Historical Imagination, Diasporic Identity

And Islamicity Among The Cham Muslims of Cambodia

by

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ABSTRACT

Since the departure of the UN Transitional Authority (UNTAC) in 1993, the Cambodian Muslim community has undergone a rapid transformation from being an Islamic minority on the periphery of the Muslim world to being the object of intense proselytization by foreign Islamic organizations, charities and development organizations. This has led to a period of religious as well as political ferment in which Cambodian Muslims are reassessing their relationships to other Muslim communities in the country, fellow Muslims outside of the country, and an officially Buddhist state. This dissertation explores the ways in which the Cham Muslims of Cambodia have deployed notions of nationality, citizenship, history, ethnicity and religion in Cambodia's new political and economic climate. It is the product of a multi-sited ethnographic study conducted in Phnom Penh and Kampong Chhnang as well as Kampong Cham and Ratanakiri.

While all Cham have some ethnic and linguistic connection to each other, there have been a number of reactions to the exposure of the community to outside influences. This dissertation examines how ideas and ideologies of history are formed among the Cham and how these notions then inform their acceptance or rejection of foreign Muslims as well as of each other. This understanding of the Cham principally rests on an appreciation of the way in which geographic space and historical events are transformed into moral symbols that bind groups of people or divide them.

Ultimately, this dissertation examines the Cham not only as an Islamic minority, but as an Islamic diaspora – a particular form of identity construction which has implications for their future development and relations with non-Muslim peoples. It reconsiders the classifications of diasporas proposed by Robin Cohen and William Safran, by incorporating Arjun Appadurai's conception of locality as a construct that must be continuously rendered in praxis to generate the socially shared understanding of space, geography and its meaning for communitarian identity. This treatment of Islamic transnationalism within the context of diaspora studies can contribute to the broader conversation on the changing face of Islamic identity in an increasingly globalized world.

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<u>**Introduction**</u>

The People, their Problem and our Problem with them

0.1   Background

On the 10th of October of 2008, an opinion piece appeared in the Phnom Penh Post titled '*A Homeland for the Chams: Find creative ways to connect young Chams with their history*'.   The title was positively pregnant with assumptions about the nature of Cham identity and the predicament in which this group finds itself – beginning with autonomous statehood as an antidote to statelessness, social change as a product of historical amnesia, and ending with a 'creative' program, never before tried, to supply people defined by their deficiencies (stateless and without history) with the requisite tools for living a fulfilled and properly ethnic existence.

The article itself touches on many problematic themes in the study of Cham people in particular as well as of the construction of ethnicity more generally.   In particular, it explicitly likens the victimization of a stateless minority during the Pol Pot period with the fate of European Jewry under Nazi rule and holds that the establishment of an independent homeland is a fair and proper compensation for years of collective punishment.   The author goes further however, beyond promoting an independent homeland for the Cham, his article suggests that the rebirth of Cham political autonomy will be accompanied, or at least should be accompanied, by a resurgence of ethnic pride, which, as of late, has come under attack by another force that is either indifferent or hostile to

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Cham customs and traditions – namely internationalist Islam.   Additionally, this appreciation of Cham ethnicity should be founded in an understanding of the past which places the Cham on par with the Khmer and the Vietnamese as producers of a great civilization complete with monuments, ruins, royal lineages and all of the other requisite accoutrements of a people that should be taken seriously.

These are all questions with which many Cham continue to grapple – even if they would not voice their concerns as a justification for a Cham state.   What is the relationship between the Cham, the Khmer people and the Cambodian state, particularly in light of the events of the Pol Pot period where the Cham, like other minorities, suffered disproportionately?   To what degree is being a Cham synonymous with being a Muslim?   How can the interwoven strands of belief and practice be teased apart and classified as being either a religious proscription or a cultural artifact?   What is Cham history and does it matter?   If so, in what way is that history understood within the context of the narratives of Cambodian nationhood, where they currently reside?   How should the Cham negotiate a coexistence as a stateless Islamic minority within an overwhelmingly Buddhist country and an officially Buddhist state?   These are the lines of questioning that this dissertation will seek to explore and ultimately illuminate so as to begin to understand the myriad of factors that currently impel Cham people and Cham communities to make choices about their future belonging in the Cambodian state.

0.2   The Broad Strokes

There are approximately 400,000 Muslims in Cambodia today. According to a survey conducted in 2005 by Bjørn Blengsli, there were 417 Muslim-majority villages in Cambodia with 244 mosques and 313 suraos (prayer houses). Since that date there has been significant construction of new institutions as well as the establishment of new Muslim communities, many of which still do not have an official status and so do not appear on the national registers. Of these 400,000 Muslims, roughly three quarters are ethnic Cham who live primarily in the north and east of the country especially near the waterways. The focus of this work will be primarily the Cham community rather than other non-Cham Muslims in the country.

Present-day Cham communities exhibit a range of ethnicizing behaviors that serve to connect them to Champa, the Islamic world and the Khmer dominated Cambodian state, as well as simultaneously distinguishing themselves from these same institutions and from each other.   If seen as a spectrum of manifestations of "Chamness", we could consider the Imam San, with their heavy emphasis on their aristocratic heritage and their ties to Champa, including pre-Islamic aspects of the culture such as the Chamic scripts and the spirit cults, as distancing themselves from Cham of more vulgar lineage who do not maintain a memory of the royal cult of Champa.   These Cham, in turn, place greater stock in an Islamic identity that compensates for the lack of royal blood and a Cham language that distinguishes them from Khmers and the Khmericized Chvea, who are also Muslims, but of Malay stock.   Despite these battles for position among

the different Cham, there is still an overarching Cham identity into which each group's efforts at distinction fit. Likewise, each group of Cham has their own way of justifying and legitimizing their stay in Cambodia in a ways that seem calculated to be non-threatening to the Cambodian institutional mainstream.

So that while they cling to the memories of an independent Champa, the Imam San also declare their allegiance to the King of Cambodia - the head of state. Many Cham downplay their foreignness in a way that makes their Islam seem home-grown and the Chvea, without a distinctive language or any connections to Champa, have probably developed a sense of community which is most similar to what Khmers think of when they say "Khmer Islam", or Khmers who just happen to be Muslim. This research represents an attempt to understand how these divisions among the Cham are created with respect to a historical memory of displacement and relocation in Cambodia. It will seek to contrast the Imam San and other Cham of different religious orientations but also find threads of commonality that underpin what is, at root, a consciously articulated, genealogically grounded narrative of dispossession and loss.

Research was conducted from 2008 to 2009 in the capital Phnom Penh and the greater Phnom Penh area. In particular, the areas of Chrang Chamres and Chrouy Changvar on the periphery of the city were important field sites - as was the area of Kampong Tralach, an hour north of the city and the center of the Imam San community. Other areas of importance were Prek Praa and Prey Pis – two important strongholds of the Tabligh movement. During this time interviews were conducted with different members of the community. Because much

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previous research had focused on the leadership and Cham hierarchy I purposefully chose to invest more energy in the development of relations with young men and women as well as with those religious functionaries whose job it was to provide services to the community directly.

Interviews were conducted in mosques, homes, coffee shops, halal eateries, moving vehicles and vehicles that had broken down. With time, as more people knew who I was and what I was doing, I had the opportunity to speak with a large number of women who provided me with important insight into how families function and to what degree women feel that being a Muslim is an essential part of their futures in a country where there is increasing talk (mostly talk) of the emancipation of women. By no means does this mean that I ignored officialdom or the older generation of Muslim leaders.

To be sure, I always found a warm welcome with the Mufti as well as at the Ministry of Cults and Religions, where I was assisted both with paperwork as well as with questions I had about the political world in which Cambodia's Muslims live, and I count many village elders and religious teachers as my dearest friends today. But fundamentally, my interest was not so much in what the past was as it was about the interpretations of that past and what they suggested about where people are going. After-dinner stories told by an octogenarian can be compelling, forceful, and weighty with the combined hopes and fears of a nation that one day found itself without a land and then suddenly, on the move. But for young Muslims, anxious to maintain a sense of connection to this past but then at the same time drawn into a future that is either damply disinterested in these

memories of yore or even explicitly hostile to the very existence of a pre-Islamic past that does not represent a step forward in the forever onward march of the community of the faithful, the meaning and meaningfulness of those stories is not always clear.

It is this discomfiture with a sense of historicized belonging in a state of permanent exile that my research has focused on. And the center of gravity of this cultural dislocation has been place squarely on the shoulders of the young. In the course of this dissertation, I hope to show how circumstances for Muslims have changed in recent years and how contact with the Muslim world outside Cambodia has brought the Cham into an awareness of options their elders likely never enjoyed. It will also examine how these different options are weighed and how the choices that result from this consideration have resulted in the splintering of the Kingdom's Muslims into multiple factions. This research will explain how history – history of the Cham but also increasingly the history of the Muslims – informs new ideologies of communitarian belonging and excludes others. With respect to these ideologies, I will propose that although they may differ from group to group they are all at heart diasporic ideologies, marked not only by a feeling of displacement but also by a moral anger stemming from a memory of dispossession - an outrage that can be assuaged and made meaningful only when coupled with idioms of justice and belonging.

Finally, this discussion of belonging and rejection will always be placed within the bounds of the Cambodian state which is both that same object of inclusion and exclusion but also the structure that bookends the realistic options

of the vast majority of the Cham.   Much commentary and even research on the Cham see them as having specifically Muslim problems (illiteracy, poverty) when in reality they are conditions prevalent throughout the country and not exclusive to Muslims.   At the same time, those calling for Cham autonomy as in the aforementioned article, appear at times to not recognize that political movement on the part of the Cham would have enormous repercussions, both political and social, in the state in which they happen to already be living.

A more recent example of this narrative that Islam exists in some type of opposition to the law or to established instruments of governance was the September 30th 2010 edition of the Economist, which published an article called 'Courting the Cham: A cultural revival gathers pace.   So do worries about fundamentalism.'   In it, it is suggested that while things seem on the up and up at the moment, fundamentalism and its never far away companion, terror, can always raise their heads in "lawless Cambodia".   The article even featured a photo of a pathetically desiccated cow, perhaps moments from the glue factory, doddering in front of mosque with the caption: "*New theatre of terror?*"   How delightfully drôle!   Unfortunately, it's also less delightfully wrong.

Cambodia, like other countries, could stand some judicial, financial, regulatory and civil society reforms – perhaps more so than most other countries – but the country is not lawless, and the Muslims of Cambodia do not feel unrestrained by law – quite the contrary, their religious faith of Islam is deeply concerned with the problems of law and the correct governance of social affairs. Not only are they beholden to the civil law of the Cambodian state but they are

morally subject to adat, the customs of the Islamic community – enforced not as much by police and judges as by the fear of social censure that one feels living in these communities.   Chams like their Khmer neighbors live in a world of laws, customs and conventions – much of it shared.   I hope that throughout this work, not only my observations but also the context in which they must be understood remain clear in order to give a realistic portrayal of a complex and heterogeneous community of people who are themselves negotiating a socially multi-faceted world.

0.3   The Structure of this Dissertation

In order to engage these problems while at the same time taking into account the diversity within the group of people that designate themselves as Cham, this dissertation will be organized into the following parts focusing on each of the most salient elements of Cham and Muslim discourse in Cambodia. The chapters, enumerated below, will cover the following issues:

0.3.1   Chapter One

The first chapter will tackle three issues that are important if one is to even begin the discussion of the present day situation of the Cham and the historical trajectory that brought them to this position.   Initially, the chapter will provide the historical background related to the rise and fall of Champa as a civilization and the subsequent migration into Cambodia of the refugees from Vietnamese rule.   It will also review the adaptation of the Cham to Cambodian society

through the French Protectorate and the Khmer Rouge régime until the present day. As such, this portion of the chapter is aimed at giving the reader an understanding of the history of the Cham as understood by colonial administrators and, later, by academics.

When one deals with a community so internally differentiated as the Cham, the question of how to refer to each group in a way that recognizes their own self designation as well as the name by which they are known outside their community becomes a necessity. In this initial chapter, the names of different groups along with their most salient characteristics will be lain out and following this, a system of nomenclature for running use throughout the remainder of the work will be established in order to make manageable the task of keeping straight the cast of characters that populate the Cham world.

Lastly, this chapter will present the Cham people from a Khmer point of view and alongside the other people with whom they share the country. As the dominant ethnic group, the Khmers' views of the Cham have an enormous influence on social relations in the private sphere as well as institutional policy in the public realm. However, this positioning of the Cham must be framed within what I have termed the 'ethnic ecology' of the country – the whole of positions held by the 'friends' and 'enemies' of the Khmer people including the Vietnamese, the Thai, the Chinese and the assorted peoples of the uplands. Within this discourse of the Cambodian nation, each group receives a position, not always favorable, and each member of these communities, including the Cham, must

learn to make their way in this web of ethnicized positionalities, much of which they will themselves internalize.

0.3.2 Chapter Two

With a basic historical framework established and the barrage of names and ethno-religious epithets brought into line, the second chapter will approach the question of religious change in the Cham community particularly since the end of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1993. The primary new currents in Cambodian Islam will be described and their essential tenets and distinguishing characteristics which have lead to new conflicts will be made clear. This chapter will therefore include explication of Islamic practices, and terminologies that need be understood in order to grasp the degree of change in religious practice as well as the manner of reinterpretation and reasoning that underlie these changes. This must not be regarded as a comprehensive exhibition of either Islamic history, creed, practice or jurisprudence. It is merely enough to make the rest of the data legible and intelligible for the reader and is strongly focused on the particularities of the religion as understood in Cambodia – particularities that may well be at variance with the understanding of the faith in other parts of the Muslim world.

0.3.3 Chapter Three

If the first chapter relayed the history of the Cham as found in the documentary record, the third will seek to explore the lived experience of a

historicized identity of a particular sub-set of the Cham people – the Community of Imam San. More than any other group of Cham, these 'Imam San' see their ethnic identity strongly tied to an identification with the historic Champa polity and this implies a certain type of relationship with the homologous institutions of the Cambodian state.

Through analysis of the beliefs and communal practices of this community, including celebrations of the birth of the founder of their community at the site where Khmer kings are buried, and the continued celebration of spirit possession ceremonies channeling the souls of the Champa king and aristocracy, this chapter will present a community that persists in antagonistic relationship to other Muslims and the new movements that have entered the country.

The way in which this community, however small, has managed to work a communitarian ideology outside the bounds of the 'new Islam' described in chapter two yields yet another example of the creative reinterpretation of ethnic history and a strategic deployment of the select commonalities with the Khmer dominated state to carve out for themselves a social, ethnic and semi-national space.

0.3.4 Chapter Four

As the majority of the research was conducted in Phnom Penh and in the greater urban periphery, this section will deal with those issues most pertinent to the urban community. Much of this will involve the difficulties Muslims have when brought into close quarters with Khmers and so will also recapitulate some

aspects of the renewal of interest in the practice and development of Islam in Phnom Penh - the epicenter of the nation's focus on the practice of development. The way in which Muslims come to terms with forms of modernity that they find unacceptable or at least problematic will reveal much of what being Muslim means in the broader world.

No longer are Cambodian Muslims merely a minority in a Southeast Asian backwater. They now form a community that, through learning about the Muslim world abroad, has itself become visible to that same caravan of donors, benefactors and Islamicist ideologues who threaten to criticize the terms of accommodations which they have made for living with Khmers. This chapter must necessarily involve an examination of how this visibility has become a part of Cham Muslim consciousness. Through studies and work abroad, and the expansion of media services that include daily coverage of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, an ongoing security crisis in Southern Thailand and other indignities suffers by their Muslim brethren, the community of the faithful, the Ummah, is more real than ever.

At the same time, urbanization and the concomitant problems of drugs, prostitution and juvenile delinquency figure prominently in this chapter as it is one of the vectors by which members quietly leave the community, and is seen to undermine the long-term viability of the community in the country – not so much because of the people that abandon the faith but because of the ill repute with which such individuals threaten to besmirch the name of the community as a whole.

Data for this chapter came from extended interviews with Muslim families, immigrant workers, religious students and members of what can only be called the dark underbelly of the city. Although this chapter covers many of the same themes of chapter two, it is more personal in tone and substance and will present the experience of contradiction and dislocation rather than the theoretical underpinnings of belonging and exclusion with which the second chapter was primarily occupied.

0.3.5   Chapter Five

This fifth chapter will depart from the Cambodian warp and woof of the earlier elaborations of the field data to explore the literature that I believe most relevant to understanding the problems of ethnicity deploying a historicized narrative of a spatially organized community. How can the experience of the Cham be understood as being similar or dissimilar to Jamaican Rastafarians, Irish Nationalist militants and Hutu militiamen? How does the data presented in chapters one through four fit with this previous work and add to it in a significant way? This chapter will both review the literature and recapitulate the findings of the field as necessary to fully integrate the data and theory.

This chapter will also seek to justify a reconsideration of the idea of "diaspora" especially in anthropology where ethnography has a privileged role in the performance of the discipline and the understanding of our subjects. I will propose that population movement alone is insufficient and perhaps not even necessary to understand a community as being diasporic. Historical scholarship

especially has taken the template of Jewish history as understood in Europe and North America and applied the term "diaspora" to a wide variety of demographic dispersions. However, this treatment of the topic denies the very reason the Diaspora captured the imagination of generations of people in the West.

The story of the Israelites is more than history or didactic morality tales; it is for many a historicizing lens that casts the present in terms of a distant past, and the future as an evolution of the present dictated by that past. The phrase "Next year in Jerusalem", said with a bottle of Manischewitz on the table, is not about Jews synchronizing their watches and setting up a rendezvous point. It's hardly interchangeable with "I'll see you next year", "I'll have my people call your people", or "Same Bat time, same Bat channel." As Rabbi Susan Grossman explains on the online Virtual Talmud, "*I think our Sages who crafted the Yom Kippur liturgy in the future tense–speaking of next year rather than this year–knew that Jerusalem is not only a very real city but also a prayer and a dream.*" The emotive power of the Diaspora narrative comes from the transformation of space and time into moral symbols – goals to be striven for, not locations to arrive at.

I myself, was born in Spain, raised in New York and then spent most of my adult life between Japan and Cambodia. I certainly have gotten around enough, but I don't ever open a bottle of malt liquor and declaim, "Next year in the Bronx." Nor do I consider that the Spanish victory over the Netherlands in the 2010 World Cup, however awesome and well-deserved, was any kind of payback or settling of scores for the Eighty Years War. The rise, then fall, then

rise again of Eliot Spitzer is nearer to me than other political scandals because it occurred in New York, but it isn't morally more compelling for that reason. Movement in space over time, knowledge of history and an interest in public ethics do not result in a diasporic mentality – they have to be combined in a particular way. The need felt by Zionists to establish a Jewish state in no place other than Palestine is just the most obvious of many possible examples of how a feeling of history can be tied to a sense of mission and yoked to a political project which in turn defines a community.

In a world where individuals are more mobile than ever before in history, it is important to not dilute the power of a term that is conceptually useful due to reckless overuse. If we are to understand how the "webs of significance" in which diasporic communities are suspended are different from those in other types of societies, then the application of the ethnographic method, with its capacity to go beyond mere descriptions of people and places, should be the privileged approach, as it permits a more holistic understanding of meaning and meaning-making than other types of research.

0.3.6   Chapter Six

All things end – even dissertations. I hope that by the time we arrive at this final chapter, the relevance of my findings will become clear at each of the levels of understanding that I seek to engage with this dissertation. This final chapter should then be considered a sort of executive summary of the findings and their relationship to other scholarship, presenting the content of the dissertation in

light of current concerns over migration, identity, citizenship and Muslim understandings of community and belonging – all of which extend far beyond the province of academia.

0.4   The Fieldwork

This dissertation is the product of a multi-sited ethnography conducted primarily in Phnom Penh and the surrounding areas – those areas roughly one hour away from the city by road.   As I was most interested in social change in the Muslim community and the way in which the idea of Cham ethnicity was changing in response to the broader transformation of the country, I elected to focus on the capital where those changes in the economic and social life of the country were most evident and where young people from around the country found themselves drawn to the opportunity to make some break with the rural life of the province.   This is not to say that the countryside remains static.   New infrastructure and remittances from family in the city or abroad have contributed to the welfare of many Cambodians, while forcible land evictions, population pressures on limited arable land and changing climate have presented complications.

Nevertheless, in order to remain multi-sited and still feasible in terms of research time and resources, most fieldwork was conducted around the capital city, where different types of field sites were reasonably close to each other and where better infrastructure did not make work impossible during the rainy season. A multi-sited ethnography was essential to the project because it involved

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comparing different religious communities and different forms of practicing religion and ethnicity and there is no single place where all of these ways of understanding religion and community come together.   Research at a single site, or even two or three could not have yielded the same results.   I also chose Kampong Chhnang province as an important area of research, both because of its proximity to Phnom Penh, and also because of all the provinces it seems to have the most even distribution of the different sects and communities of Chams in the country.

In Phnom Penh, there were four areas of research.   Reussei Keo, an area north of the city is an important area because of the large number of Muslims and the three important mosques in that neighborhood – KM7, a Salafi mosque and KM's 8 and 9 Tabligh mosques.   The relationship between these communities (Salafis and Tablighs) is not always excellent.   Across the river is the community of Chroy Changvar, a peninsula in the Mekong River, also with three mosques. This peninsula is now very much in the cross-hairs of property developers and a compliant state that has big plans for this small spit of land – plans which don't really incorporate the Muslim community.   In southern Phnom Penh, the Tabligh center of Prek Pra was also an important site for engaging missionaries and understanding their implementation of social programs.

Just north of the city, in the province of Kampong Chhnang, the sites of Chrok Romiet, a village known for its iron working tradition and the fact that a large number of people have family members that have immigrated to the United States; and Our Reussei, the center of the Imam San community, were the most

important sites. Besides these areas, some fieldwork was also conducted in Kampong Cham and Rattanakiri. Although Rattanakiri has very few Muslims, their numbers are increasing both through migration and the conversion of the Jarai, a highland group linguistically related to the Cham. These conversions and the politico-historic narrative that underpinned them became an important element of this dissertation.

Many of my interviews consisted of semi-structured encounters with people of some position or authority in the community. This included the staff at the Ministry of Cults and Religions, imams and religious teachers at the aforementioned field sites, and village chiefs, who, although Muslim, occupy a secular position. These interviews were important not only because of the information they provided but because they then legitimized my presence in the village, transformed me into a known or at least knowable element, and gave me access to the rest of the community. These interviews typically lasted between an hour and an hour and a half and covered their opinions of how their community had changed in recent years, the role of religion in local life and their relations with neighboring communities. All informants were presented with a recruitment script that explained the nature and purpose of the research as well as offering anonymity to the respondent. Besides people of official standing there is a constellation of unofficially important people that need to be engaged in order to understand the workings of the community and be considered a person with insider knowledge. Anyone can find a village chief, but can you find the best

poet, or the most popular spirit medium?   If you can then you must know your way around the block.

Extended time in these villages brought me into contact with a broad spectrum of the population.   At each site, I engaged young people, typically between the ages of 18 and 25, and interviewed them on many of the same issues mentioned above.   In the course of this, I was frequently invited to attend events where I met members of their peer group.   These gatherings included, informal meetings over coffee, family meals, spirit possession ceremonies, Islamic study circles and the occasional jaunt to the neighboring Khmer village for a drink. The opportunity to speak with young Muslims about their life circumstances and their networks of friends and contacts was important to developing an idea of how they interact with and influence each other, especially on matters such religious orthodoxy or visions of the world outside Cambodia's borders.

The majority of my interviews were conducted in Khmer.   Although Cham is a language that I continue to study, my proficiency in Khmer is far greater.   I therefore used Khmer on most occasions in order that our interactions not degenerate into language lessons, or worse, that they dumb down their language and ideas in order to make them assimilable to my Cham.   I did use Cham frequently in casual chats and I even learned to intersperse it into my Khmer for comic effect as well as to create a feeling of intimacy.   The difference between explaining to a village chief that "I am here to study the Cham community" and "I am here to learn more about our brothers and sisters" is tremendous.   In many parts of the country it is still common to find children and

older people, as well as some persons in middle age, with limited or negligible proficiency in Khmer. And so my Cham came in handy whenever I needed to ask a small child where the imam (who was avoiding me) was, or when, at the close of the day, I sat on the veranda overlooking the river as the old women tried to shock me with their dirty jokes.

Yet Khmer has the distinct advantage of having a single and standardized writing system, which Cham does not. All notes in the field were taken in Khmer. Writing Khmer by hand is one of the better parlor tricks a white man in Cambodia can perform. On more than one occasion, onlookers have crossed a street to bring a chair over and sit down beside me as I worked. Notes in Khmer served a number of functions. First, it reassured my interlocutor that I actually was pretty OK at Khmer – that he could speak without wondering too much if I understood what he was saying. It was also a way of making my note-taking transparent to my informant. He or she could see clearly what I was writing and not think that I was in fact writing something different from what was being told to me. Thirdly, relatively few interviews occurred in private. There was always a wife pouring tea, a nosy neighbor listening at the door, a child rummaging through my field bag, or that guy who dragged the chair over to gawk at my calligraphics. Field notes proved a useful prop for creating an atmosphere of conversation rather than a public examination. Asking observers for their opinions and then writing down their answers in my book made them feel as participants. Asking them for help with spelling helped keep them involved and

feeling like a valuable resource all while giving my interviewee some respite from questions.

These formal interviews also set me up for further conversations with these informants, members of their family and other persons in their in-group in more informal contexts. Observation and participation in community events lent much of the substance to this work. Time spent with the community helped me understand how people relate to each other, the ways in which they practice their religion and the discrepancies between the understanding they claim to have and the reality of lived experience. Family gatherings, religious meetings, holidays and day to day activities such as working at the shop or walking to the rice fields were all moments to interact with the local community and engage in conversations where Cambodian Muslims themselves revealed the topics of conversation that were interesting and relevant to them rather than depending on my interview agenda to drive our interactions.

All this said, there were some obvious limitations to my ability to participate in this community. The most important was the fact that I am not a Muslim. My southern European physiognomy and facial hair did give the impression that I might be an Arab to many, but I at no time claimed to or pretended to be a Muslim. This meant that I did not pray, and I was denied access to some places such as the interior of the Tabligh centers. While for the most part people were welcoming and very willing to speak to a non-Muslim, my non-Muslimness needed to be established from the outset. Once identified as a non-Muslim, it was frequently necessary to make an attempt to convert me.

These were typically one-off attempts as it would be negligent of them not to try, but some members of the Tabligh sect made more consistent efforts to this end. While I made certain to adhere to social norms, such as dietary prohibitions, abstinence from alcohol, and conduct with women, my status as non-Muslim was a consistent element of many my relationships.

This difference did have some advantages. I was not the only person engaged in questioning the Other. My opinion was solicited on a wide range of subjects, among them: substance abuse, agriculture in different countries and continents (or how do people live in places that don't grow rice?), the nature of Christ, police corruption, what Arab people are 'really' like when you meet them in person, the history of Islam in Spain, and the best way to study for school exams, to name but a few. At first, I felt that fielding these questions were taking time from my own work, but I made my best effort to take each query seriously as, after all, I had the time and resources to visit them in their country when none of them were ever likely to have the luxury to come to my country and pester my family with questions. In time, I grew to understand that these questions were themselves a source of inspiration for my research since they represented expressions of their concerns and anxieties about the changing world they find themselves in and the uncertain future that awaits their children. I can only take this willingness to expose their ignorance and insecurities as an act of friendship and trust.

Building trust was key, especially when talking to some of the more vulnerable elements of the Muslim population. In chapter 4, I present interviews

conducted with sex workers and drug users from the community.   Like everyone else, they were quoted under pseudonyms, but that was not the only kind of security they were looking for from me.   More importantly, they wanted to be guaranteed that their stories would be taken seriously and that I would refrain from judging them for their "mistakes" and "misdeeds".   Surprisingly, the testing of my methods and motivations was not greatest from the imams or community elders, but from these young people who wished to be certain that they could have a moment to explain the state of their existence and still assert the meaning of the religion they betrayed to arrive at this point.   They accepted me as a friend, and I accepted them as Muslims, which is what they appeared to have wanted all along.

The bulk of the field work occurred between 2008 and 2009, however, this was not my first time in the field and previous stints in the country during the summers of 2002 and 2004 meant that I had already established some of the basic elements of the ethnographic work, namely, introducing myself to the community, identifying sites of interest and issues of concern, and developing an understanding of the logistical challenges involved in working in Cambodia. With the bulk of the dissertation written, I returned to Cambodia in 2010 for work and continue to maintain my relationships with many of the characters that populate this dissertation.   The length of time I spent in the field meant that I had opportunity to engage the same people over a long period.   This allowed me not only to have a deeper understanding of their thinking, their values and their concerns, but ultimately, more importantly, I came to see how these aspects of

their persona changed over that time as circumstances changed – as they aged. Aging ended up being a central component to my understanding of the community as well as my acceptance into their lives, and this was not something I had earlier anticipated.

I made a decision early on in the research to make an effort to spend more time with the younger members of the different Muslim communities. In part this was because it was among these very people that I expected the transformation of social and religious attitudes and lifeways to be most salient. It was also because previous researchers, such as Bjørn Blengsli and Emiko Stock, had already spent much time with the leadership class of the Cambodian Muslim community, and so I thought the issue of social change as perceived by the youth to be a more important and original contribution to the study of Cham people. The other important factor behind this decision was that I thought I could do it – that is, I thought I could successfully develop contacts and friendships with younger Muslims, and thereby observe their social and at times anti-social lives. I was still in my 20's when my work began, and indeed I feel that I succeeded in developing close relations in these communities that permitted me to compare and contrast the emic understandings these groups have of their religion, their place in the world, and their relationships to each other.

This was not a condition that could obtain indefinitely, however. A curious element of Southeast Asian languages is the ubiquitous use of family relational terms as personal pronouns. As a result, you can actually hear yourself growing older here. Today, almost a decade after the start of my

fieldwork, the flocks of school children that used to call me "big brother" now call me "uncle". The ministry officials that once looked at me quizzically as I asked for research permissions now smile and pour me tea in anticipation of a long chat. Village women who thought I might make a good match for their daughters (provided I converted, of course) now tell me they will pray to Allah that I soon marry somebody – anybody. The youngsters who shared with me their hopes and dreams for the future of their communities are now college students – somehow still working for a better future but within a very different institutional framework. One of my best friends, a madrasah teacher, rose to become the imam of his community. Other friends of mine passed away during the course of my time here.

In short, this dissertation, like any other I suppose, represents the intersection of a certain time in my life with a certain moment in the history of the community and while most of this research could be easily reproducible by others, the change in my own positionality means that I myself can never revisit these moments or these characters again. By the type of data I was able to gather and kind of ethnography I eventually came to write, I feel justified in having made the choices I did regarding my selection of field sites and types of informants. Today, I continue to follow my friends and acquaintances in the community and, looking back at my field notes, remark on how it all turned out – sometimes in accordance with, sometimes contrary to all our expectations.

Chapter One

The Cham – a People, a History, a Religion, an Existence Apart

> *As for the Malays, or Thiâmes, as the Cambodians call them, I made endeavours to investigate their origin, and also the traces which I supposed to exist in Cambodia of Isrealite migrations. Monsignor Miche told me that he had never met with any Jews in the country, but that he had found in one of the sacred books of the Cambodians, the Judgement of Solomon exactly recorded, and attributed to one of their kings who had become a god, after having been, according to their ideas of metempsychosis, an ape, an elephant, &c.*
> *The Thiâmes are the same as the ancient Thiampois; but these Thiampois, whence came they? What is the origin of this strange people, whom the conquests of the Annamites drove back, doubtless from the south of Cochin China to Cambodia, but who form alliances with neither of the races whose countries they share, and who preserve their own language, manners and religion?* (Mouhot 2000)

1.1 History and the Historical Imagination

Once an independent and powerful player in the region, Champa was extinguished after centuries of conflict with the expanding Vietnamese empire and survives today only in the imagination of the Cham people of the diaspora. The ways in which the history of Champa is imagined and made relevant to present day Cham as well as Khmer shed light onto the development of the relations between Khmers, Cham, Vietnamese and Highlanders that one observes today. An examination of the political history of the Cham yields important insights into several aspects of their present-day situation. Namely, that the adoption of Islam need be understood as both a product of trade relations and cultural bonds between the Cham and the trading states of the Malay Archipelago,

as well as an act of resistance against Vietnamese encroachment and relocation in Cambodia. Second, that Champa consisted not only of a federation of coastal lowland Cham-speaking city states, but also included the mountainous hinterlands of the Annamite chain and the tribal Austronesians and Austro-Asiatics of that region, with whom they enjoyed amicable trade relations, and this history of interaction is still manifest in the continuum of non-state peoples of Indochina that preserve a historical memory of past alliances. Third, that the identity of Cham people, or better put, of particular groups of people who refer to themselves as Cham has historically been very malleable but can virtually always be characterized by differential emphasis placed on ethno-linguistic, religious and political affiliations which distinguish Cham from other Cham as well as from non-Cham.

1.1.1 The Rise and Fall of Champa

Champa enters recorded history in the 2nd century AD with the description of Lin Yi in Chinese sources. Lin Yi or Indrapura, as the Cham would have known it, was a city state north of present day Huế engaged in lowland rice agriculture, trade and significantly, piracy. It appears that the Cham states were founded by traders and merchants from the Malay Archipelago who settled along the coast and founded trading entrepôts between the archipelago and China as well as between the coast and the Annamite Highlands. Chinese chronicles clearly distinguish Lin Yi from Fu Nan in the Mekong Delta, a Khmer state that preceded and possibly gave rise to the later Angkorian Empire. It was Cham

piracy off the coasts of Việt Nam (then ruled by the Chinese) and southern China that in the 5th century provoked a Chinese retaliation. The Chinese expedition sacked Indrapura and carried off its treasury shifting the center of gravity of the Cham world southward to the city of Amaravati in what is today the province of Quảng Nam.

Amaravati had already been profoundly Indianized. Stone inscriptions from the 4th century in Sanskrit and Cham, representing the first writings in an Austronesian language, in addition to a Shiva temple and linga cult established in that same period are evidence that Amaravati was already profoundly Indianized by the time it assumed the leadership of the Cham city states (Coedes 1968; Majumdar 1985). This contact with the subcontinent continued as demonstrated by the continued importation of Indian ideas over the next five centuries. By the 7th century, shrines appear to Vishnu as well as Siva and in the 9th century Buddhism begins to appear on the religious landscape. All this suggests trade and other relations maintained with India and Ceylon, with the various Malay states such as Srivijaya and Mahapajit as intermediaries. Today, these temples, now ruins, at Mỹ Sơn are major tourist destinations for Westerners and Vietnamese alike and figure prominently in the Vietnamese literature on the Cham, which places heavy emphasis on the historical (read: not present) importance of Cham civilization (Lê 2002; Ngô 1994; Ngô 2002; Phan et al. 1991; Tran 2000).

Amaravati thrived as a commercial and cultural center until the 10th century when the Vietnamese threw off the Chinese yoke and began the

southward push, or the *nam tiến,* which would eventually extend the Vietnamese state to the Mekong Delta at the expense of the Cham and Khmer polities. Unlike other states in Southeast Asia at the time, Việt Nam struggled with overpopulation. While warfare in the region typically had at its goal either the extraction of tribute or the control over population centers and trade routes, the *nam tiến* was essentially a demographic push for Lebensraum, where landless Vietnamese peasant-soldiers would be granted paddy land at the conclusion of successful campaigns to settle with their families in fortified towns in a process similar to the colonization of the American West. With a still powerful China to the north and the mountainous terrain of what is today Laos to the west, it was the Cham and the Khmers of the coastal south, with their alluvial plains that were so attractive to the rice-farming Vietnamese, that would absorb the brunt of the expansion.

In 980 the Vietnamese sacked Amaravati and killed its king, formally incorporating what was Indrapura and Amaravati, which included the major port of Fai Fo, present day Hội An. This defeat precipitated yet another retreat by the Cham, this time to the city state of Vijaya in what is today the province of Bình Dịnh. It was during this period that Islam began to take hold among the Cham gradually as it was introduced by Islamicized traders from Malacca and other parts of the Archipelago. Although poorly documented, it appears that Islam spread first among the masses, which were attracted by a relatively simple religion promising a direct contact with the deity and dispensing with the elaborate Hindu cult.

The ascendancy of Vijaya would end in 1471, when the Vietnamese, under the emperor Lê Thánh Tôn, pushed southward once again, capturing Vijaya and settling its territory with ethnic Vietnamese peasants. The fall of Vijaya is accompanied by two key developments in the religious culture of the Cham. First, there would be no more Sanskrit inscriptions after the conquest of Vijaya, marking the beginning a long, slow decline of the Brahmanic cult. Secondly, Islam as a political force emerges and is immediately associated with resistance to the Vietnamese. Although Muslims at this time are still a minority of the Cham, it is they that spearhead the resistance to the invasion and later the resistance to the occupation, using their relations with the Highlanders to conduct guerrilla campaigns against the occupiers (Maspero 1928). Hindu and Buddhist Cham for the most part submitted to Vietnamese rule, although many of them would later flee under pressure from their overlords.

The demographic character of the *nam tiến* meant that instead of the Cham of conquered provinces being incorporated into the Vietnamese economy, they were in most cases forcibly displaced especially from choice paddy lands and politically and economically marginalized. Whereas in previous conflicts, the difference between winning and losing a war was often, from the peasants' point of view, a difference between sending tribute to one ruler instead of another, the Vietnamese invasion threatened the very livelihoods of these people that would be physically replaced by ethnic Vietnamese - people for whom Islam had been an attractive option. It is not well understood why Muslims were so disproportionately active in the resistance. It may be because Islam had found

converts among farmers, who may have had the most to lose in the new order. Although Islam initially arrived by sea, contact with Malay traders and other Cham in Cambodia meant that there was also an overland connection and that it would no longer be accurate at this point to think of Islam being transmitted exclusively or even primarily by merchants. In any case, it seems that while Hindu and Buddhist Cham sought some type of accommodation with the Vietnamese, the Muslims, which French scholars and historians would refer to as the "patriots", continued to defy the Vietnamese and in so doing made Islam an integral part of "true", uncompromising Cham identity.

The events of 1471 left the Cham with Kauthera and Panduranga, present day Nha Trang and Phan Rang respectively, with the center of gravity at Phan Rang. Within another 200 years, the Vietnamese would be in a position to eliminate all opposition from Cham or Khmers in the southern territories. Crucial was the 1623 Vietnamese acquisition of a customs house in the Khmer city of Prey Nokor, what is today Sài Gòn. The official Vietnamese presence in the Mekong Delta encouraged settlers to come to the delta and stake out their claims. It also meant that Champa was effectively penned in by the Vietnamese on both the northern and southern borders. With Khmer influence on the wane in the delta and Champa's room for maneuver reduced, it was only a matter of time before the Vietnamese would seek to connect the main part of their empire with their interests in the delta. Indeed, the Prey Nokor customs house gave greater impetus to Vietnamese expansion efforts and accelerated the political disintegration of Champa. In 1650, the Vietnamese take Kauthera, leaving only

Panduranga, which in 1692 undertook a disastrous campaign to recuperate the northern city state. This in turn ended with the Vietnamese capture of Panduranga itself and the end of the Cham polities, bringing to a conclusion, in less than 80 years, a decline that had been progress for over a millennium.

The fall of Panduranga set off a series of Cham migrations consisting of members of all classes of Cham society, from the nobility, which could not tolerate the humiliation of defeat, to displaced peasants (Weber 2012). The capitulation of the last of the Cham states not only reduced the options for refuge of Cham unhappy under Vietnamese rule elsewhere in the conquered territories, but also gave the Vietnamese a freer hand to pursue a more aggressive policy of Vietnamization against those Cham who remained under Vietnamese rule - a policy which spawned other migrations.

1.1.2 The Cham Migrations

Collins (1996) describes the migration of Cham as having occurred in four stages, the first being a poorly understood and documented series of resettlements after the fall of Vijaya. In 1471, the king of Vijaya, hoping to avoid the fate of the king of Amaravati, fled to Malacca. His name, Indra Brahma, suggests that he was likely a Hindu, who would have then converted to Islam upon reaching Malacca. This initial migration was characterized by settlement in other Cham trading centers, of which there were still many, and the Malay Archipelago, rather than into Cambodia.

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The second migration of Cham was into Cambodia in 1692 and is central to our understanding of the divisions among modern-day Cambodian Cham since it was likely this migration that resulted in the establishment of a community that would be known as the Community of Imam San (or simply, Imam San). The Imam San, who claim to be descended from the royal line of Panduranga, arrived in Oudong, the then capital of Cambodia, with their family and retinue numbering approximately 5,000 persons, and petitioned king Jayajettha III for refuge from the Vietnamese. The Khmer king allowed the immigrants to settle throughout the country, including near the capital, Oudong, where they soon became active in royal politics and court intrigue (Clere 1914; Collins 1996).

The Tây Sơn rebellion of the final years of the 18th century set the stage for the third migration. With Việt Nam or Đại Việt divided between the Trinh family in the north and the Nguyễn in the south, warfare was endemic and taxes, including new types of taxes which were applied to non-agricultural activities such as trade and artisanal production increased to supply the war effort. This, plus the mass conscription of peasants into both armies yielded a peasant uprising led by the Tây Sơn brothers, the eldest of whom was actually a tax collector himself, but had a falling out with the Nguyễn lord after gambling away the taxes he had collected. The Tây Sơn brothers fled into the Highlands where they had had contacts in the betel trade and, from there, organized a peasant army. In concert with the Trinh, the Tây Sơn brothers made swift gains against the Nguyễn, capturing Sài Gòn and killing off the entire Nguyễn family with the exception of the lord's nephew, Nguyễn Anh, who escaped and after several

attempts to take power, returned at the head of the French expeditionary force, who placed him back in power in 1802.

It is unclear, exactly what role the Cham would have had in the Tây Sơn rebellion, but we do know that there was considerable resistance from the Cham, who at the time were led by a Malay and orthodox Muslim, Tuon Set Asmit. After several years of fighting, the confessional fault lines made continued struggle untenable. Whereas Hindu Cham and Cham Bani (Shi'ite Cham) decided to submit themselves, Muslim patriots opted to flee to Cambodia. Once in Oudong, Tuon Set Asmit was received by the king and awarded the governorship of the predominantly Muslim district of Tboung Khmum in what is today Kompong Cham. As in the fall of Vijaya, Islam was politicized as an ideology of resistance and ethnic patriotism, intransigent in the face of overwhelming odds and in contrast to the less zealous Cham who would live under Vietnamese overlordship. This naturally begs the question of why it is intolerable to live under the Vietnamese, but acceptable to submit oneself to the Buddhist king of Cambodia. Certainly the grass was greener on the other side in this case. Although they would not have sovereignty as a state, Cham and Muslims were recognized by the Khmer and it was accepted that the governor of Cham areas should be a Muslim. Tuon Set Asmit was only one example of a Muslim who achieved high office within a bureaucracy that found a use for these refugees.

Tuon Set Asmit would meet an unfortunate end however, when, in 1820, the king of Cambodia, Ang Chant, sent a delegation to Việt Nam to secure

assistance against the Siamese.   The delegation was headed by Tuon Set Asmit, who was recognized by the Vietnamese as the author of the Phan Rang resistance. The Vietnamese offered the king help in exchange for Tuon Set Asmit, who would be executed.   The King reluctantly accepted.   The execution of a loyal servant of the king, suddenly made expendable, undercut the loyalty the king could command of his Muslim subjects.   The community was divided, with some even returning to Việt Nam, more specifically, Châu Đốc, which Việt Nam had just recently acquired from Cambodia.   This orthodox Muslim community survives there today (Collins 1996).

The fourth and final major migration occurred during the 1830's under the reign of Emperor Minh Mạng, who concerned with consolidating control over his empire in the face of growing French influence, launched a program of Vietnamization of the Cham and other lowland minorities.   Until that time Phan Rang had largely been spared the attention of the Vietnamese authorities, probably because, unlike the agriculturally promising lands of the northern Cham states, Phan Rang was drier and had poorer soil.   This may also be why Hindus and Cham Bani thought they might be able to continue living in Phan Rang under the Vietnamese.   The assimilation campaign suppressed traditional practices and reorganized village and district governments along Vietnamese lines.   Cham unwilling to assimilate fled, this time to the mountains and among the Highlanders.   Cham-Highlander relations had been friendly for many centuries, and it appears the Cham were welcomed.   The fact that the Vietnamese, as wet rice cultivators, had no interest in the Highlands was also a factor.   Indeed,

ethnic Vietnamese would hardly penetrate the Annamite Chain until the 20th century, and even then, only with government intervention and support.

The Cham Muslims would not go quietly however, and during this last migration, Muslims would make two last gasp efforts at expelling the Vietnamese. The first of these was in 1833, when Katip Sumat a holy man who had spent many years in Mecca raised an army to reestablish Panduranga as an independent state. The second, in 1834, led by the Cham Bani, Ja Thak Va, was an attempt to remove the Vietnamese settlers from their coastal enclaves. Both revolts were failures, the first more miserable than the second, which actually enjoyed a series of victories; however, they are of interest because of the way the Muslims, once again at the vanguard of the resistance, made use of and incorporated the tribal Highlanders.

Katip Sumat's plan for revolution was two-pronged in that it capitalized on the growing Muslim anti-Vietnamese fervor and the traditional connections between the Cham and the Highlanders. Missionization of the Highlanders, primarily Roglai and Chru, and the spread of Islam, with a heavy emphasis on the notion of the jihad against infidels, was integral to Sumat's designs. Ja Thak Va too sought the cooperation of the hill tribes, but he went several steps further. The Ja Thak Va rebellion, only a year after Katip Sumat's failure, had as its goal the establishment of an essentially land-based city state in the vicinity of Panduranga and Kauthera, moving the locus of power from the coast and nearer to the Highlands. More extraordinary still, he established a tripartite provisional government with a Roglai Highlander as the king of the new state, a Chru

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Highlander as the second king and a Cham as commander of the army. Although defeated, Ja Thak Va, made significant gains for a time and forced the emperor to address issues of local-level corruption in the provinces that supported the rebellion.

Both of these events, plus the levels of Cham migration into the Highlands during this period, highlight the affinity that these two communities felt with each other. Unlike the migrations of 1471, where safe haven was sought by taking to the sea and fleeing to Malacca or Majapahit, this fourth migration found Cham in solidarity with the Highlanders. In part, this may be because of the reduced maritime presence of the Cham after the loss of Fai Fo and their political marginalization after the fall of Panduranga broke the links between the Cham and the Muslim trading states, but the traditional Cham-Highlander relation cannot be ignored.

Early Cham settlements on the mainland coast seem motivated by the need to facilitate maritime trade between India and China, but there were also ancillary benefits to be derived from extending the trade network inland, in search of tropical hardwoods and especially eaglewood. Also known as agarwood, this fragrant resin was the product of certain tropical trees infected with a particular type of fungal disease. The resin, which is the tree's immune reaction to the infection, can be dried and traded as an aromatic on the Chinese and Middle Eastern markets. The acquisition of this product required Highlanders who were experienced in locating and diagnosing the promising trees. Eaglewood gathering was always done in partnership with the hill tribes, who were

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compensated in their turn. In addition to this, the Cham were able to learn construction techniques involving the use of tree resins instead of mortar in the construction of their temple towers, which still stand today (Ngô 1994). These relations appear to have maintained a certain respectful distance between the Cham and the upland communities as well, where the Cham never attempted to extend their sovereignty into the mountains and the Highlanders never saw reason to feel threatened by Cham commercial developments on the coast.

This special relationship would be sealed in the fourth migration when the last vestiges of the Cham aristocracy would flee into Cambodia, leaving behind the princess, Po Bia, and with her, the royal treasures, which could not leave Champa. Upon her death, these treasures were distributed in at least nine locations in the Highlands for safekeeping (Collins 1996). These hill tribes continue to protect the artifacts of the Cham royal cult. The fact that the Highlands were an acceptable repository for the items as opposed to Cambodia where the majority of Cham had fled, gives an indication of the closeness between the coastal and Highland Cham - the literature of the period often using the word "Cham" to refer to the members of any ethnic group that made up part of the Cham federation. Today, the Cham diaspora is recognized, not only among the Cambodian Western Cham and the Eastern Cham of Phan Rang, but also among the various Chamic hill tribes of the Highlands - the Roglai, the Rhade and the Jarai among others. In the West, this connection was reconstructed using linguistic evidence (Thompson 1976; Thurgood 1996; Thurgood 1999), but for the Highlanders and Cham themselves, it is the historical memory of cooperation

that is maintained in the traditional histories and narratives of the region that maintains feelings of solidarity (Collins 1996). These memories of a special relationship will become more apparent in the discussion of Islamic missionization of highland people of Rattanakiri province in Chapter 4.

