

BUDDHISM
AND
THE MAKING OF DEMOCRACY
IN CAMBODIA:

A Report to Cambodian Buddhist Council

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report was to assist the Cambodian Buddhist Council in Cambodia to better understand the role of Buddhism in making democracy work in Cambodia after many attempts to restore and maintain democracy since 1936 have been failed. In Part 1 the paper will focus on the history democratic movement in Cambodia and why the movement did not work well in the standpoint of political culture relating to Buddhism. Part 2 will focus on the strategic reform policy to help improve the situation of democratization which is being under threats. The paper also covers recommendations to overcome some problems that might become obstacles during the reform.

It can be stated that Cambodian democratic movement started as earlier as 1936 along with the struggle for independence from French colonization. In 1946 two political parties, the Democratic Party and the Liberal Party, were formed to hold elections for a Consultative Assembly, and National Assembly in 1951. However, the National Assembly was dissolved by King Sihanouk in 1953 and martial law was imposed. In 1955 King Sihanouk announced his abdication in favor of his father in order to form his own political party (Popular Socialist Community). Sihanouk ruled the country as head of state and his party defeated other parties in the parliament until 1970 when he was deposed by General Lon Nol. The Khmer Republic replaced the Kingdom of Cambodia, and the constitution was headed for a presidential system in favor of the United States. Civil war began between the Republic and the Khmer Rouge and ended in 1975 when General Lon Nol was exiled to the U.S. The Communist Khmer Rouge ruled the country between 1975-1979 and caused nearly two million deaths. From 1975 onwards, the democracy movement was dead until 1993 when all conflicting factions agreed to hold election under the supervision of the United Nations. Democracy movement restarted. However, a coup d'état in July 1997 has put democracy in Cambodia in risk again.

Looking at political culture in Cambodia, Buddhism has been an important influence in shaping democratic culture. Buddhism, which has been respected by the Cambodians for centuries, has some negative influence towards the attitude of trust on democracy due to the misinterpretation of the teaching and the mixing of beliefs with Hinduism and animism. Cambodian commoners believe that those who were born as kings are descended from heaven. This perception leads Cambodians to believe that the king controls their lives. In their own words to address to the king, Cambodians say “majas jivit loe tbong_ owner of life who stay above my head”. Therefore, Cambodians are highly likely to accept authoritarianism.

Although democratic values are found in Buddhist teaching, and in the daily life of the monks, the practice of democracy has not been transmitted to villagers due to a gap in communication. The monks use a democratic system in all of their decision-making. However, they do not realize that it is democracy for all of the ritual processes are done in Pali language, which no is longer used.

Teacher-centered learning system in the pagoda partly encourages violence and passiveness. Punishment is commonly used to speed up the pace of student learning, which is contradictory to the student-centered system introduced by the Buddha. It also creates an environment of accepting of what superiors have to say or to order without question.

Cambodian Buddhist Council should involve in increasing the level of trust towards democracy, improving tolerance and non-violence environment, and encouraging participation in the democratization process. To obtain these goals, CBC should consider reforming it educational system to be more student-centered learning, updating curriculum, and preparing the learning environment to be more democratic. CBC should consider promoting open and understandable communication between monks and villagers so that they can fully responsible in the process of decision-making in various ceremonies. Pali literature should be translated and interpreted, and the decision-making should be conducted in both Pali and Cambodian.

Role model of the leaders is very important in Cambodian culture. CBC should consider creating role model environment relating to democratic culture. The present governance in the temples should be democratized due to the Buddha's purpose, specific time for term of office for each abbot should be set to a maximum of 5 or 7 years. CBC should improve its institution norm to be more democratic, and organize projects that encourage democratic values in the communities.

High incomes and better education are correlated to democratic consolidation. CBC should perform community outreach activities to improve level of education and incomes of the villagers. A movement called socially engaged Buddhism which is carried out by a group of monks would be a good example for CBC to study. Furthermore, For future policy development CBC should continue its research on behavioral change in Cambodian communities. Belief in the legitimacy of democracy, tolerance for opposing parties, willingness to compromise with their opponents, and cooperation among their competitors are the subjects to be studied. The study would be beneficial to CBC in evaluating its role towards democratic consolidation.

The strategy requires policy making strategy, institution capacity, management capacity, and financial resources to carry out. CBC must actively gather financial and technical supports from local and international sources which, in my point of view, are not so difficult to find if CBC acts in a proper way. The reform itself is very challenging. In the one hand, it tries to make democracy works in Cambodia. In the other hand, it has to maintain its non-violence approach because democracy which is born by violence is not a sustainable democracy that Cambodians needs at the present situation.



PART 1

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

I. History of Democratic Movement in Cambodia

Cambodia's four-year-old democratic transition appeared to end in July 1997 when second Prime Minister Hun Sen led a bloody coup d'état and ousted First Prime Minister Prince Ranaridh. The two had shared power in a coalition government elected in 1993, which was known as the freest vote in the country's history. Last summer the opposition parties led by the Prince, FUNCINPEC and its alliance, were forced to leave the country, hundreds of people were killed, the opposition newspapers, radios, and televisions were closed, and human rights abuses increased everywhere.

Attempts have been made to restore democracy by both internal and external pressures. Facing these pressures, Mr. Hun Sen announced a second free and fair election would take place in July 1998. However, it is doubtful that the result of the election will be accepted by international communities. Even if the election is free and fair, a country cannot be called democratic unless: political rights and civil liberties are free and open; accountable government is elected; the representative of the media and their accessibility to different social groups and points of views are promoted; the public accountability and internal democracy of powerful private corporations increased; the degree of political awareness of the citizen body and the extent of its public participation are lifted; and the democratic character of the political culture and of the education system are favorable to democracy.¹

Theravada Buddhism has been the dominant religion of Cambodia since the 12th century. It is known as a religion of great tolerance, non-dogmatism, equality of rights, and democracy. Due to its influence upon Cambodians for centuries one could say that all of these qualities, particularly the concept of democracy, should have flourished in Cambodian's politics rather than bloody wars and authoritarianism which caused the country to turn into a disaster. In view of this situation, this report aims to analyze how Buddhist practices deviated from their original concepts of democracy, and to suggest ways to introduce concepts and practices which help democratize and sustain democracy in Cambodia.

