

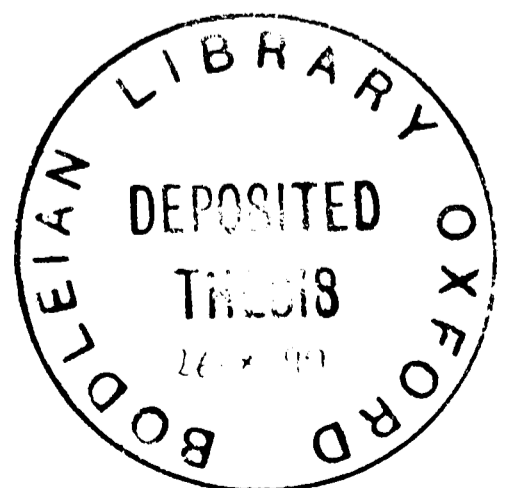
Power is Consuming the Forest

**The political ecology of conflict and reconstruction
in Cambodia**

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Abstract

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The broad aim of this research is to further our understanding of the incorporation of nature into socio-political processes of transition within countries at war. The concomitant capitalist production of nature and construction of political power is examined through the case of forest exploitation in Cambodia. The thesis draws on political ecology, sociological theories of power, and political economic theories of commodity chains to explain the apparent failure of both the Cambodian government and the international community to employ logging revenues as a positive factor for ‘peace and reconstruction’.

The main period of study extends from 1987 to 1998, during which Cambodia’s protracted civil war ended. Timber represented over that period close to half of Cambodia’s export earnings. However, this revenue largely escaped official taxation and reportedly fuelled the conflict, broadened wealth disparities, and deepened an environmental crisis. Rather than fully subscribing to this ‘politics of plunder’ story-line, this thesis examines the complexities of forestry practices, and flows of logging revenue, and analyses their relationship with the construction of

political power throughout the process of transition.

This construction of political power is interpreted through a neopatrimonial model in which social actors' politico-economic strategies both influence, and are influenced by the transition process. In Cambodia during the period of study, these strategies reinforced a 'shadow state' politics, through which the political elite, in part responding to the demands of international markets and the political challenge of the UN-sponsored peace process, consolidated its power by reorganising productive networks outside formal governance. In turn, domestic and international actors through both discursive and material practices resisted these strategies. The case of logging in Cambodia is thus interpreted as a contested process of transforming nature and incorporating space into 'productive networks', as part of a broader political economy of power.

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List of acronyms

ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
CDC	Cambodian Development Council
CDRI	Cambodian Development Research Institute
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CSD	Center for Social Development
cu.m.	cubic meter(s)
DFW	Department of Forestry and Wildlife
Div.	Military Division
DK	Democratic Kampuchea
est.	estimation
FOB	Freight On Board
FANC	<i>Fond des Archives Nationales du Cambodge</i> (National Archives)
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation
FUI	Front Uni Issarak
FUNCINPEC	<i>Front d'Union Nationale pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre et Coopératif</i>
ha.	hectares (10,000 square meters)
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KDI	Khmer Democracy Institute
KPNLF	Kampuchea Popular National Liberation Front
KR	Khmer Rouge
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MEF	Ministry of Economics and Finance
MND	Ministry of National Defense
MRC	Mekong River Commission
n.a.	not available
NADK	National Army of Democratic Kampuchea
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIA	National Intelligence Agency (Thailand)
NLF	National Liberation Front (Vietnam)
PDK	Party of Democratic Kampuchea
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
RCAF	Royal Cambodian Armed Forces
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RTG	Royal Thai Government
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SNC	Supreme National Council
SoC	State of Cambodia
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHR	United Nations Center for Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissariat for Refugees
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
WB	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)

Chapter 1

Introduction

Twenty years of a tragic history have ironically saved the forests of Cambodia from the onslaught that fuelled the economic growth of its ASEAN neighbours. Despite heavy US bombing and the murderous agrarian utopia of the Khmer Rouge, forests survived the 1970s. Their exploitation during the 1980s remained limited as the country endured an embargo on development aid and international trade imposed by ASEAN and the West. By the late 1980s, at the onset of a new era made possible by the end of the Cold War, Cambodia was still covered for nearly two-thirds of its surface by forests; undeniably a key asset for a country among the poorest in the world.¹ Since then, much of Cambodia's forests have been 'consumed' by intensive commercial logging.

The exploitation of Cambodian forests for their timber has shared some similarities with that of other Southeast Asian countries. The process of forest commodification was politicised, sustaining the power of the army and the political elite (Ghee and Valencia 1990; Hurst 1990; Broad and Cavanagh 1993; Vitug 1993; Broad 1995). Forest dwellers were adversely affected and progressively

¹ Commercial forests (evergreen and mixed forests) decreased by less than 10% between 1960 and 1990 (FAO 1994c).

disempowered by large-scale commercial logging whose products fed foreign demand, from Japan in particular (Colchester 1993b; Potter 1993; Dauvergne 1997). The Cambodian case was, however, complicated by Cambodia's complex transition from war to peace between 1987 and 1998. From the signature of the Peace Agreement in 1991 between opposing Cambodian factions and the end of the first mandate of the newly elected government in 1998, at least US\$2.5 billion worth of timber was exported from Cambodia, roughly equivalent to the average annual GDP for that period. By the mid-1990s, the exploitation of forests was estimated to represent about 43% of Cambodia's export earnings, more than any other country at that time (FAO 1997). A large part of this financial windfall was unaccountable to the official process of reconstruction and development, escaping public taxation and allegedly fuelling the conflict, broadening wealth disparities, and deepening an environmental crisis (Global Witness 1995a; Talbott 1998).²

Logging, and its environmental and social consequences, has captured the attention of the international media, NGOs and development agencies (The Economist 1995; Global Witness 1995a; World Bank, UNDP et al. 1996). Yet the specific case of Cambodia has not received much 'academic' scrutiny. This study addresses this gap in the academic literature. In particular, this thesis examines the role of forests' incorporation into transition processes between war and peace in Cambodia, with a focus on the reconfiguration of politico-economic networks of power. It attempts to explain the causes of the apparent failure of both the government and the international community to transform this 'natural resource' into a positive factor for 'peace and

² The total public revenue collected between 1991 and 1998 represented only US\$97 million, about 12% of what the government should have received under a proper system of taxation (World Bank, UNDP et al. 1996;

reconstruction'. In addition to addressing an empirical lacunae, this study contributes to the field of political ecology and debates over socio-environmental change in the Third World, by focusing on the case of a highly politicised 'natural resource' in a country at war. Throughout this study, the case of logging in Cambodia is interpreted as a process of transforming nature, and incorporating space into 'productive networks', as part of a broader political economy of power.

This chapter presents an overview of academic perspectives on the relationship between natural resources exploitation and socio-political change and summarises the concepts of political ecology. The theoretical basis for the thesis will be explored in Chapter 2. This chapter also provides necessary background information on Cambodia. The chapter concludes with a discussion of methodology, and an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1. Natural resources exploitation and socio-political change

The relationship between socio-political change and natural resource exploitation is generally identified and interpreted by academics through concepts of economic growth, presented in mainstream development discourse as key to social and political development (Rostow 1971). For Asia, economic growth has been presented as a factor of positive political change based on the modernist and statist equation that "economic growth drives social mobilization; social mobilization drives political mobilization; and political mobilization drives regime change" (Crouch and Morley 1993: 279). From this perspective, the economic growth generated by nature's

Ministry of Economy and Finance 1997).

commodification is considered a positive factor, if not a driving force, not only in providing greater material wealth but also in building greater political consensus around a 'just' governance of society.

On the other hand, critical discourses of the application of this 'modernist development' paradigm to relations with nature have denounced its adverse impact on the environment, and the many socio-political consequences of natural resources development, such as the unequal distribution of costs and benefits and conflicts over their allocation. The modernist paradigm is criticised as constructed and motivated by the vested economic and power interests of the colonial and post-colonial ruling class. It is thus recognised, in a neo-Marxist tradition, as a potent cause of uneven empowerment, injustice, and environmental bankruptcy (Pepper 1984; Swift 1993; O'Connor 1994).

Since the 1970's there has been an attempt to reconcile these two perspectives to resolve the conundrum of socio-ecological impacts of nature's transformation. In terms of actors, most attempts have concentrated on a greater 'empowerment' of stakeholders other than traditionally identified power holders, be they 'local communities' or 'non human actors' (Singh and Titi 1995). Public participation, environmental economics and environmental impact assessments have been the most widely used instruments in such attempts to reconcile nature and society and their mutual transformation (Vanclay and Bronstein 1995). Concomitantly, the contemporary period has seen a rise in the importance and number of non-state institutions and 'new social movements', including in Southeast Asia (Parnwell and Bryant 1996; Peet and Watts 1996; Hirsch and Warren 1998). The concept of 'sustainable development' is used in this attempt as a 'new' paradigm to ensure that

development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987: 43). However, critics perceive that “[i]n the sustainable development discourse, nature is reinvented as environment so that capital, not nature and culture, may be sustained” (Escobar 1996: 49). For Redclift (1987), the laudable objective of sustainable development is driven by an economic and anthropocentric perspective ensuring the durability of capitalist ‘progress’ through “reviving growth”, (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987: 49).

In the context of post-Cold War political readjustments, this dilemma over the development of natural resources has been critical for countries facing the challenges of a transition from war to peace, for which natural resources were perceived as key to a successful ‘reconstruction’. The urgency of social needs had traditionally been used to promote the commodification of nature and place it high on a consensual development agenda. However, the progression made since the late 1980s by environmental and sustainable development issues on the global political agenda, and in particular that of international organisations dealing with ‘peace and reconstruction’ programs, means that natural resource exploitation is now a largely contested solution. A contest over which type of resource development, if any, is preferable; over who will benefit most from the actual development of the resource; and over the implementation of development policies themselves as they are frequently manipulated to further, intentionally or not, the interests of some over those of others (Clay and Schaffer 1984; Ferguson 1996).

These debates over resource exploitation, reconstruction and development are expressed in a variety of ‘transcripts’, motivating and legitimating different actors.

Firstly, the commodification of nature is placed under much critical scrutiny for its effect upon nature and populations. For some, mostly within international development agencies, the commodification of nature is to be rationalised, or re-commodified, through a management that emphasises *national* prosperity. For others, mostly centred upon NGOs, ‘grassroots social movements’ and nature protection groups, this re-commodification of nature is to be resisted, as it is destructive of ‘good’ things - nature and its traditional relations with local communities - and constructive of ‘bad’ things - capital accumulation and concentration of power. The end result of these conflictual perspectives is generally a diversity of ‘public transcripts’ that are then inscribed through policy documents, media reports, or advocacy movements.

Secondly, the commodification of nature is liable to create new financial rents, and in some cases significant ‘windfalls’, as well as altering existing relations between communities, or interests groups, and these natural resources. Commodification is thus very likely to have profound effects upon both nature and society, or socio-nature, by redistributing costs and gains among human and non-human actors. The redistribution is shaped, among other things, by a ‘social polity’ organising relations of power and resistance between actors within the broad society. This redistribution is likely to be contested in a country in crisis, as individual actors are jockeying to improve their position in a highly unstable social environment, often characterised by a breakdown of law, institutions and even customary rules of social behaviour. The commodification of nature is thus shaped by a heavily politicised context that is unlikely to conform to usual ‘rational’ economic or managerial principles. Rather the commodification is likely to reflect the apparent ‘chaotic’ nature

of the transition associated with a dissolution of mainstream societal driving forces by the 'survival' strategies of individual actors.

In this context, the government - in the sense of state polity - organising its relations with the market, is likely to adopt a Janus-faced strategy in which official policies conform to the view of the current 'public transcript'; while totally different unofficial practices secure its access to, and control of the commodification process along the lines of an 'hidden transcript'. In the realm of natural resources, the state itself can be understood as conducting both 'formal' governance and 'shadow' governance. The 'formal state' can be defined as the official institutional structures and the political and legal system regulating them. The 'shadow state', a term coined by Reno (1995: 3) in his study of warlordism in Sierra Leone, refers to the system through which rulers are "drawing authority from their abilities to control markets and their material rewards". There is no neat division between the two, as actors and relations overlap, but a conceptual division might help one to understand the supposedly 'irrational' behaviour of the state during periods of crisis or transitions.

This vision of the state shares the idea of a state in crisis developed in the 1990s around concepts such as 'quasi-failed', 'fictitious' or 'predatory' state (Jackson 1990). These concepts describe the state in terms of its failure to provide public services (e.g. sovereignty, order, justice and welfare), emphasising the self-interest of actors within the state apparatus. Such 'failure' of states is attributed to the withdrawal of the Cold War 'order', the rise of 'ethno-nationalism' and other divisive forces, as well as to "their subordinate situation ... within an increasingly globalized and polarized world capitalist system" (Graf 1995: 140).

The alternative view, informed by this study, is to see the apparent 'failure' of

the state as the result of 'shadow state' strategies used as coping mechanisms by a political leadership struggling to assert its control over key resources in order to translate its position into effective power, if not comprehensive statehood. In other words, rather than seeing the state polity as passive when confronted by a new global disorder and escaping its 'prostration' only to suck the life blood of its country, this study attempts to decipher the complex dynamics placing these countries in such situations and to demonstrate the intelligibility of their polity.

From this perspective it is possible to see the 'shadow state' as a local response to the political challenges posed by the neo-liberal perspective of 'government by the market', in which "the market is viewed not merely as a means of allocating goods and services but as a form of social regulation" (Graf 1995: 141). Rather than opposing such a dominating paradigm, a state polity placed into a crisis or transition phase has an interest to co-opt it in order to benefit from its many opportunities, and attempt to reshape it into an instrument of power. In this regard, Bates identifies interventions by the state in the political economy of rural Africa not only as simple political distortions of market forces, but as "political resources ... which can be used to organize political support" (Bates 1983:129). Beyond this argument, the question is to what degree the state and the market are integrated, and how their integration should be interpreted. On both sides of the political spectrum, the intermeshing of state and market interests are often interpreted as a 'corruption' of the principles of both entities. For the political Left, the state is corrupted by the 'influence' of the market. While for the Right, the market is corrupted by the

‘interventions’ of the state (Lal 1985).³ This study employs neither perspective, instead interrogating the apparent ‘failure’ of states, and investigating the political intelligibility of the shadow state and associated ‘unsustainable’ natural resource exploitation. Several hypotheses have motivated this investigation for the case of forestry in Cambodia. The first hypothesis is that the circulation of capital secures legitimacy for ruling groups that depend more upon a circle of clients and supporters, through neo-patrimonialism and crony capitalism, rather than popular support. The second hypothesis is that forests played a key role in this circulation of capital and formed part of the ‘benefits of war’ that protracted the conflict; in the sense that some actors found an interest in maintaining their privileged access to timber through violence. The last hypothesis is that the international community played a dual role through its discourse of sustainable and accountable resource management, as it enabled open criticisms of skewed and illegal practices, but also pushed practices further underground. For this investigation, I employ a political ecology framework.

2. Political ecology

Broadly defined as a ‘political economy of the environment’, political ecology articulates physical and social sciences through a wide historical and geographical framework. In anthropology, criticism of the excesses of geographical-environmental determinism (Wallis 1926) associated with an acknowledgement of the influence of environmental factors over culture favoured an ‘ecological’ approach that created the field of cultural ecology from which political ecology emerged. Cultural ecology can

³ For an extensive review of the literature on relations between society, polity and capitalism in developing

be defined as “a method for examining what relationships exist between environmental adaptational problems and social organization and culture” (Freilich 1967: 33). This field of research has been reworked with the concerns of political economy to mostly address conflictual issues related to socio-natural processes (Wolf 1972; Schmink and Wood 1987; Hecht and Cockburn 1990; Bryant 1992; Neumann 1992; Anderson 1994; Greenberg and Park 1994; Hayward 1995; Bryant 1997a; Bryant 1997b; Bryant and Bailey 1997; Bryant 1998a; Low and Gleeson 1998).

In their key publication focusing on land degradation and society, Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) defines ‘political ecology’ as combining:

the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy. Together this encompasses the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources, and also between classes and groups within society itself. (ibid.: 17)

Regional political ecology is presented as an approach encompassing “interactive effects, the contribution of different geographical scales and hierarchies of socioeconomic organizations (e.g. person, household, village, region, state, world)” (ibid.: 17). The geographical dimension is integrated both through the importance given to scale as well as a perspective similar to that of reconstructed regional geography, arguing for intricate historical linking of social processes and places (Thrift 1983). The combination of political ecology and regional geography provides a framework for the examination of such nature-society-space relations (Jarosz 1993).⁴ However, while political ecology offers a flexible tool to analyse socionatural relations at various scales, it has been criticised for its poor treatment of politics and lack of theoretical conceptualisation (Peet and Watts 1993).

countries - which is outside the scope of this study, see (Moore 1997).

⁴ For a review of the current directions of political ecology, see (Bryant 1997a and 1998a).

Guided by concepts of domination, and resistance, political ecologists have been engaged in debates over relations between nature and power through studies of relations of social change and power inscribed in the modes of production and their impact on socionature (Hecht 1985; Peluso 1992; Colchester 1993b; Lohmann 1993; Moore 1993; Peet and Watts 1993; Swift 1993; Oliver 1994; Amanor 1995; Blaikie 1995; Escobar 1996; Johnston 1996; Swyngedouw 1997a; Keil, Bell et al. 1998). The concept has also been extended to specific epidemiological studies (Mayer 1996), as well as violent conflict (Uvin 1996). In an understanding of power as a mastery over the environment of *others*, and not of one's self in isolation, power is perceived as a means to: (i) assert control of the access and exploitation of natural resources; (ii) pollute in certain ways and in certain places; (iii) prioritise environmental projects; (iv) define 'discourses of truth' (Bryant 1997a). As such, while nature has been mostly considered an economic resource shaping social power by development economists, political ecologists have analysed it in much broader terms, encompassing a variety of politicised discursive and material interrelations with society.

2.1 Politicising and theorising political ecology

While the degree of social critique in political ecology analyses fluctuates amongst authors, a set goal of political ecology is to provide "a specific acknowledgement of the growing human production of 'nature', and the political forces behind such production" (Bryant and Bailey 1997: 191). Political ecology is thus devised as a 'politicising' framework to provide a radical critique against the apolitical perspective and the depoliticising effect, of mainstream environmental, and developmental, research and practice. Yet, as Peet and Watts (1993) noted,

Particularly striking is the fact that political ecology has very little politics - there is no serious attempt at treating the means by which control and access of resources or property rights are defined, negotiated, and contested within the political arenas of the household, the workplace, and the state. (ibid.: 239)

Politicising political ecology was the goal of these two authors in their edited book “Liberation Ecology” in order to “raise the emancipatory potential of environmental ideas and to engage directly with the larger landscape of debates over modernity, its institutions, and its knowledge” (Peet and Watts 1996: 37). Yet the volume, which provided in-depth studies of locally contested resources, did not include a comprehensive study of political ecology at the national level of state politics.

Politics are, of course, not only expressed at that level, but also at various scales, in communities, organisations, or international arenas. Probably due to its initial focus on land degradation and a regional approach; political ecology, while recognising the role of the state, has rarely examined the ‘core’ of traditional political science, namely that of *regime security* (Hettne 1983; Ayoob 1995). Most studies have instead focused on resource managers (e.g., peasant, Forest Department, forest communities) and the chains of factors, dynamic human-environment relationships, that can explain their actions towards the resource. When the state has been included, political ecology research generally focused on the articulation between state institution and local land manager, through specific struggles over forested areas (Hecht and Cockburn 1990; Peluso 1992; Colchester 1993b; Bryant 1997b); protected areas (Neumann 1992; Moore 1993); agricultural regimes (Watts 1983); or productive regions (Schmink and Wood 1987). As noted by Bryant (1998a: 85-86) political ecology research “has emphasized the marginality and vulnerability of the poor vis-à-vis social and ecological processes ... [and documented] the ways in which many indigenous people have been especially disadvantaged as their way of life is subverted

by the spread of a development process outside their control.” But political ecology has not provided much insight about what this subversion brought about politically at the national level with regard to regime security.

Political ecology has also been criticised as only being an analytical approach, if not a loose grouping of similar areas of enquiry, rather than a coherent theory of its own (Peet and Watts 1993). This analytical framework is centred around: “(1) a focus on the land users and the social relations in which they are entwined; (2) tracing the linkages of these local relations to wider geographical and social settings; and (3) historical analysis to understand the contemporary situation” (Neumann 1992: 87). Featuring a focus on land users and the social setting, this framework brings about a structural perspective on scales above the resource manager, which is indeed likely to fail in grasping the subtleties, if not the essence, of state and international politics.

In ways similar to the discipline of international relations, political ecologists often examined the state, above the institutions directly linked to the resource, as a monolithic set of institutions. If resources were to be contested within and between institutions, these conflicts were largely apprehended as bureaucratic power struggles characterised more by technocratic and territorial definitions than analysed as key factors in the production of power for ruling groups. The role of the state has been integrated within the human-environment relationships examined in political ecology, mostly through its structural role of ‘modernisation’ agent leading this development process. The bias of such macrostructural perspectives has been addressed for struggles over resources by a greater cultural analysis in order to avoid “an overly deterministic vision of social structure [that] often eclipses the ways in which competing claims to resources are articulated through cultural idioms in the charged

context of local politics” (Moore 1993: 381). Yet, the difficulty of injecting such an ethnographic approach into the sphere of ‘high politics’ has prevented detailed political ecology studies of resource production and distribution processes at the level of ruling elite. In this regard, discourse, or social narratives, analysis of social actors might provide a way forward (Escobar 1996; Paige 1997).

2.2 Discourse analysis, domination and resistance

The notion of discourse refers to social practices involved in making sense of the world for oneself and to others (Johnston, Gregory et al. 1994).

A poststructural analysis of discourse is not only a linguistic theory; it is a social theory, a theory of the production of social reality which includes the analysis of representations as social facts inseparable from what is commonly thought of a ‘material reality’. (Escobar 1996: 46)

One of the interests for political ecology in discourse analysis is its ability to reveal the fine grain of the political intelligibility of environmental issues by deconstructing the story-lines resulting from, and framing their specific understandings (Liftin 1994). Discourse analysis also helps encompass a variety of scales through the identification of broad ‘discourse-coalitions’. These coalitions group together social actors around a specific understanding, or story-line “through which they can give meaning to the physical and social realities that are implied in ... contemporary environmental conflict[s]” (Hajer 1995: 65). In particular, recent studies have examined through such an approach the politics of ‘agenda-setting’, defining knowledge and truths, thereby framing environmental issues in order to serve specific power interests (Meyer-Abich 1993; Kronsell 1997; McCombs, Shaw et al. 1997). Such an approach does not systematically deny the existence of environmental issues, problems and

crises in their materiality, but critically examines their social construction in order to reveal their political intelligibility and implications. In other words, discourse analysis can explore how power is both constructed and intertwined in the process of selective reading of environmental issues, the construction of problems and the design of solutions.

An important point to make at this stage is that the politicised nature of the environment comes not only through its redistributive material and social effects, but also from the very discursive struggle taking place amongst actors. To caricature, it is not important to have a forest ‘out there’ as long as the forest can constitute a negotiated issue of political interest. In other words, there could be no genuine interest for the forest as such, but for the forest as a discursive arena for wider political struggles. Holding the ‘truth’ about the most legitimate and appropriate use of the forest is as much part of the power equation than capturing its financial rent, as social power derives from the association of both. As such, elite groups try to create or to reproduce a pattern of exploitation, often unfair, upon dominated groups by maintaining a ‘régime of truth’ (e.g. sovereign right, greater common benefit, or inescapable security imperative) (Foucault 1980). This ‘régime of truth’, can also be referred to as the ‘public transcript’ when it becomes hegemonic (Scott 1990). Dominated groups respond to uneven power distribution through a broad range of resistance practices ranging from “everyday forms of resistance” (e.g. petty crime, avoidance behaviour) to open political contestation (Scott 1985). This resistance also includes discursive practices, referred to as ‘hidden transcript’ opposing the dominant ‘public transcript’ (Scott 1990).

Registers of domination and resistance, expressed through both symbolic and

material processes, are largely determined through a “cultural understanding of social hierarchy” that encourage consent and the ‘naturalisation’ of productive inequalities (Moore 1993: 382). Such power relations of domination and resistance are not circumscribed to the state institution and the local land manager, or the land lord and the peasant, but encompass the entire social sphere related materially or discursively to the contested resource, forming a multiple strata in which each actor resorts to both domination and resistance strategies.

In an international context, a state leader might resort to use what Scott (1985) terms “weapons of the weak”, such as dissimulation, foot dragging, or sabotage, when confronted with international creditors. In the case of Cambodia, the apparent failure of the government to control and tax logging can be interpreted as a way of resisting the demands of the international community for greater apolitical, or non partisan, development of resources. This ‘failure’ offers to governmental actors greater opportunities for the political manipulation of revenue from logging than official and transparent procedures. In other words, the ‘public transcript’ of what constitutes good management of natural resources dictated by the international community shapes in turn the attitude of the dominated state. Unable to legitimate a different management, the actors within the dominated state are constrained to use an arsenal of resistance, consisting mostly of illegal practices, in order to further their objective of regime security. Such behaviour reinforces their ‘weak’ position within the dominant sphere at the same time that it facilitates the consolidation of power for dominated state actors most able to manipulate the arsenal of ‘illegal’ practices. In other words, the hegemonic discourse of resource management promoted by the international community does not consolidate the position of its advocates within a dominated state

but would, on the contrary, reinforces unintentionally the position of those resisting it in the most effective way.

3. The setting: Cambodia

Cambodia is situated in the south-eastern part of the Indochinese peninsula, between Thailand and Vietnam, and comprises an area of 181,035 km² (see Figure 1.1). At the centre of the country lies a flood plain, drained by the Mekong River and surrounded by low altitude mountains and undulating plateaux covered by evergreen or deciduous forests (FAO 1994a). A short coastline offers access to the Gulf of Thailand. Its population, estimated at 11.4 million in 1997 and growing at an annual rate of 2.8%, is young - nearly half under the age of 15 - and predominantly rural - with more than 80% living in the countryside (National Institute of Statistics 1998). The distribution of population is extremely unequal with about 85% living in the central plains, leaving vast expanses of sparsely populated forests at the periphery (Ministry of Environment 1994). Natural resources are critical to the population's survival, as economic diversification has only recently started, partly due to nearly three decades of civil war and international isolation. Nearly 50% of the GDP comes from the agricultural sector (Ministry of Economy and Finance 1997). The life of most Cambodians depends on subsistence rice production and fisheries, and the rhythms of life are still attuned to the shift of dry and rainy seasons and the movements of water in the flood plains.

The history of Cambodia has been mostly marked by the rise and decline of the country over the last millennium as a powerful political entity in the region, and a

period of warfare and genocide over the last thirty years. The political end of the civil war in 1991 augured a new beginning for Cambodia, particularly because of the dynamic regional environment and the perspective of imitating the economic success of neighbouring countries (World Bank 1992). As a poorly industrialised country with a largely unskilled labour force and an inadequate image and infrastructure for the rapid development of the important tourism potential, much hope was put into the exploitation of natural resources for promoting economic growth and reconstruction. Some international development agencies indeed stressed that the country was “well endowed with natural resources” (FAO 1994a: ix). However, while the ‘wealth’ of the forests was often stressed, few development agencies after 1989 openly argued for a development of forestry and most took a cautious approach; calling for further ‘studies’ and ‘master plans’, if not for outright ‘afforestation’ programs (UNDP 1989; ADB 1991; World Bank 1992).

Over the decade of ‘transition’, the pattern of exploitation of natural resource, and specifically of timber, has been considered a major failure in the reconstruction process and even an impediment to peace-building due to its relationship with civil war, endemic corruption, weak tax returns and contribution to severe environmental degradation, human rights abuses, poverty and food insecurity. This situation is broadly recognised by observers as a threat to the ‘sustainable development’ and long term socio-political stability of the country as well as to the welfare of its population, due to the powerful feedback that the mismanagement of natural resources can have on the livelihood of populations, and both the legitimacy of the state and its capacity to cope with resulting crisis (Neiss 1997; Global Witness 1995a; Talbott 1998).

The importance given by political leaders, the media and the international

community to the problem of *protecting* forests for improving the transition of Cambodia from war to peace and from poverty to prosperity and the recognition of failure to do so, justifies a thorough understanding of the interactive relations between the build-up of political and economic power and forest resources in order to grasp the roles of natural resources in the transition processes taking place in the country.

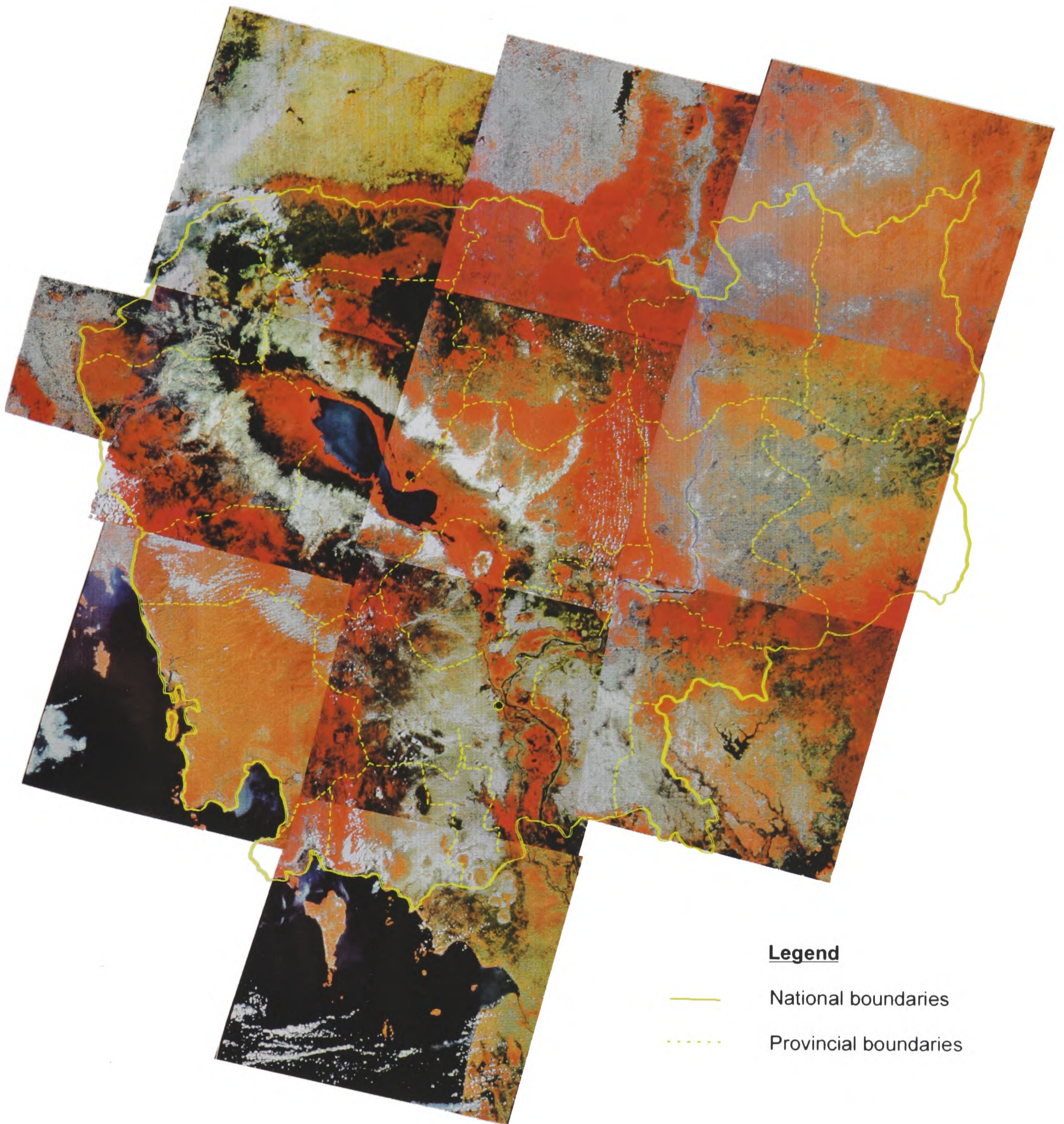
Figure 1.1 - Map of Cambodia (1993)



CAMBODIA



Figure 1.2 - Satellite image of Cambodia (1991-1993)



Source: Landsat images from Thailand remote sensing center (1993).

4. Methodology

In the light of the forgoing discussion it is difficult, if not impossible, to construct this thesis within the framework of a rigid methodology. The broad issues of resource exploitation in a developing country necessitate a more eclectic approach. Basically, political ecology is the analytical framework, but it must be interpreted in a diverse and pragmatic manner that incorporates other approaches and theory.

The general aim of this research was to gain a better understanding of the mutual production of nature and social power in the context of a society undergoing rapid socio-political and economic changes. Following this primary goal, I had four objectives. The first one was to gain an understanding of the historical trajectory of the political economy of Cambodia. The second was to trace the evolution of the forestry sector and the story-lines that have developed around it, as they are related in media, official reports, public speeches and through interviews, since the peace process was initiated in the late 1980s. The third was to explore the organisation of the timber commodity chain through first hand investigation in order to gain a personal perspective on conditions and strategies of access and distribution of costs and benefits. The final objective was to build a narrative that would include both historical materialist and discursive analyses in order to provide a better understanding of relations between forest exploitation and socio-political changes. An expected side benefit of the study was to produce a, yet unwritten, history of forestry in Cambodia.

Working on an issue in a different culture requires a maximum of caution to avoid interpreting observed facts or statements incorrectly. As Calhoun (1995: 80)

noted, “overcoming ethnocentrism in social theory involves not just appreciating differences but also coming to terms with incommensurable practices.” According to Putman, we should always prefer those interpretations that encourage us to regard others as maximally ‘human’; yet “interpretative success does not require that the translatee’s beliefs come out the same as our own but it does require that they come out intelligible to us.” (Putman 1981: 117). Finally, there is a need to be open to the diversity of ways in which “resources are articulated through cultural idioms in the charged context of local politics.” (Moore 1993: 381).

My documentary research was conducted through a critical analysis of factual and policy-related documents. Documents were critically interpreted to reveal the ‘exercise’ of power that constructed them in the first place. Documents obtained included French and Cambodian colonial and post-colonial archives, research papers mostly written by foreign advisors, governmental and international agencies internal documents and official reports, ‘leaked’ governmental papers and commercial agreements, as well as material from media sources. Documents also included official statistics and timber concession maps. Key Cambodian reports were translated from Khmer into English. Several problems affected this research, including the financial cost of translating documents from Khmer to English, the frequent reluctance of government officials to provide documents and the poor quality of archives and contemporary reports - in part due to the war. For all documents, including official reports, the quality and veracity of information are often questionable which makes any definite assessment difficult. On the other hand, weaknesses or bias provided occasionally excellent insights into the institutional and political construction of narratives.

Participant observation was conducted during a close collaboration with two environmental groups (local and international); six weeks of work for a World Bank program on “logging monitoring and log verification”; as well as an active presence at the Forestry Department in Phnom Penh. Furthermore, full-time work in 1993 and 1994 as a technical assistant for the Forestry Department and the Ministry of Environment provided me with opportunities to participate and record the transformations occurring in individuals, organisations and specific forest sites. Finally, research in forested areas was conducted in 10 of the 14 forested provinces, but for short periods only due to problems of accessibility and security.⁵ Several air surveys and two visits in Vietnam and Thailand were also conducted.

Interviews were widely used to collect information and to analyse the way in which interviewees portray (or deceptively want to portray) situations and their relationship and roles. A total of 145 people were formally interviewed through semi-structured and focused interviews, and many more interviews were held informally, especially within the Forestry Department and in the provinces with loggers and traders. Interviews were held directly with Cambodians in French or English whenever possible and, as I spoke only basic Khmer, a translator was used in other cases. Inaccurate, distorted, and more generally false statements were frequent (when detected) and indeed central to the examination of the situation. Except on rare occasions, interviews were not recorded because of the sensitivity of the issues discussed and the paranoia existing about taping. Occasionally, the actual purpose of

⁵ Opportunities for participant observation in logging activities were very limited, as legal companies refused authorisation to even visit their camps (mostly on justified fears of security problem like kidnapping) and extended visits to illegal operations were judged unsafe. Yet, short visits were conducted in both legal and illegal operations. These provinces included: Battambang, Kampot, Koh-Kong, Kompong Speu, Kompong Thom, Kratie, Mondulkiri, Pursat, Rattanakiri, Siem Reap.

the interview - such as to find more about the involvement of the interviewee in 'illegal' activities - was not disclosed. Finally, it must be noted that, for fear of reprisal, several interviews could not be conducted, or were limited in their depth with key actors involved in illegal activities.

5. Structure of the thesis

This **introduction** has presented the general thrust of this study in exploring approaches about natural resource use and social change, especially resource mobilisation to further political power. To clarify these ideas, and develop a more critical approach, the theoretical framework developed in **Chapter 2** explores theoretical concepts of power and nature, and conceptualises a construction of social power in relation to the commodification of nature.

Part II examines the evolution of the forestry sector in relation to the history of Cambodia and in particular to the evolution of its political economy and polity. **Chapters 3, 4 and 5** analyse the situation during, respectively, the pre-colonial period until the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979; the elections sponsored by the United Nations in 1993; and till the end of 1998. For each period, the study traces the mutual incorporation of forests and society, with a focus on political economy aspects. Attention is given to the evolution of socio-political relations between the state and the forestry sector, and the political and economic needs that authorities have had upon the forestry sector. Forestry policies and institutional arrangements are then detailed.

Part III analyses actors and practices shaping the contemporary situation of

the forestry sector. Using an expanded commodity chain analysis, **Chapter 6** examines the different actors and their strategies to access and control the commodification process from specific cases. **Chapter 7** deciphers the mechanisms involved in ‘illegal logging’ and the discourses of both the ‘international community’ and the Cambodian ruling elite on forestry and its relation to the conflict and reconstruction processes. Both Chapters detail practices in order to bring to light the contradictions and tensions existing in the forestry sector and provide a better understanding of their intelligibility.

A **concluding chapter** brings the different elements of the thesis into a discussion of the process of incorporation of forests into the contemporary socio-politics of Cambodia and the mutual production of political power and nature.

Chapter 2

Power and nature

“BANG ! ... ”

(the power of local discourse)

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical background to the main theme of this research - relations between nature and social power - and to conceptualise the mutual production of social power and nature. This chapter first explores concepts of social power and nature, and examines some of the theoretical frameworks that have been proposed to elucidate the relations between both, and in particular between the commodification of nature and the construction of social power. The chapter then discusses socionatural dynamics that are of particular interest in the case of Cambodia, such as the availability of a ‘bountiful nature’ upon the political economy of the country and the workings and consequences of extractive economies at the periphery; and the practices of tropical timber production. Before concluding, the chapter includes a critical perspective on the use of public policy as a tool of development and change.

1. Concepts of social power

‘Power’ is a broad concept often placed at the centre of analysis of social processes. Several concepts of power are conventionally applied: from a quantitative, or ‘realist’ conception based on the notion of domination of an individual, or group, upon another to produce intended effects (Lukes 1986); to notions of interdependence between social actors (Martin 1977); to a concept of disciplinary power, associated with “discourses of truth” (Foucault 1980). Each of these conceptions not only entails a different understanding, or reading of the ‘material’ of the case study, but also a different methodology. A realist conception of power would require the identification of individual strategies of power, developed, for example, around means of violence, while the concept of interdependence would demand a greater emphasis on collective strategies, built around social networks of shared norms. Finally, the idea of ‘decentred power’, would entail the ‘excavation’ of such norms, and the detailed study of their everyday consequences and mode of reproduction.

1.1 Power/means: sovereign will and interdependence

One understanding of power is that presented by realists and based upon the etymology of the word itself: the *ability* to produce an effect (Thompson 1995). In this view, social power can be understood as the sovereign will of a social actor upon another: A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something that B would otherwise not have done (Dahl 1961). This power can take a variety of forms through different type of relations between A and B (see Table 2.1). Power is thus embodied as a means of expression of this will; be it material, for example the

possession of a gun, the provision of money, or an accepted hierarchical relation or expertise.

Table 2.1 - Spectrum of power relations⁶

Type of power	Type of relation
Force	A removes the choice of B to do otherwise than A's will
Coercion	A threatens B not to do otherwise than A's will
Manipulation	A tricks B into doing likewise than A's will
Authority	B recognises A's will as legitimate
Persuasion	B recognises A's suggestion as well-founded

To reflect the diversity of power relations, realists have also acknowledged the existence of a 'polyarchy' associated with the multiplicity of centres of decisions (Dahl 1961). The realist approach also incorporates the idea of interdependence between social actors in the construction, and limitation, of a 'sovereign will'. As Martin (1977) argues,

In the broadest sense, power relations, of whatever kind, arise out of interdependence - alter possessing resources which ego requires in order to achieve his [sic] own goals, and which ego can only obtain by performing non-self-regarding actions. The distribution of power results directly from the multiple and varying goals of actors, the resources required to achieve them, and the means available to escape from the dependences thereby created. ... Dependence derives from the differential control over access to resources required to sustain life. (ibid: 161)

In an attempt to explain the history of human societies, and the primacy of some over others, Mann (1986) emphasised the role of "organisational means" - networks of social interaction and institutions - over that of human desires and sovereign will. In concrete terms, for example, groups have dominated others through a combination of 'powers' - such as, economic power brought by private property (Miliband 1973), and political power resulting from organisational position. Reciprocally, these 'organisational means'- private property and political systems - required an elite. As

long as some social goals can justify for the existence of these ‘organisational means’ - such as the need for food, shelter and social order - the sources of possible domination exists. Reasons for the actual form taken by this domination have been debated (one of them, namely the conditions of production from nature, is discussed later in this chapter). Yet, as this study stresses, this domination is never total; due to the reciprocity of power relations and to the relations of dependence built through production processes (Giddens 1979). While the prevalence of power relations is explained through the realist perspective, their construction and acceptance - or the mode of regulation of conflicts arising from them - are not fully captured.

1.2 Power/knowledge: decentred power and régime of truth

The realist understanding of power construction presented above is criticised by those who subscribe to a discursive conception of power in which,

knowledge structures the field of power relations through linguistic and interpretative practices, through organizational strategies, and through the contingencies of particular contexts. (Liftin 1994: 23)

According to Foucault (1980), the general mechanisms of power in contemporary western society are constituted by sovereignty and disciplinary mechanisms. The ideology of sovereignty, through its juridical-political production of a physical sovereign, established a general mechanism of power until the eighteenth century by legitimising a certain set of power relations. Disciplinary mechanisms emerged from the necessity of an “incorporation” of power in the agency of individuals permitting “time and labour, rather than wealth and commodities, to be extracted from bodies”

⁶ Adapted from (Liftin 1994: 16).

(ibid.: 104). From a political economic perspective, disciplinary mechanisms, as “one of the great inventions of bourgeois society” (ibid.: 105), enabled a new class to take over aristocratic sovereign power, while maintaining a sovereignty ideology embodied by the state. From the perspective of disciplinary mechanisms, power becomes “decentred” from the individual, in the sense of one’s property. Power is not the result of any specifically “powerful” subject, but it is rather “normalised, rendered into discipline, practised routinely by subjects upon themselves insofar as they re-enact the premises of their culture” (Calhoun 1995: 118).

Through his argument, Foucault was calling for a new direction in research on power, away from domination and leaving aside the usual legalistic focus on state apparatus and ideologies, to concentrate rather on locating power “at the extreme points of its exercise, where it is always less legal in character” (Foucault 1980: 97). Power should be studied through the “myriad of bodies which are constituted as peripheral subjects as a result of the effects of power” and by acknowledging that “the individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle” (ibid.: 98).

From this perspective:

It is only if we grasp these techniques of power and demonstrate the economic advantage or political utility that derives from them in a given context for specific reasons, that we can understand how these mechanisms come to be effectively incorporated into the social whole. (ibid.: 101)⁷

This ‘decentred’ power can be “incorporated into the social whole”, through its induction by ‘truth’.⁸

⁷ i.e., techniques of power are related to domination through rules and institutions legitimising and exerting power.

⁸ Truth is: “A system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operations of statements....The ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true” (Foucault 1980: 132-3)

‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A ‘régime’ of truth. This régime is not merely ideological or superstructural; it was a condition of the formation and development of capitalism. (ibid: 133)

Despite the ‘decentredness’ of power, the very existence of an elite embodying unequal relations of power within socionature can be considered as the result of associating actors and resources into ‘productive network’ along historically embedded régimes of truth (Latour 1986). More generally, these productive networks define ‘power holders’ or the ‘ruling elite’ as

networks of individuals (of varying degrees of integration) which provide a relatively stable matrix of connections enabling the rapid and routine mobilisation of human, institutional, material, and discursive resources into networks of action. (Woods 1998: 2107)

The political economy of this association sustains some interests over others and is specific to each society. Power is thus spatially, temporally and culturally specific. While this understanding of power has mostly been applied to, and emerged from an analysis of Western societies, several authors have also examined concepts of power in Southeast Asian societies, situating them in a particular cultural context.

1.3 Southeast Asian polity and concepts of power in Cambodia

Clearly, the use of the concept of power requires a careful examination of its cultural and historical setting. As Pye (1985) forcefully argued,

Theories which seek to specify general propositions about power miss the point entirely. Of all social phenomena power is one of the most sensitive to cultural nuances; its potentialities and its limitations are always constrained by time and place. (ibid.: vii)

The theoretical concepts of power outlined above cannot be directly applied to Cambodia, and require more than a translation to be used in this study.⁹ A second

⁹ Yet, if Cambodia’s history and archaeology have been the subject of much academic research, anthropological or psycho-sociological studies of Cambodian concepts of power are lacking. Without time to conduct specific

aspect of this cultural setting is that different actors intervening in the forestry space have different understandings of power.¹⁰ For example, an official from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is likely to have a different conception of power, and accordingly a different behaviour, than a Cambodian provincial military commander. This, and similar differences on concepts such as officialdom, national solidarity, not to mention environmental protection, may explain part of the mistranslation of ideas, policies and practices as both actors construct and interpret a singular space.

In his essay on “The idea of power in Javanese culture”, Anderson (1972) provides an analysis of the traditional Javanese political ideas in which he argued that,

The contemporary Western concept of power is an abstraction deduced from observed patterns of social interaction; it is believed to derive from heterogeneous sources; it is in no way inherently self-limiting; and it is morally ambiguous. ... Javanese see power as something concrete, homogeneous, constant in total quantity, and without inherent moral implications as such. (ibid.: 7-8)

By ambiguous, Anderson meant that “power is not inherently legitimate” (ibid.: 6). For example, in the Western view, power based on the use of force is less legitimate than power based on the force of conviction expressed through popular vote, whereas in the traditional Javanese perspective neither is legitimate or illegitimate, both are ‘power’. In the Javanese view, “the quantum of power in the universe is constant ... concentration of power in one place or in one person requires a proportional diminution elsewhere” (Anderson 1972: 7-8). From this perspective, what is

in-depth research on this theme, I am left to use research conducted in societies within the region sharing a relatively common socionatural setting and historical cultural legacy, and to glean insights from my fieldwork and other studies on Cambodian history and society.

¹⁰ The forestry space is defined broadly from an historical materialism perspective to include the physical spaces characterised as forests as well as the ensemble of discursive and material practices related to the characterisation, production (exploitation) and contextualisation of forests. By contextualisation, I imply the connections established between forests and other ecological, economic and political issues (e.g. forestry and river siltation, forestry and corruption).

important in traditional Javanese politics is not the exercise of power, like in the Western tradition, but its accumulation, concentration, and preservation (ibid.).

The most contrasting image of the power of the state in relation to contemporary western conceptions is probably that presented by Geertz (1980) about the theatre-state, *negara*, in nineteenth century Bali. In this model, the ritual life of the court reproduces the cosmic order and thereby embodies the political order by providing a “faultless image of civilised existence” and a paradigm for social order. Political power is not mainly about mastery over population, territory and resources, but about exemplary reproduction of a ‘just’ established order.

1.3.1. Galactic polity

This ‘just’ established order, *dharma*, is associated with the Indo-Tibetan cosmological concept of *mandala* (core-enclosing element) which provided a model for the traditional polity in much of Southeast Asia, and was most impressively expressed in the architecture of Angkorian temples in Cambodia. A model of traditional Southeast Asian polity is described by Tambiah (1976) in reference to the concept of *mandala* through the term of ‘galactic polity’ which “mediates and unites theory and practices, namely, certain cosmological cum topographical models of the polity that were employed as blueprints of political form” (ibid.: 102). The ‘galactic polity’ can be seen as,

a galactic picture of a central planet surrounded by differentiated satellites, which are more or less ‘autonomous’ entities held in orbit and within the sphere of influence of the center. Now if we introduce at the margin other similar competing central principalities and their satellites, we shall be able to appreciate the logic of a system that is a hierarchy of central points continually subject to the dynamics of pulsation and changing spheres of influence. (ibid.: 113).

This social constellation of autonomous individuals related to each other through a

complex system of centrifugal and centripetal forces is thus structured through the ‘weight’ of individuals and the distance, social or spatial, separating one from another.

In such polity, power and space are mutually linked in a “center-oriented concentric-circle view of polity” (ibid.: 114). What the political power *emanating* from the traditional center (i.e. god-king) is trying to reach is a relative position of proximity for populations, as well as territories, vis-à-vis the centre that it represents. This proximity was often achieved through vast population movements from defeated kingdoms to victorious ones, as manpower, rather than land, was considered the scarce ‘resource’ (Anderson 1972).¹¹ Power was characterised, and measured, by kinship and tributary relationships rather than territorial jurisdiction and fiscal control (Moertono 1968; Tambiah 1976). As Tambiah argued,

It is only after appreciating the decentralized locational disposition of the traditional polity and its replication of like entities on a decreasing scale - which constitute a galactic constellation rather than a bureaucratic hierarchy - that we can move on to the consideration of the polity’s centripetal aspects and of how the center attempts to hold the remainder. (ibid.: 114)

Building on the idea of ‘galactic polity’ to conceptualise the pattern of power relations in Cambodia regulating the successive regimes, each individual social actor is gravitating around several other actors, with the strongest tie or inclination being towards the ‘heavier’ one. To take an example, a civil servant is not systematically serving the interests of his/her institutional patron, even if the institutional power of that person is theoretically important, but rather that of his/her external personal patron holding more power in society in general. The actor has the ability to modify this relation by generating his/her own ‘weight’ in the general gravitational field of

¹¹ The massive population movements in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime can be seen in this historical perspective. While spatially, the population was dispersed; the new distance created between individuals broke kinship and other social links, thereby weakening these competing ‘centres’, or institutions, of social ordering

society or institutions, by his/her personal agency.

In Cambodia, this mobility has been limited by Khmer cultural values influenced by an Hindu-Buddhist culture emphasising hierarchy and conformity.¹² One's place in society is related to personal merits inherited from a previous life, and the respect, *korop*, of that social order is supposedly rewarded by the protection of people from higher social status, the highest being represented by the King (Peang-Meth 1991; Ovesen, Trankell et al. 1996). As such, "the immense power of kings to mediate all spiritual and earthly matters ... contributed to the concept of unchallenged personal and aristocratic cults in Cambodian society" (Bit 1991: 18-19). Social mobility was further discouraged by a 'régime of truth' arguing that,

the country should be ruled by it's natural leaders, who are the rich and powerful. The less fortunate should not envy them and try to take their place, for each person's situation in the present is determined by his [sic] past actions. The poor should accept their fate, live virtuously, and try to accumulate merit in order to improve their station in another existence. (Vickery 1984: 11)

However, contrarily to the Indian caste system, there is in contemporary Cambodia 'room for manoeuvre' for enhancing one's social status. The "extreme cultural valuation of high social status making honor and power one of the strongest motivating forces for many Cambodians" implies a dyadic competition based essentially on chronological age, gender, wealth, financial benevolence, knowledge, reputation of family, political position, employment, character of the individual, and religious piety (Hinton 1998: 101; Ovesen, Trankell et al. 1996). Each of these dimensions, most of which are regulated by institutions and rules, enters into the definition of the 'weight' of the individual. The 'weight' is in turn integrated and

and facilitating the control of the population by the regime.

¹² Khmer is the Cambodian national language, as well as the defining identity for the vast majority of Cambodians.

reproduced within the family, and extended to nonkinship relations through patron-client relationships (Scott 1972a) and lopsided friendships (Wolf 1966) by which 'heavier' actors, enjoying a more secure and privileged situation, attract people in a weaker position who, in exchange for support or material reward, seek their protection.¹³ At the political level, these relationships form part of a complex web of formal and informal relations that organise the Cambodian polity into 'cliques' (Peang-Meth 1991).

The analysis of Cambodian politics should, however, not be done with regard to political cliques, factions or parties but to fluid productive networks associating people along various, and often competing, material and discursive resources.¹⁴ As such,

[Cambodian political] factions are not so much clans organised politically, but rather the politically visible part of a nebula of informal and inter-personal relations based on a tangle of family, regional, religious, educational, economic and other solidarities, which extend beyond simple political rifts. (Népote and de Vienne 1993: 169)

These relations perform an important function of 'solidarity' counterbalancing the logic of division normally characterising clans by creating, through their diversity, bridges between different political and economic actors and social groups, with the result of creating overlapping networks of clienteles. If these dimensions of interpersonal relations are important to analyse social relations in Cambodia, an analysis of contemporary political power, and leadership, within these networks further needs to acknowledge the role of bureaucracy and the prevalence of coercive resources.

¹³ On the limitations of the patron-client framework for socio-political analysis in Southeast Asia, see (Kemp 1982; Sidel 1997).

¹⁴ However, as the icon of the party is in itself an important resource articulating productive networks, and an easily identifiable target for research, political party denominations are used, with care, throughout the study.

1.3.2. Bureaucratic bossism and violence

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the French model of bureaucracy has played an increasing role in the organisation of Cambodian society. Personalistic relations remained prevalent until the 1960s, but the sharp break operated by the Khmer Rouge regime (see Chapter 3) and the institution of a rigid and politicised bureaucracy in the early 1980s have concentrated the coercive and economic resources of the state into the hands of perennial officials and politicians handpicked by the party leadership. The legitimate rankism and the affection upon which rests leadership in a 'patron-client' model are thus mostly replaced in contemporary Cambodia by bureaucratic positions and tangible inducements, in the form of financial and coercive resources. A more appropriate model of political analysis for this study than patron-client is thus that of productive networks structured around resources by 'bureaucratic bossism'.¹⁵ This model is defined as social relations through which the power of 'bosses' is embodied in their control over coercive and economic resources within localities or organisations, and legitimated mostly by the bureaucracy and its discursive resources.

The violent character of Cambodian society during the recent years of conflict and the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge also requires attention. The use of force has a long history in Cambodia to resolving disputes, addressing frustrations about one's socio-economic marginality, asserting one's domination, or avoiding losing face (Vickery 1986). This prevalence of violence has been associated with the "lack of cultural tradition for reconciling [or accepting] contrary opinions" and the

¹⁵ On concepts of bossism, see (Wolf and Hansen 1967; Scott 1972a; Sidel 1997).

resolution of disputes through withdrawal, patronage, intimidation, or violent conflict (Ovesen, Trankell et al. 1996: 42; Bit 1991). In fact the weakness of Cambodian culture in addressing contentious issues of power relations through compromise or accommodation has been stressed (Thion 1982; Vickery 1986). The Khmer Rouge genocide itself not only drew upon the historical context and socio-political changes taking place in the early 1970s, but also upon the “dark side” of pre-existing cultural models of obedience and honour competition (Hinton 1998). However, one should not overemphasise such ‘cultural’ argument in front of the historical and material context of Cambodia since the 1970s. The widespread availability of arms, the number of unpaid military personnel, the permissivity and unaccountability perpetuated by mutual fear, the frequent lack of organisational framework for institutionalised justice, and the demand for private protection of goods and persons given the low level of trust in the state apparatus all combine into a potentially violent social reality.

1.4 Power and nature: the nature of power

Power is conceptualised in this study as the outcome of social constructs that are the transient result of interaction between agency - planned and unplanned social interventions - and structure reproduced, and contested, to serve economic and political interests (Giddens 1984). The divergence of interests motivates conflicts and struggles that are the expression of a resistance ‘fought’ through both discursive and material practices that are temporally, spatially and culturally specific. In Cambodia, concepts of leadership and power emphasise a sociocentric perspective on status and honour, giving rise to a competitive rankism which is ‘fought’ through continuous divisions within social groups and a vast array of tactics, ranging from unquestioning

obedience to outright violence (Bit 1991; Hinton 1998).

From such approach, this study intends to locate the political intelligibility of developments in the forestry sector not only “in the intentions guiding the actions of one or more animating subjects”, but also in “the systematic nature of the social reality which results from those actions” (Ferguson 1996: 18).¹⁶ By choosing this theoretical perspective I do not want to put forward the belief that power cannot result from the wilful pursuit of political goals by individual actors. Rather, my perspective on power emphasises the fact that the (re)production of power, and society, depends upon the “interaction between agents and structures that constantly adjusts, transforms, resists, or reinvents social arrangements” (Hajer 1995: 58) rather than the sole successful attainment of a predetermined goal.

2. Concepts of nature

Nature has been the traditional focus of geography, and it is now “on the agenda as never before” (Castree and Braun 1998). The question about ‘which agenda?’ provides an introduction to reflections about nature, about its production, and about the political and economic consequences of its control. The first part of this section presents nature as a simple external resource to societies. The second part challenges this concept by presenting the different faces of nature, in relation to the social sphere. The final part discusses aspects of social power that can be derived from nature, through the example of forests in Cambodia, as an introduction to the next section on

¹⁶ Chance events and unacknowledged structures produce “unintended outcomes which turn out to be intelligible not only as the unforeseen effects of an intended intervention, but also as the unlikely instruments of an unplotted strategy” (Ferguson 1996: 20)

the relation between the commodification of nature and the production of social power.

2.1 Nature as material resource and deterministic context

In this traditional perspective, social power and nature are related to each other in a mostly unilateral direction (Raffestin 1980). Nature is transformed into power through the process of commodification. Each social actor is able to secure some of the value created by nature's commodification acquires more power, not only in the form of financial or material reward but also as an outcome of the "strength of the association between actors", and his/her social status and obligations (Murdoch 1995: 748). From this perspective, social power is again both a result of, and an element within, the practices of the production of nature. The organisation of the commodification process thus translates into a social stratification and its reorganisation conditions social changes.

As these modes of production and exchange largely relied on 'natural conditions', as much as on human labour, this view is reflected into the belief of environmental determinism (Frielich 1967; Diamond 1998). This belief has been shared widely across time and space, from early European thinkers to Asian philosophies (LaPierre 1965). Environmental determinism is most notably argued in a systematic way by Friedrich Ratzel (1903) in his "Politische Geographie". Its association with geographical determinism and social Darwinism formed the basis of 'naturalised geopolitics' that dominated western political and economic thinking from the late nineteenth century till the Second World War, allowing for the world to be "known and *possessed* not just politically but epistemologically. This was the great

achievement of naturalisation; to have depoliticised inter-imperial rivalry into a set of natural and determining geographical ‘facts of life’ ” (Agnew and Corbridge 1995: 57). This naturalisation was progressively replaced by the idea of geopolitical struggles that characterised the Cold War period. Since the collapse of most socialist regimes and the domination of the new ‘global neo-liberal’ political economic order, attention in geopolitics have been recently redirected towards international political economy in which,

the relative success or failure of different localities and regions ... at any particular time is due to their historical accumulation of assets and liabilities and their ability to adapt to changing circumstances, and not the result of ‘natural’ resource endowments. (Agnew and Corbridge 1995: 6)

This absence of relation between nature’s wealth and political economic results seems to be confirmed by the relative economic success of resource-poor countries like Japan and Asian Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) in comparison to resource rich countries like D.R. Congo/Zaire, Venezuela and Nigeria (see below).

2.2 Nature as social construct

Nature, as both perceived and transformed, is related to social relations through social intervention and labour, as well as the translation which discourses operate. Discourses, as much as material practices, are key to the construction of power from nature, and the construction of nature from power (Escobar 1996). In fact, the concept of nature can only exist when it is integrated into society, or more precisely, when it is confronted with the social. Conventional western ideas of nature conceive it mostly as “the external world” (Torrance 1992: v), meaning by this the un-human or a-social elements; a perspective shared by the Cambodian culture (Ang 1997). As such, the

theory of a social, or cultural, construction of nature (Soper 1995) is not so much about the discovery of an 'other' nature but about ideas of what nature can be through a specifically human perspective. Only through such a perspective, and the associated split between nature and culture, is there such a thing as nature, as otherwise everything is nature - as everything is born, or constituted. This is probably why nature is so difficult to define (Williams 1976). As Harvey, who strongly called for an end to the intellectual separation of nature and society, argued: New York is natural (Harvey 1996). But as Cronon argued in presenting Chicago as "Nature's metropolis" (Cronon 1991), New York is 'produced nature', born from socio-natural processes dominated by the logic of capitalism (Smith 1990). From this conceptual perspective, nature and society are indeed one - socionature - due to the conspicuouness of their mutually constructive relations (Swyngedouw 1997b).

Socionatures are, however, extremely diverse, being historically and geographically embedded. The concept of nature is itself better understood as concepts of natures, to embrace the whole diversity of meanings attributed to this single word; and in particular those required by this study. To draw meaningful conceptual boundaries, I distinguish nature as 'first', 'second' and 'third' nature in order to reflect the level of 'socialisation' that the biophysical environment reaches. Second, these three categories are unified through the concept of 'produced nature' (Smith 1984).

2.2.1 First, second and third nature

The distinction between a 'first' and a 'second' nature is an Hegelian concept (Schmidt 1971). The following is a discussion, and extension, of these concepts

building on the work of Cronon (1991) and Smith (1984) on the socialisation and production of nature. In my conception of first nature, the term refers to primal, or “original, prehuman nature” as Cronon (1991: xix) puts it. Smith (1984) denies the existence of such a first nature, with the exception of primal nature that has remained inaccessible to human beings - confining to such “extreme examples” as deep geological substratum and celestial objects other than the moon (and now Mars).

In contrast, second nature is nature transformed by human beings in a conscious effort to produce their bio-physical environment, a concept close to that of Cronon (1991: xix), for whom second nature is “the artificial nature that people erect atop first nature”. I maintain that distinction but bring to it a gradient of socialisation, in particular to distinguish between an actively produced environment and one that is not (currently) actively produced.

While useful, these concepts of first and second nature remain focused on material practices and do not bring forward nature as a social abstraction constructed and produced by human beings. A ‘third nature’ referring to nature as a discourse, can thus use and extend the concept of ‘second nature’ defined by idealists:

[First nature as] concrete and material, comprising commodities as objects of use and our own activities as material, inter-exchange with nature; [second nature as] abstract and purely social, concerning commodities as objects of exchange and quantities of value. (Sohn-Rethel in (Smith 1984: 55))

There is of course not much of an ‘external world’ nor biophysical elements in such third nature, but it is still one that we are manipulating. Third nature is the place of imagination and controversy between humans through differing views; the discursive embodiment of social interests and processes generated about and around first and second nature. While second nature is often the site of ‘power/means’, third nature is the site of ‘power/knowledge’. As such this ‘third nature’ includes not only abstract

ideas about nature but also the social institutions and rules organising socionatural relations.

These categories of nature respond to each other and are of course not neatly separated, nor in any strict sense, three only. As Harvey (1996: 183) noted, “the category ‘nature’ ... should be regarded as intensely internally variegated”. Second nature can only exist from first nature and all of nature is a mix of both. For example, first nature becomes third nature through the account of travellers as it is interpreted, and third nature evolves as this interpretation varies through time and culture.

2.2.2 Produced nature

Drawing conceptual boundaries between different types of natures is useful insofar as it serves to underline the evolution of socionatural processes, and to assist in identifying characteristics of changes. Yet, changes operate along a ‘continuum’ between mutually co-evolving natural and social constructions. In other words, boundaries are less clear as the social inserts itself into, and transforms the natural (Haraway 1991). It is in the apparent driving force of this insertion in, and transformation of nature by the social that the current unity of both needs to be sought. This driving force can be called ‘human progress’, or ‘human mastery over nature’. Smith (1984) refers to it, in its current ‘global’ form and reach, as the capitalist *production* of nature.

Through human labour and the production of nature at the global scale, human society has placed itself squarely at the centre of nature ... this centrality in nature is what fuels the crazy quest of capital actually to control nature It is the dream dreamt each night by capital and its class, in preparation for the next day’s labour. (ibid.: 65)

It is upon the need for profit and the logic of profitability that the unity of the social

and the natural is currently constructed through their mutual production for their exploitation. Such unity is, however, not universal but culturally constructed (Descola 1992).

Furthermore, this unity is also shaped by nature's materiality, in its biophysical composition, as well as in its specific discursive production and the conditions and social relations of its transformation and exchange (Castree 1995). The examination of the relations between nature and social power should thus pass through an analysis of these specificities.

2.3 Forests in Cambodia

As for many societies, in Southeast Asia but also in Europe, forests constitute the opposite of and complement to 'humanised' space (Lombard 1974).¹⁷ This dichotomy is well illustrated by the Khmer vocabulary used to distinguish two categories: that of the wild and supernatural world, *prey*, and that of the civilised and human world, *srok*. The forest is thus the wild woods, *prey cheu*, while the rice growing flood plain, *veal srey*, constitutes most of the *srok*. However, these two spaces interpenetrate each other, from a 'wild' back garden of a house in a village, to a 'humanised' path opened in the deep forest by invoking spirits (Ang 1997). If the forest is not 'humanised' for lowland Khmer people, in the sense of an integration into the life cycle of the society itself such as for 'highland' proto-Indochinese groups practising shifting cultivation; it is however deeply socialised through numerous traditional beliefs and extensive use.¹⁸

Among the themes of the forest in Khmer tradition are those of transformation,

¹⁷ For a collection of papers on Asian perceptions of nature, see (Bruun and Kalland 1995).

such as rebirth, transition and journey through life, as humans come to close contact with spirits and ghosts (Thierry 1982). The forest is also the place of darkness and murder, an association that long pre-dated the existence of Khmer Rouge guerrilla, but was afterwards closely, if not indistinctly, associated by such saying as ‘where there is forest, there is Khmer Rouge’. Despite this dimension of foreignness and fear, forests were part of the everyday life of many lowland Khmers who remained in frequent contact with them through the collection of widely used forest products and frequent settlement in new forest clearings (Delvert 1961; Boulbet 1975).

2.4 Power and nature: the power of nature

Nature is understood in this study as both a ‘materiality’ *and* a ‘discourse’: a ‘materiality’, constraining or assisting the development of human societies, and through which resources and practices are shaped; as well as a ‘discourse’, fruit of the interpretation of social actors, from which concepts and practices are drawn. Both material and discursive nature mutually inform and construct each other through the interplay of multiple socionatural relations. This mutual construction shapes social power through their intended and unintended relations.

In the specific case of forests and logging in Cambodia, the boundary between first and second nature is in part tenuous, as most of the forests have been transformed from first nature to second nature through at least 4,000 years of conscious efforts to modify the environment for agricultural settlements and easier hunting grounds through clearings and fires (Anderson 1989). Yet, from a commercial logging

¹⁸ For an anthropological study of Cambodians in forested environment in the 1960s, see (Martin 1997); for

perspective, much of the remaining forests have been left ‘untouched’ by direct human intervention and, on the contrary, second nature has had the opportunity to become akin to first nature, as human populations receded from certain regions. Trees in uninhabited forests that are not being logged or intensively used by human beings can be considered as first nature. Trees transformed into logs, or other wood products, and forests that have been transformed to suit the needs of logging, for example through silviculture, are second nature. Forests as represented in media, reports, maps, GIS, statistics are third nature; but also all other representations such as a source of biodiversity or financial rent, or the opposite of a civilised space, a ‘quiet’ and insecure place filled with bandits, armed insurgents or dangerous spirits. Third nature is as well the perception placed, for example, on second nature: an ‘illegal log’ is no different from a ‘legal log’ as far as second nature is concerned. Both are pieces of wood produced by human’s labour on a tree. Yet, their meaning and value differ through the discursive qualities attributed to each according to the different perspectives of social actors. As I mentioned earlier, these boundaries are to some extent arbitrary. Their utility is derived from the conceptualisation that they offer for this analysis.

3. Commodification of nature and power

Having arrived at a conception of power, sensitive to Cambodian and Western theories of power, and highlighted the multidimensionality of nature, the following section discusses the processes by which nature and social power mutually constitute

proto-Indochinese groups in the Northeast, see (Bourdier 1995).

one another.

3.1 Production of nature and construction of social power

As mentioned earlier, relations between production of nature and construction of power have been the subject of debate. The most well-known argument was developed by Wittfogel (1957), about the relation between the necessity of constructing and managing irrigation infrastructures in Asian “hydraulic societies” and the centralisation of authority generating a form of absolutist state, “Oriental despotism”, as the dominant form of polity. This argument is in particular pointed out for the role played by ‘scarcity’ in the construction of power:

Technology [forces of production] and scarcity lead to ‘criticalness’; criticalness and inheritance lead to control over desired resource; control over resources and goals lead to dependence; dependence and limited escape potential lead to power relations. (Martin 1977: 162)

Along these lines, Cox (1987: 4) takes a dialectical and historical materialist approach “to understand how and why changes take place in both the forms of political power and the organization of production”, and argues that,

Production creates the material basis of all forms of social existence, and the ways in which human efforts are combined in productive processes affect all other aspects of social life, including the polity. Production generates the capacity to exercise power, but power determines the manner in which production takes place. (ibid.: 1)

For Cox, the structuration of power within society can be explained by examining the way in which,

the state that consecrates one of these types of production relations as the dominant form, the most legitimate, the hegemonic form, also structures the relationships among the different coexisting forms. (ibid.: 5)

While the centredness of production in Cox’s argument has been criticised, his analysis provides useful insights, for example the idea of a process of ‘consecration’

of specific forms of production.¹⁹ This process of consecration generates a structuration of accumulation providing the basis of the production of specific forms of power through the transformation of resources and labour. It is particularly important in the creation of legitimate/illegitimate spaces of accumulation conditioning the production of power. In this perspective, resources should not be analysed as “matters to acquire or to possess, which they are not, but as pretexts giving birth to practices and strategies” (Raffestin 1980: 4). Resources are thus better defined as relations, from which can emerge properties satisfying needs and demands, but also contested power, as the unstable character of these relations implies a constant struggle. Unstable relations are the source and the result of both natural and social changes, the two categories being intimately linked with each other, precisely through the concept of resource that is used to establish a relation between the natural and the social spheres.

The particular forms that conflictual relations take, expressed in the production of nature and the social sphere, are culturally specific. For Ghee and Valencia (1990: 2) Western colonialism - by promoting a new political economy and a philosophy of life centred on material wealth and social stratification grounded in the commodification of nature and the accumulation of generated profits - weakened indigenous cultures in Southeast Asia which had traditionally “fostered the development of life-styles that, in essence, did not encourage competition for material gain or multiplication of possessions for their own sake”. The new type of relations within socionature have been altered in an important way that has not been reversed

¹⁹ While Cox focuses his analysis on the state, a similar approach could be extended to other ‘consecrating’ actors, most notably private corporations.

by decolonisation but, on the contrary, accentuated as the colonial mode of power construction has been reproduced by westernised national elite.

3.2 Power, nature and socio-economic change

The following section outlines and critiques two conceptions of the relationships between natural resources, ‘human’ development, and power in developing countries that are of particular relevance to examining forestry in Cambodia; as it can be interpreted as a case of a bountiful natural endowment enabling an extractive economy to take place in the periphery of the country. The first is based on political economic work about the often poor economic and social situation of natural resource-rich countries. The second details the work of Bunker (1985) on extractive economies at the periphery.

3.2.1 Bountiful nature: the paradox of plenty

If the ‘wealth of nature’ of a country is conventionally considered an advantage for its potential socio-economic progress, numerous cases of economic and social ‘failure’ in nature-wealthy countries have led development economists to question this ‘paradox of plenty’ - the observation that abundance of resources can correlate with poor economic and social indicators - and to investigate processes related to the exploitation of generous natural endowments (Auty 1990; Lane and Tornell 1995; Sachs and Warner 1995; Karl 1997). Several explanations have been proposed, from social causes that ‘easy riches lead to sloth’, to purely economic ones such as the

‘Dutch Disease’ and ‘linkages’ model (Sachs and Warner 1995).²⁰ Upon the economic success of some natural resource-poor countries, Ranis (1987) has argued that state policy instruments, which are key in promoting growth and wealth (re)distribution, are intensely politicised in countries with abundant natural resources because of a rent-seeking behaviour by certain elites. On the contrary, in resource-poor countries, these policy instruments are depoliticised and oriented towards economic liberalisation to favour growth.

Two similar arguments are of particular interest to this study. The first focuses on the influence of a dominant commodity, or productive sector, upon the polity. As Karl (1997) argues:

Dependence on a particular export commodity shapes not only social classes and regime types ... but also the very institutions of the state, the framework for decision-making, and the decision calculus of policy makers. (ibid.: 7)

From this perspective, the development trajectories of countries can be largely determined by the pervasive influence of a commodity over political and economic life, in particular by shaping the policy processes of resource allocation. For Karl, this influence relates to a ‘structured contingency’; a structure of incentives resulting from “prior interactions of structure and agency [that] create the institutional legacy that constrains choice down the road” (ibid.: 10). This idea is complemented by that of Lane and Tornell (1995) who argue that,

²⁰ The ‘Dutch Disease’ model refers to the discovery of petroleum in Dutch waters and its impact on the economy. The model argues that abundant natural resources can lead to shrinkage of the manufacturing sector and to the loss of production externalities, with detrimental consequences for the general economy of the affected country. The ‘linkages’ model develops the same concept of direct and indirect consequences of the economy of natural resource sectors *vis à vis* other economic sectors (Sachs and Warner 1995).

Resource-rich economies are subject to more extreme rent-seeking behavior than resource-poor economies, as national politics is oriented to grabbing the rents earned by the natural resource endowments. ... a windfall coming from a terms-of-trade improvement or a discovery of natural resource deposits can lead to a 'feeding frenzy' in which competing factions fight for the natural resource rents, and end up inefficiently exhausting the public good. (in, Sachs and Warner 1995: 4)

Two approaches emerge from these analyses: a political economy approach emphasising the structural links between resource development and polity; and a socio-cultural approach emphasising the behaviour of predatory elite. While these approaches can assist in identifying the framework through which decisions are made and incentives produced by power relations, they lack critical perspective upon the process of (capitalist) commodification itself.

Mainstream developmentalism has suggested that the failure of extractive economies results from the short-term rent-seeking behaviour of authoritarian states towards natural resources which in turn can be related to their relative political insecurity (Lane and Tornell 1995). Following this argument, democracy is advocated as being key to good environmental governance and a fair redistribution of benefits from natural resources exploitation. Henceforth, it is assumed, the support of democratisation processes by the international community will reduce resource degradation in non-democratic countries by putting an end to the political insecurity, autocratic rule and violent conflicts that are considered detrimental to natural resources' good use, due to their deterring effect on incentives to invest. If arguably sound, and statistically demonstrated, in the case of forest cover (Deacon 1996; Didia 1997), this perspective lacks the reciprocal proposition that it is the capitalisation of nature that brings about political authoritarianism and uneven development.²¹

²¹ Political activists are more inclined to this kind of proposition. For example, about Nigeria, "there wouldn't have been any war in the first place [nor the current autocratic regime] if Biafra's Niger Delta were barren desert and not dotted with oil wells"(Okonta and Frynas 1997: 8).

From a state-centred perspective, state actors need to balance their relation to market, population and nature to ensure their security and that of their regime according to the potential gain that can be expected from each of these components (Skocpol 1985). State actors entertain a close relation with the market, mediated for example through neo-patrimonialism and cronyism that are often limiting the “relative autonomy” between the economic and the political (Althusser and Balibar 1968; Bates 1981). The relation with the population is more tenuous and often distant; mediated, for example, through periodic elections, coercion, clientelism, or avoidance behaviour and confrontation by the public. Finally the relation with nature is often indirect and mediated mostly through relations with the market and population, if not with foreign entities, such as green NGO or international agencies (Sachs 1993).

A concept available within the repertoire of political science for the type of state power characteristic of Cambodia is neo-patrimonialism. This concept is built upon the Weberian term ‘patrimonialism’ which describes a political domination linked to bonds of loyalty and through which “all governmental authority and the corresponding economic rights tend to be treated as privately appropriated economic advantages” (Weber 1947: 352). For Médard (1982):

Neo-patrimonialism ... is a by-product of a specific historical situation which resulted in a contradictory combination of bureaucratic and patrimonial norms ... Unlike the patrimonial regime the neo-patrimonial regime hides behind a public façade which is complex and differentiated. It dissimulates the private while simulating the public ... In neo-patrimonial societies, although the state is a façade compared to what it pretends to be, it is not only façade [sic], for it is able to extract and distribute resources. For legitimation it refers to public norms and universal ideologies. ... Neo-patrimonialism corresponds to an intermediary zone between patrimonialism and corruption [which] in underdeveloped states undermines the state itself. This prevents institutionalization and is an obstacle to the accumulation and reproduction of political resources. ... This privatization of the public has two consequences: the first is that political power, instead of having the impersonal and abstract character of legal-rational domination, specific to the modern state, is on the contrary a personal power. The second consequence is that politics becomes a kind of business, as it is political resources which give access to economic resources: politics is reduced to economics and recovers the depersonalized character inherent in the market. (ibid.: 180-181)

If some of these arguments, such as the reduction of politics to economics, are too extreme, the concept provides much insight into the construction of power by state actors through a mix of discursive practices aimed largely at the international community; and of clientelism, corruption and personalisation of political power aimed largely at vested interests and regime security.²² In this regard, “Neo-patrimonialism is conditioned by mechanisms of production, exchange, extraction, distribution and eventually, accumulation of resources”. (ibid.: 185)

The mechanisms of nature’s commodification have a clear and important role in neo-patrimonial regimes. The command over the financial rent extracted from natural resources can enable specific actors, and in particular economic and state actors, to increase their autonomy from demands of the ‘public façade’ and associated democratic legitimacy, through the build up of forces of coercion, client groups, and instruments of knowledge and interpretation. In other words, the ‘wealth of nature’ can facilitate a reproduction of power by the ruling elite by concentrating the centres of decisions for resource development and allocation. This is in part greatly facilitated by the dominant utilitarian ideology of economic growth through resource exploitation, as it provides a ready-made ‘public façade’ (cor)responding to the ‘public transcript’, for this process of concentration.

The means of this reproduction are not without consequences, in particular with regard to shaping the polity and conflicts within society. As natural resource exploitation generally entails an imbalance of relations in favour of those controlling access to the market to the detriment of, often dispossessed, local populations;

²² As Médard (1982: 180) noted “what is corruption from the point of view of imported public norms is not corruption by private norms”.

countries with abundant natural resources would thus be more likely to be ruled by a mafia-state, able to reproduce themselves independently of genuine popular legitimacy, than a resource poor country.²³ If such a proposition is simplistic and certainly cannot be overgeneralised, it remains the case that processes of capitalisation, based on nature's spatial, legal and economic enclosure are not only deeply uneven in their (re)distribution of economic benefits and social power (Bunker 1985; Smith 1990), but also shape specific forms of power and polity.

3.2.2 Extractive economies at the periphery

For dependency theorists, capitalist development, rather than offering increased wealth, produces peripherality and underdevelopment (Frank 1978; Wallerstein 1984).

Under the existing economic, political, and social framework,

Development in the core, and underdevelopment in the periphery, are two sides of the same global capitalist coin. Metropolitan capitalism depends on the exploitation and active underdevelopment of an already capitalist periphery. (Corbridge 1995: 4-5).

In this understanding, dependent development, created by the colonial system, and later replaced by a neo-colonialism maintained through international development agencies and private multinationals, operates through unequal terms of exchange and transfer pricing. These mechanisms of underdevelopment are articulated between core and periphery between, as well as within countries. Extractive economies, as well as large-scale land based or cheap labour production schemes provide powerful implements of underdevelopment and associated injustice.

One study using concepts of uneven development is the work of Bunker

²³ By genuine popular legitimacy, I mean that the population is not turned into a client group through short-term demagogic manoeuvres; even if I understand that such relation of extended patronage can be culturally

(1985) on the 'underdeveloping' of the Amazon region through the commodification of its resources. Bunker used the concept of Adams (1975), close to the concepts of realists and later of Mann (1986) on 'organisational powers' that,

power is derived from control over energy flows, and those who hold power are those who can organise their environment, both physical and social, in such a way as to control energy by structuring the environments of others. (Bunker 1985: 14).

