor that has been important in more modern Khmer polities. The flat alluvial plain of the Mekong extends to the ocean and contains numerous navigable waterways. Hence the heartland of Funan coincidentally formed the route used by foreign armies to repeatedly invade central and northwestern Cambodia from approximately 1,000 A.D. until French colonization in the late 1800s. For example, in 1177 A.D. a Cham fleet sailed from the coast up the Mekong to the northern shore of the Tonle Sap, defeated and executed the Khmer king, and sacked Angkor.¹⁹ Following their obliteration of the Cham empire in the seventeenth century, the Vietnamese began annexing Khmer lands in the Mekong delta, a process which culminated in two occupations of Phnom Penh by the Vietnamese in the first half of the nineteenth century.²⁰

The territory where the Khmer first developed surplus agricultural production, an organized system of political authority,²¹ and trade relations with other states was thus the same area most in danger of conquest by foreign invaders. The frequency of foreign invasion along this route gave rise to the belief among ordinary Khmers that they are constantly threatened by outsiders, and that harmony between Khmers must be maintained if Khmer society is to withstand foreign aggression.

Ordinary Khmer regard harmony in interpersonal relationships as the primary means of avoiding conflict within society at large,²² but the need for harmony does not extend to what Edwards²³ labels the cultural “other.” Khmer political elites have often described the Khmer people “from the outside in, manipulating negative imagery of what Cambodia is *not* . . . to project an assumed image of what Cambodia *is*.” The traditional conceptualization of the non-Khmer as a threat has given Cambodian rulers the latitude

to justify "policies designed mainly to perpetuate their own personal rule" as "a dedication to national interests."²⁴ Simultaneously Cambodian rulers are invested with the authority to defend the Khmer against hostile external forces, making ordinary Khmer obligated to accede to the dictates of their rulers; to do otherwise would be to act against the Khmer nation and for those who seek to destroy it.

SOUTHEASTERN CAMBODIA IN DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA

The policies pursued by the leadership of the state of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) between April 17, 1975, and December 25, 1978, have been called an implementation of "Mao's plan with Stalin's methods," "racialist" and "totalitarian,"²⁵ and a "utopian program of total and rapid social transformation."²⁶ The decision-making process that lay behind these policies is obscure. Only approximately a dozen official DK policy documents written by DK leaders are known to have survived, and no high-ranking figure has written an official history of the regime or its leaders.

Pol Pot, leader of Democratic Kampuchea, declared in an April 1978 interview that the DK's objective was to create "a new culture based on national traits, national tradition, and progressive qualities."²⁷ DK ideology emphasized territoriality, sovereignty, and the protection of the Khmer nation against the perceived ideological and physical aggression of the non-Khmer. As Pol Pot said in August 1976,

[a]t the present time nothing captivates our attention as much as the acts of invasion [or] violation of one's sovereignty . . . Both enemies, the West and the East, try to find opportunities to attack us.²⁸

Making the Khmer nation capable of repelling threats from without required a restructuring of Cambodian society from within. Cambodians thus had to accept without question the state's absolute authority to ensure that the revolution proceeded. Influences that were deemed alien by the DK leadership were purged from the body politic, and forced labor became a tool to produce "the rectification of the self and subordination of the individual into a collective unit."²⁹ The revolution would by necessity also "defend, strengthen, and enlarge" the DK regime itself.³⁰

In the minds of the DK leadership, the DK's "capacity to defend the country" against aggression could only be assured by "economic independ

ence."³¹ As detailed in the DK's Four Year Plan for 1977-1980 that was drafted in the summer of 1976, the DK chose a strategy of rapidly transforming peasant agriculture in order to overcome the country's weak industrial and technological base. To create "plentiful agricultural capital" over the period covered by the Plan, the Standing Committee of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) expected the Cambodia's average rice yield to increase to 3 metric tons per hectare by the beginning of 1977 and the country's rice production to double between 1977 and 1980. This represented an immediate doubling of the country's average rice yield.³² DK leaders believed that "gaining mastery" over the "water problem" was critical to increasing agricultural production, and hundreds of thousands of Cambodians spent the DK period digging ditches and building dikes in water control construction projects.³³ Foreign economic assistance was not needed to improve agricultural yields, DK leaders believed, because of the special characteristics of the Cambodian revolution, nor was it wanted because of its political dangers.