1. *Definition*

The word democracy is derived from two Greek words: *demos*, meaning "the people," and *kratos*, meaning "rule." In Khmer language the word *procheathipatey* (derived from the combination of word *prajā* (Sanskrit), meaning "the people," and *Adhipateyya* (Pali), meaning "supremacy") was created to translate the English term. There is quite a similar word used in Buddhism, *lokadhipateyya*, meaning the supremacy of the people, or of the world. In monastic life and community life the word *Sanghadhipateyya* _ supremacy of Sangha (monks or community) - have been widely used in the process of decision making, particularly in the pagodas(Buddhist temples).

2. *History of Modern Democracy in Cambodia*

The movement of modern democracy in Cambodia can not be divided from the movement of nationalism in the struggle to gain independence from France between 1887-1953. In 1936 a group of educated Cambodians began publishing *Nagaravatta* (Angkor Wat), the first Khmer-language newspaper. In its editorials, *Nagaravatta* mildly condemned French colonial policies, the prevalence of usury in the rural areas, foreign domination of the economy, and the lack of opportunities for educated Khmer. The newspaper gained wide support from the population. In July 1942, Achar Hem Chieu, a prominent politically active Buddhist monk was arrested and unceremoniously defrocked by the French authorities, the editors of *Nagaravatta* led a demonstration demanding his release. One of the editors, Pach Chhoeun, was sentenced to life in prison and the newspaper was closed down in the same year.²

In 1946 the French allowed the Cambodians to form political parties and to hold elections for a Consultative Assembly that would advise the monarch on drafting the first country's constitution. Two major parties were both headed by royal princes. The Democratic Party, led by Prince Sisovath Yuthevonng, advocated immediate independence, democratic reforms, and a parliamentary government. Its supporters were teachers, civil servants, politically active members of the Buddhist monks, and others whose opinions had been greatly influenced by the nationalistic appeals of *Nagaravatta*. The Liberal Party, led by Prince Norodom Norindeth, represented the interests of the old rural elite, including large landowners. The Liberal Party preferred continuing some form of the colonial relationship with France, and advocated gradual democratic reform. The Democrats won both the elections for Consultative Assembly and the National Assembly. The constitution was drafted to model the constitution of the French Fourth Republic, and reluctantly promulgated by King Sihanouk in May 6, 1947. In it he was proclaimed which he was the constitutional monarch with the recognition of being "spiritual head of the state".³

In the second National Assembly election in September 1951, the Democrats won a majority again. However, in June 1952 Sihanouk announced the dismissal of his cabinet, suspended the constitution, and assumed control of the government as Prime Minister. Then, he dissolved the National Assembly and proclaimed martial law in January 1953. The democratic movement under the colonial period was suspended.⁴

On November 1953 Cambodia celebrated its Independence Day. In April 1954 the Geneva Conference was held to restore peace in Indochina, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. The conference agreement established the International Control Commission in all the Indochina countries to supervise the cease-fire, the withdrawal of foreign troops, the release of prisoners of war, and overall compliance with the terms of the agreement. The agreement also stipulated that general elections should be held in Cambodia during 1955 and that the International Control Commission should monitor them to ensure fairness.⁵

In March 2, 1955 Sihanouk announced his abdication in favor of his father, Norodom Suramarit, so that he could engage in politics. He then established his own political party called Sangkum Reastr Niyum (Popular Socialist Community) and ran for election in September. His new party decisively defeated the Democrats, the Khmer Independence Party, and the Pracheachon (People's Party), winning 83 percent of the vote and all of the seats in the National Assembly.⁶

The democratic system in Cambodia gradually faded because of the authoritarian leadership of Prince Sihanouk who led the party until his fall in 1970. However, most Cambodians see Sihanouk's legitimate regime as the one that brought peace and prosperity. On the morning of March 18, 1970, the National Assembly was hastily convened, and voted unanimously to depose Sihanouk as head of state. Lon Nol, who had been serving as Prime Minister, was granted emergency powers. On October 9, 1970 Lon Nol abolished the monarchy and re-designated Cambodia as the Khmer Republic, with full support of the United States.⁷ The new constitution headed for presidential system with only two political parties. The urban people enjoyed the new republic while the rural people still believe in the monarch.

The Republic ended with the victory of the Khmer Rouge in April 1975. The country was renamed Democratic Kampuchea under the Khmer Rouge. This was the end of a long struggle between authoritarian-monarchy and democracy, and the beginning of Communism which led to more than

two million deaths of Cambodian people. Although the Khmer Rouge was expelled in 1979, and a new regime, Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP), was set up by Vietnam to govern Cambodia, democracy was not to be reintroduced until 1993.

3. *Present Conditions of Democracy*

Cambodia held UN-supervised elections in 1993 marking a key point in its transition toward more stable and democratic rule, after almost two decades of terror, repression, and civil strife. The voting for a new, 120-member Constituent Assembly, which promulgated a new constitution (including a restored monarchy), resulted in a coalition government under two Prime Ministers. The royalist FUNCINPEC party gained the majority, 45 percent and 58 Assembly seats, and the ruling CPP (Cambodian People Party, the new name for KPRP) came in second, garnered 38 percent and 51 seats. The BLDP (Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party) gained 10 seats and the Moulinaka gained one seat⁸.