Bunker added that those powerful groups created also in this way their own dependence and environmental limits; an argument close to the idea of interdependence linked to power (Martin 1977) and of second contradiction of capitalism (O'Connor 1988).

The interest of Bunker's study is the perspective that he takes on extractive systems as a "distinct socioeconomic type" through which,

the complex social organizational, demographic, and infrastructural forms that emerge as technological change and accumulation accelerate the flow of energy through the articulated productive systems ultimately depend on processes that progressively decelerate the economy, disrupt the ecosystem, and simplify social organization in extractive regions. (Bunker 1985: 30)

For Bunker, the extractive economies characterising 'extreme peripheries' tend to lead such regions towards economic and social failure as extraction activities develop few 'linkages', within the regional political economy, while depleting the resources upon which it rests. This 'enclave' situation (Levin 1960) results mostly from the uneven distribution in space and time of the resources, through its geographical location, its rhythm of extraction, and its demand.

As a result, infrastructures and settlements are often transient, and "extractive economies do not respond to the locational advantages that tend to foster the mutual proximity of productive enterprises" (Bunker 1985: 26-27). Important aspects of

understood as bringing legitimacy to a leader.

extractive economies are the relative economic and social (including political) isolation of the work force from local communities;²⁴ the low proportion of labour and local capital to market value which concentrates profits in the transformation and exchange; and the induced bias of governmental policies on land tenure and access to resources. Bunker also argues that “the paucity of economic and political linkages and the demographic and infrastructural instability of extractive economies impede rational state participation and administration” (ibid.: 28). Recognising the inescapability of resource extraction for human needs yet its lack of ‘organisational power’ for local communities under such framework, Bunker advocates a revaluation of natural energy transformation at a global level, in other words sustainable development through environmental economics.

Bunker’s study offers interesting insights from a neo-Marxist perspective into the negative social and environmental consequences of extractive economies in peripheral regions. Yet, his analysis falls short of political argument beyond an analysis of the failure by the modern state to address its development plans for Amazonia due to corruption, self-interest and conflicts within and between governmental agencies. Furthermore, Bunker does not theorise practices and so ‘black boxes’ the ways in which power is constructed. While conceptualising power as a flow of energy within a socionatural network is an interesting concept, one also needs to consider how this flow is embedded in and constructed by specific practices associated with the extractive sector.

²⁴ Such as logging and mining camps or ‘boom towns’. A different perspective is that extractive companies bring a whole range of material and social ‘innovations’ and ‘opportunities’ to local communities, often to the point of

4. Practices of nature: the case of tropical timber

Practices associated with the commodification of forests include the discursive construction of forestry, the production of timber, and its consumption. The multiplicity of actors associated in forestry ‘productive networks’ are related through ‘intermediaries’, such as flows of commodities, labour, status, money, norms and information, on a variety of scales (Callon 1991; Swyngedouw 1997a). The manipulation of these intermediaries determines to some extent the power of individual actors, including institutions, in relation to others.

4.1 The discursive construction of forestry

Two perspectives dominate contemporary debates about forest management. The first perspective, tinged with romanticism and ecocentrism, promotes forest preservation, frequently diluted into conservation. Forests are closely identified with ‘untouched’ nature, a realm of life untainted by human impact. In particular ‘primary rainforest’, and its northern equivalent the ‘old growth forest’, have become the contemporary symbols of a first nature under threat representing a source of life and inspiration (Myers 1984; Willems-Braun 1997). And while calls for a protective ‘locking away’ of ‘pristine’ nature by a (northern) elite have receded in front of more integrative approaches linking the welfare of local populations to the conservation of ecosystems (UNESCO 1972; IUCN 1986), nature ‘preservation / conservation’ as ideology and practice remains the norm. This discursive construction of forestry translates into the creation of ‘protected areas’, occasionally justifying social control of, and coercion

replacing a quasi-absent state. Yet, exchange and assistance provided by extractive companies to local

towards local populations (Peluso 1993).

The second perspective, influenced by utilitarianism, promotes a rational use of forests. Forests are identified as natural resources ‘in waiting’, an untapped potential for economic growth (Westoby 1987). However, this perspective rarely argues for total deforestation and a shift in land use. Rather, forest resources are deemed renewable and sustainable exploitation is presented as both an economic and environmental solution to forest management. Yet, if the timber industry is claiming that sustainability is a feasible objective (ITTO 1997), others consider that tropical forests constitute a finite and non-renewable resource on a short-term span and should be considered exhaustible resources (Poore, Burgess et al. 1989; Potter 1993). This is due not only to the biological reproduction and growth cycle of trees but also to the characteristics of demands both in terms of volume and quality. Apart from being rarely implemented,²⁵ sustainable exploitation of forests is further constrained by: the existence of competitive uses for fallow forests (e.g. agriculture and infrastructures); the “naturally mediated unintended consequences” (Benton 1991: 266) of previous logging operations (e.g. increase in forest fires and depletion of commercial species); and the evolution of the demand, in particular demand growth and the drive for substitution products (e.g. plywood and pulp production leading to shorter rotation cycle and deforestation).

For the logging industry, these constraints entail a strategy of territorial expansion, or of extensive and mobile exploitation. This spatial evasion, while constrained by the cost of built infrastructures (e.g. roads, processing factories), is

communities, often with an interest in securing support, tend to be limited in scope and time.
²⁵ Less than only 0.1% of productive tropical forests (828 million hectares) were under sustained-yield

facilitated by the mobility of many production inputs (e.g. semi-skilled labour, chainsaws, vehicles). Alternatively the logging industry can adopt a strategy of resistance, to the contradiction of its mode of production by intensively and durably exploit forests. Such was the goal of 'scientific forestry' which promoted the rationalisation of ecosystemic and anthropic relations through forest reserves, silviculture, genetic manipulation, population displacement, or community forestry to enhance the productivity of forests in commercial species and to protect it from competitive uses (Durand 1994; Bryant 1997).

This 'production' paradigm has even spread into the realm of conservation as, according to the logic of market economy, if forests are not used for timber production they will be converted to other uses. In this perspective, commercial logging makes sense from a conservation point of view if it is sustainable and more profitable than other land uses. The conservation perspective has however obtained that the criteria of profitability be defined in a more 'holistic' perspective than a purely marketing one by integrating and pricing externalities (Pearce 1990). In short, the failures of sustainability and 'holistic profitability' have become the main problems to be addressed by forest management. Solutions are sought by groups such as the Forest Stewardship Council through a 'certification' of the sustainability of timber harvests.

Both discourses have led to the production of uneven relations of power between concerned actors as both have a reciprocal dependency and a common ethos, that forests are an asset which requires social intervention and control (Lehtinen

management for timber production in 1985 (Poore, Burgess et al. 1989). A decade later, the situation had not much improved (ITTO 1997).

1991). This social intervention is largely shaped by the politically and economically powerful and results not only in the social exclusion of the politically and economically weak (Colchester and Lohman 1993; Zawawi 1995), but also in the exclusion of forests as actors in themselves (Richards 1993; Descola 1994). Examining the links commonly established between the degradation of forests and the impoverishment of forest dwellers in Indonesia in the context of ‘conservation and development’ initiatives, Dove argued that,

The problem is not that the forest peoples are poor ... but that they are politically weak ... and the problem is not that the forest is environmentally fragile but that it is politically marginal. (Dove 1993: 21)

This argument of political weakness and marginality might appear contradictory to the previous observation that discourses of forest management are high on the development agenda. Yet, this apparent paradox is reconciled when the unevenness of power between actors concerned by the production process is considered at a variety of scales: from trees versus loggers; to forest communities versus governmental authorities, to the global unevenness of power within the international political economy between the producing country and the consuming country; also between the ‘voiceless’ forest dweller and the forestry expert having access to media and policy arenas.

To sum up, two specific issues of interest to this study have characterised discourses about forestry: forests as free goods under specific property regimes, and forests as (non)renewable resources. Commercial timber from unplanted forests is a given from both nature and history. As such it is a ‘free good’ which, according to the labour theory of value, is only ‘produced’ through human labour (Marx 1990). Yet, as Cronon (1991) pointed out, it is partly from this gratuitousness that the value of

timber originated, and upon which capitalism strives. Although this may seem an obvious point, it is worth mentioning at least once that, under these conditions, the store of capital in unplanted tropical forests attracts capitalism in the form of social groups motivated by the prospect of financial profitability. Given this profitability and the consequences of timber extraction, social groups compete over ownership and conditions of access, competing claims been put forward on forests as either global commons, sovereign national assets, and local community resources (Humphreys 1996). These conditions of free good and access are, however, constrained by the costs of ownership and production, such as royalty rates demanded by the state and the cost of transportation to the market, as well as the rules of access and production. Furthermore, from an economic perspective, while forests are free goods, they have an opportunity cost by ‘freezing’ other land uses.

4.2 The production of tropical timber

Timber production is shaped around several key practices combining society and nature: objectification, appropriation and exploitation. As a matter of example, I apply these concepts to contemporary Cambodia.

The first practice is the social *objectification* of forests into an identifiable commodity suited to a market. Through this objectification, forests and trees lose all but their commodified characteristics and become forest types, hectares, stand, stock, class species, gross volume and harvestable yield. This necessary practice of objectification has the ability to generate from the materiality of forests a third nature

upon which social actors can prospect for potential financial gains.²⁶ Such a process of conversion of first nature into third nature can be generated through a ‘forest resources inventory process’ using remote sensing and professional field survey teams as in Table 2.2. An earlier, often more poetic but no less consequential version of this objectification is the ‘explorer’s account’ (such as that of Mouhot (1864) discussed in Chapter 3).

²⁶ For a detailed analysis of this process for grain in Chicago, see Cronon (1991: 97-147).

Table 2.2 - Cambodian forests as objectified through an inventory process

Total volume of all tree species, with DBH >30cm.	1,300,000,000 cu.m.
Total volume of commercial species, with DBH > 30 cm.	564,148,000 cu.m.
Annual sustainable yield	515,000 cu.m.
Volume per category, among the commercial species, with DBH > 30 cm.	
<i>Category</i>	<i>volume (cu.m.)</i>
luxe	10,233,100
1st	188,475,900
2nd	176,794,200
3rd	47,852,300
non classified	140,792,700
Source: (Chan 1985)	

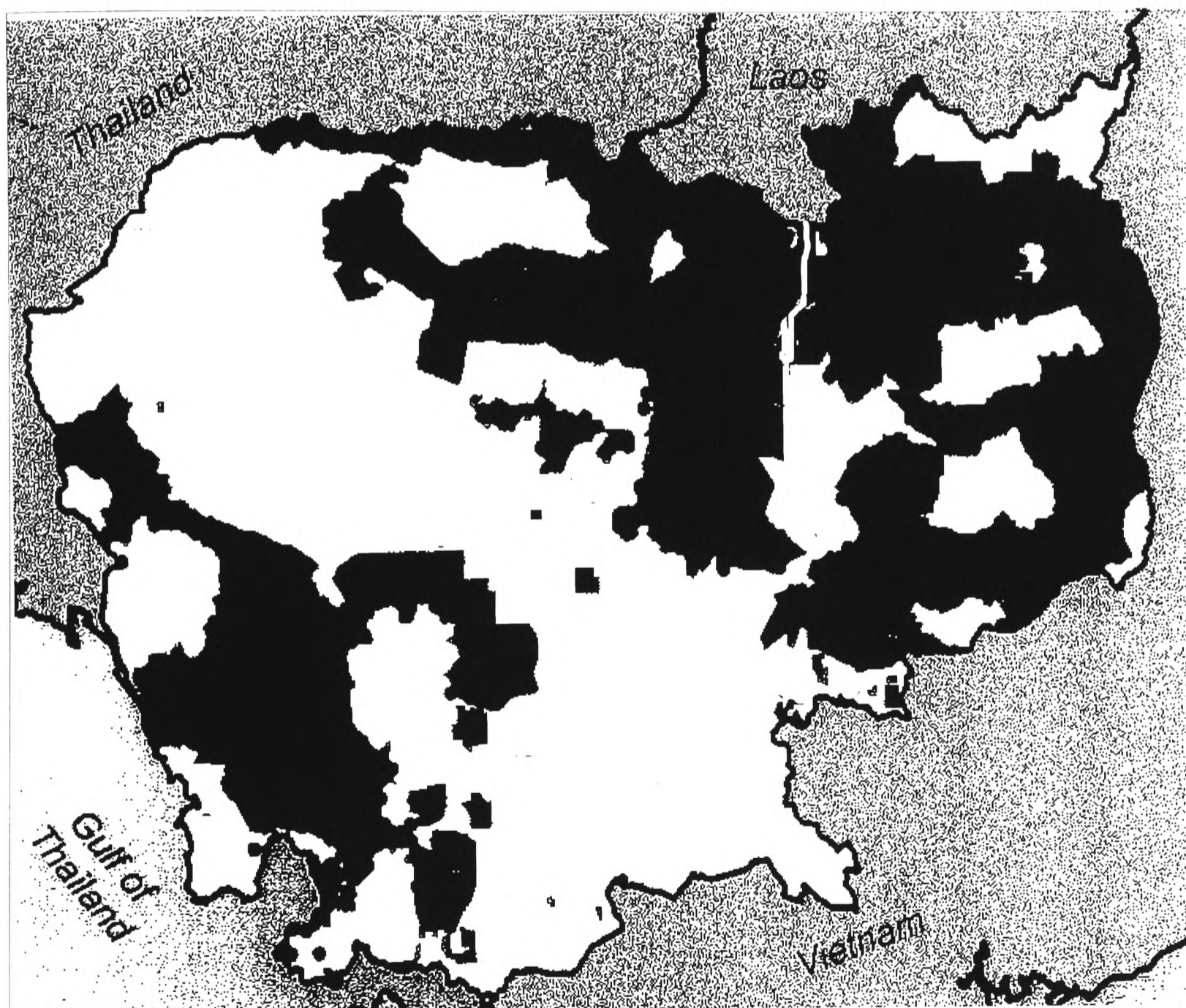
The second set of practices is the *appropriation* of the objectified forest. This appropriation is embedded in social rules and norms, often taking the form of the recognition of a commons, such as communal or state forests, or a private property or concession. To continue with the case of Cambodia, this process was formally carried out through article 58 of the Constitution stating that all forests were property of the state (National Assembly 1993), as well as short-term logging licenses and long-term timber concessions (see Figure 2.1). The intermediaries of this appropriation are thus mostly contracts, money and political status for individuals and the institutions they represent. Appropriation is also carried out through measures of enforcement by governmental forces including the displacement of local population and the criminalisation of traditional users (Peluso 1992).

As for the objectification, this process of appropriation is not unilaterally social as unplanted forests are spatially pre-determined, or fixed. This materiality entails for the logging company a strategy of appropriation based on territory-taking rather than territory-making (e.g. contrarily to the establishment of an industrial estate). As timber 'harvesting' does not constitute a natural monopoly in itself -

several logging groups can operate simultaneously and competitively within the same territory while preserving profitability - tactics have to be devised to assert resource appropriation and control of this spatially diffused commodity if capital intensive development is going to succeed in concentrating profits. In the case of territorialisation strategies, the objective is to exclude competing users, including indigenous ones. This can be achieved through a variety of social control mechanisms including rights of ownership or of usufruct. In this regard, the contemporary ethos of privatisation, embodied into vast private logging concessions, has allowed politically unrepresentative and unaccountable individuals or companies to reach regional scales of control over resources and often populations.

Social control over access to resources is not only promoted by logging companies, but also, if not mostly by governmental institutions that have used territorialisation strategies over forested, and deforested areas, to further their control over both resources and populations. The practices of appropriation and territorialisation have important effects on the production and distribution of social power, both through the domination that is embedded into their conceptualisation and implementation but as well in the tactics of resistance that is generated among forest dwellers and their local patrons (Guha 1989; Vandergeest and Peluso 1995). Other strategies to establish a privileged access to resources can include: a monopoly over the means of production asserted, for example, through the capacity of investment into capital intensive equipment; the mobilisation of know-how; and the establishment of a public image. As detailed in the study, this privileged access is also promoted by the discourses of rationalisation of forest exploitation, downstream processing and centralisation of public forestry revenue.

Figure 2.1 - Objectification and appropriation of Cambodian land use: map of concessions (1997)



Legend

■ Concession areas
(Forest and agriculture)

NB: protected areas, fisheries concessions and military 'development areas' are not represented.

(Source: DAI 1998b)

The third practice is that of *exploitation* itself, or production practices.²⁷ Through this process of metabolisation, the objectification is materially enacted, transforming forests into accessible blocks, through road building, and trees into ‘harvested’ and processed timber in the form of measured, classified and numbered logs, lumber, veneer, plywood, chips, or pulp. The practice of exploitation also includes the transformation of forests, through silviculture, plantations, and introduction of exogenous species including genetically modified ones.

Exploitation practices are dictated by a complex range of factors including the materiality of forests as well as geographical and climatic features such as rivers, mountains, and the shift of dry and rainy seasons; but also, by the available technology and labour force, the rules and regulations, and the conditions of profitability of exploitation. Among the most important ‘intermediaries’ involved in the construction of social power through exploitation practices is the technology deployed to intensify, scale up and accelerate the exploitation and transformation of forests and timber. The “tools of empire” (Headrick 1981) for the logging industry, like chainsaws, topographic maps, bulldozers, all-terrain trucks, and plywood mills, have played a key role in deriving power from the forests and excluding minor players through the competitive advantages that they bring.

²⁷ Although I use the word production later in the study, I do not imply that timber from un-planted forests is ‘produced’ by logging companies. As Cronon (1991) stressed, timber is produced by ‘nature’ and ‘harvesting’ timber is in fact nothing more than extracting and exploiting the “wealth of nature”. In this sense, the use of the verbs ‘to produce’ and ‘to harvest’ is politically biased in favour of the exploiter. I am indebted to Nigel Thrift for this idea.

4.3 Trading and consuming tropical timber

Objectified forests reach their commercial aim - the exchange of uses for money - through the practice of *trade*. The production of timber is related to this articulation between the offer and the demand of timber. According to the FAO (1998), the world production of industrial roundwood increased from one billion cu.m. in 1961, to 1.5 billion in 1997, having reached a peak of 1.7 billion cu.m. in 1990. Out of this production, the international trade of timber products represented about US\$137 billion in 1997, with about 10% of it coming from tropical countries (ITTO 1997; FAO 1998). As for practices of appropriation, trade practices are politically significant and not always politically transparent, accountable, or just. As the study details in Chapters 5 and 7, a significant part of the power generated by forestry comes from illegitimate and/or biased trade practices and their associated fiscal consequences.

In the 1990s, more than 50 countries were exporting tropical timber products towards approximately 75 countries, a growing number of which were developing countries.²⁸ The volume of tropical, non coniferous, industrial roundwood - the main Cambodian wood product - traded on the international market decreased by more than 30% since 1990 to represent in 1996 about 17 million cu.m. for a value of approximately US\$3.4 billion (FAO 1998). This slump was not the result of lower demand, but rather the result of the decision of exporting countries to develop their

²⁸ The major importers of tropical roundwood were Japan, China, Korean Republic, Thailand, France, Hong Kong, Philippines, and Portugal. Between 1961 and 1997, Japanese importation of roundwood increased by a factor five, to reach 48 million cu.m., out of which more than 6 million cu.m. were tropical roundwood. The main exporter of roundwood was Malaysia (not including Peninsular Malaysia), followed by Papua New Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon, Solomon Islands, Burma (Myanmar) and Cambodia. Yet, the international demand of tropical timber represented in the mid-1990s only 6% of the total roundwood production in tropical countries (Barbier, Burgess et al. 1995; FAO 1998).

own downstream processing sector and establish a log export ban. This disequilibrium between the offer and the demand was reflected in the increase of value for tropical roundwood, which was 55% over the period 1990 to 1996 in comparison with a decrease of 2% for other roundwoods. In short, there was a high international demand for logs (ibid.).

The practice of *consumption* is of course key to the production of tropical timber. Consumption, or demand, relates to the appreciation of specific material qualities as well as the availability of offer and prices. There is an elasticity of substitution between different sources and types of timber, as well as for other products (Barbier, Burgess et al. 1995).²⁹ The fact that consumed timber is often discarded illustrates the fact that the commodification of nature has reached its logical conclusion of disposability. Objectified, appropriated, and consumed as ‘concrete casing warehouses’, the final destination of much of Southeast Asian forests is landfills (Dauvergne 1997).³⁰ As noted above, the consideration of purely economic and material criteria are starting to change towards more ‘holistic’ values, such as the preservation of biodiversity, the sustainability of ‘natural forests’, or indigenous rights (Barbier, Burgess et al. 1995). As such the practice of consumption, which was limited to a process of exchange - money for use - has begun to move towards an ethical and political practice. Yet this movement is still limited to niche markets and has mostly concerned retailers in developed countries (ITTO 1997).

²⁹ Even if this elasticity is minimal in certain cases, timber and tropical timber in particular remain a vulnerable commodity on the international market. This vulnerability is also related to the fact that timber being easily transported and stored the competition between supply sources is global, and the spatial reach of demand is mostly constrained by economic factors.

³⁰ A further step in the commodification of forests was reached in 1999 when the US government demanded to

5. Natural resources, development and public policy

As noted earlier, power has been traditionally associated with the state and an important source of the state power has been identified in nature, through the allocation of “natural-resource goods and environmental services ... [and] the power to grant or alter property rights to resources” (Lipschutz and Conca 1993: 19-20). The sovereignty over the allocation, and the allocation itself, are matters of statecraft and negotiations between the state and civil society. For natural resources, civil society is in fact often dominated by the market, understood not simply as an arena of supply, demand and price; but rather as a complex socionatural network of production, circulation and exchange (Ribot 1993). Relations between the state and the market are thus key to shaping relations between nature and power. In this regard ‘public policies’ are conventionally acknowledged as the main intermediaries shaping this relation. In particular, policies are what much of the practice of ‘international development’ is about. Policy change is the conventional mode by which problems are to be ‘solved’, despite the repeated failure of this approach (Clay and Schaffer 1984; Ferguson 1996).

Thus, an important question to ask is, why do policies repeatedly fail? Two main types of arguments have been presented. The first type minimises the responsibility of the policy process itself by blaming either, or both, the general lack of political will of the government, and its incapacity to carry out the policies (Clay and Schaffer 1984). This argument implicitly resorts to a dichotomy of policy from implementation, and thereby depoliticises the policy process, as no political explanation is sought to determine why political will and implementation do not

have *landfills* counted as ‘Carbon Sink’ under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on climate change (Pearce 1999).

occur. Progress is thus expected from increasing the capacity of the institutions to carry out the policies and mobilising political will. The second type of argument, on the contrary, gives much responsibility to policies for their own failure (Ribot 1993). In this view, policies are overpoliticised and provide the state and its members with opportunities to serve their economic and socio-political interests. In short, policies fail because they are supposed to do so, for the simple reason that there is more to gain from their failure than from their success.

In between these two extremes, many arguments can be presented which incorporate, for example, the resolution of tensions between expectations of the formal state and those of the market, and the contradictions between the agenda of the international development community and the needs of the political elite. This study attempts to provide such a synthesis for the apparent failure of the government of Cambodia and the international community for forestry and illegal logging in particular.

6. Conclusions

Nature and power are intimately associated. Nature provides the bio-physical environment, however ‘anthropically’ produced materially or discursively, on which power is built and distributed as social actors enter into relations to organise modes of production. Nature also provides a contested terrain resisting a homogeneous construction of power, through its ecological limits to levels of extraction and transformation but also through the dependence created towards the ‘dominated’ spheres, be they nature or human labour. Finally, taking a romantic standpoint, some

aspects of nature are able, in relation to specific cultures, to generate powerful inspiration, and to forge social power through social mobilisation.

On the other hand, social power transforms nature, through both material practices associated with the 'progress' of its 'organisational means' and through the discursive practices, or disciplinary functions, of the ideology dominating social relations and resistance to it. Harvey (1996) encapsulates this close association of social relations and transformed ecosystems and their mutual impact:

One path towards consolidation of a particular set of social relations ... is to undertake an ecological transformation which requires the reproduction of those social relations in order to sustain it. ... contradictions in the social relations entail social contradictions on the land and *within* ecosystemic project themselves. ... the very design of the transformed ecosystem is redolent of its social relations. (ibid.: 184-5)

Social power is related to nature through the opportunities that it provides in the agency of social actors confronted by politico-economic structures and constructed by culturally defined ideals, and individual interests, of 'progress'. In other words, the opportunity and conditions of surplus extraction from nature influence the modes of production and the social relations that can reproduce or contest them. While politico-economic structures result from a broad range of complex interactions, the agency of actors is exercised upon a local environment. There is thus a spatial concentration of diverse effects resulting from a spatially diffuse multiplicity of causes. Power struggles not only result from diverging effects upon the processes of surplus extraction from nature (e.g. nearly everyone agrees that trees should be used for human benefits) but also over the 'legitimacy' of causes. In this regard, the "simultaneity of material and symbolic struggles" (Moore 1993: 383) over the commodification of nature and the entitlement to its benefits can be framed through a Gramscian perspective on environmental resource struggles in which,

Productive inequalities become naturalized through cultural understandings of social hierarchy that encourage popular consent. ... [and] struggles over symbolic processes are themselves conflicts over material relations of production, the distribution of resources in society, and ultimately power. (ibid.: 382-3)

If the parallel social construction of nature and power is acknowledged, it remains to explore how this construction turn out to be ‘constructive’ of life and happiness, or on the contrary destructive. Such exploration in the context of countries in transition could lead to a discussion of ethics and justice with regard to the development process. It could also engage in ideas of fairness within socio-nature, between human beings themselves and in their relations to their broader realm, nature. The object of this study is not to present such a discussion, even if it is relevant to my personal engagement.³¹ Throughout my work in countries devastated by war, I have appreciated both sides of the coin of social power. Power is not in itself a detestable thing that I reject. Power can be constructive. Power enables *ordering* which can greatly facilitate justice. As such, the production of social power accompanying the social production of nature could be positive and even emancipatory.

The other side of the coin is of course who decides, intentionally or not, that ordering? Who benefits and who suffers from it? The construction and reproduction of social power can also be extremely destructive, as much as the lack of power and the unevenness of its distribution. This is why the political dimension of the production of nature should be ever present in the mind of those carrying it out - which as Harvey (1996) mentioned is sometimes unfortunately the case - as well as of those promoting or resisting it. Environmental and social impact assessments have now become largely compulsory for natural resource exploitation projects, it may be time to include political impact assessments too.

It is with these arguments in mind that I explore in the following chapters how, and through which socionatural processes the Cambodian forestry space mingled with the production of power.

³¹ For a discussion of these issues, see (Low and Gleeson 1998; Dobson 1998)

Part II

From forests to riches: the incorporation of timber into the political economy of Cambodia

Part II consists of three chapters examining the evolution of the forestry sector and analysing its integration into the wider socio-political processes taking place in Cambodia between the pre-colonial period and 1998. The aim of these three chapters is threefold. First, it is to provide an historical context to the development of forest exploitation. Second, it is to detail policies and practices in the forestry sector, with a focus on commercial logging. Third, it is to bring forward relationships existing between forests and political processes.

Chapter 3 covers the pre-colonial period, the colonial period (1863-1953), the reign of Sihanouk (1953-1970), the regime of Lon Nol during the first period of civil war (1970-1975), and ends with the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979. Chapter 4 examines the reconstruction of the country and the second civil war (1979-1991), as well as the transition period under the mandate of the United Nations (1992-1993). Chapter 5 considers the period 1993 until 1998 during which a government of ‘coalition’ gathered opposing political parties but remained at war with the Khmer Rouge faction.

Chapter 3

Forests, colonisation and civil war

(Pre-colonial period - 1979)

“Thanks to us, Cambodia, eternal victim of aggressive and greedy neighbours, of corrupted mandarins, the Cambodian, fatalistic and apathetic, who took pleasure in regretting the past and scorning the present, aspires already to something else than the meagre satisfactions of a vegetative life.” (French colonial civil servant)³²

This chapter reviews and analyses the evolution of the forestry sector from the pre-colonial period until the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, with a focus on the colonial period. This approach is motivated by the importance of historical conditions, both political and ecological, as well as by the ‘*longue durée*’ (Braudel 1969) of many social relations organising the political economy of Cambodia, an analysis of which will help in explaining the mechanisms at work in the contemporary period constituting the core of this study.

In the first part of the chapter, a succinct description of pre-colonial history is presented as well as an account of the mode of control and management of forests. It demonstrates that the complex systems of patronage characterising the forestry sector in present-day Cambodia have a long history, as forests were already integrated for part in the system of rewards for political supporters. It also points to the role forests

³² Monograph of Cambodia presented to the international colonial exhibition in Paris in 1931 (Morizon 1931:

played as a refuge for discontented populations, run-away slaves or political dissidents.

In the second part of the chapter, colonial forestry is examined in the light of French archives.³³ The focus of the French administration in generating revenues from the exploitation of forests and the small amount of investment in forest management despite calls by colonial foresters to conserve and improve forest resources are underlined, in contrast to the cases of Dutch and English forestry practices in the region. In turn, the access to forest resources for local populations remained relatively free and open as, even if bureaucratic practices and the establishment of forest reserves hampered this access, the enforcement of forestry regulations was lax for fear of political unrest.

Colonial forestry and its influence on post-colonial forest management have been the subject of much research.³⁴ This research focused mostly on existing contradictions between the colonial project of economic development and the conservation discourse of the colonial administration (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987). From the mid-nineteenth century, economic motivation guided colonial policies towards preserving the ‘wealth’ of the forest through a total control of forests and forest uses. A discourse of rationalisation was embodied in “scientific forestry” - inherited from German and French schools of forestry and aiming at the sustainable production of timber in European forests - and motivated by economic profitability and ecological concepts such as links between watershed protection and climate

272).

³³ Archives were only available and accessible for the 1890s until 1930s, the later period of the protectorate could not be examined except through few secondary sources.

³⁴ See for example, (Tucker and Richards 1983; Crosby 1986; Boomgaard 1988; Guha 1989; Williams 1990; Durand 1994; Jarosz 1993; Fairhead and Leach 1996; Grove 1996; Rangarajan 1996; Bryant 1997b).

regulation (Grove 1996). However, as Bryant (1997b) argues:

Although couched in ecological terms, these debates resonated with political meaning. Ecology and politics were often conjoined to discredit indigenous practices while providing a powerful justification for the extension of state forest control. (ibid.: 7-8)

In particular, colonial policies targeted shifting cultivators practising slash and burn; considering them as chief destroyers of forests, but also as an unruly population. Yet, as Jarosz (1993) argued in her study of Madagascar, shifting cultivation was not the single and even chief factor of forest cover change but rather that,

The forces of colonial capitalism, mirrored in state actions and policies concerning natural resource extraction and export crop production, triggered changes in land use practices which dramatically affected tropical forest cover. (ibid.: 367)

Not all agents of the colonisation, be they colonial officers, missionaries or academics, unconditionally supported such colonial discourses and some recognised the ‘other’ rationality shaping indigenous practices (Jewitt 1995). Nor was colonial forest exploitation an “inexorable and uniform march of capitalism”, but rather a complex and uneven process which had important consequences upon the evolution of the colonised societies and forests (Bryant 1998b: 48-49).

In Southeast Asia, the cases of Burma (Bryant 1997b) and Java (Boomgaard 1988; Peluso 1992; Durand 1994) have been examined in detail. These cases demonstrated the role of forestry in building colonial power, not only through the material wealth extracted from the forests from the earliest period of commercial exchange and colonialism, but also through the control of territory, people and forestry practices that the concept of scientific forestry entailed.³⁵ This control was exercised through institutions and ideologies that criminalised many customary rights and traditional practices and were reproduced even after these countries gained

independence (Peluso 1992). Colonial control was challenged by the population, and a culture of resistance emerged, ranging from ‘weapons of the weak’ such as petty timber theft and illegal forest land occupation to violent insurrection, depending on the wider political climate, the cohesion of social groups and common interests, and the strength and violence of the state apparatus. Although deeply uneven, as the case of Cambodia illustrates, the role of colonial forestry in social control, through territorialisation and the regulation of resource exploitation practices; in economic development, through the use of western technologies and the integration in broader markets; but also in political contestation, through the rise of national elite and popular grievances, was important for Southeast Asia forests and societies during and beyond colonialism (Rush 1991; Vandergeest and Peluso 1995; Bryant 1998b).

The third part of the chapter describes the post-colonial period until 1979. The limited number of changes characterising the forestry sector after independence illustrates the ‘missed decade’ that led to economic frustration and open conflict with the Sihanouk regime at both ends of the political spectrum. The dramatic events of the 1970s are then presented with an emphasis on the damage of US bombing and the role forests played in the war opposing communist forces to the regime in Phnom Penh.

1. Pre-colonial period

Cambodia can be presented as the result of the encounter of a river, a people and a religion. Flowing down from the Tibetan plateau and guided by the last extensions of the Himalayan chain (the Annamite range), the Mekong creates a flood plain in a

³⁵ For an extensive review of colonial forestry practices in Southeast Asia, see (Durand 1994).

lacustrine basin before it reaches the sea in a delta (Carbonnel 1965). Different waves of human population came to inhabit these regions as early as 50,000 B.P. Among indigenous cultures dominated a myth of foundation based on “the genetic metaphor of the ancestor of the lineage as the wife or daughter of the master of the earth” and spatially organised through the dualism of inner/familial/village/civilised (*srok*) and outer/foreign/forest/uncivilised (*prey*) (Népote 1993: 27; Ang 1997). These groups were thus closely related to nature through its domestication, both physical, through the creation of permanent rice fields, and spiritually, through the cult of ‘land spirits’, *neak ta*, most often ancestors having first cleared the forest and tilled the soil (Forest 1992). This spatial organisation may have guided the evolution of these groups, which became increasingly distinct from other shifting cultivators as permanent rice culture was established around the lower Mekong. Yet close links remained between the lowland Khmers and some of their ‘forest’ or ‘highland’ neighbours - through trade, slavery, or flight.

1.1 Funan, Angkorian and post-Angkorian periods

From around 2,300 B.P. indigenous groups in Indochina were influenced by Chinese and Indian maritime travellers and traders. The Chinese influence was mostly socio-political and technical and remained largely limited to northern Vietnam with only regular ventures into the southern regions by seafarers, envoys and traders. The Indian influence was largely theological and symbolic and concentrated in the southern part of the Indochinese peninsula. The Indian influence, more readily integrated by indigenous groups as many similarities in beliefs already existed, led to the creation of

an “Indianised thalassocracy”, the Funan (Népote 1993).³⁶ Established in the region of the Mekong Delta, the Funan empire grew through rice culture and the facilitation of trade between India and China as well as exports of forest products collected in the interior (Chandler 1996).

Progress in seafaring progressively made the Mekong delta a less relevant port of call. From the 8th century the influence of Funan was progressively overtaken by what was to become the Angkorian Empire, with its core in Northwest Cambodia and spreading over much of the region between the 9th and 15th centuries. This dominance was mainly built upon irrigated rice, Hinduism and later Buddhist cult, and a tight control of labour (ibid.).³⁷ Politically, the Kingdom was organised through the institution of a ‘God-King’, or *devaraja*, protector of the ‘just’ established order, the *dharma*. The King held his divine power from Brahmans originating from India. The Kingdom was administered through a centralised government that progressively replaced the vassal principalities of the pre-Angkorian period by provinces placed under the control of civil servants (Sahai 1970; Chou 1992). The area under cultivation increased sharply over this period as permanent settlements were established by influential families for religious, administrative and productive purposes through the clearing of forests; the creation of water reservoirs (*baray*) and other hydrological works; as well as the importation of population, including slaves

³⁶ An Indianised myth of foundation for Cambodia is perpetuating the idea of society being the “offspring of a marriage between ‘culture’ and ‘nature’”, through the marriage of a dragon-princess daughter of the king of a waterlogged country and a foreign Brahman; the king drinking up the water, building a capital and renaming the country ‘Kambuja’ in exchange for her daughter’s marriage and the clothes provided to her by the Brahman (Chandler 1996:13).

³⁷ The concept of ‘slavery’ is particular as layperson, mostly peasants, were often considered ‘slaves’ when working within the community. The word ‘slave’ or ‘serf’, *knum*, is in fact used to express ‘I’ (Jacob 1978). However a different interpretation is that laypersons were ‘servants of the gods’ and believed that they own well-being was totally dependent on the merit of the King so that by serving the Gods, and the King, they served themselves (Stott, pers. com., 1996).

captured at war or in the mountainous forests surrounding the flooded plain (Groslier 1974; Van Liere 1989). This latter movement of population, continued until the late 19th century, played an important role in shaping the current distribution of forests.

This period marked the apogee of the Khmer people, marked in particular by the construction of the temples of Angkor on the northern shore of the Tonle Sap Lake. The reasons for the 'decline' of that empire, historically associated with successive Thai invasion in the early 15th century and the partial abandonment of Angkor in the follow decades, have been disputed (Chandler 1996). The mobilisation of the population to build temples and wage war against neighbouring kingdoms might have exhausted the nation. The exhaustion of the soil due to intensive irrigation (Groslier 1974), or on the contrary the siltation of irrigation schemes following the deforestation of the region (Audric 1972), were also proposed as a thesis for the weakening of the Angkorian society. The 'siltation' thesis was later used by a prominent Southeast Asia environmentalist to advocate greater forest protection (McNeely 1994). This movement also stemmed from increased interest for trade with China, leading to a return to the lower reaches of the Mekong, which soon was to be controlled by Vietnam (Thion 1982). From that time the Khmer capital was established in the vicinity of the 'four-arms', the junction of the Mekong with the Tonle Sap River and the Bassac river. The Khmer Kingdom remained politically unstable and at the mercy of both Thailand and Vietnam (Népoté 1993).³⁸

³⁸ For a detailed historical geography of Cambodia for the pre-colonial period, see (Groslier 1973).

1.2 The political economy of the post-Angkorian period

The Kingdom of Cambodia post-Angkor was a vassal statelet of its larger and more populated neighbours, Thailand and Vietnam. The King of Cambodia was a ‘dependent’ of the dynasties in Bangkok and Hue (Chandler 1996). This dependence meant that bitter struggles for power within the Cambodian ruling elite were exacerbated by these sponsors playing one competitor against the other (Chandler 1973).

This geopolitical factor has remained an important element in the dynamics of the polity in Cambodia until present time. Its status as a vulnerable nation has deeply influenced the mentality of Cambodian rulers, who have often depicted themselves as ‘national(ist) saviour’ (Thion 1982). It also motivated their dependence upon external patronage and their uncompromising attitude towards internal political competitors, accused of putting in danger the very survival of the Khmer nation.

Apart from the King and the royal family, the ruling elite was constituted of high-ranking officials (*okya*) including both high-officials assigned to the court or as provincial/district governors (*chaovay sruk*). In the first half of the nineteenth century, these provincial/district governors,

enjoyed considerable freedom and considerable power. They were authorized to collect taxes from their *sruk* ... and ... to mobilize manpower for warfare or public works. ... in populous *sruk* these armies sometimes contained several thousand men; in others they seem to have acted as body-guards for the *chaovay sruk*. This access to manpower and surplus rice meant that in effect the *chaovay sruk* controlled the balance of power in the Kingdom. In fact, they rarely acted as a collectivity but as individuals, responding to local interests and dyadic arrangements. (Chandler 1973: 48)

These dignitaries, who numbered about 200 during the early nineteenth century, were given their title by the King in exchange for presents, a form of tribute that was regularly repeated. While this exchange of gifts and titles could be equated to

a corrupting practice at the heart of the government, “little ethical weight was given to the transaction - high bidders, after all were people whose power had to be reckoned with” (ibid.: 44). *Okya* of different ranking positions established alliances between themselves and with members of the royal family or the King himself, giving way to a complex system of alliances in which each individual *okya* entering through such alliance added to the ‘strength’ (*komlang*) of his patron. Alliances shifted with the rise and demise of individual *okya* and princes, and “each new reign inaugurated a new patronage network” (Mabbett and Chandler 1995: 225). In particular, the 19th century was marked by foreign wars and internal strife, destroying the administrative network, limiting the temporal power of the King to the court, and leaving the countryside under the loose control of provincial governors, bandits and political challengers (Osborne 1997).

Outside of the ruling elite, the society can be divided into three main groups. The first group consisted of ‘foreign’ ethnic minorities, which included Chinese, Vietnamese (or Annamites), and Malays (or Cham), handled trading, large-scale fishing and lumbering as well as cash-cropping. These foreign ethnic groups were the active agents of the exchange economy and as such concentrated a large part of the economic wealth of the Cambodian society. These groups, along with Khmers who were government officials, were living mostly in the capital and small provincial towns along waterways (*kampong*). Patronage and clientelism was very important within this group as social status determined access to resources. The second and most numerous group was the Khmer population itself, consisting in its quasi totality of rice-farmers living in villages on the central flood plain, generally at the periphery of the *kampong*. Farming was for subsistence with exchange of surplus limited to basic

items such as metal, cloth, and salt. Surplus as well as labour, for public work and war, were extracted on an irregular basis by government officials and to support the monks but also by creditors who commonly used debt-slavery as a form of repayment. This group interacted politically with the ruling elite and the rest of society through links with a variety of individuals placed in upper social strata, including “older or more fortunate members of one’s family, monks in the local [pagoda], bandit leaders, governmental officials, or holy men” (Chandler 1996: 105). The third group consisted of indigenous ethnic minorities living at the periphery of the country. It interacted little with the other groups except for trading forest products and for being enslaved (ibid.).

Politics were thus organised by networks of patronage and clientelism in which only part of the population participated. Patrons, either *okyas* or members of the royal family, were entitled by their position to govern the population, which in Khmer language translates revealingly into the verb ‘to consume’ or ‘to eat’, *rajakar* (Chandler 1998: 43). The King was ‘consuming’ his Kingdom and reciprocally the common people were ‘consumed’ by the King. The same relation was repeated down the ladder of social status, giving way to a hierarchical society in which conformity with one’s status was expected and respected.

The economy was one of subsistence, with a surplus production of rice for the non productive classes of society, but no manufacturing and few exports (Chandler 1973). The small amount of domestic and international trade was channelled through Chinese commercial networks and external trade consisted mostly of forest products, and a few cash crops like pepper (Aymonier 1876). This underdevelopment, in comparison to Thailand and Vietnam, was in part related to the precariousness of

access to the sea, as the most direct access through the Mekong was controlled by the Vietnamese, and a high level of insecurity due to political instability, invasions by both neighbours and widespread banditry (Chandler 1996).

1.3 Organisation of forestry during the post-Angkorian period

Little is known about the pre-Angkorian and Angkorian period regarding the organisation of the forestry sector. The earliest inscription on stone referring to forest management, dating back to 639 AD, refers to a *khlon chhe prey*, or master of the forests (Lao 1972). Later stone inscriptions relating the founding of new villages during the Angkorian period indicate that such foundation was a common practice and “large areas of land were thus being reclaimed from the forest” (Jacob 1978: 110). These villages were founded by dignitaries, who reverted part of this investment to the King in the form of revenues and donations to religious foundations. As early as the 9th century, Cambodian kings granted forests to private individuals, indicating that their revenue was placed under royal ownership (Sahai 1970).

Leclère (1894), a French colonial administrator, described the indigenous taxation system for forests in late the 19th century. As master of the earth, the King was the owner of forests and vacant lands. He administered them through royal donations, as incomes provided from state revenues, or *mouk-ngéa*, to members of the royal family, high dignitaries or important provincial figures. The person receiving these forest estates, called *dey-mé-prey*, was in return giving each year a present, or *tang-voai*, to the King. Each province contained one or several *dey-mé-prey* according to the extend of its forest and to the presence of large settlements. To administer and

tax this territory, the beneficiary nominated a *mé-prey*, or chief of forest,³⁹ who was assigned the task of collecting taxes placed upon most of the activities carried out in this area. The beneficiary was doing so according to the law of the forest, the *Chbap-prac-rech-kret-prey*. Such taxed activities included logging and the collection of forest products, which were not regulated, as well as forest clearance for agriculture and the creation of new settlements, but also hunting and travel through the *dey-mé-prey*. Fugitive taking shelter into a *dey-mé-prey* were required to pay a fee to the *mé-prey* according to the length of their stay. The tax revenue from concession rights for agricultural purpose, were divided between the *mé-prey* (20%), the governor of the province (10%) and the beneficiary of the *dey-mé-prey* (70%) who then ceded a portion of it to the King. Logging was also taxed, according to the final products.

While this analysis relies on few sources, and the situation described by Leclère probably cannot be generalised to the whole country, especially given the low level of administrative control, they point to the fact that forests were part of the political economy of Cambodia in several ways. First, forest products were an important economic link between the non-Khmer local ethnic groups living at the periphery of the ‘civilised’ space and the lowland groups on one hand, and between them and foreign traders and markets on the other. As Chandler noted “until the colonial era ... the goods Cambodia exported for the most part were ones that grew wild in the woods.” (Chandler 1996: 7). Second, forests provided a difficult terrain of expansion for sedentary agriculture which was rewarded by financial, status and otherworldly rewards for the funding families. This foundation act was integrated into the local culture and system of popular belief through the cult of *neak ta*. Third, the

³⁹ The word *mé-prey* is still used nowadays to designate foresters.

forest space itself and its resources were integrated into a general system of royal reward for political followers in the form of concessionaire rights over forest uses.

2. The French protectorate (1863 - 1953)

The process of European colonisation of Cambodia, as that of the rest of Indochina, was slow. After exploration by other European powers such as Portuguese, Spanish, English and Dutch for whom Indochina did not present a major interest, the French established a permanent presence in the mid-19th century (Népote 1993). The colonisation process of Cambodia, taking place formally through an agreement of protectorate in 1863 to overtake the Vietnamese patronage of the Cambodian King and to decrease that of Thailand (Chandler 1996), was itself very limited until the early 20th century.⁴⁰ Cambodia had somehow disillusioned French hopes. The expected trade route to China up the Mekong River could not be established because of major rapids at the Laotian border (Khone falls), nor could teak be found in the country. Even Cambodians were a disappointment for the French, to whom they preferred the Vietnamese. For the French governor in charge of Cochinchina and Cambodia,

We will lose our time in trying to galvanise this race that a fatal law seems to have condemned to disappear.⁴¹

The French protectorate had effectively stopped the take-over of Cambodia by Thailand and Vietnam, and some French officials saw in this an historical aberration (Osborne 1973).

⁴⁰ Although Cambodia was not formally a French colony, the process of control and influence was one of colonisation, and I refer to it as such.

French influence was itself tenuous until 1897 when the French representative, the *résident supérieur*, unilaterally increased his powers through a coup d'état (Forest 1980; Osborne 1997). Effective colonial control within the provinces occurred only from the 1920s, and mostly through the use of Vietnamese civil servants. By the beginning of the 1920s only a dozen French businessmen managing less than 1,000 hectares in total worked in the agricultural sector (Service de l'Agriculture 1925). The total number of French remained low; around 1,800 in the 1930s (Porée and Maspero 1938); about the same number that in the mid-1990s. Cambodia was considered by the French as a hinterland for Cochinchina, as a source of support for the heart of French Indochina - Vietnam - both as a source of raw material and taxes, and as a buffer against Thai, and therefore British, 'expansionist' interests. The approach of the French administration to Cambodia was thus to minimise risks and investments by enhancing the prestige of the King, while shifting temporal power to themselves and a new class of ministers, using a Vietnamese bureaucracy, and relying upon the taxation of the local and Cochinchinese business sector, traditionally dominated by the Chinese and Sino-Khmer (Osborne 1973; Népote 1993).⁴²

Relatively little development was undertaken by the French administration, with the exception of rubber plantations and transportation and administrative infrastructures. This was particularly true in the field of education, with a single high school, funded in 1936, existing in the country for Cambodians (Chandler 1996). The population as well as the economy were nevertheless heavily taxed, first through local institutions and increasingly by the French administration (Forest 1980). The

⁴¹ Le Myre de Vilers c.1880 cited by (Osborne 1997).

⁴² Chinese traders had activities in Cambodia since at least the Funan era. In the mid 16th century, there was

economy remained agrarian, with a modernised primary sector that was for its greatest part dominated by Chinese or French investors employing a largely Vietnamese labour force. This modernised sector concentrated on pepper, timber, rubber and fisheries as well as, later, cotton and corn. The manufacturing sector was limited to a few breweries and rice-mills (Thomas 1978).

Politically, the French protectorate provided a new and powerful source of patronage which gave rise to a Cambodian elite of high ranking civil servants. The French administration remained however quite distant from the traditional Cambodian society, the King and its entourage, with Chinese economic intermediaries and Cambodians integrated into the hierarchy of the state apparatus bridging the two groups (Thion 1982). Administratively, the French administration left an important set of official rules and regulations but a very weak indigenous technocracy to implement it, with as end result a domination of this 'modern' framework of government by the political intrigue and resource manipulation of the King and his entourage.

On the other hand, the French administration had damaged some of the traditional links of patronage that related the peasantry to the ruling elite. Firstly, the French regrouped old provinces into larger ones and replaced the former governors of provinces, whom authority, prestige and relation to the territory and inhabitants created a "rustic and patriarchal" rule, by new civil servants, often former interpreters "who had spent a large part of their life ... begging ... from behind ... [and who,] if they knew how to read a budget, often took the opportunity of scaling-up the level of corruption according to a modern mode" (Pannetier 1921: 35). Secondly, the

about 3,000 Chinese in Phnom Penh (Chandler 1996) and the total Chinese population, mostly concentrated in Phnom Penh, was estimated in 1874 at 106,000 out of a population of about a million (Aymonier 1876).

increasing control by the French administration from the 1920s, was paralleled by a growing presence of Vietnamese civil servants, who were generally despised by Cambodians. Both measures fed resentment among the population and helped the development of nationalism. They also limited relations between Cambodians and their rulers, aggravating the polarisation of society (Thion 1994).

2.1 Cambodian forest riches and commercial ventures

Early foreign travellers visiting Cambodia were impressed by the overwhelming presence of the forest, noting the existence of only sparse and scattered settlements (Chou 1992). The forests of Cambodia were considered vast and plentiful and constituted a motivation for French governmental representatives in Indochina, who as Navy admirals had a constant concern for the supply of high quality timber for shipbuilding (Rothe 1947). As a result, both of the treaties proposed by the French to the Cambodian King included a request for access to timber. A first proposal in 1856 requested (hoped-for) teak for shipbuilding. The second, agreed in 1863, offered the King the protection of France “in exchange for timber concessions and mineral exploration rights” (Chandler 1996: 141).

The description of Cambodia by Mouhot (1864), a French naturalist author of a popular account on the Angkor temples, as an exceptionally rich country which patrimony was neglected by its rulers further sparked French interests (Chandler 1996). Mouhot’s account is filled with references to ‘dense’ and ‘rich’ forests. The description of his travel from Kampot on the Gulf of Thailand to the capital Udong, provides a good example:

The magnificent tree ... much prized by the Chinese for furnishing masts for their junks is found in great abundance in the forests bordering [Kampot river's] banks. ... After traversing a marshy plain ... we entered a beautiful forest, which stretches unbroken to the very gates of Udong. ... on either hand [of the road] is the forest, with its trees tall, straight, and majestic The effect is that of a magnificent avenue; and from the regularity of the intervals between trees, one might almost believe that it had been laid out by the hand of art. (Mouhot 1864: 179-195)

Attracted by the description of thick forests and the promises of trade along the Mekong, French businessmen started to venture into northern Cambodia in the 1860s, looking unsuccessfully for teak, with the exception of small plots planted by Khmer kings with seedlings from Siam (Lao 1972; Thomas 1978). The absence of commercially identified species for the European market meant that the systematic exploitation of forests did not start before the early 1880s when a sustained demand grew in Cochinchina from urban development and infrastructure projects such as the construction of railways (Navelle 1894). As the forestry industry in Cochinchina was beginning to face increasing difficulties due to taxation, legislation and timber depletion, many businesses in Cochinchina shifted their operations to Cambodia where logging was still unregulated; a situation that was to some extent similar in the 1990s.

However, if Cambodian forests were acknowledged as vast, they were also considered relatively poor in dense stands of commercial species as compared with those of Vietnam. This meant that loggers had to 'cream' the forest. Furthermore, while the extent of Cambodian forests were often described in superlative ways, its exploitation remained limited to forests in close proximity to the Mekong or its tributaries as long-distance transport could only be carried out by river. Most forests were thus inaccessible. These arguments supported a discourse of regulatory *laissez-faire* and low taxation lauded by French loggers:

Trees are of mediocre size and quality and far-off one from another ... at the speed at which deforestation is taking place [logging] will not represent an inconvenience in a country as excessively forested as Cambodia ... in these conditions establishing a regulation similar to that in France is a costly and sterile utopia. (d'Arz 1906)

On the other hand, the Forestry Service used these arguments to advocate further regulation and an important budgetary effort from the French Indochinese Government to develop silviculture (Rothe 1947).

The early exploitation of timber was largely limited to forests located in the proximity of navigable rivers. Trees were felled during the dry season and carried by ox-carts or pulled by elephants to nearby riverbanks (see plate 1). As floods reached these banks, logs were then floated, with the assistance of bamboo floats, to the Mekong and brought down in large rafts to Phnom Penh and Cochinchina by tug-boats (see plate 4). As a result, forests along the Mekong River were the first to be exploited, followed by forests along the rivers feeding into the Tonle Sap. Forests close to the Cochinchinese border were also logged in the provinces of Takeo, Kampot and Svay Rieng, their timber being directly exported to Cochinchina across the border. Wood was cut commercially not only for construction lumber but also to produce firewood for domestic use, to fuel steam-powered boats, and for the growing population of the capital Phnom Penh. Fuelwood came overwhelmingly from flooded forests around the Tonle Sap Lake (Service Forestier 1924). Charcoal was also produced, in particular in Koh Kong for exportation to Bangkok .

Despite the limited means available to loggers, with no mechanisation until the late 1930s, the timber production was relatively important, representing a third of the production of Indochina in 1929 (Durand 1994).⁴³ Two main categories of product

⁴³ Vietnam produced annually about 650,000 cu.m. and Laos officially produced 20,000 cu.m., only of teak, but this figure is probably underestimated (Durand 1994).

were distinguished: timber and firewood. Non-timber forest products were also partially recorded and included bamboo, resin, wood oil, rattan, pigments, gum, cardamoms, bark and roots. The volume of timber was relatively well known, through the deliverance of logging permits, taxed or free, even if unauthorised logging was occurring. Timber production increased between 1905 and the end of the 1920s from about 100,000 cu.m. to 300,000 cu.m of round logs per year . The production depended heavily on flood patterns, with exceptional floods providing a greater access to forests, with for example in 1926 a record production of 350,000 cu.m. (Lao 1972). In 1924, the Forestry Service estimated that 80% of the timber commercially exploited in Cambodia was exported to CochinChina with only a negligible part exported directly further afar due to the distance of European markets; their lack of knowledge about Indochinese timber species; as well as the difficulty of getting standardised timber supplies for their processing industries (Service Forestier 1924).

Efforts were made in the mid-1920s to promote the use of Indochinese timber in France and Europe, but with little results. In 1928, only 200 cu.m. of timber were directly exported to France (Service Forestier 1928). Systematic knowledge about wood properties was available by the late 1920s but the economic crisis started in 1929 ruined the international timber market (Thomas 1978) and timber trade fell by nearly 70% between 1930 and 1931 (Chef du Service Forestier au Cambodge 1932). The economic recovery of the second half of the 1930s was short lived as commercial activities declined with the start of the Second World War. The level of production of the end of the 1920s was only surpassed well after independence in the 1960s (see Figure 3.2).

2.2 Usurpating colonialism: the ethnic character of commercial logging

Logging operations were dominated by Malays and timber trade by Chinese coming from, or having connections with Cochinchina. This foreign hold on timber exploitation was often directly associated with the degradation of forests by the French administration.⁴⁴ In 1898, the first French forestry report noted that “abusive exploitations” were conducted by Annamites, or by “Malays and Annamites working for Chinese” (Boude 1898).

The unregulated exploitation of all tree species will ruin without delay all these forest riches ... the Annamites from Cochinchina are the destroyers par excellence of forests. (de Coulgeans, 1902, Bulletin Economique de l'Indochine, cited in (Thomas 1978))

The sector also included Frenchmen attracted by the myth of ‘Cambodian forest riches’ but they remained a minority. The situation remained the same during the whole colonial period. In the monograph presenting Cambodia for the Colonial Exposition of 1931 in Paris, the forestry sector was described as

monopolised by Malaysian, a few Chinese and some rare Annamites. Fuelwood trade is in Chinese and Annamites’ hands, and Chinese are the only ones in control of the trade of secondary products. Some European forestry companies begin to set up businesses in Cambodia. ... In all important centres, there are manual sawmills belonging to Chinese. (Morizon 1931: 139)

This ‘foreign’ domination was at times characterised as usurpatory as it neither benefited Cambodians nor French nationals. The dominance of Chinese in commercial activities was often pinpointed and Cambodia described as “a Chinese colony administered by the French” (Pannetier 1921: 57).

Despite criticisms of the domination of the sector by non ethnic Cambodians by many Frenchmen, that state of affairs was backed by their widespread contempt for the industrious capacity of Cambodians.

The development of this region by perfected and rational means can only be slowly contemplated: the natural indolence of the Cambodian is a sure guarantee of this slowness. ... An intense and rational exploitation of woods can also only be contemplated with the use of Annamite labour, Cambodian labour being worth considering only for second jobs. (Souchal 1931)

This vision of Cambodians as being indolent in comparison with Vietnamese, stemmed not only from an observation of the contemporary productivity of both societies, but also from the French stereotypes about ‘brown Asia’ or Indianised Asia, to which Cambodia was associated, in opposition to ‘white Asia’ or Sino-Asia, which included Vietnam.

Attempts to restrict access to commercial logging licences to French nationals, as it was done in the agricultural sector for concessions, were short-lived (Chef du Service Forestier 1927). The French administration partly justified its intervention in the forestry sector to protect the interests of the Kingdom from the monopoly exercised by mostly ‘foreign’ timber merchants. But by setting up hefty taxation to limit this domination, the French ensured their dependence upon this revenue and became its main guarantor. This situation was similar for the rest of the monetarised economy, and in particular for fisheries and rice production (Forest 1980). Prioritising fiscal revenue over questions of nationality, the French administration generally accommodated the development of successful Chinese entrepreneurs.

2.3 Colonial organisation of the forestry sector⁴⁵

As the timber trade remained limited for the first twenty years of the Protectorate, no

⁴⁴ However, French logging companies were neither spared as, for example, the most important French logging company was accused by French officials of having “literally slaughtered the forest” (Collard 1911).

⁴⁵ Two important documents could not be accessed: (Béjaud 1924) and (Allouard 1930); which, although certainly focusing on forests rather than forest management and exploitation, could have been of interest to this study.

attempt was undertaken by the French administration to organise or tax the forestry sector. Yet, with increasing timber export and rising budgetary requirements, the French administration looked to increase taxation.

By the late 1890s the tax revenue from the forestry sector averaged 65,000 piastres per year and mostly consisted of importation taxes collected in Cochinchina, with only 1,500 piastres collected inside Cambodia, by the indigenous authorities. To organise the forestry sector, the head of the French administration, the *Résident Supérieur*, had previously nominated a commission in 1895 to propose a legislation. The commission consisted of a few civil servants and a majority of businessmen, including a Cambodian, but no forester (Commission des Bois et Forêts 1895). Unsurprisingly, the main objective of raising tax revenue was not reached and the proposal was rejected. The taxation by Cochinchina was itself resisted by the emerging Cambodian timber industry that qualified the measure of a “Great Wall of China”, created by the administration of Cochinchina for sole fiscal purpose (Commission des Forêts 1895). French trader argued at the time that,

Cambodian forests do not require the same protection [as those of Cochinchina]. They are rich enough so that it is not necessary, at least for now, to establish reserves, and the population is sufficiently sparse for its exploitation not to be feared. (Chambre de Commerce de Saigon 1895: 4-5).

In a note to the *Gouverneur Général d'Indochine* the *Résident Supérieur du Cambodge* considered this the result of either the lack of zeal or the corruption of indigenous authorities, and considered “legitimate to raise logging taxation in Cambodia and to entrust to Frenchmen its notification and collection” (*Résident Supérieur du Cambodge* 1898). Such a pro-active role for the French administration was in turn generally resisted by the King (Osborne 1997).

In 1898, a French forester, Boude, carried out the first study of the forestry

sector (Boude 1898). While impressed by the extent and wealth of Cambodian forests, estimating that they covered a third of Cambodia's territory,⁴⁶ he expressed great concern for their future for fear of unregulated exploitation and man-made fire.

These forests have never been under a 'regulation of exploitation' and even less of improvement. And so, for these immense woods where precious species still abound, but where man has nearly everywhere penetrated, the work of destruction has started ... everyday, landslides result from this, carrying away towards the waters considerable amounts of soil belonging to the riverside population ... [and] obstructing further and further navigation. (ibid.: 1)⁴⁷

Boude's report set up the dominating discourse of forestry management in Cambodia: the anarchic exploitation of forests leading to their depletion and to the siltation of rivers and lakes. Boude also condemned the practice of slash and burn by the indigenous population and warned of the high flammability of forests during the dry season. Placing himself in the perspective of 'protector', he recommended the establishment of forest reserves, the creation of logging permits with exclusive rights, a prevention of man-made fires and the protection of rights of access to forest products for the indigenous population. He also advocated the training of indigenous foresters, a measure he rightly considered "an innovation ... that will certainly be received with much reserve", as only in 1931 did a first group of Cambodians receive a comprehensive technical training in forestry (ibid.: 23; Lao 1972).

On his side, the *Résident Supérieur* proposed to apply the legislation in place in Cochinchina "purely and simply". Arguing that timber traders were already accustomed to it, he expected from such measures an increase in revenue of 50%, while spending less than a fifth of the budget recommended by Boude for the establishment of a basic Forestry Department. Recognising himself that such a modest

⁴⁶ About "40,000 km²". At the time the provinces of Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, and Siem Reap were under the control of Bangkok, and this until 1907.

amount would not have allowed the creation of a proper forestry administration, he stressed that what mattered was the collection of taxes without further delays to balance the 1899 budget.

While Boude had hoped for a broad approach in managing Cambodian forests, even with limited means, the French administration wanted to immediately increase the revenue from this sector for a minimal investment. Shortly after the visit of Boude in 1898, three French foresters were sent to Cambodia with the task of taxing logs floated down the Mekong. In 1902, the Forestry service was officially established (Durand 1994).⁴⁸ Forestry revenue rose to 114,000 piastres in 1902, and soon represented the fourth most important source of revenue of the government after the taxes collected on opium, alcohol, and customs (Lao 1972; Forest 1980).⁴⁹ The proportion of the forest revenue in the total public receipts of the protectorate increased from 4.7% in 1902 to close to 9% in 1921 (Lao 1972; Forest 1980).

The decision to regulate the forestry sector through the Cochinchinese legislation, had important effects upon conditions of access and uses for the Cambodian population. This legislation had been designed to drastically reduce the access of local populations to forest resources and to ban shifting cultivation, or *ray*.⁵⁰ The result of this blunt decision upon the Cambodian population is illustrated by a letter from a provincial French administrator, sent to the *Résident Supérieur* in 1903.

⁴⁷ The landslides Boude described referred to the steep banks of the Mekong river.

⁴⁸ The first professional French forester was sent to Indochina in 1897, and forestry services were established in 1901 in Cochinchina and Tonkin, 1903 in Annam, and in 1932 - for only a year - in Laos (Durand 1994). In comparison, the Dutch established a forestry service in Indonesia in 1849, the British did the same in Burma in 1856, in India in 1864, and Thailand in 1896, while a forestry service was initiated in 1863 by the Spanish (Durand 1994; Bryant 1997b; Vitug 1998).

⁴⁹ The revenue from opium represented about 25% of the total receipts of the Indochinese budget until 1922 (Descours-Gatin 1992).

⁵⁰ *Décret du 9 janvier 1895 relatif aux pénalités en matière forestière* (République Française 1895). *Ray* is the word commonly used in Annam to describe slash and burn fields, the equivalent Cambodian word, which is

Supporting the complaints of the local population he wrote that the idea dominating the application of the new legislation was,

an immediate need to justify the creation of the [forestry] service through budgetary receipts, [and] a rather clumsy zeal to generalise the taxation associated with a poor concern for treating considerately the interests of the population and not to awake in its legitimate fears. (Administrateur Résident de France de Kompong Chhnang 1903)

This situation is as well detailed by Collard, another French administrator, who in an outspoken report to the *Résident Supérieur* questioned the idea of a ‘protectorate’ justifying the presence of the French government and remarked that,

from the moment that there is no commercial forest exploitation [in Kompong Speu province], upon who the requirements of the forestry legislation are imposed? Only upon the inhabitants who hold the right to free cutting permits as the wood cut is exclusively used to construct their houses, or ... for the relief of their misery when their rice field gave nothing. (Collard 1905)

Pointing to the actual expenses incurred by six days of travel and up to two weeks of delay for obtaining a *free* logging permit, Collard wrote that “the natives, their rights, and their customs, have never been the subject of study; they count for nothing in the concerns of this [forestry] service, which regulations are resolutely and mercilessly despotic” and warned of potential social unrest from a population that he considered a disaster victim which had traditionally “asked the forest for a compensation” (ibid.). Collard concluded his report by a request to swap the Forestry Office for a local Clinic on the ground that “if our forests can protect themselves, it is unfortunately not the case for the health of our population who, in the precarious conditions which they live in, do not even receive the regular visit of a doctor-vaccinator” (ibid.).

The high number of complaints about the new legislation spurred a demand for change that the French Indochinese Government had to acknowledge. From 1903,

rarely used by French administrators, is *chamkar*, meaning fields, or *chamkar loeu*, meaning ‘high fields’ in reference to the hilly places where it is practised by ethnic minorities (Rothe 1947).

a procedure was launched to modify the forestry legislation and adapt it to the specific situation of Cambodia, as well as increase tax revenues.⁵¹ In the letter introducing the project to the *Résident Supérieur*, the Director for Agriculture, Forestry and Trade in Indochina stressed that the French Government expected, unreasonably, the Indochinese forestry service to provide a level of revenue equivalent to that of Burma (Brenier 1903). Unreasonably, because the Burmese service had already 50 years of experience and benefited from the existence of teak - a tree species largely absent from Indochina with the exception of Laos.

This procedure took two years to be completed and left many of the parties unsatisfied.⁵² Despite severe criticisms of the existing system of logging licences, *permis de coupe* - among other things for allowing the owners of these permits to “insolently exploit wood-cutters and forest dwellers for their own profit” – the system was maintained and even extended to commercial fuelwood (Commission des forêts 1903). The Cambodian population, as well as public services, pagodas and royal palaces, retained a free access to timber resources for their direct use. Yet this access was conditional upon the authorisation of the French authorities for classified species. Finally, there was no mention of a prohibition of forest burning for shifting cultivation.

The major point of the new legislation was the establishment of forest reserves, *Domaine forestier réservé*, which only allowed logging by French people and village communities having obtained an exclusive privilege of logging, *privilège exclusif de coupe* (Gouverneur Général de l’Indochine 1905). The principle of Forest

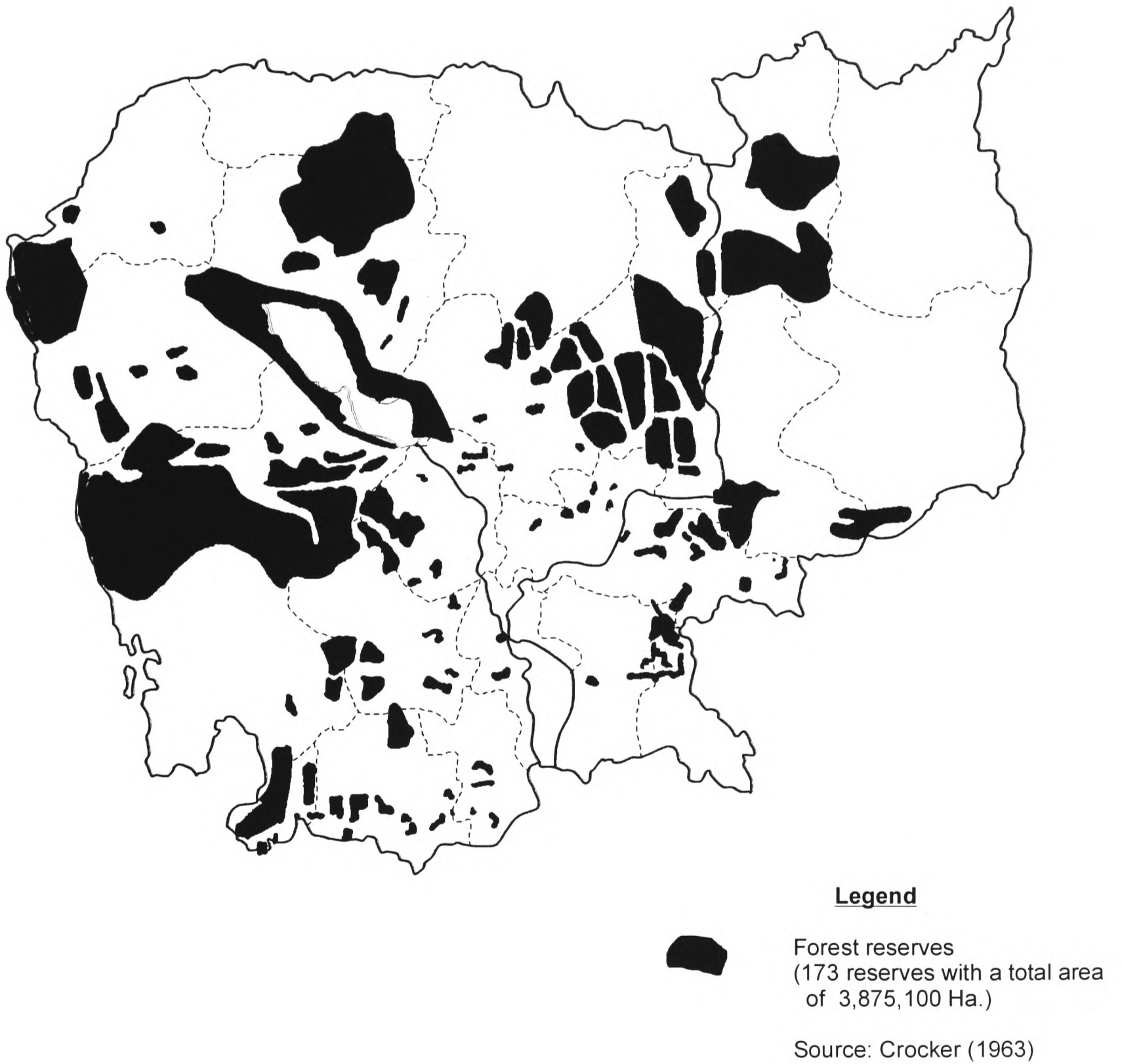
⁵¹ Royalties were collected on timber at a rate of 5 to 15% of their market value.

⁵² *Arrêté réglementant le régime forestier au Cambodge* (Gouverneur Général de l’Indochine 1905).

Reserves was to progressively remove the less commercial species to leave only the best species for harvesting, with a rotation of 20 years (Collard 1911). This measure was also taken to favour French logging companies over Chinese ones as well as to preserve the interests of forest communities. However, commercial loggers - including French ones - resisted the control of exploitation by the Forestry Service and maintained a status quo in which they were able to conduct their business as they wished as long as taxes were paid. Although French loggers had denounced the problem of 'forest pirates' exploiting any forest opening as early as 1898, the advantages of exclusive access to timber resources, in particular through long term logging permits in reserves, were seized only in the late 1920s; and even then, long term logging, *coupes méthodiques*, represented a negligible proportion of the total production of timber (0.5 % in 1932) (Service Forestier 1932).

The development of forest reserves was also criticised by other services of the Administration, conflicts between the Agricultural service and the Forestry Service occurred and several reserves were declassified to allow for agricultural expansion (Collard 1911). Yet the Forestry Service generally received the support of the *Résident Supérieur* for the creation of new reserves as it constituted one of the few concrete measure of forest conservation and management the Protectorate was willing to afford. By 1939, most of the commercially viable forest where under reserve status and the sector took a new turn after the Second World War with more logging taking place under long term concession contracts. The extent of forest reserves progressively increased to reach 3.8 million hectares at independence, representing what at the time was estimated as more than two-third of the forest cover, leaving furthermore most of the unreserved forests beyond the reach of the population.

Figure 3.1 - Map of Forest Reserves (1963)



As noted above, the discourse of French civil servants was riddled with references to the specificity of Cambodia in comparison to Vietnam and the need for a cautious approach to avoid political problems as French kept the image of a backwater country inhabited by an indolent population, unresponsive to formal administration but capable of sudden outbreaks of violence. Despite its relatively loose character in comparison to that of Vietnam, the forestry regime remained a puzzle and a vexation to many Cambodian farmers who traditionally engaged in logging during the dry season, especially in times of bad harvest. Forestry issues were thus considered “very sensitive from a political standpoint” (Administrateur des Services Civils et Résident de France de Kandal 1925). This relative prudence was based on the perspective that serious grievances amongst the Cambodian people were “rapidly translated into rebellions” (Aymonier 1876: 27) and the experience of a year and a half of nationwide rebellion in 1885-86 which had demonstrated that Cambodians were not merely ‘indolent’ and ‘passive’ (Chandler 1996; Osborne 1997). This prudence not only pointed at the ambiguity of the mandate of the French government in ‘protecting’ Cambodia and its population, but also demonstrated the weakness of the early administration.

This weakness was exemplified by the system of the *ray*, or slash and burn practices of the indigenous population in the north-eastern provinces as well as in Siem Reap and Kampong Thom. Boude had described in its first report the dangers of man made fires and had called for a “double struggle against man and nature” (Boude 1898). But this struggle was not within the capability of the Forestry Service, which had to content itself with denouncing “this barbaric mode of cultivation”, this “vandalism ... ruining without mercy rich regions”, and to acknowledge its incapacity

to repress such an extensive ‘problem’ (Service Forestier 1910; Service Forestier 1917). Specific operations were carried out in particular forest reserves or provinces, often at the request of French logging company operating in the area. These operations consisted of outright prohibition but also assisted populations to shift to permanent agriculture (Service Forestier 1917). Yet, in the vast majority of provinces, *rays* were tolerated by the Forestry Service. Not only did it lack the means to implement strict policies, but it also came to acknowledge that concerned populations had no other choice than shifting cultivation and that their practices caused in fact much less damage than natural and accidental forest fires (Service Forestier 1928).

This weakness had also prevented the strict enforcement of rules such as the applicability of free logging permits. In practice French tacitly approved illegitimate requests to accommodate the population and in particular the indigenous elite. The Forestry Service always balked at letting Cambodian authorities deliver free logging permits. It considered that rather wealthy Cambodians benefited the most from this regime and suspected – in a parallel to contemporary analysis about illegal logging - that there was a systematic peddling involving a dangerous coalition of Chinese traders, local indigenous officials and even monks robbing the protectorate of legitimate taxes (Résident Supérieur 1932). Until the First World War, the number of free logging permits had rapidly increased to an annual average of 1,500 representing a volume of 45,000 cu.m. (Lao 1972). While during the last years of the First World War this volume exceeded that of taxed production, reportedly for easing political tensions (Service Forestier 1924), this volume was progressively reduced to reach a level of 25,000 cu.m. per year in the 1920s, reflecting a tightening of French control

upon the administration (Chandler 1996).

The political caution of the French administration remained expressed through the low level of enforcement. While the high level of fraud is frequently mentioned in reports, the repressive actions appear disproportionate as ‘political reactions’ were constantly feared. This point is clearly illustrated in a report by a forester, who for once decided to apply the law. In only one district, over a single week this forester booked 34 offences; a tenth of the annual total for the country. He had to justify his zeal to the *Administrateur Résident* in the province and acknowledged that the administration might “be surprised by such a number and fear repercussions of a political nature or a dangerous reaction of the population” but should not fear so, as in his opinion, the Forestry Service had the habit of being generally too moderate towards a population that would otherwise accept forestry regulations (Service Forestier de Kompong Thom 1932).

Similarly to free logging licences, the habit of turning a blind eye for fear of political repercussions gradually decreased as the French reinforced their presence and their grip upon the local administration and the country. More stringent regulations were also imposed for the exploitation of the flooded forest bordering the Tonle Sap lake following the study of relationships between fisheries and forests in 1927 by the *Service Océanographique des Pêches de l’Indochine* (Chef du Service Forestier 1927). From the mid-1920s, the *coupe libre* were altogether prohibited in part of several provinces, like Takeo, because of timber depletion but also because it had become easier, and cheaper, to purchase a concession permit. By the 1930s the French felt strong enough to denounce suspicious practices if it was in its interests. The height of this suspicion was reached in 1934, when, during a Council of Ministers, the

Résident Supérieur wrongly accused the King of trafficking wood in association with a Chinese trader (Monireth 1934).

Institutionally, the Forestry Service remained not much more than a tax collecting office until 1912, when it was allocated an autonomous budget and transformed into the *Service des Eaux et Forêts du Cambodge*, giving it greater independence and a higher profile. According to its ‘founding father’, Ducamp, the mandate of the Forestry Service of Indochina was to:

Entirely manage forests, fix it in its definitive boundaries, and make it produce the maximum of revenues, taking into accounts the needs of the country and the optimal climate conditions and hydrological regime necessary to the full opening up of the Indochinese economy. (Rothe 1947: 20)

Practical undertakings by the Forestry Service nevertheless remained more of a fiscal nature, keeping its reputation among timber merchants of being “an autonomous branch of our customs and tax departments, only busy with the collection and the study of means to collect more and more productive rights” (Le Roi J., in *l’Eveil Economique*, 1926 cited in (Durand 1994: 119)).

Aside from impeding the ‘productive forces of the market’, the fiscal imperative maintained a low level of investment in the sector throughout the whole colonial period. The Forestry Service bitterly complained, arguing that “within 10 years” the commercial value of forests would have been destroyed (Service Forestier du Cambodge 1913). As for most of the other sectors of the economy, Cambodian forests were considered as a means to the development of Vietnam and the prosperity of French and Chinese merchants. The ratio of revenues and expenses provide a clear picture of this situation (see Figure 3.3). While the official recommendation of the *Gouverneur Général* in 1912 was to reinvest 80% of the forestry revenue into the development of the sector, only 25% were reinvested over the period 1912-1914. This

absence of budgetary effort reflected a French perspective on Cambodian forests contrasting with that of Vietnam. Thompson (1937), an academic, brings out these contrasting perceptions from her interviews with French colonial civil servants by noting about Indochina, and referring to Vietnam in particular,

Formerly forests covered the entire country's surface, but about half of them have been cut down in the most accessible regions. Natives have abused these forests since time immemorial. ... Nowadays this lack of forest land is being keenly felt, for the new industries and towns have an ever-increasing need of wood. The French were the first to take steps towards forest conservation. (ibid.: 111)

But for Cambodia she argued that,

The heavily wooded mountains form an impenetrable citadel. ... They cut off human as well as commercial relations, and have contributed to an ingrown localism. Forests offer remarkable resources, which the French are trying to develop by protection and licensed exploitation in precious woods and fauna, yet much of them must be cut down before there is any economic progress in the country. ... The forest is a formidable adversary which furthers defeatism, already too potent a factor in Khmer psychology. (ibid.: 336-337)

The comments of Thompson echoed the much acclaimed adventure novel of André Malraux '*La Voie royale*' taking place in the 'stifling' and 'menacing' jungles of Cambodia (Malraux 1930).

The situation remained similar throughout the colonial period, making the forestry sector a highly profitable one for the French administration (see Figure 3.3) (Rothe 1947; Lao 1972). The scope of its activities never reached the level of development and action of its English, Dutch and even US equivalents in the rest of Southeast Asia. At independence a total of only 12,000 hectares of forests had been improved for production through silviculture (Robbe 1953), an area equivalent to that planted annually in teak by the Dutch in Java during the 1920s (Durand 1994). However, the forestry service progressively became a sizeable administration within the French system, reaching in the 1930s about 200 staff including 30 Frenchmen. If the training and incorporation of Cambodian executives only took place from the late

1930s, with about 50 trained foresters by 1945 (Lao 1972), the French set up an administration ensuring that ideas of moderate, or sustainable, exploitation would continue throughout the next 15 years. This idea of restrained exploitation, if positive from a conservationist perspective, was, however, going to take part unintendedly in the stagnation of the economy leading to a growing frustration ultimately ending in a disastrous civil war.