1.1.3 French Colonial Period and Independence

The arrival of the French and the establishment of the protectorate in 1863 had profound effects on the Muslim community which are felt to this very day. Although this arrangement only lasted 90 years, it is seen as being key to the continued existence of Cambodia as an entity separate from either of its neighbors. Apart from safeguarding the nation, the French experience was instrumental in creating the modern sense of Cambodian nationhood shared by the intellectual classes, which assigns to the modern-day Khmer the title of inheritors of Angkor. The French, having lost Egypt with its grand history and glorious monuments to the British, had set their eyes on Angkor – an ancient civilization now in the process of rediscovering itself under the tutelage of their French protectors (Edwards 2007; Muan 2001).

Because of their monumental architecture in central Việt Nam, the Cham too were of interest to the new colonial administration and Vietnamese prohibitions on Cham practices were repealed in Việt Nam. In Cambodia, where there were no such restrictions, the French found a Muslim population that was reasonably well integrated into Cambodian political life and where they frequently were counted among the governors and administrators of areas with

large Muslim minorities.   Under the French, the Cham were frequently classified as 'Malays' and little distinction was made among different groups of Mulsims in the country (NAC 1937).   For them French rule would spell a reversal of fortunes in the public sphere, as they were loathe to send their children to colonial schools for fear that they would lose their Muslim faith.   Without the requisite diplomas, the Muslims were shut out of the apparatus of administration and the opportunities for social and economic advancement that they afforded.   The result was a disconnect from the institutions of government and a shift towards a sort of cultural and social parallelism that would keep Muslims and non-Muslims apart.   Although written in 1941, Marcel Ner's words still have resonance today:

> *… the Muslims pay their taxes and are not involved in political agitation... they can effectively be ignored as they do not form a majority in any province.   This situation is likely to change however.   Clearance of the Mekong banks have reduced fish catches as has the ever increasing competition from the Chinese and Vietnamese.   The economic crisis has hit them hard and made them aware of their isolation, their neglect of possibilities for careers in the administration and of their ignorance of Western technology* (Ner 1941).

While the Cham were not quick to plug themselves into the colonial system, they were not completely disconnected from the world outside their communities.   This was a period of intense interchange with Muslims abroad particularly in Kelantan in the Malay peninsula (Guérin 2004).   Marcel Ner noted how the flow of students and teachers led to the development of local centers of study, particularly at Phum Trea in Kampong Cham Province, a place that today stands as the center of the Tabligh movement in Cambodia (Bruckmayer 2007).   During this time, many of the divisions regarding the

correctness of particular religious practices and the importance of Islam as a guiding force in public life became sharper and better defined. This was accompanied by an increasing level of conflict in areas where preachers began speaking against un-Islamic practices (NAC 1935).

The Cambodian Muslim community became a field of contention between the Kaum Muda (Young Group) and Kaum Tua (Old Group) struggles that were occurring throughout the Malay Archipelago. The Kaum Muda can be thought of as the precursors to the contemporary Saudi and Kuwaiti missionaries, who seek to purify the religion by attacking traditions and practices that are without foundation in the Qur'an or in the sayings and deeds of the prophet. Kaum Tua are those who retain those practices and defend them as properly Islamic. By the 1940's and 50's divisions between the two groups lead to strife and violence in many communities. The main exponents of the New Group, Ali Musa and Muhammad India, were exiled to Thailand in an effort to maintain order in the Muslim community and prevent the further spread of these 'foreign' doctrines.

The Sihanouk period that followed independence was a time of national consolidation around an ideology that combined state Buddhism and a paternalistic conception of socialism. As with the French, there was concern about the involvement of outside elements in the Muslim community and an interest in maintaining its relatively quiescent and inoffensive character. It was during this time that the term "Khmer Islam" was coined, along with "Khmer Leu" for Highlanders, and "Khmer Krom" for the Khmer speaking inhabitants of the Mekong delta (Trankell and Ovesen 2004a). With these new labels, groups

previously outside the imagined collective are given a place within the new Cambodian state as a people who are effectively Khmer, even if not quite as Khmer as the majority. The importance of classification will be discussed further in 1.3.

In 1970, the Sihanouk government fell in a coup d'état directed by Prime Minister Lon Nol. Sihanouk's policy of neutrality during the Second Indochina War left the Vietnamese in control of much of eastern Cambodia and Lon Nol's coup was meant to rectify that situation. While his campaign against the Vietnamese army met with complete failure, Lon Nol focused on the enemy he could defeat, namely, the ethnic Vietnamese civilian population of the country, particularly in the Phnom Penh area (Chandler 1996). What followed was a massacre of civilians and the expulsion of many thousands of Vietnamese. Muslims were relatively favored as Lon Nol was well disposed to them. The most prominent Muslim during the Lon Nol period was General Les Kosem.

Les Kosem was a childhood friend of Lon Non, Lon Nol's brother, and both had studied together at Lycée Sisowath, an institution which had become the intellectual incubator of Khmer nationalism and anti-Vietnamese fervor. Lon Nol himself was interested in developing a grand narrative of history that opposed Mon-Khmer peoples to the invading Vietnamese, and the incorporation of minority peoples under the suzerainty of the Khmers was a principal element of this vision (Kiernan 1996). Les Kosem was given command of his own Cham battalion. Considering the independence and irredentist movements that were growing at the time among the non-state peoples, with whom Les Kosem had

close contact, the creation of an all-Cham battalion was seen as a sign of confidence on the part of Lon Nol by many Cham with memories of the time.

An older Cham living on the Chrouy Changvar peninsula recalls Les Kosem's achievements with enormous pride:

> *Back then when we were fighting Pol Pot, there was a Muslim army. The commander was Les Kosem – he was a Muslim. And they fought all around there... (wagging his index finger from north to roughly northeast). During that time we had no problems here. Sometimes we didn't get along with the Khmers before Lon Nol... One time a Muslim had capsized his boat right here and the Khmers only looked and they laughed, but they didn't help. Only when a monk came out of the temple – he chastized them and told them to help and they helped. But with Lon Nol it was OK because Lon Nol respected Islam and the Muslim soldiers helped fight the Khmer Rouge and defend the government... Later they changed and they didn't have a Muslim army any more... I'm not sure why not, but still with Lon Nol and Les Kosem, we were safe and we had respect from the government.*

These types of memories are not uncommon among people who remembered the revolution, and typically, they all take the same care to avoid points of contention. While Lon Nol is praised, Sihanouk, his predecessor under which the Cham were less well treated, remains unnamed. While he admits that there were grievances with Khmers, he points out that the monks, the representatives of the nation's official religion, were sympathetic. And even as he beams with pride with the mention of these Muslim soldiers and their commander, he always couches their exploits in the context of the wider war in which the Muslims were loyal defenders of the state. As for the dissolution of the Muslim battalion, he may or may not have known that Les Kosem's troops had

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gained such a reputation for brutality that they eventually became a liability, leading to the reassignment of Cham soldiers to other units (Vickery 1984).

1.1.4 Pol Pot Régime and Post Civil War Period

A casual glance at a bookshelf in the Cambodia section of any library or bookstore will reveal the Pol Pot period as a major concern of writers and historians. Aside from Angkor, no other period of Cambodian history receives even the most basic treatment outside of the specialty press. This dissertation will not dwell on the particulars of the régime's treatment of its population, which has been well covered in other works, except to illuminate what the effects were on the Muslim population and how the consequences are understood today.

During the civil war, the Khmer Rouge maintained a policy of integrating Muslims as a part of the movement. Soldiers and cadres were sent into Cham villages to be helpful to the population. They were respectful and well thought of (Osman 2006). Yet, upon achieving victory, the Khmer Rouge government ordered the immediate depopulation of Phnom Penh and the resettlement of urban people into the countryside. Those in the countryside were classified as the "base people" and those resettled from the cities were the "new people". The base people, being purer and less corrupted than the city dwellers, were privileged over the new people – with better living and working conditions. Muslims, although a majority were in the countryside already, were classed "deportable base people". They too would be moved internally and denied the prerogatives of the base people.

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During this time, religious observance was prohibited, as was the use of the Cham language. Religious texts were destroyed and mosques and temples were turned into pig pens, granaries or warehouses (Kiernan 1996). Many stories are told of people being forced to eat pork or work with pigs, of Islamic books and religious items being collected and destroyed, and of Cham being persecuted as disloyal. Like all Cambodians, Muslims find the Khmer Rouge period to be particularly painful and difficult to talk about. Apart from the distress of reliving memories there is the added problem of how to pose the suffering of the Muslims in this period in relation to the hardship endured by Khmers.

Older Cham who lived through the events of the civil war are, especially when first addressing this topic with an outsider, quite adamant about the fact that they and the Khmer suffered "exactly the same". They point out that the Khmer Rouge was officially an atheistic régime, that apart from destroying mosques and killing the imams they also destroyed Buddhist temples and slew monks. This emphasis on the "exact sameness" of the suffering usually weakens over time as the person becomes more open about the ways in which the Khmer Rouge singled out Muslims for particularly harsh treatment. Oftentimes, this is then followed by a repetition of how they suffered "exactly the same", suggesting a high degree of anxiety that they not be seen trying to cast themselves as victims deserving of more sympathy than their Khmer neighbors.

1.2   Contemporary Cambodian Islam

The Cham that have entered Cambodia settled primarily along the Mekong and Tonle Sap Rivers in what are today the provinces of Kratie, Kompong Cham, Pursat and Kampong Cham, just north of Phnom Penh and Phnom Penh itself, where many became particularly active in fishing.   Since then they have moved onto other provinces where they find coreligionists among the Chvea a group of Muslims who are not ethnically Cham.   Cambodian Muslims may be divided into two distinct groups: the Cham and the Chvea.   Khmers virtually always refer to all Muslims as Cham although the term Khmer Islam gained currency among some members of the older generation as a more politically neutral term that explicitly classifies them as a kind of Cambodian rather than foreigners. This politically useful nomenclature is echoed in the incorporation of the various hill tribe groups as Khmer Leu, or upland Khmers.   The Cham are further subdivided into the Cham (with no other modifier) and the Community of Imam San or simply the Imam San for short.

Of these groups the Imam San are the smallest and considered the most culturally conservative.   The Imam San group includes roughly 20,000 people. The total Cham population of the country is near 300,000 and there are an additional 100,000 Chvea (non-Cham Muslims), so they are numerically at a disadvantage and this is a cause of great anxiety in the community.   They trace their ancestry directly back to the royal court of Champa that fled from the Vietnamese army.   This community was given its current land holdings by royal decree from the king of Cambodia and to this day consider themselves loyal to the

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Cambodian royal family. The Imam San are considered aberrant by more mainstream Muslims, as they do not subscribe to the authority of the Mufti, but rather consider themselves to have an unmediated connection to the law of God. This brings them into conflict with Muslims who do recognize religious law as expounded by clerics and imams. The Imam San identify strongly with Champa, the Cham language and the Cham script, which they preserve for religious manuscripts, yet, at the same time, they derive their status as a community from the recognition of the king of Cambodia, a Buddhist, that the Imam San are the true descendants of the royal family of Panduranga. How exactly this apparent contradiction between an "authentic" Islamic sect propped up by a traditionally Buddhist institution has not been addressed adequately in previous research, but Collins (1996) suggests that in some way, the Imam San distinguish themselves from Cham and Buddhist Khmers alike by emphasizing the directness of the unmediated relationship that the Imam San enjoy with the ultimate sources of authority - the king on earth and God in the heavens. While this is true in a sense, in Chapter 3, I will also show specifically how the Imam San construct a historicized world view that casts them as a people related to the Khmer through bonds of culture and common history which are made manifest through a relationship to the royal family of Cambodia.

The Cham who are not of the Imam San group, who also trace their origins to Champa are considered more orthodox by foreign Muslims. They are open to Malayo-Islamic influence and have adopted Malay and Arabic as liturgical languages. Although they also speak Cham, they typically write it

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using the Jawi (Malay-Arabic) script.   Many Cham emphasize their faith as an identifying factor rather than their ethnicity, which they believe might lead to conflict with Khmer over their status within Cambodia.   The Chvea on the other hand, represent a mixed population of Cham and Malays, that although Muslim, are mono-lingual in Khmer.   They are recognized as Muslims by Cham, but often looked down upon for being excessively assimilated.   The Chvea typically consider themselves descendants of both Cham and Malays who have become Khmericized.   The research presented here deals overwhelmingly with the Cham rather than the Chvea.

All three of these groups have come under significant pressure in past years to bring their practice of Islam in line with the demands of foreign patrons in the Middle East and Malaysia.   Communities, in order to gain access to funding and developmental aid, must prove they are observing Islam in a sufficiently orthodox manner.   For this reason, the Imam San are outside the aid circuit and are becoming still more marginalized than before.   The Imam San have resisted attempts to change traditional practices and, for the moment, the older generation of community leaders is unwilling to compromise with what they see as a foreign Islam and an imposition.   Unlike the Imam San, Cham and Chvea generally feel that practices originating in Malaysia or Indonesia have been endorsed as properly Islamic and that the Islam of the Middle East is in some sense an ideal goal.   Whether the younger generation in the Imam San community will continue this estrangement from the rest of the Muslim world remains to be seen, but it seems that the expanded opportunities for education,

vocational training and travel offered by Islamic charities is becoming increasingly attractive to young Muslims who are marginalized in what is already a difficult economic situation.

1.3   Notes on Nomenclature

The previous section suggests some flexibility in the ways in which these groups are designated, by themselves, other Muslims, Khmers and Western academics.   To begin, it should be noted that apart from a very small number of Khmers who have close contacts with the Muslim community or who are involved with the Ministry for Cults and Religions, virtually no Khmer distinguishes between Chams and Muslims.   For this reason many Chvea will also refer to themselves as Cham when speaking in Khmer to an outsider since this is understood to mean 'Muslim' as a general term.   When speaking Cham this distinction is always maintained, however, since the Chvea do not speak Cham at all but only Khmer and therefore the synonymy of the terms 'Cham' and 'Muslim' is only tenable when speaking Khmer.

Amongst Muslims, the distinctions are somewhat finer.   All Cham recognize themselves as ethnically distinct from the Chvea.   The primary marker for this is language.   Even in areas where Cham and Chvea live near each other, they typically live in different villages and have rather separate social lives. While each regards the other as a brother in faith, the issue of language and solidarity can be touchy, particularly for Chvea who resent being left out of conversations because of their inability to speak Cham.   Some Chvea along with

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Khmer converts to Islam have become quite vocal in recent years about the need to bring Muslims into line with the rest of the country in speaking the national language – a discourse which is resisted by those Cham who see their language as a mark of separation from the rest of the non-Muslim society. This issue of language ideologies will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4.6.2 and 4.7.

Within the Cham, we have already encountered the Imam San. This is the name that the Imam San themselves use to designate their group. Other Cham will refer to them alternately as Cham Jahed, Cham Boran or Cham Daem. The word Jahed is considered pejorative by the Imam San. According to one informant, "That is the word they use to insult us. Jahed means wrong – it means we are doing things the wrong way." For unknown reasons, this term, 'Jahed' is the term most commonly applied to the Imam San by Western academics and researchers, including Collins. As far as I can tell there is nothing to suggest that the use of this term by scholars was ever meant as a way to demean the community, rather I suspect that they learned this term from other Cham and were not made aware of its negative connotations.

When friendship and collegiality need to be engendered in a conversation or social gathering, the Imam San will be referred to as Cham Boran (Ancient Cham) or Cham Daem (Original Cham). Both terms bring to mind the greater age of their traditions and their more powerful connections to the memories of the old Cham country. When talking of the Cham Daem, more than a few Cham will admit to being charmed by their supposedly old-school attitude towards religion, made visible in the odd construction of their domeless, minaretless

temples, their white robes, and their linguistic archaisms.   However, they do also

recognize that this was very much a mistaken path – a holdover from a time when

the Cham did not understand Islam correctly – and so take pains to explain how

much farther along they are on the path to being a truly Islamic community than

the Imam San.

Finally there are the vast majority of Cham who are not Imam San.   The

term they use for themselves often depends on their religious orientation.   For

those of the Salafi and Tabligh sects the terms 'Salafi' (or 'Kuwait') and 'Tabligh'

are used respectively.   Although, very frequently they may simply insist that

they are Muslims and that no further qualification is necessary.   Cham who do

not subscribe to one of these internationalist currents do not seem to have a

specific name or self-designation.   In the scholarly literature they are sometimes

referred to as Sunni-Shafi'i.   This merely indicates that they are not Shi'a and that

they subscribe to the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence, and so are rather like

the majority of Muslims in the Malay world.

Sunni-Shafi'i is not a term they normally ever use for themselves however.

Absolutely every attempt I've made to ask a non-Imam San Cham to give me the

name for his community has been met with some kind of laughter.   They find it a

surprising and odd question and always take a few moments before answering that

they really do not have a name, but if they did have to have one they would

choose either Cham Thoamadaa or Islam Kampuchea.   These terms have traction

in different communities.

The term Cham Thoamadaa literally means Normal Cham – regular, not special or particular, certainly not deviant. The word Thoamadaa contrasts with the word khos – a word whose semantic range encompasses the meanings of 'different' and 'wrong', a distinction that will be addressed in Chapter 2. 'Cham Thoamadaa' may be used by Muslims who subscribe at least in principle to the superiority of the Islam taught in foreign countries and who view the adoption of this form of the religion with favor. Thoamadaa then also implies that they are normal with respect to the practice of the religion. With the most Thoamadaa or normative practices being found in the Middle East, Cham are more normal, more thoamadaa and less khos as they approach this ideal.

Islam Kampuchea, on the other hand, is typically encountered by those Muslims who are not Imam San, but who are also uninspired by the promise of foreign Muslims to bring any kind of positive change. Frequently this term, meaning simply "Cambodian Islam", is used in the Phnom Penh area, especially Chroy Changvar, by young Muslims who aspire to some type of professional or NGO career in the city. Many are suspicious of the foreignness of these missionaries and the inapplicability of their ideas to the Cambodian context. This term is different from 'Khmer Islam' discussed earlier, in that it does not negate the ethnic difference between Chams and Khmers, but instead emphasizes the indigenous quality of the Islam they practice.

Among the Imam San, other Cham can be called Cham Changvang. This is a rather neutral term that implies little value judgment or adversarial attitude. It is simply a reference to their leadership structure, which is distinct from the

Imam San.   More often the Imam San refer to them as Khaang Arab (the Arab group) or more simply "the Arabs".   This notion of non-Imam San Cham as Arabs will be explored in more detail in Chapter 2.   The other term encountered among younger people of a secular inclination is 'Muslim' as opposed to 'Cham'. This will be further treated in Chapter 3.

For the purposes of this study, 'Cham' will refer to those Cham who are not Imam San.   'Imam San' will be used for the members of the Community of Imam San.   'Chvea' will be used for those Muslims who are not Cham and who consider themselves descended from Malay immigrants.   And the term 'convert' will be used to refer to those Khmers who have converted from Buddhism relatively recently.   The 'Cham' will then be subdivided by sect into Salafi, Tabligh and the less heavily influenced Sunni-Shafi'i – a convenient, if bulky, exonym.

1.4   Cham in the Ethnic Ecology of Cambodia

The public discourse about ethnicity in Cambodia is a complex affair. To a great extent minorities in the country are treated quite deliberately in an effort to portray a certain image of the country as a whole and of the position of the Khmer people in the nation as well as in the wider region.   The position of the Cham within the national narrative is difficult to understand and impossible to appreciate without placing the Cham within a framework that includes the Vietnamese, Thai, Chinese and upland peoples that also reside in the country and who each impart one piece of the mosaic that is the ethnic ecology of Cambodia.

This is a collage of peoples and not merely a list of the people in the country overlain with some idealized notion of national citizenship. It is highly hierarchical, with each group occupying a different position and function within the greater national narrative as understood by Khmer Buddhists and promoted by the national government. What follows is a brief discussion of each of these groups and the way in which they contribute to the national space that the Cham occupy.

As a prelude to this, one should remark on what is perhaps the principle distinction made when discussing the place of non-Khmer peoples, and that is the division between peoples who are internal to the Cambodian state and can therefore be called 'minorities', and those peoples who are from outside the borders of Cambodia. The Cambodian social science textbook for the 11th grade presents the minorities of Cambodia as being of these two types: the indigenous minorities and the foreign residents who properly speaking are not minorities, since they come from somewhere else and ostensibly form a majority in that country. This textbook included the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cham in one group – that of foreign residents – and placed the upland hill tribes in the group of indigenous 'minorities'. This tension between the foreignness and rootedness of the Cham in Cambodian society leads to certain contradictions that become apparent only as the treatment of other groups by Khmers is understood.

1.4.1　The Upland Minorities

Upland groups represent an unambiguously 'internal minority'. This is to say that they are within the borders of the Cambodian state which is dominated by Khmer people. This is not to say that they are internal to Cambodian society. At first glance this appears somewhat contradictory - they are within the state but apart from society. The post-colonial period saw efforts to domesticate the uplander and reclassify him as a Khmer (Trankell and Ovesen 2004b), but this did not substantively transform a pre-colonial mindset that saw the upland tribes as lacking in the marks of civilization, most notably rice agriculture and Buddhism (Davis 2009). This is not in any way unique to the history of Cambodia, in fact, it is a common trope in the discourse of "civilizing the margin" (Duncan 2004). However, the spatial metaphor implied by the word 'margin' obscures the degree to which these 'marginal people' are very much within the body politic even if separate and inferior. The Cambodian state after all only seeks to civilize Cambodian uplanders and not Karen in Burma or Hmong in Laos.

In a conversation with a prominent American lawyer with close ties to the Cambodian government, he remarked that at all of the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) events, Muslim members of the party were seated separately from other members. Not in the back or off somewhere near the kitchen, but usually in a quite prominent place near the center. He then explained that many government officials had told him that what they are truly afraid of is that the Muslims would make themselves separate from the Khmer and that they might not be counted on to remain as part of Khmer society. I suggested to him that

what those officials feared was not so much that they be separate, since they already were, but that they should be outside – that is to say separate outside the system and possibly within a wider Muslim world rather than separate and internal, tame - captive even.   Upon reflection he agreed this made more sense.

This feeling of ownership of one's tribals is also not unique to Southeast Asia, where this phenomenon is frequently discussed.   A close analogue can be found in the early United States, where after independence from the crown, the indigenous inhabitants of the colonies, such as the Cherokee, were classified as domestic dependent nations (Wilkins 1997).   What this effectively meant was that the native people did have their own societies and administrative structures which in turn interacted with the organs of administration of the new American state.   They were therefore, outside of the American society, and yet they were not permitted to contract trade or other agreements with the French, Spanish or English as an independent polity might be expected to do.

This status of domestic dependency is not dissimilar to what is found in Cambodia in attitudes toward upland peoples.   Geographer Ian Baird, who conducts research among the Brao people, a population that straddles the border between Cambodia and Laos, explains that in both countries, literacy programs are in development in order to render the local language in text.   However, in both countries there is an insistence that the national script be used rather than a new script or one based on Latin characters.   The result is that, since the Laotian Brao and the Cambodian Brao are marginal within different states, they will be

unable to implement a writing system that might have currency on the other side of the border.

There is, we shall find, a great deal of ambiguity with respect to whether the Cham represent such an internal minority or whether they are best understood as a foreign element in Khmer society. These contradictory feelings are at the heart of Cambodian discourse about the Cham, where the need for the orderly state comes into conflict with fears of an enemy within as we shall see when discussing the Vietnamese. For another fruitful comparison we may return to the early United States, where the domestic dependent relationship proved unsustainable as whites coveted Indian lands, resulting in the forced migration of the Cherokee and other groups out of the states of the United states and into the as of yet undeveloped Oklahoma territory. After this point it became untenable that Native Americans and whites could live in the same society and 'Indian Country' becomes synonymous with the wilderness and lack of civilization of the west of the continent. If we in turn examine the other 'Other' of the early republic, the African slaves, they were most certainly domestic and internal and no expense was spared to ensure that they remained that way. While Indians were shoved outside the borders of the colonies, runaway slaves were seen as a direct threat to white society and way of life. Slave recovery expeditions were organized, invasions of Florida mounted, and preparations for revolution were made upon hearing that Haiti, the sugar colony and milch cow of the French Empire had suddenly declared itself the world's first Black republic after a successful slave insurrection (Davis 2006).

Whether the Cham are Indians, a distinct people who are by their essence unassimilable to the state and therefore exterior, or whether they are Blacks, which as property must be kept within the family, is the question that will drive both Cambodian policy towards Muslims and Cham behavior with regards to Khmers.

1.4.2   The Vietnamese

That the Khmers have an irrational hatred of the Vietnamese is commonly taken as fact by many a Cambodia watcher (Berman 1996). Human Rights Watch concluded that it was "almost pathological" and attributed it to the history of rivalry and conflict between the two nations (HRW 1993). The Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia that finally brought down the murderous Khmer Rouge government is rarely talked about with any sense of gratitude for having been liberated. Indeed, most Khmer see that invasion as just one of a series of violations of sovereignty and affronts to national dignity that have been visited on the Cambodian people in the modern era.

The feeling that Việt Nam was in reality seeking to colonize Cambodia remains a common understanding of those events. This fear continues to manifest itself in a belief that many Vietnamese soldiers did not actually return to Việt Nam at the end of the occupation but instead donned civilian clothing and remained – as farmers, fishermen, city dwellers and government officials – the Vietnamese are still feared as the enemy within, remorselessly working to

undermine the Cambodian state until their masters in Hà Nội see fit to unleash their armies on Cambodia once again.

In web publications and political cartoons, Cambodian opposition groups frequently use the letter 'x', which is not used in transcription of Khmer but common in Vietnamese, to replace the 's' in names like Hun Xen (the prime minister), Heng Xamrin (chairman of the National Assembly), Xihanouk (the former king) or Xihamoni (the current king). This is meant to indicate that these political figures are actually Vietnamese agents working for a foreign agenda and so disloyal to the Khmer nation. The notion that Vietnamese agents are everywhere pervades political discourse and naturally creates an environment hostile to those people easily identified as Vietnamese - people who represent fairly easy targets.

Unfortunately, many of those easily identified people are prostitutes and pushers. The Vietnamese are typically associated with sex work, drugs, gambling and other vices. It is on the one hand part of their vile nature and on the other, a calculated plot to bring down Khmer society from within by attacking it at its sources of familial and financial strength. This designation as being noxious to the health of the body politic is a large part of the public rationalization of depriving the ethnic Vietnamese of citizenship rights regardless of how long they have been in the country (Berman 1996; Ehrentraut 2009). The Vietnamese therefore play an integral part in the discourse of morality and virtue in present day Cambodia since apart from being a foreign aggressor, they are also an internal

threat which can at times assume the form of those who are supposedly charged with the protection of the Khmer nation.

To be fair, these fears are rooted in a historic reality – that of the expansion of the Vietnamese state beginning in the 10th century. The political and demographic expansion of the Vietnamese eventually ended the independence of the Cham people and instigated their flight into Cambodia. It also resulted in the annexation of Khmer territories in the Mekong delta, where a sizable Khmer minority continues to live. These Khmer, known as Kampuchea Krom as well as the Cham, are important touchstones for Cambodian public opinion as they demonstrate the fate that awaits them should their lands fall into the hands of the Vietnamese.

Phnom Penh bookshops are always well stocked with books on the issue of Kampuchea Krom, ranging from legalistic texts regarding national boundaries to more polemical texts that vividly depict the cruelty of the Vietnamese. Through these stories, Cambodians are all familiar with the suffering of their brethren. They retell stories of Vietnamese soldiers enslaving Khmers to produce canals and earthworks in the Mekong delta and how the Khmers were buried up to their necks in the earth to provide a surface on which the Vietnamese could place their steaming tea kettles.

That the Khmers should become cogs in the engine of a Vietnamese juggernaut is a common theme and belies a feeling of inferiority that Khmers feel when compared to their neighbors. It was not until the Vietnamese arrived that these infrastructure projects were undertaken and the fear of the Vietnamese is

also one of enslavement to a form of modernity embodied in new relations of production and distribution that Cambodians little understand. This aspect of this anti-Vietnamese anxiety need also be seen in the context of the French colonial period. The establishment of the French Protectorate over Cambodia in 1863 effectively checked the expansion of the Vietnamese state, but it led to an influx of Vietnamese administrators and laborers whom the French preferred to the Khmer, who were regarded as a less industrious race by the French (Chandler 1996).

This lead to a period when Phnom Penh was dominated by the Vietnamese and Chinese under a colonial administration – leading to the impression the Phnom Penh is somehow not really a Khmer city, or that real Khmerness can be found in the countryside but in the city it can only become manifest in some hybridized amalgam with foreign elements. The city as a place of strangeness and potential danger is still a part of both Khmer and Cham culture today, and this has effects for how Muslims perceive the city and its attendant perils.

1.4.3 The Chinese

The Chinese minority of Cambodia is regarded as being a predominantly urban population. Since the bulk of the research took place in the Phnom Penh area the presence of Sino-Khmers was always strongly felt. As in other parts of the region, many Chinese migrated to Cambodia and became active members of the merchant classes. Today, Phnom Penh is considered by many to be a

Chinese city, where the Chinese not only dominate commercial life, but their holidays and cultural practices are also observed.

Much in the same way that many Americans remark on the Jewish character of New York, Phnom Penh is a bastion of Sino-Khmer culture. In recent years, Mandarin has become an increasingly popular school subject as it is seen as key to advancement in an economy that is increasingly dependent on Chinese investment as evidenced by the new crop of businesses that have emerged to serve the Chinese expatriate population, including a Chinese micro-brew pub – Cambodia's first.

Sino-Khmers are not in any sense a uniform block. Families have origins in different parts of China speaking different Chinese languages and to a great extent, they have intermarried and assimilated into Khmer society while still retaining a sense of ethnic distinctness (Chan 2005; Edwards 1996). In Phnom Penh, virtually all businesses are run by Sino-Khmers, the most visible of these are restaurants and hotels, making the Sino-Khmers the brokers between Khmers and the millions of tourists who visit each year.

The entrenchment of Sino-Khmers in Phnom Penh, along with a long history of employing Vietnamese administrators during the French Protectorate, gives the strong impression the Phnom Penh is somehow foreign and not really a very Khmer place. Lecturer in Khmer language and literature, Frank Smith, observes that *Sophat*, considered to be the first Khmer language novel, is remarkable in that, although it was written and published during the French Protectorate and it is set almost exclusively in Phnom Penh, it has no Vietnamese

or Chinese characters. Set against the backdrop in which Khmer literature evolved, where, even in Cambodia, the Vietnamese were publishing books and newspapers before the Khmers, it seems that the novel Sophat was more than a work of fiction – it was also a way of re-imagining a Khmer urban space (Klairung 1998). This increasing Sinicization of the city is problematic for Muslims in the urban area, due primarily to the Chinese penchant for "putting pork in everything". This matter and other issues related to the particular problems of urban Muslims will be discussed further in chapter 4.

1.4.4   The Thai

During the period of research, relations between Thailand and Cambodia grew ever less friendly as the dispute over ownership of the 11th century temple of Preah Vihear flared up into intermittent border skirmishes resulting in casualties on both sides. The temple, built in the Dangrek mountain range that forms the northern frontier between the two countries, was found by the International Court of Justice to lie within the borders of Cambodia (ICJ 1962). The more recent conflict beginning in 2008 stems from the declaration of the Cambodian government that the temple would be proposed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This in turn enraged those in Thailand who thought it should at least be a joint proposal, claiming that the demarcation of the border was not yet complete and that some related archaeological sites were found on the Thai side of the frontier.

The result was a long dispute involving the mobilization of both armies and the transformation of the temple into a political football in the internal politics of both countries. Owing to the complexity of the events that surround what passed for diplomacy between the two nations, I will spare the reader the details of the case. What is important here is that the overwhelming feeling in Cambodia was that the Thais were 'once again' attempting to steal the history of the Khmer people. This notion of the Siamese as thieves is very important to how contemporary Khmer nationalists understand their relationship with their larger neighbor (Hinton 2006).

On the surface, this would appear to be the same brand of rabid xenophobia with which many Westerners have diagnosed the Khmers in their relations with the Vietnamese. In reality it is something altogether distinct. The Vietnamese threaten to invade, enslave and steal those things of value that they might find. The rich soils of the Mekong Delta, the best fishing grounds along the rivers, the most profitable prostitution rings – these are the things that interest the Vietnamese. The Thai on the other hand are after something else.

In 2003, riots broke out when the Reasmei Angkor newspaper published a report that Thai actress Suvanant Kongying had said that Angkor Wat, the emblem that has graced every version of the Cambodian flag since independence, was in fact Thai and that the Khmers had stolen it. It was later determined that there was no evidence for her having said anything like this, but the damage was already done. Young men took to the streets attacking Thai businesses and setting fire to the Thai embassy, but unlike 2008, there was no military conflict.

The Thai air force sent some planes to evacuate their citizens and tough talk was engaged in by all sides, but the fear caused by the article was not of an invasion but rather of an annihilation – a disappearance from history and from the world. Thailand, like Cambodia, but unlike Việt Nam (but like Champa) are the inheritors of a civilization brought to Southeast Asia from India.

The Theravada Buddhism, monumental architecture and languages of the Khmer and the Thai, contrast with the Mahayana Buddhism, East Asian architectonics and Chinese inspired literary history of the Vietnamese. In an earlier time, it was the Khmer who held sway over most of the mainland of Southeast Asia – a position that was chipped away at, piece by piece until finally Cambodia found itself a buffer state between the two giants that had grown on either side of it. The sacking of Angkor by the Siamese in the 15th century lead to the capture of the Khmer leadership class as well as their artists and intelligentsia. With this, The Thais refashioned their own state on the model of Angkor and in a sense stole it – moving it to a new country.

Talking to a group of Khmer archaeology students at a bookshop by the Buddhist Institute of Phnom Penh, one of them explained:

> *Sometimes I take tourists around. I used to do it more before but even now I do it. The tourists, they like to see culture shows. You know, dancing in the apsara style. They want to go to the royal palace... but many of them are not so impressed. If they come from the US or France they say "it's wonderful", "this is something special". But if the tourist was in Thailand before then they say "oh, yes, like in Thailand..." You see the royal palace here and it is beautiful. But if you go to Thailand first and then see our royal palace, then you don't really care because you already saw the bigger one. The royal palace in Bangkok must be very large... have you been there?*

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The Vietnamese may lie, cheat and steal their way into every Khmer wallet, but there is no way that they are ever going to be able to claim to have built Angkor Wat – it's simply preposterous. The Vietnamese are after all, if the cab drivers of Phnom Penh are to be believed, already in control of Cambodia's national treasure. It is the Sokimex Group, Cambodia's largest business conglomerate that has exclusive rights to collect entrance fees from foreign visitors. And Sokimex is lead by a certain Mr. Sok Kong, an ethnic Vietnamese with close ties to Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Tell a Khmer this and he may become infuriated at how the wily Viets have once again found a way to suck the blood out of the Khmer people. But there is no talk of theft per se. The Vietnamese cannot steal Angkor Wat. They can use a combination of force and trickery to profit off the hard work of the Khmer and even their ancestors, but they lack the cultural legitimacy necessary to threaten the historic and intellectual underpinnings of the Khmer nation. The Thai are different.

Many Khmer know that there are many Thais who consider that Angkor and other sites like it were built by a vanished race called the Khom. As they disappeared, the Thais took up the mantle of civilization and the degenerate race that issued from the decay of the Angkor Empire became the Khmer – wholly distinct from the Khom. The common history and culture shared by the Khmer and the Thai become the source of a sort of civilizational death anxiety in which the people, the land and even the state may remain intact, but the foundations that

made the combination of those things meaningful can be stolen by an enemy that is all too similar for comfort.

This shared cultural legacy is important for many Cham as well. For those Cham, notably the Imam San, that identify with their Indic origins. The Thai threat to Cambodia is felt in a way that informs an understanding of history in which the Cham people too, built a society based on the principles of Indian culture and therefore can live comfortably among the Khmer as brothers. Fraternity of this type is something not to be enjoyed with the Vietnamese, who are a separate people. It is interesting to remark that many Cham believe that the cities of Champa are still there – inhabited with Cham people. Although they are under the Vietnamese yoke, it seems logical to them that they would live apart from each other and continue to maintain a parallel society – like oil and water, Indians and Chinese don't mix. Although there were no ancient Cham settlements in what is now Thailand, stories of ill treatment of Chams who go off to work in Thailand at the hands of police or exploitative bosses also colors their view of their relationship to the people that arrogate to themselves the ownership of the Indian inheritance of the region. This notion of the similarity of Indic peoples and what that means for Cham-Khmer relations will be explored more fully in chapter 3.

1.4.5 The Cham

Khmer attitudes towards the Cham vary greatly, and my investigations suggest that they are strongly conditioned by class, education and gender, but on

the whole, it is safe to say that these attitudes are not positive. Cham are frequently portrayed as foul smelling because of their association with fishing or odd because of their refusal to eat pork. However, it is in issues of the supernatural that Cham truly inspire fear in many Khmers. Cham are frequently associated with the use of magic and Cham magic is thought to be especially potent.

While Khmers may take advantage of this when they purchase protective amulets or love magic for their own use, but they are also afraid that they might be cursed or poisoned by a Cham sorcerer. The best way to protect oneself from this is to not have contact with any Cham of any kind, since this way they will not be selected as a target. One female informant claimed that after having spoken to a Cham woman once at the market, a twig appeared in her vagina. She now wonders if this will affect her ability to have children in the future.

The Muslim religion is also an issue. Few Khmers have any meaningful knowledge of Islam and its tenets. Frequently one hears that in Buddhism it is considered sinful to kill another human being, while in Islam this is positively encouraged and is an important way in which a Muslim can make merit. Some Khmer claim that, apart from prayer, mosques are places where Muslims practice group sex on Fridays, and that the reason they do not eat pork is because they recognize the swine as their ancestor. Media images of Muslims as terrorists especially since September 11 have not helped matters. Having a different religion also reduces the opportunities for meaningful interaction during holidays and festivals and segregates them for much of their education.

Some Khmer, often because of some personal experience or relationship with a Muslim, feel rather differently, claiming to like Muslims or at least not to have any problem with them. In the public sphere, it has been Prime Minister Hun Sen's policy to emphasize the peaceful relations between Muslims and Buddhists as a contrast to the situation in the south of Thailand and to decry all forms of Islamophobia. In recent pronouncements he has advocated the installation of Muslim prayer rooms in Cambodia's airports and the reformulation of school dress codes to accommodate headscarves. Hun Sen has argued that Muslims are citizens like any other and must participate in society and government.

Hun Sen is himself from Kampong Cham Province, the demographic center of the Cham population, and where his older brother, Hun Neng was governor until 2009. Although Hun Sen's declaration that Muslim girls should be permitted to wear a head covering in state schools has not come into legal force, many Muslims sincerely feel that Hun Sen is sympathetic to them and respects the Muslim politicians and advisers that form a part of his entourage. However, Hun Sen's Muslim policy is not mere sentimentality. Cambodia's border row with Thailand span off into a number of other bilateral scraps. One was the accusation on the part of some in the Thai government and military that Cham from Cambodia had infiltrated Thailand and were engaged in terrorist acts on behalf of the Muslim population of Thailand's restive south. Part of Hun Sen's public relations campaign against Thailand is to portray the Thais as intolerant and uncompromising such that there should be no wondering why its

Muslims feel oppressed and resentful. Cambodia by contrast is a land at peace, in which Muslim citizens are free to practice their religion openly without fear of exclusion from public and national life. If one keeps in mind that Muslim Malaysia is an important source of foreign direct investment and that part of Hun Sen's strategy for attracting further dollars is to convince Persian Gulf states to make investments in Cambodian agriculture and infrastructure, then the prime minister's Muslim-friendly agenda is also a vital component to a savvy national marketing plan.

The prime minister's inclusive policies notwithstanding, the tendency is for Cham to be seen as a foreign element in Khmer society. As was discussed in the previous sections and will be further elaborated in the chapters that follow, the notion of the 'foreign' only really makes sense in comparison to the ideal of the national self, and just as importantly, to other images of foreignness that become salient in different contexts. The Cham can be reviled as dangerous practitioners of witchcraft. They can be embraced by middle-class medical students eager to show the foreign researcher how worldly he is by dropping the names of a few Muslim friends. They can be looked down upon paternalistically by Khmers as a people without a homeland and without a state to govern. They can in turn themselves look down on their own 'little brothers', eking out a living in the wilderness, untouched by the light of Islam and with only imperfect memories of a past as a civilized Cham people. They can represent, through their peaceful integration into the body politic, the triumph of the multi-cultural Cambodian

state.   Or, by their increasingly deep and frequent interactions with coreligionists

in the wider Muslim world, they can pose a threat to the security of that very state.

Chapter Two

Us against them… and them, and them, and them…

‏"…سفرتي ياوكا مدا حسا حديث ڬائ نبي دغاي محمد ڬيت برسبدا لائ: مَنْ تَرَكَ‎
‏ٱلصَّلَاةَ مُتَعِّمِّدًا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ جِهَارًا. برمقصود ڤو: حاي, يا كوڠ ڤو لواي سمياڠ هڠ كهين.‎
‏مك سبيأ, ڤو نن كافر هڠ جڤيه ليه."‎

The words you just read, you understand them?

Yeah, the Cham anyway, not the Arabic part, but the Cham is just a translation of the Arabic so it should all mean, "He whoever neglects the prayer, that person is a Kafir."

That's correct. And this word 'Kafir', you understand its meaning?

Yeah. A Kafir is a non-believer.

*(*Sitting down on the stool before my desk and putting his hand on mine as if to reassure me of something*) Really, a 'Kafir' is a person who denigrates or disrespects the religion. If they are not Muslims but respect Islam then we shouldn't say 'Kafir'.*

2.1   New Movements, New Conflicts

The Cham Muslims of Cambodia are today in a period of religious and political ferment in which new forms of religious practice are being introduced via foreign missionaries resulting in increasing factionalization of the community as different groups adopt or reject foreign interpretations of Islam.   This chapter will address the issue of inter-Cham relations and explain them in terms religious change tied to other ideologies of morality, purity and development.   This chapter will then also set the stage for an understanding of notions and constructions of Cham ethnicity as a diasporic identity with various ways of

legitimating relations between Cham, Khmer and foreign Muslims, which will be detailed in chapters three, four and five.

Recently, the Cham community of Cambodia has found itself in transition from being a local Muslim minority in an overwhelmingly Buddhist country to being connected to the wider, internationalist Islamic community. Missionaries from Malaysia and Saudi Arabia have been active in promoting orthodox and fundamentalist Islamic practices among the Cham who, during the Pol Pot regime, had lost most of their religious leaders. This wave of missionization has also been accompanied by Islamic charities providing opportunities for education and business. These institutions have enabled engagement between Muslims across Southeast Asia and the Middle East and have offered new ways to envision the relationship between individual, community and state. As a result of this, it has become important to reexamine the ways in which Islamic missionization has altered the Cambodian Muslims' sense of identity vis-à-vis Khmer Buddhists, the Cambodian state and in particular, other Cham.

For some time in Cambodian studies the terms 'Cham' and 'Muslim' were largely coterminous (Setudeh-Nejad 2002; Trankell and Ovesen 2004a). In Khmer discourse this is still broadly the case and even among many Cham there is a tendency to equate the two and refer to Cham food as Islamic food and Cham language as Muslim Language. Yet the expansion of missionization from abroad has undermined the legitimacy of Chamness as a marker of membership in the Muslim community. The disdain with which Wahhabi missionaries in

particular hold local customs and the power they wield by virtue of their access to foreign benefactors means that for many Cham who would seek to improve their material circumstances, they must undergo a purge of their unacceptable customs - customs which many feel are essential components of Cham identity.

Explanations for changing religious practices have largely ignored ideologies of Chamness as something that might be distinct from and inform Islamicity. The explanations for the expansion of Wahhabi and other conservative forms of Islam is mostly talked about in term of 2 elements – access to economic opportunities and an Islamic revival after the Khmer Rouge period (Blengsli 2003; Féo 2004).

Clearly money is an important factor. Today, Cambodia has approximately 250 mosques. Only about 20 survived the Khmer Rouge period and the majority of the buildings constructed since then were built with foreign assistance. With these mosques often come madrasas and then opportunities to study abroad so that today, there are over 400 Cham students studying in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. Islamic charities such as Manar al Islam provide funds for those Cham that wish to perform the Hajj. Orphanages provide care for abandoned children or children whose families cannot care for them. In addition to providing this public service, these children are brought up according to the principles of the donors, and will presumably grow up to be members of that community as adults. Besides all this, Islamic charities provide for more mundane matters like food and health care and so the effect of money is something that is palpably felt by many Muslims.

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The other explanation frequently given is that the Cham are reconstituting their religious life after the Khmer Rouge holocaust and that they are doing this with the help of foreign missionaries. With most of the religious leaders of the Cham community having perished during the KR period, the indigenous Cham Islam is no longer viable in the face of other sects from Malaysia and the Middle East that style themselves as purer and more authentic. While both of these explanations contribute to our understanding of the changes occurring in Cambodian Islam, they are still incomplete.

Firstly, not every group accepts foreign money - or better said, not every group is willing to make the appropriate lifestyle changes necessary to ensure eligibility for aid. If money is the operative factor, why are not all Cham converting to Salafist Islam to receive their portion of the bounty? As for explanations involving an Islamic reawakening, they tend to downplay or deny the value that a Cham identity may have, and that this form of ethnic communitarian identification also influences and colors their practice of Islam and their perception of foreign missionaries. In this conception, Chamness is something that is simply wiped away as individual Cham make rational choices to maximize their access to aid.

In order to complete this picture I would propose an examination of how Chamness is being understood not as a free standing notion, but in relation to the Khmer people as well as the Cambodian state and its institutions. The Cham are normally treated by academics and journalists as an Islamic minority which happens to originate in the now defunct Champa, rather than as an Islamic

diaspora, with a particular kind shared consciousness or consciousnesses. For many Cham, but not all, Champa is still very much present in the contemporary discourse about dislocation and belonging. If we take the categories of Orthodox, traditionalist and Salafi, we see very different types of imagined relationship with Khmer Buddhists, the state and the Muslim community abroad. It is this spectrum of diasporic ideologies that this dissertation will ultimately illuminate.

2.2 Meeting the 'Real Cham'

Sitting in the courtyard outside the madrasah of Chrok Romiet, a Muslim village located an hour's drive north of Phnom Penh, Ysa informed me that we would be joined by a special guest. Ali would be coming and I certainly needed to meet Ali since he was from California and incidentally also a scholar of Arabic literature who had spent many years studying in Saudi Arabia. Either because he thought that Ali would be a real resource for my research, or because Ali might absorb some of the questions that I had been showering upon Ysa, or perhaps simply because he thought speaking to someone from the US might relieve whatever homesickness he imagined I might be experiencing, he was visibly quite pleased with himself about being able to make this introduction.

Ali's car pulled up around the mosque and down the sandy path that leads to Ysa's house and the madrasah where he teaches. Ysa and I both stand to greet the unassuming middle-aged man that emerged from the Toyota Camry and after the obligatory assalam-aleykums and handshakes, we sat down for an afternoon

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tea.   Ali is Cham, but not Cambodian.   He was born in Central Việt Nam and later moved to An Giang in the Mekong Delta to study religion.   There he became acquainted with the Western Cham language spoken in Southern Việt Nam and Cambodia and which is not quite mutually intelligible with his native Eastern Cham of the Vietnamese Coast.   He also had the opportunity to further his education in Saudi Arabia and later settle in the United States where he would meet his wife, a native of Chrok Romiet.   He was in Chrok Romiet overseeing the construction of his new house and planning to move his family to his wife's natal village – the kind of matrilocality for which the Cham have always been known.

Ali and I conversed in English as he had not yet learned any Khmer (Four years later, he still hasn't).   At a certain point Ali decided to ask me what I was doing there in Chrok Romiet.   I answered that I intended to study Cham culture – a direct translation of my Khmer answer to that question.   Upon saying this, Ali and Ysa looked over at each other and exchanged knowing smiles.   Ysa says:

> *"Well, if you really want to learn about Cham culture and Cham history then you need to visit the Cham Daem* (Original Cham). *You can't learn it all here.   Here, we're Muslims, like in Malaysia, so it's different here.   But over there, you can see the original Cham people and their Champa traditions."*

At this point, other people present nearby nodded approvingly at the idea and took turns chiming in with interesting fun-facts about these traditional Cham:

> *"You know, they only pray once a week... we pray 5 times a day but for them only on Fridays."*

"They know the old Cham language and they write it with the Champa letters. It's very difficult so we never learn it, but they write like they did in Champa."

