

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

### Reconciliation in Cambodia victims and perpetrators living together, apart

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# **Reconciliation in Cambodia: Victims and Perpetrators Living Together, Apart**

**by**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the University's requirements for the

degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

Under the brutal Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979 in Cambodia, 1.7 million people died from starvation, overwork, torture, and murder. While five senior leaders are on trial for these crimes at the Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia, hundreds of lower level perpetrators live amongst their victims today.

This thesis examines how rural Cambodians (including victims, perpetrators, and bystanders) are coexisting after the trauma of the Khmer Rouge years, and the decades of civil war before and after. In this qualitative research study, 134 semi-structured interviews were conducted with rural villagers, government officials, and peacebuilding practitioners.

Cambodian culture is characterized by conflict avoidance, and reliance on family networks, hierarchy, and patronage. Buddhism is a strong cultural influence as well. These characteristics, as well as the lack of trust resulting from the Khmer Rouge years, provided important context for this analysis of Cambodian social recovery.

Research on the processes of coexistence and reconciliation inform this study (Bloomfield 2006; Huyse 2003; Kriesberg 2001; Lederach 1997; Rigby 2001). However, few studies have been done that examine community reconciliation in Cambodia (Etcheson 2005b). This thesis examines the processes of reconciliation, including interfering and facilitating factors. Processes such as building relationships and trust, and developing empathy and compassion are explored. Cambodians' views of apologies, revenge, forgiveness, and other key concepts are reviewed.

Models of coexistence, acceptance, perpetrator coping strategies, and a victim decision-making tree are presented to assist in the analysis of the data. These models provide a theoretical framework for the understanding of the situation of coexistence and reconciliation in Cambodia. The thesis suggests that Cambodians are currently living in various stages of coexistence (surface, shallow, and moderate) and have not yet approached a condition of deep reconciliation. Practical applications of the findings are suggested.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Andrew Rigby, Director of the Centre for Peace and Reconciliation at Coventry University, for accompanying me on this thesis journey. His patience and insights have been much appreciated: he has re-taught me to write. Secondly, I want to thank my research assistant Tim Minea who worked with me for several years, providing a lens for me into Cambodian society. This he has done through the hardship of fieldwork, and with good spirits and a sense of humour. Youk Chhang assisted in the search for research assistants, and the staff at DC-Cam assisted with background interviews, advice, suggestions of possible informants, and library and document assistance. Professor Fred Brown of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies has provided important moral and substantive support since my time with him as a graduate student in 1994. Beth Wright translated my hand-written diagrams into professional figures, and Laura Bryant customized the map. Last but not least, I want to thank all of the respondents and others who provided informal interviews, who took the time to speak with me, and who shared stories of the past. Their courage and fortitude to survive, and to thrive, are truly inspiring.

Initial research assistance was provided by Ahmed Yousos and Sin Vorn. I appreciated the part-time research assistance of Chantho Kong, Kim Teang Leng, and Pia Wallgren who transcribed some of the interview tapes. A special thanks goes to Bunleng Men who provided moral support, and the Canadian Embassy that provided financial support for my research conducted in 1999 and laid the groundwork for this thesis.

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, who provided me with the sense of social justice that led me on the path I am on today.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CDRI	Cambodian Development Resource Institute
CPD	Center for Peace and Development
CSD	Center for Social Development
DC-Cam	Documentation Center of Cambodia
FUNCINPEC	<i>Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopératif</i> (Acronym in French used in English)
ECCC	Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia
ICFC	The International Center for Conciliation
KPNLF	Khmer People's National Liberation Front
KID	Khmer Institute of Democracy
KR	Khmer Rouge
NCR	Non-communist Resistance
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PDK	Party of Democratic Kampuchea
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
US	United States
YFP	Youth for Peace

# MAP OF CAMBODIA



Figure 1. Areas of study identified in white (Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, and Kampong Cham Provinces) and grey (Kep and Pailin Municipalities)(Krawma Co. 2010).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Map of Cambodia modified with permission from Krawma Co.

# PREFACE

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‘We are not fighting roosters that you can just throw in a cage and watch to see what happens.’ A prominent Cambodian-American said that to me in 1990 at one of the first workshops which brought together Cambodians from two sides of their civil war. I had been working for a non-governmental organization (the US Indochina Reconciliation Project or USIRP).<sup>1</sup> One of our activities was to organize a tour for two Cambodian monks from socialist-Cambodia to visit the US, and they attended a conference organized by Khmer Conscience at the University of California at Berkeley. In spite of these non-conciliatory words, this conference allowed people from two sides of the long-standing conflict in Cambodia to start to see the humanity in each other as individuals and to recognize their interdependence. This reconciliation effort also assisted these former adversaries to begin understanding the reality and truth of the ‘other’ – and this workshop and other work with USIRP marked my formal entry into the practice of reconciliation.

After I had worked at the Thai-Cambodian border in the late 1980s as a physical therapist, the call of Cambodia soon brought me to Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia in 1987, when Cambodia was still under the Soviet and Vietnamese-backed socialist government. Under the pacifist American Friends Service Committee, I became grounded in non-violence as a way of life, and worked on bringing assistance to the people around the havoc that was wreaked on this isolated country due to international politics. I learned first-hand about those politics, as we were unable to phone outside the country, obtain Western goods, or access most international airlines. We also learned about living under a strict socialist system, as we were not allowed to socialize with our Cambodian colleagues, and our state-appointed drivers met every Saturday to report on our activities during the week. I also

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<sup>1</sup> The US Indochina Reconciliation Project operated in the 1980s and 1990s, and then changed its name to the Fund for Reconciliation.

learned about the different viewpoints of the Cambodians, and the aid workers, as those living at the border and those living inside Cambodia viewed each other with suspicion; I was one of the few to have worked on both sides.

Crossing back and forth between Cambodia, the border camps, and the US for several years brought me in touch with some of the same people across time, as I tried to carry messages of reconciliation, shared humanity, and mutual understanding to all sides. By attempting to be neutral and talking to everybody, I was often accused of being a traitor to one side or the other (Vietnamese-head but American body was one of the most common!). But I am still in contact with many of the same people I have met over the years, and some of them assisted as key informants in this research.

As my interests shifted from physical therapy to conflict resolution, and I obtained a second master's degree, this time in public policy focusing on conflict resolution, I worked in other countries on various coexistence and peace building projects, including Rwanda, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and Nepal. These equally seminal experiences have served to broaden and deepen my understanding and appreciation of conflict situations. I have seen first-hand the human bravery as well as frailties of people as they attempted to overcome the past of war and conflict, and to find a new future of peace and security. In Cambodia I have seen the scars that the many years of war have caused, in particular the radical Khmer Rouge regime, and Cambodians' valiant efforts to rebuild their shattered lives and communities.

In 2007, many years of practice later, I attended a workshop conducted by the academic practitioner, Hizkias Assefa on reconciliation.<sup>2</sup> He instructed participants in the workshop to do an exercise on the 'River of Life.' Participants had to draw or describe their life in terms of a river -- its origins, destination, speed, waterfalls, tributaries, fish, and other characteristics as a metaphor for life. I, and a few of the others, drew their journeys through life as rivers flowing into an ocean, to show the

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<sup>2</sup> The Philosophy and Praxis of Reconciliation, Eastern Mennonite University's Summer Peace Building Institute, May 29 – June 6, 2007.

interdependence of all humanity. I agree with Assefa as he describes this interdependence as crucial for reconciliation -- a process of development of both individuals and nations, changing from a state of dependence to independence and finally to interdependence (2000: 8). This thesis is the story of my personal journey researching reconciliation in Cambodia, and the journeys of individuals in four Cambodian communities as they struggled to deal with their violent pasts.

# CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

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Imagine that the man who had led your parents and siblings to their deaths lives in the next village. Imagine that, besides your family members, he also led about three hundred other people to their deaths at that prison in the next village. You feel angry, sad, and sometimes you want to take revenge against him. You know that he was not the one giving orders: that man was killed by the Khmer Rouge (KR) during their regime. But that does not really help your pain much – whenever you see this man (I will call him ‘Pel’) you remember your past and mourn the loss of your family. So you do not even want to see Pel and you avoid him whenever possible, which is fairly easy, as he does not go out much. You feel somewhat better knowing that, when you do see him, he appears a poor, broken man, with hunched shoulders and eyes to the ground. He seems to feel regret for the past.

But now, imagine that you are that man who led people to their deaths, Pel. You are one of the few former KR cadres who still live in the village. You had to do this job during the KR period, or you would have been killed. It was not you who ordered those people’s deaths, or even chose which people would be killed. But today, you do not dare leave your house, except to till your fields. You do not go to the local Buddhist temple, or weddings or funerals, you are totally isolated. Twenty years ago, you spent more than a year in prison and you still suffer from the beatings you received there. You feel angry and frustrated at what happened to you, and you feel afraid of your neighbours. You are filled with anxiety that someone might kill you, as there was an attempted robbery at your home, and your father-in-law was killed about ten years ago – you think the people were trying to kill you.

The scenario above is the story of members of one of the communities (Southwest 2) I studied in this research on reconciliation in Cambodia. The purpose of

this research was to examine how community-level reconciliation is occurring after the years of mass violence of the Khmer Rouge period. How are these victims and perpetrators managing to live together – or are they? The processes that Cambodians underwent as they rebuilt their communities 30 years after the brutal Khmer Rouge regime, and the factors that influenced those processes, provide important insights into social reconstruction after mass violence.

Reconciliation processes have been widely studied, however few have examined community-level reconciliation. Although there have been several quantitative studies on reconciliation and justice in Cambodia, there have been only a handful of qualitative research studies (Etcheson 2005b). In spite of the lack of studies, some authors have concluded that reconciliation has already been achieved in Cambodia (Urs 2007; Widyono 2009). This research study examines the research on reconciliation processes, applied to Cambodia to examine the situation of reconciliation today. In order to capture the deep meanings, and detailed nuance, the research design was qualitative, using multi-site case study review. Data sources included document review and field research through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The data was analysed using the NVivo qualitative analysis software program (Bazeley 2007).

The thesis is the story of the journey Cambodians in four selected communities have taken since the years of war to deal with their troubled pasts. To proceed on this journey of understanding, I start with a historical and literature review. The rest of this chapter then covers the methodology of the research, and ends with a summary of the structure of the thesis.

## **Cambodian History and Culture**

After years of destructive civil war, the Khmer Rouge (KR) overthrew the Cambodian Republic on 17 April 1975 and immediately emptied the cities, leaving a

wake of women in childbirth and hospital patients grasping their IVs along the roads. As the KR implemented a revolution modelled upon Mao Tse Tung's China, communal working, eating and decision-making were implemented in the hopes of reinstating Cambodia to the position of power during the Angkor period which covered large parts of Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Between 1975 and 1979 over 1.7 million out of the 7 million living in Cambodia died from starvation, overwork, illness, and summary executions (Ciorciari and Chhang 2005: 250).

More than 30 years have passed since the destructive rule of the Khmer Rouge. A trial for the Khmer Rouge leaders (the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, or ECCC) has been completed for one defendant, and another two cases are haltingly under way. Cambodians are struggling with conflicting needs and desires – for truth, acknowledgement, justice, reconciliation, and healing.

The social reconstruction process after mass violence is dependent upon Cambodian culture and social structure. The majority of Cambodians live in rural areas and rely on local administration for support and security. Although Cambodians live in a state of relative peace today, the lingering effects of the many years of war remain, including the presence of violence in society. The family is the primary unit of organization, and Cambodians are linked together in complex webs of kinship, hierarchy, and patronage. Dispute resolution styles are profoundly different from those in the West and have not always been taken into consideration in the process of reconstruction. Cambodian dispute resolution styles of conflict avoidance have also affected the way Cambodians think about reconciliation and other transitional justice mechanisms, in particular the ECCC. Finally, the predominant Buddhist religion of Cambodia greatly influences how Cambodians perceive the various processes of reconciliation and the factors affecting reconciliation.



## **The Research Question and Objectives**

The overall aim of this research was to analyse community-level reconciliation in Cambodia. The central research question of the thesis is: Has community reconciliation taken place in select Cambodian communities?

The specific objectives were to:

- analyse Cambodian concepts and understandings of reconciliation processes
- identify key factors facilitating or interfering with the processes of reconciliation
- develop a theoretical framework of the process of reconciliation in Cambodia which can be applied to other post-conflict settings

## **Research Justification**

Since I have been working in the field of reconciliation and peacebuilding for more than two decades, this research allowed me finally to step back and deeply examine the processes of reconciliation on which I and others have been working. As can be seen from the description of my personal journey in the preface, with a deep commitment to the subject and the country, the choice of this subject corresponds with Baker's view that 'The tone of social research is that of genuine concern for the subject under study' (1994: 4).

The basis for this research project is that there is a lack of adequate research on reconciliation done at grassroots levels, and ideas to enhance reconciliation processes must come from the affected villagers themselves (Bloomfield 2006: 22-3; Theidon 2007: 119). This research project has focused on a community-level analysis and is based upon the views of the affected villagers, both victims and perpetrators. As did my previous research (McGrew 2000a and 2000b), this study gives voice to Cambodians at the community level, as it is they who should ideally have the greatest say in the reconciliation mechanism in which they will participate. As Bloomfield has observed, '... one of the basic axioms of reconciliation and one of the few over which

there is little argument (at least in rhetoric): it cannot be imposed from outside, but must be devised and driven from within' (2006: 22). Their insights, now 30 years after the KR regime, provide important lessons for other countries coming out of similar conflicts. As described by Lederach, reconciliation can be bottom-up or top-down, and emphasis in research has been on the latter (1997: 39). This research fills a gap in the literature by focusing on the bottom-up approach, with interviews in rural Cambodia. In addition, the rural views can have implications for national level reconciliation processes.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design Overview**

The research design remained grounded upon my many years of work in Cambodia, and work on other reconciliation projects is described below. This PhD research process can be described in terms of five phases which serve as background for this thesis:

1. Grounding (1986 intermittently through 2007)
2. Background Research (1999-2000)
3. PhD Preparation (2005-2006)
4. Preliminary Research (2006-2007)
5. Field Research (2007-2008 – conducted 134 interviews)
6. Analysis and Write-up (2008-2011)<sup>1</sup>

The methodology chosen was 'multi-site case study' based on applied research and evaluation tradition (Stark and Torrance 2005: 34, 38). A balance between document review, interviews, focus groups, and observation allows in-depth analysis of data, yet at the same time the comparison of data from different sources allows not

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for the phases of research. I have used the Coventry University Harvard Reference Style Guide (Version 3.0.1), and the style manual by Turabian (2007).

a 'definitive judgment' but a 'contribution to the development of evidence-based professional knowledge' (Stark and Torrance 2005: 38). The research design was guided by principles of neutrality and objectivity, and care was taken to reduce the impact of the researcher's presence.<sup>2</sup>

## **Data Sources**

The data sources for this research included document review, field research including key informant and community interviews, and participant observation. As I had worked in Cambodia for many years, and had done previous research there, I had many contacts, much experience, and many observations to rely upon.

### **Document review**

The document review included primary and secondary sources from government, the UN, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on reconciliation in Cambodia and elsewhere. Due to my long-term experience in Cambodia, the NGOs and UN agencies consulted were very open to providing reports and assessments. However, very few of the reports provided detailed information about the process of reconciliation in Cambodia, thus the primary data source was through the field research.

### **Field research**

To study this complex and little-studied subject, I chose field research as my primary method of investigation, based upon long-term experience in Cambodia and language skills in Khmer. The field research included two components: interviews and observations. I have been conscious that the researcher as outsider must be careful not to intrude, and to be open to many interpretations, cultural views, and world views. For example, cultural differences such as how Cambodians view their spirit world are

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B, The 'I' of Research.

substantially different than how Westerners view the world; these issues are discussed further in the section in Appendix B on the ‘I’ of research. Through interviews, respondents were able to share some of their understandings of those differences.

### *Interviews*

I recruited a research assistant who assisted with administrative tasks and interpreting in interviews (between Khmer and English).<sup>3</sup> A detailed set of guiding questions was developed for the in-depth interviews, keeping in mind the recent literature on reconciliation. A shortened version was used in the field as an ‘aide memoire’.<sup>4</sup> During the interviews, the research assistant and I were both present, except for some of the interviews in English. Although I conducted the interviews, if the respondent or I had difficulty understanding, the research assistant would translate. All interviews started with formal greetings, and brief introductions. We then proceeded with the consent procedure which included explaining the purpose of the research and asking the respondents to agree to the interview on tape.<sup>5</sup> Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to three hours, averaging about 90 minutes each. Both the research assistant and I took notes, and in most cases the interview was tape-recorded. Later the notes and the audio files were converted into written transcripts.

Both individual and focus group semi-structured interviews were conducted. The semi-structured interviews allowed the interview to be conversational; flow smoothly by avoiding reading from a questionnaire; to be flexible and to allow for unexpected responses; and to enable follow-on questions to increase the depth of

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<sup>3</sup> Administrative tasks included: photocopying, reading documents in Khmer, selecting related documents to copy, translating written documents, transcribing tapes., and assisting in interpretation (between Khmer or and English)The language and people of Cambodia can be called either Cambodian or Khmer.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix C for the Research Question Guide, and Appendix D for more information on data collection processes.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendices, E, F and G for ethics and consent procedures.

understanding (Mikkelsen 2005: 169-170). In the context of rural Cambodia, the flexibility and informality of the semi-structured interview are particularly relevant in order to put respondents at ease – many of whom had never been interviewed, nor ever spoken with a foreigner. The one-page research question guide was used to ensure main topics were covered.<sup>6</sup> Although standardized questionnaires could have provided increased comparability of responses, they allow little flexibility in interviewing a wide variety of respondents, especially those living in rural areas. Since the purpose of the research was to probe deeply, semi-structured interviews were a more appropriate data source. In addition, semi-structured interviews allowed for a wide variety of respondents, including officials, practitioners (in the field of peacebuilding), and community members, as various topics and questions could be emphasized depending upon the experience and identity of the respondent.<sup>7</sup>

This thesis builds upon research done in 1999 and 2000 when I spoke with over 180 Cambodians in individual interviews and focus groups (McGrew 2000a and 2000b). I have maintained many of these contacts which facilitated access to other respondents in this study. In addition, preliminary interviews were conducted with Cambodians and expatriates working at the national level during the preliminary research phase from April 2006 to March 2007. Additional background interviews had been conducted previously in the course of the author's prior work and research interest. Upon approval from Coventry University of the research and ethics plan, formal interviews commenced in April 2007, and were completed in July of 2008.

Focus groups were chosen as a means for interviewing in the former KR areas; NGOs assisted in setting up meeting and participants often had to travel great distances to attend, or I had to travel great distances to meet them and it was logistically difficult to stay long periods. A few others were spontaneous focus groups,

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix D for a more detailed description of the data collection process.

for example twice when we went to a temple to interview a monk, but there were several elders and *Achars* (Buddhist laymen) there who joined in the discussion.

A total of 17 preliminary interviews and 134 formal interviews were conducted. Of the formal interviews, 123 individual or small group and 11 focus groups were conducted.<sup>8</sup> Amongst the 123 individual interviews there were a total of 125 respondents (although some of the individual interviews were with more than one person, several were repeat interviews with the same persons). Respondents were chosen from amongst two groups: practitioners and officials, and community members. Participant selection criteria for the two interview groups were as follows.

Practitioners in the field of peacebuilding and reconciliation, and officials with relevant experience, were the first group of respondents interviewed (making up the majority of 17 preliminary interviews). Some were then re-interviewed during the field research phase. This group of respondents included individuals with knowledge or experience of reconciliation processes or projects; senior or mid-level members of NGOs and UN agencies; local Cambodians or expatriates with extensive experience in and knowledge of Cambodian history and culture, and included both men and women. Government officials were those known to me at the national level, and some others at provincial levels with experience in reconciliation processes or projects. In addition local government officials of each community of study were targeted. Most of these respondents were men, as the vast majority of government officials in Cambodia are men.

Community members were drawn from several identity groups: victims, perpetrators, and former KR who could be characterized as bystanders.<sup>9</sup> First contact

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<sup>8</sup> The small group interviews comprised two to three persons, and individual responses were recorded and attributed to individual speakers. In the case of the focus groups, the group numbers were larger, discussions were more informal, and it was not possible to attribute statements to each individual.

<sup>9</sup> The categorization of people into groups of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders is notoriously difficult. Minow notes that few survivors fit comfortably into a single role: bystanders

in each community was usually via commune or village-level officials in order to obtain permission for the research; then other key village members were identified: monks, teachers, traditional healers, security personnel, and others who may be identified as 'elders' in the community. Within each community setting, I tried to obtain a sample of villagers representative of the village population as a whole including: men and women; middle-aged and elderly (who would have lived under the KR regime); educated and not educated; high and low socio-economic status; and those from a variety of professions (farmers, NGO workers, business people, home-makers). Although a few young people were interviewed, they were not the target of this research, as the focus was on people who had lived through the KR period, and the relationships between them.

Over the course of the research period, a few particularly forthcoming key informants at the community-level were identified and then were interviewed several times to present initial developing concepts and to gather participant's perspectives. These key informants also provided access to other villagers, especially accused perpetrators who were often difficult to locate and meet.

One challenge of this research, and in particular of the data analysis, was the large number of interviews conducted (134). Part of the reason for so many interviews was that the site selection process took a long time. The challenge was to find appropriate communities with perpetrators who were widely accused by others, and who would also agree to be interviewed. Although the sample size of accused perpetrators was relatively small, the responses provided by these individuals, and by the victims around them, were crucial in the analysis and in order to identify patterns. These were then validated with repeat interviews, interviews with other community

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may not have 'clean hands'; victims may feel guilty for having survived or for not being able to save or help others; and perpetrators may also be victims of false ideology, deceit (1998: 121). The issue of victims and perpetrators is discussed at length in Chapters 5 and 6.

members, as well as interviews about victim-perpetrator relations in other communities.

### *Observations*

In addition to the interviews, participant observation occurred across the time of the research period: while making and waiting for appointments we visited markets, temples and coffee shops. Supplementary information about various other reconciliation processes was obtained through observing various meetings about reconciliation, the ECCC, and outreach activities of the NGOs. In addition observations were made at markets, temples, health clinics, and other places and events. Observations included comments on behaviour, silences, openness, expressions of emotions (such as facial expressions, hesitancy, verbal expressions, raised voices, reddened faces, agitation, tears, broken voice, crying). I kept a journal of my observations around the interviews, noting what happened, people's reactions to the setting, questions, other events, comments made outside the regular interview process, and other non-verbal communication methods. I reviewed this journal as I wrote up the findings and analysed the data.

Sometimes notes were taken during the event, but more often notes were written up afterwards. Starting with my research in 1999, I had 'recruited' a group of NGO peacebuilding practitioners who served as a sounding board, and I held several 'reconciliation discussion groups' usually over dinner, during the course of this research. These small group discussions served to assist me in understanding certain terms, including reconciliation, revenge, and empathy.

As part of my previous employment and past research, I had relationships with several NGOs who were currently conducting peacebuilding and reconciliation projects, most of which were related to sharing information about the ECCC. These projects were just starting to emerge as I went through the various phases of my



research, and I observed the activities of several of these NGOs. Through these observations, I was able to identify some of the communities of this study.<sup>10</sup>

## Selection of Field Sites (Community Case Studies)

When looking for sites for the community-level research, the main criteria were to have the presence of both victims and perpetrators, and a history of mass violence. I also focused on areas with high percentages of former Khmer Rouge civilians and cadres, and areas that had had contact with reconciliation activities in the past, and thus links to practitioners. The areas that fit these criteria include primarily the southeast (Kampot Province and Kep Municipality), and the northwest (Battambang and Banteay Meanchey Provinces, and Pailin Municipality).<sup>11</sup> See map on page ix. At the end of the field research phase, ten sites had been visited, four of which were identified as the primary research sites for case study review. Chapter 4 reviews the final selection process and details of the four community case studies.

## Recruitment of Respondents - Snowball Sample

Practitioners, officials, and community members were recruited by 'snowball' or 'chain' sampling. Through the process of the background interviews conducted the year prior to the field research period, and through previous contacts, practitioners and officials who had knowledge or experience in the field of peacebuilding were first identified. From them, and my previous knowledge, sites were selected. Once the village or commune officials had been contacted and interviewed, other respondents were identified from that interview, or through the NGO contact, using the selection criteria for interviews described above.

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<sup>10</sup> In order to protect the identity of my research sites, I have not identified the names of those NGOs.

<sup>11</sup> Siem Reap Province in the north also has a high percentage of former KR, but I focused only on two regions in order to reduce travel time and logistics.

A risk of the snowball technique is that the respondents could be clustered around certain experiences or opinions. In order to combat this risk, I made sure to get referrals from as many people in the community as possible, and also spoke with some people informally. I then used data from different sources to confirm and to validate various pieces of information about the context or particular actors, common to all interviews (Baker 1994: 32; Stark and Torrance 2005: 37). As snowball sampling can be a risk, so can the collection of too much data, which is a problem I struggled with throughout the research process.

An advantage of the snowball technique is to allow a greater chance of serendipitous findings. For example, as I accompanied many NGOs to the field to collect background information, I also learned about particularly interesting stories and findings that informed my choice of primary communities of study.

Through this process of collecting the data, the issue of ethics was of paramount importance, given the sensitivity of the subject matter, and the trauma suffered by the Cambodian victims of mass violence.

## Ethics

Asking people about reconciliation, even if it is happening in the present, usually leads to thinking about the past. Thinking about the past often brings up many bad memories for Cambodians. Thus protocols to protect respondents were particularly important for this research.<sup>12</sup> Because the majority of the interviews were carried out in rural areas where the majority of the population is illiterate, instead of a long, complicated written consent form, a verbal consent form was read aloud (see Appendix F), and then the consent was obtained on tape. Signing a written form (or even having it read to them) would have caused anxiety in the interviewees for several reasons: firstly the context of ethics regulations has no relation to their everyday rural lives; secondly long written documents in Khmer, or especially in English, are

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix E for the Coventry University Ethics Approval Form.

extremely unusual; and finally signing (or thumb printing) forms in Cambodia is often related to unpleasant situations such as human rights violations, bad land deals, or political intimidation. A written consent form was given to participants who were literate in English and who had understanding of university ethics regulations (see Appendix G). The proposal and a consent procedure were approved by the Coventry University Ethics Committee.

As is typical for ethics procedures the following information was included in the verbal and written consents: purpose of the research, description of the researcher, expected duration of the interview, how the information will be kept confidential, the final product of the research, and the rights of the interviewee to decline participation, to withdraw from the interview, to ask questions, and to receive information about the study. In addition, since the subject could be sensitive and could cover topics related to trauma and violence, respondents were given a business card which included contact information for the Khmer-speaking research assistant as well as for the largest local psycho-social counselling services. These services were also explained to the respondents.

During the writing-up period, other precautions were taken to ensure the identity of respondents would not be revealed. Specific references to places or names were removed from quotes if they would identify the respondent or the individual about whom they were talking. Key informants were given pseudonyms. Community locations were not identified. These precautions, and the ones described above, ensured that ethics procedures were followed and that respondents were not put at risk.

## Data Analysis

I read through most transcripts at least four times, making comments and asking the research assistant for clarification about words used and clarifying English translation. As I read through the transcripts, I extracted interesting quotes. The English versions of the individual taped interview transcripts were then coded using the NVivo 7 data analysis software, which assists in analysis of relationships between people, processes, and concepts.<sup>13</sup> NVivo was chosen in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the analysis, because the computer can assist in 'recording, sorting, matching and linking' the data in order to answer the research questions (Bazeley 2007: 2).

An open coding procedure was used, where concepts, groups of concepts clustered into categories, characteristics, and dimensions were coded (Mikkelsen 2005: 182). The 134 formal interviews were coded by text segments related to identified topics and key themes in seven categories: community, context, emotions, individual (characteristics), intervention, justice, and reconciliation. The codes related to reconciliation included: advice to others; apology, acknowledgement, and truth and reconciliation commissions; contact; definition; forget; forgiveness; healing; heart; ECCC and reconciliation; memory and history; mutual assistance; peacebuilding; reintegration and national reconciliation; relationship; reparation; respect; tolerance; and trust. In addition, there were six free nodes that were not included under those main categories, some of which tagged areas of interest for future research. For a more detailed description of the coding process see Appendix H.

When writing and analysing the findings, queries were run: for example all the definitions of reconciliation provided by respondents were compiled, and comparisons

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<sup>13</sup> See the NVivo website: [http://www.qsrinternational.com/products\\_previous-products\\_nvivo7.aspx](http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_previous-products_nvivo7.aspx) Although the current version of this program is now NVivo 9, at the time of the selection of my methods, NVivo 7 was the latest version available, and due to installation problems, as well as the cost of the program, I did not update to the later version.

were made between the various individuals' definitions. All mentions of the word or concept of revenge were reviewed, and then, to check various mitigating factors, revenge was cross-referenced with other codes. For example, a query was run looking at sections of the text which were coded for both revenge and for youth, to see if respondents had any observations about the relative culpability of young perpetrators. As new ideas or possible factors or theories surfaced, clusters could be identified and the meticulous NVivo coding done, allowing me to research these new ideas.

Because of the large number of interviews, and the fact that some were one-, two- and three-person interviews, while others were focus groups, and some were repeated interviews with the same respondents, the analysis of the data using the demographic information (such as examining differences based on gender or age) for each individual was not possible. However, future research could analyse various subsets of the data.

Through the analysis of the qualitative data, the assignment of conceptual tags (such as roles, routines, norms, and relationships) can assist to make sense of the data and compress it into manageable units (Miles and Huberman 1994: 16). As patterns and relationships emerged from the data, explanations or theories were developed. Several such theories and lists of relevant factors have emerged from the data which are the main substance of this thesis and which will be discussed in detail in later chapters:

This section on data analysis has summarized the process used for analysis of the data, and has reviewed the summary/topics of the major theoretical findings of this thesis. I now turn to an overview of the structure of the thesis.

## Thesis Structure

Chapters 2 and 3 comprise the literature review including Cambodia as a post-conflict society; reconciliation as a process; and reconciliation in Cambodia. This important cultural and historical background is necessary to understand the communities of study, and ultimately the situation of reconciliation in Cambodia today, and to answer the research question, 'has reconciliation been achieved in Cambodia.'

Chapter 4 begins with an overview of the ten original study communities, and the two regions in which they sit. Next, a selection of narratives about community members' experiences during the KR regime and a brief conflict analysis is presented to help the reader understand the effects of the mass violence and its aftermath on Cambodian society. Chapter 4 also looks at the macro-level of the communities of study and highlights four communities demonstrating four different types of coexistence (surface, shallow, and two types of moderate coexistence), never reaching a degree of deep reconciliation.

Chapter 5 returns to the micro-level of the individuals in the communities, and looks at victims and perpetrators, and how they have taken on the identity of victim, perpetrator, or former KR (often bystanders). Firstly, several factors affecting victim-perpetrator relationships are identified, including the type and gravity of the offenses and the motivation of the perpetrators. Other general factors such as the community population, the amount of fear in the community, and the proximity of victims and perpetrators in those communities are discussed. Individual factors such as poverty, age and ignorance also have significant effects on victim-perpetrator relations. Secondly, eight coping strategies were identified that have been used by perpetrators to deal with the legacy of their violent past, in their dealings with their former victims.

Chapter 6 changes focus from perpetrators to victims, and how victims struggle to deal with perpetrators. Four types of acceptance are suggested: revenge, non-

acceptance, partial acceptance, and full acceptance. A decision-making tree is introduced to summarize the various levels of acceptance, as well as other factors affecting victim-perpetrator relationships which were reviewed in Chapter 5. Next, factors that affect victims' acceptance of perpetrators are reviewed, which include: education, relations before the KR period, trauma, culture, hierarchy, and patronage. Finally, I return to the model of reconciliation first introduced in Chapter 4 and elaborate upon it with more details from the four example communities.

Chapter 7 looks at the little-studied topic of revenge in Cambodia: what it is, how it happened, and its lingering presence. Then respondents' experiences with revenge are reviewed and cases when revenge was prevented, as well as how perpetrators are dealing with the threat of revenge today. A confession to a revenge killing by a key informant is examined, including reactions to that killing by other members of the community. Several factors are then discussed which influence the tendency of victims to seek revenge. Finally, the relationship between reconciliation and revenge is discussed, as revenge can be a *tool* of reconciliation.

Chapter 8 explores the processes of reconciliation, which are divided into seven categories. The first and most important is the building of relationship, which includes sub-categories such as regard, trust, and interdependence. The second category is re-humanization, compassion, and empathy: though these processes were found to be beginning they were far from close to being achieved. The third category was healing of hearts and minds, which is also an important process especially in Cambodia, as the word heart is often used when discussing reconciliation, and compassion is important in Buddhism.

Chapter 9, the concluding chapter, summarizes the key findings on reconciliation in Cambodia today and the degree to which it has been achieved. It indicates that Cambodia is not yet as fully reconciled as several authors would lead us to believe (Urs 2008; Widyono 2009).

This thesis is an in-depth analysis of Cambodians' views of reconciliation, and how they are managing to live side by side, victim, perpetrators, and bystanders. The narratives of individuals, in particular in four selected communities, help us to understand and explain some typical settings in rural Cambodia today. The purpose of the analysis is to provide insights for other people in similar situations of post-mass-violence who may be able to draw upon lessons learned in Cambodia.



## CHAPTER 2 – History and Culture

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This chapter is divided into two main sections, the first on the historical context, and the second on the cultural context of Cambodia: significant aspects of the socio-political context are highlighted which relate to reconciliation processes and the factors affecting these processes.

The historical context begins with the roots of the situation of post-conflict Cambodia traced back to the vast Angkor Empire of the twelfth century. Angkor has been used as a grand baseline for many leaders, in particular the leaders of the Khmer Rouge (KR). During the KR regime which lasted until 7 January 1979, approximately one-quarter of the population of 7 million (1.7 million) perished from starvation, overwork, or extermination (Ciorciari and Chhang 2005: 250).<sup>1</sup> The KR period is the most significant period influencing reconciliation in Cambodia: the recovery needed from such an assault on society is enormous. A review of the country's recovery through the 1980s and 1990s is next, including a review of the processes of national reconciliation, transitional justice processes, and the trials for those KR leaders (at the ECCC).

The cultural context in the second section of this chapter focuses on the aspects of culture and religion that have been affected by the legacy of war. As the social fabric was torn, normal relationships between young and old, powerful and weak were turned upside down, and trust was destroyed. These social relationships based upon hierarchy, kinship, and patronage were disrupted. Other issues such as the predominant Cambodian style of conflict avoidance also must be considered, as well

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<sup>1</sup> The numbers of people who died during the KR regime varies between one and three million, but the figures most commonly used are either 1.5 to 1.7 million: most recently 1.7 million (BBC 2010; New York Times 2010; Ciorciari and Chhang 2006: 250; Cambodian Genocide Program 2010, Chandler 1991: 236; Kiernan 1993: 13; Kiernan 1996: 456-460; Mydans 2002; and Oveson 2005: 22).

as religion and the spiritual world. Finally, a review of rituals and remembrance completes this chapter's survey of history and context.

## **Historical Context**

### **Before 1975**

Cambodia is well known for its majestic ancient temples of Angkor: the twelfth century marked the zenith of Cambodian society when hundreds of complex structures were built and acres of land cultivated through intricate watering systems (Chandler 1996). Cambodian territory encompassed large parts of Thailand, Vietnam, Burma, and Laos. However, both before and after this period, Cambodia was a land of transitions, with waxing and waning powerful kingdoms relying upon various outside forces – particularly Thailand, Vietnam, China, and France. Although Cambodia is known often as the 'land of smiles', the pleasant and smiling faces of the Cambodian people also hide much conflict, suffering, and frustration.

A central figure in recent Cambodian history is retired King Norodom Sihanouk. He was appointed to the throne in 1941 at the age of 19, and by 1954 managed to end the French protectorate which had started in 1846 (Osborne 1994). Although the French brought some improvements in the administration and infrastructure such as roads and water systems, assistance to the education system was minimal. The French relied upon Vietnamese to staff the ranks of the civil service which seeded long-standing competition and resentment of the Cambodians towards the Vietnamese.

Although young and impetuous, King Sihanouk proved to be a masterful politician and was able to maintain power until 1970 when he was overthrown by the American-backed Lon Nol (Becker 1986). In the 1960s, a group of dissatisfied leftists, including Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Nuon Chea, and Khieu Samphan, began the communist

Party of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK) which Sihanouk named the 'Khmer Rouge' (Chandler 1999; Short 2004).<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the 1960s Sihanouk played an important role in the group of 'non-aligned' states, but he could not avoid getting embroiled in the American War in Vietnam, as he allowed the North Vietnamese to use the supply lines of the Ho Chi Minh trail through Cambodia. The American 'secret' bombings in Cambodia were reported to have killed hundreds of thousands of people and caused up to two million refugees.<sup>3</sup> After Sihanouk was deposed in 1970, he was recruited by the KR and called for the people to join him. As the KR insurgency broadened and deepened, people fled from insecure rural areas, and Phnom Penh's population mushroomed with war refugees, as did other major urban centres. Popular anger against the civil war and US bombings, combined with widespread resentment of the rich urban elite by the poor peasants, and a call to join King Sihanouk was a potent recipe that allowed the Khmer Rouge to eventually gain power.

## **The Khmer Rouge Period**

On 17 April 1975, the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh, evacuated cities, and brought society to 'year zero'. As two million inhabitants of the refugee-filled Phnom Penh were forced to leave with minimal belongings, thousands died. Pol Pot and the other KR leaders took the country to an extreme communal lifestyle, in an attempt to build a pure socialist society, an agrarian utopia – modelled after the Chinese Cultural Revolution (Chandler 1999; Short 2004). All allegiance was to the *Angkar* (the amorphous title of the movement which means 'organization') rather than to the traditional family members, or political patrons. Communal living and work

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<sup>2</sup> In the Cambodian language, surnames are first (Pol or leng) and first names are second (Pot or Sary).

<sup>3</sup> Estimates of deaths of civilians during the civil war period (including from B-52 bombing from American planes) range from 150,000 to 600,000 (Kiljunen 1984: 93; Shawcross 1979: 379; and Owen and Kiernan 2006: 2).

groups were created, families were separated and people were moved back and forth across the country in an attempt to populate rural areas and to break up traditional ties. The forced displacements also attacked Cambodian cultural systems of spirit worship, as they served to sever ties between villagers and the local spirits who resided in their native villages (Kent 2004: 9). These disruptions in social life caused further anxiety and erosion of social fabric.

In reality, a classless society was not created, as 'old' or 'base' (*moulithan*) people, rural farmers, were revered as the 'real' Khmer, and the 'new' or '17 April' people were discriminated against as having come from an indulgent, contaminated past.<sup>4</sup> Amongst the 'new' people, former civil servants, especially Lon Nol soldiers, were targeted first for extermination. People wearing glasses or western dress, reading books, speaking foreign languages, or without calluses from manual labour were suspected as enemies. The entire population (except for the KR cadres who ruled over others from regional, district, commune village, or group posts of authority) was sent to the fields and impossible work tasks were assigned.

The KR attempted to erase centuries of tradition as well as modern development and culture.<sup>5</sup> Religion was abolished, monks were disrobed, Cham Muslims were prevented from practicing their religion, and temples, mosques, and churches were destroyed. Books were burned, libraries destroyed, and modern medicine abolished. Family ties were obliterated, as people often had to eat and live communally and were divided into different kinds of work groups: for children (*kang*

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<sup>4</sup> As 17 April 1975 was the date of the KR takeover, the 'new' people were labelled '17 April' people as elite, bourgeois enemies of the KR state.

<sup>5</sup> The KR used a special language of proverbs mixed with threats and euphemisms, which provide insights into the tactics of the KR regime. For example, to pull up by the roots meant to kill the person and their whole family. To go for education usually meant you were being sent for execution. *Angkar* (the organization or KR leadership) has eyes like a pineapple – in other words is all-seeing so you must always follow the rules. To keep him is no loss; to lose him is no gain – yet another veiled threat that if you do not contribute to the community outputs you will be killed. See Locard's *Pol Pot's Little Red Book* (2004).

*komar*), women (*kang neary*), and for particularly able-bodied men and women, mobile work brigades (*kang chelat*). Parents and children, and husbands and wives were separated. Children were recruited as spies (*chhlop*), and were encouraged to report on their parents – they were also recruited as guards and executioners. Single people were chosen by *Angkar* and married in large group meetings with no traditional ceremonies or family participation. KR military forces were used to guard prisons and some communities, but the majority of the military were sent to border areas (especially the border with Vietnam) to prevent people from escaping but also because border skirmishes continued over the course of the regime.

People worked from dawn to dusk, often into the night, as their rulers ordered them to double or triple previous rice harvests. Food was rationed with most people (again, except for cadre) eating watery rice porridge with a few shreds of vegetables. Survivors talked of being so hungry that they would eat anything – insects, inedible plants, cow skin, anything. Survivors also talked of being treated less than human: 'we were treated like animals' is a common refrain. New people, especially those from some minority groups (Vietnamese, Chinese, and Cham) suffered greater hardship than the 'base' people (Kiernan 1996: 251-312). Other minorities from hill tribes, especially those with dark skin, were labelled 'original Khmer' and Pol Pot recruited many for his bodyguard corps.

The country was divided into six geographical zones, and then into 32 different regions which were assigned numbers. In each region the administrative system was similar to previous administrations, with districts (*srok*), communes or sub-districts (*khum*); but then at the village level, some areas had traditional villages (*phum*) while other areas had cooperatives (*sahakar*). Each district and each region had a prison or detention area, with a central prison established in Phnom Penh: the infamous Tuol Sleng Prison or S-21, which also administered the Choueng Ek Killing Fields. Approximately 14,000 people were killed either at S-21 or the killing fields, often after

having been severely tortured (Chandler 1999: 6). The regime was extraordinarily paranoid and many of those killed, especially in the later years of the regime came from within the KR cadre.

## **Post Khmer Rouge – The People’s Republic of Kampuchea**

Finally in December 1978 Vietnamese soldiers and a core group of former KR cadres pushed into Cambodia and overthrew the Khmer Rouge.<sup>6</sup> While the Vietnamese-backed faction of former KR installed themselves in Phnom Penh, the KR who had been controlling the country under Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, and Nuon Chea fled in disarray to the Thai-Cambodian border, along with thousands of emaciated and devastated refugees.<sup>7</sup>

## **The Situation in Cambodia during the PRK**

Immediately after the fall of the KR, there was mass confusion as the KR either killed their captives or tried to bring them to the Thai-Cambodian border. In the confusion, there are reports of survivors who carried out revenge killings against the KR cadre who killed their relatives (Gottesman 2003: 37-38).<sup>8</sup> Decapitated heads of former KR cadres on sticks lined the road from Phnom Penh to Battambang (IV # 42).<sup>9</sup> Former KR who were unable to flee, but who were not killed in revenge, were captured (or sometimes saved) by Vietnamese soldiers and brought to re-education camps.

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<sup>6</sup> Current Cambodian Peoples’ Party (CPP) President Heng Samrin and Prime Minister Hun Sen were amongst those KR cadres who came in from Vietnam and created the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea (PRK).

<sup>7</sup> Although In the early 1980s these Cambodians were accepted as refugees (including inadequately screened KR) with thousands relocated to third countries, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) only controlled one of the refugee camps and the majority of the population were in other camps in Thailand but were not awarded refugee status. The majority of the refugees went to the US, France, and Australia, where over 300,000 members of the Diaspora play an important though distant role in the political situation, including the creation of the ECCC. See May (2007).

<sup>8</sup> Chapter Seven discusses the issue of revenge and revenge killings in detail.

<sup>9</sup> IV# 42 refers to interview (IV) number (#) 42.

Most were released after some months, though there is little known about the details. Cambodians traversed the country for months, searching for lost family members.

The fledgling Cambodian government was initially called the 'Salvation Front' from which the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) and its governing Revolutionary Council were created (Gottesman 2003; Slocumb 2003). Under the tutelage of their Vietnamese advisors, they immediately set about collecting evidence of the crimes of the KR as well as reopening the Tuol Sleng Prison (S-21) as a museum to preserve the evidence. A People's Revolutionary Tribunal was established by a government decree in 1979, to try the KR leaders.<sup>10</sup> The Tribunal offered 'leniency towards those people who participated in the armed forces or the administration of the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary Clique but are sincerely repentant' (Fawthrop and Jarvis 2004: 42). In August 1979 Pol Pot and Ieng Sary were found guilty in absentia of genocide and other domestic crimes in a trial which has been widely denounced as a biased and unfair show trial (Fawthrop and Jarvis 2004: 47).

In the meantime, while the PRK attempted to pick up the pieces of the shattered society *inside* Cambodia, over a million Cambodians were living across the border in Thailand.

## Refugees in Thailand – the Non-Communist Resistance

While Cambodians in the country struggled to rebuild with help from the Eastern-bloc countries, Western-bloc countries provided assistance to refugees who had fled from Cambodia to Thailand. Several refugee camps were organized, led by three different political factions (which later became political parties): 1) the Khmer Rouge; 2) the royalist FUNCINPEC<sup>11</sup>; and 3) the republican Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) led by former Prime Minister Son Sann. These three factions

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<sup>10</sup> The Tribunal focused on three KR leaders: Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, and Khieu Samphan.

<sup>11</sup> FUNCINPEC is the 'Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopératif' (acronym in French used in English).

were combined into the non-communist resistance groups (NCR) which served as a front organization to sanitize the KR involvement in the coalition, thus allowing Western-bloc countries to provide aid.<sup>12</sup>

In 1979 there were over one million Cambodians at the Thai-Cambodian border camps, which gradually decreased to 360,000 in 1993 when the camps finally closed. A civil war was waged: between the NCR (including the KR and the other two non-communist groups, or Para) and the Vietnamese-backed government of the PRK which continued through the 1980s. Throughout the 1980s cold war politics placed a Western embargo on the PRK, while the Cambodian UN seat was held by the KR (also representing the NCR). Finally by the late 1980s the Cold War was ending, and the superpowers were tiring of supporting the proxy war in Cambodia. The PRK readied itself for a new phase, and instituted many changes to create a more liberal facade. Monks were allowed to be ordained freely, the name of government was changed to the State of Cambodia (SOC), and, most importantly, in 1989 the Vietnamese troops were withdrawn. These changes were in preparation for peace talks, which ushered in the next period of UN intervention.

## **The UN Period**

Various attempts were made to negotiate a settlement between the four parties through the 1980s, which failed until 1991, when the Paris Peace Agreements were signed. King Norodom Sihanouk relinquished his title to become a Prince, so that he could provide a unifying umbrella for the four factions. A quadripartite power-sharing formula was guaranteed by 19 countries, and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was created. UNTAC spent US\$2 billion in 1992 and 1993 to: 1) demobilize and disarm troops, 2) hold elections, 3) return 360,000 refugees, 4) reform the civil administration, 5) enforce and educate about human rights and

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<sup>12</sup> The NCR was not formally created until 1982. The non-KR groups in the NCR were called informally in Cambodia 'Para'.



democracy. The ultimate aim was to achieve peace and reconciliation. Although UNTAC achieved much of its mandate such as elections and repatriation, future democratic development in Cambodia was hampered because administrative and judicial reform, and human rights enforcement were never carried out (Findlay 1995: 106). After the 1993 elections, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) was created, with a co-minister system where posts were split between the two winning parties of Cambodian People's Party (CPP successor party to the PRK) and FUNCINPEC. Most of the entrenched PRK power structures of the 1980s remained in place, and as FUNCINPEC lost power over the years, these structures solidified with CPP as the main controlling force of the executive, legislative, and the judiciary (Gottesman 2003).

Unfortunately in 1992, the KR withdrew from the UNTAC process and re-camped along the Thai-Cambodian border, continuing a civil war through 1998. Although UNTAC was widely heralded as a success: 'In Cambodia, the peace process left behind contradiction, not reconciliation in the political arena' (Doyle 2001: 102). We now turn to the post-UNTAC period.

## **Post-UNTAC Cambodia**

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) was created in 1993 after the UNTAC-run elections. The RGC continued to limp along as it attempted to rebuild a devastated infrastructure, both physical and psychological. Although aid poured into the country, rebuilding was slow due to the legacy of war and a lack of educated civil servants, political infighting between the major parties, and an environment of corruption, weak judiciary, lack of accountability, and human rights abuses.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The Cambodian judiciary is fraught with problems and is often cited as being corrupt, incompetent, and not independent (Amnesty International 2000; Un 2009: 71; World Bank 2004). These reports note that the judiciary, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, indeed the entire government is controlled by the ruling party, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP).

In 2010, the population was over 15 million people. Literacy rates are variably quoted, but are quite low in the region, with the high estimates at 76 percent for women and 85 percent for men (Population Reference Bureau 2010). Eighty percent of the population is from rural areas and primarily engaged in agriculture. The economic and health situation is poor: life expectancy is only 61 years, 36 percent of children under five years of age are malnourished, only 18 percent of rural populations are using improved sanitation (Population Reference Bureau 2010). While 78 percent of the population lives on less than two US dollars per day (the highest percentage in the Southeast Asia region) and 36 percent live on less than one US dollar per day, the per capita gross national income increased from US\$280 in 2000 to US\$ 430 in 2005 – the gap between the urban rich and rural poor is rising with the problem of landlessness increasing (World Bank 2006).

Young people under 15 years of age comprise 35 percent of the population, and thus a large proportion of the Cambodian population only knows of the KR regime from hearing from their parents, neighbours, or media (Population Reference Bureau 2010).<sup>14</sup> However, the legacy of the war remains strong upon even these young people. The next section summarizes the after-effects of the wars and the KR regime upon Cambodian society.

## **The Legacy of War**

Many cleavages were created or exacerbated in Cambodian society after this convoluted history, including the KR period of mass violence between: urban (or ‘new’ people) and rural (or ‘base’ people); former KR and non-KR; direct victims, perpetrators, and bystanders; returning refugees from the border camps and those who never left the country; Cambodians in the Diaspora and those who stayed in

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<sup>14</sup> Cambodians under the age of 30 at the time of this research (in 2008) would have been born in 1978 at the very end of the KR regime and could have no distinct memories of the regime.

Cambodia or at the border; and most recently between different members of political parties.

Cambodians still suffer from the effects of these protracted civil wars as individuals, families, and armies changed alliances and ideologies over the years. The legacy of the KR and civil war is still felt today, as such a large proportion of educated people were killed, infrastructure destroyed, and social fabric torn apart: A government report from September 1983 gave the following figures for those who died: 594 doctors, pharmacists and dentists; 675 lawyers and professors; 18,000 teachers; 10,550 students, 191 journalists; and 1,120 artists.' Only seven lawyers survived (Fawthrop and Jarvis 2004: 15 and 41).

As mentioned above, human rights violations are common, and the judicial system is weak. Weapons are still widely available, and the violence which occurs in today's society is often attributed to the past history. The social fabric was frayed, social order upset, and trust was broken. In addition, there are high incidences of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as the stress and fear of the ongoing civil war continued through the late 1990s. We now turn to the topic of trauma in Cambodian society.

## Trauma

Traumatic events that almost all Cambodians were subject to are events that: 'involve threats to lives or bodies; produce terror and feelings of helplessness; overwhelm an individual's or group's ability to cope or respond to the threat; lead to a sense of loss of control; and challenge a persons' or group's sense that life is meaningful and orderly.' (Yoder 2005: 10). Layered on top of these specific traumatic events is the trauma caused by structural violence that includes poverty, and the lack of development, security, and human rights, especially in the rural areas.<sup>15</sup>

After the terror, starvation, overwork, and instability of Cambodia's past, especially the KR period, many Cambodians are plagued with health problems that include mental health disorders, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease (Kuoich and Scully 1998). The mental health disorders include major depression, anxiety disorder, PTSD, and conversion disorder (loss of specific sensory or motor functions without any organic cause) (van de Put and Eisenbruch 2002: 104).<sup>16</sup> Sonis et al. report that the incidence of PTSD in the Cambodian population over the age of 18 is 11 percent (2009: 535), while de Jong, Komproe and van Ommeren found a 28 percent incidence of PTSD (2004: 2129). In the United States, where many more studies have taken place, the rates of PTSD in Cambodian refugees have been reported as high as 62 percent (Marshall et al. 2005: 571). However, the very concept of trauma and PTSD in non-Western countries has been debated, as these categories may not be sufficient to understand all the underlying cultural and psychological meanings (Beneduce 2007: 43; Pouligny, Chesterman and Schabel 2007: 6). Although these rates of PTSD are very high, psychosocial services have taken years to develop and are widely insufficient.

In spite of the grave and almost insurmountable legacy of war described above, there were efforts made towards national reconciliation which finally contributed to the peace that Cambodia is enjoying today. These are reviewed in the next section.

## **National Reconciliation**

Many negotiations were attempted by various governments and politicians in the 1980s and 1990s to encourage the former KR to defect to the government. Starting

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<sup>15</sup> On a societal level, the effects of trauma and mass violence may be linked to increased levels of violence such as rape and domestic violence (Barsalou 2005: 4).

<sup>16</sup> Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) developed from the 1980s as a model to understand suffering caused by a wide variety of traumatic events; it is characterized by the presence of three categories of symptoms -- re-experiencing the traumatic event, hyper-arousal and withdrawal and numbing (Breslau 2004:113, 115).

in the late 1980s and resuming after the politically neutral hiatus during UNTAC, the RGC pursued a two-pronged approach in dealing with their political opponents: while continuing a civil war, they also pursued a policy of national reconciliation, trying to win over the former KR in order to control the entire Cambodian territory. These attempts to encourage the KR to defect to the RGC through their policy of national reconciliation were also known as 'Prime Minister Hun Sen's Win-Win Policy'. As part of the Win-Win Policy, in 1994, the RGC passed a law which amnestied KR members who defected between 7 July 1994 and 7 January 1995 (Royal Government of Cambodia 1994).

KR leaders finally started defecting in 1994 in Kampot Province in southeast Cambodia. Two major strongholds in the northwest defected in 1996 (senior leaders Nuon Chea and Ieng Sary from Pailin and Khieu Samphan from Malai).<sup>17</sup> KR leaders Pol Pot and Ta Mok held out in Siem Reap Province's Anlong Veng until Pol Pot was captured by his fellow KR comrades in June 1997. After a pro forma 'show' trial, Pol Pot died on 16 April 1998. Finally the last holdout, Ta Mok was arrested in 1998 and brought to the military prison in Phnom Penh. This marked the official end of the KR regime and the civil war, and Prime Minister Hun Sen claimed the success of his 'Win-Win Policy' of national reconciliation. This policy, however, has been an entirely 'top-down' process with little input from grassroots levels of society. These efforts at national reconciliation can be considered part of transitional justice mechanisms to which we turn next.

## **Transitional Justice Mechanisms**

In the 30 years that have passed since the end of Khmer Rouge rule, many models of transitional justice mechanisms to deal with accountability for serious human rights abuses have been established, including truth commissions, civil sanctions or vetting, reparations, apologies, memorials, commemorations, and community

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<sup>17</sup> After Ieng Sary defected the RGC issued a Royal Decree from the 1979 People's Tribunal, pardoning Ieng Sary from the death sentence for his conviction.

reconciliation mechanisms (Minow 1998).<sup>18</sup> The ECCC, a mixed national and international tribunal, was the primary solution chosen by Cambodia to deal with the crimes committed by the KR leaders.<sup>19</sup> However, the judiciary is weak, and the Cambodian public has little trust in the courts. In spite of these weaknesses, the ECCC as one tool of transitional justice (and some claim ultimately towards reconciliation) is well underway.

Other complementary means to assist societies in recovering from mass violence have already been undertaken in Cambodia, most importantly by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) which has documented the crimes of the KR, and more recently conducted activities to promote reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> Many other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have conducted a wide variety of activities to educate people about the KR regime and the ECCC, to create memorials, and to promote reconciliation.<sup>21</sup>

Some other examples of activities to deal with the legacy of the past are on-going and based on Cambodian culture and tradition (the yearly ceremonies to honour the ancestors or *Bun Pchum Ben*, and other ceremonies to honour those who have died) while others are more recent additions to Cambodian society (the public 'Day of

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<sup>18</sup> Transitional justice is defined as: 'a response to systematic or widespread violations of human rights. It seeks recognition for victims and to promote possibilities for peace, reconciliation and democracy. Transitional justice is not a special form of justice but justice adapted to societies transforming themselves after a period of pervasive human rights abuse' (International Center for Transitional Justice n.d.).

<sup>19</sup> The ECCC is currently predicted to be completed in 2014 (Open Society Justice Initiative 2010).

<sup>20</sup> See Documentation Center of Cambodia website: [www.dcccam.org](http://www.dcccam.org). DC-Cam's mission is captured in their monthly publication titled: 'Searching for the Truth'. Their many projects include documenting written, photographic, and other materials; gathering histories; interviewing victims and perpetrators; researching various topics such as particular minority groups and the former KR military; planning public memorials; surveys; writing competitions; translation of materials; and reconciliation mechanisms including production of plays and films. Their public information room opened in 2005 and includes a library, education centre to show films, a café shop welcome point, and a tribunal response team to provide research assistance to the public (Documentation Center of Cambodia 2005: 42).

<sup>21</sup> These are discussed in later chapters.

Hate' holiday, community reintegration projects, and conflict resolution training) (Etcheson 2004; McGrew 2006). These are discussed below in the section on Cambodian culture and religion. The next section covers the ECCC.

## The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)

In July 2006, the UN and the RGC agreed to set up a 'mixed' or hybrid tribunal to try the senior leaders and those most responsible of the Khmer Rouge regime: the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia or ECCC. This has been to date the most important step in transitional justice since the ending of the KR Regime almost thirty years before, and many have claimed that the trials will bring national reconciliation.<sup>22</sup>

The law to create the 'Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia to Prosecute the Crimes Committed during the period of Democratic Kampuchea from 17 April 1975 to 7 January 1979' was passed by the National Assembly then signed by the King on 10 August 2001. On 6 June 2003 the United Nations and the RGC signed the agreement to establish the ECCC which is a mixed (Cambodian and international) or hybrid court to try 'senior leaders' or those 'most responsible'. One trial has been completed, for that of Duch, the Director of S-21 Prison, and he was found guilty. The second trial should be starting in 2011, of four senior leaders (Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary, and Ieng Thirith).<sup>23</sup>

The ECCC however is trying only the senior leaders and those most responsible. Neither the Cambodian leaders nor the international community seemed

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<sup>22</sup> For example Prime Minister Hun Sen stated: 'The trial of the Khmer Rouge leaders will be a fair ending of its political organization after they were finished politically and militarily. We will not forget about justice as we will never forget about national reconciliation, peace and stability. The two objectives could be compared to heart and lung of every one of us; i.e. we cannot go without either one of them' (Hun 2000: 2).

<sup>23</sup> Evidence for a third trial has been collected by the prosecution but this trial has been resisted by the Cambodian government and may not take place.

ready to discuss the thornier issue of lower level perpetrators. One other mechanism of transitional justice is through truth-telling.

## Truth-Telling Mechanisms

Truth-telling and acknowledgement are important aspects of transitional justice and reconciliation processes, in that the nature and extent of the human rights violations need to be widely known and understood, but also acknowledged by victims, perpetrators, governments, and the international community. Many in and outside of Cambodia think that this 'truth' is especially important for the younger generations and for other countries, and the refrain 'never again' is often repeated.

To date, both the Cambodian government and NGOs have done a great deal to document the past crimes of the KR regime.<sup>24</sup> Most of the government efforts were undertaken in the early 1980s when Cambodia was under Vietnamese tutelage so, given the cold war politics of the time, these efforts were almost entirely discounted by the West. And indeed they were far from independent, fair, or neutral. They do however provide a strong basis for the current ECCC, as well as some of the broader transitional justice mechanisms that are being considered by some NGOs.

This summary of transitional justice mechanisms marks the end of the section on the historical context. We next turn to a review of Cambodian culture and religion, which will assist us in understanding the challenges facing the Cambodian people as they struggle to recover from the years of mass violence.