Figure 3.2 - Evolution of the recorded production of timber (1900-1970)⁵³

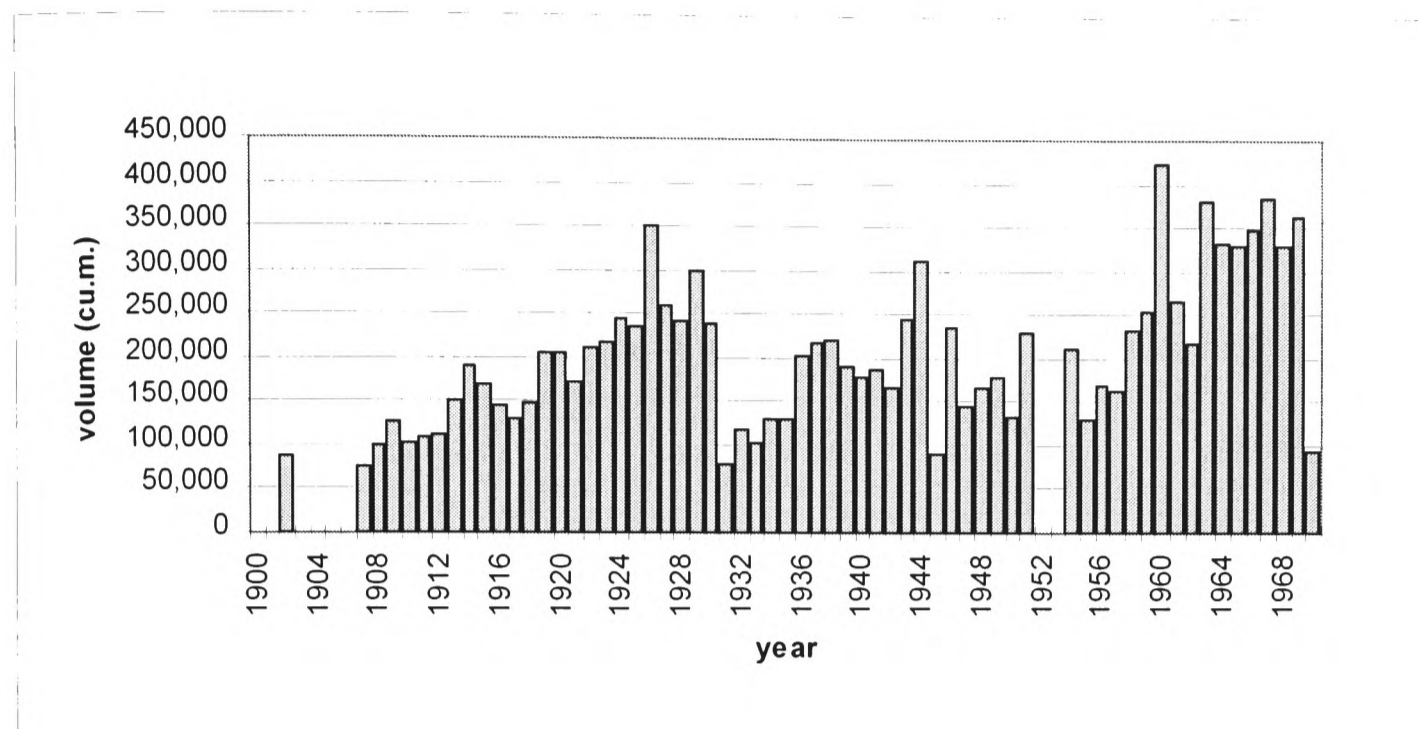
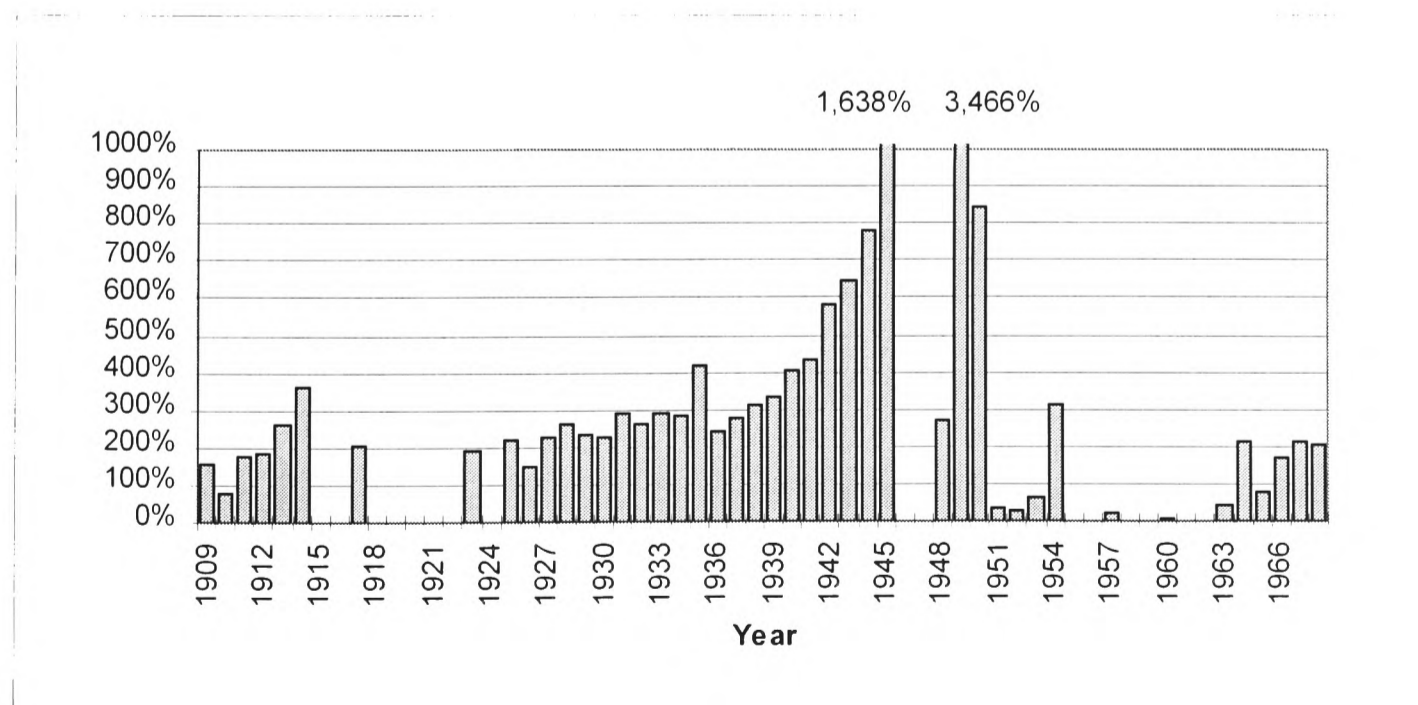


Figure 3.3 - Evolution of budgetary profitability of the forestry sector (1909-1968)⁵⁴



⁵³ Note: the recorded timber production does not include recorded fuelwood production; data is missing for years without column. Source: (Lao 1972).

⁵⁴ Notes: data is missing for years without column. Source: (Lao 1972).

3. The Sihanouk regime (1953-1970)

The path of Cambodia to independence was relatively peaceful in comparison to that of Vietnam. Following the defeat of French troops in Europe, the new regime in France agreed in August 1940 to place Indochina under the military control of Japan, while maintaining its responsibility over administrative management. On 9 March 1945, Japanese troops took over the control of Indochina and detained most of the colonial troops and civil servants. This opportunity was seized by the young King Sihanouk, who had been put on the throne by the French in 1941, to denounce Franco-Khmer agreements and to declare the sovereignty of Cambodia (Chandler 1993). Seven months later the French government regained control of the country, but in January 1946, it agreed to put an end to the Protectorate while maintaining a French presence through advisors and a control over defence and foreign affairs.

However, the transfer of sovereignty from the French to Cambodians was slow as the independence of Cambodia was carefully orchestrated by the French and Sihanouk between 1946 and 1953 to prevent overtake by less controllable elements. The French government was in particular mistrustful of the Democrat Party, which had controlled the government and the assembly since 1946. The French assisted Sihanouk in dissolving the National Assembly twice, in 1949 and 1953, and toppling the Democrat government, in 1952 (Jennar 1995a). Sihanouk and the French also faced an armed opposition by the *Front Uni Issarak* (FUI), a pro-independence group of communist obedience supported by members of the Buddhist clergy, and Viet Minh units (Chandler 1993). From the late 1940s the security situation in forested areas degraded because of the presence of these insurgents. By the early 1950s, the

FUI controlled about a third of the Cambodian territory with about 3,500 soldiers. The situation affected timber production as safe access remained problematic until 1955 (Lao 1972), when the FUI dissolved for lack of support from the communist block and China (Jennar 1995a).⁵⁵

3.1 Sihanoukist political economy

On 9 November 1953, Sihanouk proclaimed the independence of Cambodia. Between 1952, when he launched his ‘royal crusade for independence’, and 1955, when he established the first government of his single party the *Sangkum Reastr Niyum* (People’s Socialist Community), Sihanouk had taken increasingly direct control of the country, curtailing freedom of speech and bringing large sectors of economic and political life under his personal control. His regime, overwhelmingly dominated by his “self-centered, erratic style” (Chandler 1993: 183), lasted until 1970 when he was deposed by a coup d’état.⁵⁶ In national politics, Sihanouk “boldly employed his royal status and mass popular assemblies to devise a highly dynamic and personal form of governance which ultimately *undermined the formal, legal political institutions*” (Summers 1986: 16; emphasis added).⁵⁷ Over a period of 18 years, Sihanouk oversaw 34 different governments, the high turnover of high-ranking positions and their associated rewards providing an opportunity to contain political opposition (Jennar 1995a).⁵⁸ After the demise of the FUI and the Democrat party, his personalistic rule

⁵⁵ Although interesting in its similarities with the situation of the Khmer Rouge in the late 1980s, I do not explore in this study the idea that the FUI was unable to pursue its struggle for lack of financial support and thus its inability to sell resources from the territory it controlled, including timber.

⁵⁶ For a biography of Sihanouk, see (Osborne 1994).

⁵⁷ For an analysis of the history of Cambodian political and constitutional institutions, see (Imbert 1961; Gour 1965).

⁵⁸ (Lao, interview, 1997).

was resisted by the *Khmer Serei*, or Free Khmer, a right-wing group supported by South Vietnam and Thailand; and the *Pracheachon*, a left-wing group which under constant repression went underground from 1963 as the Communist Party of Kampuchea (Chandler 1996).

In international relations, Sihanouk attempted to maintain a high profile of neutrality between the two blocks confronting each other in Vietnam. However, from as early as 1962, the Second Indochina War had extended its theatre to the Cambodian territory, with occasional incursions from US and Vietnamese troops (Jennar 1995a). Since the Geneva Agreement in 1954, Sihanouk had attempted to maintain the neutrality of Cambodia between the US, allied to Thailand and South Vietnam, and the Communist block allied to North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Vietnam (Osborne 1973). This precarious balance was tipped by his decision to reject US military aid in 1963 and to support Vietnamese communists along the border by facilitating arms shipments (Chandler 1993).

Economically, the regime enjoyed an initial period of prosperity between 1956 and 1960 as the peace dividend in Cambodia, and the rest of Indochina, resulted in an increase of rice production while the taxation of exports financed the National Budget. However, with growing imports due to rising domestic consumption and a drop in export earnings due to stagnation in the agriculture and a failed industrialisation, the trade balance, national budget as well as rural livelihood degraded throughout the 1960s (Summers 1986).

Facing this complex situation and growing political opposition from leftist groups, Sihanouk launched a series of reforms in 1963 to increase the leverage of the state over the economy. This included the nationalisation of the import-export sector,

as well as private banks, insurance companies and distilleries (Summers 1986). The reforms effectively resulted in a broader political and economic power for Sihanouk, through the patronage that he could exercise, but it was often accompanied by incompetence and corruption. As a result, several institutions went bankrupt and there was large capital flight (ibid.).

The new economic policy unofficially targeted 'Chinese' businessmen who were allegedly responsible for the poverty of the peasantry - because of their control over trade and credit - and for the incapacity of the state to resolve the growing gap between rural and urban classes - because they evaded taxation. Both problems were real, but their causes were not as simple. Ethnic Chinese, and Sino-Khmers, had indeed a near monopoly over trade and industry, as in many other countries in the region (Osborne 1973). They represented 95% of commercial actors, holding the vast majority of small industries such as rice-mills, sawmills and charcoal furnaces. In 1963 the nine richest men in the country were all ethnic Chinese (Willmott 1967). Ethnic Chinese enjoyed social and economic ties providing them with information, trust, mutual support including preferential trade opportunities, and promotion of entrepreneurship; all useful for commercial ventures (Light and Karageorgis 1994). As affluent Sino-Khmers, or their close relatives, held a vast majority of important positions within the government, relations between the state and the market were frequently biased or at best ambiguous. In sum, Sino-Khmers formed a community providing Cambodia with its leading class, business bourgeoisie and intellectuals whose "power and prestige [placed] them just below the royal family in the hierarchy of Cambodian society" (Willmott 1967: 100; Meyer 1971). If they were indeed exploitative and dominated not only the economy but also the governmental sphere,

their role was nevertheless essential to the workings of Cambodian society. A common aphorism was to say that “if one has the good idea of strangling these Chinese, it would be the Cambodians who would suffocate” (Vandy 1993: 25).

For several centuries these ‘economics of ethnicity’ had shaped the political economy of Cambodia. This aspect was associated in turn to “patterns of deference, consumption and largess[e]” embedding the political economy in hierarchical relations of social status (Summers 1986: 16). As such, the economic grievances of the Khmer ruling élite were grounded in perceptions of “perennial, natural prosperity and in a conviction that resources ought to have been distributed in accordance with social status criteria, not market criteria” (ibid.: 31). This ‘perennial’ and ‘natural’ prosperity was in large part related to the somewhat false conception of Cambodia being a ‘rich country’, the “Switzerland of Asia” (Norodom 1991), thanks to its natural resources: inland water abounding in fish, unpopulated lands and vast forests, to which could be added gems, rubber plantations and the prospect of oil and hydropower development.⁵⁹

In accordance with the Khmer political economy of status, none of these ‘riches’ were materially exploited by ethnic Khmers. Commercial fisheries were dominated by Chams and Vietnamese, unpopulated lands were slowly developed for agribusiness by Chinese and Europeans; forests were exploited by Chinese, Vietnamese and Chams; rubber plantations by French companies; gems were mined by Burmese and Thai; and Chinese dominated cash crops, such as cotton and pepper. As Delvert stresses in his analysis of Cambodia,

⁵⁹ While this perspective of ‘natural wealth’ is to some extent true, Cambodia’s natural resource base is nevertheless limited and fragile; in particular, much of the soils have a low fertility (Dennis, 1987).

Only one activity is really national: subsistence agriculture. The Cambodian [Khmer] is a peasant. He [sic] has left to foreigners almost all other jobs ... The Cambodian, when he ceases to be a peasant, becomes a civil servant (Delvert 1961: 31)

Even for rice cultivation, about 80% of the financial profits generated by the rice commodity chain were concentrated in the hands of intermediaries and exporters, most of them being Sino-Khmers (Hu 1965).

According to the Khmer political economic ethos, “material success has no meaning in this world” (Népote and de Vienne 1993: 179) and, riches should flow towards people of high status, who in turn should redistribute them to the poorest according to the ideal Cambodian type of “dispenser of goods” or “renouncer” (Népote 1995). When rice was the quintessential part of an economy in which commodity exchanges embodied relations of authority rather than privileged acts of consumption, this ethos left little room to laypersons for manoeuvring socially. In a modernised economy controlled by a bureaucracy, this cultural conception of accessing wealth through social status led many Cambodians to seek bureaucratic positions so as to prosper from socially condoned prebends and corruption, rather than business ventures. Prud’homme (1969: 17) notes, that in Cambodia “power provided access to wealth rather than wealth providing access to power”; a paradigm put in practice by the *étatisation* of a large part of the economy.

Khmer youth sought social status through university training in degrees such as arts, law and administration, rather than the applied technical skills that the country needed but which were not socially rewarded. For example, in 1968 only 44 students attended courses at the University of Agronomic Sciences while 650 attended the University of Fine Arts (Chandler 1993). As administration postings were few, and in fact more easily reached through string-pulling and bribes than qualification, the

number and frustration of the educated urban youth sharply increased during the 1960s (Prud'homme 1969). These young people joined the growing mass of people disillusioned by Sihanouk's political and economic stance and frustrated by increasing corruption and mismanagement by the state. Among these were a group of mostly left-wing teachers and politicians eager to see Cambodia follow a communist path and who formed the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), better known under the name of Khmer Rouge (KR),⁶⁰ or Red Khmers (Kiernan 1986; Chandler 1993).

When the politico-economic system proved unable to deliver this prosperity the ruling élite and frustrated urban classes withdrew their support to Sihanouk. The political polarisation of society, between those advocating a shift to communism and those embracing right wing ideals increased. From 1967, "right and left were ... joined in limited but serious armed conflict that went far beyond political skirmishing in its threat of future disaster" (Osborne 1973: 98). Confronted by economic and political failure, the state was unable "to address internal political challenges, withstand armed rebellion and resist international pressure to engage in the widening Indochinese conflict" (Le Billon and Bakker 1997: 20).

The first violent conflict occurred in April 1967 in Samlot, province of Battambang, between the staff of a new agricultural camp and a group of peasants, angered by new agricultural settlements infringing on their land and a program of rice collection ruthlessly conducted by the army in order to curb down rice smuggling. In the following months thousands peasants, students and teachers, fled to the maquis as the government increased its repression against leftist and pro-Chinese movements

⁶⁰ Throughout the study I mostly refer to Khmer Rouge, a pejorative name given by Sihanouk, in guise of the Communist Party of Kampuchea or Party of Democratic Kampuchea.

(Osborne 1973; Chandler 1993; Jennar 1995a). Sihanouk's control of the government rapidly disintegrated from mid-1969 as he stepped down from Head of State and called for a special congress of his party to select a Government of Salvation. General Lon Nol and prince Sirik Matak were elected to head the new government. On 18 March 1970, while Sihanouk had taken a temporary retreat in France, the National Assembly deposed him on the initiative of Lon Nol and Sirik Matak.

3.2 Forestry under Sihanouk

Post-colonial forestry did not differ greatly from that of the colonial period. Forestry activities remained under revised legislation of the protectorate and the management was technically under the supervision of French foresters.⁶¹ The shift towards long term concessions started by the French was not increased and the level of silviculture slowly improved. Few additional forest reserves were created after independence. The major initiative was the transfer of 2,232,660 ha. of forest reserves into wildlife sanctuaries (Tichit 1981). A quite similar administrative structure was maintained and many of the same private operators continued to dominate the market. However, the high tax return of the sector obtained by the French administration weakened, reaching an average of 75% between 1957 and 1968 in comparison to 345% obtained by the French administration between 1925 and 1944 (see Figure 3.3) (Lao 1972).⁶² For the Director of the Forestry Department, “Forestry exploitation remains at the stage of picking/gathering, under the form of *coupe libre*” (Service des Eaux Forêts et Chasse 1962: 3-4). However, a major policy objective - forest conservation - was achieved and no logging boom took place in Cambodia, contrary to many other countries in the region (Durand 1994).

In the earlier post-colonial period, the increase of production that could have resulted from the relatively peaceful transition to independence was counterbalanced by the end of the financial and customs union between the three Indochinese countries in 1956, leading to a crisis in the forestry sector (Service des Eaux Forêts et Chasse 1962). The sector was also affected by increasing political tension with South

⁶¹ (Boulbet, pers. com. 1998).

Vietnam and Thailand, resulting in a near complete halt of timber export during the period 1956-58, the annual volume coming down to an average of 15,000 cu.m. (Service des Eaux Forêts et Chasse 1962). The situation improved as new commercial relations developed with China and the communist block. Logging and exports also increased as a result of the construction of road No.4, linking Phnom Penh to a new seaport in Kompong Som, which provided access to forests as well as an alternative trade route (Aubréville 1957). By 1959, the production came back to its pre-Second World War level and rapidly grew to reach an average of 350,000 cu.m. during the 1960s (see Figure 3.2) (Hun 1969). Japan, the chief importer in the region, started to import timber from Cambodia in 1960 and invested in 1961 in a joint venture with the government to form SOKECIA, the second largest logging company in the country (Chey 1971).

The early 1960s also marked the first attempt of downstream industrialisation of the forestry sector, with the construction of a paper factory (SONAPAP) and a plywood factory (SONACO), both given by China and becoming operational in 1961 (Hun 1969). But as most similar initiatives in the secondary sector at the time, both factories were characterised in the first years by technical problems, high production costs and, for plywood, a total rejection by the domestic and international markets (Service des Eaux Forêts et Chasse 1962). Instead of saving foreign currencies, these new industries often cost the state more than direct import would have (Chandler 1993). The creation of a state sawmill (SONASCIE) in 1964, and the first logging company owned by the state in 1965 (SONEF) were to some extent more successful.

⁶² I do not have the data necessary to determine if this drop in profitability was a result of the drop of exported timber, lower taxes, tax evasion or rising budgetary costs.

From 1963, all timber exports were handled by the state (SONEXIM), officially because of systematic under-invoicing by private exporters (Chey 1971). These companies provided a perfect vehicle for the 'political economy of status' of the Cambodian elite through access to wealth but also the network of clientele that they provided.

The industrialisation of the processing sector was also important in the realm of small private sawmills. Their number boomed in the early 1960s, passing from 63 in 1960 to 240 in 1968, with a two-fold increase in 1963 (Hun 1969). This boom in milling was spurred by the nationalisation of parts of the economy by Sihanouk. With the end of opportunities for high profits in the sector of importation, some local merchants invested in small manufacturing and the production of cash crops.⁶³ Hence the creation of many sawmills, but also the increase of agricultural concessions and associated encroachment on forested areas.

Timber production did not increase substantially during the 1960s (see Figure 3.2), the share of forestry in the economy remaining relatively low, with 3.46% of the GDP in 1966, or 8.45% of the primary sector (Tichit 1981). The importance of timber was even smaller in terms of foreign currency earnings with only 2% of the value of exports over the decade 1957-1966, well behind rice and rubber, the two major exports (Prud'homme 1969). Over that period, barely more than 20% of produced timber was exported (Chey 1971) in contrast to about 70% during the colonial period. The increase of timber production was thus not translated into foreign currency earnings, reflecting the uncertainty of investors and a policy of forest conservation

⁶³ Medium size companies exploited between 1,000 and 5,000 cu.m. per year and had typically about half a dozen trucks as well as sawmills. There was also about forty small size companies exploiting between 300 and

(Phin 1994). Only in 1968, as the financial situation of the state seriously degraded, was an exceptionally high proportion of extracted timber exported, close to 50%. Asked if he did not regret not having 'sacrificed' earlier the forest to help defuse the economic crisis of the late 1960s, Douc Rasy, a leading MP at the time, declared that even at a time of crisis "the forest should not have been cut", and remembered discussions at the National Assembly *not* to increase logging.⁶⁴ From 1968, access to remote forested areas near the Vietnamese border became increasingly difficult due to mounting insecurity, and official production throughout the country collapsed in 1970.

4. The fall of Cambodia (1970-1979)

From the 1970 until 1979, the Cambodian population suffered greatly. First through the bitter civil war, opposing the KR and its North Vietnamese ally to the US backed Lon Nol government, that engulfed the whole country. Second, from 1975 through one of the worst regime of recent human history that resulted in the death of up to a quarter of the population. Not surprisingly, the forestry sector took backstage as Cambodia fell into some of the darkest years of its history. Despite the lack of sources this section examine some aspects of the evolution of forest exploitation.

4.1 Forest as the enemy: the Lon Nol regime (1970-1975)

The overthrow of Sihanouk in 1970 was welcomed by the army and urban classes

1,000 cu.m. each year with one or two trucks. No official statistics are available on the number of people employed in the forestry sector but it was likely to be around 6,000 (Lao 1972).

frustrated by the economic stagnation of the country; but it stirred up the more traditional rural population against the new regime. The Khmer Rouge found in Sihanouk's support the legitimacy that it needed to mobilise the peasants and, with the assistance of Communist Vietnamese troops, was able to engage in full-scale war with the Lon Nol regime. The US provided an immediate support to the new government in Phnom Penh which was eager to receive its assistance. Despite this support, communist forces controlled about half of the country by late 1970, and two years later, most of it (Shawcross, 1979).

As access to forests became increasingly dangerous, the production of the forestry sector rapidly fell, from 363,000 cu.m. in 1969 to less than 97,000 cu.m. in 1970. Exploitation was rapidly circumscribed to the vicinity of main towns and roads still under the control of the government. This peri-urban exploitation increased as a large part of the population sought refuge in the main cities, their number in Phnom Penh alone reaching nearly a third of the population by 1974 (Sin 1992; Chandler 1993). The last available report from the Forestry Service dates back to September 1972 and mentions laconically that "since the events of 18 March 1970, the war of aggression raging in the country makes impossible a large part of forestry activities" (Pan 1972: 16).

Apart from refugees collecting timber and firewood in the outskirts of towns, or in the parks and arboretums as in Kampong Cham, the main logging activities were carried out by government troops. Auguring of a pattern that was to persist in the 1980s and 1990s, army commanders, in forested provinces organised logging operations to serve their personal interests (Phin 1994; Chan 1995). This practice was

⁶⁴ (Douc, interview, 1998).

facilitated by the military hold on civilian authority as generals were placed as provincial governors, with overwhelming powers. The forests along major ways were systematically felled to a width of up to several hundred meters to increase visibility and thereby avoid ambush. These anti-guerrilla clearings provided both the excuse and the heavy equipment to conduct large scale logging operations; the best trees being sold in towns or exported. The national road No. 4 as well as areas along the Thai border and in Kampong Cham were particularly affected by such operations. This anti-guerrilla clearing was continued and extended by the government in Phnom Penh during the conflict in the 1980s, in particular through the K-5 project, or 'Bamboo Wall', constructed along the Thai border to prevent incursions by KR forces (Peschoux 1992). However, the most important impact came from the intensive bombing campaign conducted by the United States (US).

The US 'assistance' to Cambodia took mostly the form of military aid and intensified bombing of 'enemy positions'. The bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trails and NLF sanctuaries located in Cambodia had started clandestinely in 1964 and it intensified with the beginning of official hostilities in Cambodia in 1970 to reach its apex during the last attempt to slow down North Vietnamese offensives in 1973 (Shawcross 1979). The bombing and defoliation campaigns aimed in part at denying the communist forces from the cover of forests, one of their main tactical advantage, but also at destroying the 'otherness' that tropical forests represented for western(ised) troops. The campaigns had an important impact on the environment of Indochina. Although a large part of the bombing targeted non-forested areas (see Figure 3.4), the damage to Cambodian forests was significant, at least in the short term (Westing and

Pfeiffer 1972; Westing 1976).⁶⁵ Sihanouk condemned this destruction in similar terms to his denunciation of illegal logging in the 1990s, warning of desertification and blaming Nixon for the destruction of Cambodian forests (Norodom and Burchett 1973).

The environmental devastation resulting from the ‘Nixon Doctrine’ did little to change the upper hand of Communist forces. On the contrary, the bombing mobilised some of the rural population against the US and the Lon Nol government, providing to the Khmer Rouge a powerful propaganda (Shawcross 1979). The close association of the communist revolution with the forest provided the movement, at least in the eyes of foreign observers, with an almost mystical aura of power as the “revolution from the forest” overtook the countryside, with its “forest soldiers” closing in on the cities (Debré 1976; Colm forthcoming).

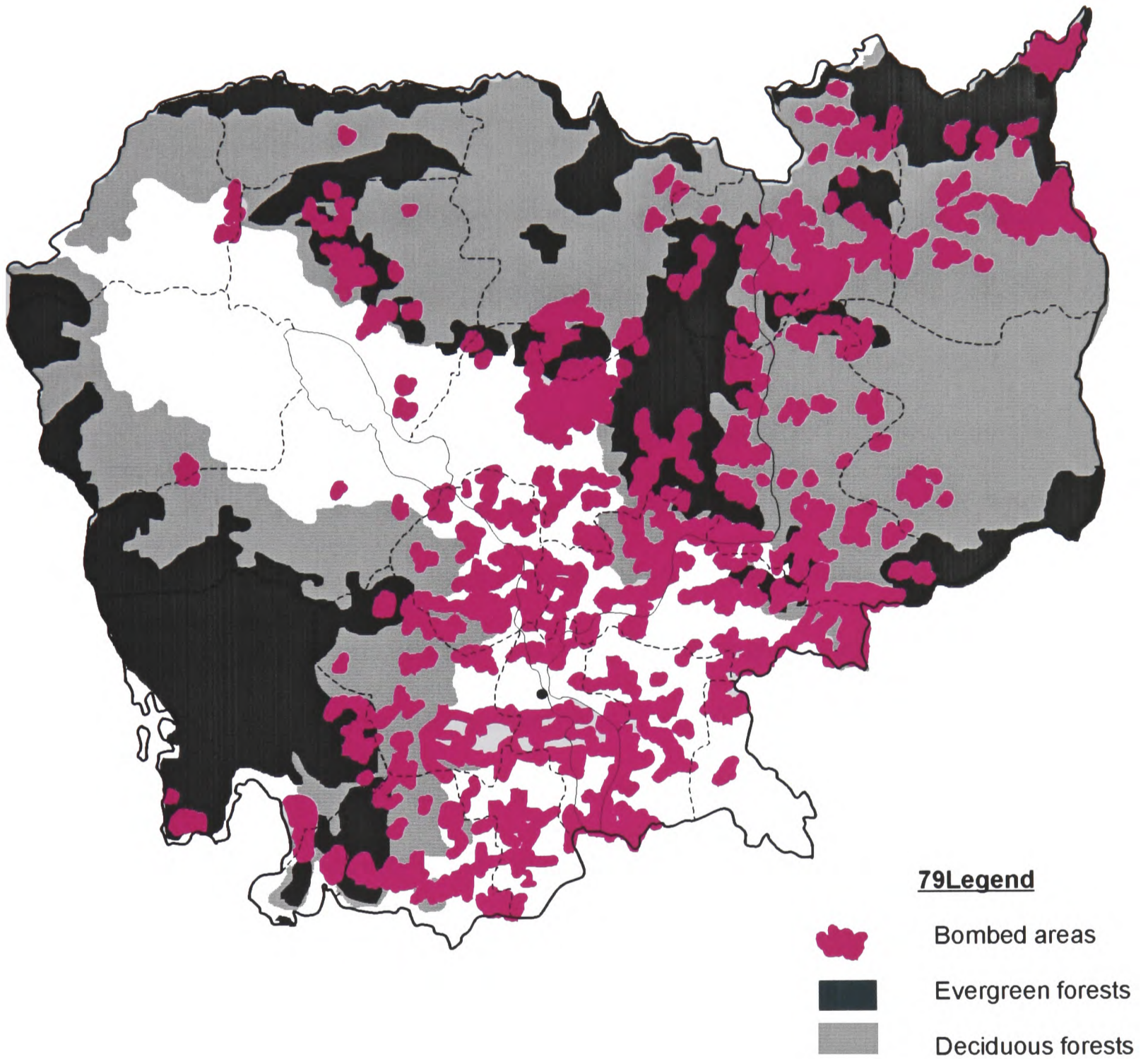
With the war intensifying, the economy rapidly collapsed due to the loss of access to agricultural lands, the displacement of populations and the destruction of production infrastructures (Hildebrand and Porter 1976). The growth of corruption and the influence of vested economic interests further undermined any possibility of economic recovery or even the mitigation of effects upon vulnerable populations, but led to poor morale within the lower ranks of the army and a lack of popular support for the government (Chantrabot 1993). Foreign financial and food assistance became increasingly needed. By 1974 the Lon Nol government controlled only a few major towns and the US government subsidised its entire budget while the population of

⁶⁵ The bombing campaign had a direct effect on forests through cratering as well as projection of shrapnel. Out of the 754,000 tons of explosives used by the US and South Vietnam in Cambodia during the Second Indochina War, 643,000 tons were crater-producing munitions, with craters covering an area of 13,000 ha. and shrapnel covering an area of 800,000 ha., the vast majority of which was in forested areas (Westing 1976). There is no study of medium term effects for Cambodia but many trees felled in Cambodia’s north-east contain shrapnel

Phnom Penh was kept alive through air supplied food (Shawcross 1979). The regime collapsed in April 1975 as Khmer Rouge troops entered Phnom Penh.

and go through a metal detector before being processed.

Figure 3.4 - Bombing campaigns by the United States of America (1969-1973)



Source: Shawcross (1979)

4.2 The Khmer Rouge period (1975-1978)

The Khmer Rouge regime was based on an extremist ideology mixing nationalism and communism. Over the four years of KR rule, close to two million people died. The KR regime collapsed in January 1979 in front of Vietnamese forces. The ideological goals of the regime were “national defence and self-reliance, radical egalitarian collectivism, economic modernisation, and the dictatorship of the proletariat” (Jackson 1979). To reach them, the regime launched a radical program to eliminate capitalism, its infrastructure, social actors and mentality. The main emphasis was placed on building a collectivist autarkic nation founded on rice cultivation through which the Cambodian society would be ‘purified’. Inspired by China’s Cultural Revolution, this ‘purification’ was conducted through a complete evacuation of town dwellers to rural areas where urban ‘New People’ were re-educated, through hard labour and farm work, or simply executed (Pin 1980). The peasantry, the ‘Old People’, was itself progressively transformed into collectivist communities and forced to abandon their traditional livelihood, farmlands, religion and family (Kiernan 1996). This societal restructuring resulted in the complete collapse of an economy already exhausted by five years of war. Even rice production – the focus of the regime – dwindled as a result of the low productivity of severely malnourished forced labour, misconceived irrigation schemes, and a fall in the technological level of production (Sliwinski 1995).

Commercial activities were prohibited inside Cambodia, but international commercial activities were maintained in particular with China, North Korea and

Thailand (Kiernan 1996).⁶⁶ These included the export of a few hundred cu.m. of high grade timber to China in 1978 (ibid.). Timber export is mentioned in the four-year plan covering the period 1977-80, as part of an ‘other’ category totalling 2% of total exports, or US\$29 million. (Party Center 1976). Most activities related to forests concerned the extension of agriculture in forested areas. These new settlements were mostly located in the flooded forest around the Tonle Sap Lake as well as in the provinces of Pursat and Battambang. Poorly equipped and working in malaria ridden areas, the death toll amongst the forced labourers was particularly high, giving these working camps the justified qualification of death camps. This was not the official opinion of Chinese journalists describing working sites in 1975 in a piece entitled “We declare war on nature”:

Songs broadcast by loudspeakers vibrate in the middle of this ocean of people soaked in sweat and rivalling with each other in ardour under the blazing sun. At night, ... taking the opportunity of the nocturnal coolness, they work even stronger ... All this demonstrates the unwavering will and determination of the Cambodian people, now master of the country, to triumph over nature. (Chinese press corp. 1975)

The extent of forest cleared in this way has not been estimated for lack of data. The only data available are a measurement of the decrease in area of forest to agricultural lands between 1973/76 and 1985/87, using Landsat MSS images, estimated the amount cleared at 492,700 ha. (FAO 1994c).

Forests in the 1970s played an active in the making of Cambodian history. Mountainous areas share with forests the tradition of providing refuge to rebels. But while this close association and its strategic consequences had been a *fait accompli* resulting from apparently immutable geographic constraints, the technological developments available at the time of the Vietnam war permitted to intervene directly

⁶⁶ While commercial activities were officially prohibited during the KR regime, clandestine trading was

upon the physical environment. By intentionally changing the rural landscape, through carpet bombing, defoliation and bulldozing, the US government demonstrated its faith in separating nature from society for the sake of separating rebels from their 'natural' cover. This faith proved misplaced. Not only did the US lose the war because it fought against nature but "could not conquer clouds, trees, rain, night, heat, micro-organisms, and mountains" (Stevens 1993: ix). But also, by denying an agrarian society its livelihood, the US actively drew popular support for its adversaries. The Khmer Rouge, at the other range of the technological scale, repeated the same mistake. Emptying the towns and using forced labour to reshape the landscape the KR apparatus denied the materiality and constraints of nature. Its faith in dominating nature proved as misplaced as that of the US and "geography took its revenge" (Delvert 1979).⁶⁷

As economic failure became more apparent and dissent mounted, the ruling group headed by Pol Pot struggled for absolute power through increasing repression against the population and its own apparatus (Barnett 1983). Supported by China, an hereditary enemy of Vietnam, KR troops - the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK) - launched repeated attacks upon Vietnamese territory and nationals (Evans 1990). Vietnam retaliated in late 1978, with the support of Cambodian dissidents, through a military operation. Exhausted by nearly four years of self-destruction, the Khmer Rouge government in Phnom Penh collapsed two weeks later, on 7 January 1979, its cadre taking refuge along the Thai border.

widespread (Thion 1982).

⁶⁷ By 'geography', Delvert meant the rural environment and its traditional organisation as his article referred to Khmer peasantry before 1970.

5. Conclusions

Incorporated in the broader process of French colonial development in Indochina and extension of overseas Chinese trading networks, the exploitation of forests had significant socio-political meaning for the Cambodian society.

First and foremost, the forestry sector reinforced the stratification of society, initially during the pre-colonial era by providing a source of political rewards but increasingly during the colonial period as the monetarisation of the economy was extended through the commodification of nature. Commercial logging reinforced a social class governed by values, such as that of status based on capital accumulation that did not fit in the traditional cultural model of Cambodian society. This class of traders, overwhelmingly dominated by ethnic Chinese, had preceded the French protectorate. Yet this class had been incorporated into the social fabric of Khmer society through inter-ethnic marriage and close commercial relations with the peasantry (Chandler 1996). The development of productive sectors such as forestry, dependent on capital and mostly foreign labour, meant that this class became increasingly economically powerful and socially distinct from the wider society (Népote 1995).

The growth of commercial logging also benefited the French administration and more traditional networks of patronage. These benefits were either channelled through the formal French fiscal system, to the greater advantage of the Vietnamese colony, or through the 'corruption' that the 'rationalisation' of the forestry sector permitted and which 'fed' local patronage schemes. In the post-colonial era, a similar situation endured with, however, a slump in public revenue and in the relative

importance of the forestry sector in the overall economy.

Secondly, the ethos and practices of colonial and post-colonial development dispossessed the bulk of the population from essential resources supported by the premise that both resources and population needed long-term 'protection'. French efforts to 'rationalise' the forestry sector, according to a colonial discourse of degradation that was perpetuated beyond independence - and into the 1990s - justified the creation of instruments of exclusion and control of forest resources alienating the general population from forests and benefiting logging companies.⁶⁸ The contradiction of entrusting the conservation of forests to those most interested in their short-term commodification did not escape some administrators, but the imperative of commodification dominated the political economic agenda of the ruling elite. Yet, this regime was tempered by free logging licences and a lax enforcement of the legislation and it did not reach a scale and hegemony similar to that of Burma (Bryant 1997b) or Java (Peluso 1992). Prefiguring conditions of access in the 1990s, networks of patronage and local interests preserving informal, and often illegal, entitlements also facilitated the conditions of access of Cambodians to forest resources. As such, the control of Cambodian forests by the state, either colonial or post-colonial, was far from absolute.

Finally, forests changed both discursively, through their (re)appropriation and institutionalisation by the new polity, and materially through their exploitation and destruction. In turn, this 'metabolic transformation' of forests, or its failure as the limits of the US bombing and defoliation campaign illustrated, played a part in socio-

⁶⁸ This 'discourse of degradation' is assuming that "the use of land and vegetation is degrading, in the absence of specific regulation, long term investment, or technology to make it otherwise" (Fairhead and Leach 1996: 13)

economic change. Logs floated down the Mekong River from forest reserves to reach consumers constructed the power of an urbanised class and the marginalisation of the Cambodian peasantry. Similarly, the protective canopy and mystic ‘otherness’ of the forest constructed the power of a revolutionary class. In other words, unequal relations of power and sharper class distinctions resulted from the commodification of nature, and tactical advantages resulted from its material and imaginary presence. The point here is not to draw the conclusion that the forestry sector and forests explained only part of the grievances leading to the rise of the Khmer Rouge or their military victory; but to demonstrate that nature and socio-political change were intricately interrelated.

Chapter 4

Timber at war: conflict and transition

(1979-1993)

This chapter examines forest exploitation during the period 1979-1993 in relation to its political and economic context. My main objective is to bring about, through the analysis of the evolution of forestry in Cambodia, a better understanding of the relations between political factions, the international community, nature and the market, in order to explore the process of transition from war to peace from a different angle than that of international relations, which focuses on ‘global politics’ and key political actors and events.

The idea is not that a broad historical process can be explained through an issue as specific as the forestry sector, but that the transition from war to (relative) peace is a complex process taking place on a continuum and at a variety of scales which cannot be fully explained by ‘global politics’ only. While peace is formally agreed between conflicting parties, criminality can replace war to maintain a level of violence preserving privileged entitlements for local armed groups. Reciprocally, conflicting parties can find an interest in officially maintaining the war, while possibly co-operating together behind the scenes. Economic factors play in this regard an important role (Keen 1998). The examination of the politics of resource exploitation

and its contrast with the broader politics of statehood, governance, macro-economy, and international relations can cast light upon micro-events and individual relations to bring about interesting insights upon the construction of the transition process. In particular the chapter traces and analyses the progressive incorporation of forest exploitation into the political process of the transition and the shift of governance that accompanied it over that period. Key issues for domestic and foreign actors alike were the (re)construction of a new political economy; the (re)articulation of relations between the state and the market; and their position within productive networks. In this regard, the exploitation of natural resources played an important role in the evolution of the Cambodian polity and the forms of governance, both inside Cambodia for the government in Phnom Penh and at its periphery for the 'resistance' factions.

After a brief introduction of the geopolitical situation of the 1980s and the regional forestry context, the second section of this chapter analyses the situation inside Cambodia under the regime of the government in Phnom Penh. The third section examines the politics and economy of natural resources extraction along the Thai-Cambodia border by the political factions opposing the government in Phnom Penh. The fourth section analyses the period of transition under the auspices of the United Nations between 1992 and 1993 and examines in particular the process of banning log exports, a major goal of which was to compel the Khmer Rouge to abide by the peace process.

1. The Third Indochinese War and regional forestry context

After the First and Second Indochinese wars, which had successively opposed local communist groups to successively French and US troops; Cambodia became the theatre of the Third Indochinese War during the 1980s, while its ASEAN neighbours continued upon their economic growth trajectory.

1.1 The Cold War political stalemate and the third destruction of Cambodia

From 1977 onwards, the increasingly paranoid and self-destructive leadership of the Khmer Rouge (Democratic Kampuchea) launched a series of military attacks against Vietnam which were motivated by its xenophobic hatred of Vietnamese associated with historical claims over parts of the former Cochinchina, *Kampuchea Krom*.⁶⁹ These attacks prompted military retaliations by Vietnam that culminated in late December 1978 in a large scale military operation inside Cambodia conducted by Vietnamese troops associated with Khmer Rouge defectors (Chanda 1986). This operation, termed ‘invasion’ or ‘liberation’ according to the perspective taken, toppled the KR government in Phnom Penh within two weeks, on 7 January 1979, and reached the Thai border a week later (Jennar 1995a). A confused situation emerged on the Thai-Cambodian border where hundreds of thousands of civilians sought refuge from the fighting, along with the remnants of the KR army (Mason and Brown 1983; Shawcross 1984).

In Phnom Penh, a new government assisted by Vietnam established the

⁶⁹ Key players in the Khmer Rouge (KR), or PDK, included: Saloth Sar (alias Pol Pot, No 1 of the party), Long Bunruot (alias Nuon Chea, No 2 of the party), Ek Choecun (alias Ta Mok, chief of staff), Son Sen (official Vice-President of PDK, member of the SNC), Kim Trang (alias Ieng Sary, Saloth Sar’s brother in law, head of the

People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) under the socialist banner of the People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea (PRPK).⁷⁰ Along the Thai border, an uneasy alliance including the Khmer Rouge, Royalists (Funcinpec) and Republicans (KPLNF) was formed to oppose the PRK and Vietnam, under the banner of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). China, ASEAN, including Thailand, and most of the Western Community supported this political and armed front despite their knowledge of the Khmer Rouge genocide. The crucial support of the Thai government and military to the CGDK factions had several causes. These included historical fear of Vietnamese expansionism; 'global politics' incentives by the western block for geopolitical and 'humanitarian' reasons, a conditional incentive by China to stop assisting the insurgent movement of the Communist Party of Thailand (Leifer 1996); as well as more low-key reasons such as local predation of resources marked out for refugees or access to informal markets (Shawcross 1984). The PRK rapidly gained the support of the Soviet block but failed to be recognised by the United Nations which instead recognised in 1982 the CGDK as the only sovereign government of Cambodia.

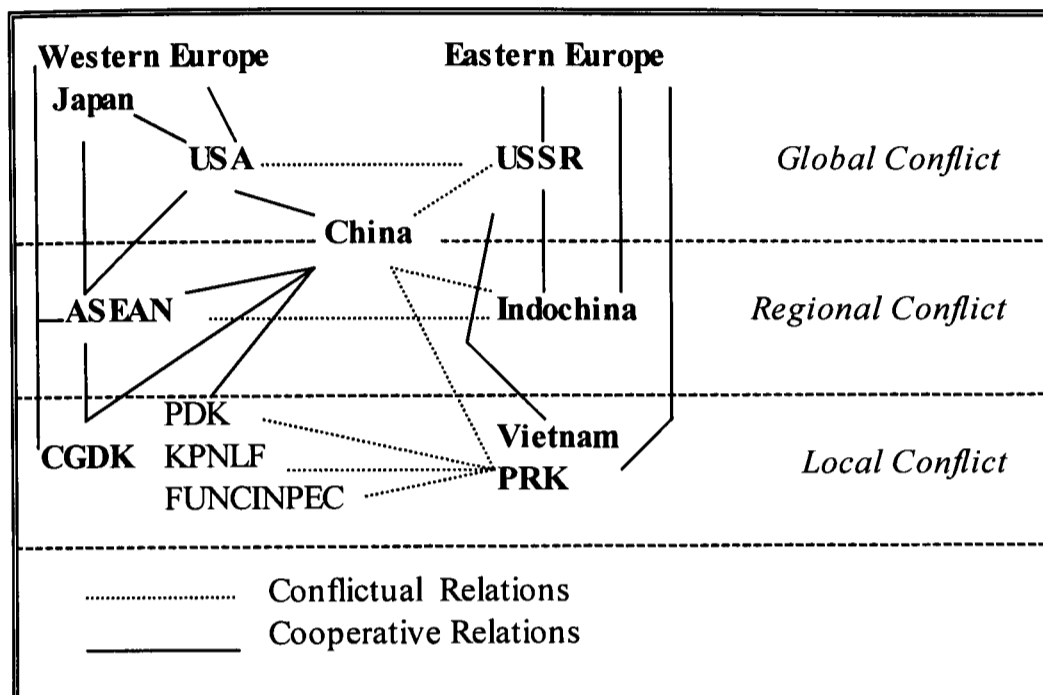
From this geopolitical alignment (see Figure 4.1), Cambodia entered into a decade of violent political stalemate (Chanda 1986; Regaud 1992). The PRK controlled the near totality of the country with the assistance of Vietnamese troops and governmental advisors as well as the support of the Soviet block. The CGDK

financial and economic committee of the CGDK), Khieu Samphan (official President of the PDK, member of the SNC) (Jennar 1995a).

⁷⁰ Key players in the party and the government included: Chea Sim (Minister of Interior, President of the National Assembly; and his cousin acting as figurehead Heng Sarim, in the position of Head of State), Pen Sovann (Minister of Defense and later Prime Minister before being dismissed and imprisoned in Vietnam from 1982), and Hun Sen (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister from 1985) (USA Directorate of Intelligence 1989; Jennar 1995a). For an analysis of the evolution of the CPP, see (Vickery 1994).

factions held small areas along the Thai border and conducted guerrilla warfare in many parts of the country.

Figure 4.1- Scales of conflict, an International Relations perspective of the Third Indochina War (1979-1989)⁷¹



⁷¹ Source: (Regaud 1992)

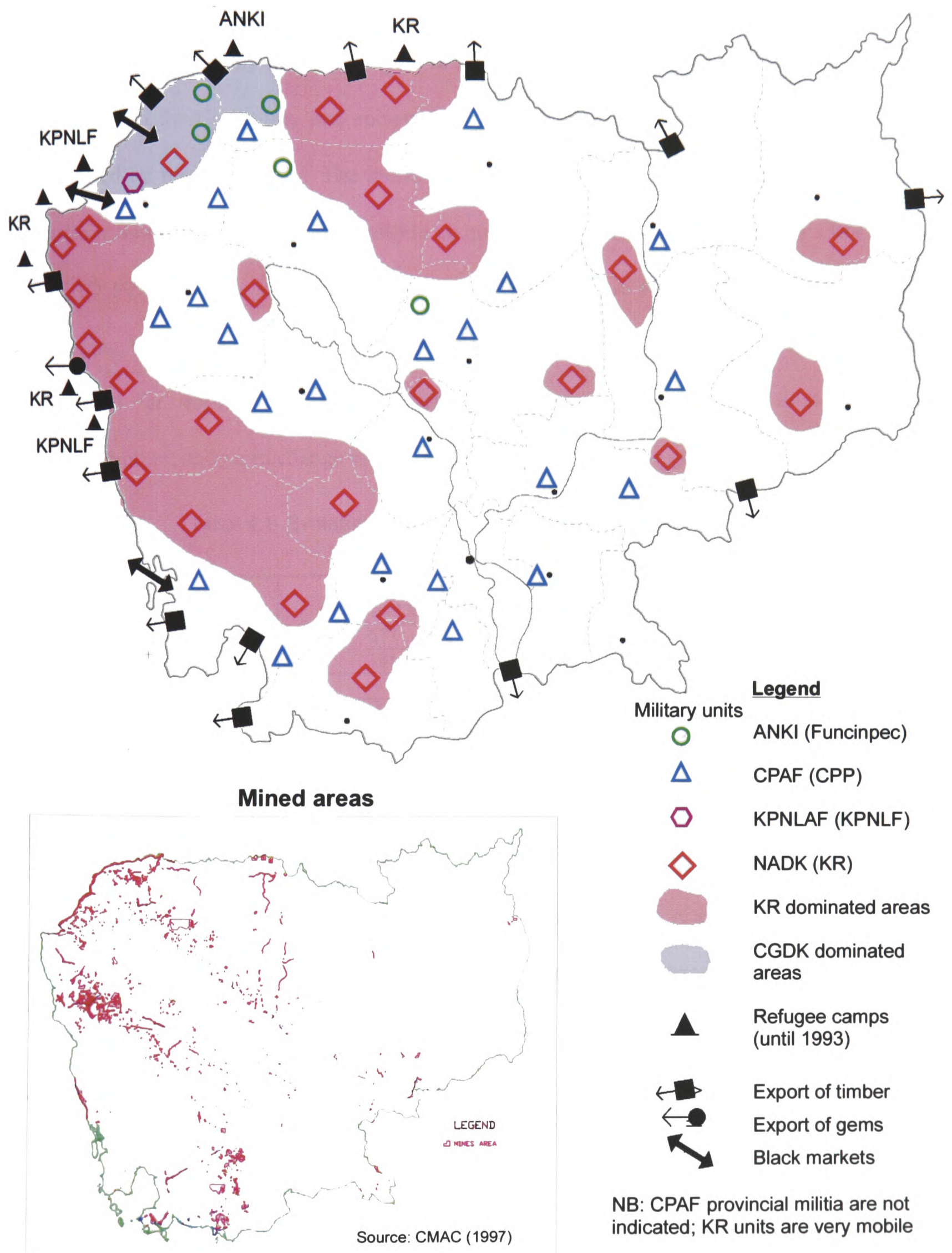
The war between the CGDK - the 'resistance' - and the PRK - the 'Phnom Penh government' - turned into a war of attrition, maintaining the country largely undeveloped and leaving about half a million refugees stranded on the Thai border (see Figure 4.2). Inside Cambodia, the PRK was placed in the difficult situation of fighting a war and reconstructing a society utterly destroyed and traumatised during the previous decade (Mysliwiec 1988; Emerson 1997).

The geopolitical stalemate evolved from 1986 with Gorbachev's 'Vladivostock initiative' to reduce expenses arising from the perpetuation of the Cold War, and his interest in normalising relations with China, reduced the willingness of the Soviet block to continue to support the war in Cambodia (Roberts 1996). At the regional level, the Vietnamese government confirmed, through its own policy of 'renovation', the *doi moi*; its will to withdraw from Cambodia, which had become its own 'Vietnam', thereby facilitating relations with the ASEAN and the West to resolve its internal economic problems (Acharya 1993). In Thailand, the army had taken the backstage after suppressing internal security problems with the Thai Communist Party and a new type of government, led by mostly businesspeople and technocrats was eager to extend its economy to Indochinese countries (Mairiskrod 1992).

At the Cambodian level, the PRK announced in mid-1987 a "national reconciliation policy" towards all opposing factions and direct talks were initiated between PRK's Prime Minister Hun Sen and CGDK's president Prince Sihanouk in order to bring an end to the conflict (Van der Kroef, 1988). The geopolitical and military situation concretely changed in September 1989 when Vietnam withdrew its last armed forces from Cambodia, which were estimated at the time between 60,000

and 80,000 troops (Jennar 1995b). However, despite numerous negotiations the deadlock was protracted until a Peace Agreement was signed by all political factions in October 1991 and general elections were held in 1993 under the auspices of the United Nations (Findlay 1995).

Figure 4.2 - Map of areas of control by political factions (1993)



1.2 Regional forestry context

During the two decades during which Cambodia remained largely isolated from the international economy, many countries in Southeast Asia have undergone important changes in their economy and society (Rigg 1997). Forests have been particularly affected by these changes.⁷² The increase in annual industrial roundwood production within Southeast Asia, from 28 million cu.m. in 1961 to 102 million cu.m. in 1989 (FAO 1998), and the loss of forest cover (see Table 4.1) are both clear indicators of logging booms taking place over that period in the context of rising international demand for tropical timber, in particular from Japan; an increase in domestic consumption; and rapid change in land use (Durand 1994; Dauvergne 1997).

Table 4.1- Evolution of forest cover in Southeast Asia (1970 - 1990)⁷³

Country	Total area (thousand km ²)	1970 (%)	1980 (%)	1990 (%)
Burma/Myanmar	677	48	42 (37)	43
Cambodia	181	73	71	59 (63)
East Timor	11	67	73 (20)	47
Indonesia	1,913	64	61 (42)	60
Laos	237	62	59 (48)	55 (53)
Malaysia	330	72	64 (57)	53
Philippines	295	53	32 (22)	27 (22)
Thailand	513	43	35 (15)	26 (21)
Vietnam	329	42	25	30 (17)

The proportion of global production represented by Cambodian timber increased in the late 1980s and early 1990s as sources of unprocessed timber inside

⁷² On forests and the political ecology of forest uses in Southeast Asia, see (Hurst 1990; Poffenberger 1990; Collins, Sayer et al. 1991; Bryant, Rigg et al. 1993; Potter 1993; Rainforest Action Network 1993; De Koninck 1994; Durand 1994; Dauvergne 1997). For individual countries, see on Burma: (Harbinson 1992; Geary 1994; Bryant 1996; Bryant 1997b; Bryant 1998c); Indonesia: (Peluso 1992a and 1992b; Dauvergne 1993; Broad 1995; Poffenberger 1997; Durand 1998); Laos (Rigg and Jerndal 1996); Malaysia: (Cooke 1994) for Sarawak: (Colchester 1993b; King 1993); Papua New Guinea: (Thompson 1992); the Philippines: (Bautista 1990; Kummer 1992; Vitug 1993; Broad 1995; Vitug 1998); Thailand: (Hirsch 1990; Lohmann 1993); Vietnam: (Lang 1996).

⁷³ Source: (FAO 1981); (FAO 1993); estimations in between brackets: for 1980 (Durand 1994), for 1990

Southeast Asia were highly limited due to the depletion of forests (e.g. Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam) or restrictions on exports (e.g. Indonesia and Peninsular Malaysia). The main providers of logs in Southeast Asia were Sarawak (insular Malaysia) and Burma (Hurst 1990; FAO 1998). This timber deficit was particularly acute for Cambodia's immediate neighbours. In 1989, Thailand banned commercial logging; in 1991 Laos tightened controls on logging; and in 1992, Vietnam set up a log and sawn wood export ban (Davies 1993).

The dynamics of resource flows were especially influenced by the Thai timber industry which, after Japan and South Korea, was the third largest importer of tropical roundwood in the world in 1990 (FAO 1994d). The official opening of the Thai market to Cambodian timber in the late 1980s was a turning point in the economic dynamics of the region symbolised in mid 1989 by the declaration of the Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Chhonhavan's call to turn Indochina "from a battlefield to a marketplace" (Jennar 1995a: 99).⁷⁴ The interest of Thailand towards its neighbours was, to some extent, motivated by the need for raw materials to sustain its economic growth, and led to a new "resource diplomacy" towards Indochina and Myanmar (Innes-Brown and Valencia 1993).⁷⁵ As Hirsch notes,

[Thailand's] interest in neighbouring countries' resources is a combined product of depletion of resources within [its] borders, resource availability in neighbouring countries, ... rapid economic growth based on industrialization and processing of raw materials, ... opening up of neighbouring economies to foreign investment, ...[and] the limits that have been set by the environmental movement on certain types of resource development within Thailand. (ibid.: 235)

Following a logging boom and rapid deforestation, Thailand forests had

(Bernard 1994) except for Cambodia (FAO 1994c).

⁷⁴ For an analysis of this shift and the related power struggle between the Thai government and the military, see (Um 1991). For a more general analysis of relations between Thailand and Indochina, see (Mairiskrod 1992).

⁷⁵ This new 'resource diplomacy' concerned timber, fisheries, gems, hydropower and oil/gas.

shrunk from 51 million ha. in 1965 to 13 million ha. in 1990, and from the mid 1970s the country had become a net importer of timber (Hoamuangkaew 1990; FAO 1997). The country supported a large wood-processing industry and imported annually about 500,000 cu.m. of timber (logs and sawnwood) during the 1980s. Thai timber needs increased to 3.8 million cu.m. in 1992 following a national logging ban in 1989 after devastating floods had resulted in a public outcry against logging (Lohmann 1989; Royal Forest Department 1996). Timber prices rose with, for example, hardwood flooring prices increasing by 50% between 1988 and 1990 (Keese 1995).

As examined in subsequent sections, the sharp increase in Thai imports from Cambodia benefited all factions in the Cambodian conflict, but more particularly CGDK factions controlling forested areas along the Thai border.

2. Inside Cambodia

In the logic of Cold War confrontation, the overwhelming majority of Cambodians *inside* the country were denied assistance from international agencies but the refugee population along the border was given full support and the routed KR army was rebuilt in part with the 'aid' money intended for the refugees (Mason and Brown 1983; Shawcross 1984). During the 1980s, while much of the attention on Cambodia by international media, aid agencies and academics was concentrated on the war and the plight of refugees, the main challenge for Cambodians was in the (re)construction of their devastated country and society. Besides the war damages, there was an acute shortage of educated personnel due to the class genocide that accompanied the recasting of the society and flight of part of the educated elite during the 1970-75 war

as well as after 1979 (Sliwinski 1995; Kiernan 1996). In the year following the collapse of the KR regime, millions of people, who had been forcefully displaced, moved around the country either to find relatives, go back to their homes or to reach refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border. These displacements, associated with the limited capacity of the new government and exacerbated by drought, resulted in further misery and famine (Leifer 1980). After the provision of international humanitarian assistance between 1979 and 1981, an embargo on development assistance was repeatedly voted at the UN until 1990 (Mysliwiec 1988; Jennar 1995a). With furthermore an economic embargo imposed by ASEAN and western countries, reconstruction and economic development were dependant upon the Soviet block. From a political perspective, one of the major effects of the 1970-75 war and the Khmer Rouge regime was a drastic decrease in the number of Cambodian elite.⁷⁶ Few of the members of the Royal family, previous state apparatus and business elite remained, or wanted to remain, in the country. As such, “Once the [KR] administrative center had fled in January 1979, a true classless, and structure-less, society was left. No one owned any property beyond the simplest personal articles” (Vickery 1990: 439).⁷⁷ A new social stratification and governance was thus possible at the onset of the PRK regime. The mode of governance chosen by the new regime was partly modelled on Vietnam’s bureaucratic socialism with a strong politicisation of the state apparatus in particular through provincial governorship (Vickery 1986;

⁷⁶ This ‘disappearance’ of the elite was also overstated by the PRK regime in order “to justify continued Vietnamese advice and to explain away the lack of democracy” (Heder, pers. com., 1999).

⁷⁷ I do not share completely this view as, not only did many people had buried assets such as gold and could recover it rapidly, but also Vickery is not taking into account potential class factors such as social capital. It remains that Cambodia in early 1979 is characterised by a relatively classless society which would provide an interesting case for a socio-political study of class stratification. Unfortunately, such a study has not yet been conducted.

Heder 1995). However, many within the PRK state apparatus “did not fully accept the socialist and proletarian internationalist tenets it espoused. Personal and patron-client relations grew to count for at least as much as doctrinal purity” (Heder 1995: 426). Although the new government adopted a Marxist-Leninist ideology commanding a planned-economy, the economy of the country developed according to a ‘dual’ system, mixing petty private trade and barter with state controlled activities, as a result of the weak organisational capacity of the state and the pragmatism of its leaders. As “buying and selling were freely allowed and, until 1983, were not even taxed” a *laissez-faire* economy predominated, centred upon the importation of commodity goods from Thailand (Vickery 1986: 129). These goods were mostly purchased with gold that had been buried during the war and the Pol Pot regime as well as loot. This relative ‘free market economy’ rapidly recreated, despite regular crackdown by the PRK, a social class of traders, once again dominated by the remnants of the Chinese and Sino-Khmer community, but also including Khmers who had “learned more about trade during [the Khmer Rouge regime] than in centuries when trade was mostly in Chinese hands” as their very survival rested on pilfering and clandestine trading (Thion 1994: 45).⁷⁸

The economy remained essentially based on subsistence agriculture and the exploitation of rubber, forestry, and fisheries. While *laissez-faire* also characterised trading in the agricultural sector, with no taxes on production and free access to markets, land was distributed amongst the population on the basis of 1.5-2 ha. per family. Additionally, ‘solidarity groups’ (*Krom Samaki*) were established in 1979 to carry out rural activities, especially rice cultivation. The system provided a much-

⁷⁸ For an analysis of the importance of overseas Chinese in Asian economies, see (Backman 1995).

needed security net for many displaced and widowed people. Yet as conditions improved it was progressively rejected by the peasantry (Frings 1997). The major difference between this and a capitalist farming system was that land ownership was nationalised, and land could thus not “be bought or sold, pawned or otherwise used as security for debt with the risk of capitalist expropriation by usurers” (Vickery 1986: 143).

The industrial sector was initially placed under state control and remained embryonic. Industry had never been well developed and had fallen into disuse following war-related destruction, inadequate maintenance, ransacking and finally looting. Basic import substitution industries were set up with the assistance of the Soviet block but remained plagued by the lack of power and raw material (ibid.). The production by state industries reached its peak in 1988, with a value of US\$18.5 million, before collapsing to the relative advantage of a private sector emerging since the mid 1980s and which reached a value of US\$138 million in 1991 (Népote and de Vienne 1993). Much of the economy was supported by Soviet assistance, which amounted to about US\$130 million/year (Hiebert 1989).

The year 1989 marked an official shift in the further “dilution of ideological pretensions” of the Phnom Penh government as a constitutional reform put an end to the PRK to create the State of Cambodia (SoC). All references to socialism were erased from the new constitution and private property and a market economy were instituted. However, the political impact of this reform was limited as many of the key politicians remained in power (Jennar 1995a). The shift nevertheless marked an increasing factionalisation between elements of the party still rooted in socialism, represented by Chea Sim, and an opportunistic ‘reformist’ branch, led by Prime

Minister Hun Sen. The latter, after having been a Vietnamese *protégé*, now courted foreigners - from Thai businessmen to Western NGOs - to provide him with a new power base that he was historically lacking (Heder 1991). In this regard, this shift represented an attempt to facilitate economic development; a step in decreasing western opposition to the regime; as well as a political move. In late 1991, the PRPK was re-shaped into the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), disclaiming Marxist identity and links with Vietnam. The new CPP, having lost its ideological foundation, was to become - at least in the perspective of many foreign observers - "a political vehicle to promote the careers and materials interests of its senior membership" (Leifer 1996: 78).

Despite the economic growth resulting from the liberalisation, the period 1989 until mid-1992 was characterised by a complex situation for the SoC. A fall in Soviet block assistance led to a budgetary crisis, itself aggravated by a reduction of revenue from a privatised public sector (Asian Development Bank 1991; Summers 1997). The privatisation of public assets was accompanied by the development of corruption, thus further decreasing public revenues, and an increase in internal political factionalism due to resistance towards liberalisation reforms from the most conservative elements of the party. The economy was affected by rising inflation, averaging about 150% per year, and a strong devaluation of the national currency, *riel*, accompanied by a 'dollarisation' (in US\$ or Thai Baht) of the economy (Ministry of Economy and Finance 1997).⁷⁹

Furthermore, the peace process had stalled as CGDK forces had taken

⁷⁹ 'Dollarisation' refers to the informal replacement of the local currency by a foreign currency, which then becomes the main intermediary of monetary exchanges. This implies greater difficulties for the government to

advantage of the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops to successively take control of some western border regions, leading to soaring military expenditures (Fitzgerald 1994; Jennar 1995a; Chandler 1997). With no significant international assistance coming before early 1993, the SoC was in an 'aid-vacuum' for nearly three years. It attempted to increase foreign currency earnings from exports, mostly timber, and by taxing imports while developing trade and attracting investments through a general *laissez-faire* attitude that reflected as much its pragmatic approach as its lack of capacity of intervention upon the economy. This *laissez-faire* was most successful in the realm of trade. However, the 'inability' of the government to control and tax the movement of goods resulted in much illegal activity that hindered the collection of customs duties, a key source of public finance representing about 70% of total tax revenues for the period 1990-1993 (World Bank 1994).

Until the signature of the Peace Accord in October 1991, few large investors ventured into the country (Asian Development Bank 1991). From late 1991, privatisation accelerated at the prospect of a return to peace, low domestic prices and a favourable economic regional environment. This privatisation and influx of private capital targeted the domains of real estate, forest concessions, imports of consumer goods and business opportunities arising from the arrival of about 20,000 international UN personnel and the expatriate staff of more than 120 NGOs. Economic growth was mostly confined to urban centres and to peripheries with access to natural resources and international trade. While the economy of Cambodia was apparently one of the most liberal in the world at the time (Ljunggren 1993), Devas rightly commented that this was rather because,

intervene financially on the economy and, often, a devaluation of the local currency.

the Government lacks the capacity to manage the economy than a deliberate policy choice. Managing the economy in this new situation requires a range of new skills and system. In the absence of these, the risk is of arbitrary intervention by any who have power. (Devas 1996: 32)

Indeed, what emerged from this liberalisation was ‘uncontrolled’ investment and business practices associated with speculative profits and corruption (Utting 1994). As such, the economy of Cambodia was ‘liberalised’, in the sense that the *formal* rules and institutions of the state did not regulate economic activities (Népoté and de Vienne 1993). The new political context arising from the peace accord not only had impacts upon the level of foreign investments but also upon market-state relations and networks of power. These productive networks, linking politicians, bureaucrats and businesspeople, were built through practices uncontrolled by formal institutions and regulations and characterised by an almost systematic straddling of state and private activities by governmental actors.

The combined effect of economic liberalisation and political manoeuvring - heightened by the prospect of a political settlement of the conflict - opened a new period of political competition. This led in turn to higher demand and increased opportunities for the embezzlement of public funds and the commodification of resources within Cambodia. Numerous public assets were transferred to the CPP, individual politicians, political cronies or simply well connected investors in an apparent climate of total impunity. So many CPP cadres were “embarking on an extraordinary orgy of corruption by selling off state assets and pocketing the money”, that protest riots erupted in Phnom Penh in December 1991 (Thayer 1992: 11). These were violently repressed, claiming at least 11 lives (Jennar 1995a). Complaints also came from international observers and CGDK factions. But despite calls to accelerate the implementation of the United Nations for managing the country in order to stop

the drain of public assets, few effective measures were taken before the elections in May 1993.

While apparently 'chaotic' given the conspicuousness of plunder, the political economy of Cambodia nevertheless remained under the guidance of a certain type of governance; one organised by productive networks centred upon a Cambodian elite accumulating wealth and (re)constructing power. The institutionalisation of capitalism was tightly related to the corruption and erosion of formal governance; a situation that was to prevail during and beyond the period of transition overseen by the UN. The forestry sector was not spared from these changes, as private capital for intensive exploitation became available and international timber markets more accessible.

2.1 Forestry under the PRK and SoC regimes

During the period following the fall of the KR regime, there was a general need for timber and forest products for the reconstruction of the country. People returning to what was left of their home place often needed to rebuild their houses. The capacity of the PRK to respond to this demand was extremely limited, both in terms of forest exploitation and management. Following the purge of intellectuals and old regime civil servants by the KR, the country was left with very limited technical staff. Out of a pre-KR level of 70 forestry engineers, 170 technicians, and 507 wardens only three, seven and ten respectively were identified and remained in the country, many having been killed or having left the country (Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1987). The Department of Forestry and Wildlife (DFW), re-established in Phnom Penh on 10 October 1979 with 16 staff, could not manage the huge demand for construction material. As a result, the forestry sector first developed on an ad-hoc basis, in a way

similar to the *laissez-faire* that dominated other sectors of the economy. Governmental initiatives were largely under the responsibility of the leadership of the Popular Revolutionary Committees of provinces and municipalities. This situation is best described by the Director of the DFW, in charge from 1979 till 1997:

From the dawn of the Liberation of 7th January 1979, the surviving population appearing suddenly from the very depths of a miserable life where it had been detained during nearly four years, got back to its place of origin to reorganise its home with what came to hand. There was then a rush for the forest domain to find there timber, posts, poles, bamboo, rattans, lianas, etc. ... for mending, reconstructing, preparing the agricultural campaign, breeding and fishing. On the other hand, the restoration of buildings for institutions, state services and organisms and the restoring of road networks, required an enormous amount of construction timber that the population exploited everywhere, in the guise of 'free cuts', in easily accessible forests. Facing these dangerous pressures exercised upon a forest domain largely weakened or degraded, the Department of Forestry and Wildlife ... and the provincial forest management units still in an embryonic state for lack of foresters, were superseded by the course of euphoric events. (Chan 1985:10-11)

Officially, the forest domain was a state asset placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and its technical department, the DFW. Yet, free access to forest resources had been granted to the population for their personal needs. Large-scale logging, primarily intended to supply the administration with timber, was conducted by the DFW, provincial Popular Revolutionary Committees and 'citizens associations', based on the model of *Krom Samaki* (Solidarity Groups). These groups rapidly operated as quasi-private actors, benefiting from lucrative contracts with governmental authorities. When the system was abolished in May 1989, the industry supposedly reverted to the DFW (FAO 1991). In practice, many of the businesspeople managing the *Krom Samaki* were able to buy or keep their equipment and subsequently formed the bulk of domestic logging and timber trading companies.

To manage the vast extent of forests covering more than 60% of the territory, the staff of the DFW increased quickly to reach in September 1988 a total of 852

people for the DFW Directorate in Phnom Penh and 722 people in the provinces.⁸⁰ By the mid-1980s, every province and district had a forestry office. But the MAFF never achieved firm minor control of forest exploitation. While politicians usually pointed to the on-going war as the main reason for the forest's mismanagement, the DFW staff in Phnom Penh denounced the independence of provinces as the major factor leading to 'anarchy'.⁸¹ The staff in provincial offices was often recruited by provincial authorities without consultation of the DFW in Phnom Penh and without regard to their technical expertise. Provincial reports were not sent to central authorities, sometimes in order to protect the interests of, or avoid confrontation with, provincial authorities. Some provincial staff illegally exported timber and "no attention" was given to forest protection works (Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1988). In fact the leadership of the PRK had established a highly politicised and centralised bureaucratic chain of command, with all communications between provincial and central institutions passing through the Ministry of Interior. Provincial governors had a wide range of civilian and military powers and, within an increasingly factionalised political framework and few resources flowing from the capital, they often developed their provinces with a great deal of autonomy, sometimes at the expense of the general interests of the state and the public.

2.1.1 Forest protection and logging control

During the early 1980s, official DFW reports repeatedly noted the importance of

⁸⁰ The training of about 2,000 agricultural staff was undertaken through short term training courses between 1980 and 1983. Later, engineers and technicians were trained with the assistance of the USSR (Toohey 1989).

⁸¹ Decision No. 165-80, dated 17 July 1980. This decision gave the DFW a legal mandate over forest management but also provided Popular Revolutionary Committee of provinces and municipalities a wide range

ecological, hydrological and climatic roles of the forests for the development of agriculture in the country. The degradation of forests was blamed on forest fires, agricultural clearings, US bombardments and the construction of “disorderly” hydrological infrastructures in protected forests by the “Pol Pot - Ieng Sary clique” (Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1984). Solutions for the conservation of forests promoted “scientific interventionism” against forest fires and agricultural clearings primarily through mass education and mobilisation in planting trees which were limited by low budgets and a lack of control in forested areas and trade. Tree planting, the major protective ‘scientific intervention’ of the state, started in 1985; the total area planted throughout the entire 1980s vary from 670 ha. to 2,800 ha. depending on the sources (Department of Forests and Wildlife 1988; Raguin 1990; FAO 1994a).

From the mid-1980s, reports increasingly pointed to the “abusive exploitation” of forests. Vietnamese companies conducted intensive logging, but only veiled remarks in DFW reports highlighted their relative “helplessness” in front of these activities.⁸² The situation of forestry remained “anarchic” throughout the 1980s, in comparison to the established colonial order which, for bureaucrats, constituted the reference. DFW’s officials denounced “those at the ‘highest level’ of the government” for impeding the proper management of forests and the establishment of comprehensive legislation (Department of Forests and Wildlife 1988). The same report commented that,

of rights, which remained criticised by DFW officials till the late 1990s.
⁸² (Soh, interview, 1997).

The application of the existing legislation ... gives negligible results and cannot in any case ensure the stability [sustainability] of forests. In effect, till now, dishonest traders and individual members of the armed forces have seized the opportunity of a weak legislation and, *supported by the lenient habits of the Party and the State* taken during the deficient situation prevailing at the beginning [of the regime], continue to base their profession on ... cutting and transporting wood ... illegally. They set up sawmills, wood workshops, open stores in an anarchic manner. They go as far as putting charcoal kilns inside the enclosure of the monuments of Angkor, which sites represent the soul of the nation. (ibid.)

The dynamics of illegal logging were not only a feature of the post UN political economy in the 1990s. Similar 'lawlessness' affected the forestry sector. However, while DFW reports accused armed men and dishonest businessmen for much of the 'anarchy', the Department itself established a reputation of providing *klanh*, literally 'fat', bureaucratic positions. For example, annual logging permits, *prey coupe*,⁸³ were instituted in 1985 with the intent to regulate logging at least spatially by predetermining felling areas (Chan 1995). But, as the implementation of these permits was poorly supervised, the situation did not change much. On the other hand, as these permits could be sold or sub-divided, they became a valuable quasi-currency. Prized for their profitability, as well as for the access to fuel that they provided, they became an instrument of neo-patrimonialism in Phnom Penh and in the provinces, and a source of informal revenue for some DFW staff. In fact, much of the 'anarchy' denounced in official reports resulted from informal arrangements that re-established bonds linking businessmen, military, bureaucrats and politicians.

These arrangements cut across political divides. Despite the war between the CGDK factions and the Vietnamese and Phnom Penh troops businessmen, and occasionally the administration itself, were able to strike deals with Khmer Rouge units controlling forested areas. For a provincial vice-governor of Koh Kong province, which enjoyed long term trading relations with Thailand, "everyone worked with the

Khmer Rouge”.⁸⁴ These deals were facilitated by the existence of kinship or birthplace links between both parties and the reliance of isolated guerrilla units on local networks of support for food, medicine, or even ammunition. Most frequently, Khmer Rouge granted access to forests in exchange for rice. Timber traders, civilian or military, thus gained a role of intermediary between the government side and insurgent groups, which they kept well into the 1990s. Such deals were even passed by the Ministry of Agriculture itself, as its joint-venture with a Japanese company (Okada) paid institutionalised ‘insecurity fees’ of US\$28/cu.m. to a Khmer Rouge unit in Kirirom, Kampong Speu province, to exploit a rare pine forest (El Mensi 1993).

2.1.2 Timber production

The scale of forest exploitation remained limited, as official figures (see Table 4.2) and the number of logging trucks operating for Cambodian administrations and solidarity groups indicates: 15 in 1981 and 266 in 1988 (Department of Forests and Wildlife 1988). The timber processing capacity of the country also remained limited, especially in comparison to the logging boom characterising much of Southeast Asia at the time. By 1988, the DFW had established five large sawmills with a total annual processing capacity of 12,700 cu.m. of sawntimber. There were an additional 207 sawmills operated by provincial authorities or individuals with a total production capacity of about 100,000 cu.m. of sawntimber per year.

Table 4.2- Official production and exportation of round logs and sawntimber (1979-

⁸³ ‘Prey Coupe’ is the term used by Cambodians, based on *prey*, willd/forest, and *coupe*, French word for felling area.

⁸⁴ (Kirirot, interview, 1997).

1989)⁸⁵

Year	Production logs (cu.m.)	Production sawntimber (cu.m.)	Exportation logs (cu.m.)	Exportation sawntimber (cu.m.)
1979	0	0	0	0
1980	238	0	0	0
1981	11,033	1,441	0	0
1982	67,700	2,994	1,753	0
1983	90,000	3,414	14,159	0
1984	73,279	4,628	15,165	0
1985	96,532	8,578	25,117	0
1986	214,549	9,994	113,776	0
1987	326,160	11,779	254,297	0
1988	282,950	12,747	106,590	0
1989	224,830	16,370	78,720	930

Exports officially started in 1982 and increased from 1986 onwards, mostly carried out by Vietnamese logging companies, towards Vietnam and a few other socialist countries.⁸⁶ By 1986, Cambodian timber exports were back to their pre-1970s level due to large-scale Vietnamese exploitation. The involvement of large scale foreign 'capital' started in 1985, when the Fifth Party Congress declared forestry the "Third Economic Spearhead" of a five year development plan and planned a total production of 200,000 cu.m. of logs by 1990 (Vickery 1986).⁸⁷ Accordingly, the DFW was granted five forested areas, covering 623,664 ha., for timber production, while a total of 698,266 ha. distributed in eight areas were defined as production forests for co-operation with the Forestry Service of Vietnam and Ho Chi Minh City. Official figures reported a production of round logs of 88,304 cu.m. for 1986 and 169,618

⁸⁵ Source: for 1979-1987, (Department of Forests and Wildlife 1988). For 1988-1989, (World Bank 1992). The production figures in logs and sawntimber are for state controlled activities only. The exportation figure would not take into account the exportations of logs by Vietnamese companies under 'co-operation agreement' for 1988 and 1989.

⁸⁶ Vietnamese companies paid a 'royalty rate' of US\$23/cu.m. (Curtis 1989).

⁸⁷ The other three 'spearheads' were agriculture, rubber, and fisheries. This choice reflected the realism of the leaders of the PRK, especially in comparison to the utopia demonstrated by the Khmer Rouge regime in its economic development plan (Chandler, Kiernan et al. 1988). The plan projected the processing of 58,000 cu.m. of sawn timber and exportation of 100,000 cu.m. by 1990 (Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1987).

cu.m. for 1987, in the Vietnamese ‘concessions’ (Department of Forests and Wildlife 1988), but because of fraud, these were probably underestimated by a factor of two.⁸⁸

A significant portion of the timber imported by Vietnam was exported to Singapore and Thailand (Kanwerayotin 1992). In 1988, the forestry sector started to open up the economy to capitalist countries, with direct exports to non-socialist countries revealing to the Cambodian administration the high prices timber could command on the international market - “more that US\$2,000/cu.m.” (Department of Forests and Wildlife 1988).