"Don't forget to take note of their clothes. They wear real Cham clothes..."

Once at the Cham Daem (Imam San) village, I was introduced to the village elders as a foreign researcher who was interested in Cham culture – real Cham culture. Children were quickly trotted out for the performance. While the girl sang, the boy wrote the complete Cham alphabet on a small blackboard giving the phonetic value of each character as he wrote. It clearly was not the first time these children had put on an impromptu Cham culture expo. Alphabet, language, song, clothing - all the hallmarks of traditional Cham culture were simultaneously put on display. Ysa grinned and said: "Now you see that this is original Cham culture. It's very different from us."

I remarked that the boy was actually writing two different sets of scripts – one variant being sharper and more angular. This is the alphabet typically used in Cambodia. "This is Cambodian Cham" an older man explained. Then pointing to the other set of characters, more gently rounded and somewhat reminiscent of Burmese script, he said "and this is what they use among Cham who live in Việt Nam." I thank him for the explanation and, just to make sure I have it straight, I repeat what I thought I heard: "So, these characters here are Cambodian Cham and those over there are Vietnamese Cham, right?" The reaction was swift and severe: "No, this is Cambodian Cham and this is Champa Cham! There is no Vietnamese Cham." Calm soon returned. The old man

seemed embarrassed, perhaps taken aback by the strength of his own reaction. He offered me a smile, some more tea and a piece of cake and thanked me again for my interest in his community.

Our encounter ended with me being prodded to give a short speech to the community on the importance of this visit to my work. At the conclusion, Ysa and our Cham-American companion made a cash donation to the community. Ali commented that the modern latrine facilities were his own personal contribution to the community, and explained in a tone of human empathy that, while genuine, did little to mask his feelings of paternalistic condescension.

> *"These people need hygiene. Before, they were going to the bathroom in the forest like animals. You can't allow people to live that way. They need to have some dignity."*

Ali, familiar with the language of ethnic politics in the US, then talked to me at length about not forgetting one's roots - that "we must strive for a future in which Islam is a progressive force, but we must also cultivate our heritage." "If these people stop the way they live or change the way they live, then we will lose Cham culture forever." The Imam San are not found in Việt Nam, but the Mekong Delta Cham, who keep ties with Cham in Cambodia and to which Ali had been exposed, hold similar beliefs about the authentic Chamness of the community in Cambodia (Taylor 2007). Now in Cambodia, Ali was projecting those beliefs 'further upstream' on the Imam San.

Without appearing to change the topic of the conversation, Ali explained that he was also in the region scouting out Islamic high schools for his sons to attend and told me he had found one in Malaysia that he liked, where they could

study proper Islam and still maintain their English language skills. Ali then waxed lyrical about Malaysian Prime Minister Badawi and his Islam Hadhari program (a Malaysian movement that promotes Islam as the basis of a civilized and sophisticated people).

> *Islam needs to be civilized. We need to think about education and technology and protecting the environment. Islam teaches these things if we do it right.*

Within Ali and Ysa's discourse, we find some key elements of what it means to be Cham and the kind of value that this should have. For many Cham, that do not subscribe to Salafist or Tablighi teachings, Imam San are Muslims even if their practices are not quite right, but the cachet of maintaining authentic Cham culture, developed at a time when Cham people were sovereign and free is undeniable. Not only should these Cham practices not be eliminated, but they should be conserved so that future generations of Cham scientists, engineers and doctors will be able to visit Imam San and recapture the heart of the Old Champa culture which they, as fully modern Muslims, can no longer practice themselves.

2.3 Fighting Unorthodoxy: Imam San against the World

The Imam San have in recent years found themselves on the losing side of the conflicts over religion in the Cham community. This is borne out by what everyone considers a dramatic, and possibly inexorable, demographic decline. Today they make up less than eight percent of the total Cham community at roughly 20,000 people. If the Imam San and the rest of the Muslim community

can agree on anything it is that once upon a time, the majority if not all Cham

practiced Islam as the Imam San do today.

In Chrok Romeat, a village close to the Imam San community, one of the

village elders relates to me the history of his family thus:

> *Before, my family was in Kampong Cham.   When they came from*
> *Champa they stayed there and then they came down here and they*
> *settled.   At that time we prayed once a week like the other village*
> *(Imam San).   We did things in the old way.   But then when we*
> *encountered other Muslims my family changed to praying five*
> *times a day.   That is important because that is the correct*
> *practice.   I can know this in the history of my family because we*
> *have all the names.   My grandfather was named Ibrahim.   That*
> *is a Muslim name.   Muslims should have Muslim names.   Before*
> *we only had Cham names but when my grandfather accepted the*
> *correct Islam he became Ibrahim and since then we have prayed*
> *here five times every day, because that is what it says in the*
> *Qur'an.*

The elder took time to explain to me the significance of this

transformation and how much it meant to him to know that his practice was

correct, it would please God and, ultimately, it would lead to him entering

paradise.   He took so much time in fact that he missed both the dhuhr (noon) and

'asr (afternoon) prayers.

2.3.1   Cham Naming Practices

A critical element in this story is the adoption of an Arabic name.   By

doing this, Ibrahim made a break with the past and ensured that both he and his

progeny would tread the path that Muhammad and his companions had

themselves followed.   The practice of naming in the Muslim community today,

reveals something about how comfortable Muslims feel about representing

themselves as members of a religious minority. This man's grandfather, Ibrahim, was also known more commonly as just 'Him'. The shortening of Muslim names so that they sound more like the typically monosyllabic Khmer names is very common, especially among members of the older generation. Thus, Muhammad and Ahmad are rendered as Mat, Usman as Sman and so on.

Among the Imam San, the practice is still to have a Khmer or Khmer sounding name for official purposes and a Muslim name for use in the village. Actually, it would be better said that this is the practice of men in the Imam San community as women are sometimes only given Khmer-style names. The Khmeresque names are typically a combination of pronounciation changes due to the significant differences in Cham and Arabic phonologies, paired with the weakening of syllables to better match the Cham (and Khmer) pattern of monosyllabic or sesquisyllabic (iambic) words. In this way Yusuf becomes Yusos or Soh, Ismael becomes Smael or El and Abu Taleb Abu Bakr becomes Leb Ke. Within the village, men will be known by either name. Outside the village, they take on the Khmer name or a Khmer version of their Muslim name. It is not uncommon for people to go by three or four different names depending on the environment and circumstances – a practice that is also found among Khmer, who may have an official name, but then go by another name within the family and then have another nickname for school or work.

Outside of the Imam San community, such as in Chrok Romiet, the younger generation is increasingly willing to use their Muslim names in public interactions with Khmers and to use them for the signing of official documents of

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all types.   This reflects not only a greater willingness but also a greater desire to be identified officially as Muslims and to make their religion legible to the state. The first time I asked a Muslim whether his national identification card indicated that he was a Muslim, he responded that indeed it did, religion is marked on the national identification.   When I asked to see it, we both realized, to his surprise more than mine, that in fact there was no such indication.   During the course of fieldwork, I had this conversation roughly 20 more times.

After turning his own ID card over several times and trying to catch the sunlight at different angles as if trying to view a hologram looking for an indication of his religious affiliation, a Muslim taxi driver explained:

> *No, OK, it's not there... but that doesn't matter because you can read my name: 'Usman'.   If I have a traffic accident and I die, the police will see my card read my name and know that I am a Muslim...   also, it has the name of my home village, and everyone knows that's a Muslim village.*

In the absence of an explicit marker of religion, name and, in the case of Usman, home village will suffice to make clear that he is a Muslim.   Of course, for Usman this is not merely a question of whether or not the people around him know that he is a Muslim.   Cambodian roads and traffic have a way of bringing mortality to mind and the thought that his body might go unidentified and thus, not properly treated, is intolerable.   The issue of the treatment of the dead has been a touchy issue since at least colonial times when the practice of conducting autopsies was introduced (NAC 1924).

2.3.2 Orthodoxy and Prayer

When talking about the Imam San, the most conspicuous (and problematic) characteristic of the group according to other Muslims is their practice of praying once a week rather than five times a day.   Prayer, or salah in Arabic, is the second of the pillars of Islam – only the shahadah, the declaration that there is no god but God and that Muhammad was his prophet, is more important as an article of orthopraxy.

The five daily prayers are fajr (just before sunrise), dhuhr (just after true noon), 'asr (afternoon), maghrib (just after sunset) and 'isha' (evening).   The times for prayer depend on the progress of the sun across the sky and so changes from day to day.   The times are calculated and published in prayer calendars and indicated on prayer clocks in mosques.   If this resource is unavailable, a Muslim is permitted to estimate the time on his own, so long as he avoids praying at sunrise, sunset or true noon as these might be understood as acts of sun worship, a form of paganism.

In the vast majority of cases however, the Muslim will have the prayer times at hand and if he is in his village he will have ample time to prepare himself for prayers at the local mosque.   These preparations, as in all Muslim countries involve the making of ablutions – washing the hands, feet and face to achieve a state of ritual purity or wudu.   In Cambodia, preparations will also include changing one's clothes from pants and shirts to a sarong and a longer shirt that hides better the form of the body.   Some minutes before prayer, one can see the

procession of village men adjusting their sarongs and headgear which they just put on moments ago in an effort to look properly Islamic.

The power of prayer as a bonding experience cannot be underestimated. Worshipers express that prayer not only brings them closer to God, but, when done together in a mosque, it makes them feel closer as a community. This is true of visiting Muslims as well. A visiting Malaysian benefactor in Kompong Chhnang explained to me that when he arrives at a Muslim village he is always warmly welcomed. He cannot speak Cham or Khmer and so depends on whomever on hand may know enough Malay or English to make communication possible. However, after prayer, he feels like he begins to know the heart of the people in the mosque and that an understanding develops that is outside of language, namely the understanding that their common love of God is what binds them before any other interests they may share.

The fact that such a deeply felt experience occurs five times a day means that for any visiting Muslim, be he a donor, missionary or businessman, it will never be very long before he has the opportunity to engage in this ritual and enjoy the feeling of community with the people that share the mosque with him that day. Some Muslims who visit the Imam San communities have the opposite experience. As one missionary recounts:

> *We go to the Imam San to teach them the correct way. We explain that these are the teachings and these are the proofs that what we are saying is true. They never listen. They talk about their history or their culture... they say they believe, but how do you believe and then also disobey? We sit there for many hours and we talk and then it is time to pray. And it is sad because we cannot pray with them. Also we do not pray in their temple... we don't want to do that we prefer to*

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pray outside and then we come back and talk some more. But while we pray they are just sitting there. They continue talking but no one thinks to pray. For me it is sad and prayer should not be sad. It should make you feel good.

The deviation in prayer practice means that not only can they not establish that bond through prayer, but the fact that they themselves must pray at the appointed times then takes them further away from the people they are trying to reach. The missionary makes no effort to hide his disappointment at the failure of the Imam San to see the truth, or his revulsion at the thought of praying in their 'temple', using the Khmer word 'vihear' which also indicates a Buddhist temple, rather than the word mosque (masjid). The association of Imam San practices with Khmer and Buddhist practices will be further covered in 2.4.

When asked about the practice of praying only once a week, the Imam San explain that it was their tradition from Champa. They add that they are perfectly aware that five times a day is the practice established by the prophet, but reserve for themselves the right to continue as they had in the past since this is also an established method of worship. As one younger Imam San explained:

> *We received Islam from Ali. Ali came to Champa and taught the religion, but Ali did not pray five times a day. He only prayed once on Fridays. When he was doing this in Arabia, many people complained to Muhammad, asking why he is not turning up to all the prayers. Ali explained to Muhammad that he only thought he needed to pray once a week, on Fridays when the rest of the community gathers together. According to my young informant, Muhammad permitted the practice of Ali, because Ali was of such excellent character that for him weekly prayer would be sufficient. This is the practice that he then brought to Champa.*

To many Muslims, this might well constitute an act of blasphemy. To my knowledge, there is no evidence from the life of the prophet to suggest that

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this may have happened, and the Imam San themselves are not always in agreement as to what weight this story should have. There is a sort of ambiguity in the Imam San position in that unique practices are understood as a culture practice rather than a religious practice (more on this in chapter 3).

Although the Imam San themselves accept the validity for the argument that prayer should be five times a day, they hold fast to the position that for them, once a week is acceptable. In both cases, there is a question of tradition. For Imam San it was the tradition of their ancestors to offer weekly prayers, for those Muslims who accept the authority of Saudi or Malay types of Islam it is in the tradition (sunnah) of the prophet that the prayers be delivered at the times given above.

The question becomes, were those Cham who came over after the Vietnamese conquest of their homeland truly Muslim or were they practicing something else? For Muslims throughout the world dedicated to the study of their religion, history or *tarikh* is an essential component of their studies, since it is through the development of the history of Islamic peoples that God's will is revealed. The history of other peoples has no such meaning (Lewis 2003). This is important to keep in mind when examining the conflicts between the Imam San and everyone else, because the degree to which the ancestors of the Imam San were fully Islamized can be called into question and in so doing, their tradition can be disregarded. We will see in other sections how Islamic history is interpreted in the modern period under the assumption that it contains messages and signposts for the believer today.

2.4   Khos vs Khos – Imam San vs Arabs, Muslims vs Khmers

On a share taxi from the Imam San village back to Phnom Penh, my phone began to ring:

> *Hey big brother!   We forgot to tell you.   You must come to Eid al-Fitri (end of Ramadan celebration)*
>
> *Eid al-Fitri, yeah, I know.   Don't worry.   I'll be there tomorrow.*
>
> *No, not tomorrow.   The day after.*
>
> *Oh, OK. The day after. Got it.   See you then!*

Overhearing this conversation, an older Muslim woman in the back of the van began to laugh, "Oh, those guys over there... you're talking to the Imam San, right?   Yes they are always doing things *khos*".   She continued to laugh.

> *Do you know the Imam San, Grandma?*
>
> *Yes of course.   I've lived here for a long time.   I remember when we were young we all knew each other.   When we were children we knew other people from school and from neighboring villages.*
>
> *And today you still visit them?*
>
> *No, I'm busy.   When I was a girl it was OK but adults are busy. But I knew them.   I know how they do things khos over there.   If you compare it to us, those people do many things that are khos.*

The woman was in her 60's and took great pleasure in telling me exactly how *khos* my friend on the phone and his entire village are.   The word *khos* is tricky since it encompasses the semantic range that in English is covered by the words 'different' and 'wrong'.   In the sense of 'different', it is not meant in the sense of 'a different one', there is certainly a substantive difference although that difference is not necessarily negative.   When it means 'wrong', the word is the

opposite of 'correct' as in a true or false examination – in this case it is the opposite of *trew*, meaning true, or what must be. Many older Cham Thoamadaa, while recognizing the ancient origins of the Imam San culture consider the Imam San to be *khos* in the sense of 'different' and are generally happy to take a live-and-let-live attitude with respect to what moral or ethical consequences that *khos* practice may have.

Among many of the younger generation, there is no longer nearly so much leeway in what is meant by *khos*. On that very same route, an Imam San friend of mine remembers being surrounded by a number of younger Muslims and their teacher. Unaware that he was a Muslim and that he understood Cham, the teacher explained: "You see this village here that we are passing? Those people are khos. In the days of Muhammad he would have killed all of those people." My friend was dressed much like any regular Khmer since he was outside the village (see 2.4) and so managed to make it through the rest of the ride without arousing suspicion, as the young Muslims from his neighboring village railed against the people of his home village.

In another case, I traveled to the village of Prey Pis, a Tabligh stronghold very near the Imam San community. It was *Eid al-'Aḍḥā,* the holiday that commemorates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son, Ishmael (not Isaac as in the Jewish tradition). The day is commemorated with a feast. In Cambodia this means that foreign benefactors arrive, purchase the livestock, and arrange for the slaughter of the animals and distribution of the meat among the needy. On hand were a number of Malaysians whose Islamic charity has been

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returning here year after year to organize the ceremony.   Apparently they used to simply send money to the officiating imams but then it turned out that the money was not being spent as it should and so now they make the trip every year to guard against corruption.

As the meat was being divided into three kilogram bags, I asked a young man who was a student at the local Quranic recitation school about what would be done with the meat.   He explained:

They will divide the meat to all the poor people here.

Here in Prey Pis?

Not only Prey Pis.   Other Muslim villages.   They are doing the ceremony here but it will help all the Muslims in the area.

Is Our Reussei (Imam San village) covered by this ceremony or do they get a different one?

No!   (face darkens) They do khos!   We don't help them.   They are not Muslims and they are khos!

I don't understand.   Those people are Muslims.   Don't they believe in Allah like you?

No, they do not believe and they are doing things khos.   They do as the Khmer do.   They worship statues and the women don't cover their hair.

(letting the statue issue slide for the moment)... but they do cover their hair.   I was there.   I saw it with my own eyes.

No! (angry and a little confused).   They don't cover their hair. They use a krama.   But a Muslim woman uses a hijab... in Prey Pis you will see hijab.   In Our Reussei you will see krama.   Like the Khmers they wear krama.

This young man was far less politic than his elders and his strident commentary on women's head covering revealed feelings about the Imam San that

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an older person might have phrased very differently – more carefully.   First, we should take a look at some of the vocabulary that appeared in this dialogue. *Khos* this time means something different from 'different' – it means wrong and it refers to a damnable offense in this case

The word *hijab* in most contexts refers to the head covering that women wear to cover their hair and protect their modesty.   It can be used more broadly to mean modesty in general, but the exact nature of the fabric is not indicated in Islamic legal sources.   The krama on the other hand, is 'the best friend of the Khmer farmer'.   It is a length of red and white checkerboard cloth which can be used as a tablecloth, a hammock for young children, a towel, an ad hoc sarong when nothing else is available, a lunch bucket, a way of connecting the towed motorbike to a towing car (not recommended), and even as a way to cover one's head while working in the field.

Older Muslims remarked that the krama is in principle an acceptable head covering.   It fulfills the function of hiding one's hair perfectly well, however, it just isn't very Islamic.   Not only is it not very Islamic but it is actually quintessentially Khmer.   It is not used by any of Cambodia's neighbors and is considered an emblem of the Khmer peasant.   In fact, during a period conducting fieldwork in the Mekong delta of Việt Nam, I could distinguish ethnic Khmer and Vietnamese by how they reacted to the krama I had tied to my field bag.

Back in Our Reussei I spoke with a group of young Imam San women. All of them covered their hair but none with a krama.   Instead there was an eclectic mix of shawls, hijabs and handkerchiefs.   As one girl wearing her

favorite American flag bandana explained: "No, we don't wear the krama, but my mother does.   I guess when I'm old, I'll wear one too."   Even among the Imam San youth there was an aversion to the use of the krama as a head covering, although in this case, it was for a very different reason – not for fear of being too Khmer, but rather because they were afraid it would make them look frumpy – something to which at least some of the girls had already resigned themselves. This association with Khmers and Khmerness is rarely spoken of directly, but is central to the critique of the Imam San by other Muslims.   In a conversation with an older man whose son worked for the Ministry of Cults and Religions he made clear his problem with the Imam San.

> *They are Brahmanists, not Muslims.   They don't pray as we do – the correct five times a day.   They only pray once a week and when they pray they pray to stones.   This is not Islam, it is Brahmanism.*
>
> *I've been in their temple.   They don't have any stones there.*
>
> *The stones might not be in the temple, but they have them. Maybe they don't show you because they are embarrassed and they want to say that they are Muslims.   But they are Brahmanists... like the Khmer, you understand?*
>
> *But Khmers are Buddhists.*
>
> *Yes.   Now they are Buddhists, but before they worshiped in the old style and that is called Brahmanism.   Even today, the Khmers they worship statues – the Imam San also worship statues. Muslims don't make statues.   That is forbidden... It is other things too... like when they greet you.   They do it in the Khmer way – with the hands together.   They do the sampeah. (traditional Khmer greeting where hands are pressed together in front of the body accompanied by a bowing motion.)*

Over and over again, critiques of the Imam San would include references to Brahmanism. The older man I cite above was much more direct than most about relating this to Khmer practices, but in each case the subtext was not only that the Imam San are bad Muslims, but that they are in fact a variety of Khmer – a people whose notions of the sacred are derived from a pre-Islamic inheritance. This coupled with the tendency of the Imam San to adopt Khmer dress and manners when they encounter Khmers makes them suspect and effectively places them outside of the community of Muslims who should guard against being mistaken for unbelievers.

The Imam San for their part, are fiercely proud of what they term their independence and grow increasingly suspicious of the motives of foreign missionaries and those Muslims who choose to abandon Cham culture and become Arabs. This is usually expressed as 'choul Arab' or 'choul Chvea'. This expression is an analogue of 'choul Khmer', or 'to become Khmer' – typically said of upland peoples who adopt lowland culture. It is a phrase that implies not only entering a culture, but also leaving another behind. These Muslims who abandon their Cham heritage are seen as having become Arab, and Arabs are not native to Cambodia – they are a type of foreigner. The Imam San freely ascribe all of the negative attributes that are associated with Arabs in the wider culture to their neighbors.

When walking from Imam San villages in the direction of other Muslim villages, people on the road would warn me, in jest of course, that I should be careful over there, that the Arabs are liable to cut my head off if they become

angry. Old men in the village complain that foreign donors are more interested in giving aid to 'Arab communities' because they are terrorists and the Americans would like to pacify them. The Imam San are ignored because they are a peaceful people whose good behavior can be taken for granted.

2.5 The Imam San and their World

The Imam San community and their way of understanding their belonging in Cambodia will be covered in depth in chapter 3. The important idea for the moment is that they regard themselves as being both internal to Cambodia and also autonomous. When I related the first conversation of 2.4, regarding the timing of Eid al-Fitri to the Imam San, they replied quite emphatically that they had the correct date. After all, Islamic holidays are determined by the sighting of the moon and so this will differ from place to place. As the Imam San understand it, they make their own sighting and then declare the holiday to have begun. This sighting is made from Cambodia. Other Muslims use a different date because they do not sight the moon themselves. Instead, they wait for a phone call from Malaysia to tell them when the moon has been sighted. The Imam San then are not *khos*, but rather they are independent, unlike the 'Arabs' who prefer to take orders from abroad. The Imam San by contrast, maintain that only sightings from Cambodia can be valid – at once an act of defiance and citizenship.

The experience of working in the Imam San community is utterly different from that of conducting fieldwork in other Muslim communities. For one, there

is absolutely no attempt ever to engage visitors in a conversation about religion with a view to converting them. There are cases of Khmers entering the community and adopting their religion but this is always done in the context of marriage. Otherwise, conversion is not only a non-issue, but also a non-possibility, since being Cham and practicing the religion in the Imam San fashion is a function of having been born into the community and being recognized as a descendant of the original Cham who fled their homeland all those years ago. Because of this unity of ethnicity and religion, foreign visitors are not so much targets for conversion as useful allies in their struggle to preserve their culture and traditions – an issue that will be dealt with in further in the next chapter.

Fundamentally, what appears to make Imam San behave very differently from other Muslims is the way in which they conceptualize the national space. Imam San culture practices, norms, customs and religious rulings are effective within their villages – those places where they were given permission to settle by the then highest authority in the land, the king of Cambodia. Older men will gather to debate whether dancing is permissible in Our Reussei, but they understand that their rulings do not have effect outside of this district. This makes, for example, the holding of dances at the border of the community legally permissible.

When traveling outside the village or going to Phnom Penh, Imam San women often do not cover their heads and do not wear any clothing that would distinguish them. The religious prescription regarding head covering is also

unenforceable outside the village. Occasionally, the Imam San will jokingly refer to their villages as 'Srok Cham' or 'Cham country' as opposed to 'Khmer country' (Cambodia). Initially, I believed this was some sort of rejection of the Cambodian state, but to the contrary, it represents and embedding of one community within the other.

Time spent in the village is done according to Cham custom and law. Time spent outside is spent in the Khmer way without any feeling of resentment or consternation about whether or not interacting with Khmers in any way diminishes their own ethnic identity. One teacher of English recounted that during his time studying in Phnom Penh, he befriended a monk who allowed him to lodge with him at the wat. This is a common practice, for Khmer youth from the countryside seeking education in the city, but no Muslim outside of the Imam San community would ever consider this. In fact, every other Muslim with whom I discussed this case was positively revolted by the thought of living among Buddhist monks. The teacher was unfazed by the experience and no one in the community thought less of him for it. However, this would be an impossibility for any other group of Muslims who subscribe to an understanding of their religion that is less tied to race and ethnicity and instead linked to a feeling of belonging to the community known as the *Ummah*.

Outside of the Imam San community, Muslims feel themselves bound by Islamic law and custom at all times, whether they are in their home village or shopping in downtown Phnom Penh. Correct dress, adherence to dietary restrictions and other aspects of conduct that make them different from Khmers

remain in force regardless of one's location.   This indifference to geography is an essential component of the newer forms of Islam that have been brought to the country, which promote a global and universal view of religion rather than a local and particularist understanding.

2.6 New Issues in Cambodian Islam

In Cambodia today, there are two important groups of foreign Muslims engaged in mission activities.   On the one hand is the Salafist movement.   Most of the support for this movement comes from the Persian Gulf, and it promotes the practice of Islam in that region, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.   The other is the Tabligh movement, whose spiritual heartland is found in the Indian sub-continent and is also popular in Malaysia.

2.7 The Salafist Movement

The Salafists are, along with the Tabligh movement, an increasingly influential force within the Islamic community in Cambodia.   In essence, the movement is interested in purifying the Islamic faith so that it is practiced in the same way as the prophet Muhammad and the members of the three excellent generations that succeeded him.   These "salafs" or "ancestors" set the example for religious belief, religious practice, scriptural interpretation and personal behavior.   Much of the support for these teachings emanates from Saudi Arabia, where the Salafi version of Islam as expounded by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his successors is the religion of the state.   Kuwaiti and other Gulf

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sources are also typically of this stripe of Islamic puritanism. Salafi thought has changed the way many Muslims, even those that do not consider themselves Salafis, regard their own relationship to the religion. While the ideal of 'living and worshiping as the ancestors did' is, broadly speaking, the ultimate goal of the movement, it is not merely left at that level of abstraction. Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab proposed a methodology for achieving this. Namely, that Muslims should return to the scriptural sources of the religion – the Qur'an and the Hadith, the sayings and deeds of the prophet. This means subverting the authority of legal rulings and commentaries that had come to be regarded as having weight on par with the Qur'an and the Hadith, to the extent that in many cases, people did not bother to return to these primary sources in the event of legal disputes but instead relied on the voluminous body of legal writings, which were man-made artifacts and therefore inadequate as an ultimate source of law.

What Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and other Salafists argued was that individual Muslims must be able to engage the Qur'an and hadith and practice ijtihad, the personal interpretation of the scriptures. The former practice of taqlid, the imitation of the judgments of past scholars, divorced Muslims from full comprehension of what they were doing as well as the underlying principles that led to those actions. For this reason, the expansion of Salafi thinking on matters of theology and jurisprudence impacts every aspect of Muslim life.

For one, it immediately changes the relationship between individual Muslims and religious scholars, since now ordinary people can, with the benefit of study, draw their own conclusions regarding the interpretation of scripture and

the application of law. Also, it greatly increases the importance of the language of the prophet as the only legitimate vehicle for comprehending the primary sources, all of which are recorded in Arabic. Malay language religious books, long the backbone of Islamic instruction in Cambodia, are demoted to a secondary status, no longer held in quite the same regard. With this in mind, it is useful to discuss the life and teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and the way in which Salafi thought is being understood in Cambodia today.

2.7.1 Muhammad Ibn Abd al Wahhab

The term "Wahhabi" derived from the name of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab has come to be used as an epithet by Muslims critical of Salafists and the Salafi movement. Salafists themselves reject the term as it appears to imply that they either worship Ibn Abd al-Wahhab or that what Ibn Abd al-Wahhab left as a legacy was a madhhab, a new school of Islamic jurisprudence. For Salafists, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab did not found a new school of Islamic thought at all. Instead he returned to the roots of the faith and the law, stripping away generations of accretions to the perfect religion revealed by the prophet Muhammad. For this reason they prefer to refer to themselves as "Salafists" or "Salafis" – those that follow the teachings of the ancestors. In Cambodia the words "Kuwaiti" or "Saudi" are typically used for these same groups, as these are the primary sources of funding for mission work and the preferred destination for study for students of Salafi leanings.

These terminological differences notwithstanding, the influence of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab on the foundation and development of this movement was without question greater and more elemental than any other religious thinker. That he was influential is uncontested. What exactly the nature of that influence was is a more complex matter. In recent years, the central participation of Saudis in the financing, planning and execution of the September 11 attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania, has brought the spotlight onto the relationship between political terror and Islam, and especially the Saudi brand of Salafi Islam. As a result much has been made of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's interpretation of the notion of jihad and the degree to which his development of Islamic theology and jurisprudence was a necessary, even sufficient condition, for the rise of violent Islamist politics (Allen 2006). Other, more sympathetic scholars, paint Ibn Abd al-Wahhab as a reformer of the faith, interested not in strict literalism or Procrustean application of the Qur'an but with correct understanding of the faith (orthodoxy) which when combined with sincerity of intent leads to correct living of the faith (orthopraxy) (DeLong-Bas 2004).

2.7.2 Ijtihad – Independent Reasoning

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was born in the region of Najd on the Arabian Peninsula in either the year 1702 or 1703. He is said to have memorized the Qur'an by the age of ten and to have displayed devotion to scholarship and religion from an early age as well. As he grew older, he became dissatisfied with the many aspects of religious life. Firstly, as discussed above, was the

reliance by scholars on works other than the Qur'an and hadith to come to judicial conclusions.   The texts that the scholars depended on were the compilations of past rulings, opinions and judgments on matters jurisprudential.   While Ibn Abd al-Wahhab did not disregard these documents as worthless, he found it impossible to consider them as the sources of law.

Since all law must be derived from the Qur'an and hadith it is incumbent upon each generation to return to the sources and interpret them anew by understanding not only the scripture, but also the principles behind the law, and the context in which the law was revealed so that each mujtahid, or practitioner of ijtihad, can derive for himself the productive legal principles of the Qur'an and hadith and apply them to new circumstances.   Earlier scholarship and commentary, has its own cultural and historical baggage and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab found much of it to reflect the culture of the time or the interests of particular groups and factions rather than the eternal word of God.

In the Sunni world, scholars of law typically subscribe to one of four madhhabs, or schools of law.   These are the Maliki, Hanafi, Hanbali and Shafi'i schools.   It is the Shafi'i madhhab that is dominant in Muslim Southeast Asia. In principle, each of these four schools is an acceptable institution for the handling of legal matters.   However, because each school had distinct standards and methodologies for producing and evaluating juridical findings, any given scholar would only be trained within one madhhab and would restrict himself to that body of work in order to arrive at judgments.   According to Ibn Abd

al-Wahhab, a competent Muslim must not be limited to one school or another, since these divisions are but historical artifice.

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab replaces the system of imitation, or taqlid, with a methodology for uncovering and interpreting the meaning of the Qur'an and hadith. His jurisprudence builds on the axiom that the Qur'an, as the revealed word of God, is perfect and does not contradict itself. Moreover, the hadith, a body of literature that includes the deeds and words of the prophet Muhammad is also a primary source, as many topics about which the Qur'an is silent are discussed in the hadith. Muhammad's sayings are not the word of God in the way that the Qur'an is, but as the last messenger and prophet to humanity, Muhammad is the ideal man and so his pronouncements on religion, law and government are considered authoritative. That said, it is also an axiomatic assumption that the hadith must also be in harmony with the Qur'an, and may not contradict it. Readings and interpretations of hadith that contradict the Qur'an are faulty, either because the hadith is inauthentic, that is the chain of witnesses that recorded and passed down the hadith was compromised; or because the hadith is authentic, but the interpretation of it that contradicts the Qur'an is wrong and so understanding of it must be corrected to bring it into line with the Qur'an.

For this reason Ibn Abd al-Wahhab is frequently tied to Ibn Taymiyya, an Islamic scholar of the 12th and 13th centuries – a time when the Muslim world was shattered by the invasion of the Mongols and their sacking of Baghdad. Among other juridical determinations, Ibn Taymiyya found the traditional division of the jihad between the lesser jihad of armed struggle and the greater jihad of moral

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perfection to be an error. Although there is a hadith supporting this view, Ibn Taymiyya found that it contradicted the God's commandments in the Qur'an, where jihad is presented as the violent struggle against the unbelievers (Allen 2006). Ibn Taymiyya himself called for jihad against the Mongols as an obligatory duty for all Muslims – this despite the fact that the Mongols had themselves already converted to Islam by this time.

Although the Mongols professed Islam, they continued to govern themselves using laws and traditions outside of the shariah they should still be resisted until they adopted the religion completely and correctly (Perry and Negrin 2008). Modern-day jihadists consider these rulings to legitimate political violence even against Muslim rulers if there form of government is in fact un-Islamic and so the philosophical connections between Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Abd al-Wahhab are a source of concern to those monitoring the influence of Saudi missionaries and religious institutions.

While scholars such as De Long-Bas, contend that there is nothing particularly aggressive or militant in this tradition of Islamic scholarship, no one doubts that Ibn Abd al-Wahhab was instrumental to legitimizing the conquests of Muhammad Ibn Saud as he set out to bring most of the Arabian Peninsula under his control – a process that would end with the foundation of the modern state of Saudi Arabia, the only country in the world named after the family that owns it. It is this association with state power that makes many American and European observers uneasy at the thought of this faction wielding broader influence in the future.

2.7.3 Shirk and Bid'ah

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's seminal text, Kitab Al-Tawhid, set down his most fundamental concerns regarding the practice of Islam in his time. Firstly there was the problem of shirk, or the act of assigning partners to God. This included any beliefs in the capacity of Muhammad or the saints to intercede on one's behalf. By offering prayers to Muhammad or any other intermediary, the Muslim is denying the primacy of God and therefore in a state of incorrect belief. Since prayer is an act of worship, these people are effectively worshiping the intermediary and that is contrary to the spirit of tawhid, the unity and oneness of God. As Ibn Abd al-Wahhab gained currency, he and his followers undertook to destroy those places of veneration such as saints' tombs and sacred trees in order to prevent the practice of shirk and to make the people aware of the inefficacy of these idolatrous practices.

The second problem of bid'ah is particular to Islam among the Abrahamic religions. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab notes that Muhammad's message to humanity is different from that of Moses or Jesus in that, earlier prophets were sent to teach the religion of God to an ignorant people. Muhammad, on the other hand, transmitted the teachings of Islam to people who for the most part already worshipped the God of Abraham, but did so only imperfectly (DeLong-Bas 2004). They worshipped God but also revered idols. They petitioned not only God, but also holy men. They prayed to God for succor and consolation and yet, did not cease using talismans and worshiping at sacred trees in the hope of being granted

favors.   Muhammad's charge was to teach the message of God once and for all. He would reveal the perfect religion after which no changes could be tolerated.

Muhammad's prophecy is as much about forbidding incorrect acts of worship as about promoting the correct ones.   As Ahmad, a man in his late fifties, explains as he packs to leave on a mission the next morning:

> *The important thing is to do what Muhammad told us to do.   He gave us the religion from Allah – directly from Allah.   Do it this way... pray five times a day... pay zakat...   He didn't say do other things.   He didn't say make new holidays or new prayers... that is bid'ah.   Islam is the perfect religion.   When something is perfect, there is no more and no less.   You can't add and subtract. If Allah tells us to pray five times a day, does that mean six times is better? No! Never! If six were better, Allah would have said six times, if seven prayers were better Allah would have said seven times.   Allah said five because five is best.   Of course if you pray less that is bad, but there are people who think that if you pray more that will be better.   They are wrong... they are equally wrong as the people who don't pray enough.   No more, no less... no more no less... no bid'ah...*

In Cambodia much of a Salafi missionary's work is focused on prohibiting a slew of practices that are not explicitly set out in the Qur'an and hadith but which have, over time, come to be understood as Islamic – either because these deal with religious questions or because they are associated with Muslim people. The visitiation of grave sites in order to pray for the blessings of the deceased is common in the Muslim world but frowned upon by Salafis. The same is true for communal meals in remembrance of a recently passed member of the community where prayers are said to safely conduct the person's soul to heaven.

These have long been practices in the Muslim community of Cambodia and efforts to end them have met with mixed reactions. While some communities

have embraced the new and more streamlined teaching others have found it more difficult to break with these traditions. These gatherings were both an important part of Muslim culture and an opportunity to feel community solidarity. Moreover, the fact that they are not present in the authoritative texts does not take change the fact that the participants feel a deep sense of piety and connection to their religion when they perform these ceremonies.

Because of this tension, many have sought a form of Islam which can be authentic but also incorporate the "Islamic traditions" that Salafis find so problematic. The Salafis' most important rival for influence, the Dakwah Tabligh movement, has embraced many of these traditions.

2.8 The Tabligh

The Tabligh (also: Dakwah Tabligh or Jamaat Tabligh) trace their origins to the Deobandi movement in Urdu-speaking northern India of the 19th Century. Unlike the Middle Eastern forms of the religion which arose in an overwhelmingly Muslim and Arab environment, the context in which the Tabligh formed was that of being a religious and ethnic minority on the subcontinent, albeit a very sizable minority. In Cambodia, Tabligh missionaries have stressed maintaining difference from non-Muslims. Just as Muslims in India must keep separate from Hindus as well as the influence of the British establishment, Cambodian Muslims must take care not to mix with Khmers and to remain recognizably distinct at all times.

This preoccupation of the Tabligh movement is most visibly manifest in clothing. While Salafis are content to go about town in a button shirt and a pair of slacks, Tablighs prefer to wear long shirts and turbans as might be found in South Asia or the Middle East. Men who work may have to tone this down somewhat, but the ideal of dressing as the prophet and his companions did and thereby distinguishing themselves from the masses of unbelievers is still held. The veiling of women is also practiced by some members of the community.

A teacher of religion, who identified himself as a Salafi, explained the Tabligh movement in this way:

They spend all their time praying. If they have a choice between praying and studying or working, they will pray. If you already prayed at the appointed time, why do you need to continue praying? You can watch them they are always doing mission work and they sit in the mosque together and they read the Qur'an. But if you ask them if they can read Arabic they will say "no". They do not know what they are saying or doing, but they think that just doing is enough – you don't need to know anything. Sometimes you go to a Tabligh village and you see that their teacher doesn't know Arabic and only got a few years of regular school. He can barely read Khmer but he teaches anyway and people listen and that is a problem... He cannot know what the shariah is. He does not know how to make decisions. He does not tell the people to stop praying to Muhammad or to the dead or practicing magic – these things are unbelief. If you do things like that you will go to hell, but when your teacher is ignorant how can you advance?

Certainly this is a harsh characterization of the Tabligh movement by an avowed critic, but elements of his philippic are important for understanding the adversarial relationship between these two proselytizing movements as well as some of the appeal that the Tabligh sect has for many Cambodian Muslims.

Critics of the Tabligh movement make much of their inattention to the kind of scholarship and book learning that make Islam superior to other religions. After all, if the Qur'an is the revealed and literal word of God, should not every effort be made to understand it and its meaning? Tablighs do have a number of important educational centers were Arabic language and Islamic sciences are taught, but they are rarely well funded and the quality of education is considered deficient even by Tablighs themselves. However, to focus on this issue is to miss the point of what the Tabligh movement is meant to achieve.

Firstly, the separation of Muslims and non-Muslims – few things will prevent one from meeting non-Muslims like spending long days reciting Qur'an in the mosque or walking around town dressed like a Pakistani sheikh. Secondly, there is the return to life as lived in the times of the prophet which the Tabligh see as a physical, energetic exercise of the body and not merely as an intellectual pursuit. When I asked Tablighs about underqualified people going out to perform missionary work the response was always that missionary work (dakwah) is meant to add to the knowledge of both individuals and that the missionary is as much a student as the person receiving the word is. What Salafis find to be incompetence, Tablighs have understood as a kind of humility.

The other criticism leveled at the Tablighs is that they do not prohibit the unlawful but instead happily join in activities that are not permissible in the Qur'an and hadith. Unlike villages that have accepted Salafi teachings, Tabligh villages for the most part maintain all of the old customs surrounding religious practice that are not approved by Saudi and Kuwaiti-trained imams. Apart from

the death rituals mentioned above, the problem of mawlud (Prophet Muhammad's birthday) also divide these communities. According to Salafi's, Muhammad never celebrated his birthday, nor did he instruct anyone to celebrate his birthday or any other birthday for that matter. It is not the practice is prohibited only that it was not a practice at the time of the prophet and since the prophet practiced the religion perfectly, the mawlud cannot be said to be a properly Islamic practice.

A Tabligh imam preparing to celebrate the mawlud with a communal feast explained otherwise:

> *Those people (Salafis) come around and make problems at this time of year. They tell us that we can't have mawlud. But Muslims have been celebrating mawlud for a long time. Everybody likes it. We get together and we eat. We feel solidarity and we feel like a community. In Muhammad's time they did not celebrate the mawlud, but they joined together and he was there. He was present so there was no need for mawlud – they had the prophet himself... No one says we must celebrate. It is not the law. But we choose to celebrate. It reminds us of our religion and we feel close to the prophet and to God when we do this... The feeling is important. The feelings in the heart – that is important. If the action increases imaan (faith) then it is good. The people who criticize us are of another thought. They are from outside and have received other influences but we don't criticize the community. We encourage them to do more and to have more faith.*

The fact that the Tablighs have been more amenable to pre-existing practices, provided that they reflect piety and devotion has gone some way to allowing the Tabligh movement to become more indigenized than the Salafis who would seek to erase such practices in the name of correctness and perfection instead of ecstatic experience.

Salafis will capsize these arguments by calling into question the notion that continuity of practice has anything to do with its acceptability. Only the revelation of the prophet and his singular example can serve as the basis for practice and law. This argument lies at the heart of what separates these two movements in Cambodia, which at least in principle, both seek to inspire today's Muslims with the example of the prophet and his companions. For the Tablighs, the history of Muslims is central as a way of deriving the meaning of contemporary circumstances. Not only is the story of Muhammad and his followers meaningful, but those meanings have been endlessly recapitulated in Muslim history since that time. Understanding this is important for reasserting that connection to the past which leads back to the prophets, and critical to discerning the correct path of action at this point in history.

2.9   New Islams and Muslim History

While the Tabligh movement is frequently considered apolitical because they are disinterested in electoral politics or political mobilization, it should be noted that for many active missionaries this is only a preliminary step. This lack of outward ambition is understood by many active missionaries as a period of preparation, of steeling the spirit of the Muslims so that they can someday transform the world around them and establish the perfectly Islamic society on Earth. Muhammad himself did not succeed immediately in spreading the word. He meditated, he preached to a small band of followers and he even had to leave his community of Mecca to take up residence in Medina until he was ready to

return triumphant. The following are some examples of various historical events that are understood by Tablighs as having value in guiding the growth and development of the community.

2.9.1   The "Conversion of Lenin" and the Perfection of the Self

Sitting at a mosque in Phnom Penh, a number of Indian missionaries were having a discussion with their Cambodian hosts. As I sat, they turned to me and explained that they were trying to instill the importance of personal faith and unshakeable belief. He thought this was fundamental to the entire enterprise of Islam especially in the field of spreading the word to non-Muslims. The Indian man addressed me and asked:

Have you heard of Lenin?

Lenin?

Yes. The King of Russia, Lenin.

I've heard of him.

You know, many years ago, there were three Tablighs from India who traveled to Russia. They arrived there and Lenin wanted to meet them so they met at his palace. The Tablighs explained their religion to Lenin for many hours and Lenin was interested in their teachings. Lenin had an entire country and so he needed to know how to live according to the Islamic way.   He asked the missionaries, "Can you show me an example of a country where this religion is put into practice?" The missionaries responded that they could not – that no nation had yet accepted true Islam as their one and only guiding cause. Lenin replied, "Well, can you show me a community where these principles of Islam are the law of the people?" Again the missionaries were forced to admit that even on that level, the commandments of God have not been perfectly applied. Finally, exasperated, Lenin asks, "Can you show me one single human being that lives the life of a true

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Muslim?" With this the missionaries hung their heads and returned to India.

The strong feeling among Tablighs that the community's failures are really an aggregation of personal failures writ large is what is at the heart of this story. As this story was told to me and translated for the benefit of others in the group, more examples of the same principle were offered: *"My cousin had a problem with drugs. He tried to stop many times but only when he became a real believing Muslim did he stop.", "There was a woman here. She could not find a husband. But then she asked God with ikhlas (sincerity) and she finally found a husband and now they have children, thanks be to God!", "There are many disobedient children, that run around doing drugs and crime, but if you put them in the madrasah and they learn the right way then they become good children. You can see them here in Prek Pra."...* This went on for some time.

In the end, Tablighs consider spiritual perfection to be the sine qua non of social and political transformation. If those missionaries had only been as righteous and upstanding as the law that they preached then perhaps Lenin would have converted, the Soviet Union would have been some sort of Caliphate, Russians and Afghans would have lived as brothers in faith, and the rest of the world would have been overawed by this example of excellent living and followed Lenin into the fold of Islam. This was not to be.

For the time being, the Tablighs of Prek Pra, Phnom Penh are reinventing their community and their mosque as a kind of addiction center. Visits to the mosque are typically received by a number of men, smiling hysterically, rolling

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back their sleeves to reveal a veritable Union Pacific of track marks as evidence of years of abuse. They credit the mosque and the religion with helping them quit. The frequent prayers and recitations plus the fact that they are encouraged to spend time with others rather than in solitary study or contemplation create an environment where it would certainly be more difficult to score a hit and indulge one's addiction.

The personal transformation brought about by the power of true belief is a common thread among many Muslims, but Tablighs in particular. Salafis will ask drug addicts to stop using so that they can enter into the path of righteousness. Correct living is pragmatically related to the practice of the faith and the search for a place in Paradise. Among the Tablighs, this is turned on its head and the correct belief is held as the foundation of establishing the correct life – just believe the right way and God will provide the rest, be it money, a wife or willpower. The faith of the individual is paramount and its importance can be found in the history of the community.

2.9.2 The Battle of Uḥud and the Decadence Within

In the year 625, the prophet Muhammad and his forces suffered a grave defeat on the battlefield against the Meccan army that sought to crush them and end their nascent religious movement once and for all. The Battle of Uḥud came only a year after the Battle of Badr in which the vastly outnumbered Muslims managed to wrest victory from a well armed and equipped Meccan force. This Battle of Badr immediately came to be seen as a sign of God's favor on the

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Muslims, who by dint of faith and dedication to the cause overcame overwhelming odds. To this day, the word "Badr" appears frequently in the names of military units and operations in the Muslim world.

The Battle of Uḥud on the other hand was little short of a disaster. A young student returning from Malaysia related the story as follows:

> *Muhammad led the troops to the battle. Everyone felt that they would be victorious, like they were at Badr. They had imaan (faith) and they wanted to beat the Quraysh to protect their religion. The Quraysh did not believe and they tried many times to kill the prophet. When they met the army Muhammad could see how to achieve victory. He placed some troops in the front and told the others to stay in the back. He needs to fight on both sides the – the front and the back. The Muslims went forward and they were beating the Quraysh, but then when they came close to the Quraysh camp the soldiers could see that they had gold and silver and other treasures. The soldiers hurried forward to get the treasure including the soldiers from the back. They left the back and ran for the treasure. Prophet Muhammad told them to protect the back but they disobeyed! After that everything was chaos. The Quraysh came from behind and the Muslims lost. Even the Prophet Muhammad was injured and almost killed. If the soldiers had obeyed Muhammad's orders the Muslims would have won, but they could not control themselves and they disobeyed and the Muslims lost.*

This story is told throughout the Muslim world as a way of understanding how Islam, once ascendant, is now in a subordinate position to non-Muslims. If a Muslim accepts that no event may occur in this world except that God should permit it, then the question becomes "Why did God permit his people to fail?" The answer must be found in the relationship with Muslims and God and the way in which Muslims have failed to live up to the expectation that the religion puts upon them. As an older man, recently convinced of the rightness of the Tabligh path explained the problem of the Middle East thus:

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How can Israel defeat all the Arab countries? The country is so small. (thumb pressed to the first joint of the index finger so as to suggest something small.) Egypt is large. Syria is large. Saudia Arabia is large. Kuwait is large. Libya is large. Pakistan is large. But Israel is small and Israel defeated all of them. The Muslims cannot defeat Israel because they don't have faith. They leave the religion. They do not follow the shari'ah. Israel is a punishment from Allah for this. So you cannot defeat Allah's punishment. If the Muslims worshiped correctly, then Israel would disappear. Allah would stop punishing the Muslims and Israel will disappear.

