

GENDER RELATIONS IN THE KHMER 'HOME': POST-CONFLICT PERSPECTIVES

This thesis is submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

London School of Economics and Political Science

University of London

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2007

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ABSTRACT

In the context of Cambodia's post-conflict society of transition, this thesis traces the changing contours of gender relations and inequalities in the Khmer 'home' and beyond. Drawing on 165 oral histories, discussion groups and semi-structured interviews, with men and women from rural and urban localities in Siem Reap, the thesis argues three main points.

First, by examining the interplay and relative significance(s) of conflict and now global integration, the research demonstrates that while the Khmer Rouge period is an important and inherent part of the fabric of Cambodian history, using it as the major benchmark for tracking change fails to encapsulate the diversity of contemporary forces affecting gender relations. I argue that tourism-generated employment and the associated rise of livelihood-related migration is having just as significant an impact on intra-household (in) equality and the spatial dislocation of households.

Second, despite the discourse of egalitarianism that the Khmer Rouge regime tried to enforce, I argue that Pol Pot did not manage to unseat persistent gender inequalities which continue to disadvantage women's lives. Combined with the persistence of normative meanings of 'gender' and 'home', I argue for the perspectives, roles and identities of men, and gendered power relations, to be the subject of greater academic and policy action.

Third and finally, the thesis argues the utility of 'home' both as an empirical site and conceptual tool for understanding the nature, depth and resilience of gender inequality in discursive and pragmatic terms. The thesis concludes by emphasising the critical need for women's equality in the home to become an integral part of future international development agendas. This is particularly the case, if advances towards fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals are to have a positive and meaningful impact on the lives of women in Cambodia, and in the Global South more generally.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research for and writing of this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance and support of many people.

In preparation for my fieldwork, I am extremely grateful to Rany Bradley who each week received me into her home and taught me Khmer. I am also thankful for my chance meeting with Theng Pagnathun at the 2004 DFID Trade, Growth and Poverty conference in London and his subsequent help during my pilot trip.

In Cambodia, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the hospitality of all the participants in Slorkram and Krobei Riel who shared their time and life stories with me. I cannot thank enough my research assistants for their stamina and hard work in this process, and I am grateful for the insight and friendship that Seang Sothea, Piseth Kham and Sophoan Sahn brought to my time in Cambodia (and now online). I would also like to mention Toby Jackson from VSO for introducing them to me. In terms of academic support in Cambodia, I benefited greatly from the people I met, and library resources I used, at the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS) in Siem Reap. I also wish to express my gratitude to the staff at the Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV), Cambodian Men's Network (CMN) and Gender and Development for Cambodia (GAD/C) for their assistance.

Life in Siem Reap would have been far less rewarding without the intellectual and humorous evenings with Tim Winter, Thina Ollier, Mandy Summerscales and Sharon Brooks. In particular, I must thank Christine Stokke for her daily emotional support, companionship and for all the trips, shopping, and otherwise, we made around Cambodia!

Back 'at home', I would like to profoundly thank my PhD supervisor, Professor Sylvia Chant for her inspiration, time, effort, pragmatism, kindness and exceptional rigour in the writing process. I would also like to express thanks to John Fyson, Dr Diane Perrons, Dr Silvia Pocosso and Dr Lois Wheller for their additional support. On a personal note, I would like to extend my whole-hearted

thanks to my parents and sister, for their love and support from beginning to start. I wish to express special thanks also to Christian Davies for his daily faith in me, and critical perspective on my work during the writing up stage of the research. He should also be acknowledged for his hard work in producing the maps for the thesis. Other notables include Alex Lefley for the determination he instilled in me, Dr Anna Hardman at Zed Books for her weekly advice and all my friends who have lovingly supported me throughout the process.

My PhD was supported by a 1+3 Postgraduate Training Award from the Economic and Social Research Council (PTA-030-2002-00869), for which I remain most grateful.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

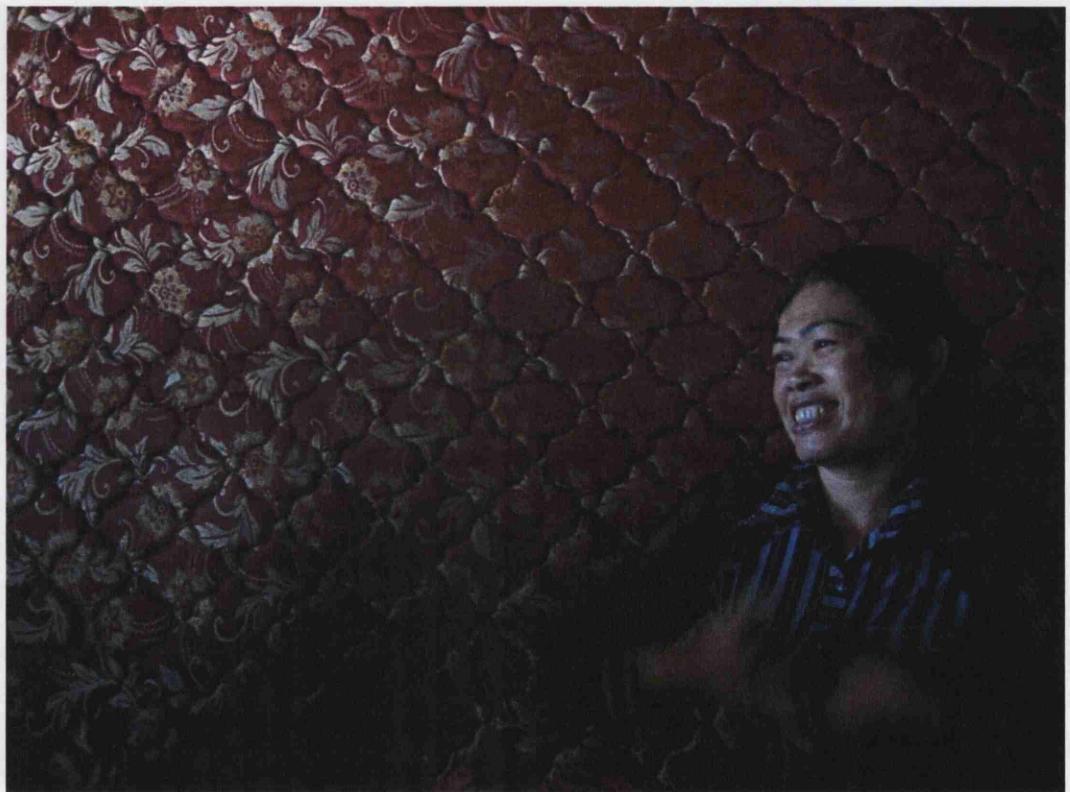


Figure 1.1: Oral history with Orm leaning against her bed mattress
(Photograph by K Brickell, Slorkram, November 2004)

1.0 Introduction

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2005: foreword), gender equality is central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals not only as a just and desirable end within itself, but also as a critical means to meet all other goals. In the context of Cambodia's post-conflict economy of transition, this thesis seeks to interrogate and understand the changing contours of gender relations¹ and inequalities.²

Three strategic and inter-related avenues of enquiry form the bases of the research. First, I adopt an approach that emphasises the multiplicity of historical and contemporary influences impacting on gender (including gender relations, norms, ideologies and identities) to counteract the singular focus on conflict that continues to dominate popular and academic discourse on Cambodia. Second, I focus explicitly on gender relations as comprised not only by women but also men to explore the diversity and heterogeneity that exists between and within households. Third and finally, I argue the utility of 'home' both as an empirical site and conceptual tool for understanding the nature, depth and resilience of gender inequality in discursive and pragmatic terms.

Through this threefold analysis, my research examines the interplay and relative significance(s) of conflict and now global integration, through the domestic discourses and practices of people living in rapidly expanding Siem Reap, home to the global heritage and tourist site of Angkor. Drawing on primary micro-level research in rural and urban loci with 135 men and 135 women (such as Orm³ in

¹ I explore 'gender relations' as the 'hierarchical relations of power between women and men that tend to disadvantage women' (Reeves and Baden, 2000: 2). This approach differs in emphasis from those which take 'gender roles' as its starting point so as to give greater prominence to the connectedness of men and women's lives, and the imbalances of power embedded in male-female relations (*ibid.* 18).

² The focus of the thesis on understanding gender relations relates to the goal of advancing gender equality as denoted by 'women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere' (Reeves and Baden, 2000: 2). While I acknowledge that the focus on what is sometimes called formal equality does not necessarily demand or ensure equality of outcomes and transformative change (as 'gender equity' does), I use the term 'equality' with a broad stroke.

³ Orm is a pseudonym for her real name. See Chapter 2 for the ethical reasons behind this.

Figure 1.1), I pose four interconnected questions. First, where do Cambodians think continuity and/or change is emanating from? Second, what specific 'influences' are the most significant for understanding gender relations and inequalities? Third, in what ways are transformations in the norms and social patterns associated with gender relations and 'home' linked or divorced by these forces and by each other? And fourth, to what extent do people's subjective views on these questions converge or diverge?

The objectives and questions I have outlined are vital as Cambodia now enters what the World Bank (2006) coins as its 'second post-conflict decade' or 'post-post conflict experience' in which the country faces new challenges and rising expectations as it moves from a post-conflict society to a 'normal' developing state. Through oral histories, discussion groups and semi-structured interviews (see Chapter 2 and Appendices) the thesis provides a critical lens on gendered interpretations of tradition and experiences of transition after the uniformity and homogeneity which the Khmer Rouge attempted to inscribe into Cambodian society between 1975-1979.⁴ It thereby assesses the significance of domestic versus broader societal factors in perpetuating gender inequality.

It is inevitably difficult to chart change, with social phenomena arguably being in a permanent state of flux. In Cambodia especially, comparisons with the past are very difficult to map. For Cambodians of all ages, "traditional" refers to pre-1970 customs; the way things were done 'before the war' and due to the absence of written material and failing memories, data rarely date before 1950 (Luco, 2002: 7). Ledgerwood *et al* (1994: 516) also warns that 'while it is heuristically useful or necessary even to use pre-Revolutionary Cambodia as a "baseline" to discuss post-1970s change in Khmer existence both in homeland and elsewhere, it is important to understand "Cambodian culture" as an intellectual construct that

⁴ In April 1975 the Khmer Rouge seized power in Cambodia and established a radical Maoist regime led by Pol Pot, which was named 'Democratic Kampuchea'. The political and social policies of the Khmer Rouge left an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians (almost one quarter of the population), dead, either from starvation, exhaustion, disease and/or execution (Brown, 2000). The Khmer Rouge viewed the home and family, 'as the most potent, hence the most feared, of all relationships of the former society' (Becker, 1998: 211) and sought to erase them. The family was reconfigured as a collective entity, with political figures assuming the role of parents and families physically separated by forced evacuation and extremist social policies.

has long undergone transformations wrought both through endogenous and exogenous forces'.

To uncover social transformation, my research analyses how global processes in Cambodian society are shaping the local contexts within which people organise their daily lives and vice versa. Correspondingly, I not only consider changing living arrangements but also working patterns to explore what Blunt (2005: 4) refers to as 'mobilising identity beyond an individual sense of self, and geographies of home, within, but also beyond, the household'. To achieve this, I dissect the Khmer 'home' both as an actual place of gender relations and lived experience, and also as a metaphorical, conceptual and material space of personal attachment and identification.⁵ In order to better illuminate this approach, as well as elaborating upon the three central objectives driving the research, the introduction examines each in turn, justifying and critically exploring their role for understanding gender relations and inequalities. The chapter ends with an outline of the organisation of the thesis (1.4).

1.1 Post-Conflict Perspectives on Cambodia

After decades of upheaval and displacement, Cambodia is currently in the throws of a so-called 'triple transition' (Peou, 2001: xx)- from armed conflict to peace, from political authoritarianism to liberal democracy, and from a socialist economic system to a market-driven capitalist one. Examining these structural shifts is necessary to facilitate a deeper understanding of gender relations and inequalities for two reasons.

First, whilst Cambodia has undergone significant cultural and social changes, the impacts are still largely unknown (Curtis, 1998) which severely limits the state of knowledge concerning gender issues and appropriate policies to alleviate

⁵ I refer to the 'Khmer home' specifically since 95 percent of Cambodia's 10 million people are ethnic Khmer (Bartu, 1999: 272) and I did not conduct research within any ethnic minority communities. I also have put 'home' in inverted commas here to indicate that it is not just a concrete word, but also an abstract signifier of a wide set of associations and meanings (see Section 1.3 for elaboration). In the rest of the thesis I have broadly put 'home' in inverted commas when referring its concept.

inequalities between women and men. The paucity of knowledge that persists is reflected in there having been very little anthropological field research done in the country (Oveson *et al*, 1996). The study carried out in 1959-60 by Ebihara (1968) is still the only existing full-length anthropological work on Khmer society, and until recently, because of the decades of persistent violence and instability, it has been virtually impossible to conduct new in-depth field research.

Second, while Cambodia's tragedy is now widely recognised as one of the last century's worst crimes against humanity (Becker, 1998), as I have already intimated, its society can also be looked upon as increasingly affected by regional and global trends (Gottesman, 2003). As Derks (2005: 9) writes in the context of young female migrants working in the garment factories of Phnom Penh, 'Cambodia is more than Angkor or the Killing Fields...because of the variety of influences and developments that have shaped Cambodia in recent times.' Chau-Pech Ollier and Winter (2006) explain however that existing work still tends to focus almost exclusively on key political transformations, with few attempts made to interpret Cambodia's near overnight shift from virtual isolation to global interconnectedness.

The aforementioned factors culminate in a situation where current and relevant research on gender relations, and Cambodia in general, is still in its infancy. It is under these conditions, that I place weight on post-conflict perspectives, alongside the traditional focus on the genocide itself. This constitutes my second main justification for the research with the mosaic of historical and contemporary influences affecting Cambodia making for a challenging yet engaging set of gender issues, which require particular attention. As Rigg (2003: 129) comments in a wider regional remit, despite the grave shortage of sub-national data,

'Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia should prove to be some of the most interesting- and complex- countries to study in terms of regional (spatial) inequalities. Each country has suffered a destructive and divisive war, and each has made- and is making- the transition to the market'

In the following two sections I explore this transition chronologically, first in regard to the path and aftermath of conflict (1.1.1), and second in the context of Cambodia's globalising society (1.1.2).

1.1.1 The Path and Aftermath of Conflict

Cambodia exemplifies the global trend in recent decades for 'the proliferation of armed conflict within and between countries in the developing world', which has 'placed "conflict", including the causes, consequences and nature of humanitarian relief and development efforts, firmly on the agenda' (Pearson, 2005: 169). The significance accorded to conflict is reflected in the wide-ranging documentation of Cambodia's genocide in survivor accounts (see Him 2000; Lafreniere 2000; Ngor 1987; Ung 2001 and Wagner 2002 as typical examples) and in academia (Chandler 1991, 1992, 1996, 1999; Cook 2006; Hinton 2005; Jackson 1989; Kiernan 1996, 2002, 2003; Mysliwiec 1988 and Vickery 1984 to name but a few).

To date, the accounts of the conflict have tended to represent people's experiences in an overly deterministic and uniform way and failed to reveal alternative discourses surrounding the Khmer Rouge period. Mam (2006) is one of few authors who have shown the inappropriateness of drawing conclusions about the fate of abstract institutions such as 'family'. While Vickery (1984: 175-177) argues that the Khmer Rouge employed no deliberate policies to destroy the family, others have asserted that Khmer Rouge policies were designed for this very purpose and were successful in their implementation (Ebihara 1990, 1993; Ledgerwood, 1990; Ponchaud 1989). In contrast, Mam (2006) argues that despite the frequent brutality of the Khmer Rouge's attack on the institution of the family, this was ultimately unsuccessful.⁶ Given these wide ranging contradictions, my

⁶ In one example, Mam (2006: 138 and 139) quotes the resistance of a woman who expressed her fidelity to her family and tradition by refusing to marry, despite being

findings will contribute to the debate (in the context of gender relations) as to whether the war should be represented as an era of complete and permanent destruction, or as I hypothesise, a time of turbulence and discord.

In the research, I give prioritisation to examining the ways in which conflict continues to manifest itself in the home since 'at the fundamental level violent forms of conflict originate from interactions of the individual with their immediate environment, social groups and institutional norms' (Justino, 2006: 2). This approach tries to counteract the dominance of macro-level, cross-sectional studies of violent conflicts, which have dominated modern research on conflict to the exclusion of micro-level analyses (*ibid.*). I therefore explore the 'security domain' of the home which the UNDP (2005: 18) identify as key for transformations in women's lives free from vulnerability to violence and conflict. The research thereby concurs with Cook's (2006: ix) argument that in the context of Cambodia (and Rwanda), 'conducting research in the vernacular provides a much greater potential for uncovering the subtle dimensions of genocide's path and aftermath'.