As noted by Chandler et al.,³⁴ the Northwest Zone, composed of portions of Battambang and Pursat provinces north and west of the Tonle Sap, was singled out in the Four Year Plan as the area slated for the greatest expansion of agricultural production. The DK leadership expected 140,000 hectares of previously uncultivated land in the Northwest Zone to produce 3 tons of rice per hectare by 1980, a target that would enable the Northwest to provide 60 percent of Cambodia's rice exports. While other areas of Cambodia were expected to supply 20 percent of the export value of their harvests to the central authorities, the Northwest was ordered to turn over 50 percent of its harvests by value.

The province of Battambang in the Northwest Zone had in fact been the most agriculturally productive region of Cambodia since colonization by the French in the nineteenth century. In terms of population, when the DK came to power in 1975, the Northwest also enjoyed higher land per capita and rice production per capita ratios than the more densely populated East Zone (composed of parts of the provinces of Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, Kompong Cham, and Kratie) and Southwest Zone (portions of Kampot, Kompong Speu, Takeo, and Kandal provinces).³⁵ The East and the Southwest Zones contained the provinces located on the alluvial plain of the Mekong watershed.

The problem facing DK leaders was to increase rice production and yields in the Northwest Zone without a ready supply chemical fertilizers, agricultural machinery, or other capital-intensive inputs. DK leaders implemented an ingenious if brutal solution to the problem: sending additional labor to the Northwest Zone by relocating not only many of

Cambodia's million-plus urban residents but also people from rural southeastern Cambodia.

The forced relocation of large numbers of people from southeastern Cambodia not only increased the amount of labor available in the Northwest Zone, but it also served the DK's wider ideological agenda. Pre-1975 Cambodian society had to be overturned, class enemies had to be destroyed, and the DK's hold on power had to be solidified. Ordinary Cambodians had to "build and defend Cambodia" while "standing guard against widespread but poorly defined enemies who threatened the Organization [the CPK] and its revolution."³⁶ Southeastern Cambodia, especially the provinces located in the East Zone, was the area of Cambodia believed by DK leaders to be most in danger of foreign aggression. DK leaders believed that the area contained the greatest numbers of civilians and CPK members whose commitment to the DK – and thus to the Khmer nation – were suspect. These individuals had to be removed from southeastern Cambodia – in one way or another – for security reasons. Notably the first DK district administration in the East Zone brought under greater control by the central DK leadership was Chantrea in 1975-76. Chantrea is the only area of Svay Rieng province and the East Zone surrounded on three sides by the territory of Vietnam.³⁷

According to Kiernan, 800,000 people were relocated under the orders of the DK leadership to the Northwest Zone between April 1975 and the middle of mid-1976.³⁸ The majority of those moved to the Northwest seem to be civilians from the Southwest and East Zones – Cambodia's southeasternmost provinces. Included in these evacuees was a large group of Chams from the East Zone. Chams, being non-Khmer, were, by the DK's definition, enemies and as Kiernan³⁹ has argued convincingly, the victims of genocide under the DK.