The personal faith component of the religion culminates in social and political consequences that may not be apparent to the individual Muslim. Here personal failings can bring loss and humiliation on the community as a whole and so therefore, the way to address social ills is to focus on personal standards of behavior and conduct. Attempts to resolve the problem by engaging the proximate cause are misguided and meaningless if they are not based in a complete embrace of the faith. It is this failure to recognize God's punshment and the submission that it demands of believers that permits social failure to persist. This narrative of individual frailty leading to communal penury has resonance in the histories of both Champa and Cambodia.

Chapter 3 will enter into more detail on the Cham story of the Kerik Tree, in which the Cham king willingly fells the sacred tree that guaranteed the security of the Cham people in a bid to please his beautiful, young Vietnamese bride, and the Khmer story of Preah Ko Preah Kaew, in which the Khmers themselves cut down the magical bamboo barrier that protected them from the Siamese in an effort to get at the gold coins the Siamese general had scattered into the bamboo.

In both cases, as in the Battle of Uḥud, the germ of failure lies in the heart of the people themselves. The antagonist, whether he be Quraysh, Vietnamese or Thai is understood to be powerless to harm the community until the moment when the members of the favored community betray the moral underpinnings of its superiority. The Cham history of failure as a people finds expression in each of these stories whose fundamental lessons are very much the same.

2.9.3   Islamic Spain and the Lost World

At a roadside eatery in the far northwest of Cambodia, I spotted and was spotted by Abdul Karim, a prominent member of the Tabligh movement in Ratanakiri Province. I had attempted to engage him in conversation several times before but his handlers from Phnom Penh had made that difficult. This time he was without his minders. He saw me from across the market, smiled, waved and began to walk over. Scanning the table, I quickly grabbed the plate of grilled pork I had ordered and tossed it under the table, where a ravenous herd of felines made short work of the incriminating evidence.

Abdul Karim took a seat beside me and began asking questions of his own:

Where are you from?

From Spain.

Oh! Al-Andalus! I know Spain. I've read about it. I've heard about it. Are you from Córdoba?

No, from Galicia. It's far from Córdoba. You know Córdoba?

Yes, Córdoba is the most important place in Al-Andalus. Have you been to the mosque there – the one with the columns?

I've never been to Córdoba. My city is far to the north.

Are there many Muslims in your city?

No. We don't really have Muslims there.

But Córdoba has many Muslims. Al-Andalus has many Muslims...

In the past there were many Muslims, but today there are few. Some Muslims from Morocco or the Middle East live there, but they come from abroad.

(perplexed) Al-Andalus was the most important Muslim country. For a long time it had the best mosques and best madrasas. They have mosques and madrasas and students.

The mosques have become churches. The Muslims left Al-Andalus when it fell.

Why did they leave?

Where did you learn about Al-Andalus? And who told you about the columns?

When I do dakwah, I talk to Tablighs from many countries. Al-Andalus was the best Muslim country... but the people started drinking and doing other things that were against the shariah. Then it fell.

Well, when it fell, the Muslims had to leave. The new kings of Spain forced the Muslims to leave. Muslims in Spain today come from outside Spain mostly.

(crestfallen) And you're not a Muslim?

No. I think I told you that before.

Yes, yes. (looking back at his table)

The conversation wound down awkwardly. I explained that my ancestors had evicted his from the closest thing to paradise on Earth that humans

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had ever created.   The fact that this was centuries ago and that he is unlikely to have had any biological ancestors residing in the Iberian Peninsula at that or any other time did little to assuage the feelings of discomfiture between us.   Abdul Karim politely thanked me for my time, wished me well and returned to his companions.

Being known in the Muslim community as a Spaniard elicited different reactions in each of the different communities.   Among the Imam San, Spain was little more than a soccer team with passports.   For the Salafis, Spain was a country in Europe, where one could study and receive a degree recognized in the US while also playing some soccer.   Among the Tablighs Spain represented something altogether different.   Spain, or Al-Andalus, was, if not the highest, a high point in Islamic civilization.   It was the shining example of what could be achieved by a community of the perfectly faithful – the apotheosis of the Islamic will to order and justice now brought low by human weaknesses to become a profane country remarkable only for drinking and soccer.

Tablighs would frequently ask me to recount the history of Al-Andalus, to translate documents found on the internet about Islamic Spain, and to explain the reasons behind the fall of the Caliphate.   For Abdul Karim, Al-Andalus was not just a country that existed in the past.   It was then a perfect land which was the product of the combined faith of all good Muslims, and it remains today a memory to be redeemed through the realization of God's plan for humans on Earth.

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To learn that this land no longer has an appreciable Muslim population is very jarring for many. It is still very common for Chams in Cambodia to believe that the cities of Champa in Việt Nam are still inhabited by Cham people. These cities are now under Vietnamese occupation, but the Cham population is still there, and although they suffer hardship and oppression, they still exist. Perhaps someday they can be found again and their community can be restored.

The story of Al-Andalus encapsulates the earlier explored themes of spiritual perfection undone by man's imperfect nature, and to this adds an element of historical interpretation, which in Cambodia is particular to the Tablighs. Salafis in Cambodia study history. They must – it is a compulsory subject in state schools which they recognize as important to their advancement. Nevertheless, the dominant strand among Salafists holds that the assimilation of Middle Eastern and Arab models are the most correct course of action, and for that reason, the Muslims of Cambodia need to learn and understand the Arabic language and the correct practice of Islam without accretions. The history of the Cham, Champa and other peoples who are now Islamic matters little. These are not sources of inspiration or guidance, and cannot be seen as homologous to the history experienced and made by the prophet and his companions.

Tablighs on the other hand, are a group of Muslims who accept the Salafi message of practicing the religion as it was practiced by Muhammad, but they do not reject the particularities of their history as a community within the Ummah. Instead, this history is incorporated and made legible in the light of previous events in other parts of the Muslim world. Abdul Karim and others like him feel

a strong connection to any aspect of the past that can be known as Muslim. To think of the Islamic ideal made reality in social life, education and sacred architecture strikes a chord of longing for a community to which anyone who professes the Muslim faith can claim belonging in.

Cham history has useful parallels that help Tablighs feel that they too are a part of the Islamic mission to unify humanity in a single religion. However, not all Cham that value their history have entered the Tabligh movement. The community of Imam San also hold their ethnic history dear – other Muslims will say that they do so to the detriment of their religious lives. Among the Imam San, we find a people who have privileged history and tradition such that religion is itself seen as an ethnic signifier as much as a confessional orientation. It is the Imam San that will be explored in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

Muslim Independence under the Norodom Parasol

Don't forget to come to our celebration next week.   We will have some music and dancing... don't worry, the party is outside the village so we can dance.

Won't the elders get angry?

Cham law is for Cham villages only.   We'll be outside the village so no one will get angry... If we are outside the village, they can't tell us what to do.   We will only be under Khmer law.

3.1   The Community of Imam San

On one of my first days in the Our Reussei community of the Imam San, I asked a young man what was the difference between the people of his village and the other Muslims in the surrounding settlements.   He answered, *'Those are the Arabs.   We are the Cham.   We are different because we have a palace.' 'And where is this palace?'* I asked.   After some hesitation he replied, *'I'm not sure.   I think it's in Việt Nam now.'*   He was proud that his people had a palace, a 'weang', which is the same word used for the royal abode of the Cambodian king. It was not merely a memory of an earlier age but a present-day marker that separated him and people like him from people like the Mufti.   The fact that they could not return to the palace was sad but it did not diminish the original accomplishment of having achieved greatness as a people.

This strong attachment to a sense of history and in particular to the royal institutions of Champa are what, for most Imam San, legitimate them as the authentic Cham community.   Other Muslims frequently refer to them as 'original

Cham' because they are said to maintain the old traditions, but this on its own is insufficient to understand how the Imam San regard these practices. For the Imam San, the traditions of Champa are part of a broader ideological framework that both valorizes their experience as a people and connects them in the present to their Khmer neighbours. This bond to the land and people of Cambodia is seen to begin when the Cham royals, fleeing persecution, were given permission by the Cambodian king to settle and remain in his country.

3.2   The Story of Imam San

Sometime in the mid 19th century, Imam Hassan ('San' for short) appears as the leader of a group of Cham people. His story is told and retold in various versions, and below is a recounting by an elder in Our Reussei commune.

> *Before, all the Cham were in the north in Kampong Cham. They settled their after leaving Champa because the Vietnamese took all the land. They were living there but there were many problems. The Cham fought amongst themselves and then the Khmer also fought with the Cham. There was disorder and it was terrible. It was hard to farm rice and there was no law. Then the king learned of this. And he called the Cham to his palace and he told them to stop fighting and he said that they should live nearby, because if they are far away he cannot be sure of imposing order. Imam San was the leader of the community and the king allowed him to choose the land for his people. And so he chose this land... you see all these rice fields around here?... that land is ours because the king gave it to Imam San.*

The king in this story is Ang Duong, considered possibly the most important Cambodian monarch of the modern era. Ang Duong emerged at a time when Cambodia had almost completely ceased to exist under the pressure of Thailand and Việt Nam. The War between the two countries was fought in

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Cambodia as each side attempted to gain mastery over what remained of the rapidly decaying kingdom. During this time Cambodia came perilously close to suffering the same fate as Champa, as the Vietnamese attempted to impose their political and material culture on the population in an attempt to permanently assimilate them into their realm. Ang Duong was finally installed by Thai forces who managed to oust the Vietnamese from Phnom Penh.

What followed was a brief respite in the bitter struggle of the Khmer to maintain an independent state in the hostile region. The king embarked on a program of re-Khmerizisation of the bureaucracy and purging of Vietnamese influences. Ang Duong was a patron of letters and himself gifted with the pen. Most importantly for the future development of the country, it was he who began making the necessary contacts with the French to involve them in the region and relieve Cambodian dependency on Thailand. Although this resulted in Cambodia becoming a French protectorate, in the long run it prevented Cambodia from being completely absorbed by its neighbours and and so permitting the eventual establishment of an independent Cambodia in 1953.

Association with King Ang Duong lends a certain type of legitimacy to the Cham presence. Firstly, Ang Duong was a great king, not only because of his political accomplishments but also because of the flourishing of culture that occurred during his reign. This was an Indian culture, which Ang Duong could preserve because he resided in Bangkok, unlike his rival, Chan, who was a client of the Vietnamese. Secondly, his program of removing Vietnamese elements

from Cambodian life passed over the Cham community. Thus, the Cham are recognized as another Indic people who share with the Khmer a common enemy.

The story continues:

Finally, the Cham people came and lived here in Oudong. Oudong was the capital. This was the where the king was. Imam San at that time started praying a great deal and he would go away for a long time to pray. Sometimes in the forest. Nobody could find him. One day the king wanted to find him and he could not. They looked everywhere and some people said that maybe Imam San was plotting against the king. When Imam San appeared they took him to the king and he was asked what he was doing. He said he was praying – that he did not want to cause any problems. Imam San was not plotting against the king. He told the king that he respected him and that he was his king, but that he needed to have a good place to pray – a quiet place. When he is praying nobody can find him. The king then offered to give him a good place to pray. He gave him a hill in Oudong. That is where we have the temple of Ta San.

This part of the story affirms the relationship between the Cham and the Cambodian monarchy. It is a patronage association whereby the Cham submit to the king and the king in turn cares for the particular needs of his subjects. King Ang Duong takes a personal interest in Imam San and, recognizing his special requirements, gives him a place on the hilltops of Oudong. The hills of Oudong are the resting place for the Cambodian royal family. The Imam San understand the significance of this moment to be the recognition of their community as royals, worthy of taking a place among the former regents of the country. As the Imam San frequently mention, the mosque atop Oudong is their mosque and it can be claimed by no other group of Muslims in the country since they are not of royal lineage. When Imam San died, it is said that although his body was buried elsewhere, his spirit returned to the mountain. In a dream he

communicated to an elder that he wanted his grave to be at Oudong at the site of the mosque as a reminder of the special bond his people enjoy with the royal family.

Today the mosque of Imam San is located in the same place. The older wooden structure was replaced by a concrete temple after the civil war. It is a simple rectangular white-washed building without domes or minarets, commanding a view of the rice fields and Buddhist temples below the hill. Just below the mosque are a series of shacks inhabited by the guardians of the mosque - older men and women in white robes who dedicate themselves to contemplation and entertaining visitors. This temple is the common focus for all Imam San in Cambodia as it is the place of veneration for their founder and their link to the king.

3.2.1   Mawlud Phnom

The story of Imam San is commemorated during the Mawlud Phnom, a holiday particular to the Imam San community. Typically the word 'mawlud' refers to Mohammed's birthday and is celebrated in various forms throughout the Muslim world. The Mawlud Phnom takes place at Oudong and brings together Imam San from Kompong Chhnang, Pursat, Battambang as well as a contingent from Kampot province. This yearly event is the only opportunity for a large scale gathering of Imam San from different communities. Apart from the Imam San, representatives, both Muslim and Buddhist, attend from the Ministry of Cults and Religions as well as a representative from the royal household. A small

number of other Muslims also show up. Their reasons vary, but usually they attend out of curiosity about the practices of these real Cham – a sort of heritage tourism.

The ceremony consists of a procession of cakes made by local women which are then arranged in front of the mosque, where the Ong Knur, other elders and visiting dignitaries gather. Inside the mosque, the religious functionaries know as the Ong Chav chant songs in praise of Imam Hassan. Just outside, at the 'grave' of Imam San himself, a number of elders wrap the grave in a burial cloth and say prayers over it. Then, when it is ready, they begin cutting the fabric into strips and tying them onto the wrists of the visitors. The wristbands are said to bring blessings for the coming year and are worn until they fall off of their own accord.

In the open space in front of the mosque, I was invited to sit with the Ong Knur as well as a Muslim parliamentarian and another secretary of state. They lavished praise on the Ong Knur and the other elders around him. "These are the protectors of real Cham culture", they would say. "If you really want to learn Cham, you will have to learn it from them", they advised. The Ong Knur smiled sheepishly as the two men launched into paeans for the Ong Knur's people - lamenting the loss of traditions which only this community preserves and looking forward to how sad it will be when it is all finally gone. Considering both of these men have been working rather actively to encourage the kind of missionization that threatens to make these traditions gone, their words quickly began grating on all of us.

The need to maintain a sense of civility on this solemn occasion prevailed however, at least long enough for the counterfeit encomium to be mercifully interrupted by a representative from the Ministry. The speaker, a Khmer, stood before the assembled, thanked the Ong Knur and the community for allowing him to attend this special day and began a short speech on the Prime Minister's commitment to the free practice of religion and the importance of this freedom as a cornerstone of the new Cambodia. He then explained to the audience that the money that comes from Muslims abroad will be used for the development of the community and not wasted - Prime Minister Hun Sen would see to this himself. The speech finished, he thanked the attendees once again and returned to Phnom Penh.

For the vast majority of the arrivals, the politicians are little more than a side show. They are far more interested in meeting each other and trying to feel like a community. The Mawlud Phnom provides a chance to get together with other Imam San from around the country and for the Ong Knur to touch base with his people outside the Kompong Chhnang area with whom he is not always in regular communication. On the one hand this creates a feeling of solidarity and relief that there are still others that maintain the traditions as they do. On the other hand, as the Imam San are by far numerically inferior to other Muslims, the question of how many adherents remain is never far from anyone's mind at these events. As one elder laments:

> *There used to be more people. Many people have started praying five times a day. They want to be like the Arabs or they want to get money from them. In the past all Cham followed the*

way of Imam San, but today very few are left.   We have some old people here on the hill and they remember the customs.   But the young people do not know as much.   They are busy.   They have work and school.   Some of them start praying 5 times a day. Maybe in the future there are no more Cham.

This sharp disconnect between older and younger members of the community becomes more apparent during holidays.   The Mawlud Phnom, because it is particular to the Imam San, serves as a sort of barometer, constantly falling, of the fortunes of the community.   Explanations for this vary, but for many of the older generation, it is the young who are failing to preserve Cham culture because of the nature of modern life, where employment, education and social networking compete for their attention.   The younger Imam San will be discussed later in this chapter.   Suffice it to say for now, celebrations such as the Mawluds and the Chai Ceremonies mean somewhat different things to the older and younger generation, with older Imam San regarding them as recreations of a better past and young Cham seeing them as a foundational element of a broader ethnic nationalism which encompasses the professional and educational pursuits which the elders see as a distraction.

3.3   Mawlud

Although the Mawlud, or celebration of the prophet's birthday is not practiced exclusively by the Imam San, it is only in this community that this remains a major production.   There is a great deal of controversy over whether or not the observance of Muhammad's birthday is properly Islamic, an innocuous cultural practice, or a dangerous form of bid'ah, innovation beyond the perfect

religion taught by the prophet.   For this reason, many other Muslim communities have either stopped holding these celebrations or toned them down significantly to a communal meal shared by the men after prayers.   In the Imam San community there is no such discussion as to whether this is a party-worthy event.

The Mawlud is much like the Mawlud Phnom except that each community holds it at the local mosque rather than atop Oudong.   There is a long procession of different families bringing the cakes fried in the days leading up to the festivity. Each group announces it's presence before entering the mosque grounds and are welcomed by a cry of 'Lo Mlai' (hurray), by those already inside.   The cakes come in the shapes of dragons and peacocks representing male and female elements respectively and are arranged on a stick into a tower-like structure. The stick itself is stuck into a hard-boiled   egg, which, like the dragons and peacocks, is another symbol of fertility, an ever-present concern for a community that fears further demographic decline.

Around the perimeter of the mosque itself, but well within the mosque grounds, wait bands of hungry Khmer children.   They've walked from the neighbouring Khmer villages and are now settling in for the long wait that lies ahead of them.   They don't know much about Islam or the prophet, but they do know that if they wait until the end, they will get some of those cakes.   As far as I know, this is the only Muslim event in the country that has any kind of Khmer attendance aside from government or party representatives dutifully showing up to shake hands and kiss babies.

The Imam San welcome them. They are after all neighbours, they go to school together and they run into each other on the paths between village and rice field, and so have a right to show up and grab some cakes for themselves. It's good PR, but more importantly, there is no issue of 'contamination' among the Imam San regarding contact with Khmers in the first place. The presence of Khmers at holidays and in mosques is not in any way problematic as it is becoming among many other Muslims in the country. This connection between Cham of the Imam San stripe and Khmer becomes more apparent during the Chai and Areak ceremonies and is central to the understanding of these spirit possession practices for which this community is well known.

3.4 The Chai

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the Chai ceremony in both defining and binding the community of the Imam San. It is at once a celebration of Cham heritage, a historical drama in which the glory and subsequent descent into exile of the Cham people in Cambodia is reenacted, and an opportunity for members of the community to take stock of their own personal fortunes and place them on the narrative continuum that is the Imam San story. Seen from the outside, the ceremony is at worst a dangerous act of idolatry and *shirk* and at best a ridiculous superstition with no place in the correct practice of Islam now available to the Cham. This ritual and its concomitant beliefs in spirit ancestors and the importance of royal lineages is, along with their failure to pray

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five times daily, regarded by Orthodox Muslims as the defining feature of the Imam San community and as evidence of the deviancy of their faith.

It is important from the outset to make clear that the Imam San themselves do not consider the Chai ceremony a religious ritual, or at least, not an Islamic practice. Much like other Muslims in Cambodia, a sharp distinction is drawn between those things which are classified as acts of faith and those that are manifestations of culture. When speaking Khmer, the Imam San regularly use the words *sasanā* and *vabbadharm* to distinguish between their Islamic religious beliefs on one hand and their Cham traditions on the other. Among Khmers themselves, the word *sasanā* typically refers to Buddhism and its institutions in Cambodia, or, when in reference to non-Khmers, some other religion such as Christianity. *Vabbadharm* is typically used in reference to ceremonies and rituals that are essentially secular although there may be a religious component or even involve the participation of religious functionaries such as weddings - such that while these words refer to two spheres of life understood to be distinct from one another, and so one should resist the temptation to think of them as being wholly separate. Instead, there is significant overlap in these two terms and considerable interpenetration of the beliefs and ideologies associated with these aspect of social life.

In interviews with Orthodox Muslims, even those who expounded at length on the importance of separating and even eliminating culture in favor of religion, virtually no one believed that the Imam San themselves made this distinction, rather, the Chai ceremony as well as other non-Islamic practices were

symptoms of a broader ignorance of the fundamental tenets of the Muslim religion. These were not two distinct facets of the cultural life of that community but a warning writ large of the dangers of allowing one's faith to be contaminated by alternate objects of veneration and forms ritual practice. The mongrelized confession of the Imam San was after all, once upon a time, the belief system of all the Cham and so the Imam San are held as a foil against which distance can be measured along one's own path to purity and perfection.

The practice of the Chai ritual is thus important both as a crystallization of Cham ethnic ideology which defines Chamness as a positive and enduring essence in a world dominated by Khmer hosts and Vietnamese enemies as well as the hallmark of a dying society, mired in the historic past and an ethnic provincialism on a planet in which the true operative distinction between people, regardless of their geographic origin or ethnic background, should be between those of the Muslim religion as taught by the prophet Muhammad and all others.

3.4.1   When and Why

The Chai, or Chai spirits, are the souls of ancient Cham royals and aristocrats who return to the community during the Chai ceremony and inhabit the bodies of the spirit mediums who then perform rituals and theatrical dance for a period of as long as three days. These dances are divided into several routines, each recounting some aspect of Cham history or court culture. Ultimately, the entire performance is an expression of a collective history of both greatness and vulnerability, exile and belonging, past events and future possibilities.

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The Chai ceremony is frequently described as a healing ritual.   Yet, while health and bodily well-being are concerns of the ceremony, it is not a ceremony that will bring about healing per se.   In fact, the Chai ceremony is carried out only after the patient has been healed and not before and so the ritual itself is not what is seen as healing the ill individual.   Instead it would better be understood, on the one hand as an expression of gratitude for the spirits of Champa who intervened to heal the sick and, on the other hand, as a manifestation of community solidarity as an extension of familial solidarity, which is an explicit focus of the Chai ritual.

This distinction between a healing event and an occasion of thanksgiving is crucial to how participants themselves describe the Chai.   As I was told by a middle aged man:

> *We are having a Chai next week.   It is for me.   I was very sick. My lungs... I had problems with my lungs.   But now I'm healed so we are doing a Chai.   You should come.   You could see it and I would be very happy if you came as my guest.*
>
> *I'd love to come.   I'm glad you're well now.   Can you tell me how you got better?*
>
> *The Chai helped me.   I asked them for help because I was sick and they helped me.*
>
> *But you didn't go to the doctor or take any medicine?*
>
> *Yes, I did.   We always go to the doctor first.   We ask the doctor, and the doctor gives us medicine and tells us how to get healthy. But this doesn't always work.   We only ask for the Chai's help if we already tried everything else.   We MUST go to the doctor first and we MUST try everything we can on our own before we ask the Chai.*
>
> *So the medicine didn't work?*

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No, the medicine helped a little but then it stopped. I saw several doctors, no one could give a different treatment.

So how did you receive help from the Chai? You just asked them?

Yes, I asked them. But also I promised them that if I am healed then I will make a Chai ceremony and we will bring everyone together for them. We will have much rice and chicken and incense... and fruit and together we will have a Chai ceremony. When the doctors could not cure me I asked the Chai for help. It was at that time that me and my family started saving money.

How long ago was this?

About two years ago. Before I didn't believe in the Chai spirits, but when the medicine didn't work I asked them and I started saving the money for the Chai. Now I am well so we can have the ceremony.

So you never have the ceremony before the person is healed?

No. No healing, no ceremony. First the person gets better, then the person spends the money saved. But if there is no healing then there is no ceremony.

The Chai ceremony may be one, two or three days long depending on the amount of money saved by the family. The layouts of cash can be quite great. For a three day ceremony, one would expect the slaughter of a buffalo which on its own would cost in the neighborhood of five hundred dollars. Add to this the cost of mediums, musicians and the rest of the Chai cult paraphernalia and the expenditures for a large ceremony will quickly surpass the thousand dollar mark and so are regarded as a long-term investment by the family as a whole.

The Chai ceremony is a celebration of the healing of the patient and of the ancestor spirits involvement in that process. The spirits greatly enjoy these ceremonies – the food and dance and the opportunity to be with their people. In

the way some describe this conditionality, the ceremony can even be described as a reward for good deeds performed - not merely as a thank you but rather as a carrot offered ahead of time when the patient makes the commitment to start saving money and then delivered when the Chai finally make the person well.

Quite apart from this, the Chai ceremony is also increasingly seen as a community bonding experience and as a public relations opportunity. For reasons I will explore in a later section, many members of the Imam San community are eager for these events to be attended by outsiders especially Westerners but also Khmers.

3.4.2 The Path to Mediumship

During my time in the field there were no fewer than 10 ceremonies in the Our Reussei area. Ing-Britt Trankell reports that the Chai ceremony has increased in popularity since the Pol Pot period (Trankell 2003) even if the exact form of the ritual as well as the list of potential participants has changed somewhat. With the Cambodian economy growing rapidly (even if less rapidly of late) and family members working in Phnom Penh or other commercial centers it has become easier for families to hold more elaborate ceremonies – a fact which pleases the ancestors and bodes well for the future of the community.

In the past, exactly who could become a receptacle for the ancestor spirits was quite restricted – limited to those of royal descent only. However, the scale of loss during the Pol Pot régime along with the ensuing dislocation and relocation in its immediate aftermath meant that much like the marriage

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restrictions that held in the past, dictating who might be suitable marriage partners, the distinction between *po* and others in affairs of mediumship was significantly weakened.   This erosion of the barriers to the status of medium, has opened up the possibility of channelling spirit ancestors to potentially any member of the Imam San community.

Stories about how one became a medium vary greatly, but very typically they involve a period of illness from which the person recovered by the grace of the ancestor spirits.   In one case, that of Blang-Nak, the spear-wielding soldier of the army of Champa, her encounter with the spirits began when she was afflicted with a disease that caused her to be paralyzed.   Unable to work, move around or even feed herself, she lay helpless certain that she would die.   Finally, after begging for the intervention of the ancestors, she received a message – that she should pray to Allah and continue to do so until she is well again.   Slowly but surely, she began to feel the health restored to her body.   At first she could move one finger, then another until at last she was healed.   From that moment on she was recognized as a medium and as such has made a successful career for herself as a performer at Chai ceremonies.   Blang-Nak was present at every single ceremony I attended and was known to other researchers and visitors that had attended over the past years.

Chai ceremonies frequently end with a divination to determine whether the person healed has also been chosen to embody a spirit in future events.   At one ceremony that took place shortly before the end of research, the older mediums determined that the patient had not received a spirit.   She said that for the

duration of the festivities, although she felt that she had recuperated she did not feel in any way special – she had not been entered by a spirit. During the divination however, her younger sister began to sob, complaining that during the festival she wanted to dance but nobody had asked her to dance. It appeared that it was her sister rather than the patient herself that had received the spirit. Yet even this became unclear as it was remarked that her ex-husband had failed to attend the ceremony. The presence of all family members is vital at these ceremonies as it is the linkage through family and blood that tie every member of the community back to each other, the royal family and the ancestral spirits. At the time of departure, her status as a medium was still being considered through further divinations and dream interpretation sessions.

Merely calling oneself a medium is not quite enough to become active in the Chai ceremony circuit. Popularity is key to a medium since it is only by being invited to a ceremony that this gift can be translated into an economic good. While potentially anyone may be a medium, one's recognition as such depends much more on whether or not one is in attendance at a ceremony rather than any single person's claim to communication with the spirits. Even if someone believes themselves to be a medium, the potential will remain unrealized unless bid by a family to channel the ancestors for them.

Some mediums such as Blang-Nak mentioned above appear to be popular because of the amount of time she has been performing and her survival through the Khmer Rouge régime. She is a member of the older troupe of mediums, much respected because they are thought to better understand their spirits - to

more fully appreciate the history of that particular ancestor and the rôle he or she plays in the historical re-enactment. That said, it is fundamentally her performance that most arouses the public. Blang-Nak is fierce, as a soldier should be. Her stoic demeanor and stony countenance retell in the minds of the audience the stories of old Champa, whose warriors bravely resisted the Vietnamese juggernaut. There is no doubt about how the story ends, but for a time, in the presence of a medium like Blang-Nak, animated by the defiant spirit of her proud fore-bearers, the community remembers what it meant to have a country, to fight and die for it, and to be regarded by all the world as a people worthy of note.

This is not to say that young mediums are not valued. Certain spirits are best embodied by young men as their dances involve vigorous movements, energetic displays of athleticism and, for the monkey spirit, lewd and suggestive gestures. These spirits spend most of their time engaged in running, jumping, wrestling and in the case of the monkey spirit, sexual molestation. The ability of these mediums to perform at a high level of intensity and entertain the crowd is what keeps them in business and for all the seriousness of the occasion – its grave concern for the well being of the healed patient, its solemn veneration of a long-past civilization – it is these mediums that provide the excitement that the spectators look forward to and decide whether or not the ceremony will be talked about afterwards by non-family members.

3.4.3 The Ship of State

For a Chai ceremony to be held, a wooden structure needs to be constructed in a field near the home of the patient. This construction consists of a simple enclosure, rectangular in form, with a clear distinction between front and back, or since it is meant to represent a boat, bow and stern. The stern is covered. It is here that the patient and close family members will be joined by the mediums of the spirits of the royal family. Along the centerline of the watercraft are placed a hammock protected by a parasol and just a bit forward of that hammock, an altar for offerings. It is around these two objects that the dancing will occur – always in a counter clockwise motion.

When asked what the structure is meant to represent most respondents will reply 'palace' rather than 'boat', although they also recognize it as a raft and admit that it represents both the royal palace and the boat in which the Cham king rescued himself from the Vietnamese. This stems from story of the Kerik tree, known throughout the Cham community and recorded in various versions. A young man in attendance explains it in rough detail:

> *Before when we had a country, we had a king. And there was a Champa but the Yuon were always making problems. They were attacking and making war. But the king was too strong and he always defeated the Yuon. Every time they fought the Cham won. The king had a special tree in front of his palace. It was a powerful tree and it made the king powerful. It protected the Cham people. So the Yuon could not defeat the Cham. So they made peace with the Cham by giving the Yuon princess to the Cham king. The princess was very beautiful. Her skin was very white... You know that Yuon people have light skin, right? They are not dark skinned like Cham or Khmer people. They have white skin and their women are very beautiful... and then the king married the Yuon princess.*

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But she wasn't happy. She said she was sick and her bones hurt... but the Yuon are clever. She was not sick. Actually, she placed gravel under her bed and when she moved in her bed it made this noise "crunch, crunch, crunch"... it sounded like her bones were breaking. But she's faking! You understand? The king was very worried... he has a beautiful wife but she was unhappy. So they called people to heal her. Many people tried but nothing worked. Then finally a Yuon healer came to the palace and said that the reason for her illness was the tree. The tree had a bad influence on the princess and it was making her ill.

The king then said "cut down the tree!" to his soldiers. Everyone thought the king was crazy. But they respected the king. So they cut away at the tree, but they are unable. The tree was too powerful and nobody could cut it. The king became angry with his soldiers and he ran out and cut the tree himself. Even though he was an old man, because he was king he could cut the magic tree of the Cham people. He cut down the tree in a single stroke and when he cut the tree it started bleeding – a lot of blood. When the Vietnamese learned that the king had cut the tree they restarted the war.

Without the tree the Yuon defeated the Cham and then took the country. The king escaped because he used the wood from the tree to make a boat. Even though he cut the tree the wood was still powerful and it still protected the royal family. He used the boat to get away from the Yuon and traveled on the sea until he could find a safe place to land.

The story continues and ends tragically as the king tries to hide from the Vietnamese in a well. Although the spiders obligingly covered the mouth of the well in cobwebs to help hide the royal, a lizard eventually revealed his location with his call. The king was drawn out of the well and beheaded. In discussions of events in Iraq, some Cham recalled that the ignominious end met with by their king was not all that unlike the fate of Saddam Hussein – a fact which made it all seem even more pathetic and drew odd parallels between Champa and Iraq as Muslim countries under occupation engaged in a resistance that in historic terms would ultimately prove futile. In the context of the Chai ceremony, this story

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explains the identity of the structure as both raft and palace since, for a time, the raft of the Kerik tree was the palace.   In fact it was all that remained of Champa just as the Chai enclosure is the last place where Cham sovereignty can be made manifest.

Within the structure there are also a number of other items and symbols that appear to have different significances depending on who is asked.   The spear flags – red and white – can symbolize war and peace respectively or male and female energy.   The parasol can be said to represent the monarchy or it can, in conjunction with the hammock, stand for leisure and enjoyment such as was enjoyed by the sovereigns in their land.   There is no authoritative lexicon of Cham symbols and much like older mediums are considered to have a better understanding of the spirits and rituals, there is a feeling that knowledge of Cham symbolism is also not what it once was.

3.4.4   Kabuki of a Nation

The full spectrum of stylized performances and rituals that is the Chai ceremony involve layers of intricate detail and nuance that are far beyond the scope of this work.   A detailed study of the ceremony is available in Juliette Baccot's *On g'nur et Cay à O Russei* (1968).   Here I will only discuss a few elements that bear on the ethno-historical value of the festival as well as some of the ways in which community involvement in its production make this a broadly popular social affair.

The opening of the Chai ceremony makes clear that the concern at hand is more than just the health of one particular member of the community. It consists of the mediums marching around the periphery of the enclosure. They will make several rounds before actually entering the perimeter. As they circle the royal residence, the forward-most among them clash with swords and clubs. Chasing each other around, they cross weapons repeatedly. *"This is the Cham army. They are protecting the country from the Yuon."* Once they move inside, they continue circulating in the same counterclockwise direction although, within the relatively restricted confines of the enclosure they no longer lock weapons. They do continue to display and parade them and will do so throughout much of the ceremony – the martial character of the carnival is never far beneath the surface.

In a nod to modern times swords, spears and bows are joined by firearms. One medium, possessed by the spirit of a Cham general and bedecked in a a red silk scarf and a pair of Gucci sunglasses, explained to me that: *"We change with the times. Before we had these weapons of wood or metal but now we can use guns to defend ourselves. I am not protecting the Cham just in the past but also today."* He stroked his wooden Kalashnikov and continued: *"Cham use everything to defend Cham. We can use weapons. I am a general and I use weapons like these. Some people know religion or science or business – everyone does their best and we build a community."* As to why he was wearing sunglasses in the middle of the night, he replied that he (the general) thought they looked good. They did.

Frank Proschan (2001) describes how among the Kmhmu, oral narratives of the creation of the world and its peoples have become infused with the experiences of the storytellers themselves, so that as Khmhu people encounter Frenchmen and Africans through military service in the French Empire, or later come across Japanese and Americans as a result of their struggles for control over the region, they incorporate them as characters in their origin myths.   In this case, when the last woman on earth gave birth to a gourd, the last man on earth pierced it with a hot poker to allow the children to escape.   The first children to exit brushed up against the charred breach and were thus blackened – the Africans. By the end, the carbonized edges of the opening were scuffed clean and the last to emerge represented the ancestors of the Japanese and the Europeans.   The Khmhu themselves appeared somewhere in between the dark and light-skinned groups.   Proschan argues that while the presence of colonial African troops and Europeans may be a relatively recent addition to the story and the integration of this new knowledge is not uniform across story tellers, the antiquity of the story itself is not prejudiced by it, as it continues to maintain the same contours of history and memory, albeit with the addition of elements that revalidate the basic premises of the account – just as the wielding of modern arms by Chai mediums does not alter the essential rational for carrying that weapon in the first place.

For all the gravitas of the underlying reasons for holding the ceremony – the health of a community member and the communion with the ancestors – it is still a festivity and as such is expected to engage, involve and entertain the audience.   Two types of spirits that are critical in this regard are the flying horse

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and the white monkey. Typically there are two or even three flying horses performing at once. Unlike the royal spirits leisurely strolling through their realm or the military spirits marching across the battlefield, the horse runs in circles at whatever speed he can manage on the grass mat surface periodically jumping into the air and then stopping at the rear covered portion to dance for the pleasure of the royal spirits, then they begin running again and the cycle repeats itself.   Other mediums will offer the horse bananas, for which he will have to run, jump and dance. When there is more than one horse, they often enter into comedic routines as they compete for the attention of the royals and access to bananas by trying to outdo each other in athleticism or, if that proves insufficient, slapping the other horse in the mouth as he tries to eat his meal.

The white monkey on the other hand typically appears alone. In his office of troublemaker, he runs about on all fours groping and fondling the other mediums. If possible he will steal their cigarettes, paw their breasts and try to crawl up their dresses.   Although the mediums do not leave the enclosure during the performance, the monkey can reach outside of it to grab the ankles of the unsuspecting or snatch a snack carelessly placed within range of his arm.   This is interspersed with calmer episodes of the monkey scratching, and fondling himself and his cloth tail, which he sticks between his legs as a mock penis.   According to all my sources, the monkey has never failed to please the crowd with this routine.

While the ceremony is not exactly scripted, it does follow an order of songs within which certain types of routines, such as the horses fighting over

bananas, may take place.   Some of these schticks are performed more often than others.   They include the procession of the nervous princess, where the Cham princess is paraded around, but if any male spirit should even brush up against her during the procession she screams and cries uncontrollably in a fit of fear and anger until the offending medium is forcibly restrained and detained.   In another, performed toward the end of the whole ceremony, the warrior mediums pass around and drink from a bowl, the contents of which are meant to represent an alcoholic beverage.   Inebriated, they become careless with their weapons which are then stolen and hidden by a Vietnamese agent, thus bringing on the defeat of the Cham army.   The variability of these performances ensures that each ceremony is unique even if they all follow the same basic pattern.

The Chai festival is a major social event that incorporates virtually all members of the community.   Families attend together with parents explaining the events to their young children.   Children also participate in the musical component.   The orchestra consisting of drums, gongs and flutes also includes a long piece of bamboo that the children strike rhythmically to keep time using small pieces of wood.   As they tire they are replaced by a new batch of youngsters and some anthropologists – in this way ensuring that everyone has a chance to participate.

For adolescents and teens, the ceremony is a good night out.   The performances go late into the night and end after midnight, a time at which girls should certainly be at home.   Along the perimeter of the field, groups of young men, some of them drunk, loiter in the shadows.   A few of them are talking to

girls.   Others are waiting to see if any girls will pass by them and give them an opportunity to spring into action and turn on the charm.   Inevitably, a group of young ladies locking arms will stroll just inside the lit area and then, giggling, skip back to the performance.   Invariably, the boys fail to seize the day (or night) and resign themselves to further waiting.   I have been told that people actually meet this way, but it did not appear to be enormously effective.   Most of the couples I saw were already couples before   the ceremony.   Nevertheless, the sideline interactions provide an alternate theatrical experience for those needing to take a break from the trance-inducing drum and gong music.

3.4.5   Belonging in the Hostland

The above description might lead one to regard the Chai festival as a self-centered, self-indulgent celebration and affirmation of Cham independence and sovereignty and yet, the event deploys story and imagery that bond these Cham to their land of exile as well.   The most obvious commonality that one sees with the Khmer is the depiction of the Vietnamese as the arch-enemy of the people, the primary existential threat to the community and the agent of their demise as an independent polity.   The story of the Kerik tree in which the Vietnamese apply the feminine wiles of their light-skinned beautiful women to undermine resistance from within has a parallel in Cambodian history as well. The Cham are also aware of how once upon a time, a similar marriage meant to bring peace and stability resulted in political subjugation and humiliation.

In the early 17th century, King Jayajetta took a Vietnamese wife from the Nguyễn line and shortly thereafter, in 1623, allowed the Vietnamese to establish a customs house and trading post in Prey Nokor. In time, the Vietnamese would, through settlement of their own people designed to change the demographics of the area, come to control the entire Mekong delta and exert commercial, military and political influence from that formerly Khmer city that would later be known as Saigon (Tully 2005). The loss of these territories, known as Kampuchea Krom, is still felt as the greatest of the many historic wrongs perpetrated upon them by the Vietnamese and continues to be a source of ill-feeling. Although Cambodia managed to escape the complete political annihilation that befell the Cham, the loss of the Mekong delta cut Cambodia off from seaborne trade, effectively rendering it a landlocked march, subject to the abuses and interventions of its more powerful neighbors – the Vietnamese and the Thais (Chandler 1996).

On a mythic level, the story also resonates with the Khmer story of Preah Ko Preah Kaew, or Lord Kaew and the sacred cow. Preah Ko and Preah Kaew are brothers, except one of them is a cow, who were born when their pregnant mother fell from a tree causing her belly to burst open. Over time, it becomes apparent that the Preah Ko possesses great magical powers. This is due to the fact that within the belly of Preah Ko are contained the golden books that store the knowledge of all things such as science, medicine, literature and statecraft. This is the Indian inheritance with which Khmer people were charged and which enabled them to build a glorious civilization.

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Preah Ko and Preah Kaew had successful careers in service of the king of Cambodia, until the king of Thailand learned of their existence and sought to possess them for himself.   After a long chase, Preah Ko and Preah Kaew were encircled by the Thai army at the fortress of Longvek.   Fortunately for the heroes, Longvek was protected by an impregnable wall of bamboo thickets that made any conventional assault impossible.   Unfortunately for them however, the Thai general had a plan for breaching this defense.   He ordered that his soldiers should load the cannons with silver coins rather than cannonballs and aim directly into the vegetation.   They did so and continued firing until the entire bamboo palisade was strewn with gold.   Having exhausted their ammunition, the Thais abandoned the siege and retreated.   Seeing the Thais withdraw, the Khmers quickly set upon their own bamboo defenses – cutting them down to get at the coins.   With their defensive perimeter dismantled, Longvek lay prostrate before the Thai army which returned in short order once they learned that their plan had worked.   The fortress fell and Preah Ko and Preah Kaew found themselves in the hands of the enemy and on their way to Thailand.

This story is frequently invoked as an explanation for the dominance of the Thais and the corresponding decline of Angkor civilization, but it is somewhat more than that.   Not only does Thailand become powerful at the expense of Cambodia but in fact the very essence of sovereign power, the knowledge of India and the virtue of Buddhism, is transferred from the declining Khmer state to the now ascendant kingdom of Thailand (Smith 2006).   The story has a basis in historical fact.   The sacking of Angkor in 1431 by the Thais resulted in the

wholesale transfer of scholars, dancers, musicians and monks to their capital at Ayutthya and the development of a court culture that usurped Cambodia's rôle as the guardian and paragon of Indic civilization in the region.

In the Cham story, the Kerik tree is said to represent the unity of the Cham people.   It had strong roots that came together to form a great trunk.   When it was cut, it spilled the blood of the Cham nation and ended their unity as a people. In both stories, the font of national strength, be it the virtue of Brahmanic wisdom or the solidarity of the people, is an impregnable defense until the Cham and the Khmer themselves decide to sacrifice the underpinnings of their dominion.   The sexual lust of an old king for a fair-skinned beauty and the greed of the Khmer inhabitants of Longvek lead to short term decisions with tragically long term consequences.   The focus on the skin of the Vietnamese princess also casts the Cham as a 'dark people' like the Khmers rather than as a light-skinned and presumably more beautiful people like the Vietnamese and Chinese and implying a natural bond between the less fortunate, less comely Cham and Khmer races.

Both stories concern bastions of Indian civilization under assault by the forces of barbarism – on their own unable to topple the civilized regents from their position of superiority.   However, in both cases, a loss of virtue and deviance from the correct principles results in their being unworthy of their fortunes and capitulating, not only politically but also morally, to their enemies. On the one hand, these stories offer an explanation for the low standing among nations of the Khmer and the Cham today.   Yet, on the other hand stories like

these, like that of the Garden of Eden, which paint a glorious past now lost to a single act of faithlessness, also imply a solution to the present predicament, namely that the recapture of the virtue that sustained the past could lead to the closing of the ring of history, where the people are redeemed and brought back to their initial state of grace.

Another story that circulates in the Imam San community is the story of Tasart, a Cham princess living in Kampong Cham at a time after Champa had ceased to exist. In an incursion by the Thai army she was captured and taken back to Thailand. Tasart's husband rallied a band of soldiers and set off to punish the Thais and reclaim his wife. The Thai general sent soldiers to intercept him but he defeated them and continued to charge at the Thai main force. He continued to absorb arrows and lances as he marched on the general. Horribly wounded, he did not stop. Overcome by pity, Tasart agreed to help the Thai general put her husband out of his misery and gave him a broach from which was fashioned an arrowhead. The arrow struck her husband dead and Tasart was taken back to the royal court in Thailand, where the ladies of the court copied her hairstyle and jewellery and made them their own.

This story permits the Cham to claim some degree of enmity with the Thais, the other great rival of the Khmer and so present themselves as united with their hosts in the struggle against their common enemies. At the time that I received the story, Thai-Cambodian tensions over the temple of Preah Vihear were continually flaring. The final touch of having Tasart perform an extreme makeover on the Thai court also echoes the transfer of knowledge and culture in

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the story of Preah Ko Preah Kaew and unites the Cham and Khmer as the original possessors of Indian arts and learning in mainland southeast Asia. This earlier pre-Islamic culture is regarded by the Imam San as the basis of their commonality with Khmers and the reason why they are able to get along so well.

There are other less obvious signs of this cultural substrate such as the dancing of the mediums themselves. In segments of the ceremony when the soldier spirits are not on the warpath, they dance around the altar performing what is essentially a roamvong, a traditional Khmer circle dance performed at celebrations and gatherings. It consists of dancers moving in a circle while rotating their wrists and spreading their fingers in front of them as if a flower blossoming. When I asked about this striking similarity, I was told that it was because of the common origin of Cham and Khmer culture. A father holding his young daughter explained:

> *These dances are old dances from Champa. Before we came to Cambodia we had Champa and the dance of Champa and Cambodia are the same. Why? Because it came from Langka. Do you know where Langka is? It's in India. Cham culture – Khmer culture they are the same because they are both from Langka. In Langka they had dance like this. They had art and letters and they also had science... like this. The Chai ceremony is a kind of science. It has scientific properties. We follow the old ways and the old ways are still effective. Like you see today – this person is healed.*

The same explanation was given for the spirit of the white monkey. In Khmer representations of the Ramayana, Hanuman, the monkey king and an important character in the legend, is depicted in white. Both Hanuman and the white monkey are mischievous and perform acrobatic routines designed to inject

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levity into the performance.   This is regarded as yet another example of the common heritage whereby the Imam San imagine their relation to Khmers as that of siblings – children of the same parent, descendants of a common ancestor – having similar and parallel cultures, neither superior to the other.   The only real difference being that the vicissitudes of history, that have dealt cruel blows to both brothers, were considerably harsher on the Cham.

The role of population transfers in cultural diffusion is historically important in Southeast Asia as the region has long been relatively sparsely populated.   This led to a type of warfare that focused on the capture of slaves rather than territory – slaves who would be moved to the political center and rendered for service.   Beemer (2009) explains that not only did the slave population eventually assimilate and take on the culture of their captors, but the slaves themselves exerted a powerful influence on the host society.   The Imam San remember the Cham contribution to Thai court life, which was itself drawn from Cambodia.   They also understand themselves to have been in the service of the Khmer king as soldiers and so as a result have a degree of belonging in the society.   By contrast, virtually all Cham believe that any Cham who remained behind was essentially demoted to peasant status and have remained there this day. They have not been incorporated into the body politic of the Vietnamese state and so have not truly been assimilated to that country.   Unlike other parts of the region, the population of the Red River delta was relatively dense and so it was land rather than people sought by the Vietnamese.   This failure to be incorporated into the Vietnamese empire in a dignified manner that recognized

their value is still resented and contributes greatly to the notion of the Vietnamese as alien and incompatible with the Cham, unlike the Khmer or even the Thai to a certain extent.

Not only are their cultures compatible, but even their ancestral spirits appear to have come to an understanding about the presence of the Cham in Cambodia. Before a Chai ceremony is initiated the Khmer spirits are also propitiated and thanked for allowing them to continue their tradition in this land. A younger Cham man, of royal blood himself, explained that when the Cham arrived in Cambodia they were given permission by the king of Cambodia to live there. Ever since then, the Cham and Khmer are joined by this agreement of their royal families and because of this the Cham always thank the Khmer spirits at the outset of any spirit ceremony and, in addition to this, Cham are able to host Khmer spirits as well. This means that among the Imam San, apart from the Chai ceremony, Areak ceremonies also take place.

The Areak is a Khmer form of spirit possession similar to the Chai ceremony but without the royal or historic element. It's practice is still common in much of the Cambodian countryside today. On occasion, healers will determine that the illness of a Cham is due to a unsatisfied local Khmer spirit and not a matter related to their Cham ancestors. When this happens, a Khmer style spirit ceremony is arranged and the services of the appropriate mediums are engaged. Some Cham have Cham spirits, some have Khmer spirits and yet others are able to channel both. The medium Blang-Nak also receives a Khmer spirit and is also a regular performer at local Areak ceremonies. The Imam San

feel that the ability to accept Khmer spirits would only be possible if the Cham were truly accepted as a part of the nation.