A serious issue relating to conflict (and gender inequality) is domestic violence, which is persistently identified as having increased in scope and intensity in Cambodia over time (Kumar *et al.*, 2000; Ledgerwood, 2003; Mackay, 1995; Oveson *et al.*, 1996; Pickup, 2001; Surtees, 2003).⁷ As elsewhere, combating gender-based violence requires an understanding of the social meanings behind it (Surtees, 2003). This is facilitated by exploring the meanings and values ascribed by men both to gender but also 'home' (see Section 1.3 for elaboration). In doing so, my work is informed by the need for feminist academics who are based in Western institutions to 'produce research agendas that do not merely address what is theoretically exciting or trendy here, but also what is considered

punished severely as a result. In doing so, the woman directly resisted the Khmer Rouge's attempt to render the family irrelevant and obsolete (*ibid.*).

⁷ It has been revealed nationally that 25 percent of ever-married women are victims of one or more forms of violence such as physical, emotional and sexual violence with 17 percent of ever-married women being victims of physical violence alone. This figure closely resembles results from the first ever quantitative survey conducted by Zimmerman in 1994 (NIS, 2001).

politically imperative by the communities we work with or are committed to over there’ (Nagar, 2002: 184, author’s emphasis).

Further to domestic violence, the period immediately after the end of conflict is an ‘ambiguous moment’ (Enloe, 1993: 252) when gender relations may become reinforced or distorted. Potential impacts noted at the household level in post-conflict societies include forced marriage or prostitution; and/or quality of marital relations changing (El-Bushra, 2000b), the first of which has been documented in Cambodia (see Heuveline and Poch, 2006)⁸. According to UNRISD (2005: 234), the backlash women experience in post-conflict societies is dominated by men against women who are perceived as having moved away from their assigned positions in society during the war and as a result have their rights and spaces to which they have gained access, removed.

Cambodia is a complex case, since women’s roles during the Khmer Rouge regime were removed as well as expanded. For example, although women were forced to undertake activities and perform roles that had been restricted to men (such as ploughing) (Kumar *et al.*, 2001: 44), they simultaneously lost control of their primary areas of recognised authority concerning the household and finances (see Chapter 4 for elaboration). Moreover, post-conflict, it is in fact likely that with the poverty created through the war, women face extra labour burdens, which extend their roles into male-oriented activities. For this reason, I am acutely aware of the potential impacts that more recent influences have for the prevalence of domestic violence and intra-household inequality more generally.

⁸ For other more general resources on gender and conflict see Byrne (1993), El-Jack (2003) and Moser and Clark (2001).

1.1.2 Globalising Cambodia

With the above in mind, one aim of my research is to consider, as I benchmarked earlier, which post Khmer Rouge 'influences' are particularly pervasive in participants' lives and accounts and why. Despite the fact that it is the rapidly developing countries in Southeast Asia (such as post- *doi moi* Vietnam⁹ and Thailand), which have most actively facilitated the overall process of 'opening up' (Souchou, 2001), Cambodia is clearly a part of this regional process.¹⁰ Once more, although this 'is not to say that globalisation is the single determinant of modern cultural experience' (Tomlinson, 1999: 1), I am nonetheless interested in the ever-denser networks of interconnections being woven through Cambodian society in its reorientation toward the market economy. This is important for two key reasons.

First, despite the recent surge of interest in the study of gender relations in Southeast Asia, none of the major contributions to this literature discuss Cambodia (see Atkinson and Errington, 1990; Karim, 1995; King and Wilder, 2003; Ong and Peletz, 1995).¹¹ It is essential therefore that the 'global flows' that 'enable some people to experience, albeit unevenly, new ideas and practices and thereby imagine (if not realise) new ways of being', are explored (Hodgson, 2001: 6). This is particularly opportune in Cambodia given that 'ideas of social construction and the ways in which people handle new possibilities, changes and insecurities have, so far, hardly been analysed' (Derks, 2005: 15).

⁹ The launch of *doi moi* in 1986 marked Vietnam's transition from central planning to the market economy and a range of other social, political, and economic changes. On the achievements of the *doi moi* process, First Deputy Minister Nguyen Tan Dung noted the halving of the poverty rate, from 58 percent in 1993 to 29 percent in 2002, and the significant increase in Human Development Index from 0.610 in 1990 to 0.691 in 2002 (www.undp.org.vn/undp/unews/mr/2005/eng/0325be.htm).

¹⁰ See Kabeer and Thi Van Anh (2006) for a discussion of gender as it plays out in Vietnam, which is moving from a more to less regulated market economy.

¹¹ For typical examples of Cambodia's more general neglect in Southeast Asia-related literature see Yamashita and Eades (2003), Lienbach and Ulack (2000) and Souchou (2001).

Second, in the context of Cambodia's demographic profile in which a new and burgeoning generation of Cambodians are now reaching adulthood (who did not live through the Pol Pot era) it remains to be seen how this new generation will choose to reshape society (Ledgerwood, 2003). This generational dimension is particularly significant given the fact that patterns in gendered privation are not static but dynamic and highly illuminating in respect to the reasons for the perpetuation of gender inequality across time (see Chant, 2007a: 19).

With regard to new possibilities, the fact that my research communities are located close to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Angkor (see Figure 1.2) means that tourism is of particular bearing with Cambodia having witnessed what Chau-Pech Ollier and Winter (2006: 12) see as growth perhaps unparalleled in any other country in modern times. In 2004 for example, Cambodia's international tourist arrivals saw a change of 50.5 percent in comparison to 2003 with an increase in numbers from 1,055,000 to 1,422,000 (UNWTO, 2006: 7).¹² New prospects for women have emerged as result. Having been involved in informal trading for centuries, women now work in larger numbers than men in hotels and restaurants both in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap (Gorman, 1999a).¹³

¹² There are limitations internationally with figures such as these since macro-economic data tends only to capture arrivals and foreign exchange receipts, associated with international tourism and therefore does not capture domestic tourism, regional tourism or the tourism-related services that are particularly important for expanding participation by the poor (Ashley *et al.*, 2000)

¹³ In rural Cambodia, by contrast, where the majority of the population live as subsistence farmers, men and women cooperate in agricultural production, the men carrying out the more physical tasks which involve more technical knowledge whilst women do some physical tasks but more unpaid domestic work (Gorman, 1999a).

Figure 1.2: National map of Cambodia



Since my research elaborates the argument that domestic space should be considered as the product of relations that extend beyond the home, it is vital to understand how tourism-generated employment (and other factors) impact on household gender relations and internal migration patterns. First, in relation to household gender relations, Heuveline and Poch (2006: 99) propose that divorce and separation trends over time and across marriage cohorts in Cambodia show that the recent rise in marital disruption is attributable to the increases in female education and employment. In Costa Rica, but eminently applicable to my case study communities, Chant (2002: 118) also argues that consumerism together with the influx of foreign visitors is widely deemed to have given rise to 'loose morals' and 'antisocial' habits, which combine to undermine 'traditional' patterns of behaviour and lead to the 'breakdown' of households.

Second, the growth in women's participation in waged work has wide ranging consequences with regard to internal migration. With 'new' markets for 'new' women opening up, the 'feminisation of migration'¹⁴ in Southeast Asia has emerged as a fully established and irreversible trend (Piper, 2002:1)¹⁵ with twenty thousand more female than male migrants in Cambodia specifically¹⁶ (National Institute of Statistics, 2000b: 9).¹⁷ Linked to tourism, my research is sensitive to the wider gender implications emerging from Cambodia's marked increase in rural-urban migration of female labour (ADB, 2001) and the potential for men and women's cultural understandings of what it means to be 'male' or 'female' to become more diverse, problematic, progressive and/or dynamic.

¹⁴ The term is a contentious one as women already made up almost half of the numbers migrating globally several decades ago, although in certain regions such as Asia, there has been a notable increase (Jolly with Reeves, 2005: 7). The 'feminisation of migration' is also used to describe the change in migration patterns in which women are increasingly moving as independent migrants (*ibid.*).

¹⁵ For a discussion on the gender implications of international labour migration focussing on intra-Asian migration flows in Southeast and East Asia, see Piper (2004) in a special issue of the *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*.

¹⁶ But because of the smaller number of males in the population, the male migration rate is slightly higher than that for females (National Institute of Statistics, 2000b: 9).

¹⁷ From here on, in the thesis I refer to the National Institute of Statistics as the NIS.

In light of the foregoing discussion, my thesis contributes to redressing the recent policy focus on international migration, which has drawn 'the attention of researchers into migration almost to the exclusion of the internal movements of people' (Skeldon, 2003: 3).¹⁸ This is particularly relevant given the Khmer Rouge's strategic use of migration to disorientate and weaken people, creating 'a population where the need to survive had become intimately intertwined with a necessity to migrate' (Immigration and Refugee Services of America, 2005: 3). While further studies are needed on these deeper impacts of war on family and community values, cooperation, support and survival systems (AMCMMN, 2002: 60), how these translate into an increased impetus for migration in present day Cambodia is a key issue to be dealt with. This is especially so given the potential prevalence of livelihood-related migration to Siem Reap and the household economy crossing spatial boundaries (see Rigg, 1998 in a Southeast Asian context).

It has been shown for example how Khmer women who work either as garment workers, sex workers and/or market traders are actively embracing change to a market-driven economy by migrating from rural provinces to Phnom Penh (Derks, 2005; 2006).¹⁹ Derks' study (2006) points to the ambiguity of multiple and contradictory positions which women experience and allow them to shape their own lives, that of their families, and wider directions for social change. The spatial interdependencies between rural and urban and repositioning of women's identities and lives in networks of family and kin are thus critical for understanding the changing contours of gender relations as subjectively understood by women (and men).

¹⁸ International migration has attracted a great deal of policy attention in recent years, obscuring the fact that internal migration is often far more important in terms of the numbers of people involved (Deshingkar, 2005: 3).

¹⁹ Women's use of migration here marries with a wider regional change in emphasis from the negative effects of migration to the use of migration as a livelihood strategy (IOM, 2005) and/or a means of personal development. The Asian Development Bank (2001) have also referred to the importance of internal labour migration remittances in Cambodia as a positive impact.

With the above in mind, it is imperative that the social impacts of tourism in Cambodia, which have hitherto tended to focus almost exclusively on sexual exploitation and trafficking (see Darwin *et al*, 2003 and Derk *et al*, 2006 for regional literature reviews) are extended to broader changes in employment, household structures and migration patterns which have daily significance for the forms that gender inequalities take. Moreover, the ways in which women handle the opportunities created by tourism needs to be analysed in terms of their ability to convert income- earning into gender parity and empowerment in families and communities. The latter is a pertinent issue for two reasons. First, despite women having higher shares of the labour force in wholesale and retail trade (75 percent) and manufacturing (66 percent) (ILO, 2001), Cambodia has a low Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) rank of 97 out of 120 countries (with a value of 0.578) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) of 68 out of 75 (with a value of 0.373) (Human Development Report, 2006: 365 and 369).²⁰ Analysis of this disjuncture is conspicuous in its absence.

To date, the government has only concentrated on women or 'Precious Gems' as driving forces for economic development (UNIFEM *et al*, 2004: 22). They have focused on moving women from a disadvantaged group to the nation's invaluable assets but have shown little concern for women's position within families, their personal well-being and men's responses to this development.²¹ This is mirrored at the international level with the World Bank (2007:1-2) highlighting gender equality and fragile states as two areas that require greater international attention if higher global growth trends are to translate into sustainable development outcomes. Cambodia as a country with particularly weak governance, institutions and capacity is therefore an important national context

²⁰ Women in the GDI are particularly disadvantaged in regard to the adult literacy rate with only 64.1 percent of women over the age of fifteen literate in comparison to 84.7 percent of men (UNDP, 2006: 365). The estimated earned income of women is also PPP US\$2,077 in comparison to men's \$2,793 with a ratio of estimated female to male earned income in the GEM sitting at 0.74 (ibid. 365 and 369). Furthermore, Cambodia has a low overall Human Development rank of 99 out of 170 (see Chapter 3 for further information and comparison with other Southeast Asian countries). For a discussion of the more general links between HDI and GDI see Klasen (2006).

²¹ As an example, see the five-year strategic plan produced by the Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs (1999).

within which to explore the increased tendency for women to engage in a broader range of tasks. This is timely given that according to UNIFEM *et al.* (2004: 22) women's employment now makes the opportunities for young Cambodian men appear to be developing more slowly. This has potentially serious implications for gender relations between men and women, an issue I elaborate on further in the section that follows.

1.2 Gender Relations

In the second strategic avenue of enquiry forming the basis of this thesis, I justify my focus on gender relations and inequalities on the basis of two rationales.

First, gender provides an analytical lens for looking at difference and encouraging a more nuanced picture of inequality to sensitise policy initiatives. In addition, to negate the 'risk of falling into a backward-looking form of gender essentialism, which ascribes too deterministic an effect to structures of gender' (Morley, 2000: 75), I consider the variables of age, class and locality (among others) to highlight the reasons for the growing unevenness in gendered contributions to household survival.

Second, my research counterbalances the almost exclusive focus on women in academic work on Cambodia to the disregard of men (Derks 1996, 2005, 2006; Jacobsen 2003a; Kumar *et al* 2000; Ledgerwood 1990, 1994, 1996a, 1996b; Lee 2006; Lilja 2006a, 2006b; and Sokroeun 2004 as typical examples). Since 'men and boys around the world are unavoidably involved in gender issues' (Connell, 2003: 3, author's emphasis) it is imperative that understanding men's power and privilege is seen as vital to building gender equality (see also Chant and Gutmann 2000; Ruxton, 2004). Having elaborated more fully on this assertion (1.2.1 and 1.2.2), I turn to the theoretical perspectives on gender which inform the conceptual thrust of the thesis (1.2.3).

1.2.1 The Neglect of Men in Gender Analyses

With regard to the neglect of men in gender analyses, my research aims first to develop the comparatively new focus on gender in development work in Cambodia (Gorman, 1999a).²² Testifying to the critical lack of attention given to men and masculinities so far is the report, *A Fair Share for Women- Cambodia Gender Assessment* (UNIFEM *et al.*, 2004: 3), the title of which bears witness to the continued equation between 'gender work' and 'women'. In the assessment, it is explained that, 'limited original analysis was carried out for this assessment, and there are several areas, such as changing gender relations and issues affecting men, that have not been covered due to lack of information and time' (*ibid.* 3). This typical lack of information or analysis of male gender issues results in a direct recommendation for future research- 'what, for example, are the changing roles and identities of men?' (UNIFEM *et al.*, 2004: 25).

This is a critical question and one that I hope to go someway to address through my contribution to the nascent but growing literature on men and gender in the context of development more generally. Driven by understanding the male side of gender the research marries with what Bannon and Correia (2006: xviii) see as 'a belated recognition that men are also gendered beings and have gender identities' and the need to move the discourse of men and development from an 'incipient stage of "thinkability" in contrast with the extensive devotion to women' (Jones, 2006: xiv). In light of this, I want to push towards studying the lives of ordinary (and extraordinary) men in the Global South who according to Jones (*ibid.*xviii) 'have remained largely vaguely drawn- or invisible'.²³

²² This aligns with the wider evolution in the 1970s to the 1990s from the main focus of analysis in development being women (Women in Development) to a Gender and Development (GAD) approach.

²³ Notable exceptions in Cambodia are limited to PADV (2003) and Sellers *et al.* (2002) on the participation of men in HIV/AIDS prevention. Globally, see Gutmann (1996; 2003) in the context of Mexico, Morrell (2001a; 2001b) on Southern Africa and Chopra *et al.* (2004) on South Asia. For edited collections see Pease and Pringle (2001) for case studies of men in India, Brazil and Nicaragua; Cleaver (2002) for chapters on Northern Uganda, Namibia and Vietnam; and Jones (2006) for snapshots of male experiences throughout the Global South.

1.2.2 The Importance of Men for Gender Equality

Second, with regard to the critical importance of moving gender analysis in a direction which delivers greater attention to the relational, I try to adopt a more 'animated and agentic approach to those processes which produce divisions of labour, and a broadening of temporal frames and notions of reciprocity, as the context within which perceptions of gender equality are embedded' (Jackson, 2000: 1). The inclusion of men does however raise questions about which men should be brought in, at what stages, and at which levels? Bearing this in mind, just as Gutmann's (2003: 1-2) work on men in Latin America 'is not intended to provide a counterpart, complementary or otherwise, to studies of women in the region', neither is this project in Cambodia, which looks at the viewpoints of both men and women.

Through my analytical insistence on the relational aspects of gender, I believe that advances towards gender equality can be made. While Section 1.3 considers men's role in the maintenance of intra-household inequality through workloads and decision-making, looking at men's experiences of social and cultural relationships also maximises the potential to eliminate gender-based violence. As summarised by the Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV) (2003:4),

'Men have been offered very little opportunity to convey their feelings, ideas and needs; they have been asked to listen but rarely have they been asked to contribute to finding solutions to the problem of violence against women'

To compound this, there has been little exploration in Cambodia of the role violence plays in defining masculinity, and the links between alcohol, sexuality and violence (GTZ, 2005: 4). I therefore consider males both as victims and agents of violence and use a, 'men-in-culture', rather than a, 'men-in-nature', perspective. In doing so, my research mirrors the shift towards studying normative and dominant identities (El Bushra, 2000a; Razavi and Miller, 1995), which are particularly important in this context given that male-perpetrated violence tends to compromise any gains in women's emancipation. Dolan's (2002) research in the context of Northern Uganda is exemplar here, with conflict

reinforcing a hegemonic model of masculinity based on violence, in which some men resort to acts of violence' as a way of re-instating power and control within the household.