The political transition of the new government has been a mixed picture of growing democratic political culture and opposition to this western culture. The UN-brokered Paris Accords of October 1991 committed all the major political forces in the country to the proposition of full respect for the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other relevant international human rights instruments. This declaration was written into the Constitution. However, the judiciary is not independent of the government. The legal system is rudimentary. The government must approve any collective bargaining agreements. All political demonstrations and associations are scrutinized. Forced labor imposed by the army is routine.⁹ Uses of force are always declared by both major parties, and finally, conflict resolution between FUNCINPEC and CPP was conducted in a bloodshed coup in July 1997, which led to a new abuse of human rights again in the country.

The fall of Cambodia has been the subject of discussion among scholars and ordinary Cambodians themselves. Some discussions go back farther that the fall of Cambodia can be traced since the fall of Angkor empire in 11th century when kings spent most of resources on the construction of religious monuments. In the last two decades, arguments have been focused on various causes: 66 years of French colonization, the geopolitics of Cambodia between two strong unfriendly-countries inwardly move, the emergence of the cold war in which Cambodia become a pawn of the world super powers.

The attempts by the United Nations to restore democracy in 1993 with \$2 billion spent in the general election have not worked. We can conclude that democracy is not going to function well simply

because an election took place, but we must look deeper into the issue of leadership, culture, socioeconomic equality, civil society, and geopolitics, and the stability of the country to understand the real causes.

II. Political Culture in Cambodia

1. Definition and scope

Political culture assumes that the attitudes, sentiments, values, beliefs, and cognitions that familiarize and govern political behavior in any society are not just random congeries but represent coherent patterns which fit together and are mutually reinforcing.¹⁰ It also assume that each individual should learn and consolidate into his own personality the knowledge and feelings about the politics of his people and his community. Each generation inherited its politics from the previous one, each reacts against that process to finds its own politics. This long process follows the laws that govern the development of personality of each individual and the culture of a society.¹¹

Understanding what political culture in general is, we can readily look at the context which informs and governs political behavior in current Cambodian society. This will help us understand the problems and prospects of political stability, integration, and conflicts which inhabit the country for years. Therefore, to understand why democracy does not work well in Cambodia we have to understand Cambodian political culture in the issue of: (1) belief in the legitimacy of democracy, (2) tolerance for opposing parties, (3) beliefs, (4) preferences, (5) a willingness to compromise with political opponents, (6) trust in the political environment, (7) cooperation among political competitors, (8) moderation in political position and partisan identifications, (9) civility of political discourse, (10) political efficacy and participation, based on principles of political quality.¹² However, this paper will limit its scope only on belief in the legitimacy of democracy, and participation of the people in democracy.

2. Buddhist Teaching

Buddhism is predominant in mainland Southeast Asia. The great majority of the people of Cambodia, Laos, Burma, and Thailand, adhere to the tradition of Theravada Buddhism and have arrived at their beliefs through many centuries of interaction of ideas. Hence, the religious belief system of each of these four nations is quite similar, and Buddhist values inform and inspire basic social, political,

economic, and cultural patterns of life for the individual, family, village, and nation of those countries. There is a profound sense in which to be Burmese, Thai, Laotian, or Cambodian is to be Buddhist.¹³

From birth to death Cambodian life has been linked to Buddhist teachings, rituals, norms, and traditions. Cambodians invite monks for blessing when a new child born, when s/he get married, s/he is very sick, s/he is dead. Most of Cambodian boys/men ordain at least once in his life or going to the temple when they get old, many Cambodian women stay in the temple when they get old, etc. In February Cambodians celebrate the Buddha First Council Day, in April they go to the temples to celebrate Cambodian New Year, in May they celebrate Buddha Birthday, in July they celebrate the Buddhist Retreat, on September they celebrate the Death Days, in November they celebrate the Cloth Offering ceremony. Buddhism has become a one of the predominant cultures in shaping the existence of Cambodian today. (see figure 1)

Buddhism in Cambodia was once abolished by the Communist Khmer Rouge whose government fiercely ruled the country from 1975-1978. Between one and a half to two million people were executed or starved. Within these year all Buddhist monks were forcely disrobed by the Khmer Rouge, most of the temples were destroyed, and the belief was prohibited. After the Khmer Rouge ended its regime in 1978, Buddhism has been reestablishing to response to the needs of the population. Today, there are approximately 3,500 Buddhist temples where approximately 40,000 Buddhist monks live in. However, the current young Buddhism is very weak comparing to the prior 1975 Buddhism. It is afraid that belief in Buddhism would be faded up by the current globalization unless actions are taken to stabilize its roles and significance.

Theravada Buddhism as practiced in Cambodia is mixing with Mahayana Buddhism which had influence in the 10-11th century, Brahmanism since 3rd century, and animism of the indigenus people. Buddha, in genuine Buddhism, is not God, but Cambodians today pray to the Buddha's statue for luck, and if they do not receive it they complain that "Preah min chouy" (The Lord did not help). This moment of prayer is a combination of Theravada (Buddha statue), Mahayana (living Buddha) and Brahmanism (God)¹⁴, and animism (Neak Ta¹⁵). In Buddhism, no belief must be taken on faith, such as a belief in supreme beings. No one should oblige someone to believe something without investigating, experiencing, and deciding by him/herself.¹⁶

Each individual is responsible for his/her own life and destiny, which is based on his/her Karma/action, the most distinctive teaching of Buddhism. Karma in the past (previous life up to a moment ago), results in the existence of today and this moment. The results (vipaka) today formulate as actual karma, which produces fruits as quickly as a minute into the future. Each karmic action interacts with another to create social karma which can be creative or destructive according to the attitude of each individual towards the Dharma.¹⁷ We can say that the world as it exists today is a combination of various waves of karma. The combination of these waves creates a unique culture at a unique time, and is inherited by the next generation.