## Cambodian Culture and Religion

Cambodia's unique cultural mix profoundly shapes the way the people have responded to the mass violence, and how they are recovering. Cambodians are

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<sup>24</sup> See page 33 above describing the activities of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) which is the primary organization documenting the crimes of the KR.



primarily Buddhist (96 percent) while two percent are Cham Muslim and about one percent Christian (Central Intelligence Agency 2010).<sup>25</sup> The majority of Cambodians are ethnic Khmer (90 percent), while five percent are Vietnamese, one percent are Chinese, and another four percent are other groups (including hill tribes as well as Cham Muslims) (Central Intelligence Agency 2010).<sup>26</sup> Buddhism profoundly shapes the Cambodian identity: 'To Be Khmer Is to Be Buddhist' (Smith-Hefner 1999: 21-63). However ancient Hinduism and animistic spirit worship also affect Cambodians' views and practices of everyday life. The majority of the population (80 percent) has been for centuries (and still is) involved in agriculture in rural areas – life and the many traditional ceremonies revolve around the rice cultivation system.

## **Governed Space - Administrative Structures**

The smallest unit of government settlements in Cambodia is the village (*phum*), with several villages making up a commune (*khum*), several communes making up a district (*srok*) and several districts making up a province (*khet*). There are 21 provinces, and two municipalities in Cambodia: this research has focused on two regions (southwest and northwest) due to the presence of former KR strongholds in those areas.<sup>27</sup> The village and commune structures are the most important for regulating how the population, and thus victims and perpetrators, relate to each other.

The village chief is the main authority figure in most villagers' lives. He (there are only a handful of female village chiefs) decides who gets assistance, how conflicts

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<sup>25</sup> While the Cham culture and Muslim religion, as well as Christian and other hill tribe practices are also unique and important, this research study was only able to focus on the majority Buddhist identity.

<sup>26</sup> Cambodia (or Kampuchea) is the name of the country, the people are called Cambodians, but since most of the population is ethnic Khmer, the words Cambodian and Khmer are often used interchangeably. The language spoken in Cambodia can be called either Cambodian or Khmer.

<sup>27</sup> The southwest region includes Kampot and Kampong Som Provinces, and Kep Municipality, while the northwest region includes Battambang and Banteay Meanchey Provinces, and Pailin municipality.

are solved, and where roads and schools are built. Most village chiefs are political party appointees, if not formally then informally and thus they are also responsible for ensuring that the entire village votes for their party (which is predominantly the ruling Cambodian People's Party). Villagers who join opposition parties will not receive assistance from the village chief. Quite a few of the village chiefs have served in their positions since 1979, though some of them have moved up into positions in the commune or have retired due to old age or ill health. In a few cases, the village chief from the KR period remained so under the PRK regime. Some village chiefs have been chosen fairly by the elected commune council and are chosen on the basis of their charisma, fairness, or administrative and leadership skills.<sup>28</sup>

Other individuals in villages (usually elders) may be consulted for various issues such as solving conflicts or other advice, and these can include monks, *Achars* (Buddhist laymen who serve as advisors of the temples), teachers or businesspeople. In the past, these elders (*chas tum*) played an important role in village affairs, including guiding moral behaviour and solving local conflicts. However, the elders' role has been diminished partly due to the village chief's authority from the CPP, and partly due to the destruction of the social bonds during the years of war (Luco 2002: 103).

Although there have been many recent efforts at decentralization, and many UN and government programs have supported the creation of village development committees, the village chief system retains the most power. The village chief reports to the commune chief, then to the district chief and to the provincial governor. There are police at the commune and district levels, though there is also a system of informal village militia – which played an important role in party control, law enforcement and military defence in the 1980s and 1990s.

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<sup>28</sup> Commune councils were first elected by national election in 2002, with a second election in 2007. Each commune council includes from five to 11 members, depending upon the population of the commune.

## Violence and Security

Traditionally, extreme violence has been carried out against enemies (Oveson 2005: 40-41, Vickery 1984: 7). But this extreme violence was perfected by the KR through the practice of 'annihilating' one's enemies (Hinton 1998: 112). In the 1980s the PRK cultivated the feelings of insecurity so as to encourage the population to fight the evil KR 'genocidal clique'.

As a culture of violence was present in Cambodia after the years of mass violence and civil war, fear of future violence stayed with many survivors for decades, especially those that lived in the war-affected areas in the northwest and southwest of Cambodia. The country is still awash in weapons, and there is much political violence. Law and order remains a challenge as the security forces are underpaid, and corruption is rampant. As a result of the KR tactics, basic trust was lost and remains lost (Eisenbruch 2007: 93). Mistrust lies just below the surface of everyday village life: 'at the slightest hurdle, mistrust comes running back' (Luco 2002: 87). Luco also emphasized the divisions between insiders and outsiders in the village, with a profound lack of trust of outsiders (2002: 13-14).<sup>29</sup> Although Cambodians often refer to themselves as 'we' Khmer (*Khmer yeung*), this does not imply a strong sense of nationality, rather only excludes people who are different than they are, that is, not Khmer (Luco 2002: 13). Villagers rely on family and patron networks as important sources for security and power. Additional security is sought from spiritual powers which play an important role in Cambodia.

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<sup>29</sup> The following quote provides a picture of traditional Cambodian society that shows the challenges of reintegrating victims and perpetrators after a period of mass violence:

A Cambodian *srok* is rather impenetrable and outsiders are not readily admitted. To fit in, one must abide by an implicit code of conduct that demands people do not draw attention to themselves, know their place and avoid causing trouble. Individuals who stand out because of peculiar behaviour are pushed aside. The only options available are either to fit into the social mould and be tolerated or face being ostracized by the locals, or to leave (move to a different area, join the army, enter the monkhood). In some extreme cases, populations have been known to physically eliminate the culprit, under accusations of witchcraft. Indeed, someone who is 'different' will often be suspected of communicating with supernatural forces (Luco 2002: 13-14).

To maintain security the village chief can call upon members of informal militia, and also upon commune-level police. The security apparatus also relies upon district and provincial police forces, as well as provincial-level military. The threat of imminent attack from military groups from inside or outside Cambodia has been eliminated. However, the population has not been able to rely on the security forces to keep them safe, as the forces have often been involved in human rights abuses. Moreover, some areas especially close to the borders may be more insecure due to trafficking in drugs, timber, and people.

## **Social Structure and Social Space**

Cambodia has a conservative, traditional society that puts high value on discretion, humility, modesty, hierarchy, and responsibility to parents. As noted by many authors, Cambodian systems of hierarchy and patronage are deep, extensive, and operate very differently from the west (Chandler 1996; Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002; Luco 2002; Roberts 2009). Status and rank are important and even in everyday speech Cambodians estimate their position in relation to others (based on age, wealth, or position) in order to choose the correct greetings. Nuclear families operate as units, with extended family in looser relationships. Most people have patrons, to whom they provide allegiance and support in exchange for protection.

Social relationships are very sensitive to public shaming, especially in the context of the hierarchical structure which will be discussed further below. Shame is explained through the concept of 'face' (*mok*) and is extremely important in Cambodian relationships: to lose face (*bak' mok*) can also be translated as to feel ashamed. Cambodians usually try to avoid open conflict or other situations where they may be required to admit a mistake or wrongdoing to another. It is much safer to tell someone what they are presumed to want to hear, than to risk making the person upset or

angry. Losing an argument causes a loss of face, which then threatens one's position in society.

## Family Structure

The family (traditionally mother, father, children, maternal grandparents) is the smallest unit of social organization.<sup>30</sup> The family unit works together to provide economically and all members of the family participate. Traditionally, for the majority of families marriages are arranged as an extension of the family economic and social unit. At marriage, the young man will usually move to the wife's village, but if possible all new couples will have their own house.<sup>31</sup>

During the KR period, often not only was the suspected traitor killed, but so was the whole family – KR slogans referred to pulling up the roots with the tree. Part of this could have been paranoia, but part rooted in Khmer culture, as nuclear family ties were so strong. There are also several proverbs about lengthy cycles of revenge over generations – thus eliminating an entire family is a means to avoid retaliation. Hinton has described this strong revenge reaction as 'disproportionate revenge' (2005: 25-27).

In the immediately post-KR period, the government created 'solidarity groups' (*krom samaki*). These were mandatory family groupings, to allow widows or those without able-bodied men to join forces in order to harvest crops. These groups were not very popular and by 1983 most families had reverted to traditional nuclear family groupings (Slocumb 2003: 104-111). Thus the nuclear family remains the most important social structure in Cambodia.

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<sup>30</sup> In urban areas this structure may differ due to economic and space reasons, and in many areas there are other forms of family structures as there are many widows and female-headed households.

<sup>31</sup> This practice of arranged marriage is gradually decreasing, as increasingly offspring are allowed to choose their own spouses, especially in urban areas.

## Hierarchy, Kinship, Patronage, and Power

Social structures in Cambodia are organized according to status, position, and rank. There are strict social guidelines about relating to people of different status (depending on age, gender, social status, and wealth) which are echoed in the language. When addressing another person titles must be chosen based on the relationship between the two; in addition there are special languages for royalty and monks which reflects the hierarchical system. Cambodians must be obedient to their social superiors and show deference towards them. The heights at which one's hands are held in the traditional greeting are strictly ordered, with hands held higher for a more important person. Patron-client relations are central to the structure of Cambodian society, and a dominant feature (Roberts 2009: 10). While the patron offers protection, the client offers allegiance. Power relations between the two parties are usually unequal, as the patron is more powerful than the client (Ledgerwood and Vijghen 2002: 110-111).

Another important aspect of social structure related to relationships between victims and perpetrators is Cambodian dispute resolution styles.

## Dispute Resolution Styles

In Cambodian culture one of the most important societal rules is to maintain balance and harmony – arguments, conflicts, mistakes, and going outside traditional rules all may result in loss of face and possibly even social ostracism. This rule could also be described as a desire to 'stay out of trouble' (Oveson 2005: 37). This approach of avoidance can also be a form of 'self-preservation' in order to avoid collision with outsiders of greater social power (Zucker 2009: 34-35). These rules are also followed as disputes are resolved: the most important outcome is the maintenance of social harmony, and root causes of conflict and other important issues may be papered over. Anger is seen as a negative characteristic in Cambodian culture, and sometimes

serves to isolate people (van de Put and Eisenbruch 2002: 107). Dispute resolution in the countryside is usually in the form of facilitation (*samrap samruol*) or mediation (*samroh samruol*) with the goal to smooth over relationships (Urs 2007: 67). In addition, Cambodian culture encourages the Buddhist principle of forbearance (*khanti*) in order to avoid and prevent conflict 'to stay calm and search for a peaceful resolution of the conflict' (Prum 2006: 20; Morris 2004).

But there are contradictions: even under the umbrella of the Buddhist principles not to kill and to forgive and forget one's feelings of anger and vengeance: in today's Cambodia mob and witch killings are prevalent (United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia 2002).<sup>32</sup> 'Self-help justice' in Cambodia can be swift. In some cases of murder, families prefer to kill the suspected perpetrator quickly and face the legal system themselves, as they feel they owe a debt to their slain relative.<sup>33</sup> Most ordinary conflicts are settled in the family however. If this does not work, a village chief or sometimes an elder at the temple can be consulted. Going to the court is the last resort. In fact the most frequent way of settling the conflict is to ignore it and try to forget. It is better to repress one's anger and maintain harmony (Bagdasar 1993: 110-120). This then evokes a paradox between forgiveness and repressed anger. While forgiveness and conflict avoidance are important cultural tendencies, when anger is repressed it can take a long time to forgive, if ever. These cultural characteristics can lead to volatile situations when repressed anger escapes, or to smouldering situations as anger is repressed for years. These issues are discussed at length in Chapter Eight on the processes of reconciliation. Another

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<sup>32</sup> Although I am not focusing in this thesis upon judicial solutions, I should point out that the above conflict styles are in contradiction to an adversarial justice system used in common law systems. Although the ECCC is based on a Cambodian civil law system, there are many common law and adversarial functions that are in contradiction to the indigenous Cambodian approach to dispute resolution.

<sup>33</sup> This issue of revenge killing is discussed extensively in Chapter Seven.

important aspect to increase understanding of Cambodian social reconstruction is religion and the spiritual world.

## Religion, the Spiritual World, and Remembrance

Buddhism and the Cambodian spiritual world profoundly shape the Cambodian worldview and these beliefs must be considered in the process of reconciliation. Cambodia is primarily a Theravada Buddhist country. Cambodia is one of the few countries in the world where Buddhism is the religion of the state. However since Buddhism did not flourish until the sixth century, the influences of Brahmanism, Hinduism, and Animism are still strong in the Cambodian culture. For the majority of Cambodians, all activities of daily life are influenced by their religious and spiritual beliefs. Some traditional beliefs are shared by all religious groups such as belief in the spiritual world, the importance of ancestors, and ritual practices performed by traditional healers.

Buddhist teachings or *dharma*, instruct followers to respect the five precepts, pray to Buddha, give rice and donations to monks, and do other acts to gain merit so as to gain a good position in the next life.<sup>34</sup> All actions have consequences in this or the next life and are seen in a good (*bon* or merit) or bad (*bop*) dichotomy - do good receive good, do bad receive bad. One's *karma* is of key importance and making merit for the next life is the main activity for many people (including several of the former KR leaders). The threat of Buddhist hell remains overhead with graphic photos of the various torments painted on the walls of pagodas.

In spite of the attempts by the KR to destroy culture and religion, and a repression of religion during the PRK rule, Buddhism was not destroyed.<sup>35</sup> However,

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<sup>34</sup> The five precepts are you shall not: kill, lie, drink alcohol, commit adultery, and steal.

<sup>35</sup> An integral part of the KR reign of terror was to destroy religion by disrobing and killing monks. Approximately 50 percent of the 50,000 monks were reported to have been killed, but only 1,000 returned to the monkhood (Fawthrop and Jarvis 2004: 15). The KR also physically destroyed temples, or used temples as prisons, pig sties, torture centres, and burial grounds.



not all Cambodians today follow all five precepts nor are most Cambodians knowledgeable about Buddhist theory. Older Cambodians frequently worship at the Buddhist temples, but those of middle and young ages less often.

The majority of Cambodians do share a deep belief in the significance of the spirit world. The forest spirits which are also ancestor spirits (*neak ta*) are extremely important and are worshipped daily and in times of need. Bad events may be perceived in terms of punishments from the *neak ta*, spirits who will have to then be appeased with special ceremonies. Traditional healers including monks, fortune-tellers, traditional healers (*Kru Khmer*) and mediums are also important sources of comfort and cure.<sup>36</sup>

## Honouring the Dead

Traditional and religious approaches to the legacy of the KR regime are many, in particular within families, to mourn their lost relatives. Many Buddhists offer daily prayers to the ancestors<sup>37</sup>, and when they give rice to the monks. The Buddhist *Bun Pchum Ben* (Ceremony of the Ancestors), *Kathin* (Buddhist Lent), funerals, and other

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Churches were destroyed as were mosques, and Cham Muslims were prohibited from practicing any religious rituals and were for example forced to eat pork. In 1979 only about 1,000 monks remained in the monkhood (Fawthrop and Jarvis 2004: 15). In the 1980s the PRK brought Khmer Krom monks from Southern Vietnam to re-start the Buddhist clergy (*sangha*); during this period the Supreme Patriarch Tep Vong also held a series of political offices. Throughout most of the 1980s, men over age 50 were not allowed to be monks. However in 1989, as the PRK tried to shed its socialist skin, more monks were ordained and temples rebuilt -- in the 1990s there were thousands of dollars donated by Cambodians inside (even poor Cambodians would eke out money to donate) as well as the Diaspora to renovate temples all over the country.

<sup>36</sup> Traditional healers are often consulted when people are suffering either physical or mental ailments. Sometimes the illness is blamed on roaming souls, and special ceremonies are done to appease them, sometimes including traditional medicines or other methods such as sprinkling holy water. Mediums can be consulted to contact lost relatives as well. These ceremonies are often very helpful to the sufferer who believes in these methods, though the youth today are less interested in these traditional methods. Astrology and fortune-tellers are also often consulted and, again, can provide relief. Traditional healers use various methods of resolving community disharmony including treating thinking-too-much madness, lovesickness madness, and ancestral spirit disorder (Eisenbruch 2007: 92).

<sup>37</sup> Many Cambodians have spirit houses outside their homes to attract the bad spirits from the home, and where offerings are left to ancestors and other departed souls; there are also small shrines inside many homes.

ceremonies are practiced widely, and all provide opportunity to remember the dead. The Khmer New Year (in April) is also an important holiday on which Cambodians remember their ancestors.<sup>38</sup>

### *Burial Rituals*

During the KR regime, traditional ceremonies including funerals and cremations were prohibited, only resuming in 1979. Although most Cambodians are cremated and the urn with ashes is placed inside other shrines (stupas) or in the Buddhist temples, some Cambodians (especially Chinese-Cambodians) are buried in coffins in burial grounds on ancestral lands. Cham Muslims have burials and cemeteries with identification of individuals in graves. For many who perished during the KR regime, funeral rites were not done, and the location of remains of loved ones is unknown.

Many Cambodians offer daily prayers for their ancestors, providing favourite foods and drinks in small shrines in the house or spirit houses outdoors.<sup>39</sup> Given the importance of burial rituals and of the various holidays to respect one's ancestors, and the livings' obligations to free their wandering souls from eternal suffering, it would presumably be important for Cambodians who lost loved ones to find their remains and do ceremonies, even if many years later. Although some families have done this, the majority have not. Some do not have the means to search. Many have no idea where *Angkar* took their lost family members. Many perhaps cannot bear to return to the scene of so much suffering. Some families invite monks to their homes on particular days of significance to pray to Buddha and honour their departed relatives. There is thus a conceptual conflict for Cambodians, between the importance of burial rituals and annual paying of respects to ancestors, and the lack of a specific location to carry out these ceremonies. A complete process of social reconstruction and reconciliation

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<sup>38</sup> The Khmer New Year is recognized by all Cambodians except the Cham, who instead remember their ancestors during Eid and Ramadan.

<sup>39</sup> In the KR controlled areas, traditional ceremonies including funerals and cremations were prohibited after 1973, and then throughout the KR period, only resuming in 1979.

will require alternative methods to deal with the issue of the many missing relatives in Cambodia.

### *Ceremony of the Ancestors (Bun Pchum Ben)*

*Bun Pchum Ben*, held towards the end of September, and celebrated for at least three days, but sometimes as long as 15 days. During *Bun Pchum Ben*, families visit about five different temples, and try to return to their home villages, to pay respect to their ancestors by making offerings: Cambodians believe that during this period the souls of the dead are freed from hell to search for relatives, offerings, and redemption. This holiday is of great importance for all Cambodians (except Cham Muslims) to commemorate relatives and friends who died during the KR regime. *Bun Pchum Ben* serves as a unifying national process for Cambodians, a necessary acknowledgement ceremony to allow wandering spirits to rest, and to focus on the living by recognizing all of the deaths that occurred – of both victims and perpetrators.<sup>40</sup>

Besides these religious and spiritual means to honour those who died during the KR regime, there are also secular holidays focusing on remembering Cambodia's brutal past.

### Government Holidays to Remember the Past

There are three main non-religious holidays related to remembering the past. 'Liberation Day' (7 January) commemorates the day the Vietnamese troops and their Cambodian colleagues (of the PRK) overthrew the KR. On 17 April the KR took over Phnom Penh (in 1975), and 20 May is the 'Day of Hate'. Both 7 January and 17 April are overtly political holidays, reminding people not to forget the PRK saving the population from the KR and the bad years of the KR period. The origins of the 20 May holiday are more obscure. In Cambodia in 1982 the PRK created a 'Research

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<sup>40</sup> The *Pchum Ben* ceremony brings both aspects of individual and collective mourning and memory together: 'The notion of private and public is also articulated through the combination of paying respect to the deceased of one's own family as well as to the deceased of the community as a whole' (Ly 2005: 2).

Committee into the Crimes of the Pol Pot Regime' which gathered petitions and produced a report in July of 1983 documenting the deaths during the regime (Fawthrop and Jarvis 2004: 72). In August 1983, the PRK National Assembly formally recognized the report, created a national 'Day of Tying Anger' (*thngai chang kamhoeng*) also known as the 'Day of Hate', and the committee also called for the construction of memorials and gathering of evidence throughout Cambodia. In the 1980s, the government was clearly and openly using this day to remind people of the suffering of the KR period, to give them the motivation to continue the gruelling and painful civil war against the former KR perpetrators. The purpose was also to remind Cambodians of their indebtedness to Vietnam for liberating them and Hughes notes that the day is clearly not only a commemoration day (2000: 39-42).

The Day of Hate has not been a public holiday, and spontaneous celebrations by the population did not occur. But in the 1980s the entire population participated in ceremonies at killing fields and KR prison sites around the country, including school children who listened to their teachers talking about their painful memories and vigilance to fight the KR. However, its prominence has been gradually decreasing over the years and in 2008 there were only scattered events held in the capital Phnom Penh, and some provincial headquarters, organized by the ruling political party (CPP).

This chapter has shown how conflict has been a dominant thread throughout Cambodia's history, both ancient and recent. Of particular importance for this research study were the years of the Khmer Rouge rule during which 1.7 million people perished. A major consequence of the extended civil war and terror of the KR period has been a profound lack of trust in relationships, which has made social reconstruction extremely difficult. With little experience of close-knit associations or other ways to bind communities together, and lack of reliance on government or other institutions, Cambodians rely on their families and systems of patronage (*kse*) or

strings of power and linkage) to survive and get ahead. Multiple and many-layered cleavages in society were created by the various conflicts. Many people are traumatized by what they experienced, witnessed or did during the war years, especially during the KR regime. Especially in the many communities across Cambodia, where victims and perpetrators live side by side, the challenges of social reconstruction and thus reconciliation are enormous.

## CHAPTER 3 – Reconciliation: What Is It?

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The purpose of this chapter is to review the various processes of reconciliation described in the current literature. First I begin with a Cambodian definition of reconciliation. This leads to a review of six basic assumptions relating to processes of reconciliation. Reconciliation is a (1) process and goal; (2) based fundamentally on bilateral relationship building; (3) focused on the future but deals with the past; (4) based on human needs and rights; (5) requires institutional and societal change; and (6) made up of constituent elements.

Seven core processes of reconciliation are reviewed: (1) building relationship; (2) re-humanizing; (3) healing; (4) acknowledgement and confession; (5) apology; ((6) forgiveness; and 7) forgetting. Finally, the current research is reviewed concerning whether or not Cambodians are reconciled.

### Definition of Reconciliation

The working definition of reconciliation for this thesis was devised by a Cambodian and international team at the Center for Peace and Development (CPD)<sup>1</sup> based on their work in conflict resolution training from 1994 to 2000:

Reconciliation is a long term process to restore or rebuild relationships between people previously in conflict. It aims for a profound change from enmity, hostility, or complete separation to mutual understanding or harmonious co-operation. In post-conflict societies, true reconciliation has taken place when a society can look to the future and its actions are no longer dictated by the wrongdoing of the past; when that society is inclusive and all members of the society are valued; and trust has been restored. *Kar phsah*

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<sup>1</sup> The Center for Peace and Development (CPD) was a project of the Cambodian Development Research Institute. Contacts from this institute served as key informants for this research, as they have been working on conflict transformation specifically, longer than any other institution in Cambodia. The CPD was originally called the Cambodian Center for Conflict Resolution.

*phsaa*<sup>2</sup> means the act of healing; the act of getting back together two or more parties previously involved in conflict. In Khmer [Cambodian language] the healing process emphasizes 'a change of heart' and the healing of divisions (Cambodian Centre for Conflict Resolution and Cambodia Development Research Institute 2000:10-11).

In the Cambodian language, the two main terms for reconciliation (*phsah phsaa* and *bangruop bangruom*) are not clearly understood nor often used in everyday speech, and are often confused with other words such as mediation and facilitation.<sup>3</sup> As noted in the definition above, the roots of the Cambodian words include terms for healing wounds and hearts. This definition includes the major elements of the reconciliation as described above. Later chapters will explore how rural Cambodians defined reconciliation in their daily lives.

## Degrees of Coexistence and Reconciliation

Reconciliation can be seen as travelling along a continuum: from an anarchic state of war to a utopian state with perfect harmony, from zero to total peace, and from simple coexistence to forgiveness and consensual democratic reciprocity (Etcheson 2003: 2). Interim stages of coexistence can be described in terms of 'passive

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<sup>2</sup> *Kar* is a modifier to signify a noun; without the *kar*, the word *phsah phsaa* could be used as a verb or in informal use, a noun. *Phsah phsaa* is the core root of the word reconciliation, and is used commonly and colloquially especially in the countryside and is the primary word used in this study. *Kar phsah phsaa lang winh* is a compound word: *lang winh* means to do something again, to return, and encompasses the 're' of reconciliation but is rarely used colloquially when using the term *phsah phsaa*. On their own, the word *phsah* means pain, and *phsaa* means to heal. A word that sounds the same but is spelled differently, *phsaar*, means to weld or solder, and some respondents assumed that this was also part of the meaning of *phsah phsaa*. Another common word for reconciliation which has the same meaning for most Cambodians is *bangruop bangruom*, and when used with the modifier *cheat* (national) is the commonly used word for national reconciliation.

<sup>3</sup> Some authors have used other definitions for reconciliation: Urs (2007: 79) used '*somros somroul*' (which she also defined as facilitation or mediation). Hettne and Eastmond used the term '*rup rum cheat*, for 'everybody joining together pure-heartedly' and also suggested that *sros sruel knea* or to cooperate is more common, though not a true definition of reconciliation (2001: 7). I argue that the term used by CPD (*phsah phsaa*) is more appropriate as it is most commonly used in Cambodia, and because CPD has by far the greatest amount of experience in this field in Cambodia. *Samroh samruol* in the glossary (same as *somros somrueh*) or mediation, and *samrap samrueh*, or facilitation, both have the meaning to smooth over and seek harmony. In practice mediators often encourage parties to paper over their conflicts and live peacefully again, without addressing the root causes.

coexistence' meaning negative peace (absence of violence), or as 'active coexistence' meaning positive peace (capacity to deal with conflict non-violently and creatively) (Galtung 2001: 3). The 'amount' of reconciliation can also be described by its 'depth' and can be referred to as thin or thick (Crocker 2002: 528).

Three stages or degrees of coexistence or reconciliation as described by Rigby will be used as the initial starting point for this thesis: (1) surface coexistence or non-lethal coexistence of separate lives (*parties living apart*); (2) shallow coexistence of parallel lives (*parties living alongside each other, but with role-specific interactions*); and (3) deep reconciliation of community (*parties living with and amongst each other with rich and multi-textured interaction*) (Rigby 2006a: 5-6, 16).<sup>4</sup> Surface and shallow coexistence may occur in early stages of resolving conflict, while deep reconciliation is more a long-term process. But the process of reconciliation is not linear so these stages or degrees may not always occur in a progressive sequence; there may be steps forward, then back.

Coexistence is a less politically loaded term than reconciliation, and may be a more practical and easily obtainable goal to try to attain during early stages of post-mass-violence reconciliation processes. Coexistence does not necessarily include the more difficult components of apology and forgiveness. Coexistence is less personal or emotional, a condition where individuals, communities or nations can live together, trade, develop, and share a future but where full relationships are not yet built or developed. Reconciliation is a more advanced state than coexistence and is characterized by relationships with mutual trust and understanding (Staub and Pearlman 2001: 206-7).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The term non-lethal coexistence was coined by Kriesberg (1998: 183).

<sup>5</sup> The following quote summarizes the relationship between coexistence and reconciliation: 'But as positive peace is the presence of social or structural justice and of positive relationships so positive coexistence would be the presence of something more dynamic: shared values, positive relationships, interaction and interdependence, respect, trust and co-operation.'



In the ideal end-state of deep reconciliation, healing is well on its way, apologies have been made and forgiveness granted. Relationships are restored and an inclusive, fair society is rebuilt meeting all citizen's basic human needs and rights. Porter suggests three requirements which would apply to deep reconciliation: '(1) it requires *fair interactions* between members of opposing groups; (2) it requires that we overcome our antagonistic divisions by occupying *common ground* and (3) it requires the presence of a society in which all citizens have a sense of *belonging*' (Porter cited in Hamber and Kelly 2005: 67). The various study sites examined in this thesis in Cambodia were analysed as to their stage of coexistence or reconciliation: surface, shallow, or deep. We now turn to *levels* of reconciliation.

## Levels of Reconciliation

Various levels of reconciliation can be identified including: individual, family, neighbour, community, region, nation, and international.<sup>6</sup> This thesis focuses upon three main levels: primarily community, but also individual and national reconciliation. Many authors believe that for sustainable peacebuilding to be effective, reconciliation must occur at all levels (Bar-Tal and Bennink 2004: 27; Bloomfield 2006: 26; and Lederach 1997). Both horizontal and vertical linkages between the various levels are important for sustainable peacebuilding and should be complementary (Lederach 1997: 38-55 and Huyse 2003: 25). Vertical reconciliation processes can also be described as bottom-up (individual to national) and top-down (from political elites at national levels down to grassroots). Horizontal linkages can occur at all levels: for example at the middle level is the building of relationships between civil society actors.

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Coexistence as end-state simply means an accommodation, a much more achievable goal than reconciliation as an end-state' (Bloomfield 2006: 16).

<sup>6</sup> Reconciliation at the individual level can be further divided into three categories: the reconciliation of an individual with the self, with other individuals and with the community (Stovel 2003: 10). Another level of reconciliation is reconciliation between the self and the environment (Assefa 2001a). The issues of reconciliation with the self and the environment will not be explored in the thesis.

The focus of this research is community reconciliation at the lower and middle levels, which is analysed through the views of individuals in rural Cambodia. Community reconciliation however cannot be entirely divorced from national reconciliation and national processes. This thesis thus fills a gap in the literature, as there have been no other qualitative studies of community reconciliation in Cambodia.

The terms used to describe the components of the reconciliation process at the individual level are often psychological or sociological (such as suffering, pain, hurt, remorse, revenge, forgiveness, apology, etc.) and may not apply to other levels of reconciliation. And individual processes of change such as the development of empathy and understanding at the individual level do not necessarily translate to similar processes at the national level. This research asked individuals how they have healed and dealt with the past, and then made observations about these findings as well as the interactions between the individuals and other community factors of reconciliation. Thus my primary interest is in the relationships both *between* individuals and *among* individuals but not *within* the individual self. Influences from the national level are further analysed as to their influence on community reconciliation.

## **Focus on Community Reconciliation**

Communities are made up of individuals and each will be on their own individual path of history, culture, recovery, and healing: 'anger, hurt and pain may still be too raw, too unexpressed for some to even contemplate reconciliation' (du Toit 2003: 11). After mass violence, besides the physical and psychological damage to individuals, community is also damaged, as mistrust, anger, and fear overwhelm community solidarity. A Cambodian psychologist, Meas Nee, observed that during and after conflict, values shift to prioritize survival and family and patronage ties, over the ties to community or nation (Nee and Healy 2003: 37). Attempts to rebuild communities in the wake of mass violence, should not only focus on victims and

perpetrators, but should also consider the damage to the community as a whole (Fletcher and Weinstein 2002: 639). As individuals (victims, perpetrators, and bystanders) begin to communicate and interact, community is built and social capital is increased.<sup>7</sup> In a state of deep reconciliation, communities, and indeed the larger society, must also be healed: people come together in solidarity and mutual support, then trust is built, and finally interdependence is realized.

This section has summarized the thesis's working definition of reconciliation, as well as various aspects of degrees and levels of reconciliation, with a focus on community reconciliation. We now turn to six basic assumptions of reconciliation, which are the fundamental building blocks of the concept.

## **Assumptions**

Reconciliation touches many fields of study including anthropology, international relations, genocide studies, law, peace studies, political science, psychology, and sociology (Pouligny, Chesterman, and Schnabel 2007: 2-3). There have been a large number of studies on reconciliation but many of them disagree about its definition and how it relates to various constituent elements such as justice, truth, and forgiveness.<sup>8</sup>

There are however, several key assumptions about reconciliation which are common to the majority of the literature. Reconciliation is (1) a process and goal which requires change and time; (2) bilateral, voluntary relationship building, leading to

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<sup>7</sup> The term 'social capital' implies that relationships in society are its core building blocks, that those social networks are an important 'asset', and that social cohesion is necessary for development and economic prosperity (Smith 2000-2009: 2).

<sup>8</sup> See for example: Bar-Siman-Tov 2004; Barsalou 2005; Bloomfield 2003 and 2006; Chayes and Minow 2003a; De Gruchy 2002; du Toit 2003; Hamber and Kelly 2005; Helmick and Petersen 2001; Kriesberg 2004; Lambourne 2004; Lederach 1997; McGregor 2006; Meierhenrich 2008; Pham, Weinstein, and Longman 2004; Skaar Gloppen, and Suhrke 2005; Stover and Weinstein 2004.

interdependence; (3) focused on the future but deals with the past; (4) based on human needs and rights; (5) requires reform of society and institutions; and (6) includes constituent elements.

## **1. Process and Goal: Requires Change and Takes Time**

Reconciliation is both a process and a goal (Lederach 1997; Rigby 2006a: 1-2). It is a slow, long-term process (Rigby 2006a). While mass violence and genocide can take place in days or months, rebuilding the relationships and social fabric can take years or decades. In this process of reconciliation, change is necessary; it is not possible to return to a pre-conflict situation. As society suffering from mass violence becomes changed irrevocably, it must find a new world that comes to terms with the violence and suffering (Schreiter 1992: 11-12). Reconciliation requires change in relationships, in beliefs, attitudes, emotions and goals, as well as deep and broader social changes (Bar-Siman-Tov 2004: 4 and Broneus 2007: 5).

## **2. Relationship Building – Interdependence**

A core concept of reconciliation is that of rebuilding relationships between parties after conflict. (Galtung 2001: 4; Kriesberg 2001: 48; Lederach 1997: 26; Rigby 2006a: 1). Lederach emphasizes the centrality of relationship as the 'birthplace and home of reconciliation' and the need to build trust (2001: 195). Connections (both instrumental and affective) are re-formed across ethnic, racial, social, or religious lines (Stover and Weinstein 2004: 4). Relationships are transformed from being hostile and resentful to friendly and harmonious, or destructive to constructive (Bar-Siman-Tov 2004: 4 and Broneus 2007: 5). An important factor is the nature of the relationship prior to the conflict as well as how the parties came to be in conflict. The more complex the relationship, the more complex the reconciliation process (Rigby 2006a: 2).

These relationships cannot of course be one-sided: du Toit notes that reconciliation can 'never be owned or fully described from only one perspective' (2003: 10). Reconciliation requires participation on the part of both victims and perpetrators (Rigby 2001: 12). Part of the process of relationship building is to learn to see the 'other' in a different light.<sup>9</sup> As recovery from the violence occurs, will the 'other' be seen as equal, as the same, or be embraced as different? Especially in the most robust form of reconciliation, deep reconciliation, interdependence and cooperation are crucial (Lederach 1997: 27). Pham describes interdependence as a core element of reconciliation: 'to establish mutual ties and obligations across lines of social demarcation and ethnic groups' (Pham, Weinstein, and Longman 2004: 604). In an ideal world, a condition of deep reconciliation would find a society profoundly interdependent, unified and the society would have cooperation amongst individuals and groups formerly in conflict.

In its complete or fullest form reconciliation should be voluntary, mutual, and consensual (Bar-Siman-Tov 2004: 5; Hamber and Kelly 2005: 37). However reconciliation may be born of necessity in particular when war-stricken impoverished populations must return to their homes, victims next to perpetrators: these early post-conflict stages can also be called non-lethal coexistence. What may start out as facilitated, involuntary, or coerced can over time become consensual, as people learn to see the humanity in each other and recover from their trauma. However many of the individual actions of reconciliation, such as apology, forgiveness, and remorse – *must* be voluntary, not forced. If they are not authentic and from the heart they lack meaning and may not have any effect or be accepted by the victim. In conclusion, the process of building bilateral, voluntary relationships lies at the very core of the reconciliation process.

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<sup>9</sup> One must look at how the 'other' became to be seen as such, and Schreiter describes seven ways of perceiving: demonizing, romanticizing, colonizing, generalizing, trivializing, homogenizing, or vaporizing the 'other' (1992: 52-3).

### **3. Focused on the Future but Deals with the Past**

Both the future and the past are key aspects of reconciliation: 'Reconciliation, in essence, represents a place, the point of encounter where concerns about both the past and the future can meet' (Lederach 1997: 27). Sharing is an important aspect of the future: 'At the core of any reconciliation process is the preparedness of people to anticipate a shared future' (Rigby 2001: 12). Various other aspects of dealing with the past are important, including 'acknowledgement, remembering, and learning from the past' (Bloomfield 2003: 14). The issue of dealing with the past however is somewhat complicated, as there are many versions of the past (and of 'truth'), so how to come to a view of the past acceptable to all parties is no simple task. Papering over the past can lead to simmering resentment, yet too much of a focus on the past can actually impede reconciliation – a balance must be found.

### **4. Based on Human Needs and Rights**

The experience of mass violence and serious human rights violations serve to disturb the victim's (and often the perpetrator's) identity and security. These violations of human rights and resultant feelings of pain, fear, and vulnerability cause questioning of the very meaning of life (Schreiter 1992: 29-34). Thus the restoration of human rights, through transitional justice and human rights development, including the rule of law, are important to the process of reconciliation (Hamber and van der Merwe 1998: 1). Post-conflict peacebuilding must also address the root causes of the conflict. Root causes of conflict often relate to unmet basic human needs including: a reasonable standard of living (food, shelter, clothing, and health), security and order, identity, self-esteem, dignity, recognition, participation, and equity (Lambourne 2004: 3-4; Montville 2001: 130). If these basic human needs are not addressed, then conflicts can easily arise again.

In Cambodia, while many of the basic human needs for food and shelter have now been met (in rural areas only to a bare minimum standard), the needs for self-esteem, respect, recognition, dignity, and justice are still challenged by the dehumanizing past of the KR regime and by unjust social conditions and lack of rule of law. Although the ECCC may serve to fulfil a partial need for justice which seems to satisfy many Cambodians (see survey section below), the economic and security needs remain a great challenge. Some of these specific human needs are described below as ‘factors’ that have strong influence on reconciliation and are analysed further in later chapters.

Personal and collective security is one of the most important human needs to be met in post-conflict peacebuilding and is a necessary condition for reconciliation (du Toit 2003: 113-125; Halpern and Weinstein 2004: 580; Ignatieff 2003: 331; Rigby 2006b: 9). At both the individual level and the societal level, there are strong links between physical security and reconciliation. When emotions are high and one is in fear of one’s life, it is not easy to re-establish trust and relationships. Healing, as an important process of reconciliation, is difficult if not impossible in the presence of on-going threats (Staub and Pearlman 2001: 206). Unfortunately, security is a precious commodity for most Cambodians – both physical and economic security.<sup>10</sup>

## **5. Requires Institutional and Societal Change and Rebuilding**

In many post-conflict societies, including Cambodia, the years of war have taken a toll, leaving a country ravaged both physically and psychologically by the war and the violence. Cambodians continue to suffer from politically ordered summary executions, mob killings, acid attacks, widespread corruption, and blatant political

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<sup>10</sup> Respondents’ views on security will be covered in Chapter 5, and its relationship to other aspects of reconciliation in later chapters.

manoeuvring of powerful parties. In this environment it is difficult for the normal Cambodian citizen to begin to build trust in government and society. For a full reconciliation, institutional and societal change and rebuilding are needed.

For deep reconciliation, the structures and social context that caused the past violence must be acknowledged and addressed so the violence will not continue or be repeated (Schreiter 1992: 22). Institutions must be developed which deal with accepting and promoting human rights, rule of law, tolerance of social diversity, 'equality of opportunity', and non-violent conflict management (Bar-Tal and Bennink 2004: 23-26; Pham et al. 2004: 604). There is however no ideal end-state of a 'comprehensive idea of social harmony', as conflict is a natural part of relationships and processes of change and recovery are continuous. Since the focus of this research study is on community-level reconciliation, the topic of institutional change will not be addressed, though aspects of societal change and social reconstruction will be discussed in later chapters. The next assumption of reconciliation is that there are certain constituent elements of the process.

## **6. Constituent Elements of Reconciliation**

While there is wide agreement that reconciliation incorporates several constituent elements, there is no consensus on what these are. The most widely quoted scholar includes four main elements: truth, mercy, justice, and peace (Lederach 1997: 28 – 30). Reconciliation is defined as a place where truth (honesty, revelation, vulnerability, accountability, and clarity), mercy (compassion, forgiveness, acceptance, and a new start), justice (making things right, creating equal opportunity, rectifying wrong, and restitution) and peace (harmony, unity, and well-being) meet.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Lederach stresses the importance of the various paradoxes of achieving reconciliation through these four elements: 'Truth is the longing for acknowledgement of wrong and the validation of painful loss and experience, but it is coupled with Mercy, which articulates the need for acceptance, letting go, and a new beginning. Justice represents the search for individual and group rights, for social restructuring and restitution, but it is linked with Peace



Particularly thorny is the relationship between reconciliation and justice. Several authors suggest justice is a precondition for reconciliation (Bloomfield 2006; Lambourne 2001). Lambourne discusses several types of justice to be addressed in reconciliation processes, including restorative; procedural; economic and social; and symbolic (2001: 312-315). Although I would personally think that justice is an integral part of a reconciliation process, there are many examples where justice does not occur, yet some sort of reconciliation (or at least coexistence) is possible. This thesis provides an example of just that situation, as we will see many examples of coexistence occurring in Cambodian society, yet in the absence of justice – except for the procedural justice mechanisms of the ECCC which is trying only five senior leaders. There have been no processes of: restorative justice, procedural judicial targeting lower-level perpetrators; economic and social justice for victims; and no symbolic justice (no truth commission or public apologies).<sup>12</sup> I now turn to the processes of reconciliation.

## **Processes of Reconciliation**

This section describes seven processes of reconciliation: (1) building relationship; (2) re-humanization and the development of compassion and empathy; (3) healing; (4) acknowledgement, confession, and regret; (5) apology, (6) forgiveness; and (7) forgetting.<sup>13</sup> Through these processes of reconciliation, hatred, fear, and anger

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which underscores the need for interdependence, well-being and security.... Reconciliation is where truth, justice, mercy and peace meet: it is a process and a place' (Lederach 1997:28-31).

<sup>12</sup> There have been a wide variety of symbolic processes incorporating commemorations, monuments, and ceremonies, but none of these have been carried out by accused perpetrators.

<sup>13</sup> Besides the main processes described in this section, there are various other descriptions of the reconciliation processes that can occur. Rigby divides processes into two types: cultural or personal, and institutional or structural: both types are necessary as reconciliation is not complete with one alone (2006b). Bloomfield suggests four separate processes of reconciliation: justice, acknowledgement, healing, and reparation (2006: 12). Fisher describes a

can be replaced by non-violent coexistence, trust and confidence, and ultimately empathy (Huyse 2003: 20).

## 1. Build Relationships, Trust, and Interdependence

As noted above, an assumption of the process of reconciliation is that it is necessary to build relationships. Assefa described a process of relationship-building between two parties, bringing forth the key characteristics of acknowledgement, remorse, and apology (2001b: 340).<sup>14</sup> Trust is another important factor to examine when analysing the process of reconciliation. One major characteristic of people living in conflicted areas is that trust has been lost.<sup>15</sup> The process of reconciliation is to rebuild the broken trust; this happens over time, and can be influenced positively or negatively by actions taken by victims, and by perpetrators.<sup>16</sup> As parties get to know each other and trust each other they can reduce their fear. Trust is closely related to the basic human need for security; we need trust in various individuals and institutions

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sequential process of reconciliation as dialogue, acknowledgement, apologies, forgiveness, and promises of non-repetition (2001: 28). Montville (2001) and Tavuchis (1991) describe similar processes but they also include accepting responsibility and expressing sorrow. Hamber and Kelly describe 'five interwoven and related strands' of the process of reconciliation: 'developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society; acknowledging and dealing with the past; building positive relationships; significant cultural and attitudinal change; and substantial social, economic and political change' (Hamber & Kelly 2005: 49). My premise is again the 'shopping basket' approach, as certain processes may be more appropriate at certain times, and may not occur in a particular order.

<sup>14</sup> Assefa observed: 'Reconciliation entails honest acknowledgement of the harm/injury each party has inflicted on the other; sincere regrets and remorse for the injury done; readiness to apologize for one's role in inflicting the injury; readiness of the conflicting parties to let go of the anger and bitterness caused by the conflict and the injury'; commitment by the offender not to repeat the injury, sincere effort to redress past grievances that caused the conflict and compensate the damage caused to the extent possible, and entering into a new, mutually enriching relationship' (2001: 340).

<sup>15</sup> Lederach found that the conflict parties: '... have direct experience of violent trauma that they associate with their perceived enemies and that is sometimes tied to a history of grievance and enmity that has accumulated over generations. The conflicts are characterized by deep-rooted, intense animosity; fear; and severe stereotyping' (Lederach 1997: 23).

<sup>16</sup> Trust can be defined in terms of three variables: relationship, expectations, and behaviour (Notter 1995: 3). An analysis of such factors as risk, power, interdependence, and cooperation, then relate to these three variables, yielding information about: various views of trusting relationships, a disposition of trust, or a character of trustworthiness (Notter 1995: 3).

in order to feel secure. The process of building trust is closely related to cooperation and can also be looked at as a process of reconciliation whereby specific activities may be designed to encourage cooperation, trust-building, and eventually reconciliation. Factors that affect trust-building include the (baseline) amount of trust that parties had in the past (how well they knew and trusted each other), how and how deeply the trust relationship was broken, how trust is being built (direct communication or other means), and pressures and influences in the present on trust (the proximity of the parties, influence from outside parties encouraging relationship, etc.).

A legacy of distrust was left by the KR regime as well as the surrounding decades of war in Cambodia: in fact the KR specifically attacked trust relationships by creating betrayal and suspicion and dissolving traditional social and family ties (Luco 2002: 72; Zucker 2008: 197; Zucker forthcoming). Zucker suggests that distrust is highly related to anxiety, and distrust was cultivated by the KR through a wide variety of methods which in turn caused increasing cycles of distrust (forthcoming). Another aspect of the process of relationship-building is the development of regard, recognition, and respect.

## Develop Regard, Recognition, and Respect

Regaining one's humanity and self-respect, and attaining recognition as a valued human being are important aspects of recovery from mass violence and of reconciliation, and are also related to trust-building. 'Violence is aimed precisely at stripping us of our humanity, of that which distinguishes us from the other animals – that network of meaning that is our sense of safety and self . . . the nucleus of our humanity is restored to us in re-establishing the ability to trust' (Schreiter 1992: 37-8). Regard is another related concept, defined by Kriesberg as recognizing the humanity and identity of others, the minimal form being recognition, while the deeper forms include apology or forgiveness (2004: 84). The degree to which both perpetrators and

victims develop regard, recognition, and respect for each other is an important factor in reconciliation, and indeed are also basic human needs of identity.

Regard, recognition, and respect can be provided through various means. De Greiff suggests transitional justice measures can 'provide recognition to victims, promote civic trust, and make a contribution to the democratic rule of law. In these ways, they help redress some of the obstacles to development left by massive human rights abuses in their wake, obstacles that include, precisely, 'adverse terms of recognition,' weak bonds of trust, and fragile or nonexistent regimes of rights' (de Greiff 2008: 143).

The need to be recognized by others is an important part of each individual's identity (Albert 2010: 2-3). Thus, regard, recognition, and respect are also important components of reconciliation on an individual level.<sup>17</sup>

## Tolerance

Another important part of the process of reconciliation is tolerance, and the ability to tolerate difference: '... [R]elating to another on an on-going basis will involve disagreements, and therefore tolerating differences is part of a resilient relationship. Further, models of cooperation and political or joint action depend on the idea of respecting each other's distinct perspectives' (Halpern and Weinstein 2004: 575). As tolerance is developed, relationships can be built.

## 2. Re-humanization, Empathy, and Compassion

Dehumanization is when opponents see each other as less than human, as hated enemies, or even animals. Both perpetrators and victims may become dehumanized during periods of mass violence.<sup>18</sup> After people have been dehumanized

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<sup>17</sup> The issues of regard, recognition, and respect are discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>18</sup> Hicks observed dehumanization as affecting both victims and perpetrators: '[a]ll of the perpetrators said that they had to dehumanize their victims in order to carry out the killings.

during mass violence such as the Khmer Rouge regime, re-humanization is a process of reconciliation whereby warring parties recognize each others' humanity and integrity, and thereby create bonds between them (Hicks 2008: 12-13). The degree of dehumanization and the direct experience of dehumanizing practices between two individuals affect their future relationships. In order to understand recovery, one has to understand the way dehumanization was created through the construction and deconstruction of the 'enemy' (Theidon 2007: 103). The KR regime was notorious for using euphemisms (to take for 'education') and code words (to smash) to signify death and killing in order to dehumanize the victims and to avoid dealing directly with atrocities. During historian David Chandler's testimony in front of the ECCC, he spoke about the dehumanization processes used by the KR regime, where dehumanization became routine, and he 'compared the Khmer Rouge to a waterfall in which everyone was caught up' (Nhean and Cryder 2009). In later chapters, individuals' experiences with dehumanization, and the victims' ability to understand the process, will be analysed as factors of reconciliation.

The development of empathy is also an important aspect of reconciliation (Huyse 2003: 20 and Schreiter 1992: 52-53). Empathy can be broken down to include three components: being able to individualize and resonate emotionally; expressing curiosity about the other's perspective; and development of the ability to tolerate ambiguity (Halpern and Weinstein 2004: 571-2). On the other hand, empathy can be considered a discrete stage of reconciliation. Huyse described empathy as the third stage of reconciliation: firstly replacing fear by non-violent coexistence, secondly building confidence and trust, and thirdly moving towards empathy (2003: 19-21).

The processes of re-humanization, developing empathy, and compassion are important to reconciliation, primarily at the individual level of reconciliation. All three

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What they failed to point out was that they de-humanized themselves in the process: they had to disconnect from the part of themselves that *felt* the horror of taking someone's life' (Hicks 2008: 22).

involve the process of being able to see the perspective of the 'other' or to walk in someone else's shoes. All three involve healing.

### 3. Healing

Healing of torn relationships is central and essential to reconciliation, and the healing processes take place both on an individual and a community level (Lederach 2001: 200; Staub and Perlman 2001: 206). Galtung defines reconciliation as 'closure plus healing: closure in the sense of not reopening hostilities [and] healing in the sense of rehabilitated' (2001: 4). Healing requires dealing with strong emotions such as hatred, anger, and fear. The tasks of healing are to deal with the hurts, resentments, and enmities that have arisen during mass violence (Stevens 2004: 42-43 cited in Hamber and Kelly 2005: 18). As healing progresses, so also does reconciliation, but if delayed, so is reconciliation.

On an individual level the concept of healing initially drew from psychosocial literature and can be seen as unspecified general healing, healing of heart and mind, and/or trauma healing.<sup>19</sup> As noted earlier, the degree of trauma, and how trauma was experienced and recovered from are important factors in individual reconciliation processes. In any case the process of healing is an important process of reconciliation: 'Processes where victims are recognized, wrongs acknowledged, and responsibility allocated are seen to be required to bring closure and healing' (Skaar, Gloppen, and Suhrke 2004: 4-5). As delineated by Rigby there are two dimensions of the process of reconciliation and thus two types of healing, personal healing (reconciliation *to* past loss, trauma, etc.) and social healing (reconciliation *with* others, or between people):

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<sup>19</sup> A 2007 handbook on trauma in Cambodia stated:

We believe that a greater consciousness about the socio-political and individual aspects of trauma is one of the first steps towards individual and national reconciliation. There will be no path to comprehensive reconciliation in this country until there is more inner peace in the hearts of individuals, more conscious and relaxed communication between couples as well as among people in families, villages and towns (Center for Social Development 2007: 3).

‘becoming *reconciled to* the pain and loss of the past, and becoming *reconciled with* former enemies...’(2006b: 6).

Healing, especially in Cambodia is closely related to the concept of ‘the heart’.

## Healing of Hearts and Minds

Kraybill suggests the healing process involves a ‘unity of head and heart’ (1988: 8). Halpern and Weinstein suggest that reconciliation is a two-part process (intellectual (mind) and emotional (heart)): ‘If reconciliation is not merely an intellectual but also an emotional process (*contritio cordis*), then a major role in making reconciliation between peoples possible, in generating a capacity for reconciliation, will be played by the education of attitudes, or what used to be known by the old-fashioned term “cultivation of the heart”’ (2004: 568). This terminology of the heart is particularly applicable in Cambodia, as the concept of reconciliation is a compound word, one part of which can be translated as ‘healing’.<sup>20</sup>

Part of healing deals with the concept of memory and the process of making sense of the past.<sup>21</sup> The process of making meaning of the past and even finding something beneficial may also be an important way to overcome traumatic experience (Field and Chhim 2008: 355). This reinterpretation process may be facilitated through the Western model of ‘talking therapy’, but not necessarily – healing is a very individual process and is steeped in culture. Especially on an individual level, Cambodians work through their cultural traditions to find meaning for the future so as not to let the past overwhelm them. For example on a community level, approaches to healing and reconciliation include rituals and religious events, as well as other examples which we will explore in the next chapter.

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<sup>20</sup> *Phsah phsaa* is reconciliation: *phsah* mean pain, while *phsaa* means to heal.

<sup>21</sup> Minow suggested: ‘What’s needed, paradoxically, is a process for reinterpreting what cannot be made sensible, for assembling what cannot be put together, and for separating what cannot be severed from both present and future’ (1998: 120).

The next constituent process of reconciliation involves acknowledgement, confession, and expression of regret.

## **4. Acknowledgement, Confession, and Regret**

Acknowledgement, confession, and regret are all related terms referring to perpetrators facing up to, and being honest about, acts they have committed in the past. Acknowledgement or confessions can occur in many contexts, such as in trials, truth commissions, public ceremonies, or in individual conversations. Confessions may release the perpetrator from feelings of guilt, especially if confessions lead to apologies, which then lead to forgiveness. However, confessions (and acknowledgement of past crimes) can be extremely difficult for the perpetrator to carry out, especially in Cambodia where there is such importance put on 'saving face', and public shame and embarrassment are to be avoided at all costs. Theissen described these enormous challenges: 'Admitting guilt or acknowledging the futility of our experiences and actions is a fundamental threat to our self-esteem and personal integrity. Such self-realisation is contrary to many people's naturally delusional conviction that they are good and moral citizens' (Theissen 2004: 13). However, when victims are denied acknowledgement, they may feel re-victimized (Huyse 2003: 61).

Expressions of regret are perhaps easier than acknowledgement and confession, as they can be general and perpetrators may not have to admit specific wrongdoing. Regret is closely related to apology and, as we know from everyday experience, hearing an expression of regret on the part of the perpetrator (and especially an apology) can lessen the victim's feelings of anger and resentment.

## **5. Apology**

Some authors feel that regret is an important part of apology and, for a true apology, the wrongdoer must feel sorrow for the wrong done (Tavuchis 1991: 4). One



of the biggest hurdles to surmount in giving an apology is the ability to be vulnerable, as apology admits wrongdoing and, ultimately, feelings of shame. As noted above there is a strong desire in Cambodian culture to 'save face' and avoid shame, and apologies go against this desire.

Closely related to apologies, is the issue of forgiveness – when apologies are offered, forgiveness may more likely be granted.

## **6. Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is a deeply personal decision and is related to many factors such as the gravity of the offense(s), feelings of safety and security, pressure from others, and the presence of apologies. Forgiveness cannot be forced or required – it must be an entirely voluntary act on the part of the victim – it cannot be done merely at the bequest of the perpetrator. Because it is so difficult and a deeply personal act, forgiveness can be an extremely powerful tool of reconciliation, a way to heal, and a strong influence on others. Forgiveness is not necessarily dependent upon the perpetrator's acts, such as apology or acknowledgement – *victims* must make the decision to forgive (often in order to release themselves) and they can even do so in the absence of contrition of the perpetrators. However, the process of forgiveness is often influenced by, or dependent upon increased understanding by the victim, of the perpetrator (Fisher 2001: 41).

## **7. Forgetting**

'Forgetting' what happened after mass violence goes against the grain of all the processes above, yet it is one of the processes that can take place during reconciliation. In Spain, after 1975 when Franco died, the process used by both the elites and the population was 'collective amnesia' (Rigby 2001: 2-3). Mozambique's post-war recovery also did not involve any sort of transitional justice process such as

trials or truth commissions, and, while initial reconciliation processes involved many individual and community-level rituals, the country has essentially forgotten about the past. Forgetting may be the path of least resistance, especially for perpetrators who wish to escape the discomfort of acknowledgement, confession, or apology. Victims too may be overwhelmed by everyday life, by PTSD or merely bad memories from the past trauma, and may prefer to forget. Some pain may be just too great to remember, especially in times of insecurity and economic hardship. However, this process of reconciliation is actually not a process which can achieve deep reconciliation, as without the other processes described above, and some dealing with the past, people cannot achieve interdependence.

This section has summarized seven different processes of reconciliation, some of which involved both victims and perpetrators, some just victims and some just perpetrators. We now turn to a review of the literature on reconciliation in Cambodia.

## **Reconciliation in Cambodia**

This section on reconciliation in Cambodia begins with a review of reconciliation as it relates to Buddhism. As noted earlier 'to be Khmer is to be Buddhist' and thus Buddhist concepts are integral to the understanding of reconciliation in Cambodia. Secondly I review the various surveys that have focused on reconciliation in Cambodia (most of which have had justice and the ECCC as their primary variable, and trauma as a secondary variable). Thirdly, I provide a review of authors who have stated that Cambodia is already reconciled as a baseline for the rest of this thesis, which explores the situation of reconciliation amongst respondents at the community level.

## Reconciliation and Buddhism

Through the examination of the Buddhist canon and traditions, John D'Arcy May concludes that reconciliation is implicit in both ethical principles and in Buddhist practice, and includes mutual forgiveness (1994: 177-182). Behaviour is governed by the belief that one's present life is just the latest in a long series of lives, shaped by the law of *karma* or the acts done in proceeding lives (Neumaier 2004: 70). As explained in Buddhism's 'Four Noble Truths', all life is suffering (greed, hatred, and delusion), and detachment from the causes of suffering through meditation and making merit are the path to Nirvana. The root of all craving, and thus suffering, is ignorance, and the path to enlightenment is to know the truth of life's impermanence. Buddhists are taught to live in the moment and to practice 'mindfulness' as well as a life of restraint, including non-violence and non-harm of animals. Five precepts must be followed, to refrain from killing, stealing, harmful sexual activities, lying, and intoxicating beverages. Buddhist principles of 'no-self', impermanence, and interdependence, and that all people are part of the human family can be interpreted as reconciliation: in the deepest sense of Buddhism, there is no 'other' with which to be in conflict and nothing to crave or no reason to kill (Phan 2006: 98). Buddhist principles of equality and reciprocity are also fundamental to reconciliation (do unto others as you would do unto yourself (Prum 2006: 22). Buddhist prayers for loving kindness (or mercy) (*metta*) and compassion (*karuna*) apply to all human beings, including those who have harmed, and this can be interpreted as forgiveness. Prominent Buddhists teach non-violence (*akhoengsa* or sometimes known as *ahimsa*), interdependence, tolerance, love, compassion, empathy, and equanimity; these people and principles are also promoting peace and reconciliation.<sup>22</sup> Justice, on the other hand, is also important in Buddhism: in the rules of *karma* everything can be seen as cause and effect (or action and result) and people are told to take responsibility for their actions. D'Arcy May points out that the

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<sup>22</sup> Prominent Buddhists conducting these teachings include the Dalai Lama, Sulak Sivaraksa, (Cambodian) Maha Ghosananda, and Thich Nhat Hahn.

differences in mental frameworks between Christianity and Buddhism are so fundamental there are frequent misunderstandings between them in interpretation (1994: 177).