Domestic violence across the world, rather than attributed to shifts in gender identities, are related to supposed conflicts between 'ideals' of masculinity and femininity and 'reality' (El Bushra *et al*, 2002: 6). In the case of Dolan's (2002) work on whether weak states undermine masculinities for instance, the possibility of becoming someone through education or employment collapses. This connection between state-level dynamics and micro-level behaviour is particularly relevant to Cambodia. The levels and intensity of domestic violence for example are possibly attributable to the 'cultures of conflict' which during war are infused into the symbols, attitudes, values, and beliefs that constitute culture (Campbell, J, 1992).

One related and recently emergent body of literature suggests that conflict, changes in the economy, in social structures and in household composition, are resulting in 'crises of masculinity' in many parts of the world (Chant and Gutmann, 2000; Cleaver, 2002). Examples provided include the low attainment of boys in education, economic changes resulting in the loss of men's assured role as breadwinner and provider for the family, and women's increased participation in the labour force (Chant, 2001; Cleaver, 2002).

Yet the notion that masculinity is 'in crisis' seems a shallow one for a number of reasons. First, such assertions assume that gender identity might at some point be fixed. Identity is not unitary and thus to equate such activity with an overarching crisis of masculinity seems an overly deterministic and generalising proposition. Second, on a grander scale, the precise nature of men's crisis, (that is, how it manifests itself and is actually experienced) is ill-defined and elusive, as pointed up by Chant (2000) and Beynon (2002: 75). Third, as the work of Dolan (2002) demonstrates, crisis tendencies may actually provoke attempts to restore a dominant masculinity. As Connell (1995) contends, such crisis tendencies will always implicate masculinities, though not necessarily by disrupting them.

Following on from this, in my research, I investigate the challenges and vulnerabilities affecting men as perceived and defined by men themselves. In terms of theoretical underpinnings, the notion of 'multiple masculinities' developed by Connell is important for understanding the differences within and between men on the basis of class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (McDowell, 2002: 102). Criticisms from authors that the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' originally defined by Connell (1987) is too rigid and monolithic (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; 1996), has led masculinity to be defined as this complex and inherently unstable category.²⁴ Increasingly, there are also calls for theoretical work developed from thinking through an empirical world specifically located in developed Anglophone nations (Chopra *et al*, 2004: 1) to become more sensitive towards geographical specificity.

1.2.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Gender

To investigate the multiple and overlapping 'layers' of past and present that constitute people's gender(ed) identities, experiences and viewpoints in a non-western context, I use the analytical and methodological approach adopted by Davids and van Driel (2001: 154) to consider the relationship between globalisation and gender. The 'layeredness of gender' which they identify is three-fold. The first 'layer' is the symbolic order, in which representations of masculinity and femininity obtain their substance and are sometimes solidified into very persistent cultural texts (*ibid.* 159). These 'pre-existing perceptions of gender', as Karim (1995: 12) writes in the context of Southeast Asia, are reviewed in Chapter Four through Cambodian literary models of male and female behaviour (*Cbpab*)²⁵ and explored further empirically with participants (Chapter 5). This is important in order to be able to critically assess Rayanakorn's (2003: 174) analysis of gender inequality in the Mekong region, in which it is concluded that the greatest force affecting it is not contemporary globalisation but the deep-rooted culture and tradition of female subordination prevalent throughout the region's countries.

²⁴ 'Hegemonic masculinity' is defined as a dominant form of masculinity that subordinates, co-opts, or marginalises other forms (as well as women) (Connell, 1987).

²⁵ For Khmer to English transliterations I have largely used Headley (1977)

Moving on from the realm of representations, ideal images and stereotypes, the second layer is the structural or institutional dimension, such as the division of labour, education and marriage (Davids and van Driel, 2001:159-160). In my research, this dimension is examined through the structure of the household (see Section 1.3). The third dimension is of the individual subject and the ways in which individuals shape their identities (ibid.160).

In relation to the construction of changing and multiple identities, Butler's work (1990), as the most comprehensive and influential analysis of sex and gender from a post-structuralist and postmodernist theoretical perspective, is important. Gender cannot be seen as having some essential basis; there is no original, 'authentic' femininity or masculinity located in male and female bodies, or in our inner selves (Butler, 1990). Butler's (1990) analysis instead, emphasises the fluidity of identities, suggesting openness to resignification and recontextualisation. As Butler (1990: 33) explains, gender is 'the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory form that congeal over time to produce the appearance of a substance, of a natural sort of being'. Hence, gender, rather than being part of our inner essence is performative; to be masculine is to perform masculinity, to be feminine is to perform femininity. Battersby (1998) however challenges this refusal to allow any ontological essence to the body, and proposes not to reject the possibility of an 'essence' of the body, but to redefine it as fluid, rather than fixed. Similarly, for Grosz, (1994: 191) the body can be moulded and shaped by experience, practice and expectations of 'bodily capacity'.

Although subtly different accounts are presented, what is in common, in contrast to Butler, is an approach closer to Foucault's (Busby, 2000) where there is a sense of a 'real' body which is affected both by structure (such as kinds of material cultural practices), but also by agency (its own interventions in the world). The body is not only mere matter but is also an informed substance with power acting on it through what Bordo (1993: 174) terms the 'direct grip' of culture 'through the practices and bodily habits of everyday life'. While Butler sees performance as producing an illusion of a gendered self, embodiment views

performance as producing not an appearance, but a reality (Busby, 2000) with Butler's preoccupation with subjectification causing 'her to foreclose theorizing the interrelated issues of social change, resistance, and the historical/geographical embeddedness of identity performance' (Nelson, 1999: 336). As a starting point for mapping a cartography of identity therefore, my research takes Nelson's point about how individuals and/or collective subjects do identity in relation to various discursive processes (e.g. class, race, gender and sexuality), and to other subjects all embedded within time and space. This approach corresponds with the attention now paid, not just to the processes creating identity but to the places and spaces in which identity is produced (Berg and Longhurst, 2003: 357), with the exigencies of fieldwork also demanding that I theorise subjects in time and space.

1.3 The Utility of 'Home'

Finally, as my third strategic area of enquiry, I argue the utility of 'home' for developing a deeper understanding of gender inequality in discourse and practice. This is informed by a belief that looking at the social, cultural and material foundations of 'home' as well as the developmental bases of the household facilitates greater insight into gender relations and inequalities in three key ways. First and foremost, the home is a site of persistent gender inequality, which arguably plays an important mediating role in development outcomes. Second, there exists only limited work that expands the substantial intersection between the literatures relating to 'home' and 'household', vital to a holistic understanding of the domestic realm. Third, in a geographical sense current theoretical and empirical scholarship on home has yet to extend its remit in a sustained manner to the Global South (and Cambodia).

1.3.1 The Home as a Site of Persistent Inequality

Regardless of the measure chosen, 'the distribution of power and resources within the household almost always favours men' (Quisumbing, 2003: 12). As Gutmann (2003: 19) concurs in the context of Latin America,

'Without exception, on the grand level of societies, and in far more varied ways at the interdependent level of families, households, and neighbourhoods, men are in positions of power and control.'

Taking these viewpoints into consideration, it is clear that despite the difficulty that gender analysis poses to development practice when it strays into the 'private realm', the household should be subject to more considerable analysis (Kabeer 1994; Sweetman 1997). Moreover, in order for reporting on MDG Goal 3 (the promotion of gender equality and empowerment) to be strengthened, qualitative data need to be presented wherever available, including from micro level studies at the community level to illustrate key issues (UNDP, 2005: 27). The home arguably represents a key domain for attempts to reduce poverty, gender inequality and generate major changes in women's position. If explicit recognition of the family is not acknowledged for example, then the MDGs are unlikely to be fulfilled in many places (Abeysekera, 2004: 7).

Leading on from this, if the GEM continues to overstate the significance of formal systems of representation and the formal economy then the (lack of) transformation in the domestic realm will remain overshadowed by the normative social and cultural ideals which reflect and condone gender injustice (see Chant, 2007a: 335). This is a matter of considerable concern given the importance of 'domestic units as a (if not the) arena for socialisation, in which messages and meanings concerning gender are transmitted inter-generationally through norms and practices of parenting, conjugal and filial obligation' (Chant, 2003b: 163).

In a Cambodian context the centrality of home in the resilience of gender inequality across time leads Gorman (1999a: 52) to suggest that rather than considering politics, education and religion alone (which have received most attention and are considered most important), the household should be viewed as an equally significant part of everyday life. Following on from this, the recommendations for research include: the impact of female income/work outside (and inside) the home on gender relations in the household; processes of household decision-making; women's control over expenditure; and urban/rural variations (ibid.). Consistent with my own research, I believe these questions are critical in light of women's considerable inputs into household labour, and other paid and unpaid activities, which increasingly play a crucial role in underpinning Cambodian livelihoods. As Chant (2007a: 336) notes in the context of The Gambia, Philippines and Costa Rica,

'Just as most women encounter barriers to increased empowerment, men, despite their lesser inputs to household livelihoods, are managing to retain their traditional privileges, including the exercise of authority, distancing themselves from the time and labour efforts necessary for household survival...if this scenario is not puzzling given the perpetuation of patriarchal norms in families and in wider society, it is decidedly worrying that investments are becoming progressively detached from rights and rewards, and perceptibly evolving into a new and deeper form of female exploitation.'

Furthermore, with the diagnostic and operational arena of 'livelihoods' being a multidimensional concept (see Chambers 1995; Moser 1998; Rakodi 1999; Rakodi with Lloyd-Jones 2002), it is important to gain an appreciation of how survival is negotiated by men and women (Moser, 1998) not just through income-generating work but other activities. These include 'gaining and retaining access to resources and opportunities, dealing with risk, negotiating social relationships and managing social networks and institutions within households' (Beall and Kanji, 2000:1).

In the past there has been a pervasive myth of family solidarity and unity (Harris, 1981) with the household treated as 'an individual by another name' (Folbre, 1986: 5). As a result, the notion that co-resident households function on the basis of shared participation and advantage (New Household Economics) has been systematised within conventional definitions of households in macro data sources. Like other inequalities, this assumption is misplaced since women's earnings may not translate into greater personal consumption and well being because they can be undercut by men withholding a larger share of their earnings when women go out to work (Chant, 2003a: 21). As Quisumbing (2003: 12) elaborates, 'across countries, the most consistent effect is that relative resources controlled by women tend to increase expenditure shares on education, but the mechanisms through which men and women's resources affect individual outcomes differ substantially'.

Disassociating myself then with the emphasis on shared advantage, in line with a New Institutional Economics perspective (developing from the bargaining models of the 1980s), my research views intra-household relations and the control and management of household resources, dynamically. Intra-household relations represent a continuous process of negotiations, contracts, renegotiations and exchange within the broader political, economic and social context. Although the household involves more than one decision unit, it would be erroneous to simply shift analyses from the household to the individual. This is especially since as a unit of analysis it is 'for Southeast Asia at least, the best we have and there is a good deal of life left in the household, notwithstanding the changes of recent decades' (Rigg, 2003: 199). Instead, I focus on relationships within and between households, using the gender relations approach developed by Kabeer (1994). The approach is aware of the potential for household conflicts, arising both from gender divisions and generational differences (Young, 1997).

In response to the awareness of the potential for household conflict, arising both from gender divisions and generational differences (Young, 1997), there has been a corresponding growth of literature linked to redressing the 'female bias' in studies of households, in which the role and experience of men in families and households is considered (Chant, 2000; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003; Gutmann, 1996, 2003 and Pineda, 2000). This focus on men as well as women is particularly important according to Stivens and Sen (1998) given that the Southeast Asian home embodies family, gender, masculinity, femininity and sexuality which are all central sites for the cultural expression and reworking of ideas of the 'modern' and for the expression of worries about the costs (and benefits) of development and modernity. In the context of Cambodia's re-opening to the world therefore, it is accordingly necessary to acknowledge this shift 'from the analysis of the household as a bounded unit towards a view which stresses its permeability' (Moore, 1994: 86) and its embeddedness within wider macro-economic structures.

1.3.2 Intersections between 'Home' and 'Household'

In recent years, geographical research has moved to re-examine and reclaim 'as an object of study that which has been ignored: house and home, the household, and the domestic world' (Domosh, 1998: 276). As my second rationale for looking at the home, I believe that despite this reclamation, there exists a paucity of studies that synthesise these currently disparate topics into an analytical framework that allows for an all-encompassing understanding of the domestic world. Most work which has proliferated on the multidimensional concept of 'home' within the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, psychology, human geography and architecture for example, has not translated into multidisciplinary research in the field (Mallett, 2004: 62).²⁶

²⁶ One current attempt to bring together cross-cutting geographical scholarship on house and home from across human and physical geography is at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

Despite what Blunt and Varley (2004: 3)²⁷ observe as the growing, diverse and interdisciplinary study of 'home' across the humanities and social sciences, I believe there is a dearth of work linking analyses of 'home' in social and cultural geography and 'household'²⁸ in development geography. Moreover, the void between the two limits a holistic understanding of this geographical space and the social and economic relations it plays host to.

In looking beyond income privation, the home needs to be analysed both as a site of gendered disadvantage and as a concept which has the potential to embody unequal power relations. I argue that rather than 'de-contextualising' the domestic through analyses of the household alone, gender inequality can be more strongly revealed by addressing the meanings associated with 'home' also. For example, while 'household' is common currency in the development lexicon, I suggest that moving beyond this 'disciplinary orbit' (see Mallett, 2004: 64) and encouraging greater dialogue between 'home' and 'household' will facilitate a more sensitive and nuanced picture of the myriad forms of inequality experienced by women at the domestic level.

In terms of operationalising this, my research uses a traditional developmental approach to analysing intra-household gender relations combined with an exploration of the 'the emotional bonds and ideological and cultural images that set the background for, and justify the existence of the family and the household' (Jelin, 1991: 14). This approach relates to conceptualisations proposed by a number of authors, that there are two constituent aspects of 'home' (the first of which can incorporate orthodox analyses of the household).

²⁷ See the special issue on 'Geographies of Home' in *Cultural Geographies* (2004) for papers and references which are situated within a number of disciplinary traditions, including geography, cultural studies, visual culture, religious studies, architecture, design history, anthropology and performance studies. See also the journal, *Home Cultures*, published by Berg.

²⁸ The 'household' is commonly understood as comprising individuals who live in the same dwelling and who have common arrangements for basic domestic and/or reproductive activities such as cooking or eating (Chant, 1997: 5).

While Rapport and Dawson (1998:17) believe that the 'home' is both 'a nodal point of concrete social relations' and 'a conceptual or discursive space of identification', Armbruster (2002: 20), writes that 'home' entails the dimensions of 'an actual place of lived experience and a metaphorical space of personal attachment and identification'.²⁹ Most recently, Blunt and Dowling (2006: 2 authors emphasis) contend that the 'home' 'is a *place*' in which people live and also 'an idea and imaginary that is imbued with feelings'. My usage of 'home' is thus rooted in the notion 'that home is much more than house or household' since 'whilst house and household are components of home, on their own they do not capture the complex socio-spatial relations that define home' (ibid. 3).

Leading on from this, one perspective on 'home' is as an expression of an 'ideal environment' reflecting social ideologies and an ethos for living (Rapoport, 1996).

³⁰ While this is well received, we also need to interrogate if this 'ideal environment' is an individual or a collective/ household one. Moreover, how are the meanings or ideals of 'home' gendered and how do they reflect and perpetuate intra- and inter-household inequality? As elaborated by Gregson and Lowe (1995) in the context of contemporary middle-class British homes, there is a multiplicity of meanings of 'home', so rather than seeing things in terms of a single ideology of 'home', it is important to think of 'home' in terms of dominance and resistance, to consider how and why a particular ideology of 'home' maintains its hegemonic position and how this might be contested through alternative interpretations (ibid.).³¹

My research considers, in part, the physicality of home, including the built form of dwellings and the material cultures of home. However rather than focus on the physicality of home, my research concentrates on the social relationships form;d

²⁹ This approach reveals an ongoing tension in existing literature on transnationalism, international migration and home, between definitions pertaining to physical places and those referring to symbolic spaces (Al Ali and Koser, 2002: 7). Many writers have taken the view that the concept entails both meanings, a perspective this research embraces.

³⁰ Although this research focuses on the home at the level of the domestic, 'home' can be applicable across all scales in respect to the region, nation and globe (among others).