Vickery,⁴⁰ in contrast, argues against the view that "the Chams were as a group a special object of extermination policy" and that evidence indicates that "there was never a central policy to destroy them . . . they were not the object of any special attention by the authorities and that they survived in the same proportion as other people." The death rate of Chams under the DK does not alter the fact that Chams were deliberately relocated away from the East early in the regime on the orders of the central DK leadership – against the wishes of DK cadres in the North and Northwest Zone. An official telegram to Pol Pot on 30 November 1975 states:

According to the final decision of the meeting [between regional and district authorities in the Eastern Zone], we must not send the Islamic People [the Chams] to Kracheh

[Kratie] Province [in Cambodia's southeast]. The Northwest and the North [Zones] have to accept them, so that we can *keep them away from the Mekong River to help ease the atmosphere* ... In principle, the Zone withdrew fifty thousand people to the North. More than one hundred thousand *additional* Islamic people remain in the Eastern Zone . . . But *we will not have enough people to reach the one hundred fifty thousand* [slated for relocation out of the Eastern Zone], if the Northern Zone will not accept the Islamic people.⁴¹

Although executions on a mass scale did not begin in the East until 1978, East Zone cadres apparently began to be arrested as early as 1975, and by 1976 cadres from the Southwest Zone had begun to implement a centrally-directed plan "to sweep all Eastern cadres out of the system."⁴² The decision to "purify" the East was thus a decision reached before the beginning of execution campaign of 1978.

Heightening fears among DK leaders that southeastern Cambodia might fall victim to foreign invasion were increasingly frequent military clashes with Vietnam. Vietnamese forces had penetrated more than 20 miles into Cambodian territory in 1977, and residents of the East Zone retreated into Vietnam as its army pulled back. For this event to occur, the DK leadership believed, the area had to be rife with traitors, and these traitors had to be eliminated if the border was to be secured. If traitors were not exposed and defeated by the DK, they would eventually "rot society, rot the Party, and rot the army,"⁴³ leading to the destruction of the Khmer.

The killing campaign instituted by the DK in the East Zone in 1978 targeted all remaining East Zone cadres, urban evacuees, and in particular anyone in the Zone believed to be ethnic Vietnamese or a supporter of Vietnam – anyone labeled as having a "Khmer body but a Vietnamese mind." During the 1978 purge between 100,000 and 250,000 men, women, and children from the East Zone were killed.⁴⁴

The importance placed by DK leaders on "purifying" southeastern Cambodia near Vietnam rather than Cambodia's northwestern interior is further demonstrated by the pattern of mass graves that have been mapped by researchers participating in the Cambodian Genocide Program (CGP) at Yale University. In Cambodia's southeastern provinces (Kompong Cham, Kompong Speu, Kampot, Kandal, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, Takeo, and the city of Phnom Penh) – the provinces that occupy the flat alluvial plain of the Mekong – approximately 12,000 mass gravesites were identified, composing

almost two-thirds of all mass grave sites that had been located in Cambodia by July of 2001. Although the precise number of people killed at these locations is unknown, evidence indicates that these are in fact “mass” graves filled with the bodies of people executed by the Khmer Rouge.

At most of the sites containing mass graves, CGP researchers also identified Khmer Rouge-era prison facilities at or near the mass grave site. This fact, along with witness testimony and records of the Khmer Rouge security services obtained by the CGP, leads us to conclude that most mass graves hold the remains of victims of centrally-organized violence, rather than of other causes of death such as disease or starvation.⁴⁵

For example, documents record that 94,000 people were killed at a single site in Svay Rieng province.⁴⁶

Northwest Cambodia presents a different picture. In the six provinces surrounding the Tonle Sap (Siem Riep, Battambang, Pursat, Kompong Chhnang, and Kompong Thom) – a region that includes the heartland of the former Angkorian empire and the productive rice fields of Battambang, nearly 5,200 mass grave sites were located by July of 2001 – less than half the number found during the same period in southeastern Cambodia. The geographic distribution of death under the DK regime is heavily skewed toward Cambodia’s southeastern provinces, as shown in Figure 1.