In practice, however, the above principles are not fully practiced in any country; for example, not all Buddhists are vegetarians or pacifists. Morris suggests that the Buddhist religion in Cambodia has contributed to peacebuilding only when its leaders have adopted active nonpartisan roles in teaching, conflict resolution, and advocacy for public ethics and non-violence: Buddhism has been unconstructive when it becomes disengaged from social issues or is politically aligned or manipulated (2004: 192). In everyday life in Cambodia, many of the above Buddhist principles are mentioned, and references to religion were often made by respondents in this study. The major Buddhist beliefs can be summarized into two simplistic concepts that Cambodians repeat as a mantra: (1) do good, receive good, do bad, receive bad (*karma*) and (2) hatred can never be appeased by hatred; hatred can only be appeased by love (McGrew 2000a: 28-29). In practice, Cambodians commonly do good deeds by making donations to the temples and monks in order to make merit and to be reborn into a better life. As noted in Chapter 2, Buddhism was destroyed and few learned Buddhist scholars survive today. Deep understanding of Buddhism is lacking in most Cambodians. Yet Cambodians' interpretations of and reliance upon religious beliefs, remain important factors in their daily lives and in their processes of reconciliation. These various interpretations will be described in later chapters.

In conclusion, Buddhism, the religion of the vast majority of Cambodians, supports reconciliation, forgiveness, truth, and amnesty, as well as some forms of justice. Later chapters explore the specific views of respondents on reconciliation and its elements in relation to religious and cultural beliefs.

An important part of the literature review, and of understanding what the state of reconciliation is in Cambodia today, is to review past surveys on reconciliation in

Cambodia. Cambodian attitudes towards reconciliation and its related concepts are reviewed in the next sub-section.

## **Cambodian Attitudes Towards Reconciliation**

Through 2006, there were several studies and surveys done in Cambodia to determine Cambodians' views of justice, truth, reconciliation, and peace, most of which have been with fairly small samples, and based on questionnaires. Since 2006, several other major surveys were completed with larger sample sizes and random selection designs. I start first with a review of the older surveys.

### **Summary of Main Survey Findings Before 2006**

This sub-section provides a general review of surveys done before 2006. It was difficult to compare the surveys, as their methods and samples varied widely. The references, sample sizes, and methodologies are reported in the footnote below.<sup>23</sup> Although, none of these surveys have been comprehensive or representative, nor were they controlled scientific studies, the responses on most subjects were remarkably similar. Because they are not comparable, statistical data is not presented.

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<sup>23</sup> - Jaya Ramji working with the Documentation Center of Cambodia conducted a survey of 35 Cambodians in June 1997 (Ramji 2000).  
- Institute Français de la Statistique, de Sondage d'Opinion de Recherche sur le Cambodge (IFFRASORC), national survey of 1,503 Cambodians (1998).  
- Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee, petition calling for KRT signed by more than 90,000 Cambodians (United Nations Secretary-General 1999).  
- The *Cambodia Daily* informal survey of 24 rural Cambodians, on 12-13 January (Saing and Gardner 2000: 1).  
- The Center for Social Development (CSD) undertook three public forums to discuss the KRT in 2000 (CSD 2002).  
- Laura McGrew conducted a survey in 1999 with a written questionnaire completed by 48 Cambodians and focus groups, and individual interviews of 50 additional Cambodians (McGrew 2000a and 2000b).  
- Suzannah Linton reviewed the DC-Cam questionnaires and published a book on the findings (Linton 2004). The 27-question survey was distributed nationwide through the DC-Cam monthly magazine, between January and September 2002, to about 7,000 people: 712 answered the questionnaire.  
- Khmer Institute of Democracy (KID) conducted a survey with 536 questionnaires (KID 2004).

### *Reconciliation, Forgiveness, and Forgetting*

The concept of reconciliation, especially 'national reconciliation' has often been cited as a reason (especially by some government authorities and by the KR leaders) to forgive and sometimes forget. But most Cambodians were not willing to forget, though some felt they could forgive. Many still suffered from nightmares. Many Cambodians felt that reconciliation was an important goal for Cambodia, and some felt that the trials or other mechanisms could help the process. Rebuilding trust in the Cambodian society was seen as an important goal.

### *Truth*

Almost every single person surveyed wanted to know the truth, why Khmer killed Khmer and how did this happen. Oftentimes they asked who was behind the Khmer Rouge, implying that China and/or Vietnam were the masterminds who manipulated the Khmer Rouge leaders into killing their own people.<sup>24</sup> However, probably due to lack of exposure, few suggested a truth commission.

### *Peace*

Few (and fewer as time passes) Cambodians have been concerned that peace would be disturbed during transitional justice mechanisms; however, a notable exception occurred in former KR-controlled areas where some respondents stated they were afraid peace would be threatened if trials occurred (especially if lower-level perpetrators were to be tried).

### *Amnesty, Civil Sanctions, and Reparations*

Amnesty was seen by the majority as unacceptable, while civil sanctions, though incompletely explored, were highly desirable. Many respondents were unhappy that former KR officials were part of the current government. Reparations had been

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<sup>24</sup> This desire is echoed in the numerous meetings the Open Society Justice Initiative held in 2004 and 2005, and attended by the author – people often said 'Khmer couldn't kill Khmer'.

initially seen as unlikely, but when these studies were conducted there had been little public discussion and thus little knowledge about reparations.<sup>25</sup>

### *Apologies and Confessions*

Views on confessions and apologies were mixed, but most agreed that religion informs thinking about these concepts. Some Cambodians felt that apologies are important, but the majority preferred confessions and explanations rather than apologies.

### *Justice*

The vast majority of Cambodians wanted trials for the Khmer Rouge leaders, and most preferred international trials. While most wanted to try the leaders, some wanted to try others besides the leaders, either the regional authorities, or the specific perpetrators who killed their individual family members.

## Recent Research Findings

The next three studies are presented separately: the first is presented because it has been the only qualitative study looking at reconciliation in Cambodia prior to this research (Etcheson 2005b).<sup>26</sup> The second two were quantitative surveys with random sampling and large numbers of respondents, so statistical data can be reviewed (Pham et al. 2009 and Sonis et al. 2009).

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<sup>25</sup> Since the ECCC was created, meetings were held by human rights organizations to promote reparations and the ECCC has since addressed them.

<sup>26</sup> Munyas also conducted qualitative research into youth and reconciliation, but her subjects were all youth, none of whom had been alive during the KR period (Munyas 2006). Thus those findings are not presented in the thesis, as space has not allowed for an analysis of youth and reconciliation. Wallgren conducted a study of 47 villagers and authorities in the northwest of Cambodia under the auspices of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2000. The study examined the UNDP 'Seila Reconciliation Program' and to 'present people's perceptions of life and the changes they have experienced since their communities were brought under government control' (2000: 2). There were some observations related to reconciliation but this was not the main purpose of the study.

Firstly, a notable study was done by Etcheson, who conducted 48 interviews in three communes in Cambodia in 2001 and 2002 with a variety of informants – including both former KR ‘base’ people and ‘new’ people and victims and perpetrators.<sup>27</sup> He found that there was enduring trauma, a desire for revenge, limits to forgiveness, and that there existed a state of coexistence (but not reconciliation) (2005b: 201). As in my previous research on reconciliation (done in 1999), Etcheson also found that Cambodians supported a tribunal for KR leaders, and varying views on revenge, forgiveness, punishment, and reconciliation (2005b).

Secondly, Sonis et al. carried out a survey in 2006 of 1,017 randomly selected Cambodians, 813 of whom were older than 35 years (thus older than 3 years of age during the KR regime and thus of an age range similar to my study group) (2009: 527-536). The primary objectives of the research were related to the prevalence of PTSD and the relationship of PTSD symptoms and disability to attitudes towards justice, but the study also examined the desire for revenge. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using a standardized questionnaire, by two research teams in all provinces and municipalities in Cambodia. Although 75 percent of the respondents expected reconciliation to result from the ECCC (as well as to reveal the truth and prevent atrocities), 87 percent of those older than 35 years expected painful memories to arise in the process (Sonis et al. 2009: 533). Respondents indicated a ‘strong desire for revenge’ (Sonis et al. 2009: 532).<sup>28</sup> Scales devised to measure respondents’ views on justice found respondents to be dissatisfied with: punishment of perpetrators, restitution, apologies by perpetrators, and by justice in general in Cambodia (Sonis et

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<sup>27</sup> There is however, no information about the methods used in the study, which was presented as a chapter in a book. The region of the study was not identified, nor the numbers of subjects in each region. Although their ages and names are cited when the respondents are quoted, there is no summary information about the sample group as a whole (i.e., ages, gender, etc.).

<sup>28</sup> A strong desire for revenge was defined as: ‘[s]ixty-three percent of respondents strongly agreed and 21 percent agreed with the statement: ‘I would like to make them suffer’ (Sonis et al. 2009: 532).



al. 2009: 532). Respondents with a high desire for revenge were found more likely to suffer from PTSD (Sonis et al. 2009: 534).<sup>29</sup>

Thirdly, a survey was conducted in 2008 of 1,000 Cambodians (69 percent of whom had lived during the KR regime) based on a structured questionnaire (Pham et al. 2009: 1-50). In the 24 provinces (or municipalities) of Cambodia 125 communes and 250 villages were randomly selected. Detailed results on exposure to violence, overall priorities, knowledge of the KR, living with former members of the KR, accountability, the ECCC, and the national criminal justice system were compared and contrasted. The most pertinent results relating to community reconciliation were that: interviewees wanted the KR to suffer (71 percent); wished they could take revenge (37 percent); would take revenge if they could (41 percent); felt uncomfortable living in the same community with former KR (47 percent); while 36 percent said they had forgiven the KR (2009: 3).

These three studies have provided important background information for this study on reconciliation in Cambodia. Specific details of their findings are compared to my findings in later chapters. None of them indicated that reconciliation had already been achieved. I now turn to some claims that reconciliation *has* been achieved in Cambodia.

## **Already Reconciled?**

The statement that reconciliation has already occurred in Cambodia has been made by several people, especially members of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC). Successful reconciliation was seen as politically important for the government of Cambodia but was essentially equated to the overthrow of the KR. Foreign Minister Hor Nam Hong concluded that national reconciliation was the primary achievement of the RGC, attributed to the success of Prime Minister Hun Sen's 'Win-Win Policy' in

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<sup>29</sup> However, this relationship was only found in a bivariate analysis; when using multivariate model controlling for demographic variables, this relationship between revenge and PTSD was no longer statistically significant (Sonis et al. 2009: 534).

overthrowing the KR at a speech made in 2001 (Hor 2001: 2).<sup>30</sup> This claim of national reconciliation was again made at a public speech by a government official (Deputy Prime Minister Sok An) in 2006, but this time, although they claimed reconciliation had been achieved, they acknowledged that justice (in the form of the ECCC) had not (Sok 2006: 3).<sup>31</sup>

More recently, the former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General in Cambodia, Benny Widyono observed:

Ordinary people, encouraged by the return to peace and progress - especially since the last remnants of the Khmer Rouge have been dissolved by government policy - have, of their own volition, forged reconciliation among all Khmers. No longer do people question whether their neighbour, or their office mate, or the bride of their son is ex-Khmer Rouge or the daughter of an ex-Khmer Rouge. . . . Reconciliation has indeed been achieved by Cambodians, for Cambodians (Widyono 2009: 2).

Urs also argued that there was no need for reconciliation in Cambodia, as people are living calmly without 'community unrest' and she did not note any problems with coexistence in her research (although she did note some lingering anger) (2007: 79). I argue in this thesis that, with continuing unresolved fear and anger, reconciliation has

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<sup>30</sup> The relevant excerpts from Foreign Minister Hor Nam Hong's speech at a conference on peace, reconciliation, and democracy building in October 2001 are as follows:

. . . I would identify only four categories of success that Cambodia has been able to achieve during the past decade. First and foremost is peace, political stability and national reconciliation . . . did not just come about or transformed overnight. It took this country years of hard work . . . became truly realized only when the Khmer Rouge fully collapsed. The demise of the Khmer Rouge was the hard work of Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia, who actively pursued a policy of defection and integration of the Khmer Rouge rank and file. With the complete disintegration of the Khmer Rouge and their integration into the national community, Cambodia for the first time achieved peace, stability and national reconciliation in decades (Hor 2001: 2).

<sup>31</sup> Deputy Prime Minister Sok An stated:

In Cambodia this emphasis on national reconciliation has not meant that we have forgotten our past, and we have undertaken many efforts to document the record of what happened during Democratic Kampuchea. But what is still not yet achieved is rendering justice for the victims of that genocidal regime. . . . Now as we finally have established the ECCC, we keep in our minds firmly that this judicial process must not damage the process of reconciliation that I have described above. In Cambodia we seek justice in order to heal the wounds in our society (Sok 2006: 3).

definitely not yet been achieved, but probably instead Cambodia remains at a level of surface or shallow coexistence.

This chapter has provided a review of the current literature on reconciliation to provide a basis for the examination of community reconciliation in Cambodia. Starting first with a definition of reconciliation, we then turned to its six basic assumptions. Secondly seven processes of reconciliation were reviewed. Finally, the situation of reconciliation in Cambodia was addressed, through a summary of the recent surveys of reconciliation and justice. While there have been some large-scale surveys about reconciliation, this thesis is the first in-depth qualitative examination of community reconciliation. Through the examination of how victims and perpetrators have been managing to live together in some select communities in Cambodia, light will be shed upon how the process of reconciliation has been experienced. Lessons learned from this process in the unique cultural setting of Cambodia over a period of more than thirty years can provide insights for other countries recovering from conflict. The next chapter sets the stage of this thesis's analysis by presenting the communities of study.

## CHAPTER 4 – The Communities in Context

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The starting point for this analysis was initially ten research communities, which are described below in Table 4.1. In Chapter 1, I explained how the communities were initially selected on the basis of two main characteristics: a history of mass violence, and the presence of former KR victims and perpetrators. Of the ten communities, three were in the southwest and seven were in the northwest. The communities in the southwest were visited more frequently due to the closer proximity to the capital, so interview numbers were similar (45 in the southwest and 54 in the northwest). Although several of these communities initially had some promising indicators of the presence of both victims and perpetrators, in several cases, it was not possible to easily identify accused perpetrators, or to have them agree to be interviewed. In the case of the three former KR stronghold communities, there were several similar characteristics; Northwest-3 is representative of all three. Thus the original list of ten communities was eventually winnowed down to four. However, many of the community-level respondents (as well as the additional 35 Phnom Penh-based interviews) also provided valuable insights and observations about the process of reconciliation in Cambodia so their views are also included throughout the body of this thesis.

**Table 4.1. Community and Respondent Overview**

REGIONS AND CASE STUDY COMMUNITIES	PROVINCES, DESCRIPTION, AND CHARACTERISTICS
<b>Southwest</b>	<b>45 Interviews and Focus Groups in the Southwest Kampot Province and Kep Municipality</b>
<b>Southwest-1</b> (case study community)	Cluster of several rural villages including: Village A - mixed Khmer and Cham village, primarily new people; and Village B - neighbouring village with a large number of former KR and base people, including several accused perpetrators
<b>Southwest-2</b> (case study community)	Cluster of several rural villages including: two relatively richer villages; Villages A and B with primarily 'new' people, and three relatively poorer villages (C, D, and E) which included more 'base' people; the cluster included several accused perpetrators and some former KR soldiers
<b>Southwest-3</b>	Newly created rural village in 1994 by government to house former KR coming from the local KR stronghold, but since then other primarily non-KR joined to obtain land; land of fair quality and fair water supply; high percentage of military and their families
<b>Northwest</b>	<b>54 Interviews and Focus Groups in the Northwest Banteay Meanchey and Battambang Provinces, Pailin Municipality</b>
<b>Northwest-1</b>	Well developed semi-urban village and district headquarters with industrial base of small factories with fertile land and good water supply; mixed 'new' people and 'base' people but with a majority of 'new' people; did not locate accused perpetrators
<b>Northwest-2</b>	Remote rural village of very low population with poor land, repopulated with KR in 1990s, now mixed with non-KR, 50 km from provincial city; many newcomers seeking land; majority of 'base' people and former KR, some 'new' people from the area, but no one accused of being a (direct) perpetrator
<b>Northwest-3</b> (case study community)	Former KR stronghold, with urban centre and many surrounding smaller villages; former KR forces integrated in 1996; high percentage of military families
<b>Northwest-4</b> (case study community)	Remote group of villages in highly contested war-torn areas close to Thai-Cambodian border; has mediocre land, fair water supply and problem with land mines; highly mixed area of government, former KR, and non-communist resistance factions; high percentage of soldiers and their families; mixed 'base' and 'new' people including several accused perpetrators
<b>Northwest-5</b>	Rural village close (10 kilometres) to provincial city; suffered attacks during civil war; mix of 'base' and 'new' people; self-professed former KR, but not enough interviews to find accused perpetrators
<b>Northwest-6</b>	Urban village on edge of Battambang town with much fighting before, during and after the KR regime, but physically relatively unscathed by KR period or civil war; majority urban 'new' people, though with some 'base' people including the family of a senior KR leader; I did not identify accused perpetrators
<b>Northwest-7</b>	Former KR stronghold; district includes semi-urban town with many remote villages surrounding; close to border with Thailand; multiple displacements and fighting, land mine problem; high percentage of former KR soldiers and their families
<b>Phnom Penh<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>35 Interviews and Focus Groups in Phnom Penh</b> Interviews with Cambodian government officials, UN/NGO workers (Cambodian, overseas Khmer, and expatriates), and various other victims
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	<b>134 TOTAL INTERVIEWS</b>

<sup>1</sup> This category is made up primarily of Phnom Penh-based interviewees, but also includes a few interviews with peacebuilders based in other provinces, as well as one focus group of victims from another province.

# The Context

## Introduction to the Communities

As discussed in the historical review in Chapter 2, from the 1960s, Cambodia and its people have been enmeshed in war for decades, from the war in Vietnam, the civil war between Lon Nol and the KR, the KR mass violence, and finally civil war (between the Cambodian government, the KR, and various resistance factions). A study of recovery after mass violence in Cambodia thus cannot be limited to only the violence of the years of the Khmer Rouge rule (1975-1978). The civil war lasted through 1994 in the southwest and 1998 in the northwest, finally ending in the north (Siem Reap Province) in 1999. The ten communities of this study included three of the approximately six major Khmer Rouge strongholds<sup>2</sup>.

The people suffered great hardship during the entire forty years of civil war, from loss of life, injury, displacement, lack of food and services, and destruction of homes and infrastructure. Nothing however compared to the physical and psychological destruction of the KR regime, as noted in Chapter 2. During the KR regime, there was a great deal of variation in the conditions of the different regions, 'tolerable in the northeast and eastern zones, somewhat worse in the southwest and west, and worst of all in the northern and northwestern zones' (Chandler 1993: 212).

The next sub-sections provide overviews of the two regions of this research study which were introduced in Table 4.1 above.<sup>3</sup> The southwest region borders the ocean (Gulf of Thailand) and Vietnam. The northwest region lies on the border of Thailand (see map on page ix). The contact between peoples at these borders has

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<sup>2</sup> The primary headquarters of the KR strongholds in Battambang include Pailin and Samlaut; in Siem Reap, Anlong Veng and O'Smaich; in Banteay Meanchay, Malai and Phnom Chat; and in Kampot, Phnom Voar, and Koh Sla.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 5 and Appendix H for information about the respondents.

had effects on the development of these regions: globalization and migration are also part of the changing landscape, which affect the whole of Cambodia, but in particular the study regions. The next sub-section summarizes the two regions of study: the southwest and the northwest.

## **The Southwest**

In the southwest, the province of Kampot and the municipality of Kep were chosen as areas of study due to the presence of former KR strongholds, a history of civil war both before and after the KR period, and the fact that I had a large number of previous contacts there. The southwest is bordering the ocean and Vietnam, and houses the ocean fishing industry and salt fields. There were three communities of study chosen in the southwest, Southwest-1, -2, and -3. Kampot province lies 175 kilometres from Phnom Penh and takes about 3 hours by road. As you drive from the busy sprawl of Phnom Penh, the landscape changes to rural rice fields and houses on stilts. Driving on the road one glimpses a view of daily life: children play in ponds, water buffalo wallow in mud, and families sit under the shade of their houses chatting and eating shared meals. Approaching Kampot, there are small hills, with small mountains in the distance. The terrain flattens out near the Kampot Province town, with vast expanses of salt fields south of the town. The southwest had an overall history of war and violence similar to the northwest, because there were several KR strongholds in the region (though only two in contrast to several in the northwest). However, a major difference is that the defections of the KR military forces occurred in 1994 and 1995 (versus 1997 and 1998 in the northwest), greatly shortening the period of civil war. Also, the effects of the civil war in the 1990s were bad in certain pockets of the province, where former KR soldiers crossed government territory, but the entire province was not a war zone (in contrast to the northwest which was more severely affected). I now turn to an overview of the northwest region.

## The Northwest

Two provinces were chosen for study in the northwest of Cambodia (Battambang and Banteay Meanchey), and one municipality (Pailin), due to their relatively high numbers of mixed former KR and non-KR populations. The northwest region is a politically significant area of Cambodia, because it borders the important trading partner Thailand which sheltered various factions during the different conflict periods. During the KR period the northwest was the site of major purges, as the southwest KR faction came in 1977 to replace and destroy the northwest KR faction, so many of the original cadre who started in the area were killed and replaced by others. The northwest region was home to most of the major strongholds of the former KR<sup>4</sup>, and thus was the site of much of the war before, during and after the KR period.

Because the northwest borders Thailand, it is also the area from where the largest numbers of Cambodians fled after the KR (though notably there had been proportionally larger numbers of people brought in by the KR in order to till the fertile fields). Battambang, and to a lesser degree Banteay Meanchey are also areas where a proportionally larger number of refugees were repatriated due to their desire for fertile land, as well as their desire to be close to Thailand in case of further violence in Cambodia. It thus suffered the most from continuing warfare and displacement throughout the 1990s until the KR defected in 1997 and 1998.

Battambang is 291 kilometres from Phnom Penh (about five hours to drive) and to reach Sisophon, the capital of Banteay Meanchey Province, is an additional hour and a half. National Route No 5 is one of the better roads in Cambodia, passing through several provincial capitals on the way to Battambang. Rice fields, houses on wooden stilts, and newly built cement villas of the nouveau riche, alternate with beautiful old trees and dusty plains. Battambang province is the most fertile in the

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<sup>4</sup> The other major stronghold was in Siem Reap province in the northern region of the country.



country (known as the breadbasket), while Banteay Meanchey is much less fertile, though it has the largest border crossing point with Thailand.

Current population movements have occurred throughout the region as in all the former KR areas there has been a large influx of people from all over Cambodia, searching for land and a better life. In addition, in the northwest there are migrants who cross the Thai border daily or monthly to work as labourers or in the border casinos.

This sub-section has given a broad overview of the two study regions. One of the three communities in the southwest (Southwest-3) and two of the seven communities in the northwest (Northwest-3 and -7) were former KR stronghold districts. All three had been primarily former KR, but many newcomer non-KR started arriving in the late 1990s searching for land and jobs. Thus in many cases in these areas, the former KR cadre, soldiers and 'base' people, did not know the 'new' people arriving from other provinces. Both regions suffered from the wars and the KR regime, and the next section provides an analysis of those conflicts.

## **Setting the Stage – Conflict Analysis**

This section provides an overview of respondents' views of the war, and how the war affected them. A more detailed review is provided in Appendix K. The leaders of Cambodia used their political means to gain and hold power, and, especially given Cambodia's patron-client linkages and reliance on hierarchy, the population easily followed. However, all respondents looked back at the war period with regret and realized they had been used for the gains of the politicians. The conflict caused cleavages in society between KR and non-KR but these cleavages were essentially manufactured by the economic and political conditions, as 90 percent of Cambodians are of the same ethnicity. All areas of Cambodia suffered from a long history of war and violence, but stories reverberated for different areas at different times. Many areas

in the northwest suffered multiple displacements from the 1970s through the 1990s. In the southwest however, because the defections of the former KR occurred in 1994 (rather than in 1998 as in the northwest), the stories of war and violence were less severe than those heard in the northwest region. A history of war and violence is an impediment to reconciliation, as the traumatic experiences cause insecurity and also may cause psychological and physical problems leading to negative emotions such as fear, hatred, and mistrust. These negative emotions are compounded by the multiple displacements that Cambodians have suffered.

The above background helps the reader understand and empathize with the community members, so as to better understand the processes of reconciliation they describe later. As noted in the previous chapter, reconciliation depends upon firstly an analysis of the conflict, including historical and cultural factors. We now move to another important section of the conflict analysis, the description of the period of mass violence of the KR period.

## **The Khmer Rouge Period**

This section reviews some typical stories of survivors of the KR regime interviewed for this research. Although my initial research plan had been to focus interviews on the post-mass-violence period of reconciliation and rebuilding after the KR period, I found a much larger portion of the interviews than I had anticipated focused upon the mass violence. It was impossible *not* to listen to the stories of survivors of the KR period, as that is what people wanted to speak about first, and because without the context of the background it was impossible to understand the rebuilding. There were multiple narratives, often to convince me of the hardship of the KR regime, the lack of food, the hard labour, the fear, and the stories of horror. Some

respondents asked several times if I believed them. Several respondents spoke of the humiliation they had suffered and their fear.

## **Common Memories of Suffering During the KR Period and Afterwards**

Respondents' stories contained many commonalities, as also seen in the many memoirs, reports, news stories, and films about the Khmer Rouge regime (Criddle and Mam 1987; Seng 2005; Ung 2000). Sanders' study on memories of the KR period suggests the following memories of highest frequency: lack of food, executions, forced labour, plus an additional category of 'investigation and punishment by Angkar' (2006: 27). Findings in this study were similar, and are described in respondents' words below.

### **Lack of Food**

One common denominator to almost all interviews was a discussion of the lack of food and the poor quality of food. Sanders suggested that KR period narratives revolve around the lack of food; as Cambodian life revolves around the cycle of the crops, the attacks on food sources were equated with attacks on the body and the core of Cambodian identity (Sanders 2006: 63). This respondent, now working for the ECCC in Phnom Penh, spoke repeatedly about the lack of food:

At that time we had four brothers, down to three because one of my brothers was sick and died in 1975. Another brother died when we reached the village a few months later, because he had no food and no medicine, because he ate something that is very poisonous because he was so hungry . . . he was a big boy and there was nothing to eat so he died. . . . (IV # 133).

### **Executions**

Not surprisingly throughout the interviews, I heard many stories of horror and suffering that those who made it through seemed to feel obliged to tell me to make sure I believed. This middle-aged man said: 'My youngest brother was in a children's

group and he picked a papaya so he was taken to be killed' (IV # 59). This middle-aged Cham woman was filled with sadness and suffering:

I have thirteen children, but most of them died so there are only four children left. . . . My first husband was killed by Pol Pot. The men in the village were almost all killed and just only one is alive. . . . It was Ta Theung who told them the number and took people away. And they had already dug the holes so they put people there. Their soldiers took them away. They came from outside (IV # 95).

This man in his forties was only ten years old when the KR took over, but he had some strong and painful memories:

My father was taken to be killed in 1975 because he was a senior-level soldier in the Lon Nol period. They arrested many people, and especially those people who worked in this village and commune were all arrested. . . . I saw revenge against one spy who was very cruel. His parents were killed in 1977 or 1978. This spy was ordered to take his parents to kill them, and he killed them. At that time, things like that often happened. At that time, the person who stole something such as rice or fish was buried alive in a hole. They just put the body into the hole, only from the feet up to the chest, and the hands were left out of the hole. They put a pot in the thief's hands to show that he had stolen something, and then the person died there. I ran back home, but the spy took a bloody knife to threaten me to not run home again. I was afraid of dying (IV # 117).

Expatriates were also scarred by bearing witness to the aftermath of mass violence, as this long-term UN/NGO aid worker spoke about memories soon after the KR period:

At that time we also saw trees that were blood-caked because they smashed the heads of the children against them. I saw with my own eyes those trees, they were often at the bottom of a hill or a mound, with a pit at the bottom so they would just push the people in the holes . . . . I saw these trees everywhere and I am sure that this is what they were used for. I don't know why the blood didn't wash off the trees but you could still see it, and even tufts of hair (IV # 127).

Such traumatic experiences have caused high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the Cambodian population as discussed in previous chapters. When suffering from PTSD, some of the symptoms (anxiety, headaches, fear, nightmares, etc.) make it more difficult for people to recover and reconcile. Their

suffering was made even worse during that period because the KR prohibited people to show their emotions, as described in the next sub-section.

## Inability to Mourn or Show Emotion

As is well documented in the literature, the KR in their attempts to cut all ties between family members did not allow people to mourn at the death of family or friends and even forced people to kill others (Chandler 1991: 241-242, 260-261; Kiernan 1996: 154). Several respondents spoke about the fact that they were not allowed to cry during the KR period, especially at the death of one of their loved ones and that this still bothered them. This prohibition of showing emotions and the severing of family ties was strongly resented by the victims, has contributed to the negative psychological effects of the trauma, and has made reconciliation more difficult. This woman describes how she and her neighbour witnessed the killing of the neighbour's son:

When they were arresting him, he was running around his house and asked his mother for help and cried that 'please help me mum! Please help me mum!' . . . 'They are going to arrest me'. He told them 'I will not let you arrest me, please just shoot me to death'. . . . When they were chasing him, they shot his thigh and then he fell down to the ground and he said that they could do whatever they wanted because he had already injured his leg, and he asked them to please just kill him. So they shot him to death at that place. He was brought to be buried far from the village near the place where I grew vegetables and I was so afraid of him because I used to grow and watered vegetable everyday near his grave. His wife and mother cried very much, and his mother just cried in the house secretly because if they saw she cried, they would take her to be killed also. They did not allow us to cry (IV # 108).

This testimony is only one from amongst many of respondents who expressed their sadness and frustration over not being allowed to properly pay respects to the dead. Prison experiences were also very significant examples of trauma recounted by respondents.

## Prison Experiences

Prison experiences, described by victims, accused perpetrators and former KR were often reported as formative experiences. Those respondents who had been in prison all stated they had suffered more than other people, and these harsh experiences may be related to stronger cries for justice and fewer for forgiveness. In the study community Southwest-2, several respondents had been at the same prison, all former KR who were accused of being enemies in the early stage of the KR rule. This former KR cadre stated, 'I was in that prison for three months but I nearly died. If I had stayed one more month I would have died. I was there until Phnom Penh fell, but after it fell, they sent engineers, educated people, students, royal people, and Excellencies. Maybe thousands of people died' (IV # 93).

This former non-KR prisoner was an avid observer of the ECCC and, although he expressed the pain and trauma of his suffering, was eager to tell people about his prison experiences – in fact it was difficult to get him to *stop* speaking about them:

I was arrested; the KR arrested me in the beginning of 1977 until the beginning of 1979. When the Vietnamese soldiers came I was rescued. I was accused of being a 17 April person, a new person and I was the number one enemy of the KR because I had been living in the Lon Nol region. They accused me of being a Lon Nol soldier and a CIA of America but I was not. The suffering of those who lived outside the prison was less than those who lived inside. I am still afraid to meet any of those prison guards, that they would treat me badly again. All the guards took prisoners to be killed; none of them could reject this duty. None of the guards were good. If ripe fruit fell and we picked it up without asking permission, we would be taken to be killed. I do not want to hear and recall about the prison because when I do, I cannot sleep. I have never told my wife and child about it. But I am waiting for the international trial; I want to tell the judges. There are few of us prisoners alive as they have been affected with various diseases from that time and other suffering, as they were treated so badly. Their bodies were badly hurt inside and so were their minds (IV # 59).

Although much of the KR regime experience was traumatic for most people, the prison experiences were particularly painful. An important part of the painful memories was related to the humiliation and dehumanization suffered, as discussed in the next section.

## Humiliation, Dehumanization and Loss of Identity

As noted in Chapter 3, the KR dehumanized their enemies, humiliated them, and stripped them of their cultural identities (related to being Buddhist, Muslim, or following animist practices, as well as most Cambodian social intercourse such as showing respect to elders, being close to family members, etc.). Many respondents spoke of the humiliation and dehumanization they felt during the KR regime - threats to their identities and to their very existence as human beings: 'They ordered us like animals. We came from the mountain then they ordered me to dig the dam at Koh Sla after I gave birth one month before. It was very hard, I had no food, I just got one piece of potato' (IV # 46). Others were shaken by what they had witnessed:

Ah! You never saw they killed the people directly but for me, I saw and my child was very shocked when she saw that, my child who died. I looked at them secretly and I saw they hit the people and those victims lamented like '*eut eut*' and I heard the sound '*peung*' so I thought that they had been hit on the head. Even if those people had not died yet, but when they fell down into the pit, they would die there. They put four or five people into each pit. After they [the KR] killed the people already, they went to wash their hands in the water and they said 'We just killed dogs, and we are very happy!' They called those people dogs (IV # 108).

This respondent talked about the discrimination he suffered as a Cham Muslim, as part of a power display by the KR:

My child and also my grandmother were burned by Pol Pot. For Cham custom or religion, we do not cremate people when they die, we bury them, but they made us cremate her. They ordered the village chief and the group chief to cut the wood and they ordered us to burn the bodies in the wood pile. . . they hated us and made us go against our religion. They did not allow us to bury the bodies. They wanted to win (IV # 32).

These quotes indicate that survivors thirty years after the mass killings remain strongly affected by these traumatic experiences.

## Discrimination by 'Base' People against 'New' People

As the KR regime's purpose was to create a new classless society, there was a great deal of discrimination by the KR cadre and 'base' people targeting the 'new'

people for execution and discrimination (Vickery 1984: 81-82).<sup>5</sup> Several respondents, especially those with higher education (including some former KR), spoke about the KR tactic to divide the society and the resulting discrimination: 'They started making problems, to divide between old and new. . . They said the "new" people oppressed them, were leeches sucking their blood, and did bad things to them' (IV # 33). The resentment felt from discrimination is an important factor that can lead to new cycles of discrimination. The presence of discrimination and resultant resentment are important factors that must be addressed in a reconciliation process, and are examined further in later chapters.

## Khmer Killing Khmer?

The KR regime tactic of pitting the 'base' people against the 'new' people resulted in a situation of mass killing whereby Khmer people killed Khmer people. A debate has been on-going amongst Cambodians as to how the KR mass killings could have happened – disbelief that Khmer could kill Khmer (Doung and Ear 2009: 7; Linton 2004: 27). Khmer nationalism is strong, with proud memories of the majestic Angkor Wat and the twelfth century when the Khmer Empire controlled much of Thailand and Vietnam. As 90 percent of the Cambodian population has ethnic, religious, and cultural homogeneity, the KR period created massive suspicion, as the enemy had to be sought 'within' (Eisenbruch 2007: 94). But it is difficult for many Cambodians to admit that the destruction of society was carried out by their own people. In searching for causes of the violence, Cambodians have often blamed others: the Vietnamese and the Chinese in particular. The residue of this confusion has increased the lack of trust and has shattered the view of the Cambodia 'self'. Only a few respondents were able to recognize this identity crisis, such as this respondent: 'There was no war like the war in Cambodia because we killed ourselves. They took the ignorant people to be the

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 2 for descriptions of 'base' people and 'new' people.



leaders and then the knowledgeable people had to be killed' (IV # 44). This identity crisis caused by the KR regime, has resulted in impediments to reconciliation. These impediments will be explored in later chapters, based upon the structure followed in the next section which presents four case studies as models of reconciliation.

## Models of Community Reconciliation

This section reviews four case study communities, two in each region (southwest and northwest) in which four different types of coexistence can be identified. See Table 4.2 below. As reviewed in Chapter 3, Rigby has described three different degrees of coexistence and reconciliation, surface, shallow, and deep (Rigby

**Table 4.2. Models of Community Reconciliation**

Region / Community	Coexistence	Description
<b>Southwest</b>		
Southwest-1	<b>Surface</b>	Village of non-KR direct victims, living next to a village of primarily former KR including some accused perpetrators
Southwest-2	<b>Shallow</b>	Cluster of villages of varied economic status which suffered differently during the KR regime; now, some isolated former KR soldiers and accused perpetrators living lonely lives in the midst of majority direct victims and some former KR 'base' people
<b>Northwest</b>		
Northwest-3	<b>Moderate</b> (without previous contact)	Former KR stronghold of mixed indirect victims, former KR, and perpetrators: victims came in the 1990s for work or land while the former KR (presumably including some perpetrators) had been here since the KR fell in 1979; few know each other from the past
Northwest-4	<b>Moderate</b> (with previous contact)	War-torn community close to the Thai border that had been under the control of the government in the day time, and former KR at night; includes rural people, some who fought for the KR, some for government, and some for the resistance

2006a and 2006b). My findings incorporate a fourth category of 'moderate' coexistence, with two sub-categories (those who had previous contact, and those who did not). A condition of deep reconciliation was not found in any of the ten study sites.

## **Southwest-1 – Victims Living in Fear – Surface Coexistence**

Southwest-1 was a cluster of several villages, one of which was of mixed Khmer and Cham Muslim ethnicity. Southwest-1 lay close to the main road and the houses were fairly accessible by road or foot. The area had been taken over by the KR in 1973. During the 1990s there was extensive fighting in the area as KR from strongholds in the region would descend and try to attack what were now government-controlled areas. I visited this community several times and also attended several sessions when a local NGO provided training about the ECCC.

There was little interaction between the various villages in Southwest-1. Though all the villages did farming, the Cham portion of one of the villages was located on the small river, and the Cham were the main members of this community involved in fishing. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is a five percent Cham Muslim minority in Cambodia. Although this study does not allow detailed examination of the factors related to the treatment of various minority groups during the KR period, several groups, including Cham Muslims, Vietnamese, and Chinese city-dwellers, suffered disproportionately.<sup>6</sup> From the sample of Cham respondents in one village, all the respondents spoke about the greater degree of persecution they suffered in comparison to the Khmer villagers. In the Cham section of Southwest-1 almost all the men from that village were killed, and many of the women and children died as well. For example, one respondent lost nine of her thirteen children.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Vickery 1984: 194-196; Kiernan 1996: 461-462; Osman 2002: 2-3. Oveson agrees with Kiernan that Cham people were persecuted to a greater degree than others during the KR period, but argues that this was due to the KR perceptions of Cham culture as being 'different' (2005: 29).

<sup>7</sup> See quote above on page 87 (IV # 95).

What was striking about this community was that the villagers in this mixed Khmer/Cham village (Village A) were still living in fear of their neighbours in the next village: a village with many former KR members, including several accused perpetrators (Village B). Several of the respondents in Village A said they were afraid to speak about what happened in the past and were afraid of their neighbours living in Village B. For example, this non-KR victim expressed his fear of the other village a few times during the interview: 'I am afraid, I am afraid they might come back and do these bad things again' (IV # 29). In another neighbouring village, this 75-year-old man had been part of the KR originally but was later removed from his post: 'I get angry because they forced me to work very hard but now I dare not to show my feeling out because I am afraid of their co-workers, and that the lower KR will report about me to the top' (IV # 46).

Only one of the non-KR villagers in Village A to whom I spoke was not fearful, and was in fact trying to find out more about the past history: key informant Mr. Sunh. Sunh remarked upon the discrimination and separation between 'base' people and 'new' people during the KR regime in reference to one of the KR women cadres:

She was the chief of the women's mobile group (*mei kang chalat neary*) and she did bad things to women at that time such as she took the hot burned potato to push in the mouth of women who stole potatoes to eat. So that is why I tried to ask her husband in the coffee place but he did not say. Most people in [Village B] were 'base' people so they controlled the 'new' people (IV # 96).

Another example of the relatively richer and more educated 'new' people suffering disproportionately was provided by two non-KR victims who had been teachers before 1975. They were accused of being 'new' people and almost their entire families were killed (IV # 99).

Southwest-1 included village A, with many villagers living in fear, living side-by-side with their former jailers from the KR period. They rarely communicated so there have been no opportunities to build relationships and they live in a state of only

surface coexistence.<sup>8</sup> I turn next to Southwest-2, now moving from surface coexistence to a deeper level of coexistence: shallow coexistence.

## **Southwest-2 – Islands Alone – Shallow Coexistence**

In contrast to the mixed Khmer and Cham village Southwest-1, Southwest-2 was 100 percent ethnic Khmer. This area had also been taken over by the KR in 1973. Two amongst the five villages (Villages A and B) were relatively wealthy before the war (they had raised wooden houses, small pieces of land, and some had livestock). The other three villages (Villages C, D, and E) were farther from the main road, and had less land and livestock. During initial visits to the area, inhabitants of the richer villages (A and B) explained that before the war the poorer villages sent labourers to work on the fields of those living in the richer villages. However, this did not stop some of the sons of these relatively richer villagers from joining the KR and becoming soldiers, lured by King Sihanouk's call in the 1970s. During the KR period, the killings in the two richer villages (primarily 'new' people) were much more severe than in the three poorer villages (primarily 'base' people) and many people in Villages A and B were killed. A temple in one of the poorer villages (Village D) served as a prison and execution centre, and behind this temple thousands of bodies were unearthed after the KR regime. In the 1990s a monk and some other elders arranged for re-burial of the remains in the temple grounds in Village A, and a small memorial was built. There were approximately four accused perpetrators identified by various interviewees: one accused perpetrator who had been identified as particularly cruel had died a few years before, one accused perpetrator was interviewed and the other two could not be located. There were a handful of former KR soldiers living in the community, one who was available for interview.

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<sup>8</sup> They have however moved beyond a state of raw revenge, and refrain from violence, though it is close under the surface.

Southwest-2 included farmers, labourers, and some small business people. There was a great deal of interaction between the villages, as there was a common market in the district town nearby, and there were two Buddhist temples shared amongst the five villages. I had visited the village and met some of the villagers during my initial research in 1999, and had also met several of the villagers several times when they were invited by an NGO to visit the ECCC and to attend regional workshops on reconciliation and justice.

One of the former KR soldiers and his wife (a former KR 'base' person) were living in Southwest-2, and this soldier served as a key informant to this research, Mr. 'Kuy' whom I visited many times. Although he said he was never involved in any killings, that he only fought at the front lines, and that he had saved some villagers who were captured during the civil war period, he was treated with suspicion by other villagers. One former KR accused perpetrator and his family also lived in the community: their stories are told in the next chapter in the context of their communities.

Southwest-2 is categorized as living in a state of shallow coexistence: in contrast to the surface coexistence of Southwest-1-TS, there was communication and exchanges between victims, former KR, and the perpetrator and his family. I did not hear widespread expressions of fear from victims; however, the accused perpetrator expressed anxiety and fearfulness, and was living in isolation.<sup>9</sup> I now move to the northwest, where two communities exhibiting the next category of moderate coexistence are highlighted.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Zucker described an accused perpetrator who lives in a similar situation of isolation, as he is shunned by other villagers due to his past acts (Zucker 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Although the two examples of coexistence in the northwest I chose were both reconciled to a greater degree (moderate) than those found in the southwest (surface and shallow), I cannot conclude that in general coexistence was higher in the northwest. Firstly, there were three examples of communities demonstrating moderate coexistence (with no prior contact); I chose one of the two from the northwest, rather than the one from the southwest so I could highlight two communities from each region. Secondly, because the southwest was closer and the roads were better, and because I had more long-term ties to some of the communities, it was easier to find communities where victims and perpetrators were living side by side, and it was easier to locate accused perpetrators who were willing and able to be interviewed.

### **Northwest-3 - The Melting Pot - Moderate Coexistence (Without Prior Contact)**

Northwest-3 was one of the major former KR strongholds during the KR regime and thereafter, and its leaders had defected to the government side in 1996. Although the former KR areas in the northwest were experiencing a development boom in some areas, signs of the past war were everywhere: bombed out buildings, 'Caution! Land Mines!' signs, and desolate areas of scrub where development was not possible. In all of the former KR stronghold communities, there were a variety of populations, including former KR and non-KR, for the most part depending upon the land available. This woman deputy village chief explained:

The former Khmer Rouge are 60 percent while the rest (40 percent) are newcomers. . . . They come from various provinces. . . . They come here to work and once they are prosperous, they buy land to live here; others come to work and some were immigrants from the border of Cambodia. Here is a place to earn money and to work so they can start a new life here (IV # 64).

Researchers in former KR areas in the north and northwest, in 2000 noted that when former KR groups defected as a group with leadership intact, their recovery was more rapid than amongst scattered un-connected people fleeing from former KR areas (Cambodian Centre for Conflict Resolution and Cambodian Development Resource Institute 2000: 13-19). Three of the ten study sites were former KR areas, all of which had intact leadership. Interviews done in this case study community were done in a single visit, over a period of a few days, thus no repeat interviews were possible. Results of multiple focus group meetings, with a mixture of former KR and non-KR, showed some lingering fear and resentment on the part of the non-KR, most of whom admitted to feeling afraid when they first arrived (for the most part) in the late 1990s. Responses varied depending upon the make-up of the village (whether they were all former KR, or if it was a mixed area, as above) and the distance from the urban centre. The former KR interviewed were not shy to admit their former allegiances, and their

views ranged from being still proud and loyal to the KR regime and its leaders, to feeling sad, angry, and resentful of lost time and opportunities during the war. There was a great focus on working hard to find a better life, an endeavour in which all were engaged. Respondents spoke about current stresses on community reconciliation as land prices rise, land grabbing occurs, and conflicts thus increase, but with the exception of one respondent all denied that such conflicts ever occurred along KR/non-KR lines.

Several respondents spoke of close relationships between former KR and non-KR, presumably because they did not know each others' activities during the KR period. Since these interviews were relatively short, and were single rather than repeat interviews, none of the former KR respondents spoke about what they had done in the past except with the most general information. However, from listening to individual stories, especially the newcomers who were not KR, it was apparent that few of these people knew each other during the KR period (i.e., no prior contact). Thus their level of coexistence was not deep, and there was neither need for apologies nor forgiveness for specific acts. Yet of all the communities, this area showed a relatively higher degree of coexistence (moderate).

#### **Northwest-4 – We Are All in the Same Boat - Moderate Reconciliation (With Prior Contact)**

Another community of moderate coexistence was found in Northwest-4. In contrast to Northwest-3, this grouping of villages was not a former KR stronghold, though it had been taken over by the KR several times during the civil war (in the 1980s and 1990s). It looked like a typical cluster of Cambodian villages, mainly wooden houses on stilts but with a few cement buildings of more wealthy individuals. It was an agricultural area and rice fields surrounded the dusty main road. There was little commerce, just some small village markets. Although the Thai border was not far, the road was bad and there was no Thai commerce on the Cambodian side of the

border. Signs of war abounded with the bombed buildings and land mine signs, and there was a general lack of development: the long road from the provincial capital was still of very poor quality and frequently impassable in the rainy season. Many of the villagers had lived here for generations, and had been caught up in different sides of the conflict – as KR and the ‘Para’ (or non-communist resistance forces) fought here both together and against each other. Government forces were constantly also competing for control, so it was described by the locals as a ‘tug of war’ region.

Several individuals were interviewed who knew each other, as well as an accused perpetrator who had been in another region during the KR regime. This area was at a stage of moderate reconciliation, because victims and former KR sat side-by-side and talked about the past, though there was still much resentment. Other topics of their coexistence are explored further in the next chapter, such as religion, guilt, and discrimination.

In conclusion, this chapter has identified four communities that serve as four different models of community coexistence and reconciliation: (1) surface, (2) shallow, (3) moderate (with no prior contact), and (4) moderate (with prior contact). Firstly, the stage was set through background about the KR regime in the words of respondents. Secondly, details of the four communities were reviewed which exhibit characteristics of four different types of coexistence. In the next chapter, we turn to the individuals living in the case study communities in terms of how they are coping on an individual basis with the trauma of the past.



## CHAPTER 5 – Victims and Perpetrators: Fine Lines, Factors, and Coping Strategies

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After a period of mass violence the goal of reconciliation in a reconstructed society is ultimately to reintegrate victims and perpetrators. If victims focus on their victimhood to the exclusion of all else, or if perpetrators live separate lives as pariahs, or trumpet their impunity, society cannot move forward and develop. This chapter introduces the three groups of people studied in this research: victims, former Khmer Rouge (many of whom were bystanders), and perpetrators.<sup>1</sup> First, the three groups will be described. Second, key factors that affect the degree of acceptance of perpetrators by victims are explored. Third, a theory of perpetrator coping strategies is presented.

The categories of victim, perpetrator, and bystander are not always mutually exclusive and the lines between them are often blurred.<sup>2</sup> The conflict in Cambodia was Khmer against Khmer, and the majority of people were not separated by race, ethnicity, or religion.<sup>3</sup> Thus it is not easy to determine who was who, and families were often divided by chance and politics. Even so, automatic moral judgments are inherent in the categories assigned to people after violence: victim (associated with innocence and purity) and perpetrator (associated with guilt and evil) (Baines 2008: 4). These

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<sup>1</sup> I decided to use the general term 'former KR' instead of specifying the detailed categories such as this classification used by the Documentation Center of Cambodia: cadres (those who had positions of authority); combatants (soldiers); security personnel (prison guards and other security staff); and base people (rural populations living in KR-controlled zones) (Cougill et al. 2004: vi). Since my interview format did not focus on the KR period itself, and because asking former KR their specific roles would be seen as sensitive and invasive, I have identified people with the general term of former KR, unless an individual has explained their role voluntarily.

<sup>2</sup> Although the terms victim and perpetrator are both value-laden and imply clear delineation of guilt, I have used them throughout the text (in contrast to survivor and offender or harm-doer), because they are well known in Cambodia and clearly understood.

<sup>3</sup> The KR discriminated against three primary minority groups based on their ethnicity: the Chinese-Khmer, Vietnamese, and Muslim Cham. These groups of people were all considered in the category of 'new' people and were persecuted.

automatic judgments often take place in Cambodia, at least between two groups: the leadership or cadre of KR leaders at various levels who as perpetrators committed crimes, and the 'enemy' population of the 'new' people victims, many of whom were persecuted and killed.

The grey areas between the two extremes of victim and perpetrator have led Coloroso to identify a range of roles played by people in genocide. These include: (1) planners, instigators, and perpetrators; (2) henchmen; (3) active supporters; (4) passive supporters; (5) active bystanders; (6) passive bystanders; (7) witnesses; and (8) active witnesses, defenders, and resisters; and (9) victims (Coloroso 2007: 82-3, 144-151). This framework is helpful in analysing the complex relationships between group and individuals, and will be applied below.

As this chapter focuses on the micro-level of individuals, in order to describe the victims, accused perpetrators, and former KR interviewed in this research study, we start with a review of the respondents of the research study.

## **Respondents**

After so many years of war, and the slow and halting defection, reintegration, and reconstruction processes, there are many groups and sub-groups within Cambodian society. Respondents for this research study were focused in two regions of Cambodia, which were described in the last chapter (the southwest and the northwest) with a third centrally located respondent group in the capital (Phnom Penh).

I conducted a total of 134 interviews, 123 of which were individual interviews and 11 were focus groups. In the text, respondents are identified by their individual characteristics (e.g., KR soldier, or woman victim) and by their interview number: for example, the first interview (IV) is (IV # 1), the second is (IV # 2), etc. Some of the individual interviews included more than one person (101 one-person, 20 two-person, and two three-person individual interviews) and some of the interviews were repeat

interviews (32 interviews): there were a total of 124 respondents interviewed. Of those 124 respondents 33 were women and 91 were men.<sup>4</sup> See Appendix I for more details about the respondents.

Both individual and focus group interviews were used to triangulate the data. For example, I visited the temple in Southwest-2 that had been a prison during the KR period, where Mr. Pel (the accused perpetrator mentioned in Chapter 4) had brought people to be executed. We requested to meet the head monk, who was meeting with the temple advisors and elders, so we held a spontaneous focus group discussion to ask the community members about the history of the area and their feelings about it. One of the respondents stated during the interview that we should ask Mr. Kuy (the key informant, former KR soldier) about that time period. Later, Kuy told me that he had felt insulted by this comment, as he had been at the military front, and had not been involved in the local atrocities, as the speaker had implied. Thus observing interactions between individuals, and gathering information from multiple sources, provided me additional inputs to better guide my later interviews.

My goal was to include as many accused perpetrators as possible, but I found it difficult to firstly identify them within communities, secondly find someone who could lead me to homes of accused perpetrators and introduce me, and thirdly have the accused perpetrator agree to the interview. In the end, amongst the individual interviews, eight were accused perpetrators, and 21 were former KR members (the majority of whom were self-identified): some of the 21 former KR may have also been

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<sup>4</sup> Admittedly a missing element in this study is the voice of women. As I was using a serendipitous method of sampling, when entering a village, men were usually the first to meet with visitors, especially since the first visit to the village has to be with the village chief to obtain permission, and village chiefs in Cambodia are overwhelmingly men. As I tried to sample older people who had lived through and could remember the KR regime, and to include respected elders, this included village chiefs, religious leaders (monks and Buddhist laymen or *Achars*), and teachers, which also skewed the sample towards men.

perpetrators, but I did not have information about their pasts. About half of the focus group interviewees were also former KR.

Of the 124 respondents, seven were monks or *Achars*, 53 were community members (10 of whom were teachers and three were *Kru Khmer* or traditional healers), 28 were NGO workers, eight were UN workers, 20 were government authorities (three at the national level, three at the provincial level, and the rest at the local level (district, commune, or village), two worked for the ECCC, and six were victims from the Phnom Penh area involved in ECCC or other NGO activities.<sup>5</sup> As I tried to include respondents who had experience working on reconciliation activities, and/or with many years of experience working in Cambodia, 14 were expatriates.<sup>6</sup> In order to protect the identity of respondents, I refer to all the UN and NGO staff workers as UN/NGO workers.

The majority of Cambodians interviewed had lived under the KR regime, but a few who had not. The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 88, but the vast majority of interviews were in their forties, fifties and sixties.

## Key Informants

Eight key informants were identified on the basis of their particularly significant inputs into my understanding:

- Mr. **Sunh**, from Southwest-1, a KR victim, a government soldier, former village chief, and self-professed revenge-seeker whom I interviewed four times;

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<sup>5</sup> These summary statistics numbers are approximate, as several interviewees had multiple identities, such as NGO workers who had been recently let go who were now speaking as community members, or community members who were also part-time volunteers with an NGO.

<sup>6</sup> Although my focus was on rural Cambodians, I also spoke with some Cambodians who, although they had experience with reconciliation activities, either: had lived for many years outside of Cambodia (IV # 128 and 134); or had not lived through the KR period (IV# 41, 21, 48, and 49). The expatriate interviewees were interview numbers: 12, 27, 28, 35, 36, 39, 58, 71, 72, 124, 125, 127, 129, and 131.

- Mr. **Tang**, from Southwest-1, a former KR cadre and accused perpetrator whom I interviewed once;
- Mr. **Kuy** from Southwest-2, a former KR soldier whom I interviewed five times and who assisted in setting up other interviews, and his wife Mrs. **Lysa**, a former KR member whom I interviewed formally once;
- Mr. **Pel** and Mrs. **Kong** from Southwest-2: Mr. Pel was a former KR spy (*chhlop*) and accused perpetrator whom I interviewed once, and Mrs. Kong, his wife, a former KR member I interviewed twice;
- Mr. **Kin**, from Northwest, a former UN/NGO worker on reconciliation projects, and former monk whom I interviewed twice.
- Mr. **Sary**, from Phnom Penh, a victim, and former KR prison inmate whom I interviewed twice.

We now turn to a review of the general characteristics of the victim group of respondents.

## The Victims

### Who were the Victims?

In this study and in Cambodia in general, the term ‘victim’ refers to those who suffered human rights violations during the KR regime. Suffering of victims included violations of most human rights, including discrimination, hard labour, starvation, lack of medical care and education, physical abuse, torture and execution. ‘New’ people or 17 April people (the educated, civil servants, and people living in cities – the ‘bourgeois’) were subjected to much greater hardship than the ‘base’ people (rural Cambodians, often poor, or those who had joined the KR movement in its earlier stages – also known as ‘old’ people). The primary targets of the KR regime were these ‘new’ people, as well as certain other groups such as Cham Muslims and Buddhist

monks. For many victims, their role as victim was an important part of their identity, and many interviewees were eager to tell their stories of suffering.

Amongst the victim group several distinctions can be made, depending upon victims' roles and identities: 'no victim is only a victim, but also an actor with many identities, roles and resources' (Huyse 2003: 56). For example, victims will have suffered differentially depending on such factors as: the severity of the general economic conditions in the area (some regions had more starvation than others); if and how often the person was displaced; how far they were separated from their family, and the severity of the leadership (in imposing regulations related to food, labour, executions, imprisonment, etc.). The amount of family support, luck, personality, motivation, religious devotion, and belief in the importance of forgiveness also influences how the individual recovers from the trauma of the past, and thus how they are able to reconcile with former KR perpetrators and bystanders. These distinctions and variations played a role in how they remembered their experiences and how they viewed perpetrators.

Almost all Cambodians consider themselves victims, as shown in a 2008 survey on justice and reconciliation: 93 percent of the respondents (which included both victims and perpetrators) who had lived under the regime considered themselves victims (Pham et al. 2009: 2). Their experiences included starvation (82 percent), lack of shelter (71 percent), destroyed property (71 percent), forced evacuation (69 percent), forced labour (53 percent), torture (27 percent), witness of torture (30 percent), and witness of killing (22 percent) (Pham et al. 2009: 2). The term victim may also apply to former KR, as the KR turned upon themselves and targeted their own cadres who suddenly became enemies of the regime (KR victims). Indeed in the Tuol

Sleng (S-21) prison the majority of those killed were former KR cadres weeded out in increasingly paranoid internal purges (Chandler 1999).<sup>7</sup>

## **Child Victims and Child Soldiers<sup>8</sup>**

The KR actively and purposely recruited young children and youth as KR soldiers and cadres, and began indoctrination in children as young as six years of age (Etcheson 2005a: 5). The youth were seen as more malleable and as the purest revolutionaries. Most children were separated from their families even at very young ages and were subjected to indoctrination and constant propaganda. They were thus uneducated, often ignorant, and subject to influence and superstitions (Locard 2005). Some were forced to become child soldiers, spies, and even executioners. This KR victim noted: 'The people in that time were cruel -- even the young people' (IV # 16). All people, including children, had to work hard and were often threatened with punishment or death -- they also witnessed death or at least observed people led to their deaths, or people who disappeared. Few had any education except for all-night speeches about the virtues of the KR regime.

There were many orphans after the KR regime, some of whom were kept in orphanages and others who were taken in by family members. Thus young people were used by the KR regime as a tool of their policies, and were also victims who suffered under the regime. When examining the period of mass violence in Cambodia and its aftermath, an important factor is the age of the parties, with youth as a possible mitigating factor. Child soldiers are a particularly vulnerable group and an example of the fine line between victim and perpetrator (Huyse 2003: 65). This former child soldier explained: 'No, I was forced, I would say. I was forced by the KR to do killing before,

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<sup>7</sup> In this infamous Phnom Penh prison (Tuol Sleng, or S-21) more than 14,000 'enemies' of the KR regime were tortured and killed between 1976 and 1978 (Chandler 1999: viii).

<sup>8</sup> A prime example of a child victim/child soldier is Arn Chorn Pond, who was adopted by an American family, who now speaks openly about his mixed role as both victim and perpetrator, how he survived, and how he has worked on coming to terms with his past. See for example: <http://www.cambodianlivingarts.org/people/arnchornpond>

and all these things. So I speak more and more now about it; I just started to talk about ten years ago....how many children around have been forced?' (IV # 134).

## **The (Fine) Line between Perpetrators and Victims**

In the analysis of a post-mass-violence situation, it is important to disaggregate the category of perpetrators and acknowledge the complexity of guilt and innocence, and the blurriness of the victim and perpetrator categories (Lemarchand and Niwese 2007: 168; Pouligny, Chesterman and Schnabel 2007: 11). This disaggregation is rarely done in Cambodia, as the term KR is often used interchangeably with perpetrator.