³¹ I should note that my singular use of 'Home' in the thesis title should not be taken to signify that there exists one national 'Khmer home'. As I have explained, there is a multiplicity of meanings and materialities of 'home', which this thesis explores.

through domestic space and the ways in which they uphold gender inequality. This focus emerged from the pilot study in which the domestic symbolism and practices rather than the built form and materialities of home were deemed of greater significance for the formation of gendered roles and identities in the home. This was based on the fact that both communities were poor and participants felt the simplicity of their homes in material terms was of little relative importance. Nevertheless, as I elaborate in the empirical chapters, photography does expose the significance of domestic and work-related possessions for understanding men and women's relationships and status in society more widely.

1.3.3 'Home' in the Global South

My third and final rationale for focusing on the domestic realm is to extend these 'geographies of home' to the Global South. Although some studies do exist³², the theoretical and empirical foundations on which this body of knowledge has been built, is predominantly Western. The definitional basis of 'home' for example has been examined by Western housing researchers who have produced exhaustive lists of its meaning (see Depres, 1991; Somerville, 1992, 1997; Watson and Austerberry 1986). These lists whilst prominent in environmental psychology are problematic given their sole use of middle class populations, appearing to have universal applicability, and presenting a largely positive view of home in a static way (Moore, 2000: 10).

Looking at the multiple connections between the house and the people it contains in Southeast Asia (see Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 1995) is complicated similarly by the geographical specificity of the research and the challenge to adapt frameworks to other places. Linguistically, at least in Khmer, there is no distinction between house and home (*Phteah*). While *Phteah* literally means house, the Khmer word *Kruosar* is roughly equivalent to family. While in Western

³² See Brydon (2004) on the traditional courtyard house in northern India, Dohmen (2004) on threshold designs and reading in terms of a performative relation to 'home' in south India, Constable (2003) on Filipina workers in Hong Kong homes and Varley and Blasco (2000) on urban Mexico as some diverse examples of work on home in the Global South. See also Sand (2003) on the modern Japanese home.

theoretical debates the association and frequently interchangeable usage of 'home', family and household has been the subject of much debate³³, semantically at least in Cambodian, they are the same.

This potential complexity has been shown in other societies. For instance, for some indigenous groups in Latin America such as the Zinacantecos of Mexico, there is no term for 'household', but instead basic social units are referred to by the term 'house' and no boundaries are drawn between family units (Collier *et al.*, 1997: 73). Correspondingly, conceptions of space have been exposed for their Western foundations by Tuhiwai Smith (2005: 50-51) who details how the West classifies space with such notions as architectural space, physical space, psychological space and theoretical space when many indigenous languages and cultures (such as Maori) have the same word for time or space. I aim to move beyond these cultural-linguistical specificities in my own empirical research and explore the fact that each of these entities themselves is open to infinite variations on the ground. This corresponds with Moore's (1994) reminder of the importance to assess the degree of congruence between terms, which will always require empirical specification.

Exploring local conceptions of 'home' and 'household' also counters the attempts to bring together the dominant and recurring themes about home, which fail to discuss cross-cultural perspectives on 'home', place and space (see Mallett, 2004 for a self-critique). In Cambodia for example, it is arguably just as important to consider the absence of home as much as its presence in peoples' biographies. First, in terms of academic work, since the study of art and architecture has been so dominated by Angkor that 'the events and creations falling outside the time and style it encompasses have tended to lack attention' (Ibbetson-Jessup, 2004: 193), the everyday environment of the home remains largely invisible in histories of Cambodia.³⁴ Second, and most dramatically, the

³³ Whilst households often consist of individuals related by blood or marriage, they may also comprise of unrelated persons such as colleagues, friends and lodgers. As such, household and family are not coterminous (see Moore, 1994).

³⁴ For literature on the technical aspects of Cambodian house building, mainly in French, see Dumarçay (1987), Giteau (1971), Huy-Dan (1973) and Sunnary (1996). For a more

home was dismantled by the Khmer Rouge who physically demolished dwellings and even entire villages, collectivising the transfer of homes, titles and property statuses. By destroying Cambodia's cultural landscape, Porteous and Smith (2001) apply the idea of 'domicide'- a neologism to suggest the deliberate destruction of home that causes suffering to its inhabitants.³⁵

The loss of home as a result may not only involve the destruction of physical place, but the emotional essence of 'home'- and even aspects of personal self-identity. These linkages between 'home', memory and identity are particularly significant given that 'one aim of genocidal projects is to erase not only the physical presence of a collectivity but also its memory' (Lentin, 1997: 13).³⁶ In other contexts, such as natural disasters, ordeals including Hurricane Katrina which tore through the US in 2006 and the consequences of the Asian tsunami in December 2005, show how such 'events are also about home- disruptions to belongings and attachment as well as the loss of shelter, the porosity of home, and the formal and cultural politics of home' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 259).

With the disruption brought through natural disasters, or in Cambodia's case, conflict, individuals, households, and communities are often forced to change their ways of doing things, and thereby challenge 'their beliefs about who they are' and what their roles are in the world (Pickup, 2001: 145). Combined with Cambodia's (post) revolution migration patterns, the upheaval of home is potentially significant for understanding the changing contours of household organisation and the meanings associated with it.³⁷ To date however, analyses

recent exposition of the Thai house see Chaichongrak *et al.* (2002). For anthropological research on the Southeast Asian home, see Waterson (1990).

³⁵ Under the heading, 'extreme homicide', it is explained how the United States in a campaign of strategic bombing dropped three times the tonnage of bombs on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia as were used in the whole of the Second World War, reducing villages to rubble and annihilating hundreds of people (*ibid.* 64, 67).

³⁶ See also the term 'memoricide' proposed by Porteous and Smith (2001:2).

³⁷ Households have a life-course like their inhabitants and means that 'given the possibility of such flux in family form within a single lifetime, for any individual, therefore, familial social identities- those of son or daughter, sibling, mother or father- and the expectations, responsibilities and attitudes tied to these social roles, will shift and change throughout his or her life course' (Hockey and James, 2003: 88). Household formation may also shift over time, especially among the urban poor in developing societies where residential units change not just once in a lifecycle, but often several times in a single year (Chant, 1997: 5; Moore, 1994: 8-10).

only exist from the perspective of the Cambodian diaspora in which tenuous and ambivalent relationships are maintained both with ancestral and adopted homes (Um, 2006). 'Home' becomes an expression of tradition with its image 'reduced to one constructed out of treasured fragments of pre-war memory, preserved in nostalgia and kept frozen in time' (ibid. 89).

The relationship between 'home' and mobility for those residing in Cambodia itself remains unclear, but could have wide-ranging repercussions for the way that gender relations have been (re) constructed in the name of 'tradition'. For example, just as a sense of belonging to a specific place may be accompanied by the wish to reinvent traditions and cultures associated with 'home', and even a sense of self, of one's identity (Al Ali and Koser, 2002: 7), pre-revolutionary gender norms and expectations may also be reproduced in an attempt to recreate the perceived order and stability of life before the war.

Yet the increasing prevalence of livelihood-related migration in Southeast Asia may conversely also destabilise traditional ideas of 'home' and 'place' thereby becoming 'ambiguous and shifting notions, where multiple identities- both "rural" and "urban"- can be simultaneously embodied' (Rigg, 2003: 198). This change also has potential implications for the blurring of peoples' gender and work identities. Thus far, 'home' (like gender) is not a static conception, but is a dynamic process, 'involving acts of imagining, creating, unmaking, changing, losing and moving "homes" (Ali and Koser, 2002: 6).

1.4 Organisation of Thesis

Having set out the key objectives and rationales for the thesis, Chapter Two elaborates on the reasons for my methodology and choice of case study communities. This is followed by Chapter Three which details the empirical anatomy of Cambodia. Chapter Four then traces the normative foundations of gender relations (and the home) in (pre) revolutionary times. Switching from discourse to practice, in the first of four empirical chapters, Chapter Five examines how traditional meanings of 'gender' and 'home' are being re-interpreted in Cambodia's changing macro-environment. Chapter Six then goes on to explore how people are responding to changes in employment structures and the associated rise of livelihood-related migration. This lays the foundation for Chapter Seven which examines how these developments are influencing and in turn, being influenced through intra-household (in)equality. Chapter Eight follows by taking an in-depth look at experiences of marriage (and its dissolution), violence and alcohol consumption. Finally, Chapter Nine summarises the key findings along with major theoretical, methodological and policy implications.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY AND CASE STUDY COMMUNITIES

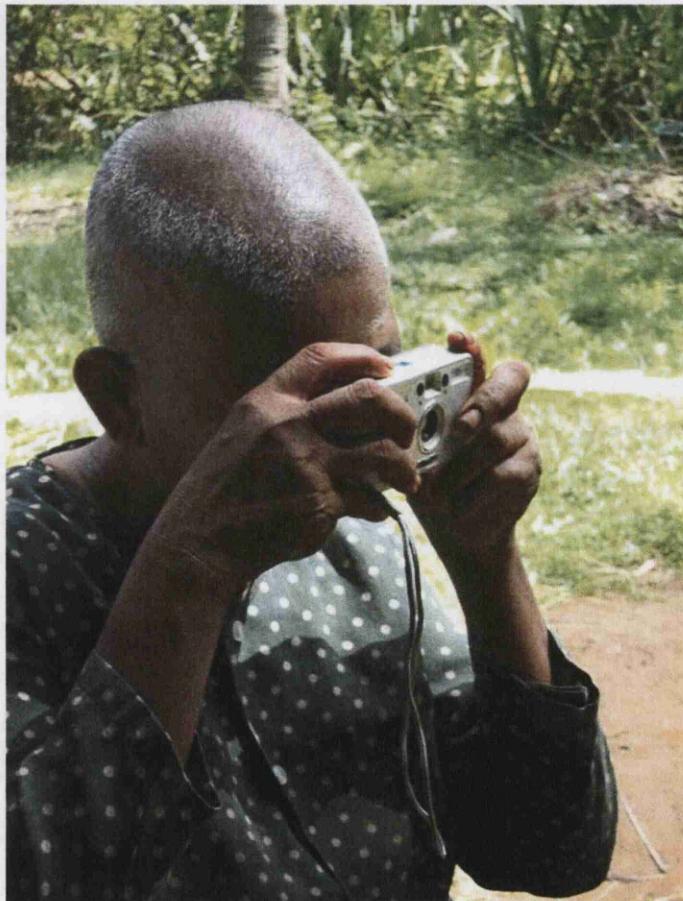


Figure 2.1: Participant photography exercise
(Photograph by K Brickell, Krobei Riel, July 2004)

2.0 Introduction

Chapter Two performs two functions. First, it sets out the research methodology and second, it explains the rationale informing the selection of case study communities. The research methodology is broadly qualitative, providing often personal insights from participants about their lives and experiences. Related to this, and despite a past stereotyping of case studies as the weak sibling among social science methods (Yin, 1994), I base my research on case study research. Now one of the most common ways to conduct qualitative inquiry (Stake, 2000), I use this approach to explore the degree of congruence between one largely rural and one predominantly urban community in Siem Reap Province.¹

The methods more specifically, consist of three strands: oral histories, discussion groups, and semi-structured interviews, each of which are outlined in relation to the 'participatory' and visual research methods accompanying them. I then move to discussion of the collection, analysis and ethics of my work. Here, the fieldwork process is closely informed by feminist methodologies attentive to my positionality, reflexivity and the emotive aspects and power relations of research. In my research, this is particularly important given the sensitivities associated with conducting research in a post-conflict society, concerning the 'private' sphere and being a female academic from the North working with men (and women) of the South. The chapter ends by justifying the choice of case study communities (2.7).

2.1 Pilot Study

My fieldwork in Cambodia took place in three stages after six months of weekly Khmer language training in London. The first period involved a one-month pilot study in March 2004 which was used for holding consultations with representatives from the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA), Project Against

¹ In my case study research while my primary concern is to produce a better understanding of the particular case, I am also aware of the potential applicability of my research to other locations in Cambodia and the Global South. This is partly because 'confirmation, fuller specification and contradictions all may result from one case study' (Vaughan, 1992: 175). See Section 2.7 for further elaboration.

Domestic Violence (PADV)² and Cambodian Men's Network (CMN)³ in Phnom Penh, and Banteay Srei⁴ in Siem Reap (all of which I met with further as my research progressed). These meetings were used to discuss the potential applicability of my research in the context of their organisations and to try and find a research assistant who could also function as translator (see later). The purpose of the pilot trip was also to test the methodology I had devised and identify suitable case study communities.

Before the pilot, I was particularly aware of divergent opinion regarding the use of discussion groups in different contexts. McIlwaine and Moser (2003) in their research on poverty and violence in urban Colombia and Guatemala, note that people in the study felt safety in groups by being able to talk about what was happening in the community in general, rather than being under pressure to discuss their own personal experiences on a one-to-one basis. On the other hand, the exposure to extremes of violence, deprivation, surveillance and Khmer Rouge efforts to destroy all potentially alternative identities- including the family- was likely to have a profound impact on the ability of survivors to trust and act collectively in the discussion group format⁵. In Vlaar and Ahlers' (1999) study to better understand the relationship between gender and the socio-economic situation of Cambodian households it was found that the current situation did not allow for open and carefree discussion with many villagers hesitant to share their ideas and opinions for fear of jealousy or malicious gossip. In the pilot I did not find any such problems, but proceeded with a mixed method

² PADV is a local non-governmental organisation that works to prevent, reduce and eliminate domestic violence and helps its victims.

³ CMN is a network of men from the NGO Gender and Development for Cambodia (GAD/C). The CMN was formed by concerned men who firmly believe that men must address and commit themselves to gender equity and eliminating violence against women because violence is a societal problem and not a women's problem. One objective therefore is 'to reduce destructive aspects of male behaviours such as gambling, drinking and extra-marital sex' (UNESCAP, 2003: 36).

⁴ The Cambodian NGO, Banteay Srei, was formed in 1999 to perform advocacy and counselling work and to address a wide range of health- and violence-related issues, including the problems of domestic violence, trafficking of women, reproductive health, and women's rights.

⁵ See Colletta and Cullen (2000) and Smyth and Robinson (2001) for discussions of the ethical and methodological issues arising from researching conflict-affected countries.

approach that included individual level interviews to counteract this potential (see Appendix 1 for discussion group structure).

2.2 Oral History Interviews

The above preparation was followed by a period of substantive fieldwork between June and November 2004. The principal components of this research comprised oral history interviews (100) and discussion groups (25). The oral history interviews were completed in two sessions when possible and were used to understand change over the life course given the shifting expectations, responsibilities and attitudes tied to men and women's roles in household and beyond (see Appendix 3 for oral history structure). This approach resonates with post-structural feminism and its emphasis on the meaning of concepts such as 'men' and 'women', 'male and female', which are considered uncertain, equivocal and shifting over the lifecourse (Mats and Sköldberg, 2000).

The interviews were divided equally between the communities, in which I used a spreadsheet (updated daily), to ensure a proportional representation of men, women, age cohorts and income groups in order to examine how gender relations and inequalities are experienced and perceived by different stakeholders.⁶ Where possible, the oral histories were conducted in the respondents homes so that we could tangibly discuss it and gain greater insight.⁷ This approach was consciously adopted to counteract researchers that have usually taken the position that it is scarcely possible to participate in and directly observe private life (Morris and Lyon, 1996).

As Appendix Three demonstrates, the oral history interviews were conducted using a thematic approach within a broadly chronological framework and lasted between two and five hours. Oral histories were chosen for their emphasis on

⁶ These stakeholders are divided into three main age cohorts- defined as 'young people' (13-29 years), 'middle adults' (30-49 years) and 'senior/elderly adults' (50 years plus given that the average life expectancy in Cambodia is 56.5 years according to UNDP, 2006).

⁷ See Tolia-Kelly (2004) for research that incorporates a tour of the home

free-ranging, open-ended interviews around a series of issues, drawing on direct personal memory of the past and experience of the present. As Blunt (2003a: 81) reflects, oral histories 'address memories and experiences in a personal way, and involve listening to individual stories that relate to much wider historical themes and events' than other (usually semi-structured) interviews.⁸

The use of oral history interviews dovetails well with the thematic thrusts of my research. In regard to migration, their value is linked to the significance now accorded to memories and personal accounts as unique ways of gaining insight into migrant experiences (Williams 2005: 401). Increasing use of oral testimony methods also reflects their potential for raising the profile of women's experiences of conflict and in doing so, facilitate interest in individual experiences of war. As El-Bushra *et al* (2002: 8) acknowledges, oral history collection can be an effective method for researching the sensitive issues likely to arise in contexts of conflict and interpersonal violence. Furthermore, 'life stories in person are often collected and analysed to explore personal memories and experiences of people whose lives might remain marginalized or invisible and subjects- such as the home and domestic life- that might be absent from other sources' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 35). Lastly, in relation to my focus on men and masculinity, Beynon (2002: 152) suggests that life stories are also capable of revealing 'the cultural origins of male subjectivities and how what is considered "manly" is, in fact, learned, expressed and sustained in time and place'.

⁸ See Lim Pui Huen *et al.* (1998) for the use of oral histories in Southeast Asia.

