



THE KILLING FIELDS

SHORT STORIES

23/04

CAMBODIA

Cambodia is a country in Southeast Asia bordering Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. The country's history is marked by wars and conflicts, especially the genocide by the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s. The conviction of high-ranking representatives of the Khmer Rouge was a milestone in coming to terms with the genocide and made the history of the genocide known to a broad public. The population suffers from traumatising, political repression, land theft, corruption and a weak justice system.



Genocidal Center, Choeng Ek

Brother No. 1

Cambodia became an important retreat area for the Vietnamese underground army (FLN) in the 1960s. Therefore, eastern Cambodia was systematically bombed from 1969 onwards on the orders of US President Richard Nixon. In April 1970, head of state Norodom Sihanouk was deposed by General Lon Nol, whereupon Sihanouk allied himself with the communist resistance ("Khmer Rouge") in Chinese exile. Power in "Democratic Kampuchea" was taken over by a leadership group around President Khieu Samphan and Prime Minister Saloth Sar, known as Pol Pot or "Brother No. 1". The core of the Khmer Rouge's pseudo-communist ideology was the restoration of an agrarian society. While the rural population was idealised, urban dwellers were considered "class enemies". Cities were evacuated within just a few days. Tens of thousands died on the forced marches to the rural regions, if they had not already been imprisoned and killed beforehand. Industrial and service enterprises were closed, books burned, teachers, traders

"Our policy was to provide an affluent life for the people. There were mistakes made in carrying it out. Several thousand people may have died ... Better to kill an innocent by mistake than spare an enemy by mistake".

- Pol Pot

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and almost the entire intellectual elite of the country murdered. Religions were banned, places of worship destroyed and minorities persecuted and killed. Under Khmer Rouge rule, more than 1.7 million people of the eight million population lost their lives by January 1979 as a result of murder, torture, forced labour, hunger and disease.

The Killing Fields

The Khmer Rouge military leader Pol Pot was responsible for the murder of 21% of the Cambodian population. The genocide in Cambodia was the result of a Khmer Rouge socio-political project based on Mao's communism to create a classless agrarian society. The Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia from 17 April 1975 to 7 January 1979, murdering between 1.6 and 3 million people (21% of the approximately 7.8 million population) during this period. Cambodian civilians died from starvation, torture, executions, medical experiments, untreated diseases, forced marches, forced labour and other forms of violence.

The Khmer Rouge ruled a totalitarian state in which citizens had virtually no rights. They abolished civil and political rights, private property, money, religious practices, minority languages and foreign clothing. The government built huge prisons where people were imprisoned, tortured and executed. The most notorious of these prisons was S-21 in the capital Phnom Penh, where traitors and their families were kidnapped, photographed, tortured and killed. Of the approximately 17,000 men, women and children taken to S-21, only about a dozen survived. There were mass graves all over the country, which became known as Killing Fields. In November 1978, when Vietnam invaded and put an end to Khmer Rouge excesses, millions of Cambodians died at the hands of the Khmer Rouge .



Khmer Rouge Methods

The Khmer Rouge justified their policies by saying that the citizens of Cambodia had been corrupted by outside influences, especially Vietnam and the capitalist West.

The Khmer Rouge labelled people who supported their vision as pure people and persecuted anyone they considered impure.

Within days of taking power, the regime killed thousands of military personnel and forcibly expelled millions of people from the cities, killing anyone who refused or was too slow. They forced citizens into so-called re-education schools, which were essentially places of state propaganda. The regime forced families to live with other people in order to destroy the

family structure. The Khmer Rouge targeted ethnic minorities, especially Chinese, Vietnamese and Muslim Cham, of whom an estimated 80% were killed. In addition, anyone who was considered an intellectual was killed: doctors, lawyers, teachers, even people who wore glasses and spoke foreign languages were targeted.