Nirvana _ freedom from greed, hatred, and delusion _ is the ultimate goal for all Buddhists. Each individual can attain this goal only by following the Noble Eightfold Path: proper understanding, thought, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration. This requires each Buddhist to study, understand, and practice by her/ himself under the guidance of the Buddha and the monks. By practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, each individual is committing to self-development, which is divided into four stages: (1) physical development (kayabhavana) which requires the sufficiency of basic needs for human development; (2) moral development (sila bhavana) which requires each practitioner to abide by religious and social rule, law, and regulation; (3) mental/emotional development (cittabhavana) which requires each practitioner to control his/her own emotion and develop his/her mind to be free of greed, hatred, and delusion; and (4) wisdom development (pannabhavana) requires each practitioner to fully develop his/her own wisdom _ to see things as it is. It should be noticed that the Noble eightfold path is also called Dharmasera (Dharma liberty), and someone who lives in Dharmasera is called puggalaseri (a liberty/free person).¹⁸

During his time, the Buddha introduced a new system of ruling to the monks by which they were obliged to live. It was in complete contradiction to the ruling systems in India, which were mainly autocratic. In his model, Dhammaddhipateyya, decision making is to be made by member consensus or by a majority vote if consensus is not achievable. For example, in the ordination of a monk, the candidate seeks approval from the chief of monks' community. The chief appoints two mentors to check background of the candidate. After investigating, the two mentors propose verbally three times to the 21-member assembly of monks. If there is no objection, all of them should be quiet. If there is objection, one should speak up and the process must be redone until consensus is achieved. In appointing someone to a position of responsibility such as inventory manager, the appointment must be approved by the members of the pagoda he lives in, and must be done by a legal process as cited in the scripture.

In his ideal community the Buddha encouraged and obliged the monks to live together as communities (Sangha). Monastery life is set up as a ruling system in which leaders are chosen by their qualities and with the approval of the community of monks. Each member of the monk-community must participate in the stability of rule of law of the monastery, i.e. participating every two weeks in a ceremony call Patimokha Review in the temple to review compliance of the law. In the ceremony, each monk must inform the community if he cannot comply with the rules for further action by the community. Criticism is allowed in a formal setting, particularly during the meeting every two weeks, and at the end of the three-month Retreat. Someone who sees another monk commit a mistake but does not present to the community, is considered to be wrong (apatti).

Conflict is a natural phenomenon in Buddhist community. Buddhism sees change (Anicca) as a permanent phenomenon. Conflict even occurred between the Buddha and his followers. Conflict resolution is made by the presence of all conflicting parties, the judge, and the law (viniya). Freedom to express truth in the formal meeting is encouraged for everyone. Conflict resolution must be made non-violently and by persuasion.

The Buddha also involved in managing conflicts of the non-religious community (lay people). However, his involvement meant to save the lives and property of the people rather than to increase or decrease the power of the conflicting parties. The Buddha prohibits monks from taking side in politics, and getting involved in power seeking of the lay people. Nevertheless, Buddhist scriptures allow the monks to address the kinds of qualities that make good leaders and bad leaders and codes of conducts for leaders at various levels.

3. *Misunderstanding the Teaching*

a) Trust

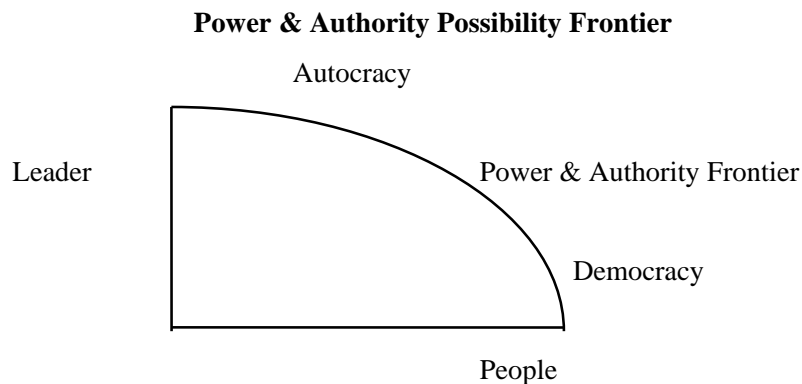
It is possible to explain Cambodian political behavior in terms of beliefs in Buddhism.

Cambodian difference to authority, for example, is sometimes explained by noting that someone of high status performed good deeds in his previous lives. Someone who is subordinate, on the other hand, by the same rationale, has less good karma and hence is duty-bound to respect his superior.¹⁹ Cambodian commoners believed that those who were born as kings, princes and princesses, and high class were descended from heaven.²⁰ Sometimes people even call the king 'Bodhisattva' (future-Buddha). Therefore, to be loyal to the king is similar to being loyal to the Buddha. This common perception led

Cambodians to believe that the king controls the fate of all. Within this context, authoritarianism is highly likely to exist because people have given full trust and power to their leader.

b) Rulers and Followers

If we call a ruling system in which one person claims all authorities for him/herself an autocracy, and that in which no one person gives up all his power a democracy, we can say that power and authorities determine the interaction of karma between the leader and the followers. Along the same line, the relationship between the Buddha and the monks is determined by Dharma, the code of standard, virtue, law, value, systems, etc. In his early time, the Buddha used his authority to rule his community. When he saw that they understood the Dharma well, then he gave the authority to rule to the monks. There are four points to look in this Power & Authority Possibility Frontier: when the leaders should give their powers and authorities to the people, when the people should require the powers and authorities, how much the powers and authorities should be divided, and how the powers and authorities be transferred, violently or non-violently. There is no topic or concept of these four issues taught by the monks to their lay people. Therefore, there is no sign of voluntarily transference of powers and authority from the leader, but always by wars and coup d'état.