2.3 'Participatory' Exercises

The oral history interviews and discussion groups included the use of a 'participatory' exercise in each reflecting their growing popularity in geography as critical qualitative methodologies (Pain and Francis, 2003: 46). The combination of 'more standard, non-participatory social-science techniques with participatory methods' is recommended to understand gender analysis within the context of broader community structures and relationships (Kindon, 1998: 163). This mixed method approach also reflects McIlwaine and Moser's (2003) concern that participatory tools (such as victimisation surveys and homicide quantitative studies) provide quite shallow insights into the micro-level experiences of violence among the poor and should not be used as a replacement for oral histories and in-depth interviews that are able to uncover multiple layering of different types of violence in given contexts.

My research distinguishes between participatory methodologies and epistemologies that aim to effect change for and with research participants, and participatory tools, as a set of research techniques, which are useful to stimulate interaction and dialogue. This distinction is important since 'the past decade witnessed a growing backlash against the ways in which participation managed to "tyrannise" development debates without sufficient evidence that participatory approaches were living up to the promise of empowerment and transformative development for marginal peoples' (Hickey and Mohan, 2004:3). As Cornwall (2000: 8) explains,

'Distinguishing who participates, how, at what stage and in what way becomes crucial for determining the shape "participation" takes in practice'

While I do not claim that my research has transformed existing patterns of power relations, the use of tools is helpful in relieving our lack of knowledge regarding current conditions in Cambodia (Jenks Clarke, 2001) and reconstructing a record of history after the Khmer Rouge's explicit attempts to eradicate all previous social knowledge. While in the context of doctoral research it is inappropriate to

have participants summarise and interpret the data as some proponents argue (Chambers, 1997), the emphasis placed on the particularity of local experience, concepts and categories, and privileging of personal experience over structural analyses is valuable given the contested and context-specific nature of gender relations and the home.⁹

In the oral history interviews I asked a number of participants to take part in a photography exercise (see Appendix 3), while in the discussion groups, household activity charts were completed (see Appendix 2). For the photography exercise respondents were given a camera to record and comment on various aspects of their lives at home (Figure 2.1).¹⁰ Once the photos were developed the following occurred (in accordance with Kebby, 2000). The photo was 'interviewed' as the questions in the schedule suggest-soliciting detailed explanations of its elements, interrogating its coherence, comparing it to other photos or other sources of data and pursuing the conflicts and consensus that arose during its creation (*ibid.*).

This process stimulated a more extensive dialogue on the practices in, and perceptions of, the 'home' (and gender) and framed questions based on local everyday constructs rather than on predefined categories. The use of 'visual graphics' according to Guijt and Cornwall (1995: 3) for example 'can motivate those involved...to behave differently and to undertake different kinds of action' by encouraging critical reflection. The process also helped establish a shared visual and verbal vocabulary for further discussion¹¹ and provided a means of offering something back to the participant by giving them the photos to keep.¹²

⁹ For papers on gender and participation see Akerkar (2001) and Bell and Brambilla (2001).

¹⁰ I asked for participants' consent to reproduce their photos in this thesis, along with additional photographs I personally took.

¹¹ This was particularly important- photography unlike other tools do not require literacy levels which exceed Cambodia's low adult rate in 2004 (% ages 15 and older) of 73.6 (UNDP, 2006: 285). Women also have lower adult literacy rates of 64.1% in comparison to men's 84.7% (*ibid.* 365).

¹² In recognition of the fact that respondents were often forfeiting time to participate in my study, a modest 'gift' of a soap bar was also given for their attendance. At my research assistant's recommendation I gave a soap bar because it was appropriate for both men and women, was not perishable and was something that people liked to

Moreover, unlike Rocheleau et al's (1998) use of drawing exercises in their research on gendered landscapes in the Dominican Republic, I found that photographs were a more appropriate medium, as it is a popular Cambodian pastime and avoids the need for literacy and drawing skills.

The focus on visual and material culture is increasingly being addressed as the recent move towards 'rematerialising' social and cultural geography reflects (Jackson, P, 2000: 13). In the context of my research, it has two main purposes. First, it is sometimes overlooked that people are not merely attached to other people but also to familiar objects, structures and environments that nurture the self, support the continuity of life, and act as props to memory, nostalgia and identity (Porteous and Smith, 2001: 6). Tolia-Kelly (2004) for example, shows the importance of researching the materiality of visual culture in her work on the presence of landscapes within the British Asian home, and anthropologist Miller (2001) has repeatedly done so in his work, including *Home Possessions*. Also, since the home arguably 'contains the most special objects: those that were selected by the person...that create permanence in the intimate life of a person, and therefore that are most involved in making up his or her identity' (Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg, 1981: 17) photographs are useful both as a recording device and also as a way of exploring individual subjectivities.¹³ For example, 'while images should not necessarily replace words as the dominant mode of research or representation, they should be regarded as an equally meaningful element of ethnographic work' (Pink, 2001: 4-5).¹⁴

It should be noted that the use of photography in this thesis is distinct from other approaches to visual materials because it does not work with 'found' images that already exist distinct from a research project (Rose, 2007). For example, while

receive. At the end of the research process in Krobey Riel commune I also distributed noodles to the families as thanks.

¹³ See Chambers (2003) and Rose (2003) on researching family photographs and Hoskins (1998) on the significance of biographical objects.

¹⁴ During the 1990s, new innovations in visual technology along with critical postmodern theoretical approaches to subjectivity, experience, knowledge, representations and a reflexive emphasis on interdisciplinary have invited exciting new possibilities for the use of photography (Pink, 2001).

Tolia-Kelly (2004) offers women the opportunity to talk in the material context of home about their photographs of landscapes and places, my research 'makes' photographs as part of the research process. This dovetails more closely to work conducted on child workers who were given disposable cameras and asked to photograph their workplaces (Bolton *et al*, 2001). This method is less engaged with theories of visuality or of visual objects, but rather uses images to address questions and issues generated in a wide range of theoretical contexts (Rose, 2007) and through participants' analysis of their images, gives them a means to reflect on aspects of their lives that they might have given little thought to (Latham, 2003). This analytical approach therefore echoes Harper's (1986) notion of 'photo elicitation' whereby participants are asked to reflect, explain, and comment on pictures as part of the research process. In the thesis, like in other photo-elicitation studies, the photographs encourage interview talk that would not be possible otherwise, with the talk then interpreted in the empirical chapters and the images used in a supporting role to supplement the written text (see Rose, 2007).

The household activity charts in the discussion groups meanwhile were used as stimulus for debate by exposing the responsibilities allocated to men and women in the home and their relative importance. These were useful since what people say about the existing division of labour and decision-making in Cambodia (as elsewhere) is not necessarily what they do in practice (Vlaar and Ahlers, 1999). The groups were therefore productive in bringing to the fore divergences and convergences in perspectives on specific issues and were conducted in a variety of different configurations.

2.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

A third main arm of the research consisted of semi-structured interviews (40) in March-April 2005, which drew on important themes identified by respondents in the earlier stages of the research process (see Appendix 4 for interview structure). Although oral histories provided a voluminous and rich source of material dealing with personal and collective memories and helped define the scope of issues, I felt I needed to collect 'follow-up' data on a number of specific

questions. As Järviluoma *et al* (2003: 46) suggest, 'life stories in research practices are a challenging problem because of the amplitude and all-encompassing nature of the life narratives' and as a result may not be useful for collecting verifiable data relating to pre-determined questions.¹⁵ For this reason, I used semi-structured interviews and discussion groups to get a better sense of where individuals fitted within the community and how widely their experiences were shared.

In the semi-structured interviews and other methods, I found a propensity for metaphorical and allegorical language in the form of proverbs. This reflects the way that in every culture, particular narrative forms and models are used when stories about life are told (Järviluoma *et al*, 2003). The usage of Khmer proverbs has been noted by other researchers writing on Cambodia who explain that they are commonly stated from memory and are used to make general points (see Ledgerwood, 1990 and 1994 for further details). Proverbs have a certain ambiguity similar to that of the gender imagery (see Chapter 4), which allows for various interpretations and hence adaptations to present day life and problems (Ledgerwood *et al*, 1994: 24).

Since single proverbs have a wide range of meanings (Evans-Pritchard, 1964: 2), in order to understand the shifting meanings associated with them I asked interviewees to qualify their interpretation of the Khmer proverb they referred to in order to deal with the problem of linking text-based practices with local interpretations. As Siran (1989:225) reflects in his data collection among the Vute (Cameroon), 'as soon as a proverb is told, a Vute understands something that a foreigner will miss if not told more' with 'cultural' as well as 'linguistic competency' necessary. Given that in Cambodia the content of proverbs conveys through vivid imagery prescribed mores and custom, (which arguably contributes to the process of gender socialisation), understanding this 'latent communication' was imperative.

¹⁵ See ACORD (2000) for the limitations and opportunities that oral testimony has for gender-sensitive planning in conflict-affected situations

2.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Since drawing any conclusions from the interview transcripts which 'are clearly "beyond" the micro situations constituting the contexts in question' (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000: 205) in the oral histories and semi-structured interviews, a profile was used to gather general background socio-economic information about participants and their households (see Appendix 5).¹⁶ This profile along with the field notes I recorded and the other methods I have outlined was a means by which to triangulate methods by testing multiple measures of a single concept (like 'home') or research question.

In terms of the sampling, I found respondents through visits on different days and times to randomly selected individual households in the two communes and through contacts with schools, local businesses and construction sites. All interviews and discussion groups were recorded, translated and transcribed having been gathered for the most part in Khmer.¹⁷ Although I had a basic proficiency in Khmer, my research assistants transcribed the interviews and discussion groups into English in their entirety, which I then checked over with them to clarify their translation. I gave them appropriate guidance on the extent of literal translation required.

The transcripts produced from each interview and discussion group were hand-coded as discourse analysis enables the interpretation of stories and memories in a more nuanced and sensitive way than computer coding packages allow (Blunt, 2003a: 84). Like Blunt's (*ibid.*) research on home and identity with Anglo-Indian women, I then read and re-read the transcripts to identify themes and sub-themes to be drawn out with quotes to illustrate key points. In my analysis, following Elliot (2005: 38), I not only examined the content of the narratives (i.e. what happened and why) but also the structure of the plot, its coherence or

¹⁶ A basic version was used in the discussion groups.

¹⁷ In the interviews themselves, we would let the participant speak and when a natural pause would arise the research assistant would translate what was said. I would then pick up on any points to explore further.

complexity, style or genre of the narrative, and the choice of metaphors and other images that were invoked. I therefore analysed not only the external reality (e.g. facts, events) in participants' answers but also their internal experiences of gender relations and the 'home' (e.g. feelings, meanings) (Silverman, 2000: 122).

In line with this, I analysed the narrative in its entirety having a master book containing every transcript in its pure and richest unedited form (see Plumber, 1983) and also on a categorical basis where I extracted short sections of text to classify and place into the theoretical themes and concepts which evolved over the course of the research. This allowed me to compare what different people said, which themes were discussed and how concepts were understood. In the thesis I have been consistent when referencing individual biographies and have refrained from creating composite characters imagined as a synthesis of different individual experiences. These individual extracts were chosen from the various interviews and discussion groups both to demonstrate key trends I identified during my analysis as well as to show the divergence of perspectives concerning a number of themes across the research methods. In relation to the oral histories particularly, I was aware that printing the interviews in their entirety was likely to result in 'lengthy and almost unreadable texts (in which the mechanical fidelity of transcriptions thinly veils the qualitative betrayal of turning beautiful speech into unreadable writing)' (Portelli, 1991: 76). For this reason, I have employed the different forms of empirical material slightly differently in each chapter. Some chapters, including those based on migratory experiences (Chapter 6) and marital conflict and domestic violence (Chapter 8), are based more fully on longer sections of oral histories given the depth of detail required to sensitively document traumatic life events. As I have indicated, this is balanced by a concern in these and other empirical chapters to show how widely accepted or contested people's perspectives are in Cambodia's post-conflict environment. Throughout the empirical chapters, I draw on extracts from the semi-structured interviews and discussion groups to provide more direct commentary on specific issues.

2.6 Ethics

In terms of ethics, I was aware that 'ethical decision-making includes being consciously aware of one's values, principles and allegiances to ethical codes, intuition and feelings, within a context that is characterised by professional and power relationships' (de Laine, 2000: 3). I was therefore conscious of the possible consequences of my research, especially in the context of Cambodia's recent history. First, interviewees' names were changed for reasons of confidentiality and I fully briefed the respondents about the purpose of my research, purpose of recording, voluntary nature of their participation, and the potential hazards of participating (e.g. emotional upset).

Second, I was aware that in relation to domestic violence the taboos surrounding violence against women mean that investigating it requires awareness on the part of the researcher of the difficulties and dangers for the respondent (Pickup, 2001: 238), although in general I found women discussed domestic violence openly as a 'normal' part of their everyday lives (see Chapter 8). I explained to the respondents that if at any point they felt distressed and wanted to change the subject (or stop the interview) then this was fine. Although in a number of cases women started to cry, generally this subsided and they chose to continue discussing the issue. My decision concerning this is informed by the fact that 'sensitive research addresses some of society's most pressing social issues and policy questions' (Sieber and Stanley, 1988) and thus should not necessarily be avoided.¹⁸ When domestic violence did come to light I informed the participant of NGOs which could potentially help them in the local area.

Third, I was aware of my positionality and that of my three research assistants. In terms of my identity in Cambodia as a young, foreign woman, I identified a number of advantages. I believe my 'otherness' was a source of intrigue and status for participants, which encouraged more people to take part. I also feel that men and especially women may have felt greater liberty to express their

¹⁸ See also Lee (1993) and Renzetti and Lee (1993) on researching sensitive topics.

opinions given their association between my western background and the 'modern', rather than confinement to traditional custom or rhetoric. In terms of limitations, clearly my basic Khmer (however impressive in relative terms to both communities) means that my understanding was part mediated through my research assistants. Furthermore, just as Willott (1998: 178) felt increasingly disempowered as the majority of men in her prisoner group-work sessions discussed their low opinion of women and gay men, I was concerned that keeping silent could be interpreted as agreement. Nevertheless, I kept my disheartened feelings to myself in response to some men's derogatory responses about women so as not to discourage men from expressing their beliefs.

In terms of research assistants, I worked predominantly with two twenty-five year old males who had graduated from Maharishivedic University (MVU) in Agronomy in March 2004.¹⁹ I met Sothea first through a VSO volunteer who was proof-reading his undergraduate dissertation. Sothea also had research assistant experience with an Australian academic looking at agro forestry and critically with a Japanese academic on gender and development.²⁰ In the period of substantive research Sothea was available and in the third stage of semi-structured interviews, Piseth was able to take over, both of whom I paid well and wrote references for, which enabled them to secure research positions in two Cambodian NGOs. I also managed to find a female research assistant, Sophaan, who was a tour guide, for the main period of my research, to see if female (and male) participants were perhaps more open or comfortable speaking to us and if I gained any different findings or reactions. This choice reflects that what is involved here 'is not simply a technicist response of attempting to limit the way in which the gender of the researcher [and research assistant] impacts on the research process but reflexively to explore how the researcher's gender identity is intimately connected to ways of knowing' (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003: 105).

¹⁹ Working with research assistants also meant that potential safety issues were minimised. This reflects the rise of personal safety considerations as composite parts of research design (Treweek and Linkogle, 2000).

²⁰ I received references from both academics before I began working with Sothea. In the case of the Japanese researcher I also contacted her to find out about Sothea's pre-existing knowledge and understanding of gender issues.

As it transpired, I do not feel that there were significant differences using female or male research assistants. In terms of how I felt as a researcher however, I did feel more comfortable with my male research assistants as I sensed we would be taken more seriously and the complex power dynamics arising from a woman interviewing men would be defused with a male translator.²¹ This may also be partly attributable to the fact that Sothea and Piseth had a great deal of maturity and some research training behind them. Hand in hand with this, Sothea had previously conducted research on rattan weaving in Krobei Riel and had a good relationship with both the commune and village chief, which facilitated trust with my research respondents.

I did not meet with any negative criticism throughout my research apart from on two occasions. First, in Krobei Riel the village chief's wife once asked me why I had chosen to stand in the sun and darken my skin 'like a Khmer girl'. The negative connotations associated with this I discuss in relation to work in Chapter Six. Second, when my boyfriend came to visit on one day, the village chief's wife asked why we were not married and also said to him that he should do the research and I should go back home! While tinged with joviality, her comment clearly alluded to traditional male and female roles in public and private and contributed to the legitimacy I felt as a researcher using male research assistants who had a clear appreciation of cross-cultural difference. The differences in belief I held about 'women's place' in comparison to some participants admittedly contributed to my personal need not to *completely* immerse myself in the lives of participants and rather than live in either of the communes, live close by in a Siem Reap guesthouse. This 'closeness-distance dilemma' as de Laine (2000: 108) coins, was a complex one to negotiate given that one tenet of participatory research is to focus on closer partnerships between the researcher and those who are researched (which my participatory tools aimed at).