Rigby cautions against facile distinctions between victims and perpetrators, as the agonizing decision to become a perpetrator (often under the threat of death) cannot be judged by outsiders who were not in that difficult situation (2001: 116). Indeed several of the respondents could understand and empathize with those difficult decisions. This expatriate UN/NGO worker recounted the words of his Cambodian colleague (who narrowly escaped being recruited as a KR cadre) to another colleague (who had self-identified as victim and only talked of her own suffering, never listening to the suffering of her colleagues):

She said: 'My father who had a high position in the Lon Nol government happened to survive the first two years because he had dark skin and could act like he was a cyclo driver. But then he was caught and he was killed before our very eyes, not taken away, he was killed right on the spot! And I was there, and then I was made the chief of a youth group, and that was three months before the Vietnamese came in. If it had been six months, or three months longer . . . I would have been like [the known perpetrator]. You should be happy that you were just too young!' And finally she just stopped. . . . I wonder when do you stop being a victim and become a perpetrator? (IV # 58).

Another expatriate UN/NGO worker recounted a story about the fine line between perpetrators and victims from the 1980s, when their government guide greeted a soldier along the side of a road with a big hug:



When she came back I said to her, 'wow, who was that?' She said that this was the female cadre who was responsible in her KR camp for her group who was responsible for the deaths of many people in the camp. I said 'why did you hug her then?' I will always remember, she said angrily, 'Never judge others, because you never know what you would do to survive!' I think then she must have also had to do such things that she might not have done in other circumstances (IV # 127).

Waller described genocide as a situation of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances in order to remind us that the capacity to commit such crimes lies in the majority of humanity (2002: 8). Thus we should be careful about judging others – what would we have done when put into those extraordinary circumstances? A way to avoid being judgmental is to increase understanding of the 'other'. We now hear from some of those former KR (some of whom may have been perpetrators, some bystanders) as to how they became involved in the movement and how they saw this fine line between victim and perpetrator.

## **Former Khmer Rouge and Bystanders**

The second group of respondents is labelled 'former Khmer Rouge (KR)', to include those who were self-identified, or identified by other villagers, as former KR, but not as having committed any crimes. Former KR soldiers were often placed by respondents in this category (rather than being labelled as perpetrators), as they were usually not seen as having committed crimes against the population. For the purposes of this study, this category also includes former KR who had relocated (usually to KR-controlled areas in the northwest or north) and whose background remained unclear.<sup>9</sup>

The majority of the former KR who were not direct perpetrators might also be described as bystanders. Bystanders are those who stand by and do not act in the face of human rights violations, and, during the KR period, that would include the vast

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<sup>9</sup> In the context of the study, in many cases I was only interviewing people one time and would not have known the true past of many respondents, so I have classified them as merely former KR.

majority of the former KR or base people. However, all groups including victims, former KR, and perpetrators were often forced to watch many human rights violations and were powerless to stop them. This powerlessness and memories of viewed atrocities contributes to trauma and to feelings of guilt (including guilt for merely surviving). No one dared speak; everyone risked becoming an immediate victim. As described by many survivors, they learned to be like the kapok tree (*dam kor*), a play on words as '*kor*' also means to be deaf and mute. Coloroso describes four valid reasons for bystanders not acting: (1) fear of injury or death; (2) fear of becoming a target; (3) fear of making the situation worse; (4) does not know what to do (2007: 99). These reasons have often been invoked by both former KR and non-KR when trying to understand and explain their experiences during the regime. These reasons for not acting can also be applied to survival strategies in the present day, as described in the section below on perpetrator coping strategies.

Given the methodology of my research with primarily only one interview with an individual, it was difficult to know exactly the role of respondents during the KR period. Many stated they were rural inhabitants, 'base' people without any authority or other role in the regime. At the time of the KR regime it was estimated that approximately 15 percent of the 5.3 million base people died (800,000) and 33 percent of the 2.4 million 'new' people died (also about 800,000) (Kiernan 1996: 456). Thus there are millions of people (5.3) who enjoyed a relatively better standard of living than the minority group (2.4 million). Although much attention is focused on the planners and instigators of the most grievous crimes of the KR (such as killing and torture), the majority of 'base' people under the KR have committed moral and/or political offenses. These moral and political offenses included enjoying direct or indirect advantages at the expense of others, or inaction in the case of human rights abuses, including the above criminal offenses. However these moral and political offenses were not always committed by choice, as we will see in the next section on the reasons people joined the KR.

## Why did People Join the KR?

The gravity of the offenses and the motivation of the perpetrators are important factors in determining the ability of individuals to reconcile in the post-conflict phases (Huysse 2003: 67). Former KR respondents provided a variety of motivations for joining, examples of which are provided below. Many families were divided during the war period, as in some areas the KR would recruit one soldier from each family in a rural area, while the government also did the same. The effects of the war and the US bombing affected many areas as well. This former KR soldier speaking in a focus group explained how he had tried to explain to his family how he ended up with the KR in the turmoil of war, stating a common refrain that the KR had protected the Cambodian nation from being swallowed by the Vietnamese:

After we stopped fighting with the Vietnamese I went to my home village in 1993. The people asked me why were you on the KR side? I told them that I have been alright and have food and a home. . . . But amongst the people who studied with me in my village, only two among ten survived! The Americans bombed our area and so many people died at that time. When I returned home . . . amongst my sisters and brothers only four had survived. They asked me again how could I have been on the KR side? . . . I told them that if the Vietnamese had been successful in their invasion of Cambodia, we would have lost our territory so we joined in the struggle. . . . (IV # 61)

Not all KR were forced to join the movement; several respondents in the former KR areas were proud of the KR and joined willingly, such as one senior former KR soldier who denied his neighbour's statement that he had joined under pressure 'No, it is not. It was the politics which I loved myself' (IV # 116). He also added that he had joined before the American bombing, but the bombing affected him greatly, with many of the people in his village killed.

This respondent was recruited at a young age but also stated she went willingly:

I have five siblings. I am the oldest daughter. I left my family in 1970 when I was 15 years old. I left by my choice; no parents forced me! I was highly motivated. I was a KR soldier from 1970 to 1974. After then we were liberated

[in 1975] I was sent to work in salt field in Kampot, and then I worked in a transport group (*krom dek chenhchoun*) until 1978 (IV # 65).

On the other hand, this respondent was “recruited’ from her poor rural village unwillingly:

When I was 16 the Khmer Rouge asked to take me from my parents to be involved in the arts. They trained me in art for 3 months, but I was not allowed to return home. I tried to go back to my home three times but they followed me to bring me back. I did not want to stay with them. There were many taken by the KR in my village. If there was a son in a house, the son would come, but if there were two sons, they would come; if there were three, they would also come. Some of them would be alive and return, but others would not (IV # 64).

This section provides viewpoints of several former KR in order to assist us in better understanding the competing pressures upon the individuals in the lead-up to the years of mass violence. This increased understanding is an important factor in re-humanization and developing empathy, important dimensions of the process of reconciliation, which will be discussed more extensively in later chapters. As victims consider whether or not to accept former KR into their communities, understanding the factors that influenced people to join the KR can facilitate reconciliation. Part of this understanding is the ability of victims to see former KR also as victims.

## **Khmer Rouge as Victims**

As noted above, KR were also victims of the regime, having lost family members and friends through increasingly vicious internal purges. Besides the killings and discrimination against the ‘new’ people by the KR, the majority of the violence reported by respondents was related to the KR southwest zone cadres killing the KR northwestern zone cadres. Gradually over time, there has been increased attention to the suffering of the perpetrators as well as the victims. In several news articles former KR perpetrators such as prison guards also refer to themselves as victims (Mydans 2009). A DC-Cam publication highlighted the suffering of both former KR and

perpetrators (Cougill et al. 2004). However, there is still little public debate in Cambodia today about former KR as victims.

I asked about half of the respondents if they felt they had suffered the same, more, or less than others during the KR regime. Most respondents said they suffered the same as others, although one accused perpetrator (as well as his wife) said he suffered *more* than others. He seemed to be intermingling his experiences during the KR and after the KR in the passage below. He, as most other former KR, including former KR accused perpetrators, felt as though he was a victim also:

I hate it very much when I hear about Pol Pot. Nobody could call me to join now, I stopped following them and believing in them anymore. The KR time was very difficult. . . I have much more suffering than others and I stopped going or believing their calling. I don't like Pol Pot anymore (IV # 85).

Although the majority of the former KR respondents had lost relatively few family members compared to the non-KR victims whose families were for the most part decimated, this former KR soldier in the northwest reported many family members killed:

I lost many relatives. I lost my siblings and parents. I lost about 10 or 13 relatives including my uncles, aunts. My father was arrested during the three years and eight months [KR period]. Then, my uncle, aunt, and granduncle were arrested to be killed because they accused them of being enemies betraying *Angkar*. In the KR period, my father was the chief of a cooperative, but later on, the KR leaders were changed between the southwest (*near'ordei*) and northwest (*peayoap*). Since he was a northwest (*peayoap*) person, when the southwest came, they accused all the northwest as enemies and they killed many northwest people (IV # 78).

This former KR senior level cadre spoke about the many family members he also lost, and the anger surviving family members felt against him for not saving them.

You know the sister, the older sister of the wife of Mrs. Ieng Thirith; she died during the administration of the KR. Also, the sister-in-law of Pol Pot, she died also. It [the killing] touched everyone. But one cannot say that Pol Pot decided to kill his sister. . . . My cousins were not happy with me. They said you were in the ranks of the KR, and you could not even defend the members of the family! And I told him, it was even difficult for me to defend my own head, so it would stay attached to my body [laughs]. You know at that time, it was like that, no one could protect anyone (IV # 63).

Although it is clear that many former KR suffered as well as victims, there should not be too much emphasis on the role of former KR (especially known perpetrators) as victims, and this should not be their primary identity. As Huyse argues, when perpetrators claim they are victims to the point of avoiding any responsibility for their actions, reconciliation processes can be obstructed. 'Such blurring of guilt can become an obstacle on the path to coexistence, trust and empathy from the point of view of many victims' (Huyse 2003: 62). We now turn to the perpetrators: who were they and what are they accused of doing?

## **The Perpetrators – The Accused**

### **Who Were the Perpetrators?**

In this thesis, the term 'perpetrator' includes former KR (base people, cadres, security personnel or soldiers) who identified themselves as former KR, and have been accused by others of harming or killing others during the KR period. Some were accused of planning, some of ordering, and some of directly killing others. This section reviews the perpetrators and their offenses.

Factors such as the degree of guilt (numbers of people killed) or whether crimes were committed by choice or not may differentiate various types of perpetrators. Included in this category of perpetrators were some of the peasant 'base' people who misused their power against richer neighbours out of jealousy.<sup>10</sup> A passive or active supporter may have merely pointed out or accused someone, but any type of accusation in the paranoid KR society could result in execution of the suspect. Children and youth recruited by the KR comprise a special category of victim perpetrators; they were often manipulated into carrying out a variety of crimes.

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<sup>10</sup> This delineation of types of perpetrators is from Coloroso 2007: 82-3, 144-151.

Perpetrators can be direct perpetrators as per above, or indirect perpetrators who committed moral or political offenses.

The perpetrators in Cambodia can be divided using Coloroso's scheme as described above: the DK Central committee (planners); KR cadres, soldiers, spies, and security personnel (henchmen and active participants) (Coloroso 2007: 82-3, 144-151). Some former KR cadres, spies, and base people also acted as 'active supporters' by identifying others for execution. Many of the spies and the soldiers were children and youth.

In the case of Cambodia, the KR transferred their cadre out of their home villages to lead in other villages and often moved cadre from place to place. But in some cases, some lower level perpetrators such as spies, or the henchmen who executed people or led them to their deaths, were from the same communities and were known by the victims. Mr. Pel, one of the key informants, was in this situation, because as a spy (*chhlop*) he was responsible for bringing victims to the prison to be executed. This "'intimate" crime leaves particularly deep marks, both individually and collectively, weakening the regulatory foundations of society' (Pouligny, Chesterman and Schnabel 2007: 7).

## **The Offenses**

The role of perpetrators, both in the past and present, and the context in which offenses occurred, are important factors in the process of and degree of reconciliation achieved. In order to develop a reconciliation policy or to deal with the process of reconciliation, these factors can be further subdivided as follows: the type and gravity of the offense, and the motives (Huyse 2003: 67, 72). Youk Chhang, the director of the DC-Cam, wrote in the preface of a book of stories of young KR perpetrators that they were willing to testify, and such truth-telling was the only way to achieve reconciliation (Ea and Sim 2001: 2). However, most former KR in Cambodia were not eager to

discuss the past, especially their role in any atrocities. The notable exception is the KR leader known as Duch (whose full name is Kaing Guek Eav) who has revealed at least some of his role in the infamous S-21 prison and torture centre (Doherty 2009; Kea 2009). While Duch has apologized several times for the deaths that occurred under his watch and taken responsibility for them, he has not admitted to direct killing. The three other senior leaders indicted by the tribunal, in spite of evidence to the contrary have not admitted to any direct involvement in crimes. Although they are not on trial, some of the surviving prison guards have been interviewed publically several times and have been interviewed in a film.<sup>11</sup> Several have admitted to killing one or two persons or smaller numbers, rather than the hundreds of which they are accused (Sloan 2006). Some of the guards and staff of the prison have also spoken about their roles at the prison and killing fields.<sup>12</sup>

But in general, as the majority of former KR are reticent to speak publically about their role in any crimes, and there were few other witnesses to the crimes, it is difficult to link the gravity of offenses to individual perpetrators. Many former KR, including accused perpetrators, attempt to withdraw from society in order to hide their identities and any past deeds. Only one of the accused perpetrators I spoke to was willing to talk about his experiences during the KR regime.<sup>13</sup> The only other exception to the general reticence of perpetrators talking about past crimes was this indirect reference to bad deeds of the past made by the wife of an accused perpetrator: 'I ask him to go to pagoda so he can release some bad deeds that he did before but he does

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<sup>11</sup> See film by Rithy Panh *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003).

<sup>12</sup> I intentionally did not interview any of the famous Tuol Sleng prison guards who have confessed, partly because it was not the main purpose of my research, secondly because their story has been very widely reported, and thirdly because one often had to pay and to use various contacts to obtain such interviews which was not part of my research plan.

<sup>13</sup> This was Arn Chorn Pond, a Cambodian-American who often speaks publically about his experiences as a former KR child soldier: see above.



not go. He does not go but he sometimes encourages his children to go to the pagoda' (IV # 90).<sup>14</sup>

A small minority of former KR respondents, primarily in the northwest provinces, still spoke proudly about the KR regime, its accomplishments, and nationalism, such as this former KR soldier:

So, that is the good point of the KR that they could protect the Khmer people and keep the land of Khmer [from the Vietnamese]. So, the KR really could defend many thousands of people. Even they said that the KR is not good. In fact, they were good people that defended the native people and they cared about all things in Cambodia. So, the world also supported the KR at that time because the KR could defeat the strategy of Vietnamese. At that time, Thai begged the KR to help. If there were no KR, the Vietnamese would have fought over all the countries in Asia, especially with the Chinese (IV # 66).

Although the respondent above did not admit to any particular individual offenses, he was proud of the regime and its accomplishments. He spoke loudly, in public (in a safe setting surrounded by his former KR colleagues) and flaunted his local power which was still intact. The two approaches taken by these above perpetrators (withdrawal versus the use of power) are described in the section below on perpetrator coping strategies. We now turn to individual crimes and the factors affecting victim and perpetrator relationships, starting with the type and gravity of individual offenses.

## **Factors Affecting Victim-Perpetrator Relations**

This section reviews a variety of factors that can affect relationships between victims and perpetrators. The type and gravity of the offense as well as the motivation define different categories of perpetrators. Other factors include: classification as direct or indirect perpetrators, relationships before the KR period, frequency of contact, location and proximity, poverty, age, and ignorance. Both victims and perpetrators will

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<sup>14</sup> However, in daily life in Cambodia, this statement is not necessarily an admission of guilt; it does indicate some spiritual dissonance.

have to weigh these factors as they decide how to remember the past and frame the future.

## **Type and Gravity of Offense**

Firstly, in considering the type and gravity of offenses, perpetrators can be grouped in various ways: is their guilt criminal, political, or moral? Let us consider the criminal versus moral question. There are thousands of perpetrators with criminal guilt in Cambodia who have committed crimes that could be brought in front of a court of law. The most clear criminal offenses include the planning or ordering of others to be killed, killing with their own hands, beating, torturing, or otherwise injuring others. A handful of senior leaders (four) are being tried in front of the ECCC, accused of planning these and other crimes. However, many people (former KR and victims alike) were put into the difficult situation of the moral offense of being asked to accuse others (often 'new' people) of various offenses (sometimes wrongly), and deaths and injuries have resulted. Many former KR were also involved in economic crimes of taking victims' belongings and property. Other moral offenses occurred for large numbers of people who stood by (for various reasons) while others were killed or injured in front of them.

The gravity of the offense is an important factor in how the victims view the perpetrators and this affects how the reconciliation process proceeds. In general most respondents divided former KR into categories depending upon the severity of the crimes they had committed and with how much cruelty – this resulted in a certain degree of guilt perceived: (1) serious - those who were very cruel and committed serious crimes, often killing large numbers of people; (2) moderate - those who committed crimes but only under orders or who were naively ignorant; (3) minor - those who tried to be kind and tried not to commit crimes.

Amongst perpetrators who committed serious crimes of the first category, many were killed in revenge immediately after the fall of the KR, or had fled to different parts of Cambodia. Perpetrators in the second grouping (those who were seen to commit 'moderate' crimes) have been received with a variety of reactions from victims, ranging from revenge, to ostracism, to acceptance: these reactions will be described in the next chapter. Most of those in the third category of minor crimes have been reintegrated into their communities to a greater or lesser degree.<sup>15</sup> For example, in this small group discussion, the two participants (1 and 2) noted that perpetrators who were not 'so cruel', i.e., who had committed less serious offenses, could return to the village:

1: The Khmer Rouge ran away, and then came back because they are the children of villagers in this village. They were Khmer Rouge but they are not cruel so the people did not get angry and the Vietnamese also forgave them too.

2: They ran because they were afraid themselves. No one tried to kill them, such as Vietnamese and government soldiers who in fact called them to come back, but they were afraid so they ran away and, after they knew that we would not kill them, they came back and surrendered.

1: They came back because Vietnamese soldiers called them back and they did not kill them so the lower Khmer Rouge came back and they gave them rice, farm, and land (IV # 16).

## Motivation

As noted above, perpetrators can also be categorised according to their motivation for committing offences. Was it because they were ordered to do so and, if so, were they afraid for their own lives? Did they take initiative and enjoy killing others? Did they do it for community gain or self-interest? Although only a handful of former KR have admitted any direct guilt at all, most former KR who were involved in the movement have claimed that they were under orders and living in fear of their lives (Ea and Sim 2001). KR cadre and youth were often forced to kill others to demonstrate their loyalty to the revolution.

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<sup>15</sup> These delineations will be discussed in detail in Chapter 7 on revenge, as victims went through a decision-making process as to whether or not to take revenge: see victim decision-making tree on page 151.

Many respondents spoke of how ‘cruel’ (*kach* or *sahav*) the perpetrators were, which was closely related to the motivation of the person, or whether the person was perceived as doing these acts by choice or not. Although this research did not specifically examine the motives of the perpetrators (few perpetrators admitted committing crimes at all much less speak about their motives), victims often interpreted motivations of former KR and could consider some motivations as mitigating factors (see below). Etcheson also noted that lower-level perpetrators were more easily accepted when victims could see they acted under coercion or ignorance (2005b: 219). However, this understanding can go only so far. In situations of mass violence, many offenders deny any wrongdoing at all, and say they were only following orders. Huyse notes that perpetrators may also claim to be victims, blaming ideological indoctrination of ‘the system’, and this claim of victimhood can then be used as a way of ‘escaping guilt, shame, or responsibility’ (Huyse 2003: 62). This denial and avoidance is not usually a productive route to reconciliation.

In one community a victim stated that he was living in close proximity to former KR perpetrators who had done cruel things to him in his daily life. At the same time, he was able to acknowledge that those former KR did not join by choice, so he was able to justify their involvement. In this narrative the victim, a farmer (1) was sitting next to a UN/ NGO worker (2 - Mr. Khin, one of the key informants of this study), and they openly discussed a former KR perpetrator (and neighbour) who had been sitting nearby before the interview started.

2: There are only the lower leaders around here; there are not any top leaders. These lower leaders had arrested and beat me, but later on, here [He pointed to a house near his house] we could not put the punishment to them because they were ordered from the top leaders. The top leaders ordered them to cut off the hands of the people who stole rice. Now, there are many cruel persons in this village. I was beaten and tied up by them. If children stole rice, the spies (*chhlop*) arrested them, and beat some of them until they were unconscious. One man [cruel perpetrator] lives to the south of my house.

1: He did this because he was hungry. That man used to be the KR too. [He pointed to the place where someone had been sitting previously]

2: At that time, everybody was the Khmer Rouge because even if we did not want to be the KR, we would die . . . if we were against them, we would be killed (IV # 103).

As this victim understood that the motivation of the perpetrator was to avoid being killed himself, the victim was better able to develop empathy and live peacefully with his neighbour. We turn next to the emotion of fear as another factor related to motivation.

## **Fear**

The amount of fear felt by both the victim and the perpetrator can influence the type of relationship and the amount of reconciliation. The greater the fear (on the side of either victim or perpetrator) is, the less chance of a positive relationship. In a survey done by Jansen, many interviewees assumed that many former KR might be afraid to testify as witnesses before the ECCC, because they would be afraid that victims would resent and discriminate against them (2006: 32-33). Several respondents spoke of the fear that accused perpetrators and former KR must live with, and some of the accused perpetrators I spoke with expressed that fear. In order to move forward, safety and security are important factors such that the victims are not afraid of a return to the period of violence and perpetrators are not afraid of revenge. Once fear has lessened, then the task of reconciliation can occur: trauma healing, building trust and confidence, and finally development of empathy. This issue of fear is explored more deeply in the next chapter in the context of community reconciliation.

## **Community Population**

As will be explored further in the next chapter on community reconciliation, an important factor in victim-perpetrator relationships is the village population statistics – the percentage of victims, perpetrators, and former KR and ‘base’ people. Another factor is the presence and status of surviving family members who had not been

involved in crimes. In most cases, minority populations (whether they were victims, perpetrators, or former KR) in general expressed more fear than majority populations.

## **Frequency of Contact**

Frequency of contact between victim and perpetrator is an important factor in reconciliation. In some cases if people never meet, they can put the past out of mind. However, if often faced with a former perpetrator, visions of the past may interfere more often with daily life and may force people to deal with the past more than they wish. Many of the victim respondents stated they never saw the most serious perpetrators again, as some were killed by revenge killings, and the rest ran away. In the case of perpetrators who committed less serious crimes, several victims reported meeting them only occasionally, such as by chance on the road, or at social occasions in the village.<sup>16</sup> Another small group of victims had by chance met a perpetrator (who had committed more serious crimes) in passing once or twice since the KR regime.<sup>17</sup> In only two of the 134 interviews did people report seeing perpetrators daily.<sup>18</sup>

## **Proximity**

Also impacting on processes of reconciliation in addition to frequency of contact is the degree of the physical distance between victims and perpetrators (Kriesberg 2001: 49–52). If parties never have any contact, how can they reconcile? On the other hand, if there are power differentials between them when they do meet, the victim can also feel doubly disempowered. Proximity and integration are also closely related to the factor of geography, as the physical contours of the environment and living conditions can serve either to separate or facilitate contact and reconciliation (Bloomfield 2003: 47). Other geographical concerns occur at the village level in

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<sup>16</sup> This group included most of the victim inhabitants of Southwest-1 and Southwest-2, and many of those living in Northwest-4.

<sup>17</sup> Interview numbers 1, 31, 46, 59, 83, 98, 101, and 108.

<sup>18</sup> Interview numbers 19 and 103.

Cambodia, such as the location of houses in relationship to each other and who lives in them, and the location and proximity of community structures such as Buddhist temples.

Many perpetrators fled their home villages where they carried out atrocities. Most victims interviewed assumed that the more responsible perpetrators who survived are living in distant areas controlled by the former KR. Thus the distance between these accused perpetrators and their former villages is very far, both physically and mentally. Victims assumed that the perpetrators are afraid to return.

## **Poverty, Age, and Ignorance**

Besides location, poverty, age, and ignorance are also important factors affecting victim-perpetrator relationships. Many of the informants spoke with regret and anger about the KR regime's selection of ignorant uneducated people as local level leaders. However, this tactic of selection by the KR did not always extend to anger against individual perpetrators and instead became a mitigating factor. This respondent in a small group interview felt that the accused perpetrator's lack of education was a mitigating factor in his crimes: 'He lives near here, just two houses from here across the street. They have stopped saying anything bad against him. All those killers, they couldn't read at all, so it was easy to make them kill people. And it was the rule of Pol Pot to only choose people who never went to school to be leaders' (IV # 1).

Another mitigating factor is the age of the alleged perpetrator at the time of the past events. Many respondents still expressed resentment that their oppressors were often young people, which is not surprising given the great emphasis that is placed upon age, wisdom, and seniority in Cambodia's hierarchical social structure. Although they were angry at the individual young perpetrators, they were primarily angry at the KR system which had turned their social world upside down.

The next example illustrates the range of factors that can affect current relationships, including gravity of offense, motivation of perpetrator, frequency of contact, location and proximity, fear, and community population. Two women (respondents 1 and 2) stated they were still living amongst former KR and were still in fear of their lives, and felt resentment against the discrimination they had suffered as 'new' people during the KR period. This exchange shows how, in some communities, anger and fear are close beneath the surface. They dared to speak out at a public forum, far from their homes, to a foreigner, but stated they were afraid to speak up at home. While respondent 1 seemed to understand that the perpetrator was following orders and would otherwise be killed, both respondents were still afraid of this perpetrator as he still used his local power effectively:

2: I know that a perpetrator is in front of my house. But I dare not to do anything against him because I am afraid of the law.

1: I don't want to do anything against him either, because at that time, he just followed the orders of the higher leaders.

2: When my brother was angry, he said that he could not do anything even if the killer was in front of him. He lives alone; he always says that he lost not only the country, but also his parents and relatives.

1: Here, most of the members of my family were killed because there were a lot of KR families at that place which my family was sent to during the KR regime.

2: They [perpetrators in front of my house] did not ever apologize. The chief of the prison said that if such a regime happens again, he will destroy all of us. He really said that. I never tell a lie, I dare to swear in front of the guardian spirit (*neak ta*).

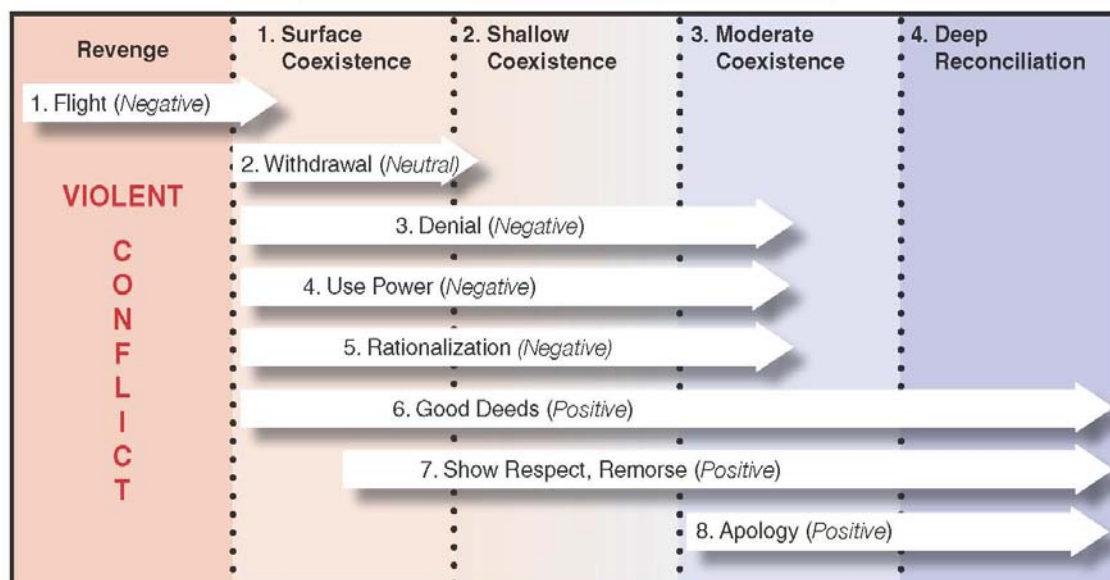
1: He is now just a normal person without any high position, but at that time he was a perpetrator and he said that if the regime happened again, he would kill all of us. He said like that and he is not afraid of the law. They are not afraid because they give them the rights now. Even today, when I go back to my village, I dare not to say anything about the ECCC because most of my villagers are the former KR and we fear that the former KR will hurt us (IV # 19).

This quote shows how victims weigh different factors in considering the past and how to deal with the future. We now turn to how perpetrators deal with their past, in order to live within the communities of the present.



## Coping Strategies of Perpetrators

The purpose of this section is to introduce the range of coping strategies that perpetrators demonstrate as they attempt to integrate back into their communities. Through observations made by victims, or from direct observations of accused perpetrators, eight coping strategies were identified: (1) flight; (2) withdrawal; (3) denial; (4) use power; (5) rationalization; (6) do good deeds; (7) show respect and remorse; and (8) apology. These strategies are illustrated in figure 5.1., as they correspond to and overlap with the various categories of coexistence. The Figure shows the progression of reconciliation and relationship, from conflict and revenge on the left, where flight is the predominant coping strategy, towards deep reconciliation on the far right, where perpetrators cope by doing good deeds, expressing remorse, and apologizing. The first five strategies are more negative strategies, not necessarily leading towards reconciliation or peaceful relationships, while the last three strategies are more positive, and can lead towards reconciliation. The next section below reviews the details of the eight coping strategies.



**Figure 5.1. Perpetrator Coping Strategies**

## 1. Flight

The first strategy is flight, which in the case of Cambodia has probably often included a change of identity. Many respondents felt that if perpetrators had committed numerous bad deeds they would feel obliged to run away, and most assumed (or knew through relatives) that they had run to either former KR areas (in the northwest or north) or overseas. This survivor knew the exact location of several of the former KR perpetrators, as he had met them when the military forces integrated: 'The chief of the commune was not good at all. He was from far away, Kampong Speu . . . I met him, while he surrendered' (IV # 31). In many cases when the accused perpetrator had run away, they would sometimes come back some time later with varying results.

Depending upon such factors as the severity of the crimes committed and other mitigating factors, the return would have resulted in a revenge killing, or various forms of coexistence – these issues are explored in the next chapters. We now turn to the tactic of withdrawal as a coping strategy used by perpetrators.

## 2. Withdrawal

Withdrawal is a common method of conflict avoidance used in Cambodian society described in Chapter 2. For accused perpetrators living amongst their former victims, this was found to be a common mode of survival (though often in conjunction with good deeds and religious acts). For example, the accused perpetrators in Southwest-2 who were described as 'islands alone', living in a state of shallow coexistence, were in a minority amongst a majority of victims, and withdrew from the rest of the community.<sup>19</sup> For example, key informant Kong stated that her husband, accused perpetrator Pel, did not attend ceremonies at the temple because he needed to tend the cows. She said she encouraged him to go to the temple but he refused (IV # 51).

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 4, pages 95-96.

Amongst those perpetrators who have stayed in their communities, withdrawal may take the form of hiding their identities – or at least not publicizing their pasts. The identity change can come in the form of a name change and not talking about the past, to a change of personality (for example from a strong, powerful KR commander to a poor, subdued farmer). For example Pel, widely accused by members of his community of bringing people to the local killing field, seemed to have become a quiet, shy, humble, and scared person. Several villagers seemed to pity him, partly because he was seen as doing these things to survive, and partly because he was poor, withdrawn, and depressed.

One young UN/NGO worker who was born in the refugee camps suggested that the wealth of the former KR had allowed them to withdraw, hiding behind their wealth:

Close to my house there is one KR family living. I don't know any others who have come to live in my village. They are rich, have a big house, and a lot of land. We don't have much contact with them. The husband is a military officer and he married a woman I knew, after his first wife died. She was divorced and had a small business in [one village] and they met there. It is possible that others are around here too, but they hide their identity. These neighbours hide themselves; maybe they feel they are outsiders. But their kids go to school, and mix normally with the others. I don't think the other kids at school know about their parents though (IV # 7).

Closely related to withdrawal is denial, as those who withdraw often also deny any wrongdoing.

### **3. Denial**

Denial is a common coping strategy in many post-mass violence situations, and most of the accused perpetrators in this study denied directly, or indirectly any involvement in crimes. An example of a former KR soldier using denial to deal with victims' (indirect) accusations of his role in the KR came up during a focus group interview at which he was present. During the interview, one participant said 'if you

want to know about the KR then ask Mr. Kuy' (IV # 88). Later during our discussion with this KR soldier he said:

When they were talking today at the temple and they said that if you want to know who killed who, ask me. But for me, I never did anything bad against the people because I was fighting against the Vietnamese at the border so the people in this commune love me and pity me. They do not hate me. I have one habit that I did not kill hostages when we arrested them during the war. I often released them secretly, and those men still live in this village now' (IV # 89).

Since there was no investigation of this former KR soldier's situation, and no validation of his statements, it is not possible to speak about the 'truth' of what happened in the past. If it were true that he was not involved in killing of civilians during the KR regime (versus killing Vietnamese soldiers which he had admitted), then this sort of stereotyping would undoubtedly be very frustrating. Many former KR suffer from discrimination due to their involvement with the KR in the past. In addition, this former KR soldier also considered himself a victim due to a physical disability that occurred during the war. On the other hand if he did commit crimes, then he would no doubt be eager to proclaim his innocence and deny his past.

A more indirect form of denial occurs when perpetrators try to fit into a community without acknowledging their past. This husband and wife, former KR cadres who had become victims of the regime, observed how the accused perpetrators did not fully withdraw from society but indirectly denied involvement: 'Husband: Both good and bad people go to the pagoda. But I rarely see them when I go to the pagoda. Wife: They go the pagoda to fit in with the other villagers and to hide their bad deeds' (IV # 46).

The use of denial is forceful coping strategy, as it must take courage to face one's victims and deny that one has committed any crimes. Another forceful (and also negative) strategy is the use of power and politics.

## 4. Use Power

Perpetrators may use their power and influence in the community to keep a distance from other community members and maintain a low profile. Or, they may use their power and influence in more public ways. I found both examples amongst the respondents' accounts. One of the accused perpetrators seemed to bask in his reflected power from relatives who were important commune officials and moved around the community with relative impunity (IV # 92). Another example of the use of power and politics was described by this former KR cadre respondent who spoke about a well-known accused perpetrator who had resettled in the US: 'He just came back. He dares to go anywhere and contacts with the police and authority, with big powerful people' (IV # 93).

A UN/NGO worker related a story of two major perpetrators in his village. One perpetrator (who had been an *Achar*, or Buddhist layman, before the war) had been killed by a mob of sixty women during the fall of the KR regime. On the other hand, another perpetrator was still alive and involved with local politics – this he found inexplicable: 'The CPP tried to nominate this person as the commune council candidate. My brother tried very hard to convince others that it should be impossible for this man to be a commune council leader, because of his background as a KR perpetrator, but my brother was very surprised that [the perpetrator] had strong support from the people' (IV # 126).

As can be seen from these illustrations, the use of power can be quite effective in protecting accused perpetrators so that they are able to re-enter society. This strategy may allow an interim period for victims and perpetrators to face each other after mass violence, so that other processes of reconciliation to build relationship could develop over time. Another tactic is rationalization, similar to denial in that both are

ways for accused perpetrators to reduce their own and other people's sense of their culpability.

## 5. Rationalization

Few of the accused perpetrators or former KR respondents tried to rationalize their past actions directly, but when they did they usually invoked reasons of fear of being killed, or their need to save Cambodia from being overtaken by the Vietnamese. One example is in this quote from a former KR cadre who was explaining to his relatives why he did not help them: 'And I told him, it was even difficult for me to defend my own head, so it would stay attached to my body. You know at that time, it was like that: no one could protect anyone else' (IV # 63). In another interview a former KR soldier rationalized his involvement in the regime: 'I told them if the Vietnamese were invading us, we would maybe lose our territory so we joined the struggle. . . (IV # 61). Rationalization could be interpreted as a neutral coping strategy, as real pressures did lie upon perpetrators insofar as they did risk being killed if they failed to follow orders. However, that does not absolve them from responsibility. We now move to more positive coping strategies of good deeds, showing respect and remorse, and apology.

## 6. Good Deeds

As a way to silently acknowledge past misdeeds, accused or known perpetrators may attempt to perform good deeds in order to increase their chances of acceptance into the community, as well as attempting to obtain an improved *karma* and better status in the next life. Good deeds can come in many forms, but are often done through religious actions in an attempt to make merit at the temple. Another way of doing good deeds is through helping others in the community. First we will examine religious means.

Making merit can be done in many ways: attending the religious days at Buddhist temples, donating money or goods to the temple, or serving as a Buddhist layman (*Achar*). Becoming a monk is the most significant act one can do in order to obtain the highest merit (Komai 1997: 161; O'Leary 2006: 20). Several respondents brought up the way some perpetrators had become religious figures in part to atone for their sins. One of the producers of the film *Deacon of Death* (van den Berg and van de Put 2004) commented about the accused perpetrator highlighted in the film, Mr. Karoby who became an *Achar* dealing with death rituals:

For us as outsiders, we thought this was something that we would have invented or was a bit over the top, or ridiculous. Mr. Karoby at the time of the KR, was the security chief, he was the literal deacon of death, now he was the ceremonial deacon of death. For us as Westerners this was very hard to understand, the same guy who had sent so many people to their deaths was now responsible for their cremation to make sure that everything goes right. The response was exactly that this was his way for therapy, this is the way he tries to repent (IV # 59).

One foreign-educated UN/NGO worker brought up the issue of *gaining* respect and thereby gaining acceptance or integration through religious good deeds:

You know during the Cambodian traditional ceremonies, especially when people meet together like *Bun Pchum Ben* or Khmer New Year, I observed in my villages, I always observe there are many different Buddhist laymen that come from other villages and some of them testify that they were quite strong people in the KR period. And they became a Buddhist layman and they become a very good person in the temple and they work as the layman so other people respect them a lot (IV # 126).<sup>20</sup>

Another foreign-educated UN/NGO worker also spoke of this phenomenon of using religion to repent for one's sins, but in this case it was a father who brought his son to become a monk:

In preparation for a proposal we were writing, we convened a group of monks. Monks who came, when they trust you, they can really talk. What in Buddhism can we use to deal with reconciliation, to give perpetrators a chance? Buddhist teachings say if you do wrong you must pay for it. There is one story in Buddhism about a family with a father who commits crimes. His son becomes a monk, in dedicating this work he can relieve the sins of the father. One monk then told us that his father was a KR leader. After the peace accords, the first

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<sup>20</sup> *Bun Pchum Ben* is the Ceremony of the Ancestors when Cambodians travel to temples to give offerings for their deceased relatives.

thing, the father took his son to be a monk - the monk then had a mission to relieve the father from his sins (IV # 21).

Another example that was raised by several respondents was former perpetrators who became Christians, presumably in an attempt to escape their bad *karma* and to be forgiven by a Christian god. When the accused former KR leader Duch was found living near the Thai-Cambodian border, there were several news articles claiming that he had become a Christian in order to escape punishment in the next life for bad deeds in the past (Smith 2007). Several respondents spoke about this view of religion also: 'This guy killed not only my father but also a lot of people and that is why he became Christian, I think' (IV # 6).

Besides religious acts, other ways to do good deeds is to help the community at large. Many of the religious acts above, such as becoming an *Achar* or donating to the local temple, also often assist the community at large. One respondent seemed to be trying to assist the community as a means of acceptance, without religious overtones: this former KR soldier asked me repeatedly for assistance to lobby on his behalf with a local NGO to include community members from his village in various training sessions run by local NGOs. He tried to use power and respect gained from his association with the NGOs to help others in his community and thus improve his standing and prestige. This means of seeking acceptance in the community is also related to the next category, of showing respect.

## **7. Show Respect, Show Remorse, and Accept Responsibility**

In an ideal process of reconciliation, perpetrators would tell the truth; engage directly with and listen to victims; acknowledge harm done; show sorrow, guilt, remorse, and shame; and ultimately feel empathy (Huyse 2003: 76-7). Etcheson found that when former KR returned to communities and expressed regret for past acts, they



were welcomed (2005b: 217-8). This UN/NGO worker had lived in the northwest in a war-stricken area and spoke about a perpetrator who showed his respect and remorse through his behaviour:

In 1979 and 1980 it was still fresh just after the liberation and he dared not go anywhere. And he bowed to everybody! Including to people like me or others who knew he had caused several people to be killed. He just stayed quiet and made no reaction. He became a totally different person. During the KR time he was a very active, powerful person. But when the Vietnamese came he became a rabbit (IV # 118).

This description of becoming like a rabbit is similar to the way that Mr. Pel, the accused perpetrator from Southwest-2 acted as well. The bowed head and quiet demeanour is typical of Cambodians paying obeisance to those in higher social positions. This type of exaggerated behaviour may serve to mollify angry victims in early stages of post-mass violence.

Another accused perpetrator, Mr. Tang, spoke frankly about his early surrender to the Vietnamese authorities after the KR period. He seemed to feel that since he voluntarily surrendered and had not run away this was evidence of his remorse and acceptance of responsibility: 'In late 1978 and early 1979, the other KR cadre ran to the forest but I did not. I was in the village and I surrendered to the Vietnamese soldiers. I surrendered to the Vietnamese but others ran away, but I did not. They said then that I was no longer accused!' (IV # 92).

## **8. Apology**

While few of this study's respondents reported confessions, apologies, or accepting apologies directly between victims and perpetrators, apologies are important ways for perpetrators to cope with their pasts. These will be discussed in Chapter 8, as an important constituent process of reconciliation.

This section on coping strategies has explored eight strategies that may be used by perpetrators to deal with the post-conflict period. The five more negative strategies of flight, withdrawal, denial, use of power and politics, and rationalization were seen more commonly in this research. Strategies six and seven, the positive methods of doing good deeds and showing respect, were also seen, but less frequently. The last strategy, of apology, was relatively rare and will be discussed in the next chapter, when we move to examine in more detail the nature of relationships within the communities studied. The next chapter moves from the individual relationships of this chapter, to relationships within and between communities.

## CHAPTER 6 – Return to Community

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As a perpetrator returns home after committing crimes, how do victims respond? The last chapter reviewed factors affecting victim-perpetrator relations and perpetrator coping strategies: we now turn to victims' reactions to receiving those perpetrators back into communities. Firstly, a scheme is presented to describe victims' varying degrees of acceptance of the perpetrators (ranging from revenge to non-acceptance, partial acceptance, and then full acceptance). These degrees of acceptance correspond to different levels of community reconciliation (surface, shallow, moderate, and deep) that were presented in brief in Chapter 4 and are illustrated in figure 6.1. below. Secondly, factors related to victims' acceptance of perpetrators are reviewed. Thirdly, the model of coexistence first introduced in Chapter 4 is expanded upon, through examples from the four case study communities, giving voice to Cambodians in rural areas who are faced with the issues of reconciliation every day.

The degree of acceptance, and thus also reconciliation, is influenced by the behaviour of the perpetrator in the form of the coping strategies chosen by the perpetrator as discussed in the last chapter.<sup>1</sup> For example, when a perpetrator does good deeds or shows respect, the victim may be more likely to accept them. As discussed in the last chapter, there are additional factors affecting victim and perpetrator relations, which also relate to the degrees of acceptance.<sup>2</sup> Additional factors are discussed in a later section of this chapter, as factors which affect the

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<sup>1</sup> The perpetrator coping strategies include: (1) flight, (2) withdrawal, (3) denial, (4) use power and politics, (5) rationalization, (6) good deeds, (7) show respect, and (8) apology.

<sup>2</sup> The factors affecting victim and perpetrator relations include: type and gravity of offense; motivation; fear; community population; frequency of contact; location and proximity; and poverty, age, and ignorance.

degree of acceptance of perpetrators by victims. The interplay between different factors can result in different outcomes of coexistence. For example, victims' acts of welcome and their ability to empathize with the perpetrator's situation and understand mitigating factors may influence the coping strategies of perpetrators: as former KR are welcomed into the community, they may be more inclined to talk about and explain the past. This section on a model of acceptance concludes with a decision-making tree that summarizes the process a victim might use to decide to seek revenge, or decide to accept a perpetrator, and to what degree.

## **A Model of Acceptance**

In a reconciliation process, the end goal is mutual trust and mutual acceptance.<sup>3</sup> Kelman suggested that 'mutual acceptance of the other's identity and humanity' is the *key* element of reconciliation (2008: 16).<sup>4</sup> In this chapter I focus upon the victim's journey from revenge towards full acceptance of the perpetrator. The victim makes decisions along the way, depending upon various factors including the behaviour of the perpetrators. This section presents a model of acceptance with four stages of acceptance from the viewpoint of the victim, as they move from revenge, towards reconciliation. (1) Firstly, the extreme negative reaction is revenge, where victims seek to eliminate the perpetrator by killing them.<sup>5</sup> The next three reactions of victims towards perpetrators are then described: (2) non-acceptance, (3) partial acceptance and finally (4) full acceptance. These degrees of acceptance correlate to

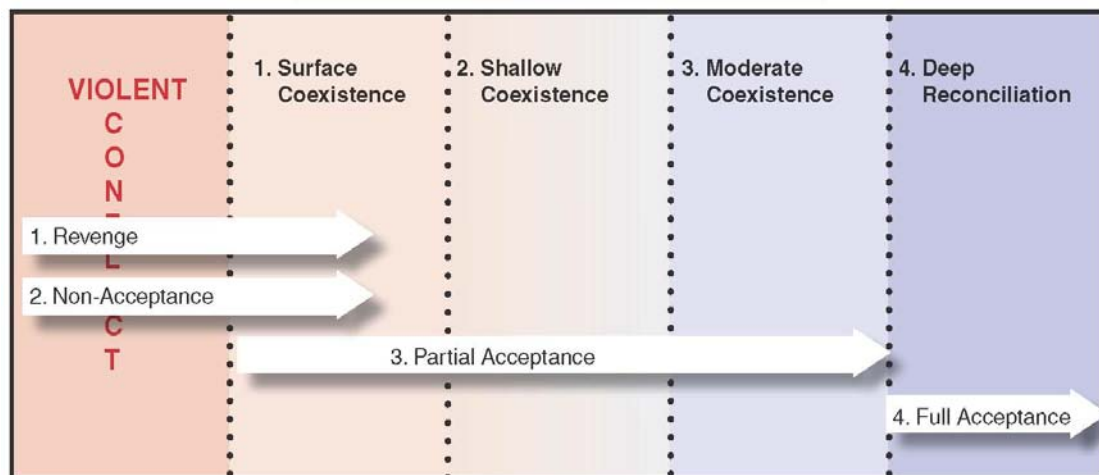
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<sup>3</sup> Acceptance played a role in Lederach's model of reconciliation, as he described mercy as including: compassion, acceptance and a new start, as well as forgiveness, support, and healing (1997: 31).

<sup>4</sup> Due to time limitations, and a lack of data on the personal views of accused perpetrators, I am limiting my analysis to the acceptance of perpetrators by victims, and not the issues of mutual acceptance, or acceptance from the view of the perpetrator.

<sup>5</sup> Revenge is the topic of Chapter 7, where it will be discussed in detail.

degrees of coexistence from surface to shallow to moderate to deep. These relationships are illustrated in the diagram in figure 6.1. below.



**Figure 6.1. Model of Acceptance**

Although the last chapter discusses extensively the coping strategies adopted by perpetrators in their efforts to regain traction in society, these coping strategies must also be explicitly mentioned as important factors that victims weigh when determining whether or not they will accept the perpetrator back into society. When perpetrators make efforts to appease their former victims, such as doing good deeds, showing respect or remorse to the victims (or even accepting responsibility) victims will be more inclined to accept them. Or, if perpetrators use power or politics, they may also be accepted by victims, but not willingly nor fully, only partially and with resentment, out of necessity.

Another factor related to the behaviour of perpetrators includes the presence and status of surviving family members who had not been involved in crimes. In Southwest-1 several community members stated the perpetrator was accepted back to visit in spite of the fact that he killed many people, because his father was an *Achar* and a well-respected community member. Although his behaviour did not change, he was shielded by the (good) behaviour of his father. The physical actions and

demeanour of the individual perpetrators (humble, remorseful, or modest) could also be important factors.

Although this chapter focuses primarily on how victims accept (or do not accept) perpetrators living back in their communities, as background I shall present a review of former KR memories of their initial return to their communities after the war.

## **Welcoming Former KR into Community**

In general, former KR stated they were warmly welcomed home by their family members when they finally returned after the years of war and separation; the majority of them became nostalgic and smiling, recounting their emotional family reunions. All the former KR spoke of their happiness to be reunited with family members (who had often assumed they were dead). Some spoke about sharing experiences about their own suffering. Only a few admitted that they had been discriminated against because they had been with the KR.<sup>6</sup> This focus group discussion by former KR military and cadre (identified as respondents 1, 2, 3, and 5) provides some typical stories about how former KR were welcomed back into their home communities:

3: We had missed our parents because we had been separated for many years, some of us for ten years and some 20 years. So they did not hope that we would come back home. They thought that we were dead already. They had done burial ceremonies for us already!

1: We did not talk about the KR. We talked about our regret that we had been separated a long time, and we were happy that we could meet family and friends. The soldiers from the government side welcomed us also, like we were in one family. They did not say that you were the KR or threaten us. They tried to protect us also.

2: I left home when I was 12 years old. I was in the district children's office in 1974 and in 1975 they sent me to Phnom Penh to work as worker. When the Vietnamese troops fought in Phnom Penh, I did not know the way to go home so I ran with the KR here. I went home in 1996 and in 1993. They welcomed me like uncle just said, but some people did not like me because they had relatives who had died in the KR regime. But I had relatives who died during that time also because they accused me of living with the KR. I said that I did not know who killed who, but I did not know the way to go home and that is why

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<sup>6</sup> Although, since most of these interviews were single interviews in shorter visits to the northwest provinces, rather than repeat interviews, their deep feelings might not have been revealed.

I was on the KR side. I told them that I did not know that the KR were killing people. I came to know about the killing of the KR period, only when we were fighting each other afterwards in the 1980s. I did not know, and I had no food and faced a lot of difficulties also!

5: I went home in 1996, both the government and the people welcomed me because we had reintegrated already. They did not discriminate (*reus aeng*) against me. We have equal rights.

1: I came here alone and my five brothers and sisters are living at my homeland so when I visited there we were happy and my neighbours also came to visit me also. I did not lose any relatives during the KR period. We had just been separated from each other for a very long time, so when we met, we hugged and cried. We were very excited.

2: We had been separated for a long time. They got news that some people were living in USA. When they heard that I came back home, they came to visit me and they asked me about my experience in the KR time. I could not even sleep for the first week because they came to ask me both day and night. They thought that I already died because they put my name in the dead list. They asked me that Pol Pot did bad things to me or not? (IV # 61)<sup>7</sup>

The above focus group discussion provides several examples of how former KR perceived their return to home community -- with a mixture of joy, relief, and sadness, and also some discrimination. Now we turn to the viewpoint of the victims and the first step of the model of acceptance, where the most negative reaction to perpetrators is described: revenge.

## **1. Revenge (Perpetrators Killed by Victims)**

In order to fully explore the process whereby a victim moves from revenge towards acceptance of perpetrators, I start with the most negative act possible – revenge. Although the details of revenge are the topic of the next chapter, to discuss a complete model of acceptance, revenge is also mentioned here. The following text box describes the most common situations respondents explained when revenge would take place.

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<sup>7</sup> Numbers were assigned to group members depending upon their seating position in the group.

## Revenge

### *(The 'Who')*

Former KR cadres or soldiers who were involved in killings and who were seen as particularly cruel or who had killed a large number of people

### *(The Situation)*

- were usually described as being killed in revenge immediately during the fall of the KR, or
- were sometimes reportedly killed when they dared return to the community after they had fled or gone to prison

None of the respondents mentioned mitigating factors when it came to perpetrators who were seen as particularly cruel. Nor were perpetrator coping strategies such as the use of power or apology mentioned. Apparently, some crimes were seen as so heinous, certain perpetrators could not escape from revenge killings. Such factors as degree of suffering, trauma, religious beliefs, and those related to their desire for revenge will be addressed in the next chapter. I now turn to the second degree of non-acceptance.

## 2. **Non-Acceptance** (Perpetrators Ostracized from Community)

Non-acceptance can take several forms: ostracism, avoidance, disrespect, shaming, and denial. In the initial period immediately after the KR regime, revenge killings were common, but today, with the passage of time and a national-level integration process (Prime Minister Hun Sen's 'Win-Win' Policy), this research found both revenge and total non-acceptance to be relatively rare. Few respondents described their attitudes towards former KR as entirely non-accepting. However, there were some exceptions described below. The way that victims dealt with this category of serious perpetrator as above, was by ostracizing and avoiding them. Victims went out of their way to avoid situations where they would meet perpetrators, or ignored them in any encounter.



### Non-Acceptance

Former KR cadres or soldiers who were involved in killings or selection, and may have killed large numbers of people, but were ostracized (non-acceptance) rather than subjected to revenge killing:

- but not seen as entirely cruel or evil, often through mitigating factors or personality
- but have some form of protection through power or politics
- or their families that remain in the community are respected

Non-acceptance can also take the form of a victim withholding signs of respect that would normally be expected in the hierarchical Cambodian culture, or by publically shaming the perpetrator as a sign the perpetrator was not being accepted. The following is an example of non-acceptance of a perpetrator by a victim in the case of the film *Deacon of Death* (van den Berg and van de Put 2004) where a young woman was filmed meeting the former KR cadre she accused of killing her uncle. The following quote is from a person involved in the film production who described the non-acceptance of a perpetrator as the victim shouting at him, accusing him of lying, and humiliating him in public (which is rarely observed in Cambodian society):

During the filming, we were afraid of hand grenades [thrown by victims against the accused perpetrators] . . . The concern that I had, looking at her face . . . I thought anything could happen! . . . At that very moment when he [Karoby, the accused perpetrator] keeps denying and then he says, 'well okay, these were my subordinates who did it, not that I was doing it . . . they were doing it' . . . Then she said 'You are lying, you are a liar, you are in charge you were in charge, you are responsible!'... What she has done at that moment in her position as a younger woman, to an older man, who still is an *Achar* [Buddhist layman], she is telling him out loud in front of the cameras that he is a liar, and he has accepted that she is calling him a liar... You can't go much further than this . . . it could lead to physical violence . . . and we did not want this. Karoby had been humiliated by her, and she knew it (IV # 58).

In the above passage, the respondent pointed out the importance of status or hierarchical differences between victim and perpetrator, as the victim was younger than the accused perpetrator, and he had been working as an *Achar* in his community – these differences made her public accusations of him quite significant in the context of Cambodian society. Humiliation (as she and her family were humiliated by the KR)

also played a role, as she now in turn tried to humiliate the accused perpetrator in public. The use of public shaming and humiliation are examples of non-acceptance, and non-reconciliation.

Another example of non-acceptance is amongst those victims who were still living in fear, exemplified in the community case study Southwest-1 (surface coexistence). Two communities (one of victims and one of former KR) were living side by side in neighbouring villages, but had minimal contact and expressed a great deal of fear, anger, and even a desire for revenge. Hinton spoke about victims being 'tied in a knot of malice' to perpetrators (2005: 94-95). It is these victims in Southwest-1 who remained totally estranged, mistrustful, and in total non-acceptance of the perpetrators in the next village.

Although the majority of respondents did not admit to continuing wishes for revenge, and only a small minority were non-accepting of accused perpetrators, a 2009 survey of Cambodian attitudes found that the majority of interviewees still felt hatred towards the KR: 71 percent wanted to see the KR suffer; 37 percent wished to take revenge, and 40 percent said they would do so if they had the opportunity. Forty-seven percent said they were uncomfortable living in the community with former KR; while 36 percent had forgiven them (Pham et al. 2009: 3). These statistics show quite high percentages of the Cambodian population still feeling anger and hatred towards former KR.

### **3. Partial Acceptance (Perpetrators Living Separate Lives in Communities)**

In this category of partial acceptance, a wide variety of modalities of living may occur. These correspond with three types of coexistence: surface, shallow, and moderate. Partial acceptance could occur in many forms, from minimal social interaction, to being friendly neighbours but not talking about the past. However, this

category of 'partial acceptance' is mainly defined by what it is *not* – it is *not* revenge or non-acceptance, and it is *not* full acceptance.

#### **Partial Acceptance**

Former KR cadres or soldiers who may have been involved in killings, selection, or other crimes both minor and major but:

- were clearly seen to be reluctant to carry out the duties
- were seen as heroes for fighting against the Vietnamese
- had demonstrated remorse through becoming active in temples, or through other actions and good deeds
- were in positions of power (through personal wealth, family ties, or ties to other powerful people)

First I will describe some situations of partial acceptance through victims' words, such as when victims are afraid, or when they perceive perpetrators as being respectful. I then elaborate on this category of 'partial acceptance' through the views of perpetrators, who described their feelings of being only partially accepted because they felt they are discriminated against in society. The first situation explains why victims are partially accepting of accused perpetrators, is when the victims are afraid.

### **Victims Afraid**

One of the main reasons there was partial acceptance of perpetrators by victims was fear. Sometimes this fear was related to past events (during the KR period), but sometimes the past events translated into current events. Current events related to politics can be used as a tool of power by either victims, perpetrators, or both. This respondent talked about the person who killed his father, and how that person now lords over the population, as he still has power. He talked of him as a 'scary person', in other words he is still afraid of him:

Now if I have to go back there I don't want to see him [the former KR accused perpetrator]. Now he is still alive, he is a member of the commune council for the Sam Rainsy Party. I never went to meet him. He would broadcast to everyone that they are threatening him. No one likes him but they voted for his party. He is a very stupid KR. He escaped though, he was very lucky, many were chopped up in 1979. He was moving around, and I don't know exactly when he came back. I was very surprised though when he inaugurated a medical centre. No, he never apologized. He doesn't want to talk to anyone; he

is a very scary person. Nobody ever dares to talk about him because he is involved in politics (IV # 84).

## Perpetrators Use Avoidance and Live in Fear

Several victim respondents assumed that perpetrators used the coping strategy of avoidance and lived in fear, which also defines a state of partial acceptance. As the victim and perpetrator do not meet or discuss the past, the assumption that the perpetrator is living in fear may make the victim feel that the perpetrator regrets his past acts, but the situation is still not conducive to interaction. This passage quoting two friends who are victims, speaking about the perpetrators in the neighbouring village who have never acknowledged, confessed, or apologized and who they assume live in fear: 'No, they never confessed or apologized. They are trying to avoid us, even their children. They avoid us because our country has laws now and they are afraid in the future there is somebody [who] will search for them' (IV # 99).

## Perpetrators Show Respect and Do Good Deeds

On the other hand, perpetrators can use positive coping strategies of doing good deeds and showing respect, which are reviewed in Chapter 5 (see page 129-132). The process of an offender giving respect to a former victim, as well as promising non-repetition is an important part of reconciliation and restoring relationships (Huyse 2003: 24; Kriesberg 2001: 48; Rigby 2006b: 8). Very few respondents mentioned explicitly perpetrators showing respect; for example this villager from Southwest-2: 'No, no perpetrators ever confessed. I used to be angry but I see that perpetrator did not do bad things anymore and he respects me. That is why I don't get angry now' (IV # 91).

In Southwest-1, quotes from an elderly couple show the nuances of community reconciliation. The husband had been a KR cadre in the early 'liberation' period (before 1975), but was then demoted and punished (for not agreeing to order monks to

disrobe). The wife felt angry at the KR leaders who made her and her husband suffer.

At the same time the couple could understand the KR leader was under orders, and they felt he had reformed, did good things, and had 'changed his heart':

Wife: His house is over there and near here. I meet him when they invite me to a village ceremony. I never go to visit him. Or I meet him when I go to the pagoda. Yes, I talk with him normally. I don't know what else to do because [his abuse of me] happened already.