In 1989, official exploitation and exports receded due to a general increase in fighting with the KR and other factions. The actual variation of exploitation is nevertheless difficult to assess as the opening of the Thai market, which was previously officially closed for political reasons, offered important market opportunities for border provinces (see below). Timber production statistics under the SoC regime are highly unreliable, with major discrepancies between different governmental agencies (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 - Official production and exportation of round logs and sawntimber (1989-1993)⁸⁹

Year	Production logs (cu.m.)	Production sawntimber (cu.m.)	Exportation logs (cu.m.)	Exportation sawntimber (cu.m.)	Export value (MUS\$)
1989	224,830	16,370	78,720	930	7.7
1990	257,400	15,700	96,900 or 91,342	n.a. or 5,521	7.7
1991	308,900	16,000	234,300 or 122,421	25,500 or 4,932	24.6
1992	104,000	16,000	273,000 or 107,031	21,500 or 7,164	25.1
1993	n.a.	n.a.	27,911	100,542	60.3

⁸⁸ (Soh, interview, 1997).

⁸⁹ Sources: production logs and sawntimber, DFW cited in (World Bank 1994); exportation logs and sawntimber, different figures from DFW cited in (FAO 1994a); export value of logs and sawntimber, Ministry of Commerce

There was at least a threefold increase in production within areas under the control of SoC between 1989 and 1992. As numerous exports to Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, but also from the coast, went unreported, it is likely that this increase was much greater and could have reached a total volume exceeding 750,000 cu.m. by 1992.

2.1.3 Foreign capital and the privatisation of forest exploitation

The new economic orientation of the SoC marked a shift to a new type of forest exploitation. In 1988, a joint venture with a Japanese company (Okada) was established to increase the capacity of the main sawmill of the country. Forest concessions were now allocated on a longer term. Starting with a Cambodian/Soviet joint venture in 1989, ten concessions were subsequently awarded between mid-1991 and 1993 (FAO 1994a). All concessionaire companies were from Asia (Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan), with the exception of one French company. Several foreign companies also operated without concession agreement, mostly through informal dealings with provincial authorities. Foreign companies had been attracted by the prospect of peace in this densely forested country, and several had conducted prior negotiations with different political factions to secure their access to timber and the necessary export licences (e.g. the Thai companies BLP and Panloy Chorvy). Some negotiations were also concluded to secure neutrality and to guarantee support whatever the outcome of the up-coming elections. Some companies were unable to start their operations because of on-going security problems, while others, having established links with local strongmen, were able to operate. For example, Double

cited in (World Bank 1994).

Ace, a subsidiary of the Malaysian logging company WTK, worked in association with General Yu Ry, a former military commander with business interests in Koh Kong.⁹⁰

Secondly, domestic logging companies were officially privatised. But, as mentioned above, many of the *Krom Samaki* and timber extraction activities of provincial authorities were *de facto* already running quasi-private operations. Thirdly, there was an increase in ‘illegal’ exploitation resulting from an inflow of private capital and the breakdown of regulations and restrictions. This not only demonstrated the limited capacity of DFW to control activities, and possibly the complicity of its staff, but also the strengthening of a diffuse polity characterised by the erosion of formal governance and the increasing power of ‘bureaucratic bossism’ exercised by provincial strongmen, politicians, bureaucrats and associated businessmen (see Chapter 6). This situation was especially blatant in provinces along international borders. It reflected a similar rise of ‘bossism’ in neighbouring Thailand and Vietnam that had accompanied primitive accumulation in resource rich provincial areas and the decentralisation of governance (Phongpaichit and Piriyarangsan 1994; Sidel 1996; Vasavakul 1996).

Finally, there was a greater opening-up of regional markets and a greater demand from Thailand. As mentioned above, the decision to set up the logging ban in Thailand in 1989 was accompanied by intense pressure from the Thai timber industry upon the Thai government to access forests in neighbouring countries. In December 1988, Thai army chief General Chavalit Yongchaiyut successfully negotiated with the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) in Myanmar/Burma, that Thai

⁹⁰ (Kim, interview, 1997; Khim, interview, 1997).

companies be granted forest concessions, many of which were located in territory controlled by armed opposition groups (Leungaramsri and Rajesh 1992; Grundy-War 1993; Bryant 1997b). In January 1989, Hun Sen made his first official, yet 'private', visit to Thailand and met General Chavalit, who he had already 'secretly' met in fall 1988 (Jennar 1995a). The visit of the Cambodian Prime Minister was, justifiably, given a strong political significance, but it also represented a step forward for Thailand in securing access to resources from its periphery as Hun Sen officially confirmed negotiations with Thai leaders about "investment, trade, *forest and gem exploitation*, construction and tourism" (FEER 1989: 103, emphasis added).

This new relation between Thailand and the PRK resulted in the creation of a commission for economic co-operation between the two countries in February 1989 and direct timber imports from Cambodia, which previously transited through Singapore (Jennar 1995a).⁹¹ While this co-operation could have represented a step towards peace, it was perceived as a threat by CGDK factions. Direct economic relations between Bangkok and Phnom Penh meant that they could be made redundant with regard to Thailand's political and economic interests, and that greater economic wealth within Cambodia would undermine an economic incentive drawing Cambodians towards their refugee camps (Lechervy 1996). From mid-1989, CGDK factions hardened their position in the peace negotiations and launched their most important military offensive following the departure of Vietnamese troops (Jennar 1995a). Forests and gem mining areas in the West and Northwest constituted a prime target for CGDK factions. Both SoC and the KR engaged their best military units over

⁹¹ Tea Banh, vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, an ethnic Thai from Koh Kong, was nominated as head of this commission.

the control of Pailin, the most important gem mining town, which fell in late October 1989 to the Khmer Rouge.⁹²

The following section examines transborder economic activities between the two opposing camps and then details the case of each CGDK faction with a focus on the extraction of natural resources.

3. Natural resources and armed struggle: the economy of the central periphery

Peripheries are locationally relative. From the border zone, Bangkok was much nearer in time and distance than was Phnom Penh. Also, paradoxically, the leadership of the CGDK had a seat in the United Nations, while the ‘central’ government did not. In addition, Cambodia’s Thai ‘periphery’ attracted far more attention from the international media and international development and humanitarian agencies than did areas under the control of Phnom Penh (Mason and Brown 1983). The ‘periphery’ was at the centre of the geopolitical scene, a conclusion that is reinforced when considering how this periphery was central to shaping the life and governance inside Cambodia during the 1980s and early 1990s. Forests within what may be called this *central periphery* began to play a crucial political and economic role, providing income to continue the conflict and creating a complex web of inter-dependency amongst factions, governments and foreign companies.

⁹² Khmer Rouge also took control of Anlong Veng in the North but they were unable to take any significant provincial town, as they had initially hoped (Heder, pers. com., 1999).

3.1 Transborder economy: 'free trade' and the permeability of frontlines

Despite the civil war, the international embargo on development aid and the tenuous diplomatic relationship between Thailand and the PRK/SoC, the Thai-Cambodian border was relatively permeable. Cross-border trade had started early on following the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime (Vickery 1986). Trade concentrated in consumer goods and humanitarian aid provided in camps located along the border, but also involved the export of timber (Paterson 1992). According to official Thai statistics, there was no major increase in direct timber imports by Thailand before late 1991, when the Paris Peace agreement was signed, supposedly because the intensity of the conflict proscribed the use of expensive heavy equipment (Royal Forest Department 1996). Yet, there were numerous unrecorded imports, mostly coming from the province of Koh Kong, but also from other CGDK controlled borderlands as temporary cease-fire were agreed between opposing factions and the SoC restrained military attacks close to the border to avoid antagonising the Thai government (Suksamran 1989; Tarr 1991). The SoC was caught in the dilemma of either intervening militarily against commercial activities in Khmer Rouge controlled areas and risk a direct hit on Thai military and civilians operating in these areas - thus worsening the political situation and entrenching Thai support for the Khmer Rouge - or leaving Thai companies to operate in Khmer Rouge areas and support them financially - thus worsening the military balance in favour of the KR. A middle path was chosen, by which compromises were apparently reached with the Thai government and Thai companies to secure a part of the financial rent generated by the exploitation of natural resources, while military pressure was maintained on the front line.

There was as well as timber transiting through Vietnam or Laos, with about half of the timber imported by Thailand from these two countries originating in fact from Cambodia (see Table 4.4) (Liden and Hiebert 1992). Indeed, while large scale timber extraction by Vietnamese companies inside Cambodia had started at least since 1986, the logging ban in Thailand and renewed fighting in the western part of Cambodia had resulted in a rush of Thai timber traders to Vietnam to purchase Cambodian logs from eastern provinces (Kanwerayotin 1992).

Table 4.4- Evolution of timber imports by Thailand (1987 - 1993)⁹³

Volume (1,000 cu.m.)	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Direct from Cambodia	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	30	74	583	466
Via Vietnam/Laos (est.)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	259	156	211
Sub-total imports	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	333	739	677
Total world-wide imports	725	1,123	2,508	3,341	3,281	3,814	3,168

In many respects, the border zone could be considered a case of a transnational 'grey area', that is, and especially since 1989, a place of dubious governmental control, though *de facto* under the control of a wide range of political parties and armed groups as,

Dozens of separate and uncontrolled military units have carved out their own fiefdoms in Cambodia, where they deal in everything from toothpaste to surface-to-air missiles. (Morello and Thayer 1992: 12)

Cross-border trade was integrated into the activities of Thai military units motivated by the profits they could extract from informal trade, making the Thai side of the border 'grey' too, as local Thai commanders established fiefs working and prospering in a relatively autonomous way. As Grundy-War (1993: 44) noted, "it is the lack of central state control in parts of their borderlands that has enabled informal

⁹³ Source: (Royal Forest Department 1996)

cross-border linkages to flourish”. Yet this reading is somewhat simplistic as ‘free trade’ was in fact actively pursued by both central states, within the constraints of international relations.

The Thai/Cambodian border was not the only zone which lacked control by the government. Vietnamese companies were conducting ‘uncontrolled’ logging inside Cambodia under the protection of local governmental troops.⁹⁴ These companies were mostly active in the border provinces of Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri and Kratie, but frequently extended their activities to Stung Treng, Kampot or Koh Kong.⁹⁵ Working non-stop, small teams were able to extract at least a thousand cu.m. of high grade timber over periods as short as 24 hours (Paterson 1992). As mentioned earlier, much of that timber was then directed towards Thailand or other international markets. Similar operations were conducted in forested areas along the border with Laos.

3.2 Building power from the central periphery

With the intervention of Vietnam in late 1978, a significant proportion of the Cambodian population fled the country. At the height of the refugee crisis in 1980, the number of refugees in camps located along the Thai border reached between 1 and 1.2 million, later decreasing to about 350,000 in 1992 (Lis-Svarre, Poulton et al. 1992). Some were retreating Khmer Rouge cadres and soldiers (see Figure 4.3a), which had retained a tight command over their troops and the populations of refugee camps

⁹⁴ Armed groups providing protection were paid about 60,000 Riels (US\$75) per day. In February 1992, one such armed group took five DFW officers hostages during a control and released them for a ransom of one million Riels (US\$1,250) paid by the DFW director (Paterson 1992).

⁹⁵ (Soh, interview, 1997; Ty, interview, 1997).

under their control (Peschoux 1992). However, the vast majority of refugees had no political affiliation and had simply attempted to escape the on-going war and economic hardship prevailing in the country. This proved an opportunity for elements of the Royalist and Republican diasporas of the 1970s, eager to regain power, but unwilling to make concessions with Vietnam and what they referred to as its 'puppet government' in Phnom Penh. Two main political factions emerged along the border from the association of insurgent armed groups with politicians: the Kampuchea People's National Liberation Front (KPLNF), headed by Son Sann (Republican),⁹⁶ and the *Front d'Union Nationale pour un Cambodge Independant, Neutre et Coopératif* (Funcinpec), headed by Norodom Sihanouk and later by his son Norodom Ranariddh (Royalist).⁹⁷

These two political groups incorporated pre-existing small armed groups of *Khmer Serei*, Free Khmer, that were located along the Thai border since the Khmer Rouge victory in 1975. While these groups had not received the backing of the Thai government to confront the Khmer Rouge, they had been tolerated by local Thai military and border police units because of their use as intelligence sources as well as for the commercial opportunities they offered. As Shawcross noted,

none [of these guerrilla groups] was impressive; for the most part they smuggled teak [sic], gems, small amounts of gold and occasional statues out of Cambodia. It was the massive 1979 exodus from Cambodia that gave them both aspirations and power. (Shawcross 1984: 227)

Thailand provided a military sanctuary for CGDK factions, from which they were able to rebuild their forces with foreign financial and military assistance as well as launch attacks from base camps without fear of retaliation, except for occasional

⁹⁶ Other key players of KPLNF included Ieng Mouly (General Secretary) and Gen. Dien Del (Chief of staff).

⁹⁷ Other key players in Funcinpec included: Norodom Sirivuth (half-brother of Sihanouk, General Secretary), and

shelling. The composition of the camps, mixing civilian populations with political and military personnel, provided not only additional protection from retaliation for these factions, but also human resources and international aid to support their armed struggle (ibid.). Yet, due to the number of Vietnamese forces, none of the factions was able to significantly improve its military capacity to move from guerrilla warfare to holding permanent control of large territories inside Cambodia before the Vietnamese withdrawal in late 1989 (see Figure 4.3b). As a result, the frontier economy that had developed between the factions, businesses and Thai military units was limited to transborder trade as well as the predation on the humanitarian and development assistance to refugees, and the extraction of timber and stone carvings from ancient temples in areas close to the border or where local collaboration could be obtained from the government side.

The end of the Cold War and the relaxation of the politico-military stalemate opposing Vietnam-USSR vs. China-Western powers entailed the drying-up of military and financial assistance by foreign powers, a cause of alarm for all political factions. But prior to the fall of the Berlin wall, there was already a genuine sense that the political situation was already changing, largely because of domestic and regional initiatives to end the stalemate. For instance, Pol Pot declared in a speech delivered to Khmer Rouge cadres in December 1988 (which also fitted in the new 'resource diplomacy' of Thailand) that:

Our state does not currently have sufficient capital either to expand its strength or to enlarge the army. We are spending many tens of millions of Baht to augment the assistance of our friends, but that is still not enough and there are many shortages. It is thus imperative that we find ways to develop the natural resources that exist in our liberated and semi-liberated zones as assets to be utilised in the fight against the Vietnamese aggressor enemy. ... [we need to build] gateways for entry and exit to the outside world ... roads for external contacts ... The resources in each and every one of these areas absolutely must be utilised as assets.⁹⁸

Well before the withdrawal of external sponsorship, the Khmer Rouge partially shifted its economic stand and sought financial autonomy by setting up major deals with Thai companies, in logging, quarrying and gem mining.

With the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces in September 1989, the balance of power tipped in favour of the CGDK factions in peripheral areas close to the Thai border (see Figure 4.3c). The resistance factions moved further in-country to assert a territorial control that allowed them to offer exploitation permits to private companies and individuals as well as develop their own activities, with Thai military units and with politicians taking a protection or facilitation fee on the way.⁹⁹ While small agricultural schemes and workshops were set up in 'liberated' territory, the exploitation of natural resources was by far, the most profitable activity. All factions attempted to extend their territorial control, and to lease logging concessions to foreign companies.¹⁰⁰ Other than timber, resources included: gems, stone carvings from ancient temples, latex, gravel, rice, fish, scrap metal, and Non Timber Forest Products such as sandalwood oil. After the repatriation of refugees in 1992/93 and the creation of a coalition government excluding the KR this faction maintained economic sanctuaries to sustain its conflict with the new government (see Figure 4.3d).

⁹⁸ Speech by Pol Pot in December 1988, cited in (Thayer 1991). The KR leadership assimilated the PRK/SoC army to Vietnamese troops.

⁹⁹ For example, the Thai army unit 838, which was in charge of covert assistance to the KR, was reportedly getting US\$1.6 per cu.m. of timber imported in Thailand, or about one million US\$ per year (Morello and Thayer 1992).

¹⁰⁰ Companies operating in areas controlled by CGDK factions were not only Thai but also Japanese and American, at least through joint ventures with Thai investors.

Figure 4.3- Schematic representation of the evolution of the situation on the Thai-Cambodian border (1979/1998)

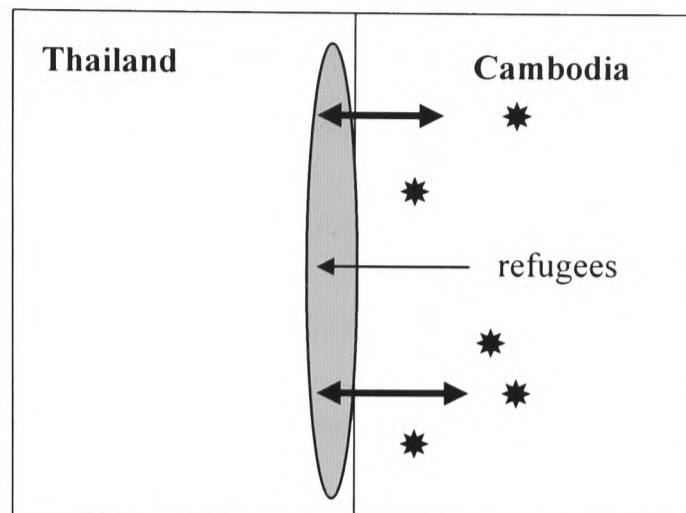
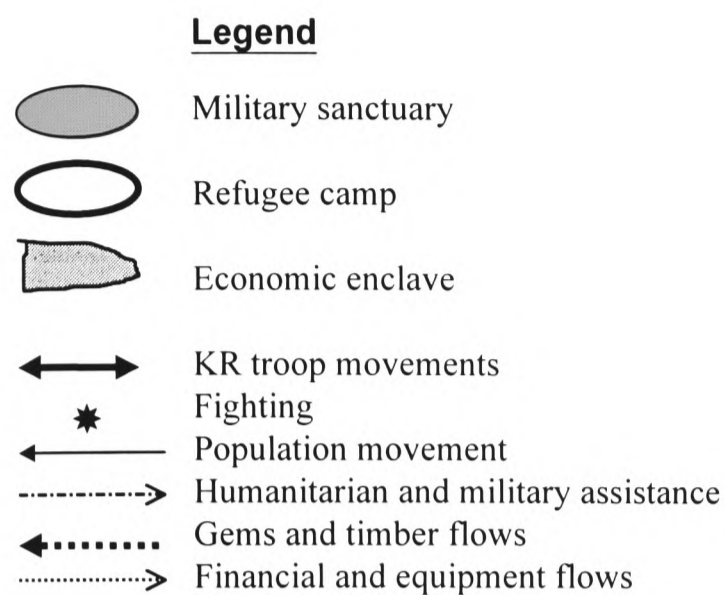


Fig. 4.3a - 'military sanctuary'

1979- KR officials and armed forces retreated along the Thai border into military sanctuaries; a flow of refugees towards Thailand followed.

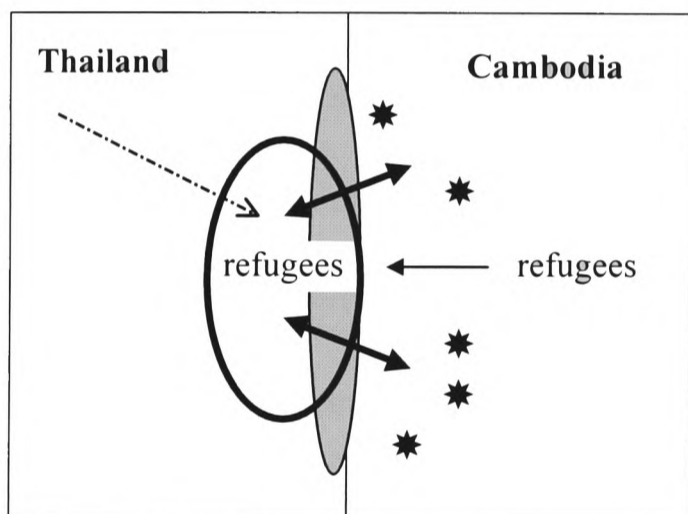


Fig. 4.3b - 'humanitarian sanctuary'

1980/1989- KR and other CGDK factions established permanent refugee camps, receiving both humanitarian and military assistance.

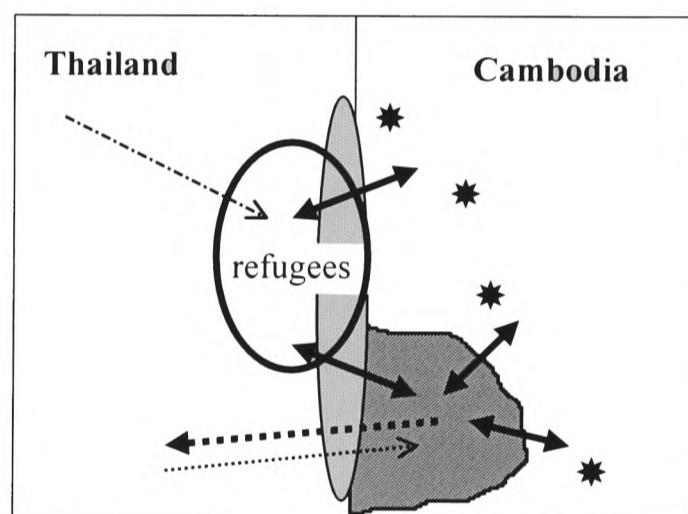


Fig. 4.3c - 'humanitarno-economic sanctuary'

1989/1992- KR and other CGDK maintained refugee camps, and increased their territorial control in order to develop economic activities in partnership with Thai army and business.

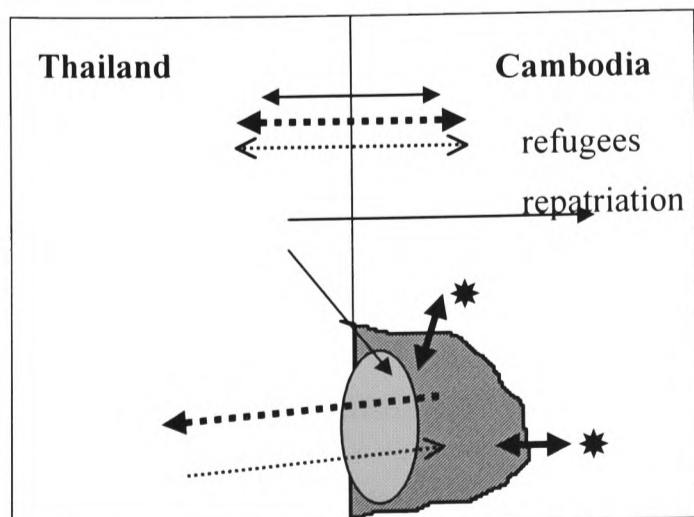


Fig. 4.3d - 'economic sanctuary'

1992/1996- Factions integrated the coalition government and the vast majority of refugees were repatriated, but KR maintained its territorial and economic autonomy.

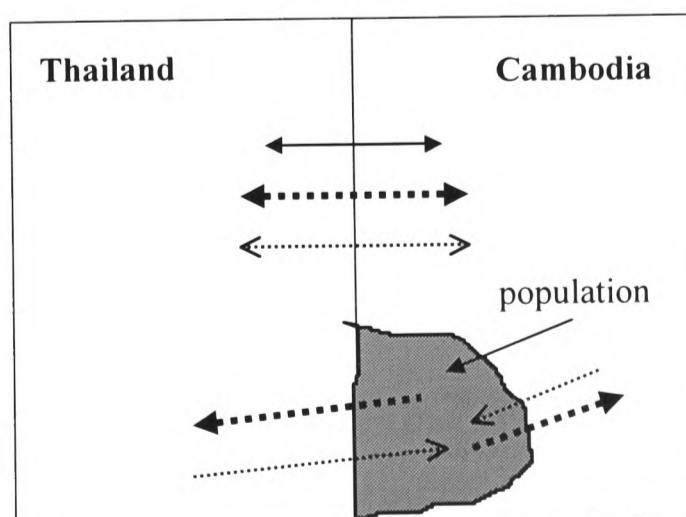


Fig. 4.3e - 'autonomous enclave'

1996/1998- KR defected to RGC but negotiated a quasi-autonomous control over the enclave. Population migrated to benefit from economic opportunities.

3.3 Funcinpec

The Funcinpec had a rather small territory under its control with few resources other than timber and ancient temples with valuable stone carvings. Most of its resources came from international aid, directly and through refugee assistance, as well as donations from the Diaspora and business interests eager to secure future political support in case of Funcinpec victory. Funcinpec planned the economic development of its area with investments in agriculture and crafts as it passed from a military zone to a civilian one. These projects received about US\$20 million of assistance from USAID from June 1991 (Handelsman 1992). Funds were also raised from private investors overseas; sometimes for dubious projects, as a fraud on false shares (worth US\$2.4 million) in an financial firm for the development of this area revealed in late 1993 (Lechervy 1996). On top of these resources, the party had access to the revenue of assets located overseas, which would have brought its financial wealth at US\$100-150 million (Népote and de Vienne 1993).

With regard to the forestry sector, Funcinpec signed a contract to log 320,000 ha. and to trade most available resources with a Thai-Japanese company (T.J.R.) in early 1991 (Funcinpec 1991). A second contract was passed on 20 July 1992 with another Thai company (Surin Thanak Phung Co.) for 200,000 cu.m. to be harvested within a period of two years (Funcinpec 1992). Royalty fees for these contracts were reported at US\$56/cu.m. while Funcinpec charged other factions between US\$6 and US\$22/cu.m. for the transit of timber to Thailand through their territory (Handelsman 1992; UNTAC 1993). By mid-August, Funcinpec reported to UNTAC officials that it had exported about 40,000 cu.m. of logs to Thailand, while a UNDP report estimated

that volume at 128,000 cu.m. (Dennis and Woodsworth 1992; Handelsman 1992). While the involvement of Funcinpec in logging activities was limited, it nevertheless demonstrates that this political group was using the same economic instruments as other political factions, despite its greater facility of access to both western donors and the support of a wealthy Diaspora.

3.4 KPNLF

The KPLNF also had limited territory under its control but benefited from the support of a large part of the former republican elite from which it collected much of its revenue (Népote and de Vienne 1993). His head, Son Sann, denied any civilian involvement in logging or any other exploitation of natural resources but denounced the activities of some of his *own* generals. In a report to the United Nations, the political faction declared that,

in the areas under the control of [KPLNF], there must be people or undisciplined soldiers who organise with foreign businessmen, notably Thai, clandestine logging and illegal exportation of forest products towards Thailand with the green light of neighbouring authorities. (FLNPK 1992: 1).

The civilian branch of the KPLNF accused General Prom Vit and General Sak Sutsakhan of organising logging. These accusations are not surprising as the KPNLF had been officially split between its political and military branches since 1985. The split had opposed Son Sann to a military leadership benefiting from greater power and financial resources through the control of the border economy and extraction of natural resources (Dufresne 1993). This conflict provided an example of the internal

divisions affecting political parties.¹⁰¹ It also illustrated how the commodification of local resources had the possibility of generating unruly clients or even competing strongmen gaining access and control of both resources and social alliances associated with the commodification process. The establishment of socio-economic networks around the commodification of forests was thus a precarious strategy for the rulers of political factions.

3.5 Khmer Rouge

Of the three CGDK factions, the Khmer Rouge (KR) were the most powerful militarily and controlled the most territory. It benefited from a diversity of financial sources of support, particularly through the exploitation of natural resources that allowed them to evade the peace process and international pressure and ensured the support of political, business and military groups in Thailand. Yet, in the end, this financial windfall helped to cause the partial disintegration of the faction through the ensuing ‘embourgeoisement’ of its cadres. In 1993, the value of their assets was estimated between US\$300 and 500 million (Népote and de Vienne 1993).

Like the other two factions, it received both direct and indirect assistance from Western powers, but also most importantly from China. A fund had been established at the Chinese embassy in Bangkok, from which KR leaders could withdraw a maximum of US\$80 million/year and regular arms shipments transited through Thailand (Chanda 1986). This support reportedly stopped in early 1992 (Abuza 1994). The KR also drew their resources from the territories and population that they

¹⁰¹ For an interesting analysis of the consequences of the split, see (Dufresne 1993).

controlled and while Khmer Rouge units generally bought their rice from farmers when venturing outside of areas under their permanent control (Peschoux 1992), rice produced in their villages was taxed (Abuza 1993). Other sources of support included expropriation of the humanitarian assistance delivered to refugee populations under their control and the taxation of import/export traffic through Poipet, and possibly Koh Kong, as well as any other outlet under their control or within their military reach, for example the road linking the port of Kompong Som to the capital.

The Khmer Rouge areas, or 'archipelago', of control were temporal as well as spatial and social, expanding at night and during the rainy season, but also through shifting allegiances. As such, while some relatively small areas remained permanently controlled by the KR, vast zones, including most forests, were deemed 'insecure' by the general population due to the possible presence of Khmer Rouge soldiers.

3.5.1 Logging

While timber exploitation had been conducted since the early 1980s in borderlands, large scale logging became important only after the offensive of 1989. From 1990, forest concessions were awarded to Thai companies following negotiations between the KR, Thai business companies and the Thai military in charge of the border; the Thai Ministry of Interior giving its final approval. Negotiations could also include a complex array of 'rogue' military units and representatives from the different Cambodian political factions, often based on family, birthplace, business or personal ties, as well as territorial control or military reach. Royalty fees were functions of the type of timber as well as the company and the area under concession, and ranged from US\$40 to US\$210/cu.m., which was half to a quarter of the price on the Thai market

(UNTAC 1993b). The KR were not involved in timber exploitation per se, only providing armed escorts and supervising operations, for which a number of its officers and soldiers had been deployed.¹⁰² Contract consulted, as presented below, did not include any regulation concerning exploitation rules or environmental considerations.

Figure 4.4 - Khmer Rouge logging contract¹⁰³

“Buy and Sell Timber Contract”
 Made at the Registration Office of Klong Ha... on 11 July 1990

This contract is made between the Government of Democratic of Cambodia by Mr. Tep Pramuk, chief of 450 Army Division, and Mr. Hien Channa, hereinafter called “the Seller”, and S. Prachin Permpoon Industry Co., Ltd, by Miss Somnuk Vilawan, hereinafter called “the Buyer”. The two sides agree as follows:

1. The Seller agrees to sell timbers grown in Cambodia in the area indicated in the map attached to this contract as follows:

siamese rose wood	cubic meter	:	B 4,000 [US\$160]
black wood	-	:	B 5,300 [US\$212]
iron wood	-	:	B 2,300 [US\$92]
burmese ebony, patalum	-	:	B 4,300 [US\$172]
malabar iron wood	-	:	B 3,890 [US\$155]
yang	-	:	B 1,800 [US\$72]
others	-	:	B 1,300 [US\$52]
2. The Buyer has to cut and haul timbers by its own expenses and the Seller must pave the way and provide security between such process.
3. The Seller must provide 2 personnels [sic] for 1 chain saw to pave the way for such process without any claim from the Buyer.
4. When the amount of timbers cut and hauled into Thailand reached at 800 timbers, the Buyer must pay in baht, in Thailand for such goods which the Seller must give receipt evidence.
5. The Seller must provide 2 personnels [sic] for checking and calculating price at spot center in Thailand. In such case, the Buyer must pave the way for them and bear for any expenses for such performance.
6. This contract will be lasted for 5 years and the Seller has promised not to sell timber in the stated area to anywhom [sic] other than the Buyer.
7. The Buyer has to pay for goods after the process stated in Clause 5 within 10 days. If failed to do so, the Buyer must allow the Seller to fine 50% of timber proces [sic] until the total amount has been paid.

This contract has been made in 2 copies, each copies three languages, with the same wording. The two sides has read and throughly [sic] understood then give their signature hereof. [Stamped by two parties and signed by three persons mentioned above, plus two witnesses: Mr. Kumron Sinthusomjal and Mr. Surathai Meoros].

¹⁰² (Heder, interview, 1996)

¹⁰³ Source: UNTAC archives. An accompanying memo noted that the contract was for a annual quota of 50,000 cu.m. and that the prices of logs per cu.m. were estimated by the Mekong Secretariat in Bangkok at: Siamese rose wood (US\$1,120-1,400); black wood (US\$1,120-1,400); iron wood (US\$200-240); burmese ebony (US\$260-320); malabar iron wood (n.a.); yang (US\$80-120).

According to official Thai Forestry statistics, timber imports from Cambodia reached 687,809 cu.m. between 1990 and 1992, with a value of US\$108 million (Royal Forest Department 1996). A report of the Thai National Intelligence Agency stated that the KR had earned, between November 1989 and 1992, about US\$106 million (Stier 1993). A total of 22 logging concessions were listed, 16 awarded by the KR for a total volume of 15 million cu.m. to be harvested over a period of three to five years; four by Funcinpec; and two by the FLNPK. The report estimated that by the end of 1992, the income of the KR from logging was US\$8 million/month, with a theoretical potential to rise up to US\$28 million/month.

3.5.2 Gem mining

While gem mining has not yet been examined, as this study is focusing on the forestry sector, it is interesting to detail some of its aspects in comparison to timber as it played an important role for the KR at this stage. After the Khmer Rouge seized Pailin on 22 October 1989, Thai mining businesses started to operate in the region, rich in rubies. The KR awarded the first official licences to Thai companies in September 1990, with the coming end of the rainy season (Abuza 1993). But access was granted to 6,000 miners and traders as early as November 1989, and their number grew rapidly, despite the risk of mines and malaria: by early 1991, more than 50,000 Thai miners a month were registering at Thai health authorities, for malaria prevention. Each paid a fee of US\$32-60 for accessing gem areas for a period of two weeks. Land had also to be leased from the KR for mining, with prices ranging from US\$40-

480,000 per *rai* (0.16 ha.) (Thayer 1991). By 1992, about 45 large Thai companies were exploiting as many as 150 fields, with a large occurrence of sub-contracting and sub-leasing. One of the main Thai mining companies, Pailin Rungroj, was reported to have paid US\$12 millions for about 10 concessions in Pailin and Samlot; with the KR collecting an additional tax of 45% of the value collected gems and a direct protection fee for local KR military units (Chuchart 1993; Lechervy 1996). Mining had become increasingly industrialised, with capital intensive, heavily mechanised operations estimated to use more than 200 excavators, worth US\$200,000 each, by the end of 1992 (Lechervy 1996). Various estimates, from western intelligence and Thai officials, suggest that monthly income from mining between late 1990 and 1992 represented between US\$1 million and US\$5 million, the later figure being the most probable.¹⁰⁴

Aside from generating funds for the KR movement, gem mining had important social and environmental consequences. While KR troops and population were not involved in mining operations, some families were able to rent 'privately' to miners a two hectares plot initially provided to them for farming. The annual rent could reach US\$12,000/ha.; enough to purchase 'luxury' goods and to make some savings (Chuchart 1993). Such incomes represented not only improvements in livelihoods for the KR, but also an 'embourgeoisement' antithetical to the doctrines of the regime, yet condoned by local commanders. Environmentally, mining operations had a dramatic impact on local rivers feeding into the Tonle Sap Lake, as sluice mining was widely

¹⁰⁴ Various estimates for gem mining incomes: US\$5 million/month in profit in early 1991 from mining around Bo Rai, according to "Thai and Western intelligence sources" (Thayer 1991); US\$1.2 million/month in mid-1992, according to Thai Foreign Minister Arsa Sarasin, and US\$3 million/month in mid-1992, according to "Western intelligence sources" (Chanda and Tasker 1992); US\$4 million/month in late-1992, according to Thai MP Thanit Traivut for Trat province (Tasker 1992).

used (Dennis and Woodsworth 1992).

3.5.3 Khmer Rouge revenues

The total income of the Khmer Rouge was generally overestimated by western observers, with figures reaching up to one billion US\$ for 1992 (Jennar 1995a: 117). It is difficult to make a precise assessment and more research would be needed, but the annual revenue for the KR in 1992 can be estimated at around US\$40-60 million for logging and US\$50-80 million for gem-mining (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 - Estimation of revenues by the KR during the period 1989-1992 (million US\$)

Year	Logging	Gem mining	Foreign aid	Total
1989	1	3	80	84
1990	5	20	80	105
1991	20	50	50	120
1992	50	65	0	115

While such funds were not sufficient in themselves to tip the balance of power in Cambodia, they were able to strengthen the guerrilla force - the replacement of Chinese assistance to KR troops being estimated at US\$1.8 million per month by the NIA (Stier 1993). However, the availability of such funding and the network of support within Thailand associated with it to played a significant role in sustaining the KR throughout the period of international isolation that followed its withdrawal from the peace process in 1992.

4. Transition: deforestation and peace keeping

Following the approval of all four Cambodian parties in October 1991 of a peaceful resolution of the conflict under the terms of the Paris Peace Accords, the United

Nations set up the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to oversee the transition process.¹⁰⁵ Under the terms of the Accords, all four political factions had agreed to become part of a Supreme National Council (SNC) recognised as the only legitimate sovereign body and source of authority in Cambodia, which delegated to UNTAC all powers necessary to implement the Peace Accords (Findlay 1995; United Nations 1995). UNTAC's mandate included: (i) supervision, monitoring and verification of the withdrawal of foreign military forces; (ii) cantonment, disarmament and demobilisation of the four factions; (iii) oversight of military security and civil administration; (iv) conduct of a free and fair election. The mandate also provided for the repatriation and resettlement of Cambodian refugees and displaced persons, de-mining, and economic reconstruction and development (Findlay 1995). At a cost of US\$ 1.5 billion for the peace plan (1992-1993) and US\$1.7 billion for emergency relief and development (1991-1994), it was the UN's most expensive operation ever.

This transition process had important consequences. Socio-politically, it offered a peaceful alternative to resolve the stalemate of the 1980s. However, while the "democratic transition" promoted by the international community was an electoral success, it was nevertheless "fraught with violence, reflecting the general refusal of elite culture to recognise the legitimacy of difference and opposition" (Heder 1995: 426). Its political outcome was a government of uneasy coalition formed under pressure rather than from an electoral outcome (see Chapter 5). In the end, the transition process remained incomplete as the KR had prematurely withdrawn from

¹⁰⁵ This period and the different aspects of the peace process have been examined through numerous academic publications, see for example (Shawcross 1994; Utting 1994; Doyle 1995; Findlay 1995; Jennar 1995b; Heder

the process and conflict resumed (Roberts 1996).

Economically, the main impact of the peace accord was to divert foreign exchange “from the public to the private sector and from capital to consumption expenditure” (Irvin 1993: 129). The UN operation had a distorting effect on the economy due to the high level of expenditure concentrated in urban areas (Fitzgerald 1994). More generally, the availability of foreign capital and the blurred institutional setting favoured a boom in ‘uncontrolled’ economic practices by actors with a vested interest in an absence of *formal* regulatory framework. In turn, once initiated, these practices tend to be reproduced and institutionalised; which unsurprisingly came out to be the case for Cambodia (Curtis 1993), and spectacularly for the exploitation and export of timber. Even if the socio-economic impact of the transition period under the United Nations received attention (Utting 1994), the focus of the international community was on the political success of the UN operation. In this regard, the main issue of concern was the withdrawal of the Khmer Rouge faction from the peace process.

4.1 From Rio to Pailin: greening the Khmer Rouge

As the UN mission progressed in 1992, difficulties arose in making the KR abide by the Peace Accords of 1991. The Khmer Rouge argued that the presence of Vietnamese settlers and soldiers would bias the elections and that the SoC had retained control of the state administration despite the mandate of UNTAC to prevent this from occurring (Roberts 1996). UNTAC was indeed helping to maintain, for good reasons, the SoC

and Ledgerwood 1996; Roberts 1996).

administration upon which the overwhelming majority of Cambodians depended, but the KR was trying to find a way out of an electoral process that was perceived as unfavourable by the leadership (Ashley 1998). The possibility of a power sharing agreement jointly with Funcinpec and the CPP, was also doubtful as Sihanouk had been eager to secure a coalition of Hun Sen - Funcinpec excluding the Khmer Rouge (Summers 1997). As a result, the KR was reluctant to provide access, demobilise its forces, facilitate voter registration, and allow other political parties activities in areas under its control (United Nations 1995).

Several initiatives were taken to bring the KR back into the peace process. The UN Security Council, through its resolution No.766, had tried in July 1992 by warning it that “no reconstruction aid would go to parties not co-operating in the peace process”. This threat had little effect as the KR had secure financial autonomy through independent economic activities (i.e. timber and gems). Diplomatic initiatives by the international community failed (Roberts 1996) and the idea of more drastic economic sanctions against the Khmer Rouge were on the informal agenda of the Ministerial Conference on the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Cambodia in Tokyo in June 1992.

In order to bear direct pressure on the KR, the SNC decided on 22 September 1992,

to place a moratorium on the export of logs from Cambodia as from 31 December 1992 and place the export of sawn timber under the control and monitoring of UNTAC in close consultation with the SNC. (Supreme National Council 1992)

These sanctions resulted from a complex array of political manoeuvring. Sihanouk and Son Sann had the idea, within the SNC, of the log export ban in order to promote a “containment” of the Khmer Rouge problem without resorting to a military

offensive, which the SoC leadership wanted to be supported by the international community. Economic sanctions were only a 'half-measure' against the KR as the UN did not want to intervene militarily.

The protection of the environment and resources of Cambodia was widely invoked in the text of the decision, which was officially based on the recommendation made by the Technical Advisory Committee on the Management and Sustainable Exploitation of Natural Resources in Cambodia, set up in July 1992 upon the request of Prince Sihanouk (Araul 1992). However, its main objective was political as,

the revenues from logging operations could be utilized in a way that is prejudicial to the neutral [political] environment conducive to free and fair elections. (Supreme National Council 1992)

The measure specifically targeted the KR, even if in press releases, the UN reasserted that "the purpose of the moratorium is to protect Cambodia's natural resources. It is not aimed at any one party, but has been designed to help Cambodia as a whole" (UNTAC 1993c).

The KR rejected the SNC decision on the grounds that it,

would in practice constitute a form and measure to penalize the Democratic Kampuchea party while leaving the door open for the Phnom Penh party and Vietnam to continue [to cut and export logs] as before. (Democratic Kampuchea party 1992: 2)

On the other side, Funcinpec confirmed its desire to see a ban on logging that it had declared unilaterally on 25 June 1992 in areas under its control, following the appeal against deforestation made by Norodom Sihanouk, at the Earth Summit in Rio a month before; although it had infringed it less than a month after, by signing a log and lumber export agreement with 'Surin Thanak Phun Co.' (Norodom 1992). The KPRLF favoured a moratorium on "the exploration and exploitation" of all natural resources, including sawn timber. The SoC agreed with the log export ban but rejected

the idea of a ban on sawntimber, as it represented one of its few financial resources funding essential imports like fuel for which its administration “had not yet received even one cent [from the international community] as balance of payment support” (Araul 1992: 4). Indeed, even by March 1993, the International Community had disbursed only about 10% of the US\$880 million pledged at ICORC in June 1992, with an important part going to the refugee repatriation program. The quota of sawntimber exports was later fixed at 160,000 cu.m. (United Nations 1993a).¹⁰⁶

The ban on log exports went ahead and was subsequently supported by the UN Security Council “in order to protect Cambodia’s natural resources” (United Nations 1992). It was, however, more explicit about the expected political and economic impacts of the ban upon the KR than the SNC decision had been, condemning “the failure by the [KR] to comply with its obligations [under the Paris Agreement]” reinforcing pressure by requesting the SNC “to consider the adoption of a similar moratorium on the export of minerals and gems in order to protect Cambodia’s natural resources”, and asking Thailand to prevent the supply of petroleum products to the KR (United Nations 1992: 3-4). The SNC later decided to place a moratorium on extraction and export of mineral resources (United Nations 1993: 22).

4.2 Thai political commitments and business interests

Specific Thai political and economic interests were directly targeted by the moratoria as there were important investments and economic rents flowing from logging and gem mining in KR controlled areas. The period prior to the moratorium saw intense

¹⁰⁶ The UN Special Representative, Akashi, was himself in favour of allowing sawn timber exports (Araul 1992).

lobbying, especially on the part of business interests established in Trat and Chantaburi provinces bordering Cambodia. Most prominently, a Thai MP for Trat with border timber interests since 1984, Thanit Traivut from the Chart Thai party, lobbied the Thai Foreign Ministry to postpone UN sanctions by one year in order to allow Thai companies to repatriate to logging and gem mining equipment valued at Baht 10 billion (Suksamran 1989; Raksakul 1992). This lobbying involved Chavalit Yongchaiyut, at the time Minister of Interior (Tasker 1992: 13). In late December 1992, the Thai Minister of Interior, Chavalit, informed the UN that authorisation had been provided to 27 logging companies to use temporary border crossing point to import logs from Cambodia between 1990 and 1992. But on top of these, 21 companies had been granted authorisation by Chavalit, to use temporary crossing points from 20 December 1992 in order to remove as many logs as possible before the deadline (see Annex 1) (UNTAC/BKK 1993). Thai businesses, backed by the Royal Thai Government, declared that they had invested nearly US\$600 million and were employing close to 34,000 Thai workers in forest exploitation in Cambodia and that the implementation of the moratorium would put both at risk (UNTAC/BKK 1993).¹⁰⁷ This lobbying exposed parts of a complex web of relations between Thai business interests, Thai military, and Cambodian political parties. It also revealed that many Thai companies had entered into deals with the SoC for their operations within Khmer Rouge and Funcinpec territories (Tasker 1992: 12). The Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs made this point clear by declaring to the press that he believed that “after the Paris Accord private companies entered into agreement *with all four factions* for

for which he was criticised because of the possible influence of the Japanese demand for timber and direct Japanese investments in the biggest sawmill of the country, Okada company (Lao, interview, 1997).

logging and mining” and were thus only trying to “recoup [their] investment” (Chanda and Tasker 1992: 20, my emphasis).

The Thai Government refused to allow the UN to establish checkpoints on its territory and reaffirmed that “the door should not be closed to negotiation with the [KR]” (United Nations 1995: 245). Earlier, the Thai Foreign Affairs Minister had declared, in the light of economic sanctions against the Khmer Rouge that “a frustrated UN is looking for a scapegoat in Thailand” and that the Thai military, resented “the way UNTAC went about its business [in controlling Thai activities in Khmer Rouge areas]” (Chanda and Tasker 1992: 20).¹⁰⁸ The Thai Government, along with Laos and Vietnam, nevertheless announced it would impose “a complete ban on the import of Cambodian logs beginning on 1 Jan[uary] 1993” (Findlay 1995: 43), “to reaffirm and show Thailand’s sincerity in its co-operation with the United Nations” (Chavalit 1992).

Yet, effective backing of the UN sanctions on the Thai side, was unlikely. Historically, the context of competition with Vietnam over Cambodia, has led Thai authorities to support anti-Vietnamese Cambodian parties.¹⁰⁹ Large investments and economic rent benefiting Thai companies and prominent governmental and military personalities encouraged these actors to lobby against the strict implementation of sanctions. Furthermore, the balance of power between civilian and military authorities in Thailand remained precarious and the leverage of ‘civilian’ politicians from

¹⁰⁷ The figures were certainly inflated.

¹⁰⁸ According to a report of *The Australian* (2/12/1992), “the Thai military had clumsily attempted to pressure the UN to delay implementation of the ban by forcing UN supply flights to give three-day notice before entering Thai airspace [starting on 1 December 1992]” (Findlay 1995: 43-44). The measure was cancelled by the Thai government after four days (Jennar 1995a).

¹⁰⁹ Thailand assumed the effective control of Western Cambodia from the decline of the Angkorian empire till 1907 and, following the French defeat in the Second World War, from 1941 till 1946 (Chandler 1996). Much of the traditional Cambodian elite of Western provinces, and Battambang in particular, had furthermore strong

Bangkok over military units in control of the border area was weak, with the latter enjoying much independence. Finally, Thai authorities feared the perspective of a ‘cornered’ Khmer Rouge, that could seek revenge on Thai authorities, and look for new economic resources, by raiding Thai villages.¹¹⁰

4.3 Implementation of the log export ban

The implementation of the log export ban was difficult without the co-operation of concerned parties, and in particular neighbouring countries. The main reasons invoked by the UN for this difficulty were the lack of manpower to exert control and the “formidable difficulty to obtain information when it related to such crucial monetary interests” (UNTAC 1992b: 3). UN military personnel also pointed at the erosion of central governance and the rise of strongmen controlling the periphery as they noted that:

the majority of logging for export was conducted by high officials including Governors of border provinces and high level army officials in each faction *without the official approval of their political authorities*. To try and stop this would require military intervention on a large scale by UNTAC and very high likelihood of armed resistance. (ibid.: 4, emphasis added)

Yet, as natural resources were under “direct control” of UNTAC, according to its official mandate, the sanctions needed to be implemented (ibid.: 3). The four factions were requested to bring their legislation on forestry in line with the declaration, to assist the UN implement the moratorium, while the UN itself was confined “to observe and report” on the illegal export of timber across the border (ibid.: 4). Embargoed items included: logs, gems, cultural artefacts and, from

and long established ties with Thailand, pre-dating the two nation-states.
¹¹⁰ (Heder, interview, 1996)

April/May 1993, rice, while the export of sawn timber and rubber required licences (UNTAC 1993d). The ban proved difficult to implement, most notably in Khmer Rouge controlled areas, where UNTAC remained unable to establish checkpoints. The final report of the UN Border Control Unit concluded that all manned checkpoints, except four, “witnessed attempts to breach the moratoria or to illegally export goods” (ibid.: 15).

The effectiveness of the ban was most directly flawed by Thailand’s ‘ineffective’ control of its border. Officially, the Thai government closed its temporary border crossing points until mid- July 1993, but numerous violations occurred.¹¹¹ The UN attempted to get the support of the Thai government on this issue. The UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali himself declaring that,

I personally took up this matter with the Foreign Minister of Thailand during my recent visit to Bangkok. However, response to this appeal is still awaited. (United Nations 1993a: 22, my emphasis).

But the relationship between the newly elected civilian-based coalition led by Chuan Leekpai, and the military and other business partners such as local politicians, was too precarious to force compliance on trade sanctions that would have harmed their interests.¹¹² Thailand was not the only country to violate the embargo, nor were all exports ‘illegal’ as ‘official’ export authorisations were delivered after the date of the embargo by the SoC (Lechervy 1996). In total 103 violations were reported over the five months period: 98 by SoC and one by Funcinpec (see Table 4.6); while only four violations could be reported by KR although many more occurred but UNTAC had no access to these areas (UNTAC 1993e).

¹¹¹ For example, on 3 January 1993, 246 trucks crossed the border into Thailand at Chaom Ksan (Lechervy 1996).

¹¹² The government of Chuan Leekpai succeeded in September 1992 to a military dictatorship installed by a coup

Table 4.6 - Volume of exports (cu.m.) reported by UNTAC in violation of the export moratorium in 1993¹¹³

Destination	January	February	March	April	May	Total
Thailand	13,225	11,510	3,225	3,508	600	32,068
Japan	13,142	0	0	0	0	13,142
Laos	5,018	50	0	1,085	716	6,869
Unknown	1,572	0	770	3,970	380	6,692
Vietnam	1,121	810	700	500	900	4,031
Pakistan	3,114	0	0	0	0	3,114
Singapore	1,500	0	0	0	0	1,500
Hong Kong	30	0	0	0	0	30
Total	38,722	12,370	4,695	9,063	2,596	67,446

4.4 Whose success?

Judging by the statistics, the export ban was a success, but the absence of checkpoints in Khmer Rouge areas and the fact that UN border officers were only mandated to monitor illegal trade, not to intervene or sanction, severely limited its effectiveness. The official import figures from Thailand confirm this relative failure, with a drop in timber imports (both logs and sawn timber) for 1993 of only 20% in comparison to 1992 and 1994 (Royal Forest Department 1996). The ban had the intended effect of reducing log exports, but it also had predictably unintended effects that were to prove more influential than the intended ones. Assessing the impact five years later, the forestry sector review conducted in 1997 at the initiative of the World bank, UNDP and FAO concluded, that: “it appears that the largest impact of the log export ban has been to create a new class of smugglers and encourage illegal and inefficient domestic processing” (DAI 1998b: 15). Given the pattern of governance and the low level of conditionality and direct assistance by the international community, this conclusion did not come as a surprise (see Chapter 7). The log export ban imposed during the

in February 1991 (Leifer 1996).

transitional period under the UN was terminated and reinstated on four other occasions during the following five years (see Table 4.7 and Chapter 5). These shifting policies generated a confused situation and an unclear message to importing countries resulting in part from the contradictions of a (re)construction process based on rapid economic growth but publicly governed by precepts of an environmentally friendly sustainable development. More importantly, these shifts expressed the struggle taking place over the forestry revenue and who benefited from opening, and closing, the flow of timber.

Table 4.7 - Closing the timber tap: list of log export bans (1992-1998)

<p style="text-align: center;">31 December 1992: first export ban by SNC decision (22/9/92) and UN Security Council resolution No. 792</p> <p style="text-align: center;">31 December 1993: second export ban by Letter of CM to MC No. 535 (13/10/93)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">31 March 1994: third export ban by Announcement of RGC No. 638 (27/4/94)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">31 April 1995: fourth export ban by Declaration of RGC No. 3 (28/4/95)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">31 December 1996: fifth export ban by Declaration of RGC No. 2 (26/12/96)</p>
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The first effect of the sanctions was to considerably accelerate the “breakneck race to exploit Cambodia’s natural resources” that accompanied the UN peace process (Chanda and Tasker 1992: 20).¹¹⁴ The last months of 1992 before the implementation of the ban saw a rush of Thai logging companies to the border region in order to extract as much logs as possible before the implementation of the export ban

¹¹³ Source: (UNTAC 1993e).

(UNTAC/BKK 1993).

Secondly, the number of sawmills increased throughout Cambodia in order to comply with the sanction *de facto* requiring timber to be processed before exportation.¹¹⁵ This requirement, proposed by UN experts thinking that “sawmill operations would ... bring value added activities in the country”, provided an unhoped-for market for outdated sawmill equipment coming mostly from Thailand (UNTAC 1992a). In the short term, ‘value added activities’ materialised in improvised sawmills where ill-equipped workers put their limbs at risk for a salary as low as US\$0.20 per day.

In the longer term, this first ban on log exports, as well as subsequent ones, obliged legal concessionaires to construct large processing facilities (e.g. sawmills, veneer and plywood factories) creating local employment but also ‘locking-in’ a large demand for timber for the years to come and promoting a potentially powerful politico-economic sector able to lobby for the provision of raw material in order to offset investment costs and preserve local employment. It also gave these same concessionaires a monopoly of legitimacy over domestic logging companies and timber merchants unable to mobilise large amount of capital to invest in downstream processing. In short, the succession of log export bans favoured foreign capital intensive companies. Interestingly the first comprehensive assessment carried three years later by multilateral agencies recommended that the forestry sector would “consist of a greater number of smaller, more locally-owned firms, utilising local labour. It would initially be oriented toward export of unprocessed logs to high value

¹¹⁴ The possibility of moving heavy equipment with the beginning of the dry season in October-November also boosted exploitation.

foreign markets” (World Bank, UNDP et al. 1996: ii). This was to some extent the situation prior to the log export ban and precisely the option that was ruled out by the log export ban. In a way, the shifting attitude of the government towards the ban, and the numerous infringements to it, reflected both the political ‘contingency’ preoccupying the leadership and the pragmatic resolution of the dilemma of developing the forestry sector rapidly with foreign investments red-taped and impeded by a predatory bureaucracy in a context of ‘green reconstruction’ (see Chapter 7).

The third effect was to increase the bargaining power of Thai timber buyers. As other countries were unable to directly purchase Cambodian timber the Thai market became the outlet for crudely sawn timber coming from the Khmer Rouge and areas controlled by other political factions. On the other hand, restrictions on direct log exports to Thailand pushed Thai companies to look for supply from within Cambodia, for example through logging concessions.

The fourth, and probably most important effect was to make logging and the timber trade illegal. This ‘illegalisation’ had important political consequences as it led to a process of criminalisation of the forestry sector through which state actors, logging companies and importers reorganised productive networks in order to circumvent the log export ban. This process of criminalisation has been observed in other cases of embargo in which a weakened state apparatus competing with opposition factions delegates to new politico-economic actors activities that have become criminal, with the risk of a criminalisation of the state apparatus itself (Kopp 1996). As the formal, or official, politico-institutional management of this resource

¹¹⁵ In Sre Ambel, a coastal town in Koh Kong province, the number of sawmills surged for a dozen to more than 50. In early 1993, more than 120 crude sawmills were built in KR held territory (Abuza 1993).

receded, without timber losing its 'patrimonial' importance in domestic and regional politics, logging became an 'underground' resource. Exploitation was deemed 'anarchic' and 'illegal' by the government, but it was, however, institutionalised by a complex network of actors, many of them belonging to state institutions, who were both competitive and collaborative with each other (see Chapters 6 and 7).

In many ways, the case of the logging ban is a classic example of conflict between a 'central authority' trying to 'project' its control and power over peripheral regions by addressing issues of national security, political dissidence and illegal trading, and a border population which is better off with close political, social, economic and cultural interaction across borders (Grundy-War 1993). The main differences in this case, being the foreign essence of the UN as 'central authority' and the 'protection of natural resources' as the main 'public mandate' to be exercised upon the periphery. The borderlands of Cambodia and Thailand represented "grey areas of political control symbolising the inherent weaknesses of their respective states" (ibid.: 42). But more than that, they reflected the nature of the networks of power within and across these states and demonstrated the capacity of domestic actors to preserve their interests by successfully resisting a 'public transcript' dictated by powerful, yet limited, external actors, in this case the UN Security Council.

5. Conclusions

This chapter has detailed the increasing role that timber played in the political economy of Cambodia, evolving from a domestic resource for the reconstruction of the country to an internationally traded resource for the consolidation of political

power. Aside from the electoral process, the political outcome of the transition to peace was fought through diplomatic and ideological manoeuvres, violent confrontation over territory and resources, and tactical political and economic compromises. Forests were incorporated into these processes in a variety of ways.

In a regional context, while by the early 1960s Cambodia and Thailand had a similar level of development, by the mid-1980s Cambodia had become a periphery for Thailand and a frontier for its economy. The uneven development of these two countries resulted from a complex historical-geographical process including the war in Vietnam and Cambodia, and the associated capitalist development in US-sponsored Thailand. After thirty years, Cambodia still had forests but no industry while Thailand had an industry but no more forests. In other words, war destroyed Cambodia and preserved its forest while reciprocally, peace constructed Thailand and destroyed its forest. The transition of the late 1980s meant the incorporation of Cambodian forests into this destructive peace.

This perspective contrasts with the association of deforestation and war, through direct military activities or through competing armies fighting each other over the control of forests to monopolise their plunder. While these two arguments are undeniably correct, it is also the prospect of peace and the relative security of local compromises between warring factions that attracted large scale foreign investments in the forestry sector, pointing at logging as 'working for peace'. It is thus towards the redefinition of these dualities - war/peace and (re)construction/destruction - and the acknowledgement of the continuum existing between them that we need to look for understanding. This continuum is located in the multiplicity of scales and processes as well as the numerous shifts in allegiances, compromises and agreements shaping a

variety of productive networks. Processes of destruction/(re)construction and war/peace appear thus as intricately related “dialectical twins” within a complex process of transition (Swyngedouw 1998).

In the specific case of Cambodian forests, this continuum was most powerfully expressed through the erosion of formal governance and the establishment of “structured coherences” cutting across political and national divides (Harvey 1985). Provincial strongmen, either coming from the state apparatus, including the security forces, or from the private sector, were the main actors shaping this transition in governance. The commodification of forests formed the basis of a pervasive politics of locality, based on unaccountable bureaucracies and unbridled capitalism. These politics of locality occasionally contradicted ‘global politics’ and shifted the motivation of many actors from a politico-military struggle to an economic one, which the international community wanted and intended to be more peaceful. However, as the next Chapter demonstrates, this shift towards the economic remained deeply political and violent.

Chapter 5

Timber at peace: forests' plunder and the politics of accommodation

(1993 - 1998)

"They pay me, I pay them. The party is a private business"

(General Toan Chhay, commenting about his supporters and on the democratic nature of his election as president of a Funcinpec splinter group)¹¹⁶

*"Cambodia's politics does not have to be winner-take-all,
kill the losers and their families, and eat their livers! It can be humanised...
It is up to us ... to help them to find a new style of politics"*

(Tony Kevin, former Australian Ambassador to Cambodia, 1998)¹¹⁷

As mentioned earlier, in Cambodian language: 'governing' is 'consuming' (Chandler 1998). This chapter examines how the governance emerging from the peace process incorporated and consumed forests between 1993 and 1998. The first part of this chapter provides an overview of the 'political economy of cohabitation' between

¹¹⁶ Cited in (Cambodia Daily, 1997)

¹¹⁷ (Kevin 1998). Indeed, Cambodian politics are for the most part 'non-cannibalistic' and give a large part to compromise and accommodation, even if this is not the image conveyed in the media.

the two main political parties sharing power following the United Nations peace process in 1993. This political cohabitation imposed by the imbalance of power favouring the CPP took the form of a 'two-headed' government associating the two main opposing political parties, CPP and Funcinpec. Emphasis is placed upon the relations between the political economy of transition to a 'post-conflict' and reconstruction situation and the strategies of political leaders for keeping power throughout the period of cohabitation. Building upon this political economy analysis of the transition process, the second part examines the specific sector of commercial forestry from both a political and a technical perspective.

1. The political economy of cohabitation

Despite a boycott by the Khmer Rouge and political violence during the electoral campaign, the UN sponsored elections for a constitutional assembly at the end of May 1993 were deemed a success, as participation was close to 90% (Findlay 1995; Heder and Ledgerwood 1996). The results provided a relative advantage to Funcinpec, with 58 seats; over CPP, 51 seats; BLDP (ex-KPLNF), 10 seats; and Molinaka (a militarist party), 1 seat. A new government based on democracy and meritocracy characterised by accountability and transparency was the hope.

However, the 'success' of the UN was beset by two domestic failures: the on-going armed opposition of the Khmer Rouge to the new government, and the refusal of CPP to accept its electoral defeat. While now irrelevant on the international political scene, the Khmer Rouge remained an important player in Cambodia and continued to enjoy the support of Thai actors, most notably Thai military units along

the border. By the end of 1993, the Khmer Rouge still controlled with approximately 10,000 -15,000 troops, about a fifth of the national territory, and up to 100,000 civilians (Findlay 1995). While the Secretary-General of the UN was eager to preserve the image of the 'success' of UNTAC, the UN representative in Cambodia himself admitted two years after the elections that "one of the continuing problems is the persistence of [KR] in resisting extermination by RCAF which is in turn fuelled by their ability to finance their operations through the logging and gems trade" (Widyono 1995).

As important, was the outcome of the election itself. The rebuff to the CPP, which received only 38.2% of the votes, was striking, and led its leadership to reject the result and launch a series of political manoeuvres to secure its hold on power. Prior to the elections, there had been attempts at reciprocal accommodation across political parties, in particular between Sihanouk and Hun Sen; and Chea Sim and Ranariddh. These had antagonised some of the political players, such as the Khmer Rouge, with the result of further dividing factions (Summers 1997). In the face of Funcinpec's rejection of any power sharing, the CPP organised a secession movement in the eastern provinces of the country and threatened of civil war (Heder 1995). Under such pressure, a 'coalition government' was formed, co-presided over by Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen, as First and Second Prime Ministers respectively, with Sihanouk as Head of State and Chea Sim as President of the National Assembly. The Assembly ratified a new constitution instituting a constitutional monarchy and on 29 October the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) was officially instituted.

1.1 The democratic political (dis)order

During its first three years, the uneasy coalition of Funcinpec and CPP was sustained by a common interest to maintain a power-sharing consensus in which both leaders could minimise internal dissension and repel outside opposition. The political accommodation between Hun Sen and Ranariddh was further necessary to reassure international donors, who provided half of the national budget, and to bring a minimum of stability to attract private investors. However, this accommodation was not much more than a political compromise “contingent upon the uneasy relationship of two unstable individuals” (Ashley 1998: 50). This compromise was oriented towards building their private power base, rather than independent state institutions which could turn out to become obstacles or rivals to their personal power and the interests of their followers. Both co-Prime Ministers did so through complex and interrelated networks of clients and embezzlement of public revenues. Often overextending their executive power to encompass the whole regulation of politics and the economy, the co-Prime Ministers secured the support of the private sector by granting tax exemptions or condoning illegal activities. Parallel revenues were in turn used to consolidate their position, by financing personal security forces, buying off political alliances, or personalising public welfare programs through direct donations. Funcinpec, in particular, needed to build up its capacity as it lagged well behind CPP in terms of financing its political activities. Unsurprisingly, and as in many countries in which rapid political changes take place, the easiest way was to resort to corruption.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ For an analysis of political corruption and political change, see (Huntington 1968; Scott 1972b; Perry 1997). For a perspective on the case of Thailand in relation to party formation and democratisation, see (Ockey 1994).

Networks of clients not only encompassed the growing private sector but also the state apparatus itself. The clientelisation of the state apparatus was not new to Cambodia, but the coexistence of two main networks within a single space led to further erosion of formal governance. Public rules and organisations became subordinate to politics and, ultimately, to individuals, civil servants and businessmen alike, able to secure their position within a multiplicity of politicised and personalised networks. This clientelisation of the state took the form of a division and multiplication of official postings. The division was part of the power-sharing consensus. Ministries, provincial governorship, state companies, and command of military regions were divided, or shared, between parties, not only with the objective of implementing a political balance but also of distributing perquisites generated by these organisations. Sihanouk noted with irony that, “[s]ince the 1993 election, Hun Sen and Ranariddh have chosen to share everything. I speak carefully. They’ve found a miraculous formula or recipe. It’s delicious” (quoted in (Shawcross 1996: 43)). A tacit sharing agreement was passed, for example, over rubber plantations, remaining under CPP control, and civil aviation, passing under the control of Funcinpec. Answering a French rubber expert asking him why he signed crooked deals favourable to Hun Sen’s cronies, Ranariddh argued that “rubber does not concern me. I am in charge of civil aviation, [Hun Sen] is in charge of rubber, and we don’t bug each other”.¹¹⁹

There was also a multiplication of postings, in part to balance the absence of Funcinpec and BLDP party members within the existing administration without having to sack CPP civil servants, but also to reward political followers. The new

¹¹⁹ (Monin, interview, 1997)

government was characterised by a profusion of high ranking positions, institutions, commissions, and honorific titles all contributing to the 'political economy of social status' so important in social relations and access to wealth. The Royal Government of Cambodia, for example, had 106 ministers, state secretaries and under-state secretaries - instead of about 30 under the SoC (Jennar 1995a). Similarly, the number of provincial governors and vice-governors increased to a hundred, or four per province. The same can be said about the number of 'strongmen', or would-be 'strongmen', in the military. The new Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) had about 1,245 generals in 1994 and officers and non-commissioned officers made up about two-third of the army (Jennar 1995b). Titles like 'Your Excellency', *aekodom*, or *okya* flourished; Hun Sen himself received a princely title of *Samdech*.¹²⁰ As Marston (1997) noted:

There was ... an amazing jockeying for the signs and symbols of rank ... a desire to return to pre-socialist usage but mostly a discursive etiquette corresponding to the demand of a new political economic order, which had to do, not with age-old hierarchies, but with how much political and social hay you could make with newly revived symbols of power. (ibid.: 178-179)

Symbols, and tangible intermediaries, of power also included private bodyguards and the display of wealth such as luxurious cars and villas, second and third wives, extravagant partying, gambling in one of the 30 new casinos, or generous donations at weddings and to pagodas and charities. For foreign observers, Cambodians developed a 'casino culture' in which "getting rich and staying rich" was apparently the only thing that mattered (Shawcross 1996). For ordinary Cambodians the 'free spending' lifestyle of the new upper class was affordable to those abusing

¹²⁰ The grade of general could be purchased for about US\$2,000. Hundreds of 'generals' were later demoted. The title of 'okya' was provided by either co-PM for a donation of about US\$10,000 to the party or their public welfare programs (Ek, interview, 1997).

‘the power of the gun’ and benefiting from high bureaucratic positions and powerful patrons.

The ‘liberalised’ mode of regulation, resulted in an economic growth that reassured the international community on the success of Cambodia’s release from the grip of what some still identified as a ‘Leninist’ regime (e.g. Brown and Timberman 1998). However, because of the pattern of politics, none of the formal institutions and rules prescribed by the new Constitution became an effective instrument of control over this ‘liberalised’ regulation of the state and society; many of them not having been even created (e.g. constitutional council, supreme council of magistracy, anti-corruption law). As a result, “most activities in Cambodia - economic, social, even political - occupied the same semi-legal, semi-illegal status” (Ashley 1998: 60). In turn, these activities reflected and exacerbated unequal power relations. Abuses or criminal activities were rarely condemned and even less punished as “patrons throughout the system - up to and including the co-prime ministers - considered the need to protect their clients to be more important than justice ... [and] politics, not law, was paramount” (ibid.: 57).

1.2 The liberal economic (dis)order

The new political economic order of Cambodia was officially presented under a different light by the government. To reap the benefits of its international recognition and access development assistance, the RGC presented to international donors in early 1994 a “National Programme to Rehabilitate and Develop Cambodia” with three objectives of social justice, national reconciliation and economic growth (Royal Government of Cambodia 1994c). This plan was backed by five strategies:

economic stabilisation and growth through long-term economic management, foreign investment and private entrepreneurship; administrative and judicial reform; regional and global economic integration; investment in social services and infrastructures; and optimisation of natural resources exploitation, including the protection of the environment (St John 1995). This programme was one amongst many, often tailor-made by foreign advisers for international donors, to present the new face of Cambodia's political economy. However, there was a large gap between policies and the ongoing 'uncontrolled practices' mentioned previously.

Two key laws pertaining to the budget and investment, illustrate the ambiguity and complexity of the new political economy. The new Minister of Economics and Finance Sam Rainsy (Funcinpec) believed that budget control by the state was the main 'rudder' for implementing new governmental policies and from 1994, all taxes were to be centralised by his ministry. While unanimously adopted by the National Assembly, this finance law was rapidly resisted by the multitude of interests that the previous budgetary regime had nurtured as it "stripped government ministries, provincial authorities, and powerful individuals of long-exercised rights to collect taxes [and disburse cash] independent of the national government" (ibid.: 268). While lauded by the international community, the law was threatening the structure of power and patronage in Cambodia. It proved unworkable in practice and was systematically circumvented by exemptions and parallel clandestine budgets.¹²¹

On the other hand, a new law on investment, tailored according to the liberalisation credo adopted by the RGC for attracting investors, provided a major instrument of political patronage and cronyism through its taxation leniency (National

Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia 1994). Massive tax exemptions were granted in exchange for direct financial support, most frequently taking the form of donations to the population, but also ‘disappearing’ into the complex neopatrimonial networks of military and administrative support, as well as the pockets of the protagonists, their relatives, and followers.

Within this context, the overall economic situation of Cambodia improved rapidly. The formal GDP growth averaged 7% between 1993 and 1997, and would have been higher if the informal economy was better integrated into macro-economic statistics (Népote and de Vienne 1993; Ministry of Economy and Finance 1997). The GDP per capita increased about a threefold over the decade 1987-1996 (see Table 5.1).

¹²¹ (Sam, interview, 1997; Soch, interview, 1997).

Table 5.1 - GDP by industrial Origin at current purchases' prices (%) and per capita (1987,1993,1996)¹²²

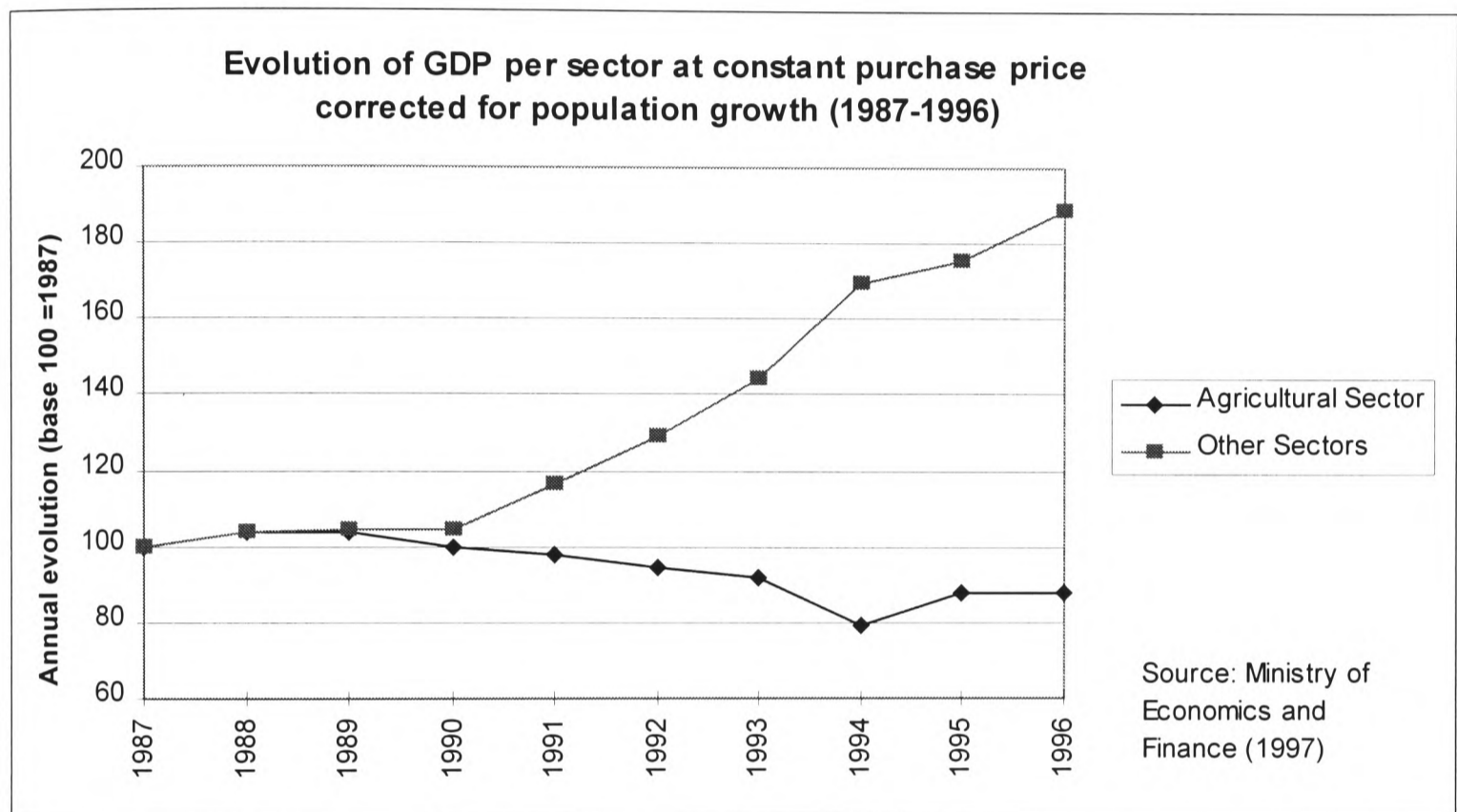
Year	1987	1993	1996
Agriculture	61.1	45.8	42.6
Paddy (rice)	27.5	17.3	13.8
Other crops	9.5	8.7	7.7
Rubber	2.6	0.7	1.1
Livestock	12.4	12	11.2
Fishery	7.7	3.3	3.3
Forestry	1.4	3.7	5.5
Industry	13.3	15	17.8
Mining, quarrying	1.2	1.5	1.9
Manufacturing	8.7	5.6	5.9
Electricity, water	0.2	0.6	0.8
Construction	3.3	7.2	9.2
Services	25.6	39.2	39.6
Transportation, communication	4.8	6.5	6.4
Wholesale, retail sale	10.6	11.5	12.8
Hotel, restaurant, tourism	0	1.5	2.2
Banking, insurance, real estate	0.6	0.8	0.8
Public administration, defence	2.6	3.7	4.4
Ownership of dwelling	3.1	6.7	5.6
Others	3.8	8.6	7.4
GDP per capita (US\$)	107	200	290

However, such growth was not sufficient to lift Cambodia from an underdevelopment ranking of 153 out of 175 countries on UNDP's Human Development Index (UNDP 1997). Growth was concentrated in urban based tertiary sectors (see Figure 5.1), leaving three quarters of the population dependent on subsistence agriculture (World Bank 1994).¹²³ Furthermore, even an improvement of the agricultural production did not result in an alleviation of poverty as an increasing number of farmers were driven out of their land by real estate speculation and agro-industrial development schemes. Despite rice surplus for 1996 and 1997 at the national level, about 15% of the population still suffered from severe food deficiencies (Fontaine 1998). International aid, which represented about half of the

¹²² Source: (Ministry of Economy and Finance 1997).

public budget, helped to mitigate some of these problems but remained largely concentrated in the capital with little impact on the countryside (Grube 1997; Naranhkiri 1998).

Figure 5.1 - Evolution of GDP per sector (1987-1996)¹²⁴



1.3 Political showdown

From 1996 onwards, despite the relative wealth and consensus generated by the mutual accommodation of the coalition parties, the political situation severely degraded. This degradation stemmed from Ranariddh's frustrations with the success of Hun Sen's political and economic consolidation, and his own weakness in translating his electoral victory into *de facto* governance. First, as changes had mostly affected high level postings within the government rather than the whole structure of

¹²³ For an outline of the Cambodian economy for the period 1993-1997, see (Summers 1997; Naranhkiri 1998).

¹²⁴ The agricultural sector excludes forestry exploitation and rubber production. GDP is at constant purchase

government, the CPP remained in control of the vast majority of civil servants, including the heads of villages, communes, and districts as well as most executive departments. Second, few political changes took place outside of the capital. Even in the cases where Funcinpec obtained a position of provincial governor, the personal loyalties of civil servants remained with the CPP Vice-Governor (Jennar 1995b). To take the example of the forestry sector, no changes in personnel affected the Department of Forestry and Wildlife and all important provinces remained under the authority of the CPP.¹²⁵

Funcinpec remained basically an accommodating opposition party within the coalition government and focused on developing its own area of influence from which informal rents could be extracted in order to sustain political clienteles and a financial cushion against an uncertain future. This situation resulted in a weakening of Funcinpec, and BLDP, as their members either shifted alliances towards the CPP, in an attempt to secure more efficient allegiances; left because of the party's weaknesses, incompetence, or authoritarianism; or were expelled by the party's leadership for their incompatible views. The most prominent example of the latter case was the eviction of Sam Rainsy, the outspoken Funcinpec Minister of Finance (see below).

This situation was complicated by massive defections of Khmer Rouge taking place in mid-1996 following, *inter alia*, the cessation of logging revenues as the Thai government, under pressure from an international NGO and the US, closed its border to trade with the KR (see below). These defections were not total and some KR commanders remained in partial control of their territory and its resources through yet

price corrected for population growth. Source: (Ministry of Economy and Finance 1997).
¹²⁵ However, the allegiance of the Forestry director was with Chea Sim, that is with the core of the historical CPP

another accommodation with key governmental officials. The political situation became increasingly tense between the two 'coalition' partners competing over these newly available forces and the resources that they controlled. With the weakening of their power base, the leaders of both Funcinpec and the KR in Anlong Veng sought to (re)unite their forces, providing the excuse for elements within the CPP to stage a successful coup against core elements of the Funcinpec in July 1997. After a year of government by the CPP and sympathetic Funcinpec members, national elections were held and confirmed the CPP in power, although without an absolute ruling majority.¹²⁶ Following difficult negotiations with the Funcinpec, marred by public protests and violent repression, a new coalition government was formed under Hun Sen, as single Prime Minister, giving a much lower profile to Funcinpec.

In sum, the situation from 1993 until 1998 was characterised by three main elements. First, the new government of Cambodia was left with a war to fight and could not count on direct foreign assistance to help finance it. On the other hand, the plight of the population, and the guilt accumulated by donors formally supporting the embargo, guaranteed a sustained provision of humanitarian and development aid representing approximately half of the national budget.

Second, Funcinpec, the supposedly leading party, had to construct its power base within a state apparatus overwhelmingly controlled by the CPP. The Royalist party had few means and little resources to do so. It could either strengthen public support through a better public management improving the lot of civil servants and

resisting some of the personal politics of Hun Sen. The director was politically more inclined towards this faction within the CPP and was also personally related to Chea Sim who was the adoptive father of his wife.

¹²⁶ The elections of a new national assembly gave 64 seats for CPP (41.4% of votes), 43 seats for Funcinpec (31.7% of votes) and 15 seats for SRP (14.3 % of votes) (Schier 1998). For an analysis of the elections, see (Peou 1998).

the population, thanks to policies developed by a few key Funcinpec technocrats. Or it could negotiate the institutional power inherited from the elections to capture part of the informal bureaucratic rent and create a politico-economic clientele through ‘shadow state’ practices; in other words, get into the flow of corruption initiated by the CPP and parasiting the formal and informal economy and use it as a source of patronage. Both leaders within Funcinpec and CPP opted for the latter. Because of this choice, “since no progress had been made in creating a rule of law or building democratic institutions, the only way to protect one’s wealth and position was to hold onto power” (Ashley 1998: 69).