DK-era Mass Grave Sites in Cambodia



Source: Cambodian Genocide Project,
http://www.yale.edu/cgp/maps/1975_cambodia.jpg

While Khmers inside Cambodia who were perceived as traitors were being eliminated, ethnic Khmers who lived on the other side of Cambodia's southeastern border were brought under DK rule to bolster national defenses. Officials from the Southwest Zone were told by their superiors in 1977 that "the Khmer Krom [ethnic Khmer living in southern Vietnam] were to be brought to live in Cambodia while [Cambodian] Khmer were to be sent to live in Kampuchea Krom," in part to gain "many forces" to fight Vietnam.⁴⁷ In 1978, Southwest military units began launching raids across the border into Vietnam to forcibly drive ethnic Khmers into southeastern Cambodia; however, once inside Cambodia the Khmer Krom had to endure the same "tempering" – forced labor, political indoctrination, and in some cases torture and execution – as native Cambodians to prove their loyalty as "true" Khmers.

CONCLUSION

The construction of a national identity is usually assumed to have three prerequisites. The first prerequisite is a belief shared by a large group of individuals that each member of the group belongs to a community that is distinct from and bordered by other communities. According to Anderson,⁴⁸ the nation is an "imagined community" in the minds of its members whose boundaries, while superseding the individual's immediate environment, are finite. While individual members of the community need not be identical in terms of class, religion, or even language, they feel a bond with other members of the community and therefore want "to act in unison on all matters of national importance."⁴⁹

The second prerequisite is the belief by members of the community that the community should be governed by a sovereign state, and that the defense of this sovereignty legitimizes the use of power by the leaders of that state. Sovereignty links the shared belief in the community to the community's most important political institution – the state – and prescribes some of the necessary duties of that state and those who manage it. The belief in sovereignty grants the state's leaders the authority to act upon the nation as a whole in the name of national interests.

This paper has focused on the third prerequisite for the construction of a national identity: the existence of a tradition of a territory that the community regards as its ancestral home. The tradition of a territory provides a chronological anchor for the supposed authentic and pristine origins of the nation. The tradition also bolsters a nation's:

political claim to a specified area of land and its resources, often in the teeth of opposition from rival claimants. From this perspective, the homeland is indispensable for economic well-being and physical security; and the exploitation of its agricultural and mineral resources becomes a prime nationalist consideration.⁵⁰

Nationality is thus a product not just of culture and history, but also of geography. Geography is central to national identity, and while geography is not destiny, "it comes awfully close to being so . . . tradition can be invented [but] it cannot be invented out of nothing."⁵¹ In the case of the Khmer, the geography of the lower Mekong river watershed – an unforested alluvial plain that is flooded annually by monsoon rains – made possible the development of food-surplus rice agriculture. Surplus agricultural production in turn permitted the Khmer to form their first highly-organized polity, the empire of Funan. The importance of the region once occupied by Funan to Khmer concepts of nationhood is demonstrated by the mythical account of the origin of the Khmer people. Though the historical accuracy of the myth of a foreign man marrying a native princess and establishing a dynasty over the land now known to Khmer as Kampuchea is impossible to verify, the Khmer have believed in it for over fifteen hundred years. When people believe in myths, the myths themselves become reality to the people who believe in them, and "people act, or even base their lives upon them, especially in times of crisis."⁵²

The crisis that put the Khmer nation most recently at risk was the regime of Democratic Kampuchea. It has been estimated that within only forty-four months the leaders of Democratic Kampuchea caused the deaths of between 9 and 20 percent of the Cambodian population.⁵³ Cambodia has still not recovered socially, economically, or politically from the trauma inflicted by Democratic Kampuchea. The area of Cambodia subjected to the most brutality during the DK regime was its southeastern provinces, especially those bordering Vietnam, an historical enemy of the Khmer. In the minds of DK leaders, the past use of the plains of southeastern Cambodia as an invasion route by foreign aggressors required that the region be purified of anyone disloyal to the Khmer nation or unsupportive of the DK's authority over it. The DK leadership's preoccupation with defending southeastern Cambodia from supposed enemies led to precisely what it feared most – an invasion by the Vietnamese on December 25, 1978. The government of Democratic Kampuchea fell within days and Vietnam occupied Cambodia for over a decade.