Husband: I just talk with him normally because they ordered him at that time but now he stopped his bad behaviour already.

Wife: He changed his heart now. He does good things so I do good things back to him (IV # 46).

In deciding how to relate to perpetrators, victims take various factors into account, including the severity of the perpetrators' guilt.

## Victims' Perceptions of Perpetrators' Guilt

One factor influencing the degree to which perpetrators are accepted into their communities is how the victims perceive the guilt of the perpetrators, including the type and gravity of the offense.<sup>8</sup> A village chief from Southwest-1 related perpetrators' cruelty as directly related to the degree of acceptance by victims: 'Those perpetrators who were not so cruel, they can live together still. In our village there are no perpetrators, but some former KR are staying close to here in Village [B]. Those who were not so cruel have been able to live there until today' (IV # 29). Another victim recalled how one former KR cadre advised him how to behave so that he would not be killed and thus felt accepting towards him:

We don't blame them [the former KR cadre] because some of them are victims too; they are not all bad people. Because when we lived in this village, they shared with me their views, and sometimes they talked to me and told me that I had to be careful. They said 'you have to wait one day and you had to remain hopeful.' He talked to me and told me that I should not rely on anybody, and that I should pay attention and respect *Angkar* (IV # 132).

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 5, page 117-118.

So even though this former KR cadre had committed crimes, the victim was able to show empathy towards him as he had been kind.<sup>9</sup>

A group that appeared to be more easily accepted back into community than former KR cadres was former KR soldiers. They were often perceived as being in a special category of either committing lesser crimes, or in some cases as being heroes for defending the nation. For example this non-KR village chief living in a mixed former KR area stated:

In fact, the reintegrated people did not know about the bad situation in the KR time. I always asked them about this. 'We were fighting in the front line but our relatives in the back line were killed too,' they said. They did not know at all until later when they saw the real picture, and found out that they had been involved in a struggle to kill their own relatives! They told me this when I asked them (IV # 113).

Several other respondents said the same thing about their views of the KR soldiers, that they were fighting far away, or were just following orders so they were not to blame. This government official who had been a victim and lost his parents in Southwest-2 said about another informant:

[Kuy] did not do bad things to the people. Because he was a soldier, he was far way and so the people do not hold any grudge against him and they let him live easily. Another reason is that he was a soldier and he did not have power to make decisions, it was up to their chiefs so we don't blame him (IV # 33).

The above factors (fear, respect, and weighing of guilt) are all considerations taken by the victims, as they decide whether or not to accept a perpetrator back into community. We now turn to the views of perpetrators, and their feelings of being discriminated against.

## Discrimination

Discrimination is an important facet of how the category of 'partial acceptance' is played out in the community. In the section above on welcoming former KR into

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<sup>9</sup> The development of empathy is a process of reconciliation which will be expanded upon in Chapter 8.

community, many respondents living in the northwest areas denied any discrimination. However, the former KR and accused perpetrators in two case studies (Southwest-1 and Southwest-2) felt discriminated against (although this discrimination was not recognized nor acknowledged by victims).<sup>10</sup>

Although initially this former KR soldier had downplayed the discrimination he suffered, his wife (also former KR, but a 'base' person and key informant, 'Lysa') spoke openly about how difficult the early reintegration period was. She spoke of the importance of an NGO in saving her life, and her husband extrapolated this to include all NGOs:

Lysa: I still love [the NGO] even though it does not support my family now. If there was no [NGO], I would not have survived. We would not have this house and even a half of a can of rice was not given to us because they [neighbours] thought that he lost his leg because he was former KR. They did not give us anything. [She nearly cries and her face becomes red.]

Kuy: At that time, there was some discrimination because they did not understand unless some organizations came to explain. I think that reconciliation and national reconciliation could happen because those organizations observed the communities. However, if there were not human rights and development organizations, Khmer would continue to kill because of discrimination (IV # 50).

Lysa went on to speak very enthusiastically about the relationship between her change of status through development assistance, and reconciliation. Once she had links to an NGO and had employment, she was more accepted by the community:

Besides that [NGO], there was no organization which helped me even though others received things in the village. I saw that they did very well because they had helped disabled people to get some work skills. After the [NGO] helped me, the neighbours did not discriminate against me at all, but they loved me very much when I had my own work (IV # 50).

Although I asked many respondents about the existence of conflicts between former KR and non-KR, all denied it except this NGO worker:

Such conflict rarely happens; I don't mean that there is no such conflict at all but it is in a very low degree. People rarely mention it. When they get drunk however, they might have said that if you were so strong, why don't you go to the forest to be with the Khmer Rouge? But about this problem, we daily try our

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<sup>10</sup> As noted in Chapter 4, there was great discrimination against 'new' people by 'base' people – now in Cambodia today the 'new' people are in turn discriminating against the 'base' people.

best such as in radio program, TV, and newspapers to educate them about spiritual education (*abrum phlov chet*) in a hope of eliminating the accusations that you are from here or there (IV # 60).

Although discrimination against former KR occurred in the case study villages in which they were a minority, there is a confusing link between being former KR and current politics.<sup>11</sup> The former KR soldier (Kuy) and his wife (Lysa), quoted above, blamed current politics for some of the discrimination:

Kuy: Yes, at the beginning, it was difficult because they always threatened both my body and my mind.

Lysa: They did not give us anything to eat even when the salary was supposed to be given. They said that he was KR.

Kuy: From that time until now, I never got any salary from the government at all. They had discriminated against me because they thought that I was a disabled KR soldier. I had known them before; some of them were my relatives, but because the politician took my name to say that I was the KR or Khmer Blue<sup>12</sup> in order to make the villagers hate me because they were afraid that I would become politicized and try to take the power. For me, I never wanted any power at all; I just wanted Khmer to have peace and development as in the other neighbouring countries. As an individual, I think that my life had no meaning at all besides birth, old age, illness, and death and I thought that I would die, but I just continued to survive because of my children.

Lysa: They did not give us rice since my husband went to learn at [NGO] until now even the second-hand clothes were not given to us because they blame us [for belonging] to another party (IV # 50).

A former KR 'base' person living in a mixed community spoke about how she welcomed non-KR families to join her in the early years, but felt a lack of solidarity in the current time. She used important indicators of reconciliation in Cambodia: giving food and medicine, and lending money. This passage exhibits how partial acceptance occurs in small rural communities as people interact, lend money, pay for neighbours' funerals, but underneath there are currents of dissatisfaction:

There are some small differences between the former KR families and non-KR. For example, they have been in the free society and I had been in the Communist society; the people who had been in the communist society have

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<sup>11</sup> As noted in Chapter 5, perpetrators may use politics to their advantage.

<sup>12</sup> The 'Khmer Blue' here refers to the opposition political parties. In some areas in the late 1990s and early 2000, the Sam Rainsy opposition party recruited many former KR to vote for them, but then those who did were punished by the ruling party, as described in this passage, and deprived of assistance and services.



good principles and good solidarity because we used to share food and help each other when someone [had a] problem. But when we live in this society, it is different and they do not have the same solidarity. When they first arrived, I sometimes gave them a net, blanket, cloth, salt, fish paste, even medicine when their house burned. I have lived with them since 1997 until 2005, 2006, I understand about them now. I was cheated and how did they cheat? First, I was cheated by their words and secondly by materials. They borrowed my money and they said that they would return it back tomorrow but they did not. I was cheated by them many times until I now have nothing . . . I stopped [lending money] but I still help them when somebody dies. Even though they did not help me, because I want solidarity between my neighbours . . . I don't discriminate because I allowed my daughter to get married to the son of the villager here. I observed that he has good character, kindness, and honesty (IV # 17).

A teacher at the school of this former KR 'base' person's daughter observed some discrimination: 'I think she [the mother] had trouble with her neighbours because she was cheated, she doesn't earn much money, and I think her neighbours discriminate a bit against her. These points result in her being separate from the community'.<sup>13</sup>

Several of the former KR and accused perpetrators living in mixed communities noted discrimination they faced in their daily lives, and one noted the distance in society between herself and her non-KR neighbours. This discrimination did not seem to extend to their children, as discussed in Appendix L (Children of former KR).<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion, the majority of all victim respondents interviewed were partially accepting of former KR living in their communities, for a variety of reasons. Sometimes the victims felt afraid of the accused perpetrators; sometimes they felt angry or were traumatized. In many cases they would state they had no problem with the accused perpetrators, and they lived together peacefully, but in fact had very little interaction with them, and/or expressed underlying resentment. Statements and actions were sometimes different in that victims reported that they had reconciled, but, when I asked

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<sup>13</sup> Informal interview with teacher, in reference to IV #17, 10 August 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Several more instances of discrimination against former KR (even those not accused of any particular crimes, but a former KR soldier who had been fighting at the border) are discussed in the community case study of Southwest-2 below.

if they ever met the accused perpetrators or former KR, they acknowledged that they only interacted to say hello, if that. The behaviour of the perpetrators and which coping strategies they had chosen also influenced the victims' responses. This broad-ranging spectrum of behaviours in this section corresponds to the different levels of coexistence as shown in the model of acceptance above (figure 6.1.). For example the fear expressed by both victims and perpetrators is more characteristic of surface and shallow coexistence, while showing respect, doing good deeds, and victims' expressions of empathetic responses towards perpetrators move towards the category of moderate coexistence. As expressions of respect, good deeds, and empathy increase, the relationships move towards a condition of deep reconciliation, and full acceptance, which is discussed in the next sub-section.

#### **4. Full Acceptance (Perpetrators Living Freely in Communities)**

None of the informants demonstrated that they had fully accepted any former KR accused perpetrators. However, on the basis of my observations and of existing literature, one can hypothesise regarding the conditions that would facilitate such a response.

##### **Full Acceptance**

- Former KR cadres who had not been involved in any killings or selection of others to be killed, were not cruel could integrate easily into the communities
- Former KR soldiers who were often in a special category of being accepted if their posting was far away on the front and they had no visible role in the community during the KR period
- Former KR cadres or soldiers who are accepted unconditionally by family members
- Former KR cadres or soldiers who are accepted unconditionally by certain individuals such as very religious people

In Southwest-2, a former KR soldier seemed to be fully accepted by his niece and nephew-in-law, but treated as an outsider by other villagers. Although this soldier's activities were never specifically discussed in interviews, the niece and nephew

reiterated the view that KR soldiers were relatively 'innocent' having mainly worked at the front lines against the Vietnamese, not against the people.

To summarize this section, figure 6.2. below reviews the process whereby victims seemed to weigh various factors when deciding how to respond to accused perpetrators coming back into their communities, and whether or not they would be accepted or not.

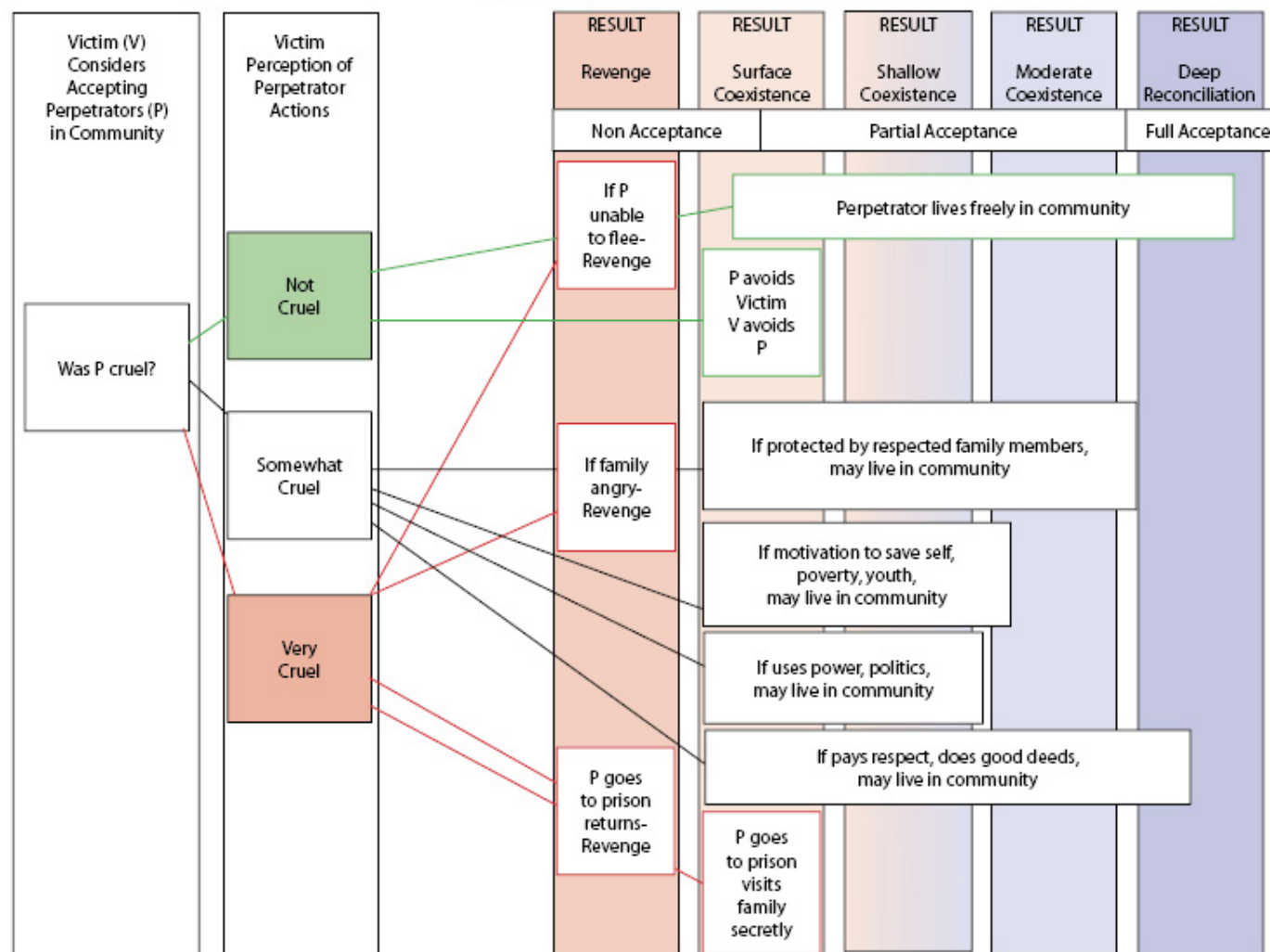


Figure 6.2. Victim Decision-Making Tree

This diagram (figure 6.2.) shows the ideal-typical process whereby a victim first decides whether or not the perpetrator was ‘cruel’ or not (which was the terminology used by most respondents). This cruelty was related to the motivation of the perpetrators, as well as to the type and the gravity of the offenses. The various decision-making processes in the diagram have been discussed throughout this section, as well as in the last two chapters.

We now turn to some additional factors that impact on victims’ responses that are not conscious decisions on the part of the victim, nor based upon specific behaviours of the perpetrators. Instead, these factors are underlying characteristics of the victims and/or perpetrators.

## **Factors Affecting Victims’ Acceptance of Perpetrators**

This section identifies certain personal and cultural factors that can affect victims’ responses to perpetrators. These include: education, relations before the KR period, trauma; culture; violence and conflict; and hierarchy and patronage. First we examine education.

### **Education**

The relationship between level of education and desire for reconciliation has only recently been studied.<sup>1</sup> As will be discussed in the next chapter, several individuals eager for revenge have had high levels of education. In contrast, this educated teacher living in an isolated village close to the Thai border spoke about his memory of being severely beaten by a former KR spy during the KR period when he was seven years old. The former KR spy was now the director of the school where the respondent was teaching. He linked his ability to let go of the anger and feel relief to

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<sup>1</sup> In research about Rwandans’ attitudes towards reconciliation, higher levels of education were associated with less support for three measures of reconciliation -- interdependence, community, and social justice (Longman, Pham, and Weinstein 2004: 219-221).

his educational level: 'I was very angry at that time, but now I feel relieved and calmer in my mind. Because I have a high education, I started thinking that not everything that they did was their own idea, but they just received orders from the higher leaders' (IV # 104). Other respondents did not discuss their levels of education in relationship to reconciliation. In summary, my findings on the relationship between education and desire for revenge (or the ability to reconcile) are inconclusive: other factors, such as the frequency of contact and degree of suffering, may be more directly related, though more study is needed.

## **Relations before the KR period**

One factor that does have a clear influence upon reconciliation is the relationship between the parties before the conflict: a distant economic relationship would require a more narrow restoration, while more complex or richer relationships are more problematic to restore (Rigby 2006b: 2). People who had little reason to interact in the past might need less work to reconcile. Relations between communities as a whole can also be a factor in individuals' relationships: for example, in Southwest-2, two neighbouring villages before the KR conflict were separated by economic status (one village of richer farm-owners, and one village of poorer labourers on those farms). This relationship was reversed during the KR period – the former higher status, richer people, became oppressed 'new' people, while the lower status labourers became more privileged 'base' people. Underlying resentments between the people from the two villages were evident during interviews, and the separation before the war still existed after the war: the two villages continued to have little interaction between them.

## **Trauma**

Trauma was discussed as an important element of Cambodia's historical background in Chapter 2, and it is a factor that affects how victims relate to perpetrators in their communities. Studies in other countries such as Rwanda have

shown that the victims with a higher degree of trauma have less interest in reconciliation (Longman, Pham, and Weinstein 2004: 219-221; Pham, Weinstein, and Longman 2004: 602). Several examples where trauma affects reconciliation arose from the data. Two respondents, whom I had known for many years, would talk at length about the accused perpetrators they blamed for killing their fathers, and talked about the trauma, becoming emotional as they did so. In another case, a woman living in Southwest-2 lost eight children as well as her husband and, although she was eager to be interviewed and tell her story, she got upset when talking of the accused perpetrators.

The behaviour of perpetrators is strongly related to general cultural factors, which we turn to next.

## **Culture**

The coping strategies that perpetrators develop to re-enter into community (such as good deeds or showing respect) are strongly influenced by culture. For example, a UN/NGO worker suggested that Cambodian society is predisposed towards reconciliation because positive and respectful actions towards people in the present are seen as more important than negative actions in the past. He described many aspects of Cambodian culture that are related to reconciliation:

I think reconciliation occurs as some people relate between themselves through their culture. Also, culture is the means through which sometimes people are able to help each other. I think it is called cultural practices . . . no matter how cruel you were but as long you help others in your daily life you are accepted. The [perpetrators] try to be nice. For those who felt that they did something bad but now try to do something good, they will be very well respected by the people. This is reconciliation . . . I think in [Cambodian] society, solidarity and trust are built around the ability to trust one another, and the ability to relate to one another. There have been a lot of social activities between people . . . so I think reconciliation just emerges as people build trust (IV # 126).

Besides this cultural attribute of acceptance occurring over time when the perpetrator acts positively, another important cultural factor is how societies are predisposed to deal with conflict and violence, which is the subject of the next section.

## **Violence and the Denial of Conflict**

As noted in previous chapters, there remains much debate on the nature of Cambodian society – conflict avoiding or warriors. This study has found both of these conflict styles in the various communities of study. Even if there is underlying or latent anger and frustration, especially when known perpetrators are living in the villages, the surface situation is usually calm. Another example of this dichotomy was found in the immediate post-KR period (1979-1981) when there were many episodes of violent revenge taken by victims, but then soon thereafter there was remarkable acceptance of (many) perpetrators returning to live back in society. However at the same time, in many cases the so-called reconciled perpetrators are living very separate lives. I raise this issue of violence and conflict as an important factor to consider when looking at the context of community-level reconciliation, although the findings are contradictory.

## **Hierarchy and Patronage**

Chapter 2 identified the importance of hierarchy and patronage in Cambodian society, including the ties (*kse*) that bind people together in relationships of debt and allegiance. This can impact on how people respond to perpetrators in their midst insofar as the relative status of victims and perpetrators, both past and present, can influence the victims' acceptance of perpetrators. For example, when perpetrators in present-day Cambodia are very poor, they may be more easily accepted by victims, as they are pitied and not seen as a possible threat. On the other hand, when perpetrators are more powerful, and flaunt their power or wealth, victims may be doubly resentful.



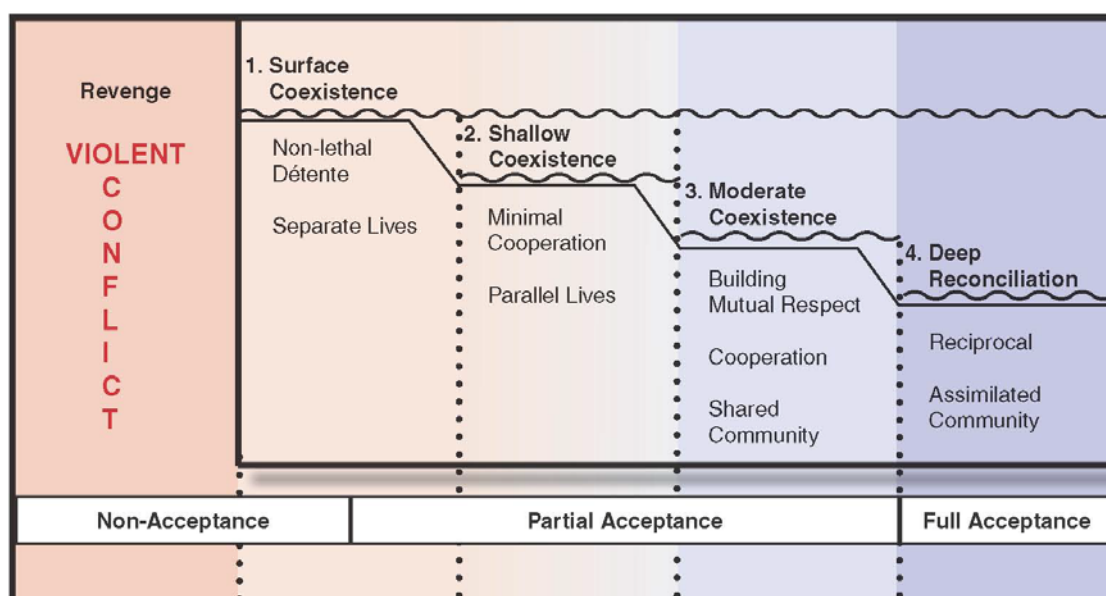
The four categories of acceptance described above on the individual level are next put into context through an examination of four models of coexistence. In the next section I examine how victims' acceptance of perpetrators relates to different levels of coexistence at the community level.

## **Four Communities – Four Types of Coexistence**

Ten research communities were introduced in Chapter 4: amongst the ten communities, four were chosen to illustrate typical types of coexistence in Cambodia. 'Victims Living in Fear' in Southwest-1 (surface coexistence), 'Islands Alone' in Southwest-2 (shallow coexistence), 'The Melting Pot' in Northwest-3 (moderate without prior contact), and 'We are all in the Same Boat' in Northwest-4 (moderate with prior contact). In all ten of the case studies, the degree of coexistence has varied from surface to shallow to moderate, never reaching the deep coexistence or reconciliation of assimilated community. Respondents expressed only views and behaviours that indicated partial acceptance, such as fear, avoidance, withdrawal, and some minimal signs of respect and empathy in early stages. The four types of coexistence include: (1) surface coexistence – non-lethal détente of separate lives; (2) shallow coexistence – minimal cooperation of parallel lives; (3) moderate coexistence – cooperation, collaboration and building mutual respect of shared community; and finally (4) deep reconciliation – interdependence, reciprocity, rich and multi-textured horizontal and vertical ties, of reciprocal and assimilated community.

A model to illustrate the transitions occurring through the stages of coexistence and reconciliation is presented below (Figure 6.3). It attempts to show how communities might move from conflict to peace, from surface coexistence to deep reconciliation, and from revenge and non-acceptance to reconciliation and full acceptance. The diagram is reminiscent of a swimming pool, where surface

coexistence lies on the surface of the water, and shallow and deep reconciliation move gradually into deeper water, and deeper relationship. As victims begin to develop understanding of the situation of perpetrators, and perpetrators begin to show remorse and do good deeds, then communities can gradually move towards deeper reconciliation.



**Figure 6.3. Model of Reconciliation**

The four case studies are now reviewed to illustrate communities with different degrees of coexistence, ranging from surface to shallow to moderate (but never achieving the deep reconciliation of interdependence).

### 1. Southwest-1 'Victims Living in Fear' ( Surface Coexistence)

Although a brief description of Southwest-1 is included in Chapter 4 (see pages 93-95), additional details provided below add to our understanding of surface coexistence. This surface coexistence is characterized by minimal contact between victims and perpetrators and a great deal of fear. The community was made up of three neighbouring villages: A, B, and C. The stories of many of the people living in

Village A were heartbreaking. The mixed Cambodian and Cham Muslim<sup>2</sup> village was physically demolished, poverty-stricken, and populated with ‘victim survivors’. Village A was still haunted by a nearby village (B) which consisted primarily of former Khmer Rouge ‘base people’, some of them (accused) perpetrators. Village C was a mixed village of both former KR and non-KR. It housed just a few former KR cadres, including one prominent man who no one would talk about or introduce me to, and a former KR elderly couple who provided many insights.

In Village B, although most of the mid- and upper-level KR leaders had been killed in internal purges, or fled in 1979 when the KR regime fell to Vietnamese troops, some low-level cadres remained. I interviewed some of these former KR cadres, including two who had been sent to prison for a few months in early 1979 and one person who was identified by many villagers in Village A as an alleged perpetrator – accused of selecting and then leading many to their deaths. I also interviewed another accused perpetrator (accused by some former KR cadre of killing more than a thousand people) who was now living in the US but was visiting his father. As the information in the interviews was compared and contrasted, especially the differing perceptions found in villages A and B, a picture of the delicate nature of the coexistence emerged.

This case study also showed how surface coexistence can be very close to the edge of revenge. The only case of revenge admitted by any of the respondents in this entire research study was in this community, in Village A, as a former government soldier admitted to joining with two other villagers to kill three particularly cruel KR perpetrators.<sup>3</sup> While this occurred in the past, some of the victims indicated they might still like to take revenge. This case study also illustrates the importance of the factor of

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<sup>2</sup> About 96 percent of the Cambodian population is Buddhist; about 2 percent are Cham Muslim, and less than 1 percent Christian.

<sup>3</sup> The story of this revenge-taker, key informant Mr. Sunh, is explained in the next chapter, as well as some other respondents’ continued desire for revenge.

location and proximity, and power relationships. In Village A, many victim respondents expressed their fear and spoke with lowered voices, due to the close proximity of former KR cadres in the neighbouring village (B). The former KR cadres seemed to have retained their power, as some of the commune officials were relatives and protected them. The former KR cadres also wielded power due to the close proximity of a former KR stronghold where many high-ranking former KR still lived.

From this community of surface coexistence, Southwest-1, where relationships are minimal, contact is avoided, and levels of fear and anger are high, we move to a community displaying a slightly deeper level of coexistence: shallow.

## **2. Southwest-2 'Islands Alone' (Shallow Coexistence)**

Southwest-2 was a cluster of villages consisting primarily of victims, with some base people and a few isolated direct perpetrators and former KR soldiers living lonely lives. The shallow coexistence observed in this community was characterized by cordial relationships between victims and perpetrators, but underlying this was anger and sorrow on the part of victims, and fear, anger, and feelings of discrimination on the part of accused perpetrators and former KR. Of all the research communities, I had the most interviews here – it was more accessible, I had a close key informant, a former KR soldier (Kuy), and I was able to obtain access to a former KR cadre who was widely recognized in the community as a perpetrator. Almost every respondent I spoke with claimed that their community had already reconciled and they had no problems. However, their reports of how often victims and perpetrators interacted, their interviews, and my observations led to the conclusion that this community was actually living in a state of shallow coexistence, far from deep reconciliation. It was obvious that the victims did not fully accept the former KR members into their community, and did not welcome them to participate fully.

The following focus group discussion illustrated how victims were often reticent to speak directly about accused perpetrators; victims did not dare to look at those who had been the executioners during the KR period. Also, the respondents spoke about the cycles of purges conducted by the KR against their own cadre – many KR suffered as well.<sup>4</sup> Finally this passage indicates how victims discriminated against former KR in the present day (LM indicates my questions, while the numbers indicate the individual focus groups members):

LM: Are there any perpetrators who killed the people in the temple living around this area?  
7: The perpetrators also died in the Pol Pot regime; they were killed the same as other people. But there are a few left now. But we dare not say who.  
LM: Are the perpetrators living with the people normally?  
5: Yes, they are living normally.  
6: We do not hold a grudge because the perpetrators were afraid of the KR leaders too.  
LM: Nobody wanted to take revenge for the death of their family members?  
5: No, no . . . [Laughing]  
LM: How many are still around?  
[Everybody talking to push each other to speak out]  
6: I did not know the killer because they did not allow us to see.  
7: Yes, they did not allow us to see.  
4: She doesn't want to ask for whom specifically; she just wants to know how many are still around?  
6: We don't know how many perpetrators but we just know that they took our parents away.  
5: Please ask Mr. Red shirt [referring to the key informant, Kuy], he knows!  
3: The person who took the people away was the village or group chief or . . .  
7: As I see those people [perpetrators] were killed by each other from one generation to the next. They were all killed because when the new group came, they said that they sent those people to another place; but in fact, they were killed at the dam. The people were killed, even the people who were in their village, so all the people were killed the same. I think maybe ten persons [perpetrators] are alive now but we don't know where they are. If we know where they are, we won't take revenge because we will not get the dead people (our relatives) back (IV # 88).

Although this passage above does not identify individual perpetrators, because I visited this village so many times and interviewed so many people, I was able to find out later the names of two accused perpetrators, one of whom I was able to interview.

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<sup>4</sup> Due to the highly paranoid nature of the KR regime, internal purges were carried out by the KR, increasingly frequently in 1977 and 1978. The majority of the killings carried out at the infamous Tuol Sleng prison in Phnom Penh were of KR cadres.

## A Lonely Accused Perpetrator – Living in Fear

I had tried to meet this accused perpetrator (Pel) in Southwest-2 several times through an interlocutor over a period of months.<sup>5</sup> Both he and his wife mentioned several times his anxiety and fear, though his fear gradually reduced over the period of my visits to the village, as Pel began to trust me (LM below):

LM: I see that it was difficult when you were in the prison and that you remember this and feel sorry about it. So how do you feel now when you are talking about these stories in the past?

Pel: I don't feeling now . . . I feel . . . umm . . . [Laughing]

LM: Is it better or worse than before?

Pel: I feel better, yes better. I don't have chest tightness (*tung*) anymore but I feel relieved (*thuo*).

LM: Why?

Pel: Because you don't make me feel difficult. It means that you don't make me feel afraid' (IV # 85).

Fear is a common response amongst victims of mass violence after the events.<sup>6</sup> But perpetrators also feel fearful – that their pasts may be exposed, or they may be brought to justice, or even killed for revenge. As noted above Pel was clearly anxious and nervous about meeting people. He appeared to be suffering from mental health problems including anxiety and fearfulness, and both he and his wife Kong spoke about those symptoms (headaches, chest pain, and rapid heartbeat) when others asked him about the past. Kong also spoke about an attack on their home several years ago that resulted in the death of her father, which they feared was an attempted act of revenge, a view shared by several other respondents.

Anger was another emotion expressed in the narrative of this accused perpetrator. Kong was still upset and angry about Pel's arrest after the KR fell, and the

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<sup>5</sup> Pel's name had been given to me by several respondents, including key informants and the commune chief. By the time I finally had an appointment to see him, a local NGO film crew had just been there the day before and had directly questioned him, on film, about what he had done during the KR regime. Thus he was not home at the time of our appointment and his wife told us that he was not feeling well because of the visit of the film crew. Over time, after several overtures by intermediaries, and an explanation that I would ask questions about the PRK period, not the KR period, he finally agreed to meet.

<sup>6</sup> Note for example that the case study above (Southwest-1) is titled 'victims living in fear'.

year he spent in jail (1980). She went to bring him home from jail and was very disturbed at how thin he was and how he had been maltreated. She also spoke about herself being beaten by the police and accused of being a former KR traitor while her husband was in jail. Although the commune chief and other neighbours stated that Pel was included in the community activities normally, my interviews and observations indicated that in fact he rarely left his house and then, only to tend his cows. He did not go to the temple, though he encouraged his wife and children to do so.

Because of this anger and bitterness still held by Pel's wife, she had no wish to reconcile. In her explanation, her husband was only a spy for a few months, so did not deserve to be in prison for a whole year, and she said she was also beaten by the authorities.<sup>7</sup> She also illustrated how they used the perpetrator coping strategy of withdrawal and avoidance:

No, I never saw the men who arrested him [Pel] since then because they died already. They were from this commune. But I don't want to see them because they think we are bad people so we don't want to see them. . . . Perhaps we saw them on the road by accident, but we did not talk with them and we turned back. Both my husband and I, we did not ask them when we met them because they ill-treated (*thveu bap*) us so why we should talk with them?' (IV # 51).

Huyse describes a two-step process whereby firstly fear and anger are replaced by non-violent coexistence, and then secondly confidence and trust are built (Huyse 2003: 20). In the case of Pel and Kong, these steps were far from achieved. Since Pel was a lone perpetrator in a community of victims, and there had been one attack on his life, he was living in a constant state of fear. Since he lived an isolated life, he only occasionally interacted with people in the community. Thus there was little reason nor opportunity to build trust or confidence. Since the Cambodian model of conflict avoidance had led few people to ever speak openly about what happened in the past, both sides were living in a state of heightened anxiety and mistrust. However, the conditions for the development of empathy may be present, as several villagers

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<sup>7</sup> However, three other villagers stated they were eyewitnesses to Pel's activities working in the KR prison and leading people to their deaths during the regime.

stated they understood that Pel had to follow orders or he would have been killed. If Pel knew of their understanding, it might lead him to acknowledge what he had done and that in turn would possibly promote healing for both him and his victims. The trust that apparently exists between Pel and his former KR neighbour could be an important starting point for development of future relationships.

Another isolated individual was Kuy, a former KR soldier who used development aid to buy acceptance.

### A Lonely Former KR soldier – Using Development Aid to Buy Acceptance

Although educated and from the richer village of wealthier landowners, Kuy had joined the KR voluntarily to follow the call of King Sihanouk. When he first came back to his village when the KR fell in 1979, he was not accepted by the authorities, so he returned to fight the Vietnamese, leaving his wife and family behind. He finally returned to the community in the 1990s after he was injured and became an amputee.<sup>8</sup>

Kuy had spent a great deal of time trying to build relationships with his community by attempting to bring development through an NGO, but he still lived in a depressed state and in relative isolation. I observed several remarks made about him in public identifying him as former KR (see above on page 160), which he admitted later had bothered him. Although he several times denied any problem with reconciliation, his wife became tearful while he answered my question about how they were received into the community when they first returned after the KR years:

Around me, there were many people, who lived in the PRK or SOC [People's Republic of Kampuchea or State of Cambodia] and there were many soldiers. I was the only one former KR army that lived in the village. Many years ago, even though they troubled me in both the mind and body, I still was determined that I would try until all the Khmer people understood about me. What way could I try? I tried to develop the roads and the ponds or other things in order to clarify that I did have the nationalist ideals. Moreover, I wanted to live together (*ruop ruom*) and rebuild and do development. After I had requested this project

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<sup>8</sup> There are several passages above that illustrate the discrimination he and his family have experienced.



already, I gave it to the commune chief in order to show my good points that I did have the nationalist ideals and everything that I did was for the Khmer and for only the Khmer. I dug that pond because of our Khmer race and for the needs of the people, because before they needed to go far away to get water. Since that time, there were no longer any problems because they knew that we were working for the advantage for the Khmer society and we were not the destroyers nor tried to do bad things. They always saw our good deeds (IV # 50).

Southwest-2 exhibited several attributes indicating its state of shallow coexistence.

Firstly, victims feared to speak openly about perpetrators. Secondly a lonely perpetrator (Pel) lived in fear while his wife (Kong) felt angry. Finally, a lonely former KR soldier (Kuy) and his wife (Lysa) felt discriminated against but used development to buy acceptance. Victims only partially accepted the former KR members of their community, while the accused perpetrators tended to use coping strategies of withdrawal and denial. We now turn to the third type of coexistence: moderate coexistence without prior contact.

### **3. Northwest-3 'The Melting Pot' ( Moderate Coexistence – without prior contact)**

A stage of moderate coexistence is characterized by greater levels of acceptance and interaction than in a condition of shallow coexistence. In moderate coexistence, relationships are deeper, interdependence increases, and the (negative) emotions of fear and anger decrease. Two types of moderate coexistence are described: one in which people have had no prior contact, and the second in which people have known each other for years and know which have been victims and which have been perpetrators.

Northwest-3 was one example of several former KR strongholds that maintained control of their populations into the 1990s. These communities then experienced inflows of Cambodians from all over the country that came seeking the relatively free land as it was gradually cleared of land mines (thus, the 'Melting Pot'). People in these communities rarely knew each other during the KR regime, and

although they were aware of two distinct social groups (victims versus former KR) there were no instances of direct victim- perpetrator relationships found amongst respondents. Northwest-3 is an example of moderate reconciliation, as former KR and KR victims lived in close proximity, with good, close social relationships. They were highly accepting of each other, and some victims expressed empathy towards the situation of former KR during the regime. However, since they were not direct victims and perpetrators, neither knew about the others' pasts, and there were no problems with anger towards, or fear of, specific individuals.

#### **4. Northwest-4 'We Are All in the Same Boat' (Moderate Coexistence – with prior contact)**

The second example of moderate coexistence (with prior contact) is another community in the northwest of Cambodia, though it had not been a KR stronghold. As in Northwest-3, victims and former KR had a great deal of contact, had deep relationships, and exhibited interdependence in religious and economic life – thus characterized as moderate coexistence. However, villagers in Northwest-4 had known each other for decades, many since birth, so this community exhibited the dynamics of moderate coexistence *with* prior contact. The area was called by many a 'tug of war' region as it was a major crossroads for the various factions during the war years (from 1979 through 1998): sometimes the KR controlled it, sometimes the government forces, and sometimes the non-communist resistance (known as 'Para'). Young men were recruited from this area to be in all three military forces and, even before the first year of formal KR rule in 1975, many men had joined the KR, some voluntarily and some not. After the KR regime, many of the inhabitants fled to refugee camps in Thailand, but had since returned. Because of the on-going war and the mixed allegiances, and the common suffering ('We are all in the same boat'), the community was mixed between all three groups (KR, non-communist resistance, and government)

who were living peacefully together, in moderate coexistence, with a high degree of acceptance of perpetrators by victims.

A key informant (Khin), a former UN/NGO worker and formerly a refugee who had escaped during the KR regime and was now resident in the village, observed the changing allegiances made out of necessity as noted in the section on hierarchy above:

If we were living with the communists, we would have to join with them, but our hearts still wanted democracy. That is why we wanted to escape to Thailand or the US. We could say that our bodies had to be with the KR so when they ordered us to kill somebody, we would have to follow them. When the peace came, we had no conflict any longer. Many people here are now my relatives. Even when we just talked about that perpetrator, he was also our relative.<sup>9</sup> We are all living near here so we could not kill each other, but we were forced to do things under their threats. Nowadays, we don't need to find the KR because many of the villagers are KR (IV # 103).

The brother-in-law of the key informant spoke about a direct perpetrator and neighbour who had beaten him as a child during the KR. He is quoted in Chapter 5 on the section on motivation (see page 119) where he explained that in spite of the mistreatment, he was able to understand the mitigating factors – that the perpetrator would have been killed had he disobeyed.

The fact that this community was able to reconstitute itself, and direct perpetrators were able to sit next to direct victims was an example of the greatest degree of coexistence found in this research study (moderate coexistence with prior contact). However, there was not yet deep coexistence as there was not deep communication between victims and perpetrators, little discussion of the past, and no expressions of remorse, acknowledgement, or apology made. But since all communities had strong experiences of common suffering, their being in the 'same boat' allowed them to better develop empathy.

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<sup>9</sup> In this interview, the discussion had just been about a KR perpetrator living nearby.

This chapter has provided an overview of factors affecting victims' acceptance of perpetrators, a model of victim acceptance of perpetrators (from revenge to full acceptance), and finally an elaboration of case studies of community coexistence (from surface to shallow to moderate coexistence).

- **Surface Coexistence** - In Southwest-1, one village of former KR and one of approximately equal numbers of victims were separated by approximately one kilometre, so people did not want to or did not have to interact – coexistence was merely on the surface with a lot of fear and almost no communication.
- **Shallow Coexistence** - In Southwest-2 a majority of direct victims and a minority of perpetrators lived in very close proximity to each other and thus have had opportunities for social interaction. Yet, they only lived in a state of shallow coexistence, as perpetrators lived in fear and isolation.
- **Moderate Coexistence (without prior contact)** - In Northwest-3 a melting pot of victims and former KR (many of whom may be hiding their pasts) live in relative harmony and moderate coexistence.
- **Moderate Coexistence (with prior contact)** - Finally, in Northwest-4 several villages in a war-torn area included a mixture of former KR, victims, and former resistance groups who are all living in moderate coexistence – better able to communicate and understand each other due to their common suffering.

The next chapter focuses on the important issue of revenge, much of which occurred in the early years after the KR regime, but the impact of which still affects relationships today.

## CHAPTER 7 – Revenge – Blood Debts

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Revenge is an evocative word: in Cambodia it is related to blood debts, hot anger, and cycles of killings through generations. Revenge (or vengeance) and reconciliation (and sometimes forgiveness) lie on opposite ends of a continuum moving from conflict towards peace. This chapter discusses the specifics of revenge: what it is, how it happened in Cambodia, how it is seen by Cambodians, what factors affect it, and how it relates to justice and reconciliation. A revenge killing in the case study community Southwest-1 serves as a central narrative to unpack this complex topic, including many revealing observations by the man who confessed. I draw upon this example and other interview material to describe the situation of revenge in the communities. In addition, I examine the factors that led to revenge killings as well as the factors that led to perpetrators being spared. Factors such as the passage of time, religious views, and the motivation of the perpetrators were found to influence the incidence of revenge: they and other factors are discussed below. As the literature is sparse on the topic of revenge in Cambodia, this thesis adds detailed analysis of this important issue.

### **What is Revenge?**

Vengeance is a normal human reaction: a response to humiliation and to threats against self-esteem, perceived control, and power (Herman 1992: 104 and 189; Minow 1998: 10; Nadler and Shnabel 2008: 46-7). Revenge is primarily seen as a negative act. However, when a victim takes revenge, the balance of power changes as victims try to regain control over their lives damaged by conflict. In some cases revenge can improve the psychological health of the victim, as they feel that what happened to them has not been forgotten or minimized (Nadler and Shnabel 2008:

46-47). Victims may also seek revenge in an attempt to force perpetrators to acknowledge their actions and the harm they have done (Herman 1992: 189). However a desire for revenge, especially if too strong or overwhelming, can be a negative force: victims may wallow in the past, ignite cycles of violence, or not be able to focus on the future (Field and Chhim 2008: 353).

Vengeance or acts of revenge can be seen as private acts between individuals, or official acts such as political reprisals or courts (Crocker 2004: 6). The private acts can be in the form of 'soft revenge' such as victims shaming perpetrators, or the extreme acts of revenge killings. Official acts of retribution in the form of trials are discussed below. When the scale and scope of revenge is excessive or uncontrolled, it can lead to unending cycles of revenge. The ability to forsake vengeance and focus on the future is the very essence of reconciliation and the transformation of relationship (Rigby 2001: 12).<sup>1</sup>

Hinton differentiates between two concepts in Cambodia: revenge (*sangsoek* or 'pay back the enemy') and holding a grudge (*kumnum*) (Hinton 2001: 25-6).<sup>2</sup> Hinton suggests that acts of revenge may result from insults or loss of face, while some forms of grudges could be from much more serious violations. Hinton describes the more serious grudge as resulting in 'disproportionate revenge' with never-ending cycles of violence: a 'long-standing grudge leading to revenge [is] much more damaging than the original injury', (Hinton 2000: 32-34; Hinton 2001: 25-6). There has been little direct research on the degree to which revenge has occurred in Cambodia, except for observations from some researchers that revenge is presumed to have been fairly

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<sup>1</sup> In a survey in Rwanda (and some other surveys) a lack of desire for vengeance has been described as an indicator of reconciliation (Pham, Weinstein, and Longman 2004: 604-5).

<sup>2</sup> These concepts are related to being 'tied to anger' (*chang kumhoeng*), or malice: A national 'Day of Anger' was an annual ceremony in Cambodia which will be discussed in the next chapter. Hinton notes that 'the root of the word *sangsoek* is *sang*. It refers to the moral obligation 'to return (an object), to pay back (debt), to pay for damage' (Hinton 2001: 26). This word '*sang*' (or *sang* using Hinton's transliteration system) is also used as the root for reparations, and the verb used in criminal cases to pay back victims for damage done.

common and widespread (Gottesman 2003: 37-38; Hinton 2001: 25; Linton 2004: 150).<sup>3</sup>

## **Research on Attitudes of Cambodians towards Revenge**

In the 1970s many Cambodians joined the KR movement due to anger against the war and to avenge the suffering caused by bombings by the US military (Hinton 2000: 32-3; Zucker 2009: 39). During the KR period the leaders developed drastic policies whereby the entire family and network of suspected traitors were exterminated along with the traitor ('pulling up the roots'). Oveson suggested that revenge occurred during the KR period because the regime viewed itself and its leadership as a semi-divine power, so that elimination of the 'enemy' had to be complete and had to include all of the kinship links (Oveson 2005: 40).<sup>4</sup> This 'scorched earth' policy colours how Cambodians feel about the KR, and about revenge, today.

Research studies have revealed some contradictory findings about revenge, partly due to the way that revenge has been defined in the studies. While most studies suggest that a minority of Cambodians want revenge against the former KR, a majority want them to suffer in some way.<sup>5</sup> Etcheson did interviews in three villages and quoted several respondents who still desired revenge, leading him to conclude that strong feelings of anger and a desire for revenge were still widespread (2005b: 206-8)<sup>6</sup>. A study by Linton of 712 Cambodians indicated that a majority (69 percent) of

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<sup>3</sup> Several Cambodian survivors mentioned revenge killings in their memoirs. See May 1986: 239-246, 254; Ung 2000: 206; and Ngor 1987: 353, 362.

<sup>4</sup> S-21 Prison Chief Duch explained the KR policy about children during his testimony at the KR tribunal: 'There is no gain to keep them, and they might take revenge on you' (Cheang 2009: 1). It is under these policies that entire families were killed with KR cadre guided by this KR slogan: 'When pulling out weeds, remove them roots and all' (Locard 2004: 77; IV# 6 KL).

<sup>5</sup> A desire to make someone suffer is also used as an indicator of a desire for revenge in several studies (Pham et al. 2009; Sonis et al. 2009).

<sup>6</sup> The study does not indicate how many people were interviewed, nor when, and did not describe the various percentages of respondents' opinions. In addition, Etcheson indicated that the strong feelings of revenge held by most respondents were evident in their support for the KR trials (Etcheson 2005b: 208).

respondents was not seeking revenge, while a minority (24 percent) was seeking revenge (2004: 9). An informal study I conducted in 1999 indicated that 10 out of 48 respondents wanted revenge, while 30 did not<sup>7</sup> (McGrew 2000b: 35). A study conducted in 2008 of 1,621 randomly selected Cambodians showed that interviewees wanted the KR to suffer (71 percent), wished they could take revenge (37 percent), and would take revenge if they could (41 percent) (Pham et al. 2009: 3). A study of 1,000 Cambodians conducted also in 2008 indicated a strong desire for revenge (average of 19.7 on a scale of 25): 63 percent of the 1,017 respondents strongly agreed, and 21 percent agreed with the statement 'I would like to make them [the KR perpetrators] suffer' (Sonis et al. 2009: 532).<sup>8</sup> Thus, in general, recent studies agree that although the majority of Cambodians do not wish to take revenge themselves, there are still unresolved feelings towards perpetrators, some want revenge, and many victims still want perpetrators to suffer.

We now turn to the voices of respondents in this study, to explore how revenge happened in their communities.

## **Revenge in Cambodia**

### **How did Revenge Happen?**

As noted above, there has been almost no research or investigations in the literature or press about the incidence of revenge killings in the aftermath of the KR regime. Although revenge is a natural reaction to mass violence, many respondents were reticent to speak of it. However through the interviews, a picture emerged of the

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<sup>7</sup> Seven respondents did not know or did not answer the question.

<sup>8</sup> A desire to make someone suffer was one of the five measures used by Sonis to assess the desire for revenge, as was the desire to 'get back at them'. But the Sonis study did not report the total number of respondents who desired revenge or their scores on the five measures of revenge.



little-discussed or written about period just after the KR were overthrown. The majority of respondents had at least heard of revenge killings, some had witnessed them, and a few had taken part in them. Several respondents, such as this KR prison survivor, had seen the dead bodies of presumed KR perpetrators along the roadways as they staggered home after the KR regime:

I know revenge happened after 1979 or early 1980. For example my cooperative chief (*prathean sahakar*) was chased to be killed by the people but they could not reach him because he had run away two days before. On National Road Six, on the way to Siem Reap, there were many stories. The people killed the chiefs of the KR who were cruel or killed the people. Then they took their dead bodies to hang on the road; I saw them with my own eyes (IV # 42).

Another prison survivor also observed many dead bodies though, as with many respondents, he said he did not see the actual revenge killing:

I heard people say there were KR who had been killed for revenge. The streets were full of dead people. Both the people and the Vietnamese killed the KR. The Vietnamese shot the KR to death when they were fighting to liberate the country. And because of their cruelty, people were suffering when the KR were occupying the country. The people's anger was stronger than the Vietnamese's anger. The people dared to knife the KR to death in either daytime or night-time. I saw some people who went into houses trying to kill some KR in the afternoon (IV # 59).

This former KR 'base' person, who then became a victim of the KR as his family members were killed by the second wave of former KR leaders (from the southwest) spoke frankly about all the revenge he had seen. While the majority of respondents said they had only seen one or two killings, he was one of the few who had seen many. He invoked a proverb about revenge based on Buddhist beliefs:

It was very difficult in 1979 because as a Khmer proverb says 'hatred will not cease with hatred': for example, if we saw somebody kill another person, we should not kill that killer; we should just keep silent because it is too late. We should not do the same mistake as he did. There was a lot of revenge in 1978-1979 when the Vietnamese came. At that time, when I escaped I saw people take revenge immediately. If some perpetrators did not run away in time, they would be killed with knives, not guns. From the time that I was born, I never saw so many flies as during that time; the flies perched everywhere on the dead people. It was terrible because the victims were very hurt so they had to take the revenge. Some KR escaped to live at the border and they never went back to their home villages because they are afraid of revenge. I saw a

revenge killing in a rice field; I was very afraid. After the war ended, a cooperative chief who had a big ox drove his cart along a small path, and there, the people stopped him. They had been waiting there to kill him because he used to punish their relatives to deprive them of food. I saw revenge many times. I did not just see it when the Vietnamese came (IV # 78).

Although in most cases people reported that the cruellest perpetrators ran away in fear for their lives, this former KR victim respondent (in Northwest-4) spoke about a case where a relatively less cruel KR cadre dared to stay in the community – but was later killed:<sup>9</sup>

In our village there was only one person killed because he believed himself that he was not so cruel and he did not kill or that he had troubled many people. He could not escape in time, but as for the others, who were very cruel, they escaped. They ran to be soldiers so they could escape. They ran away like flies. As for him, he did not know how to escape. He was not so cruel; he trusted the people very deeply. Even though he trusted the people, but they still arrested him to kill him. During the KR period, he did not kill by himself, but when anybody in the mobile work group made the mistake, he ordered his soldiers such as militia (*chhlop*) to arrest them (IV # 104).

The above examples are of revenge killings observed in the immediate aftermath of the KR regime, when the majority of killings took place. However, some killings also occurred later on in the 1980s, including some in the refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border: ‘Sometimes there was revenge in the camps if people recognized KR people in Thailand’ (IV # 118).

Only a few people admitted they would still take revenge now. One man living in the southwest stated: ‘We still have pain in our hearts, they were so cruel. If I were young, I will take revenge’ (IV # 32). And this respondent living in the northwest stated:

Yes, I still think about revenge, even right now. My mother forgets some things in the past and about [the accused perpetrator] but for me I cannot forget. I cannot forget because they killed my father and they are still alive and free. Like I told you before if someone killed people, they must be put in jail but now they live freely. And if we don't sentence them, other people will follow them and also kill people without punishment (IV # 6).

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<sup>9</sup> The passage of time served to decrease feelings of revenge and allowed some perpetrators to live freely in community if they returned later, but not in this case. See section on time below.

Some perpetrators seem well aware of the possibility of revenge, and live in fear. For example, one perpetrator was said to be acting like a 'rabbit' prostrating himself in front of his victims (see page 132); accused perpetrator (Pel) is afraid to go out of his house (see pages 125 and 162); and Pel's former KR co-worker fled his community without his belongings after Pel's father-in-law was killed (see page 176). In the case below, two former KR cadres (1 and 2) spoke about a former KR perpetrator who 'died' of fear of revenge:

1: He did not kill himself. He got sick because he was so frightened himself; he dared not to go anywhere.

2: He was afraid somebody would take revenge.

1: If he walked around, he was afraid he would be hit by people because they knew that he killed their relatives. . . . He was alive for one year after he returned from the prison. He returned home and no one ill-treated him, but he dared not to go out or do anything. He felt afraid.

2: He dared not to go to Kampot because there are a lot of 'new' people in Kampot. The people around here were his relatives so that's another reason they didn't take revenge.

1: It was because he controlled 17 April people ['new' people]; he was the chief of 17 April people group and he did bad things to them and starved them. He was the chief of a group (IV # 93).

Now, the discussion moves from a continuing desire for revenge, to the situation when respondents spoke about preventing revenge killings.

## **Revenge Killings Prevented**

While most respondents reported incidents of revenge killings, people also reported instances when acts of revenge were prevented. For example, these two former KR 'base' people (respondents 1 and 2) had worked in the PRK commune headquarters, and as spies for the PRK. One of them had been sent to prison as a suspected KR cadre. Respondent 2 stated he had acted to save some former KR from being killed by the PRK authorities:

1: Yes, some former KR were killed after 1979.

2: But I worked in the commune headquarter so they came to tell me when they wanted to kill someone in the village.

1: Yes, they told us before they killed someone because we worked in the commune but we did not have the right to prevent them.

2: [During the PRK regime] I was a spy (*chhlop*) in this commune and they were spies in another commune so we knew each other and they came to inform me that they were going to kill two guys in this commune but I said that I did not allow them to kill those men. But they still went to kill those guys. They told me that those men were not my father, so they would kill them even if I did not allow them.

1: At that time, you took revenge against me and I took revenge against you.

2: I saved many people (IV # 93).

Key informant Sunh and his brother spoke about revenge killings prevented, as the brother's military commander prevented him from taking revenge against an accused perpetrator (key informant Tang). They also noted that this accused perpetrator was spared because of links to relatives with political power, and because of the passage of time. In this case the reference to forgiving Tang seems to be the minimalist definition, in that they are no longer seeking revenge:

Brother: [Tang - accused perpetrator and key informant] killed A Sen's mother. When I was a soldier, originally we wanted to kill him, I went to find him with A Sen, but he ran away.

Sunh: [Tang] burned my relative to death.

Brother: I took a sword and went to kill him but he ran away. It was in 1980.

LM: Now do you still want revenge?

Brother: No, I stopped and [Tang] now is old too. But when I was a soldier I did politics and I called my colleagues to surround [Tang]'s house, but my boss was afraid I would shoot [Tang] so he stopped me.

Sunh: After that he ran away for about one year, and then he came back.

Brother: [Tang] was cruel, He burned people alive. The children of the victims came to tell me.

Sunh: [Tang] dares to live in the village because he has relatives (of his wife) who work in the commune office.

Brother: His relatives take responsibility for him and we also forgave him (IV # 32).

In conclusion, we see that revenge was quite widespread with many people reporting its occurrence, though at times revenge was prevented by others.

Perpetrators were sometimes protected by those with political power, which is related to one of the perpetrator coping strategies discussed in Chapter 5 (see pages 128-129). Those strategies are the topic of the next sub-section.

## Perpetrators Coping with Revenge

There were some cases where perpetrators escaped revenge killings through the mechanisms described in Chapter 5, specifically flight and use of power and politics.<sup>10</sup> This UN/NGO worker who had worked in the border camps observed a high incidence of flight (as well as noting revenge killings taking place in the refugee camps):

In Thmar Pouk and Banteay Chmar there was not much revenge – there would have been more revenge, as we wanted to, but the KR escaped to the Thai-Cambodian border. Most perpetrators fled Cambodia to go to a third country and are there now. Many fled with the KR or the non-KR to Thailand and the refugee camps because at that time everybody ran and life was all mixed up. Sometimes there was revenge in the camps if people recognized KR people in Thailand (IV # 118).

Another example of flight is demonstrated in this discussion between Mrs. Kong (the wife of a former KR spy (*chhlop*)) and her sister, also a KR 'base' person, about what happened to various KR perpetrators in their village. They discussed the effects of the killing of their father in 1997, which was either an attempted robbery or a revenge killing aimed at her husband. The wife freely confessed that her husband brought people to the prison during the KR time, and she and her sister spoke openly of other accused perpetrators in the area:

Kong: The KR leaders responsible for the bad things done in this area have died already, Ta Chuon was north of here, and Ta Chorn ran away and we don't know where he is now. He ran a long time ago.

Sister: He ran away around 1993 or 1994.

Kong: No, no! Our father died in 1997, so they all ran away around 1998 or 1999. When my father died, the other KR were afraid so they ran away. My husband was a person who took the people to put them in prison. The one who ran away was the village chief during the KR time. So when my husband had a problem, this other man ran away. He had lived peacefully but in 1997 there was a problem at my house so he disappeared. The people knew that he worked in the KR prison so the people got angry with him. Because the people were angry, he had some problems with the people but I dared not to say anything because I was afraid also.

Sister: He sold his land and farm and everything here.

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<sup>10</sup> The other perpetrator coping strategies of withdrawal, denial, rationalization, good deeds and showing respect were discussed in Chapter 5, while the strategies of apology will be discussed in the next chapter.

Kong: He ran without even getting all the money for his farm, and he took his whole family with him. He did not even do a ceremony when his wife died. His wife had died before my father was shot (IV # 51).

As noted in Chapters 5 and 6, although particularly cruel perpetrators were killed more often than those who were less cruel, even very cruel accused perpetrators could live freely in the village, if they were protected by powerful people. For example, the accused perpetrator (Tang) living in Southwest-1 was protected by the close proximity of several other former KR cadres, and a powerful family member in the local commune office (see page 175 above). A victim who had lived under the control of Tang when he was a group leader observed about the former KR cadres: 'They live amongst their group members, so they can live together easily. That area was a well-known KR area in the past' (IV # 97). In another example, an accused perpetrator was reported to have returned freely to his community in spite of allegedly killing thousands – because he was now protected by powerful local politicians and by the good reputation of his religious father (IV # 94).

Thus, amongst the communities of this study, we see that revenge killings happened frequently in post-KR Cambodia, usually immediately after the fall of the KR, but sometimes the killings were delayed by years. The likelihood of a revenge killing occurring was also dependent upon the coping strategies of the perpetrators – if they fled in time they could escape being killed, or if they relied upon power or politics. In order to illustrate the more specific dynamics of a revenge killing, we next examine the case of Sunh, who confessed to killing for revenge.

## **Confession to a Revenge Killing**

When cycles of revenge begin, and acts of vengeance are committed by victims against perpetrators, the line between victim and perpetrator blurs, as the

perpetrator then becomes a victim. One of my key informants, Sunh was a KR victim, a current and former soldier, and a former village chief. He provided several interviews, including one of the most informative narratives in this research study, as he and other villagers spoke openly about several revenge killings in Southwest-1. I had heard about the revenge killings from several other respondents in the village prior to meeting Sunh. For example, a former village chief (victim) spoke first about the perpetrator that had been killed, and then about Sunh, who had taken revenge:

That perpetrator had killed so many people! But in 1979, they killed him back. They told me that the KR who had killed my brother-in-law was killed in revenge because he had killed a lot of people. Oh he killed hundreds and hundreds and he was very, very cruel. I don't know exactly where he was killed, I just heard that they took revenge and they took him away. They don't like to talk about this too much, as they are afraid there will be revenge back against them so they keep the story secret (IV # 29).