Through the Chai ceremony, the Cham both celebrate and lament their history. In celebration, they embrace their Brahmanic Indian heritage and the sophisticated and cultured polity it once produced. At the same time, they mourn the loss of that world and renew their resistance to the forces that threaten them further. In both of these sentiments, the Imam San find a very basic common bond with their Khmer hosts as heirs to a single legacy now lost to the depredations of their enemies.

3.4.6   The Future of the Past

As Ing-Britt Trankell (2003) understood, the Chai is also an occasion for contemplating the future of the community and for hoping that the times of trouble that the community has experienced - from the exile, to the Pol Pot period, to the current economic difficulties gripping the country – will give way to a prosperous future for the Cham nation. I found that the lull between dinner and the start of the Chai ceremony always sparked an almost stream of consciousness conversation with young Cham about their plans for the future as well as the nature of their current predicament. While these young people seemed happy to discuss all aspects of their experiences growing up as young Cham in the Imam San community, it was around the time of Chai festivals that they appeared especially concerned about their futures as they, this time without being asked by me, recounted their hopes and dreams and asked what advice I might have for

getting one's affairs in order and having a successful life. Much as New Year's celebrations in the United States lead conversations to turn to weight loss, quitting smoking and running marathons, the Chai ceremony sparks adolescent concerns about marriage possibilities, schooling, work, and their future standing in the community.

In a comment heard by many foreigners working in the Cambodian countryside, Yusuf, a young man said to me: "In Cambodia the cows eat grass, but in America the cows eat hamburger". The very notion of feeding cows to cows struck me as odd and for a moment I thought I should explain to him how silly it was, but then, reflecting on the mad cow epidemic of the 1990's caused by grinding up cows and feeding them to other cows, I thought it better to just ask what he meant by that comment:

> *In Cambodia there is no money. There are no jobs – especially here. If you go to Phnom Penh then you can find a job. But the jobs aren't good and then you live in Phnom Penh. The city is expensive and then you have to come back to your village to see your friends and family. Travel is expensive, rent is expensive in the city... In America I think you have a lot of money and you have jobs to do. In America maybe you can be a doctor or you can do business, but in Cambodia there is very little to do. So we farm, but farming can't make a better life.*
>
> *If you had the money, what do you think you would do?*
>
> *I would be a doctor. I want to study medicine and be a doctor, but I don't want to work in Phnom Penh. Maybe I can live there for a few years while I am studying, but I want to be a doctor for my community.*
>
> *So you would study there and come back here?*

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Yes... well... it's hard. There is no hospital here. So even if I become a doctor, maybe I still won't help Cham people. I will work in Phnom Penh.

But you could send money back to your village?

Yes, but I want to be the doctor for the community. If I send money, that is good. But we need to have a Cham doctor and Cham medicine. Today we have a Chai ceremony, but before the Chai the sick person has to go to doctors and travel outside the village to Phnom Penh. It would be better if we had a doctor here. The Cham doctor would do his best and charge very little money to help the patient.

Yusuf's concerns here are multiple. On the most elementary level, he makes the observation that Cambodia is poor – an uncontroversial statement. However, he relates this not merely to a lack of money but also to a lack of things to do. His broader point is that the United States or other more developed countries have economies where things happen, where a person that wants to study and work can indeed study and work – the efforts of the person are absorbed by social institutions. In Cambodia today, most people who would like to study and work, by contrast, will have nowhere to do so. Yusuf's hopes for the future are accompanied by a feeling of futility.

Since the Imam San are not orthodox Muslims, they are not considered for aid by Muslim charities. The lifeline from abroad is not a real possibility for them in the way that it is for Wahhabi or Tablighi communities. Occasionally, if the international Muslim donors are not too savvy regarding the local divisions of Muslim communities in Cambodia, it is possible for the Imam San to receive some aid during holidays. One Imam San member solicited and received 8 heads of cattle for the feast of the sacrifice. He simply wrote his name and

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village and the number of people he needed to feed.   They did not ask how many times a day he prayed, neither did he volunteer this information, and so the village received a donation that year.

Yet these windfalls are the exception rather than the rule.   Most organized donors are aware of the need to enforce orthodoxy in this corner of the Muslim periphery and are willing to use aid as leverage to induce Cambodian Muslims to bring their practices in line with those of orthodox Muslims.   For this reason, it is not clear that any such aid would even address Yusuf's other key concern, that being the integrity of the Cham community to which he belongs. The reliance on Phnom Penh might just become a reliance on Kuwait and in any case:

> *I think the Arabs want us to study religion.   They send everyone to their country and then they come back.   They come back and they are Arabs and they know everything about religion.   But I want to study medicine.*
>
> *So you don't want to study religion?*
>
> *I'm not so interested.   (smirk) If we study religion it has to be their religion.   And afterward we still need doctors.   We already have people in this village who study religion in the Cham way. That is enough.*

Yusuf's ability to meet his goals will not come from "the Arabs", a people that he sees as positively hostile to the existence of his own community.   It will have to come from somewhere in the community itself.   Options that involve leaving the community or "becoming and Arab" are simply insufficient to the task Yusuf would like to set for himself.   So far he has been unable to secure money

for anything other than English lessons, but he feels medicine may yet be a possibility for him.

Another example of community-centered long-term planning came as I was taken for a walk by Rina and Sras, two girls in their late teens. They took me to an area between their own village and the Khmer village with its Buddhist temple. They were separated by a lake used to irrigate rice fields during the dry season, and walking along the dyke to the Chinese graveyard and Buddhist temple we could look back on the lake and their village.

> *I want to make a resort here... This place is beautiful. There is a lake and there is our Cham village and there is a Khmer Village and the Khmer village has a nice wat that people can visit. If we make some chairs and tables then we can sell food and drinks. People can enjoy this area and they can visit our village. Everyone will know that the Cham village is a nice place. People can relax in the village and everyone will be happy. I think it would be a good business. People already eat and buy coffee in Sala Lekh Pram (on the highway). But Sala Lekh Pram is not so nice. Not like this place. They don't have a lake. And here there is the Buddhist temple. For Khmer New Year people come here and they have a carnival. So people can come here and they like it, but only once a year. If we make a resort, they will come every day.*

Rina and Sras' plan both emphasize the importance of their own Cham village and Cham space as well as set in a broader multicultural context with Khmer temples and Chinese graveyards in a way that does not subordinate one to the other. This projection of a future involving neighbourly relations, not as an abstract "we-should-all-get-along" but rather as a blueprint for very concrete cooperative relations between themselves and the Khmers and Sino-Khmers of the surrounding settlements. At the same time, there is no reference made to

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other Muslims in nearby communities, of which there are several. By 'Cham village' these women always mean their own cluster of Imam San villages. Other Muslims, Arabs or Chvea are simply not part of the productive and prosperous future of their imaginations.

3.5 Muslim Gaze

For young Imam San, the Chai ceremony is not only the celebration of their shared Cham heritage but also an event that crystallizes ethnic consciousness and projects it into the future as a possible coordination of Cham aspirations with the realities of living in a Khmer dominated state. For this reason, many Imam San are eager to receive visitors during this time so that they might better understand what Cham culture is about. The history, the display of material culture and the spiritual component are presented simultaneously as the most complete and comprehensive expression of the experience of the people that can legitimately be called 'Cham'. This sort of ceremony is something that only Cham perform. It anchors their understanding of their relationships to both Khmers and Vietnamese and so helps establish a yardstick for their progress as a people. Other Muslims, as they have abandoned the Chai spirit cult, are therefore also abandoning Cham culture and so cannot lay claim to the inheritance of their Champa ancestors.

However, this pride in the conservation of Cham cultural practices disguises a parallel insecurity in their community's knowledge of those things which other Muslims, by virtue of their access to the outside world, possess.

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That the Chai is classified as a 'culture' event and not as a 'religion' event is critical here. As the Chai cult is antithetical to the modern practice of Islam it has no analogue in the other Muslim communities and therefore it is incommensurable. There is no critique by foreign Muslims or local orthodox Muslims about the way in which the ceremony is carried out, rather, the critique is that it is being carried out at all. The Chai ceremony is regarded by even the most scathing detractor of the Imam San as an 'authentically Cham' ceremony – the real McCoy. Nobody doubts that it is a tradition passed down from ancient Champa, which incidentally is exactly the reason why they hate it so. But outside of the Chai cult, the self-assuredness of the Imam San begins to evaporate.

Early on a Saturday morning, I received this call from Usman (a personality I will discuss in greater detail in section 3.5):

> *Hello, brother, I need to ask you something. Do you know Arabic?*
>
> *Very little. Why?*
>
> *We have a document. It's really old maybe two or three hundred years old. Some of it is in Cham and some is in Arabic. I can't read it. Can you read it?*
>
> *Well, I know the Arabic alphabet.*
>
> *All the letters!?*
>
> *Yes, but that doesn't mean I know the meaning of the words. I can pronounce them and then maybe I'll understand or maybe I won't.*
>
> *Great! Can you come now? I am bringing together all the students. We are going to the elder's house and we will copy the document together. But if you can help us then maybe we can really understand the entire thing.*

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Arriving at the village I was greeted by Usman and his band of students – nine boys and girls. They were gathering around a low table and anxiously waiting for the elder to come out of the house with the old texts. They were armed with notebooks, pens, pencils, rulers and a a large piece of heavy paper roughly a square meter in size. One of the older girls explained that they were going to copy the document onto the paper. That way they could study it without damaging the original since it was so old. I couldn't help but remark on her shirt – a red T-shirt emblazoned with an image of Preah Vihear, the temple on the Cambodian-Thai border, and the words 'I am proud to have been born a Khmer.' This shirt and others like it had become very popular in Cambodia with the increasing tensions between the two countries over the ownership of the ruins. Everyone laughed as she proclaimed her Cham pride and then explained that she liked the shirt. After all it was a nice shirt and those temples really are Khmer and not Thai. Outside of the Imam San community, I have never seen any other Muslim wear any of this line of Preah Vihear shirts.

A man in his 60's emerged from his house with a bundle of old papers. These were texts that he had handwritten himself and that he had hidden in a pillow during the Khmer Rouge period. As the document was produced, the students, under the direction of Usman, carved out a grid pattern on the paper, with each student taking responsibility for copying one of the sections. The majority was written in Cham using the Cham characters typically used in Cambodia with titles of sections written in Arabic. I helped sound out the Arabic as well as copy it out into the duplicate that they were making. Although

all of the students knew the Cham writing system, they were slow – they sounded out each syllable until the sound in their head matched a word that they knew. There are few opportunities for reading and writing in Cham and so while they understood the script, it is not something that they ever had the chance to internalize over a lifetime of literacy. Their difficulties notwithstanding, it is remarkable to find people in this age bracket with any degree of Cham literacy, much less nine at a time.

As I finished my contribution to the project – the copying of the Arabic text – Usman turned to me and said:

> *Listen brother, please don't tell anyone else about this... anybody from the other villages.*
>
> *Is this a secret?*
>
> *No, but we do not understand it yet. The Cham is very old and I will need to have an elder explain to me what the text means. It is not the same as the Cham spoken today. And the Arabic, we don't understand at all, except for what you explained. Until we know, we can't allow anyone else to see it. Especially don't tell Ali from Chrok Romiet.*
>
> *Why not him?*
>
> *He comes here often and tries to tell us that we should change our religion and culture to be like the Arabs. I think he studied in one of those Arab countries...*
>
> *He studied in Saudi Arabia.*
>
> *Right, Saudi Arabia, and I think he knows Arabic very well. Maybe even better than you, brother.*
>
> *He has a degree in Arabic literature from Medinah. My Arabic doesn't compare to his.*

Yes! Exactly, he can use his knowledge of Arabic and try to tell us what it means. Then he will criticize us. He always criticizes us. We need to understand the text first, and then maybe we can show it to other people.

Unlike the Chai ceremony, this text was certainly religious in character – the presence of the squiggly 'worm script' made that clear to them from the moment they set eyes on the yellowed text. The Imam San may own this particular document, but their understanding of it, and by extension their worthiness to continue to own it, is not beyond dispute. The students, who will also be discussed further in section 3.7, arrived on a mission to document, conserve and protect a piece of Cham culture and history, but were faced with an artifact whose significance straddles both the linguistic and literary inheritance of Champa, which they are devoted to defending, and the religious importation of Islam, which lies well outside their comfort zone. A document like this could potentially spell disaster. If an 'Arab' like Ali were to come across it and decode the Arabic, he could well be in a position to expound further on the rest of the document, rendering the Cham components irrelevant or twisting them so they support his idea of what the text says.

Usman and the students know that when it comes to Islam as a religion they are hopelessly outgunned. The fact that they called me as an Arabic language consultant is a rather good indicator of the absolute lack of people skilled in Arabic in their community and their degree of mistrust for other Muslim groups. The elder explained that the text related to the health of the body and the way in which a correct life leads to a sound state. These were texts handed

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down from Champa and the teaching that they received from Ali, who introduced Islam to the Cham.   For this reason the texts could only be understood by someone well versed in Qur'an and other religious knowledge.

And this was the problem.   Quite apart from the oldfangled writing style was the question of the content, which this group of young Cham, of which none had ever even held a Qur'an in their lives, was ill-prepared to interpret. Moreover, none was at all interested in acquiring this type of knowledge.   The students dutifully finished their duplication of the text and returned the original, but their initial enthusiasm for it was dampened as it became clear that this was a 'religion' thing rather than a 'culture' thing.   Several months later I asked about what progress there had been in decoding the text.   The project was on hold. There were more pressing matters and a text of that type could wait.   The important thing was to create the replica – with that done, it could be put on the back burner for later.   I never heard of the document again.

The sensitivity of the community to criticism by other Muslims and the need many feel to perform, explain and justify their ways to the outside world leads the Imam San to emphasize events such as the Mawlud, Mawlud Phnom and Chai ceremony as public relations events for potential visitors.   During my time in the community, I was thanked not only for attending the events myself but for bringing others to witness them.   Other researchers, journalists, aid workers and US Embassy staff are seen as important to the status and image of the community. Foreign Muslims who were not missionaries and not interested in explaining to the Imam San what the correct practice of Islam should be were also welcomed.

On one occasion, I arrived in the company of an Ismaili woman from India, who was curious to meet this group of Muslims that pray only once a week.

This lady is a Muslim from India.

Oh.   Hello.   She is a Muslim?

Yes, she is an Ismaili Muslim.   They pray three times a day.

Three times!   (leaning over to repeat this into another elder's ear)   Three times!   (smiling)   Here we pray once a week.   It is our tradition from Champa.   (turning to tell a group of people in a louder voice)   She is from India.   She prays three times a day!

Everyone was very amused by this, but also there was a sense of vindication:

The Arabs come and tell us to pray five times a day.   They say everyone prays five times a day.   But we say no.   We pray once a week.   And she prays three times.   The Arabs travel.   We don't travel.   So I've never been to her country.   Her country is India, right?   ...   India is far.   Maybe we would need a boat, or nowadays a plane to go there.   There her people pray three times a day but the Arabs never said, some people pray five times and some people pray three times.   We do it in our own way. Everyone has to worship according to the tradition of their people. If you have a good heart, like this lady, you can pray three times – it's not a problem.

Another middle aged man, nodding his head, speaks up:

We are from Champa.   Our culture is also from India like this woman.   Although we are Muslims, we are not Arabs.   There are Muslim people in India, but their tradition is different from Arabs, and our culture is from Champa and also India and so our tradition is different as well.   Arabs don't care if we pray with sincerity.   They only want everyone to do things their way.

The men thanked her for visiting and talking about her country and religion to them.   For them, this was proof of what they had suspected for some time – that Islam is practiced in different ways in different places.   If a well educated Muslim foreigner working for an NGO can pray three times a day then

the whole tzimmes about praying five times daily is really an irrelevancy. The fact that she was from India, the historic origin of the Cham civilization was another victory over the Arabs – they may be able to foist their beliefs and practices on those who forsook their Cham heritage to become cultureless Chvea, but people with real culture such as the Indians or the Cham need not surrender themselves to the lies spread by 'intolerant and aggressive Arabs'.

Liisa Malkki (1995) working among Hutu refugees, also encountered this drive to establish an outer universe of foreign agents who support their struggle not only materially but on a moral level by recognizing their value as people as opposed to the Tutsi who negate it. The presence of these foreign visitors in to the Imam San community is essential to developing a world view in which the 'Arab' is not the final and absolute arbiter of practice. Like most Cambodians the Imam San do no travel outside the country and do not study geography for any significant period of time. They are unsure as to where Arabia, India, France, Japan or the United States are and what their relative sizes are. The impression that they are given from Islamic missionaries is that out there there is a benevolent and supportive Muslim society – the umma. If only they would conform to their practice of religion then the Imam San too would be brought into the fold. Americans, Europeans and other unbelievers are at best irrelevant and at worst a threat to the health of the umma. By filling in the gaps in their knowledge about the outside world through interactions with visitors, the Imam San can begin to challenge this view of a world that is morally uni-polar and find justification for their practices in the acceptance of foreigners who in turn accept them.

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3.6   A New Generation

As in other Muslim communities in Cambodia, there is a pronounced gap in religiosity and world view between the younger and older generations, separated by the Pol Pot period of the mid to late 70's.   However, while in most communities there has been a trend toward increased religiosity and elevated interest in a kind of Islam that transcends the borders of the Cambodian state (Blengsli 2003), among many of the Imam San of Kompong Chhnang, the opposite has been true.   Dissatisfied with the negation of their ethnic identity that they feel orthodox Islam represents, they construct a vision of community that adds weight to their historic status as an independent and civilized people and weaves it into the fabric of the Cambodian state which ultimately they see as the guarantor of their place in the country.

3.6.1   'The Students'

One morning I was invited by a young Imam San girl to join her friends on a field trip.   Usman, their teacher of English and all of his students were off to the National Museum.   They were going to look at the art objects and then have a discussion about Cambodian history.   Much of the museum is given over to Buddhist and Hindu images from different periods, made in different styles.   The students wove around the statues and displays while taking notes – mostly in Khmer but also in English when possible.   As their English teacher, Usman continued to reinforce the need for them not only to know English, but also to be able to use it to talk about their community.   This means knowing how to handle

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history, art, culture and engage a potential new foreign friend in an interesting conversation and act as an advocate for the needs and concerns of the Imam San.

Since placing them in a museum does not diminish the religious power of Buddha images, attendants were present to offer jasmine flowers to visitors so that they could in turn offer them to the Buddha along with a small monetary contribution.   A smiling attendant extended several bundles of flowers to Usman and the students he brought in tow. "*I'm sorry.   We're Muslims*", he replied politely.   The attendant seemed confused.   Afterwards she explained that they looked like Khmers so she did not understand why they did not make the offering. "*They don't cover their heads like the people in Chroy Changvar or Chbar Ampouv.   But later I heard them speaking their wa, wa, wa language*", she explained, tacking on her best Cham impression at the end.

Arriving at the last room of the museum, the students gathered in front of a large map showing the extent of the Khmer empire at its zenith - covering all that is today Cambodia and extending into much of present-day Laos and Thailand as well as parts of Malaysia and of course the Mekong delta, known as Kampuchea Krom, or Lower Cambodia by Khmers today.   The map also included other states contemporary with Angkor – most notably Champa, hugging the littoral of the South China Sea in what is today central Việt Nam.

> *That is Champa.   That is where we're from.   You see, at the same time as Angkor, Champa was a great country.   Now we are in Cambodia... maybe here...* (pointing at a map of today's Cambodia at a spot just north of Phnom Penh in Kompong Chhnang province.) *Now we can't go to Champa because the Vietnamese took it.   You see here...* (snaking a finger down the coast from Champa to the tip of today's Cà Mau peninsula.) *The*

Vietnamese took everything.   They took Champa and Kampuchea Krom from Cambodia.

What was Champa like?

It was like Angkor.   The same.   It had big buildings and culture. Cham people were happy because they had their own country. Until the Vietnamese came and took the land from Cham and Khmer people.   Both Cham and Khmer fight against the Vietnamese.   That is why the Khmer let us live here in Cambodia. We cooperate to protect our country.

Did the Cham and Khmers also fight each other?

No, I don't think so.   They worked together to fight Việt Nam. You know we have a culture like the Khmer so we also had buildings like Angkor Watt in Champa.   If we have more money then maybe someday we will go to Siem Reap and see Angkor Watt.   If we can't go to Champa then we can still see Angkor and understand the history of our people.

As with the participants and spectators of the Chai ceremony, the students present a Cham historical narrative forged in the conflict with the Vietnamese enemy and tempered by a sense of belonging to the Cambodian state, but moving beyond this, the students are not content to replay the drama of Cham nationhood on the Chai stage but instead are resolved to add to the fund of knowledge that buttresses their claims to be the heirs of Champa, and justifies their current religious and cultural orientations vis–à–vis Khmers, Muslims and non-Muslim foreigners.

For the past several years, this group of young people have been studying English from Usman and at the same time, engaging each other in discussion about the Imam San community – its problems and its future.   Usman is himself of the royal lineage.   He tries to be as discrete as possible about this since he

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feels it may cause people to respect him unduly and not listen to the actual substance of what he is saying. Around himself he has built a following of young people mostly in their late teens and early twenties, who he hopes will be the nucleus of a new Cham society. The group does not have a formal name. They are typically referred to and refer to themselves as Usman's students although sometimes they are referred to as 'Krom Rina', or Rina's group, after one of the older, more charismatic girls among them.

The students share both an interest in their Cham heritage and a general apathy for the Islamic faith. They hold the practice of praying only once a week as an important part of their understanding of Cham culture, but they themselves do not ever pray. They enjoy and participate in events such as the Mawlud, Mawlud Phnom and the Chai but never in a religious capacity – merely as spectators. These religious events are reinterpreted as cultural events and thus protected from criticism by other Muslims, who naturally do not have the same understanding and appreciation of Cham culture as they. Once, in the middle of February, Rina was explaining to me some important Cham traditions as we walked the path that led to her family's rice fields.

> *...and we have another tradition which is Bulan Euk. Do you know this one?*
>
> *No, I don't. What is it called again?*
>
> *B-U-L-A-N E-U-K. Bulan is the moon. Euk is when you don't eat. For one month we don't eat or drink during the daytime.*
>
> *Oh, OK. You mean Ramadan.*
>
> *What's that?*

It's the month of Ramadan. When Muslims don't eat or drink during the day. It is the month that Mohammed first received the Qur'an.

I don't know anything about that.

Rina was not all that interested in the revelation of the Qur'an and the conversation tailed off a bit until a few minutes had passed when, spinning around to face me, Rina remembered to wish me a happy Valentine's Day. The students may not care much for Islamic topics, but part of their English language training did apparently include a review of what holidays were observed in the West and what their significance was. Bulan Euk is a time for Cham to show discipline by refraining from eating or drinking. Valentine's Day is the day foreigners give gifts to people they love. Ramadan is some kind of Arab word for something weird thing that Arabs do.

Usman strongly encourages his students to understand Westerners and their ways, not in an effort to 'Westernize' his students per se, but to enable them to access and deploy cultural capital to their personal advantage and the benefit of the Imam San community. Apart from English, this means knowing something about Western countries beyond which football teams correspond to which cities. It means taking an interest in those things that are interesting to Westerners. And it means learning to interact with them in ways that they consider appropriate, such as making up your own business cards. Rina has never had a job other than cultivating rice, but she has a set of hand-made business cards with her name, address and her status as a member of the Imam San community which she smartly produces whenever receiving a foreign visitor.

Usman's goals for his students and ambitions for his community are complex, but can be outlined according to what he sees as his two most elemental principles.

3.6.2 Purity

If this movement is about anything, it is about being Cham. And that means defining which characteristics are indispensable for being considered Cham and which are peripheral, optional or even contrary to being a member of the nation. The first and for most people least controversial component of Chamness is language. Speaking Cham goes a long way to establishing someone as Cham. Since virtually no Khmer or Vietnamese person ever learns it, this tongue can be considered unique to its native speakers. "*Now*", Usman remarks, "*there are people who speak Cham, but are not Muslims. In Champa, there are Cham people who are Brahmanists and not Muslims*". If they are Cham but not Muslims then, Usman reasons, being a Muslim is not central to being Cham.

> *I'm tired of meeting with other Cham and all they want to talk about is religion, religion and religion. I want to talk about culture and I want to talk about the problems in our community. We are poor. We need jobs. We need more education. But they want religion. And then they want to ask the Arabs or the Malays for money. But we can work. If we work together then I think we can help the community for all Cham without regard to religion. But they don't care about being Cham. It's just about religion for them.*

This is the problem that most frustrates Usman and the Imam San like him. Simply put, they cannot convince other Cham speakers to feel solidarity on the

basis of their ethnic identity and then also use that feeling of unity as a springboard for collective action. In addition, they are unwilling to 'cross over' and join a community bound by a collective belief in importance of orthodox Muslim practice. Usman is not without strategies for trying to curry the favor of orthodox Cham. Very frequently he will admit that there are Cham that are non-Imam San who know things that the Imam San do not. Stories and genealogies of which the Imam San were not aware. This is a weighty concession for a member of a community that considers itself the guardian of all things Cham. To invite a Cham from another community to enlighten him on the culture of the Cham is to forsake an opportunity to lord his more authentic Cham credentials over other Muslims.

Sitting at a Cham eatery in Phnom Penh, Usman and I begin to listen in on a conversation at the next table. Usman remarks that 'that man speaks very good Cham.' As one of the men leaves, Usman gets the other's attention and asks him to join us. He begins with 'Wow! You're Cham is really good. Where are you from?' The man responds that he is from Kompong Cham, and Usman immediately offers that as the explanation for the superior quality of his Cham diction – the clarity of the vowels and the crispness of the individual syllables. The evening proceeds with Usman flattering and attempting to charm his new friend by suggesting that they have much to learn from each other about Chamness and could only profit by working together on something. The man was entertained and even somewhat intrigued at moments, but in the end seemed unwilling to make any efforts himself on behalf of an ethnic Cham movement.

He was not unsympathetic, he explained, but unlike many Cham (or Khmer for that matter) he was rather gainfully employed at a university and this was simply not something for which he would budget any of his precious time.   Usman would not quit, but to my knowledge, he has not yet convinced a single non-Imam San Cham to share his vision of community action informed by ethnic pride and blind to confessional allegiance.

Related to this concern for the essence of Chamness is the purity of the language and culture.   There is a strong feeling, not only among the Imam San but among all Muslims in Cambodia, that much has been lost and then replaced with borrowings drawn from Khmer culture primarily but also from foreign Muslim.   Not all Muslims necessarily believe this is such a terrible thing, but for Usman and the students, although contact with other peoples is desirable the preservation of Cham culture from these influences is also important, or, if not possible, at least a recognition of the borrowedness of the culture trait in question.

As with concerns about ethnicity, language practice is the most important barometer.   Today the Cham language relies heavily on Khmer words in order to discuss any but the most mundane matters.   Frequently this is expressed in terms of the percentage of strength that the language has.   'Cham is only 70% strong', is used to mean something like it can only be used in 70 percent of cases or the remaining 30 percent is Khmer.   The assignment of percentile values to the relative strengths of things such as language proficiency is common in Khmer.

The visit of two Indonesians to a Chai ceremony sparked interest in knowing more about the other Malay languages.   For an hour, the visitors were

bombarded with questions – "How do you say this in Indonesia?" followed by an analysis of how close that was to the Cham word. The languages have many cognate words and it is recognized that they are related by migration as well. Indonesia is a country that has very little presence in Cambodia at the moment. Malaysia on the other hand is a major investor in Cambodia and is also an important source of patronage, particularly for the Tabligh sect. The Malaysian language, while mostly identical with Indonesian, is seen as a threat to the purity of Cham. The common example given is that of the ubiquitous 'tetapi' meaning 'but' or 'however'. It is in fact the most common word in Cham to express that meaning, but some Imam San are quick to point out that the correct word is 'ta' – it is the authentic Cham word. What is galling to language purists is not merely that the Malay word is preferred, but that most people who use it believe it to be Cham. It is not only linguistic degeneracy but also a kind of ethnic false consciousness with which they are charged.

Usman himself, would like to see a more active program of language purification and education to remedy the situation. Even basic phrases such as 'nice to see you' are considered calques from Khmer. The correct expression, which he recently coined himself, literally means 'it's good to see Cham folks here'. Self-conscious language reforms of this type need always be considered in the wider context of social and political expectations that drive them (Neustupny 1989). Apparently, Usman's version of the greeting is better because it is not a direct translation of the Khmer and because it immediately engenders a feeling of ethnic solidarity, addressing the other not as a mere interlocutor, but as a comrade,

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a person with whom one can be expected to have much in common – a commonality that opposes itself to the wider non-Cham society. That wider society consists of Muslims – people who are Cham by heritage but do not valorize or cultivate that aspect of their identity. Since the greeting would only be given in Cham, and Khmers do not speak Cham it is not reasonable to interpret this as a Cham vs. Khmer opposition. Khmers would never hear and understand it. On the other hand, a Cham person may overhear two people greeting each other in this way and thus know that he is in the presence of people who take their Cham identity seriously and perhaps he too will feel inspired to revalorize his Cham identity.

The Cham language spoken aloud – correctly and without hesitation – is to be the mark of the new ethnically aware Cham individual.

> *Before, my students were like pill bugs. They were very shy in the market or any place that had Khmers. And they would always speak to each other in Khmer. But I encouraged them and now they always speak Cham together. They are proud of themselves and they see that the Khmers don't hate them. They can live together speaking Cham and Khmer.*

Without this pride, Usman's students could not move about in the wider society as Cham. They could do so as individuals, but not as representatives of their people, and as a consequence the Cham people as a whole would have no place in the broader, modern community in which the business of the nation is conducted.

3.6.3 Modernity

Secondly and most difficult to pin down precisely, is the notion that the Cham should be a modern people. This means a great many things and is quite different from the notions that other Muslims attach to the idea of modernity – a subject that will be addressed in Chapters four and five. Far beyond technology or even wealth, modernity seems to represent a complex of institutions that will make the Cham a nation in the same way that other nations are constituted as nations. Cultural establishments, the likes of which are never mentioned by Orthodox Muslims, are becoming increasingly important to some of the younger Imam San. Other types of possibilities that are opening up for business, trade and the training necessary to carry out those affairs are also regarded as crucial to the health of the community and its relative standing in the area.

As Yusuf explained earlier, the problem is not merely one of money, but also of things to do. It is at once an economic difficulty, but at the same time a moral trap, since the absence of gainful employment leads to a lack of money which may then lead to asking the 'Arabs' for money – a solution which compromises their ethnic integrity and still leaves them with nothing to do besides waiting for the money to arrive. Recent moves to address this situation include cooperation with a foreign NGO for the development of a training program that would turn young people into motorbike mechanics and then help them establish shop along the national highway. Another has been the opening of a tailor producing women's fashion that is *toan samay*, or modern, much like what fashionable women in Phnom Penh might sport. As the owner explained, '*We*

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like modern clothing in the Khmer style, we don't do old style clothes like the

Arabs and Malays wear.   We don't like that here.'

This connection between modernity and Khmerness is also made by orthodox Muslims, although there is some difference in the significance of that linkage.   Among the Imam San, the accoutrements of modernity place them on a par with the Khmer but do not compromise their identity as Cham.   Indeed, the acquisition of modernity is what makes the Cham a nation just as it made the Khmer a nation – it is an attribute that people must strive to attain for themselves but it is in and of itself not the core of ethnic identity.   Blengsli (2003) observes how orthodox Muslims have adopted certain aspects of 'modern Khmer' culture as a way of distancing themselves from their Cham traditions.   He notes how Cham are increasingly married in the Khmer style (man – suit, woman – dress) and that this is seen as an abandonment of older Cham practices.   As this is also the practice outside Cambodia, it is seen as uncultural rather than culturally Khmer and therefore an acceptable adoption by the community.

For young Imam San, these marks of modernity are signifiers of nationhood and are imagined to have existed before the fall of Champa.   This is to say, Champa was once upon a time a real and proper state equivalent to Angkor from which the lineage of the Khmer civilization is derived (Muan 2001).   These were lost, and with them, the status of the Cham as a fully-fledged nation which was both an independent producer of civilization but also a partner with Khmers in the guardianship of the Indian arts.   In recent years, this has lead to many

individual efforts to 'produce culture' and to imagine institutions in which this production can be housed and managed.

Several people have taken it upon themselves to produces books in the Cham language. This is typically done by handwriting a text and then having photocopies made. These copies are distributed among the elders in order to win their approval and also among younger Imam San who are involved with this movement of Cham cultural revival. A certain number are always held back to offer interested foreign visitors as an exemplar of the present-day vitality of the Cham people. With books comes the need to house these books, and Usman is currently floating ideas about having a library and museum built. This would enable both conservation and display of documents and artifacts, some of which he has recently acquired from contacts in Việt Nam.

These two acts – conservation and display – are the foundation of the National Museum in Phnom Penh. Conservation implies on the one hand a maintenance of a relation with an ancestral people and on the other the possession of something worthy of conserving. It is not lost on either Khmer or Cham that much of the interest of the outside world in Cambodia is due to its cultural heritage made manifest in buildings and artifacts. It is Westerners who finance and develop the majority of the projects aiming to restore Angkor era monuments and it is this legacy that gives the Khmer, a people to whom recent history has not been kind, a degree of standing in the world. The ability to then lay claim to and display this type of heritage capital gives enormous prestige and potentially developmental benefits to the community in question. The dispute over Preah

Vihear on the border with Thailand flared up because of dissatisfaction in Thailand about the listing of the temple as a Cambodian UNESCO World Heritage Site and the feeling that Thailand would be excluded from claiming the temple, and the associated benefits from tourism, as part of its own heritage.

Conserving and displaying are the opposite of what the Imam San see other Muslims as doing, namely, imitating and repeating. The slavish adherence to foreign Arab or Malay norms in ritual practice and daily life represent a collective forgetting of the Cham heritage and its replacement by a foreign veneer which itself is sterile – it cannot produce anything new, at least not in Cambodia, because its source is external. By contrast the inner cultural integrity of the Imam San permits them, albeit slowly, to move towards the establishment of a more modern community of capable people. The external supports of the Arabs, however formidable, condemn those who choose that path to a moral pauperism – waiting for hand-outs and instructions from foreign masters. This ideology of locating power either internally or externally and applying a moral significance to this locus is also very similar to that found among the Hutu refugees of Tanzania by Liisa Malkki (1995) and will be discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

3.7   Obstacles

But all is not forward progress for Usman and the students. It is not by accident that Usman's followers are all in their early twenties at most. There is a strong feeling that they are not only struggling against an outside world that doesn't understand them but that they are also engaged in a conflict internal to the

community.   This friction became apparent when Usman proposed what was his latest idea to modernize the Cham people.   It was a logo.

During a field excursion with Usman and anthropologist Bjørn Blengsli in Kampot province, Usman remarked on a tattoo on Bjørn's arm.   It was a *Hon Kan*.   The Hon Kan is a symbol used by the Cham of central Việt Nam that combines an image of the sun with one of the moon as well as the numerals representing six and three, which add up to nine, considered the largest number (Nakamura 1999).   It is a sign of unity between the Cham and Islamic elements of the community and is commonly found on Cham publications there.   Usman was astounded that such a symbol should exist and as part of his plan to bring the Cham into the modern world, resolved to have it adopted as a logo for the community.

Within a week, he had made several sketches himself and, having produced an elegant design, proceeded to fashion a computer graphic file that he could then set as the backdrop to his cell phone.   Finally, he arranged a meeting with some elders after the Friday service and asked that I attend for support.   At the time, I was unsure as to what that meant.

> *This symbol is called the Hon Kan.   It comes from Champa and it is the symbol they use there for all the Cham people.   Alberto and another friend explained it to me.* (Glances over at me.)
>
> *Uh-huh... (*Also looks over at me*.)*
>
> *You see... this is the sun and this, the moon... and these are the numbers three and six... together they represent the whole.   All the Cham people!*
>
> *Uh-huh...*

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I want this to be the symbol for the community.   For all the Cham – Imam San and the other ones.   We can use this symbol when we want to talk to other Cham about Cham issues.

I understand.   (Looks at the other elders, then me, then Usman.)... *We need to make sure we understand this.   I have never seen this symbol before.*

I know.   It is from Champa.   We aren't using it here yet. (Usman is becoming impatient.)

We don't understand it fully.   We have to wait.   What if we begin to use the symbol and then we learn it means something else?

The conversation fizzled out at this point as the elder grew cautious and self-conscious of his ignorance.   Apparently, my role was to provide support for Usman's position.   By bringing in the foreign scholar, Usman hoped to head this problem off at the pass - providing an outside voice that would assuage the fears that the Hon Kan might have a problematic meaning.   While the elders asked me to comment and appeared to take my words under consideration, it proved insufficient to move them towards acceptance of the sign.   Usman, visibly exasperated, was forced into a retreat.   Walking away from the mosque he vented.

We don't have a symbol.   The Red Cross has a logo.   And the Muslims, they have the moon symbol.   But we need a symbol for all the Cham.   This symbol is perfect.   It includes Muslim and non-Muslim Cham so we can use it to talk about Cham issues without all the religion.   Organizations have logos.   Businesses, religions, countries... they all have a logo so when anyone sees it they know what is being represented.

Do you think the elders will accept the logo?

I don't know... They're scared, because they don't know. They don't understand so I have to explain it to them over and over again. But they are afraid of the other Muslims.

Much as was the case with the antiquated document in 3.4, the elders were concerned that this symbol may have a meaning, history or significance of which they are unaware. These hidden meanings lie in wait, lingering in the background, until they are revealed – betraying the community and exposing it to criticism and ridicule. This threatening ambiguity, where culture artifacts that embody the proud history of the people can be transmuted into the dirty laundry of the community is strongly reminiscent of Michael Herzfeld's concept of cultural intimacy (2005). Herzfeld describes how aspects of culture may be seen as shameful in the presence of outsiders and yet be well accepted among members of the community themselves. These traits are guarded both because they may prove embarrassing, but also because they engender a sense of solidarity among all those who share this fear of the discomfiting gaze of the other.

The importance and significance of culturally intimate practices is continuously reinterpreted and tested not only within the community but also against the exterior world whose judgment is feared. My presence at this meeting was meant to address whatever apprehensions the elders might have about adopting the Hon Kan – Usman hoping that the 'knowledgeable outsider' would reduce the scope of other Muslim's ability to criticize by introducing a 'broader, more international' perspective to the conversation. As Herzfeld found during his time in Crete, the outsider need be careful when confronting a people's cultural undergarments, since he may be allowed knowledge but not use or

ownership.   In my earlier encounter with the students and the old manuscript, I was made privy to their insecurities about their understanding of religion and Arabic.   It was clear that the students considered me trustworthy and I did feel honored to be a part of their project, but it was also made equally clear that I was to refrain from sharing this with Muslims from other villages, with whom they knew I was good friends.   In effect, I was asked to keep their secret and share in their intimate cultural life and in return, I was expected to know my place in the chain of knowledge transmission.

Herzfeld's work emphasizes the importance of cultural intimacy in creating solidarity but that feeling of unity is not immediately obvious among the Imam San.   In fact, it appears to be the basis for the division between the older and younger generations of the community.   While the elders prefer to maintain a sort of status quo with regard to the hidden knowledge, that is, they would rather not explore nor allow it to be explored, the students are given to the notion that they should find ways to possess this information before it is lost, or worse, before it falls into the wrong hands.   For the students, the elders are the most precious source of traditional knowledge.   They are also the greatest obstacle.   Usman tries his level best to speak politely of the elders and frequently he is successful – criticizing specific policies or particular ways of doing things instead of focusing on the limited competence that these older men of deficient education and experience may have.

These attempts at restraint notwithstanding, for young Imam San interested in changing the way life happens in the community, changing the

nature of the office of the Ong Knur, the religious and political head of the Imam

San community, is vital.   One young Imam San explains:

> *We have to change the leaders.   If they are old and they have*
> *knowledge about Cham culture, then that is very good.   But we*
> *have a lot of problems... we have problems about work, about*
> *health problems in the community... we also have problems with*
> *agriculture – we want to grow vegetables, but we need to get*
> *water... the old people are important but they don't understand all*
> *of these things.   And they don't change.   They are always the*
> *same.   We need to have term limits for the Ong Knur.   If we*
> *have term limits then we can have the right leader at the right time*
> *and then change the leader later.   Some people know about*
> *medicine... some people know about agriculture... you understand*
> *what I mean?*

I understood perfectly well what he meant – he intended to establish a

sub-state, ethno-national technocratic bureaucracy.   The discrepancy between

younger and older Imam San in political thought is, I believe, more than merely a

question of entrenched interests and a sclerotic gerontocracy unable and unwilling

to change course.   In reality, the elders are extremely troubled by the thought of

their way of life disappearing and have, in their own way, made efforts to

encourage some activities, such as the publishing of books in Cham, that they see

as new and innovative ways of reinvigorating the culture.   Their methods and

their hesitancy to do anything too brash may irk the newer generation, but no one

claims that the elders are unconcerned with the world that their grandchildren are

inheriting.

As an alternative to this, I would submit that the operative difference is to

be found in the historical imagination of the two generations.   Older people in

the community reminisce about their lives before the civil war.   This time was

far from perfect.   Life was difficult.   The land provided only a modest living at best and they were subject to the same vicissitudes of climate and pests as any other farmer in Cambodia.   Nonetheless, this was a relatively stable time when they felt safe.   Relations with other Muslims were strained at times, but this was well before large scale foreign missionary work had begun and they did not feel threatened in the way they do today.   There was a even a group of curious foreigners like myself, such as Juliette Baccot, who conducted extensive research on the Chai ceremony and a certain 'Mr. Ra' (perhaps Roth?), who provided clinical services to the community and was said to not only speak Cham, but be able to read the script as well.

Today's elders wish to have the pressure taken off the community – to go back to an earlier time when they were left alone and respected enough to be allowed to practice their customs and religion as they saw fit.   This structural nostalgia (Herzfeld 2005), the imagination of an ideal time, the conditions of which were somehow natural, was disrupted by the war and the subsequent penetration of foreign Muslims into Cambodia.   The elders say they consider the continued practice of the faith and the culture in the form of praying once a week and the Chai ceremony as the best way for protecting the culture in the face of adversity.   This 'stay the course' message has proven unsatisfactory for younger Imam San that would like to emphasize education and development as a critical component of protecting the community.   The elders are themselves very much in favor of members of their community finding opportunities for secular

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education outside the community, but do not typically make the programmatic connection between the degrees obtained and the uplift of the community.

For people of Usman's generation, there is no memory of the pre-war lifeways. Born around the time of the war or shortly afterwards, the recent experience of the community has been marked by deprivation, suffering and more recently, because of the ridicule of other Muslims to which they have been exposed, humiliation. To the extent that they feel there exists a past model for a better community, it is located in the much farther past – in Champa. Yet, they are not calling for a return to historic Champa. They know this is impossible and would only place them in the position of the Kampuchea Krom – caught between two states, neither of which is particularly concerned with their welfare. Nor are they seeking to re-establish a community based on kingship. Indeed, although they regard Champa as the source of their culture and the origin of their status as a people, they are not looking to put into practice any of institutions that once organized the Cham people along the coast of the South China Sea. Incidentally, even if they wanted to undertake such a project, they have little idea as to how the Cham actually governed themselves in those times. Questions such as 'How were taxes levied?' or 'What was the penalty for murder?' are met with a vague 'The king would decide that.' But in any case, Usman and the students are angling for the creation of 'modern' institutions, but grounding their case in the shared experience of the nation which began in the Champa period.

Instead of the structural nostalgia of the community elders, the intellectually active youth are working toward a form of structural homologization

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with the Cambodian state.   The past is idealized not as a model for the future, but as just that – an ideal past, at which time Champa and Angkor were commensurate in all aspects of culture and civilization.   As a result of the Vietnamese invasions, the Cham people missed the boat to modernization and statehood and today find themselves in an unresolved situation – not quite possessed of all the trappings of a modern society, but certainly not at the level of the indigenous minorities lacking in civilization of their own.   Structural homologization is therefore the attempt to make up for lost time by charting the progress of the contemporaries of Champa from the moment in which Champa ceased to be to the present day, and using this a guide and template for the communities own development.   Not a Cham king, but an Ong Knur (an ancient title) with term limits (an exigency of the modern world).   Not a military aristocracy for defending the country, but an educated vanguard to develop the nation.   These are the goals toward which Usman and others like him are steadily working.

Chapter Four

A New Sense of Belonging

> *… first he took me to the Barça Café, sat me down and ordered tea for me. Al Jazeera was reporting on Iraq. The camera fixed on a man, his eyes wild, his distorted mouth silently screaming, his legs running frantically with no direction, a little girl in his arms, blood and brains streaming from her head. It was not the Fox or CNN video game of the Iraq war, where, in Orwellian fashion, body bags had become even more sanitized "transfer boxes" that no one was ever allowed to see except for the family just before the burial.*
> *"Some things a man can't take."* (Atran 2010)

> *"You know you're a Muslim when you drink, gamble, have sex... but you won't eat pork."*
> Ahmed Ahmed on the Axis of Evil Comedy Tour 2007

4.1   The Ummah

For many millions of Muslims around the world, the idea that each Muslim is connected to every other in a community of belief is still an operative concept in the imagination of the world and the interpretation of the significance of the events that occur upon it.   When Scott Atran began investigating the life histories of the Madrid bombers, he encountered a way of engaging world events that is quite different from what one typically finds in the West.   The towns of Morocco, where the bombers were from, were daily steeped in graphic images of violence perpetrated by non-Muslims on Muslims.   Whenever it was time to turn on the news, tune into the radio or pick up the paper; the senses are accosted by the narrative that somewhere out there people like themselves are suffering and they are largely powerless to stop it (Lewis 2003).

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The "people like themselves" are Muslims, and this classification of humanity into members of the Ummah and non-members is a process that has been constantly renegotiated as Muslims encountered non-Muslims societies – first from a position of strength and then later, from one of relative weakness. Recent developments in communications and global mobility have made this feeling of solidarity come alive among Muslims whose connection is now realized by international networks of labor migration, 24 hour news channels, and websites offering Islamic chat rooms, matchmaking services and online fatwas (Cooke and Lawrence 2005; Hansen et al. 2009; Roy 2004) .

The persistence of this differently centered world view is explored by Tamim Ansary (2009), who wrote, in English, a work of history that more closely cleaves to the Islamo-centric model of historical development found in his childhood Farsi books. From this perspective, long chapters must be devoted to the life and achievements of the prophet Muhammad, the further elaboration of society by the rightly guided caliphs, and the later division and decline of the community. The great political revolutions of France and the United States are given short shrift, while the industrial revolution which is seen as the key to Euro-American dominance over the lands of Islam is treated in much greater depth. Privilege at every moment in this narrative is given to either those events that lead up to the formation of the Islamic community or those that have had subsequent impact on that same community in an effort to explain its positionality in the present.

Edward Said (1979) long ago developed the critique of the Western notion of the East as a self serving intellectual framework on which to construct the moral and cultural superiority of the West, so it should be unremarkable that in the Muslim world the West is regarded primarily in terms of how it has altered the flow of history as Muslims believe it should have unfolded. Ansary's "Middle World" (rather than "Middle East") is defined by the community of adherents to the faith even as geographic and political boundaries fluctuate across the topography.

What is important to keep in mind then, is the power of the idea of belonging to create webs of significance among Muslims in all places and at all times, and that this outlook on the classification of humanity is at odds with the ethno-national models typically found in the West and which serve as the unspoken substrate for the majority of intellectual, political and media discourse. This chasm in basic presuppositions was driven home to me years ago when I sat with a group of Muslim men and translated a new report on television about the events in Iraq that day.

> *…They are talking about the US soldiers in Iraq… some fighting…*
>
> *They are fighting Iraqis?*
>
> *I don't know. Maybe Iraqis, maybe there are foreign fighters.*
>
> *French [foreign] people?*
>
> *No, other people, coming from Saudi Arabia or Syria or other countries nearby.*

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But they are Muslims.   Muslims have to protect each other and help each other.   Muslims are going to Iraq but Iraq is a Muslim country.   They must defend it.

The message was clear.   These people are Muslims in a Muslim country.   They are not foreigners.   They are simply doing their duty by defending the Ummah – the community of Iraqis, Jordanian volunteers, and Cambodian Muslims, watching impotently from the other side of the world.   The apparent real time nature of this television program, the ubiquity of foreign travel, and the influx of visitors to the country mean that in today's Cambodia, the Islamic ties that bind are becoming ever more real and, as a consequence, ever more imaginary – transforming the Muslim's sense of self and relationship to others.