c) Participation

At the end of his life, one of his followers was very concerned that Buddhism would be finished when the Buddha passed away. The Buddha confirmed that the future of Buddhism depended on the four assemblies, namely monks, nuns, laymen, and lay women. In other words, lay people were to have a say in how Buddhism would be managed. In fact lay participation in the affairs of the temples is limited to the role of supporter and does not reflect the original intention of the Buddha. As a result, Buddhism does not seem as a model for public participation in the system of

governance in the way that it could. If public participation was promoted in Buddhism, Buddhism would serve as a model for public participation in governing the country.

d) Hierarchy

The hierarchy based on how long each monk has been in the monkhood in Buddhist monastery, in my experience, correlates to authoritarianism. In the monastery, newly monks have to respect elderly monks and listen to what they teach. Students must believe what the master says. The teacher-centered learning system, proceeds with punishment to increase the learning speed of the students. Although deep in their heart the monks are full of compassion, the method they use encourages violence and an autocratic environment. This emotional environment will somehow transmit to the villages when some of the monks leave the pagodas to be ordinary people. Therefore, we can see some trends of autocratic environment in Cambodian families. This is contradictory to what the Buddha taught about the freedom of questioning, non-violence, and student-centered learning system that he usually used.

e) Gap of Communication

The ancient language of Pali is used during the ceremonies of ordination, appointment, and other decision-making. Unfortunately, most of the meaning is lost by the young monks because the daily spoken language is Cambodian, not Pali. The ignorance of the ceremony is unproductive because ordination is the process of accepting new members into the assembly of monks who will make decisions in the future. The communication gap encourages the absence of democratic values in the pagodas, and in the villages as well.

The belief in the leader as a person designated by previous good karma, the environment of being passive in learning and obeying, and the absence of democratic values expressed in our own language, contribute, in my points of view, to the lower level of trust in political democracy in Cambodia. Democratic system, are mainly known in the capital cities and big towns among highly educated people. In the countryside people are much more familiar with authoritarian values. Therefore, public participation in the democratic movement for the last six decades has had little chance to progress. However, it does not mean that democracy in Cambodia cannot be sustained because the prevailing practice of Buddhism lead to this failure.

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, beside political culture, we have to look at leadership, socioeconomic equality, civil society, and geopolitics, and the stability of the country as well in

understanding democracy in Cambodia. For example, the democratic system envisioned by the Buddha is based on the assumption that the basic physical needs of the monks were met. This condition is met for the monks who do not worry about food, but the lay people have to struggle to meet their basic needs. According to many studies, high income has high correlation with sustain democracy.²¹ Another example is geopolitics of Cambodia. Geographically, Cambodia located between the two competitive countries, Vietnam and Thailand, whose policies had been negatively affected the stability of Cambodia. This frequent instability is likely to use authoritarianism to protect the country. With all these factors combined, it is not surprising that democracy did not develop in Cambodia.



PART 2

REFORM STRATEGIC PROPOSAL

The Cambodian Buddhist Council should consider reforming its Buddhist educational system, promoting communication between temples and community, creating role model environment relating to democratic culture, performing outreach program and involving in economic development, and conducting further behavioral research and evaluation. These would help Cambodians increasing positive trust towards democracy, improving tolerance and non-violent in turnabout powers and authorities, and encouraging their participation in the democratic movement.

In undertaking the proposed reform, the CBC should take into consideration support to move the policy into public agenda, reactionary from the public towards the reform that might be occurred and how to response to the problems, , capacity of the CBC to implement, resources to inject the reform, and other unexpected problems that might come to distract the reform.

I. GOALS

The main strategic goals of the reform are to increase level of trust towards democracy, to improve tolerance and non-violent environment in shifting powers and authorities, and to encourage participation of Cambodian citizen in the democratic movement. These strategic goals will be uphold by two support strategies, behavioral research and policy development.

1. To Increase Level of Trust Towards Democracy

Sammaditthi²² (right view, right understanding) is the first of the eight factors or constituents in Buddhist teaching leading towards problem-free or happiness. This, with the same rationale, is very applicable as the first step to build democracy. Without right view of democracy, lack of understanding on how democracy works, and low trust whether the system would benefit to each individual and society democracy is not going to be consolidated. Empirical study has shown that higher level of trust contributing to sustain democracy.²³

2. To Improve Tolerance and Non-Violence Environment

It is evident that Cambodia is internationally well known because of wars, violence, oppression, and mass murder in the last 3 decades which is very contradiction to the fundamental Buddhist teachings on tolerance (Khanti), non-violence (Ahimsa), compassion (Metta-karuna) and respect for all kinds

of life. Tolerance and non-violence environment must be improved to help planting the trust towards democracy, and to assure the validity of the teachings.

3. To Encourage Participation

Sangha, community of monks, is an ideal concept of Buddhism on how people are encouraged to live and act together for wellbeing of communities (Sokha Sanghasa samaggi).²⁴ Participation in thinking, speaking, and acting²⁵ from all monks and lay people to maintain Buddhism was the final word before the Buddha went to Nirvana. Democratic movement requires participation from all social status whose the message should be partly sent by the CBC.

II. OBJECTIVES

The three strategic goals to promote democracy are crucial in replanting public values towards democracy and the significant role of Buddhism as social commodity. However, concrete actions must be done to assure the vitality of the goals. Five strategic objectives are recommended to the CBC: reform Buddhist educational system, promote communication between temples and communities, create role model environment relating to democratic culture, perform outreach program and involving in economic development, and conduct further behavioral research and evaluation.