Cambodia's Economy

The Cambodian economy is made up of various economic sectors. These include the garment industry, tourism, agriculture, construction and information and communication technology (ICT). The tourism sector plays an important role in economic growth and job creation. Agriculture is also an important industry in Cambodia, especially rice cultivation. The garment industry is an important export sector in the country and employs many people.

Cambodian Education System

The Cambodian education system includes pre-school, primary, general secondary, tertiary and non-formal education. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is responsible for national policies, while the education system is highly decentralised at lower levels. The brutal rule of the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s still has an impact on Cambodian education today. As a result of the murders of intellectuals, there is still a lack of appropriate personnel and young academics today. Despite the Cambodian government's efforts to improve the state of education (among other things, by raising teachers' salaries and extending teacher training), the education system is severely underdeveloped. At around 20 percent (2015), the illiteracy rate in Cambodia is relatively high compared to other Southeast Asian countries.



Places of Interest

Cambodia has many sights to offer. Here are some of the most famous:

- 1. Angkor Wat:** The largest temple complex in the world, built by the Khmer between the 9th and 15th centuries, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a must-see for any visitor.
- 2. Phnom Penh:** The capital of Cambodia is a fascinating city with many historical sites, including the Royal Palace and the National Museum.
- 3. Tonle Sap:** The largest lake in Southeast Asia is an important habitat for many animal and plant species and offers breathtaking scenery.
- 4. Koh Rong Sanloem:** A beautiful island with dream beaches, crystal clear water and a relaxed atmosphere.
- 5. Mondulkiri:** A pristine forest off the beaten track where elephants can be seen.

Population

The population of Cambodia in 2021 was about 16.9 million people. The largest ethnic group is the Khmer, who make up about 95% of the population. The remaining 5% of the



population are mainly Vietnamese and Chinese. The population density is about 94 inhabitants per square kilometre.

Young people make up about 33% of Cambodia's population. This means that about one third of the population is between 15 and 24 years old. The youth are an important resource for the development of the country, but they also face many challenges such as poverty, unemployment, lack of education and health.

Languages

The official language in Cambodia is Khmer, which is spoken by 95% of the population. In addition, Vietnamese, Chinese and Cham, the language of a people living across several Southeast Asian states, are spoken to a lesser extent.

Angkor Wat

Angkor Wat is one of the largest and most important temple complexes in the world, built in the 12th century by the Khmer kings in Cambodia. Angkor Wat means "City of Temples" and is a symbol of both Hinduism and Buddhism, which are prevalent in the region. Angkor Wat is famous for its architectural beauty, ornate reliefs and spiritual significance. Angkor Wat is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a popular tourist attraction.



Angkor Wat, Siem Reap

Royal Palace

The Royal Palace in Phnom Penh is a complex of buildings that serves as the residence of the King of Cambodia. The palace was built by King Norodom Sihanouk in



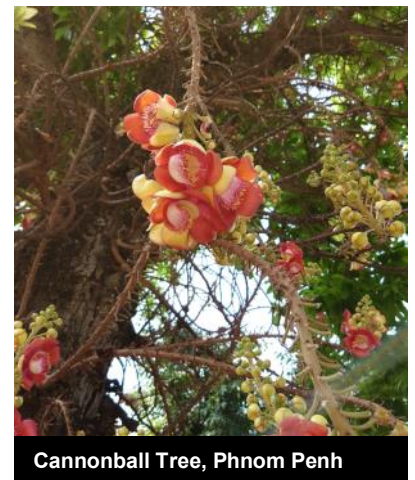
Royal Palace, Phnom Penh

1866-1870 and is surrounded by an imposing wall. The palace cannot be visited because the king lives there. However, the throne room, the treasury and the outside areas are impressive enough and can be visited.



Pre Rup Temple, Nokor Thum

It is estimated that there are more than 200 temples at Angkor Wat, covering an area of about 400 square kilometres.



Cannonball Tree, Phnom Penh

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