4.2   New Contacts

The recent opening of contact with Muslims outside Cambodia has introduced Cambodian Muslims to a wide world where instead of a small minority they are joined by over a billion others in the cause of making a worldwide community.   Previous chapters have focused on how conceptions of history and valorization of ethnic particularity relate to the adoption of forms of Islam with a center of gravity outside the country.   In this chapter, the examination will be of how new experiences of Muslims in this environment are shaping a vision of belonging in the national and international community.   As these are relatively new options for many Muslims, this chapter must also serve as an exploration of Muslim youth culture at a time when they are becoming

increasingly aware that their lives will take very different paths from those of their parents.

4.3   Hajj

If all of these new vectors for contact among Muslims were not enough, the foundation of the religion have already provided for a mechanism to both imagine the geographical unity of the Ummah as well as to realize it through collective action.   The Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, which requires every Muslim of sound body and finances to travel to Mecca in pilgrimage at some point in his life.   The power of this ritual to transform the way Muslims see their fellow coreligionists was famously related by Malcolm X after his Hajj in 1964, when a militant Black nationalist saw the possibility of enjoying brotherhood with men of different races and complexions by submitting to a singular god (Haley 1965).

As with other aspects of Muslim influence, the Hajj is understood differently by members of different sects.   An example of the most common reaction to the Hajj is related here by Mat, a Muslim praying five times a day who identifies himself as neither Salafi nor Tabligh.

> *I traveled to Saudi Arabia in 2002.   I had saved the money myself and we all went together.   All the Muslims from Cambodia, first we met at the airport, then we went to Malaysia and we met some more people there.   Together we traveled to Mecca.   We met many Muslims from every country.   There were so many people... We went around the Ka'ba, went to mount Arafat... then we came home.   It was a very happy feeling.   I completed an obligation of the religion.   Everybody should do this once in their lives.   I did it so I am relieved.   I did the right thing for God...*

If you go on the Hajj, you see people from all over the world… We love each others like brothers from the same womb… I couldn't speak to many of them… But we were happy to be together.

Mat's testimony of fulfillment and belonging among strangers who aren't strangers because they are all brothers in faith contrasts with that of Ly, an Imam San who was given an airline ticket and support in the hopes that he would pray five times a day and accept orthodoxy after visiting the most sacred site in Islam.

I went on a plane. This is a little scary but then you get used to it… We arrived in Mecca and we saw the Ka'ba. They took me around and then I came home.

What did you think of the place? How did you feel about being there?

It was very hot. No trees or cows or rivers. They had a lot of goats. Arabs like goats. But I didn't see any rice fields. It was brown and sandy.

Are you changing your religious practice in any way now?

(smiling) No, we'll continue like before.

Ly's allegiance to his local understanding of the religion seemed undisturbed. His account was mostly about the contrasts between Cambodia, a tropical country where life is determined by the seasonal flowing and harnessing of water, and the Arabian desert, alien, inhospitable and teeming with goats, of which Arabs (rather than Chams) are fond. Other than a few handpicked individuals sent to Mecca in the hope of helping them discover the error of their ways, the Imam San do not perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, and stand wholly outside the discourse of belonging that crystallizes around it.

The Mufti of Cambodia, Sos Kamry, estimates that the number of Cambodian Muslims who perform the Hajj annually is in the low hundreds. Many receive assistance from foreign organizations to help defray the costs of travel and accommodation, but others may, over the years, have saved enough money to perform the pilgrimage on their own. These will make this fact readily known as paying for the Hajj one's self means that the spiritual benefit accrues completely to the traveler and is not shared with a benefactor. This point of pride betrays another issue that arises with the travel of Cambodians to the Middle East, namely, the fact that Cambodia is not only at the geographical periphery of the Muslim world, but at its economic, political and social periphery as well.

The Hajj, along with Islamic education and migrant labor, have planted Cambodia's Muslims firmly in the grounds of a global Muslim community, but it has done this in a position of structural inferiority from which the avenues for escape are unclear. Cambodian Muslims have passed from being a Muslim minority maintaining a separate existence parallel to the majority to a member community in the Ummah occupying the bottom rung in the great chain of belonging. Muslim households will often have cherished pictures of the Ka'ba surrounded by throngs of believers. Talking to people about them, it becomes apparent that this is not a devotional item or a mere decoration. It is a reminder of the sheer number of Muslims in the world – that despite their relative isolation inhabiting the banks of the Mekong, they are part of something bigger and greater which will endure and never die out.

The Hajj ensures a lifeline to the outside world and the security that the anxiety of community survival examined in 3.2 can be palliated through union with the rest of the Ummah. Yet, the Hajj is still undertaken by relatively few Muslims and for those that do it is a one-off affair, which while personally and symbolically important does not much alter the way life occurs in the home community. However the Hajj is not the principle vehicle for communicating Cambodia with the Muslim world. The education of Muslims in the Islamic sciences as well as the opportunities to work in Muslim-majority neighboring states have had a far more dramatic effect on the consciousness of young people and lent tangible muscle and sinew to the ideologies of Muslim fraternity.

4.4   Saudi Arabia – The Cradle of Islam

Although founded relatively recently as a state in 1932, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a very special place in the geography of Islam. The location of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina within the boundaries of the kingdom makes it the center of pilgrimage and confers upon the king the status of guardian of the sacred sites – an epithet that in earlier times was attributed to the Ottoman Sultans as a way of justifying their leadership of the Muslim world. The adoption of a particularly conservative and puritanical form of Islam known as Salafism, or sometimes Wahhabism, which is claimed to be the form of the religion as practiced in the time of the prophet, also has a hold on the religious and historical imaginations of many Muslims worldwide. The enormous wealth that is the result of extensive petroleum and gas exploitation has also given the kingdom the

means by which to project influence and cultivate its image as the cradle of the Islamic faith.

Direct Saudi presence in Cambodia was mostly ended when the Umm al-Qura school was closed after it was connected to the Islamist terror network al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah (JI) and Hambali of 2002 Bali bombing notoriety. This operation led to the arrest of three foreign teachers and the expulsion of 28 and was an important motive for the push to indigenize Islamic education in the country and have as much as possible taught by Cambodian nationals. Despite this setback for the Saudis, all of the same Salafist influences are entering the country through Kuwait. In fact the word "Kuwait" now commonly means Salafi and is also used to refer to organizations and programs that are just as or more likely to lead participants to Saudi Arabia.

The center of the "Kuwait" system is held by the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS). RIHS maintains a large high school and dormitory in Phnom Penh with hundreds of students from all over the country. This school is also served by a number of feeder schools in the provinces. All of these schools are also orphanages. Orphanages study free of charge and receive two meals a day. These schools are notable for the complete education they make available to students.

Cambodian state schools operate in both the morning and the afternoon, but students will only attend one of the sessions, depending on their schedules or family obligations. Cambodian state education is designed to be taught in half-day sessions. RIHS students spend their mornings studying religious

curriculum including Arabic language, and their afternoons studying the state mandated curriculum. All teachers, including those teaching secular subjects are Muslim, and all teachers are paid a minimum of 90 dollars a month. In a country where a regular state school teacher receives a monthly salary of 30 dollars, this is an impressive sum and obviates the problem of teachers charging for lessons or test answers to make ends meet.

Feeder schools apply exams in both Islamic and state subjects, the passing of which makes the student eligible for a place at the main school in the Phnom Penh district of Chaom Chao. Chaom Chao, unlike Umm al-Qura, Trea or other large Islamic institutions, is not built in a Muslim neighborhood and does not engage the local community. The school's vice director explained to me that the Arabs wanted to build the school close to the airport, so they could fly in, look around and be off on another flight later that day. The school is ideally situated for just this purpose.

Within the compound, students continue their 7th to 12th year state educations as well as the Kuwaiti curriculum. The graduate of Chaom Chao has completed all years of state education. This is by no means common in Cambodia, where only 75,000 students in the entire country were enrolled in 12th grade in 2008 (MoP 2008). The successful exam takers will also be in a position to continue their Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia or sometimes Kuwait. To study abroad anywhere is an enormous opportunity, but to seize the opportunity to return to the source of the Islamic faith to become a scholar is an honor for both the student and his family.

The experience of being abroad however, is often far from smooth. Students encounter a number of difficulties starting with language issues. Studies and social life is conducted in Arabic a language that presents significant problems in terms of pronunciation and grammar for speakers of Austronesian and Austro-Asiatic languages. Their training in Arabic consisted, up until that point, of written Arabic of the classical and formal registers leaving them ill equipped to follow more mundane conversations and interactions which are necessary to sustain a complete life anywhere.

Another hurdle to overcome is that of discrimination by Arabs against non-Arabs. Frequently treated as second class citizens, non-Arabs find that they are mocked for their accents, their deficient religious educations and the poverty of their home countries. The low regard with which the "airport Arabs" hold the Cambodian population becomes the social backdrop against which these students must conduct their academic experience abroad.

Finally there is the question of curriculum and educational satisfaction. RIHS students have been prepared for years to undertake studies in Islamic sciences since childhood, and ostensibly, that is the motivation for sending them to the Middle East – to transform them into scholars. It should be of no surprise however, when young men, traveling abroad for the first time and encountering diverse peoples, novel experiences and unexpected opportunities, should reconsider their path in life and begin taking interest in matters that were once of little moment in his high school dormitory. The inflexibility of the curriculum with regards to non-religious subjects creates for some students a straight jacket

permitting them to see but never touch the opportunities which this new environment presents.

Students abroad are difficult to interview as they are typically in the host country for most of the year, returning only for Ramadan, when the month-long fast from sun up to sun down means that interviews should be conducted at night. Nevertheless, over several years and several Ramadan periods I was able to engage a number of students on their experiences in the Middle East. The following is an excerpt of a reasonably typical interview which illustrates the points above:

> *Tell me about Saudi Arabia. Do you like studying there?*
>
> *Yes. But it's hard. My Arabic is much better now, but in the beginning I couldn't speak. Here we study how to read, write and recite, but when Arabs speak normally they don't use the full grammar… They pronounce the words differently. But now I can speak well.*
>
> *You must have many Saudi friends now.*
>
> *Sometimes I see them at the soccer field. We will play a few games, but usually they don't want to be with us. I am usually with other non-Arabs. The Arabs and the non-Arabs are apart. We see them in class and in sports. But in the free time they are elsewhere. They speak amongst themselves and we don't understand them so clearly. Also, they have more money and we are poor.*
>
> *So you're mostly with Cham people?*
>
> *No, there is one other Cham. I spend time with the people in my dormitory. We have some Chinese and Indonesian students. Sometimes we see students from Africa.*
>
> *Are there Arabs in your dormitory?*

Not really. The dormitory is for people coming from abroad. So we live with other non-Arabs... We are not permitted to bring in food to the dormitories. The Saudis are afraid it will stink too badly.

...What are you going to do when you return to Cambodia?

I will teach Arabic or shariah. When I finish studying I will be able to teach those things for the community.

Do you study anything other than Islamic subjects there?

It is very difficult. My patron doesn't want me to study anything other than Islam. He won't pay for anything else. I want to study English and computers... I take part of my stipend and use it to pay for private classes, but I need that money to live. I take some English and computer courses on the side but it isn't enough.

Would you rather be a teacher of Islamic subjects or work with computers?

Don't know...

Saudi Arabia is, in a manner of speaking, a developed country. Yet despite the obvious wealth and the comforts of modernity the Cambodian Muslims that study there do not seem to see it as a model for their own society. Studying in Saudi Arabia has its charms to be sure – there is prestige that comes from being selected for the scholarships and support necessary for the undertaking. There is also a certain pride that one feels knowing he is fulfilling an obligation on behalf of the community. In Islamic thought, obligations can be individual (fard al-'ayn) or collective (fard al-kifāya). While each individual Muslim should seek knowledge of the religion for himself to the best of his ability, it is simply impossible for everyone to commit themselves for the period of time necessary to become and Islamic scholar. These students go to Saudi Arabia not only for

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themselves, but to serve the entire community and keep it in good standing with god.

While religious obligations are met, other needs are not. For Salafi students, taught that local particularities, customs and traditions didn't matter in the light of the shared faith, the social rejection at the hands of Arabs is a sharp disappointment. Gulf countries have cars, highways, potable water and elevators, but they also have a way of life that consigns them to a second class status and hampers them from realizing themselves as social personae. For feelings of brotherhood, acceptance and belonging, Cambodian Muslims would best go elsewhere.

4.5   Malaysia – An Islamic Modernity

Tabligh Muslims, if they study abroad are unlikely to go as far as the Middle East. Instead, they are drawn to Malaysia and Southern Thailand, from which much of their funding and curriculum is sourced. And for those Muslims less inclined to studies, a period of time spent working abroad in a Muslim country can be a powerful experience of connection to a world they had heard about growing up. The most important countries accepting their labor are also Malaysia and Thailand. Like studying in the Middle East, this endeavor is heavily laden with expectations and hopes for a better future both social and financial.

The impact of Malay culture, even on Salafi communities, has been deep and long-lasting. Apart from the Imam San who have their own Indic script, all

other Muslims in the country write the Cham language in the Jawi script – a derivation of the Arabic script developed by Malays to represent the different sounds found in Malay but not in Arabic. Islamic fashion – women's hijabs, men's sarongs – are dictated from Malaysia. Music has also had an influence and there are now Cham language karaoke DVD's available for sale. When I asked if this type of music was permissible in Islam, the vendor replied, "It's the same as Malaysia."

4.5.1   Making the Modern Muslim

It may be useful to digress for a moment and consider why Malaysia is so significant in the development of the notion of Islamic modernity. Arabian civilization, for all its ostentatious wealth and financial resources, fails, in the eyes of many Cambodian Muslims to provide a model that they themselves can follow so that they too can be Muslims in the modern world. Malaysia on the other hand holds out the promise of being a reproducible modern Muslim society – a model of which at least some elements can be exported. This is not at all an accident, but the result of a long period of negotiation in Malaysia that did not oppose Islamic ways and modern, Western modes, but rather started from the assumption that modernity is not a unique property of the West and that many of its benefits could be Islamicized while its dangers could be attenuated with some good Islamically grounded planning and guidance.

The interaction of Islamic faith and modernism (a faith in progress) in insular Southeast Asia has been the subject of anthropological inquiry for the

better part of a century (Federspiel 2002). While Islam is the dominant faith throughout much of the Malay archipelago, historic contacts and relations with non-Muslims, both Western and indigenous to the region have led to a number of strategies for cohabitation. In the British and Dutch colonies, the religious establishment were allowed to regulate many aspects of public morality and family law provided they did not interfere with the administration of the colony. With independence, a new generation of young scholars, trained in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and strongly influenced by the works of Syed Abul Ala Maududi, began to challenge the old guard of the religious establishment (Hassan 2003). The resurgence of confidence in their Islamic heritage coupled with the notion that Islam should not be reduced to a mere religion, but rather practiced as a comprehensive way of life, made efforts to integrate Islamism and modernism inevitable.

From the colonial crucible of developing nationalisms to the post-colonial condition that emerged after WWII, notions of modernity and its consequences for traditional societies have been central to the elaboration of paradigms for the development of imagined communities as well as the frameworks for engagement with the developed world. Industrial and trade policy, the reconciliation of distinct legal traditions with the needs of the state enterprise, the question of what to teach in schools and at what age English language should be introduced as a compulsory subject are all part of a wider series of debates that ostensibly seek to resolve the tensions between ideology and practice. In developing Islamic countries, this discussion takes place at the intersection of several narratives,

namely, an Islamic discourse that defines a community by its acceptance of the revelation of God's word to Muhammad and a modernist Western conception of historicized progress whose trajectory propels man from barbarism to ever greater levels of civilization and within which, the prophecy of Muhammad is but another event on the timeline. Add to this localized notions of community, identity and development derived from national or racial ideologies and the picture becomes even more complicated.

Modernization theory has for some time posited that as a society accepts modern ideas and ways of organizing social institutions, those institutions will become increasingly rationalized, that is governed by codified rules and regulations with an eye to enhancing efficiency and productivity. This increased yield of the institution must necessarily be measured in relation to some other institution that absorbs the product so that iron mines are judged by how well they supply steel mills, steel mills by how well they supply shipyards, shipyards by how well they supply the navy or the merchant marine and so on. Schools and institutions of learning then are valued and legitimized to the extent that they produce graduates who will then occupy positions of influence and prestige in society. As value and legitimacy become increasingly derived from the relationships between specific groups of producers and consumers, institutions develop particular internal logics governing correctness of work and administration. The result should then have been the collapse of all-encompassing narratives and ideologies as valid organizing principles for the

various new forms of economic activity and intellectual plurality (Dobbelaere 1981; Luhmann 1984).   One source of such narratives is religion.

Religion, however, has not retreated from public life with the notable exception of Europe.   Virtually everywhere else it seems to be resurgent in some way or another, alternately in opposition to modernist projects or in support of them (Haynes 1997; Saha and Carr 2001; Simpson 1992; Westerlund 1996). Predictions of the demise of religion in the face of modernity were for the most part incorrect because they rested on the crucial assumption that modernity was a unitary phenomenon which by necessity would give rise to liberal democracies, capital markets and neatly defined and internally coherent spheres of social and economic activity.

What these predictions failed to reckon with was the degree to which the grand narratives offered by religion could succeed in incorporating the modernist vision rather than being superseded by it. Assuming that modernization would take the form of a master-pupil relationship between the West and the rest of the world, social scientists overlooked the desire of people around the world to craft a version of modern life that is less at variance with local norms and pre-existing ideologies that define ideal social relations (Hefner 1998; Roy 1994).   Islamic societies in particular are often imagined to suffer from a peculiar kind of backwardness - an inability to take that one key step toward embracing modernity that every other society seems to have done or be in the process of doing (Hofmann 2002; Huff and Schluchter 1999), yet there is already a long history of

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Islamic engagement with modernity and the West that utilizes Islamic principles and institutions productively to create new and satisfying social arrangements.

Educational institutions hold a certain special place both in traditional Islamic societies as well as in the vision of modernity. In the Muslim world there is a long history of education, formalized to varying degrees, that centers on the study of the Qur'ān and the Qur'ānic sciences, particularly law. Other religious subjects as well as the natural sciences, history and literature were also studied in this context. There is a strong association between the acquisition of knowledge ('ilm) and personal value, with the pursuit of knowledge imagined as a perfection of the individual's ability to understand his duties before God and society (Ahmad 1985; Ashraf 1985; Khan 1986; Makdisi 1981; Mohd Nor Wan Daud 1989; Sardar 1991). In a sense, the pursuit of knowledge makes the ideal citizen in both the Islamic system and the modernist conception. In both cases, there is typically an overt program for producing citizens through education whose bodies and intellects will serve as a resource for the institutions of society. In the developing world, it is the school system that is charged not only with teaching children those academic skills that will be required of them after they graduate but also a way of imagining themselves as parts of a larger communitarian or national whole (Keyes 1983).

The study of education and especially the study of the transformation of education cannot be separated from the examination of the matrix of values, symbols and material exigencies in which particular forms of knowing are elevated to the status of knowledge and how that very knowledge is then

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disseminated, acquired and deployed differentially by members of society. In different societies and at different times, these conditions are likely to vary, leading to locally and temporally specific articulations of ideology, socio-economic systems and education - the inculcation of ideology in anticipation of a particular kind of economic life (Anyon 1980; Anyon 1995; Levinson 2000; Reagan 1996). Whether it is a question of modern media requiring telegenic spokespersons for Islamic values, the development of Islamic economics and banking drawing religious students into the financial professions, or discussions of halal foods for astronauts awakening young Muslims to the promise of an Islamic space program; it is the transformations in the worlds of statecraft, commerce, culture and ideas that are at once producing novel modes of education and transforming older practices by imbuing them with new relevance.

At present, there is a substantial literature on the incorporation of Islam into the machinery of state and deployment of Islamic ideology by the state to legitimate itself. This scholarship is typically concerned with the relationship between religious thought and state bureaucracy as a whole, rather than systems of schooling in particular and yet, the discourse of Islamic modernity, particularly in Malaysia, where Islam is integral to the morality of modernity, has a profound influence both on schooling and the moral and intellectual boundaries in which that schooling takes place. This section of this paper will be dedicated to an examination of the effects on education of state-sponsored efforts at modernization of Malaysian society and the degree to which they are suffused with a religious worldview and ideology.

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The notion of Islam as the foundation of worldly success was expounded by Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first prime minister of Malaysia and in so doing he created a foundation upon which subsequent Malaysian politicians would build an ideological edifice characterized by an intertwined Malay/Islamic identity, a progressive attitude towards technology, commerce and education as well as a powerful state apparatus that commands the allegiance of its prosperous subjects. It is probably not insignificant that fairly early in his prime ministership, which lasted from 1957 to 1970, he established the Islamic Welfare Organization, which provides aid to Muslim Malays such that from the very beginning, Abdul Rahman promoted Islam as a vehicle for the promotion of basic welfare and was extremely popular.

After Abdul Rahman stepped down, the most important promoter of Malayo-Islamic values became Mahathir Mohamad, who did not deviate from the policy of making Islam the lynchpin of all modernization efforts in the country including educational modernization. Indeed, since assuming political leadership in 1981, Mahathir sought to outmaneuver his antagonists in the Islamic party, PAS, by instituting a program of state-sponsored Islamization that presented the state (with Mahathir at the helm) as the legitimate protector and promoter of Islam in all affairs public. Unlike other progressive minded leaders in the Muslim world like Atatürk or Tunisia's Habib Bourghuiba, who saw strict secularism and, when necessary, the suppression of Islamic institutions as necessary to the development of the modern state, Mahathir embraced Islam in public life and in so doing neutralized much of PAS's momentum. In this

context, progressive Islam was developed as a discourse of social engineering by bureacrats and elites which had as its primary feature the "re-invention of Islam as a discourse compatible with development and commerce." (Noor 2004: 3)

This new articulation of Islamic principles would then be embedded in the institutions of social reproduction, particularly the schools and other academic organizations such as universities and Islamic think tanks. This occurred to a great extent by including members of the 'ulamā within these academic and administrative bodies so that by Mahathir's second year, there were over 100 'ulamā working for the Office of the Prime Minister and more than 700 on the payroll of the Ministry of Education (Noor 2004: 15). In addition, Mahathir greatly expanded the number and visibility of Islamic learning institutions. Most notable was the foundation of the International Islamic University of Malaysia in 1983, a university dedicated to the development of Islamic knowledge at the university level. By Islamic knowledge progressive Muslims are not limiting themselves to the traditional Islamic sciences, but rather, they are proposing to Islamize all knowledge in general so that Islamic knowledge is not simply about what one studies and what one understands, but instead it focuses on how one studies and how one comes to certain knowledge (Mohd Nor Wan Daud 1989; Sardar 1991).

By emphasizing an Islamic way of knowing rather than merely an Islamic content, a wider range of investigation and research could be conducted by scholars within the legitimating discourse of Islamism. Universities and think tanks began holding conferences on Islamic media, Islamic banking, and Islam

and technology to name but a few topics.   Most recently, Malaysia played host to a conference on Islam in space in anticipation of Malaysian astronauts going into orbit in cooperation with the Russian Federal Space Agency (Reuters 2006). Topics covered included the determination of the direction of Mecca from orbit and the performance of ablutions in a weightless environment among others. Many of these issues have already been dealt with in one way or another - there are rules for prayer when the *qiblah* (direction of Mecca) cannot be determined, as well as for *tayammum*, dry ablutions in the absence of fresh water - yet, this conference is promoted as a momentous occasion in the history of Islam.   What matters here is not so much the technical details of religious performance, but the powerful subtext that there is in fact a place for Muslims and Islam in the exploration of space and that there is an Islamic way to conduct space sciences. This has brought attention to Malaysia as the cutting edge of Islamic modernism where Islamic knowledge leads to Islamic applications and a modern lifestyle consistent with Islamic principles.

Mahathir's other chief innovation seemed to be the articulation of a comprehensive critique of the West, its civilization and morals (or lack thereof) and the Western conceptions of modernity.   Mahathir Mohamad's writings and lectures focus on the essential character of Malay people - it is good, but weak, and the compatability of this national character with Islam, which fortifies it (Mohamad 1986).   Kamal Hassan (2004) takes a similar stance and describes the contemporary Muslim mindset as insufficient to the task of modernisation - a situation that must be remedied, not by abandoning religion and embracing

Western values and practices, but instead by "recapturing" the forward-thinking

and progressive Islamic spirit of the 12th century.

> *Setting the requisite mindset of the Malaysian Muslim community is certainly not an easy task as it requires a coordinated, unified and comprehensive agenda by all agents of social change for a truly comprehensive transformation of the Malay people. We have to bear in mind that the Malays are highly tolerant but custom-bound people with the behaviour pattern of the 'nature's gentleman' who were exposed in the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries to an Islamic heritage which carried a strong emphasis on tasawwuf (spirituality) as well as elementary fiqh (legal procedure) of al-Shafi', separated from the more scientifically and technologically rich Andalusian legacy of the once holistic Islamic civilization. The task of changing the Malay mindset is daunting but not insurmountable. People do wake up from their slumber of complacency and will want to break away from their self-imposed prison of political myopia when calamities or disasters descend upon them as was the case with post-World War II Germany and Japan (Hassan 2004).*

In both the works of Mahathir and Hassan, one is struck by the amount of

self-deprecation and criticism of the apparently inherent weakness of the Malay

people and their fundamental inability to compete on the same terms as

Westerners. This is however a common rhetorical device among many Asian

leaders and intellectuals who seek to build a modern society that will look nothing

like the West - to define for themselves what constitutes modernity. By

reappropriating the discourse of Asian difference so prevalent for centuries in

European and Anglo-American society (Khairudin Aljuneid 2004), intellectuals in

the Pacific Rim countries, particularly China, Singapore and Malaysia, define the

distinctive Asian qualities that differentiate them from the West (Ong 1999).

Usually these qualities are friendliness, kindness, gentleness, gregariousness,

family values and other such warm and fuzzy attributes.

By valorizing that which the West appears to reject, Asian leaders propose a particular form of modernity that is more virtuous than the Western version based on the cold logic of individual capital accumulation. Leaders such as Mahathir Mohamad, Lee Kwan Yew (Singapore) and Ishihara Shintarou (Japan) have used such rhetoric in order to legitimize their politics and bolster their claims to be defenders of their people against Western-style market capitalism that seeks to subject Asiatic peoples to its needs. It is this discourse that enables these leaders and others like them to style themselves simultaneously as the caring and generous father of the state, and the masculine and self-empowered Asian that can say "No" to the West.

In this way, Islam is made indispensable as it gives the gentle Malay a moral certitude with which to compete with the West and win. The Cham too can now benefit from this model. As Malaysians have already demonstrated that Islam belongs in the future of the modern world, the Cham as a related race can also expect to participate in the rational, bureaucratized, technologically sophisticated and increasingly mobile world that tomorrow is expected to bring.

At a coffee shop outside of the Tabligh KM 8 mosque three men who have worked in Malaysia, two as construction workers and one as an ice cream vendor, agreed to share their experiences there as well as their impressions of Malaysia as a country. They are labeled A, B and C:

> *C: Malaysia is a good place. In Malaysia everyone is Muslim*
> *and they do things the Muslim way.*

A: That's right.   You don't have any problems with anything. Halal food, places to pray – you have everything.

Me: But there are many non-Muslims in Malaysia as well.

C: It's a Muslim country it doesn't have so many non-Muslims.

A: Yes, there are.   The Chinese.

C: Yes, ok, the Chinese.   And some Indians, but many Indians are also Muslims.

B: I also met non-Muslims, but there were more Muslims.

A: In Malaysia there are Muslims and non-Muslims, but the non-Muslims understand Islam and they respect the religion. The country is Muslim so even if they are not Muslim they cannot offend Muslim customs.

C: That's right. (increasingly animated) If people are not Muslims that is not a problem because the country and the laws are Muslim. For example…   for example… for example, alcohol.   You cannot have advertisements for alcohol in Malaysia.   (pointing to a whiskey advertisement) In Malaysia that is not permitted. Why?   Because alcohol is haram.   You understand? So we have no problems there. (thumbs up)

B: Yes, Malaysia is easy.   Ramadan comes and everyone is fasting like you.   They don't bring you alcohol or other things that are haram.

C: Malaysia is a good place! (thumbs up + satisfied smirk)

Me: How about Malay people?

C: Very nice! (two thumbs up).   If we go there, they will treat us well.   They help us and accept us like brothers.   We live like them and speak Malay and we have no problems.

A: If you speak Cham, Malay is not difficult.   Malay people respect Chams.   We have the same religion, the same customs, the same language also…   our children can go to school there and learn English…   they learn about Islam.

C: The girls can wear the hijab in school – no problem.

Me: Can't children do that here?

C: No, the girls can't wear the hijab in Cambodian schools. They don't allow them in the school.

Me: But [prime minister] Hun Sen just said a few months ago that Muslim clothing should be permitted in schools.   Don't they let the girls into school here now.

B: That's right, he said that.

A: He said that, but it's not the law.   They didn't make a law. He just made a pronouncement.

C: In Cambodia we have freedom to practice our religion.   But the whole society is not Muslim.   So we can go to school but the school is not a Muslim school.   We are different from them – we speak Cham and we are Muslim...   In their schools we must do things their way.

Me: Can you teach Cham language or Muslim subjects in state schools?

C: No, we have madrasas for that.   They teach religion there. And they use Cham, but in state schools never.   I'll explain – the Cambodian government and the Vietnamese government are very close. (joins index and middle finger)   If they teach Cham or Cham subjects, the Vietnamese will be angry.   They have a great influence and they don't want us to talk about Cham people or Cham history...

Me: How is life in Cambodia now – compared to Malaysia?

B: It's hard.

C: It's hard here.   There are no jobs.   In Malaysia you can always find work and they pay well.

B: There is a lot of crime here too.   Malaysia is safe.

C: In Malaysia, they have police, they aren't corrupt.   There aren't so many thieves.   Not like here.   You see, in Malaysia they don't have the problem of alcohol, because it's haram. Drugs are also haram.   You don't have these thugs getting high

and causing trouble. Cambodia, yes – but in Malaysia, no. (thumbs up)

B: Here there are two ways – Khmer and Muslim. In Malaysia it is all Muslim.

C: Muslims need to be with other Muslims, or the non-Muslims don't know about our religion and they look down on us. In America, Muslims must hide their religion.

Me: You can be a Muslim in America without hiding it.

C: Do you know Michael Jackson? He was very famous. He just died. He was a Muslim but nobody knew. He was hiding his religion. If people in America knew he was a Muslim they would not like him.

A: Also because he is a Black person... Many Black people in America are Muslims...

Me: Yes, I do know Michael Jackson. I heard he was a Muslim but I wasn't sure. But, his brother, Jermaine, was also a Muslim. He never hid his religion. I knew he was a Muslim for a long time.

C: That's right, but you know Muslims. Maybe most Americans didn't know about his family... If Muslims live with non-Muslims it is difficult for people to understand each other's hearts...

This rather long discourse on the character of Malaysia as an Islamic community highlights both the palpable anxieties that become evident when Muslims encounter non-Muslims, and the promise of temporal resolutions to worldly problems offered by a fully functional Islamic culture.

The interview took place in Chrang Chamres, a district of Phnom Penh with a large Muslim population supporting three major mosques. While not the worst neighborhood in the city, Chrang Chamres does have real problems with drugs, juvenile delinquency and crime. Straddling the outbound Highway 5

heading north to the Thai border, the area has a mixed economy of fishing and small-scale agriculture which has been practiced here for centuries as well as garment factories and mechanical support for the columns of trucks that form the backbone of the Cambodian ground transport network. It is dirty, polluted and crowded with rural migrants. This, plus the fact that each of the men had been back in Cambodia for a number of years already, may have helped to raise the level of fondness with which they remember Malaysia. Nonetheless, their praise for Malaysia as well as the implicit and explicit critiques of Cambodia illuminates important aspects of Cham thought regarding their place in the world.

Firstly, there is the importance of living in an Islamic society. This is distinct from living amongst Muslims. The fact that the organs of state are Muslim, particularly schools, but also the criminal law and the regulations of work places, meant that Muslims would be protected from the problems attendant when they are made to interact with non-Muslims. Strictly speaking, these men, and many like them, are not desirous of a society without non-Muslims per se, rather they see a practical ideal in having a multi-confessional community subordinated to Muslim norms and conventions. The Muslim character of the Malay state neutralizes the disruptions that could be caused by the presence of Chinese and Hindus. Without Islam, the natural character of the person is given to vice. Much like Islam gave backbone to the gentle Malay, it fortifies the will of Cham people to follow the correct path.

Secondly, each of these men evinces a strong identification with Malay people as ethnic kin. This is quite different from what many experience when

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they travel to Saudi Arabia. In Malaysia, the commonality of language (both Malay and Cham are Austronesian languages, which while not mutually intelligible have many cognates and obvious similarities), of religion and of imagined heritage as descendants of the Muslims who plied the sea lanes between India and China, means that the Cham can feel a sense of bonding and develop a network of fictive kinship much like they would back in Cambodia and unlike Arabia, where they are never made to feel that they are part of the community.

In conversations like these, there is very little reference to the tenets of the religion itself – no quoting of the Qur'an or references to the hadith. Combined these three men may have had as little as 6 years of Islamic education total. The central themes of the discourse are comfort, respect and belonging. The comfort that Chams feel at seeing people living in a familiar material world – rice-staple diet, Malay style clothing and fashion, social conventions regarding the treatment of family members and the interaction among individuals including body language and tone of voice – helps many Cham feel that Malay people practice a culture similar to but more advanced than their own. This leads many who have experienced the material prosperity of Malaysia to regard it as a model for a modern Muslim society completely in keeping with the principles of the Cham moral economy.

This kinship is reinforced by the fact that they feel themselves to be respected by Malays. This respect is in opposition to the contempt with which they believe they are held by the Khmers, the Vietnamese and the Americans / Europeans and even Arabs. The narrative of Islamic faith buffeted in a sea of

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willful disbelief is a common one in Cambodia and other Muslim-minority contexts. That even Michael Jackson a world famous superstar could not openly practice his religion attests to the insignificance of the individual, no matter how great, when not supported by a Muslim society.

Muslim-friendly edicts from the prime minister's office are certainly welcome, but they do not constitute the basis for a good Islamic community. Malays have found the answer to this in Islamicizing society and bringing justice for Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Of course, as a small minority, the Muslims of Cambodia are in no position to make such impositions on the rest of the society, and so, Malaysia becomes an ideal – not really acheiveable but available to be admired and emulated to whatever extent possible. Unlike Saudi Arabia, Malaysia is not an alien land of austere Islamic purity powered by pilgrimage and petrochemicals, but a civilization, connatural with their own, but more fortunate in that they were never stricken with the territorial dispossession of the ancient Cham. This ideal of living in an Islamic world where non-believers cannot contaminate the purity of belief or the correctness of lifestyle is especially relevant to the urban mixed population of Chrang Chamres and the rest of the urban agglomeration of Phnom Penh.

4.6   Phnom Penh – "There is Pork Everywhere"

Boarding a bus in Phnom Penh to accompany Ysa back to his village, it occurred to me that we should grab some bread for the trip up. Ysa agreed and authoritatively motioned through the bus window for a vendor to approach. As

the young man raised a bag of French bread to within reach of Ysa's outstretched arm, a voice called out. Rushing over, a share-taxi driver raised his hand and shouted that that bread contained pork. Ysa recoiled from the offending vittles and shooed the vendor away. He thanked the taxi driver and they spoke for a few moments – clearly they knew each other.

The Cham are traditionally matrilocal and typically move from their natal villages to their wives' upon marriage. This means that Cham men frequently have a well developed network of friends and family that include their home villages, their wives' villages and the villages of other men from the natal village that married women from other areas. This taxi driver was from Chroy Changvar, a peninsula across the river from the center of Phnom Penh – a historic center of the Cham community in the area and until recently, relatively undeveloped despite being formally within the bounds of the city. Ysa would sometimes comment on how growing up in Phnom Penh and now living in Kampong Chhnang gave him perspective on the urban-rural divide.

But Ysa hasn't lived in the city for a long time. The town has changed and it is now a place that combines business and educational opportunities, which he approves of, with personal hazards and moral endangerments, of which he approves less. Fortunately, Muslims are always looking out for each other and Ysa's childhood friend stepped in to prevent what would have been an awful situation. As the bus pulled away from the station and away from our last chance for lunch, Ysa explained that the city isn't anything like the countryside, where any strange person can be spotted and kept an eye on. In the city there are

lots of bad things – crime, alcohol, sex, pork and other bad influences. He worried about me living in such a dilapidated apartment block and advised me to move somewhere safer. Ysa would later be accosted by a group of young hoodlums looking for cigarette money in the stairwell of my building shortly before Chinese New Year. As if the point were not clear to me he drew the picture: your building, plus addiction, plus Chinese holidays equals crime…

4.6.1 Fear of the Foreign

One should be clear that Ysa's feelings of trepidation vis-à-vis Phnom Penh is by no means a new phenomenon nor is it particular to Muslims. The anxiety about the city is shared broadly especially when it is children or younger, more impressionable family members going off to work or study. A significant aspect of this is the very foreignness of Phnom Penh. Business of virtually any type is dominated by Sino-Khmers, the descendants of Chinese merchants and agricultural workers as well as the Khmers amongst whom they married. Despite the fact that, unlike Việt Nam, Cambodia was never under direct Chinese rule nor was its language ever written in Chinese characters, Chinese decorations and characters for luck and fortune are to be found in the majority of private businesses – be they restaurants, hotels, stationary stores, pet shops or coffee houses.

This image of Phnom Penh as being non-Khmer has a history going back to the French period, when the administration preferred Vietnamese civil servants over Khmers. The city consisted of a French ruling class, their Vietnamese

clerks and assistants and a Chinese merchant community. Khmers and Chams were both resident in the city but their influence over its functioning was minor. In the 1930's, attempts to modernize Khmer culture led to the appearance of the first Khmer language novel, *Sophat*. This story of a young orphan boy from the countryside who grows to manhood and reconnects with his family roots in Phnom Penh is remarkable in that, although taking place almost completely in Phnom Penh, there is not a single non-Khmer character in the work (Klairung 1998). This urge to make Khmer the urban polity would find a less innocuous expression when the Khmer Rouge evacuated the cities into the countryside in order to purge the nation of the corrupting influence of the foreign.

For many Cham, the city is doubly foreign. It is a place where Chinese merchants and Euro-American tourists interface with Cambodian people through points of common interest such as – alcohol, pork products, dancing and everything that leads to – all things forbidden to Muslims. Yet Muslims have been a presence in the city since its founding (Osborne 2008). The peri-urban regions of Chrang Chamres on the road leading to Thailand, Chbar Ampouv on the route to Việt Nam and Chroy Changvar across the Tonle Sap river from the heart of the city all have large Cham-speaking Muslim populations supporting mosques, madrasas and halal business establishments. These communities have created Cham and Muslim neighborhoods by continuing many of the same practices of barrier building as one finds in the rural context.

4.6.2 Barriers and Defenses

The most plainly obvious fact that keeps Muslims and non-Muslims separate from each other is their physical separation. In the countryside, Muslims and non-Muslims almost always live in different villages. In a contact area, a commune will have some villages classified as Khmer and others as Muslim. Even in those places where one finds mixed villages, the villages are not so much mixed as divided. An example of this phenomenon is Prek Tapouv just south of Phnom Penh, where the Cham population lives on the bank of the creek and engages in fishing, whereas the Khmers live on the side of the road away from the water and mostly find employment in the market town. Cambodian land laws prohibit the private ownership of waterfront property, so Muslims do not own their homes and will not maintain or expand them for fear that the land will be confiscated without compensation. In this same village Muslim and non-Muslim are separated by patterns of land occupation, profession and relative squalor as well as language and religion.

Muslim villages will usually have Muslim village chiefs and mixed villages will always have a Muslim assistant to the village chief. When a problem emerges among villagers the *me juma'ah* is called to determine whether the dispute is a matter for the religious leadership or for the civil authorities. Family law is usually handled by the religious establishment while land disputes or cases involving criminal conduct are referred to the village chief. In addition, Muslim communities may punish infractions such as drinking alcohol, which are not crimes at all in Cambodia. The combination of spatial distance and

administrative particularism gives Muslim communities a certain feeling of autonomy and self-sufficiency regarding the day-to-day conduct of their lives. These facts have been recapitulated in the urban setting.

As in the countryside, Muslim communities are defined geographically. These are places with where the call to prayer can be heard, women walk about with their heads covered and pork is not on the menu. Women's dress is the clearest indicator to Khmers of whether they are in a Muslim area. Although many Tabligh men do dress in ways that call attention to the fact that they are Muslims, most will dress down when it comes time to go to work. Seeing a man in a Tabligh village who is always Islamically dressed is usually a good indication that he is employed in the Muslim community and interacts little with Khmers. Women on the other hand, among Tablighs, Salafis and most other Muslims with the notable and important exception of the Imam San, must be dressed in an Islamically appropriate fashion whenever they are in public.

It is a known fact among Khmers that marriage to a Muslim requires conversion of the non-Muslim partner. By marking themselves as Muslims, these women remove themselves from the world of romantic intrigue and sexual maneuvering of non-Muslims. This should not be understood as Khmers being uninterested in Muslims in this way. The headscarf and social distance engenders a certain allure for many Khmer men, many of whom believe that Muslims are actually extremely sexual and engage in full-on orgies at the mosque every Friday. The combination of Muslim women being sexually unavailable and at the same time being regarded as having secret lives to which Khmers are

not privy, creates feelings of anxiety at the possibility that members of the Khmer community might be lost. As a member of the district office responsible for Chrang Chamres explained in the presence of Muslims, "If a man marries a Muslim, he converts. If a woman marries a Muslim, she converts. They take everyone. They take people."

These Muslim body snatchers break the bonds between the Khmer and his or her family, friends and community. To marry a Muslim woman means to convert and to enter her community. It means that one should abstain from alcohol and refuse to eat pork, a popular meat among all non-Muslim Cambodians. It means that the convert should no longer attend Buddhist festivals or religious ceremonies. It means adopting lifeways that are at odds with those of Khmer Buddhists and surrounding one's self with a new family that the old family may not feel as comfortable with.

To spend a day in Phnom Penh with an observant Muslim is to quickly run into a number of obstacles that do not present themselves when spending time with Khmers. If you eat three times a day, those are three times when halal eateries must be located. In Phnom Penh, outside of the Muslim areas listed earlier in this section, these places are relatively few. A city of nearly two million people is immediately reduced to a handful of locations where food is both halal and affordable. Recent years have brought an influx of new restaurants and other dining options that cater to the growing middle class, the expatriate community and the increasing numbers of tourists. Some of these serve South Asian or Middle Eastern food, which are halal, but these

developments have meant nothing to the local Muslim community since they are priced for foreigners and well-off Cambodians. Whether they feel excluded because they are practicing Muslims or because they are poor Cambodians, the distribution of Muslim friendly options across the city has remained essentially unchanged throughout the period of fieldwork.

The maintenance of these parallel life paths through the urban landscape and these alternate networks for sustaining the Muslim both bodily and spiritually is still vigorous and effective by the reckoning of most Muslims interviewed. The one area in which this barrier between Muslims and non-Muslims may be weakening is in the use of language. It should best be said that really this is something that separated non-Cham speakers from the Cham speakers, since not all Muslims are ethnic Cham, and in Phnom Penh both Cham and non-Cham Muslims are represented. Nevertheless, the evidence for language attrition among the younger generation has begun to disturb many members of the community.

The characteristic that mostly clearly and unambiguously marks a person as a member of a Cham community is the use of the Cham language. Non-Cham Muslims, or Chvea, do not speak Cham and for this reason Cham and Chvea typically inhabit different villages even when in close geographic proximity, a patern of separation similar to that found between Muslims of any type and non-Muslims. Khmer converts to Islam also do not normally acquire any knowledge of Cham, favoring the continued use of Khmer instead. The Cham language in effect separates the Cham from their Khmer hosts as well as from

other Muslims that do not have their origins in Champa. This is not to say that the Cham language is a unifying force among Cham or even a common bond between different Cham communities. The differential use of the Cham, Khmer and other languages along with the different writing systems used and notions of what the most clear and correct pronunciation is all help mark differences between Cham communities who in principle share a common language.

Today it is estimated that Cham is spoken by approximately a quarter of a million people (Blengsli 2008). Throughout the country the vast majority of people who would classify themselves as being ethnic Cham all claim the language as their mother tongue. In the provinces and particularly in Kompong Cham, the use of Cham remains vigorous. It is the language of daily life for community members of all ages and is used for discussion of the most mundane matters as well as religion and politics. However, the situation in Phnom Penh and its immediate environs has changed within the past generation. In both the peninsula of Chroy Changvar and the northern suburbs of Reussei Keo, young people are less likely to use Cham for anything other than religious instruction and even this bastion of the language is beginning to give way.

Walking through the Muslim quarters of Chroy Changvar, one is as likely to hear a mother scolding a child in Khmer as in Cham. Although Cham is still frequently spoken, there is frequent code switching into Khmer when a youth less proficient in Cham joins the conversation. The two southern mosques of the peninsula, Masjid Dar Al-Salam and Masjid Al-Azhar, both have congregations that are primarily Cham speaking, even if the younger generation may not be as

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fluent.   The northernmost mosque, Masjid Muk Dach, just at the foot of the bridge that connects the peninsula to the center of Phnom Penh, now has far fewer Cham speakers.   The few that are found in this community are often transplants from Cham-speaking communities in Kompong Cham or even Việt Nam.   The majority here continue to consider themselves Cham, that is they do not call themselves Chvea, but recognize that they no longer possess the language of their ancestors.

Opinion at the southern mosques is divided.   Firstly, there is no real agreement on whether their language will disappear in their communities as it has at Muk Dach.   Secondly, there is no consensus on what sort of action would be necessary to stem any decline of Cham language use or even that this decline represents any kind of a problem that needs to be addressed.   Many older Muslims claim to speak Cham fluently and as their first language, and balk at the notion that their children or grandchildren will somehow fail to develop those skills.   These discussions inevitably lead to the bairns being summoned before the audience of elders and foreign anthropologists and subjected to a quick grilling on their Cham skills.   In Cham they are asked if they speak Cham, if they write Cham and with whom they speak in Cham.   Once they have demonstrated their proficiency they are let loose to continue playing with their friends – frequently in Khmer.

Yet other members of the community do recognize that loss is occurring. Usually these are in early middle age and are raising the first generation of Cham

children in the area to complete a significant number of years in Khmer language state schools.

> *Children now go to school. I didn't go to school – only a few years. But children now go to school longer... the school is here nearby... the teachers are Khmer, the students are Khmer. They speak Khmer in school and when they come home they have TV in Khmer. They like to watch karaoke and the songs are all in Khmer... when you look at the screen you see the Khmer characters. So now they speak Khmer. We speak Cham at home but they speak Khmer to friends. Even if they both know how to speak Cham they don't. They speak Khmer instead. Young people nowadays they prefer Khmer. They can speak Cham but they don't care about it. It isn't important.*

The question of whether or not Cham matters is complex. There is the problem of utility. As I began learning the Cham language myself, I was both strongly encouraged to do so and at the same time questioned as to why I should even bother. In Chroy Changvar, many were especially puzzled by the fact that I should study Cham when I had yet to master the more useful Malay language. Older women would gather by the windows of the schoolhouse where I studied Cham and called out the answer to the teacher's questions in Malay rather than Cham, thereby, according to them, affording me the opportunity to learn both languages at once. This approach was not very effective, but they sincerely felt it would be in my best interest to acquire some Malay as a way of understanding their community and possibly meeting members of their family working in Malaysia..

The peninsula as a whole and Masjid Al-Azhar in particular have historically strong connections to Malaysia mostly because of labor migration. Malay was until recently studied by the students at the local madrasa, and has

been regarded as a language of upward economic mobility by enabling them to access opportunities in the Malaysian economy. The similarities between Cham and Malay meant that many people saw Cham as a gateway to Malay – one the language of home and elementary religious instruction, and the other a language opening up another set of possibilities. A younger woman working as a manager at the Puncak Hotel explained:

> *Here there are many people that have gone to Malaysia to work. My brother worked in construction and his daughter was born there. There are other people that go. Some Cham go even if they don't know Malay. But when we go, it is easier because we can speak and the people respect us. In Cambodia also there are Malaysian people. There is the Puncak Hotel, which is a Malaysian hotel. Muslims stay there. The food is halal and everyone is Malay or Cham and they speak Malay. If I didn't speak Malay I would not be able to work like this. Now I am even learning Arabic for our Arab guests.*

Despite these opportunities to validate their home language by connecting it to the broader world of Muslim languages, the continued decline in the use of Cham in Phnom Penh is likely to continue as there are no formal structures in place to encourage its learning or its usage outside of the home. Much as valoration of Cham is connected to its perceived ability to bring Muslims together, fears about the loss of Cham is also strongly tied to anxieties about the loss of children to mainstream Khmer culture manifest in the monetized and impersonal economy of the city and the opportunities for straying from the path that this presents.