In my first interview with Sunh, not intending to ask directly about the sensitive topic of the revenge killing, I asked him about the trials for the KR – but he answered by talking about a revenge killing: ‘I killed the bad people already; those others are no problem. Let the court try them. I killed the mobile group chief (*mei kang chelat*) because he was the one who beat us at that time. I killed only one because the others ran away (IV # 31). Later however, after several interviews, he spoke about other revenge killings he had done in the village of his wife, where he returned after the KR period. Because Sunh was in a position of power as the village chief after the KR period, who in the early 1980s also controlled the village militia, these acts of revenge against former KR could be seen as a form of state-sanctioned summary execution.<sup>11</sup>

In my fifth and final interview with Sunh, in a joint interview with a victim who had lost her entire family, Sunh first spoke about the revenge killing he had prevented,

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<sup>11</sup> As noted by Rigby, the confusion and lack of institutions in the aftermath of massive violence (such as that in the KR period), can allow for revenge killings, and even condone them: ‘In the absence of any due process, of course, people have no formal means of clearing the family name, no right of appeal, no recourse to law, and can be driven to seek their own vengeance’ (2001: 160).

and his current relationship with the accused perpetrator Tang, and then he began to speak about the revenge he had taken:

I first met [Tang] in 1980. When [Tang] transported sugar cane by ox cart, my brother took a machete and went to kill him. But I prevented him from killing [Tang], even though he had killed lots of people. At that time, [Tang] untied his cows and ran away. Because our friend had told my brother that [Tang] had killed his mother and caused his father to become crazy. I prevented my brother from taking revenge, because I thought that we should not take revenge ourselves. I thought to let someone else do it, as I didn't want my brother to kill him. But later I did it myself, not to [Tang], but to others. I killed A Den, A Neat, A Uon, A Phem: about five or six people who were chiefs of the district.<sup>12</sup> I killed them all. There were lots of people who I couldn't remember. We did it one by one. We arrested them and kept them in the school. There were three of us who worked together. This happened in 1980, because they had run away, but then they came back to the village. We didn't know where they ran to, but when they came back to the village the villagers told me. So we let [Tang] escape and then we arrested the others and put them in the school and then we killed them one by one. They did not admit their guilt, but we knew they were chiefs in the district so we arrested them (IV # 97).

A bit later in the conversation, we returned to the topic of the accused perpetrator Tang, and Sunh stated that he had not seen Tang for 20 years, since the time when he had saved him from being killed, even though they live less than a kilometre apart. But Sunh said he still felt anger towards him, implying he would still like to take revenge:

[Tang] saw me at that time in 1980 when I saved him. At seven in the morning, he took sugar cane from his house. At that time, my older brother carried a long machete in order to kill him but I was holding a gun and saw him so I prevented my brother from doing it. When I saw [Tang] yesterday, I did not recognize him because he is so old, but I could still recognize his face a bit. I had not seen him for almost 20 years. I still feel angry (*khoeng*) also right now but I am lazy to do anything against him (IV # 97).

In this next passage, I asked Sunh what his religion taught him about revenge. Although he stated that his religion does not allow revenge, when I asked how he felt about his past act of revenge, he answered that he was still angry about the acts of the perpetrator. I had expected him to express perhaps remorse, or at least acknowledge

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<sup>12</sup> The prefix 'A' in Khmer can indicate familiarity such as when referring to a close friend, or can be a derogatory prefix used as an insult, sometimes translated as 'despicable' as in this example.



that his acts of revenge went against his religious training, but he talked about the relief he felt from taking revenge:

My religion says we should not kill others. They teach us to do good, not to take revenge. And Islam also preaches like Buddhism, if we do good, we get good. If we do bad, we get bad. Nowadays, the Imam calls us for meetings in the mosque and tells us to live together (*ruop ruom*), to not fight, to be friends with all people: not only with Khmer but people in all nations. After I took revenge, I still felt angry, but now the country has laws so we must respect the laws; we can't do anything outside the law. We respect the religion, and the religion tells us to stop killing. . . But I feel a bit relieved because I took revenge already against the person who did bad things to me (IV # 32).

In contrast to these comments which indicated he was proud of the revenge he had taken, and that it had provided him some relief, Sunh also spoke about his mental health and acknowledged the internal toll the revenge killing had taken on him and his need to go to a traditional healer:

After I did the revenge killings, I was about to go crazy. When my father was alive he took me to meet a traditional healer (*Kru Khmer*). He said that when I killed many people, the spirit of the ghosts would come to live inside my body. So as a traditional healer he was able to release the evil from me. As I remember he didn't use medicine; he just touched my hands and used magical words, so he was a magical healer (*kru mon akum*). He just caught my hands and I was very scared. Now I am fully recovered. The healing took about one week (IV # 97).

Sunh spoke on the topic of reconciliation: 'Now we have all stopped being angry. Everything is finished. There is no grudge. In the past, I couldn't walk alone in this area and I had to carry a gun if I went out. But now I can go anywhere alone; I am not afraid. We don't ill-treat them and they don't ill-treat us. Even ten years ago I still had to carry a gun with me' (IV # 97). As also described in the last chapter, he, as did many others, stated he had reconciled, but he still spoke about 'them' and 'us', indicating the deep divisions that persist in his community.

Sunh also admitted that the families of the people he had killed for revenge had raised law suits against him, but that the district level authorities did not follow up on these complaints (at the time of the killings he was a village chief). Apparently, at least in his area, the authorities turned a blind eye to revenge killings, especially since they

lived close to a KR stronghold and the area was constantly being attacked through the 1980s until the mid-1990s. Sunh also presumed that these perpetrators were living in fear, as the balance of power had shifted to give the former victim more power than the perpetrator.

After I took revenge, I heard about their families, who are still living in that former KR village nearby. The families of those people are afraid; even though they made a complaint against me once. They asked me for compensation, but I didn't pay them. They once complained to the district office but later it was quiet; the district office didn't work on this. This was in 1981 or so, two years after the revenge killing (IV # 97).

I then asked how the families of the perpetrators who had been killed in revenge killings felt now, and a family member of Sunh replied: 'Their families don't hold a grudge because they know also that their brother was cruel when he was the village chief. They also don't dare to take any more revenge against us. The anger at that time was very hot' (IV # 32). This discussion of hot and cold is a common way to describe emotions, to which we turn in the next section on blood debts and hot anger.

## **Blood Debts, Hot Anger, and Revenge**

The concepts of 'blood debts', hot anger, and revenge are closely linked (Gottesman 2003: 37-38). During the KR period, the word 'blood' was used dramatically in two revolutionary songs: 'Glittering red blood blankets the earth, Sacrificial blood to liberate the people: . . . Seething with anger, let us move into the attack' (Locard 2004: 39 – 43).<sup>13</sup> In this research, some respondents brought up the topic of blood debts. For example, this commune councillor and KR victim suggested that revenge killings and blood debts were interchangeable terms:

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<sup>13</sup> 'The Red Flag of the Revolution' and the 'Dazzling Victory of 17 April!' (Locard 2004: 39-43). Hinton suggested that the KR's frequent use of the word 'blood' was a 'metaphoric call for revenge' (Hinton 2000: 34). Blood and blood debts are also another way Cambodians describe reparations or revenge – for example, if a car hits and kills a child, the community members may chase after the driver and kill him to pay the blood debt.

For me, the important idea is to be granted reparations from the criminals' top leaders. If we make them re-pay by blood, this will not work out. I have no intention of being paid back by blood or taking revenge any more. My hopes are economic stability and happiness, and that Cambodian people could live happily and they gradually be filled with prosperity, to make their living (IV # 100).

In another example, this former KR 'base' person and wife of a former KR village chief stated she had lost many family members during the KR regime. When asked about reparations for her relatives who had been killed, she answered in terms of blood: 'I do not know what to do because they have died already, and if we want the compensation by blood [blood debt or revenge], it would not be possible. So, they have died already, it is over' (IV # 54).

This UN/NGO worker spoke about the strong anger in the years after the KR fell, which gradually decreased through the mid-1980s. He had been a young boy living near the Thai-Cambodian border during the KR regime. He was later involved in the resistance movement and had fled to the Cambodian refugee camps in Thailand. Here he speaks about anger and hot revenge:

At the time of the liberation in 1979, through 1982, we were all full of anger and revenge inside the heart. I knew one person who took revenge. One KR group chief had beaten the victim Mr. Smei in my village often, who suffered greatly under the torture. In the Khmer resistance time, the perpetrator went to the refugee camp. Then the perpetrator was killed in a revenge killing there. In the resistance time there were many, many killings: lots of fighting and lots of revenge, murder and robbery. So, the action of the revenge killing was tolerated by all. In 1979, 1980, and 1981 it was still fresh. If anyone talked about the KR they became very emotional. Violence could happen very easily, leading to revenge, up until about 1985, when people began to think about a new life, and a new way. We started to have reconciliation, and we began to have a concept of solidarity and brotherhood. The revenge idea was less by 1985. And now, there is no more 'hot' revenge' (IV # 118).

This young village chief spoke about revenge in terms of 'hot blood', though in reference to others and not himself.

Of the people who took my parents away to be killed, some of them ran away and some of them are still living in this commune. I meet them normally and I don't get angry. The chief of [a neighbouring] village knew the perpetrator and he came to take revenge here in 1979 but later he was killed too. I think it was because of hot blood. He came to kill Ta Chit. For me, it was a long time ago so

I forgot already. I know who took my parents and I have suffering in my heart but I take the *dharmma* [Buddhist teachings] to put in my heart. I think that they did these things because somebody ordered them to do so (IV # 91).

Finally, some respondents were still full of anger, and had to actively look for ways to reduce that anger and consciously try to release their desire for revenge. This commune chief (victim) explained: 'Although I am full of anger, I can gradually reduce it after chatting with you both or with my friends. I sometimes walk around and see something good or that makes me happy so I can reduce my anger. It doesn't allow me to still hold the grudge forever' (IV # 100).<sup>14</sup>

In Cambodia, hot anger is used to describe situations of extreme anger, and is often linked with revenge as the respondents above have demonstrated. This hot anger, as well as revenge in general, can be decreased by various factors which are the subject of the next section.

## **Factors Influencing Revenge: To seek or not to seek. . .**

The amount and type of vengeance taken depends upon many factors, several of which were amongst the factors related to acceptance and community (which were discussed in the last two chapters), while some new factors were identified particular to revenge. In Chapter 5, factors affecting victim-perpetrator relations included: type and gravity of offense; motivation, fear, community population, frequency of contact, location and proximity; and poverty, age, and ignorance. In addition, the coping strategies used by the perpetrator were important as to whether they denied or rationalized their crimes, or on the other hand expressed remorse, respect, or apology. Additional factors were identified in Chapter 6 that affected victims' acceptance of perpetrators, including: education; relations before the KR period; trauma; behaviour of

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<sup>14</sup> Additional ways to reduce anger and promote healing are discussed in Chapter 8, on the processes of reconciliation.

perpetrators, culture; violence and the denial of conflict; hierarchy; and patronage. In this first sub-section I discuss particular factors influencing victims' decisions to take revenge

## **Particular Factors Influencing Victims' Decisions to Take Revenge**

We first turn to ways in which respondents brought up the issue of the rule of law when they were discussing revenge.

### **Rule of Law**

Several respondents spoke about the importance of the rule of law as a moderating force when victims consider acts of revenge. Some respondents stated they wished to take revenge, but were unable to do so because of current laws (implying if there were no laws, such as in the immediate aftermath of the KR period, they would have been tempted to take revenge). For example, this (victim) commune chief had just told us several stories about violence during the KR period and, when asked how he felt talking about the difficult past, he brought up the issue of rule of law and revenge:

Revenge is full in my brain, but it cannot be practiced because there are rules in our society, so we could not use our emotion to commit any crimes intentionally. If we commit revenge, we will be sentenced so that we cannot do anything. If revenge happened during periods of upheaval, just after the KR period, it could be put into practice. If we saw a person who was cruel to us, we could beat them. But now, we cannot do this. We are still full of anger, but nothing could be implemented and we could not kill them because our country has rules. So we could not (IV # 100).

Another commune chief reinforced this view, explaining that the rule of law allowed perpetrators to live more comfortably in society.

The perpetrators ran away in 1979 because they were afraid of people taking revenge against them. There were about four perpetrators here, but they were just lower level spies (*chhlop*). But now there is only one left who still stays here. He does not feel afraid because he knows that the policy of the government does not allow people to kill for revenge. We people and family

members were angry but we could not do anything because of the policy. They are still angry, but they must follow the law, and they are also waiting to see the trial (IV # 2).

Thus a reliance on the rule of law can increase survivors' comfort levels and can provide them with the feelings of security that are an important basis for reconciliation. Another important influence is that of relatives and friends.

## Influence of Relatives and Friends

Relatives, friends, and neighbours can influence whether or not acts of revenge will occur. For example, as noted in the section on confession above, Sunh recounted a story in which he prevented his brother from taking revenge. In a different conversation, Sunh stated that his brother's commander had also prevented his brother from taking revenge. In another example, two former KR cadres in Southwest-1 spoke almost boastfully about their actions to prevent other villagers from taking revenge against a known and serious perpetrator.<sup>15</sup> Some comments from respondents who prevented others from taking revenge were related to saving them from the sin of the bad deeds in their next lives.<sup>16</sup> The relationship between revenge and Buddhism is elaborated upon in the next section.

## Revenge and Buddhism

Some Cambodians have refrained from acts of revenge based on their religious beliefs.<sup>17</sup> In Buddhism, the belief in *karma* (action of cause and effect) reassures some victims that perpetrators will be punished (or will receive a [negative]

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<sup>15</sup> See references about preventing others from taking revenge, on pages 174-175.

<sup>16</sup> This situation of friends preventing others from taking revenge in order to save them from bad *karma* was also reported in the film 'Deacon of Death' (van den Berg and van de Put 2004).

<sup>17</sup> As noted previously, although Christian, Cham, and animist beliefs are also important in Cambodia, I have had to limit my discussion to Buddhist beliefs since 96 percent of the population in Cambodia is Buddhist.

effect from their past bad actions) in either this life or a later life – thus freeing some of them from feelings of revenge in this life.<sup>18</sup>

Buddhist beliefs also encourage Cambodians not to take revenge, as it leads to never-ending cycles of revenge and bad *karma*. This UN/NGO worker observed:

There was a revenge killing there by Smei against that perpetrator. Smei had been a good person before; he dared not even to kill a chicken. He is now back in the village, but now he is paralyzed, he had a stroke and he is nearly 50. Maybe because he committed this sin, this is his *karma*? But no one blamed him, that was the war (IV # 118).

Several respondents spoke of the laws of *karma* as a sort of revenge, in that people who had done bad deeds during the KR period had already died. For example, this UN/NGO worker observed:

I do not know about all those perpetrators, maybe the gods killed them already. [Laughing] Since the KR time, the people who tried to kill me, I don't know maybe I have some spirit thing in me or something, but those who did bad things to me, they have all died. Such as the chief of my group who beat me with a stick, people told me she died. And the teacher who was the big boss of my other second team who had tied me up, she has also died, after the KR period. All the people who treated me very badly, they died already, all of them! (IV # 40)

This young Buddhist monk in Southwest-2 (where several accused perpetrators lived) attributed the lack of revenge in his community to the population's commitment to Buddhism, in that they feared problems in the next life if they took revenge. The monk had heard about the KR period from his parents and other elders and had known the accused perpetrator as they had both lived in the same Buddhist temple:

Yes this village has reconciled since the war. Before [the accused perpetrator] was an *Achar* [Buddhist layman] here. He killed many people. In 1979 people

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<sup>18</sup> However, this belief in *karma* can in itself be a form of revenge, and does not necessarily bring relief or calm; the white, hot anger of revenge can still be present, as in this quote from a Cambodian-American author: 'Pol Pot and other dead Khmer Rouge are now suffering severely in burning hell for every single Khmer life they had destroyed during their reign of terror. They will be there for millions of lifetimes yet to come, one lifetime for every life they took. I felt avenged knowing this simple fact' (Yimsuit 2000: 46).

had a lot of anger against him, and they went to kill him but he ran away. Now they see if they take revenge, if they see killing, this will continue forever. Now we can do ceremonies together, speak, eat rice, and smile at each other, it means they reconciled (*phsah phsaa*). *Achar* Khun was forced to kill others. He had gone to live in another province, but his home village is near here. When he came back from here in 1980 to do a ceremony they tried to ambush him to kill him for revenge because they were very angry, but they failed. Later on, up until he died last year, he could come freely and not be afraid they would want to kill him because they stopped taking revenge, because they had been educated about the *dhamma*. They listen to the radio show by Venerable But Sovang so they understand about the *dhamma*. Their parents who are Buddhists tell them do not take revenge because it will lead to a bad fate for them now or in the next life. So they stopped; and they forgave (*ak hao se kam*) him (IV # 24).

The Buddhist belief in compassion was also raised by some respondents. An *Achar* (Buddhist layman) said that he no longer held a grudge against former KR perpetrators and even prays for them: 'We don't hold a grudge. I also dedicate some offering to them because many of them died also. I prayed for them to have a good next life and not to do bad things like they did in this life' (IV # 10). This elderly woman victim stated: 'I think that because both I and [accused perpetrator] are Khmer, the Buddha said that people should not take revenge. Moreover, everything happened a long time ago. Every day, I just listen to the *dhamma* so I could finish everything in my life. If we killed him, how about his children; what do they eat? So it is better not to kill, but we just bring the peace to finish everything' (IV # 108).

As the above respondent was expressing compassion for the perpetrator's family if someone were to take revenge upon him, she also mentioned that the influence of time can also reduce the chance of revenge, which is discussed in the next sub-section.

## Time

As noted in several quotes in this chapter above, the passage of time can decrease feelings of revenge. In previous chapters, time was also highlighted as an



important factor in reconciliation.<sup>19</sup> A commune chief agreed that time reduced grudges: 'The longer years have passed, the more the grudge is removed! So nowadays we do not think much about it. It is gradually removed' (IV # 86). Although several respondents reported that very cruel perpetrators were either killed immediately after the KR fell, or were killed when they returned to their home villages, some respondents reported cases when perpetrators were spared when they returned a few years later, as in this incident reported by a UN/NGO worker:

There was one famous killer in the village, who used to be an *Achar* and who was very well respected but who then became a killer. At the end of the KR regime, when there were just a few days after the Vietnamese invasion, there were about 60 women whose husbands were killed by him or under his orders, they were chasing him and they killed him. They surrounded him while he tried to run away to the rice field to go home. Two of the widows, one with a big knife climbed up. He was killed instantly by 60 women, like an upsurge of anger. But after that, another famous guy was not killed, he was much more famous than the one who was killed, and he now is the commune council leader. Soon after the Vietnamese came in, people in the whole village were searching for him. He was the chief of collective (*mei sahakar*) and was a very bad man. But four years later he came home and he lived very peacefully. Now he has become a commune council leader! (IV # 125)

The passage of time also serves to heal some types of mental health distress (van de Put and Eisenbruch 2002: 151-152); trauma is the subject of the next section.

## Trauma

In a study on the impact of cognitive behaviour therapy on 60 Cambodian clients of counselling, the majority of whom had PTSD symptoms, Lo found that as PTSD symptoms decreased, so did the desire for revenge<sup>20</sup> (2005: 14). Similarly, in a nationwide survey of 1,000 randomly selected Cambodians, Sonis et al. found that respondents older than 35 years of age, who had higher desire for revenge, were more

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<sup>19</sup> See page 55. Time was found to be an important factor in the reduction of anger and revenge by Etcheson in his interviews of rural Cambodians (Etcheson 2005b: 214-5).

<sup>20</sup> Lo found however that there was no change found in the degree of mistrust (Lo 2005: 14).

likely to have PTSD than those with a lower desire for revenge (2009: 534).<sup>21</sup> In their study of a group of 130 Cambodians, Field and Chhim found revenge was positively related to PTSD symptoms (2008: 363-4).<sup>22</sup> In addition they found that feelings of revenge were also related to the following factors: less social support during the KR regime; lower educational levels and occupational status; and higher disclosure (speaking about the past). However the factors of trauma exposure and current social support were found not to be related to a desire for revenge (Field and Chhim 2008: 362-6). A lower desire for revenge was found amongst those who were able to find some positive benefit or learning from the past violent events, and a large percentage (72 percent) of the study group were able to find such benefit from the KR period (Field and Chhim 2008: 364).

Although I did not specifically study in isolation these two variables (revenge and trauma), and because my study was qualitative, I cannot draw definitive conclusions on this topic. However anecdotally, amongst the five victim respondents who showed symptoms of mental health disorder or PTSD (they ruminated on narratives of KR suffering, and spoke about anxiety and nightmares) all of them also had a strong desire for revenge – if not through a revenge killing, then by strong interest in punishment through the trials.<sup>23</sup> Field and Chhim suggested that victims with a continued desire for disclosure (talking about the past trauma of mass violence) had a greater desire for revenge: this desire could be due to a failure to gain closure of the events (2008: 368). Strong desires for revenge were linked also to how cruel the perpetrator was perceived to have been, as victims assessed the type and gravity of

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<sup>21</sup> This finding only applied when using a bivariate model; differences found in a multivariate model were not found to be statistically significant (Sonis et al. 2009: 534).

<sup>22</sup> But the relationship between PTSD and revenge occurred only when comparing the two variables alone.

<sup>23</sup> Respondents # 6, 59, 95, 97, and 101

the offense which I will discuss next in the context of factors affecting victim-perpetrator relations.

## **Factors Affecting Victim-Perpetrator Relations and Revenge**

This sub-section reviews factors affecting victim-perpetrator relations that were brought up in Chapters 5 and 6 – but here with an emphasis on how they relate to revenge. These factors include: the type and gravity of the offense; motivation of the perpetrator; community population, and proximity (of victims and perpetrators).

### **Type and Gravity of Offense**

As explained in the last chapter and illustrated in the victim decision-making tree<sup>24</sup>, the more cruel perpetrators were, the more likely victims were to seek revenge against them. If perpetrators were not perceived to be cruel (i.e., their offenses were seen as less grave or there were other mitigating factors), the perpetrators were usually allowed to live freely in the community. These two government officials (1 and 2) were talking about the period immediately after the KR were overthrown in 1978 in this passage:

1: We arrested some of the [KR] spies, village chiefs, and chiefs of the groups because we were afraid that people would take revenge. We took them to educate them. We did not keep them for a specific period and sometimes we sent them to live far away from the place they lived during the KR regime. We were afraid the relatives of the victims would take revenge against them.

2: But sometimes people took revenge secretly during the disorder right after the KR regime. For example if I was in this cooperative and the chief of this cooperative was cruel, killed people, or forced them to work too hard, then the people got angry and took revenge right after the 1979 liberation. However, the policy of the government did not allow the people to take revenge.

2: If the chief of the group was not cruel, the people did not take revenge, as the people loved him too. Some good chiefs of groups are living now but some bad ones are not living here. The bad ones mostly are living far away in other places such as a third country. They could not live in their villages so they ran to the Thai border and then the UN took them to a third country. Some of them now dare to come home to visit, because now no one can touch them. The people respect the law (IV # 123).

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<sup>24</sup> See figure 6.2. 'Victim Decision-Making Tree' on page 151.

Another reason perpetrators might be spared was if victims could empathize with the motivations of the perpetrators.

## Motivation

As noted in Chapter 5, the motivation of the perpetrators as perceived by victims was an important factor in shaping victim-perpetrator relations: it was also a key indicator of whether or not the victim would take revenge. If perpetrators were seen to be acting on orders from above rather than pursuing their own preferences, then victims were more likely to regulate their desire for revenge. For example, this victim commune chief noted that the accused perpetrator (Pel) was following orders:

[Pel] was a spy of the commune (*chhlop khum*). He guided people to be arrested, and also arrested them himself. But to arrest this one or that one was not his plan: those were the plans of the village chiefs and commune chiefs who ordered him. Because he was a spy, he was the one who took the orders. It was difficult to say who did the killing though (IV # 86).

The concept of the heart is very important for Cambodians and in one interview a monk observed that a perpetrator was allowed to go free because he had not killed of his own volition, or 'with his heart': 'After the Vietnamese came in during the PRK, the people took revenge against those perpetrators who had killed their parents. *Achar* Khun was lucky because he did the killing without heart, he was forced to do it, so they did not kill him' (IV # 24).

Some respondents were able to allow for other extenuating circumstances, such as if the person had not killed, they would have been killed themselves. In one example, this respondent who lived in the native village of a senior KR leader understood that the leader's family suffered also: 'I don't hold a grudge because they had some family members die also' (IV # 119). This understanding of the motivation of the perpetrators allowed some Cambodians to release their desire for revenge and let go of grudges.

## Community Population and Proximity

Other factors affecting victim-perpetrator relations, and hence the incidence of revenge, included the demography of the local community, particularly the percentage of victims versus perpetrators living in the community and the physical proximity between victim and perpetrator.<sup>25</sup> A commune chief in Southwest-2 observed that the perpetrator's direct neighbours were all 'base' people and thus had less interest in vengeance (because they had suffered less than the 'new' people), while the villages of victims or 'new people' were more distant so had less contact with the accused perpetrator: '[Pel's] relationships in his village are normal, because in his village the people were not ill-treated. The communists considered the poor people in his village to be the peasant class ['base' people] who supported the KR party' (IV # 86).

In a similar example in Southwest-2, a former KR cadre observed that an accused perpetrator who he had saved from being killed in the post-KR period remained relatively safe from revenge attacks because he lived in a village of primarily 'base' people against whom he had not committed crimes. His victims were all in the neighbouring village: 'The police knew that he had done bad things, but now they feel relieved and they don't care. He killed only 17 April people ['new' people] at that time but he did not kill the 'base' people so they did not get angry with him' (IV # 93).

In conclusion, this section has reviewed factors influencing victims' decisions as to whether or not to take revenge. A large variety of factors are involved, including some that are weighed in the heat of the moment, and some that change with reflection. This process of weighing factors happens unconsciously and is all part of the process of reconciliation. The next section deals with the relationship between reconciliation and revenge.

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<sup>25</sup> See page 120-121 in Chapter 5.

## Reconciliation and Revenge

This thesis has presented a model of reconciliation which can be applied to communities in conflict, as they move towards peace. The model shows transition from independence to interdependence, from non-acceptance to full acceptance, and from revenge to reconciliation. This section reviews findings pertinent to the relationship between revenge and reconciliation. Etcheson suggested that revenge killings were used as a *means* of reconciliation or restoring social harmony in the early years after the KR fell:

. . . [C]ertain instances of extrajudicial execution played a key role in re-establishing social harmony in the immediate aftermath of the Khmer Rouge regime. In 1979 and 1980, the Vietnamese military carried out summary executions of Khmer Rouge cadre judged to be 'especially cruel' by villagers. This reassured many Cambodians that the abuses of the recent past would not be repeated, helping to consolidate one of the key prerequisites for reconciliation, a sense of physical security (2003: 9).

I concur with Etcheson that revenge killings in that tumultuous post-KR period appeared to offer some relief to the traumatized population that had lived under conditions of extreme hardship and cruelty. Key informant Sunh confessed to the revenge killing, stating that he felt relieved afterwards (see page 180). As the entire community seemed satisfied and even complicit in this self-help justice through summary execution, it supports the view that some sort of justice is necessary for deep reconciliation.

Although many respondents stated that the time had passed for revenge, and they were no longer as angry as before, one respondent spoke of *reaching out* towards a former perpetrator – which can be described as an act of reconciliation and even forgiveness (Hartwell 1999: 3). The elderly victim recounted how he spoke directly with the perpetrator about the past, and about the possibility of revenge.<sup>26</sup> He also brought up several other factors discussed in this chapter and the last: (1) the

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<sup>26</sup> See page 194 for the interview (IV # 108).

victim excused the perpetrator because he was under orders (motivation), (2) the gravity of the offense was not severe (he was less cruel), (3) the perpetrator confessed, (4) the victim felt that the perpetrator was now fearful of the victim (which implies some acknowledgement of the crime), and (5) the perpetrator showed respect and remorse by buying a gift for the victim:

The perpetrator had returned to his home village but did not dare to meet anybody because he was so afraid. But accidentally he met me and I invited him to eat rice at my house because I thought . . . he had nowhere to eat. I told him not to fear me because I had no time to take revenge, and because we were both Khmer people. Moreover, I bought wine for him to drink in order to make him not be afraid because he just came to find his children . . . at first he did not dare to drink. I told him not to fear; please drink because I did not want to take revenge (*sang soek*). It was too late to take revenge because you are Khmer and I am also. So he lifted his hands to salute and thanked me. I said that he did not need to thank me, because it was just my greeting to him and even if I had wanted to kill him before, now it was too late to kill. He wished me to have good luck and he would come to visit me next time. He told me that he would come again. . . He came in 1999 and in 2001 from a distant province. He sent me one *tao* [15 kilogram measure] and a half of rice, because I was honest with him. We did not feel anger against him because he confessed (*sara'pheap*) and explained that they had ordered him to do those things. It was not his wish. He admitted the things that he did; he had been a soldier in the KR period, but his job was the chief who controlled the workers in the rice mill hall, though there were other persons who were higher than him. He was not so cruel; the one who was very cruel was his chief (IV # 108).

In conclusion, this last quote incorporates many of the factors influencing the decision-making process of victims as they are met with perpetrators in their communities.

To summarize the other findings in this chapter, I found that most respondents reported incidents of revenge killings that they had seen directly or heard of from others. In the communities of study, revenge in the immediate aftermath of the KR period was reported to be widespread and frequent. Respondents reported that most perpetrators who were killed were crueller than other KR, or were responsible for killing many people. When former KR were seen as trying to help the community or the victims during the KR regime, they were often spared and sometimes welcomed back

to the community.<sup>27</sup> Most of the killings took place immediately after the KR period (1979-1981) though some were delayed, as grudges were held for a few years until the mid-1980s – there were no reports of revenge thereafter. Some former KR perpetrators who were sent away to prison, or who ran away to the Thai-Cambodian border, were killed when they came back. In other cases, KR perpetrators were saved from revenge killings by their own friends or families, or by friends or families of those contemplating revenge. In addition I heard no reports where revenge extended to family members or their networks of friends and colleagues as had happened during the KR regime.<sup>28</sup> Many former KR perpetrators live peacefully (if not without fear) in Cambodian communities today. The next chapter discusses the processes upon which those perpetrators and their victims have relied as they progressed from the period of mass violence to coexistence today.

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<sup>27</sup> In societies recovering from mass violence, there is a great focus on forgiveness and reconciliation, but perhaps more important is the ability to refrain from revenge. In situations of recovery from mass violence, a shallow coexistence without revenge is the minimum standard needed for society to function and, in the short term, may indeed be the best that can be hoped for. As noted by Stovel: 'For the purposes of national peacebuilding, there is no convincing reason why the victim needs to reconcile with, or even forgive, the perpetrator. The victim should be the one to decide whether forgiving or reconciling with the perpetrator is beneficial for her emotional or spiritual health. However, in the interests of peace, the victim does need to agree to not take revenge' (Stovel 2003: 11).

<sup>28</sup> Vengeance can be seen as a continuum of varying degree, from no vengeance or no response (turn the other cheek), an equal response (an eye for an eye), or a greater response. In Cambodia, Hinton describes this greater response as 'disproportionate revenge' which lies in contrast to notions of Western law and justice, and of Buddhist views on non-violence (2005: 28-9). Although the KR functioned under the premise of disproportionate revenge as they pulled up all the 'roots of the weeds', exterminating entire family lines, the revenge spoken about by respondents in this study was not disproportionate. Locard also disputes the concept of disproportionate revenge in today's society: 'Do we see 'disproportionate revenge' today when farmers are deprived of their tiny land or exploited by monopolistic tradesmen or rapacious officials?' (2005: 6).



## CHAPTER 8 – Processes of Reconciliation

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When societies are left in a non-reconciled, post-mass-violence limbo, the population may remain traumatized and live in misery. Cycles of revenge can return again and again. In order to avoid the continuing trauma or cycles of revenge, victims and perpetrators must both be involved in processes which lead towards reconciliation and healing of society. However the initial steps or actions of these processes may differ: while most involve both victims and perpetrators, some processes are acts undertaken by perpetrators (apology, acknowledgement, confession); while forgiveness and forgetting can be initiated by victims rather than perpetrators. The purpose of this chapter is to review seven different processes of reconciliation, and how Cambodians have incorporated various aspects of these processes on their journey towards reconciliation.<sup>1</sup>

In the last chapter the concept of revenge, the degrees of revenge, and the factors that affect it were discussed. We now turn to the opposite of revenge, to respondents' views about processes of reconciliation. Seven processes are analysed: (1) build relationship, trust, and interdependence; (2) re-humanize, and develop compassion and empathy; and (3) heal hearts and minds; (4) acknowledge, confess and show remorse; (5) apologize; (6) forgive; and (7) forget.

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the processes can be facilitated by third parties, but in this thesis I have focused on processes that originate within the individual (victim or perpetrator). Although the terminology varies, there are a variety of other activities which could be termed processes or approaches to reconciliation. These include ceremonies, rituals, memorials, reparations, public ceremonial and symbolic acts, contact, projects, trials, and education. Although these are also extremely important processes of reconciliation, space limitations do not allow further discussion.

# 1. Build Relationship, Trust, and Interdependence

Some of the first steps of building relationship and trust are reducing anger and being able to envision a future of peace. In one example in Northwest-4, communities joined together to improve security. A schoolteacher living in a contested border region described the steps between the three groups living in his area (Para, KR, and government):<sup>2</sup>

The people could not stop their anger immediately after the war. Whenever they met, they always 'growled' (*krahoem*) at each other. Sometimes, when they met, they fought each other for a few minutes; they did not stop being angry immediately. I did not know how the leaders were, but as for their soldiers, they would stop fighting immediately if their leader ordered them to stop. However, even when they stopped, they would still have small fights for a few weeks, or three or four months. They did not get along with each other (*trovrov knea*) immediately. For most of them, it was about one or two months until the lower-level soldiers could get along with each other. Nothing special happened during those two months, but they thought about it, and knew that even if they took revenge, they would be angrier and this anger would be spread out. Because of that, they calmed down and they could get along with each other. Moreover, people were happy because the villages could contact each other, and they did not worry so much about thieves because they could communicate with other villages. Before that, I could not go anywhere because the thieves would take the motorcycles along the road. For a long time afterwards, people observed that it was useless to be angry anymore so all the people calmed their anger down (*ram ngoap*). Eventually, they could even marry between the groups (IV# 104 NT).

As anger is gradually reduced, as described by the above respondent, other elements of relationship can be addressed, such as increasing tolerance and reducing discrimination.

## Tolerance and Discrimination

The process of developing tolerance and decreasing discrimination is part of the process of building relationship. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the KR and 'base' people practiced extreme discrimination against 'new' people during the KR regime, and Chapter 6 reviewed how in Cambodia today the tables have turned, and former

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<sup>2</sup> 'Para' refers to the non-communist soldiers who were fighting in the coalition with the KR from the Thai-Cambodian border camps, against the government forces in the 1980s and 1990s.

KR and 'base' people report a significant amount of discrimination against them (in return). However, this situation appears to be gradually decreasing, as some respondents reported lower levels of discrimination than initially. A schoolteacher living in a contested war-torn area with many different groups living side-by-side noted: 'For example, the lower leaders of the KR such as the chief of sub-groups or chief of groups used to be violent at that time, but now the people don't discriminate (*prakan*) against each other; they love each other as brothers and sisters' (IV # 107).

As tolerance for the 'other' increases, people can gradually begin to communicate even after years of separation due to conflict.

## Communication and Humour

Communicating and listening are important parts of building relationships. This expatriate UN/NGO worker spoke about how to build peace in Cambodia, and the importance of communication and spirituality:

There is a great need [for reconciliation], but how to work on this? That was Maha [Ghosananda]'s gift to us. He needed organization to do the *Dhammayietra* [peace walk] — if there were no organizers there would not have been a walk. We would be worrying about how to organize, how many people do you need to have a movement, etc. One donor asked us this question, and Maha answered — 'We need only one!'. One person can affect the spirit of many. Anyone can touch others. But, you do need a language in which to communicate. Every part of the population has a different language. But how to touch the spirit of the population. If you reach just one person, then that person can translate into their group's language. For example, a reflection of the history of the suffering is an important lesson for Cambodian spirituality and healing, as in Maha's peace prayer (IV # 39).

Humour can be a useful tool in early stages of reconciliation: several respondents spoke about the need for humour as a means of building relationship in the early stages. For example an expatriate UN/NGO staff person recounted a conversation between former KR and government officials when they first met after the decades of war:

Yes, there were difficulties but generally it [the initial meeting between KR and government] was very constructive and took on its own momentum and I have

really, really funny stories . . . one of the Khmer Rouge guys said to a new guy from the Department of Education ‘where do you live again?’ And he explained where his house was, and the KR guy explained ‘Huh. This may be kind of rude but are you the guy that bombed my house many, many times?’ ‘Yeah, yeah . . . that was me.’ And they started laughing and he said ‘I forgive you.’ But you know, a number of examples of those sort of things—that once people started talking and they could see each other in a new role, they would share that sort of experience (IV # 27).

Another expatriate UN/NGO staff person who had been involved in an incident of violence perpetrated by some former KR soldiers spoke of his own personal experience using humour: ‘I think both sides were victims at one level . . . Because he was a victim of the whole situation, he was just a soldier. Here was someone I had been in a violent situation with, and he was the perpetrator of that violence. But what do you say? You laugh and you joke’ (IV # 39).

As tolerance increases, and communication begins (sometimes through humour), other aspects of the process of building relationship may come into play, such as developing regard, recognition, and respect, the topic of the next sub-section.

## Regard, Recognition, and Respect

The attitudes of regard, recognition, and respect (see Chapter 3 pages 62-63) are important factors that can develop during a process of reconciliation. The degrees to which these attitudes are achieved are important indicators of a deepening reconciliation process. Regard and recognition are inherent in the initial process of building relationship, while respect is a deeper, more multi-faceted attitude, related to fundamental human rights. Though only one of my respondents spoke about respecting their former enemies, a government official when asked about reconciliation related a story about reconciliation within his family, where mutual regard and recognition of the views of the two parties (he and his grandfather) were developed to achieve a condition of respect:

Reconciliation is (*kar bangruop bangruom*). For example, I tried to be close to my grandfather, but he said that you are not good children because you ask me

so many questions. Before he was in the court, very close to the King, but during the election 1955, there was a split amongst our family members and I tried to ask him about this. Finally when he got sick, we were able to talk about it, and he realized we had different thinking, but he accepted that and we could share our views. Also for example about the holiday on 7 January<sup>3</sup> there were different ideas of some people, some thought the Vietnamese had invaded, and you know I am not pro-Vietnam, but if the Vietnamese had not come, would we Khmer even exist now? So we have to be realistic and see different sides. Before there was fighting, and we could not talk but if you move the people together at one table, we can start to understand each other. When there are different interpretations, if we move from the differences that are far from each other, and move to sit close by, we can understand each other and share views (IV # 132).

As the initial steps of reducing anger, increasing communication, and developing regard and respect are achieved, an important aspect of these initial steps is underpinned by the process of building trust.

## Trust

As discussed in Chapter 2, the structure and rules of society during the KR regime were designed to break down traditional ties between family members and friends, and trust was broken (Luco 2002: 72; Zucker forthcoming: 1). The element of trust is a significant factor in reconciliation and rebuilding community, which was mentioned frequently in the interviews. One way to build trust was reported by this UN/NGO worker:

Until they believed us, we had to eat rice and do everything with them. If they invited us to their child's wedding, we had to go, if they persuaded us to drink, we had to drink. Even if they went to hunt wild animals, we had to go – only if they tried to persuade us to kill people, we could not go. This could be considered politics, but our NGO considered it as our policy or technique. We avoided any accusations by not taking either side: when we went to the Para region, we would not downgrade the KR, and when we went to the KR region, we would not downgrade the Para. We did this because we did not want both sides to continue fighting each other anymore (IV # 103).

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<sup>3</sup> A Cambodian national holiday on 7 January marks the end of the KR regime, when Vietnam and some early defectors from the KR regime swept into the country from Vietnam while the KR leadership fled to Thailand. Whether the Vietnamese invaded (the pro-non-Communist resistance version) or saved (the pro-Vietnamese version) Cambodia remains contested.

Building trust can be a long and delicate process, especially in post-conflict countries. An expatriate UN/NGO staff person working on relationship and trust-building between young adults spoke about the time and experience needed to build trust: 'It is true that after Pol Pot, trust had been broken. So how do communities build trust after such a nightmare? Trust is built from experience. People say "I don't trust you yet, because I don't know you. It takes time. I need to see that I can trust them". Of course you need a minimum of trust or you cannot do anything with them' (IV # 71).

Trust may also be an issue at various levels, at the individual, community, and national levels, and can take place at different rates at different levels. Several respondents spoke about trusting internationals more than their fellow Cambodians. Many respondents were especially distrustful of the Cambodian government (which includes former KR) to carry out fair trials of former KR leaders through the ECCC. This respondent valued the justice he felt the ECCC would bring to him, which he could trust as a result of international involvement, as part of his process of reconciliation and healing:

I am not hoping for 100 percent success of the ECCC, but I am hoping for just some parts only. If Khmer people sentence Khmer people, I would not trust them because the Khmer Rouge leaders are also Khmer people. Nowadays in the government, there are lots of Khmer Rouge leaders so the Khmer judges will not find justice for the victims and prisoners. If there are rules...when the Internationals come, I think they will pay attention for Khmer's case (IV # 59).

The next component of this process of building relationship in reconciliation is to build interdependence, one of the most complex and difficult steps.

## Interdependence

One way to build interdependence is by reinforcing a common identity. The threat the KR regime brought to the Cambodian national identity was noted by many respondents in this study. They and other Cambodians over the years have said to me 'We want to know why Khmer killed Khmer'. As victims were in the process of coming

to terms with perpetrators, several mentioned reconciliation through common identity and interdependence through words such as these: 'I told him not to fear me because I had no time to take the revenge because we were both Khmer people' (IV # 108).<sup>4</sup> Although there are many forms of interdependence (such as bilateral trading, lending and borrowing money, sharing and exchanging food), none of these were reported by respondents. Interdependence is one of the later, more complex and more difficult steps of the process of building relationship in reconciliation. As interdependence is developed, people recognize that they need each other to survive and to flourish in community, and have less chance then to return to a state of conflict.

## Working Together

Relationships can be developed when former adversaries work together cooperatively. A UN/NGO staff person who had assisted former KR and government officials to set up development programs in the early years of KR reintegration in the 1990s remarked upon the process of building trust through initial contact on technical issues between former enemies:

It was this amazing two-way learning thing. All of a sudden they were starting to understand—but through the eyes of service provision—they were starting to understand their own history and develop relationships, but through education or agriculture or whatever the service was. Through those eyes they started to talk about technical things. So . . . how many teachers do you need to teach five thousand kids? And what is the curriculum going to be? So we did things like identify teachers and bring them to [the city] for crash courses in training and then the [city] teachers would go up there and help them set up a mentor scheme (IV # 27).

A UN/NGO worker described reconciliation in these terms: 'Well, It is unity (*ruop ruom*) or forgiveness (*kar at tos*)—not to mention what happened in the past or to get revenge (*sangsoek*), nor to break up our friendship. It means to assist people to work cooperatively' (IV # 111). As relationships (even though in some case shallow ones) are key to the functioning of rural Cambodia, most Cambodians recognize and

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<sup>4</sup> See full quote from IV # 108 in Chapter 7 on Revenge on page 194.

value the restoration of relationships that have been damaged by the war, or the creation of new relationships in a new society. Relationships can exist in all stages of reconciliation (surface, shallow, moderate, and deep) though the depth and complexity varies. However, re-humanization of the 'other' and the development of empathy are processes that are only encountered in deeper stages of reconciliation.

## **2. Re-humanization, Compassion, and Empathy**

Re-humanization, and the development of compassion and empathy, are processes that are linked and overlapping. Amongst respondents in this study there were some expressions of compassion and empathy of victims towards perpetrators, but none of perpetrators towards victims. Conditions of deep mutual empathy had not been reached. Re-humanization seems to have taken place in the subconscious of Cambodians: and certainly not fully. Many respondents spoke about the KR regime's many methods of dehumanizing their victims, and though this still bothered them, they seemed to feel more human today and were able to proceed with their lives. The embodiment of re-humanization occurs through mutual understanding, and the development of mutual respect, compassion, and empathy.

Expressions of understanding, compassion, and empathy were discussed in Chapter 5 on victim-perpetrator relations. Victims expressed their understanding that perpetrators were forced to carry out crimes in order to survive. They were able to see the perpetrators were ignorant or uneducated – these are important first steps of developing compassion and for both victim and perpetrator to feel human again.<sup>5</sup> However, amongst the accused perpetrators whom I interviewed, and the former KR bystanders, there were almost no expressions of compassion or empathy towards the KR regime's victims. Several former KR cadres or members did express regret that the

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<sup>5</sup> Understanding the influences leading perpetrators to their actions may open them to reconciliation (Staub et al. 2005: 328). Mutual understanding also leads to the building of trust and re-humanization (Hicks 2008: 12-13).



regime had happened, and their lives were negatively affected and their economic development delayed, but there was little sign of them expressing sorrow for the suffering of the victims.

The absence of statements of compassion by perpetrators about their victims was probably at least partly due to the limited number of accused perpetrators I interviewed, but this lack of compassion of perpetrators for victims has also been noted in the press about several notable accused perpetrators. Although some of Duch's (S-21 prison chief) comments refer to an understanding of the plight of his former prisoners, and some of the prison guards expressed remorse for their actions, in rural Cambodia there have been few reports of empathy of perpetrators towards victims. Another important reason for the absence of expressions of empathy by perpetrators towards victims is related to the Cambodian cultural tendency to avoid the loss of face, and thus not to admit wrong-doing. Once perpetrators acknowledge their victims have suffered, they are then on the slippery slope of acknowledging and confessing.

Compassion is an important component of the Buddhist religion.<sup>6</sup> The importance of compassion is included in the definition of reconciliation provided by an

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<sup>6</sup> The following quotes by the senior 'peace' monk Maha Ghosananda (who is well known in Cambodia), in his book *Step by Step* provide a backdrop to Cambodians' views of reconciliation, related to compassion and loving kindness: 'The suffering of Cambodia has been deep. From this suffering comes Great Compassion. Great Compassion makes a Peaceful Heart. . . .' (Ghosananda 1992: 28); 'The balance of wisdom and compassion is called the middle path . . . Wisdom and compassion must walk together' (Ghosananda 1992: 34-5); 'Peacemaking requires compassion. It requires the skill of listening' (Ghosananda 1992: 51); 'There are no boundaries to loving kindness. The Dharma is founded in loving kindness. The Buddha saw the whole world with compassion' (Ghosananda 1992: 55); 'Loving kindness also means friendliness. With loving kindness, all enmity is transformed. Our enemies will no longer hate us and, eventually, they will return our loving kindness to us, as friends' (57); 'Hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred is only appeased by love.' (67);

I do not question that loving one's oppressors—Cambodians loving the Khmer Rouge—may be the most difficult attitude to achieve. But it is a law of the universe that retaliation, hatred, and revenge only continue the cycle and never stop it. Reconciliation does not mean that we surrender rights and conditions, but rather that we see ourselves in the opponent—for what is the opponent but a being in ignorance, and we ourselves are also ignorant of many things. Therefore, only loving kindness and right mindfulness can free us (69).

accused perpetrator who is now a schoolteacher (the meanings of the words for compassion (*karuna*) and tolerance (*khantei*) are similar): 'I think that it means that we negotiate with each other and we are not angry with each other anymore. Totally, we reconcile (*phsah phsaa*) in our heart and mind. We do not negotiate . . . using weapons, but we kill the anger of ourselves by developing tolerance (*khantei*) for each other' (IV # 106).<sup>7</sup>

The 'heart' is often used as a metaphor for compassion and understanding in Cambodia, which can be observed through peoples' actions. A UN/NGO worker living in a rural war-stricken area explained how compassion and understanding are developed through listening and attention, another way of paying respect:

To know whether people have reconciled, firstly, we needed to look at their activities, for example, I am very happy to be interviewed by you Laura, but really, my heart is at my rice mill. Even though I acted here, but my heart is there as you just saw a moments ago, as I had asked my workers why they did not go to the machine room. Therefore, Laura might see my activity, and you thought that you might be troubling me, but for me, I thought that Laura came from a very distant place so I could not trouble you so take time to listen to you and moreover, we had known each other before, is it right Laura? Secondly, we could not reconcile the heart of the people, for example, I had asked them to build the road, then they went to build it, but some just went and talked with each other and some were building the road so we could know that they did not like to join with us. These were the activities in their heart. They went to join in the meeting, but they did not listen to us. We need to look at all the activities of reconciliation (*phsah phsaa knea*) even if we sat on one place; we needed to consider their activities all the time (IV # 103).

Although empathy is an important component of reconciliation, amongst respondents in this study few had recognized it, especially perpetrators.<sup>8</sup> I propose that this lack of empathy supports my finding that Cambodians are in states of

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<sup>7</sup> The section below on healing of hearts and minds also includes several references to compassion, as the heart is the receptacle for compassion in Cambodian Buddhism.

<sup>8</sup> As described in Chapter 3, the process of reconciliation includes a process of gaining self-confidence, acknowledging humanity in the 'other' and distinguishing between a person, and their actions (Huyse 2003: 20). In a process of developing empathy it is important for conflicting parties to learn to see 'the other' in a new light (Schreiter 1992: 52-3). 'Empathy comes with the victims' willingness to listen to the reasons for the hatred of those who caused their pain and with the offenders' understanding of the anger and bitterness of those who suffered. . . (Huyse 2003: 21).

coexistence, not yet in deep reconciliation – empathy would take place in deeper stages of reconciliation. In spite of this lack of empathy, other processes have been found, such as healing of hearts and minds.

### 3. Healing of Hearts and Minds

Healing is a core component of reconciliation, especially in the Cambodian definition, as the word for reconciliation (*phsah phsaa*) includes the word healing.<sup>9</sup> A reconciliation process needs healing at both individual and community levels, although all individuals may not be at the same level or stage, nor healing at the same rate, or with the same process. Healing has long been a goal proclaimed in various public meetings by Cambodians when speaking about the ECCC (Shay 2009). An ECCC staff person attributed healing to the types of interaction in the courtroom: ‘The testimony was very emotional,’ said Reach. ‘Duch cried. Then the witnesses cried. Then the audience cried. And then I cried. Seeing this is part of the healing process’ (Brady 2009).

Healing is needed for all (victims, perpetrators, and bystanders) and is best done when there is a modicum of physical security (Staub et al. 2005: 302). A state of relative security has been achieved for most in Cambodia, thus there is now space for healing. Several types of healing were identified by respondents, healing through: relaxation; doing good deeds, and social activities.<sup>10</sup> Healing occurs in different ways in different people. As suggested by research on former soldiers in Yugoslavia, combat soldiers may have more in common with each other than with other citizens and thus

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 3 for a definition of reconciliation. Healing is underscored by the grandfather of peacebuilding Johan Galtung’s concise description of reconciliation: ‘the process of healing the traumas of both victims and perpetrators after violence, providing a closure of the bad relation’ (2001: 3).

<sup>10</sup> Several other authors have written about a process of healing that include three sequential steps -- acknowledgement, contrition, and forgiveness (Montville 1993: 113). But since my model of reconciliation does not require forgiveness, this process does not apply here.

may heal better talking to each other (Pouligny, Chesterman and Schnabel 2007: 11). Key informant former KR soldier Kuy said that the way he dealt with trauma was to seek out his former soldier colleagues and talk about the past.<sup>11</sup>

I asked many respondents how they could feel relief from their memories of the KR period. Several explained they would work, go to the Buddhist temples<sup>12</sup>, go for a motorbike ride, or look at beautiful scenery. Self-healing is described by Mollica as a natural response to psychological illness and injury which affects how traumatic memories and emotions are repaired; the core of self-healing is the will to survive and recover (2006: 94-101). Social activities such as altruism, work, spirituality, use of humour, social support, and physical exercise can lead to psychological recovery (Mollica 2006: 94-101). Several of these methods are exhibited in the next section on healing by relaxation.

## Healing through Social Activities

Many respondents described aspects of this sort of self-healing as their means of dealing with traumatic memories of the past.<sup>13</sup> For example, a victim survivor who is closely following the ECCC, and a person who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), recounted a variety of things he did to relieve his suffering:

When I am depressed, I drive my motorcycle around to see beautiful views and natural beauty. Whenever I think of going somewhere, for example, I want to come to ADHOC organization<sup>14</sup> I must come. Whether it is useless or useful, I

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<sup>11</sup> Kuy told me this in an informal interview in 1999.

<sup>12</sup> Many respondents spoke about meditating, praying or bringing offerings to the Buddhist temples or to their ancestors as a form of relief, but a full discussion of these religious and spiritual approaches is not possible to address in this thesis due to space limitations.

<sup>13</sup> Several (non-rural) informants interviewed prior to this thesis research spoke about writing their stories as a means of healing, as did several prominent Cambodian authors. For example Cambodian-American survivor Oni Vitandham said upon the publication of her KR period memoir: 'It felt like a release,' Vitandham said of finishing her book. 'Now my memory will not crash me into darkness. It's a release of emotions, anger, forgiveness' (as quoted in Smith 2006).

<sup>14</sup> ADHOC is the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association which provides support to victims of human rights violations and also has a project to assist victims of the KR

at least could release my pressure. If I am really depressed, I will drive my motorcycle along the riverbanks. When I feel better, I will drive back or sometimes I drink coffee in order to forget my suffering so my feeling is good until these days. I don't have nightmares because I try to forget it. In the past, I tried to forget it by going to pagoda to offer things, but now I try to forget it by walking instead. I walk to wherever I want to (IV # 59).

Besides motorbike rides and looking at beautiful scenery, doing good deeds helped survivors heal from the violence of the KR period.

## Healing by Doing Good deeds

As noted in Chapter 5, doing good deeds was an important strategy employed by perpetrators to cope with the past: by obtaining merit for the next life, as well as obtaining the respect of community members to increase acceptance. Doing good deeds is also an important component of the healing process in Cambodia. A respondent who lost his father during the KR regime and who spoke often about this loss suggested he needed to pay back those who helped him survive:

It is not my home village, but I had to go through the village to get to my village. In that village, some people liked me and my father and my mother. They always hid me so it is just like a friendship village that I passed and got food on the way to my own village. Otherwise this area was all rice fields so they [the KR] could see me and they would arrest me. And that is why I pay back to this village. As the proverb says, if you receive the fruit from the tree, you have to pay them back. I do not pay individually but I pay the group. My wife likes to do this too, so we enjoy it. I have a water irrigation system that I put in the name of [my employer] even though it was donated by me. So that is how I healed (IV # 133).

## Healing through Listening and Talking

There is a debate as to whether or not talking with others (especially about the past) is a culturally appropriate way to relieve tension and reduce trauma in Cambodia. However, a few respondents stated that talking to others was important. For example, a victim living in a former KR area said:

When I have some problem, normally I talk with my neighbour, who is a former Khmer Rouge. She has told me that during the KR regime it was not difficult for

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regime to become civil parties and make complaints to the ECCC. See <http://www.adhoc-chra.org/>

her because she was old and did not have many relatives so they didn't mistreat her. Her husband is also a Khmer Rouge. I like chatting with her only about the KR regime, but when I want to talk seriously about other things, I phone to my home village and talk about my suffering to one of my friends who used to work and study together (IV # 74).

Youk Chhang, the Director of DC-Cam spoke of being listened to as one of the most potent forms of healing: 'I think the most important thing many victims are looking for is someone to really listen to their stories. They want to tell you their story. And when you listen, it is very helpful. You don't need to do anything. When their children learn [about the Khmer Rouge] in school and come back home to talk to them, that is the most healing medicine (Carey 2009: 3). This act of being listened to is also a part of being acknowledged and is discussed in the next section.

Many respondents expressed spontaneously their thanks for my listening to their stories. The relief of this accused perpetrator and his wife after talking to me was palpable:

I feel better, yes better. I do not have chest tightness (*toeng*) anymore but I feel relieved (*thuo*). Because you do not make me feel badly, it means that you do not make me feel afraid . . . Before if I saw somebody coming like this, I was very afraid, for example when brother [Kuy] took some people with cameras here so we were very afraid . . . But now I am not afraid and now I am laughing – but if we were afraid as before, we would not have let you see us. I said this in front of you honestly. Now he is not afraid and feels better (IV # 86).<sup>15</sup>

The respondent above who spoke about driving his motorcycle for relief and healing, later on in the interview, also said that speaking to me had brought him some relief (and in fact it was difficult to end the interview as he wanted to continue talking about his KR experiences). At the end he said: 'Now that I have spoken with you today, I can sleep well' (IV # 59). His relief after speaking to me was also related to the heart, body, and mind connection which is the subject of the next sub-section.

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<sup>15</sup> His relief may also have been because I asked him about his post-KR experiences, including his imprisonment by the government, and did not focus upon his deeds in the past in the interview.

## Hearts, Bodies, and Minds

Reconciliation is a process that occurs both in emotions, mind, and by action: in Cambodia, the process was often described in terms of body, mind, and/or heart. The word '*chet*' in Cambodian, literally means 'heart', not the physical heart which is '*beh daung*', but can also be translated as 'mind'. Several respondents spoke about the mind versus heart, noting that it was possible to act as though you had reconciled without really feeling it, and on the other hand if you did not take any action, then you may not be fully reconciled – you must take action to show you are reconciled.<sup>16</sup>

Respondents made many references to the heart in interviews. For example, a village chief (victim) spoke about using Buddhism to replace suffering with compassion in his heart: 'I know who took my parents and I have suffering in my heart but I take *dhamma* [Buddhist teachings] to put in my heart. I believe that they did these things because someone ordered them to do so' (IV # 91). In another example a UN/NGO worker explained the body versus heart/mind dichotomy in several ways. Firstly that you can have peace and reconciliation in your actions (or body) but not in your mind but that both are necessary for reconciliation. Secondly, that if you take action in the negative way of revenge, then you cannot later have peace in your heart and furthermore you risk starting cycles of revenge.

We had peace for our bodies in 1993 [with the UNTAC intervention and elections], but not peace for the mind because we did not reconcile (*phsah phsaa*) yet. I thought about this since I learned about the reconciliation (*kar phsah phsaa*) at the camp so we took the way of reconciliation of Buddhism to educate the people because the peace for the mind is better than the peace for the body. Moreover, if you think that you have to kill this person but even if your body does not kill, the peace will not exist in your heart. If you killed the other, their children will kill us back and if we do not kill the other, they will not kill us and the peace will exist (IV # 14).

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<sup>16</sup> The concept of heart and mind has also been mentioned by other authors: 'Reconciliation involves social transformation: it deals with the hurts, resentments and enmities that exist (the task of repair and healing) and seeks the transformation of relationships with all that implies at the spiritual, psychological, social, economic and political levels. Reconciliation requires *metanoia*, a conversion of mind and heart. It demands particular attitudes and practices (Stevens in Hamber and Kelly 2005: 42-3).

Healing can be increased if people are able to make meaning of the past in their minds, including seeking ways to prevent future violence (Staub and Pearlman 2001: 226). Several respondents spoke about the importance of the ECCC (and other approaches such as memorials) to teach the next generation about the crimes of the KR, and to ensure that such violence would never happen again. Teaching about the past through education programs can be viewed as part of the healing process of reconciliation (Pham et al. 2009: 28).