Third, as a result of this ‘shadow’ governance, ‘uncontrolled practices’ flourished in the presence of a rapidly expanding private sector eager to benefit from the opening of this new frontier for capitalism. These three basic tenets of the political economy of Cambodia for the mid-1990s were to have important consequences on the forestry sector.

2. Forest management under the RGC

Over the period 1993 until 1998, the forestry sector of Cambodia altered radically. The rapid changes begun in the late 1980s were further accentuated with an increase in small-scale logging by domestic actors; a continuation of timber extraction by Thai and Vietnamese companies in borderlands; and the surge of transnational logging companies appropriating nearly all productive forests through vast logging concessions. The following section first details the evolution of the sector through its successive phases and highlights their political aspects. It then brings forward the key

evolution that represented the lease of logging concessions and examines some of its consequences.

2.1 The logging imperative: financing war and neo-patrimonialism

The new Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia declared forests and natural resources to be state property and, in its article 59, mentioned that,

the State shall protect the environment and balance of abundant natural resources and establish a precise plan of management of ... forests and forest products. (National Assembly 1993)

Yet, as mentioned above, the imperative of numerous actors within the government and the business sector was much more straightforward: forests needed to be cut to finance the conflict; to build up public revenue and political clientele; as well as to be made available to attract and satisfy foreign investors. Since the elections the ban on log exports had been maintained despite attempts by some Thai officials to re-open the border.¹²⁷ Fearing that the situation of the environment would further deteriorate, King Sihanouk, who expressed a deep concern for the protection of the environment of his country,¹²⁸ unilaterally signed in November 1993 a Royal Decree giving a protected status to 19 per cent of the country. Despite preventing the allocation of logging concessions in these areas, the decision had little impact on stopping logging and, by 1997, more than 20% of forests in protected areas had been intensively logged (DAI 1998b).

¹²⁷ In late April 1993, General Chavalit had failed to reopen the border due to pressure from the Thai Prime Minister (Bangkok Post 1993).

¹²⁸ Deforestation ranked second, after human rights and before land mines, among the “issues of concern” of the King of Cambodia (Norodom 1995).

2.1.1 Removal of the log export ban

The first step to the removal of the timber export ban decided by the SNC on 22 September 1992 was initiated by Funcinpec (Lu Lay Sreng, Vice Minister of Commerce) in early September 1993. In a letter addressed to Ranariddh, Lu Lay Sreng lobbied for the reopening of the border to timber exports:

To serve the *national interest*, I believe that already felled timber should be exported, both logs and sawn timber, within 1993. The Ministry of Commerce plans to stop issuing of export licences for logs and sawntimber the following year. (letter Ref. 254, dated 7/9/93 cited in (Norodom 1994), emphasis added)

While the letter mentioned “approximately more than 200,000 cu.m. of timber” still remaining in the country, this move was motivated by the *private* interest of a Thai company (BLP) to export 55,000 cu.m. of round logs (*ibid.*). The company had had a concession since 1991 and enjoyed close ties with both political leaders in Cambodia and with Chavalit in Thailand.¹²⁹

In mid-October, upon Ranariddh’s suggestion, Hun Sen gave his approval. The following day, shortly before the formation of the Royal Government of Cambodia on 25 October 1993, the Ministry of Commerce was informed by the provisional Council of Ministers that the log ban established under the UN transition authority was lifted until 1 January 1994 to permit the export of ‘timber felled many months ago’ (Norodom 1994). The BLP company was subsequently authorised to export logs by the Ministry of Commerce and MAFF on 29 October 1993, *the very day of the investiture of the RGC*, through both Funcinpec and CPP ministers; demonstrating the importance of such deals for some in the government (Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fishery 1993; Ministry of Commerce 1993). On 3 November

¹²⁹ (Global Witness, interview, 1997).

and again on 24 November, the newly nominated Minister of Finance, Sam Rainsy, complained about this situation to Ranariddh, arguing for the lack of transparent consultation and authorisation by the Prime Ministers on such an important issue, the low level of royalty fees, as well as the by-passing of the Ministry of Economics and Finance for the payment of taxes (Ministry of Economics and Finance 1993). The log export ban was de facto lifted; even if no consultation of the National Assembly or official decision of the Council of Ministers had taken place, nor the Customs department informed (Customs Department 1993).¹³⁰

An inter-ministerial commission was subsequently created to sell “already felled timber on the Thai-Cambodian border” (Norodom 1994). Special customs zones located inside Thai territory where logs could be stocked before official importation to Thailand were to be established for inspection by Cambodian Customs officials (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1993).¹³¹ This measure was necessary as most of the timber was coming from KR areas that were not accessible to RGC officials due to fighting. As the export deadline approached, Sam Rainsy, now supporting exports to raise public revenues, obtained its postponement until 31 March 1994 (Ministry of Economics and Finance 1993).

2.1.2 Fighting, and financing the Khmer Rouge

The issue of log exports was discussed during a meeting between the co-Prime Ministers of Cambodia and the Thai Prime Minister, Chuan Leekpai, on 12 January

¹³⁰ Since the end of April 1993, close to half of the volume of sawnwood authorised by export licences issued by the MC had not passed through Customs, resulting in a theoretical loss of US\$ 1.7 million, and about 84,000 cu.m. of logs had been authorised for exportation (Customs Department 1993).

¹³¹ A similar procedure was used in Burma for controlling Thai timber imports from rebel territories.

1994. According to the minutes of the meeting, Ranariddh expressed the decision of the RGC

not to permit any more logs to be cut from 1 January 1994 but had decided to extend until 31 March 1994 the period for permitted export of unprocessed timber felled many months ago. ... this extension applies, under the same conditions, to logs cut in zones controlled by the Khmer Rouge (Democratic Kampuchea) faction ... [However,] *since [this] matter is a sensitive issue both internationally and domestically*, it should not be placed in the Joint Communique to be issued at the end of the visit of the Royal Thai Government delegation. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1994, emphasis added).

On his side, Hun Sen confirmed this position as “that of the RGC and added that contracts previously signed by the Khmer Rouge will be honoured by the Royal Government of Cambodia” (ibid.). Official declarations following the meeting denied any support to the KR by the Thai, nor obviously by the RGC with which it was still officially at war (Jennar 1995a).¹³² This meeting, as well as the position of the RGC regarding its stance towards Thai business interests in the border region, reflected its optimism in solving the situation militarily and securing the assistance of the RGT provided that Thai business interests were protected. During the first three months of 1994, the government authorised the export of 750,000 cu.m., bringing to the Treasury US\$32 million of taxes (Norodom 1994). About 70% of the exported timber originated from KR areas, probably generating for that faction at least US\$15 million in revenues.

Through these deals, the RGC, as well as the KR and personalities in the Thai government had found a convenient relationship of coexistence maintaining their access to the logging rent. The policy of exporting only ‘old logs’ for the ‘national interest’ and isolating the KR to further peace was only a façade, behind which both competition and accommodation orchestrated the struggle over who was to control the

¹³² For a report on Thai military support to the Khmer Rouge at the time, see (Cambodia Study Group 1994).

flow of revenue generated by logging.

The Thai military was critical of the ambiguous attitude of the RGC vis à vis the logging issue in KR territory as,

the world is accusing the Thai military of helping the Khmer Rouge, but there is no publicity about the effect of the temporary lifting of the logging ban. ... The Royal Government [of Cambodia] fights them and negotiates agreements [with the Thai government on log exports] that allow them to get money. That is hypocrisy. The Royal Government negotiated an agreement with the Thai government on how many cubic metres of logs, what companies, and what crossing points. Some of these logs are coming out of Khmer Rouge territory. Money goes into the hands of the Cambodian government and money goes into the hands of the Khmer Rouge. (Thai senior army officer on 30 March 1994 quoted in (Brown 1994))

The ban on log exports was officially reinstated on 31 March 1994 and placed under the supervision of an interministerial committee. But this third export ban, the second for the RGC, was breached within three weeks. As early as 9 April, Ranariddh gave his approval for a ‘special authorisation’ to be provided to the Democratic Popular Republic of Korea to export logs. Hun Sen agreed on 20 April and the Council of Ministers officially informed the MC on 26 April that since “some timber remained ... [the RGC] ... can make an *exception*” (Norodom 1994; emphasis added).

2.1.3 Military hold-up and political consensus

The ban was also quickly bypassed with ‘exceptions’ granted by the Ministry of National Defense (MND) to Thai companies (Ministry of National Defense 1994a; 1994b). From August 1993, the RCAF had launched an intensive military campaign against the Khmer Rouge. This offensive succeeded in capturing and controlling for a short period the two main Khmer Rouge strongholds of Pailin and Anlong Veng (Jennar 1995a). But the assistance of the Thai military to KR units, and the lack of logistical support and poor command of RCAF troops by officers focusing mostly on

grabbing the spoils of victory, led to successful counter offensives by KR troops that by the end of April even threatened large towns, such as Battambang. Having spent already more than half of their budget, the Cambodian armed forces turned to additional sources of funding.¹³³ In April 1994, the MND requested ‘special exemptions’ to authorise and directly tax timber exports. The two co-Prime Ministers, “in view of the present military and security situation [and] of the immediate needs for the building and strengthening of the Royal Armed Forces” cancelled the export ban and the previous procedures, giving themselves the sole authority to allow exports of wood by the MND or other ministries (Royal Government of Cambodia 1994a).

This move was resisted by several ministries as this decision derided the new Finance law and undermined their role in the government. Two deals passed between the MND and Thai companies for c.250,000 cu.m. were put in the light of the media by the Minister of Finance in order to foster his own position. Numerous protests, from Embassies and the International Monetary Fund, also followed this decision, which was perceived as the handing over of timber exports army (Bangkok Post 1994). For some in the international community, the lifting of the ban in itself did not represent a major issue, as development agencies had always considered Cambodia’s forests as a major economic asset to be exploited for the development of the country and from at least early 1994, the IMF and World Bank had knowledge of the RGC approval of timber exports from KR areas.¹³⁴ What mattered most for donors, and especially international financial institutions was the growth of accountable public

¹³³ Other sources included deals with prominent businessmen, for example the Cambodian tycoon, Teng Bunma, suspected of drug trafficking and who substantially financed the 1994 dry-season campaign, and Sok Kim, who received the state petroleum company in exchange for a debt of US\$10 million contracted by the army (Ek, interview, 1997).

¹³⁴ (Martimor, interview, 1997).

revenue.¹³⁵

The pressure put by the international media and the IMF pushed the co-Prime Ministers to come back, at least officially, on their position (Reuters 1994). The co-PM created a new interministerial commission, dominated by the military, to oversee exports and ordered all ministries, except the MND, for taxes to be paid to the Treasury (Royal Government of Cambodia 1994a and 1994b). Despite verbal commitments from the co-PM to revert to a total centralisation of the budget, the MND continued to collect taxes from timber exports independently (Ministry of National Defense 1994b). These deceitful promises fuelled resentment amongst international donors and agencies *vis à vis* the top leadership of the RGC.

At an inter-ministerial meeting in December 1994, the government again decided that, from 30 April 1995, Cambodia would ban log exports and authorise only exports of processed wood. Following a habit of conciliation with international donors, who were still providing approximately half of the national budget, the government hoped to demonstrate by this measure its willingness to protect the environment, to be financially transparent, and to favour domestic timber processing to increase in-country added value. Yet, this measure was again circumvented and ended up mostly boosting exploitation before the deadline and increasing competition over forest concessions.

It is difficult to estimate the exact amount of taxes that evaded the national treasury to the benefit of the Ministry of National Defense, as well as of the Ministry of Interior which benefited from a similar scheme. Officially, according to the Customs department, the MND exported logs only 3,000 cu.m. and the Ministry of

¹³⁵ (Charap, interview, 1997).

Interior 52,000 cu.m. (Steichen 1995). Estimations by the MEF were very different, and calculated from Thai sources that about 1.2 million cu.m. had been imported in 1994 by Thai companies with the authorisation of the MND, with the military earning at least US\$44 million, a sum roughly equivalent to the expenditure of the RGC in 1994 for education, public health and rural development (Sam 1995). Newspapers in Bangkok also reported that Thai companies operated without restraint to offset royalties paid to the Ministry of National Defence; during the last six months of 1994, some 65 Thai companies would have been given export authorisations totalling more than 700,000 cubic metres (Keesee 1995). Official Thai statistics on Cambodian timber imports reported a total of 578,000 cu.m. for 1994 corresponding to exports approved by the civil ministries during the first quarter (Royal Forest Department 1996).

In October 1994, the Minister of Finance Sam Rainsy circulated a briefing paper to the international community, criticising the decisions of the Co-Prime Ministers as showing,

a high degree of irresponsibility and inconsistency leading to considerable confusion and bringing about a huge loss of revenue to the state and very serious damage to the environment. (Sam 1994:1)

Behind the curtain of 'irresponsibility', 'confusion' and 'inconsistency', the logging rent was weaving and consolidating productive networks useful for political manoeuvring and financing life styles that could not be afforded by governmental wages of US\$50-1,200/month.

The forestry sector was not the only one criticised by the Minister of Finance who also attempted to renegotiate some of the dubious contracts passed by the SoC before the elections. Rapidly, Sam Rainsy had become too much of a political figure

and enjoying the support of the King as well as a growing popularity among students and the rising middle-class of petty traders. From March 1994, Hun Sen and Ranariddh “were drawn together through their common interest of protecting party patronage from the challenges posed by Rainsy” (Summers 1997: 189) and removed him from his post of Minister of Finance in October 1994 through a government reshuffle that reinforced the influence of the CPP (Jennar 1995a).¹³⁶

In 1994, the state treasury had been able to collect about US\$39 million from the forestry sector, close to 15 % of the total domestic revenue for that year, proving that a proper taxation system for logging was possible (Ministry of Economy and Finance 1997). However, the taxation of economic activities conducted on territory controlled by the KR raised the question of participating in ‘fuelling’ the war by condoning the financing of the Khmer Rouge by Thai businesses.

2.1.4 Fighting and financing the Khmer Rouge: sequel and end?

From mid-1994, the Khmer Rouge became officially increasingly isolated as the Cambodian National Assembly declared them “outlaw” and the American congress passed sanctions against countries assisting them militarily (Jennar 1995a). However, the situation for timber exports to Thailand altered significantly, with an official volume recorded by the Thai customs even increasing, from 578,000 cu.m. for 1994 to 587,000 cu.m. in 1995 (Thai Customs Department 1995). Agreements for logging operations inside KR controlled territory and timber imports into Thailand were

¹³⁶ Sam Rainsy was replaced by Keat Chhon (CPP), the Minister of Commerce Var Huot (CPP) by Cham Prasith (CPP), and the Minister of Agriculture Kom Som Ol (CPP) by Tao Seng Huor (Funcinpec). In a gesture of solidarity, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norodom Sirivudh (Funcinpec), resigned and was replaced by Ung Huot (Funcinpec) who became ‘first’ Prime Minister after the coup d’état of Hun Sen evicting Ranariddh in

provided to Thai companies by the Thai Ministry of Interior, senior KR commanders, but also by ‘generals’ and ministers in the RGC (Global Witness 1995a and 1995b).

Cambodia’s war was increasingly characterised as a “wood-fired war” unlikely to stop, because it had become too profitable for many of those involved and in particular for the political elite of Cambodia and Thailand (The Economist 1995). The benefits of the absence of civil governmental control due to the insecurity in forested areas and armed skirmishes between governmental troops targeting the control of timber rich areas supported this analysis. As well, the trade of arms between opposing factions and other business deals passed between ‘enemies’ convinced observers that the conflict was not simple in its motivation – winning - but had turned into a politico-economic system sustaining itself from the ‘benefits of war’ (Shawcross 1996).

The climate of insecurity, and the extremism of means of control in the forestry sector, were clearly illustrated by the slaughter of about 90 Vietnamese loggers in 1991 in Kratie, 17 Thai workers of the BLP logging company in 1994 in Preah Vihear, 13 Vietnamese loggers and 3 soldiers in 1995 in Mondulkiri, 14 Cambodian loggers in 1996 in Kampot, and the murder of a journalist investing illegal logging in December 1994 in Kampong Cham and two foresters in 1997 in Siem Reap and Mondulkiri (Gennino 1992; Amnesty International 1995; Bangkok Post 1995; UNCHR 1996; ERC 1997). At least five international logging companies lost staff and all suffered from kidnappings.¹³⁷

The insecurity associated with the state of war and political uncertainty justified in turn the exclusion of civilian governmental institutions from controlling a

¹³⁷ 1997.
(Hoan, interview, 1997)

full range of illegal economic activities and allowed unpunished human rights abuses,

In many cases, the military have used security problems as excuses in order to prevent the competent authorities, such as Forestry and Customs officials, from inspecting the cutting and export of timber. (Sam 1994: 5)

The case of Cambodia is not isolated in this respect, the involvement of military forces in the exploitation of natural resources, and in particular in remote areas that they control has been noted in many Southeast Asian countries:

once entrenched in a particular area of conflict, the military often becomes legally or illegally involved in economic activities ... [and] its physical presence sometimes becomes a mere cover for its business in the affected locality. (Ghee and Valencia 1990: 8)

From 1995, the US congress toughened its stand by threatening sanctions against countries dealing militarily or commercially with the KR (Grainger 1996a). This pressure, in conjunction with an international campaign denouncing the links between Thailand and the Khmer Rouge and the consequences upon the Cambodian environment and population by Global Witness, a British Non Governmental Organisation (NGO), pushed the Thai government to order a closure of the border on 27 May 1995 (Rayananonda 1996). This move was also motivated by a need to improve Thailand's image and by the lesser importance of the Khmer Rouge in the new political environment. This decision placed the Khmer Rouge as well as Thai logging companies in a difficult situation.

The RGC was, on the other hand, in a stronger bargaining position as the decision of Thailand provided the Cambodian leadership with the ability to 'legitimise' the reopening of the border by authorising exports. Indeed, in January 1996, the two Cambodian co-Prime Ministers entered into an agreement with Chavalit, now Deputy-Prime Minister, to authorise selected Thai companies to import Cambodian logs that had been 'felled before 30 April 1995' (Royal Government of

Cambodia 1996a). Unsurprisingly, some of the selected Thai companies had close ties with Chavalit (Global Witness 1996e), who was at the time seeking funds for the parliamentary elections he won in November 1996 following “one of the dirtiest election campaigns in Thai history” (Vatikiotis and Fairclough 1996: 16).

The total volume of logs authorised for exports amounted to 1.1 million cu.m. and was worth a minimum of US\$330 million; representing 10% of GDP (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996a). The deal was initially kept secret but was revealed in April 1996 by the British NGO Global Witness. As most of these companies were felling trees in Khmer Rouge controlled territory (Global Witness 1996d) and were therefore taxable by the guerrilla group, the deal passed by the Cambodian government was, once more, indirectly accomplice to the conflict stalemate. In an interview, Ranariddh justified the decision by arguing that the Khmer Rouge would otherwise find a way to export logs “with no profit to the Cambodian state budget” (McDowell 1996), a questionable argument given past sharing agreements and the relative success of the border closure by Thai authorities since June 1995. On the contrary, the Thai government clearly pointed at the responsibility of the Cambodian leadership for initiating the deal (Rayananonda 1996).

The media coverage of this deal was very important and largely discredited the RGC leadership. Pressure was put on the Cambodian government by international donors to conduct a strict verification of exported logs and transparency in financial dealings. The US administration renewed its pressure on the Thai government to forbid the importation of timber coming from KR territory (Global Witness 1997b). The Thai government complied by maintaining its border closed, with the exception of a limited number of deals approved by the Cambodian Ministry of Economics and

Finance. Official timber imports from Cambodia fell to a fifth of the volume in previous years (Royal Forest Department 1998). Financial revenue for the KR dwindled and tensions increased within the movement. These tensions came to an apex in August 1996 when several Khmer Rouge units in Battambang and Pursat provinces seceded from the core group around Pol Pot to partially defect to the RGC (Watkin 1996).

These units represented about half of the armed forces and controlled the richest territories of the guerrilla movements, including the gem mines of Pailin and dense forests of Samlot. The reasons for defections were complex and included the general battle fatigue of KR troops and the growing evidence for soldiers on the ground that they were not fighting Vietnamese occupiers, but fellow Khmers. Past economic development, and promises of a better future facilitated by economic integration, also had an impact on the movement. The relative 'embourgeoisement' of some in the leadership and the growing disparities in wealth within some areas fuelled resentment amongst the rank and file. Both sides of the divided Khmer Rouge movement accused each other of embezzling money. According to Khmer Rouge in Anlong Veng, Ieng Sary had embezzled US\$16 million from Chinese aid as well as timber and gems deals (Cambodia Daily 1996). Similar accusation were made by the defectors against former co-leaders who had resisted the defection and taken refuge in Anlong Veng,

Son Sen not only has power ambitions and like to kill, but also he stole common money and uses it as his personal money. ... Son Sen collected ... in total 167 millions baht [US\$6.7 million]. Besides that, he had money from his brother, Ny Korn, who has made business with logging for years, about more than 200 millions baht [US\$8 million]. (DNUM 1996)

In areas, where redistribution of wealth was more equitable, the population and local leadership resisted the attempt by Pol Pot to come back to a more 'orthodox'

way of life and to provide the central command of the movement with a greater share of their resources.¹³⁸ Finally there was an important military pressure placed by the RGC upon these KR units,¹³⁹ which were counterbalanced by promises of economic legitimacy through a more conciliatory position with the government. The Thai military and companies were also eager to preserve a privileged access to resources and feared that in case of KR military defeat they would lose both this privilege and their investments. A situation of accommodation between these KR units and the RGC as well as Thai investors was thus preferable.

Both CPP and Funcinpec, were eager to secure the allegiance of these units. Local KR commanders played one side of the government against the other, to get the best conditions out of their defection, including amnesties, political positions, administrative and economic autonomy, and provision of development aid. Deals were passed by the two main units, led by Ee Chean in Pailin (Div. 415) and Sok Pheap in Phnom Malai (Div. 450), with both the CPP and Funcinpec, to retain a de facto control of their territory and population, under the creation of quasi-autonomous municipalities.¹⁴⁰ In exchange, the CPP in particular was given more leverage over, and access to benefits from, the exploitation of resources which was now legitimised by the defectors' official recognition of the sovereignty of the RGC. Soon after the defection, Hun Sen visited the breakaway KR areas with a cohort of Cambodian and foreign investors and donations for the population.

Its was mostly the poor and populated KR areas that defected more completely to the CPP, expecting development assistance; while commanders of richer areas were

¹³⁸ (Peschoux, interview, 1997).

¹³⁹ (Vanderstein, interview, 1996).

eager to preserve their control over resources and, as mentioned above, played one potential patron against the other.¹⁴¹ Asked in December 1996 why his unit in Phnom Dey had defected to the CPP, the local KR commander answered:¹⁴²

There is no good way for life in the future [if we continue fighting], we don't want to make the war continuously. The committee of commanders here [units 415, 450, 250] decided to make peace, not Ieng Sary, nor Samlot. We decided to defect to the CPP because the development promises made in August [by Hun Sen] were good. There was no prior negotiation with the CPP, neither with Thai people and investors, who were very surprised by our defection to the CPP. We defected to CPP rather than to Funcinpec because Funcinpec cannot provide for schools etc. because its party is poor and Funcinpec will lose elections [in 1998] so it's better to be with CPP. CPP gives us power, not Funcinpec.¹⁴³

The role of the timber import embargo by Thailand in pushing these KR units to secede from the core group of Khmer Rouge in Anlong Veng is difficult to assess. The organisation of the forestry sector in Khmer Rouge areas as well as revenues generated had developed contacts at the local level between military commanders, politicians and businessmen as well as nurtured personal economic interests within Khmer Rouge ranks (see Chapter 6). These contacts and rising 'consumerism' lessened the orthodoxy of individual commitment of Khmer Rouge cadres and weakened the centralised chain of command of the movement. When these sources of revenue became jeopardised and no way out of the conflict could be expected from a military victory, the option of changing status from hunted down rebel and international pariah to amnestied and courted leader of a rich fiefdom was attractive. Yet, the connections between increased trade followed by an economic embargo, and defection process are not direct and unmitigated. Khmer Rouge leaders in Anlong Veng had benefited from logging revenues for many years, but did not change their

¹⁴⁰ Ieng Sary is also associated with Pailin, mostly as a figurehead.

¹⁴¹ (Widyono, interview, 1996).

¹⁴² Phnom Dey was a locality situated between Pailin and Phnom Malai, of about 30,000 people mostly involved in agriculture and locally financed by the exportation of corn to Thailand (about US\$2 million in 1995). The area had good farmland but forests of poor commercial value and no gem mines, and was thus considered quite

political stand until 1998.

This competition over allegiances destabilised the ‘coalition’ government in 1997 as the Funcinpec attempted to secure an alliance with some of the defectors as well as the Khmer Rouge in Anlong Veng in order to strengthen its position *vis à vis* the CPP.¹⁴⁴ This move was used as a pretext by the CPP to stage a coup d’état in July 1997 and topple Norodom Ranariddh (Ministry of Information 1997).

Since their defection in 1996, ‘breakaway Khmer Rouge’ continued to receive revenue from Thai companies involved in logging and gem mining with the authorisation of the RGC;¹⁴⁵ while RGC institutions at the provincial level had no say in either controlling or taxing operations. Two years after their defection, the breakaway Khmer Rouge headquarters in Pailin, featured a Casino, partially built with Vietnamese labour and financed by the son of the richest Cambodian tycoon (Scroggins 1998).¹⁴⁶ The logic of the integration of the Khmer Rouge into the broader capitalist economy and the ‘casino culture’ of contemporary Cambodian politics had come full circle.

2.2 Reorganising the forestry space: logging concessions

Aside from consolidating their control over logging deals along the border, the leadership of the RGC was also negotiating logging concessions inside the country with transnational logging companies. In turn, these companies were attracted by

poor in comparison to Pailin, Samlot or Phnom Malai.

¹⁴³ (Um, interview, 1996).

¹⁴⁴ CPP had initially agreed for Funcinpec to deal with the KR in Anlong Veng (Heder, pers. com., 1999).

¹⁴⁵ For example the RGC authorised in early 1998 the export of 105,000 cu.m. of untaxed timber from Pailin (Council of Ministers 1998).

¹⁴⁶ The casino was a Thai-Cambodian joint venture with MSP Development, owned by Koh Meng Sreng, the son of the president of the Cambodian Chamber of Commerce Teng Bunma, as Cambodian partner (Scroggins

Cambodian forests which had been protected from intense logging by two decades of war and isolation. The new political context offered them the opportunity to reap the 'peace dividend' and insert Cambodian forests into a process of relocalisation driving the tropical timber industry from traditional Southeast Asian timber producing countries facing timber depletion (e.g. Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia) towards new areas such as the Solomon Islands, Guyana, Surinam, Central Africa, and Papua New Guinea (FAO 1997a).

In late 1995, a new map of the country emerged from the vision of an Indochina moving "from battlefield to marketplace": the British NGO Global Witness presented a confidential document of the MAFF detailing logging concessions. The government had awarded 14 concessions covering 4.1 million hectares and was in the process of awarding 14 others, covering 2.4 million hectares. Two further companies were 'pending' as there was "no forest left to allocate" (Global Witness 1996a). The wartime 'archipelago' of Khmer Rouge controlled areas dominating forested areas had been covered by a peacetime patchwork of forest concessions. In the space of three years, more than 35% of the country's territory had passed from the public domain to the private realm, largely in complete secrecy, sometimes without even officially informing provincial authorities (see Figure 5.2).¹⁴⁷ Technical departments, such as DFW, were most frequently excluded from negotiations and were consulted only to provide an area of forest, or in some cases any area that could be put under forest concession, even if there were not much commercial forest in the area in the

1998).

¹⁴⁷ It is interesting, in this regard, to make a parallel with the rather autocratic creation of 23 protected areas covering 3.2 million hectares on 1 November 1993 by King Sihanouk, upon the recommendation of Ranarridh and the Minister of Environment, Dr. Mok Mareth. While the transfer of public resources for economic development resulted in an outcry in particular by the international community and environmental NGOs, the

first place. As the head of the Forest Management unit of the DFW, confirmed

Technically we cannot give all the forest so the rationale is not technical but political. It is to make companies invest what ever they do, who ever they are, in order to bring money to the country.¹⁴⁸

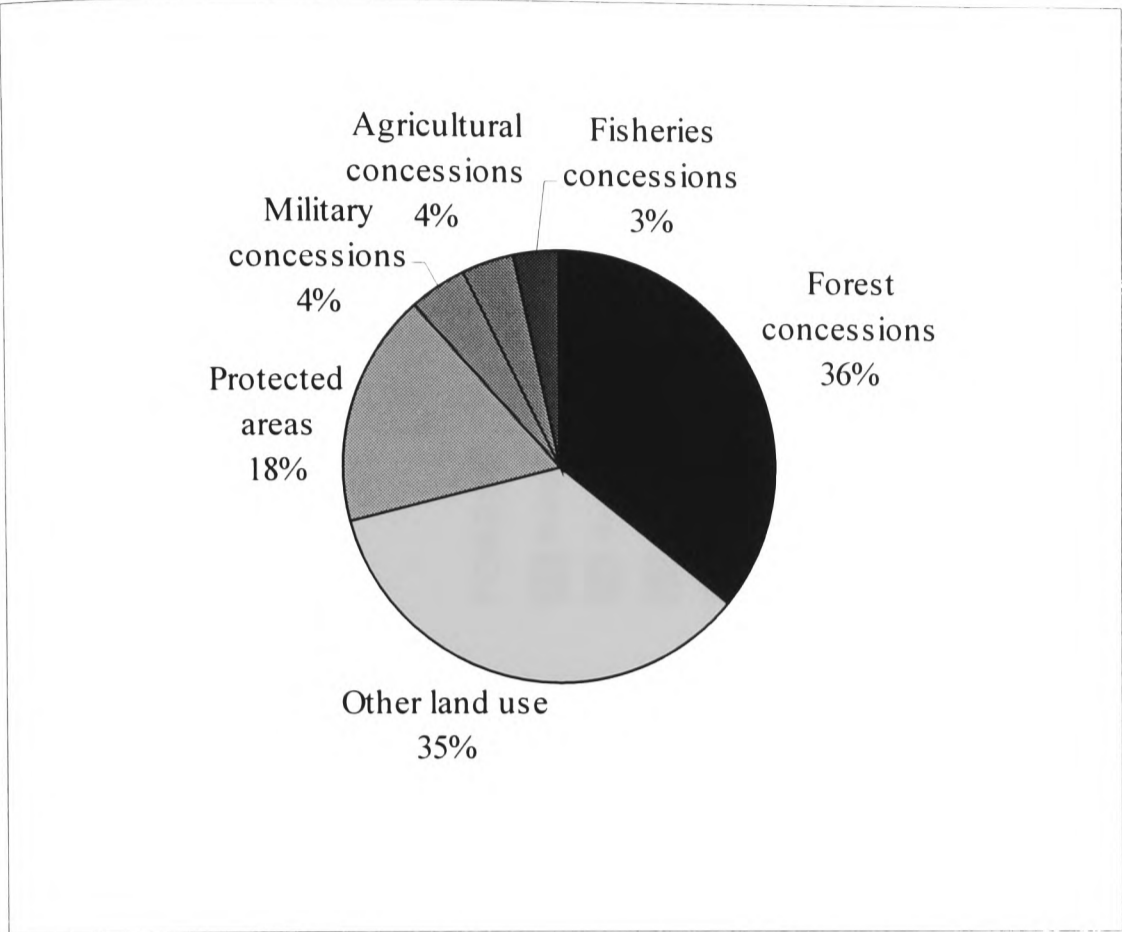
Technically, the DFW estimated that only between 2.2 and 3 million hectares of forests were commercially viable, yet the awarded concessions covered 6.5 million hectares. Between 1994 and 1997, the quasi totality of forested areas, not already included into the system of protected areas, were placed under logging concession agreement.

Until 1993, large-scale logging had been mostly limited to the border areas. Now that the civil war was largely over and the forestry sector could be fully developed, a new logging era was bringing heavily equipped and efficient multinational companies in the entire country. While small scale, and often illegal, logging had provided important job opportunities for many and profit opportunities at intermediate levels during the late 1980s and early 1990s, this modernisation process affected most of the Cambodian forests and many interests of the society by its scale and its concentration (see Chapter 6).

The transfer of rights of access and exploitation from local communities to the private sector was not limited to the forestry sector. Transfers had flourished since the transition to a market economy and even more after 1993. By late 1997, about 65% of the national territory was allocated as concessions or other restricted use status (see Figure 5.2).

¹⁴⁸ preservation of these resources was unconditionally considered a 'wise' thing.
(Mea, interview, 1997)

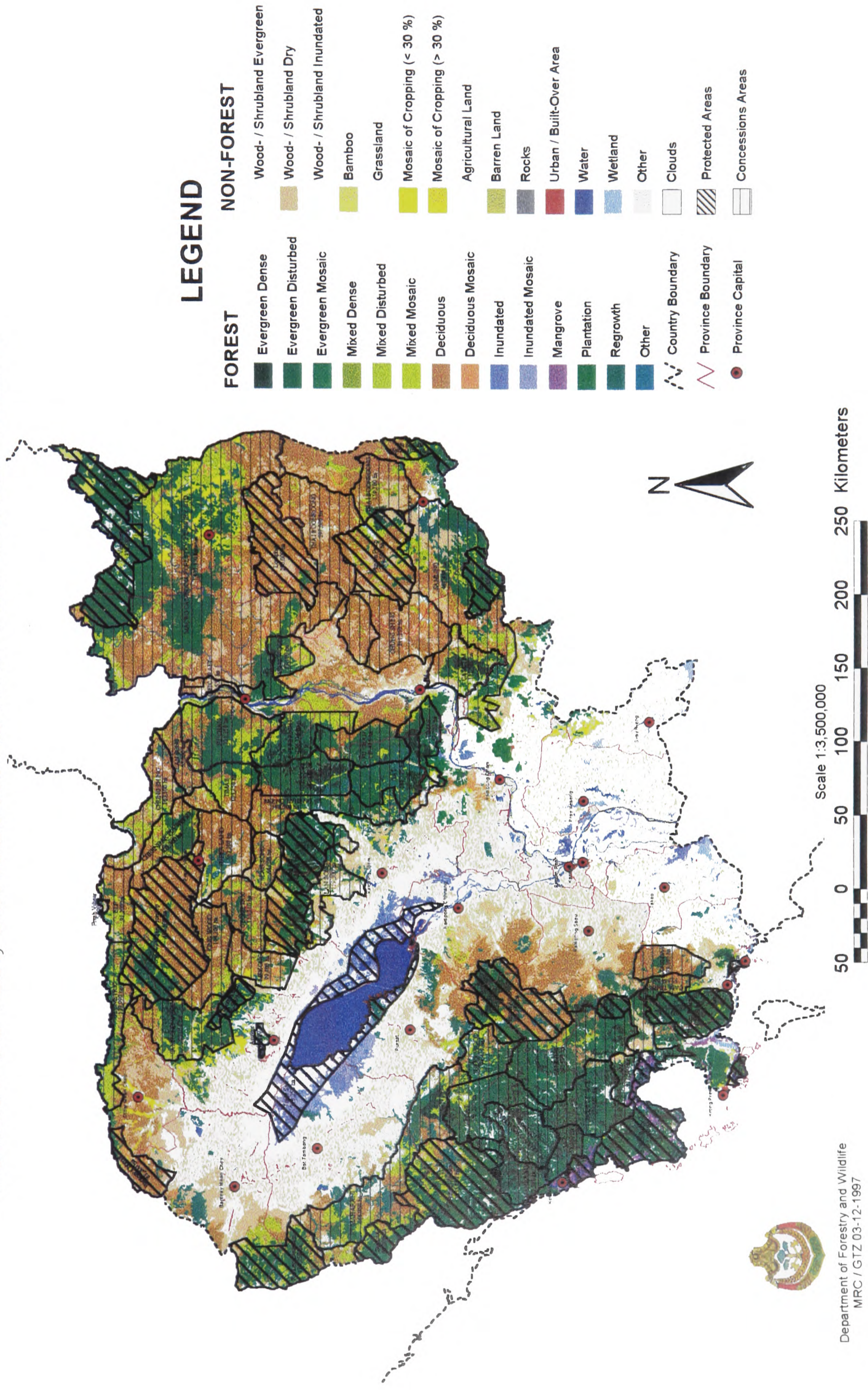
Figure 5.2 – Allocation of land use (1997)¹⁴⁹



¹⁴⁹ Source: (ARD 1998).

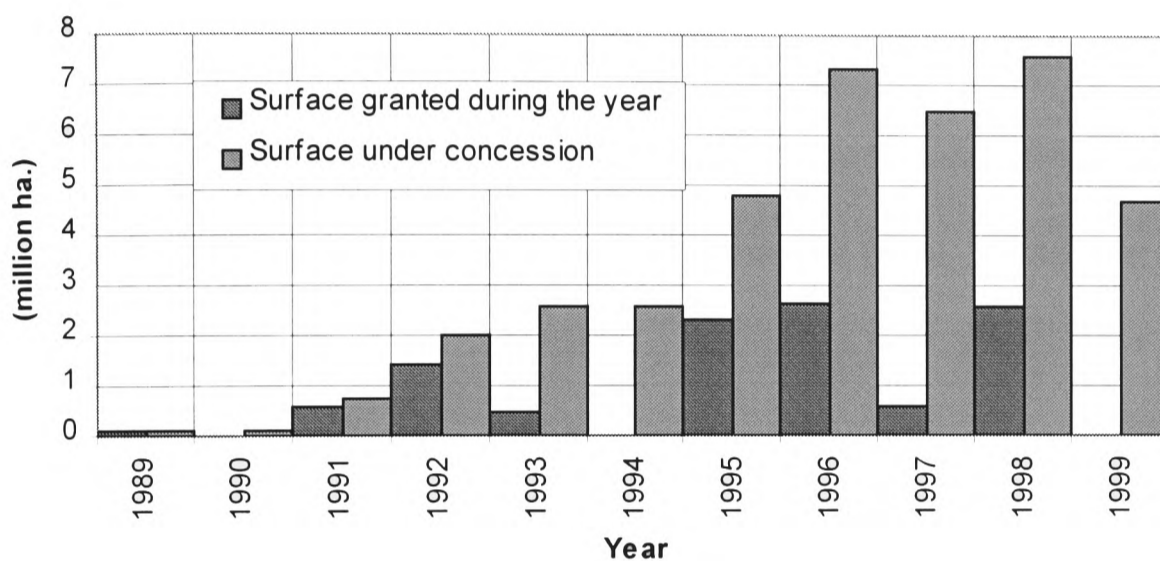
Figure 5.3 - Map of logging concessions (1997)

CAMBODIA FOREST COVER, CONCESSIONS AND PROTECTED AREAS



Between 1989 and 1998, at least 62 concessions were granted by the government in Phnom Penh: 11 during the SoC; 40 during the RGC (1993-1997); and 11 after the coup d'état in 1997. Between 1993 and 1997 about 30 contracts were passed officially by the Cambodian government to lease more than 6.5 million hectares (see Figure 5.4 and Annex 2).

Figure 5.4 - Concession areas (1989-1999)¹⁵⁰



All concessionaire companies were requested to invest heavily in wood processing inside the country, in order to create jobs and to add value on exported products. By early 1997, 24 concessionaires had committed up to US\$ 900 million for infrastructure investments and were supposed to create more than 20,000 jobs. The planned capacity of processing reached 3.4 million cu.m. of round logs per year (Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1997a; DAI 1998b). This volume far exceeded the sustainable extraction volume for commercial timber in the country, which was estimated between 0.5 and 1.5 million cu.m. (DAI 1998b). In return for their (tax free) investment, the companies were offered massive tax exemptions and low royalty rates

¹⁵⁰ Source: (Global Witness 1996a; Ministry of Agriculture, forestry and fishery 1997; Department of Forestry

for harvested timber (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 - Royalty rates and reference prices for Cambodian timber (1995)¹⁵¹

Timber categories	Official royalty rate (US\$/cu.m.)			Reference prices (F.O.B. US\$/cu.m.)		Negotiated log royalties (US\$/cu.m.)	
	Old logs	New logs	Sawn	Logs	Sawn	Process	Export
Grade 1	43.5	60	63.7	255	510	16-20	44
Grade 2	29.0	40	42.5	170	340	11-14	30
Grade 3	23.5	32	34.0	156	272	9-11	24
No grade	14.5	20	21.2	156	272	-	-
Lux grade	81-152	112-210	119-223	408-765	816-1,530	100	-

Forest concessions were officially viewed as a means of reducing uncontrolled logging, capturing added-value through the integration of downstream processing and thereby providing greater employment opportunities (DAI 1998b). In practice, forest concessions provided an internal market for uncontrolled logging, thus extending extraction and illegal logging from border areas to more central forested regions. The capture of added-value was also doubtful, at least from a formal taxation point of view. Under the new concessionaire taxation scheme, about 40% of the potential tax revenue is lost in comparison to that under the previous regime. This loss reaches nearly 70% of tax revenue when the exemption of export tax is taken into account. Finally, the increase in employment opportunities was limited as companies imported, free of tax, heavy machinery that reduced labour requirement. In terms of individual salaries, most of the jobs provided to Cambodians were lowly skilled and paid, ranging from US\$30/month for sawmill workers to US\$120/month for secretaries. From a perspective of rights of access and sustainability of production, concession

and Wildlife 1999).
¹⁵¹ Sources: official royalty rates and reference prices as fixed by MAFF, MC, and MEF (Ministry of Economics and Finance, Ministry of Commerce et al. 1995). Negotiated log royalties, for processing or for direct export, from concession contracts and collection permits (DAI 1998b).

agreements gave “exclusive rights to cut, and remove logs for all marketable trees” within the concession area, without any further reference about entitlements for third parties, such as local populations. Nor did concession agreements mentioned maximal harvestable volume to ensure the reproduction of commercial species.

By early 1998, the number of large factories operating in Cambodia reached 15, with a total processing capacity of about 1.2 million cu.m. of logs (see Table 5.3). However, the factories were reportedly working at less than half of their capacity, mostly for lack of raw material due to delays in logging authorisations.

Table 5.3- Situation of large-scale processing capacity and official actual volume processed in 1997¹⁵²

Product	Log input (cu.m.)	Capital investment (MUS\$)	Employees
Sawnwood	400,000	20	2,000
Plywood	700,000	160	7,000
Total capacity	1,200,000	180	9,000
Actual volume	460,000	-	-

More than half of the factories were Taiwanese investments, occasionally in joint venture with Cambodian companies. The second investor was Malaysia, for about 25%, followed by Singapore and Japan. Spatially, close to 75% of the large scale processing factories operated by forest concessionaires were established close to the capital, a further 20% being located in Kampong Cham and Kampong Thom (Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1997a; DAI 1998b). These locations offered a diversity of potential sources of supplies and benefited from a greater level of security. They also provided access to labour, but reciprocally participated to a further concentration of population. On the other hand, the proximity of concessionaires to

the administrations in charge of controlling and taxing their activities did not pose a threat to their illegal dealings as protection by powerful patrons greatly limited the access and initiatives of mandated civil servants (see Chapter 7).¹⁵³

In early 1998, forest concessionaires started to organise themselves in a formal way through the creation of a Cambodian Timber Industry Association (CTIA) bringing a “common voice ... [for] the better development and improvement of their business environment as well as other common benefits among their peers” (Kong 1998: 1). CTIA’s first motion was to condemn a proposition of taxation on timber exports and to call for the Royal Government to “show more commitment in protecting the interests of investors” (ibid.: 3).

Unsurprisingly, the rapid shift towards this monolithic, foreign driven and exclusive regime of forest exploitation had important consequences. First, the shift made other logging activities illegal according to the terms of the concession contracts and new regulations passed by the RGC banning all other timber trade within the country (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996b). Second, disenfranchised actors - among them non-concessionaire loggers and timber merchants - resisted this shift. Some rejected the new regime to preserve the sustainability of their monopoly over logging activities in particular areas. Others integrated it by treating forest concessionaires as an additional market for their production (see Chapter 6 and 7).

¹⁵² Source: (Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1997a; DAI 1998b). Four factories were also reportedly involved in producing furniture.

¹⁵³ For example, the DFW staff had to be accompanied by the Minister of Agriculture to inspect Pheapimex factory (Hong, interview, 1997; Kim, interview, 1997).

2.3 Controlling the flow of timber

Despite relative progress since the early 1990s, the Forestry Department was not capable of overseeing and controlling such an extensive and complex system of concessions, nor was it able or willing to control other logging and timber trading activities in the country. Its institutional capacity was limited by budgetary constraints and the vast majority of its staff consisted of young graduates with no experience and little incentive to leave the relative safety and comfort of the capital city except in the hope of improving their earnings through opportunities presented by activities of control and law enforcement. These constraints aside, the most important factor in preventing an effective management and control was political. Some logging companies enjoyed the backing of the political leadership of the country, to the point of receiving the direct assistance of the co-Prime Ministers' body guards units to protect illegal logging operations from formal institutions such as DFW (Tao 1997). As detailed in the next two chapters, logging and timber trading were organised through a diverse set of relations and rules that rarely conformed to the formal institutional framework and the legislation.

In practice, little control was exerted upon logging companies by the DFW, to the exception of key stages, such as compulsory stamping to legalise logs as well as during transportation and export on main ways. Inside forests, logging companies had to deal more with local military forces and rogue armed groups than DFW officials. As these groups were often themselves actively involved in logging, violent clashes with companies' security forces or loyal units sent by the government at the request of legally entitled companies occurred. More frequently, agreements were reached between parties, either through the payment of 'protection fees' or through the

purchase of logs produced by these groups by concessionaire companies. Forestry agents, as well as civil servants supervising the exploitation of other natural resources such as fisheries, were relatively powerless if motivated purely by the application of regulations. The situation was usual in most provinces where logging activities were under the control of the military and largely beyond the reach of officials from the Forestry Department.¹⁵⁴ As the director of a provincial Department of Agriculture put it,

Under the argument of the war, the Khmer rouge and the military took the control of the forests and rich areas and this until this day. This system is protected from above because Hun Sen still need the military as there is still a war and even if there is peace there is always economic war. The military always receive the support of the [second] Prime Minister, so we do not bother them. ... They are afraid of loosing their jobs because of peace, so they look for ways to make money ... Capitalism is a real opportunity for high ranking military.¹⁵⁵

On the other hand, officials could be relatively efficient in turning their bureaucratic function into a source of graft by facilitating illegal practices. Institutional powerlessness and individual ability to collect bribes were in fact often working together.

From that perspective, using the force of the state to support formal institutions and rules was often counterproductive and contradictory to the interests of many state actors benefiting from such situation. For example, special enforcement units set up to curb illegal logging were under strict direct orders from the co-Prime Ministers and intervened only very rarely.¹⁵⁶ The existence of a special 'forest protection force' of 1,900 troops set up in 1996 by the government was even doubtful as an international auditing firm could not locate and identify it (DAI 1998b). Such

¹⁵⁴ (Sen, interview, 1996).

¹⁵⁵ (Niv, interview, 1996)

¹⁵⁶ (Ly Seng, interview, 1997)

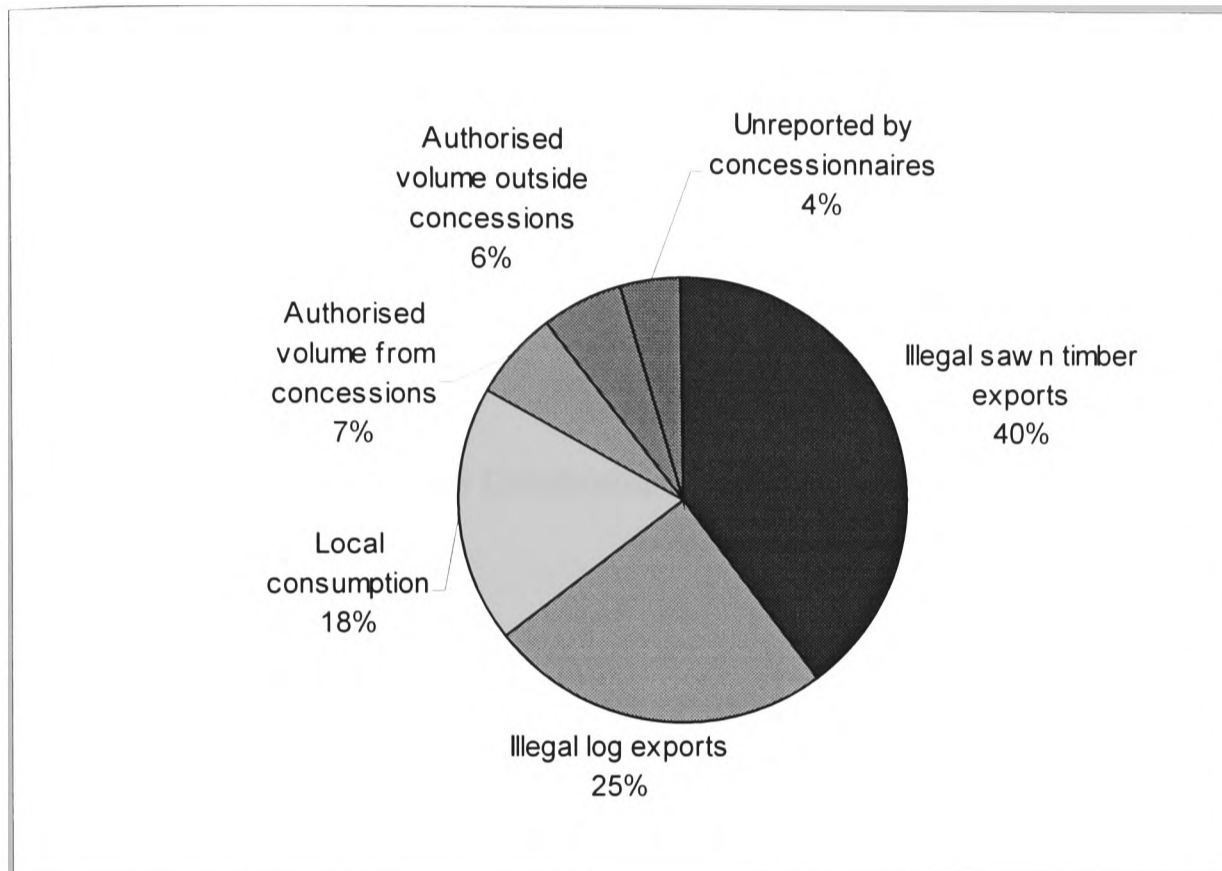
tacit approval of illegal practices by state actors was often blamed upon the idea of politico-economic collusion (Global Witness 1996a), but it also rested on a rationale of economic development and a competitive political context in which state actors required external support and therefore were more placed in a position of seekers than enforcers.

2.4 Forest production and exports

The difficulty of estimating the volume of commercial timber extracted from Cambodian forests between 1993 and 1998 is reflected in the wide diversity of figures available. While governmental figures suggest an annual production of circa 0.5 million cu.m., the World Bank estimate is 1.5 million cu.m. and an international audit estimate is 3.7 million cu.m. (Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances 1996; World Bank, UNDP et al. 1996; DAI 1998b).

According to this latter estimation, the total volume extracted for timber production (excluding fuelwood) in 1997 varied between 3.1 to 4.3 million cu.m. (roundwood equivalent). More than half of this volume was exported illegally, either in the form of logs (0.9 million cu.m.) or sawntimber (0.95 up to 2 million cu.m.). The uncontrolled production for local consumption was estimated at a fifth of the total volume of production (0.67 million cu.m.). The volume of authorised production represented slightly more than a tenth of the total volume (0.46 million cu.m.); half of which was authorised outside of the legal concession scheme (0.21 million cu.m), the other half being exported by legal concessionaires as processed wood (0.25 million cu.m.). Finally, the unreported volume by authorised logging companies was estimated at about 0.16 million cu.m (see Figure 5.5) (DAI 1998b).

Figure 5.5 – Percentage of timber per category of production (1998)



The official figures for exports are presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 - Official volume of round logs and sawnwood (cu.m.) exported from Cambodia by destination (1990-1996)¹⁵⁷

Country	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	Total
Thailand	5,394	10,350	34,964	211,074	514,340	289,538	130,639	1,196,300
Vietnam	70,991	65,474	32,872		29,000	145,366	99,605	443,308
Singapore		5,509	6,896	114,062	149,463	67,199	18,644	361,773
Japan	19,306	23,883	17,296	18,720	16,364	21,860	12,220	129,649
Hong Kong		17,646	14,059	9,600	20,504	46,149	4,775	112,733
China			2,001		22,420	48,022	26,480	98,923
Taiwan				12,228	18,120	20,612	10,804	61,764
Laos				14,000	10,200	8,263	8,420	40,883
Others	9,105	5,022	4,815	2,833	25,136	43,813	290	91,014
Total	104,797	127,884	112,903	382,517	805,547	690,822	311,877	2,536,347

¹⁵⁷ Sources: exportation of logs and sawntimber and export value for 1993, 1994, 1995 from Customs

An estimation of the real volume of Cambodian timber imported by each country is difficult to do due to access to, or absence of data. The dominant market for Cambodia was clearly Thailand, followed by Vietnam and Singapore. Information for Vietnam could not be obtained, but statistical information for Thailand is available and was also completed by Global Witness investigation work. Such evaluation indicates that the volume actually imported represented about four times the volume officially exported, or two times for the period 1994-1996 (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 - Estimation of the Cambodian timber imports (cu.m.) by Thailand (1990-1996)¹⁵⁸

Category	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	Total
Recorded	30,361	74,117	583,331	466,427	578,633	587,429	113,873	296,466	2,809,005
Difference	24,967	63,767	548,367	255,353	64,293	297,891	-16,766	n.a.	1,237,871
Transited	200,000	260,000	156,000	210,000	135,000	130,000	100,000	20,000	1,191,000
Unrecorded	20,000	30,000	40,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	200,000	200,000	690,000
Total	250,361	364,117	779,331	826,427	863,633	867,429	413,873	516,466	4,690,005

From available sources (i.e. official and FAO reports, Global Witness documents and informants), Cambodia's timber exports between 1993 and 1998 can be, very roughly, estimated between 6 and 10 million cubic metres of roundwood equivalent, with a commercial F.O.B. value of approximately US\$ 2.5 billion (see Table 5.2 and Table 5.6).

Department (Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances 1996);
¹⁵⁸ Source: (Royal Forest Department 1996), Global Witness reports. Recorded: official Thai statistics; Difference: difference between official figures for Thai imports and Cambodian exports; Transited: Cambodian

Table 5.6 - Estimation of timber exports and domestic market (thousand cu.m.) in Cambodia (1990-1998)¹⁵⁹

Category	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Exports by SoC/RGC	105	128	113	282	305	541	242	350	450
KR exports	80	200	550	355	570	450	80	75	90
Funcinpec exports	20	50	100	2					
KPLNF exports	20	50	50	1					
<i>Illegal exports</i>									
to Vietnam	150	200	150	110	55	200	200	250	250
to Thailand (by land)	10	10	10	10	50	50	50	50	50
by sea	80	150	300	500	400	400	400	300	200
to Laos	50	60	120	100	120	50	20	20	50
<i>Total exports</i>	515	848	1,393	1,360	1,495	1,691	992	1,045	1,090
<i>Domestic market</i>	500	500	600	650	650	700	700	700	700

Under the former fiscal system, and assuming that the UN and the RGC were able to exercise taxation upon all exports at the standard royalty rate of US\$40/cu.m. plus a 10% export tax on F.O.B. value, the total fiscal revenue for the period 1992-1997 could have reached between US\$ 340 and 545 million. However, taxes collected by the RGC over that period represented only about US\$ 92 million (see Table 5.7).

Table 5.7 - Budgetary revenues from forestry (1992-1996)¹⁶⁰

Year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Forestry revenue (US\$ million)	1.5	3.3	39	27	11	12
% of domestic revenue	1.6	3.2	17.3	10.7	4	n.a.

As already noted, this failure in capturing public revenue was officially due to the inability of controlling illegal logging and in particular some borders, as well as the award of tax exemptions and low royalty rates for concessionaires (see Table 5.2).

timber imported in Thailand through Vietnam and Laos; Unrecorded: direct imports not officially recorded.
¹⁵⁹ Source: author estimates and (Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1997a; DAI 1998b; Royal Forest Department 1998)

However, as Part III further demonstrates, the organisation and taxation of the forestry sector was the result of a complex process in which the metabolism of forests served and shaped power relations.

¹⁶⁰ Sources: (Ministry of Economy and Finance 1997; ARD 1998)

3. Conclusions

As this chapter has demonstrated, between 1993 and 1998, the entrenchment of clientelist networks of governance was both facilitated and necessitated by the exploitation of forests and associated timber politics. This new governance was characterised by regulation based on a complex interplay of social networks through which blurred borders between the public and the private, and a mutual accommodation within the elite, ensured the dominance of politics and individual interests over the rule of law. As such, the rise of politicised networks was accompanied by a further erosion of formal governance and a clear orientation towards an authoritarian rule increasingly commanded by Hun Sen. The divergence of political interests within the coalition and the practice of neo-patrimonialism resulted in the structuration of a scattered polity characterised by bureaucratic bossism and the proliferation of contra-governmental, or anti-state, practices mutually reinforced and influenced by the growth of the economy.

As one of the major sources of wealth, timber was integrated into the 'shadow state' politics of the new regime. In doing so, both co-Prime Ministers opposed or co-opted competing networks consisting of strongmen and unruly clients located mostly at the periphery or within formal institutions. The violence of this integration, and resistance to it, was expressed in a variety of ways. The illegal or clandestine character of agreements and practices, violence between logging groups and towards 'nosy' journalists or scrupulous officials, plunder of resources, dispossession or exploitation of local communities, unequal power relations, and increasing differences

in the distribution of wealth; all testified to the violence of a society supposedly at peace. In this regard, the demise of the Khmer Rouge contrasted with the topicality of their original social critique.

The resolution of the Khmer Rouge ‘problem’ illustrated the ambiguous role played by timber in the (re)organisation of productive networks. As many observers have argued, timber revenues fuelled the war, and even motivated it, or the appearance of it. Yet, the benefits of logging also enticed compromises across political divides and convenient cease fires, participating in this way to the transition from war to peace. The *status quo* of ‘not-war-nor-peace’ between the RGC and the KR, and the power sharing ‘consensus’ between Ranariddh and Hun Sen, demonstrated how competition and accommodation between political actors interplay at a variety of scales, blurring borders between categories such as allies and enemies, war and peace, legal and illegal.

As Chapters 3 and 4 detailed, the patterns of Cambodian politics remained relatively similar throughout the different periods. If the growth of bureaucracy as a social practice marked a watershed in the mode of governance, the prevalence of patron-client relationships nevertheless continued to orchestrate social relations and the hierarchical character of a society governed by individuals assuming *personal* governance, rather than one dictated by formal rules and institutions. However, the case of forestry clearly demonstrated that if patron-client relationships and an authoritarian (neo)patrimonialism endured, the *intermediaries* articulating these relations evolved. Power used to be vested in intermediaries, such as divine authority, kinship, ideology, or historical charisma which did not require large-scale resource exploitation to generate financial windfalls. In this perspective, and aside from

violence, money was in the 1990s the main intermediary flowing through social networks. The ability of party leaders to generate and to secure those revenue flows, and direct them at will, determined much of their legitimacy within the domestic polity by guaranteeing their followers' status, the promotion of their public image and their security. Forests, among other resources, were incorporated into this construction of power, which in turn depended upon it for its reproduction.

After examining the political economy of timber over a century through the last three chapters, one can wonder if power in the 1990s depended on 'consuming' the forest, more than it ever did. The level of exploitation in the 1990s certainly exceeded all previous records. Yet, technical means were newly available and the demand of the international market was higher than ever. As such, the situation of Cambodia could be interpreted as the result of a late encounter with a capitalist process of commodification that had already swept across most of Southeast Asia. However, this technological and economic context alone cannot explain for the pattern of forest exploitation and its political meaning. Rather, power, forests, technology and the market were all interrelated and mutually incorporated into a dynamic totality. Part III will examine aspects of these interrelations through which actors and practices constructed power by consuming the forest.

Part III

Organising the power of the wild woods

“One can catch more fish in cloudy water”

(Cambodian proverb)

Following the analysis of the general socio-political context and policies of forest exploitation in Part II, the two following chapters examine the actors and practices that have organised the forestry sector in the 1990s, with a focus on the period 1996/97, to highlight the relations between the production of nature and the construction of power.

This examination of the forestry sector in Cambodia is based on the concept of ‘commodity chain’.¹⁶¹ Used as an analytical tool to examine the political economy of commodity production processes (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986), a commodity chain can be defined as “a series of interlinked exchanges through which a commodity and its constituents pass from extraction or harvesting through production to end use” (Ribot 1998: 307-308). Commodity chains are composed of networks of actors “clustered around one commodity ... [and] situationally specific, socially constructed, and locally integrated, underscoring the social embeddedness of economic organization.” (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994: 2). From this perspective, a

¹⁶¹ The term ‘production chain’, and its French equivalent ‘filière’, are also used in the literature (Bernstein 1996).

commodity chain is embedded in much wider networks of social actors and practices that encompass more than only those directly interacting with the operations of the commodity chain. Markets are not only driven by economic rationality, governmental policies and legal mechanisms but by a vast array of social relations and institutions, such as for example kinship or religious institutions (Barber 1995). Furthermore mainstream production analysis have often neglected “the most politically sensitive sites along commodity chains, preventing that concept from uniting, in a comprehensive politics, consumption, culture, labor, and the use of nature” (Hartwick 1998: 425). Upon this, Hartwick argues for a “politics of reconnection”, focusing on the conditions of production and the signs of consumption. The analysis of the commodity chain should thus reconnect the variety of sites and actors involved as well as encompass “the whole repertoire of interacting mechanisms shaping [its] operation” (Ribot 1998: 308). This concept of social embeddedness, mainly developed by Polanyi (1957), is crucial to this study in emphasising the role, and construction, of power in the development of the forestry sector and the timber commodity chain in particular.

For this study, I extend the concept of commodity chain in two ways. First, in the case of a study of natural resource based commodity chain, the embeddedness of the commodity chain can be extended to reconnect production to the realm of nature through the dialectical concept of socionature. That is, the analysis should give a role to the (re)source of the commodity itself, in the present case: forests. It should also acknowledge the interplay between that (re)source and the social mechanisms at work in the commodity chain. As detailed in Chapter 2, the idea is neither to revert to environmental determinism nor to simply mention forests as a necessary given for

commodity processes to occur. The idea is to restore a dynamic role for nature in its commodification that has often been undermined by a focus on economics and social institutions in political economy analysis. Second, the concept of commodity chain allows for a greater emphasis on the role of discourses in shaping production, exchange, and consumption practices. In this way, an appreciation of social embeddedness can be extended from the social actors directly involved in the operations of commodification to wider networks with which the commodity chain interacts.

Broadened in these two fashions the commodity chain becomes what I term a *commodity network*, composed of diverse and heterogeneous socio-natural actors organised around both material and discursive practices. This study focuses on specific actors involved in commodity networks: the domestic polity, that is state actors and politicians; the producers directly involved in the commodification process; and the international community, that is foreign donors and international development agencies, as well as environmental pressure groups and the media. A distinction is made between material practices that group actors into production coalitions and discursive practices that group actors into discourse coalitions.

With this argument in mind, the aim of the two following chapters is to bring about a better understanding of the material and discursive metabolism of forests through an examination of social relations taking place between individual actors in organising timber commodity network and participating in the construction of social power. Chapter 6 examines the different actors involved in timber commodity networks during the mid-1990s. Several empirical cases are described and analysed in different areas to inform a conceptualisation of relations within the forestry space

presented in Chapter 7. In this latter chapter, the discursive production of forestry is examined with on emphasis on the interpretation of numerous 'illegalities' characterising the forestry sector, putting them within a logical rather than 'pathological' framework.

Chapter 6

Accessing and controlling forest's commodification

*“The Royal Government shall grant to the Investor the concession areas,
with an exclusive right to cut, and remove logs”*

Macro-Pannin 1,432,930 hectares logging concession agreement ¹⁶²

“It's not your mother who planted these trees!”

Answer of an 'illegal' logger to a forestry inspector ¹⁶³

This chapter identifies the actors involved in timber commodity networks and analyses their strategies of access to, and mechanisms of control over the exploitation of forests. After examining forests and analysing specific cases throughout the country, emphasis is placed on characterising the actors related to the commodification process through authorisation, production, and consumption as well as criticism.

1. Conventional forestry

Before characterising logging in Cambodia, a brief description of 'conventional'

¹⁶² (Macro Cambodia Forestry Ltd 1995)

capitalist logging practices is presented to serve as a reference point. The model is then criticised to highlight the shortcomings of a ‘conventional’ utilitarian approach when applied to a country like Cambodia.¹⁶⁴

1.1 Ideals of timber commodity chain under state-regulated market economy

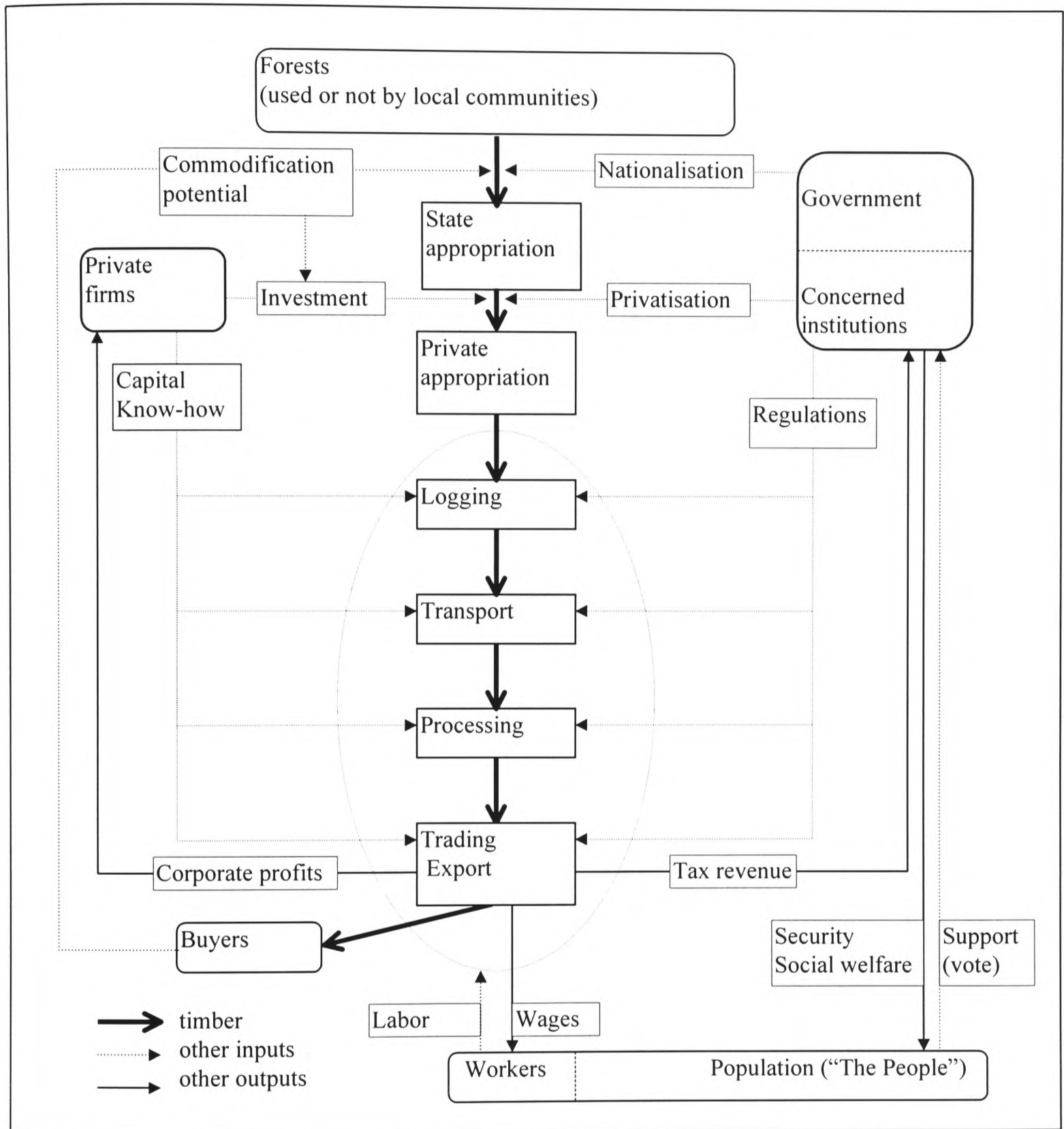
The idealised timber commodity network which can be used to characterise the conventional capitalist model is a succession of political, material, economic and legal mechanisms, which is described in a simplified form in Figure 6.1. Five main actors can be identified: forests, the government, private firms, the population and markets. In this model, markets transform forests into resources following an input of: the government, through regulations; private firms, through capital and know-how; and populations, through labour.¹⁶⁵ The population plays a dual role of legitimisation for the government, through elections; and production for the firms, through paid labour. The state-population nexus acts as a regulatory safeguard against firms that would otherwise have “no stake in [forest’s] sustainability ... unless the society puts a value on sustainable conservation and management of the forests and enforces conditions” upon forest exploitation (Bruenig 1996: 87-88).

¹⁶³ (DFW-Snoul, interview, 1997)

¹⁶⁴ For a governmental view of conventional forestry in Sarawak, see (Bugu, 1995).

¹⁶⁵ The case taken is one of timber export, thus the population is not part of the market.

Figure 6.1 - Timber commodity network under conventional state regulated market conditions



This conventional approach to forest exploitation rests upon four main principles related to broader concepts of state-regulated market economy and sustainable development currently predominant in mainstream theories of development and valuing 'sustained (economic) growth'. These principles are:

First, markets are the most efficient tools of resource definition and allocation to ensure economic growth. The use of forests is thus best decided by national and international markets, rather than by indigenous socio-economic and cultural beliefs or traditional local uses.

Second, forests belong to the state; not to local communities. This decision, denying possible pre-existing user rights or ownership by non-state actors, is legitimated by the "power of representation" (Clapham 1982) of the state for the population at large and its mandate to ensure the best management of the 'common good' to serve the general interest of the nation. In other words, customary forest exploitation rights are taken from 'some people' - communities traditionally using forests - to be reallocated to 'The People' - the "imagined community" of a country (Anderson 1983). In similar ways, the sovereignty of the country and the state precludes forests from being assigned to serve the interests of the 'global community'; along ideas circulated since the mid-1980s in the report 'Our Common Future' and international conventions on biodiversity conservation or climate change (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987; Sachs 1993).

Third, forest exploitation rights are transferred from the state to competent private firms for maximising the economic rent extracted from exploitation. Private capital is more readily available and more efficiently distributed and managed, than

public investments directed by a planned economy or by the limited means of local communities. The rent maximisation guaranteed under market rule ensures a growth in economic activities providing greater benefits for the population represented by the state, through a legitimate taxation, allowing a just redistribution of wealth, and through direct employment for the population.

Fourth, science can determine the optimal level of extraction and define techniques able to ensure the sustainability and maximisation of economic, environmental and social benefits as well as the minimisation of related costs and their even distribution upon the population. The state defines and enforces these principles upon private firms through regulatory practices.

Actual practices in a given forestry sector obviously diverge from this ideal model and Cambodia is no exception to this. However, before pointing to what assessments based on this idealised model would consider as the ‘pathologies’ of Cambodian forestry, the model can be criticised in itself.

1.2 A critique of ideals

The main weakness of this idealised model is associated with the principle of delegation of power for managing and controlling the distribution of forest resources to the state and associated private firms. In other words, this model is susceptible to the distorting effects of autonomous state power as this model assumes a broad social coherence within society reflected in the legitimacy of governance, be it democratic or else. In other words, this system is based upon the idea of a society in which *resources are governed by rights*: that is, by rules agreed by society through law or custom.

Without such coherence, the fragmentation of social control and the disintegration of the state's legitimacy ensure that the instrumental definition and distribution of resources in themselves become the means of social and political control through the power that they confer. This power is then also resisted, or accommodated, by actions upon this instrumental definition and distribution of resources. In short, the model becomes not only vulnerable to distortions in a society in which *resources are governed by access*, but also becomes, in turn, an instrument of social fragmentation.¹⁶⁶ The result is a complex array of interventions upon the commodification process through a set of legal *and* extra-legal mechanisms including social status, misuse of public authority, trickery, coercion and violence, physical circumstances, as well as social and financial capital (Ribot 1998).

These two regimes of resource governance, by rights and by access, are not mutually exclusive (e.g. rights can provide access, and access often leads to rights). They rather generally co-exist in all societies, as effective exercise of rights over resources are, of course, intrinsically conditioned by a capacity of access. The interest of distinguishing these two concepts is that the ideal model of conventional logging acknowledges only a limited conception of power governing resource use, that defined by *de jure* rights, and not *de facto* access. In particular, it does not take into account the multidimensional aspects of unequal power relations that determine conditions of access and definition of rights.

This critique provides a perspective from which the following section examines the socio-political intelligibility of the mismanagement and apparent anarchy of the forestry sector in Cambodia to understand who benefits, and how, from

¹⁶⁶ Access is defined as the “opportunity to reach [or] use” through all possible means (Thompson 1995: 8).

forest exploitation under the condition of a fragmented society where resources are governed by access, rather than by rights.

2. Logging roots: the Cambodian forests

The first node in timber commodity networks in Cambodia is composed of forests which are objectified and appropriated by the government as timber concessions or protected area; with only marginal areas left as unclassified forests.¹⁶⁷ But more importantly than their *de jure* classification, forests are defined in relation to commodity networks by their market value and their *de facto* geographical and social conditions of access.

2.1 Forest types

From a commercial forestry perspective, three broad categories of dryland forest types are recognised: evergreen, semi-deciduous, and deciduous forests (Wharton 1968; Boonyabhas 1988; Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1998).¹⁶⁸ If some forests can be clearly identified as one particular type, in many other cases these forest types are intimately mixed; in a process of degradation or transition; or differentiated by rainfall patterns, in particular intensity and the length of the dry season, fire, soil, hydrography, as well as anthropogenic factors (FAO 1994a).

Evergreen forests consist of a diverse multi-layered structure with an irregular canopy averaging a height of 30 meters with emergent trees exceeding 40 meters.

¹⁶⁷ In January 1999, about 2 million ha. of concessions - mostly in timber poor deciduous forests - were reclassified as 'protected forests' (Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1999).

They also include a ‘dwarf’ forest in swampy depressions and a hill evergreen forest above 700 meters. In 1993, these forests covered 4 million hectares. They have the highest commercial value for the timber industry. The largest proportion of them have been disturbed or degraded.

Semi-deciduous forests (or semi-evergreen, or mixed forests) can be considered an intermediary between evergreen and deciduous forests, both in terms of difference in tree density and size with the former, and dominance of deciduous species with the latter (Rollet 1972). These forests require an annual rainfall of more than 1,200 mm. and a dry season of a maximum of 3 to 5 months. They cover about 1.3 million ha. and have a commercial value close to that of evergreen forests.

Deciduous forests are generally open forest with a grass and shrub undergrowth frequently burnt during the dry season (Rollet 1972; UNEP 1995; Jones 1998).¹⁶⁹ These forests dominate the landscape of northern and eastern Cambodia when the altitude is lower than 600 meters. They cover about 4 million hectares; or slightly more than 5 million hectares if woodlands are included on this category. Their commercial value is about a third of that of the other two categories (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1- Estimated volume and value of commercial timber per hectare (1995)¹⁷⁰

Forest type	Evergreen forest	Semi-deciduous forest	Deciduous forest
Commercial stock	104 cu.m.	80 cu.m.	35 cu.m.
Value	US\$ 19,000	US\$ 17,000	US\$ 7,000

¹⁶⁸ From a botanical perspective, 18 different types of forests have been identified (Legris and Blasco 1972). For a description of the vegetation in Cambodia, see (Maurand 1943; Rollet 1972; Dy 1981; Ashwell 1997).

¹⁶⁹ A study based on satellite information estimated that close to 40% of the ‘dry mixed deciduous forest’ had been affected by fire at the time of investigation (UNEP 1995).

¹⁷⁰ Source: FOB commercial value (*not* stumpage value) estimated from (Legris and Blasco 1972; Ministry of Economics and Finance, Ministry of Commerce et al. 1995a; Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1998).

2.2 Forest cover

The first available figure for forest cover dates back to 1898, with French foresters estimating that forests covered a third of Cambodia or around 4 million hectares (Boude 1898). During the 1920's the extent of forest was estimated at 4.5 million hectares and at independence it was estimated at 10 million hectares, as even deciduous forests with low tree density were included (Service Forestier 1928; Robbe 1953). A series of forest inventories based on aerial photographs and ground surveys were carried out in the 1950s-1960s, culminating in the first comprehensive forest cover assessment undertaken between 1957 and 1963 as part of a general land use project funded by USAID. The results of this study calculated that forests covered 73.6% of the Cambodian territory (see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2- Forest cover estimates in Cambodia 1898/1997¹⁷¹

Year	1898	1918	1939	1953	1958	1975	1986	1991	1992	1993a	1993b
Dry land forests (%)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	69.3	64.3	60.4	n.a.	58.2	57.4	55.7
Total forest Cover (%)	33	33	45	55	73.6	75.8	67.2	40	65.8	65.9	58

The forests of Cambodia have long been influenced by human activities (Legris and Blasco 1972). The movements of populations and long term settlements over thousands of years have shaped the vegetation cover through agriculture, fires, and the collection of forests products including timber. This human impact is most clearly illustrated in the disappearance of most lowland forests in the proximity of long term human settlements in the 'historic' central provinces and at the periphery of

¹⁷¹ Sources: 1898: (Boude 1898); 1918: (Service Forestier 1928); 1939: (Fédération Indochinoise 1947, cited in Durand 1994); 1953: (Robbe 1953); 1958: (Tichit 1981); 1975 (1973/76), 1986 (1985/87), 1992 (1991/1993):

the Tonle Sap as the population shifted from floodland farming, taking place after the burning of grassy vegetation and bushes, to wet rice farming in “higher areas, mostly overgrown with dense forests, [which] were reclaimed into bounded rice fields” (Van Liere 1989: 149). The role of agricultural settlements and the use of fires has also been indicated in transforming the northern plains of Cambodia and the hills of the north-east (Wharton 1968).

Less well recognised is the impact of the transfer of population from the forested and hilly regions to the lowlands through slavery up until the late 19th century. These movements of population, as well as other transfers such as the deportation of Angkorian population to the Kingdom of Siam following military victory by the latter in the 15th century, have played a role in shaping Cambodia’s landscape.¹⁷²

The high forest coverage is thus explained by a concentration of population in the central flood plain which greatly limited forest conversion to agriculture in peripheral regions. The population was furthermore relatively small. At the beginning of the French Protectorate, the population of Cambodia was estimated at just above a million people, without the western provinces under Thai control (Aymonier 1876). National census counted 5.7 million people in 1962 and 11.4 million in 1998 and demonstrated that the spatial distribution of population had not changed much since the end of the 19th century, with the exception of more dense settlements in coastal areas (Migozzi 1972; National Institute of Statistics 1998). Behind the current average density of 63 inhabitants per square kilometer, a sharp divide exists between human settlements in the plains and those of the peripheral regions (see Figure 6.3).

(FAO 1994c); 1991: (Benge 1991); 1993a (1990-1995): (JAFTA 1995); 1993b: (FCMP 1998).
¹⁷² Forests now covering pre-Angkorian and Angkorian settlements demonstrate not only the “vigorous capacity

Populations are concentrated in the alluvial flood plain and along the Mekong and its tributaries; while scattered communities practising mostly shifting cultivation are distributed in the peripheral regions of the country.

The several wars of the late 20th century and the Khmer Rouge regime have been erroneously associated with a decrease in forest cover (Sin 1992). After a period of intense forest colonisation and conversion in the 1960s, satellite imagery indicates that, on the contrary, the dramatic events of the 1970s resulted in an increase of forest and woodlands cover; which can be explained by the exodus of population during the war and the inefficiency of land clearances during the Khmer Rouge regime (Picq 1984; Chandler 1993; FAO 1994c). This situation reversed during the first years of the PRK regime, with massive return of population towards either their place of origin in the central 'historic provinces' of Cambodia or a flight to the Thai border.

Several estimations of the forest cover have been conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, especially at the request, and with the support, of international development agencies. Land cover changes at the national and provincial levels between 1953 and 1993 are presented in Annex 4. The annual rate of deforestation for the period 1986 to 1992 has been estimated at - 0.5 %, or 56,000 ha. (FAO 1994c).

