

Chinese military capability? Fenton's analysis of communist intent is limited by his sources, a weakness of which he is aware: 'Until the day, should it ever come, that Beijing and Hanoi allow access to their archives from this period, these deliberations are fated to remain hostage to speculation' (p. 231). He relies on historical precedent, principally the Korean War, to demonstrate a communist willingness for conventional military action to seize perceived easy pickings, and then makes the deduction that the lack of such action against the troubled emerging nations of postcolonial Southeast Asia is sign of the deterrent effect of SEATO as a vehicle for intervention by the United States and its other Western allies. It is a problematic judgement, particularly in the light of the communist insurgencies that SEATO neither deterred nor acted against; perhaps SEATO, like Western military power more generally, was simply a contributing factor to a change in the character of warfare in Southeast Asia.

The value of *To cage the red dragon*, however, is independent of its judgements regarding what SEATO did, or did not achieve. The core strength of this book lie in its insights into the internal dynamics of a multinational alliance, particularly the iterative nature of operational planning in this context. Fenton also successfully links Southeast Asia's small wars with the broader strategic concerns of the SEATO member states and the shape, and ultimate fate, of its contingency plans; in so doing he has achieved his aim of contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the Cold War.

GARTH PRATTEN

*Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University*

## Cambodia

### *Buddhism in a dark age: Cambodian monks under Pol Pot*

By IAN HARRIS

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013. Pp. 242. Plates, Notes, Abbreviations and Glossary, Bibliography, Index.

doi:10.1017/S0022463415000144

Ian Harris passed away in late December of 2014, just as I finished this review. His passing is a loss to Buddhist Studies, and especially to Cambodian Buddhist Studies. Harris's early training was in Buddhist studies; his research into the political aspects of Buddhism led him to realise the dearth of scholarly attention paid to Cambodian Buddhism, and specifically to the impact of the Khmer Rouge revolution on Cambodian Buddhist monks and institutions. This book focuses on that problematic.

This book is an important contribution as a resource, collection, and chapter-by-chapter analysis of how Buddhist monks in Cambodia fared under Democratic Kampuchea (Khmer Rouge) and their successor socialist regime, the People's Republic of Kampuchea. The highlights are the painstaking work of collection and narration, rather than a single sustained argument. Undoubtedly this is in

part a result of the way in which the book relies on a vertiginous archive of documents of various sorts, from various perspectives, in addition to Harris's own interviews. To the extent that Harris makes an argument throughout the book, it is that 'some elements of Buddhist belief and practice were subsumed into the Khmer Rouge worldview' (p. 139).

The finest contributions in the book are those in which Harris sorts through a monumental amount of material to construct several narratives of how Buddhism and Buddhist monks fared before and after Democratic Kampuchea. Although much of this material has been available in other sources, it has been scattered, episodic, and largely in specialist documents, many of which are hard to obtain. As Harris notes in his final chapter, he hopes in part to aid the process of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal (Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia) through this effort. Harris's treatment is excellent, and these chapters will help readers understand the complex and diverse ways in which Cambodian Buddhist monks interacted with — and sometimes were — Cambodian communists.

Chapter 3, where the book-length argument is first presented, is less successful. As noted earlier, Harris argues that there was a subsumption of Buddhist beliefs and practices into the Khmer Rouge worldview, but it is unclear what this subsumption means, or what Buddhism Harris refers to. If he means that the previously hegemonic worldview, ritual practices, and moral discourse influenced Khmer communism and its discourse, he makes a good case: certainly the Khmer Rouge leadership employed (a distinctly Buddhist discursive tactic of) redefining words with moral values so that true morality was re-coded to mean the new moral and practical norms of Democratic Kampuchea. But the significance of this point is unclear. Harris is a highly respected scholar of Buddhism, and has literally 'written the book' on *Cambodian Buddhism: History and practice* (also from University of Hawai'i Press). But the 'Buddhism' he invokes in this book is not always clear, and a key argument in Chapter 3 relies on speculative assertions of Mahāyāna Pure Land influence in Cambodian Buddhism (pp. 61–2). Harris justifies this in a footnote on page 186 (fn. 59) with a reference to François Bizot's work on tantric or Mahāyāna influences in Cambodia. Indeed, the only substantiated clear influence of Pure Land Buddhism in Southeast Asia of which I am aware is in Vietnamese Buddhism. If the argument is that the revolutionary regimes of Southeast Asia are influenced by the ideas of preceding Buddhism, and that Pure Land Buddhism and Year Zero are important to the Khmer Rouge, then a more compelling argument would be that this Pure Land influence came to the Khmer Rouge, like the vast majority of the rest of their policies, through their imitation of the revolutionary Vietnamese Communists. But it seems more likely that the inspiration of starting from scratch in the Year Zero is more directly a result of their French Revolutionary influences.

If the argument in this chapter doesn't hold, the exemplary work done in other chapters, which does not rely on this argument, does. An example is the excellent work Harris does in chapter 6, on monk mortality. This chapter on the demographics of monastic death during the Democratic Kampuchea period is a wonderful piece of work that not only reviews the various and contesting numbers often adduced, but makes its own argument skilfully, and includes important evidence about the role of

the illegal bombings by the United States (1965–73) in monastic mortality prior to 1975.

This book is a major accomplishment for Cambodian Studies, as it skilfully compiles and narrates in one place the experience of Cambodian Buddhism under the various socialist regimes from 1975–1989. For graduate students and scholars of Cambodia, Southeast Asia, and modern politics, this book will serve as a central resource on the topic and period. For students of Buddhism, the book will fill a critical need in the study of Buddhism's continuity across revolutionary disruption, accomplished with scholarly distinction. Additionally, this book could easily be used in undergraduate courses. I'll be using it in one of mine.

ERIK W. DAVIS  
*Macalester College*

*Britain and Sihanouk's Cambodia*

By NICHOLAS TARLING

Singapore: NUS Press, 2014. Pp. 375. Maps, Notes, Bibliography, Index.  
doi:10.1017/S0022463415000156

Nicholas Tarling continues his series of close studies of British strategic foreign policy and the international relations of Southeast Asia, during the post-Second World War era of decolonisation, state-building, and Cold War, by this forensic examination of Cambodia's efforts to keep conflict at bay. Working primarily through the very familiar sources housed at the UK National Archives in file series FO371, drawing principally on British perceptions, policies, and actions as the vantage point from which to engage this Southeast Asian story in international history, Tarling presents what an attentive reader will recognise as an insightful, richly documented, and fair assessment of the mercurial Prince Norodom Sihanouk and his long effort, from 1954 into 1970, to preserve the independence and territorial integrity of his small and vulnerable nation. This is not by any means an exercise in external scholarship. British and Western diplomats, especially in the region, paid very close attention indeed to the agendas, calculations, intentions and policies of the regional governments with whom they worked. Their files contain a great deal of insightful analysis of this volatile period in the international history of Southeast Asia, composed first hand and on the spot by very interested but often well informed and thoughtful parties. As he has in previous volumes, Tarling's deep immersion in these files brings this out very well. And until Southeast Asian governments abandon their lamentable policy of refusing to release any significant records of their own for serious research, these 'outsider' records, with all their inherent limitations, remain the indispensable source.

Tarling points out that throughout this turbulent and confusing period the British government and Prince Sihanouk actually shared a broad general diagnosis of the region's long-term future and how best to approach it: sooner or later the Western military and political position in mainland Southeast Asia would become