## **4. Acknowledgement, Confession, and Regret**

### **Acknowledgement**

In Cambodia, although there has been a great deal of general acknowledgement of victim's suffering, by many actors (the government, international community, and the ECCC), there has been little acknowledgement of past wrongdoings by the perpetrators who committed the crimes, and consequently there have been few confessions. Indeed, there has been very little discussion of the past at all, and hardly any discussion of specific acts of perpetrators, except in the ECCC. As has been noted, in Cambodian society in general people are reluctant to admit wrongdoing in public (or in private) for fear of losing face (Hinton 2001: 27). This avoidance of acknowledgement could also be attributed to people being unwilling to take responsibility for their actions, both as a cultural attitude and out of fear of revenge (McGrew 2000a: 21).

One major exception was Duch, the S-21 Prison Director in his trial at the ECCC: 'With passion and intense arm gestures, Duch told Mam [another S-21 Prison employee] not to be afraid of death and to "just tell the truth!" Duch explained that he has acknowledged his own crimes and told Mam, "I want you to do this same"' (MacDonald 2009: 3). Several other leaders and most other former KR have denied



any knowledge of crimes, much less taken responsibility for them.<sup>17</sup> Some suggest that the ECCC may be Cambodians' last opportunity 'to receive formal acknowledgement and recognition of the grave injustices and losses they have suffered' (Pham et al. 2009: 8).

Acknowledgement can be more powerful when it is public or coming from outsiders. For example respondents would ask me if I believed them, apparently asking me, an outsider and foreigner, for validation and to acknowledge their suffering and their history: 'Do you believe the stories about the KR? . . . Do you believe that they just gave people only rice soup to eat? . . . They did not give rice; they just gave rice soup to people to eat even if there was rice' (IV # 110).

Another example of Cambodians' desire for this acknowledgement by outsiders was provided by key informant Sunh: 'I am very excited that you come and ask us questions and bring information to us. We want the world to know what happened to the [us] . . . If you don't come, they won't believe us' (IV # 31). Besides valuing the fact that I had listened to his story, and those of other villagers, Sunh felt that an outsider's acknowledgement could add further value to their suffering and the wrongs done to them. Acknowledgement is closely related to confession which is the topic of the next sub-section: in order to confess, one first has to acknowledge a transgression.

## Confession

In her study of cycles of mass violence between villagers involved in rebel groups in Peru, Theidon recounts several processes whereby former perpetrators could be reinstated in communities and be trusted, with a strong emphasis on confession and repentance: 'Confessing, atoning, sobbing, apologizing, begging, promising – sincerity would depend on both words and action' (2007: 110-111). In

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<sup>17</sup>Exceptions to this tendency to *not* confess are: some former KR interviewed by Documentation Center of Cambodia; former prison guards interviewed in a film by filmmaker Rithy Panh (2003); and two KR cadres who confessed in a film produced by Rob Lemkin and Thet Sambath (2010).

Cambodia, however, there have been no such public displays, and very few confessions reported in the press, or reported by my respondents.<sup>18</sup> Although Etcheson stated that if perpetrators were willing to confess they would be accepted by their communities, he reported few actual cases of confessions (Etcheson 2005b: 218-219). In a survey of 25 Cambodians Ramji found that approximately half of them would accept amnesty for KR leaders if they confessed and apologized (2000: 145-6). While several processes were described by respondents whereby people might be accepted into the community, few of them focused on words, instead actions were of primary importance.<sup>19</sup>

The only confession of killing during the KR period I heard from a respondent was from a former KR cadre, who stated another former KR perpetrator (his boss) confessed to him – but then threatened him not to tell others!:

[The perpetrator] came to tell me that before he killed people, he raped them first if they were pretty and then he cut them open and took out their liver and gallbladder, even if the person was conscious. First he took the gallbladder out and then she was thrown against the palm tree. For example, Mr. San had his gallbladder taken out while his eyes were still open. I used to work in the commune so I know a lot. He told me because he talked too much (*niyeay chru*). He told me because he wanted to boast. Then after speaking, he said he had talked too much so please don't tell anybody! Be careful or you might die, he said: he threatened me! He was a leader! (IV # 93).

In a discussion with key informant Sunh about truth-telling mechanisms, he suggested confessions would be important for a successful process of reconciliation:

If they do like this [truth-telling], people will calm down (*tracheak chet*)<sup>20</sup> because the perpetrators confess (*sara'pheap*) to the people. It could be used in Cambodia and it is a good idea. As [the accused perpetrator] said yesterday, he didn't confess to anybody. But he admitted it in front of the Vietnamese.

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<sup>18</sup> The most talked-about confessions in Cambodia today are the confessions made by Duch about his involvement in killings at S-21. However these were not without controversy, as some Cambodians and foreigners alike have expressed doubt as to the sincerity, accuracy, and completeness of the confessions (Ledgerwood forthcoming).

<sup>19</sup> Acts taken by perpetrators such as using power, doing good deeds, and showing remorse are discussed on pages 128-132 in Chapter 5.

<sup>20</sup> *Tracheak chet* literally translated means cool heart – another example of the importance of the heart in reconciliation processes in Cambodia.

There are people [victims] full of anger (*khoeng*) and still holding grudges (*kumnum*), but they do not dare do anything. If the perpetrator called all the people and confessed what he did, and that he has now stopped, the people would feel relieved (IV # 97).

This respondent also raised the issue of non-repetition, which can be an important element of a confession, an apology, or expression of repentance. If perpetrators acknowledge what they have done and confess to their bad deeds, there may also be an element of remorse and/or repentance which can make the apology more heartfelt or meaningful.

## Remorse, Regret, and Repentance

Remorse and repentance were discussed in Chapter 5 as coping strategies of perpetrators to re-enter community. Amongst respondents in my research study there were few examples of repentance, which is not surprising given Cambodians' reluctance to be publically shamed or lose 'face'. As Henri Locard noted, 'If you express remorse and repentance, you lose face, you put yourself in a position below the person you admit you have offended or hurt.' (cited in Eisenbruch 2007: 92). The closest mention of remorse or repentance I found in interviews was firstly former KR expressing remorse that the KR regime had ever existed, and secondly sometimes victims assumed perpetrators were remorseful, based upon their observations of actions of the perpetrators. One example of this repentance through indirect actions was observed by an expatriate UN/NGO worker involved with the making of the film *Deacon of Death* (van den Berg and van de Put 2004):

Mr. Karoby [the accused perpetrator] at the time of the KR, was the security chief, he was the literal deacon of death. Now he had become the ceremonial deacon of death [an *Achar*]. For us as Westerners this was very hard to understand, the same guy who had sent so many people to their deaths was now responsible for the cremation at the temple to make sure that everything goes right. The response from the Cambodians was that this was his way of therapy; this was the way he tried to repent (IV # 58).

A former KR base person, whose family had been decimated during the internal purges, spoke about the actions of perpetrators in his home village. Although the perpetrators did not say they were sorry, he assumed through their actions that they felt remorse:

The three or four perpetrators left in the village never said sorry to the victims. At that time, all the people in my village had to work for the KR and we all had to work very hard. The perpetrators who killed people were accused by others, but they did not dare to accuse them to their faces. As for the perpetrators, even when they heard the accusations, they kept silent because they knew by themselves that they were wrong and now they are getting old. Yes, I think they feel guilty. They started knowing their mistakes when the law was created and they knew they had killed people. We observed their feelings because everyone knew and heard about who was a perpetrator and who was a victim. Even though they did not speak about it, I could guess about the feelings of the people. They have to go to the court in order to face what they did (IV # 78)

In some cases, the regret was expressed directly, though not about individual actions, but about the regime in general. This UN/NGO worker observed:

I used to meet a few former KR, who talked about the truth about what they did in the past. Because at that time, they did things under orders, forced by their leaders so they felt regretful for what they did. They had no intention of doing such things. They said they were regretful, when we met them while we went to our target villages, educating people about conflict resolution in each house. We talked to them, one or two in each village. They dared to talk about it without being afraid. Most of the former KR that I know because I have been working along the border for a long time, 100 percent tell their children about the tragedy of the three years eight months and twenty days [KR regime]. They pray to their ancestors and tell their grandchildren to never let it happen again. They hate that regime very much. They did not say directly how many people they killed or whom they killed, but they just said that they feel regret for what they did (IV # 82).

A more difficult step than expressing general remorse and regret is to offer apology for specific past acts.

## **5. Apology**

This section provides highlights from respondents' interviews that explain the basic process of apology in Cambodia.

## Apologies Avoided

Hinton suggests that Cambodian hierarchical culture does not encourage people to apologize: 'To do so would involve a slight loss of face both for the child and his or her parents. As one informant explained, "to say excuse me makes them too lowly"' (Hinton 2001: 27). A UN/NGO worker who had lived outside of Cambodia made a similar observation: 'It is difficult here because we do not have the culture to say sorry. But now I teach my daughters to say sorry all the time' (IV # 128).

In a few cases respondent victims felt that perpetrators avoided making apologies. This schoolteacher and young victim suggested that one perpetrator had not apologized because he thought no one knew about his past actions. The victim did not want an apology because he did not want to bring up the past and preferred to forget: 'No, he has never made an apology. I think he thinks that the younger generation does not know about him doing all those bad things. For me, I don't want him to say sorry, because I can rub out all the old memories. If we wanted him to say sorry, then we would be reminded of everything again, and it would make us unhappy' (IV # 1).

But just because apologies are avoided, does not mean that victims do not desire an apology. This woman victim living in Southeast-2 wanted an apology for the death of her grandparents: 'I was in Phnom Penh when they arrested my grandparents to be killed but then when Phnom Penh fell [1975], I heard from the old people that this man took my grandparents to be killed. I have met him since then, and speak normally with him, but I still want him to apologize' (IV # 1).<sup>21</sup>

Another example of an apology desired is of this rural traditional healer (*kru phlom*), who also offered a common explanation of why perpetrators have not apologized to date: fear of trials and fear of revenge.

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<sup>21</sup> This passage also exhibits the condition of shallow coexistence, as she said she wanted him to (she appeared to be indignant and angry when saying this), yet she said she spoke normally with him.

To apologize, for both the top and the lower levels is important. However, these people are afraid of the trial, and they are afraid of being killed. So if they apologize, they would ask for forgiveness and to avoid a trial. If I had done things like they did, I think it would be very important to apologize, ask for forgiveness, ask people not to be angry, and not to hold a grudge against me in the future. No former KR ever apologized to me though. I believe they do not dare to show their faces, and they do not dare to say what they did is wrong. If they did bad things, they don't dare to show their face (IV # 34).

## Apologies Made and Apologies Heard

Although many respondents complained that they had never heard apologies from perpetrators, and instead often heard denials, there were some apologies reported by respondents. For example, the key informant Kuy stated he had heard a (weak) apology in the immediate aftermath of the KR regime, which served in part to spare the perpetrator from being killed in revenge:

In 1979 when the Vietnamese came, I heard [the perpetrator] say 'I would like to apologize for what I did because they ordered me to do it'. I heard only one person apologize, this man who killed many people. He killed a lot more people than the others did, about 60 people. He said that what he did was under the order of the leaders and he did not want to do it. He was a spy (*chhlop*). At that time, some people with guns wanted to kill him but when he apologized, they didn't kill him. The Vietnamese soldiers came and they arrested him and planned to kill him in revenge, but before killing him, they asked the people in the village about his killing but the villagers were quiet. Then he also reminded the people that if they killed him now, it was like what he was forced to do in the past also (IV # 1).

A former KR cadre was demoted and punished in the early years of the KR in 1973, after he had refused to follow orders by his superior to disrobe monks at the local Buddhist temple. The KR cadre and his wife were living near his former superior who had consequently punished him throughout the rest of the regime and had put him in prison. The KR cadre's wife was still angry, even though she had heard this (half-hearted) apology from the superior: 'He said to me "what could I do because I just followed somebody's order so please don't get angry with me!"' (IV # 46). When apologies come in the form of excuses, sometimes they may not be accepted by the victims.

However, public apologies do make a large impact. As noted above and elsewhere, Duch, the former S-21 Prison Director who was tried by the ECCC, has been very influential because of his acknowledgement of and apology for crimes committed during the KR regime. Duch was quoted as having recognized the consequences of his crimes: 'When I find myself faced with the victims, the widowers, the orphans, I understand that they condemn me and I bow to these victims. [...] I regret that not all had a chance to speak' (Gee 2009a: 7). In this statement, he acknowledged the pain and suffering of the victim, he listened to them respectfully, expressed remorse and responsibility.<sup>22</sup>

Sometimes apologies are expressed through action, as discussed in Chapter 5, and in the following example. A UN/NGO worker and former monk described the process of reconciliation in reference to a former KR cadre who had killed many people. The respondent observed that the perpetrator withdrew from the community, and also inferred from the perpetrator's behaviour that he felt remorse:<sup>23</sup>

This man was a chief of a group (*prathean kang*), and a chief of the cadre (*prathean kamaphibal*) and he ordered others, fought, and was powerful in killing. Later on he came back to live in his commune, and families kept complaining that he had taken their gold, that he had forced them to join the cooperative, that he had done bad things to them. So how could he live with

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<sup>22</sup> However, several observers of the trial have felt that Duch's remorse and apologies were not fully sincere and he demonstrated a non-repentant, boastful and domineering attitude in the court. In an article forthcoming in the DC-Cam magazine anthropologist Judy Ledgerwood commented on her observations of Duch's behaviour during his trial: 'And when Duch addresses witnesses, he is able to berate them, belittle them and attack them though the use of language – for example by attaching the prefix 'a' to people's names. There is no direct translation to English, but scholars often use 'the despicable' as in 'a-Pot', the despicable Pol Pot. During this bullying Duch jabs his finger in the air and raises his voice. This is not a contrite man, apologetic for his crimes. Here is the man from the 1970s, the math teacher turned conspiracy theorist looking to root out the maggots that had infiltrated the revolution – determined to smash them. This gets translated into English as the benign, 'Mr. so and so'. We lose the contempt that Duch still holds for his subordinates and former captives' (Ledgerwood forthcoming). DC-Cam researcher Kok Thay Eng responded to Dr. Ledgerwood's article and added: 'I went to see Duch's hearing only a few times. He has said sorry, admitted his guilt and been cooperative so far. But I do not feel good with the way he speaks. Your article captures exactly the way I feel about Duch's behaviour. In Khmer sensitivities, a remorseful person should look down and speak softly to whoever listening to him. He should not have the face to be overly confident, raise his hand and voice and lecturing the court' (Eng 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Withdrawal and remorse are coping strategies used by perpetrators: see Chapter 5.

them? He could live with them until now! There are many factors that show how he can live with them. The people have been educated that the past was a mistake of the politicians, so now the people can live together. However, he is disappointed in himself for what he did, so he does not dare to appear or join in the community activities. He apologized to a few families who accused him of taking their gold and money to offer in the cooperatives. He told them that he did it because the KR had ordered him to do so (IV # 60).

Another example of a perpetrator apologizing was this direct apology recounted by a victim who had been imprisoned for several years during the KR regime. He spoke about meeting one of his former jailers on the road. He seemed to have been able to accept the apology because it was sincere (from the heart). He is also one of the few respondents who reported a direct conversation between a victim and perpetrator about the details of the past:

He was frightened that I would trouble him. He was frightened until his lips turned pale when he met me. I stopped my bike in front of him. I told him not to worry because I had no grudge (*kumnum*) and did not plan to take revenge against him. Whatever he did, I forgot it. His lips turned red after hearing such words. He had hit me directly. I talked to him for a long time. We talked about the past, like ill-treating prisoners and killing prisoners. He said, 'I apologize to you, for what I did badly to you'. He apologized to me because he knew it was his fault that he shouldn't have hit me because of the ten seeds of jackfruit. I didn't hold the grudge (*kumnum*) against him anymore . . . He apologized by himself. He said it from his heart (IV # 59).

This perpetrator was apparently living in a great deal of fear, which could explain his preparedness to apologize to his direct victim. But in some cases respondents did not want to hear apologies, even if they were offered.

## Apologies Rejected

In some cases respondents felt that the crimes were of too large a magnitude to be affected by an apology: For example this victim living in a former KR area preferred a trial to an apology: 'Because they killed people with great cruelty and in such large numbers. If they apologize just like that, there is still injustice for the people who died. Millions of people are dead! Some of us lost 20 or 30 relatives, so apology is just a memory. Let the internationals sentence them' (IV # 74).



Apologies can also be rejected because they may be perceived as being insincere. A former KR prison inmate stated he was not satisfied with the apology of Duch: 'I am fine but I still have chest tightness because A Duch did not accept his mistakes. He just said it to release his crime. What he said is not a hundred percent right or from his heart so I still get angry and suffer in my chest'.<sup>24</sup>

## Apology and Responsibility

Respondents recognized different types of apologies. A victim living in a former KR rural area felt that the former KR leaders should both apologize and accept responsibility, but he pointed out that apologies should be voluntary and heartfelt.

I think it is very important if they apologize and accept responsibility, because they should know by themselves that they are the real initiators of the crimes. Both are important, because they should admit that they did wrong and then apologize. We have to make sure that they voluntarily apologized by themselves and nobody forced them to answer. If someone forced them, the apology is not important. If they beat them with a cane to force them to answer, that is also not important (IV # 77).

A victim who almost died in a KR prison spoke about the importance of a public apology for his healing (to feel relief) and for justice. He also included a reference to the heart, in this case meaning a sincere apology would be important:

I take the case of S-21 to say that I want those people who worked in the torture and killing places to do a ceremony to apologize to the dead people in Cheung Ek or Tuol Sleng. I want them to make their apologies from their heart in front of the people, including monks. I could not call them alone, but the court should call perpetrators in S-21 to tell the people what they did in a ceremony. There are about ten people in S-21 such as Mr. Hun, Prak, Pan, and others, and they should do this ceremony all together, and I would feel relieved (IV# 42).<sup>25</sup>

Once apologies are made, forgiveness may be more likely to occur, which is the topic to which we turn next.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with the victim by my research assistant, at the Chenla Theatre on 7 May 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Note this reference to a public ceremony reinforces the view of Harris that such a national-level process presided over by Buddhist clergy would fit into the Cambodian Buddhist moral world: See Harris 2005: 86-86, and page 239 of this thesis.

## 6. Forgiveness

While several respondents mentioned forgiveness in their definitions of reconciliation, only a few spoke directly about forgiving or not forgiving the KR. This UN/NGO worker felt that forgiveness was an important part of reconciliation: 'Well, it is unity (*ruop ruom*) or forgiveness (*kar at tos*) - not to mention what happened in the past to get revenge (*sangsoek*), nor to break up our friendship (IV # 111).<sup>26</sup> A former KR cadre living in a former KR area described a similar importance to forgiveness in reconciliation: 'Reconciliation (*phsah phsaa*) means that people get along with each other (*chea nea*) and stop being angry at each other. We talk to them to help them to be tolerant (*at aon*) and forgive (*leuk leng tos*) each other' (IV # 77).

The majority of the theological and psychological approaches to reconciliation assume that forgiveness is necessary to recover from trauma, a positive step and a way to heal, and thus that forgiveness is necessary for reconciliation (Schreiter 1992; Staub and Pearlman 2001: 205). Enright argues that 'one may forgive and not reconcile, but one never truly reconciles without some form of forgiving taking place' (2001: 31). On the other hand, this thesis supports the view that forgiveness is a desirable, but not necessary facet of reconciliation. Other authors agree that forgiveness is not a mandatory component of reconciliation (Broneus 2007: 5; Huyse 2003). In this research study, an expatriate respondent was able to give a very concise and thoughtful explanation of the relationship between reconciliation and forgiveness, a more practical approach that fits within the Cambodian context:

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<sup>26</sup> A complicating factor in the discussion of forgiveness is the term in Cambodian: '*leuk leng tos*' for forgiveness, which means literally, raise free the guilt. Although *leuk leng tos* is the dictionary definition for amnesty (while 'to forgive' is *at tos*, *akphey tos*, or *ak hao se kam*) in everyday language this term is used for forgiveness. Thus in some people's minds they were unable to separate the idea of forgiveness from justice or punishment – some did not want to say they forgave someone as they interpreted that to mean they did not want the person to be punished. If the meaning in Khmer allowed victims to have justice and punishment, and at the same time grant forgiveness to perpetrators, they may have been more willing to forgive.

Reconciliation is a term that is subject to many different interpretations. The more important aspect of it is reintegration or re-functioning. I think some of the issues of forgiveness and forgiving are probably unattainable and should maybe not even be attained, because I think people's memories of what happened and their feelings of distress and blame are very hard to overcome' (IV # 129).

## Buddhism and Forgiveness

Cambodians also consider Buddhist views on forgiveness: Buddhism promotes compassion and loving kindness in daily life, but karmic retribution can still be relied upon for justice. Findings in this research study echoed this Buddhist interpretation: at the community level some respondents spontaneously forgave their former tormenters, others were waiting for the results of the ECCC before deciding whether or not to forgive, and others said they would never forgive.

The Buddhist parable of Angulimāla was mentioned occasionally when I asked about reconciliation (and justice and forgiveness) in Cambodia.<sup>27</sup> Although it was interpreted by different people in different ways, Angulimāla's relinquishing of his old murderous ways, and turning to Buddhism and good deeds was often suggested as a reason to forgive the KR perpetrators, as explained by this senior-level monk: 'I replied that [Angulimāna] killed 999 people and then he dropped his sword and followed the Buddha so they forgave him and he finally obtained Nirvana' (IV # 38).

An expatriate UN/NGO staff person working on peacebuilding felt that forgiveness was not relevant in Cambodia, as Cambodians believe that the perpetrator's *karma* would provide ultimate justice: 'The Cambodians are not looking

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<sup>27</sup> Angulimāla was an infamous robber who had killed 999 people and cut off their fingers to show his great success in killing. He had decided to kill his mother as the thousandth victim, but then met the Buddha who convinced him to stop killing, out of compassion 'led him back to righteousness'. Angulimāla became a monk, did good deeds, and could bestow blessings on others. However, he still suffered, and was shunned by the community due to his (bad) *karma*, and was thus still destined to suffer the bad consequences of his evil deeds – though because of his repentance the consequences were much less (Harris 2005: 65-66). The story could also be interpreted as a form of forgiveness, or at least acceptance, as the Buddha explained that he had changed his ways so should be accepted in peace, and was a reminder that Buddhists should live in the present, and not in the past (Gray 2010: 47-49).

for punishment for acts done in the past. They more have a desire to understand how and why something happened, why was it so awful, why did you let my mother or father die. The meaning of *karma* for most Cambodians is that these people will pay later in their next lives . . . Forgiveness does not come into it' (IV # 39).

## Forgiveness – by Relinquishing Revenge

The most common example of forgiveness in this research study was in terms of relinquishing a desire for revenge.<sup>28</sup> For example, one victim showed clearly, through his actions of welcoming a perpetrator, giving him gifts, and inviting him to visit his home, that he was in the process of forgiving – although he never uttered the actual words (IV # 108).<sup>29</sup> When I asked one former KR prison inmate if he had forgiven the prison guard he had met on the road, he answered that he no longer held a grudge – not directly saying he had forgiven. His ability to let his anger go was partly because he had received a hero's welcome from the people in his village, and partly because he rarely met his former tormenters:

I did not say anything to him. He just apologized to me as we rode our bikes past each other. I don't hold a grudge against him. I also don't hold a grudge against the spy (*chhlop*) who reported me to arrest me. I was the only one who was able to escape and survive so I don't hold a grudge and am not angry with them. Also, because when I returned to my home village the people welcomed me so warmly, as they saw thousands of people who were arrested and it was unusual that only I survived. The reason that I could not hold my grudge was also because the spy chief and village chief escaped to their villages so that the grudge was no longer held in my mind and I didn't hold the grudge against them anymore (IV # 59).

## Forgiveness Granted, or Not

The examples above are of people relinquishing the desire to exact revenge, rather than the positive act of embracing and welcoming. Another example is provided in an anecdote reported by an expatriate UN/NGO worker of forgiveness between two government officials (one former KR, one government) meeting for the first time after

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<sup>28</sup> See Chapter 7 on revenge.

<sup>29</sup> This quote is also analyzed in Chapter 7, see page 194.

years of war. They had not known each other personally, and did not suffer knowingly at the hands of the other. Forgiveness in this case, was indirect and impersonal, between two officials living in close proximity and wanting now to promote economic development in their war-torn region. 'And they started laughing and he said "I forgive you". But you know, there were a number of examples of those sort of things—that once people started talking and they could see each other in a new role, they would share that sort of experience' (IV # 27). This sort of impersonal forgiveness must be easier than forgiving individuals for specific transgressions, which are the next examples of victims unable or unwilling to forgive.

An expatriate UN/NGO worker felt that he had never seen anyone forgive another: 'I have never heard of people saying that they have openly forgiven others . . . They tolerate the fact that the other is alive' (IV # 58). One victim explained why she could not forgive the former KR leaders, due to the magnitude of the crimes, but felt that in everyday life people should apologize for mistakes. She had been a 'new' person, and lost many family members, she was now living amongst former KR in a former KR stronghold. She as many other respondents was a strong proponent of the ECCC: 'Concerning apologies of the KR, we cannot forgive them, but if in the case of a village volunteer, it is good for them to apologize. The KR are different and they can't be forgiven the same as people in the village, because what they did was a much more serious problem' (IV # 74). Several respondents felt that they could not simultaneously want justice and grant forgiveness, that once the trials were over they could then consider forgiving.

Forgiveness is not however equivalent to amnesty – while an individual victim may grant forgiveness, justice and the granting of amnesties and pardons is a separate, if interrelated process. For example, many Cambodians perceived a brief statement at a press conference by former KR Foreign Minister Khieu Samphan to 'let bygones be bygones' as a grave insult - forgiveness is a gift given by victims, not

something to be requested by perpetrators (McGrew 2000a: 32). Forgiveness should also not be conflated with forgetting, because even when victims grant forgiveness, they do not necessarily forgo the desire for remembering, justice, or punishment. We now turn to forgetting in the context of reconciliation processes.

## 7. Forgetting

Forgetting, similar to amnesty, is another process of reconciliation, which has recently received more attention in research on transitional justice. In a study in Burundi, Uvin observed: 'Most people seem to prefer to forget, to be silent, to draw a veil over the past. . .' (2009: 168). In Cambodia, Etcheson also suggested that 'collective voluntary amnesia' may be the best way for villagers to be able to live side-by-side and start to rebuild broken relationships (2005b: 203, 220). In addition, Rigby suggested that forgetting could be a viable alternative for Cambodia: he quoted a Cambodian respondent observing that the large number of perpetrators would be too hard to send to trial, and it was better to 'safeguard the living' (2002: 4).

Several respondents stated they preferred forgetting as a process of reconciliation.<sup>30</sup> This desire to forget was mainly towards lower-level perpetrators at the community level, about whom they could accept mitigating factors such as ignorance or orders from above. At the same time, while forgetting the crimes of the lower-level perpetrators, they also supported justice for the senior leaders who they blamed for the regime

This issue of forgetting versus remembering is now being explored in Cambodia, as more and more local NGOs are getting involved in exposing the past. Amongst many other projects, DC-Cam has recently organized travelling theatre showings of 'Breaking the Silence' which expose the public to vignettes of people grappling with the past – and then encourage the audience to engage in discussion.

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<sup>30</sup> For references to forgetting, see pages 173, 208, and 216.

The organizer's purpose is to promote reconciliation through revealing the difficult past (Pich 2010). Several NGOs organize dialogue sessions in communities where victims and perpetrators, and young people who have not experienced the KR regime can talk about the past and what to do about it.<sup>31</sup> More time must pass before these fairly new endeavours to remember and respect can be fully assessed.

In conclusion, the following narrative of a reconciliation process exhibits many of the processes described above. This victim respondent, a schoolteacher living in the war-affected community of Northwest-4, described his journey of reconciliation: first anger, next observations of the perpetrator's behaviour and then, acting with empathy, compassion, tolerance, and ultimately forgiveness and letting go of the past. However, this ultimate forgiveness was dependent upon the perpetrator's actions – the perpetrator acted as a 'good person' (did good deeds) and thanked the victims (showed respect).

Some spies (*chhlop*) were violent when they gave rice or food for the people. They were very strict at that time. One I know is rich now and has a big house but no one has taken revenge against him. There is one here, living to the west of this village, but he could correct himself as a good person according to the circumstances. Moreover, when the KR ran; he did not follow them. He still lives here because his home village is here, so he could live together with all villagers and they did not discriminate (*prakan*) against him as this or that in the KR period. The people forgave him. We did not remind him about the past even though we know about him being a spy. We told him that we tolerated each other as villagers in the same village because in the KR period, some people just followed the leaders -- if they did not follow, they would face great difficulties. And then, he thanked us and held our hands. We always told him when we met each other in other ceremonies. When we came back at first, we had anger, but as we met each other every day, we had the idea that we could not make violence as that time. We just helped him and forgave him and we did not remind him about the past and forgot about it, so everything became better because everything happened in the past, we let it go. We did not need to remind him or ourselves about this -- if we still kept it in our minds, that problem would create new problems (IV # 107).

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<sup>31</sup> For example, see Youth for Peace: <http://www.yfpcambodia.org>; or the International Center for Conciliation: <http://www.centerforconciliation.org/Home.html>

This chapter has shown that reconciliation in Cambodia is far from a state of robust, deep, forgiving interdependence. A strand of coexistence, rather than reconciliation runs through each chapter of this thesis. But at least most Cambodians have set aside feelings of revenge, and started to build relationships. The next and final chapter brings together the findings of the previous chapters in a summary of the state of reconciliation in Cambodia, and makes recommendations for the future.



## CHAPTER 9 - Conclusion

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This thesis used a qualitative research approach, based on 134 semi-structured interviews, to examine how victims and perpetrators are managing to live together in select Cambodian communities. As the data was collected and organized about community-level reconciliation in Cambodia, conclusions were drawn about the state of that reconciliation in those communities. Through this sifting and prioritizing of information, several models were developed. In this final conclusion chapter, I have summarized key findings and highlighted possible practical applications for these research findings that could be applied in other countries emerging from mass violence.

### Summary of Key Findings

This thesis has provided the reader with the historical and cultural context of the conflict in Cambodia, and in particular the years of the KR regime and its effects. A trial for the leaders of the KR is on-going (the ECCC) but thousands of lower-level perpetrators are living throughout the country. Through this study, I have attempted to address several questions: how these victims and perpetrators are managing to live together, if and how they have reconciled, and what factors are affecting the processes of reconciliation. Although there have been several studies of views of Cambodians on justice and reconciliation, as well as a few large random surveys, there have been no extensive qualitative studies.

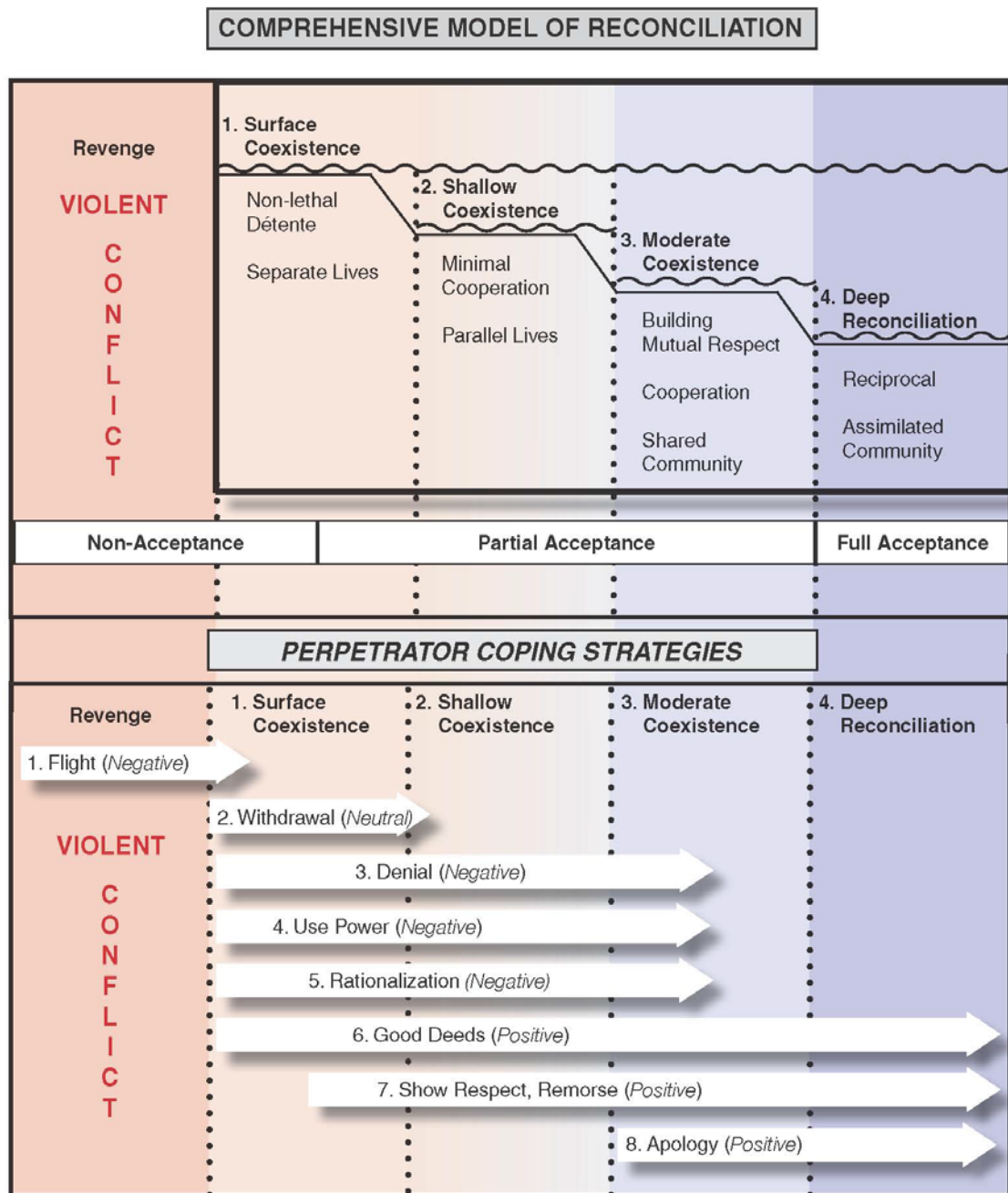
This research, based on a qualitative study of 123 respondents plus 11 additional focus groups, has found that Cambodians exist in various stages of coexistence. None have reached a stage of deep reconciliation. Several factors have

been identified that affect the attainability of coexistence and reconciliation, including which coping strategies perpetrators choose, victims' acceptance of perpetrators, as well as how victims make decisions about whether or not to seek revenge.

In order to describe these findings, I have proposed several models and schemes: (1) a theoretical model of reconciliation; (2) a scheme of perpetrator coping strategies; (3) a model of acceptance (by victims of perpetrators); and (4) a victim decision-making tree on revenge. In this concluding chapter I provide a summary of these key findings.

## **Comprehensive Model of Reconciliation**

The Comprehensive Model of Reconciliation in figure 9.1. below combines aspects of the four models above into a single diagram.



**Figure 9.1. Comprehensive Model of Reconciliation**

This model describes a process of reconciliation whereby communities move from conflict to reconciliation, through degrees of coexistence (surface, to shallow to moderate). As victims begin to accept perpetrators back into community, feelings of revenge subside, and people begin to move into the hesitant state of surface coexistence of separate lives, or non-lethal détente. Examination of the perpetrator

coping strategies section at the bottom indicates that, in states of surface coexistence, perpetrators may be more likely to flee, and withdraw from society: strategies including denial of past acts, the use of power, and rationalization are utilized by perpetrators in attempts to evade their violent histories. However, as surface coexistence progresses towards shallow coexistence, other coping strategies are used, which imply some acceptance of the past (though often indirectly) as perpetrators do good deeds, show respect and remorse. Through the long process whereby victims and perpetrators begin to have societal contact, they begin to accept the presence of the 'other', and feelings of fear and anger decrease, stages of shallow and moderate coexistence are reached. While in shallow coexistence there is minimal cooperation, in moderate coexistence cooperation and acceptance increase and a sense of shared community develops. Finally as a state of deep reconciliation approaches, relationships become more reciprocal, community members are assimilated and interdependent, and perpetrators are fully accepted by victims back into community. In the stages of moderate and deep reconciliation, confessions, apologies, and forgiveness may occur, though not always.

## **Reconciliation Today in Cambodia – Has it been Achieved?**

Several authors have observed that reconciliation in Cambodia is already achieved (Urs 2007; Widyono 2009).<sup>1</sup> However I argue that Cambodians are living in various stages of coexistence – not deep reconciliation such as might occur when the perpetrator confesses their crimes, acknowledges wrongdoing, and apologizes, while the victim listens, acknowledges the perpetrators' wrongdoings or their mutual misunderstandings, and forgives the perpetrator. Very little of this ideal, deep reconciliation was observed in my study sample. In many cases, the perpetrators were merely tolerated or coexisted for a variety of reasons. These reasons included the

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 3 for full discussion.

victim pitying the perpetrator who was poor, ignorant, or uneducated, or the perpetrators using their power or politics, which caused victims to feel afraid.

Due to the Cambodian culture of conflict avoidance, and a reliance on hierarchy and patronage, in many cases, there were no outward signs of animosity, but many victims and perpetrators seemed to have superficial relationships without true exchange or interdependence. Religious beliefs have been a mixed blessing with regard to reconciliation processes in Cambodian communities. Many respondents mentioned the law of *karma*, in that the perpetrators would suffer in the next life. However while that approach allowed some victims to go on with their lives and move towards forgiveness, others returned again and again to thinking about how perpetrators will suffer in their next lives. The trials for KR leaders were supported by the vast majority of Cambodians and, although a full exploration of the relationship between the ECCC and reconciliation was not possible in this study, it appeared that there were hopes that the ECCC would contribute to reconciliation.

## Reconciled already?

Almost every respondent, and especially those living in rural areas, stated that reconciliation had already been achieved. For example, this accused perpetrator, living in a mixed former KR, non-communist resistance (Para), and government area (Northwest-4), denied any need for reconciliation in his community:

In this area, I never heard about reconciliation (*phsah phsaa*); the people just came one-by-one to the village normally. I never heard that they were angry or discriminated (*prakan*) against each other for being KR or Para. I think that reconciliation means that we negotiate with each other and we are not angry with each other anymore. Totally, we have reconciled (*phsah phsaa*) in our hearts and minds. We do not negotiate . . . [with weapons], but we kill the anger in ourselves by developing tolerance (*khantei*) for each other (IV # 106).

However, the question is, what do people mean by reconciliation? Apparently, a superficial peace and lack of violence and revenge seem to be what is meant by the majority of respondents – which is closer to the definition of coexistence than

reconciliation. For example this respondent, a non-KR victim living in a former KR area, described a community in coexistence:

[My relatives] once visited here and they first were afraid of Khmer Rouge living here, but when they arrived, and they saw their relatives, they were happy. And they said that there are laws in the country so that they wanted to buy land. Before, they did not dare to buy land, because they were afraid that the Khmer nation would have become something else or after buying there would be war in the country. I told them that there is no war in Cambodia. They asked why I dare say that. I said that Cambodia is 100 percent united (*ruop ruom*); no one lives in the forest or other regions. They are united (*ruop ruom*) under one Kingdom of Cambodia (IV # 74).

In this example a local-level government official from Southwest-2 knew that the accused perpetrator Mr. Pel had received an indirect death threat. However, the official denied that Pel was living in fear and explained that the rule of law allowed perpetrators to live comfortably in society. His viewpoint was in sharp contrast to my findings that Pel was afraid, anxious, and living in isolation:

The perpetrators ran away in 1979 because they were afraid of people taking revenge against them. There were about four perpetrators here, but they were just lower level spies (*chhlop*). But now there is only one left who still stays here. He does not feel afraid because he knows that the policy of the government does not allow people to kill for revenge. We people and family members were angry but we could not do anything because of the policy. They are still angry, but they must follow the law, and they are also waiting to see the trial [ECCC] (IV # 2).

In this same community, where the local officials were saying the people were reconciled, both the accused perpetrator and the former KR soldier whom I interviewed felt discriminated against. Pel and Kuy in Southwest 2 both felt estranged from the community and, in the case of Pel, also quite afraid. In the northwest former KR areas, several former KR spoke about their family and friends being angry with them, and several said they wished that the ECCC would move forward, in order that they not be blamed for the crimes of their leaders.

The public rhetoric of Prime Minister Hun Sen's 'Win-Win Policy' and 'National Reconciliation' encourages Cambodians to forgive, forget, and to reconcile for the sake of their country. This pressure from above may encourage people to paper over

their true feelings and state that they are reconciled and even that they may forgive. But what does this mean? Essentially they mean they will no longer seek revenge, not necessarily that they have been able to release feelings of anger, fear, and pain.<sup>2</sup> In other words, they are living in a state of coexistence, often of a shallow nature.

## Shallow Coexistence

Several sources have revealed similar findings to mine, that reconciliation is shallow in Cambodia. For example, Etcheson observed a 'voluntary amnesia': '[r]econciliation seems to have advanced to the stage of coexistence, with the villagers by and large committed to living together peacefully' (2005b: 218). This long-term expatriate observer stated about reconciliation: 'No, reconciliation has definitely not happened yet in Cambodia! Because if you introduce one person to another, they have to know where that person stands and how they are related before they say anything. If they don't have a reference then they can't trust each other' (IV # 127). A senior government official also acknowledged that reconciliation was not yet achieved: 'But reconciliation is needed even now, from 1973 up to now and maybe tomorrow and after tomorrow! Conflict always exists, and we have to cut down the big differences between us' (IV # 132).

An expatriate mental health worker also concluded that reconciliation has not yet happened in Cambodia, partly related to the Cambodian conflict style of avoidance or withdrawal:

This is avoidance of reality, or the process of disassociation. Your reality has to be different in order for you to live, to survive. You can even sit, play, and eat together, but like war crimes, there is a part of the soul that is separate, some deep part cannot be cheated, but someday it will come out, and it can come out in bad ways, or in later generations. For example if a son marries the daughter of a perpetrator; it may seem okay at first, but then something could come out to the next generation (IV # 36).

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<sup>2</sup> Stovel (2003) described these as situations of 'forced forgiveness' and cautions that those who wish to seek justice may be accused of threatening peace. This rhetoric is also used in Cambodia, as Prime Minister Hun Sen and other politicians accuse those who are pushing for justice for the KR crimes as inciting war.

In conclusion, much of Cambodia today is in a state of shallow coexistence characterised by a basic tolerance of the other in a culture of conflict avoidance. This expatriate UN/NGO worker summed it up succinctly with a 'minimalist' definition of reconciliation<sup>3</sup>:

My personal . . . view of reconciliation is the absolute minimal one, which is to live on without killing each other . . . but I don't expect much more. And to be honest I've not seen much more either, especially in Cambodia. I've never heard of people saying that they have openly forgiven others. They tolerate the fact that the other is alive, which has everything to do with the whole tradition of avoiding . . . (IV # 58).

## **Strong Desire for Peace**

The situation can be understood in part by reference to Cambodians' strong desire for peace. Many respondents made statements about peace. Even if they were not willing to deal with the past directly, nor apologize or forgive, all Cambodians are war-weary and this exhaustion and desire for normalcy affects their stance in relation to reconciliation. For example, this former KR cadre was a strong supporter of the KR (she did not want the ECCC and thought no apology from the KR leaders was necessary, because everyone suffered and everyone makes mistakes). When I asked what advice she would have for other people emerging out of a situation of conflict, she spoke of her life of difficulty and suffering and made a plea for peace:

To me, nowadays what I want is for either the United Nations or the Cambodian government to ensure that the leaders not argue with each other. I strongly wish they should work cooperatively to gain peace and independence for the people and the new generations; I do not want them to struggle like me because it was so painful (IV # 64).

## **Obstacles**

There are still many obstacles to reconciliation in Cambodia. Characteristics of Cambodian society that contributed to the mass violence of the KR period still exist

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<sup>3</sup> In its most raw state, coexistence can be merely a willingness not to kill one another (Huysse 2003: 20).



today, such as the strong hierarchical system based on patronage, the tendency to avoid conflict, and the fear of speaking out against oppression. Widespread corruption in society contributes to papering over of valid complaints of the population and leads to lack of security, simmering anger, as well as a widespread feeling of hopelessness. The trauma to the psyche of the majority of Cambodians who lived through the KR period, victims and perpetrators alike, as well as the secondary trauma of the second generation, has been an on-going obstacle to reconciliation. People overwhelmed by feelings of anxiety and fear may find it difficult to reconcile.

Cambodians often have difficulty planning ahead and making plans for the future. This characteristic could be due to the years of war, poverty, and uncertainty, where it was truly impossible to plan and hopes were dashed repeatedly. A lack of trust in one's neighbours and in societal institutions is also related to this lack of hope. A UN/NGO worker expressed this link between the traumatic past and the difficulties with the future:

But it is very difficult for reconciliation. Some people had the best luck from every regime and the victims are very upset with that situation. For myself I don't know for myself what I will do for the future. I just do my job but I have no clear vision what the country will look like in the future . . . If we talk about justice, talk about development, talk about morality, sometimes it is still dark. It is not so clear now. Like when we work in the projects, it is like we get one kilogram of salt and put it in the river. It is very far to reach the goal (IV # 109).

On the other hand there are many reasons for hope.

## **Hope for the Future**

Just because the Cambodians with whom I spoke were not yet close to reconciliation, it does not mean that there is no hope for a deepening process of reconciliation and healing in the future. There seems to be a great deal of hope for reconciliation and peace on the part of both victims and perpetrators. As the ECCC continues to struggle forward with prosecutions of the senior leaders and those most responsible, more NGOs have been actively pursuing community-level truth and

memorial projects. It is these small-scale projects that may slowly make a difference.<sup>4</sup> Many Cambodian victims remarked that they wanted to find the truth and justice but had felt frustrated that the perpetrators remained silent, and these projects may offer them some hope. An expatriate working long-term in Cambodia expressed hope for the future of reconciliation: 'I think it's on the way. Reintegration and the functioning of a society is coming, and I think that in that sense Cambodia has gone a lot further than many other societies in a post-conflict situation of this nature' (IV # 129).

Another reason for hope is the compassion and empathy expressed by victims towards some perpetrators. As we have seen in previous chapters, Pel was living a lonely life in a constant state of fear, as a lone perpetrator amongst a community of victims. Many villagers expressed empathy towards him, understanding he was uneducated and would have been killed if he had not carried out his orders. None of these victims had extended their hands to him, nor had he ever apologized. However, hope for the future may lie with the passage of time, as memories fade further and Buddhist teachings of living in the present erode feelings of fear, anger, and pain.

This long-term expatriate UN/NGO worker suggested that hope exists by extending one's reach:

You have to keep reaching for something that is beyond reach. I think in Cambodia people should be reaching for reconciliation, knowing that they won't get to that point. But by doing it, they will achieve some kind of reasonable social structure that was totally destroyed and that was so weak in the first place. But what they need to build society is to ... rebuild this social life, reweave this fabric of social life... that's good enough (IV # 58).

One way to extend hope to the future is through change agents.

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<sup>4</sup> Several NGOs are working on such projects including: the DC-Cam, the International Center for Conciliation (ICFC), the Khmer Institute of Democracy (KID), Youth for Peace (YFP) and others. Much further study is needed, as all of these projects have been initiated by NGOs from outside the communities, and are usually Phnom Penh-based: it is doubtful that any of the communities would ever have thought about or indeed carried out any projects on their own.

## Change Agents

My years of experience in community-based reconciliation projects in other countries such as Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan, as well as my reading, led me to believe that I would find the effect of 'change agents', of individuals such as Bishop Tutu in South Africa, or local-level individuals who make great moves towards reconciliation and/or healing. At the national level there have been several 'change agents' in Cambodia. For example, the monk Maha Ghosananda led the ground-breaking peace walks into former KR areas throughout the 1990s and beyond, and Chea Vannath made early overtures to former KR low-level leaders for discussion (Center for Social Development 2002). While at the community level I did not find individuals who were recognised for their activities of healing or reconciliation, several key informants could be considered as emerging change agents. Kuy was discriminated against for his identity as a former KR soldier, but continued to make overtures to community members and tried to carry out development activities in order to improve his status. And Sunh, who was well-known in his community for having taken revenge against former KR cadres, still sought out former KR to introduce to me. Khin, a former monk and UN/NGO worker, and another former monk working at the same organization have worked for decades in very difficult and war-torn areas of the country and seem to have made a difference. Further study on the effects and efficacy of change agents is needed.

From these indication of hope for the future, we now move to the next section which highlights significant findings and practical implications.

# Significance of Findings and Practical Applications:

## Next Steps – How to Build the Future

### The Use of Religion and Public Ceremony

As Buddhism is an integral part of the identity of the majority of Cambodians and a factor in how people think about justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation, some special conclusions on the topic are warranted. Harris found a consistent theme from contemporary Cambodian Buddhists, that the justice process of the ECCC 'should eschew a "politics of anger", or retribution, in favour of reconciliation, understood as a reordering of the world in accord with *dhamma*' (2005: 82). The former head of the Khmer Institute of Democracy (KID), Mr. Lao Mong Hay suggested such an event based upon these principles with a public confession by the KR leaders in the national stadium, presided over by a central figure of status, preferably the King (McGrew 2000a). A KR prison survivor (IV # 42) also suggested this, as did an expatriate UN/NGO worker, if led by a change agent such as Maha Ghosananda who could touch the spirit of many through their actions (such as the peace walks) (IV # 39).<sup>5</sup>

These religious approaches to reconciliation hold promise, as Buddhist traditions remain strong in Cambodian society: 'The greatest resource for sustainability is rooted in the people and their setting' (Lederach 1997: 94). Through the Buddhist clergy who are working on community development projects intertwined with

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<sup>5</sup> The full quote from the expatriate UN/NGO worker was:

There is a great need [for reconciliation], but how to work on this? That was Maha [Ghosananda]'s gift to us. He needed organization to do the Dhammayietra [peace walk] —if there were no organizers there would not have been a walk. We would be worrying about how to organize, how many people do you need to have a movement, etc. One donor asked us this question, and Maha answered – 'We need only one!' One person can affect the spirit of many. Anyone can touch others. But, you do need a language in which to communicate. Every part of the population has a different language. But you can get any part of that population to touch their spirit. If you reach just one person, then that person can translate into their group's language. For example, a reflection of the history of the suffering is an important lesson for Cambodian spirituality and healing, as in Maha's peace prayer (IV # 39). Unfortunately, Maha Ghosananda has passed away and there are no other obvious change agents with similar levels of dignity currently undertaking similar activities to unite the country.

reconciliation efforts, a vision of a shared future may be possible. Interfaith religious dialogues underway by various NGOs could supplement the Buddhist approaches to include all Cambodians.<sup>6</sup> An important aspect of the use of religion in reconciliation efforts is related to restoring dignity.

## **Restore Dignity**

As described in the last chapter, one of the processes of reconciliation is to restore dignity to both parties. I posit, from the many statements from victims about their feelings of dehumanization, that some recognition of these past actions by the perpetrators or the leaders is needed for reconciliation in Cambodia. And on the side of the victims, although many do indeed re-include some perpetrators in their moral communities, allowing for the excesses of the regime and their need to carry out orders to avoid being killed themselves, many other victims do not seem to have translated their acceptance into real actions towards former KR.<sup>7</sup>

## **Joint Sorry/Healing Approach**

Because in Cambodia there is a cultural tendency to avoid conflict and to avoid losing face, the 'Joint Sorrow/Healing Approach' as suggested by Galtung could be an appropriate model in Cambodia (2001: 14-15). This approach could include victims and perpetrators discussing how a war could have been avoided, or other common topics. The purpose would be to create a situation whereby victims might meet perpetrators, with a focus on healing through joint sorrow and shared pain (Galtung 2001: 14). This approach would seem to complement the ECCC, and fit in with victims'

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<sup>6</sup> For example, the Alliance for Conflict Transformation has a program on interfaith peacebuilding: <http://www.actcambodia.org/sub.php?id=1>

<sup>7</sup> Some perpetrators and others involved with the former KR regime still live outside the community, reluctant to interact with others out of fear for their lives.

needs and desires to know why Khmer killed Khmer and to promote the compassion of Buddhism.

## **Community Efforts – Participatory, Local Approaches**

Starting in the late 1980s, development projects were initiated all over Cambodia to promote community participation in economic development. However, these projects did not focus on building relationships because the war was still on-going, and many factions of society were still separated. On both sides of the civil divide, leaders sought to incite their constituents in order to find enough soldiers to keep fighting the war. Now two decades later, participatory development projects are much more common, and security is much improved. Economic development projects that support the entire community and are done inclusively can be important tools for reconciliation as people focus on the economic gain and future vision, and in the meantime can build relationship, trust, and interdependence (Chayes and Minow 2003b: xix-xx; Galtung 2001: 15). But lessons learned from other countries have reinforced the idea that the initiative for such projects, especially those involving reconciliation, are more successful when the initiative originates with the conflict-affected population rather than from outsiders (Stovel 2003: 11).<sup>8</sup> This UN/NGO worker who had worked in Cambodia since the early 1980s suggested several possible approaches which could facilitate reconciliation in similar settings:

I would give more support to community efforts. Here it was difficult because of security and there was still fighting going on. But in other post-conflict situations, the fighting has stopped. I would provide more support to work together to rebuild the country. Pagodas came up with the assistance themselves. There could have been more community participation. The first thing was to restore normalcy, and to get the schools going and to provide respite for the parents. What we see in the post-KR period is the children grew up with very little emotional support. The parents didn't have it, and the schools also were not providing support. So another lesson learned would be to provide more emotional and psychological support. We need to rebuild esteem and

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<sup>8</sup> Stovel observed: 'Even when the attacker and victim are from the same family or community, I do not think inter-individual reconciliation and forgiveness are important for peace and indeed pushing victims too hard to reconcile or forgive may at best trivialize the meaning of these words and at worst be counterproductive' (2003: 11).

confidence of the people . . . I thought to let people work through their trauma with monks and doctors is the best rather than bringing in external psychologists (IV # 127).

The plethora of indigenous NGOs in Cambodia provides hope for the future. Since many of them focus on rural development, including sorely needed infrastructure projects, the standard of living of rural populations will hopefully improve. As mentioned earlier institutional strengthening is crucial for reconciliation processes, and many NGOs are focusing on good governance, transparency, anti-corruption, improving the judicial system, and promoting and protecting human rights. The issue of human rights, in the context of rebuilding societal institutions is an important element of reconciliation in post-conflict countries. Many respondents spoke about human rights, and a common thread was the references to the impunity of both the KR leaders and of current leaders that contributed to social decay.

## **Building Trust – Don’t Say No!**

An expatriate UN/NGO worker, who had broken the security rules to enter former KR areas, spoke about the importance of taking risks in order to build trust and break down initial barriers:

Because I was prepared to go, knowing we were going into the unknown. Breaking all the rules . . . you do things because of the importance of a moment and sometimes you have got to push the boundaries of the procedures and make it happen. . . you’ve got to take advantage of the moment. And sort it out later. That is more important than following the procedures . . . Because he [former KR leader] had asked me to go [into the former KR area], and I thought, early on, I would try to avoid saying ‘No’. Because I wanted to build a relationship and I wanted him to believe that we could do something. I didn’t want him to say ‘come visit me’ and find that all he got was flowery words and no action. Once I had agreed with him and trusted him, I needed to show him that that was true. And you have to do it one or two times to show that your words have meaning. I think that is really important in these kinds of moments. You have to show that you are in fact an honest broker. You will take some risks because you are being true to your word. Once you have done that, you have a different kind of relationship (IV # 28).

Another way to build trust, according to key informant Khin, was to join in the activities of conflicting parties in a neutral way and not to criticize them.<sup>9</sup> An additional approach was described as taking initiative and daring to take risks – ‘just do it!’

## **Just Do It!**

One expatriate UN/NGO worker who had been involved with Cambodians for more than 30 years described how the process of reconciliation occurred in his experience: ‘That’s the trick in reconciliation, you try to find the acts or actions that people do all together, activities to help bring them together. But don’t use the words peace and reconciliation. These are words you use afterwards when you reflect on it. Just do it!’ (IV # 39). Another lesson for interventions for reconciliation was suggested by another expatriate UN/NGO worker, who had worked in the former KR areas as the war was ending. He spoke about his early forays into the KR area that he did without permission from the UN security network, but he’d seen an opportunity to go and see the situation for himself: ‘We head off on this bloody trip. . . .There was a reason to go there because there was someone quite important who we could talk to in the area and sort of, you know, get a feeling for what was going on. It was probably against the rules. Because we just had to do things’ (IV # 28).

## **Build Social Capital**

Several of the former KR cadres felt that their communities had better social cohesion during the KR period as compared to the current society: ‘Yes, there was more solidarity than now . . . in the past people were so united. Before . . . we usually ate rice sponsored by the Red Cross, so we were full of solidarity. Nowadays, we work privately, so the rich work with the rich and the poor work with the poor. It is not the same as before!’ (IV # 65). Although I am not advocating a return to the communal eating methods of the KR period, some respondents were nostalgic for a period of

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<sup>9</sup> See quote on page 200 from IV # 103.



more solidarity; NGOs could address these concerns and find ways to reconstruct social institutions such as traditional associations that could generate social capital.

As I noted in Chapter 5, there can be a fine line between victims and perpetrators and in any reconciliation process the complexity of guilt versus innocence must be addressed in order to increase social cohesion. All KR are not necessarily perpetrators. And the fine line becomes even finer in the case of child soldiers. Private and public discussions of these fine lines could benefit all sectors of society and contribute towards mutual understanding and the development of empathy. In Cambodia's climate of conflict avoidance, and fear of public shaming, few perpetrators are likely to speak out; however, innovative ways to discuss these thorny issues would help move Cambodian society towards healing and reconciliation.

## **Reconstructing the Cambodian Identity**

A refrain I heard again and again, and that was discussed in Chapter 4, was 'why did Khmer kill Khmer?' For example, this long-term expatriate UN/NGO worker observed: 'For the people, it was hard to know why. [They wondered. . .] What is it about us that this happened, why did Khmer kill Khmer? And why does the international community react so strongly against us, reject us and refuse to give us aid? This had a deep psychological effect on the people' (IV # 127). The damaged sense of the Khmer identity travelled with Cambodians overseas, as when they met people from other countries, their main identity was as victims of the KR – but they no longer wanted to be seen as merely victims from events 30 years ago. In addition, former KR were burdened with the collective guilt of the crimes of the group – all former KR have been seen as guilty by association, no matter what they did during the regime. This lost and damaged sense of identity and belonging could be an important starting point upon which to tackle community and national healing.

## **Top-down Versus Bottom-up – Focus on the Leaders**

As we heard from many respondents in Chapter 5 and elsewhere, the conflict in Cambodia was more dependent upon the leaders than upon the rank and file. This expatriate UN/NGO worker, speaking about implementing projects in the former KR areas, observed that no progress was made until the leaders were on board: ‘You didn’t have the leadership, but you did have the people. And when [my colleague] went there, bang! It happened. So it was a leadership issue, it wasn’t the people’ (IV # 28). Another respondent, a schoolteacher in Northwest-4, observed: ‘I did not know how the leaders were, but as for their soldiers, they would stop fighting immediately if their leader ordered them to stop’ (IV # 104).

This issue of leadership has implications for planning interventions to promote reconciliation, as well as for conflict prevention. Although interventions are not the topic of this thesis, the findings clearly point to both a bottom-up and a top-down approach. In Cambodia, with its hierarchical social structure and culture, there can be little significant change unless the leaders approve. The leadership still controls any attempts at justice or dealing with the past, which is the topic of the next sub-section.

## **Justice and Dealing with the Past**

Many observers suggest that Cambodia must confront its past in order to build a new future. Youk Chhang, the director of DC-Cam stated: ‘Reconciliation in Khmer terms is reconnecting the broken pieces. It is our obligation to put these broken pieces together, so that we can understand’ (Roasa 2010). The findings of this research are less clear – many victims and the entire small sample of perpetrators preferred to deal with the past by forms of amnesia, relying on the ECCC to find justice for the crimes of the past.