2.3 Distribution and exploitation of forests

Forests are currently located on each side of the central plain oriented along a diagonal north-west/south-east which covers a third of the country (see Figures 5.2

of reconstitution of the majority of lowland forests after felling, burning and temporary culture" (Rollet 1972); but also a capacity to regain ground even after long periods of agricultural use (UNESCO, 1994).

and Annex 3).¹⁷³ Forests in the south-west consist of evergreen humid forests on the seaward slopes of the Cardamon Mountains and hill evergreen forests above an altitude of 700 meters. On the slopes going down to the central plain, forests are generally a mix of evergreen and semi-deciduous forests increasingly degraded and replaced by an open deciduous forests in the lowlands, especially in the central provinces. In the north and north-east deciduous forests dominate but there are as well large mosaics of semi-deciduous forests. Dense evergreen forests can also be found, especially in the regions west of the Mekong and on the Kontum plateau in the area of three borders (Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam) as well as on the Chhlong Loeu plateau at the border between Kratie and Mondulkiri provinces.

The forest cover and commercial logging operations taking place in 1997/98 are presented in Figure 6.4 (DAI 1998b).¹⁷⁴ By this time, commercial exploitation, which was previously concentrated along the tributaries of the Mekong and the central border regions with Vietnam, had been extended to much of the country. The only forests remaining unexploited were in the centre of the Cardamom Mountains, much of which is of poor commercial value due to the altitude. A large proportion of the flow of timber was oriented towards neighbouring countries as 'rich forests' were located along international borders, or were still inaccessible from the Cambodian capital by the mid-1990s. Infrastructure investments, in roads and heavy duty trucks, were thus required to extract timber on an industrial scale for many of the rich forests

¹⁷³ This is a simplified representation. Only 'evergreen' and 'deciduous' forests have been represented and 'semi-deciduous' forests have for the most part integrated into the 'evergreen' category.

¹⁷⁴ Three categories are identified: legal logging operations; illegal logging operations for the domestic market or export oriented processing; and illegal logging operations with direct exportation. The pattern of logging was determined for commercial timber only, from satellite imagery and aerial surveys, and should not be interpreted as equivalent to deforestation but only to forest degradation as resulting from selective logging rather than clear-cutting. The map is to be interpreted with caution.

spatially oriented towards the domestic market. The pattern of logging corresponded to economically rational operations rather than to legally authorised ones. Interestingly, logging that had been officially authorised accounted for only a few percent of the total logged areas. The practices of exploitation are examined in the following section.

Figure 6.2 - Map of forest cover (1997)

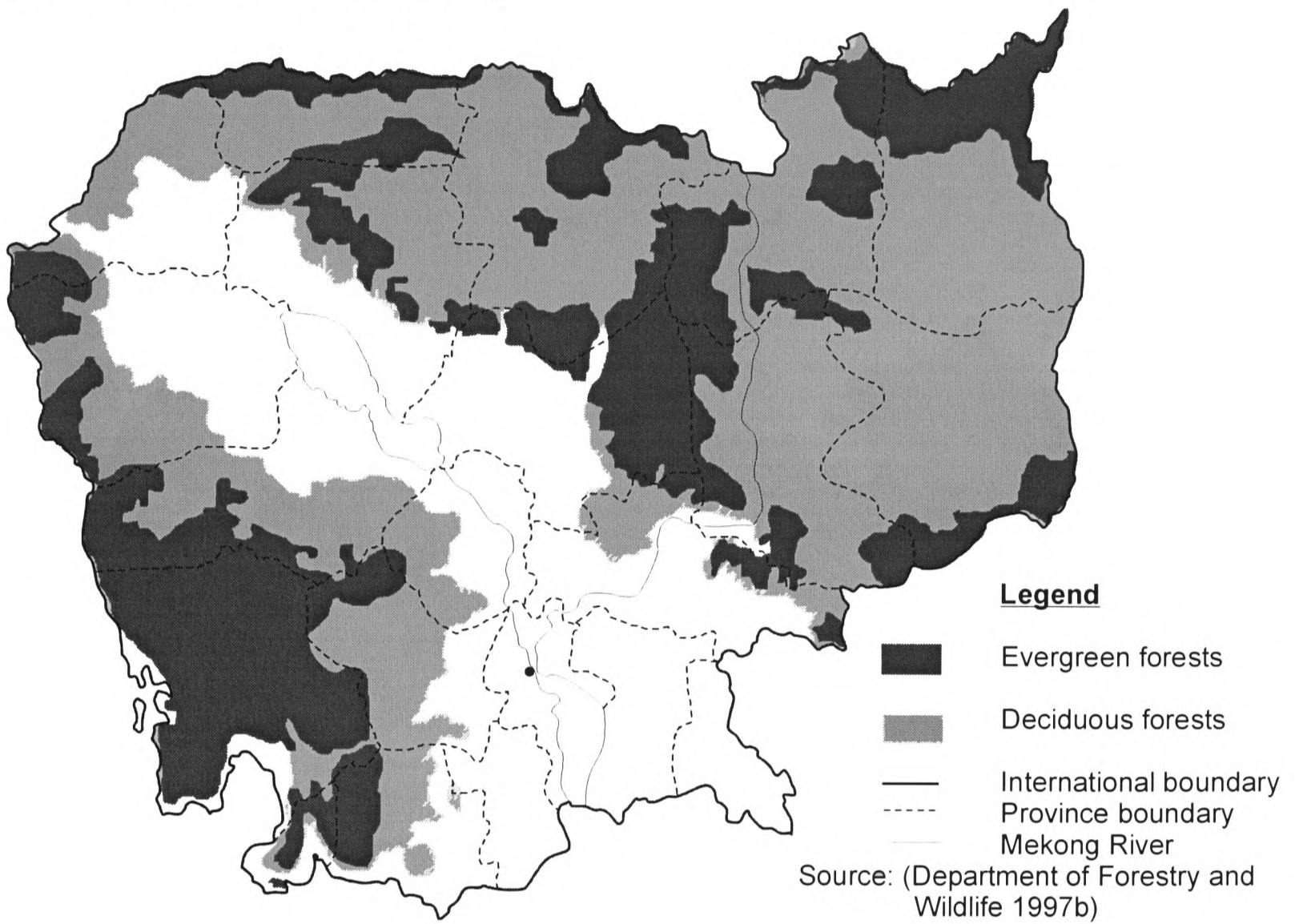


Figure 6.3 - Map of population density per district (1993)

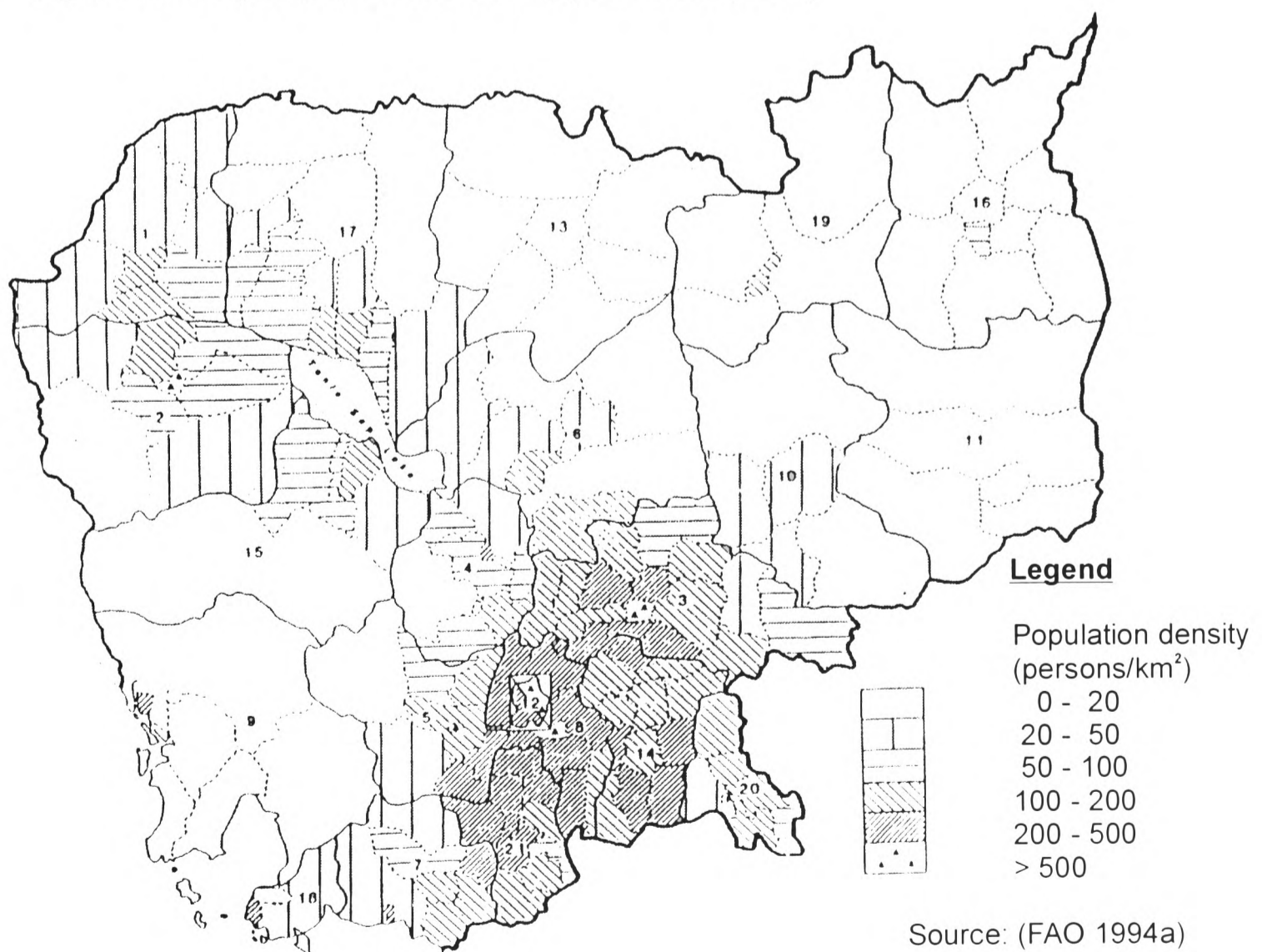
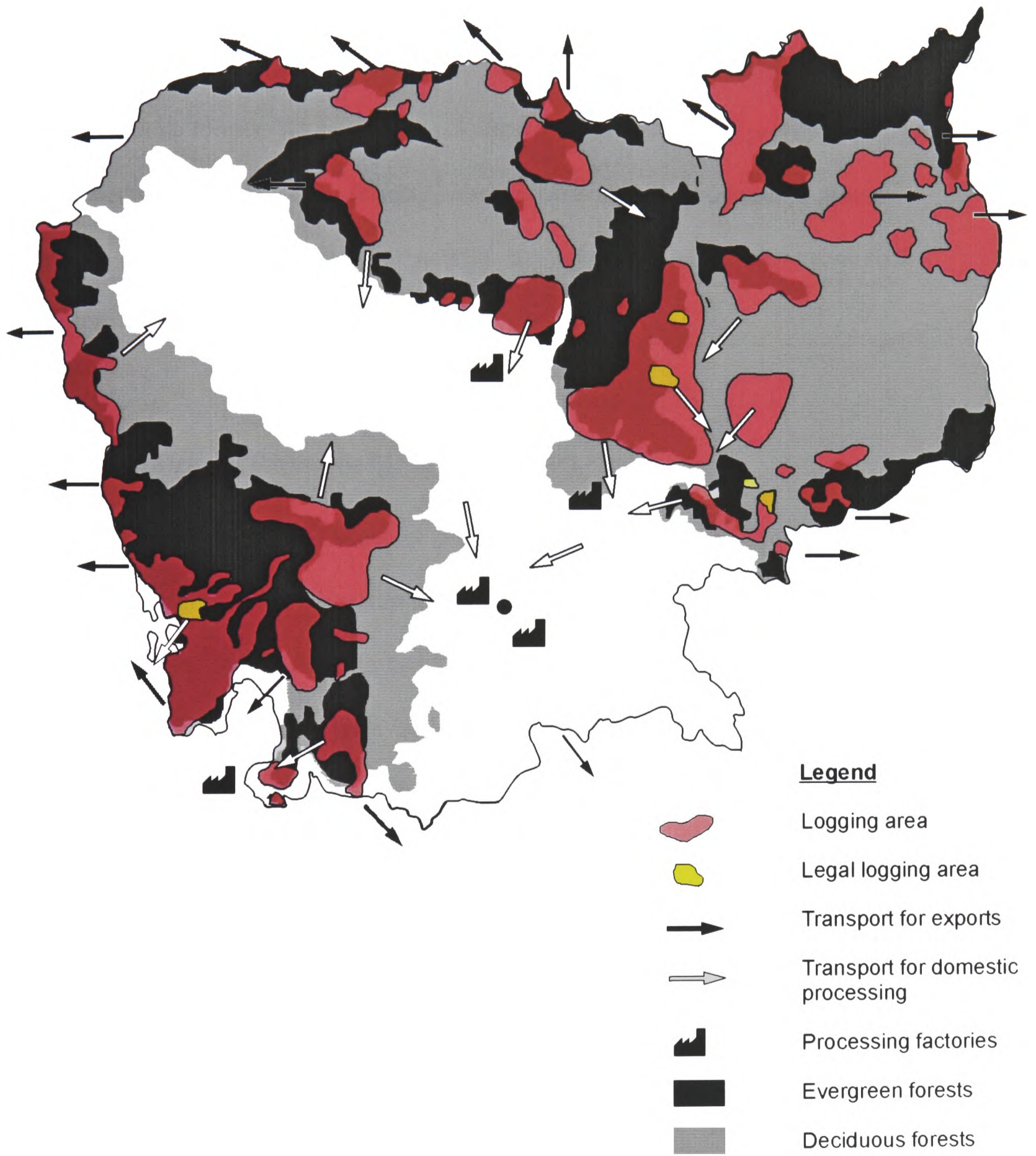


Figure 6.4 - Map of logging areas and main flows of timber (1997)



3. Consuming the forest: cases

This section examines actors and practices constituting the timber commodity network in several key regions in the mid-1990s. Intensive forest exploitation was concerning 14 out of 21 provinces. For most of them, the overwhelming factor organising the plunder was the proximity of buyers and transport infrastructures to highly valuable forests. While it is not possible, for lack of space, to present a detailed and exhaustive account of the forestry sector in each of these provinces, I provide an analysis of key areas, which illustrates the dynamics of timber commodity networks.¹⁷⁶

3.1 The Mekong River: the forest central artery

Flowing down from Laos to Vietnam through rich timberlands, the Mekong has long proved a valuable vehicle for timber extracted in the provinces of Stung Treng, Kampong Thom and Kratie. Timber floating reached an industrial scale during the early colonial period, when steam-boats became available to drag down large rafts.¹⁷⁷ In the mid-1990s, transport down the Mekong River was conducted mostly by small boats and rafts owned by individual entrepreneurs, rather than directly by concessionaires using modern barges; with boat owners purchasing logs or being sub-contracted to transport them to the mills.

From Laos to Kratie, the river is treacherous, with numerous islands and small rapids, and is only passable during the high water season from April to December or

¹⁷⁶ Unless otherwise stated, the following information was collected through interviews or direct observation conducted during fieldwork in 1996/1997.

January (see Figure 1.1). As the level of the water seasonally decreases each year, so does the transportable volume of logs - from 200 cu.m. per boat down to 25 cu.m.. Between Stung Treng and Kampong Cham, a dozen major log yards established by concessionaires and timber merchants on the banks of the river gather logs from all over the region, sometimes stretching for several kilometres. After Kratie the river flows uninterrupted to major markets, Kampong Cham, Phnom Penh, where the vast majority of concessionaires have located their mills. This location guarantees them a diversity of supply sources as many concentrated their activities on purchasing timber at their mill's gate or in upstream areas through 'collection permits', rather than in exploiting directly their concessions.

Following the flow of timber from the forests of Stung Treng, the value of logs increases tenfold between the felling site in Stung Treng province and the gate of the processing mill in Phnom Penh (thirtyfold if reaching Vietnam). Logs in the forests of Stung Treng are worth US\$10-12/cu.m.. With dry conditions, truckers can make around US\$300-500/day in transporting timber from the forest to the river (two trips per day carrying 10-17 cu.m./truck). Having reached the river, logs prices fetch US\$40/cu.m.. The upper reaches of the river were, in the study period, 'insecure' due to the permanent presence of KR units and 'rogue' army units but, as a result, there is no need for official authorisations and only bribes of a few US\$ are paid at military checkpoints. Transport by boat from Stung Treng to Kratie varies from US\$5-27/cu.m. according to the water level. A boat can be rented US\$150-300 if self-driven; US\$300-400 if run by someone else with an armed escort.

¹⁷⁷ Dense hardwoods sink and therefore need support, either by ropes tied to the boat or by bamboo floats for rafts.

Having travelled downstream to Kratie, the price of logs reaches between US\$80-100/cu.m.. The rest of the journey to Phnom Penh is much more controlled, not only by official DFW foresters but also by Kampong Cham's Governor, Hun Neng, who provides provincial permits for an informal fee of about US\$20/cu.m..¹⁷⁸ The provincial military enforces this control; in particular by Sath Soeun, a colonel convicted of murdering an inquisitive journalist in 1994.¹⁷⁹ The strategic position of Kampong Cham with regard to the timber flow - as it also controlled timber coming by road from Kampong Thom - gives it the ironic reputation of making its leaders rich from forestry despite having no forest left in the province.

The price of logs in Kampong Cham and Phnom Penh at the mill's gate varies between over US\$160/cu.m. with an appropriate licence, to US\$130/cu.m. otherwise. Log prices reached about US\$300/cu.m. on the Vietnamese side of the border, making the additional journey a highly lucrative activity. However, because of the log export ban, exports required military escorts backed by high ranking officials, or the discreet smuggling of only small quantities.

3.2 Ratanakiri: dispossession and the mirages of development

With valuable forests and the most important ethnic minority communities in Cambodia, logging in the north-eastern province of Ratanakiri has become a highly contested activity within and between local communities, provincial elite, and environmentalists. Marginalised and alienated by the development of rubber

¹⁷⁸ Hun Neng is Hun Sen's brother; he was Governor of Kampong Cham since 1985 (Jennar 1995a). The fee was relatively similar to that of other provinces where domestic logs can reach the international market (i.e. foreign country or large processing mill).

¹⁷⁹ Col. Sath Soeun, or Soeun Penda, was acquitted a year after his conviction (Lor 1997).

plantations and other agricultural schemes in the 1960s that brought an influx of lowland Khmers; ethnic minorities in the north-east nurtured resentment and distrust towards the people of the central plains and the cities leading to clashes with governmental authorities and troops in the late 1960s (Meyer 1971; Matras-Troubetzkoy 1974). Many became attentive listeners and followers of the Khmer Rouge movement, which found in these communities the essential space and support that it needed during its first years, as well as part of its inspiration for “ideology of community” (Chandler 1993; Colm forthcoming). Later disabused by the oppression of the Khmer Rouge regime, several of these communities fled to remote areas, to come back only after the victory of Vietnamese forces. Since then, they have re-established their traditional livelihood, based largely on shifting cultivation.¹⁸⁰ From the mid-1980s, Vietnamese logging companies started to operate in the province, generally through barter deals set up by provincial elite on both sides of the border. These deals mostly focused on timber but also included the export of rattan and rubber.¹⁸¹

Timber extraction encroached on ethnic minorities lands, damaging fields, roads and forests, some of which were culturally valued as burial grounds or ‘spirit forests’. Communities complaints went unheeded or resulted in token compensation as logging received the backing of the provincial and central authorities for furthering ‘development’. Furthermore, while initial deals in the 1980s resulted in tangible outputs, including the construction of a small hydropower station, buildings, and road

¹⁸⁰ For an analysis of contemporary livelihoods, see (Bourdier 1995).

¹⁸¹ The difficulty of the Vietnamese government to enforce its own policies against the interests of provincial and military elite was well illustrated by the failure of the Prime Minister VoVan Kiet to impose a provisional ban on timber exports in 1993 due to the resistance of party officials in the southern and central provinces (Hill 1993).

improvements; timber export gains moved along the general trend of politicisation and self-interest characterising the Cambodian political economy of the 1990s. Promised development projects failed to materialise and taxes were directly assigned to parallel military and political budgets. Concurrently, the local elite greatly improved its lifestyle by taking personal stakes into the timber extraction and export. A Cambodian timber exporter was, for example, obliged by Vietnamese provincial authorities to deal with local companies belonging to a local Vietnamese politician; rather than with other companies guaranteeing him an additional profit of US\$10/cu.m..¹⁸² In turn, the import company, which had diversified into the production of garden furniture, was related to importers in the UK, themselves connected to retailers reaching the individual British consumer; which in turn extended 'discursively' the timber commodity network to Britain through an information campaign by Global Witness, peaking with a prime-time documentary on Channel 4.

The personal stakes taken at the provincial level in timber exports also related to a 'snowball effect' resulting from granting timber export licences. As presented in Chapter 5, while log export bans were instituted for most of the mid-1990s, numerous exceptions were granted by the co-Prime Ministers. These exceptions took generally the form of official agreements between the Cambodian and Vietnamese governments at a central level (Global Witness 1998). Once the agreement was passed between the two governments and the companies, many separate deals were passed at the local level between the local authorisers, such as the head of the police or the provincial governors, and the importer. The exported logs were then stocked in transit log yards

¹⁸² (Khim, interview, 1997; Global Witness, interview, 1998).

in the no-man's land, where Cambodian authorisers checked the actual volume that had been exported and levied an informal fee on the extra volume, which could represent up to four or five times the licensed volume.¹⁸³

The opening of the border presented several interrelated opportunities. First, additional timber could be exported on top of the official quota. Individual people felled trees, claimed ownership, and sold them to the importer coming to fell and collect logs. These individual people could be politicians or strongmen subcontracting small logging groups to fell several hundred cu.m., as well as individual soldiers selling a dozen logs. The Vietnamese company was then exporting as much as it could within the time period granted by the export licence, bribing customs and law enforcement officials to facilitate transport within the province and turning a blind eye to the breach of officially licensed export volume. These bribes constituted the second opportunity and could be between a few dollars for simple local militia personnel to several thousand dollars for Military Police coming especially from Phnom Penh to supervise the export. A similar contract sealing a deal for timber export to Laos contained a total of US\$37/cu.m. to be paid to various institutions outside of the legal taxation system (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 - Fees paid for 'illegal' log exports to Laos¹⁸⁴

Recipient	Fee (US\$/cu.m.)
Military Region 1	7
Provincial Joint Committee (sub-region police)	15
Police at border points (all institutions)	5
Forestry Department (measurement and stamping)	5
Miscellaneous fee	5
Total	37

¹⁸³ (Kep, interview, 1997).

In a related example, in 1997/98, a request for timber export came from the RCAF as part of larger export deal to Vietnam and to Thailand via Laos.¹⁸⁵ The official export agreement between the co-Prime Ministers to the Prime Minister of Vietnam mentioned a total of 27,000 cu.m. for ‘illegal logs’ to be exported from Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri provinces to help finance the military.¹⁸⁶ However, an independent survey by Global Witness in March 1998 estimated that between this operation and a similar one conducted in 1997, Vietnam had imported about 260,000 cu.m. of logs from the two provinces (Global Witness 1998). Aside from ‘feeding’ the soldiers of Military Region 1, the revenue from this massive timber export was allegedly used for the 1998 electoral campaign of the CPP. The case of a log export taking place in 1997-1998 is presented in Figure 6.5.

¹⁸⁴ Letter from Pipat forestry Co. to Ke Kim Yan, RCAF Chief of Staff dated 16/n.a./1998.

¹⁸⁵ Letters No. 1414/97 and No. 1415/97 dated 27/10/97 from Gen. Ke Kim Yan.

¹⁸⁶ Letter dated 7/11/97 from Ung Huot and Hun Sen; letter No. 6732/KTTH dated 30/12/97 from Lai Van Cu.

3.3 Kratie: concessionaires versus provincial elite

Located between the Mekong River and densely populated Southern Vietnam, the forests of Kratie province constitute a prime target for logging companies. Large scale commercial exploitation dates back to the early colonial time, with already recorded cases of timber smuggling to Cochinchina in the same regions affected in the 1990s (Pierre 1934). This province was, with Ratanakiri and Kampot, the most exploited by Vietnamese logging companies during the 1980s. It was the first in which a long-term concession was granted - in 1989 to a Soviet-Cambodian joint venture - and where one of the largest foreign concession was awarded in 1992 to the Malaysian company Samling (S.L. Int'l.). In November 1993, the 'Snoul Wildlife Sanctuary' was instituted by Royal Decree in the middle of Samling's concession, taking up nearly half of its stock of dense forest. As for the rest of the area, the sanctuary was regularly poached of its best timber by small Vietnamese and local logging groups including military units. Small KR units were also active in the province, surviving mostly on racketing logging companies, including Samling.

The rehabilitation by Samling in 1996 of a derelict road passing through the sanctuary gave a strong impulse to logging in the area by providing easy access to highly valuable forest stands. Timber extraction became increasingly organised, in particular by a 'Joint Commission of Verification of Timber', associating military and provincial officials authorised to turn, through a system of 'collection permit' illegally felled logs into legal ones to be exported to Vietnam or sold to timber merchants and forest concessionaires. While a substantial part of the benefits that timber trade allegedly ended up in private pockets, the ostensible aim was to raise funds for provincial and national budgets (see Figure 6.6).

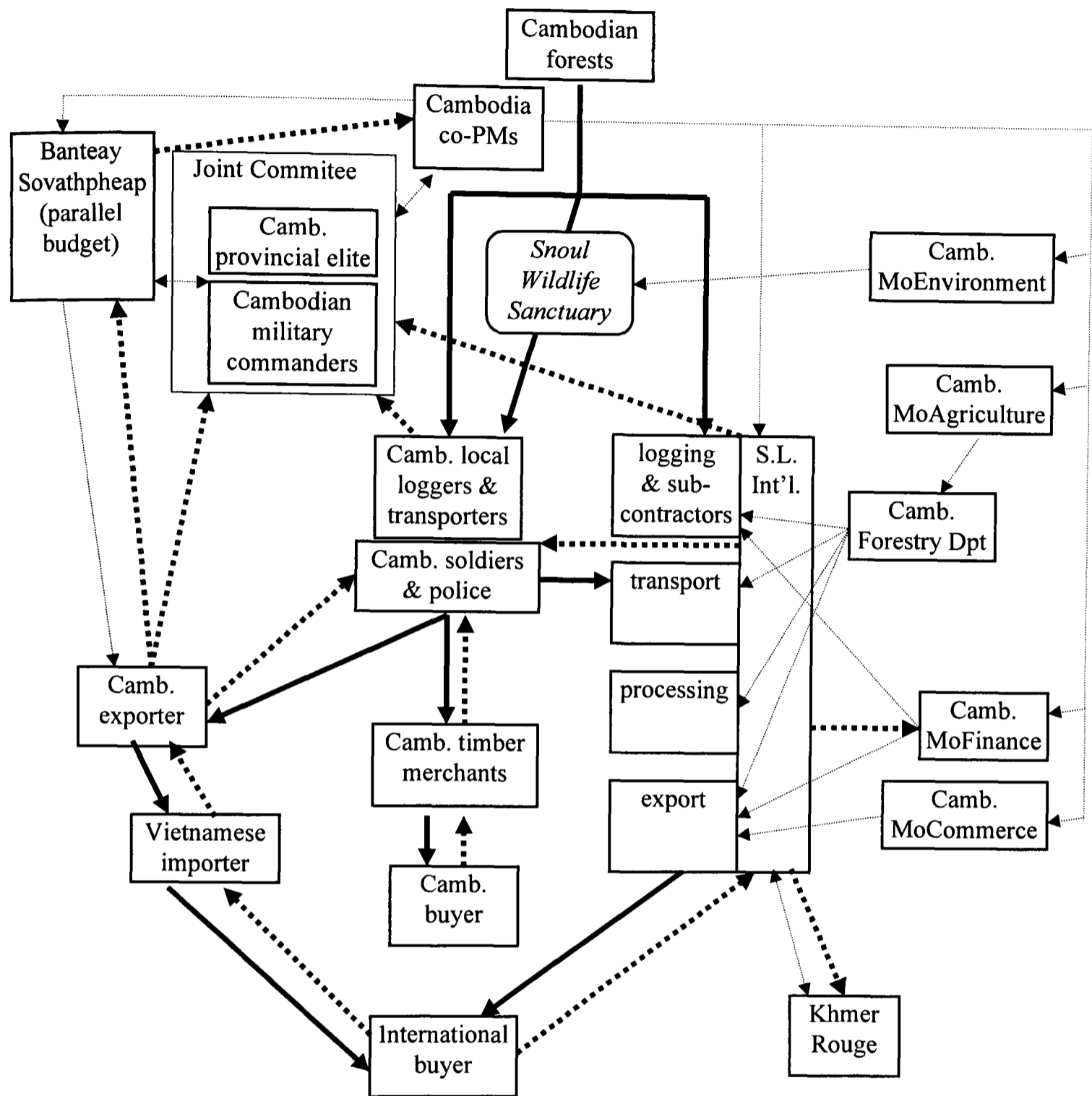
The take-over of the forestry sector by foreign concessionaires represented a direct threat to the interests of the provincial elite; but also for domestic timber exporters who were cornered into illegal dealings and complex systems of authorisation involving provincial authorities. As a Cambodian timber merchant explained,

Before only [DFW] was in charge of logging, now there is the mixed committee. When we want to log in Kratie we have to go and see the governor. I am interested to do illegal [logging] but I am also afraid of loosing the legal [part of my business]. Before the arrival of the big [concessionaire] companies, my company made a lot of money. Now it's not so good and very complicated.¹⁸⁷

The relations between Samling, provincial elite, and locally based logging groups fluctuated between mutual distrust and public denunciation of plunder, occasionally resolved through violent skirmishes; with Samling using a mix of foreign security advisers (Gurkha), special troops dispatched by the second co-Prime Minister and local villagers (Tao and Ke 1997). The situation was not without its own contradictions. Samling was opposing the exploitation of some of its own concessions by 'illegal loggers' working in concert by the joint Committee to fund the parallel security budget, *Banteay Sovathpheap*, of both co-Prime Ministers (Kong 1997). These complaints, as well as the public exposure by the media and Global Witness (1997a), partially halted the logging, which resulted in a wastage of c.80,000 cu.m. of logs, worth about US\$15 million, left to rot in forests and log yards. On the other hand, Samling progressively incorporated local loggers as sub-contractors to facilitate its insertion in the provincial socio-political fabric - thereby providing the company with illegal logs that the company would not risk extracting itself - and also financed health clinics and made regular payments of 'social fees' to provincial authorities.

¹⁸⁷ (Khim, interview, 1997).

Figure 6.6 - Timber commodity network in Kratie (1995-1998)



- ← Flow of wood
- Flow of capital
- Relation of authority
- Relation of accomodation

Key: co-Prime Ministers (Hun Sen, Ranariddh); Provincial elite (Nou Phoeurng); Provincial Military (MR2, Gen. Uy Sarin); Ministry of Environment (Mok Mareth); Ministry of Agriculture (Tao Seng Huor); Ministry of Commerce (Cham Prasit); Ministry of Finance (Keat Chhon; Chhea Peng Chean); Forestry Department (nat'l dir.: Chan Sarun/Or Soeun; prov'l dir.: Hay Seng); Camb. soldiers and police (MR2: Lim Sopheng; Police: Than Rethy); S.L. Int'l (Han Cheng Kong); Camb. timber merchant (V.T.N.); Camb. exporter (Rethy Mex. Co.: Long Rethy).

3.4 Kampong Thom: sub-contracting and the problem of ‘anarchy’

The dense evergreen and mixed deciduous lowland forests of Kampong Thom and southern Stung Treng represent the largest and best stock of timber of the country. Their relative inaccessibility due to their distance from international borders protected them during the 1980s and early 1990s, with only areas located along rivers being exploited. Access from the Mekong River was conditional upon new roads and the traditional means of access by the Stung Chinit and Tonle Sap Rivers meant that only small riverboats could be used. Most of these forests were allocated as concessions in the mid-1990s, with the exception of a wildlife sanctuary in the west. As the forests are located near the densely populated province of Kampong Cham, and base to an important military contingent due to the presence of numerous KR units, there was no shortage of either labour force or local strongmen eager to assist concessionaire companies to develop their business. With the establishment of processing factories in the country and investments in road building, the forests have come under intensive exploitation.

From 1995, some concessionaires and timber merchants obtained ‘collection permits’ for ‘illegally felled logs’ from the two co-Prime Ministers in order to circumvent the lengthy process of formal logging authorisation and to quickly recover their investments. The co-PM were themselves eager to accelerate the pace of ‘economic development’, and collect taxes for both public and parallel budgets (see Chapter 7). This (de)regulation created a market for a great number of individual entrepreneurs, ranging from groups of villagers to military units, to ‘illegally’ fell trees, all of whom thereby become *de facto* subcontractors to permit holders. This resulted in what has been termed the ‘anarchic’ felling of the forest.

However, this ‘anarchy’ reflected as much the lack of interests of members of the RGC to bring order to the forestry sector, as the ability of local strongmen, bureaucrats and politicians at the provincial and district level to shape a situation that best served their own particular interests. This complex situation was well illustrated by the existence of four competitive provincial committees in charge of supervising forestry. While this mode of regulation led to a systematic infringement of the legislation, it allowed a great number of people to enter the commodity network and obtain some of its profits. While there is no figure for the number of people involved, the commodification of Kampong Thom forests involved from the felling site to the mills’ gates thousands of individuals, a few hundred timber transport boats, *touk choeu*, and the authorisation of several dozen officials; all benefiting – in various degrees - from the timber trade.

Sub-contracting could be perceived as a very positive factor, as it offered an economic activity for local populations. Concessionaires procured in this way a more direct access to international markets for villagers traditionally involved in logging. But as most of these sub-contractors were not informed, or did not observe, forest regulations, management plans or block boundaries, cutting was thus conducted with a high level of infractions. These could not be easily monitored and sanctioned by the DFW due to the informal and diffuse nature of sub-contracts. As a result, logs bought from sub-contractors were cheaper for the concessionaire than wood harvested in accordance with management plans.

To an extreme, sub-contracting had a tendency to blur the boundary between concessionaires and ‘poachers’, as many ‘poachers’ often became *de facto* subcontractors for concessionaires. In other words, the use of sub-contractors allowed

concessionaires to legalise logging conducted by 'poachers'. This operation was not without risks as official authorities could be keen on condemning such practices and seizing logs, which could then be conveniently sold to a timber company enjoying closer ties with them. For example, in 1996, Casotim sub-contracted 'poachers' to log inside its concession in Kratie. However, with insufficient political backing despite its status of state joint venture, the company was denounced by MAFF for breaching its management plan. Logs were seized on the order of MEF, MAFF and the RCAF Chief of Staff (Chea 1996b), and sold in part to V.T.N., a timber trading company with better political connections.¹⁸⁸ A similar situation occurred for Meng Ly Heng company, which had to 'donate' 40,000 cu.m. of logs to the RGC after it was accused of being unable to control illegal logging in its concession.

In Kampong Thom, a similar situation occurred as 'big men', *neak thom*, competed between themselves and with legal concessionaires over 'illegal logs' produced by unauthorised sub-contractors and 'poachers'.¹⁸⁹ The situation evolved as companies increased their own operational capacity, obtained formal logging licenses and started to assess the extent of damages caused by such conditions of access. All companies took measures in order to curb down 'illegal logging' inside their concessions, but also to reduce the risk of kidnapping and racketing by local armed groups and KR units. Concessionaires set up private protection units, mostly consisting of hired villagers and local militias paid about US\$50/month. Clashes ensued between concession militias and local logging groups dominated by the provincial military, with deadly ambushes against concessionaire staff and violent

¹⁸⁸ (Naumov, interview, 1997).

¹⁸⁹ The main 'big men' included Chea Sim's son, Hun Sen's nephew and son of Kampong Cham governor, and

skirmishes which left victims on all sides. During the first half of 1997, there were 16 cases of kidnapping and at least four concessionaire staff were killed, including two Malaysians, in this area alone (ERC 1997).¹⁹⁰ Conflicts also occurred between the concessionaires and villagers 'encroaching' on concessions; an unavoidable occurrence given that the near totality of forests were under concession status.¹⁹¹ Concession militiamen burned villagers' oxcarts creating strong resentment in local communities. The situation often resulted in similar arrangements then in place in Kratie, by which local logging groups were progressively excluded or acted as sub-contractors concentrating on illegal logging, for example in protected areas, closed concession blocks, or on the occasion of road improvement programs.

Forest exploitation in Kampong Thom also demonstrated how the provincial governor could be pushed by local budgetary requirements left unfulfilled by the centralised national budget into breaking the law. For example, the governor facilitated for concessionaires and local sawmills the purchase of logs from logging groups controlled by military units, which employed local people to log 'illegally' inside a concession, and this, with the tacit approvals of the DFW and the legal owner of the concession. Despite *a priori* contradictions in the objectives of the different actors, this arrangement offered them the advantage of not abiding by the rules, and thus 'poaching' the concession. The governor received directly much needed additional finance; the concessionaire or the sawmill obtained logs to process; the

Kun Kim vice-governor of Kandal responsible for Hun Sen's parallel security budget (ERC 1997).

¹⁹⁰ Ransoms ranged from a few thousand US\$ for a local staff up to US\$50,000 for international staff. A US\$150,000 ransom was paid by GAT company for several international staff in Koh Kong (Kim, interview, 1997). Kidnapping were also a way of securing longer term 'protection fees'; for example, in mid-1997, following the kidnapping of one of their drivers, Colexim paid a protection fee of US\$140/month to KR defectors for each of their trucks operating in Kampong Thom (Heng N., interview, 1997).

¹⁹¹ For similar change of perception about, and attitude of authorities towards, the 'illegality' and impact of logging by local people using buffalo-cart in the Philippines, see (Van den Top 1998).

military group made a living, as well as the local population and the staff of DFW; and finally the legal concessionaire received an immediate financial compensation while avoiding problems of long term capital investments and proper management of its concession. In this arrangement, the illegal character of exploitation was thus a rational operation for all actors.

This was of course an ideal scenario. In reality, a number of problems could arise. The local population might have cut trees but not get paid by the military group and other middle-men who kept the money; the legal concessionaire might not have received any financial compensation, but on the contrary be threatened by the military; the same might have happened to DFW staff; the concessionaire or sawmill buyer might have seen logs sold to another company, despite the fact that a commission had been paid in advance to both the province and the military; finally, the budget of the province might not have seen much of the money generated by this process.

3.5 Siem Reap: the benefits of insecurity

Home to the ancient temples of Angkor, the region of Siem Reap is the heart of the tourism industry in Cambodia. A park was set up in 1924 to protect the complex of temples and the surrounding landscape, which mostly consisted of semi-deciduous forests (Le Billon 1994). To the north of the park lies a second temple complex, on *Phnom Koulen*, and forests stretching up to the Thai border. This northern area was controlled by the Khmer Rouge to the east; and Funcinpec, to the west. All factions exploited timber in their area of control (see Chapter 4). With the decline of fighting accompanying the UN process, logging sharply increased in the former no-man's

lands separating the different factions. After the defection of a small KR group of 15 to 20 troops previously active in this no-man's land, military units controlled by the CPP (Div. 11) further advanced their logging operations and moved from simply providing timber to the local sawmills to exporting timber to Thailand via the province of Banteay Meanchey.

The pacification of the region did not, however, grant civil institutions, such as the Forestry Department, a greater capacity of supervision of logging operations. Personnel from Div. 11 sustained the level of insecurity, through claims of rebel activities, deterrence, and the eventual murder of a too conscientious forester in early April 1997. Such violent incidents, opposing DFW to military logging interests, were not the first of their kind. Back in 1994, DFW had set up armed patrols and laid mines next to valuable trees in an attempt to stop loggers from operating within the Angkor park. Within two weeks, both sides had lost personnel and the operation was called off. After the coup d'état in July 1997, conflict between Funcinpec Loyalists forces, associated with KR units, and CPP troops allowed for a new military offensive by Div. 11, which, as an old-timer provincial forester pointed out, "always guarantees soldiers with an opportunity to do logging and provides them with a good income".¹⁹² This time, with the total collapse of the KR movement, Div. 11 was furthermore rewarded by a small concession area, within *Phnom Kulen* national park, granted by the co-Prime Ministers in 1998 (Global Witness 1999).

To some extent, the 'insecurity' characterising forested areas such as these in Siem Reap was directly related to the opportunity for armed groups to survive, and even sometimes prosper, from sales of timber or racket of logging companies. In this

perspective, creating or maintaining a 'space of insecurity' was essential to guarantee these groups their privileged access and control of forest resources. In turn, as the state and foreign concessionaires further appropriated these resources, through protected areas, concessions, taxes and regulations, these 'spaces of insecurity' can be interpreted as 'spaces of resistance' as much as they were perceived by formal institutions as spaces of 'anarchy', and 'illegal control'. The case can be extended to Khmer Rouge units whose survival was linked to establishing a balance between accessing timber markets, while remaining in control of their area.

3.6 Kompong Speu: defection and business

Close to the capital city and the densely populated south-eastern provinces, the forests of Kompong Speu have provided timber for a substantial part of domestic needs within these regions. By the mid-1990s, they were highly degraded, with the exception of western areas, mostly controlled by the KR. Forest exploitation was concentrated on the extraction of timber for local construction, fuelwood and charcoal channelled through National Road No.4; giving way to booming settlements as security levels progressively increased.¹⁹³ Exploitation of high grade timber for export remained the privilege of military units - in particular Div. 44 in charge of protecting this strategic road linking the deep sea port of Sihanouk Ville to Phnom Penh - and private loggers enjoying connections with the KR.

The situation evolved in early 1996, when a KR commander, General Keo Pong, defected to the government with about 350 soldiers (Grainger and Ker 1996).

¹⁹² (DFW - Siem Reap, interview, 1997)

Further defections occurred later in the year and the region became a safer place for logging and transport. The KR defectors also benefited from the new 'business environment' they helped to create, as they could more easily access domestic and export timber markets whilst retaining their rank and full control over their area. Thanks to the perquisites granted to them for their defections and those generated by logging, the KR leaders enjoyed a much-improved lifestyle and a new position of status within the provincial elite.

3.7 Kampot: National Parks' problems

Overlooking the seaside town of Kampot, the Bokor plateau provides a majestic landscape to visitors. Rising at a thousand meters, the southern edge of the plateau was developed as a hill station during the French period and offers breathtaking views over the forest canopy and the Gulf of Thailand below. With dense evergreen forest, abundant wildlife and high biodiversity, the 140,000 ha. Plateau was declared a national park in 1993 and has since been proposed as a World Heritage Site and received funding for conservation purposes by the European Union. However, located near Vietnam and along major roads leading to large domestic and international markets, the site has attracted, until 1998, more loggers than tourists. Aside from small scale timber extraction by local villagers, no less than four distinct logging groups operated within the park in 1997, each of them illustrating a facet of contemporary forestry.

The longest established group brought together local KR units (Div. 305 and

¹⁹³ For example Stung Samrong increased from 25 families in 1992 to about 800 in 1997 (ERC 1997).

405) and provincial businessmen. In June 1996, the abduction of workers employed by five local companies and slaughter of 14 revealed the local dynamics of authorisation linking KR, businessmen and provincial authorities. Despite a logging ban and the status of National Park, these five companies had received from the provincial governor the tacit - but not free - authorisation of logging in a KR controlled area. In turn, the companies paid monthly fees to the KR unit. As the fee was not paid on time, the KR commander ordered a raid on the logging camp, targeting in particular one company owner, who had previously cheated the KR during the 1980s over logging deals in the province of Koh Kong. KR troops destroyed most of the equipment, abducted the staff and asked for a ransom to be paid for their release. After six days, the targeted businessman was axed to death along with 13 of his staff, accused of being 'government agents'; one of who survived to tell the story (UNCHR 1996). Following this incident, and the integration of the KR units into the government later in the year, logging in the area became dominated by (ex)KR personnel themselves.¹⁹⁴

A second logging group consisted of government police who took advantage of their control of the main road leading to the Bokor hill station to log the surrounding forests. Fully aware of the situation, the Minister of Environment was apparently powerless to stop the offenders. In a similar case in the national park of Kirirom, he had to request no less than the 'on-the-ground' support of the RCAF Chief of Staff to temporarily stop logging by local army units. Logging progressively decreased, however, as fewer trees were within easy reach and park rangers toughened their stand.

¹⁹⁴ (Phlok, interview, 1997).

A third logging group was a new palm oil plantation company adjoining the park and owned by a close business associate of Hun Sen, who had been given a free lease over 11,000 ha. for this plantation.¹⁹⁵ Taking the opportunity of uncontrolled access to the park, the company had set up a sawmill which was mostly operated by RCAF Div. 44 personnel and provided sawntimber for a massive school building program that the company was supervising for Hun Sen's political campaign (Global Witness 1998).

The fourth group was a domestic company sub-contracted by Long Day, a Taiwanese forest concessionaire with a timber-depleted concession located north of the park and a veneer-processing mill in Sihanoukville. The operation was fully illegal and had led to a pitched battle between soldiers protecting the site and Military Police troops enforcing a crackdown in early 1996.¹⁹⁶ While equipment was seized on that occasion, the sub-contractor continued its operation, with the protection of military personnel from an adjoining army training camp funded by the Australian government.

3.8 Koh Kong: peaceful forest plunder

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the province of Koh Kong largely remained at peace and provided a vivid example of how a 'battlefield' could turn into a 'marketplace'. Throughout this period, Koh Kong thrived on two things: forestry and smuggling.

¹⁹⁵ The company owner, Mong Rethy, had initially consolidated his fortune through a near monopoly over rubber exports secured through his business ties with Singapore importers and a special tax exemption given to him in 1995 by Hun Sen. The rent from the monopoly and tax exemption over rubber exports represented for 1996 an estimated US\$11 million; part of which was used in return for politicised donations and public works (Monin, interview, 1997; Mong, interview, 1997).

¹⁹⁶ (Vanderstein, pers. com., 1997)

Both activities benefited from each other by exporting timber to Thailand and importing consumers' goods to Cambodia. Linking the forests of Koh Kong to the thriving - and timber hungry - Thai economy, the flow of commodities constructed a complex productive network across national borders and political divides that required the close association of many parties (Suksamran 1989).

First, armed groups belonging to the government or the Khmer Rouge granted access to forests. Conditions of access were progressively organised, from the occasional provision of rice to KR patrols to the payment of fixed fees for the use of equipment and the extraction of timber in defined areas or even for the felling of individual trees. Second, equipment and labour were required to extract timber, and, while lowland forests were accessible to heavy equipment, the rugged terrain of the hinterland and the successive bans on log export shifted exploitation towards labour intensive on-site processing and manual transport of large planks. The flow of commodities necessitated numerous manpower, resulting for this sparsely populated province in an important migration from eastern Cambodian provinces and Vietnam. Logging teams were organised by army units, businessmen and provincial officials, some of them becoming prominent figures even at the national level due to the high profitability of the sector. Large scale logging by concessionaire companies also took place, but most found it difficult to operate in the local political environment. This was confirmed in early 1999, when several foreign concessions in the area were cancelled and reallocated to Cambodian political cronies and provincial figures, General Yu Ry and Mae Vuthy (Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1999).

Transport by sea, in small to medium size coasters carrying between 20 and 300 cu.m. of sawntimber, was tightly controlled by provincial and military authorities

on both sides of the border. However, this control was not aimed at enforcing regulations per se, but rather at ensuring a capture of some of the benefits of this trade through fees collected by different controlling bodies; the most potent of which was an 'anti-corruption committee' set up by army, police, customs and provincial officials which collected a royalty of US\$20-40/cu.m. and fined offenders US\$80/cu.m. (ERC 1997; DAI 1998b). Once in Thai territorial waters, coasters were only allowed a short journey to Kalapandha harbour in Trat province where timber was unloaded to be directed to processing factories in Klong Yai and the rest of Thailand. Several of these factories and import companies belonged to prominent politicians and army commanders, who ensured in return that Khmer Rouge activities in the region would not interfere with the interest of their trade. By doing so, they guaranteed themselves a provision of timber not only restricted to a narrow and precariously controlled borderland (see below), but extended to a whole province.

While the province was reputedly peaceful, control of the timber flow in forested areas and at sea was not, however, without competition between different army units and one of up to 30 semi-autonomous entities that dotted the coasters' itineraries to control their freight.¹⁹⁷ Fighting also erupted when central authorities attempted to crack down on illegal sawmills and timber exports protected by local armed groups, Khmer Rouge and 'rogue' navy units protecting their business or that of their clients (Khem 1995), with some of the enforcement operations reminiscent of anti-guerrilla warfare,

¹⁹⁷ (Chan, interview, 1997).

On 31 December [1995] about 80 [Military Police] attacked the village of Prek Toak ... and destroyed two sawmills. They also burned 12 houses belonging to villagers who are suspected of illegal logging activities ... one armed soldier protecting the village was wounded.¹⁹⁸

However, there was generally a high level of accommodation between parties in the mutual interest of keeping the trade running. Perhaps as many as 200 coasters and barges, and between 200 and 300 sawmills were involved in this trade, generating an estimated annual volume of at least 300,000 cu.m. of sawntimber worth around US\$80 million.¹⁹⁹ If a relative peacefulness allowed trade to prosper, the distribution of this financial windfall was nevertheless highly skewed in favour of timber traders and their institutional protectors and predators. Workers earned about eight dollars for a ten day shift in malarial forests. This exploitation was made possible by the general low level of income and working opportunity, but furthermore by the illegal character of logging and trading activities which concentrated profits into the hands of authorisers (between US\$ 20 and 50 per cu.m. of sawntimber) and their crony merchants (up to US\$100 per cu.m. of grade 2 sawntimber). It is interesting in this regard to note that the illegalisation of trade ensured the greatest access to profits to those strategically dealing with the 'criminality' of the productive network. The provincial governor, commanders of Military Region 3, Div. 5, Div. 44 and the Navy, and the provincial director of DFW and that of customs were all reportedly benefiting from this 'illegal' trade.

3.9 Pursat-Battambang: the complexities of accommodation

The western regions of the two provinces of Pursat and Battambang, between

¹⁹⁸ (RCAF report; Vanderstein, pers. com., 1997)

Thailand and Cambodia, were heavily forested and constituted a barely accessible borderland. Centred on Samlot and Phnom Malai, these regions had remained under the control of the Khmer Rouge since the early 1980s. Forests had been exploited along the border during that period by about fifteen Thai companies which, until mid-1996, provided the Khmer Rouge units with much of their revenue through forest concession fees. Some of these companies had been also authorised by the RGC between 1993 and 1996 to officially export timber against the payment of a tax, while the RGC was still at war with the Khmer Rouge (see Chapter 5). On the eastern side of that region, local logging groups from Battambang, mostly governmental troops, also exploited forests fringes, at a much lower scale and with great risks as it was heavily mined due to regular fighting and shifting front lines. At that level also, deals were occasionally passed between logging groups and the Khmer Rouge, although access to forests generally followed successful 'dry season offensives' which placed new areas under the (temporary) control of the RGC (Chaumeau 1996).

In Pursat province, the situation was relatively similar, yet less intense as there was much more forest available, fewer logging groups, and greater distance between RGC and Khmer Rouge units. In a heavily forested district (Kravanh), logging was conducted by about one third of the working population on a small scale using ox-carts or tractors. Logging was authorised through a 'permit' provided by a committee constituted by the district governor, the chief of the Military Police, the local army commander, and the KR defecting unit. This permit took the form of a letter issued for US\$70 to harvest one tractor load (about 8-10 cu.m.) over a period of 2-3 days. The letter was presented to authorities and security forces, replacing to some extent fees

¹⁹⁹ An international audit estimated the trade of sawnwood at US\$163 million per year (DAI 1998b).

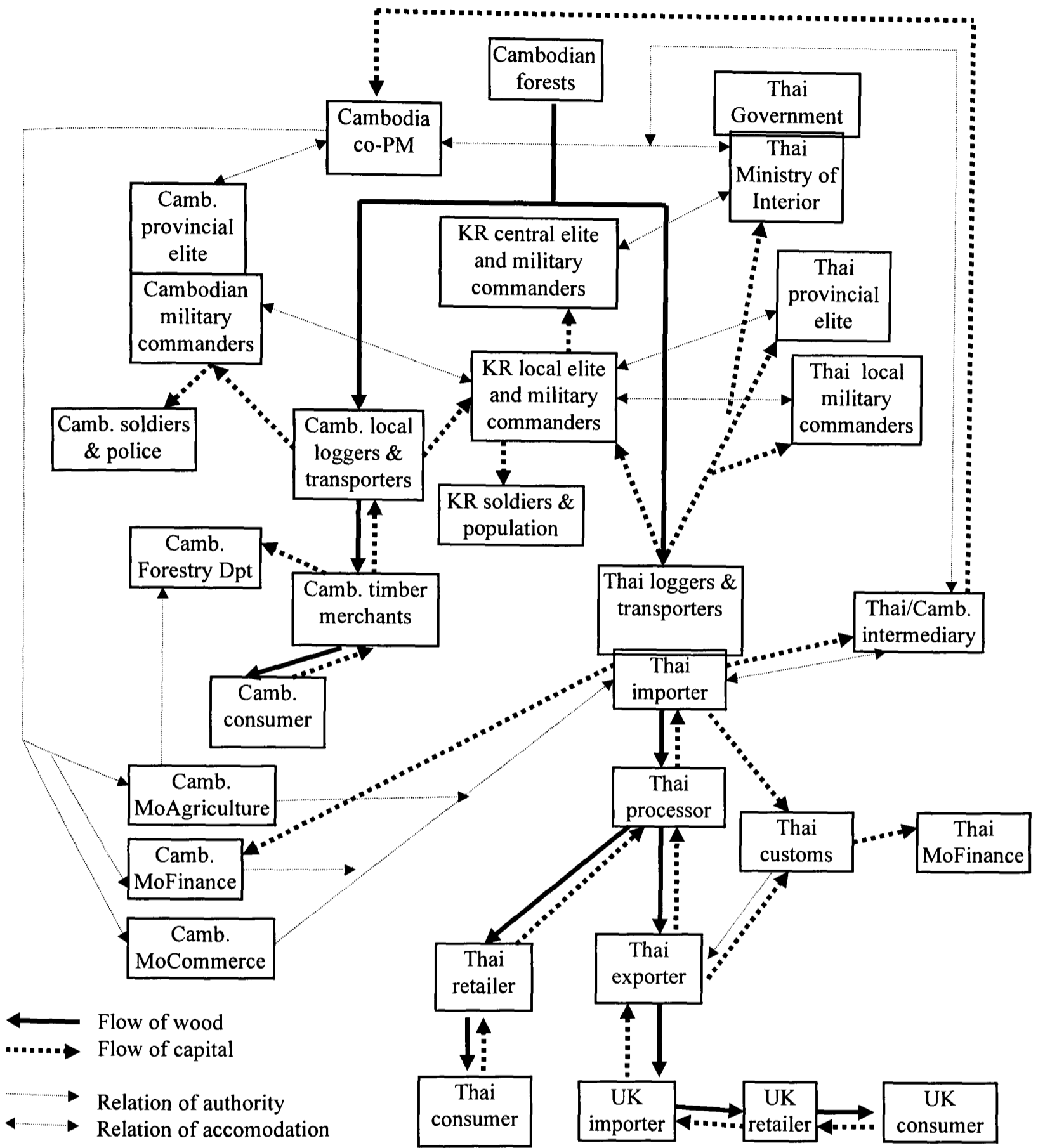
that were previously collected by soldiers directly at checkpoints. Although several areas had been granted as timber concessions, until mid-1997 no large company had started operating - to the exception of Thai companies in the most western areas of the provinces.

With the defection of KR units in mid-1996, the situation of both logging and control became increasingly fluid (see Figure 6.7). Logging in several areas resumed, once contracts had been (re)negotiated by CPP General Pol Saroeun.²⁰⁰ However, taking place in the general context of a log export ban, logging remained limited and activities concentrated on local processing for direct export to Thailand (Global Witness 1998). Many of the logs were appropriated by the RGC and redirected towards the Cambodian domestic market, in particular to provision the densely populated areas of central Battambang. There was also some log smuggling to Thailand. The new arrangements between the RGC and the KR defecting units occasionally gave way to tense disagreements, especially in the context of the instability and resumption of conflict following the coup d'état in July 1997. For example, in August 1997, the KR commander of Front 909 (re)defected to join KR loyalist forces in part because of the seizure by governmental forces of US\$23 million worth of logs and logging machinery from his area.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ (KR administrator, interview, 1996; Kongchuntuk, interview, 1998).

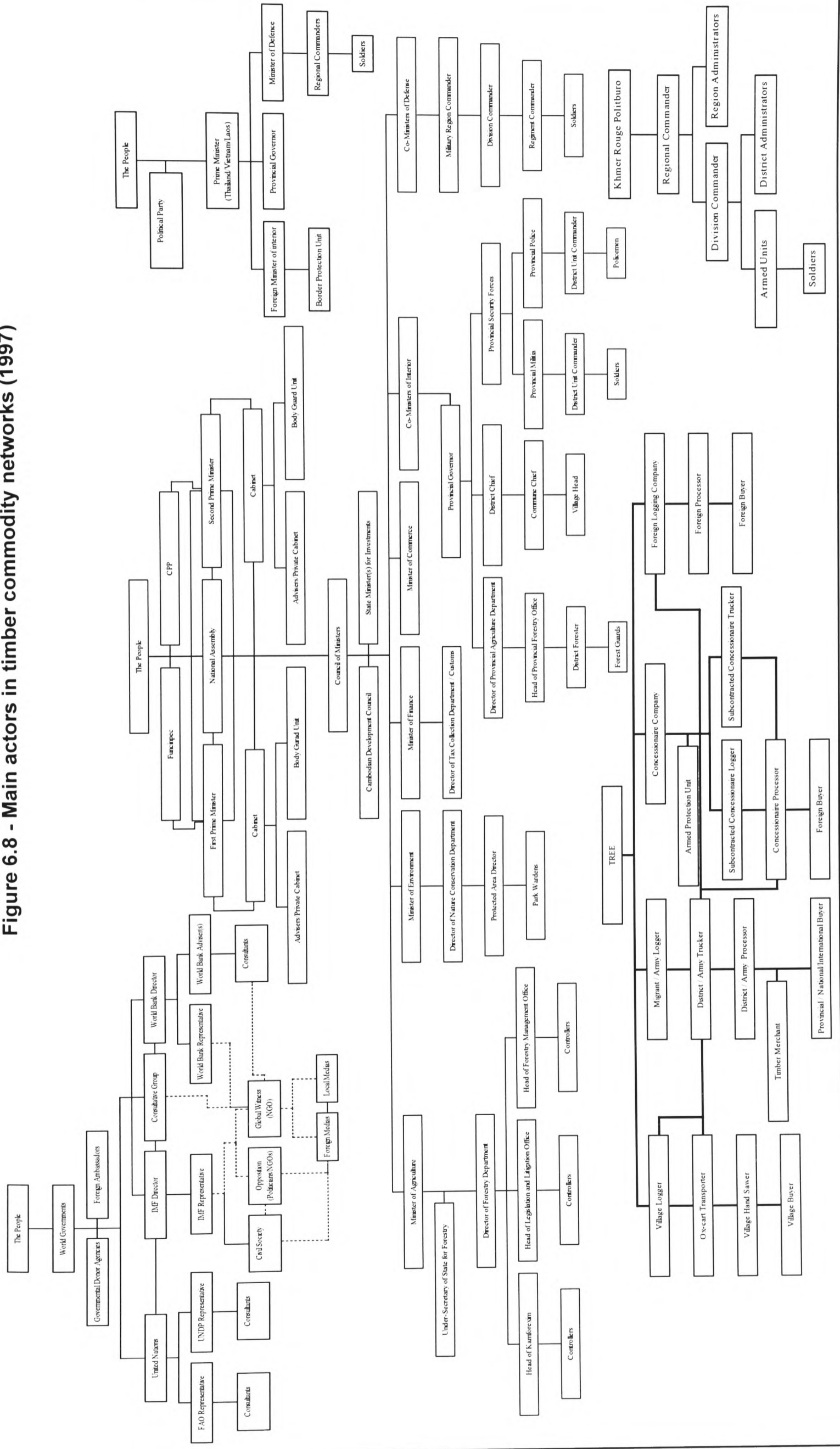
²⁰¹ Gen. Eam Phan statement on 13 August 1997, cited in (Global Witness 1998).

Figure 6.7 - Timber commodity network in Pursat-Battambang area (1995-1998)



Key: Cambodia: co-Prime Ministers (Hun Sen, Ranariddh); KR central command (Son Sen, Ta Mok, Pol Pot); KR local command (Ee Chean, Ieng Sary, Eam Phat); Provincial elite (Ung Sami); Provincial Military (MR5, Gen. Prum Moranak); Ministry of Agriculture (Tao Seng Huor, Chhea Song); Ministry of Commerce (Cham Prasit); Ministry of Finance (Keat Chhon; Chhea Peng Chean); Forestry Department (National Director: Chan Sarun/Or Soeun, Sen Long.); Customs Dpt (n.a.) - Thailand: Thai Government (Chuan Leekpai/Banharn Silpa-archa/Chavalit Yongchaiyudh); Provincial elite (Thanit Traiwudh); Thai logging (Chantaburi Roomphoroo, Enterprise TSD, Philler Product, Pipat Forestry, PT Agricultural, SA Pharmaceutical, S. Containers).

Figure 6.8 - Main actors in timber commodity networks (1997)



4. Consuming the forest: actors

In the following section, I continue to examine the different actors involved in timber commodity networks in order to draw out how power is constructed, for whom and by whom. While this analysis provides a characterisation of four main categories (authorisers, producers, buyers, and commentators), it is worth noting that these networks were neither fixed in time, organisation nor homogeneous in space as they rapidly evolved during the 1990s. Furthermore, actors are themselves the product of distinct historical processes. If they are treated somewhat anonymously and through broad generalisation and categorisation this is only for a greater ease of analysis. Figure 6.8 presents the main actors involved in Cambodian timber commodity networks.

4.1 Authorisers: politicians, bureaucrats and strongmen

The forestry sector has been characterised as ‘anarchic’ by both the government and the media. However, forests were overwhelmingly commodified upon the decision of *authorisers*. Given the organisational structure of the RGC, only key officials such as the Minister of Agriculture, the Director of the DFW, and the Minister of Commerce should have been formally mandated. However, the distribution of official mandates was the object of much competition between different ministries and personalities. For example, the responsibility for timber exploitation and exports evolved nine times within four years (see Table 6.4). There was a similar situation at the provincial level, with numerous commissions established, for example to ‘collect illegal logs’, to ‘curb down illegal logging’, or to ‘stop corruption’. Non-mandated politicians, strongmen

and bureaucratic facilitators providing authorisations along the timber commodity chain included people such as the Prime Ministers and some of their close advisors, high ranking RCAF officers, officials from the Ministry of Interior, provincial governors, businessmen, and local district chiefs.

Table 6.4 - List of institutions officially managing timber exports from Cambodia (1993-1996)

<p style="text-align: center;">MAFF, MEF, MC, MFA by Announcement of CM No. 933 (20/12/93) of CM of 13 December 1993</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MAFF, MI, MND, ME, MC, MEF 'Permanent Inter-Ministerial Commission for the Prevention and Elimination of Forestry, Fishery, and Rubber related Offences throughout the Kingdom of Cambodia' by Sub-Decree of RGC No.2 (17/1/94)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MAFF, MEF, MC, MI, MND by Announcement of CM No. 638 (27/4/94)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MND by Announcement of MND No.58/94 (1/6/94)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">co-PM by Decision of RGC No. 65 (18/6/94)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">'Commission to Investigate and Examine the Problem of Unprocessed and Processed Timber' (CIEPUPT) PMs special envoy, MND, MAFF, MEF, MC, CM, MI, MFA by Decision of RGC No. 78 (20/7/94)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Modification of CIEPUPT on taxation and stamp of approval by Decision of RGC No. 88 (5/8/94) and Announcement of CM No. 1184 (5/8/94)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">'Commission to Control and Auction Remaining Timber' MAFF, MND, MEF by Decision of RGC No. 50ssr (17/7/95)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">'National Committee to Manage and Execute Forest Management Policy' co-PM, MEF, MAFF, CM, CDC, MND, MI, MP, MC, ME, DFW by Sub-Decree of RGC No.33 (3/7/96)</p>
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Authorisers were people in positions of power either through the legal mandate of their official position, their social status, or military might, ranging from Prime Minister to the rank and file troops. While the general model of bureaucratic bossism can be applied to most authorisers, these can be sub-categorised according to a 'triangle of accommodation' model (Migdal 1988), as politicians, strongmen and bureaucrats (i.e. implementers or facilitators of bureaucratic procedures). These three categories are not mutually exclusive and an individual can play other roles, either directly or through a relative or a stooge. These authorisers interrelated with each other in a variety of ways ranging from accommodation to outright violent conflict as they competed over the spoils of timber control. Competition also included denunciation of frauds and corruption by other authorisers; resulting in an atmosphere of distrust among fellow officials and loose control along chains of command. At each level of the hierarchy the strict application of official orders issued by the hierarchy encountered difficulties. As mentioned in Part II, this association of rankism and competition was not only related to the control of perquisites, but also to a broader political economy of status.

Local populations played a limited role in authorising logging as, apart from the north-east, few villages were located inside, or in the immediate proximity, of forests and there was no institutional mechanism giving them any power of authorisation over the use of forests they had traditionally used (Delvert 1961).²⁰² Villagers often felt powerless in the face of loggers sanctioned by governmental authorities that rebuffed their complaints, or settled disputes with threats, a donation

²⁰² Communal forests only started to be recognised in 1997 for a few communities in Ratanakiri. The only legal entitlement of villagers was for the prohibition of logging trees used for collecting sap (Council of Ministers

of a few logs or token payments. To capture at least some of the logging profits, local communities were thus enticed to either directly participate in logging activities, or to extort ‘protection fees’ through the threat of violence.

4.1.1 Politicians

Authorisers amongst politicians included the two co-Prime Ministers as well as ministers, state-secretaries, and provincial governors. Their socio-political capital offered them the opportunity of regulating access and conditions of forest exploitation, through for example the deliverance of timber licences, tax exemptions, and export authorisations. However, as mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5, with ‘post-conflict’ power-sharing arrangements and the creation of new institutions, the number of politicians had bulged. Authority was thus spread thinly over institutions, and formal political power became a devalued commodity that reinforced the importance for businessmen of securing agreements with powerful figures within the ‘shadow state’; for example, close advisers to the Second Prime Minister.

Politicians delivered authorisations directly through mandated institutions, or through non-mandated ones. The most notorious non-mandated institution delivering ‘authorisations’ was the committee for the security of the two co-Prime Ministers, *Bantey Sovath Pheap*, through which Hun Sen and Ranarridh provided the authority necessary for two generals, Kun Kim and Neak Bun Chhay respectively, to authorise logging and export by crony companies in order to collect funds allegedly for the security budget of the co-Prime Ministers (Tao 1997; Kun 1997). Companies

1988: article 17).

supported in this way could not be controlled or opposed by formal institutions (Kong 1997). This authorisation channel was not only used by any of the Prime Ministers to fund parallel budgets and support crony companies, but also to circumvent the delays and informal fees of bureaucratic institutions in order to rapidly raise money, including for the public treasury (Cham 1997).

4.1.2 Bureaucrats

Bureaucrats, as authorisers, included civil servants responsible for implementing forestry-related policies, regulations and programs. They included the staff of the MAFF and DFW, in the capital and in provinces, of the MC (Exports), and of MEF (Customs). While some held a role of facilitator in a permanent fashion, others were 'interim' facilitators nominated by their institutional supervisors, or external patron, in a decision-making role on an occasional basis to access perquisites.

The critical role of bureaucrats in shaping the actual practices of a sector has been stressed in the literature (Grindle 1980). It has been argued that bureaucrats are key in weakening the effects of governmental policies as they have to respond to the demands and constraints of their social environment, including that of their security, careerism and mobility (Migdal 1988), as well as favouring their personal wealth. Indeed the social environment of forestry bureaucrats in Cambodia constituted a complex and dangerous system of pressure that required constant negotiation and breaches of the law. Bureaucrats were not regularly rotated, leaving them exposed to, and embedded in, the local dynamics of power. Even at a high level, bureaucrats were not 'covered' by the legislation. For example, the two-co Prime Ministers, attempting to protect the interests of one of their cronies acting against the legislation, had to

warn the Minister of Agriculture and the State Secretary that, “the management framework of the administration should be kept in good order so that *lower officials must obey higher officials without objections*” (Royal Government of Cambodia 1997b, my emphasis). After a similar warning, the Director of DFW was fired (Chan 1997). Yet, the role of bureaucratic facilitator could also reward handsomely those most gifted in the politics of accommodation.

4.1.3 Strongmen

Strongmen are generally defined as local ‘bosses’ that “have fashioned for the local population the existing strategies of survival, the rules of behaviour” (Migdal 1988: 239), and who have secured and maintained “virtual monopolies over coercive and economic resources within territorially defined bailiwicks” (Sidel 1996: 56).²⁰³ The rise of strongmen arose from the conjuncture of capitalist development and ‘de-monopolisation’ of the state’s hold on coercive and economic resources. They included two categories: businesspeople and military; who were often associated in uneasy coalitions to defend their personal interests.

Business-strongmen, and strongwomen, included mostly cronies and relatives of provincial or national politicians and businesspeople who fled in the 1970s and came back with ties to mostly overseas Chinese commercial networks. While business-strongmen had no official mandate from the state to deliver authorisations, their personal authority was sufficient to get things done, even in contravention to the legislation. They often hold an important place in the patron-client networks

²⁰³ On the rise of local bosses in Thailand following the economic boom and the process of democratisation see (Ockey 1993; Phongpaichit and Piriya-rangsan 1994; Sidel 1996)

organising social control and economic activities.

The second category of strongmen consisted of police and military figures, either linked with the government - hence, often a party or a politician - or with insurgent or rogue armed groups. Armed-strongmen were involved either as quasi-legal authorisers, for example through ad-hoc commissions on forest exploitation. Some also constituted *predatory protectors* extorting from both legal and illegal operations for authorising forest access, transport and local processing; but also protecting illegal operations, thus maintaining a climate of insecurity for governmental officials enforcing regulations.

4.1.4 Authorising commercial forestry

The system of authorisations resulting from the interplay of authorisers was complex. Multiple authorisations could be given for a single operation, as well as horizontally and vertically integrated for different operations in different locations. Official authorisations dealt with the allocation of private timber licences (forest concessions); the provision of short term logging licences (*prey coupe*) to private firms; the transport of timber products inside and across provincial boundaries; the taxation of logs (royalty on timber volume and grade) as well as the taxation on reforestation; the processing of logs; and the export of timber products and related taxes (e.g. Kamforexim management).

4.1.4.1 Forest concession contracts

Timber licences (concessions) were provided by the two co-Prime Ministers, through

relevant ministers,²⁰⁴ to private companies for the lease of a forest concession with exclusive rights on timber extraction, and sometimes tree planting, for a period varying from 25 to 50 years (see Annex 2). All new concessions were supposed to be granted through a 'one-stop-shop' process handled by the Cambodian Development Council (CDC) overlooking all private investments in the country (Summers 1997). The CDC, theoretically, operated in consultation with relevant technical ministries and the Council of Ministers. In practice, the CDC was bypassed by investors, who directly dealt with close advisors of both co-Prime Ministers, in charge of 'shadow' investment boards. Negotiations were held at a political level, with limited input from technical institutions.²⁰⁵

The new policy of promoting economic growth and local employment through free, and untaxed, exploitation of resources was not simply the application of a neo-liberal economic theory. Official tax exemptions were often the counterpart of informal bribes embezzled by the Cambodian leadership which entered the circuit of neo-patrimonial redistribution. As the country director of Samling pointed to a team of international experts in 1996, his company would be very happy to pay a royalty of US\$75 per cu.m., as they recommended, if that was the only payment to be done, as it would be cheaper than the informal fees the company had to pay to "all these people", meaning the RGC and in particular the staff of the DFW.²⁰⁶ In one rare documented example, the BLP Company distributed around US\$5 million to high-ranking SoC

²⁰⁴ Powers for signing such deals were delegated, for timber licenses to Tao Seng Huor (Funcinpec) and Chhea Song (CPP); for investment agreement to Sok An (CPP) and Bun Uy (Funcinpec) or Veng Sereyvuth (Funcinpec).

²⁰⁵ A deputy director of the Forest Management Office of DFW denounced these practices to the Minister of Agriculture. He was severely criticised by his superiors and later invited to attend a provincial visit in company of the RCAF chief of Staff with a view to intimidate him (Ty, interview, 1997).

²⁰⁶ (McGrawth, interview, 1997).

officials in 1991 for a concession of about 90,000 ha. This sum included a payment of US\$940,000 to the provincial governor of Preah Vihear province where the concession was located.²⁰⁷ If such figure is used as a reference, informal fees paid by concessionaires to the RGC as ‘signature bonus’ between 1991 and early 1999 would represent US\$560 million, a figure which is certainly overestimated but provides an idea of the motivation of accelerating concession agreements.²⁰⁸

This question of informal fees, or “hidden costs” as an official from the MEF described them to a delegation of international donors in 1997, goes beyond mere institutional ‘corruption’, in the sense of the use of bureaucratic power for personal enrichment. Informal fees are also about the construction of a ‘shadow state’ outside of the formal institutional apparatus, rules and budget. In a political economy regulated by a ‘shadow state’, companies are encouraged by the political leadership not to deal with the state apparatus according to the set of formal legislation, but to deal instead directly with it through a parallel structure organising the exchange of protection and privileges by the authority against a tribute paid by the company. This ‘encouragement’ could take the form of tax exemption or political pressure upon formal institutions to secure privileges.

The discretionary character of these authorisations can be related to the important political demands put upon both natural resources and the private sector associated with a widespread fear amongst decision makers that anything not gained, could be lost to competitors. Competitors included rival political parties at the national level or an individual with authority within a region or a sector, but also the

²⁰⁷ (Cambodian Ambassador in Thailand; cited by Global Witness, interview, 1998).

²⁰⁸ Over that period, a total of 10.1 million ha. were granted as forest concessions (see Annexe 2).

formal state itself, as institutional and budgetary demands competed with patronage and patrimonialism ones.

Several reasons can be invoked for this state of affairs. Firstly, as presented in Chapter 4 and 5, greater political competition, associated with new ‘rules of the game’, resulted from the transition to ‘peace’ and ‘democracy’ which took place between 1989 and 1993. This competitive political environment led to privatisation with factional aims which not only concerned forestry, but also many state and public assets such as companies, real estates, and trade monopolies (e.g. imports of essential drugs). For example, prior to the UN elections, an internal CPP directive called for the transfer of public assets to the party and close political allies.²⁰⁹

Secondly, a lack of capital in the country to exploit forests was perceived by the government in relation to ‘reconstruction and development’ needs. The only options were thus left to invite foreign firms to invest in the country, in order to manage forests more efficiently and especially to develop processing capacities, or to let neighbouring countries come to extract logs along the borders. The first option was ‘officially’ chosen on the principles that adding value through processing was a priority and that a log export ban could resolve the difficult problem of ‘illegal logging’ for which forest exploitation rent could be lost to ‘poachers’ or to the security apparatus of the government.²¹⁰ The decision of ‘privatisation’ being taken, its implementation offered vast opportunities for securing both ‘facilitation fees’ and clients as well as the opportunity of consolidating ties with leaders of foreign countries. For example, PT Maharani was reportedly owned by a daughter of then

²⁰⁹ (Kep, interview, 1997).

²¹⁰ The ‘official’ character of this decision is based on ‘official’ public practices rather than an ‘official’ policy,

Indonesian president Suharto.²¹¹

Yet, as the case of Samling illustrated, such fast-track forestry policy changes oriented towards privatisation and associating centralisation of power, global market integration and foreign currency earnings did not take into account a wide range of in-country needs, such as, national demand for timber, access to resources for national logging companies, expectations of life style improvements among civil servants and the military, or political and budgetary demands in the provinces. The confrontation of such competing interests somehow derailed the processes set up by the forest concession management system, resulting in a variety of 'hybrid' processes mixing both legal and illegal operations. The control of these 'hybrid' processes was exercised by officials through different authorisations, the most important of them being 'collection permits'.

4.1.4.2 Collection permits of 'old' or 'anarchic' logs

These authorisations were different from timber concession contracts in that they were provided for short periods of time and for a limited volume of timber. Furthermore they were often loosely defined geographically, with reference only to a province or a district. Despite being illegal according to the existing legislation and the concession management framework, collection permits were widely used as they offered a degree of flexibility appreciated by both logging companies and authorities. Logging companies could harvest timber without a concession, a management plan, or even a spatially defined harvesting area. On the other hand, collection permits provided

as there is no official forestry document providing the opinion of the RGC on the question of forest concessions.

authorities with a wide discretionary power to generate revenue in a short span, to favour the interests of specific companies or individuals and penalise others (e.g. by granting 'collection permits' for third parties inside their concessions).²¹² Collection permits also allowed state leaders to circumvent the red tape of technical and provincial authorities and to protect the economic interests of crony companies.

Collection permits represented the cornerstone for much 'uncontrolled' logging in the country and can be considered as an important instrument of a patrimonialism that encompassed different scales and sectors (private, para-public and public), linking the global (i.e. international firms) to the local (i.e. civilian authorities and military units at the district or commune level). In other words, collection permits can be seen as an ad-hoc answer to the problem of conflicting interests mentioned above; with the exception of provision of timber for the national market as most of the collection permits examined were mostly delivered for export purposes.

These authorisations were provided by the two co-Prime Ministers, provincial governors and central high ranking RGC officials within the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Commerce, to forest concessionaires, military units, timber trading companies or individuals (see Annexe 6). The simplified processes involved in the provision of collection permits and highlights the cases in which unofficial authorisation of logging preceded illegal cutting operations is presented in Figure 6.9.

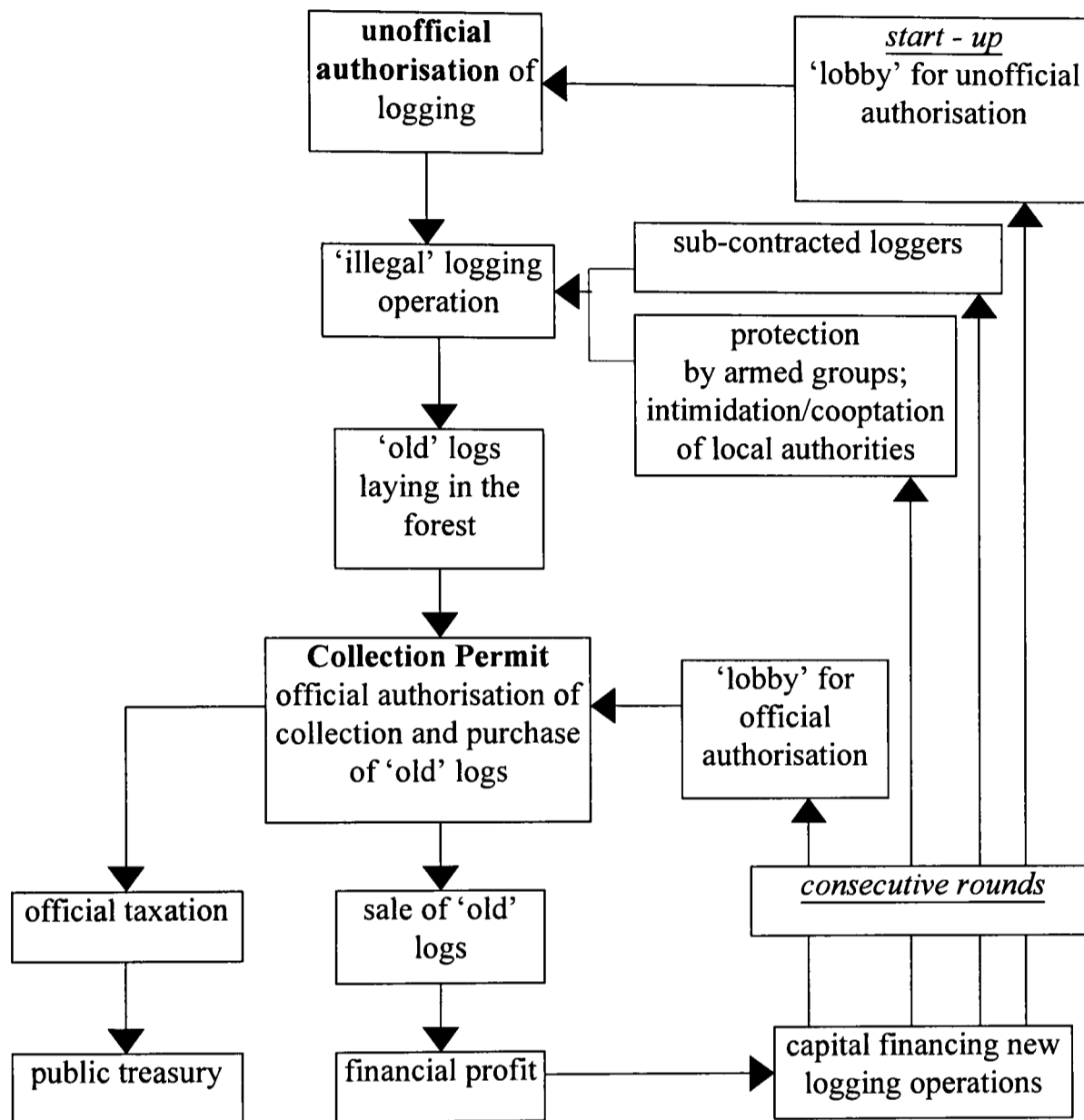
The collection permit process would typically start with an unofficial negotiation between the providers of collection permits and a logging or trading

²¹¹ (Lejeune, interview, 1998).