1. Reform Buddhist Educational system

Comparing to other Buddhist countries such as Thailand and Ceylon Buddhist educational system in Cambodia cannot fulfill the needs of its clients, monks and lay people, in this changing world. Furthermore, the system itself cannot transfer the real meanings of the teaching either. As one of the most successful world religious leader teaching skill was one of the Buddha's qualification, of which we can study and combine his methodology with the modern one. His success was the result of his effective methodology, useful and trustful curriculum, and well-prepared learning environment for the students.

(a) Teaching Methodology

It was the student-centered learning methodology, which he used during his time. We have to realize that the Buddha was against the belief in Hindu God (Veda and Bhraman) who prohibited Hindus from questioning his existence, messages, and creation. This was a one way communication. In his system, two-way communication, students are not obligated to believe of what he said²⁶, encouraged for questioning, discussing among groups, searching, and

implementing by her/himself with each own pace. The student-centered learning system will allow monks to have more rational thinking, be able to gain knowledge, not only from their teachers but other sources. The same ideas should be applied when the monks preach their followers. The CBC should create more Dharma discussion among the population. The idea of this new method is to get rid of sense of 'fear, receptiveness, passiveness' (qualities possessed by people under authoritarianism) and to promote sense of 'friend, reaction, participation in the process' (qualities possessed by people under democracy) from students towards teachers and superiors.²⁷

This concept seems to be abstract and not much relevant to democratic consolidation. However, if the concept applied thousands of monks who would be socialized by these qualities would give a big impact on their families and communities when they return to their secular life. The impact would be seen also among the lay people who get familiarity with the qualities while the monks communicate with them during sermon.

(b) Update Curriculum

The present curriculums of Buddhist education (for primary and high school) in Cambodia were developed since 1960s. Many things in the world have been changed within these years including the markets for Buddhism. Cambodian Buddhist Council should update the present curriculum in responding to the present Cambodian daily life and needs. This does not mean that we are going to change the teachings of the Buddha, but to present the teachings in a new manner in the world where technology, science, and globalization are dominating day by day.

The curriculum should respond to the present problems and needs of Buddhists. CBC (monks) should think itself as a company which sell products (Dharma, Buddhism) to its customers (Cambodians) in a competitive market with a large varieties of product (other religions, authoritarianism, dictatorship, war, fears, oppressions, violence...). The customers will buy CBC products only if the customers perceive the products are useful, better quality, practical, accessible, and reasonable price. CBC should update its products to keep customers' demands constant.

Within the context of democracy that this paper covers, Cambodians need to understand and trust in democracy, participate in the process, and act in a non-violence ways. The curriculum should include these subjects, both concepts and practice, in the teaching (sermon) and learning (school) systems. These subjects are not strange to the Buddhist teachings at all, but originally the core concepts of Buddhism.

(c) Prepare learning environment

In our case, students learn better in an environment that promotes peace, trust, and democracy. Theoretical and technical help from experts on these fields will enhance the building of democratic environment.

2. Promote Communication

The ancient language of Pali, which is used during the ceremonies of ordination, appointment, and other decision-making, contribute to the lack of understanding of democratic concepts among Buddhist communities. Most of the practical meanings are lost because the daily spoken language is Cambodian, not Pali. In the one hand, it is understandable that the language is very important in ceremonies to preserve the sacredness of the belief and, by all means, we do not want to revolute the tradition. But in the other hand, to loose the principles because of the ceremony would not be the willing of the Buddha. Therefore, we should find ways to revive the principles and, at the same time, keep the sacredness alive as well. Two recommendations to promote communication during decision-makings are:

(a) Translate and Interpret the Literature

Translation of the Tripitaka²⁸ from Pali to Cambodian is already available. However, it is difficult to understand the literature unless the readers are well educated. CBC should consider producing complementary literatures in today language so that everyone can access to the sacredness. Major concepts should be extensively interpreted in the simple language. In our case, the translation and interpretation of ceremonial literatures, which related to decision making, are very important at this time for the decision-makers (Assembly of monks) and the candidates who apply to be monks.

(b) Bilingual Double Check the Processes

It is no doubt that the Pali will be permanently used in the decision-making process. However, to promote understanding and participation we ought to include translation and explanation in Cambodian into the process to make sure that everyone get sense of the decisions. By doing this, we can still preserve the tradition and, at the same occasion, promote responsibilities among the decision-makers, the candidates, and the people who join the ceremonies as well.

(c) Involve Villagers in Religious Affairs

Another way in the context of improving communication is to involve villagers in various policies and activities of the temples. As mentioned in the first report that the Buddha put

innovations for the development of Buddhism. This whole life opportunity is also perceived as a form of autocracy which might not be compatible to the purpose of the Buddha about democratic value he set up.

An appropriate term, let say 5-7 year, is recommended for the governance of each abbot, and renewable by a systematic arrangement. The CBC should consider post-abbot honorable status as reward for those who has committed to the prosperity of the temple and its communities. If this can be achieved, its influence will change the perception that people have towards their authoritarian leaders, someone who deserves to control the country because of past good merit.

(C) Strengthen the Cambodian Buddhist Council

Before anything else, CBC is the major player in the reform of this governance reform. The role of CBC reflects the whole pattern of governing system which will be observed as a precedent. Reengineering of the present organizational body and function to be more democratic would be an example for lower organizations. CBC should improve communication between its central and local authorities and involve them in the process of decision-making based on democratic culture to create trust between the lower and upper class.

(d) Organize Democratic Culture Environment Project

Living in a good environment is one of 38 factors for a blessing life in Buddhism, as well as in the process of learning and living of the secular world today. Democratic environment in place, in the sense of Buddhism, includes concrete things that residents can see, hear, receive, learn, provide service, and have a memory of democracy everyday.³⁰ CBC should consider organizing project that enable these concrete topics happen.