In the years after Democratic Kampuchea had fallen to Vietnam, Cambodia's southeastern lowlands remained important in definitions of the Khmer national interest. For example, following elections sponsored by the United Nations in 1993, Prince Norodom Chakrapong, a son of Cambodia's king Norodom Sihanouk, declared that an "autonomous region" would be formed out of provinces adjacent to the Mekong River, such as Svay Rieng, Kompong Cham, Prey Veng, Kratie, Stung Treng. Chakrapong's statement was intended to force the winning party in the election, led by a rival son of the king, to accept a coalition government with the political party that had ruled Cambodia before the election. The ploy worked – faced with the potential secession of much of southeastern Cambodia and not wanting to be regarded as responsible for a division of the Khmer people into two states, the winning party agreed to share power. In the era of globalization when national territories and borders are supposedly becoming increasingly irrelevant, the geography of Cambodia remains important in Khmer politics.

NOTES

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2. Kenneth R. Hall. *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1985. p. 38
3. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
4. Paul Pelliot. "Le Fou-nan." *BEFEO* 3, 1903. pp. 248-303.
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6. Rudiger Gaudes. "Kaundinya, Preah Thong, and the 'Nagi Soma': Some Aspects of a Cambodian Legend," p. 339; George Coedes. *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, pp. 36-38; and R.C. Majumdar. *Kambuja-Desa or An Ancient Cambodian Colony in Cambodia*, pp. 17-18.
7. Paul Pelliot. "Le Fou-nan," p. 254.
8. Miriam Stark. "The Transition to History in the Mekong Delta: A View from Cambodia," pp. 180-181.

9. R.C. Majumdar. *Kambuja-Desa or An Ancient Cambodian Colony in Cambodia*, p. 23 and Louis Finot. "Notes d'Epigraphie: Les Inscriptions de Mi-Son," p. 923.
10. George Coedes. *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, pp. 496-497.
11. Rudiger Gaudes. "Kaundinya, Preah Thong, and the 'Nagi Soma': Some Aspects of a Cambodian Legend," p. 337.
12. Eveline Poree-Maspero. "Nouvelle Etude sur la Nagi Soma," p. 246.
13. R.C. Majumdar. *Kambuja-Desa or An Ancient Cambodian Colony in Cambodia*, p. 19.
14. R.C. Majumdar. *Kambuja-Desa or An Ancient Cambodian Colony in Cambodia*, pp. 18-19, and Eveline Poree-Maspero. "Nouvelle Etude sur la Nagi Soma," p. 239.
15. Jared Diamond. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999. p. 111 and W. J. van Liere. "Traditional water management in the lower Mekong Basin." *World Archaeology* 11, 3: pp. 267-269.
16. W. J. van Liere. "Traditional water management in the lower Mekong Basin," p. 271.
17. John V. Dennis, Jr. "Kampuchea's Ecology and Resource Base: Natural Limitations on Food Production Strategies." *The Cambodian Agony*. David A. Ablin and Marlowe Hood, (eds.). Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1987. p 213.
18. Michael Vickery. "What to Do about *The Khmers*." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27, 2, 1996. p. 390.
19. George Coedes. *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, p. 164.
20. Thu-Huong Nguyen-Vo, Khmer. *Viet Relations and the Third Indochina Conflict*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1992, pp. 2-9.
21. The trappings of political power in Funan were formerly believed to be of Indian import. While evidence does exist that the techniques of Indian administration were shaping Cambodian polities from the earliest dates found in the historical record – a Chinese mission to Funan sometime between 245 and 250 A.D. reported that Cambodian writing resembled an Indian script, for example (Pelliot 1903, p. 254) – these Indian influences in all likelihood did not result in the "extirpation of local genius" (Mabbett 1977: 161). The use of the term "god-king": (devaraja) to denote a belief in the absolute political and cosmological power of early Khmer rulers has also undergone serious revisions, the term may be simply a Sanskrit translation of a Khmer term for a local protective deity (Vickery 1996: 393). It can

- now be reasonably asserted that the Khmer developed indigenous beliefs in the nature of authority and its relationship to Khmer political identity.
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