²¹² Royalties for 'collected' logs varied between US\$96/cu.m. and US\$14/cu.m., averaging US\$47.6/cu.m.

company. The company would present a request to an official for an authorisation to 'collect' a fixed volume of 'anarchic', 'illegal', or 'old' logs left in a forested area. In fact, in most instances 'old' or 'anarchic' logs were to a large extent fictional but allowed for a justification to provide an authorisation linked to the felling of 'fresh' timber done by either (i) sub-contractors of the concessionaire, acting on its request, (ii) relatively independent local logging groups, acting on belief that collection permits might provide a future market for the logs they produced, (iii) local logging groups controlled by governmental officials, acting on knowledge that a collection permit had been or would be granted, (iv) foreign logging groups (Thai, Malaysian or Vietnamese) acting on request of the 'collection permit' holder. The right of 'legalisation' provided by the collection permit could also be transferred from a company, or an individual, to another as well as be sub-divided. In sum, 'old log' collection permits provided a flexible instrument for both politicians and investors.

Figure 6.9- Process of illegal logging associated with Collection Permits



4.1.4.3 Other logging authorisations

The two types of logging authorisations examined above did not generally cover logging for the domestic market.²¹³ There was thus a basic flaw in the legislation to ensure the legality of access to wood resources for domestic uses which provided a wide discretion to authorisers to fill the gap and respond to the imperative need of providing timber to the population, businesses and institutions. In other words, ‘illegality’ was needed to resolve the basic contradictions and gaps set by the legal framework.

In response to this problem, concerned actors set up a great diversity of systems in forested provinces to organise logging for national consumption. In some provinces and district, logging itself had to be authorised. In such cases, the authorisation could come from the provincial DFW or district authorities, or military units located near forested areas. Fees were collected on the basis of equipment used or timber felled. Such authorisations could be very formal and quasi-official (e.g. written authorisations provided by official authorities), or totally informal (e.g. fees collected at checkpoints by individual army units).

4.1.4.4 Authorisations for transport

Transport was a critical stage in the commodification process linking spaces of extraction and spaces of consumption. It was also a ‘space of control’ during which timber was exposed to control by third parties, and more so than they had been, either

²¹³ The domestic market of construction timber can be very roughly estimated at 700,000 cu.m. of logs per year, based on an average domestic consumption calculated at 67 cu.m. per 1,000 inhabitants in the 1960s (Hun 1969).

in 'insecure' forests, the private space of processing mills, or the safety of international waters or foreign territory. This control could take the form of formal inspection to assess the validity of transport licences, or outright extortion to authorise transport.

Two types of authorisations can be distinguished.²¹⁴ Both types provided an authorisation in exchange for a facilitation fee or a bribe, depending on the legal or illegal nature of the transport (e.g. transport of illegal logs). First, illegal transport authorisations were provided by a wide range of RGC officials, from co-Prime Ministers' close advisors, down to local military and police commanders. Police, military and Military Police (MP) forces controlling road traffic justified this predation by arguing that 'security' on the roads could not come for free and that with very low salaries they felt entitled to receive a contribution from the businesses they helped to prosper; to the point that a quasi-official system of 'protection fee' tickets was instated. Such systems competed directly with the official legal system managed by the DFW. For example, DFW staff in Takeo province complained that they were "out of business" as the MP had taken over the control (and racket) of timber transport.²¹⁵

The second type of authorisations concerned DFW staff mandated for controlling timber transport.²¹⁶ In the case of the Forestry Department in Phnom Penh,

²¹⁴ The question of 'authorisation' by rogue armed groups controlling roads or portions of the Mekong or other transportation routes is not discussed here. This problem is generally resolved by logging companies by paying 'protection fees' to these groups (on the basis of volume of logs transported, or the number of trucks inside the concession, etc ...) or by hiring private or military armed forces.

²¹⁵ (DFW-Takeo, interview, 1997).

²¹⁶ Following a decree passed by the Second Prime Minister shortly after the coup d'état in July, most check-points in the country, including those of DFW, were prohibited and the transportation of timber could not be controlled (Sub-Decree 45 dated 29/8/97). This decree, which also prohibited the presence of DFW staff along the border to monitor international trade, was later revised to ensure at least a control of the international border. (Pou, interview, 1997)

there were two main lucrative tasks for bureaucrats: manning one of the check-points controlling the transport of timber into the capital, and stamping logs. In fact, even at the official level, authorising - through fines - the unauthorised transport of forest products into Phnom Penh provided a significant parallel mode of funding for DFW. During 1997, the six permanent checkpoints around the city were able to collect about US\$485,000 in fines, mostly from small timber merchants. Half of that sum was officially distributed amongst enforcement staff and other members of the institution (DAI 1998). Some of it was also used to renovate infrastructures and purchase equipment.

4.1.4.5 Processing authorisations

In a pattern similar to that of transport authorisations, the authorisations for processing logs covered both unofficial agreements to let illegal sawmills operate in exchange for bribes, or unofficial agreements to embezzle taxation money from legal sawmill. In the first case, sawmills were not so much 'authorised' as they were 'protected/racketed' by governmental institutions, mostly security forces. Governmental authorities were not the only 'protectors' of sawmills, those located in remote regions are frequently racketed by rogue or KR armed groups. For example, in Kratie a local sawmill owner paid KR defectors US\$1,000 for two saws for the logging season. In the second case, the embezzlement could be to the profit of both parties (i.e. sawmill owners and officials), or of the officials involved (i.e. facilitation fee). Local agreements were passed, or imposed, in order to extract a 'governmental' rent from processing businesses. Like at other stages, such informal taxation responded, however, not only to greed from bureaucrats or strongmen, but also to

practical necessities of raising money in order to support governmental salaries and activities. This basic financial need by government institutions resulted from low budgetary expenditures and was furthermore taking place in a context where budgetary processes were complex and highly uncertain. The facilities of financial transfer were non-existent due to a weak banking system and the provincial public finance office, was reportedly short of cash and corrupt, or at least self-financing, and reportedly took a 10% commission on all remittances.

These negotiated taxes also aimed at adjusting the taxation rate to local conditions in order to preserve the interests of producers and buyers by keeping timber prices low. As a district governor in Pursat put it,

If we impose the tax of US\$29 per cubic meter on sawntimber, nobody can make profit and no one can afford to buy it.²¹⁷

Instead both the district authorities and the provincial DFW staff practised informal taxation mostly based on accommodation.

4.1.4.6 Export authorisations

With concession agreements, exports authorisations were formally the privilege of central authorities. While key decision-makers were ministers, the official procedure for timber exports nevertheless extended down the bureaucratic ladder as it required about “30 signatures and six inspections, directly involving over 40 government officials” (DAI 1998b: C-17). Each stage was allegedly the occasion of bribery towards officials. At the provincial level, ‘special export licences’ were also provided in an informal fashion by provincial governors and strongmen. The systematic

character of these informal exports meant that domestic transport authorisations to these provinces, especially Koh Kong, were *de facto* export permits.

4.1.5 The dynamics of authorisation

The illegal character of authorisations stemmed from: a lack of legal authority for the official providing the document; an incomplete process of authorisation; or a fake document. Such authorisations could also take advantage, or respond, to one of the numerous legal loopholes of the current regulatory framework defining the ‘legality’ of operations. In most instances, governmental officials provided illegal authorisations. The value of such authorisations, generally incorporated into ‘official’ documents, was not so much a function of their legality but often of the level of authority of their providers at the local, national or international level. In the absence of law enforcement, an authorisation signed by an influential and militarily powerful individual generally proved more effective than a legal one.²¹⁸ In this sense such authorisations were associated with social modes of patronage and patrimonialism regulating flows of resources and revenues, but also to unequal relations of power reproduced by the absence of legal protection and the patent potentiality, or exercise, of violence.

Legal authorisations were also accompanied by the collection of fees, the donation of gifts or by political support from forestry operators, outside of the legal framework of the tax collection system (see Tables 6.5 and 6.6).²¹⁹ This practice was

²¹⁷ (Kravanh district, interview, 1997).

²¹⁸ A parallel can be given to land rights more securely asserted by planting landmines, or putting surrounding walls, and armed guards than by a legal property title.

²¹⁹ For a complex categorisation of corruption see (Alatas 1990).

so widespread that timber concessionaires perceived the complex system of authorisations managed by Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) officials as specifically designed to extract ‘facilitation fees’ from their businesses. It is unlikely that this situation resulted from a co-ordinated set-up among state actors, but the high number of lowly paid employees and the institutional and budgetary framework was most likely to result in widespread graft. Yet, it is interesting to note that such practices were already conspicuous during the Sihanouk regime, despite much better conditions for civil servants at the time (Prud'homme 1969). These informal financial dealings could reach a quasi-formal level, in which case, companies paid bribes, or provided gifts, to institutions. For example, several companies in Cambodia sponsored the establishment of a zoo and forestry public centre for US\$630,000 in 1995/97; a sum equivalent to about a third of the official royalties collected in 1996.²²⁰

Table 6.5 - Fees collected between forest landing in Kampong Thom/Kratie and mill in Phnom Penh²²¹

Collector	US\$/cu.m.	Annual value (US\$)	Percentage of timber value at the mill gate
Ministry of Finance (legal tax)	14.00	2,086,840	10.77%
Provincial authorities	7.00	1,043,420	5.38%
Military authorities	1.70	253,402	1.31%
Provincial forestry officers	0.88	131,173	0.68%
Foresters at checkpoints (3)	2.75	409,915	2.12%
Foresters at intervening provinces	0.50	74,530	0.38%
Forestry officials at final destination	1.38	205,703	1.06%
Sub-total	28.21	4,204,983	21.70%

²²⁰ (Ouk, interview, 1997).

²²¹ Based on the official volume exploited by concessionaires for 1997 (149,060 cu.m.), a value of US\$130/cu.m. at the mill's gate, and fees collected on a single shipment of 4,000 cu.m. (McGrath, pers. com. 1999).

On the other hand, forest concessionaires seem to have benefited from the wide discretion granted by the legal and institutional frameworks on authorisation matters, as the decreasing rate of royalties and taxation demonstrated. Royalties per cu.m., for timber of category II, decreased from US\$40 in 1991, to US\$35 in 1993, to US\$14 in 1994; and most of the forest concessionaires were exempted from export duties in early 1997 (Royal Government of Cambodia 1997a).

From the perspective of authorisation systems the illegal character of the sector did not come from too much legislation that was not observed but from too few contradictory laws that *could not* be observed. In response to this problem, concerned actors set up a great diversity of systems in forested provinces to organise logging for national consumption.

Table 6.6 - List of official and illegal authorisations, formal and informal fees, and authorisers (1997)²²²

Authorisation	Formal fee (US\$)	Informal fee (US\$)	Authorisers
Timber licence	0-100,000	50/ha.	Minister of Agriculture
Investment agreement	0-50,000		Co-Ministers in charge of Council of Ministers
Concession management plan	0	n.a.	Minister of Agriculture/DFW
Annual harvest plan	0	n.a.	Minister of Agriculture /DFW
Hammering (three marks)	0	2-5/cu.m.	DFW
Harvested log - list	9-20/cu.m. 2.4/cu.m.	n.a.	DFW
Intra-provincial transport permit	n.a.	n.a.	Provincial governor
Inter-provincial transport permit	0	n.a.	Minister of Agriculture
Fourth hammering	0	n.a.	DFW
Transport control	0	2-5/cu.m.	DFW
Collection permit	0-40/cu.m.	5-6/cu.m.	MAFF
House building permit	0	n.a.	DFW
Luxury wood collection permit	112- 210/cu.m.	n.a.	MAFF
Export licence	1% 0-10% F.O.B.	n.a.	MAFF, Kamforexim, MC, Customs, Kamcontrol, Economic Police, FMO-DFW, Director of port, Kamsab
Sawnwood production	10-14/cu.m.	2-5/cu.m.	DFW
Total	14-70/cu.m.	30-50/cu.m.	
Illegal authorisations	Unofficial fees		Authorisers
'Special' collection permit	90/cu.m.		High ranking RGC officials
Protection fee for logging	2-10/cu.m.		Military, KR
Chain saw operating	14-75/month		Military, police, KR
Truck operating	100-250/month		Military, police, KR
Transport authorisation or protection	0.5-80/cu.m.		Police, Provincial 'anti-corruption' committees, Military, Navy
Sawmill authorisation/protection	10-500/month		Provincial authorities, Military units, KR
Illegal export	20-40/cu.m.		Provincial and enforcement agencies

The result is that these informal arrangements directly competed with some of the official licensing procedures that ensured at least a minimum of transparency and tax revenue. For example, in 1994, the MAFF offered on public bidding 29 *prey coupe*, for a total volume of 100,000 cu.m.. Only a tenth of it was officially granted

²²² Sources: author and (DAI 1998b).

and taxed. Bidders justified their disinterest by the high level of insecurity and the need to pay informal taxes to “the Khmer rouge”, even if there were none in the area.²²³ Some concessionaires declared that they had to pay between around US\$40-50 per cu.m. in ‘facilitation fees’ for conducting ‘normal business’ (ARD 1998; DAI 1998a). Unwilling to pay taxes twice, at an official level and at an informal level, loggers by-passed official licences delivered by the MAFF and sold timber directly to sawmills and exporters. This situation is demonstrated by a cost/benefit analysis for timber exports, if all official and informal taxes were paid and if concessionaires invested for in sustainable forestry practices (see Table 6.7).

Table 6.7 - Cost/benefit analysis for logs, sawntimber and veneer exports (1997)²²⁴

Category	Concession logs (US\$/cu.m.)	Collected logs (US\$/cu.m.)	Sawntimber (US\$/cu.m.)	Veneer (US\$/cu.m.)
Exploitation costs	77.5	77.5	161.4	140.9
Concession management costs	25.0	-	52.1	45.5
Processing costs	-	-	130.0	165.0
Shipment costs (FOB)	6.0	6.0	22.5	22.5
<i>Sub-total production cost (FOB)</i>	<i>108.5</i>	<i>78.1</i>	<i>365.6</i>	<i>373.9</i>
Forestry taxes	24.2	47.6	50.4	44.0
Export tax	19.0	19.0	35.0	43.0
Informal taxes	51.5	51.5	107.3	93.6
<i>Sub-total taxes</i>	<i>94.7</i>	<i>118.1</i>	<i>192.7</i>	<i>180.6</i>
Total cost price	203.2	201.6	558.7	554.5
Market price	190.0	190.0	350.0	430.0
Balance	-13.2	-11.6	-208.7	-124.5

For all exported products, companies would be in deficit if paying all formal and informal taxes. Hence, companies cut costs in particular by circumventing official taxation through exemptions and illegal logging. The issue was thus not so much that informal taxes were cheaper than official ones - as they were often not - but that they

²²³ (Courbois, interview, 1996).

²²⁴ Prices for timber in category 2. The conversion rates from logs are 48% for sawntimber and 55% for veneer. Exploitation costs could be much lower, for example about US\$30-40/cu.m. along the coast. Source: (Soi, interview, 1997; ARD 1998).

had gained legitimacy among authorisers. Having lost its monopoly over taxation, the formal institutions of the RGC reacted by stopping the official bidding procedure and banning exports (Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fishery 1995). As detailed earlier, these two decisions reinforced the illegal mechanisms of the timber commodity chain. First by further disengaging formal regulation by official institutions. And second, by criminalising an activity that the government was unwilling to stop.

4.2 Timber businesses

Three main groups are identified: transborder logging firms, forest concessionaires, and domestic producers. However, as some of the cases above have highlighted, these groups were frequently integrated, making distinctions difficult, if not deceptive.

4.2.1 Transborder logging firms

Logging companies from neighbouring countries played an important role in the forestry sector since the mid-1980s and in particular in the early 1990s. With the depletion of timber along the borders, the competition with concessionaires and the successive log export bans, this importance decreased during the second half of the 1990s. These companies had the ability to rapidly generate large cash flows for authorisers, due to the availability of equipment, work force, and access to buyers. At a small scale, transborder logging operations could generate up to US\$100,000 dollars within a few days. At a much larger scale, companies could fell and extract several hundred thousand cubic meters over a few months, with a turn-over representing up to

10% of Cambodia's official GDP (Royal Government of Cambodia 1996). The significance of these deals were thus very high on the political agenda, both at the national and international level, as well as at the provincial or district level where individual deals could be brokered by local actors.

Transborder logging companies were involved in complex networks of authorisation, exploitation and trade providing them with access to Cambodian timber. These networks often cut across political divides, linking in the case of Thai companies operating in Khmer Rouge territory, local strongmen on both sides of the front line as well as the leadership of both countries and the Khmer Rouge faction. For example, one such network was centred on the Khu Kan Aroonsawat company managed by Mr. Aroonsawat, a Thai who developed close contacts and a prosperous business with the Khmer Rouge during the 1980s, working for the United Nations Border Relief Operation to assist Cambodian refugees in Thailand (Florent 1995). He then served as an intermediary for KR investments in the province and conducted logging operations, reportedly for Ta Mok a KR general implicated in a bloody repression during the KR regime (Kiernan 1996). In 1994, the company was authorised to import 45,000 cu.m. by the RGC from KR controlled territory (Norodom 1994). The company paid fees to all sides. For logging and importing high grade timber, the company paid US\$200 per cu.m. split between: KR (US\$95); RGC (US\$30 for the MEF as official taxes, US\$20 for each of the co-PM, and US\$5 for low ranking officials at the border responsible for the inspection); and US\$30 for Thai ministers (Interior and Foreign Affairs). The company's log yard was located on military land, protected by a Royal Thai Army unit, and adjoined a KR checkpoint on the opposite side of the border from which a road led to the KR headquarters of

Anlong Veng and the logging area (Global Witness 1996a).

4.2.2 Forest concessionaires

Forest concessionaire companies originated predominantly from neighbouring Asian countries: Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, Indonesia, and China; and all managers were, with very few exceptions, ethnic Chinese (Kong 1998). By 1997, there were 32 contracts passed but only a dozen of companies were active (see Annex 2). Three of these concession deals were of particular significance, due to their size and the way in which they reflected the evolution of the sector.

Samling (SL Int'l), is a Malaysian company with logging operations in Sarawak, Guyana, and Angola (Colchester 1994; Forests Monitor 1997). The company started its operations in Cambodia in 1992, and a formal concession agreement, for 0.8 million hectares, was confirmed in 1994 during a visit of Norodom Ranariddh to Malaysia. Samling was a precursor of the new type of forestry industry to be developed in Cambodia. The contract that Samling negotiated with the RGC set a standard for a new type of forestry industry and most contracts were subsequently tailored to this one, with companies obtaining similar tax exemptions.²²⁵

The company pledged an investment of more than US\$100 million in infrastructures and logging operations with the objective of creating in Cambodia a “viable and sustainable forest industry” that would provide employment to more than 2,500 Cambodians (Samling 1994 and 1995). To offset this capital influx, Samling negotiated important tax exemptions, including a tax holiday period of eight years

²²⁵ In early 1997, seven logging companies including two para-statal companies were exempted of export taxes and of profit taxes for those which were previously taxed (Council of Ministers, letters ref. 41 SJN.KS and 368

from the date the company would derive profits, a 100% exemption of import and export taxes, as well as a preferential royalty rate for timber: US\$14 per cu.m. instead of the US\$29 to US\$40 for usual logging contracts and a stumpage fee of US\$ 75 recommended by World Bank staff (Sadoff 1993). The negotiation of the contract was highly political, and the Director of DFW was not included into the final round of negotiation over royalty rates.

The company was lauded by Hun Sen for investing US\$16 million dollars before “cutting even one cubic meter of timber” at a time when illegal logging was rife, and was lauded by foreign forestry advisors for its professionalism (Cambodia Daily 1995). Such support was the result of Samling’s strategy to appear as a victim of illegal logging in order to claim access to further resources, as well as present solutions to the problems of forestry management, including that of illegal logging, so that “the RGC will identify suitable alternative concessions [for us] and get the bad concessionaires out”.²²⁶ To this end, Samling documented acts of illegal logging carried out within or in the vicinity of its concession and enlisted ‘First World’ expertise, such as the Edinburgh Tropical Forestry centre and the French *Office National des Forêts*, to help it develop a ‘sustainable forestry’ sector (Kong 1997).²²⁷

The DFW director held, on the other hand, a serious concern for the ‘efficiency’ of Samling, reflecting a warning given to him by a Japanese forester that “if Samling comes to Cambodia, it will be the end of its forests”.²²⁸ Despite its commitment to “protect the forest resources and utilise it in sustainable manners” the company was officially denounced for illegal practices and subcontracted of police

SJN.K)
²²⁶ (Kong, interview, 1997).

and military units to conduct illegal logging in protected areas (Samling 1995; Minister of Agriculture 1997).

Proposing the creation of 10,000 jobs through an investment of US\$200 million in a wood-chipping operation, Macro-Pannin, a financial group from Indonesia, was awarded a 1.4 million hectares concession in 1995, the largest to date (Macro Cambodia Forestry Ltd 1995). The concession covered two provinces in the north-east and overlapped the traditional shifting cultivation lands of ethnic minorities. The 100% exemption of taxes it also received from the government prompted strong criticisms by foreign advisers to the MAFF arguing that “Cambodia does not have to make concessional deals to develop its timber industry as these resources are in short supply throughout the world” (Cameron 1995). Like several other concessionaires, though, Macro-Pannin was not able to implement its plans in Cambodia, and after two years the concession contract was cancelled by the RGC and part of the area transferred to Cambodian crony companies, one of them being Pheapimex-Fuchan.

Pheapimex-Fuchan is a Cambodian-Taiwanese joint venture which initially became involved in import-export business in the late 1980s. It is headed by Cheung Sopheap, a Sino-Khmer women who worked as a Vietnam expert and translator during the PRK and as an informal advisor to Hun Sen. She reportedly also enjoyed close ties with Princess Norodom Bopha Devi, a daughter of Sihanouk, and Minister of Culture during the SoC, and married Lau Mong Khan, a friend of Princess Eng Marie, the wife of Norodom Ranariddh. With an influx of capital from Taiwan, and

²²⁷ (Mengin-Lecreux, interview, 1997)

²²⁸ (Chan, interview, 1997).

such relations, the company expanded its activities through contracts over state resources.

In early 1995, the company was awarded a contract for the felling of old rubber trees with the direct agreement of both co-PM, without undergoing the compulsory bidding process. The commercial value of the timber was estimated at US\$124 million, while the contract was awarded for US\$22.5 million and rapidly sold to various companies with a benefit of US\$4.7 million (Kong 1996).²²⁹ In March 1996, Pheapimex was awarded two logging concessions and received less than two months later an authorisation to 'collect and buy' 150,000 cum. of round logs throughout most of the country in contravention of existing legislation and forestry policy. This decision was resisted by the director and some of the staff of DFW, but direct political pressure from the two co-Prime Ministers, threats of dismissal, and the use of military force (including the co-PM's body guard units) to protect operations ensured that the deal went ahead (Tao 1997; Hun and Norodom 1997). During 1997 and 1998, the company consolidated its position by obtaining the transfer of concession rights from two foreign companies, totalling 708,725 ha.; and was awarded the largest agricultural concession in the country for a tree plantation, totalling 404,800 ha. (Ministry of Agriculture 1997, Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1999). In return Pheapimex was supportive of its political backers, through, for example, donations to their charities or favourable comments in the media.²³⁰

The situation of other concessionaires varied between the cases detailed above. For some, operations were closer to the formal framework set up by the legislation

²²⁹ (Monin, interview, 1996).

²³⁰ Pheapimex made donations to Hun Sen's program for schooling and appeared on CPP controlled television

and contractual obligations. But in the vast majority of cases, companies had to develop a pragmatic attitude to seize the opportunities of the politico-economic environment of Cambodia and to resist its constraints. In practice, many of the concessions consisted of 'paper concessions'. Either because the concessionaires were unable to start their operations, for lack of investment capacity, bureaucratic delays, local insecurity, or lack of timber. Some concessionaires also only considered their contract as an 'entry ticket' into the 'formal forestry industry' to purchase logs from local timber merchants. While some concessionaires were directly involved in timber extraction and transport operations, many relied on domestic producers to carry out the actual work.

4.2.3 Domestic producers

Four different domestic producers have been differentiated by function: woodcutters, transporters, transformers, and timber merchants. Several of these functions were often integrated vertically by timber merchants of various scales, ranging from the simple middleman to large scale operations.

4.2.3.1 Woodcutters

With the exception of large scale operations by Thai and Vietnamese companies operating on the border and a few of the new forest concessionaires, most woodcutters operated in small groups informally linked to downstream networks of transporters and traders.

just after the coup d'état to demonstrate that the economic life had not been affected by the 'incidents'.

Many of the groups were made up of villagers living in the proximity of forested areas. Logging and the collection of forest products is a widespread traditional activity for Cambodian farmers, especially during the long dry season during which few agricultural activities take place (Delvert 1961). The vast majority of them specialised in the collection of fuelwood and timber for local use, due to the limited carrying capacity of their ox or buffalo-carts (see Plates 5, 6, and 8). Some local villagers were also involved in the extraction of large logs in association with timber merchants, truck owners, and nearby sawmill owners. Villagers also processed timber, using handsaws.

Other than local villagers, many seasonally migrant people were coming from central provinces where there was a traditional surplus of labour, especially during the dry season. They were organised by timber merchants or sawmill owners into logging groups. This group included many people having 'taken to the bush', *teou prey* or *chhol prey*, to avoid debt, family problems, revenge or the police; a practice long established in Cambodia (Delvert 1961; Chandler 1996). For those, as well as others such as deserters involved in logging, the illegal exploitation of forests represented a "social escape" (Bayard 1993).²³¹

Woodcutters operated mostly at the local scale. They were generally paid by timber merchants between 0.2 and 2 US\$ per cu.m. if they were integrated into a large operation that provided them with the equipment and extracted logs. Those owning, or renting equipment, sold their timber to transporters or timber merchants between 2 and 10 US\$ per cubic meter, depending on the location and the conditions of access

²³¹ Not all soldiers involved in logging were deserters. On the contrary, many remained in their military unit, which offered a structure to carry out economic activities.

for logging trucks. On average woodcutters earned US\$25-150 per month. In this regard, the exploitation of nature was frequently concomitant to the exploitation of people.

4.2.3.2 Transporters

Groups of woodcutters were generally organised by timber merchants able to integrate vertically some of the different operations: logging, transporting, processing and trading. As trucks, or tractors, represent the most expensive capital investment in a logging operation, many of the truck owners were able to incorporate woodcutters to become small timber merchants. Others simply subcontracted their trucks to woodcutter groups or timber merchants able to preserve a monopoly of logging in particular forested areas.

A second category of transporters was those owning boats and rafts used to transport timber by sea or on rivers (see Plates 11,12, and 13). As these were more remote from forested areas, and formed the second leg of a transport route, they were often not vertically integrated into the timber commodity chain but were subcontracted by timber merchants to transport logs to large processing factories. Boats, or rafts, could be hired with or without an armed escort, and many of the boat owners were, or had close ties with, local military. It is difficult to estimate the profits of transporters as only a few interviews were conducted on this question and there is a wide variety of possible cases depending on the local conditions, the length and means of travel and amount of expenses, including protection fees. It is estimated that the owner of a truck or small boat could make US\$500-2,000 per month.

4.2.3.3 Transformers

Small-scale legal and illegal sawmills were concentrated in districts located close to forested areas to minimise transport costs, or were directly set-up inside forests to facilitate transport but also to avoid control and taxation. While the number of identified illegal sawmills was 256 in 1998, the total number of sawmills was estimated by the DFW at about 800 by the end of 1992 and 1,500 in 1998 (Department of Forests and Wildlife 1988; FAO 1994a; ARD 1998). Typical small scale sawmills would consist of one or two band saws powered by diesel engines, and be staffed by about five workers per saw, most frequently migrant workers paid US\$1-2/day. Chainsaws were also widely used to produce crude sawnwood. Sawmill owners generally enjoyed close links with the local administration, or were part of it. Monthly profits for sawmill owners averaged US\$800-2,000 per band saw.

4.2.3.4 Timber merchants

Timber merchants constituted another category of actors which, as presented above, could integrate several of the operations of the commodity chain (i.e., they were not only retailers). The main characteristics of timber merchants were their capacity for securing authorisations and finance for these operations, as well as establishing connections with markets. Cash, as well as social relations were thus required, which resulted in the overwhelming dominance of Sino-Khmers among them. This was particularly the case for timber exporters whose dealings essentially required trust relations across international borders, a social capital that was the near monopoly of

Sino-Khmers for links beyond neighbouring countries.²³² Aside from established private entrepreneurs, many of the petty timber merchants in the provinces were governmental officials enjoying a position of authority such as foresters, militia commanders, police commanders, but also officials from the provincial and district administration, as well as their relatives.

Mrs. Ma was one of these small international timber merchants operating in the province of Stung Treng. An ethnic Chinese born in Siem Pang and married to a Laotian, she spoke four languages. Following her divorce in 1991, she started her own business by trading fuelwood and sap, used for torches. Through her dealings, she met in 1994 a Laotian businessman interested in importing timber who lent her enough money to start small scale smuggling with an ox-cart. In 1995, she scaled-up the operation by putting in contact the main military strongman of the province, General Seuy Keo commander of Military Region 1, who dispensed 'special local export licences', to her contacts in Laos. This contact led to an export deal for which she was able to secure a sub-contract worth US\$20/cu.m. for 2,000 cu.m.. Sub-contracting labour and transport, she was able to export an extra 1,000 cu.m.. Mrs. Ma later obtained a 'special' licence for herself and exported 1,500 cu.m., instead of the 300 cu.m. 'authorised', making US\$30,000; enough to allow her to make gifts to General Seuy Keo and her sub-contractors, placing herself as both a client and a patron in the Stung Treng society. She since extended her activities to smuggling small quantities of heroin from Laos to Phnom Penh and was using part of the benefits to lobby for a 'special' licence to export 3,000 cu.m. she had had recently cut and gathered near the border (ERC 1997).

²³² (Luon, interview, 1997)

While some timber merchants had fully integrated operations, others were barely more than middle-men linking concessionaire timber buyers and wood cutters. Timber buyers would be paying an advance for middle-men to organise the (often illegal) felling in a given area by recruiting wood cutters. They would often pay a second advance for contracting transporters after having been shown already felled logs. Unsurprisingly, there were numerous swindles, most frequently with middle-men selling twice or more stocks of logs, that might not even belong to them, or disappearing with the cash advance after woodcutters had felled trees. Conflicts were often 'resolved' violently, increasing the climate of insecurity in logging areas. A timber-merchant with an integrated production (truck and sawmill) could earn in the central provinces about US\$3,000-5,000 per month.

4.2.3.5 Armed forces

Aside from constituting a major authoriser, in the form of predatory protector, armed forces constituted a distinct category of forestry producers themselves.²³³ The involvement of military forces in logging dated back to the early 1980s, when they had to assume part of the reconstruction of the country and in particular the reconstruction of military infrastructures, strategic installations (such as bridges), and the clearing of forests along communication routes. That involvement had evolved to systematic and often large-scale operations in the 1990s. In 1994, the DFW estimated that the Army operated about 70% of all sawmills (FAO 1994a) and the Navy was

²³³ In 1997, the armed forces officially counted about 123,000 personnel divided into intervention divisions under the General Staff and provincial battalions and commune militias under the control of provincial governors (Hermes, interview, 1997).

allegedly the largest exporter of timber in the country.²³⁴

Most of the military personnel involved in logging were only running small operations and often acted as sub-contractors for local sawmill owners, domestic timber merchants and concessionaires. Indeed, woodcutters groups were frequently constituted of soldiers and policemen, and their relatives. These groups were mostly located in more remote locations generally along border or in front-line regions where access to forested areas was conditional upon the approval of local armed units. This privilege of access, granted by their employment and maintained if necessary by the use or the threat of violence, guaranteed their entitlement to forest resources. Being within the security forces could also provide access to trucks or boats. In other words, it is precisely by remaining in the army, even without pay, that individuals maintained their access to the forestry sector. In a way, while being *de facto* 'self-demobilised', these army personnel kept their privileged access to guns and trucks as a 'competitive advantage' to set up a commercially profitable activity. Civilians themselves occasionally wore military clothes in order to gain some respect and self-protection.

The activities of armed groups were either irregular and short term, or regular and long term, depending on the ability of the group to gain permanent territorial control of the area and to become 'encysted' into the local economy, thereby consolidating their power within the local networks of authority and their links with timber buyers. The viability of their business generally depended on the physical accessibility to a market, for example a river or an international border, as their limited initial capital and lack of legitimacy meant that they could not access distant markets directly. This viability was also dependent upon the legal conditions of access

²³⁴ (Courbois, interview, 1997).

to the market. In this regard, collection permits, thanks to which illegal logs could be officially stamped by DFW to be put on the legal market, greatly facilitated the reproduction of illegal logging and ensured the economic viability of such groups.

4.3 Consuming the forest: buyers

Aside from domestic buyers, most buyers were Thai or Vietnamese companies, and to a lesser degree Laotian. Other international buyers were based in Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, where imported timber was processed before final sale. While trade had mostly concerned indirect exports in the form of log smuggling to neighbouring countries; direct exports of processed timber to non-neighbouring markets, especially China and Taiwan, were becoming significant since 1997 as processing factories became operational.

While the ‘international’ character of the market is often stressed, the local continuum existing between markets through personal relations also needs to be underlined in order to expose the socio-political intelligibility of ‘market mechanisms’. The domestic political agendas of Thai politicians like Chatichai or Chavalit, or the financial interests of provincial Vietnamese members of the nomenclature are all important when considering which social ties link them to the Cambodian timber supply. Underlining the local character of the ‘global market’ is not a trivial point. In cases like Cambodia, the reference to the ‘international’ character of the market where exchanges of commodities and money take place is often used to avoid ethical matters. For example, the diamond consortium De Beers refers to the ‘international’ character of the diamond market, and the inability to trace the origin of an individual diamond, to brush aside public objections to buying

diamonds from warmongers in Angola or Sierra Leone (Reno 1998). Likewise, the acknowledgement of responsibility often relies on the disclosure of the *local* character of international flows of capital and resources. The case is most successfully exemplified by the use of ‘trailing’ techniques by environmental NGOs (e.g. Global Witness 1998). Paper trails, monetary exchanges or timber itself, are perceived as the most convincing ways of demonstrating this *local* character in order to unveil the individual responsibility of actors hiding the ethical issues of their choices behind the curtain of *global* dealings. On the other hand, buyers eager to support what they considered an ethical consumption could be flouted by intermediaries within the commodity network. For example, wood furniture imported by the company Lilo in England deceptively presented timber from Cambodia as “genuine plantation wood” from Vietnam.²³⁵

4.4 Consuming the forest: commentators

This last category of actors consisted of individuals and institutions intervening more indirectly than the preceding groups upon the timber commodity network. These included international donors, foreign advisers, environmental pressure groups, opposition politicians, public figures, and the media. Most of these were brought by their common interests for forestry through a highly interrelated network in which information, but also money circulated. While financial gains for this group were not directly related to the commodification of forests, it is nevertheless worth mentioning that the timber commodity network was indirectly generating substantial financial

²³⁵ (Global Witness, interview, 1998).

rents for commentators. Wages and consultancy fees paid by international grants or loans amounted to a few hundred dollars per month for local NGO workers, up to US\$38,000 per month for international consultants.

While these actors did not intervene in a material way in the process of timber commodification, they did so in a powerful indirect way by shaping the tone of the public legitimacy of forestry and budgetary practices. Even if many of them were neither Cambodians nor democratically representative of a domestic constituency, they shaped much of the ‘public transcript’ qualifying in ethical, technical or economical terms the practices and actors organising the commodification of forests. In such a way, they acted as another type of authorisers, unveiling and criticising many of the practices in the forestry sector and withdrawing legitimacy to key institutional actors involved in the ‘shadow state’ political economy.

By shaping the ‘public transcript’, pressing the government and neighbouring countries into changing their policies and practices, this discourse coalition influenced, with both intended and unintended effects, the forest commodification process. The role played by Global Witness, Sam Rainsy and the IMF in this regard was key to move from a ‘confused’ situation dominated by accommodation, to a sharply contrasted interpretation of the wrong-doings in the forestry sector, participating in its politicisation and contentious character within Cambodia and the region. These aspects of the commodity network are further developed in Chapter 7.

5. Conclusions

Timber commodity networks in Cambodia over the study period were characterised by: a high diversity of actors and production coalitions; a complexity and multiplicity of authorisations; and the dissolution of formal state sovereignty over forest management, including at the level of the 'public transcript'. These characteristics were expressed at a variety of scales and for each stage of the commodification process.

Every step within the commodity network was localised by the practices of individual actors. In this regard the locational effect of resources and flows - in the form of forest sites, transport routes, and borders - was critical in the structuration of the polity and the articulation of power. Each stage in the commodification process had to come down to the 'local' scale, giving an opportunity for the renegotiations of the distribution of costs and benefits by individual actors, and giving by the same way this appearance of 'anarchy'. These renegotiations were facilitated all the more by the constant shifts in the official forestry policy of the RGC. However, it was no more 'unbounded' than the access to the forest was 'free'. Far from being 'free' or 'anarchic' these renegotiations were embedded in unequal relations of power. The possession of a gun, the relic of institutional authority, the claim of political legitimacy or high moral ground, the capacity to invest in a chainsaw or a multi-million dollars plywood factory, were all intermediaries constituting the 'stuff' of power and constructing these relations. Translated from strategies of access into mechanisms of control of the commodification process, the possible success of these practices ensured the (re)production of inequalities among actors.

The diversity of actors and production coalitions reflected the absence of monopoly over means of production and channels of exchange. But more importantly, it reflected the success of a diversity of strategies of access to, and mechanisms of control over, the metabolism of forests. Actors, strategies and mechanisms intervened directly at specific scales (e.g. territorial control, timber extraction, legal prescription), and mutually influenced each other at a variety of scales. A summary of actors, main strategies of access as well as mechanisms used to maintain and control that access is provided in Table 6.5.

The diversity of production coalitions was also related to the diversity of actors authorising each of these coalitions. In other words, networks of authorisers were (partially) incorporated into production networks for each stage and at each scale. As Chapter 7 demonstrates, these authorising networks were sometimes contradictory, while in other occasions, they supported each other. Similarly, the practices of these networks were both supportive and predatory of those of producers. The diversification of authorisers, at numerous levels of the state apparatus led to withdrawal of formal state sovereignty over forest management. However, this diversification maintained a grip upon the forestry sector in which rules and practices were fluid and largely informal. This fluidity came at a cost, which was not only that of bribes and protection fees but also that of uncertainty and risk. This uncertainty jeopardised commitments for investments and risks were lethal. This diversification of authorisers also extended beyond the national realm, in the form of colluding leaders in neighbouring countries. But also, as Chapter 7 details, at a wider scale through the involvement of the ‘international community’ in shaping the ‘public transcript’ of proper governance and development of the forestry sector.

Table 6.8 - Actors and their access to and control of the timber commodity network

ACTORS	STRATEGIES OF ACCESS	MECHANISMS OF CONTROL	SCALE
Forests	market value	bio-physical features social accessibility	local international
Authorisers			
<i>Politicians</i>	socio-political capital	manipulation of legislation and taxation	provincial national international
<i>Strongmen</i>	financial, political or military dominance	control of access to forests and impunity for illegal operations	local / provincial national / regional
<i>Bureaucrats</i>	institutional legitimacy	leverage over taxation regulation delays and red tape	local provincial national
<i>Predatory protectors</i>	might	threat and use of violence areas of insecurity	local / provincial
<i>Local populations</i>	legal and customary rights	participation in illegal logging and insecurity	local
Producers			
<i>Transborder logging firms</i>	socio-political ties capital and technical means	markets geographical access support to authorisers	transborder regional regional
<i>Concessionaires</i>	legal legitimacy financial and social capital political ties	large labour use markets leverage over prices collusive collective action support to authorisers	local / provincial national regional / international
<i>Woodcutters</i>	labour force social ties	technical means and skills support to authorisers	local
<i>Transporters</i>	capital social ties to access transport authorisations	financial and technical means and skills support to authorisers	local / provincial transborder regional
<i>Transformers</i>	capital social ties	means of transformation and technical skills support to authorisers	local provincial
<i>Timber merchants</i>	social and political ties capital	financial capital, use of credit leverage over prices markets support to authorisers	local regional transborder regional

Table 6.8 (cont'd)

ACTORS	STRATEGIES OF ACCESS	MECHANISMS OF CONTROL	SCALE
Buyers			
<i>Domestic</i>	demand	choice and payment leverage over prices	local / provincial
<i>International (importers)</i>	financial capital	financial and political ties with authorisers leverage over prices	regional / international
<i>International (final customers)</i>	control of demand	choice and payment leverage over prices	regional international
Commentators			
<i>Media (domestic)</i>	influence over legitimacy	information	local national
<i>Media (international)</i>	influence over demand and legitimacy	information	national international
<i>NGOs</i>	moral legitimacy relative free will	information lobby of donors and authorities	provincial national international
<i>Politicians & public figures</i>	political legitimacy social capital	information	national international
<i>Governmental donor agencies</i>	institutional legitimacy financial and technological capital	policy recommendations choice over funding leverage over imports	national international

Chapter 7

The ‘illegal’ forestry sector: conflicting discourses of reconstruction

*“To get rich by illegal logging is a gross violation of and contrary to the
common interest of the national society”*

Speech by the President of the National Assembly, Chea Sim, on the Arbor Day 1996 (Chea 1996a)

The timber industry of the mid-1990s has conventionally been characterised as illegal, anarchic, and corrupt. In media, governmental or international development reports, the term logging itself was almost systematically replaced by ‘illegal logging’. However, the systematic characterisation of illegality originated, in fact, from the ill-defined notion of legality itself. As the head of a technical mission in charge of auditing the forestry sector in 1997 remarked, “the first thing would be to know what is legal and what is not, but there seems to be no one in the country to tell

us that”.²³⁶

Indeed, looking at the published legislation was often frustrating, especially the initial struggle to *find* the legislation; so was the consultation of contracts. In other words, there was little formal legal framework. As a legal adviser to the Council of Ministers confirmed,

Everything [on timber deals] is confidential and top secret, we [the leadership] work through annotations [on letters of request], so the high administration has no hold over these issues, which are treated outside of the normal circuit of decisions. People concerned by these decisions recognise this authority.²³⁷

A striking thing about the concept of legality was that Ministers themselves referred to the co-Prime Ministers as ‘The Royal Government’, but in doing so intentionally excluded themselves (Tao 1995). In this way, what ‘The Royal Government’ (i.e. the two co-Prime Ministers) decided *defined* what was legal, even if this decision broke the law. As this chapter demonstrates, this pattern of ad-hoc ‘legalisation’ was a widespread practice among authorisers, which was repeated at a variety of scales, from international affairs down to the village level, giving way in return for a myriad of ‘illegalities’ characterising the timber commodity network.²³⁸

The concept of ‘illegality’ is thus perilous to use. On the other hand, it is useful to examine what purpose the deployment of the concept of ‘illegality’ served; and to examine how, intentionally or not, the ‘illegal’ forestry sector and the discourses of the ‘international community’ and domestic actors related the exploitation of forests to the socio-political process of transition.

Because of this controversial and conspicuous character of illegality, forest

²³⁶ (Grosenick, interview, 1997).

²³⁷ (Heng, interview, 1997).

²³⁸ Not all illegalities are examined in detail in this study. The classic ‘tricks of the trade’ such as cost cutting on logging operations, mis-reporting or under-reporting are not presented in details. For a description of these, see

exploitation was one of the most contested issues of the reconstruction process of Cambodia. This section examines the discursive aspects of the commodity network in order to analyse how the public transcript on the 'illegal' forestry sector was shaped and, in turn, resisted. Two broad discourse-coalitions (Hajer 1995) are identified: that of 'outsiders' and that of 'insiders'. The discourses of each of these coalitions evolved and responded to that of the other, as well as to the perception of the logging situation and its consequences.

The first discourse-coalition was constituted mainly by the 'commentators' presented in Chapter 6: social actors who were not directly involved in the commodification of forests but related to the forestry sector through their discursive practices. The actors of this heterogeneous coalition constructed their political power through their grouping around a "specific set of story-lines" (ibid.: 13), which "not only help to construct a problem, [but] also play an important role in the creation of a social and moral order in a given domain" (ibid.: 64). Despite their individual divergence over the details and aims of their own story-line, each actor reinforced the story-line of logging as an exercise in plunder organised by greedy politicians, the military, and transnational corporations resulting in war, misery and ecological crisis. This set of story lines created a public transcript of 'logging as looting', dominated by the idea that forestry was symptomatic of the broader problems of reconstruction, thus functioning as a discursive emblem, a parable through which Cambodia's broader social and economic ills were perceived and understood.

The second discourse-coalition was constituted of 'insiders'; social actors more directly involved in the commodification of forests, namely government

(Traffic 1994; Cooke 1994).

officials and logging companies. Their discourse followed in many ways the public transcript presented above, especially when directed towards the public or in other official circumstances. In this way, the Cambodian government replied to criticisms with a discourse claiming its powerlessness to fight the ‘anarchy’ of ‘illegal logging’. By doing so, the country’s leadership acknowledged the diffuse nature of political power organising the Cambodian polity. At the same time, however, some elements in the government were actively encouraging this diffusion, through policies and practices which, most importantly, further developed the ‘shadow state’ at the expense of the formal state. The public transcript of ‘anarchy’ was thus employed by the government as a kind of discursive smoke-screen, in order to preserve its own neo-patrimonialist interests.²³⁹ Logging companies on their side complained of illegal logging along lines similar to those of the public transcript. Yet, this assenting discourse masked a ‘hidden transcript’ that shaped, and justified, the actual practices prevalent in the ‘illegal’ forestry sector.

In the following sections, these discursive practices are analysed in great detail.

1. Outsiders’ discourses: war, accountability and environmental plunder

This section examines the perception of the forestry sector by the international community, which provided about half of Cambodia’s government budget, and the shaping of a ‘public transcript’ advocating forest conservation and a de-linking of natural resources exploitation from factional political agendas.

²³⁹ (Tao, interview, 1997)

1.1 International forest politics and green ethics of development

The attitude of the ‘international community’ towards the management of Cambodian forests was in several aspects quite different from the attitude characteristic of the preceding period of logging boom in other Southeast Asian countries. While “the role of forest industries in the attack on economic underdevelopment” of low-income countries had been stressed throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and many efforts had been made by the international development community to ensure the rapid growth of the commercial forestry sector, the relative social and environmental failures of this modernist and utilitarian approach had resulted by the mid-1980s in growing criticisms (Westoby 1987). From then on, the socio-economic and ecological impacts of logging and deforestation received a great deal of attention by the international development community, reflecting a wider concern for the environment and local communities with regard to the relation between environmental degradation and development patterns (Guppy 1984; Myers 1984; World Bank and World Resource Institute 1985; World Commission on Environment and Development 1987).

Furthermore, while much of the mainstream literature remained oriented towards problems such as population growth and shifting cultivation or northern consumerism, some of them reminiscent of the colonial conservation discourse, there was also growing evidence presented about the importance of socio-political factors in the dynamics of tropical deforestation (Hurst 1990; Kummer 1992). In their key study of the failure of forest public policies to bring about socio-economic benefits and to minimise environmental impacts, Repetto and Gillis (1988) stressed that policies were often deliberately shaped to serve the interests of those in power and that of their allies. Indeed politics, greed and uneven access to resources were pointed to by critical

analysts as the major causes of unsustainable forest exploitation and oppression or constraints put on rural poor, previously so frequently portrayed as the main agents of deforestation . For Colchester (1993a),

It is both wealth and poverty which underlie deforestation and it is in the inequitable structures which link the two that the roots of forest loss can be located. Deforestation, in other words, is an expression of social injustice. (ibid.: 4)

In a post-Cold War environment, political motivation is not limited to the circle of local politicians and transnational companies but as well involves the tacit support of foreign governments and in particular that of the United States (Guppy 1984). In this perspective, major US and western dominated international development institutions were aiming at supporting friendly regimes, such as those of the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia to take the example of Southeast Asia; here, criticism of resource exploitation practices is effectively prohibited by a politics of pragmatism and alliance-building. The situation is to some extent different with ‘unfriendly’ regimes, and non-strategic countries, such as Cambodia; here, less political restraint is placed upon critical assessments of resource policy, which are conducted with a different political frame of reference.

The discourse of western development agencies towards the forestry sector in the early 1990s was thus influenced by two principles. Firstly, forests were to be conserved for a wide range of purposes going beyond the simple rationale of timber production for economic growth, to encompass biodiversity conservation, carbon sinks against climate change, prevention of floods, droughts and desertification, as well as eco-tourism development. These sometimes disparate suggestions reflected a wider conflictual debate between northern and southern countries on the development path to be taken by poor countries, and also competing proprietorial and use claims

over forested lands. Secondly, forests were to be ‘depoliticised’. That is, forest rents needed to be put out of the reach of politicians who could manipulate forestry exploitation for factional political purposes, rather than for the public good.

The attitude of the international community towards the Cambodian forestry sector was permeated by these principles. In particular, the idea of depoliticising forestry was reinforced in the early 1990s by the non-recognition of the government in Phnom Penh as a sovereign political entity. As the following section details, this attitude was to have important consequences on the construction of a ‘public transcript’ by the ‘international community’ and its token acceptance by domestic political actors through *façade* policies.

1.2 Public transcript: a ‘green’ reconstruction for Cambodia

The forests, which help stabilize the soil and regulate the flow of water in Cambodia, are disappearing at an alarming rate. Once known for its fertile [sic] rice fields, rich fishing grounds, lush forests, and abundant wildlife, Cambodia is now suffering severe environmental degradation and food shortages resulting from the policies of the despotic Khmer Rouge regime, the inept and corrupt Vietnamese-installed current regime, the ravage of war, and plunder by its neighbors and outsiders. Prior to the take-over by the communists in 1975, it was estimated that over 70% of Cambodia was covered with forests, but now Cambodia’s Forestry Department estimates the cover at 40%. (Benge 1991:1)

This introductory paragraph of a USAID report on ‘an environmental and agricultural overview and sustainable development strategy’ for Cambodia, provides a good example of the story-line built around forestry exploitation by the ‘international community’ since its promised “flood of good will” (UNDP 1989: ii) to assist in the reconstruction of Cambodia started to trickle in the early 1990s. Reading from it, deforestation becomes a symbol of the tragic recent history of Cambodia and the on-going plunder of forests by greedy predators, which will bring an apocalyptic

ecological crisis for poor Cambodians.²⁴⁰ In his statement, Bengé (1991) goes on to warn of the direct consequences of deforestation on the floods that affected Cambodia that year and on the siltation of the Tonle Sap lake, the threat to fisheries that this represented and related effects on the Cambodian diet.²⁴¹

Yet, the interest of this statement is less in its partial validity, omissions or inaccuracies than in the logic flowing from this perspective: the recommendation to place an immediate moratorium on export of natural resources “until a strategy for the sustained management of these resources can be developed and enforced” and the creation of ecological reserves (*ibid.*: 15). In other words, what the population of Cambodians remaining in the country should expect from the new ‘goodwill’ of the international community, after two decades of war, was assistance in reinforcing the economic embargo and in placing access to some resources under the supervision of park wardens.

This discourse emphasising forest conservation over the economic well-being of Cambodian people was expressed in most official reports by other aid agencies in the early 1990s, and most prominently by a UNDP report prepared for the UNCED conference in Rio in 1992 which stressed that Cambodia had “exceptional qualifications to develop as a ‘Green Lung’ of Southeast Asia and a world-class

²⁴⁰ Bengé did not mention in his analysis that his government supported the ‘despotic’ Khmer Rouge and imposed an economic and development aid embargo on 90% of the Cambodian population. Nor did he mention that his government was responsible for an overwhelming proportion of the ‘ravage of war’. And finally, his statistics of deforestation, although provided by the Forestry Department, were presented in a biased way as the figure of 40% referred to forests with a commercial potential for timber production, while the total forest cover was about 63% (Ministère de l’Agriculture 1989; FAO 1991). This erroneous reporting of the forest cover was extremely influential as it was used as the reference for the UNCED report published in 1992 which received much media coverage (Dennis and Woodsworth 1992).

²⁴¹ The issue of the siltation of the Tonle Sap lake, the largest body of fresh water in Southeast Asia, is one of the most controversial within the environment and development debate in Cambodia. While the causes of this siltation are generally agreed - greater silt load transported down the upper watershed of the Mekong and local tributaries due to deforestation and change in land-use; and, more controversially, the degradation of the flooded forest surrounding the lake - estimates for the drying up of the lake vary widely, from 10 years (World

destination for environmentally-sensitive tourism” (Dennis and Woodworth 1992: i). One proposal, significant enough to merit an editorial in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, even called for Cambodia’s establishment as the ‘World’s Park’; rather than playing catch-up with the fast-paced industrialisation of the rest of the region, Cambodia should capitalise on its ‘under-development’ to become Asia’s eco-tourist and biodiversity preservation zone *par excellence*. Similar, if less radical, calls were relentlessly made by international agencies, international NGOs and the media to preserve the Cambodian forest for the sake of biodiversity, carbon sink against climate change, drought and erosion prevention (ADB 1991; Liden and Hiebert 1992; World Bank 1992; UNTAC 1993a; Davies 1993; Rainforest Action Network 1993). Yet direct and constructive assistance on the core issues - forestry policy and commercial logging - were largely avoided until 1996, as they were considered too politically embedded and sensitive.

Among the rare exceptions to this ‘green discourse’, was the work of Kevin White (1991), an experienced forester asked by the Australian Catholic Relief to examine the forestry sector and come up with recommendations. Taking a pragmatic view, he argued that Cambodia had approximately a reserve of 500 million cu.m. of high quality timber and considering the need for export earnings, logging was “definitely a source of foreign exchange” (Van Zuylen 1992). In his view, rather than trying to stop exploitation - the credo of most agencies - efforts should be directed at strengthening the management of this exploitation. Advocating forest exploitation rather than conservation, White’s report received a minimal coverage in comparison to that of UNDP, and had no impact upon the donor community.

Bank 1992), to 25 years (Mottet 1997), to 600 years (Mekong Secretariat 1993).

The wait-and-see attitude characterising western aid agencies, with the exception of a few NGOs, between 1989 and 1992 was primarily rooted in a wider political agenda and secondly in the contradictions of the reconstruction agenda. As a UNDP (1989: i) report mentioned: external assistance, even in the form of development plan, “must clearly await the establishment of a new government in Phnom Penh enjoying international recognition”. For Vickery (1990), one of the few scholars with open sympathies for the government in Phnom Penh, the unspoken Western political agenda was the weakening of the State of Cambodia:

Since Vietnam cannot be counted on to keep Cambodia subjugated, thus dissatisfied and a threat to Indochina stability, both countries must be starved into collapse. Otherwise there is still the danger that they might become moderate socialist success stories. (ibid.: 456)

Vickery’s other assumption was that “economic liberalism [will be] destroying a country which had made notable progress in the most difficult conditions under socialism” (ibid.: 460). Both assumptions were exaggerated but still well-founded. Withholding development assistance and increasing the level of political uncertainty at a time of intense political-economic change resulted indeed in the dissolution of formal state power by both budgetary constraints and a quasi take-over of the state, often from within, by private interests in what the World Bank euphemistically termed “spontaneous privatisation” (World Bank 1992). The problems resulting from the erosion of formal administration in fact inverted the action of the international community, which, from the institution of the UN transitional administration, attempted to maintain afloat the administrative structure and the financial system.

The fear of unregulated economic development was also shared by UNDP experts who rightfully argued that the environment was at risk because in “Cambodia now everyone is in a ‘get rich quick’ mode - whether it’s to fuel war chests for

elections or personal enrichment prior to possibly leaving office” (cited in, Gennino and Colm 1992). UNDP specifically set up a program in mid-1993 to help the government to “coordinate the screening of all major investment and development aid proposals for adverse potential environmental impacts and for development sustainability” (Dennis and Woodsworth 1992: 24). Yet, the program never achieved this goal, and was transformed instead into a ‘capacity building’ instrument to set up a largely powerless State Secretary for Environment.²⁴² Similarly other foreign development agencies, such as FAO and IDRC, rarely dealt with logging and preferred, as is usual for international development projects, to avoid highly politicised issues.

1.3 Imposing conditionality: between principles and pragmatism

During the first five years of the RGC, the issue of logging gathered institutions and individuals located outside the direct process of authorisation and production of timber commodities into a broad discourse-coalition advocating mostly for fiscal transparency, governmental accountability, and environmental protection. However, while commercial logging was singled out as the main channel of governmental corruption and environmental damage (Davies 1993; The Nation 1994), the international development community continued to avoid dealing directly with it, preferring to concentrate on conservation issues throughout the first years of the RGC.

²⁴² An armed attack on the head of the program shortly after the beginning of the project probably accelerated this process by motivating UNDP in taking a low-profile and ousting the victim to replace him by a discreet technocrat simultaneously overseeing four other projects elsewhere in the world. The link between the outspokenness of the head of the UNDP program about illegal logging and other environmental ‘abuses’ and the assault was never clearly demonstrated but the Minister of Environment reminded me about the incident, four years later, and invited me to be careful about what I was writing in my dissertation; implying that he could not protect me if I accused the army too directly.

In 1994, two years after its first set of recommendations on the reconstruction process of Cambodia, the World Bank was still *calling* for assistance in the forestry sector and while several ongoing and proposed projects were noted, none of them dealt directly with the management of commercial logging (World Bank 1994).²⁴³ This avoidance did not stem from a lack of understanding about the crucial role that the exploitation of forests could play both in the political economy of the country as a World Bank report noted that,

Cambodia's forest resources are substantial and are particularly valuable to this country with few alternative sources of wealth and foreign exchange earnings. Nearly half of the extensive forested area is dense evergreen forest that is rich in export quality commercial timbers. (ibid.: 128)

The decision of the 'international community' to avoid dealing concretely with commercial logging was in itself a political act, and not simply the expression of powerlessness and false ignorance. This political act aimed not only at preserving the direct interest of consultants and agencies eager to keep good relations with the government, but also a political status-quo through which economic development could take place in the hope, or belief, that social justice would be brought by the 'trickling down' effect of economic growth.

As time passed and evidence of financial embezzlement, façade policies, and lack of 'genuine good will' on the part of the government was brought to the public, in particular through the detailed work of Global Witness (Global Witness 1995a, 1996a), the relations between the international community and the government became tense and polarised. From 1994, most foreign institutions were prone to openly criticise the mismanagement of Cambodian forests and, in private circles, to

²⁴³ These ongoing and proposed projects were: forest inventory, reforestation, forestry faculty training, research (World Bank 1994).

criticise personalities in the government.²⁴⁴ During international meetings bringing donor countries and the Cambodian government together, the forestry issue took an increasingly important place on the agenda. In many ways, forestry had become the symbol of what was ‘wrong’ with the government. As pointed out by the former Finance Minister Sam Rainsy during a international donor meeting,

The international community wishing to help Cambodia must follow the issue of deforestation very closely because it involves many elements of crucial importance to the country: not only economic and financial, but also ecological (climatic changes leading to poor crops ...), political (financing of the war and political factions or clans) and social (corruption, non-respect for the law, the rule of the gun, and social decay). (Sam 1995: 6-7)

Forestry provided indeed a forum for exposing criticisms of these sensitive issues as well as the economic role of the army and the ambivalent relations of the government with the Khmer Rouge. The IMF and the WB saw in the management of forests by the RGC a serious mismanagement of resources that would “undermine the structure and equilibrium of the Ministry of Finance and have undesirable and dangerous effects on society through the widening gulf between elite with access to [the wealth generated by] concessions and the general population ... [as well as] might have long term effects on the environment”.²⁴⁵

Apart from calls for action and technical assistance projects, the focus of the ‘outsiders’ discourse-coalition was on putting pressure upon the leadership of the RGC through positive aid conditionality. Official development assistance covered roughly half of the RGC budget, equivalent to the 1995 defence and security budget of the state, and thus constituted a potential lever for influencing the behaviour of the RGC leadership. The main advocates for this strategy were the British NGO Global

²⁴⁴ For example, the IMF representative referred privately to the Council of Ministers as the “council of thieves”, and for a World Bank official, the Minister of Agriculture was a “clown”.

²⁴⁵ (Redfern, interview, 1997).

Witness and the IMF, an unconventional association given the usual mistrust and past conflicts between the two types of institution. Global Witness intervened mostly through information and advocacy tactics aiming at major donors, public media and the RGC. For Global Witness, much of their investigative work proved that,

The co-Prime Ministers and the army are in effective control of the Cambodian timber trade. Working on behalf of illegal logging operations, they provide the authority and the power to override the country's Ministries and forestry legislation. The revenues from these operations almost entirely bypass the national budget. (Global Witness 1997a)

From Global Witness' perspective, by condoning such an attitude through underwriting the reconstruction process, aid donors were "accessories to Cambodia's current democratic, economic, and environmental decline" (Global Witness 1996b: 1). The IMF was an exception to this general attitude. In September 1996, after numerous warnings, it cancelled its loans to the RGC until issues related to forestry and budgetary transparency were resolved (Lang 1996). After declaring at an international donor meeting that the "depletion of the country's most valuable natural resource [forests] ..., with the direct involvement of the highest levels of government ... remains the single most critical issue in Cambodia", the IMF closed its representation in Cambodia in September 1997 in response to the lack of progress in these matters and the coup d'état (Neiss 1997: 3). The World Bank as well as several donors, among which the United States, supported this move.

However, other donors maintained their assistance, and even went some way towards condoning the coup d'état. For the French Ambassador, the failure to create a rule of law in the country was the end result of a misunderstanding initiated by the Paris Peace Accord between Westerners and Cambodians.²⁴⁶ In his perspective, the

²⁴⁶ (Le Lidec, interview, 1997).

'international community' had hoped for Cambodia to be a clean slate on which western politico-economic models could succeed not only in 'reconstructing' Cambodia but also in challenging the model of 'Asian Values' dominating the region.²⁴⁷ The Cambodian elite had perceived international institutions and foreign donors as necessary sponsors, while the population hoped for more supportive patrons. The translation of western democratic concepts unrelated to the Cambodian situation had thus been highly distorted through their integration into the (re)organisation of the Cambodian polity.

Furthermore, some members of the 'international community' had commercial interests at stake in the organisation of the forestry sector and while subscribing to the 'public transcript' condemning the mismanagement of forests by the government, they maintained their support. This was mostly the case of Japan, the most important donor. In a letter to the MFA in 1994, the Japanese Embassy declared that,

It is quite regrettable that the Kingdom of Cambodia continues to permit to export of logs on an occasional basis contrary to the official decision. ... it is believed that Japanese companies are being unfairly treated. [follows suggestions for lifting the ban in ways acceptable for the Japanese Government]. (Ambassade du Japon 1994)

In 1996, the Japanese government assisted the RGC financially in order to substitute for loans withdrawn by the IMF in 1996; undermining the IMF's efforts to bring about more accountability in the hope of preserving a rapidly degrading domestic political situation.²⁴⁸

The multiple aims of development assistance were revealed again when, after an assessment of the RGC's forest policy conducted in late 1995, the World Bank obtained with much difficulty, after a tedious eighteen month negotiation process, the

²⁴⁷ On Cambodia as a 'dreamed country' in western perceptions, see (Chieregatti 1996; Deboisvieux 1996).

²⁴⁸ (Monsef, interview, 1997).

RGC's agreement to take a 'soft loan' of US\$ 1.6 million, in order to pay for an extensive review of the forestry sector. As the senior World Bank contact responsible for the forestry review later commenting, "It took some ass-kicking to get that loan signed." The decision to lend money was in itself key to the assessment by the World Bank of the commitment of the RGC's leadership; the government's indebtedness to the Bank, in other words, was taken as a sign of its commitment to restructure policy in ways acceptable to the Bank.²⁴⁹

For the RGC, the loan was an expensive, but useful way to buy time, as it continued with the status quo while the review was being conducted. In other words, with the full knowledge of the World Bank (which was in possession of documents authorising export deals, with the signatures of government Ministers) the government was authorising logging to continue, even while it was paying for a review designed to address the problem of 'illegal' logging. The World Bank team chose not to publish the documents, and the in-country team leader was severely reprimanded by the World Bank Chair of Cambodia's Donor Consultative Group, Miss Ngozi Okong'o-Iweala, for admitting to the press that some illegal logging may still have been ongoing.²⁵⁰

The review, conducted by foreign consulting firms was completed in 1998. It supported a rationalisation of the forestry sector, confirming the legitimacy of forest concessionaires as efficient actors able to conduct sustainable forestry and bring about more fiscal transparency, while criticising domestic practices taking the form of informal taxes and illegal logging (Secretariat for Forest Policy Reform 1998). The

²⁴⁹ (McGrawth, interview, 1997).

²⁵⁰ (McGrawth, interview, 1997).

review also pointed to political pressures and influence of extensive patronage networks undermining governance of the forestry sector (DAI 1998b).

To solve these problems, one of the most concrete recommendations was the further “privatisation” of forest control and law enforcement through the creation of an “autonomous” organisation supported by regiment of “Royal Cambodian Forest Rangers” and reporting to the Prime Minister. While the proposed solution to Cambodia’s logging problem may satisfy the international community’s desire for visible enforcement, the risk was high to see this 700-strong unit of heavily armed rangers, with powers of seizure and arrest in cases of illegal logging, mostly acting against small-scale, local logging operations, and individuals harvesting forest products as well as timber. Most large-scale logging, being carried out under the auspices of larger armed groups, and forest concessionaires receiving the backing of the government and politicians were unlikely to be constrained in their illegal activities by this unit. Existing enforcement bodies, such as the police, customs and Forestry Department, have proven incapable of tackling illegal logging, indicating that armed official presence in the field is not the simple solution to forestry mismanagement. In fact, the recommendation to create yet another armed force in Cambodia ran the risk of establishing another coercive force unaccountable to the formal state, reminiscent of the 5000-member Military Police unit sponsored by the French in 1994.²⁵¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the RGC, in the person of Ung Huot, the First Prime Minister replacing the ousted Ranariddh, supported “100%” the overall strategies proposed by the foreign auditing firms (Secretariat for forest policy reform

²⁵¹ The MPs have allegedly been involved in human rights abuses and drug smuggling, and were reportedly one of the most active of the armed forces units involved in the July fighting in Phnom Penh; the UN Human Rights

1998).

As discussed earlier with respect to the UN log export ban, the discourse for ‘green reconstruction’ and greater transparency and accountability on part of the government had a dual effect upon the forestry sector. The discourse acted as a check on practices and governance by bringing to light ‘facts’, even if it remained tainted by a simplifying perspective overemphasising the corrupted nature of practices and socio-political relations. However, beyond the simplification implied by the construction of its founding story-line, the discourse failed to identify its own unintended consequence upon the organisation of the commodity network: pushing practices further underground by ‘criminalising’ them and legitimising large scale concessions with the risk of further marginalising the population at large from forest resources. By not tying its discourse to concrete action, such as aid conditionality, the international community mostly received in return façade policies and hollow pronouncements from the government.

2. Insider’s discourses: façades, doctrines and justifications

Insider’s discourses, as discussed above, made pragmatic use of the storylines of the outsiders’ discourse coalitions, in order to further their own agendas. As detailed in Chapter 6, the use of the adjectives ‘old’, ‘anarchic’, or ‘illegal’ to characterise timber was symptomatic of the contradictions between the public forestry policy of the RGC, aimed at reassuring international donors and attract foreign investors, and the practical requirements and expectations of governmental and forestry actors; the production

envoy in Cambodia urged that the MP unit be disbanded if it cannot be brought under the rule of law.

coalition. During a visit to Samlot a Malaysian businessman invited by Hun Sen to invest in logging in the area, joked after being explained the principle of ‘old log’ collection permits, “Yes, they are ‘old’: ‘old’ by a few hours!”.²⁵² Behind the trivial aspects of arguing about the age of felled timber, lay an entrenched conflict about the path of development and the political transition that Cambodia had to take.

2.1 Abiding by the public transcript: the politics of façade policies

To respond to the accusations of the ‘international community’, domestic political actors retorted with a discourse inscribed with powerlessness and expediency *vis à vis* a situation they characterised as ‘anarchic’. Press releases, official declarations, and prime ministerial decrees were regularly presented to the international community by the RGC leadership to testify to its good intentions. Most of these official documents were, however, drafted by foreign advisors and echoed what the public transcript was already dictating and what international donors wanted to hear. These documents acknowledged the problem of illegal logging and presented measures to curb it, ranging from log and sawnwood export bans, suspension of forest concession bids, adoption of international aid agency recommendations, external independent auditing of timber trade, investigation and immediate measures against offenders, to calls for co-operation from neighbouring countries (Royal Government of Cambodia 1995; Royal Government of Cambodia 1996b). Many of these measures were never implemented or successfully conducted, or, in most cases, they were rapidly undermined by contrary agreements and exemptions granted by one or both of the co-

²⁵² (Hermes, interview, 1997)

Prime Ministers to logging companies, military units, or importing countries. RGC authorities frequently justified the failure of these façade policies by their powerlessness to stop ‘illegal logging’ and, as in other domains, this argument gave rise to demands for more resources from international donors.

This discourse of powerlessness was most forcefully put forward by officials from the MAFF; blaming the current situation on the control of forests by ‘armed men’ and the backing that they received from the state apparatus. This discourse was often well grounded. As a forester in Kampot pointed out, “our job is made difficult because of shifting forest policy from the government and loggers, including high ranking officials, are not afraid of the forest legislation because [DFW] always loses in court: an illegal sawmill is fined [the equivalent of US\$0.4]! The army is more effective and businessmen listen to it rather than to us”.²⁵³ In isolated provinces with international borders, such as in the Banteay Meanchey, the problem was even more complex, as one forester argued:

Banteay Meanchey is ‘Texas’, the RCAF talks with the gun: we cannot control or even see. There are constantly arguments about who controls the area. ... it is the last province of the country and in contact with Thailand so smuggling [timber] is very easy to do. *When we compromise with the RCAF, it's OK*; but when we want to control: impossible! No money to do so. Businessmen pay the RCAF to do logging. RCAF justify what they do by the need to feed the soldiers and then lobby the provincial governor to pressure the [DFW]. We need the co-operation of the governor. All we can do is reporting. When we arrest a businessman, there is the interference of the high ranking military.²⁵⁴

Another forester, owner of a fine new car, half-jokingly summarised the situation: “the Forestry Department has the law, without having the force: I execute the law without force and on the other side, [the military] exercise the force without law”.²⁵⁵ Force was indeed sometimes exercised by military units against a stubborn

²⁵³ (Plok, interview, 1997).

²⁵⁴ (DFW-Banteay Meanchey, interview, 1997; emphasis added).

²⁵⁵ (Seng, interview, 1997).

application of the law, which foresters could occasionally pay with their life. Figures 7.1 and 7.2 illustrates the ‘fate’ of the foresters according to this story-line: to work hard to obtain a diploma and to end up sweating in a tree nursery or being chased by soldiers ‘laying the law’ in the forest and on the roads. A monthly salary of about US\$ 35 provided yet a more common incentive for foresters to accommodate the activities of ‘armed men’ than death threats. Because of the inescapability of “compromise”, and thus corruption, the Cambodian polity was promoting the co-optation of foresters into a system benefiting the powerful and the partial enforcement of the law enforcement upon the weaker strata of offenders.

Figure 7.1 - Forester planting seeds and soldier protecting illegal logging²⁵⁶

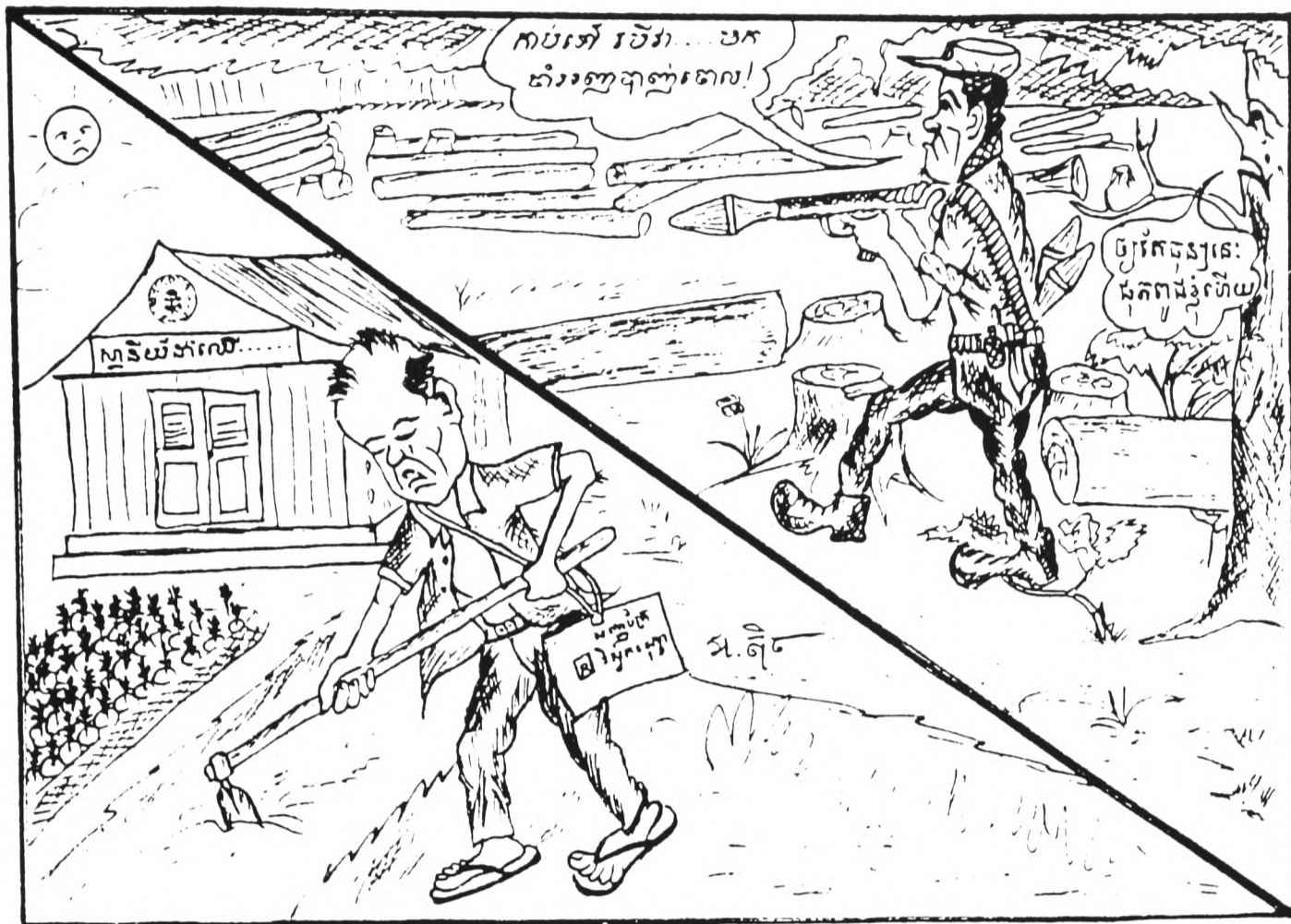
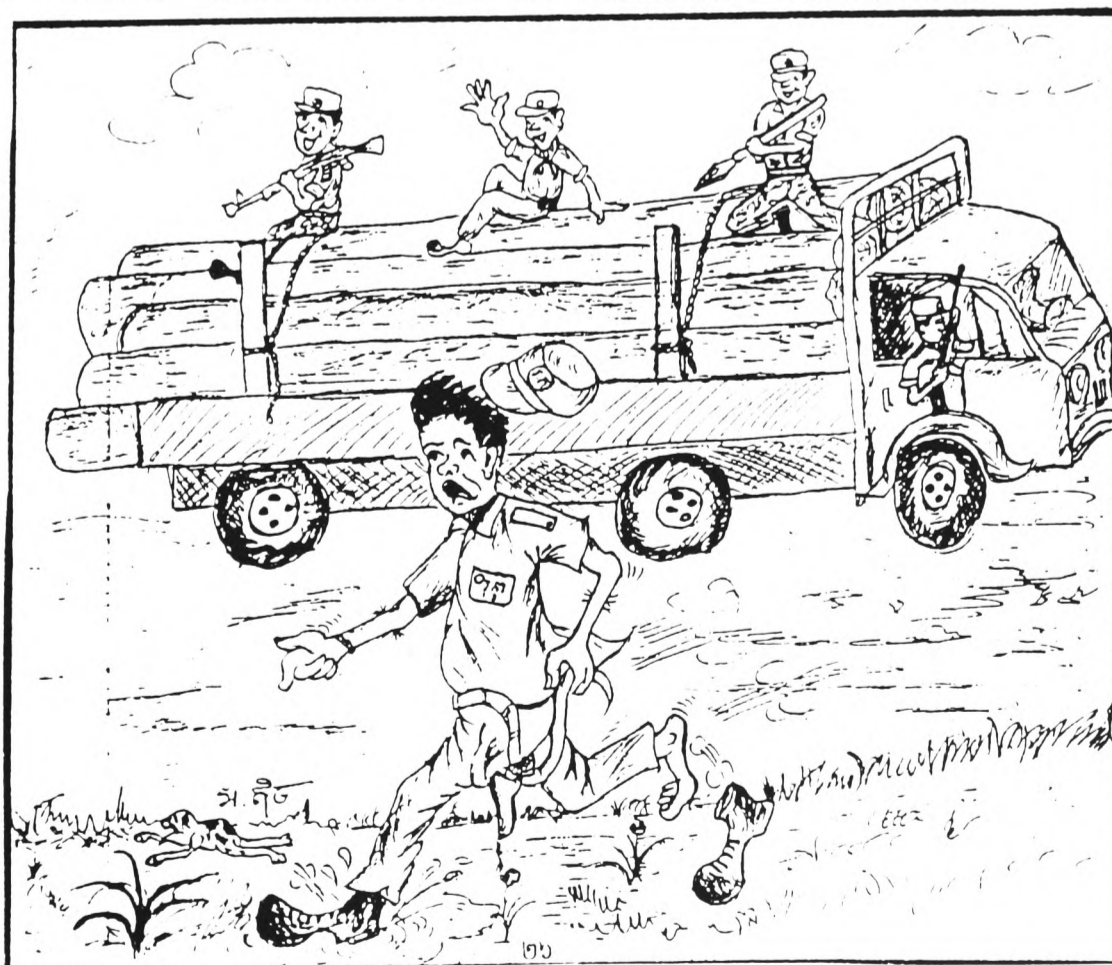


Figure 7.2 - Forester running for cover as army logging truck passes



256 Source: Newsletter of the Department of Forestry and Wildlife c.1996.

Claiming powerlessness was also part of the classic repertoire of Funcinpec politicians; not only for timber but for running the country in general. First Prime Minister Ranariddh had for example declared to the UNESCO general secretary upon his arrival in Cambodia, “don’t blame me. I’m in not in charge of anything in this country”.²⁵⁷ Funcinpec’s story-line about forestry was that forests were under the control of their political opponent, the CPP, along with the quasi totality of public assets. These were allegedly used for partisan purposes, undermining the state and their own party, the 1993 election winner. Contrasting the control of economic resources between Funcinpec and CPP, the Director of Cabinet of Prince Ranariddh argued that:

The CPP is very rich. It controls rubber plantations. It controls the timber production. It owns many forest concessions and hotels. Everything belong to them. 95% of Cambodia, of the territory, of properties, of public assets. All belong to them. ... The Funcinpec is poor, we try to survive ... we don’t sell public assets ... we don’t sell our natural resources, timber, to foreigners. ... Hun Sen built 20,000 schools [sic] and spent US\$40 million. Where does that money come from? From drugs, from rubber? All this belongs to the state or not? (Ly, interview, 1997)

A somewhat similar argument was put forward by CPP members denouncing alliances between Funcinpec politicians and logging companies, which were granted concessions in exchange for bribes.²⁵⁸ Hun Sen himself, answering a journalist, argued that,

This timber business is a headache topic. There is really anarchy within this. ... You say that I am a powerful man, why I cannot put an end to this? A strong man cannot do anything. You need strong men throughout the country. (Phnom Penh Post 1996)

However, ‘strongmen’ were precisely what logging was creating.