- Each year there are hundreds of new candidates enter monkhood and hundreds of monks become ordinary people. These ex-monks can serve as agents for a democratic culture if they were organized as a formal entity, i.e. ex-monks Associations. The associations which are locally organized will create an environment where villagers can see, hear, and touch directly the democratic system. According to Robert. D. Putnam, local association and clubs, which he called social capital, are essential in enhancing democracy in a society.
- CBC can also organize other clubs that serve the same purpose, such as children clubs, Buddhist women groups, nun society, parent association...

- Set up a committee whose role is to evaluate and reward groups or individual families that have best performance in democratic values. This contest is to create a role model in the communities.
- CBC should consider the role of media in initiating and communicating democratic values. Books, bulletin, news should be available and pass through communities to ensure awareness and responsibilities of action concerning democracy.
- Etc...

4. *Perform Outreach Program and Involving in Economic Development*

In the mission statement which was proclaimed to his first missionary group the Buddha ordered the monks to enter villages, town, and cities to address the Dharma for the benefits, happiness, quality of life, and peace of the people in all status.³¹ Today, it seems that the outreach teaching activities are being reversed. Reasons of this reverse is not clear and the study on this issue should be done for further action. However, outreach program has become a new strategy for all religion in the world for successful promulgation. In our case, CBC should consider reviving this strategy to promote the democratic culture in its followers. One of the program, which is well known among modern Buddhist in the world and is being implemented by some monks in Cambodia, is socially engaged Buddhism. This movement is aiming to engage Buddhism in social and economic development of the population which are critical to the sustainability of democratic consolidation. Area of concentration could be human resources development, education, economic development. environment, non-violence, civil society, etc...

5. *Conduct Further Behavioral Research*

This paper does not cover other aspects of behaviors of Cambodian Buddhists towards democracy, such as belief in the legitimacy of democracy, tolerance for opposing parties, a willingness to compromise with political opponents, and cooperation among political competitors. International efforts to bring about behavior change in order to improve democratization has not been as successful as expected. Understanding of human behavior towards belief is limited; however, it appears that behaviors can be changed. Social and behavioral science provide the tools for understanding behavior change processes and therefore can be used to improve current interventions. Behavioral research clearly is important for improving learning, communication, and even policy development. Further study of these aspects periodically would be beneficial to CBC in evaluating its roles in

modern Cambodia, process in delivering activities within the complexity of various cultural influences, and the results of its commitment in involving with Cambodian society.

III. Problems Encounter the Reform

Traditional views towards the relationship between Buddhism and Cambodian society have been planted for centuries which is difficult to avoid negative reactions from the publics. Therefore, In undertaking the proposed reform, CBC should take into consideration supports to move the reform policy into public agenda, capacities to implement the strategy, resources to feed the implementation, and other unexpected problems that might come to distract the reform.

1. Reactions From the Publics

All of the five strategic plans described above will be the most controversial subjects among conservatives (and the progressive as well) who, as normal, would be afraid that the reform would create a new Buddhism in Cambodia as experiencing during the introduction of new sect from Thailand in the 18th century. CBC should also aware that the reform might be exploited by some politicians as a subject for their political advantages. The reactions can cause obstruction in moving the policy into a public agenda for decision making.

Recommendation

- a) CBC should be firm on its commitment towards the reform for it is necessary to continues its role in Cambodia.
- b) Provide enough information about the reform to monks, and the publics and explain how importance it is towards Buddhism and Khmer society. Using media is very sueful in communicating to the publics. CBC should consider conducting seminars on the reform policy to make sure that the message get across the publics. It is wise to be open for comments and criticism.
- c) The Ministry of Religious Affairs is a helpful source in supporting the reform. Traditionally, CBC and the ministry works hand by hand. Therefore, working with the ministry in developing the strategic policy is meriful.
- d) The King will a potential constituent for the policy. Getting the King stays by the policy will help moving the policy. He also is a major source of financial support.
- e) CBC should classify the policy as short-term and long-term policy so that the policy will be more realistic. The urgent actions and non-urgent actions are also good to be clarified so that the public would not see the policy as a pressure one.

- f) Being neutral in a political friction like Cambodia is obligatory. CBC must show shows itself clearly that the reform is not for anybody or political party, but for the sake of Cambodians. The neutrality will help CBC to avoid exploitation or condemnation from other parties.
- g) Networking with other groups who share the same interests, including outside the countries.

2. *Capacities to Implement the Strategy*

One of the main concerns is how CBC going to successfully implement the challenging strategy due to the condition of Buddhism and Cambodia today. To implement the strategy CBC needs to improve its policy making capacity, institutional capacity, management capacity, and its political capacity. The present CBC capacities are not being met by the standard of the reform.

Recommendation

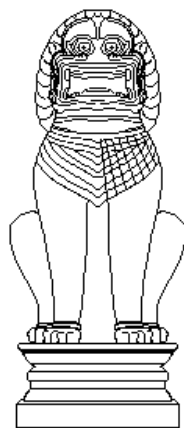
- a) Short-term and long-term training are indispensable for CBC members and other local authorities on how to make a policy, how to manage a project, how to build an efficient institution, and how to deal with political climate within the public opinions. CBC should ask for support from various institutions in the country, both government and non-government agencies. Because the reform is benefiting Cambodians, there will not be difficult to get support in improving human resources.
- b) For long-term purposes, CBC should consider invest monks in a long-term formal education in other countries such as Thailand and Ceylon.
- c) Thailand and Ceylon are likely the two Buddhist countries in the region that might help in building capacity needed for implementation the strategy. CBC should consider contacting the two Buddhist clergies to assist in the reform.
- d) The movement of socially engaged Buddhism which is performing its work widely in the country is enthusiastically considered by foreign donors a successful one in the field of community development. Some international agencies, such as Konrad Adenauer Foundation of Germany, are willing to provide financial supports activities that run by monks. However, CBC should aware that the fund is not religious oriented, but for economic and social development of the communities. CBC can get supports from these agencies for its capacity building to carry out their supported projects.