²¹ See Willott (1998) in the context of her research with male prison inmates and Chopra (2004) in her work with men in the rural Punjab of Northern India.

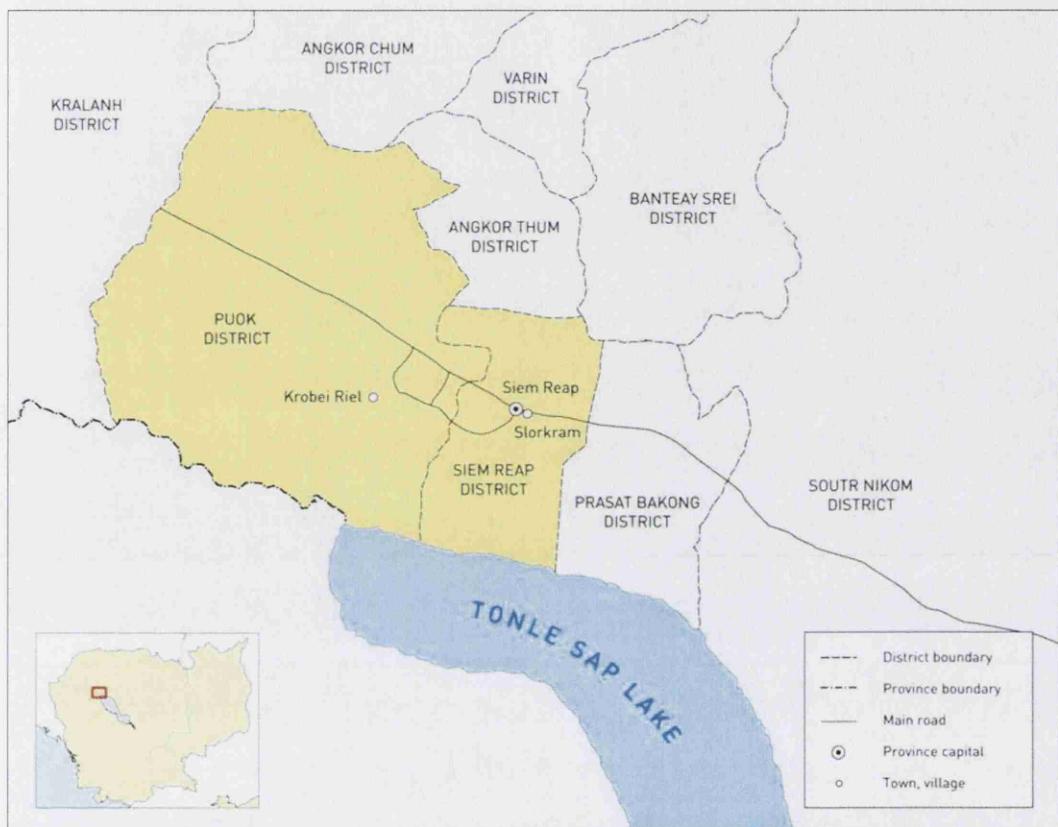
2.7 Location and Characteristics of Case Study Communities

As case study communities, Kok Dong village in Krobei Riel commune (Puok district) was selected as my rural location and the villages of Beoung Don Pha, Slorkram and Treing located in Slorkram commune²² (Siem Reap district) as my urban fieldsite. In the rest of the thesis I refer to Krobei Riel and Slorkram respectively. Both communities are located in Siem Reap Province (Figure 2.2).²³

²² The pilot trip showed that unlike rural Krobei Riel, it was necessary to widen my research area from only Slorkram village to other villages in Slorkram commune as it was difficult to find participants in, particularly during the day. This reflects the differences in household organisation and livelihoods with the home in rural areas remaining an important site for basket-weaving and agricultural production in comparison to urban Slorkram where people tend to leave their homes to work in the town.

²³ Local administration is represented at two levels: the Province and the District (*Srok*). Each district consists of a group of communes, which can be either rural (*Khum*) or urban (*Sangkat*). Communes are not really administrative entities, but rather correspond to zones of activity and services of several villages (*Phum*) under the authority of the district). In all provinces, districts containing provincial headquarter towns are treated as urban areas in the 1998 census. Transliteration of Cambodian Province names are based on NIS (2001).

Figure 2.2: Provincial Map of Siem Reap Province



(Source: Adapted from map provided by local NGO)

In Siem Reap Province, the impact of tourism has yet to meet its full potential and it is notable that in 2004 it was the third poorest province in the country (World Bank, 2006). An important reason for comparing communities is that they have different economic structures and lifestyles, which will yield interesting comparative data on gendered experiences of transition.²⁴ Moreover, this

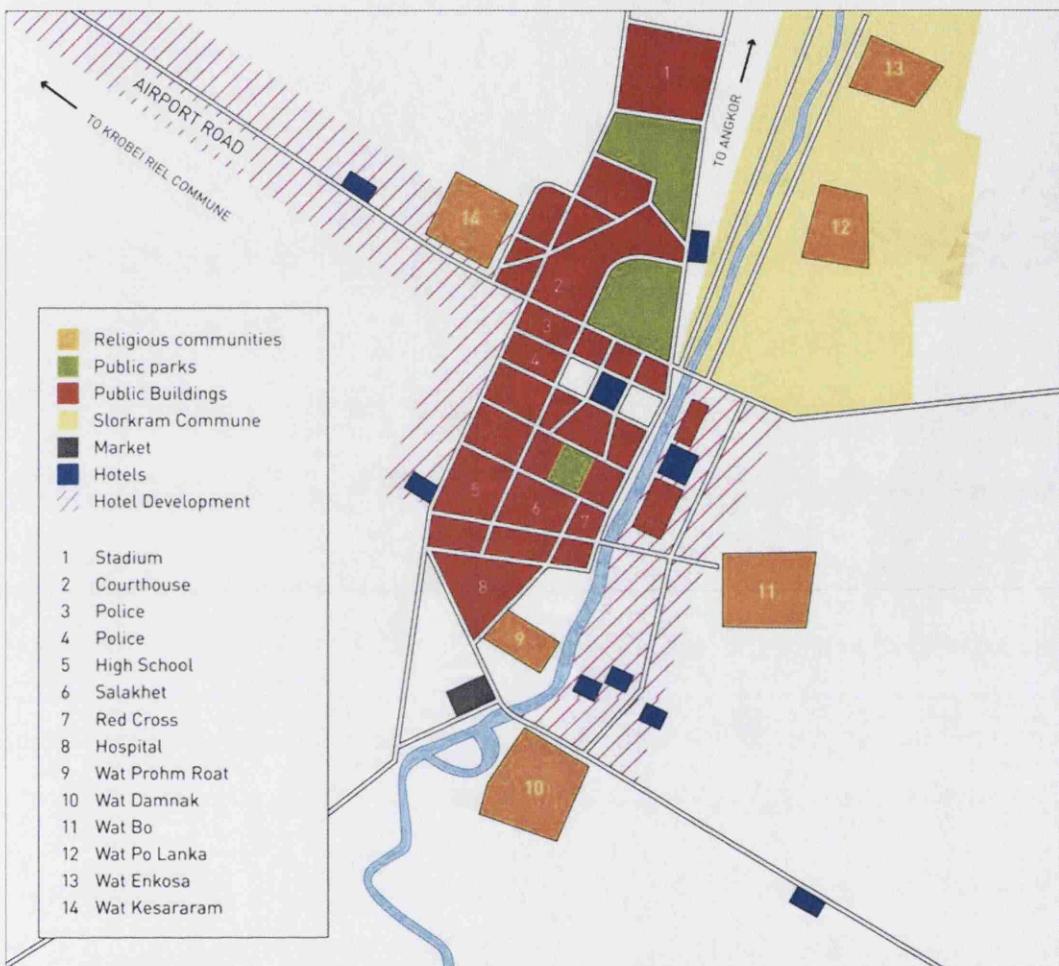
²⁴ The choice of fieldwork sites was grounded in pragmatic as well as academic considerations. Living in Siem Reap town allowed me easy access to facilities to support my research including photocopying, printing and photo developing, as well as to Sothea who migrated from Srei Rieng for the duration of the research. Logistically it also worked out well, for on days in which I could not reach Krobei Riel in the rainy season, I could still do research in Slorkram.

approach recognises 'how interventions to tackle gendered disadvantage should arguably desist from the "one size fits all" formula often promulgated by international financial and development institutions (Chant, 2007: 24) and thus investigate the diversity of communities even within close proximity of each other.

2.7.1 Slorkram Commune, Siem Reap

Originally a collection of villages, each centred on a Buddhist monastery, Siem Reap was gradually transformed into a single administrative and social unit during the French colonial administration (APSARA: 1998:100). Largely defined by the proximity of Angkor both past and present, urban infrastructure was put in place by the French, aided by scientific research teams. The colonial town grew up for the most part on the right bank of the Siem Reap River, approximately 6km south of the Angkor Wat. Yet growth was halted by the Khmer Rouge, who as with all other towns and cities in Cambodia, emptied Siem Reap and Angkor Park of their inhabitants and deported them to rural regions. Vietnamese troops took over Siem Reap in 1979 forcing out the Khmer Rouge and encouraging the arrival of local people into previously unpopulated regions, primarily to the east of the Siem Reap river. Population distribution today is largely a secondary effect of this policy with returning refugees without local family left to fend for themselves often grouped into ghetto-like quarters on non-arable land (APSARA, 1998: 108).

Figure 2.3: Map of Siem Reap Town



(Source: Adapted from APSARA, 1998)

Siem Reap is the fourth largest individual town in Cambodia with a population of 83,715 (Haapala, 2003: 21)²⁵ and Slorkram with a total population according to the commune chief (2004) of around 4,000 inhabitants.²⁶ Siem Reap is now the focus for the region's economy and is a major node of inter-regional transport and exchange (APSARA, 1998: 139). While the town's economic buoyancy was

²⁵ According to the 1998 census Siem Reap is defined as urban because it is a provincial capital. The largest city in Cambodia is Phnom Penh with a population of 1,077,853 followed by Svay Pao in Battambang Province with 124,290 inhabitants and 85,382 in Mongkoi Borei in Banteay Meanchey (Haapala, 2003: 21).

²⁶ This includes around 309 families in Slorkram village, 466 in Beoung Don Pha, and 504 in Treing (Commune chief figures, 2004).

short-lived during the presence of the United Nations Transitional Authority of Cambodia (UNTAC) in which an artificial economic boom throughout the country was created, (APSARA, 1998: 114), today the immediate proximity of the Angkor archaeological site makes it the most important site for tourism in the country (see Chapter 3 for further details). As a result, the town is allegedly 'beginning to look like Las Vegas' (Strang, 2005: 5). Whatever the case, however, it is a major pole of development in Cambodia, 'sheltering an ancient memory while incessantly adapting to an ever-changing social and physical world, it is a fact that due to an unprecedented combination of factors, at the present time many traditions are more fragile and more threatened than ever before' (APSARA, 1998: 123).

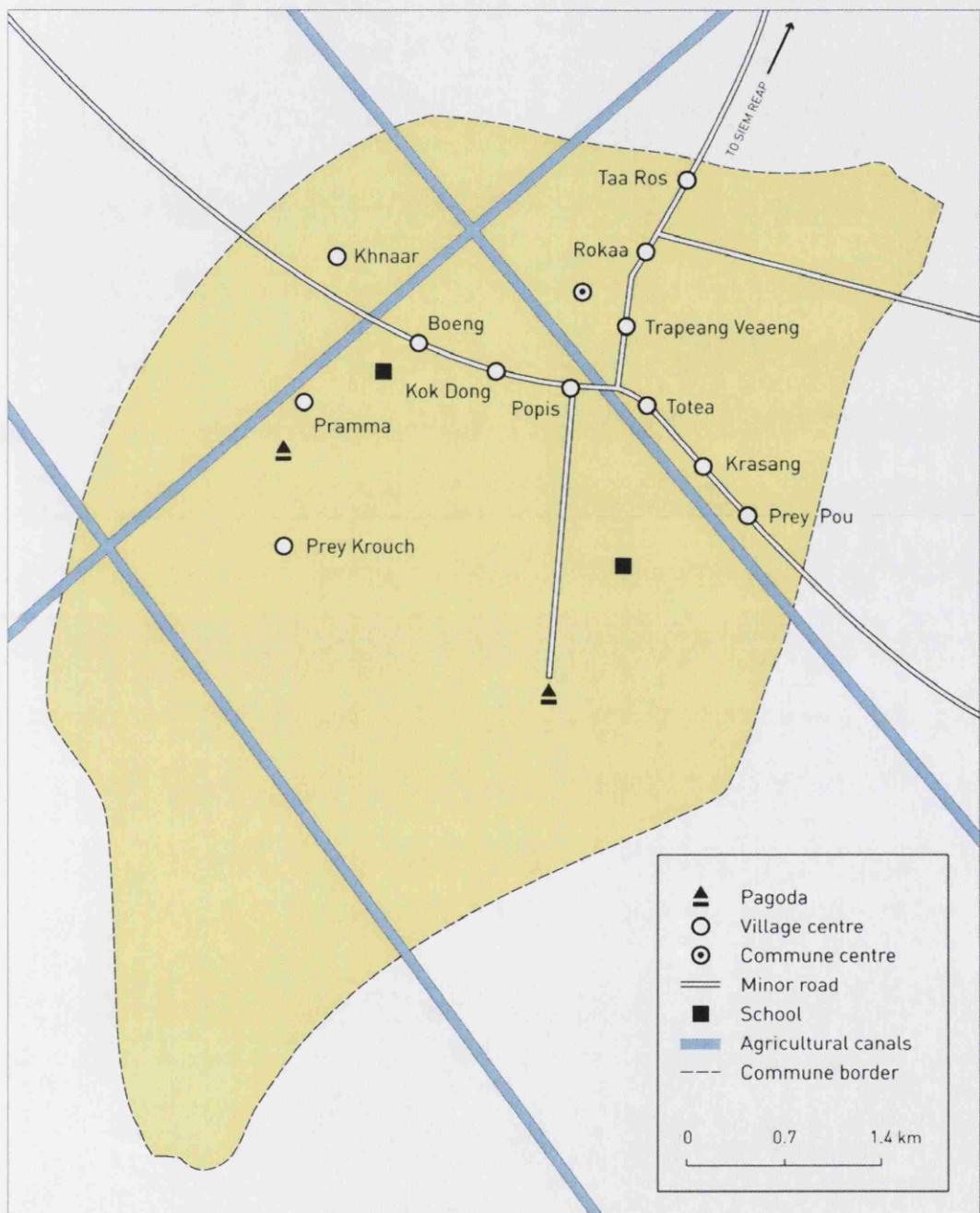
As such, Slorkram commune in Siem Reap provides an important field site for studying gender relations in a changing socio-economic environment. While previously an isolated beacon of tourism in Cambodia, Siem Reap has the potential to highlight the likely impacts of further development in the country. First, it is an important site for understanding the wider impact of tourism-related change given the industry's rapid extension to other parts of the country such as Sihanoukville, Kampot and Kep on the Southern coast and Rattanakiri and Mondolkiri provinces in the Northeast (see Figure 1.2 for national map). Secondly, in light of the increasing prevalence of rural-urban migration (see Chapter 3 for details) Slorkram is an indicative site for exploring migrant experiences and identities which increasing shape the lives of Cambodians.

2.7.2 Krobriel Riel Commune, Puok District

While the history of Siem Reap town has been documented (albeit partially) in government reports, the history of its surrounding rural areas is absent and thus pieced together from fragments of knowledge from the inhabitants themselves. Nobody, including village officials, knew when Kok Dong was established only that in 1950 the villagers were ordered to live along the road away from the inaccessible old village. During the Pol Pot regime most villagers in Kok Dong

village moved to other areas until 1979 when they returned. The village was under the jurisdiction of Siem Reap district until 1982/3 when it was placed under the reformed boundaries of Puok (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4: Map of Krobei Riel Commune



(Source: Adapted from map provided by Krobei Riel Commune chief)

Today, according to the village chief (whose house is literally positioned at the centre of village life) there are 121 registered families in Kok Dong.²⁷ In some houses there are 2-3 families living together. The main problems in the village were identified as malnutrition, alcohol addiction and domestic violence, lack of food security, money, and flooding which every year destroyed rice production.²⁸ According to the Economic Institute of Cambodia (cited in World Bank, 2006: vi), Puok district has received some benefits from the boom in tourism in the provincial town, but production constraints (poor soils, no money for inputs such as fertiliser, lack of water control infrastructure or good roads) have prevented most local farmers from responding to increased demand for food crops from hotels and restaurants. This is reflected in data which suggests that agricultural productivity of the area north of the Tonle Sap that once supported the Angkor Empire has declined drastically and today the soils in Siem Reap are among the poorest in the country (Dennis, 1990: 213-214).