²⁵⁷ (Norodom, interview, 1997).

²⁵⁸ (Ok, interview, 1997).

2.2 The intelligibility of powerlessness, bossism and shadow state practices

As highlighted in preceding Chapters and section, alleged powerlessness of the formal state apparatus, bossism prevalent in provinces and institutions, and shadow state practices of the political leadership orchestrated the regulation of the commodity network. Yet, rather than being pathological and chaotic, especially in comparison to the idealised model presented in Chapter 6, this mode of regulation was constitutive of an overall (re)adjustment of the motivations and practices of individual actors and productive networks concomitant to the broader the transition process. This was most particularly the case for authorisers supposedly responsible for regulating this very process.

For bureaucrats, powerlessness was important for sustaining their security and their personal wealth, and even their career. The strict application of forestry rules and especially new policies drafted by foreign advisors, frequently contradicted by the decisions of high-ranking officials and politicians, was not, on the contrary, the best strategy to achieve these goals. The politics of survival, meant accommodating the most powerful, remunerative and potentially harmful actors while justifying the lack of result in the implementation of official policies by “giving an appearance of not managing [their] environment” (Migdal 1988: 243). This strategy was in this case tactically implemented by invoking their lack of control over forests, roads and sawmills due to the presence of ‘armed men’ and the existence of authorisations provided by ‘corrupted politicians’ for most illegal activities. While foresters expressed a seemingly genuine frustration about the mismanagement of forests, the politics of survival and accommodation often overrode their concern for improving the situation. For those who attempted to enforce official regulations or who

denounced illegal practices, the visit of high ranking security officers from Phnom Penh, a convocation to the office of the provincial governor, or, more simply and more frequently, a visit at home by arms-toting drunk soldiers, would provide a reminder, if not a final settlement, of the rules of the game. Far from being limited to acts of violence, the broader social environment of foresters – ranging from the expectations of provincial bosses down to ‘good neighbours relations’ within small district towns- was highly influential upon their regulatory practices.²⁵⁹

For strongmen, bossism allowed for maintaining a control over social and economic resources from the competition of new ‘power centres’, such as political rules and actors accompanying the UN peace process and the increasing presence of foreign forest concessionaires. The fragmentation of social control and the influx of capital in the country that characterised the UN and post UN period provided increased opportunities for resources control and extraction by strongmen. While the environment was more competitive, in many cases the development of new centres of power proved beneficial to strongmen, for example by becoming intermediaries or subcontractors for the logging operations of new forest concessionaires or by securing a privileged control over forest access by colluding with armed units. The strategy of politicians, within CPP or Funcinpec, mentioned above also provided opportunities for strongmen to become much-needed political clients and to carve at the same time for themselves a greater independence from the game of competition between the different political factions. In other words, strongmen developed strategies to benefit economically from a ‘bigger cake’ and to strengthen their social control upon their

²⁵⁹ For an analysis of the constraints and motivations existing upon foresters in the ‘peaceful’ environment of Peninsular Malaysia, see (Cooke 1994).

local domain to increase their bargaining position vis-à-vis their political patrons. Strongmen benefited from their situation of bosses, and in particular from the loss of monopoly over the use of violence by the state, which increased demand for private security and individual influence. Following the UN elections, for example, and mostly during the period 1995-1997, the use of heavily armed private bodyguards became widespread.²⁶⁰ For example, business-strongmen did not hesitate to impose the presence of their body guards, armed with assault rifles, during negotiations over public contracts with the Minister of Agriculture, within his own office.²⁶¹

For politicians, the 'shadow state' regulation of commercial logging provided access to informal fees, as well as maintained a relative control over society, institutions and strongmen in order to maximise their political and economic gain, most particularly from the emerging concessionaire sector, while satisfying enough of the requirements of international donors to keep the flow of foreign aid running. Some of these goals were intrinsically antagonistic with their official mandate, such as increasing formal fiscal rent *and* maximising informal fees, satisfying military strongmen *and* reassuring forest concessionaires, or strengthening state institutions *and* personalising progresses for political gain. Politicians had thus to accommodate many of the actors motivating these requirements and to privilege the most politically potent of them, to the detriment of others.

This accommodation was also associated with a politics of 'blurring', by which politicians attempted to create conditions of freedom for their decisions and opacity for their working environment; offering thereby flexibility with official rules

²⁶⁰ Following the coup of July 1997, Hun Sen forbade the use of private bodyguards.

²⁶¹ (Courbois, interview, 1997).

and excuses for the lack of implementation of their policies. As noted in Chapter 5, the most powerful tool in this ‘blurring’ arsenal, was article 13 of the 1994 investment law granting discretionary power to the leaders of the RGC to exempt any economic agent from all existing taxation. This legal instrument was used time and again to turn taxes into ‘voluntary contributions’ by the private sector and channel them towards parallel budgets instead of the public treasury. The discourse of insecurity, resulting from the presence of Khmer Rouge was also used. Speaking a few months after the massive defections of KR units, a legal advisor to the government mentioned that after Khmer Rouge defections, “the new excuse is now the feudals, the warlords!”.²⁶² This insecurity maintained civil, or technical, institutions out of the picture, leaving private companies and their armed protection ‘uncontrollable’. The delegation of a large proportion of public policies to foreign advisors also ensured that these would satisfy the expectations of international donors and agencies. While this practice is common in the Third World, it reached very high proportions in Cambodia. From a paper presented at a provincial workshop or an international conference, to an official policy document presented at the national assembly by a minister, most of the public texts of the RGC were concocted by foreign experts, then censured (and perhaps later ignored) by Cambodian decision-makers themselves.²⁶³ While these practices could have resulted in close collaboration and, possibly, sound technical impact upon policies, that delegation of opinion resulted in a delegitimisation of public policies and the co-optation of international agencies which were left with nothing to critique, except the ‘failed implementation’ of policies.

²⁶² (Heng, interview, 1997)

²⁶³ (Courbois, interview, 1997; Bel Haj Amor, interview, 1997).

Criticising the implementation most frequently led to diagnostics of the type ‘lowly paid and incompetent civil service working in an insecure environment with inadequate means’ which left donors with little option but to call for further ‘institutional capacity building’ and more foreign advisors. In return, this donor support secured the survival of the institutional state at the lowest cost possible for politicians and thus gave them greater political room for using public revenues for their personal ends.

2.3 Cambodian development doctrines

An alternative line of discourse by members of the government was the imperative of logging to generate revenue for ‘development’. This developmentalist doctrine was embedded in social relations of power and shared many similarities with the practices of Sihanouk in the 1960s (see Chapter 3). Doctrines of developmentalism, for example, served to justify logging, even if only to ‘feed the government’, as the Chef of Cabinet of the First PM noted:

Natural resources in a poor country like ours, allow us to live and to feed the government, to feed our civil servants, to feed our army, our police, etc ... The economy does not work, so there must be something to survive. Like in Burma ... in some countries they have sacrificed their environment and natural resources for a certain period to build the country. ... when the economy works we stop logging and we start to love nature ... we go from one stage to the other [follows comments on Rostow’s five stage of growth].²⁶⁴

Beside ‘feeding the government’, the practice of development took in fact first and foremost the form of voluntary donations by politicians and strongmen to their followers. Among these could be close political allies and supporters, down to anonymous villagers rallied by local party members to listen and publicly support the

²⁶⁴ (Ly, interview, 1997)

donor. The uses of direct donations for promoting development and alleviating poverty served as a justification for the parallel taxation of economic activities and the circumvention of the public treasury.

These practices were often incorporated as claims of legitimacy. Recognising that their party, and more prominently Hun Sen, financed an important number of public infrastructures and development projects through a parallel 'shadow state' budget, CPP members justified these practices by arguing that while,

Hun Sen takes the money from the companies and redistributes to the people. The other party [Funcinpec] takes the money and keeps it to buy planes and houses.²⁶⁵

Such manipulations of public resources were also politically motivated. As Ranariddh acknowledged, Funcinpec was not in the best position to control these manipulations and publicly supported the importance of 'good governance',

We won the [1993] election with less than \$200,000. And the CPP spent \$20 million! If I have to base a victory for Funcinpec on money it would be a mistake, on the other hand you tell how I can get money? It's difficult. *Don't tell me we can fell logs. It's difficult.* I can't build so many schools like Samdech Hun Sen. I can't do. Funcinpec is very limited. I hope the achievement of the Royal Government [reflects] the best to the people. (cited in Grainger 1996c; emphasis added)

Hun Sen had nevertheless a more straightforward analysis of the problems of the forestry sector. The final story-line was that people were involved in illegal logging for their very *survival* and that it was wrong to denounce their activities, or ban logging, without assisting them in the first place. Criticising the suspension of aid by the IMF and the WB, and the call of Global Witness for an end to (illegal) logging, Hun Sen argued that:

²⁶⁵ (Nun, interview, 1996)

If Global Witness wants to end the logging, it should help us, give us money. Nobody wants to die. Since [people who cut trees] have nothing left to eat and since they are not able to ... do anything else, they are forced to cut trees to earn a living. This is why forests are denuded. The policy of imposing sanction is only punishment and kills the poor. ... The sanction or embargo or aid suspension will not kill Hun Sen but the Cambodian people. It also kills Cambodia's environment [as funding for environmental programs is stopped]. (Hun 1997)

This story-line reflects only part of the dynamics of forest exploitation. It leaves aside the role and benefits reaped by large companies and individuals controlling access to forests and markets. However, it points at an important direction, also highlighted by other insiders, about the effects of the sanctions. In the words of a provincial vice-governor of Koh Kong,

If people remain poor, you cannot lay down the law. If the forest is closed by the central government, how can poor families find rice... Authorising a little bit of smuggling gives a better situation for [poor] families. If you don't let the poor do, then only big businessmen benefit.²⁶⁶

This points at a second range of discourses, the 'hidden transcript' of governmental actors which justified their attitude in front of the political environment and the public opinion, in particular that of the donor community. Accessing this 'hidden transcript' is of course difficult for an outsider as myself, but the point of view of a legal advisor to the Council of Minister can give a hint about it, and is worth quoting at length:

266 (Kiroth, interview, 1997)

During the SoC regime, there was no public finance but patrimonialism within each institution which was very autonomous and there are still some vestiges from this system. To provide revenues to the Public Treasury is not the norm. Now, we make a lot of money. If we inject this money in the Ministry of Finance what will be the use? And who will benefit from this money? We don't know! If I do not steal this money, somebody else will do it and will kill me with the weapons bought with it. During the SoC regime every head of department was paying its staff, now the MoEF doesn't have resources to do that: forests, gems, etc ... are under the control of other people in the provinces who make revenues invisible and extremely difficult to collect, even physically. The Khmer Rouge do not control any more forested areas but logging is not stopping because timber is used to reward some feudalities as there are no more salaries or indemnities, so forests are used to pay clientele. In Cambodia, it is not like in Thailand where the army can pay itself by putting in an order for arms, or through the banks it owns, Thai airways, etc ...²⁶⁷

Exposing how this 'hidden transcript' was in part an answer to the 'public transcript', this legal advisor pointed out that,

The World Bank wants to do a legislation and a pro-forma contract in order that we don't trick them too much. We operate in this [clandestine] way because the [public] opinion is not in favour of timber exploitation, and between the public good and the [political] imperatives [we have to choose the latter]. There will never be a 'just' exploitation of timber. What ever will be the way, good or bad, we will never receive the support of the public opinion. So, there is no will to protect [forest resources]: why write a law when even the most protective one will not be approved by the [public] opinion?²⁶⁸

As part of their own 'public transcript', governmental leaders occasionally mentioned the role of the external demand as a further cause, and in particular the pressure from Vietnam and Thailand to import timber from Cambodia. But the broader dynamics of the forestry sector in relation to the polity and the development path of the country were rarely mentioned. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 1, most of the forested tropical countries have met similar problems closely associating uneven development and political authoritarianism, or instability, with a rapid growth of the timber industry (Hurst 1990). The difference in the case of Cambodia was the large involvement of the 'international community', both as a 'transitional authority' in 1992/93 and as a donor providing about half of the governmental budget, and its apparent interest in addressing these issues.

²⁶⁷ (Heng, interview, 1997).

3. Green reconstruction discourse and power politics

As the contradictions between the official declarations of the state leadership and its actual practices demonstrated, the public transcript was not dictated by the government, but by the 'outsiders' coalition. In short, there was a transposition on Cambodia of the green discourse prevalent at the time within international debates over socio-environmental development (e.g. UNCED) and its associated ethical values. Through their discursive construction of Cambodian forests as 'raped' by a corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy allied to a greedy private sector, rather than a society interacting opportunistically with nature in a fast changing politico-economic environment, the 'international community' imposed a simplifying story-line that proved a powerful public transcript. However, this transposition not only proved inadequate to the economic and political aspirations of at least part of a society impoverished by decades of conflict and economic embargo, but was also politically dangerous as it imposed a public transcript confining the state and formal regulatory framework to a role of enforcer of a resource embargo, rather than of arbiter of resource allocation. This situation favoured the consolidation of informal networks integrating specific actors of the state apparatus and new politico-economic actors able and willing to breach formal rules, thus often closely related to coercive forces and 'criminalised' groups. This process reinforced the individuation of power relationships, shifting them from formal intermediaries, such as laws linking institutional actors, to informal intermediaries, such as personal authorisations and

secret contracts linking individual actors.

Unsurprisingly, the translation of this public transcript by ‘insiders’ resulted mostly in façade policies and illegal practices. As such, the green discourse of reconstruction has similarities to Ferguson’s analysis of the political effects of failed development projects in Lesotho (Ferguson 1996), except here the discursive representations of the international community had the *unintended* effect of decreasing, rather than increasing, formal state power; while reinforcing power relations outside of the public institutional framework.

As noted by Kopp (1996) for other cases of economic sanctions in developing countries with relatively weak states, the sanctions related to the forestry sector, log export bans and aid withdrawal, were bypassed by the political leadership of the country with important economic and socio-political consequences in terms of erosion of formal government sovereignty. This bypassing was conducted either at the initiative of this same leadership, through their tacit approval of export activities carried out by other politico-economic actors, or through outright ‘criminal’ activities.

4. Conclusions

The aim of Chapters 6 and 7 was to identify actors intervening in the timber commodity chain and to analyse the strategies and mechanisms through which they created and maintained their access to, and control over, the commodity network. A broader aim for these two chapters was to dissect the workings of the forestry sector in order to better understand its overwhelming ‘illegal’ character and the apparent failure of the government to transform forests into a resource for the (re)construction

of the country and an impoverished population. Rather than responding to purely economic rationality subject to legitimate socio-political supervision, the forestry sector was governed by individualistic politics of control, accommodation and resistance that had little in common with the ideal workings of the conventional logging model exposed in the first part of Chapter 6.

As such forestry management was a failure. However, this analysis demonstrated that it was not a failure for all, and that substantial benefits flowed from the commodification of forests. As Ribot noted for Senegal's charcoal commodity chain, decisions over the use of forests and distribution of benefits were "embedded in a hierarchy of social and political-economic relations" (Ribot 1998: 336). In Cambodia this hierarchy had traditionally taken the form of a galactic polity of provincial strongmen revolving around a King who "maintained a regime based on interlocking pyramids of patron-client networks that kept ... subjects in place and provided rewards to loyal followers" (Heder 1995: 425). Although this type of polity was supposedly swept away by a republican and two communist governments, a similar type of polity, cutting across political party divides, still governs Cambodian society in the form of bureaucratic bossism. Social relations within such a polity can be translated in terms of neo-authoritarianism, neo-patrimonialism, nepotism, familism, bossism, patronage and clientelism; all terms that pervade mostly western analysis of the political and economic life of the country.²⁶⁹ Such analyses express the prevalence of informal politico-economic practices over formal public and market rules. They imply an ordering of society sensitive to both the culture of social hierarchies and the blunt rationality of daily pragmatism.

The strategies and mechanisms of access and control of the timber commodity network in Cambodia were expressions of these unequal relations of power and their associated hierarchies. Discourse analysis of the 'illegalities' of the timber commodification process offer insights into the intricate relations that bind and reproduce these hierarchies, through the opportunities for some of the peripheral actors to manipulate or control them for their own benefit. In this perspective, the multiplicity of networks not only resulted in disorder and the appearance of 'anarchy' but also in opportunities for marginalised segments of society to counterbalance unequal power relations. In this light, illegal logging can be perceived as a mode of resistance to an excluding mode of modernisation, in particular with regards to the take-over of forest ownership rights by large transnational companies.

As such the regime of governance, or the 'state polity', in Cambodia is not only built in a unidirectional top-bottom fashion inherited from past monarchical and communist regimes. For example, the trend of profit concentration by international companies and the urban political elite accompanying the lease of large logging concessions was resisted by provincial bosses such as provincial governors, administrators, military and police or local businessmen who were eager to secure a share of the growth of the forestry sector or limit the impact of these developments on their own timber businesses. They did so not only for purely personal financial interest, but also to maintain or enhance their status and their relative position in society. This resistance, when necessary, was expressed through the creation of difficulties for logging operations ranging from red-taping, to illegal logging, intimidation, kidnapping and murder. Such pressures generally led foreign logging

²⁶⁹ See for example (Thion 1982; Peang-Meth 1991; Heder 1995; Marston 1996; Shawcross 1996).

companies to pay protection bribes, to be confined to the role of buyers of illegal logs, or to create 'joint ventures' with local power holders and businessmen. With precarious power over the provinces, due to unresponsive institutions and supporters who required tactful treatment, the ruling elite in Phnom Penh were thus left to resort to accommodation; which somewhat suited their broader political goals as such process could indirectly extend their patronage. In this environment, successful logging companies were those most savvy at playing by the informal rules of the game and securing the highest patronage.

As Cambodia's political leadership resorted to unlawful logging operations to secure their privileged access to informal financial rents, numerous peripheral actors could benefit from the state of lawlessness that was therefore created. While a rigid legal, but biased, framework, could have ensured by its strict enforcement the concentration of profits in the hands of a few privileged (Broad 1995), the actual situation resulted in many opportunities for negotiation and larger gains. This extra-legal, or ad hoc, system of distribution is of course itself socially embedded, but through different modes than institutional and regulatory ones. Social capital, individual authority and potential for violence play important roles and actors at the local level often have in this regard an advantage upon the urban institutional elite. Simultaneously, the tactics of these peripheral actors integrated and shaped the relations between the state and the forestry sector. As mentioned earlier about the presence of 'outlaws' among woodcutters; logging, or 'illegal logging', represented a "social escape" from the state, its police and its laws (Bayard 1993: 258).

Timber was incorporated into the transition processes not only as a financial resource but also as a discursive one. The conflicting discourses of reconstruction

embodied in the ‘public’ and ‘hidden’ transcripts of forest exploitation were key to the construction of productive networks. In a context of domestic and international scrutiny rooted in a discourse emphasising democracy, good governance and a sustainable development approach, forest exploitation became a politicised icon of the abuses of the new regime. Behind façade policies, mimicking this discourse, both co-Prime Ministers pursued with greater difficulty the integration of forests into their private power base. As such the story-line of forest plunder associated with this discourse of democracy and sustainability served as both an intermediary and a catalyst for the association of a variety of actors into a political coalition. Yet, ironically, the discourse of this coalition, through its translation into a public transcript - supported by façade policies and regulations, but not enforced by concrete action – participated in the undermining of its own intended objectives.

By unintentionally favouring those able to operate with impunity outside of the legal framework, over those abiding by it, this discourse resulted in a further criminalisation of the forestry sector, as illegal practices remained more frequently rewarded than ostracised by the new polity. Furthermore, this discourse resulted in a legitimisation of forest concessionaires, with similar consequences of exclusion for the politically less powerful members of local communities. Simultaneously, the discourse of accountability and green reconstruction acted as a check against some of the ‘illegalities’ of the forestry sector, and in particular the most blatant contradictory stances of the co-Prime Ministers; it nevertheless participated, mostly unintentionally, to the construction and concentration of power out from the exploitation of forests.

The end result of these conflicting discourses of reconstruction were commodity networks based on a pragmatic use of accommodation, patronage and

violent authoritarianism, that linked the political leadership, the state apparatus, the major logging companies and local actors, and organised uneven access to resources, territoriality and political control. While never fixed, this mode of governance was easily reproducible in the social and institutional context of Cambodia and thus remained relatively stable over time as coalitions of actors found an interest in the perpetuation of this regime. Yet, their interest was not the only driving factor in the evolution of the commodity chain. The evolving demand and opportunities of ‘the market’; the new political and social forces, emerging in part from the resistance to but also from the benefits brought by this coalition of interest; and the changes in forest quality perpetuated the dynamics of the commodity chain and the resulting distribution of costs and benefits.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the progressive incorporation of Cambodian forests into the political economy of the country from the pre-colonial period till 1998. The analysis focused on the processes associating the production of nature with the construction of social power in the transition between war and peace in the 1990s. An explanation was thereby constructed of the causes of the apparent failure of both the government and the international community to transform this 'natural resource' into a positive factor for 'peace and reconstruction'. Cambodia in the mid-1990s had a respectable growth rate, yet remained characterised by violence and an ongoing, if low-level, civil war. This perspective contrasts with the conventional views of Cambodia's transition to a market economy and the concurrent resolution of the armed conflict, and undermines the claim that there is a simple association between the development of a successful market economy and the stabilisation of peace in countries undergoing reconstruction. The analysis also disproves the simplistic claim that logging 'fuelled' the conflict. Rather, the conflict fuelled logging, which in turn permitted the continuation of the conflict, in the context of commodity networks which cut across political and factional divides. The detailed scrutiny of the pragmatic construction of productive networks presented in this thesis, demonstrated that actors in the conflict resorted to conciliation, as much as confrontation, in order to further

their accumulation strategies. This does not imply, however, that the motivation for the conflict in Cambodia in the 1990s had been completely reoriented from ideology to personal gain. Rather, it implies that accumulation strategies are a critical element in the construction and maintenance of power, whether in 'war-time', or 'peace-time'.

1. General findings

Cambodian forests were of critical significance in the process of transition taking place over the last decade. This thesis identified five key aspects of this relationship. The first aspect is geopolitical, in that most forests are located at the periphery of the country, along the borders of Thailand and Vietnam, two countries that have often supported opposing Cambodian factions in order to increase their respective influence over Cambodia. Forests have thus a long history of participation in insurrections and politics, by providing a natural fortress or hideout for opponents to central authorities, and a safe conduit to the 'lifeline' of their foreign sponsors (e.g. the provision of arms, equipment, drugs, food).

A second aspect is the financial rent that political factions have been able to extract from the exploitation of these forests. This rent became particularly important as the financial backing of foreign sponsors declined in the late 1980s and social status in society became increasingly tied to financial wealth. By helping to fund the conflict, the commodification of forests thus played an active role in its continuation. Again, the location of forests was important for providing a spatial continuity between the site of struggle and the source of support (market); in this case, by enabling Thai companies to gain access to Cambodian forests controlled by particular factions. The

capture of this economic rent also led to military operations having for objective the control of forested areas and transport routes.

A third aspect is the socio-political effect that this commodification had on actors organising and controlling the commodity network. Trade between military commanders, politicians and businessmen nurtured the personal economic interests of members of the factions and co-operative arrangements between 'enemies'. These socio-economic relations diluted the orthodoxy of individual political commitments and weakened the general chain of command of military factions. This was particularly true when the commodity network crossed a political divide, either spatially (e.g. an export route successively controlled by opposing factions) or institutionally (e.g. the need for an export licence issued by the central authorities), and thus required accommodation by the different sides.

A fourth aspect is the politico-economic effect that the availability of windfall revenue from large scale logging operations had on the structure of power in an impoverished country such as Cambodia. By providing a means for patrimonialism and opportunities for corruption, the forestry sector weakened formal governance to the profit of individual and factional interests. When the transition to peace took place, the locational effect of forest commodification also played a significant role in the structuration of the polity, as it provided opportunities for peripheral actors, mostly provincial strongmen and politicians, to benefit from the conjuncture of economic liberalisation and political uncertainty to strengthen their power base by increasing their financial wealth and building local productive networks. In turn, this decentralisation of resource control and political power was counteracted by the central leadership with a concessionary framework ensuring a more secure control and

capture of forestry rents through foreign companies or close cronies. This also had an impact in international relations at a regional scale by implicating politico-economic networks, such as that of Thailand's Prime Minister Chavalit or Vietnamese party and military leadership.

A fifth aspect is the antagonism that the mode of forest exploitation created between the government of Cambodia and part of the population as well as the international community. Widely perceived by the latter two as a blatant example of the corruption and irresponsibility of the former, the organisation of the forestry sector discredited the government. While abuses occurred, on the side of the government as well as that of the international community, much of that antagonism resulted from the confrontation of pragmatist and idealist perspectives on the transition process itself. In this regard, the 'rationalisation' of forestry through logging concessions accompanied by improvements of governance, economic indicators, and accountable collection of public revenue by the government is likely to diminish this antagonism and to win back the support of the international community. Yet, forestry is likely to remain an arena of domestic discontentment and political challenge, as the rationalisation will entail a more efficient, and more exclusive, process of commodification.

To sum up, the incorporation of forests through the transition period of the 1990s evolved from a resource funding war between opposing political factions to one stratifying classes. Resources made unaccountable to the broader formal process of transition transformed the war and new forms of violent conflicts emerged over their control, while the resulting growth of wealth disparities did not augur for a peaceful future. The commodification of forests combined nature and society, a variety of

scales and in both material and discursive terms, establishing through the intermeshing of ecological transformation and social practices a close association between timber and power through the articulation of productive networks.

2. Discussion

This thesis examined three key hypotheses. Research was initiated to investigate the hypothesis that the circulation of capital secures legitimacy for ruling groups that depend more upon a circle of clients and supporters, through neo-patrimonialism and crony capitalism, than popular support. In the case of Cambodia, it was assumed that in a post-Cold War context - in which ideological clientelism and its perquisites had been supplanted by economic imperatives of access to international markets and capital - the leadership of political parties came to rely on the capitalisation of nature to generate such circulation and the security of their regime. In turn, the capitalisation of nature required the control of territories by political actors for the exploitation of natural resources; access to capital to extract them; and integration within trade networks to sell them. It also entailed a mix of coercion/legitimation optimised by balancing concentration of shareholders, for a maximisation of profits, and consolidation of power.

Examining the incorporation of forests into the socio-political evolution of Cambodia, the study highlighted that - aside from providing the much needed resources of a rural society and a space in opposition to which Khmers could define their civilised world - two distinct aspects dominated: forests as source of revenue and reward for political supporters; and forests as space of social escape and political

resistance. From the early 1980s, these two aspects were combined as opposing Cambodian factions commodified forests for the sake of political struggle. This politicised commodification constituted a complex web of relations woven between the leaders of Cambodian political factions, and neighbouring military, businessmen and politicians. Importantly, this incorporation of forests not only provided financial revenues but also a network of politico-military support. This close integration of nature, capital and social networks proved most valuable for the Khmer Rouge faction when it became internationally isolated in late 1992 after withdrawing from the United Nations peace process, allowing it to prolong the civil war. More generally, the politicised commodification practices organising the forestry sector were part of a broader institutionalisation of capitalism resting on 'shadow state' strategies.

An associated hypothesis maintained that, in Cambodia, forests were a key part of the 'benefits of war' that protracted the conflict; in the sense that some actors found an interest in maintaining their privileged access to timber through violence. Indeed, the conflict was largely protracted, beyond the dynamics of the Cold War, through logging revenue. However, the study indicates that a clear-cut answer is not possible. Not only did the equilibrium rest on a mix of open conflicts, compromises and co-optation motivated by the multiplicity of interests associated with the capitalisation of nature; but the rationale of this 'political economy of war' lowered the intensity of violence and provided the opportunity of multiple contacts and the development of common interests on both side of the political divide as well as a rapid embourgeoisement of local military commanders. These developments among certain Khmer Rouge units seem to have facilitated, if not induced their defection in 1996. In this way, the analysis of an economic logic of war requires a careful appraisal

of the relations associating actors through both material and discursive resources at a variety of scales.

Furthermore, the study highlights that the categories of peace, war, ally, and enemy have little analytical purchase in the context of Cambodia and that concepts of accommodation, façade politics, and fluid productive networks were more fruitful in bringing to the fore the logic and socio-political intelligibility of logging, and more generally those of any ‘benefits of war’. Broadly speaking, the commodification of forests was mutually related to the evolution of governance. As governance rested upon unaccountable ‘shadow’ practices and that the flow of timber was ultimately controlled at the local level, commodity networks frequently took on a life of their own. In this way, the commodification process turned supporters into unruly clients and even strongmen competing with the central leadership of factions. This was particularly the case when a timber export ban was imposed against the will and interests of local actors on both side of the border. On the other hand, by authorising, even ‘illegally’, the flow of timber to take place, the central leadership could accommodate these interests and (re)place itself in a position of patron.

A third hypothesis was that the international community played a dual role through its discourse of sustainable and accountable resource management, as it enabled open criticisms of skewed and illegal practices, but also pushed practices further underground. Furthermore, I argued that the tenets of a ‘green reconstruction’ were deeply contradictory and that the apparent failure of the government to control and tax logging can be interpreted as a way of resisting the demands of the international community for greater apolitical, or non partisan, development of resources.

Indeed, this 'failure' offered to governmental actors greater opportunities for the political manipulation of revenue from logging than official and transparent procedures. Yet, it is clear that by looking at historical examples in the region, such as the regimes of Marcos in the Philippines or Suharto in Indonesia, that the pattern of 'shadow state' politics and financial embezzlement does not require a public transcript of accountability to flourish. Only to some extent, state actors were unable to legitimate a different management responding better to the circumstances of governance. They were thus constrained to use tactics of resistance to the public transcript, consisting mostly of illegal practices, in order to further their ultimate objective of regime security. In turn, this facilitated the consolidation of power by those most savvy at using such tactics. In this sense, the public transcript instituted by the international community did not consolidate the position of its advocates within a dominated state but, on the contrary, unintentionally reinforced the position of those resisting it in the most effective way. This was particularly the case as few concrete actions were taken by the international community to sustain its discourse. In other words, faced by such conditions for (re)establishing governance - strict but not enforced guidelines - none of the co-Prime Minister saw a sharp interest in consolidating the rule of law and public services, beyond deceptive public pronouncements, if it was to the detriment of their own clientele and particular wants.

A second effect of the international community's discourse was the entrenchment of the legitimacy of foreign transnational companies. By placing nature instead of labour at the centre of its preoccupations, the public transcript instituted by the international community not only condemned local loggers (mostly 'disused' soldiers and domestic timber merchants) to seek the protection of authorisers

condoning their practices; but it also facilitated the appropriation of timber resources by central authorities and their business allies, portrayed in the role of taxpayers, good practitioners and victims within a 'corrupt' sector. In turn, however, these politically empowered actors negotiated with 'illegal' operators to circumvent this same discourse of proper forestry governance, acknowledging to some degree the reality of local power distribution but also furthering the interest of both production coalitions in front of 'Western' and politically marginal groups. By doing so, the public transcript allied itself to central political leaders eager to also remain in control of a flow of resources that had tended towards a peripheralisation under the impulse of provincial strongmen.

3. Audience

This study was undertaken with several audiences in mind. Cambodian students and foresters will be interested in a single document encompassing a 'Western' interpretation of the evolution of commercial exploitation of forests over the 20th century and discussing its role in the conflicts and reconstruction process of Cambodia. In particular, this study will prove relevant to future generations of Cambodians interested in analysing the role played by the international community, and transnational corporations, as well as domestic and regional actors, in negotiating and shaping the incorporation of forests into the broader process of socio-political and economic transition that took place in the 1990s. Given the forces currently at work and the recent history of logging in neighbouring countries, it is very likely that this period will be regarded as a major shift in the history of Cambodian forests as well as

that of politico-economic relations within the Cambodian society.

Practitioners interested in peace making and development issues in Third World countries facing violent conflicts and complex processes of transition will find the case study presented in this thesis of great relevance. The study has demonstrated the importance of the manipulation of resources, in this case natural resources, in such processes. As such, findings advocate for a greater incorporation of socio-economic issues into the negotiations of transition processes, such as peace agreements, which tend to focus exclusively on distribution issues of political power. In this regard, such negotiations should be broadened to secure the involvement and commitment of neighbouring countries and the private sector to social goals. In other words, a new generation of transition 'blueprints' is required to reflect the growing importance of private capital, non-state actors and 'shadow state' strategies.

Academics interested in the political economy and political ecology of natural resources will find an interest in both the empirical material and the analysis linking the production of nature to the construction of social power. Through the concept of commodity network, the study has highlighted the multiplicity of scales at which a diversity of actors has been able not only to access and control the commodification of forests for financial benefits but also to derive from it material and discursive practices embodying social power. In other words, the production of social power from forests was extended from the simple capture of financial rents through the (re)production of unequal relations of power to that of the interpretation of social, ecological and political meanings constructed around the forestry sector.

4. Further research

This study illustrated that the production of nature gives way to social practices, both material and discursive, and incorporates a dimension necessary to order and justify the unevenness of the production process. This dimension, referred in this study as power, is embodied into a multiplicity of intermediaries linking individual socio-natural actors within a commodity network. Intermediaries consist of ‘objects’ (such as technological elements or institutions, in the sense of codes, but also labour), which are mobilised by actors to gain access to and control over the commodification process in order to create or integrate social relations. In this regard, further research in the fields of anthropology and psycho-sociology examining Cambodian concepts of power, and the role of these intermediaries in socio-political relations would be of great interest. More generally, as the study pointed out the importance of cultural conceptions of social order, stability, and entitlement, the unintended effects of the confrontation of cultural models of transition would require additional research. In this regard, an examination of cases in which the security of entitlements for the poor are linked to relations of authority and domination, and a discussion of problems associated with individual empowerment and democratisation processes promoted by international development assistance would be of interest to peace and development studies.

The study also demonstrated that the commodification of nature is a deeply ecological and political process, both including and excluding specific actors. The political meaning of the commodification of nature results from the scaling-up, or aggregation/reproduction, of social relations. In other words, logging has a political meaning not because it entails a power differential between the tree, the individual

logger, the individual timber merchant, and the final consumer; but because it constructs social groupings around both material and discursive practices. These social groups, be they discourse-coalition or production-coalition, in turn create or articulate intermediaries in a political manner to organise society in the pursuit of their interests. The intentionality of actors' interventions in this process is, however, not to be taken as a token of social determinism and centred power. Disorder and the multiplicity of interactions characterising social practices result in numerous unintended effects, some of which in turn affect the political ordering of society. A further direction to explore would be thus an anthropological study of small logging communities, made up of demobilised soldiers, local villagers, and 'social escapees' integrating the timber commodity chain from the bottom and constituting the increasingly marginalised 'illegal loggers' of this and the coming decade. More generally, other case studies on the political ecology of natural resources focusing on interrelations between nature, commodities and socio-political processes of transition would prove useful.

**Annex 1 - List of logging companies
operating in Khmer Rouge controlled areas (1990-1996)**

Name of company	Period of operation	Investment (US\$)	Staff
A. Victor Development	1990/92 – 1994/95	18,120,000	1,000
Amnatcharoen Sawmill	1990/92 – 1994/95	19,520,000	1,050
B.L.P. Import Export	1991 - 1998 (CPP/SoC)	24,520,000	1,000
Cellular Chantaburi	1994/95	n.a.	n.a.
Chakapong Kanai	1996	n.a.	n.a.
Chantaburi Romphoroow	1995 – 1996	n.a.	n.a.
Chaoprayachai	1990/92	8,936,800	1,200
Chaopraya Akanay	1996	n.a.	n.a.
Choke Pana	1992/93	7,480,000	550
C.S. Import Export Travel	1992/93	5,860,000	450
Display Tech (Thai -U.S.A.)	1995-1996	n.a.	n.a.
Entreprise TSD	1996	n.a.	n.a.
E.S. Development	1992/93	8,200,000	650
Forestry Industry Organisation	1990/92	n.a.	n.a.
G. Nantamanop Sawmill	1990/92	1,580,000	200
Gantaralak Sawmill	1992/93	1,400,000	450
Golden Triangle Forest	1992/93	9,840,000	800
Hua Weing Sawmill	1993-1996	n.a.	n.a.
Isarapap (Independence) Guard	1992/93	7,680,000	500
Kakinburi Timber and Construction	1990/93	3,320,000	650
Kanjana Buri	1996	n.a.	n.a.
Kaolem Wanawet	1992/93	7,800,000	650
Kor Nanthamanop	1995	n.a.	n.a.
Kukan Aroonsawat	1990/92 – 1996	13,060,000	800
Lancharoen Supermarket	1992/93	14,320,000	300
Maka Centre	1996	n.a.	n.a.
Mena Thai Trading	1992/93	1,680,000	400
Mor Lor Lor 33 (M.L.L. 33)	1990/92 – 1994/95	30,600,000	950
Nanchinawat	1992/93	9,388,000	750
Nityotakarn (Nitaya) / Nitara Construction (?)	1990/92 – 1994/95	5,668,000	650
P.C. Udorn Supply	1990/92 – 1994/95	18,600,000	750
P.T. Eastern Premier	1990/92	15,938,800	850
P.T. Agricultural	1996	n.a.	n.a.
Pamai Pipat / Pipat Forestry	1990/92 – 1995/96	15,988,000	1,200
Panom Roong Taloongchai	1992/93	1,800,000	400
Pawnee Enterprises	1992/93	7,960,000	1,000

(...)

(con't)

Name of company	Period of activity	Investment (US\$)	Staff
Phanathongrungeong	1990/92	12,828,000	700
Philler Product	1996	n.a.	n.a.
Pichanagan	1992/93	5,280,000	550
Piwat	1990/93	27,412,000	900
Ponpatanagangaset / Pornpatana Agriculture	1990 – 1994/95	17,280,000	700
Poon Cement Eastern	1990/92	31,200,000	400
Rachasampan Mongkol	1992/93	11,056,000	650
Roongrueng Pailin / Rung Ruang Pailin	20 Dec. 1992 - 1994/95	15,560,000	950
Ruampanathai Import Export	1990/92	3,680,000	650
Ruenrom Enterprises	1992/93	17,518,000	920
S. Container	1993-1996	n.a.	n.a.
Sahadaorueng Kamy	1992/93	6,880,000	400
Sahapotin	1992/93	13,000,000	950
Sahawanpruek	1990/92 – 1994/95	40,650,400	1,200
Santi	1996	n.a.	n.a.
SA Pharmaceutical	1996	n.a.	n.a.
Sin Siam Warin	1990/92	15,880,000	750
Siri Kontong	1992/93	6,720,000	500
S. Prachin Permpoon Industry	1990/92	n.a.	n.a.
S.R.R. (Commercial)	1994/95 – 1996	n.a.	n.a.
Studio 92	1990/92	12,960,000	650
Suan Pha Siam	1995-1996	n.a.	n.a.
Surin Thanapong Korsang	1990/92 – 1994/95	11,434,800	650
T.P.S. International	20 Dec. 1992 - 1994/95	5,400,000	600
Thai Japan Reforestation and Forestry (T.J.R.)	Funcinpec area (1991 - 1993?)	27,033,680	1,100
Thai Smit	1992/93	8,624,000	650
Toong Dindam / Thungdingum	1990 – 1994/95	13,014,400	680
Thong Phaphum Timber	1994/95	n.a.	n.a.
Wes[t] Group	1992/93	10,628,000	750
Wooden Supply Import Export	1990 – 1996	18,120,000	1,000
World Teck Plus	1990/92	2,760,000	450

Key: The period 1990/92 defines companies authorised by the Thai Ministry of Interior to operate in Cambodia between 1990 and 1992; the period 1992/93 defines companies authorised by the Thai Ministry of Interior to operate in Cambodia from 20 December 1992 to operate in Cambodia (figures for investment and staff are given by the Thai Ministry of Interior); the period 1994/95 defines companies authorised by the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to export timber from Khmer Rouge controlled areas between 1 January and 15 March 1994; the period 1995/96 defines companies authorised by the RGC to operate in Cambodia from early 1996 and/or identified by Global Witness as operating over that period. Sources: (UNTAC/BKK 1993; Norodom 1994; Global Witness various reports).

Annex 2 - List of forest concessions (1989 - 1999)¹

List of forest concessions granted during the three successive governments in Phnom Penh between 1989 and 1999. Companies with a concession valid in early 1999 are in bold.

Concessions granted by the State of Cambodia (1989-1993)

Company	Country	Area (ha.)	Date	Year	Status
Casotim	Camb./Russia	131,380	12/7/89	10	operating
BLP Import/Export	Thailand	91,000	27/8/91	5	cancelled 1999 - protected forest
Double Ace	Malaysia	177,500	25/9/91	25	uncertain
Wanchai	Thailand	129,260	28/11/91	5	cancelled 1997, transfer to Pheapimex
McGate	Indonesia	137,475	25/12/91	25	cancelled 1996, transfer to Pheapimex
Cambodia Timber	France	54,874	28/12/91	n.a.	cancelled 1994, transfer to Double Ace
Samling (SL Int'l)	Malaysia	787,810	10/9/92	30	operating
Pelico	Thailand	381,611	13/10/92	20	cancelled 1996, transfer to Pheapimex, Everbright
Panloy Chorvy	Thailand	86,200	20/10/92	10	cancelled 1996, transfer to PT. Maharani
Utama Overseas	Malaysia	119,700	25/11/92	n.a.	cancelled 1997, transfer to TBR
Colexim	Cambodia/Japan	147,187	?/?/93	20	operating
Subtotal pre-RGC concessions		2,243,997			

¹ Source: (Global Witness 1996a; Ministry of Agriculture 1997; Department of Forestry and Wildlife 1999).

Concessions granted by the Royal Government of Cambodia (1993-1997)

Company	Country	Area (ha.)	Date	Year	Status
Doncam	Korea	103,750	n.a.	25	cancelled 1996, transfer to Chernda Plywood
Camico	Singapore	56,500	n.a.	25	cancelled 1996, transfer to Timas
Sokoclarid	Singapore	171,305	n.a.	25	cancelled 1996, transfer to Talam, Lang Song
Eliund	Taiwan	n.a.	n.a.	25	cancelled (?)
Hero	Taiwan	60,150	n.a.	25	operating
Super Wood	Malaysia	94,419	3/4/95	25	in progress
Longday	Taiwan	98,000	5/5/95	25	operating
Grand Atlantic - (GAT)	Malaysia	365,500	22/7/95	25	operating
Samron Wood	Camb./Singapore	200,050	22/8/95	25	in progress
Macro-Panin	Indonesia	1,432,930	12/9/95	50	cancelled 1997, transfer to Pheapimex, TBR, Hero
Chernda Plywood	Taiwan	103,300	6/2/96	25	operating
Meang Ly Heng	Cambodia	198,500	27/2/96	25	operating
Pheapimex - Fuchan	Camb./Taiwan	358,725	13/3/96	25	operating
Geometrics Holdings	Malaysia	245,700	10/4/96	25	cancelled 1998, transfer to (?)
Chung Sing Cambodia	Taiwan	374,350	22/4/96	25	cancelled 1999 - protected forest
Talam Resources	Malaysia	111,500	25/5/96	25	in progress
Everbright C.I.G.	China	136,376	9/7/96	25	operating
Lang Song	Taiwan	132,000	8/8/96	25	operating
King Wood	Taiwan	144,100	20/8/96	25	in progress
King Wood	Taiwan	63,100	12/9/96	25	operating
Pheapimex - Fuchan	Camb./Taiwan	129,260	16/10/96	25	in progress
Timas	Singapore	105,750	??/96	?	operating
PT Maharani Infiniti	Indonesia	459,330	5/11/96	25	cancelled 1998, transfer to (?)
Shinwa	Japan	148,000	??/96	25	cancelled 1997, transfer to PT Maharani
Landworth (Mekong)	Cambodia	99,600	5/2/97	30	cancelled 1999 - protected forest
Pacific Craft	France	24,537	31/7/97	25	cancelled 1999 - protected forest
Thai Boon Roong (TBR)	Cambodia	416,700	8/8/97	30	cancelled 1999 - protected forest
Subtotal new RGC concessions (1993-97)		5,727,532	(including transfers)		
Total area under concession in 1997		6,522,854			
Total concessions granted (1989-1997)		7,971,529	(including transfers)		

Concessions granted by the Second Royal Government of Cambodia (1998-1999)

Company	Country	Area (ha.)	Date	Year	Status
Samling (SL)	Malaysia	218,059	?/?/98	?	cancelled 1999 - protected forest
Chang Ling Lumber	n.a.	236,500	?/?/98	?	cancelled 1999 - protected forest
North Eastern Forest Development	n.a.	232,100	?/?/98	?	cancelled 1999- protected forest
Thai Boon Roong (TBR)	Cambodia	360,900	?/?/98	?	cancelled 1999, transfer to (?)
Pheapimex	Camb./Taiwan	128,910	n.a.	?	n.a.
King Wood	Taiwan	94,000	n.a.	?	n.a.
Silveroad Wood Product	China (?)	315,460	n.a.	?	n.a.
You Ry Saco	Cambodia	214,000	n.a.	?	n.a.
TPP Cambodia Timber Product	n.a.	395,900	n.a.	?	n.a.
Wood Tee Peanich	Cambodia	63,050	n.a.	?	n.a.
Cambodia Timber Product	n.a.	34,924	n.a.	?	n.a.
Subtotal 2nd RGC concessions (1998-99)		2,293,803	(including transfers)		
Total area under concession in 1999		4,739,153			
Total concessions granted (1989-1999)		10,265,332	(including transfers)		

Annex 3 - Glossary

<i>Aekodom</i>	His Excellency (Her Excellency: <i>Lok Chumteav</i>) honorary title, symbol of power which was in much use after the 1993 elections.
<i>Ang</i>	To depend on someone, in the sense of providing protection which allows the person to act with impunity (represented as bad)
<i>Chaovay sruk</i>	Governor of a district.
<i>Kampong</i>	Landing-place (Malay), generally referred to towns /ports along water ways
<i>Khet</i>	Province, currently the main territorial unit of administration.
<i>Khngang</i>	Patron, literally ‘back’.
<i>Klanh</i>	Fat, refers to a lucrative job with many opportunities for corruption.
<i>Kom lang</i>	Strength of an individual or a group, resulting in part from his/her social network alliances.
<i>Korop</i>	To respect, to honour.
<i>Ksay royeaq</i>	Personal network, it denotes a particular string of personal relations, much like those in a pyramidal patron-client network. Also refer to retinue.
<i>Neak cheh-doeng</i>	Person with know-how and knowledge.
<i>Neak doeuk noam</i>	Political leader.
<i>Neak ta</i>	Male or female ancestors, often a couple, patronising a village community or a forest.
<i>Neak ta-sou</i>	Person of struggle.
<i>Neak thom</i>	Big person, in the sense of powerful person.
<i>Neak truot tra</i>	Administrator, civil servant.
<i>Okya</i>	Honorific title traditionally given by the king to high-ranking officials and recently extended to high-ranking political supporters such as businessmen providing donations to a ruling political party.
<i>Omnahj</i>	Power, in the sense of political power
<i>Phnom</i>	Mountain or hill.
<i>Phum</i>	Village.
<i>Poeng</i>	To depend on someone, when dependence means fulfilling need (represented as good).
<i>Pra chea phi thot</i>	Promises and façade support to the population, which include direct donations by politicians. The expression was used for Sihanouk’s numerous donation ceremonies.
<i>Prey chheu</i>	Forest.
<i>Prey coupe</i>	Logging permit, refers to geographically bounded annual logging license.
<i>Rajakar</i>	To govern; but also to consume.
<i>Samdech</i>	Princely honorific title.
<i>Sruk</i>	Equivalent of a district, the main territorial unit under administrative authority before their incorporation into the larger provincial unit.
<i>Tayou</i>	“Sewer pipe”, slang word used to refer to a line up by means of a friend in high places. Relates to the idea that if only one could find a <i>tayou</i> , everything would be taken care of.
<i>Teou prey</i>	Leave for the bush, in the intention of escaping from society.

Annex 4 - Land cover type distribution and change (1953 - 1993)²

Year	IREF		FAO		FAO		FAO		Change
	1958/63		1973/76		1985/87		1991/93		
Land cover type	Km ²	%	Km ²	%	Km ²	%	Km ²	%	%
Evergreen forest	46,314	25.5%	68,764	37.9%	48,527	26.7%	47,633	26.2%	-2%
Coniferous forest	178	0.1%	93	0.1%	82	0.0%	98	0.1%	20%
Deciduous forest	52,967	29.2%	47,929	26.4%	43,679	24.1%	43,012	23.7%	-2%
Mixed forest	25,040	13.8%			11,130	6.1%	9,773	5.4%	-12%
Secondary forest					6,185	3.4%	5,170	2.8%	-16%
Flooded forest	6,814	3.8%	9,379	5.2%	7,954	4.4%	3,707	2.0%	-53%
Flooded secondary					282	0.2%	2,598	1.4%	821%
Mangrove forest	958	0.5%	946	0.5%	685	0.4%	851	0.5%	24%
Woodlands			10,569	5.8%	3,492	1.9%	6,563	3.6%	88%
Dryland forests	124,499	68.6%	116,786	64.3%	109,603	60.4%	105,686	58.2%	-3.6%
Total forests	132,271	72.9%	127,111	70.0%	118,524	65.3%	112,842	62.2%	-4.8%
Total forests and woodlands	132,271	72.9%	137,680	75.8%	122,016	67.2%	119,405	65.8%	-2.1%
Natural shrublands	3,297	1.8%			11,674	6.4%	13,501	7.4%	16%
Abandoned shrublands	461	0.3%			5,067	2.8%	2,528	1.4%	-50%
Swamp shrublands	2,929	1.6%			122	0.1%	14	0.0%	-89%
Grasslands			7,196	4.0%	19	0.0%	24	0.0%	26%
Grass savannah	5,804	3.2%			813	0.4%	468	0.3%	-42%
Flooded grass					808	0.4%	849	0.5%	5%
Abandoned grasslands					2,777	1.5%	1,095	0.6%	-61%
Marches	39	0.0%			332	0.2%	15	0.0%	-95%
Water surfaces	4,511	2.5%	4,814	2.7%	5,671	3.1%	4,111	2.3%	-28%
Barren lands	93	0.1%	667	0.4%	149	0.1%	336	0.2%	126%
Urban	873	0.5%	147	0.1%	63	0.0%	45	0.0%	-29%
Paddy	24,927	13.7%	25,210	13.9%	22,043	12.1%	26,097	14.4%	18%
Receding/Floating rice					175	0.1%	293	0.2%	67%
Upland crops			2,786	1.5%	3,930	2.2%	4,665	2.6%	19%
Swidden agriculture	1,162	0.6%	1,573	0.9%	1,358	0.7%	1,856	1.0%	37%
Orchards	10	0.0%	943	0.5%	16	0.0%	188	0.1%	1075%
Plantation	395	0.2%			830	0.5%	746	0.4%	-10%
Field crops	2,885	1.6%	518	0.3%	3,668	2.0%	5,299	2.9%	44%
Total area	179,657		181,534		181,531		181,535		

² For the 1958/63 the categories 'bambou' (3,874 Km²) and 'evergreen dwarf forest' (2,887 Km²) are integrated into 'Evergreen forest'; 'Mangrove' includes 'mangrove forest' (383 Km²) and 'rear mangrove forest' (575 Km²). Sources: (Legris and Blasco 1972; FAO 1994c).

Annex 5
Evolution of forest cover (square kilometers) per province (1958-1993)

Forest type	Dense forest			Semi-dense forest			Deciduous forest			Pine forest			Flooded forest			Mangrove forest			Sub-total		
	1958	1993	%	1958	1993	%	1958	1993	%	1958	1993	%	1958	1993	%	1958	1993	%	1958	1993	%
Province	2,879	2,224	-23	2,773	1,735	-37	6,140	2,850	-54				2,187	1,842	-16				13,979	8,651	-38
Battambang	2,681	2,428	-9	170	223	31	1,265	1,097	-13							208	214	3	4,324	3,962	-8
Kandal	1		-100	7	15	114	57	14	-75				545	739	36				610	768	26
Koh Kong	10,505	10,547	0	359	258	-28	240	416	73	109	98	-10				744	637	-14	11,957	11,956	0
Kompong Cham	535	1,319	147	2,075	497	-76	612	524	-14				532	453	-15				3,754	2,793	-26
Kompong Chhnang	184	167	-9	85	282	232	2,344	1,119	-52	3		-100	600	829	38				3,216	2,397	-25
Kompong Speu	997	924	-7	122	252	107	4,031	3,271	-19	55		-100							5,205	4,447	-15
Kompong Thom	5,932	4,857	-18	1,313	1,164	-11	2,306	846	-63	5		-100	909	898	-1	3			10,468	7,765	-26
Kratie	2,642	3,122	18	3,446	1,199	-65	5,081	5,716	12				91		-100				11,260	10,037	-11
Mondulkiri	1,420	2,164	52	3,111	1,266	-59	9,136	9,668	6										13,667	13,098	-4
Preah-Vihear	2,651	2,216	-16	4,629	2,029	-56	8,647	8,646	0										15,927	12,891	-19
Prey Veng	6	21	250	97	6	-94	35	34	-3				274	93	-66				412	154	-63
Pursat	4,324	4,624	7	746	1,477	98	2,959	1,267	-57	6		-100	751	650	-13	3			8,789	8,018	-9
Rattanakiri	2,875	5,636	96	3,920	992	-75	3,789	4,967	31										10,584	11,595	10
Siem Reap	1,520	2,759	82	2,403	2,434	1	3,099	4,053	31				873	571	-35				7,895	9,817	24
Stung Treng	3,201	4,578	43	3,403	1,106	-67	2,971	4,952	67										9,575	10,636	11
Svay Rieng	40	47	18	215		-100	54	124	130				24		-100				333	171	-49
Takeo	13		-100	15	8	-47	195	11	-94				28	230	721				251	249	-1
Total	42,406	47,633	12	28,889	14,943	-48	52,961	49,575	-6	178	98	-45	6,814	6,305	-7	958	851	-11	132,206	119,405	-10

Sources: (Tichit 1981, FAO 1994c).

Annex 6
Examples of collection permits granted between 1994 and 1996¹

Date	Company	Authorisers	Volume (cu.m.)	Product name	Location	Taxation (cu.m.)	Comments on the permit, include the motive of authorisation
21/05/94	Co-Ministers of MND	2nd PM (21/5/94) 1st PM (21/5/94)	140,000	old logs	Koh Kong	n.a.	Repair of Royal residence, build hospital and schools, RCAF budget (US\$35/m3)
16/02/96	VTN	MEF (27/3/96), RCAF Chief of Staff (12/4/96), MC (12/4/96)	20,000	anarchy logs	Kratie	US\$30.5	Decrease anarchy and increase national budget (initial proposal of US\$110/m3 of cat.1 and US\$55/m3 of cat.2)
13/04/96	RCAF	1st PM (24/3/96) 2nd PM (29/4/96)	12,500	logs	Battambang	n.a.	Construction of army barracks
18/04/96	RCAF & Voot Tee Peanich	Council of Ministers (Sok An, Veng Sereyvuth)	30,000	logs	Koh Kong, Kampong Speu	n.a.	Referring to approval by 2nd PM (18/3/96) and 1st PM (24/5/96) including tax exemption
18/04/96	Reaksmev Angkor	Committee for Controlling and Bidding Logs Remaining after Ban	12,250	logs	Rattanakiri	n.a.	To be implemented by Vietnamese company (30 April Co.)
30/04/96	RCAF	RCAF chief of General Staff (Gen. Ke Kim Yan)	200	logs	Battambang	n.a.	Maintenance of army barracks and bridges
7/05/97	Everbright	2nd PM (6/5/97) MAFF (Tao Seng Huor)	40,000	logs	Stung Treng and unspecified	n.a.	Need to process timber
10/05/96	Pheapimex	Council of Ministers (Sum manit, Nouv Kanun), 2nd PM	150,000	logs	11 provinces	n.a.	Need to process timber
28/05/96	RCAF	Council of Ministers (Sok An, Veng Sereyvuth)	20,000	logs	Chres	n.a.	Referring to approval by 2nd PM (8/5/96) and 1st PM (15/5/96) including tax exemption. Logs confiscated to KR
02/08/96	Hero	General Director of MAFF (Sin Niny)	1,000	old logs	Rattanakiri	n.a.	Referring to approval by Council of Minister (3/7/96) for processing and export
20/12/96	EPAC	Kampong Speu Governor (Neang Sithoun)	10,000	old logs	Kampong Speu	n.a.	Part of a 40,000 m3 authorisation of 2nd co-PM to SK Development dated 4/5/96

¹ Source: documents obtained from government officials or through Global Witness.

Annex 6 (cont'd) - Examples of collection permits granted in 1997

Date	Company	Authorisers	Volume (cu.m.)	Product name	Location	Taxation (cu.m.)	Comments on the permit, include the motive of authorisation
17/03/97	Pheapimex	Council of Ministers (Sum manit, Nouv Kanun)	26,000	old logs	Stung Treng	n.a.	Approved by 1st PM (13/3/97) and 2nd PM (14/3/97)
17/03/97	King Wood	1st PM (20/3/97) 2nd PM (24/3/97)	50,000	old logs	Kratie	US\$14	n.a.
22/05/97	Everbright CIG Wood	1st PM (31/5/97) 2nd PM (19/6/97)	20,000	illegal logs	Kratie	US\$14	Lack of raw material for the processing factory and illegal logs will rot
27/05/97	Timas Resources	Minister of MAFF (27/5/97)	20,000	anarchy logs	Kratie, Kampong Cham	US\$14	n.a.
16/08/97	Keo Van	Under Secretary of State MAFF (10/9/97)	29,300	paid logs	Mondulkiri	n.a.	Logs could not be cut and exported by previous buyer (Heng Ngeap)
18/08/97	United Logging I.P.E.P.	RCAF Navy	n.a.	logs	Koh Kong Krau	n.a.	Development of the area
17/09/97	Hak Hy	Committee of Security Barracks	56,306	logs	Kratie	n.a.	n.a.
27/10/97	RCAF MR1	2nd PM (27/10/97) 1st PM (28/10/97)	27,000	old logs	Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri	n.a.	RCAF budget and construction equipment
29/12/97	RCAF MR1	2nd PM (29/12/97) 1st PM (29/12/97)	20,000	illegal logs	Preah Vihear	US\$ 37	Improvement of the living conditions of soldiers in MR1 and reimbursement of a military debt. Export by PIPAT Co.

Annex 7 – Plates

Plate 1 – Transport of round log by buffalo cart (late 1920s)

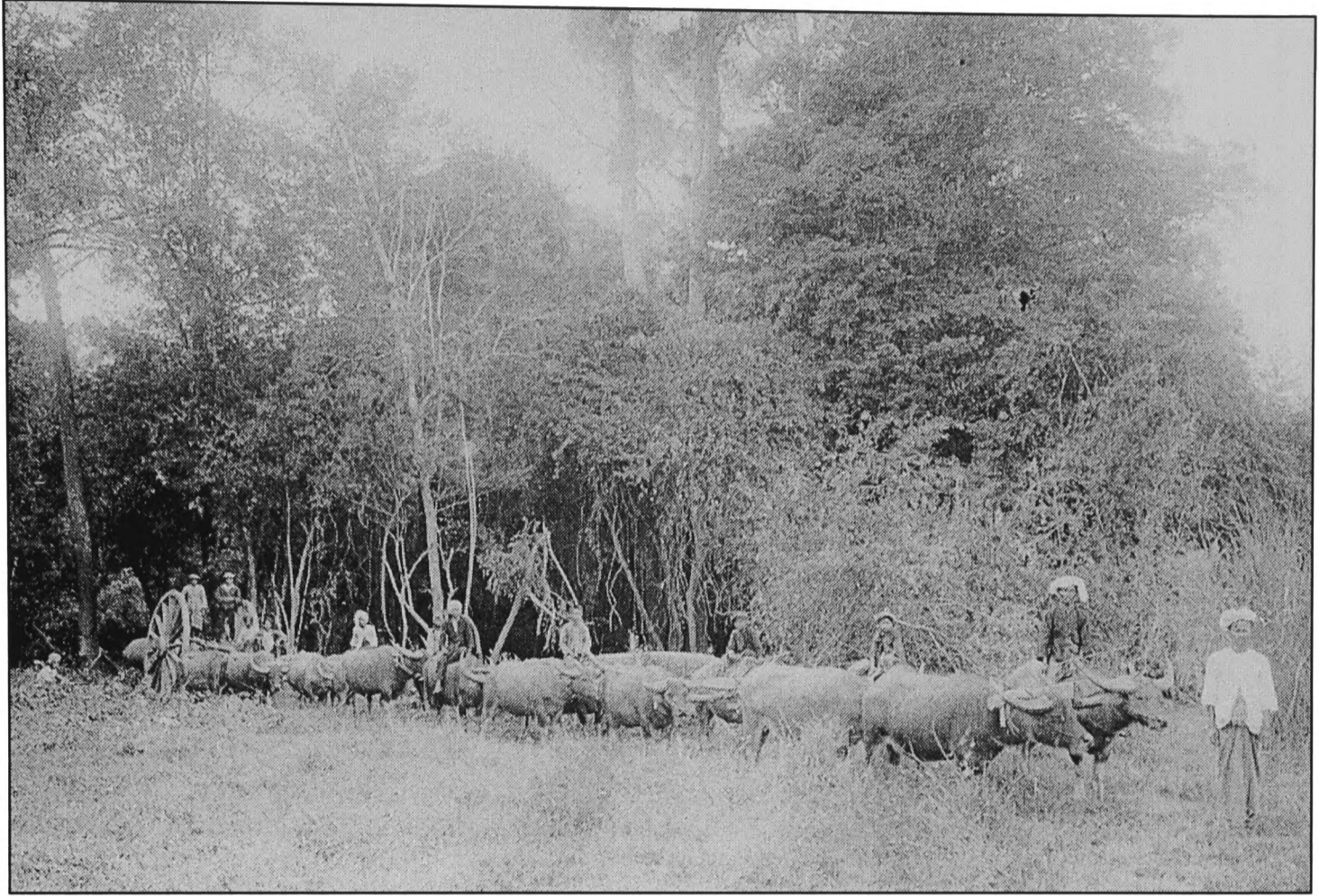


Plate 2 - Transport of round log by tractor (late 1920s)



Plate 3 – Log arriving at a sawmill (late 1920s)



Plate 4 – Raft of approximately 500 logs going down the Mekong River towards CochinChina (1925)



Plate 5 – Villagers transporting sticks, Siem Reap province (1997)



Plate 6 – ‘Khmer Rouge’ loggers in Phnom Dey, Battambang province (1996)

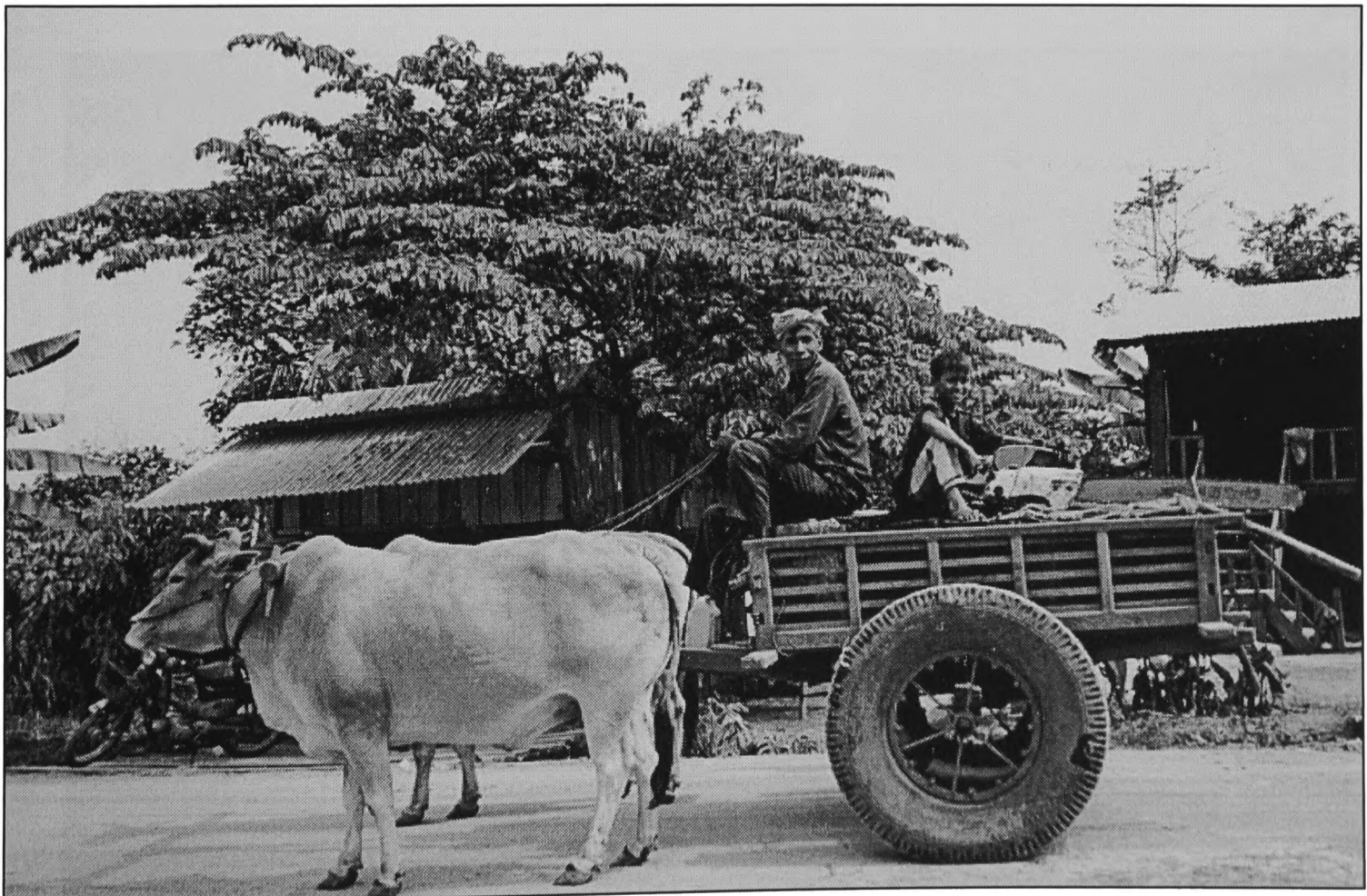


Plate 7 – Timber merchant sending poles to Phnom Penh hidden under bags of concrete, Sihanoukville (1994)



Plate 8 – ‘Illegal loggers’ transporting house timber beams from Bokor National Park, Kampot province (1994)



Plate 9 – Cambodian border checkpoint with Vietnam,
Ratanakiri province (1994)



Plate 10 – Log yard in Vietnam along the Cambodian border,
Ratanakiri province (1997)



Plate 11 – Loading sawntimber at an ‘illegal sawmill’, Koh Kong province (1997)



Plate 12 – Unloading Cambodian sawntimber in Kalapandha harbour, Thailand (1997)



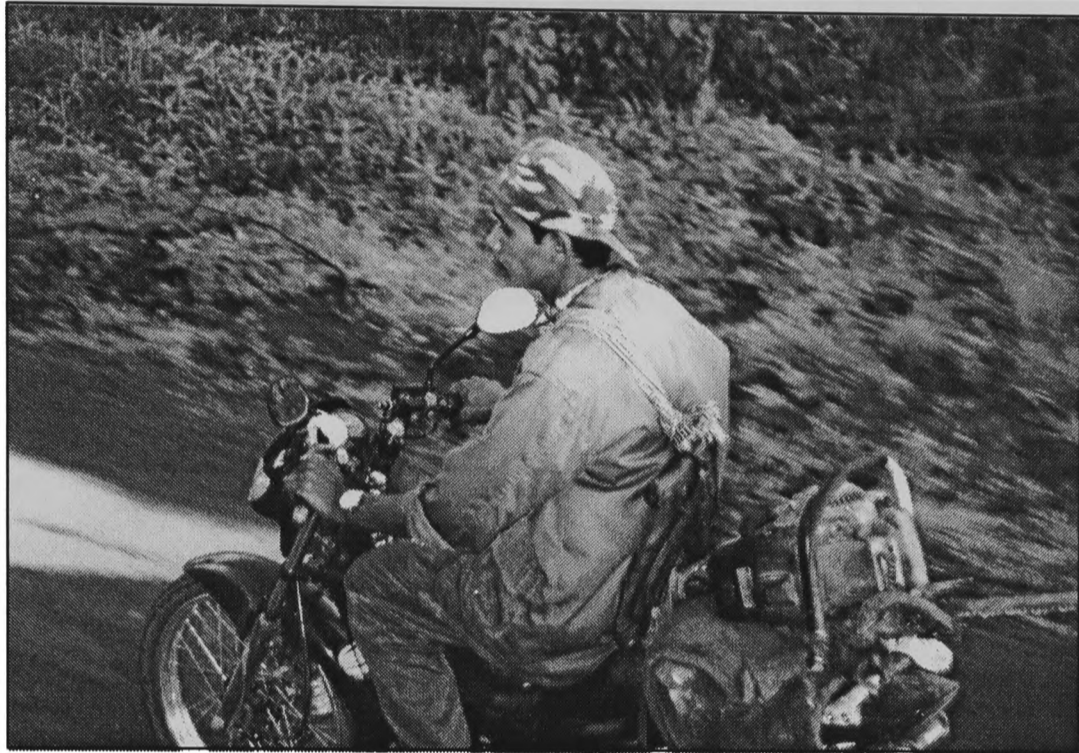
Plate 13 – Unloading logs for timber processing, Kampong Thom province (1997)



Plate 14 – Processing factory (Lamsong), Kampong Thom province (1997)



Plate 15 – RCAF logger heading for a logging site, Battambang province (1998)



(Global Witness)

Plate 16 – Thai logging company vice-manager with a log from Pailin (1995)



(Global Witness)

Plate 17 – UNDP ‘world’ forestry advisor posing next to a soldier protecting a timber concession, Kampong Thom province (1997)



Plate 18 – Hun Sen (center) at the inauguration of Mong Rethy Palm Oil Plantation, Kampot province (1996)



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Interviews

Name	Position	Date
Alley, Patrick	Global Witness, director	1996/97/98
Ang, Choulean	Ministry of Culture, Cambodian adviser	28/7/97
Aswhell, David	World Conservation Union (IUCN), liaison officer	1997
Babb, Tony	Development Alternatives Inc., Vice-President	12/97
Baird, Ian	Fisheries researcher	24/1/97
Bajot, Etienne	FAO officer, Siem Reap	20/3/97
Bel Haj Amor, Monsef	MEF, WB adviser	20/2/97
Boulbet, Jean	Retired forest researcher	4/6/97
Cameron, Baden	MAFF, Australian adviser	30/11/96
Chaize, Leon	National Bank of Cambodia, WB adviser	11/12/96
Chan, Lumpath	MND, local commander of military region 2	26/11/97
Chan, Sarun	DFW, former director	5/12/97
Chan, Sophan	MAFF, state secretary in charge of forestry	24/6/97
Chang, Tong Yves	MAFF, director of planning	30/1/97
Charap, Joshua	IMF, country representative	29/4/97
Chay, Samit	MoE, head of protected areas office	4/6/97
Chea, Peng Chheang	MEF, state undersecretary	1/96
Chhay, Sary	Battambang provincial government, official	4/12/97
Chheang, Heang	DFW, retired officer	16/12/95
Chhim, Somean	Rubber Directorate, financial director	9/7/97
Chhit, Sam Ath	ADHOC, researcher	23/5/97
Chhun, Sareth	MAFF, state undersecretary	12/12/95, 1997
Chun, Try Sieng	Customs Department, vice-director	11/12/97
Courbois, Jean-Michel	MAFF, French advisor	13/12/95, 1997
De Reboul, Henri	ENDA, director	16/4/97
Douc, Rasy	Former Member of Parliament	3/3/98
Durst, Patrick	FAO officer, Bangkok	6/12/95
Ek, Madra	Economic journalist	1997
Em, Mony	DFW, officer in Siem Reap	20/3/97
Farvolden, John	UNHCR, officer	12/95
Gour, Claude	Adviser to the First prime Minister	7/97
Grosenick, Gerold	DAI, chief technical adviser	12/97
Hang, Sun Tra	DFW - Secretariat of National Forest Policy, coordinator	1997
Hay, Eng	DFW, provincial director for Kratie province	26/11/97
Heder, Steve	SOAS lecturer	27/6/96
Heng, Huor	DFW, head of Litigation Office	19/11/97
Heng, Kam Chin	DFW, officer in Kampong Thom	10/12/97
Heng, Nut Un Voan	Colexim, director	4/97
Heng, Von Bun Chat	Council of Ministers, legal adviser	17/6-16/7/97

Name	Position	Date
Hermes, Simon	Australian Embassy, military adviser	5/97
Hiep, Dinh	MRC image interpretation specialist, Bangkok	7/12/95
Hines, Richard	SGS company, national chief executive	22/1/97
Hing, Kunthap	Chatomuk newspaper, editor	2/3/98
Hoan	Everbright CIG Wood company, vice-director	29/5/97
Hong	DFW, provincial director for Kandal	4/12/97
Hout, Pon Loeu	DFW, head of Office for Statistics	6/97
Hyeu, Luc	UNDP, officer	16/12/95
Jacques, Claude	Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, professor	25/2/98
Jennar, Raoul	Historian	21/5/97
Johnston, Peter	UNDP, chief technical advisor	1997
Kao, Kim Hourn	CICP, director	23/6/97
Kao, Nath	DFW, retired official	12/95
Karl, Judith	UNDP, officer	28/7/97
Kashio, Masakazu	FAO officer, Bangkok	6/12/95
Kep, Chuktema	Ratanakiri provincial governor	10/7/97
Khim	Khikimex, director	31/7/97
Kim, Sun	DFW, vice-head of Forest Management Office	1997
Kiroth, Van	Koh Kong provincial vice-governor,	5/97
Kong, Henry	Samling, managing director	18/2/97
Kongchuntuk, Kaewta	Thai Royal Forestry Department, officer	1998
Koy, Sokha	MoE, provincial officer in Ratanakiri	10/1/97
Lao, Mong Hay	KDI, director	6/97
Le Jeune, Johan	FAO, forestry advisor	1997
Le Lidec, George	French Ambassador	6/8/97
Le Pelletier	French Embassy, military attache	27/2/97
Lechervy, Christian	French Ministry of Defense, official	2/3/98
Long, Rithy	MND, vice-head of military region 1	26/7/97
Luon, Bounhi	Kamforexim, vice-director	27/9/97
Ly, Seng Hong	MND, representative in the forestry commission	1/7/97
Ly, Tuch	Chief of Cabinet of First Prime Minister	11/6/97
Makino, Yuka	UNDP, officer	13/12/95
Mang, Channo	PPP, reporter	12/95
Martimor, Charles	WB, adviser to MEF	20/2/97
Mao, Thora	MoC, head of Export Department	2/7/97
McGrawth, William	WB, officer	17/6/97
McNaughton, Andrew	IDRC, officer	12/12/95
Mea, San	DFW, head of Forestry Management Office	25/6/97
Mea, Sitha	DFW, provincial director in Koh Kong	9/5/97
Mea, That	MAFF, district chief in Sre Ambel	13/5/97
Meas, Sovann	MND Development Office, head	6/97
Mengin-Lecreulx, Patrice	Samling, French adviser	12/7/97

Name	Position	Date
Mok, Mareth	Minister of Environment	1/96, 29/1/97
Mong, Rethy	Mong Rethy company, director	25/7/97
Monin, Philippe	Rubber Directorate, French adviser	23/12/96
Mou, Som Vann	DFW, provincial vice-director in Ratanakiri	6/1/97
Mysliwiec, Eva	CDRI, director	16/6/97
Nam, Tom	Deputy vice-governor of Battambang province	4/12/96
Naumov, Serguei	Casotim, vice director	12/3/97
Népote, Jacques	CNRS, researcher	1997
Ngo, Ut	Vietnam Forest Product Cooperative, officer	16/4/97
Nguyen, Tran Dinh Khoi	Vietnam Trade Information Center research, officer	8/4/97
Nhim, Vanda	Secretary of National Committee for Disaster Management	4/7/97
Niv, Narin	MAFF, provincial director in Battambang	12/96
Nooyens, Tony	UNDP, representative in Ratanakiri	1/12/97
Nororom, Christine	UNESCO, officer	1/96
Nun Nin	Second Prime Minister body guard unit, financial assistant	16/12/96
Ok, Serei Sopheak	Minister of Interior, Cambodian adviser	30/7/97
Okamura, Mariko	NGO worker	28/4/97
Ou, Sovann	Voice of Khmer Youth, editor	22/1/97
Ouk, Siphon	Vice-Director, DFW	1997
Pall, San	Deputy governor of Koh Kong province	10/5/97
Pao, Ham Phan	Deputy governor of Kratie province	24/11/97
Parson, Peter	NBC, balance of payment advisor	30/4/97
Paterson, Gordon	Natural Resource Management, director	18/11/97
Peschoux, Christophe	UNCHR, officer	3/1/96
Phi, Tach	Open Forum, director	1/96
Phlok, Thai	DFW, provincial director in Kampot	4/12/97
Pok, Than	CSD, director	1/7/97
Pomonti, Jean-Claude	Le Monde, correspondent	22/4/97
Pou, Thien Se	DFW, vice-head of Legislation and Litigation Office	19/11/97
Prak, Sarun	MoE, adviser	23/1/97
Quinn, Kenneth	US Ambassador	5/97
Redfern, Christopher	WB, regional officer	24/5/97
Roberto	Samling, forester	27/11/97
Ros, Borat	ASPARA, director	9/6/97
Sabou, Bacha	ME, state undersecretary	12/95
Saing, Sothea	Reaksmey Kampuchea, reporter	24/11/97
Sal, Yuch	Som Kaning - Ratanakiri, village head	3/1/97
Sam, Rainsy	Khmer Nation Party, president	28/1/97
Sarin, Denora	Attorney	12/97
Schrempp, Berthold	MRC, officer, Bangkok	7/12/95
Sen, Long	DFW, provincial vice-director in Battambang	16/12/96
Sin, Meng Srun	CDC, agriculture and forestry officer	1/96

Name	Position	Date
Soch, Hach	WB, adviser to MEF	6/97
Soh, On	DFW, head of reforestation department	15/5/97
Soi, Sia Ka	Double Ace, managing director	19/12/95, 7/5/97
Son, Chhay	BLDP, Member of Parliament	27/11/96
Sorensen, Worm	EU, Environment program officer	1997
Spijkers, Ad	FAO, country representative	19/12/95
Steicher, Laurent	Customs department, French foreign advisor	1/96
Stibig, Hans-Jurgen	MRC/GTZ, officer	21/12/95
Tao, Seng Huor	Minister of Agriculture	1997
Thaiutsa, Bunvong	Forestry Faculty, Kasersat University, Dean , Bangkok	6/12/95
Thion, Serge	CNRS, researcher	26/2/98
Thoeun, Ros	MoE, provincial vice-director in Battambang	12/96
Touch, Seang Tana	MAFF, Fisheries advisor	1997
Tran, Trung Dung	Central Highland university, Agro-forestry faculty lecturer	11/4/97
Ty, Sokhum	DFW, vice-head of Forestry Management Office	7/97
Um, Put	Khmer Rouge Front 250, commander	17/12/96
Van, Molyvan	Permanent secretary of the National Land Use Committee	23/7/97
Vanderstein, Mj.	UN representation, military adviser	12/96
Vann, Piseth	CEPA, director	1997
Vay	Khmer Rouge Front 250, administrator	18/12/96
Widoyono, Benny	UN special envoy	12/95; 12/96
Woodsworth, Gregory	IDRC/USAID, project manager	16/12/95