Although some authors consider justice a mandatory precondition for reconciliation, the real world sometimes does not allow for a just solution to mass

violence. The millions of dollars spent on a trial for KR leaders through the ECCC will provide justice for many Cambodians, but the question of 'why Khmer killed Khmer' will not be fully addressed. Other processes of truth and healing are needed, not the least to address the silence about the crimes of lower level perpetrators.

In conclusion, this thesis has addressed the question 'has reconciliation occurred in Cambodia?' Some observers suggested that Cambodians are already reconciled. This thesis refutes that observation, instead showing that amongst respondents in this study many prefer not to think about the past, and that they merely live in an uneasy truce with their neighbours with much left unspoken. Most perpetrators are living quite separate lives from their direct victims in states of various stages of coexistence. However, with my long experience in Cambodia, I personally have great hopes for the future. The people have suffered greatly but overcome enormous obstacles and demonstrated remarkable resilience. Reconciliation and healing are long, slow processes, but they are well on their way in Cambodia.

# APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A – Research Phases

Phase	Title	Process
Phase 1	Grounding	1986-1987 – Worked on the Thai-Cambodian border 1987-1997, 1999, 2003-2006 – Worked on projects related to reconciliation in Cambodia 1997, 1998, 2000-2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 – Worked as a consultant on reconciliation or coexistence projects in other countries
Phase 2	Background Research	1999-2000 – Conducted independent research on ‘truth, justice, reconciliation, and peace in Cambodia’
Phase 3	PhD Preparation	2005-2006 – Decided on graduate school, applied, enrolled, chose a topic, prepared research proposal
Phase 4	Preliminary Research	2006-2007 – Completed research proposal, conducted 17 formal preliminary interviews, to assist in development of research proposal, completed ethics procedures and permissions
Phase 5	Field Research	2007-2008 – Conducted 123 interviews and 11 focus groups in Cambodia. Visited reconciliation projects of NGOs, attending meetings on reconciliation, mental health, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) and other subjects
Phase 6	Analysis and Write-up	2008-2010 – Processed interview transcripts, analyzed, and wrote up; reviewed another approximately 120 documents, including notes from meetings, informal interviews, and field trips with other NGOs; also reviewed about 25 interviews done by others, including my research assistant and staff at DC-Cam

## APPENDIX B - The 'I' of Research

Especially in the case of lengthy field research involving different cultures, the researcher must consider several important issues in order to separate the researcher from the research. Neutrality and objectivity, the influence of the researcher's presence, and the construction of narratives of the 'other' were all considered in the process of conducting this thesis.

Self-imposed neutrality or impartiality is aptly described in Adam Curle's *Tools of Transformation* (1990), as he describes his personal journey as mediator and his struggles to see different sides of a conflict to increase the parties' understanding and knowledge. During the course of this research I have attempted to keep the 'I' of the researcher in mind so as to objectively view this complicated and emotion-fraught topic. As noted in Baker 'This does not mean that you must forget or disregard your values, but rather that you can place your values in a framework where they compete with contrary values' (1994: 4). Stepping back to consider the cultural setting and to question one's own culture and perspective is an important part of the research process.

Although one thinks of narrative as what the researcher hopes to gather from their respondents, it is the researcher who constructs that narrative. Pouligny et al. suggest criteria for research in post-conflict countries: the researcher must pay attention to complexity, have adequate historical knowledge, have capacity for real listening, and for 'understanding beyond the words and the silence' (Pouligny, Doray and Martin 2007: 30). Through the extensive interviewing, discussions with my research assistant, lengthy travel times, and participant observation, these criteria have been met in the field research. Deep listening was especially important in the case of accused perpetrators, to put aside any rumours heard about their past, and to listen with empathy. Pouligny et al. also noted that narratives occur 'at the intersections of collective history and psychic history, individual histories and group

relations, and group linkages and the working culture (Pouligny, Doray and Martin 2007: 30). In Cambodia, these intersections have been paramount and are discussed in the body of the thesis. Furthermore, because of the trauma suffered by Cambodian respondents who were involved in the mass violence, their narratives are a function of their selective and painful memories.

There is much literature on the difficulties for the researcher to actually represent the 'other' (Stronach and MacLure 1997 cited in Stark and Torrance 2005: 34), which is of course compounded when the interviews are taken through the lens of an interpreter. However the cross-checking described above allowed for the smallest amount of error and misinterpretation possible.

I have had to be very careful not to advise any of the respondents or give my own value judgments – partly because that is the nature of research, but also important because of cultural relativity. I had started this research with the personal belief that one cannot walk through life with a festering wound of anger or sought-after revenge lying just below the surface – that in many cases dealing with the past and acknowledgement of past wrongs helps the future. But I have maintained an open mind, to learn from Cambodians what their experiences are. What is reconciliation to them, and how can they best heal from the trauma of the past? Indeed as will be seen in later chapters, talking about the past may not be the most common cultural experience for Cambodians.

Part of the reason the data collection period took a long time was that interviews often took longer than expected. Once people started discussing their past, they often wanted to tell me about their suffering, and wanted to make sure I knew about the hardship of the KR period. Especially when I asked about ideas about reconciliation, forgiveness, and apology, respondents were asked to think about things that could evoke painful memories. I had to be particularly sensitive to the symptoms of mental health and trauma, and respondents were provided with counselling resources if needed.

A particularly poignant (but frequently faced) dilemma in this research was that respondents often asked for money or assistance during or after the interview. These requests are common when working in, visiting, or doing research in Cambodia, but nonetheless, make the researcher uncomfortable, as poor rural villagers were often in dire straits, with great difficulties faced in obtaining basic health care and other services. At the end of each interview, I would ask if the respondent had any questions to ask me, hoping to elicit unexpected observations. But often requests for assistance were made. For example when I asked these two elderly neighbours if they had any questions, they replied with an explanation of illness and hardship:

No, I have no questions but I just ask you to help the people in this village . . . I just got sick. I stayed in hospital for a month. I am hot and tired because I lack blood . . . I borrowed money to stay in the private hospital because you can get better faster. In the government hospital, a small illness quickly becomes serious (IV # 108).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interview references are provided in shorthand as in the above example: Interview (IV) number (#), 108.

## APPENDIX C – Research Question Guide

### **PART I – To ask Cambodians who were in Cambodia during the KR period**

1. **Where were you before/during and after the Khmer Rouge (KR) period?** What were your experiences during that period? Have you lost friends and family members? How many people have died or are missing? How do you feel about what happened to you? Your family? Do you feel that you were a victim? Perpetrator? Bystander? Mixed?
2. **How do your past experiences affect you now?** Did you, and do you now, feel any suffering or trauma? Have you returned to your native village? Have you met anyone that you knew from the KR years?
3. **Do you know any people who have done direct harm to you or your family during the KR period or during the war?** How do you feel about them now? Do you want to forgive, punish, forget, or seek reparations?

### **PART II – To ask of all informants**

4. **What does reconciliation mean to you?** What does the word mean (*phsah phsaa knyear / bangruom bang-ruop knea/samros samruei*)? Has reconciliation happened already or not? Between who and who? How did reconciliation happen? What is the process of reconciliation? Has reconciliation and healing taken place? If it has not happened, then should it? How important is it? How do the following relate to reconciliation: truth, justice, forgiveness, healing, trials, religion, trauma, relationships, long term, peacebuilding, coexistence? What is national reconciliation (*bangruom bangruop cheat*) and has it occurred? How do individual, community, and national reconciliation relate to each other? Are there any lessons you or others have learned in Cambodia related to reconciliation that could be helpful to others going through similar conflicts and recovery in other countries?
5. **Do you know any direct victims and perpetrators who have, or had direct contact with each other?** How did or do they relate to each other? Have you ever seen or heard of any apologies or forgiveness?
6. **Do you know any projects or activities by individuals, organizations or government (third-party interventions) that have worked for or resulted in reconciliation?** If so, who and how? What was their impact or results and how were they measured? Were there knowledge, attitude, and/or behaviour changes? What caused the project to be successful or unsuccessful? At what level did these occur, individual, community, or national level?
7. **Can reconciliation and healing be done through projects and activities?** If so, how? Should this be done? Why?
8. **How do you feel about the Trials for the KR?** Do you trust the process? Are you hopeful? Is the KRT important? What will it accomplish? Is justice important? Will the KRT bring justice? Reconciliation? Do you think the trials should happen?



## **APPENDIX D – Data Collection Processes**

This section on collection processes describes the details of the process of obtaining research assistance, developing questions, conducting interviews, and generating transcripts.

### **Research Assistance**

I recruited a research assistant to assist with administrative tasks (such as copying, reading documents in Khmer, and selecting related documents to copy), translating written documents, transcribing tapes, and assisting in interpretation (between Khmer or Cambodian and English). The research assistants were recruited from the University of Phnom Penh's Schools of Psychology and Sociology so that they could assist in referring any interviewees who might feel they want to consult a counsellor. Although I had good understanding of Khmer, lengthy experience in the country, and was able to crosscheck the translation, using an interpreter allowed for time to take notes, and to speak with the research assistant later about impressions, reactions, environmental factors, and other issues. One full-time assistant worked from 2006 through 2009, and has remained a resource for questions about the translation of the transcripts throughout the writing-up period. In addition, two additional assistants were hired for a period of several months to assist with the transcription of the auditory tapes.

### **Question and Questionnaire Development**

A detailed set of guiding questions was developed for the in-depth interviews, keeping in mind the recent literature on reconciliation. A shortened version was used in the field as an 'aide memoire', see Appendix C. Many of these questions could not be asked directly, but had to be indirectly approached due to their sensitive and personal nature. If respondents were interviewed more than once, the more sensitive questions, as well as specific follow-up questions, were asked in later interviews. The majority of

these questions were from a questionnaire I developed in my 1999/2000 study (McGrew 2000a). However, a large number of other questionnaires were consulted during the development of these questions, including a questionnaire used on a reconciliation program in Cambodia (Saltsman 2006), and questions used in qualitative research on justice and reconciliation in Cambodia by Pham et al. (2009). However, to allow for serendipitous findings, and to keep an open mind necessary for these complex topics, additional questions were added during the research period.

Reliability and validity of questions was checked during preliminary and initial interviews, and informally through discussion with my research assistant. In addition, all questions used on my 1999 survey had been checked for reliability and validity and had been translated, and reverse translated to check for appropriate terminology – these questionnaires were used as training materials for the research assistant. Discussions with the research assistant also confirmed internal consistency within individual interviews, as well as crosschecking of information received from various respondents about the same people or experiences.

## **Conducting Interviews and Generating Transcripts**

For the majority of the interviews, the research assistant and I were both present: although I conducted the interview, if the respondent or I had difficulty understanding, the research assistant would translate. All interviews started with formal greetings and brief introductions. We then proceeded with the consent procedure, which included explaining the purpose of the research and asking the respondents to agree to the interview on tape. We both took notes, and if permission was granted, the interview was tape-recorded. However, given the sensitive and personal nature of the interview questions, we also made sure to attentively listen to the respondents by making occasional eye contact, nodding, and providing verbal cues. Later the notes, and or the audio files were converted into written transcripts. When recording was not possible (in the case of informal interviews or serendipitous

interviews when I did not want to risk disturbing the interview with technology (16 interviews), or when the respondent denied permission (three interviews), notes were taken at the site, then the notes completed and typed up soon thereafter. For participant observation, when the setting did not allow note-taking, then memory guides were used and notes filled out later. Only the primary interviews were analyzed using the qualitative analysis computer program (see next section).<sup>1</sup>

Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to two hours, averaging about one hour to 90 minutes each. In order to avoid either boring the respondents or taking time away from their everyday tasks needed for survival, questions were geared towards each respondent's identity, though certain basic questions were asked of all respondents, such as what does reconciliation mean to you, and do you think it has been achieved.

Often we had to use different ways of asking the same questions such as the question 'what advice would you give to others seeking to reconcile after civil war.' Rural respondents in particular were not used to being asked their opinions in this way, but some gave thoughtful and interesting replies.

Open-ended questions were asked to avoid yes/no answers. Easier, less threatening, and less sensitive questions were asked first, which usually led to the respondent talking about their experiences under the KR period – then towards the end more sensitive questions were tackled.

For respondents who spoke English as their first language, or with ease, I conducted interviews usually alone, in English (13 Cambodian and 16 expatriate). Some of these interviews I transcribed myself, a few were done by my research assistant, and a few I paid an expatriate transcriber to do. I conducted one interview in French, and translated it and transcribed it to English myself. With Khmer-speaking informants, interviews were conducted in Khmer, either by me or with assistance of the research assistant. Most interviews were tape-recorded. In the case when the tape

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<sup>1</sup> Only the primary interviews were analysed using the qualitative analysis computer program (see next section).

was difficult to hear, notes were used to complete the transcripts. At first the tapes were transcribed into Khmer by the research assistant, and then into English, but, due to the lengthy process of transcription, tapes were later primarily transcribed directly into English. I reviewed all transcripts and checked the English translations for accuracy through discussions with the research assistant as well as by listening to the auditory tapes. Most transcripts were reviewed, corrected, and clarified at least four times by both myself and the research assistant.

We made special efforts to include replies from women, which sometimes took repeated encouragement, and silences to wait for responses, as women were in general less likely to speak openly, especially in the presence of men, officials, or persons they saw as their superiors.

# **APPENDIX E – Coventry University Ethics Approval Form**

## **COVENTRY UNIVERSITY ETHICS COMMITTEE (Form 1) <sup>1</sup>**

### **POSTGRADUATE STUDENT & STAFF APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL**

<b>Name</b>	<b>E-mail</b>
McGrew, Laura	lamcgrew@igc.org

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<sup>1</sup> W / HLS / Student / Ethics / CU Ethics Forms / CU Ethics PG and Staff Form 1 BES Sep06 Revision

<p><b>Designation / Subject &amp; Faculty</b>  PhD - Faculty of Business, Environment and Society, Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies</p>
<p><b>Title of Study</b>  An Analysis of Reconciliation in Cambodia: The Influence of Third Party Interventions</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of proposal</b>  The overall aim is to identify key factors facilitating processes of community-level reconciliation in Cambodia, with particular reference to the significance of third party interventions. The specific objectives include: (1) To analyze concepts and understandings of reconciliation processes held by Cambodian and international stakeholders; (2) To identify the key third parties and interventions promoting reconciliation in Cambodia; (3) To identify the key factors impacting upon the efficacy of different forms of third party intervention in the promotion of grass-roots reconciliation in Cambodia; and (4) To develop a theoretical framework of the process of reconciliation through third party interventions to promote reconciliation in 'post-conflict' societies.</p> <p>This study builds upon research done in 1999 and 2000 (McGrew, 2000) when I spoke with over 180 Cambodians in individual interviews and focus groups. I have maintained many of these contacts which will be used to follow up with this study, facilitating access.</p> <p>Two villages in each of two provinces (Kampot and Banteay Meanchey) will be chosen based on the following selection criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically located near former KR strongholds;</li> <li>• Presence of former KR (perpetrators) living alongside their victims;</li> <li>• One village in each province will have had the presence of at least one third-party intervention process, while the second village will have not.</li> </ul> <p>Intensive and repeated interviews will be done to compare and contrast two villages – one that has had third-party interventions, and one that has not. Additional interviews will be collected in Siem Reap Province (third KR stronghold) and the capital, Phnom Penh for interviews with national level government, NGO, international organization informants who have direct or indirect experience with reconciliation and/or third party interventions.</p> <p>This qualitative research will be examined through: <b>1) literature review</b> (including identification of measures used in the literature to assess impacts of interventions of elsewhere); <b>2) document review</b> (primary and secondary sources from government, UN, NGOs, etc); <b>3) field research</b>. The field research will have several components including: <u>(a) interviews (semi-structured) with key informants</u> (Planners and policy-makers, practitioners and funders (30 interviews); <u>(b) interviews (semi-structured) at the community level</u> with villagers (victims, offenders and bystanders) practitioners, and others (80); and <u>(c) observations</u> (markets, temples, health clinics, KR tribunal outreach events, etc). All informants' identities will be kept confidential and the appropriate consent procedures and ethical guidelines will be followed.</p> <p>In order to do a deep analysis of concepts and understandings, individual interviews are the best methodology. Once participants start discussing their views on the past however, they may recover old painful memories. But the two NGOs that offer counselling for persons suffering from previous traumatic events, both state that talking about the past may indeed help the person deal with the past, understand the past and be able to move forward in the future. The consent procedures include giving all informants telephone numbers of counselling services if needed. The participants will lose the time taken speaking to the researchers, but the previous research project has shown that in fact the majority of the participants feel very positive that the researcher has taken the time to listen to the participant. In addition, benefits will ultimately be gained in other situations of post-conflict recovery.</p>

<p><b>2. Sample of participants</b>  Participants will include two groups: 1) key informants in government, non-government organizations and international organizations at the central level, both Cambodian and internationals (50) (Written or audio taped will be obtained); 2) Cambodians living at the village level (80) (audio taped consent will be obtained). See Appendix A for Email concerning full details of consent form planning. Putting signatures on paper (or thumbprints) is a highly tense and dangerous act in Cambodia for many people. This is because signatures and thumbprints are linked to people being forced to vote for certain parties, to sign over land that they don't wish to and other human rights abuses. So even if they can read, starting off an interview with a signature will immediately put people very ill at ease. Also with a very low literacy rate, many villagers that I would plan to speak with, will not be able to read a consent form, so will not even know what they are signing.</p> <p>Exclusion criteria will be those potential participants who refuse to participate, those that are suffering from observable symptoms of mental health disturbance (severe depression, avoidance or anti-social behavior, etc.), or those who may be implicated in the upcoming trials for the Khmer Rouge.</p> <p>Data will be stored in the researcher's and research assistant computers, but will not be printed out with names included. Both computers will be protected with passwords. A separate document will be kept to record the key of pseudonyms given for case studies to be used in the research results. Any interview transcripts sent to others such as the supervisor or advisors will be given pseudonyms.</p>		
<p><b>3. Site/s location</b>  <b>Cambodia – primarily Phnom Penh, Battambang, Banteay Meanchay, Kampot, and Siem Reap Provinces</b></p>		
<p><i>Tick / Cross. *Where answered 'NO', please give reasons on separate page.</i></p>	➤	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><b>No*</b></p>
<p><b>4. Scientific background, design, method and conduct of the study.</b>  a) Have you given a justification for the research?  b) Have you commented on the appropriateness of the design, the perceived benefits, risks and inconveniences to participants?</p>	<p>√</p> <p>√</p>	
<p><b>5. Recruitment of participants.</b>  Have you provided a comprehensive account of the characteristics of the population including the process for obtaining access as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria?</p>	<p>√</p>	
<p><b>6. Care and protection of research participants and researcher.</b>  Have you given an account of any interventions, situations and risks which have the potential to cause concern or harm to the participants and researchers?</p>	<p>√</p>	
<p><b>7. Access, storage, security and protection of participants' confidentiality.</b>  Have you identified who will have access to the data and what measures have been taken to ensure confidentiality and compliance with the Data Protection Act?</p>	<p>√</p>	
<p><b>8. Informed Consent.</b>  Have you given a full description of the process for requesting and obtaining informed consent?</p>	<p>√</p>	
<p><b>9. Community considerations.</b>  Have you considered how this study will benefit the participants or the community from which they have been drawn?</p>	<p>√</p>	
<p><b>10. Participant information Sheet and consent form.</b>  Are these attached?</p>	<p>√</p>	
<p><b>11. Source of External Funding if any</b>  None</p>		

## APPENDIX F – Verbal Consent Form

Coventry University Ethics Committee

Verbal Consent Form

Laura McGrew – *Final – Revised 29 March 2007*

An Analysis of Reconciliation in Cambodia: The Role of Third Party Interventions

Hello, my name is Laura McGrew and I am a PhD student at Coventry University. I have worked many years in Cambodia as well as some other countries such as Sri Lanka and Afghanistan and am interested in post-conflict peacebuilding. I am looking into how communities are managing to live with their past and build a new future together. I have asked to speak to you, because you have had some experiences related to this topic. I want to listen to your stories and ideas so that I can better understand the situation here and to help me write up my PhD thesis. I want to ask you how your experiences during the war time are affecting you now. And how those experiences relate to how you and your community are living together today. I will ask how you feel about topics like truth, justice, and reconciliation. I believe lessons from Cambodia can help other countries.

Our discussion could take about an hour or two, and is entirely voluntary. We can stop or pause the interview at any time you wish. Your name will not be used in the report, and I will not share your identity with anyone else besides my research assistant who is helping me in translation. I have planned this research on my own, and it is not being funded by any organization. The research has been approved by Coventry University where I am studying. If you have any questions, you can reach me at the number on this card [researcher hands respondent business card with information as per below].

If you agree, I would like to record our conversation and take notes so that I can make sure I understand everything clearly and do not miss anything. I will give you a few minutes to think about it. Do you agree to speak with me? [If participant agrees, Researcher turns on tape recorder.]

So could you please say that you agree to speak to me on the tape recording? [Participant gives verbal consent] Thank you very much, now we can continue. [Interview proceeds]

[At the end of the Interview]

Sometimes when people talk about the past, or about difficult events, they may experience some feelings that are related to the past. This is normal, and will probably come up more often now that they are discussing the trial for the Khmer Rouge. However, if you would like to speak with a health professional that is used to helping with these kinds of feelings, then you may telephone TPO, whose telephone number is on the card I have given you. They have a free 'hot-line'. If you have any further questions you may call me, or the research assistant.

[Respondent Business Card content]

Research Project: Reconciliation in Cambodia

Laura McGrew

Researcher/PhD Candidate

Coventry University

[Telephone number]

[Email]

[Research Assistant]

[Telephone number]

[Email]

Transcultural Psychological Organization

[Telephone number]

[Business card includes Coventry University letterhead and ethics committee information]



## APPENDIX G – Written Consent Form

Research Project:  
**An Analysis of Reconciliation in Cambodia**

Consent Form

*2 April 2007*

Laura McGrew, PhD Candidate, Coventry University, Coventry, UK

Laura McGrew is a PhD student at Coventry University. She has worked many years in Cambodia as well as some other countries, such as Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, and is interested in post-conflict peacebuilding. She is looking into how communities are managing to live with their past and build a new future together. She has asked to speak to you, because you have had some experiences related to this topic. She wants to listen to your stories and ideas to better understand the situation here and to help write her PhD (doctoral) thesis. She wants to ask you how your experiences during the war time are affecting you now. And how those experiences relate to how you and your community are living together today. Topics will include truth, justice, and reconciliation. Lessons from Cambodia can help other countries.

The discussion could take about an hour or two, and is entirely voluntary. We can stop or pause the interview at any time you wish. Your name will not be used in the report, and Laura will not share your identity with anyone else besides the research assistant who is helping me in translation. She has planned this research on her own, and it is not being funded by any organization. The research has been approved by Coventry University. If you have any questions, you can reach Laura McGrew or her research assistant at the number below. Furthermore if you have any questions about the conduct of this research, you can contact the Coventry University Ethics Committee, numbers below.

If you agree, Ms. McGrew would like to record the conversation and take notes to make sure she understands everything clearly and does not miss anything. You make take a few minutes to think about participating.

If a person has experienced stressful or traumatic events, sometimes when these are discussed, some people may experience some feelings that are related to the past. This is normal, and will probably come up more often now that they are discussing the trial for the Khmer Rouge. However, if you would like to speak with a health professional that is used to helping with these kinds of feelings, then you may telephone TPO, whose telephone number is on the card I have given you. If you have any further questions you may also call me, the research assistant.'

Please sign below if you agree to be interviewed for this research project. Your signature indicates that you understand the purpose of the research and the conditions of the interview as outlined above. Do you agree to speak with me?

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Witness signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## APPENDIX H – Coding the Transcripts

This memo describes the coding process as it changed over the research period. Coding in the NVivo 7 software program allows both free nodes (unrelated to each other) and tree nodes (mother nodes have one or more child nodes as sub-categories). The preliminary coding list consisted of a large list of free nodes, which were drawn from my research questions, as well as from the specific guiding research questions on the questionnaire guidelines.<sup>1</sup> Many of these codes were descriptive (versus analytical or topical). This very large list of preliminary codes was used as a basis for reviewing transcripts in another similar data set (Saltsman 2006).<sup>2</sup> Then categories were grouped together as ‘tree’ nodes, as themes emerged from the initial coding of the interviews.

These codes were then reviewed, analyzed, and modified during the period of the preparation of the transcripts after some sample interviews were coded. As I developed the nodes, I wrote in descriptions of what each node included and in some cases what was not included. Then while coding if I needed a reminder I would check the definition. At this point a few additional codes were added such as: apology (separated from forgiveness), Cham/Chinese, civil society, and cruelty. As the coding continued, other subsets were removed or combined as they were found not to be used: development (added to economics), prison, social capital (combined with

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary codes included: culture/art, development, Diaspora, ECCC, economics, empathy/sympathy, evaluation, forgive, gender, healing, history, impunity, intervention, justice and KRT, justice transitional, killing, KR, memory and memorial, morality, narrative, new people, old people, peace, peacebuilding, perpetrator, politics, poverty, power, prison, PRK, reconciliation, refugee/IDP, reintegration, religion, reparations, responsibility, revenge/vengeance, ritual, security, social capital, space, survival, torture; trauma; truth; victim; violence; youth.

<sup>2</sup> The codes used for this project, as designed by the author and the project coordinator included: access to info; cruelty; current needs; development/poverty; forgive/forget; forgive/poverty; gender, impunity and ROL; justice and KRT; KRT and peace; memory and history; morals; old/new people; politics; UN and other countries; questions; reconciliation and coexistence; religion; responsibility; revenge; reintegration; torture; trauma and healing; violence; younger generation.

community) and survival (too broad and unclear). The final codes included all three types of coding: descriptive, topical, and analytical – as descriptive nodes were combined into categories, more topics became apparent. These were grouped into seven categories: community, context, emotions, individual (characteristics), intervention, justice, and reconciliation. The codes related to reconciliation included: advice to others; apology, acknowledgement, and truth and reconciliation commission; contact; definition; forget; forgiveness; healing; heart; ECCC and reconciliation; memory and history; mutual assistance; peacebuilding; reintegration and national reconciliation; relationship; reparation; respect; tolerance; and trust.

In addition, there were six free nodes that were not included under those main categories, some of which tagged areas of interest for future research (Diaspora, gender, miscellaneous, questions to ask me, quotes, and youth). The free node 'quotes' gathered together all important areas of the interview transcripts which were highlighted as possible use for quotes: this allowed me to double check any parts of the text that were particularly important and to reduce duplicative quotes.

After the transcripts were completely prepared, during the final stages of data analysis, the number of codes was consolidated to focus the findings. Several categories were combined into one node, for example:

- justice and the KRT and transitional justice were combined
- economics and poverty were combined
- new people and old people merged into discrimination
- Cham and Chinese deleted – as these were mainly descriptive and not the main topic of the research

Another important issue is trying to avoid the possible overlap of different discrete categories. For example, as I was processing the transcripts, I had noted I wanted to add nodes on anger and fear. I was thinking these should be separate from 'trauma' but in fact, often when someone is talking about trauma, or I am asking about it, this will be related to emotion. On the other hand, if someone is talking about being

fearful of someone, it is related to trauma, but not necessarily directly. Thus in the end, I coded all of these separately: anger, fear, and trauma.

At a fairly early stage, I noted that there were some nodes that seemed not to be coded very often, yet appeared to be important themes, so I left them in. Here are some observations I made about those codes during the process:

- security - I had identified security as a topic/node, but very few people spoke about security per se, though in certain areas they talked about fear and insecurity in the past. I had not asked a specific question about security.
- community and social capital – This is also a very important issue, but it seems hard to code this.
- identity – is also an important issue, and offhand I can think of the majority of the Cham people identifying themselves as part of a special group, but cannot see that this will be coded very often. Hopefully I can link it up later as a theme.

Periodically, I reviewed the numbers of nodes and the numbers of sources and references for each node. I then re-thought the coding system to see if things should be organized differently. When I added new nodes, I would mark the master list so I could go back and re-code the previous transcripts that had not included that node. For example, after the first third of the interviews were coded, I added a separate node for 'heart' as the word was mentioned frequently. I had highlighted this concept in my initial literature review and then realized it should actually have its own code. I also added one for morality and about half way through for respect.

Some of the codes were not directly linked to the research questions at first glance, but because I was interested in these topics, I added them: (1) Peoples Republic of Kampuchea (PRK – related to the very early stages of recover and reconciliation in 1979 and 1980); and (2) forced marriage. In the end, both were useful, as I did gather a great deal of information on the PRK and will be able to write an interesting follow-up article, and because I was able to supply some interesting information to some other researchers investigating forced marriage.

NVivo has a system to create 'cases' which in my data set would have been the same as individual interviewees. Each case can be assigned attributes, which are defined as per the data: for example, gender, age, etc. Then queries can be run, such

as reviewing what female victims said about revenge. This assignment process took quite a long time, but I thought it worthwhile so as to assist in making specific queries. However, what I finally discovered, after consulting an expert in NVivo, was that I would have had to manually re-code many of the interviews in order to make 'cases' out of the interviews that had more than one person in them. (I never had the intention to make cases out of the focus groups, as I was not able to consistently assign text to individual focus group participants.) Thus, for this thesis I was not able to use the 'cases' and the attribute function of NVivo.

As I coded the data, I wrote observations in a journal, and this memo will end with a sample of those observations.

## **Observations**

Following are some examples of observations written in my journal as I analyzed the data. These themes have surfaced in the final theories developed in the thesis.

- **Progression of Interviews**

The progression of the interviews is usually similar, starting out with context, which is interspersed with community as it applies to the context. This includes their history, for example about the KR period, PRK, etc. Towards the end it moves to more specific questions.

- **Time**

I did a word frequency search today and had thousands of references for time, more frequent than reconciliation for example. I should re-check, as time is definitely an important theme.

- **Cruelty**

I am often coding the same passages for perpetrator, cruelty, killing, The subject of cruelty has come up much more often than I had imagined. Sometimes, they also talk about cruelty related to KR leaders in general or the ECCC.

- **Empathy**

Finally someone mentions empathy spontaneously, though he is a community facilitator and has received training.

- **Hierarchy**

Some good insights on hierarchy, references to leadership in KR and how people operate under hierarchy which I propose -- here I think I show that hierarchy has an important role in reconciliation. If your leaders tell you to do it, you do it, an important first step. While during the war, Prime Minister Hun Sen was ready several times to reconcile, but when he did, and suddenly welcomed former KR leader Ieng Sary into the fold (after keeping them as the enemy 'other' for a decade) he was vilified by the international press and by local people's comments.

## APPENDIX I – The Respondents

This appendix supplements the text about the respondents of this research study. General information about the respondents from the three study areas (southwest, northwest and Phnom Penh) was reviewed in the body of the thesis, while this appendix provides more detailed information about the respondents and their characteristics.

When possible, basic demographic information was collected on all respondents of formal interviews including: (gender, age, marital status, education, religion, ethnicity, nationality, occupation, whether or not lived under the KR or not, and group identification as old-base person, cadre, new person, and if lived in Cambodia since 1979 or was refugee).<sup>1</sup> Because the demographic information was not possible to collect for all respondents, especially in more serendipitous interviews, or the large focus groups, no conclusions were drawn about various identifying characteristics (age, gender, etc.) and respondents' views or experiences of reconciliation.

I conducted a total of 134 interviews, 123 individual interviews and 11 focus groups. I attempted to conduct individual interviews with one person alone, but especially in rural Cambodia, it was difficult to focus on just one respondent, as family members and neighbours would come to listen and join in, and it is rude to tell people to leave (especially in their own homes). Of the 123 individual interviews, 101 were of one person, 20 were two-person interviews, and two interviews included three people - they are labelled individual interviews because even though more than one person

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<sup>1</sup> I tried to interview people with a variety of socio-economic statuses. However, in the time allowed for the interview, we did not have time to do a formal rating system of socio-economic status such as observation of belongings. However, in general most respondents whom we interviewed at home in communities were of low or middle income. In Cambodia this means they had a small wooden house, sometimes with a foundation, a few farm animals, and usually some small land to grow rice. For the focus groups we did not visit people's houses so could not even estimate socio-economic status.

may have been present, each person was asked to answer each question and all statements in the interview were attributed to a unique individual.<sup>2</sup>

The 11 focus group interviews were primarily set up by local NGOs, and ranged from three to nine persons, with an average of five persons per focus group. Two of the focus groups were all women, five were all men, and four were mixed. Four of the focus groups were all former KR, five were all victims, and two were mixed. The majority of the focus group members were community members, except in some of the former KR areas when many of the focus group members were also government officials such as village and commune chiefs. The vast majority of the quotes used in the text were from individual interviewees, though a few were from focus groups.

The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 88, but the vast majority of interviews were in their forties, fifties and sixties. I was unable to ask the age of all respondents so summaries or averages are not possible, especially for the focus groups. However only seven of the respondents were under 38 years of age, thus the remaining 127 respondents would have been at least 5 years old at the beginning of the KR regime, and all of the younger respondents stated they were able to remember some of the KR period.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> During small focus groups (of four or five persons) names, ages, and gender of all participants were recorded, but in the larger groups it was not possible to collect all the data nor to attribute statements to particular individuals.

<sup>3</sup> Individual or small group respondents under 38 years of age included:

IV#	# 7	# 8	# 20	# 24	# 49	# 55	# 60
Age	29 years	27 years	18 years	34 years	26 years	27 years	29 years



## APPENDIX J – Talking About Perpetrators

While respondents were eager to talk about their experiences in general and how much they suffered, most were much less eager to discuss specific perpetrators, especially if they were still living nearby.<sup>1</sup> During my initial visits to communities, it was often difficult to find out if there were alleged perpetrators living there, as many were reluctant to speak. Once trust was built however, these discussions became more open. In addition to being reluctant to talk about specific perpetrators, most non-KR were also reticent to discuss the details of particular individuals whom they had witnessed committing crimes, or even heard about committing crimes. Perpetrators were often referred to in general terms, such as Pol Pot, A Pot, or Angkar (terms for the KR regime).<sup>2</sup> This terminology allowed respondents to blame the regime in general rather than individuals.

On one hand, the reticence to speak about perpetrators seemed to be related to fear or safety issues. On the other hand, sometimes victims seemed not to want to openly accuse another person (thus risking open conflict). Some admitted they were afraid. Several respondents said that they didn't see, they were taken away at night, or they never dared look at their faces – they kept their eyes on the ground (IV # 95, IV # 29). 'If we talk about witnessing it is a bit difficult because at that time I did not see with my eyes that this person really killed people or not. I just heard them talk about this' (IV # 61). In research on KR narratives, Sanders found that the victims omitted specific memories of local-level perpetrators from their narratives. She suggests that these omissions impede trauma healing because the local perpetrators remain faceless in victims' narratives so the second generation cannot understand the past (Sanders 2006: 89).

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders noted that '[t]he most important subject that Khmer Rouge survivors wish to forget is the subject of the perpetrator. Yet everything they wish to remember revolves exactly around this very subject' (2006: 62).

<sup>2</sup> The prefix 'A' before a name, 'A Pot' can be translated as 'despicable'.

An exception to this reticence was certain urban-dwelling non-KR respondents who were very eager to talk about specific perpetrators, and several of these victims would tell me the same or similar stories over and over again. In these three particular cases, the victims had focused on one or two particular individuals whom they held most responsible for their father's deaths (IV # 101, IV # 6, IV # 84). All three of these persons expressed symptoms of post-traumatic stress, as all three spoke about nightmares, crying, and feeling very angry. Their reactions, and the comparative approaches of talking, versus not talking about the past, are discussed in Chapter 8 on Processes of Reconciliation.

While many respondents were reticent to speak about specific perpetrators or their actions, all respondents were clear on differentiating themselves from the 'other': victims from perpetrators. However, sometimes those distinctions were not so clear.

## **APPENDIX K – Setting the Stage – Conflict Analysis**

This section provides an overview of respondents' views of the war, and how the war affected them. The leaders of Cambodia used their political means to gain and hold power, and especially given Cambodia's patron-client linkages, and reliance on hierarchy, the population easily followed. However, all respondents looked back at the war period with regret and realized they had been used for the gains of the politicians. The conflict caused cleavages in society between KR and non-KR but these cleavages were essentially manufactured by the economic and political conditions, as 90% of Cambodians are of the same ethnicity. All areas of Cambodia suffered from a long history of war and violence, but stories reverberated for different areas at different times. Many areas in the northwest suffered multiple displacements from the 1970s through 1990s. In the southwest however, because the defections of the former KR occurred in 1994 (rather than in 1998 as in the northwest), the stories of war and violence were less severe than those heard in the northwest region. A history of war and violence are impediments to reconciliation, as the traumatic experiences cause insecurity and also may cause psychological and physical problems leading to negative emotions such as fear, hatred, and mistrust. These negative emotions are compounded by the multiple displacements that Cambodians have suffered.

This background helps the reader understand and empathize with the community members, so as to better understand the processes of reconciliation they describe. As noted in the previous chapter, reconciliation depends upon firstly an analysis of the conflict, including historical and cultural factors. This conflict analysis reviews the nature of the conflict, including issues of power and politics, war and violence, multiple displacements, cleavages, conflict between former KR and non-KR, violence and security, and peace. First we start with the roots of the conflict in power and politics.

## The Roots of the Conflict - Power and Politics

Several respondents spoke of the power politics at leadership levels that caused suffering for citizens and soldiers alike. They suggested that the conflict was essentially a grab for power by leaders in which the individual soldiers for the most part did not have ideological reasons for fighting. This former monk, and long-term UN/NGO worker based in highly contested areas, provided a sophisticated analysis of the power struggles between the political leaders:

We could analyze the conflict as the political conflict because they wanted the power and they all wanted to be the top leaders. As for the Para [non-communist resistance forces], they wanted their armies to be strong and, as for the KR, they also wanted their group to be strong. Until 1993, they used the political conflict. At that time it could not be reconciled (*phsah phsaa*) easily because they still had their guns. If they use the power, we cannot reconcile (*phsah phsaa*). When the villagers hated the other, they always shot at each other. . . We can say that power can make people stop knowing their sisters or brothers any longer; they just want to hold onto the power. When they had power, they can do everything. In 2000, the human rights program started because at that time we did not think that the Para and the KR could understand each other (*yol chet knea*). They still hated each other (*sa'op knear*) very much (IV # 103).

The idea that the war in Cambodia was created and fuelled by super-power politics was explained by this former KR soldier, followed by his firm commitment to peace:

In Cambodia, America supported Lon Nol to oppose Samdech Sihanouk, and the people were in favour of Sihanouk so Lon Nol killed many people. America also took B-52 bombs to bomb for 300 days and 300 nights in Cambodia that left big, big holes that are still there now. It is difficult when one country pushes another country to have war with each other. The war caused everything to be damaged, many people died and were separated and it was very difficult because I had these experiences. So I tell my children from now on to stop making war. It is not a game, it is not good. I decided to do a small business; I don't want to be very rich, I just want to have enough food. If we are rich, we will have jealousy and start to get involved in bad things (IV # 61).

Part of conflict analysis is the examination of the factors that brought the conflict to a close, which may be a 'hurting stalemate' when both parties tire of the costs of the conflict, see no other options, and come to the negotiating table (Zartman 1995: 8). This is what happened in Cambodia (primarily as a result of patron foreign

government fatigue) but the concept is captured through a Cambodian proverb: this rural former KR soldier described the hurting stalemate in Cambodian terms of two cows with worn-out horns that have stopped fighting. Finally, the conflict abates further as the government started to focus on development:

. . . if we compare to the cow, it means that we were fighting until our horns are worn out so we don't want to fight anymore. . . after reintegration, my village and commune have developed. We did not have schools then, but under Samdech Hun Sen ruling, we have developed from year to year (IV # 61).

As the above respondent suggested, development and the alleviation of poverty are foremost in many Cambodians' minds. Because both former KR and non-KR live in relatively similar levels of poverty, they have the common goal to improve their economic situations. Indeed as the areas of Cambodia that had been controlled by the former KR began to open up at the end of the 1990s, and non-KR flocked there looking for free land, reconciliation happened fairly seamlessly, as most did not know each other during the war periods.

These analyses of the roots of the conflict originating with power-hungry leaders facilitates a reconciliation process, because the conflicting groups did not have strong ideological, ethnic, racial, political, or economic differences between them. Because they saw themselves as primarily Cambodian, and as victims, they do not have deep-rooted identity differences. Thus reconciliation processes focus primarily on dealing with their past history of actions during the war period, and does not have to deal with decades or generations of deep ideological difference, of stereotypes, or other differences which are difficult to surmount.<sup>1</sup> The next topic of conflict analysis summarizes that past history of war experience, as respondents' views and memories were remarkably similar, both former KR and non-KR.

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<sup>1</sup> Many respondents said they wanted to know 'why Khmer killed Khmer', or they don't believe that Khmer could kill Khmer, instead blaming their historical enemies, the Vietnamese.

## Multiple Displacements

Massive displacements occurred throughout the conflict period, though people in the northwest suffered more than the rest of the country. The displacements occurred in four distinct periods. Firstly prior to the KR regime, during the Lon Nol and Sihanouk periods in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many people fled their rural homes for the relative safety of urban areas, due to fighting and bombing in the countryside. Secondly during the KR period, one of the signature acts of the KR leaders during their almost four years of rule, was to frequently displace the population. This was done to try to cultivate the greatest amount of land in search of the widespread agrarian revolution, and to keep the population confused, disoriented, and separated from friends and family. Thirdly, after the KR regime fell, millions of Cambodians fled to Thailand (and to a lesser extent, Vietnam). As the civil war continued to rage in Cambodia throughout the 1980s and 1990s, displacements continued, including one massive displacement in 1993 when refugees were repatriated from camps in Thailand. Finally, after the civil war had ceased with the defection of the KR leaders in 1998, displacement occurred on an economic basis, as poor Cambodians travelled to KR areas seeking affordable land. The following quotes describe the displacements of these four periods, which often merged together in the minds of respondents living in these war-affected areas:

This region was the contested (tug-of-war) region because if one side fought, they said that the people in this village were on their side and if the other side fought, they said that these people were on their side. We faced very many difficulties in the war (IV # 103).

About the integration period...I could not remember anything. . . . Well, the standard of living was so poor . . . I was faced with difficulty . . . . Oh, escaping from bombs exploding. After that we were not afraid or fearful, only we just kept collecting things to support our standard of living only (IV # 65).

After I repatriated from Site 2 camp, I came to Battambang in 1993. Then, I thought that I was refugee and I had no land so I decided to come to Pailin. I came to Battambang because I could live with my relatives, but their house was small and they had little land so I had to find another place to live (IV # 78).

As each of these displacements occurred, people lost belongings, homes, and ties to ancestral lands (which are very important in Cambodian culture). As family and friends were separated, traditional cultural ties and support networks were loosened. These fractures in social capital then caused difficulties in reconciliation, as people were inhibited by fear, lack of trust, and lack of support. These cleavages between people are an important unit of analysis in conflict analysis, and in reconciliation.

## **Cleavages**

The divisions in Cambodian society have been discussed in previous chapters, as cleavages in society create conflict, and thus also must be overcome in reconciliation. Most respondents were able to identify various cleavages between people as root causes of conflict, though as in the quotes above, many recognized the false nature of the cleavages, as they were created through propaganda from leaders seeking power. This senior government official describes deeper divisions as several waves of cleavages throughout recent history:

If you find out about everybody's past you will have a problem in the whole country. Because Cambodia, it was divided since the beginning. When we started the coup before the war, before 1970, there were some groups, such as the rebel group against Sihanouk. There were differences between the two groups then. After that, after the coup, Cambodia was divided even further. But if we point at each other this will destroy the country. When the KR took whole country, they divided into the old people and new people, and this separated the people, and made them very divided. We see that we have to be realistic, because everybody is a victim of the KR policy! You cannot continue [the cycles of revenge] and if you can continue, even I can kill people in my village. I could do that because we were divided for a long time (IV # 132).

The above analysis by a government official living in Phnom Penh suggests deeper cleavages than those described in the descriptions of most of the rural respondents. One explanation of this difference, is that people living in rural areas may reconcile more easily as they are forced to live side by side and do not have the means to change locations. In contrast, those living in the urban areas can choose to live separate lives and may be able to avoid contact with those to whom they feel in

opposition. The next section also speaks to the cleavages between people, between former KR and non-KR, in the context of rural Cambodia.

## **Conflict Between Former KR and Non-KR**

While specific relationships between individual former KR and non-KR are discussed in Chapter 5, in general most respondents stated that there were no conflicts based upon these relationships. In interviews, especially in the northwest former KR areas, I would begin with the relatively safe topics of general questions about the situation in the community, including conflicts in the area. In only one of the interviews did a respondent admit that people used the KR versus non-KR label when involved in current-day conflict:

Such conflict rarely happens, as the main conflicts are neighbourhood conflicts, domestic violence, land conflict, and business conflict like cutting forest illegally. If concerning the conflict mentioned that you are Khmer Rouge versus you are from the Para [non-communist resistance], it occurs rarely. People rarely mention about it. When they get drunk however, they might have said that if you were so strong, why don't you go to the forest to be with the Khmer Rouge? (IV # 60).

This finding was initially surprising, in that one would expect people with a history of mass violence between victim and perpetrator groups, to fall back upon their past history and identities when involved in conflicts. However upon further examination, the Cambodian approach to conflict resolution (avoidance) and reliance upon hierarchy probably inhibited the development of such conflicts. This avoidance reaction however does not mean that conflicts are forgotten, but they are often merely filed away and then may explode at a later date in a violent reaction.

## **Violence and Security**

The culture of violence remains a problem in Cambodia but it affects both victims and perpetrators fairly equally. Levels of societal violence, though debated, seem increased in today's Cambodia in comparison to levels before the war. Eisenbruch attributes an upsurge in violence (domestic violence, rape, sexual abuse,



women hurting women, parental murder) in the late 1990s to a loosening of government controls with an 'explosion of personal freedoms' (2007: 83). As noted in Chapter 3, human security is a basic human need, and without security the process of reconciliation is difficult. Since much of the violence today is either state-condoned or due to ineffectual security forces, all citizens are angry at their government for a lack of protection.

A theme that arose frequently in the interviews is the issue of land disputes. The vast majority of disputes reported by respondents were related to land, especially in the northwest provinces, where there is more free land, land speculation, and recent migration. This focus group member noted 'There were mostly land cases' (IV # 79). The most common and the most problematic land cases I heard about were military or government officials seizing land from others, then using their power to violently remove people from their land. This is a common problem throughout Cambodia today. People's common suffering at the hand of unequal treatment from powerful people above them can even be a factor *promoting* reconciliation as people can find solace in their common suffering. A society with adequate security measures to control violence is the ideal context for reconciliation and in which to promote peace.

## **Peace**

As noted by Lederach, peace is one of the pillars of reconciliation (1997). Throughout the interviews, respondents made strong statements promoting peace and disarmament, and shared their sadness about the futility of the many years of war. One example is this strong and eloquent plea for peace made in this focus group (participant 1 was a former KR soldier and participant 2 a government soldier):

1: Based on my view, we should create one organization to call both leaders to meet each other and negotiate because the war doesn't have any benefit at all. On the other hand, it damages your country. The benefit is for the country which sells weapons to you! In conclusion, we should call both leaders to study and discuss about the law and to respect human rights. . . .

2: . . . I don't only want peace in Cambodia but I also want peace in the other countries which are having war. As evidenced in Vietnam, and Hiroshima in Japan, those bombs still affect the people in those countries. The children were

born without hands or legs because air pollution of those bombs in Vietnam, trees did not grow anymore since they threw chemicals on them. It affected the health of the people even it happened since 1945. It is still there from 50 to 60 years ago. It has great effect on the people so I request the leaders in the countries which have war come to see Cambodia about peace and development after we finished the war. These are all of my requests and ideas (IV # 81).

The presence of a peaceful society, with security and respect for human rights, is an important basis for the development of reconciliation (though in many post-conflict countries such as Cambodia a great challenge to obtain).

In conclusion, an analysis of the conflict is an important starting point for an analysis of reconciliation. This section on 'setting the stage' explains respondents' views of the roots of the conflict, and how the conflict affected their lives then, and today.

## APPENDIX L - Children of Former Khmer Rouge

This section describes how respondents viewed the integration of children of former KR members into society. Discrimination is still an issue in Cambodia today, but the few second generation respondents in this research study denied any discrimination against children of former KR. For example, this interview with a former KR soldier, his wife, and daughter suggest that second generation former KR are not discriminated against, and other young people in the school are not aware of the background of each other's parents: 'Father: No, she is not accused as being KR. Daughter: No, they did not accuse me. Father: My child was very young so she did not know anything. They probably did not know who she is. Daughter: No, they did not know me' (IV # 50). Another example was provided by this teacher in a mixed KR and non-KR area about former KR respondent # 17: 'Anyway, I see that her children are welcomed by other students, there are no problems with them at school' (Email correspondence with teacher 10 August 2008).

When I asked this 18-year-old young man who had moved from a government-controlled area to a former KR stronghold village if he knew any children of former KR he replied: 'No, not really', an obvious falsehood, as there were many children of prominent former KR leaders in his high school (IV # 91 NE). In general there is certainly reticence to address such sensitive issues as to who is former KR, and who is not, directly in conversation. On the other hand, a young UN/NGO worker whom I have known for several years spoke freely about who was who amongst her friends and community:

Close to my house there is one KR family living. I don't know any others who have come to live in my village. The former KR family is rich; they have a big house and a lot of land. We don't have much contact with them. The husband is a military officer and he married a woman I knew, after his first wife died. She was divorced and had a small business in another village and they met there. It is possible that others are around here too, but they hide their identity. These neighbours hide themselves; maybe they feel they are outsiders. But their kids go to school, and mix normally with the others. I don't think the other kids at school know about their parents though (IV # 7).

In conclusion, this appendix summarizes comments by respondents concerning discrimination against the children of former KR. While both parents and children denied discrimination against the children, we have learned in Chapter 5 that the former KR (parents) felt discriminated against by non-KR community members.

# GLOSSARY

English	Khmer / Transliteration <sup>1</sup>
<b>Key Vocabulary</b>	
amnesty (also forgiveness in common usage)	<b>ការលើកលែងទោស</b> <i>kar leuk leng tos</i>
anger	<b>កំហឹង</b> <i>kamhoeng</i>
anger – to tie anger (as in the day to tie anger or day of hate, 20 May)	<b>កំហឹង - ជំរកំហឹង (ថ្ងៃជំរកំហឹង)</b> <i>kamhoeng - chang kamhoeng (thngai chang kamhoeng)</i>
(to be) angry	<b>កំហឹង</b> <i>khoeng</i>
angry in my heart	<b>ខឹងក្នុងចិត្ត</b> <i>khoeng knong chet</i>
anxiety	<b>ការថប់បារម្ភ</b> <i>kar thoparam</i>
association	<b>សមាគម</b> <i>sakmakum</i>
blood avenges blood	<b>ឈាមសងឈាម</b> <i>chheam sang chheam</i>
brother	<b>បង</b> <i>bang</i>
Buddhist layman	<b>អាចារ្យ</b> <i>Achar</i>
calm down	<b>ស្ងប់ចិត្ត, ត្រជាក់ចិត្ត រំលង</b> <i>s'ngap chet, tracheak chet, ram ngoap</i>
Ceremony of the Ancestors	<b>បុណ្យភ្ជុំបិណ្ឌ</b> <i>Bun Pchum Ben</i>
chest tightness	<b>តឹងទ្រូង</b> <i>toeng truong</i>
commune	<b>ឃុំ</b> <i>khum</i>
compassion (compassionate actions)	<b>ករុណា</b> <i>karuna</i>
(to) confess	<b>សារភាព</b> <i>sara'pheap</i>

<sup>1</sup> This glossary includes words which have more than one meaning in Khmer or in English, or were used commonly in the thesis and do not have a clear equivalent in English (such as 'base' people). When words used by respondents were consistent and unambiguous, (such as suffering (veteneea) or justice (tolakar) these words were not included in this glossary. The transliteration was done using the 'Transliteration Table' created by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (1998).

cruel	<b>កាច</b> <i>kach</i>
cruel (very)	<b>សាហាវ</b> <i>sahav</i>
deaf and mute	<b>ក្បាល់</b> <i>kor</i>
despicable (familiar or derogatory prefix for men's names)	<b>អា</b> <i>A</i>
<i>dhamma</i> (Buddhist teachings, also righteousness)	<b>ធម្ម, ធម៌</b> <i>thormak, thor</i>
discriminate	<b>រើសអើង, ប្រកាន់</b> <i>reus aeng (knea), prakan</i>
district	<b>ស្រុក</b> <i>srok</i>
(to) do again, to repeat	<b>ធ្វើឡើងវិញ</b> <i>thveu laeng vinh</i>
(to) do bad things (commit sins)	<b>ធ្វើបាប</b> <i>thveu bap</i>
elder (respected elder)	<b>ចាស់ទុំ, ចាស់ព្រឹទ្ធាចារ្យ</b> <i>chas tum, chas proetheachar</i>
empathy	<b>ការយល់ចិត្ត</b> <i>kar yol chet</i>
face	<b>មុខ</b> <i>mok</i>
facilitation	<b>សម្របសម្រួល</b> <i>samrap samruol</i>
forbearance	<b>ខន្តិ</b> <i>khanti</i>
forest spirit – (old man of the forest, guardian spirit, or ancestor spirits)	<b>អ្នកតា</b> <i>neak ta</i>
(to) forgive	<b>អត់ទោស, អភ័យទោស</b> <i>at tos, akphey tos, ak hao se kam</i> <b>លើកលែងទោស</b> <i>leuk leng tos</i> (common usage)
forgiveness	<b>ការអត់ទោស, ការអភ័យទោស</b> <i>kar at tos, kar akpheytos</i> <b>ការលើកលែងទោស</b> <i>kar leuk leng tos</i> (common usage)
(to) get along with	<b>ត្រូវគ្នា ត្រូវរៀប ល្អៗស្របជាន់</b> <i>trov knea, trovrov, sroh sruol, chea nea</i>
grandfather	<b>តា</b> <i>ta</i>
grandmother	<b>យាយ</b> <i>yeay</i>

grudge or hold the grudge	<b>កុំនុំ ជេកុំនុំ</b> <i>kumnum, chang kumnum</i>
(to) hate (each other)	<b>ស្អប់</b> <i>sa'op</i> <b>ក្នា</b> ( <i>knea</i> )
(to) heal	<b>ជួយ ជា ព្យាបាល</b> <i>sah, chea, (sah chea), pyabal</i>
healer (traditional – some other healers are sub-categories of <i>Kru Khmer</i> )	<b>គ្រូខ្មែរ</b> <i>Kru Khmer</i>
healer (traditional - who uses his breath (blowing) for healing)	<b>គ្រូផ្អំ</b> <i>kru phlom</i>
healer (traditional – magical)	<b>គ្រូមន្តអាគម</b> <i>kru mon akum</i>
heart	<b>ចិត្ត</b> , <b>បេះដូង</b> <i>chet, beh daung</i>
kapok tree	<b>ជើមក</b> <i>dam kor</i>
<i>karma</i> (Buddhist law of cause and effect)	<b>កម្មជល, កម្ម</b> <i>kamphal, kamma</i>
<i>Kathin</i> (Buddhist lent)	<b>កបិន</b> <i>Kathin</i>
(to) lose face (to be ashamed)	<b>បាត់មុខ</b> <i>bak' mok</i>
mediation	<b>សម្រុះសម្រួល</b> <i>samroh samruol</i>
mercy (loving kindness, compassionate thoughts)	<b>មេត្តា</b> <i>metta</i>
moral force	<b>កំលាំងចិត្ត</b> <i>kamlaing chet</i>
national reconciliation	<b>ការបង្រួបបង្រួមជាតិ</b> <i>kar bangruop bangruom</i> <i>cheat</i>
non-communist resistance (Para, or NCR)	<b>ក្រុមអ្នកកសិប្រឆាំងកុំម្មុយនិស្ត</b> <i>krom neak tasou</i> <i>prachaing komuynist</i>
non-violence	<b>អហិង្សា</b> <i>akhoengsa (ahimsa)</i>
pardon	<b>អត់ទោស, លើកទោស, អភ័យទោស</b> <i>at tos, leuk tos, akphey tos</i>
Peace Walk	<b>ធម្មយាត្រា</b> <i>Dhammayietra</i>
province	<b>ខេត្ត</b> <i>khet</i>
(to) reconcile	<b>ជួយជួប. បង្រួបបង្រួម</b> <i>phsah phsaa, bangruop bangruom</i>
reconciliation (see national reconciliation)	<b>ការជួបជួប. ការបង្រួបបង្រួម</b> <i>kar phsah phsaa, kar bangruop bangruom</i>
(to) relieve (release)	<b>ចោរ</b> <i>thuo</i> <b>ស្នើយ</b> <i>sbaey</i> <b>ចោរស្នើយ</b> <i>thuo sbaey</i>

reparations	សំណងជូនជូល <i>samnang chuos-chul</i> (verb <i>sang</i> )
reunite	រួបរួម <i>ruop ruom knea laeng vihn</i>
revenge	ការសងសឹក <i>kar sangsoek</i>
(to take) revenge	សងសឹក <i>sangsoek</i>
<i>sangha</i> (Buddhist Clergy)	ព្រះសង្ឃ <i>pheah sang</i>
sin (or bad)	បាប <i>bap</i>
solidarity	សាមគ្គីភាព <i>samakipheap</i> សាមគ្គី <i>samaki</i>
solidarity groups	ក្រុមសាមគ្គី <i>krom samaki</i>
spiritual education	ការអប់រំផ្លូវចិត្ត <i>kar abrum phlov chet</i>
<i>stupa</i> (Buddhist religious monument)	ចេតិយ, មេន <i>chaydei, men</i> (often called <i>stupa</i> )
talk too much	និយាយជ្រួល <i>niyeay chrul</i>
ties (of patronage) or literally, string	ខ្សែ <i>kse</i>
tolerance	ការអត់អានអោយ <i>kar at aon aoy, kar akthyeasrey</i> ឧត្តិ <i>khantei</i>
(to) understand	យោគយល់ <i>yok yul</i>
(to) understand each other	យល់ចិត្តគ្នា យល់ <i>yol chet knea, yol</i>
(to) unite (or live together)	រួបរួម <i>ruop ruom</i>
unity	ភាពរួបរួម, ការឯកភាព <i>pheap ruop ruom, kar ekakpheap</i>
vengeance	ការសងសឹក <i>kar sangsoek</i>
village	ភូមិ <i>phoum</i> [common usage " <i>phum</i> "]
virtue (or everyday use, 'good')	បុណ្យ, កុសល <i>bun, kosol</i>
<b>Khmer Rouge Vocabulary</b>	
<i>Angkar</i> (the) Organization (refers in the DK to the top leadership)	អង្គការ <i>Angkar</i>



base people (old people)	<b>អ្នកមូលដ្ឋានចាស់</b> <i>neak moulithan chas</i>
cadre	<b>កម្មាភិបាល</b> <i>kamaphibal</i>
chief	<b>ប្រធាន</b> <i>prathean</i>
children's group	<b>កងកុមារ</b> <i>kang komar</i>
cooperative	<b>សហករណ៍</b> <i>sahakar</i>
east	<b>បូព៌ា</b> <i>bopear</i>
educate (euphemism for taking to kill)	<b>កសាង</b> <i>kasang</i>
mobile work groups	<b>កងចាត់</b> <i>kang chalat</i>
new people (17 April people)	<b>អ្នកថ្មី</b> <i>neak thmey</i>
northwest	<b>ពាយ័ព្យ</b> <i>peayoap</i>
social affairs	<b>ការងារសង្គមកិច្ច</b> <i>kargnear sangkumkech</i>
southwest	<b>និរតី</b> <i>near'ordei</i>
spy	<b>លួប, ភ្នាក់ងារ</b> <i>chhlop, phneakgnea</i>
transport group	<b>ក្រុមជីកជំនួន</b> <i>krom dik chenhchoun</i>
women's group	<b>កងនារី</b> <i>kang neary</i>

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