According to Rigg (1998: 497), this trend more generally across Southeast Asia is leading to an increase in non-agricultural employment and a concomitant restructuring of the 'household' as genders and generations renegotiate their respective roles. This certainly appears the case in Krobei Riel where the decline in farming is seen as responsible for the mounting number of villagers going to work in Siem Reap. Furthermore, the lack of income is increasingly supplemented by the growth in the market for rattan-weave baskets that female villagers produce (introduced by the French Protectorate in the 1950s and 60s).²⁹ These are sold to tourists in neighbouring Siem Reap and to a small number that come to the village directly. The inclusion of a rural case study is therefore warranted, as these changes are relatively new in Cambodia. Moreover, there are few detailed studies despite the fact that Cambodia's population is predominantly (although decreasingly) rural (see Chapter 3). Selecting a rural case study therefore complements the choice of an urban field site, as the connections

²⁷ Population figures for the commune as a whole were unavailable during my time in Cambodia.

²⁸ For concerns of the poor more generally in Cambodia, including the lack of food security, see ADB (2001:23).

²⁹ The rattan is harvested for 1-2 days. One day is then spent peeling the knots off and splitting it into finer lengths for weaving.

between rural and urban in Cambodia and the Global South become more complex through people's livelihoods and strategies, which often include some sort of mobility and diversification of income and occupations (Tacoli, 2006).

CHAPTER THREE

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF POST-CONFLICT CAMBODIA



Figure 3.1: Schoolgirls awaiting the arrival of the Vietnamese Prime Minister (Photograph by K Brickell, Siem Reap, March 2005)

3.0 Introduction

Within this chapter, the political and economic history of Cambodia is examined. As argued in Chapter One, since the 1980s, scholarship on Cambodia has been 'dominated by the attempt to come to terms with the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) period, which still looms in international consciousness of what Cambodia represents as a nation' (Marston, 2005: 501). To counteract this, Cambodia is framed in the following analysis as a country having embarked on a three-fold transition, from civil war to peace, from one party to multi-party politics and from an isolated and subsistence-oriented economy to one based on the market and open to international trade (World Bank, 2006).¹ These changes will all to varying degrees influence gender relations and the home with everyday practices being 'the appropriate site to understand how larger orders of social force come together with micro-contexts of local power' (Kleinman, 2000: 227).

3.1 Pre-Revolutionary Cambodia (Pre-1970)

Once a mighty empire, spanning Siam (now Thailand), Burma (now Myanmar), Laos, and parts of Vietnam in the twelfth century of the Christian era, Cambodia shrank to an insignificant vassal state of both Siam and Vietnam until it was 'rescued' by France in the mid-nineteenth century and finally emerged from colonial rule as a modern, independent nation state in the 1950s (Brown, 2000: 11). French rule viewed Cambodia as a backward, unchanging country, her people docile, immune to modernisation and in need of the mission civilisatrice that France was also undertaking in Vietnam and Laos (*ibid.* 22). As a result the French brought in Vietnamese bureaucrats to staff the civil service causing anti-French feeling to grow among Cambodians, who objected to their presence. One

¹ In Cambodia there exist particular difficulties in applying a 'phases of conflict' framework (Marcus, 1995: 4). Broadly, pre-conflict refers to pre-1963 although some areas did not experience conflict until after this date; conflict from 1963 to the present day, including the Khmer Rouge period, though varying in intensity across the country; the peace process years to those of the Supreme National Council and UNTAC, including eighteen months in 1992-3; and post-conflict to the post-UNTAC period, whilst recognising there are still areas in which conflict continues and that much of the country was *de facto* in a post conflict period after the ousting of the Khmer Rouge administration in 1979 (*ibid.* 4).

of France's enduring legacies to Cambodia was also the 1884 Land Act, which legitimised private ownership of land for the first time and created a deterioration in the conditions for smaller farmers (Oveson *et al*, 1996: 47). Although taxes were raised, these were not directed towards health care or education as the introduction of the French educational system widened the chasm between the educated and peasantry class (Ponchaud, 1989: 155-56).

By the Second World War, French control in Indo-China was weak and pro-independence movements in the region were growing in strength resulting in Cambodian independence being agreed in 1953. Independence did not quell Cambodians' fears of territorial and political domination, and political leaders were quick to exploit such fears creating deep-seated prejudices against 'outsiders' such as the Vietnamese (Brown, 2000:11).² Before 1970, the Cambodian underground communist movement led by Pol Pot was fragile and did not pose any threat to the government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk. Sihanouk had dominated Cambodian politics since the French crowned him King in 1941, manoeuvring for independence from France and in 1955 abdicating the crown to become chief of state (Ledgerwood, 2003). Whilst after independence there was no return to the glorious past of Angkor, Cambodians rejoiced in the presence of Sihanouk whose political manoeuvrings helped to bring foreign rule to an end (*ibid.*). Sihanouk's good relations with North Vietnam compounded by his suppression of internal political dissent held the Cambodian Communist forces in check. Moreover, the communist movement could not win over the support of the masses because of the Prince's popularity.

By the late 1960s however, Cambodia faced serious economic difficulties provoked by a combination of factors, including Sihanouk's rejection of American aid, corruption, and the fact that by 1966 more than a quarter of Cambodia's rice crop was being sold illegally across the border into war-torn Vietnam (Ledgerwood, 2003). This cut deeply into government revenues that were dependent on exports taxes on rice (Chandler, 1991: 122). The national education program which Sihanouk established after independence in 1954 meant that

² Today at least publicly, as Figure 3.1 shows, relations between Cambodia and Vietnam have improved in comparison to previous decades.

there was a growing educated populace with unrealistic expectations of social mobility. Antagonism towards the Sihanouk regime increased in the 1960s among the urban elite, students and intellectuals, and the prince was overthrown in 1970 by General Lon Nol and senior military officials in a coup d'état. While the United States denies orchestrating the coup, General Lon Nol's administration was immediately awash with US funding. The knowledge that US support would be forthcoming was undoubtedly an important motivating factor for the men who directed the coup (Ledgerwood, 2003).

In 1970, the US and South Vietnamese armed forces launched heavy military air and ground campaigns against North Vietnamese soldiers inside Cambodia. Their goal was to capture the headquarters of the Vietnamese communist movement, which was based inside Cambodian territory, but which was never found by the invading forces. The military offensive pushed the North Vietnamese soldiers deeper into Cambodian territory. By the end of 1973, the total bombs dropped on Cambodia reached 539,129 tons- three times more explosives than were dropped on Japan during World War Two (Ablin and Hood, 1988: xxvi). Sihanouk, while in exile and with the encouragement and support of China and North Vietnam, formed a united front with the Cambodian communists to fight against the United States-backed government in Phnom Penh. These developments created great opportunities (with growing support from the Cambodian people, arms from China and North Vietnam, anger over US bombardment, and appeals from Sihanouk to join their cause) for the Paris-educated Khmer Rouge. Led by enigmatic Pol Pot their armed forces were built up from around 800 soldiers in 1970 to a well-organised and well-disciplined force of 40,000 soldiers in 1973 (Ablin and Hood, 1988: xxvi). By this time the Khmer Rouge controlled most of the Cambodian countryside and over the next two years they advanced and finally took control of Phnom Penh on April 17th 1975.

3.2 Closing the Window to the World (1970-1989)

According to one of the leading historians on Cambodia, 'the weight of the past is such that "tragedy" seems to be one of the more descriptive words, and most enduring explanations, for the ongoing process of Cambodian history' (Chandler, 1996: 325). Exemplifying this 'tragedy' are two wars from 1970 to 1975, and from 1978 to 1991. The Khmer Rouge renamed the country Democratic Kampuchea (DK) in January 1976. The Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) ruled the country but its identity and leaders were hidden from the public. This secrecy was essential, in the view of the CPK's leaders, because it had helped them in the past and because enemies were allegedly attempting to sabotage the revolution (Ledgerwood, 2003). The 'upper organisation' or *Angkar Loeu* was the name of the central committee of the party, the governing body of the Democratic Kampuchea regime (ibid.). Its policies were aimed at radically transforming Cambodia into a new society breaking completely with its past. The country self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world by discontinuing international phone-calls, telegrammes, cables, and mail (Gottesman, 2002: 25). Pre-revolutionary institutions were uprooted and old traditions, thoughts, and ways of life were forbidden. Immediately after the fall of Phnom Penh, DK leaders began evacuating approximately three million people from towns and cities throughout the country echoing the idea that while other revolutionaries had 'distrusted cities...only the Cambodians have emptied them altogether' (Stretton, 1978: 118).

Although Khmer Rouge cadres claimed that the evacuations were to prevent epidemics, starvation and to protect civilians from American bombing, this decision was, in fact, 'a calculated, political decision, part of a wider agenda with economic and ideological rationale' (Chandler, 1991: 247). In revolutionary eyes Phnom Penh had become 'an extreme case of an exploitative, debauched, worse-than-useless parasite of a city' brimming with lazy, unproductive and politically misguided refugees (Stretton, 1978: 118). The evacuation's purpose was therefore to ensure CPK's control over the urban population and to turn the culturally corrupt, economically and politically exploitative urban class into a new and productive people. Moving the urban population into the countryside also

enabled the Khmer Rouge to control every segment of the population and reduce people's ability to resist their new leaders (Chan, 2003: 10). The former inhabitants of cities and towns were forced to engage in agricultural labour in the countryside. Those who could not transform, chose not to, or who were considered a threat to the revolution were imprisoned or eliminated. Khmer Rouge cadres, for example, immediately executed former high-ranking government officials, businessmen, and military officers.³ Personal freedom was therefore totally controlled by Angkar, 'the pineapple' so-called because it had eyes everywhere (Brown, 2000: 26) checking these perceived threats. Sihanouk was also placed in Khmer Rouge control under palace arrest, in which he was forbidden to travel, make public statements or to receive visitors (Gottesman, 2003).

Despite the measures to build a classless society, under the Khmer Rouge regime Cambodian people were divided into social categories, thus contradicting the notion of an equal society. This means that 'Cambodia's postconflict reconciliation among divided Cambodian citizens adds an extra dimension of complexity to the transitional problems' (Kato *et al.*, 2000: 125). These divisions included those on gender and age lines in which women were held as equal to men, working the rice fields on the same footing (Ponchaud, 1989). Furthermore, those who had not lived under the Khmer Rouge-controlled territory prior to 17th April 1975 were considered 'new people', while 'base people' who enjoyed more privileges, were those who had lived in the Khmer Rouge controlled territory (Chandler, 1991: 265). Geographical variations also existed; conditions in the North and Northwest of the country, where more than a million new people were resettled in 1975-6, are argued to have been the harshest (Chandler 1991; Vickery 1984). In this way, the Khmer Rouge took 'as one of its pillars that geography was indeed destiny, that where one lived determined one's enemy status' (McIntyre, 1996: 758). These differential experiences may affect the values and meanings ascribed to the domestic sphere, either in the past or the present

³ See Jacobsen (2005) for the history of punishment in the Cambodian past and present. For an analysis of the impending trial against surviving leaders of the regime see also McCargo (2005).

and are reflected in the selection of two contrasting fieldwork sites to provide differential bases to explore these geographical and social variations.

The project to establish a uniform society also greatly affected the ethnic minority groups living in Cambodia who had distinct traditions, ways of life, religions and languages. Among these groups were Vietnamese Muslim Cham, and ethnic Chinese. Soon after the liberation of Phnom Penh, DK leaders planned to remove all Vietnamese residents from Cambodia. By September 1975, more than 150,000 Vietnamese residing in Cambodia were expelled to Vietnam (Kiernan, 1997: 107). However, a number of Vietnamese who were married to Cambodian spouses chose to stay in Cambodia. Virtually all of them were executed by the regime and this practice of killing Vietnamese civilians continued to be the policy of the Khmer Rouge after they were overthrown until 1998 (Ledgerwood, 2003).⁴ Punishing ethnic Chinese on the other hand was centred on class rather than race. Many Chinese were merchants and traders who resided in towns and cities and as a result belonged to the bourgeois class and to the category of 'new people', labelled enemies of the revolution. Some important ethnic Chinese businessmen were executed soon after the Khmer Rouge came to power, while those considered capable of reform were forced to adapt to the new society. The use of Chinese language and ancestral worship, central to the lives of ethnic Chinese, was also prohibited. The Muslim Vietnamese Cham were also under the DK regime forced to abandon their way of life and to assimilate into the new Khmer society. Refusal to adapt, by not eating pork and by not giving up their forms of worship, constituted acts of resistance that were not tolerated.

⁴ The Vietnamese are now by far the largest economic migrant group in Cambodia with over 1.1 million migrants relocated between 1985 and 1998, a substantial proportion of who are ethnically Vietnamese. Cambodian NGOs cite the lack of government policies and corruption at the border control points as factors contributing to the large numbers of irregular Vietnamese in the country (AMCMMN, 2002: 58). A key factor facilitating high levels of migration is the ongoing expansion of the service and construction sectors post Khmer Rouge, which has increased the demand for labour.

Explanation of the Democratic Kampuchea years not only focuses on destruction of people and relationships but on reversal (Ledgerwood, 1990).⁵ This trend in which traditional notions of social hierarchy are reversed can be found in personal narratives written by urban Khmer who survived the DK regime such as Him (2000), Ngor (1987) and Ung (2000). Members of the wealthy, urban elite who had possessed every advantage found themselves treated as the lowest rank of society. Like their Maoist counterparts in China, the Khmer Rouge leaders emphasised manual labour over knowledge. They claimed 'rice fields were books, and hoes were pencils' rendering teachers and those educated as the lowest rank of society. In the view of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia did not need an education system. The Khmer Rouge leaders deliberately destroyed the foundations of a modern education. People with higher education such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, professors, and former college students were killed or forced to work in labour camps. The Khmer Rouge also engaged in the physical destruction of institutional infrastructure for higher education such as books, buildings, and other educational resources. It is estimated that by the end of the Khmer Rouge time, between 75 and 80 percent of Cambodian educators had been killed, died of overwork, or had left the country (Ledgerwood, 2003).

3.2.1 The People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea (1979-1989)

In early 1979 Cambodian attacks on Vietnamese border towns and villages, and reports of the decimation of the Vietnamese community led to a force of 120,000 Vietnamese entering Cambodia, reaching Phnom Penh and ousting the Khmer Rouge (Brown, 2000: 26). Democratic Kampuchea was replaced by the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) who ruled throughout the 1980s. With the collapse of the DK regime, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians traversed the country in search of family members. People report being initially elated as they realised as Daran Kravanh tells, they could 'go home' (Lafreniere, 2000: 154). It is currently unclear to what extent this celebratory sense of going home was connected to the reuniting of kin given the attempts by the Khmer Rouge to destroy all familial

⁵ See Chapter 4 (Section 4.1) for a discussion concerning egalitarianism and gender relations during the Khmer Rouge period.

attachments or to a physical or symbolic return to 'home'. This is in the background of expressions of love for family such as weeping over the death of a spouse or child having been scorned and even punished by the Khmer Rouge (Hinton, 2002: 276). In this way, the experiences of the Cambodian population must be viewed as 'something more than crossing a border and coming back home' (Rodocio, 2001: 125). This is because return is a process involving more complex experiences of re-encountering people with whom relationships were broken due to the conflict and a rebuilding of a new life in socio-economic terms.

This mobility of the population and the social chaos that ensued after the collapse of tight DK control resulted in low rice production in 1979. Consequently, people consumed even draught animals and rice seed. The shortage of draught animals and rice seed, compounded with drought for the 1979-80 planting season, led to severe food shortages. Thousands of people, especially elderly people and children, died of starvation. At the same time, outside powers once again took sides and Cambodia 'reverted to a second, more low-intensity albeit still massively debilitating civil war between the PRK government and the alliance of anti-PRK guerrilla groups operating out of refugee camps on the Thai border' (World Bank, 2006: 5). This conflict continued throughout the 1980s with Cambodia remaining closed to most of the world, except for the presence of some aid agencies (Neupert and Prum, 2005: 223).

This tragedy generated a generous response from the world community, who provided emergency food relief to Cambodia under the supervision of United Nations agencies. People's lives subsequently improved as they took up residence and began to re-engage in agricultural and commercial activities. The PRK introduced a semi-socialist economic system in which factories, land, and industrial crop plantations such as rubber and banking belonged to the state. Peasants were organised into solidarity groups (*krom samaki*), comprising 10-20 families (Ledgerwood, 2003). Members of the group communally cultivated certain plots of land and shared the harvest based upon their contributions. There were three main kinds of *krom samaki* that varied in the extent to which property and labour were collectivised. However, by the mid-1980s in virtually all areas, peasants had reverted to farming private plots with spontaneous

decollectivisation, formalised through liberalisation and land distribution in 1989, 'which improved output and was welcomed by most, although vulnerable groups lost important forms of social security' (World Bank, 2006: 5).