3. *Resources to Support the Implementation*

Financial sufficiency is a main key in implementing such a big strategy. CBC gets only a small support on education from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The financial deficiency could bring the whole strategy collapse unless some measures are taken.

Recommendation

- a) If the policy get through and the government supports, CBC can expect to get more budget for its implementation.
- b) Fund raisings in the country seem to be not a difficult issue. Cambodian Buddhists are willing to donate to the reform if they perceive it as a wholesome karma. However, financial transparency is important to guarantee the continuity of the donation.
- c) Each year, each temple receives quite a considerable amount of money from the people through various ceremonies. Membership fee and donation due to its income from each temple should be formalize to ensure the sustainability of the reform.
- d) Cambodian Buddhists are spreading out in many countries, particularly in the United States and France. CBC can get good supports from these exile Buddhists as well.
- e) Buddhism is well spread worldwide and there are many Buddhists in those countries. CBC can get supports from those Buddhist organizations to help enhance the reform in both financial resources and technical capacity.



CONCLUSION

Cambodians have been in a situation of oppression for nearly three decades because of the various experiments of ruling systems introduced by those Superpowers during the cold war. The results of the experiments are far beyond to believe that human beings can let these experiments happened.

It is confused among Cambodian population in which ruling systems they can feel safe, extend their thought, express without fear of reprisal, and stand on the same ground under the rule of law. In the one hand, authoritarianism deeply rooted in its culture in all levels. We found authoritarianism in the government level, in the family unit, and even in the religious sectors. Somehow, people are used to the regime and feel that it fits to the present conditions. In the other hand, democratic values that were hidden behind the scene are being emerged by external drives to play more roles in the complexity of state politics. The two streams are confronting to find its own place to live. Which stream is the most eligible depends not only on the people but also on how the stream are introduced to influence the decision makers. If democracy is to be in Cambodia, it must convince its people that it is meritorious to having democracy for it will improve the quality of life of the one who own, and the well-being of the society. The Cambodian Buddhist Council should embrace this perception into its reform policy and strategy.

Depend only on the reform within the context of Buddhism will not make democracy work. Researches on how a system democratized based on hundreds of assumptions and conditions. However, trust towards democratic system, participation in the system, economic development, and education described in the strategy are among the main conditions to consolidate democracy. The reform of the CBC will contribute to the democratization being made.

As people say 'Rome was not built in one overnight' or in Cambodia 'Angkor Watt was not built in one day', democratization is a long and continual process which requires proper time and circumstance. In his own style, the Buddha, before doing something, would clearly understand what are the causes behind the issue, what are the purposes of the work, whether he was fit to the process, what is the moderation of the work, when is the proper time, what kind of people and its environment, and who is the individual in the process.³² This preparation should be kept in mind in laying out the policy and implementing the strategy. Historically, It is observed that we often used abrupt method (revolution) rather than a gradual method (evolution), which most of the times led to gruesome situation. Democracy which is born by violence is not a sustainable democracy that Cambodians needs at the present situation.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ David Beetham, "Defining and Measuring Democracy," SAGE Modern Politics Series Volume 36, pp. 25-41
- ² Cambodia: A Country Study, Federal research division, Library of Congress, December 1987, pp.20-21
- ³ *ibid.* PP.23-24
- ⁴ *ibid.* pp. 24-25
- ⁵ *ibid.* pp. 27-28
- ⁶ *ibid.* pp. 29-30
- ⁷ *ibid.* pp. 29-30
- ⁸ Julio A Jeldres, Cambodia's fading Hopes, *Journal of Democracy* 7.1 (1996) 148-157
- ⁹ Freedom House, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/library/freedom96/cambodia.htm>
- ¹⁰ Political Culture and Political Development, 1972, edited by Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, Princeton University Press. Pp. 7-8
- ¹¹ *Ibid.* 7-8
- ¹² Politics in Developing Countries, second edition, edited by Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995
- ¹³ Clark D. Neher, Politics in Southeast Asia, Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc. pp. 90-91
- ¹⁴ In Hindu, Buddha is considered on of Shiva reincarnation.
- ¹⁵ Powerful spirit represented by some objects or sculpture
- ¹⁶ be not let by report, tradition, the authority of texts, mere logic, inference, considering appearances, the agreement with a considered and approved theory, seeming possibilities, and by the idea, "This is my teacher". Kalamasutta, Anguttaranikaya, Tikanipata
- ¹⁷ The concept of trinity of Buddha (individual), the Dharma (standard measure), and Sangha (community)
- ¹⁸ Aggavisanasuttanidesa, khuddikanikaya. Culanidesa
- ¹⁹ Clark D. Neher, Politics in Southeast Asia, Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc. p. 91
- ²⁰ Khmer Buddhism and Politics from 1954-1984, Yang Sam, Khmer Studies Institute, 1987
- ²¹ What Makes Democracies Endure in Consolidating the Third Wave Democracy, pp. 295-2-312, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- ²² ickxvjlk
- ²³ kldfjgldkjgldk
- ²⁴ hfkshf
- ²⁵ hhcdsjh
- ²⁶ kalamasutra
- ²⁷ Kalayanamitta
- ²⁸ The Buddhist Scripture
- ²⁹ Dhammapada, a translation, Thqanissaro Bhikkhu, Dhamma Dana Publications, BARRE Center for Buddhist Studies, Barre, Massachusetts, 1998
- ³⁰ Anuttariya 6, D.III.250
- ³¹ Guidance of life, Monychenda
- ³² Sappurisa-dharma 7