The ability to go into the city and gain anonymity means that young Muslims can and do experiment with drugs and alcohol with a reduced chance of

facing social opprobrium when they return home.   Some young people, already well down the path of addiction, no longer have the wherewithal to hide their activities, bringing shame upon their families who are usually at a loss as to how to deal with this unfamiliar challenge.   From among these, some will not return to the community.   They will instead establish whatever life they can for themselves in the city as their families' disesteem turns to disconnection.

4.6.3   Disconnected

Cham youth that have fallen out of the community provide us with an idea of how Islam and Cham identity are articulated in distinction to Khmerness as well as how these aspects of identity are seen as being both intensely personal and shared in a community.   These cases can often be quite tragic.

Ka is a 26 year old woman originally from Kompong Cham, although her family had relocated to Kampot when she was young.   For the past 4 years she has been working as a freelance prostitute in one of the major entertainment areas for tourists and expats.   Initially, she was renting an apartment together with anywhere between 3-7 other girls and was making a reasonable living.   In recent years however, her visibly declining health and her increasingly demanding drug habit and gambling problem have made her unable to make her portion of the rent and so now finds herself effectively homeless, depending on an increasingly Khmer clientele for a basic living.

When I first met Ka about 7 years ago, she had mentioned that she was from Kompong Cham.   At the time I was not studying the Cham and thought

little of her province of origin. Upon my return to Cambodia, I saw her again working at an Australian pub. I greeted her in Cham and asked me in Khmer whether I now also spoke Cham. I continued in Cham for a while longer and realized that she responded to me exclusively in Khmer.

> *Can you speak Khmer to me? I don't want to speak Cham here... I don't want anyone to know I'm Cham. If you speak Cham they will think I'm Cham. And I don't want that...*

> *Are you ashamed of being Cham?*

> *I'm a whore (literally: broken woman), I'm not good. Cham people are good. Islam teaches us good behavior. I don't want people to think Muslims are whores. Cham are not like the Vietnamese... Muslims don't lie, steal or kill. Everyone knows the Vietnamese work in prostitution and everyone hates them... they are bad people. But Cham are good people, Cham don't cause problems, so don't speak any Cham with me anymore, OK?*

Ka's acceptance of the mainstream Cambodian discourse of the Vietnamese as prostitutes, pimps and thieves as well as her interchangeable usage of the terms 'Cham' and 'Muslim' are certainly unremarkable on their own. What is of interest here is how she expresses a sincere regard for the Islamic faith that provides guidance and character, and yet distances herself from the very same religion so as to protect it – relegating herself to the status of broken woman and therefore not worthy of association with the religion of Islam. Her awareness of the gaze of Khmers is obvious and she manifests a concrete fear that the connection of Chams or Muslims to unsavory activities will result in them being regarded with the kind of disdain Khmers normally reserve for the Vietnamese.

On many occasions, I have told this story to older men in the countryside. Each time they wince and grimace as they hear of a Muslim girl having sex for

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money with foreign men, however, as they learn of her response to the situation, as they understand that she is concealing her background to protect the honor of Islam, they breathe a sigh of relief and begin to nod with approval.

> *Even if she is doing something bad, it is good that she protects the faith. Nobody needs to know where she is from. What she does is good.*

Unfortunately, Ka's defense of her community was not reciprocated when she fell on hard times. Shortly after renewing contact with her, Ka was banned from the bar for allegedly starting a fist fight with a Vietnamese sex worker.

> *Why did they throw you out of the bar?*

> *There was a Yuon woman talking to my customer. I went to the bathroom and when I returned there was a Yuon with him. I've known her for a long time. She is mean and I know she was watching us because that day there were very few customers – a lot of girls, only a few customers. Then we fought.*

> *You fought?*

> *Yes, we were arguing. And then the customer became unhappy. And I was so angry. That Yuon was giving me problems and making me lose my customer. I haven't worked in a long time, you know? There are no customers and I pay to get to and from the bar myself. The taxi and then food. I pay everyday to come to work but I can't find a customer. I was so angry. I told her get out of here and she hit me. And then they threw me out.*

> *For how long?*

> *I don't know. Maybe I can't go back.*

> *Did they throw the both of you out? The Yuon girl too?*

> *She went back in. She had money she could pay the guard to let her back in side. Also she has friends inside. The Yuon girls always work together. You see them always together. You know they are Yuon because they have light skin. If you see*

many light skin girls together they are Yuon and they are working together.

Do you work with anyone inside?   Can someone help you?

Before when I lived with other girls, sometimes we worked together, but know I don't.   We've argued and we don't want to be around each other...   The Khmer girls work together but not like the Yuon.   They [the Khmer] have fewer friends.   They change friends.   But also if they need help they usually have family in Phnom Penh or they have brothers and sisters.

You don't have family here?

No.   They have family, but my family is in Kompong Cham and I don't talk to them so often.

Ka here recapitulates the us-versus-them dichotomies typical of the Khmer-Vietnamese discourse – a group of light-complected invasive predators use their superior organizational skills to deprive the dark-skinned, good-hearted locals of the modest living to which they feel due.   Ka is a local in this scenario in a way that is reminiscent of the comments on ethnicity and skin color in 3.3.3. Ka's confrontation with the Vietnamese brings into focus the importance of social connections in Cambodia as the key to success for anyone regardless of one's race, ethnicity or religion.

This goes deeper than pithy sayings like "It's not what you know, but who you know."   While true to a great extent it doesn't truly capture the web of mutual obligations, deferred and realized expectations, and bonds of loyalty that make up the networks of *khsai* and the framework of *khnong* which make social and economic advancement possible.   In Khmer khsai refers to connections and contacts (literally 'string' or 'chain') and khnong refers to support (literally

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'back'). The term khsai here may be thought of as being similar to Guanxi in a Chinese context (Ong 1999), a notion whose definition varies from "a web of extended familial obligations and sentiments" to a view that privileges the strategic deployment of this form of social capital in driving social exchange (Bian 2001).

Khsai are important. Anyone trying to make it in the city is going to need some work, and the best way to find a job is through some contact. A good contact not only means that a young person coming in from the countryside can get a decent job, but that the working conditions and the social situation on the job site are likely to be better. While there are exceptions to this, the reputation and status of the contact and recommender will accrue to the recommended, and he will be known as a kin or fictive kin relative of the recommender. This brings great advantage in terms of being treated well on the job for fear of offending the person who provided the khsai, as well as for being considered a person of trust since one's character has been vouched for and it is understood that nobody wants to disappoint his patron.

Understanding the importance of khsai and the degree to which it is an accepted practice is central to understanding what role discrimination might play in the economic and social relations between Khmers and Chams. Newspaper articles and other publications about Cambodian Muslims will frequently include some boilerplate about discrimination and marginalization. However, notions of discrimination in the West are based on the assumption that the correct way to, for example, hire an employee is to review a series of applications and select the

contender whose skills, training and aptitudes most closely match the description of the job published, without regard for race, gender or other quality understood to be unrelated to the performance of duties. In such cases, to prefer a man over a woman, a white person over a black person or a Catholic over a Lutheran, is a violation of a principle of fairness defined by the characteristics of the position and nothing more.

The problem with importing this idea to the Cambodian context is that virtually no Cambodian could ever be naïve enough to ever entertain the fantasy of blindness to social connections in matters of employment. In general people prefer to hire someone they already know. For one, trustworthiness is very important where many aspects of business still have an informal feel. Knowing a person's background and family means that they can be held accountable for their actions. In addition, hiring or supporting a young person with room and board is a way of building bonds between different family groups and maintaining networks of khsai by providing khnong. An account of this system from Math, a Muslim from Kampong Cham who spent several years in Malaysia as a construction worker, reveals that with regard to this system of connections, Muslims live in a wholly separate but also closely parallel system of social relations:

> *My brother was in Malaysia before me. He had a job broker and he knew how to do everything over there, so I followed him. When I arrived in Malaysia my brother had already returned, but I met the people he worked with and they gave me work and I stayed with them.*
>
> *Why did you come back?*

I wanted to get married. I saved some money so I came back. But now I'm driving a moto-taxi. It's difficult because there aren't many customers and gas is expensive.

Can your brother help? The way he did in Malaysia?

No, he is back to farming. He doesn't have any khsai here and neither do I. Before we had the broker and the broker helped us connect to work but now I don't know anyone.

Can you go back to school? You're still young. I know Ahmed Yahya is still giving scholarships to Muslim students to go to Norton University.

Same problem. Before I went to Malaysia, I wanted to study, but I didn't have the khsai so I couldn't get the scholarships. The other students have khsai and they can get support but I don't know the right people. I would like to study. If I could meet someone that could help me I could finish school and get a better job.

The khsai that these people have for jobs and school, are they Muslims?

Yes.

Can you try to connect with Khmers? Maybe you can use a Khmer network to get a better job.

Khmers have different khsai. There is Khmer khsai (hands motioning to the left) and Cham khsai (hands motioning to the right). They are different. Chams help Chams and Khmers help Khmers.

So you don't know any Khmers?

Yes, here there are many Khmers… some Vietnamese… some Muslims. So I know many Khmer people.

Where do you meet Khmers? How do you socialize?

On the street. If I am walking and I see someone on the street walking I say hello (waving his hand).

I see. Do you visit their houses.

No.

Do you go out to eat with them?

No.

You don't spend time with any of them.

No.   I just see them on the street.   Sometimes at the market.

Math and others like him are not opposed to the system of khsai and khnong, merely, they recognize that they are outside of the system and would like to be plugged in themselves.   When he did have khsai, back in Malaysia, Math was happy to make the best of the situation.   But today he sees his problem as a lack of social connection as well as no feasible way to build new ones.   Unlike a sterling CV, a prestigious diploma or a glowing letter of recommendation from a former employer, the whole khsai-dependent approach to making one's way in the world does not travel well.

Any kind of social or geographic dislocation can potentially neutralize any number of social connections of patronage and obligation.   Moving to Phnom Penh can be risky because unless one arrives with a contact already in the city, the possibility of being without khsai is very real.   Math has fallen through his khsai network and now finds himself with little hope for the future.   His moto-taxi earns him barely enough to support his wife and infant, and the financial troubles are taking a toll on their relationship.   Despite living in the capital, he has no social connection to the majority Khmer community – his idea of good relations being friendly acknowledgments of each other's presence made from a safe distance.

Unlike Ka, Math still makes the clear distinction between the Khmer and Cham social worlds.   The inclusion of the Vietnamese into the discourse has a way of encouraging Chams to find commonality with Khmers.   We saw this in 3.3.3, where remembering the Vietnamese invasion of Champa strengthens their cultural and racial attachment to their new country.   In 4.5.1, the difficulties tied to reproducing Cham culture in this new hostland was explained as a result of Vietnam's overwhelming influence on Cambodians, both Muslims and non-Muslims.   Math however, still maintains the importance of being separate for the social order as well as the health of the individual.   As he explains further:

> *You have to be careful here.   If you become involved with the wrong people you will be in trouble.   Even though I have no khsai, I don't get involved with people that do drugs or commit crime…   There are other people here, from Kampong Cham, but they started doing drugs or other bad things.   So I don't really see them now…   I think if they stopped being with those people and came back to the religion they could be ok.   But if they are criminals it is better that they don't return.   They can stay in Phnom Penh.   They are with Khmer people now and they forget the difference between right and wrong.*

Math sees himself as being in a difficult position, but cleaves to the religion – regularly attending prayers at the mosque as well as participating in Tabligh study circles.   By staying apart from Khmers he is not only protecting himself, but also his family and his place in the community.   These young Muslims who have lost their way, like Ka, are following the wrong path, because although they are availing themselves of opportunities in the city and developing new connections, those same connections lead to their undoing.   The poisonous

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khsai that connect Muslim with non-Muslim will inexorably lead to the contamination of faith and the exit from the community of believers.

Math does not actually speak ill of Khmers when they are not corrupting Muslims. He realizes that the majority of Khmers are not drug-pushing pimps, but then he also understands these upstanding Khmers to inhabit a different set of social relations – helping their own kind. While these Khmers are not bad, they are also not that relevant in day to day life since they will not cross the line between Muslim and non-Muslim and so remain an inert element in social interactions. The Khmers he worries about are on the lower end of the social spectrum. They do not know right and wrong and as a result violate all kinds of rules – the law, sexual morality and social conventions regarding the interaction of Khmers and Chams.

This vision of two distinct and parallel societies living in the same country underlies much of the discourse of Cambodian Muslims of all sects. Obedience to the laws of the state, respect for public institutions including the Buddhist heritage of the country and its monarchy, and recognition of Muslim Cambodians as individuals possessed of social and religious liberties because of the post civil war constitution, are all basic elements of mainstream Muslim discourse throughout the kingdom. However, this is not simply an acceptance that Chams will live as a minority within a larger state. This notion of parallelism, similar to the structural homologization of 3.7, leads to further efforts to instantiate and make manifest in social relations the imagined development of the community

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disrupted and discontinued by the Vietnamese invasion of their original homeland.

4.7 "We too have Hilltribes" – Imposing Civilization

Ratanakiri province in the Northeast of Cambodia is a hilly country to which access has historically been difficult from lowland central Cambodia. It borders both Laos and Việt Nam and has long been populated by the Khmer Leu, a blanket term for the upland peoples of Cambodia. Since independence, Ratanakiri has experienced immigration from lowland Cambodia, which the government encouraged with the aim of bringing the border region under firmer control and exploiting the economic potential of rubber and coffee along with the extractive industries. This demographic shift, accompanied as it was by new arrangements of land tenure and the increasingly important role of money in economic transactions has put the indigenous peoples of the highlands on the back foot struggling to cope (Sokhom and Monie 2002).

To a great extent these state-directed transformations are similar to those found around the region, both in their material effects as well as their intellectual justifications and underpinnings (Duncan 2004). Recent developments in Cambodian governance have made multi-culturalism an important principle of development in the country (Ehrentraut 2004). This has led to support for local communities to support their cultures and languages, but on the whole there is still a strong sense of paternalism that pervades encounters between the lowland

peoples and the uplanders.   Here the lowlanders are not only Khmers, but Chams as well.

In an interview with Imam Sleh, the provincial imam of Ratanakiri Province, he recounted the history of the Cham community in the highlands in this way:

We came here after UNTAC left.   At first we only had a few families – about 20.   It was difficult for us then.   It was a very wild place.   No electricity, the roads were not paved, no doctors. We came together from Kampong Cham and we lived together – near each other.   The Khmer Leu didn't like us.   When someone died they wouldn't let us bury the body here.   They were afraid that the Cham ghosts would haunt the area afterwards.   We did some farming and planted rubber trees.   It is difficult to grow rice here and it is difficult to fish... it is very different from kampong Cham.   But Kampong Cham has too many people.   If you have children, they can't all work the farm.   Some have to leave...   But here we have rubber – we can sell it and then buy rice or other things...   Today there are several Muslim villages. More people have come to Ratanakiri and we have a few mosques and some Islamic teachers...   Also, many Jarai are becoming Muslim now.   The Jarai and the Cham are from the same people. Both are from Champa.   When Champa fell the Cham people had to come to Cambodia.   They crossed the mountains to Kampong Cham and Phnom Penh.   They went to the areas of the Mekong where they could fish and plant rice.   But some people didn't make it.   They couldn't cross the mountains and the forest and they stayed here in the middle.   These people returned to a state of wildness.   That is why they speak differently from us and they don't know Islam.   But our languages are still similar enough that we can understand each other and so now we talk to them and teach them about Islam.   When we teach them, we also help them.   We are finding donors to build mosques and madrasas. We will bring teachers and help with development.   The Jarai are our little brothers and we will help [pity] them.

Imam Sleh's story is one of opening the wilderness.   In it, an intrepid band of Muslims travel to the high country where rice does not grow, confront the natives, settle the land by establishing the foundations of a modern (cash)

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economy and finally win the natives over by bringing them into the bonds of fictive kinship.   As remarked in 1.4, the Cham have an odd status in that they are not the majority in any significant polity as the Chinese and Vietnamese are, and yet they are not exactly a minority group like the Cambodian highlanders.   While they do not have their own state they do have rice agriculture, mercantile activity, a religion, a language with its own writing system and a history of interaction with the institutions of the Cambodian state.

The indications of this status are sometimes subtle because they are made visible not by state action but by a lack of state involvement.   An example of this is the writing system of the Cham language.   Moves to multiculturalism have enabled the development of scripts for the representation of the indigenous languages of Ratankiri, but they are all derivations of the Khmer script (Thomas 2002).   These writing systems place indigenous literacy squarely within Khmer literacy and in fact, one of the justifications for these programs is that it will facilitate the acquisition of Khmer later on.   In the Cham community, there are sometimes fierce debates about how the language should be written, but these are internal to the community and have never been the subject of government involvement.

Like the Vietnamese and the Chinese, the Cham do not use Khmer script and to my knowledge, no Khmer politician has ever advocated this as a policy. Unlike Europe, where one can travel from Portugal to Spain to France and onward to Poland all the while still using the same alphabet until the Belorussian border, in mainland Southeast Asia there is a special congruence of national border with

language and script.   In many aspects of symbolic community capital the Cham are on the level, or would at least like to think of themselves as being on the level as Khmers, Thais or Vietnamese.   The use of Cham Jawi script marks them as separate and identifies them with the world-bestriding civilization of Islam.   The use of traditional Cham script also marks them as separate but more attached to an Indic heritage that birthed Khmer and Thai cultures.   In either case, the Cham are different but not inferior to any of their neighbors in the arts of civilization.

It should not be surprising then that just like the Vietnamese have Montagnards, the Laotians have the Hmong and the Khmers have the Khmer Leu, the Cham also have "Cham Leu".   These Cham Leu, or Jarai, are an Austronesian people inhabiting the highland region of Việt Nam and Cambodia speaking a language closely related to Cham.   While Muslim missionaries never attempt to proselytize to Buddhist Khmers, the Jarai, who are neither Khmer nor Buddhist, are a potential source of converts.   In principle they could also engage other groups, such as the Tampuon or the Brau, but to my knowledge this has not happened.   When asked about this, missionaries respond that they are Khmer Leu, while the Jarai are Cham Leu, thus revealing an attempt to claim their own indigenous Other distinct from that of Khmers.

Khmers never use this terminology, nor do they recognize a division of ownership of the upland communities with the Cham, but missionaries are keen to press forward while flying under the radar of Khmer awareness of the highlands. While one village was receiving money from Kuwait for a mosque it did not appear to be integrated into an RIHS framework, as all the converts had contacts

in KM 8 of Phnom Penh, which is a Tabligh area. Converts were mostly very recent converts – within the last year or so. They typically had nothing that could be characterized as an Islamic education and their knowledge of the religion rarely extended beyond the shahada – the confession of the faith that there is only one god and Muhammad is his prophet.

The work of the missionaries is not over by a long shot. Apart from the need to raise the level of religious knowledge there is the vexing question of competition for souls with Christian missionaries in a struggle to find a patronage network to allay anxieties about, among other issues, the problems of land loss associated with the expansion of plantations and mines in the province (Brady 2010). The trials of the missionary became vividly clear to me when I encountered Sen, a missionary from Kampong Cham who was sent to teach Islam to the Jarai.

Having heard of his mission, I asked a youth to take me to the village and make an introduction. We arrived and he presented me as a visitor who "*cheh khmaer at liay*" – speaks Khmer without mixing, that is without using words from highland languages when Khmer fails. Sen, a man in his 50's rushed towards me with his arm extended. Capturing my right hand he held it for what seemed an unreasonable amount of time as he smiled intently, only releasing to finally bring his right hand to his heart as is the greeting typical of most Muslims.

Where are you coming from?

*From Banlung. I heard you were here teaching Islam so I came
to visit. The provincial imam sends his regards.*

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Oh, good.   Come to my house.   Have you eaten yet?

Sen spoke hurriedly and seemed desperate to get as many words out as possible in whatever time we had together.   Climbing up into his house we sat down to tea and engaged in what was for him some badly needed small talk. This man was desperately lonely and he didn't mind if I knew it.   His wife, a Jarai woman, served us lunch as she watched over their sleeping newborn.   She brought rice, vegetables and not one, but two kinds of prahok – a salted, fermented fish product that is a common way of preserving fish in the countryside, and an acquired taste.

This prahok and that prahok are different…

Yes, they are made from different fish.   Here have this one. (Pushing forward a plate of prahok that still looks identifiably like fish.)

It's good.

Hmm.   Here we don't have any meat.   If you come to Kampong Cham, you will have beef for lunch, but here we eat prahok.

I saw a cow outside.

Yes, but we don't have anybody to slaughter the cow in the halal fashion.   We don't have enough Muslims here so there are no halal butchers.   No beef, no chicken.

When was the last time you had beef?

(laughing) I don't know, maybe a year.   I've been here for two years and I eat like this every day.

So, not so many people here have converted to Islam?

Not so many.   Some convert but these people are ignorant. They convert but they don't really mean it.   They don't understand the shahada or the religion.   Also you have the

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Christians that come and they bring rice and gifts. We don't have as much money for gifts. They convert to Islam but then the Christians bring rice and so they become Christians. But then the Christians leave and so they come back to Islam. But then their cousin converts to Christianity and they want to spend time with their cousin so they convert to Christianity again. It's always like this. They don't really understand (pointing to his wife), they don't speak Khmer, they can't read, they can't write... I'll be here three more years and then I return to Kampong Cham. I miss my family - my wife (legal wife) and sons. I miss our food and our village... Nobody here speaks Khmer. It's hard to talk to people.

Can they speak Cham?

A little, many words are similar to Jarai, but actually they often don't understand. If we speak quickly or about something they don't understand then they don't understand me. I speak in Cham slowly and they understand (pointing to his wife.)

It's hard being out here. Why did you come?

We have to try to help them. The Jarai are our younger brothers. We are siblings and we need to explain to them the religion. Insh'allah they will understand the religion and become good Muslims. Otherwise they will remain in the forest.

Sen spoke at length about the Cham man's burden and how he was trying, even if not so successfully, to bring civilization to his benighted brethren. It was the kind of historicized discourse of perfection, decay and redemption that one frequently encounters among the Tabligh (see 2.9). He talked almost exclusively about himself and his mission. Very few questions about the Khmer-speaking foreigner who just appeared in his forest abode, no questions about his own religious affiliation and whether he would like to accept Islam. This is rather atypical behavior, but then again this man lives in a state of social

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disconnection from the people he now finds himself surrounded by.   Perhaps this was his way of making up for lost time.

A stroll through this Jarai village revealed the attempts made by outsiders to bring their religions to these ignorant indigenes of the hills.   Sen's own house established near the small mosque still under construction was far removed from any of the other residences.   Sen would clearly like some converts to start living near his house and create an identifiably Muslim area in the village but this has not happened.   Closer to the road that connects the village with the rest of the world is a large shack with crudely painted crosses.   Here people gather on Sundays and sing songs, the assistant village chief told me.

It did not seem possible to distinguish Muslim, Christian and traditional households by visual inspection.   Converts and non-converts lived amongst each other in the same arrangement as before the missionaries arrived.   Domestic pigs wandered back and forth visiting Muslim and non-Muslim houses alike.   It was mostly women at home at the time and my efforts to inquire about the practice of missionization were stymied by the fact that few women spoke Khmer.   My efforts to use Cham as a bridge language also failed as I attempted to ask a woman with the word "UNICEF" tattooed onto her forearm about her piece of body art.   The assistant village chief explained that some people change religion and some don't.   It just isn't much of an issue.   "The Christians and Muslims both come and sometimes they help us by bringing rice", he added.

Of course, it is not simply an issue of Muslims and Christians, the Jarai themselves have very definite ideas about what this missionary work means for

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them and they are not always all that pleased with it. Closer to the Vietnamese border, there is another village, now divided into two distinct communities a few kilometers away from each other - one for converts to Islam and the other for traditional Jarai. The second village, the one for Muslims, was smaller and had a small mosque with a classroom. I was confronted by 6 men, all dressed in the Tabligh manner and all speaking fluent Khmer. They were from KM 8 in Phnom Penh. Other than that they would divulge very little about themselves. They asked for and meticulously examined my research permits before engaging me in any discussion.

Why are there two villages here?

This village is for Muslims. In the other village, they worship according to their traditions.

Are you teaching them about Islam?

We did, but they do not accept Islam. They prefer to follow the ancestors instead of doing things the correct way. If they convert they can join us like brothers, but otherwise they will live separately from us.

How about the children? Are they all going to school together?

(Points to the classroom underneath the mosque raised on stilts.)

That's not a school. That's a madrasah. Where is the state school?

It's down the road close to the original village. It is too far so the children don't go... Later there will be a school here and the children will go.

When?

I don't know.

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My questions were annoying them and since it was apparent that I wasn't going to convert to Islam that afternoon, they decided to be busy and have other things to do – abandoning me in the muddy field in front of the mosque.   None of these men were from the community and they would all be returning to their lives in Phnom Penh once their visit was over.   On my own, I managed to round up a few young people, ages 12, 14 and 15, two girls and a boy.   They were indeed illiterate in Khmer and explained that they would study at the madrasah. They could read Arabic characters and sound out words and even write their own names, but they never understood what they were reading.

The Muslim diatribe against the Jarai closely resembles their critique of the Imam San – that their blind allegiance to tradition prevents them from appreciating the truth of the religion.   The inhabitants of the non-Muslim community saw things differently however.   Arriving at the larger, original settlement, I was met by the village chief and invited to his porch.   It was 11AM and he along with two men and a woman all appeared to be quite inebriated.   As they passed around a plastic bag full of rice wine, the chief spelled out the nature of the division between the converts to Islam and themselves.

> *They look down on us.   That is why we fight.   They want us to believe in their religion, but we already have a religion.   They are Muslims, we are Brahmanists.   We have our own culture. We have our own language. We have our own traditions.   We have our own lands… (Counting on his fingers as he enumerates.)*
>
> *But the Cham and the Jarai have a common origin, don't they?*
>
> *(laughing by all) That is what they say.   That we all came from Champa and that we are all the same people with the same religion.   But that is not true.   We were always here.   We were*

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always living in these villages. (Pointing in the direction of neighboring Jarai communities) I'll explain, they call us little brothers and themselves big brothers. They say they want to help, but what they want is to look down on us and make us be like them. We were in this country before them. We are the big brothers and they are the little brothers. They are arrogant and that is why they cause problems wherever they go. If we talk to Tampuons or we talk to Khmers, we have no problems. But we talk to Muslims and then there are problems.

But you speak similar languages? You don't feel kinship with them?

(scoffing by all) No! No way! They understand us only if we speak very slowly. But if we speak normally, the way we speak amongst each other, then they don't understand anything... They say that we all speak Cham but they don't understand us. (laughing) They say that they can write, but they only write in Arabic. We have our own alphabet. We use English letters. We don't have to use Arabic. Arabs come from abroad. That is not our culture. We have books and we write those books in English letters... They tell us to not drink, to not eat pork, to pray every day, but we don't want to.

These Jarai villagers were apparently very aware of the overarching narrative in which they figured as the untutored savage to the benevolent Cham patron there to save them from their own ignorance. Their resentment took the form of a multi-layered counter narrative in which they, not the Cham, are senior because of their presence in the country since time immemorial – a claim that is also likely tied to the land title disputes in the region. The derision with which they hold Islam as a religion and as a culture, a foreign, Arab culture no less, contrasts with the superior characteristics of the Jarai, such as writing their language in "English characters", a language which everybody regards as important and powerful.

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These discourses of historical belonging, domination through kinship and willful reconfiguration of global connections are all occurring within Cambodian society, where certain tropes, be they the moral superiority of lowlanders, the Islamic authenticity of Arabic script, or the superiority of the all conquering Latin characters, are deployed by the Cham and Jarai to mark moral geographies particular to themselves, but intelligible in a wider context. What all ideologies of Chamness (in the case of the Jarai, a kind of anti-Chamness) have in common is a particular way of deploying arguments about space, social relations and morality as parts of an integrated whole which springs from the political and economic realities of living in a poor, majority Buddhist country, in which the Cham position in the national narrative is still not concretely defined. It is these discourses of place and belonging which will be engaged in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

The Geographic Imagination of Community

5.1 Spatialized Identity – The Cham as an Islamic Diaspora

The preceding chapters have hopefully made clear the elements of religious, ethnic, linguistic and historicized identity components that define, in different proportions, the different communities that consider themselves to be Cham as opposed to Khmer or non-Cham Muslim. This chapter will be an attempt to integrate these narratives of belonging with some of the scholarly literature relevant to this case, namely the case of diasporic communities. As such, this will depart significantly from the ethnographic accounts which made up the bulk of chapters two, three and four and explore the outlines of some trends in thought concerning diasporas as well as selecting certain texts for more detailed exposition because I feel them to be particularly relevant and which propose ideas which parallel those expounded upon in this dissertation.

By the end of this review of literature and integration with field data, I hope to accomplish two objectives. Firstly, to present a notion of "diaspora" which, by taking account of the history of this term and the way it has been used, is more appropriate and useful for deployment in the social sciences and other disciplines which incorporate subjective human experience as an object of inquiry. Secondly, this chapter will present the Cham as a diasporic people, whose variegated ideologies of community identity overlay a shared language of moral displacement explained in geographic and temporal terms. To arrive at these

goals requires first a careful consideration of the role of space, place and geography in the imagined collective life of a community.

In discussing the predicament of personal and community identity in a world characterized by increasing numbers of people living and working away from their land of birth, Pico Iyer (2000) invokes the notion of the 'global soul' to describe the enlightened state of having embraced one's dislocation and found depth of character without a sense of rootedness in place.   This new community of 'global souls' will revel in its permanent state of foreignness - never quite invited to become members of the community they find themselves surrounded by and equally at home in all environments because they have no home in the traditional sense against which to compare whatever nexus of geographic and social relations they may be occupying at any given time.

Oddly, one of the results of the increase in the numbers of global souls is that they will find themselves congregating in certain locations – global cities where the particular locality of a place will be obliterated and replaced by a mosaic of cosmopolitan subjectivities.   Like a modern-day Diogenes, Iyer welcomes the new post-modern landscape of multi-cultural bliss and social anomie which Robert Putnam's (2000) *Bowling Alone* presents in a very different light - as an atomistic dystopia.   Although focused on the United States, Putnam's argument that Americans are losing their sense of connectedness during a period in history which has been marked by rapid and regular advances in the technologies of communication underscores the apprehension with which many view our impending globalized future.

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This general feeling that social relations and institutional bonds are being loosened with deleterious results for both the human spirit and society as a whole has been a recurrent theme in the arts and social sciences since the beginning of the industrial revolution, but turning to the more serious minded folks at the RAND Corporation, one finds a radically different conception of transnational communities and the growing importance of diaspora populations. In the no-nonsense national security view, these communities represent detachments of an ethnic group that can be counted on by insurgents to provide funds and other support during conflicts in the homeland since they are motivated by feelings of kinship rather than strategic vision as well as relatively uninterested in the actual policies of the movement (Byman et al. 2001). In their study of the Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka, the RAND report characterized the relations between the Liberation Tigers of Tiger Eelam and the Tamil diaspora as follows:

> *Sometimes immigrants support insurgents as a result of coercion by the movement's overseas representatives. Diaspora communities are often tightly bound and isolated with as much of their commerce, policing, and other basic functions being handled within the community as possible. if insurgents can influence the policies of these self-contained units, they may be able to force immigrant workers to contribute a share of their wages to the group and coerce businessmen to make donations to the cause.* (pg. 56)

Although they recognize that insurgent groups might have to guilt, shame or coerce their diaspora brethren into contributing to the cause, they consider the diaspora population to be an essentially homogeneous bloc, internally undifferentiated, and unambiguously loyal to the ethnic homeland once they have been properly motivated. This outgrowth of the home community becomes the

fulcrum through which insurgents can exert pressure in the world of nation-states and, in this context, become legible to national security planners. The changing face of transnationality in the context of global economic and political institutions is a growing concern as elites seek to exert governmentality over a population which, while potentially very valuable, violate the traditional categories of administration (Ong 1999; Sheffer 2003).

Despite their differences, Iyer and the Rand Corporation both regard group identities to involve a spatial component. For Iyer, the decoupling of place and person undermines the 'group' of group identity and yields a new configuration of person and social relations independent of place, whereas for the policy makers, the expansion in space of a community leads to their extension within that place, such that more of the earth's surface comes under their sway. The explosion in interest in the social and political conditions of transnational communities has focused primarily on understanding this problem of space and place in the constitution of social life. One term whose use has been dramatically expanded in this context is that of 'diaspora'. The use and overuse of this term has led to significant confusion about what it is that is referred to when this word is pronounced. The word is employed variously to describe all manner of peoples who find themselves outside their country or region of origin and the result has been a degree of muddlement about not only the meaning, but also the usefulness of this designation. The following section will discuss the differing uses of this word and how it has been understood in the social sciences as well as propose an alternate and hopefully more parsimonious formulation of the term which will in

turn include the Cham people of Cambodia. This is done with the full knowledge that it may well result in further muddlement.

5.2   Defining Diaspora

In his treatment of the Tibetan community in exile as a possible candidate for diasporahood, Dibyesh Anand (2003) begins with a consideration of the shifting meaning of the word diaspora over time, as it comes to be applied to different groups and circumstances - the scope of the term expanding and contracting to suit the situation at hand.   The term 'diaspora' has its own history, of course, and Anand examines that history, deploying Edward Said's notion of 'traveling concept' (1983).   According to Said, a concept arises in a particular context, such as an academic discipline, and is continuously negotiated and refined while, at the same time, this concept is adopted and becomes incorporated in different contexts, perhaps a different discipline or perhaps the concept travels from academia to the lay public.   This transfer of ideas across fields of intellectual endeavor then results in another round of negotiation and redefinition of the term in its new context.   This process can continue for as long as the concept retains enough currency to be worth incorporating into new fields and subsequently redefining.   As a result of these transmutations, the concept of 'diaspora' has been used to characterize many different groups of people, focusing alternately on their demographic, geographic or socio-economic circumstances.

The present version of Microsoft Word on which this dissertation is being composed still finds the word "diaspora", in the singular and uncapitalized, to be

objectionable. This is because term "diaspora" was long used primarily to refer to Jewish communities which settled outside of Palestine as a result of the Babylonian exile of the 6th century BC or the Roman expulsions of the first century AD. These events created the template for describing and understanding subsequent population dispersals, focusing on the coercion of the dispersed into exile, their longing for the homeland and whether or not they ever return to it. Recent scholarship has sought to distill a formulation of the concept of 'diaspora' from out of its long history in both academic and general discourse. In so doing, these scholars are addressing the question of what exactly constitutes a diaspora and what is merely a demographic dispersal. At the same time, there has been a proliferation of the term in both scholarly literature and lay discourse that threatens to weaken its discriminatory power and usefulness as an analytic category.

Other than being a definable group of people in a place other than where they are supposed to be from, there is little coherence to be found in the application of the term 'diaspora'. Apart from Jews and Armenians, we find Chinese diasporas (Clammer 2002; Ong 1999), African diasporas (Gomez 2006), Muslim African diasporas (D'Alisera 2004), Jamaican/Ethiopian diasporas (Chevannes 1994), an Israeli diaspora (Gold 2002) (distinct from the Jewish diaspora) and a Muslim diaspora in the Indian Ocean (Ho 2006) among many others. Once classified as a diaspora, there is a tendency for subsequent scholarship to adopt the designation as a matter of convention. And while these groups can alternately be defined by a history of enslavement, religious or cultural

practices or simply a collective homesickness; much of the scholarship leaves unanswered the wider question of what these groups have in common and why they collectively should be considered to form a diaspora, a form of social organization distinct from all others. Where does one draw the line between diasporas, national minorities, religious communities or immigrants?

Early attempts to theorize the study of diasporas tackled the problem inherent in trying to ascribe a particular term, in this case 'diaspora', to Jews, Armenians, Punjabis, Chinese, Africans and other groups with such different histories and cultural specificities that bringing them under a single umbrella term becomes unwieldy or simply arbitrary. This was initially done by organizing diaspora communities typologically according to the features considered necessary to qualify as a diaspora - features that are most salient in the description of the diaspora experience (Cohen 1997; Safran 1991).

William Safran proposes the following litmus test for diasporahood:

1. dispersal of a population to at least two locations
2. commonly held mythology concerning the land of origin
3. feeling of alienation from the host society
4. desire to return to the ethnic homeland
5. continuous connection with the homeland

Robin Cohen develops these ideas further and then adds a typology within which different diasporas can be classified according to the nature of their dislocation. In this scheme, diasporas may be understood as:

1. victims (Jews, Africans and Armenians)
2. labor (Indians)
3. imperial (British)
4. trade (Chinese)
5. cultural (Caribbean)

Noting that "categorization and theory-building are empty exercises without examples" (pg. xi), Cohen elaborates in some detail on each type of diaspora using selected communities to illustrate his points and justify his classificatory arrangement.   Cohen himself recognizes that, in fact, there will be considerable overlap in the way these categories fit over the historic lifetime of a diaspora, so that Jews, while originating as a victim diaspora, also developed other ways of extending their communities' participation within the host society through trade and other arrangements with administrative and social institutions. Likewise, it is impossible that every member of a Chinese diaspora was engaged in trade.   There must have been practitioners of other professions as well as women and children who would also have been an important part of the community despite having a more restricted role in commerce - the diasporic subject typically being gendered as male within this typology.

It is not difficult to see the kinds of difficulties that will inevitably arise out of this rubric.   Firstly, lists of conditions as proposed by Safran or categories attempting to encompass a range of manifestations always have a certain arbitrary quality as they are assembled in a particular context, at a particular moment in the development of the discipline and with a view to housing those examples of diaspora that are given.   That is to say: we create a category of humanity, we privilege certain aspects of their experience (to the detriment of others), we break it up according to, in this case, vaguely vocational categories and then say we have a system for identifying and classifying diasporas - a category we had constructed beforehand.   Classification according to a series of characteristics

rather than the development of a binary division necessarily spectrifies the category and begs the question: why five conditions and not four or six? Is four out of five good enough? What about two out of five? Is there such a thing as a half-diaspora?

Secondly, and more crucially, the a priori designation of diaspora communities to be studied means that we are allowing the study to constitute its object (Axel 2004). We are assuming and presupposing the diasporic nature of the community as a state of being that can be determined objectively according to the above criteria, rather independently of whether the members of this objectified community consider those criteria to be the most salient expressions of their personal or group identities. While the pursuit of genes across time and geographic space without regard to the feelings and experiences of the organisms that transport those genes may be the order of the day in more biologically oriented studies of human movements, for the social sciences, where the subjectivity of the object is central, the concept of diaspora must be allowed to 'travel' as Said described and be incorporated into a framework that privileges the lived experiences and understanding of the communities in question.

5.3   Toward an Ethnography of Diasporas

Recent works have considered the applications and limitations of the ethnographic approach to diaspora studies (Appadurai 1996; Axel 2004; Butler 2001; Levy 2000). For Levy and Appadurai, the problem is essentially one of scope - of attempting to encompass something which is by definition global

within a technique that privileges localized experiences and understandings. André Levy finds the discipline of anthropology hesitant to engage with the notion of diaspora on a theoretical level and that even when anthropologists do study diasporic communities they do not study them as diasporas. Levy attributes this reticence to enter the field of diaspora studies to the dominance of cultural relativism among anthropologists and the resulting skepticism in universalist explanations for human behavior. Ethnography as traditionally practiced may not be ambitious enough an enterprise to capture the global patterns of social reality, but fortunately Levy is ready to provide solutions to this problem. Among the gems proffered are: "Anthropology could gain by purposefully looking for a marginal site, a border, a people out of place, or for margins within a specific society." or "Another possibility is to conduct *multisited* (original italics) research. By so doing ethnographers gain a comparative knowledge, and by implication they animate and relativize their assertions regarding a range of theoretical notions" (pg. 142).

It is difficult to know what to make of these suggestions. The principles and virtues of multi-sited ethnography are widely understood in the anthropological community and are in fact quite common in applied and corporate anthropology - a fact which might suggest that the financing and logistical concerns of the multi-sited approach may be at least as important as the generalized distaste for overarching theory that Levy imputes to anthropologists. As for the study of marginal people, it would be impractical and unwieldy to list here the ethnographies written on minority (or minoritized) groups who inhabit

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zones peripheral to the centers of power, but suffice it to say that Laura Nader's (1969) call for anthropologists to "study up" and develop an anthropology of power was, at least in part, an attempt to transform the field of anthropology, which had so fully been identified with the study of the margins. Apart from these suggestions for improving the discipline, Levy's approach is problematic because it relies on an overlay of geography over social life rather than the other way around. By referring to the diaspora under investigation as the "field site", Levy presupposes and imposes the cartographic contours of some pre-selected space on the observed configurations of social relations of this pre-identified diaspora. While theoretical profundity with respect to the study of diasporas may be as lacking as Levy suggests, it is unlikely that this will be achieved by forsaking the small locality of the field site for the large locality of the entire community assumed to be a diaspora. One way or another, a notion of locality that flows from the creative power of social praxis rather than the sterile delineations of longitude and latitude will be necessary to advance our understanding of this phenomenon.

Appadurai addresses precisely this problem noting that spatial localizations and social scale are not isomorphic and so what is called for is an appreciation of the degree to which locality itself cannot be assumed as given within the borders of the field site, but rather, how the sense of locality is produced, maintained and reproduced by agentive subjects. Instead of studying social practices and interactions within a given and predefined area, anthropologists should discover locality through those practices and relations that

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create it. In Appadurai's conception, locality is an exceedingly delicate thing liable to evaporate without the continuous, deliberate efforts of its denizens to produce and reproduce locality through their labors.   The shape of the economy, the division and distribution of labor, the allocation of space for the purposes of work, play or recreation; the differential access of individuals to these places and the ways in which this access is granted, the division between sacred and more mundane areas, the ways in which localized notions of group belonging and morality are embedded in the historical and mythical terrain of the community, are all examples of how human actions and interactions, rather than being bound in space, are in fact what create that space.

This approach evades the trap of essentializing either the group identity or the nature of their locality, and instead allows the two to grow and change over time as notions of space, place, homeland and dispersion gather and lose weight and import as circumstances change.   The ethnographic approach here is critical since ideologies of ethnicity are so frequently couched in historic terms regardless of how recently they were formed or how much they may have changed.   The Comaroffs' (1993) study on the historicization of ritualized practices in Africa describes in some detail how contemporary conditions reshape the meaning of rituals held to be immutable.

In order to make the break with the ritual-as-content-school of thought, the Comaroffs set out to reconceptualize ritual as an active and dynamic process of signification that incorporates and produces new referents and symbols as it is wielded to engage and shape the public discourse.   In so doing, they make a

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departure from the traditional view of ritual as a transmitter of cultural information and approach ritual as a form of expression, the content of which is subject to reanalysis and reinterpretation by both its practitioners and its audience. This reformulation of ritual occurs in the context of changing economic, social and gender relations and it is at this nexus of tension between formalized behavior and the vulgar pursuits of everyday life that ritual is given meaning and rendered intelligible. This take on the study of ritual behavior suggests that one should seek to uncover those relations between context and symbolic action that allow ritual to mean, rather than look for fossilized nuggets of wisdom to be transferred across generations. In this view, ritual is a dynamic and malleable instrument for expression and meaning making that both creates contexts and is responsive to them rather than a rigid union of activity and meaning.

The Chai ceremony of the Imam San (3.4) is another example of what the Comaroffs have demonstrated, as are the reinterpretations of Islamic history (2.9) that connect the history of the prophet, with the history of the Cham and show continuity of mission and spirit. The creative reuse and repurposing of contemporary themes permits these groups to retain a connection to a past, distant in both time and space, while at the same time updating themselves so as to remain commensurable and legible to their contemporaries. These negotiations have helped define community by defining relations with non-Muslims, other Cham, and the national bureaucracy and its version of history.

When examining the history of Jewish diasporahood, this continual transformation of the symbols and meanings that have produced communal

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locality over time is especially obvious. Long presented along the lines of Robin Cohen's victim diasporas, the essentialized narrative of the Jewish diaspora has been that of a forcible dispersal, followed by a long period of exile and culminating in a glorious return to the land of Israel (Konner 2003). Yet, this narrative, the teleology of which would have appeared absurd until the 20th century, arose only after centuries of impassioned arguments about the nature of Jewry - exactly what, if anything, it is that makes a community out of a dispersed population, and the appropriate relationship between this group of people known as Jews and the rest of the world (Herzl 1933; Herzl 1960; McCoskey 2003; Sartre 1954; Zhitlowsky 1945).

A quick sketch of 20th century Jewish thought regarding the meaning of Jewishness reveals a variety of articulations of Jewish personhood and community identity with variable reference to the territory of Palestine. In the pre WWII period we find Jewish autonomism or the notion that Jews should seek autonomy within the context of diaspora and not seek to ape other nations in acquiring a national territory (Dubnow 1970). While no longer a viable option in the post-Holocaust era, autonomism had enjoyed considerable popularity among the political left and the working classes who sought a sort of cultural and moral sovereignty within the context of European nation-states.

Others sought a feeling of belonging that emphasized certain modernist cultural practices such as literature and theatre rather than ancient and even backward religious beliefs that would serve to further alienate them from the European mainstream. Instead of defining a bounded community of worship as

with certain Hasidic sects (Goldschmidt 2000), Yiddischkeit centered around the lifeways of secular Jews who emphasize the use of Yiddish, the dominant international language of Jews until the Second World War rather than the newly revived Hebrew (Estraikh and Krutikow 1998; Glinert 1999; Isaacs 1999; Kerler 1998; Sherman 2003).

For those who did heed Herzl's call to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, there were a number of open questions (Kaplan 2004; Shavit 1988; Shindler 1995). How religiously Jewish it should the new state be? Will the state of Israel be a European transplant in the midst of backward and degenerate Arab tribes or would it present an opportunity for Jews to return to their Semitic roots after centuries of life in Europe? Would Jews be a nation of pioneer farmers forming a virtuous society by developing the productive relations with the land that were forbidden to them in exile or should they recapture the martial spirit of the Israelites who resisted Greek and Roman oppression?

These divisions between secular and religious Jews, Yiddishists and those who supported Hebrew, and labor Zionists and revisionists were constantly being recreated in much the same way that Appadurai described the construction of locality or the Camaroffs the production of ritualized meaning. The cursory survey of literature above demonstrates the futility of attempting to burden our understanding of these particular Jewish groups with the history of exile and dislocation which they all presumably share. For each community, questions of belonging, be it to a cult, a culture or a state, were negotiated within a framework of political and racial ideologies that formed the backbone of the post-Metternich,

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pre-war system of nation-states and yet, the resulting multiplicity of solutions to the problem of Jewishness would seem to diminish the primacy of diasporic victimhood as a dominant or guiding factor. Although we must consider diaspora communities as distinct from their host societies, since otherwise they would not be objects of investigation at all, they are not outside of that society, nor are they simply the graft of one society onto another.

Many of these currents of thought regarding the correct relation between in-group and out-group can be taken from the ethnographic accounts of the previous chapters. The quest for autonomism of some form or another is a common to all Cham. Each group seeks in its own way and for their own reasons to maintain a life apart from Khmers and other Muslims of different sects. While the autonomism of the Imam San derive from a pretention to political equality with the Khmers who share their civilizational origins in India, the Tabligh and Salafi justification for separation are cast in terms of spiritual purity versus pollution – the purity of the faith they cling to versus the pollution which is the land they inhabit.

Although they offer different solutions to the problem of exile and dislocation, each group must contend with many of the same constraints and limitations by virtue of the fact that they all live in the Kingdom of Cambodia. They also absorb, to varying degrees, the prevailing views in politics, history and morality from the wider Khmer society which influence among other things, the way they regard the Vietnamese (4.6.3) and the Jarai of the northeastern highlands (4.7). None of these characteristics of identification could be knowable from a

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single story of how the Cham arrived in Cambodia from their homeland. None of these ways of being is intelligible without giving weight to the conditions of their hostland, which is also the only homeland they have ever known. Like European Jewery before the advent of the Zionist movement, there is no call for the reversal of exile by returning to the land, instead some form of accommodation to political realities must be arrived at. In both cases the myriad of options for accommodation have root in the local and particular character of the circumstances in which people found themselves.

Further argumentation for the deprivileging of cartography in the field of diaspora studies comes from Brian Axel's (2004) study of the formations of diaspora identities through the medium of websites advocating the creation of an independent Sikh nation of Khalistan. Unlike most treatments of diaspora communities, Axel does not take a diaspora to merely be an ethnic population outside of a homeland, but examines the production of an identity type within the context of a diaspora discourse. For Sikhs outside of the Punjab, the internet, with its capacity for the transmission of images and multi-media products, is deployed not to recreate a Sikh community in North America or even necessarily to sustain particular religious or linguistic practices abroad, but rather, to produce very specific and individualized images that in turn stand for a collectivized identity. The images produced and distributed are strongly gendered and cast using the images and rhetoric of Sikh hagiography with the *amritdhari* standing in as the ideal Sikh subject.

The *amritdhari*, the male Sikh who undergoes ritual baptism, is not only a powerful symbol of Sikh masculinity, but it also represents a refusal to compromise or become invisible to the authority of the Indian state. Sikh baptism into the community of the Khalsa (the pure) entails adoption of the five K's:

> Kesh – unshorn hair and beard representing the physical beauty of god's creation and normally worn in a turban.
> Kanga – a comb with which to maintain the cleanliness of the hair.
> Kara – an iron bangle worn on the wrist, representing the unbreakable bond between believer and god as well as among the believers themselves.
> Kaccha – long shorts worn as an undergarment, symbolizing moral virtue and mastery over one's worldly desires.
> Kirpan – an iron blade to be used in the protection of the weak from the strong.

These five K's have deep significance for Sikh believers as they are the symbols of the Khalsa, which are both paragons of moral virtue and defenders of the community. Additionally, these symbols are clearly visible identifiers, and a Khalsa, with his turban and beard will always stand out in a crowd of Hindus and Muslims. In this way, the Khalsa can be seen as using his body to produce boundaries on behalf of the rest of the community, of which the women and young children are not obviously distinct from non-Sikhs. These symbols become points of contention as images of Indian police and soldiers tying up Sikh prisoners with their own turbans in an effort to humiliate them and demoralize their supporters are downloaded by Sikhs around the world.

Axel examines how Sikhs – both men and women, young and adult – identify with images of martyred Sikh masculinity which define not only the

borders of the community but the community itself as the body is transformed into the collectivity. Diasporic subjects are constituted by identifying the self with this idealized and gendered representation of community solidarity. At the same time, the homeland, in this case the unrealized Khalistan, emerges as a product of that same diasporic subjecthood – a homeland defined through the opposition of the purity of the Khalsa against the oppressiveness of the Indian state.

These mediating images between individual member and wider community united by powerful ideals are made much more effective in the age of digital communication and relatively cheap and reliable air travel. Among the Cham one finds the impact of a picture of the Ka'ba in Mecca, where the masses of pilgrims are evidence of the health of a worldwide community spreading far beyond the confines of their own Cambodian existence, and the identical cloth sheets worn by pilgrims represent a promise of belonging that renders irrelevant their dark skin and non-Arab phenotype (4.3). The importation of Malay styles of dress and even aspects of pop culture such as music (4.5), provide a vision of a contemporary Islam to which they should belong and even the more elaborate Tabligh outfits are recognizable as a Muslim ideal type even by those who do not wear them or who find the wearing of such clothing to be excessive.

What Axel highlights in his work is the actual practice of diasporic imagination which produces community and homeland within the context of the hostland and mediated by technologies of socialization, in this case, the internet. By studying diasporas as acts of imagining, one breaks away with what Axel calls

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the genealogical approach to diasporas, whereby one sees these communities as extensions of a homeland and presumes to found understanding of this community within the study of the homeland.   In this approach, it is the imagination that creates and defines the homeland rather than the other way around.   This homeland – its significance, its properties, its distinguishing characteristics – is understood through symbols, the sharing of which defines a diasporic community.

Diasporas then, are not a thing at all, but a particular way of imagining a community not unlike that which birthed the nation-state (Anderson 1983).   Yet there is never a single diaspora.   In the case of Punjabi Sikhs, there are sharp distinctions to be drawn between their relocation among Muslims and Hindus on the subcontinent (Talbot and Thandi 2004), their emigration and assimilation to North American society (Chadney 1984) and their global reconfiguration as an embattled religious minority through the medium of the internet.   What there are, are a multiplicity of ways of imagining identity and belonging as in some way a function of space – space which is imbued with social and moral properties.

For the 20th century Zionist groups discussed above, divisions regarding the meaning of Palestine arose out of the myriad of intellectual currents to which they would have been exposed in early and mid-twentieth century Europe.   Each of these ideologies - nationalism, socialism, anti-colonialism and race theories among others – informed ideas about the state of Israel and the viability of a Hebrew nation.   For Cham people in Cambodia, the historicized and particularistic discourse of their ethnos confronts the moral and universalist

imperatives of their religion and in the process lead to a multiplicity of ways of understanding the geographic disposition of the community in moral terms. It is in the process of thinking these thoughts about legitimacy, purity and solidarity and then acting them out that Phnom Penh becomes a dangerous place (4.6), Prek Pra becomes a sanctuary for the morally afflicted (2.8), and a map of Champa and Angkor side by side becomes a roadmap for envisioning a better future (3.6.1)

The general trend in the scholarship is to move away from 'place' and towards an appreciation of 'placing' – the active and frequently contentious production of a localized situation. In so doing, we begin to free ourselves from the travel agent mentality concerned with the routes, stopovers, final destinations and satisfaction with accommodations which so suffuses the approaches advanced by Safran and Cohen. By changing tack and focusing our attention on the native understanding of the imagined communities in question we can radically reduce the necessary and sufficient conditions for what we consider to qualify for diasporahood. These conditions, namely, a sense of community and a particular notion of locality that corresponds with that sense of community, are necessarily salient and intelligible to members of the communities themselves and so respond to Axel's critique of the tendency of diaspora studies to construct and impose their own categories.

This development in the theory demands a more complete discussion of two intertwined yet distinct problems. First, there is the question of how human actions transform topography into a symbolic landscape legible to members of the community as well as outsiders. This focuses our attention on the manufacture

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of ethnic boundaries as in Axel's study, instead of attempting the endless task of cataloguing the cultural repertoire of a community (Barth 1969).   Secondly, we must examine how these imagined landscapes serve to guide the development of socially salient categories and the inscription of self and other with the characteristics of belonging or foreignness.   In addition, with regards to the second problem, the nature of diaspora locality and how it differs from other types of imagined landscapes is also in need of clarification.   What follows is a presentation of scholarship that addresses both of these issues, focusing first on the formation of identity through sectarian violence in Northern Ireland and then by the development of moral cosmologies born out of the violence in southcentral Africa.   These discussion of these works and others with similar themes will advance our understanding of diaspora communities and the possible location of the Cham amongst them.

5.4   Making Space

For at least two generations, discussion of Northern Ireland has been completely dominated by "the Troubles", the sectarian violence between Protestants and Catholics, and the proposed explanations for the origins of the conflict.   Traditionally, this has meant examining the history of Great Britain and Ireland and finding the source of the structurally unequal relationship between both groups.   This history is seen to be punctuated by key events such as the Irish Potato Famine or Bloody Sunday, which are incorporated into the discourse of opposing factions on either side of the Northern Ireland question.   Rarely

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however, has the violence itself been taken as an object of study in its own right - an object which, although possessed of a particular history, cannot be reduced to an epiphenomenon of that history (Venn 2005).

Allen Feldman (1991) takes on the notion that the endemic violence in Northern Ireland is simply to be understood as a result of perceived historical injustices on both sides as well as present-day disparities in political power and economic participation. Instead, he proposes that acts of violence themselves serve to continuously recreate the environment in which the use of violence appears justified and legitimate. This is not to say that that Feldman ignores the history of British-Irish relations or the prosperity gap between the Protestant and Catholic communities, rather he embeds political violence within an overarching historicizing discourse, which is itself transformed by that same violence.

Central to this ideological conception of violent struggle is the idea of space. In both Nationalist and Unionist rhetoric, Northern Ireland is imagined either as a home territory alienated from the Irish people or as an enclave of British civilization in an only partially civilized island. This spatial organization of friend and foe in the minds of Nationalists and Unionists is fundamental to the mythico-historic narratives within which the violence is understood and legitimated. These imagined spatial relationships are replicated at other levels below that of the narrative. The organization of neighborhoods, the location of weapon caches and safehouses, and the performance of resistance within the jail cell can only be understood in terms of how these acts deploy notions of space

accepted by both Nationalists and Unionists in order to demarcate and extend in-group boundaries.

Feldman sees militants as establishing sanctuaries within neighborhoods surrounded by a frontier zone, a border and finally an unfriendly area. The construction of sanctuaries implies a cult of purity where the sanctity of the interior is maintained by not allowing it to come into contact with the other. This purity is contested by the state, which launches raids into homes in order to find suspected paramilitaries, but also to reinforce and create the power of the state in a visible way as the police or army enter into paramilitary sanctuaries. These military operations serve to deny the sanctity of these domains and assert the authority of the state over the Nationalists. This also applies, perhaps counter-intuitively, to the actions of the inmates as they resist the guards and the authority of the penal institution. By defiling their cells with excreta, prisoners deny the authority of the guards to tell them when they can or cannot go to the lavatory. In addition, this creates a noxious environment, which guards will avoid until they need to reassert their authority through beatings and inspections of the prisoner's body. Feldman presents the body as the site where the ideology of space is restricted to its smallest point - the individual person - and where the practices of boundary marking and sanctification are manifest in the way this body behaves in the presence of the other.

The role of the human body as the locus of political expression and resistance is perhaps the most important contribution of this work as it has deep implications for our understanding of the performance of space. Feldman

presents a short history of the ideology of the body, in which industrial development of a region that had previously been primarily agricultural was followed by a new valorization of physical strength. As machines began to replace muscle, blue-collar workers responded by refusing to devalue their bodies in the ways that industrial capitalists had. This gave rise to a culture of pugilism and the persona of the hardman. The hardman could, by virtue of his fighting prowess, impose himself as an individual upon other individuals. He could be recognized and known as an individual tied to a certain reputation - an individualized history of personalized violence.

The gunman, as a descendent of the hardman, is a more recent transformation of the physical body. The gunman is also a violent character, but unlike the hardman, he is faceless and cannot be identified as an individual. The gunman in fact, loses his individual identity and becomes a working body on behalf of a collective entity. Feldman's description of the gunman holding a gun as "an instrument holding an instrument" speaks to the essence of the transformation from hardman to gunman, which involves the loss of agency of the character in question. By transforming himself into an instrument, the gunman places himself within the mythico-historical discourse leaving behind both his personal identity as well as personal responsibility for the acts committed.

If the hardman was a response to the replacement of man by machine, the gunman replaces the hardman in the presence of the firearm. The violence of the gunman denies the primacy of the physical body as well as the individual-on-individual character of the thumping administered by the hardman.

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This exaltation of the physical individual is then replaced by submission to a cause and the construction of victimhood that is contingent on confessional affiliation rather than a particular personal relationship between the two.

It is not only the assailant that is transformed and stripped of agency but the victim as well. Feldman remarks that the victim of sectarian violence acquires, upon death, an identity that is no longer personal but taxonomical - he is not so much a person as a Catholic or a Protestant. The practice of mutilating the body adds to the effect of othering that transforms the corpse into the embodiment of violence directed against a group of people. This tension between the individuated identity such as that of the hardman and the collective identity of the gunman or the stiff runs through much of Feldman's analysis with important implications, particularly for the state, which seeks to enforce its authority upon the collectivity through mass arrests only to find itself with a judicial and penal system that insists that only the jural individual may become the object of sanctions.

Feldman weaves together interviews and conversations with paramilitaries into a comprehensive narrative of transformative violence and resistance, which creates a new historicizing discourse rather than merely being situated within it. Paramilitary action and state response together define the boundaries and contours of continued interaction, while the ideologies of the body symbolically produce the collectivities that inhabit these boundaries. This understanding of the production of locality through the performance of place has important implications for the study of groups that more closely fit the model of the

conventional diaspora. Because of the corporal component of this type of locality production, there is frequently a racial or racialized element as one finds in the different manifestations of African diasporahood.

The valorization of the Black body for example, was and continues to be a critical ingredient in the Black nationalist and pan-Africanist movements in the US, which seek to foster a sense of individual and collective self-worth (Austin 2006; Porter and Washington 1979). Black beauty subverts the dominant logics of racial aesthetics which assign brutishness, stupidity and servility to dark skin, thick lips and kinky hair while exalting White racial characteristics as the standard against which both physical beauty and personal virtue should be measured. For Black women, the choice of hair style was transformed into an obvious and at times inflammatory political statement (Banks 2000). Much as Sikh men represented the boundary between the community and the Other, Black women coiffed in a manner that accents rather than negates the African phenotype create divisions, not so much between Whites and Blacks, but between Blacks who subscribe to the Africanist aesthetic and those that prefer to straighten or relax their hair. The emergence of the "beautiful Black woman" and the self-assured Black man that embraces her has been accompanied by an increasing interest in all things African - from fashion to language – and a corresponding disinterest in those symbols and practices associated with Whites or assimilationist Blacks.

The rôle of the body in defining Muslim space is both strongly gendered and obviously ethnic in the Cham context. Muslim headcoverings on women indicate their inadmissibility as romantic partners and remove them from certain

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social spheres (4.6.2).   They are also emblematic of certain virtues that Muslim women are meant to embody – chastity and modesty among them.   In the countryside where most everyone is Muslim, these are not thought of more than anyone putting on a shirt or pants.   Girls are socialized to cover the hair at very early ages and it is not uncommon to find even pre-pubescent girls reflexsively placing a scarf or washcloth on their heads.   In the urban context, however, the distinction of the Muslim female is an essential element in guarding a woman's honor and by extension her family's.   The abandonment of such garb and any other visible signs of a Muslim identity upon entering the dark underbelly of the city is another indicator of how such practices of the body are meant not only to deliver a message about the individual, but about the entire community (4.6.3).

The extension of this practice also has a political component, since Imam San see their exile as a denial of sovereignty, they do what they can to conduct traditional practices in their villages and community.   There they can embody the customs of the Cham as set out by elders while refraining from other activities, such as dancing and drinking.   Upon leaving the community, they will remove such garments and are free to dance and maybe even drink.   On the surface this appears to be an attempt at assimilation, but this would be incorrect, as the Imam San are never perturbed by this state of affairs and never seek to enforce dress and behavior standards beyond the community.   Instead, the behavior of the Imam San helps define the boundaries of the community and give them force whether Khmers are aware of them or not.   Leaving the village remove restrictions, thus implying that the community is an area of distinct laws.   Returning to the

community brings those rules back into force. Unlike other Muslims for whom characteristically Islamic behavior is a personal affair that makes Muslim space, the Imam San use their bodies to indicate cultural authority as they travel through otherwise unmarked ethnic topography.

These practices of space-making have other manifestations besides the use of the body as boundary post. A study of shack construction and location among Jamaican Rastafarians show other strategies for projecting the alternate community into the public (Pigou-Dennis 2006). Rastafarianism, which arose in Jamaica as a form of resistance to ideologies of White supremacy, is also strongly associated with certain practices of the body such as the growth of dreadlocks and a restricted, often vegetarian diet. These practices exalt the purity and naturalness of the body of the original Black man, who allows his hair to grow without interference and refuses to contaminate his body with impure foods as prescribed in the book of Leviticus – at times going so far as to shun all processed and preserved foods as well as metal or plastic cooking implements. Ultimately, Rastafarians find separation from the contamination of Whites and assimilated Blacks a necessary prelude to the abandonment of Babylon/Jamaica for a reunion in Africa with the messiah Haile Selassie – the last king of Ethiopia (Barret 1997; Chevannes 1994).

The material and musical culture that sprang from this cultural ferment – Rasta caps and reggae – is widely regarded in the West as representative of Jamaican culture as a whole, yet within Jamaica itself, Rastafarians feel the need to express their faith and demonstrate their Rasta lifestyle to non-Rasta Jamaicans.

One way to create Rasta spaces within the public domain is the through a distinct form of architecture – that of the Rasta shack. These ramshackle dwellings, cobbled together from roughly hewn planks, present an invasion of public space by virtue of their locations and adornments. Shacks are erected on marginal, yet highly visible, parcels of land, such as near runoff trenches used as garbage dumps or pedestrian thoroughfares between neighborhoods. The selection of undesirable sites mirrors the cultural and social marginality of the Rastas themselves, however, the fact that such areas are otherwise unoccupied make the shacks stand out to those passing through. The shoddy arrangement of construction materials serves to further highlight the borderline quality of the shack's location.

Just as important as location is the intricate symbolism of the decorations of the shack. The red, gold and green colors as well as the image of the Lion of Judah of the Ethiopian flag figure prominently – as do images of Haile Selassie and Bob Marley. These symbols, which are fairly standard in Rastafarian iconography, are supplemented by personal flourishes and written text on the exterior of the shack which transform the inhabitant into an artist communicating his moral vision to the rest of the world. The messages include denunciations of White supremacy, the current Jamaican establishment and "false Rastas" who appear to take on the trappings of Rastahood without adopting the modus vivendi of the true Rastafarian. These humble shacks intrude into everyday life by occupying the frontiers of the public sphere and, from there, projecting images of alternative narratives of Africa, Jamaica and the Black diaspora.

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Another example of the imposition of community on space is the eruv (Cooper 2000; Cousineau 2005; Fonrobert 2005; Fonrobert and Shemtov 2005). The enclosure of the eruv need not be a wall or fence – rabbinic decisions have judged wires or strings suspended in the air to be acceptable barriers that would permit the carrying of objects on the Sabbath and for that reason, one might think the eruv of little concern to Gentiles in the vicinity. However, recent attempts to create eruvs that encompass entire neighborhoods in London have met with considerable resistance. Cooper and Cousineau demonstrate how the creation of space is always contested and how attempts to perform space occur within the context of other ethnic and cultural identities as well as political ideologies which claim that same performative space.

In London, an Orthodox community seeking to deploy a wire eruv between 80 poles, which would be erected for the purpose, have collided with a constellation of ethnic and secularist ideologies which find unacceptable the insertion of religious symbolism in the public space. Arguments against the eruv are couched in terms of protecting the beauty of public spaces against the construction of eyesores, the separation of church and state; of which the public space forms a part, and concerns about the danger the wire may pose to birds. Each of these ideologies is necessarily invested with a particular notion of space and a prioritization of how that space should be allocated, be it to publicly secular citizens or wildlife. Proponents of the strong religion-state divide also voiced a fear that the character of he neighborhood would be transformed by the eruv – that its presence would result in a neighborhood of Jews becoming a

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neighborhood for Jews. Finally, and despite the overwhelmingly culturalist-secularist arguments against the eruv, the plan was struck down because of environmental concerns - a presumably less inflammatory justification.

The dynamic remarking of boundaries of living areas and communal facilities has been examined in real time as changing allegiances are inscribed into the lived landscapes (4.7). The separation of Muslim converts from non-Muslim former villagers and attempts to refashion an existing village around the centerpiece of a mosque are all manifestation of a desire to purify community and to have that purity made legible in the topography. The way in which the Tabligh insist that Thursday maghrib prayers should be conducted not at a local mosque, but at a merkaz, a Tabligh religious complex, is another example of how space (at particular times) can be activated to create a community. These religious divisions are also related, in the minds of people, to the different ways of living on the land and participating in the economy, such as when a waterfront community of Muslims shares a village with Khmers, who then interact with Muslims at the market buying fish. Fishing and its ancillary activities are Muslim professions and so Muslims concentrate themselves in areas where these activities are easiest to carry out.

Whether we look at Northern Ireland, Black America, Jamaica, London or Cambodia, we find ideologies of space made manifest in the practices of the body as well as the overt material culture. These practices have as their target the erection and maintenance of boundaries – frontiers of exclusion which necessarily defy the dominant paradigms of social geography and citizenship. One

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necessary condition for a diaspora is some shared feeling of community and of being separate from the wider host society otherwise we would simply be talking about the assimilated descendants of immigrants and so these acts of boundary building as captured in the above ethnographic accounts are one essential component of understanding diasporic communities.

5.5   Putting People in their Place

An important aspect of Cham identity is the construction of identity in a stateless context.   To address this we may consider the struggles for survival as individuals as well as communities of the displaced people of the violence in central Africa.   The recent crises in the African Great Lakes region have been portrayed in the media as an eruption of ethnic hatreds among the Hutu and Tutsi. However, the origin of these divisions and the ways in which they reproduce and sustain themselves is rarely discussed.   In Purity and Exile (1995), Malkki examines the construction of these ethnic categories and the supposed innateness of their mutual hatred.   Engaged in fieldwork with Hutu refugees, Malkki also explores issues of nationhood and how they relate to statehood or an inability to achieve statehood.   The refugee as a stateless entity engages both the state of origin and the state of refuge in a relationship which, nowadays, is frequently mediated by third parties in the form of former colonial powers or the UN.   From the point of view of the Hutu refugee, these actors need to be incorporated into a moral cosmology that defines his new situation as both a transformation and a continuation of the old, such that the category of Hutu can be projected into the

past and future as needed.   Malkki describes just such a phenomenon in the refugee camps of western Tanzania.

Malkki compares two different field sites in Tanzania where many of the Hutu refugees find themselves.   Mishamo is what typically comes to mind when one hears 'refugee camp'.   It is a circumscribed area, constantly under surveillance where the Hutu are obliged to deal directly with the Tanzanian authorities from a position of dependency as refugees.   Movement in and out of the camp is restricted and business transactions, chiefly the sale of produce, must be carried out at the camp cooperative.   Isolated from events in Burundi as well as the mainstream of Tanzanian society, these Hutu develop an identity that, by analogy, extends their existence in Burundi into exile.   From the point of view of Hutu refugees, Malkki recounts briefly the history of arrival of the three ethnic groups in Burundi - the Tutsi and Hutu plus the numerically minor Twa.   It is this mythico-historical narrative that the Hutu reconstruct in exile, this time in the context of the refugee camp.

The mythico-historical narrative defines Hutu people and Hutuness as a structural relation between a parasitic class, the world community and themselves. Hutuness is embodied in the activity of cultivation or production.   In Burundi, it was the Tutsi, who the Hutu describe as lazy and weak, who lived off the labor of the Hutu.   They entered into unequal relationships mediated by livestock with the Tutsi, who by malign trickery subjugated the Hutu.   In Tanzania, the Hutu refugees often imagine the agents of the Tanzanian state to be exploiters of their labor.   By obliging them to sell their produce at the government cooperative and

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levying taxes, the Tanzanians unwittingly play the role of grasshoppers to the Hutu ants.   For Hutu that define their existence in Burundi as a time of servitude to the dominant class, Tanzanian authorities are a convenient foil against which to recreate that aspect of their identity.

Outside of their immediate environment, Malkki explains that the Hutu are aware of a wider French and English speaking world represented first by the Belgians and then by the UNHCR and other international aid organizations.   In a sense, this wider world encapsulates both the Hutu and the Tutsi and in the Hutu imagination serves as a venue where the ultimate rightness of the Hutu cause can be objectively found to be true.   The Hutu are concerned with the way in which the conflict is perceived outside of Africa and derive legitimacy for their claims from their contact with international organizations much as, during the colonial period, the Belgians imposed a certain equality on the Hutu and Tutsi, thus negating any Tutsi claims to superiority for the duration of the colony's existence.

Although the international community may be geographically remote and seem peripheral to the Hutu-Tutsi situation, it is in reality a central tenet of the social cosmology, since it is not simply a structural inequality between producers and consumers that the Hutu imagine themselves in, but also a moral relationship vis-à-vis the Tutsi.   In the mythico-historical narrative the position of producer is inherently morally superior to the position of consumer.   Moreover, the locus of their power is a function of their activity.   The Hutu as producers and cultivators derive their power from their work.   The more the Tutsi make them work the more powerful they become - until the day when they can challenge the Tutsi

themselves.   The strength of the Hutu is internal and can only grow in adversity. The Tutsi, on the other hand, find their strength externally - it is in their trickery and malevolent cunning that they gain advantage.   Unlike the Hutu, the Tutsi's strength, being external, can be neutralized and defeated.

In the mythico-historical narrative, it was the Belgians that recognized the inner value of the hard-working Hutu and provided them with opportunities for social and economic advancement.   With independence, the Tutsi reasserted their dominance and blocked the Hutu from entering those fields that might lead to their participation in decision-making.   Incidentally, the fact that the Tanzanian government encourages refugees to undertake vocational training rather than engage in administration or management is seen by the Hutu as a continuation of a Tusti-esque policy of intellectual subjugation.   The international community, by being external, can be portrayed by the Hutu as an impartial arbiter of the moral relationship between the Hutu and those who exploit them whether they be Tutsi or Tanzanian.

The ultimate result is that by equating Hutu with refugee in the mythico-historical analogy, refugeeness becomes a heritable trait, which in turn defines the Hutu.   Malkki describes attempts to introduce the Hutu to artisanal work in an attempt to develop a material culture which end in failure because, as Malkki found, the Hutu have unlinked identity to what most social scientists would consider cultural practices.   They are uninterested in making 'authentic' Hutu baskets, blankets or trinkets and instead focus on their formation as a community that was formed at the moment of exile from Burundi through the

recognition of the structural nature of their condition. This experience of constituting a unified and pure community among the camp Hutu contrasts sharply with Malkki's description of those Hutu who sought refuge in the city of Kigoma instead of the camp.

Kigoma, a Tanzanian city on Lake Tanganyika, became home to many Hutu refugees who, over time, developed a very different way of dealing with questions of their identity. Instead of brandishing the label of refugee as a marker of authentic Hutuness, the Kigoma Hutu find various ways of downplaying their origins and developing an identity of anonymity by situationally deploying the discourse and habits of the unmarked category. Kigoma Hutu may marry non-Hutu in order to establish residence, as well as acquire documentation which, even if false, enables them to travel and engage in commerce. Islam is another element in mainstream Tanzanian society and Hutu may adopt Islam or Muslim names in order to disassociate themselves with Burundi and their refugee status. City Hutu employ these techniques as the individual deems necessary and as a result there is less of an overarching connection between them. They do not form a homogeneous discourse of unity in the face of the other, but instead seem to reject essentialized categories altogether. Kigoma Hutu have much more positive feelings toward their Tanzanian neighbors and while they do not deny being met with insults and discrimination upon their arrival, they attribute this to marginal elements in Kigoma - drunks and anti-socials. Significantly, they also develop relationships

with Tutsi in Kigoma and accept that they could not possibly be involved in the massacres in Burundi.

For camp Hutu, this might be a way out of their cycle of perpetual oppression by and moral haughtiness toward the Tutsi, but instead the Kigoma Hutu only reinforce in the camp Hutu the importance of maintaining the purity of their predicament. The Kigoma Hutu, as merchants and traders in pursuit of wealth, are neither true producers nor true consumers and so are at best morally ambiguous. Camp Hutu see them as lost, making fortunes by transporting ivory to Burundi while unwittingly supporting the régime that sent them into exile in the first place. If the Tutsi are the adversary of the camp Hutu, then the city Hutu are a warning of what may happen if this adversarial relationship is not maintained. After all, what would be of the mythico-historical worldview of the Hutu without an exploiter?

Malkki presents two very different reactions to exile, brought about to a great extent by differential contact with the state and its institutions. Instead of the predatory state which refugees must resist, the situation is one of negotiation using social capital at hand to produce an acceptable living environment. For Kigoma Hutu, it is clear that while they fear arrest and being sent to the camps the state is still a tool they can employ. Acquiring false documents may suggest an adversarial relationship, but in so doing the city Hutu gains freedom of travel and to engage in business - both protected by the state. In the case of the camp Hutu it is less obvious, but it would seem that it is the very 'technology of power' that imprisons them that makes their purified Hutu identification possible. While

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communication between villages in Burundi was difficult, in the camp, nothing escapes the grapevine and the unified mythico-historical discourse that emerges and to which the camp Hutu feel so attached is an obvious product of their subjection to the panopticon.

These diverse strategies revealed by Malkki shed light on some of the experience of the Cham, particularly the great divide between the Imam San and everyone else. As a community that still remembers itself as sovereign and still possessed of a leadership and unique frameworks of self-governance, the Imam San, like the Kigoma Hutu have found ways to engage the Cambodian state on a practical as well as a moral level (3.2.1 & 3.4.5). In doing so, they have become contaminated by their association with Brahmanism and other aspects of Khmer culture in the eyes of other Muslims (2.4). The transit from Champa to Cambodia spawned a number of meaningful storylines, each with its own geographic grounding. The significance of having an Indian visitor to legitimize the practices of the Imam San came about because of a vision of history that considered India the source of civilization shared by Chams and Khmers (3.5).

For other Muslims, particularly the Tabligh, this same history of migration has resulted in both a feeling of permanent displacement as well as a valorization of the displacement as a moral barrier, later to be carved into the geography, between the believer and the "duniya" – the mundane world. The idea that believers can be part of an Ummah rather than be forced to make community with whatever unbelievers might be found in the vicinity enables Muslims to liberate themselves from the tyranny of geography which cruelly dictated to them that

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they should live inn a non-Muslim country, and helps them find meaning in their condition of exile.

Malkki's ethnographic description of the formation of stateless nationhood, is then of great value to our understanding of the Cham, and of some import to issues of identity in diasporic communities in general, be they Jews, Rastafarians or Palestinians. The main contribution of this work is the notion of the creative interaction between the state and the stateless that lead to a spectrum of narratives and practices that enable the displaced to imagine the survival of the biological person within an imagined space as the survival of the social individual.   Many of Malkki's conclusions resonate strongly with Dibyesh Anand's remarks on the Tibetan diaspora living in Northern India (2003).   Anand considers how the act of choosing exile outside of Tibet create a community of refugees rather than refugees from a community.   As refugeeness and dislocation become hallmarks of the Tibetan experience and badges of patriotism and dedication to the homeland, they neglect to apply for Indian citizenship which would allow them to buy property and operate businesses in the community.   The discourse of refurgeeness becomes self fulfilling because it stigmatizes exactly those activities that would advance the material circumstances of Tibetans in exile and leaves Tibetans dislocated both from their homeland as well as their hostland.

In the case of the Palestinian diaspora the issue is one of how space is or can be configured within the context of an Israeli occupation and how these structures enable Palestinians to maintain a sense of connectedness with others in the same predicament (Ben-Ze'ev 2005; Hanafi 2005).   Hanafi finds that whether

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or not particular Palestinian families maintain a diasporic identity have much to do with whether or not they are able produce a locality that contains Palestine as a central component. Hanafi shows how the relatively recent classification of the Palestinians as a people has made it difficult for many Palestinians in neighboring Arab countries to maintain boundaries or to develop an inventory of symbolic acts such as those of Rastafarians or Orthodox Jews in order to produce a distinctly Palestinian locality in a Jordanian or Lebanese context. For those Palestinians further abroad in North America or Europe, the idea of a homeland in Palestine is problematic when relatives remaining in the Middle East are not living within the state of Israel or even in the occupied territories but other Arab countries - the same countries where Palestinian is not always a viable identity. In these cases, Palestinians outside the region are more of a dispersal than a group of people who find solidarity in a common notion of a Palestinian homeland.

Here we may see the distinction between the Cham and the non-Cham Muslims known as the Chvea. While the Chvea are Muslims and are subject to many of the same restrictions that makes interaction with Buddhists problematic they do not maintain a well articulated community identity that could be considered commensurate with the Cham. Although a minority and although they are understood to have an origin in the Malay Archipelago, the Chvea have never developed a diasporic discourse as they have not kept contact with the homeland, either in reality as Hanafi suggests the Palestinians should, or in the collective imagination of the community as have the Cham. This lack of

connection to a different moral geography is what makes the minority experience of the Chvea so very different from the diasporic experience of the Cham.

Palestinians struggle and frequently fail to accomplish both of the tasks which this chapter sets forth as indispensable to the creation of diasporic consciousness, namely, the transformation of space into locality in a way that creates and preserves group boundaries and the deployment of this shared notion of locality to inform the moral economy of the community. The Chvea on the other hand are probably not even trying. If diasporahood is the product of diasporic performance rather than a category assumed from the outset, then it stands to reason that groups may fail to perform in this way despite a trajectory across the globe comparable to other groups classified as diasporas. In addition to this, we should consider that this performance, as an act of manifest communitarian imagination, need not necessarily reflect the experience of geographical displacement very closely or even at all. Diasporic discourse can be adopted and modified strategically to serve perceived ideological needs.

Rastafarians in the Carribean claim an origin in Ethiopia, the only African country to preserve its independence against European expansion, rather than the slaving centers of the Gold Coast. In a similar manner, college-age African Americans with Pan-Africanist inclinations study the East African language of Swahili, for which there are courses and pedagogical materials, rather than Wolof or Igbo which are rarely encountered in course catalogs, even if their ancestors where much more likely to have hailed from what is today Sénégal or Nigeria rather than Kenya or Tanzania. These transformations of the diaspora narratives

for either ideological or pragmatic reasons underscore the primacy of contemporary political and social considerations and negate attempts to characterize diasporas as a direct and linear function of their origins as described in the genealogical understandings of diaspora. The pragmatism that is apparent in these examples as well as the way in which Chams have availed themselves of new economic and social opportunities in recent decades suggest that the ideologies of identity as described in this dissertation are likely to change in response to new realities confronting the Cham.

It is the diasporic imagination that imbues certain events, travels and travails with genealogical significance and not the other way around. The Black Hebrews of Dimona in the Negev Desert are an example of a radical break with a diasporic discourse in favor, not of assimilation, but of an alternate and more liberating diasporic identity (Markowitz 2006). Black Hebrews reject the narrative of the pan-Africanist diaspora that places them in exile away from their African homeland and spurn the integrationist paradigm that emphasizes the Americanness of the descendents of slaves. Instead, through reinterpretation of biblical texts, they style themselves the true and legitimate heirs to the land of Israel. While Black Hebrew Israelites do not deny the history of slavery or that their ancestors were taken from West Africa they devalue those events and recontextualize them, bookending them between their expulsion from Judea and their triumphant return to the land.

The imagination of space and the boundaries within it is central to communal understandings of locality - the sacred or profane character of certain

places in Northern Ireland, the discrimination of friend and foe in Burundi and the representation of the boundary-sustaining masculinity of Sikhs in the diaspora are all case studies in the production of community. This two part process of social localization, namely the performance of locality that gives rise to community and then the situation of that community within the imagined geography, is not sequential, as there is a reciprocal relationship between the two and there also exist other mitigating factors that reform and reframe narratives that stem from exterior political exigencies. While locality production localizes subjects and topographic imagination provides the discursive template for localizing the other, no community is inextricably bound to either aspect of this process. Just as European Jews can strategically apply different discourses of Jewishness and Black Hebrews can dismiss one established social geography, which centers on an experience of humiliation, and replace it with a new narrative, which in the 70's tied Black Hebrews in with a reborn and resurgent Israeli state; there is considerable flexibility in how these communities are created and sustained through imagination and reimagination.

5.6   Diasporas in Time

Contrary to what Iyer would have us believe, one cannot escape place any more than one could escape from one's shadow. While an individual may abandon a particular space, he will always end up creating a new place to inhabit through the cultivation of social relations and the development of new patterns of life. We find that the places people make – their localities – are dependent on

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natural and urban geography and yet clearly distinct from it. Central to understanding locality as a product of human agency is determining what it is above and beyond geographic situation that makes locality as opposed to merely location. One essential ingredient that transforms inert topography into living locality is time (Massey 2005).

Locality, the series of human and productive relations embedded within an imagined space, is defined not only by its topographic contours but also by its temporal element. Since every act of imagining of locality, every conception of social order and every notion of community belonging is embedded in a specific time, with particular groups of people being present and certain régimes of morality and governance in effect, then time is as much an component of the imagination as space. When one considers the longing of social conservatives for the "America of the 50's", when gender and family roles were clear and uncomplicated, it becomes apparent that the Boston of 50 years ago is imagined as a locality distinct from the Boston of today and yet, at the same time, at least in principle, this time in the past can be reinstantiated by performing the social and moral acts of locality building associated with that time. Because Islam is an Abrahamic religion with a built-in timeline if not a schedule, it is important to consider how time, like space, can have a moral dimension.

In Charred Lullabies (1996), Valentine Daniel begins an exploration of communal violence in Sri Lanka by considering the different ways in which history is conceptualized as the crucible of communal identity. While most Westerners are concerned with the Jaffna Tamils and their struggle for an

independent state, the Estate Tamils, which consider themselves distinct from the Tamils of Jaffna. Estate Tamils working on the tea plantations are almost entirely involved in a hand to mouth existence that depends on their ability to sell their labor to plantation overlords, typically Sinhalese or Burghers who style themselves as British. In addition to their limited economic and social mobility, their more recent arrival in Sri Lanka from India makes their situation even more precarious than other Tamils. Daniel probes questions of identity and historicity in this community, which defy the standard Sinhalese versus Tamil explanation for political violence in Sri Lanka.

One important and potentially very useful contribution of this work is Daniel's elaboration of the distinction between history and heritage. Daniel proposes that with the appearance or arrival of Buddhism and Islam in India, a historicizing discourse was developed or, in the case of Islam, imported, where events are believed to occur at fixed moments in the past. All other events can be placed according to their temporal relationship with these key moments, such as the birth of the Buddha or the revelation of the Qur'an. This is particularly interesting in light of the traditional treatment of Buddhism by scholars of religion as a non-linear, cyclical philosophy that contrasts with the Abrahamic faiths, which are explicitly goal oriented.

Daniel places Buddhism in opposition to Hinduism in this regard, with practitioners of the latter having a less developed sense of history and being less invested in an identity that derives its legitimacy through historical narrative. Tamils instead do not rely on an objectified historical past encompassing those

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events (independent variables) that give rise to the present condition (the dependent variable). Through his fieldwork, Daniel provides a contrast between Sinhalese, who from childhood are acquainted with the genealogy of ancient Sinhalese kings and their mythic exploits against the Tamils, and the Tamils themselves, for whom the lineage of past kings is rarely invoked to articulate the concerns of present-day Tamils. Instead Tamils understand their situation through a series of stories and beliefs whose truth values are not drawn from their historical reality but from their moral content. Daniel refers to these ways of locating significant events in time as history and heritage respectively.

This is not to say that Tamils do not have history or Sinhalese a sense of heritage, but rather, all things being equal, Sinhalese will privilege a historicized discourse and Tamils not. Because of this, Sinhalese define themselves as a community in a continuous relationship with the community of the past. These ancient Aryans had particular and definite characteristics. They were Buddhists, of relatively fair complexion and spoke an Aryan language related to Sanskrit and the Prakrits. Not only does this historicizing discourse maintain these criteria for Sinhaleseness alive in people's minds, but it also defines the Tamils as well. Sinhalese can know through their invocation of history that Tamils are a Dravidian people and that they are Hindus, thus associating them with the mainland of the subcontinent in the past and the modern state of India in the present - in both cases they represent foreignness. They also know that Tamils invaded the kingdom of the Sinhalese and plundered their temples - that they were an enemy in the past and that that condition has not essentially changed.

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Among the Cham there are multiple recapitulations of history that then serve as the basis for justifying social and political behavior today. This may be the connection to the Cambodian monarchy felt by the Imam San (3.2 & 3.2.1), the desire for a kind of structural homologization of the Cham with the institutions of other Indic peoples (3.6), the doctrine of personal discipline through faith as vehicle for world transformation (2.9), or the disdain with which the mortal enemy – the Vietnamese – are held (3.4, 4.5 & 4.6.3). the moral imagination of Muslims needs to be understood in terms of a very well defined teleology that includes an ideal past, a corrupt present and a redemptive future, about which the main uncertainty is who will find god's favor in the end of time. As with Valentine's work, this moralization of time is rather at odds with the more cyclical notion of time understood by Khmers, who unlike Christians and their competing eschatology, are completely outside the temporal morality that upholds geographic morality of Muslims. The wrongness of the now and the moral imperative to effect a new order is difficult to translate from Cham to Khmer.

One place where we consistently find an identity discourse which is overtly premised on the injustice of the contemporary time-space of morality is in indigenous communities. James Clifford (1997) notes that indigenous and minority discourse has begun to be replaced and supplemented by diaspora discourse and that this is becoming an articulation of dispossession that places stress on the empowering potential of global networks instead of the isolating siege mentality of minority discourse. The question then is how we can consider

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these groups in relation to other diasporic groups and how consideration of the diasporic qualities of fourth world communities can shed light on the issue of diasporas more generally.

Much has been made of the notion of sacred space in Native American and Aboriginal Australian societies (Bell 2001; Clarke 2003; Fouberg 2000; González and Cook-Lynn 1999; Lazarus 1991; Rumsey and Weiner 2001). Yet controversies that crystallize around the sites, such as Ayer's Rock (Uluru) or the Black Hills of South Dakota are not simply conflicts between real estate agents and aboriginal worshippers. These are examples of a wider discourse in which native communities are wronged because of their alienation from those elements of the land that were incorporated into the social and productive relations at some point in the remembered/imagined past. They are arguments that link the injustice of the present to a different socio-moral configuration within a more just time-space. This makes indigenous movements more similar to Zionist or Pan-Africanist ideologies as well as the ideologies of Chamness described here than transnational communities of Chinese merchants or Israeli expats and so gives us a new way to approach the terminological problem that current use of the word 'diaspora' presents.

If we accept that "all communities are imagined communities, but only communities imagined in particular ways are diasporas" (Butler 2001), then what exactly a diaspora is should be understood through consideration of communal imagination and not by plotting points on a map marking the passage of the community from one place to another. If allowed to travel, the concept of

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diaspora can, despite André Levy's reservations, be quite handsomely adapted to the discipline of anthropology and its most powerful investigative tool - the ethnography.   By understanding 'diaspora' as a communal discourse of displacement that implicitly and explicitly demands the restoration of a moral geography, we can dispense with issues of slave diasporas versus trade diasporas, or questions of dispersal conditions and demographic patterns and focus on the problem for which ethnographic magic is most suited - examining the production of belief.   The Cham of Cambodia, as described in the ethnographic record can best be understood in terms of these ideologies of moral meaning-making manifest in a geographic logic than as simply a religious minority or a temporarily displaced people.

Certainly, this definition of the term will exclude many groups that, for reasons of convention, have tended to be discussed as diasporas and compared to other diasporic communities.   It will also include groups which hitherto have not been considered diasporas for the mere reason that they have not moved anywhere - a problem easily solved if we consider that geographic movement is not necessary for the experience of moral dislocation.   These recategorizations are not unreasonable, however.   It makes more sense to appreciate communities, diasporas or otherwise, within the contexts in which they see themselves, than it does to try to impose a vague category on disparate peoples and then rework that classification with duct tape and bailing wire as new candidates present themselves.   The methods of anthropologists and ethnographers are particularly applicable to this problem of understanding a form of communitarian organization

that produces not merely locality, but a dialectic between locality and dislocality instead which, among other groups, now serves to define the Cham community of Cambodia.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

While it is common to speak of the Cham as a community or ethnic group in Cambodia and Việt Nam, once immersed among them the contours of their identity become less clear. What is at issue here is not so much whether certain members belong in the group or not, as is a contentious issue in many Native American communities where questions of blood quanta and tribal enrollment result in people being excluded and unrecognized as members. The divisions found in the Cham community are less about hwere the group boundaries are and more about how those boundaries should be respected, crossed or protected.

The Cham, although they are divided into various communities, whose practices of identity-making take different forms, do all recognize each other, however vehemently they may disagree on religion and identity, as being Cham. Each group has had to come to terms with and derive meaning from a moment in the past when the Cham, once like the Khmer the Vietnamese or the Thais, became unlike them in a fundamental way. By losing their country, the Cham failed to develop a state, and yet by having had a country, they feel a sense of cultural esteem which places them between the nation-states of the region and the indigenous people, who now live in states but only because the extension of civilization has enveloped them.

The chasm between the possession of a certain degree of civilization and the inability to realize a social environment under their control is what frustrates

the hopes of Imam San who would like to reinstate some form of autonomy or other Muslims who would wish to make human interactions more shari'ah compliant as has been possible in Malaysia, where the Muslims did not lose their country. The Cham have found several ways to lighten the weight of this historical shame. For some, like the Imam San, pre-existing symbolic relationships with the Cambodian monarchy and state presented the option of maintaining the status with which they entered the country – guests of the Cambodian king, loyal and true to his interests and standing besides (but separate from) Khmers as they confront shared challenges.

Others could not avail themselves of these connections to the structures of their hostland, and as a result the memories of their own history could not be deployed in the same way as a vehicle for making sense of their current condition. For those who held that the events of the past along with its stories and traditions, the Tabligh movement with its relatively indulgent attitude toward folk customs that arise around the practice of Islam, became an attractive option. For others less convinced that historical developments of a particularistic character can usefully inform the orthopraxy of a universalizing religion revealed in history, but not in any history that had Cham people in it, the Salafi movement may be a more comfortable fit.

This has not been a uni-directional influence from historical consciousness to choice of religious affiliation however. Being part of one of these groups also encourages one to think in the terms described here. A young person whose village accepts a donation from Malaysia will likely install a Tabligh imam,

receive tabligh missionaries, and be introduced to the religion with a particular way of viewing identity and history. An orphan accepted into an RIHS school is going to encounter not just an educational curriculum, but a series of claims and presuppositions about the world that curriculum is meant to prepare him for.

The Cham can be seen as consisting of those that view themselves a a civilization of India, akin to Khmers and Thais and who therefore consider it proper to forge relationships of symbolic equality with the Khmers among which they live, and those Cham who see their religion as the paramount marked of identity, both personal and communal, and so find it difficult to make fast relationships with the Khmers that encircle them. For this second, and far more numerous group, it is by reaching out to the Ummah that they escape the exile of the Cambodian state and reimagine themselves a valued constituent in a complete whole.

The act of imagining here is central because as a minority they can do relatively little to bring about change in public life or law. Moreover, few Khmers would have any idea what is meant by these distinctions in what they regard as an undifferentiated mass of Muslims. The Imam San efforts to ally themselves to Cambodia's monarchy and Khmer culture goes completely unrecognized by Khmers who are rather unaware of the details of their culture or history. Much in the same way that attempts to divide the hilltribes into Khmer Leu and Cham Leu go unnoticed by Khmers, relatively few of these social and ideational changes among the Cham have had any real impact on their relations with Khmers. They are however seen, understood and then applauded or

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rejected by other Cham. While these changing practices often appear to be attempts to assert themselves in Khmer society they are in reality performances meant to be seen by other Cham.

This is inteligible because for all their apparent diversity of thought and action, each group of Cham can agree that the present state of affairs is somehow wrong and unjust. It is a corruption of a once better condition which must be recovered through words and deeds. For this reason, the discourse of the Cham minority is always carried by a moralizing current that integrates visions of purity and contamination, order and anarchy, goodness and perversion, into their assertions about what is to be done. Although the Cham are a demographic minority in every polity they now reside in, our understanding of the Cham communities, and in particular the wide range of ethnicizing practices, would be incomplete if we were to only consider them as an ethnic, racial or religious minority. The spectrum of performances that can potentially express Chamness must be understood as part of a moral discourse of placing and placemaking that is grounded in spatial and temporal imaginaries.

This core of unresolved injustice at the heart of a communitarian ideology is the sine qua non of diasporic consciousness, and the rhetorical mortar that binds what at first appear to be self-contained and wholly independent membership groups. The heterogeneity of Cham discourses, which each in their own way acknowledge and contend with the shared elements of the community's historic and material circumstances in the kingdom, brings into focus the mundane and pragmatic mechanisms for generating ideal social types. Understanding how

these ideas take form as well as how they incorporate elements of their cultural and political superstrate, which in this case are the wider Khmer society and the Cambodian state, places this diasporic communities squarely within the hostland where these views on self and other, desires for justice and redemption, and efforts toward mobilization and accommodation are born.   The field of diaspora studies, as well as Islamic studies, could profit from considering the Cham and their religio-historical discourses of social idealism and transnational belonging as they endeavor to make themselves some space and then live in it.

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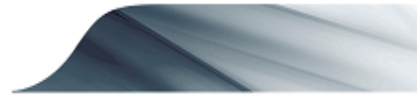
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APPENDIX

A - IRB APPROVAL

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	Hjorleifur Jonsson
	MC
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair
	Soc Beh IRB
Date:	11/17/2008
Committee Action:	**Expedited Approval**
Approval Date:	11/17/2008
Review Type:	Expedited F7
IRB Protocol #:	0809003295
Study Title:	Historical Imagination, Diasporic Identity and Islamicity Among the Cham Muslims of Cambodia
Expiration Date:	11/16/2009

The above-referenced protocol was approved following expedited review by the Institutional Review Board.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without approval by the Institutional Review Board.

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.