3.3 Re-Opening Windows to the World (1989 onwards)

In 1989 Vietnam withdrew its troops. Thereafter, on 23rd October 1991 the four warring fractions- FUNCINPEC, the Khmer Rouge, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front and the People's Republic of Kampuchea/State of Cambodia agreed to end their armed conflict and signed a peace accord known as the Paris Peace Agreement. The agreements invested Cambodian sovereignty in the Supreme National Council (SNC), which was headed by Norodom Sihanouk and contained representatives from the four factions. The SNC in turn delegated all powers necessary to implement the accords of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), whose mandate was far reaching. To coordinate the repatriation of Cambodia refugees and displaced persons and to organise and conduct free and fair elections, UNTAC deployed some 16,000 military personnel and 5000 civilians, including 3,500 police officers.⁶

The Paris Agreements were not completely fulfilled, however, with the disarmament process failing. The Khmer Rouge pulled out of the electoral process and continued to wage war after the election in May 1993. Although FUNCINPEC won the elections, and Prince Norodom Ranariddh of FUNCINPEC (one of Sihanouk's sons) became First Prime Minister, Hun Sen of the CPP assumed the position of Second Prime Minister. The coalition ran into trouble after 1996 and met an abrupt end when Hun Sen staged a coup against his co-premier in early July 1997. After some forceful international intervention however, the country managed to hold an election on 26 July 1998. This time the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) won, though arguably through political intimidation and massive fraud (Ledgerwood, 2003). This means that 'we are not looking at a transition toward liberal democracy that has been stymied, derailed,

⁶ Several analyses of the UNTAC era have appeared in print, see for example Heder and Ledgerwood 1996 and Utting 1994.

or thrown into reverse, but rather one that has never even left the station' (McCargo, 2005: 107).

3.3.1 Economy

Since 1998, with the death of Pol Pot and the apparent destruction of the Khmer Rouge, there is renewed hope that this disastrous era may finally have ended. Cambodia's economy has experienced drastic changes since the late 1980s bringing tremendous growth as well as challenges. Cambodia is now 'at a cross-road in its development as it moves away from a post-conflict situation towards a more stable development paradigm' (United Nations and Kingdom of Cambodia, 2005: 8).

Departing from a low base, economic growth averaged 7.1 percent per annum between 1993 and 2004 (World Bank, 2006: vii). The most striking growth has been in garment production. In the 1980s and early 1990s the garment industry produced only basic materials for domestic consumption such as skirts, blankets, scarves (*krama*) and some medical materials. Even this production was of low quantity. By 2005 however, garments accounted for 80.4 percent of total exports by value (World Bank, 2006). The garment industry grew due to agreements with the European Union and the US granting Most Favoured Nation Status to Cambodia in 1997 (UNIFEM *et al.*, 2004: 47). In 1999, Cambodia and the US entered into a quota agreement on garment exports and an unprecedented linking of quotas to enforcement of labour standards, which was extended until the end of 2004 (*ibid.*). With industrialisation, in a short span of six years (until 2000), 210 garment factories were set up, providing direct employment to about 180,000 workers, mainly young women, the majority of which are migrants (Acharya, 2003a: 15).⁷ Although perceived as an opportunity to generate cash for a large number of single young girls who migrate from rural areas, the quality of employment is poor with little training in transferable skills and few possibilities for promotion (Gorman, 1999a: 40). Moreover, outside of the agriculture sector,

⁷ Since the end of the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) in 2005 there has been an inevitable closure of less competitive garment manufacturing units, with countries such as Cambodia facing the possibility of disastrous consequences, such as downward spirals in the economy and pushing retrenched workers into dangerous occupations (Deshingkar, 2005).

there is a pronounced segregation of occupations by sex, with women in a narrow range of traditional 'female' occupations, including trade, crafts, sewing and the entertainment industry (UNIFEM *et al*, 2004: 43).

Another broader problem is that poverty is widely believed to have risen since the war with increasing rural and urban social differentiation (Mackay, 1995; Sonnois, 1990). The government has not resolved a number of critical issues related to the agricultural sector heightening this inequality; chief among them being land ownership. For example, while land distributions formally began in 1989 (as previously explained) as of 1996 many farmers did not have deeds to their property (Ledgerwood, 1998). Although the government has emphasised the need for rural development in its overall economic rehabilitation plan, action has yet to be taken in this area. To use Curtis' (1998: 62) words, the government's rural development programme offered only 'a long wish list of things to do, achieve, or accomplish', all geared to 'provide' 'to improve' 'to foster' or 'to upgrade', but no substantial tangible outcome has been achieved. Although agriculture is still the primary source of livelihood for 75 percent of the labour force, agricultural productivity is extremely low (US \$ 480 per ha) and combined with increasing pressures on land, it is increasingly difficult for small farmers to survive (UNIFEM *et al*, 2004: 6). The proliferation of garment factories restricted to urban enclaves (such as Phnom Penh) fails to generate broad based growth. This upholds the urban bias, which Cambodia's pattern of growth has exhibited so far (UNDP, 2004: 14).⁸ Cambodia is heavily dependent on foreign assistance (in 1999, foreign aid financed over 90 percent of public infrastructure development), a financial inflow that will not last indefinitely (Cambodia Development Review, 2000).

Millions of dollars have also been given or loaned to Cambodia since the UN period but have also been siphoned off through corruption (Ledgerwood, 2003). This is a problem for households and enterprises with public corruption perceived by both as a leading problem (World Bank, 2000). Household survey

⁸ Garment factories pay at least US \$ 45 a month; with overtime payments, most such workers are able to net US \$ 60-75 per month (Hach *et al*, 2001). Plus even when income is not much higher than rural areas, urban work may be available more regularly compared to the crop season of rural work (Deshingkar and Grimm, 2005: 16).

results suggest that 'corruption may not only weaken government's ability to deliver services to the poor, but also may disproportionately burden them through the informal payments they must make' (*ibid.* 2). Unless domestic sources of capital, such as increased tax revenues and private savings, materialise, sustainable economic development will not be realised (*ibid.*). Cambodia also has unsustainable debt levels. Cambodia however has not been identified as meeting the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative's income and indebtedness eligibility criteria based on end-2004 data. According to EURODAD (2002) this is problematic since several LDCs, including Cambodia, have large debts according to the conservative criteria set by the World Bank and the IMF, yet are not included in the initiative.

Apart from garment production, Cambodia is also overly reliant on tourism. This has had a significant impact on patterns of migration in the country and on Siem Reap as the gateway to the temples of Angkor. Siem Reap is popular as a migrant destination mostly because of its opportunities in tourism, with several studies emphasising the town as an important destination of migration especially from communes and provinces nearby (Haapala, 2003: 29; FAO, 2000).⁹ For example, in Tek Sean, which is located next to Siem Reap, whilst many of the households there have at least one family member who works in the town (Ballard, 2003), the implications of this for men and women's roles in the household and for gender ideologies and identities more broadly, remains unexplored. The growth in tourism is on the one hand positive for Cambodia because with its limited industrial base, tourism is an important source of hard currency. There are problems emerging apart from those relating to the sex industry however, including the lack of 'value-added' tourism in Cambodia and the trend for tourists to go directly to tourist hot-spots (such as Siem Reap) and in a day or two, fly out. Of recent concern also is the introduction of 'mass murder tourism' (Spillius, 2003: 31) in which the Cambodian government plans to turn former Khmer Rouge areas into tourist sites where tourists can hire former consorts of the Khmer Rouge dictators as guides. The plan could be said to almost commercialise the memory of those who died and is an issue of great delicacy for the survivors of

⁹ Urbanisation is higher in Cambodia with seasonal migration as many migrants move to work in construction sites and factories in the dry season, which is the agricultural off-season (Haapala, 2003:vi).

the regime. Furthermore, tourism and construction are vulnerable to fears of SARS, avian flu, political instability and terrorism (World Bank, 2006: 53).

Overall, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was considerable evidence of rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development activity as the garment and tourism industries serve to illustrate. Development in the agricultural sector has been slow however with uneven development leaving many rural Cambodians, (who make up of 85 percent of the total population) in poor conditions. For example, in the *Cambodia National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* despite the commitment cited by the Royal Government of Cambodia (2002) to reducing poverty and inequality the country remains very poor by any economic indicator with an extremely low life expectancy at birth (56.5) (UNDP, 2006: 285). It has been found that 77.7 percent of the population (between 1990-2003) live below the \$2 a day poverty line (UNDP, 2005: 221). Cambodia, alongside the other countries of Indochina and Myanmar, are all marked out by their relative underdevelopment in comparison with other nations such as Thailand (Rigg, 2003: 12). This is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Development indicators for Cambodia and its neighbouring Countries

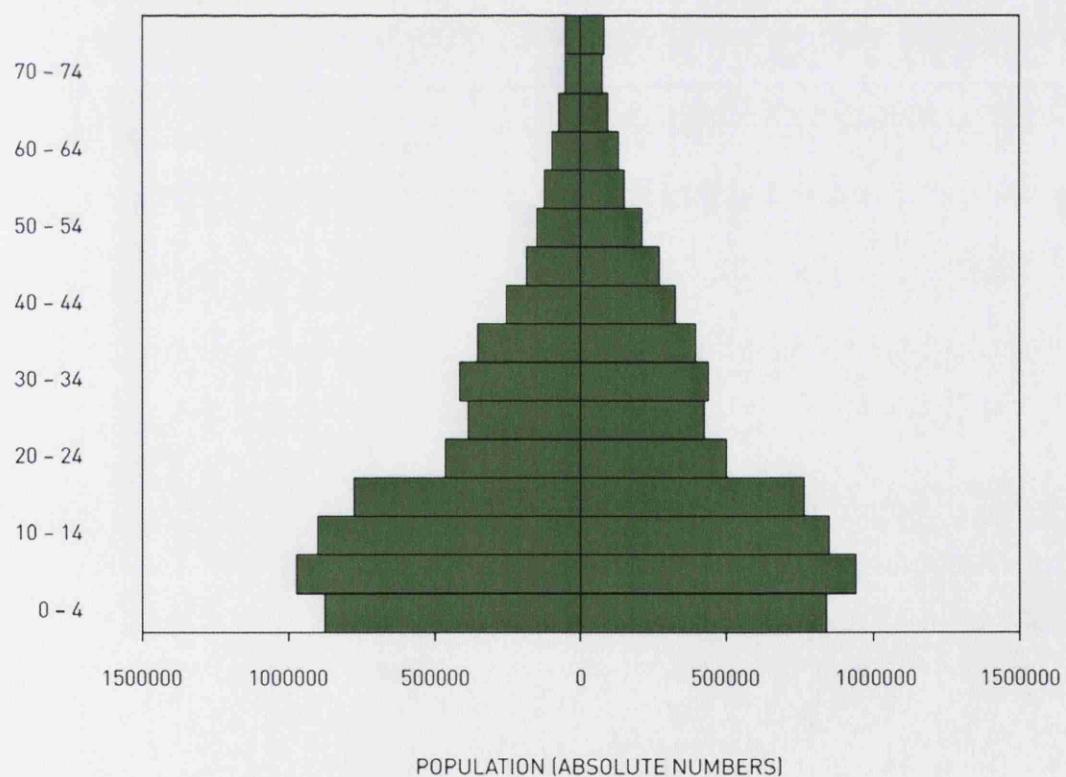
Country	HDI ranking / 175	Life expectancy at birth 2004 (years)	Adult literacy 2004 (% age 15 and above)	GDP per capita 2004 (PPP US \$)
Thailand	74	70.3	92.6	8,090
Vietnam	109	70.8	90.3	2,745
Cambodia	129	56.5	73.6	2,423
Myanmar	130	60.5	89.9	1,027
Laos	133	55.1	68.7	1,954

(Source: UNDP, 2006: 284 and 285)

3.3.2 Contemporary Population and Migration

As Figure 3.2 shows, Cambodia has a broad-based pyramid structure due to the majority of the population being under 20 years of age. Children under 15 years of age account for almost 43 percent of the population, a common feature of populations with high levels of fertility (NIS, 2001: 10).¹⁰ The unusual gap in structure for the age groups 20-24 and 25-29 represents cohorts born between February through July of 1971 and February through to July of 1980. This were times of escalating civil war with Khmer Rouge rule characterised by few births and very high infant and child mortality (*ibid*). The demographic consequence of political and social turmoil is shown in the clear indentation in the population pyramid on the most recent (1998) census (Neupert and Prum, 2005: 218).

Figure 3.2: Population pyramid of Cambodia, year 2000



(Source: Neupert and Prum, 2005: 227)

¹⁰ 53.6 percent are between the ages of 15-64 and 3.6 percent over the age of 65 years old (NIS, 2001: 10).

While 6 percent of the total Cambodian population is now 60 years and older, over 50 percent of the population is 19 or younger (Robinson cited in Zimmer and Kim, 2001: 364). This has created a high dependency ratio in which almost one third of the population are either over 60 or under 10 years of age (*ibid.*). In addition, as a result of the turmoil in Cambodia, higher male versus female deaths occurred meaning that there is a relative shortage of males particularly noticeable in the 35-54 age group (Zimmer and Kim, 2001: 363). Cambodia, as a result, has an overall sex ratio of 92 males per 100 females (NIS, 2001). According to Boua (1982) this highly skewed sex ratio created a problem for women in the past also: knowing that adult males were in short supply, men took advantage of the situation by consorting with many women, abandoning wives and taking second wives (though polygamy is no longer legal).

Although Cambodia is 84 percent rural, the traditional dominance of rural to rural migration is decreasing (NIS, 2000b: 11).¹¹ Migrants have become especially important in urban zones- while 15.7 percent of the population of Cambodia live in urban areas, 29.4 percent of migrants were enumerated in them (NIS, 2000b: 48). Apart from the internal migration, which is detailed throughout this thesis, Thailand is the primary destination for approximately 88,000 short and long distance migrants with Malaysia being the second largest destination with approximately 11,000 migrants currently registered (AMCMMN, 2002: 54-57). A number of factors encapsulated in the transitional nature of Cambodia have had a negative impact on rural people and forced them to leave their homes in search of more income. These include changes in employment structure as the country switched from a state-controlled economy to one that is market-driven, rapid population increases, and the mechanisation of agriculture (Sovannarith, 2001).

Most of the migrants to Thailand are from poor or very poor households, with approximately twenty-three percent owning one hectare or less of land and forty-seven percent owning no farmland at all in their source area (Sovannarith, 2001). Cambodian migrants to Thailand fall into two main groups, long-range migrants

¹¹ This is the case across South-East Asia where rural-rural migration has been decreasing, and the share of rural-urban migration has been increasing (Guest, 2003)

and short-range migrants (*ibid.*). Long-range migrants consist mainly of men who go deep into Thailand, occasionally as far as Bangkok and the Myanmar border. They come from poor households but with enough assets to sell in order to raise the money for their trip. Women form the largest group of short-term migrants who straddle the Cambodian-Thai border. Male migrants are often employed in a larger variety of industries than women, including manual labour with the majority of Cambodian migrants to Thailand young males (AMCMMN, 2002).

3.3.3 Health

Given Cambodia's recent history, which saw hospitals, clinics and equipment destroyed, it is not surprising to find that health care services are extremely limited. During the Khmer Rouge, a drastic reduction in the number of doctors meant that medical care was almost non-existent (Neupert and Prum, 2005). As a direct consequence of the conflict, Cambodia now has the highest rate of amputation due to landmine injury in the world. There are an estimated 350,000 people disabled in Cambodia which is one of the highest proportions in the world (Marcus, 1995: 11). The stationing of peacekeeping forces in the UNTAC period also resulted in an enormous increase in the number of commercial sex workers in Phnom Penh. This reflected both demand from foreign personnel and increasingly, domestic demand from newly prosperous Khmer clients. Lack of bargaining power may mean that insisting on condoms is a luxury that sex workers cannot afford (Marcus, 1995: 12). As a consequence, by 1992, ten percent of female sex workers in Phnom Penh and thirty-eight percent in Sihanoukville, a south coast port with strong links to Thailand were HIV positive (*ibid.* 12). Correspondingly, Cambodia now has one of the most serious HIV epidemics in the Asia and Pacific region (Tarr and Aggleton, 1999: 375). This is despite the fact that the adult prevalence rate has actually declined from 3 percent in 1997 to 1.9 percent in 2003 largely due to increasing mortality and a decline in HIV incidence (United Nations and Kingdom of Cambodia, 2005: 9).

While the health care system is supposed to be free to all citizens according to the 1993 Cambodian Constitution (Article 72), in reality all levels of health care

operate on a fee for service basis. In 1997 for example, the Ministry of Health introduced a scheme whereby patients unable to pay for healthcare were supposed to be exempt from paying fees but in reality, these are not uniformly applied and unofficial payments have not been eliminated (UNIFEM *et al.*, 2004: 89). The care and coverage of state clinics varies widely, often depending on whether or not a foreign aid organisation has taken an interest in a particular facility. In some instances such organisations provide supplies, drugs, and equipment and may supplement staff salaries. Health care is best in the capital, Phnom Penh, where much of the international aid in the health sector has been focused in the last ten years. Most Khmer doctors would not consider taking a position anywhere else in the country. Therefore Cambodia has a medical system that is inaccessible in terms of distance and cost. This means that in desperation, Khmer families will often go into debt to try to treat a family member's illness since they need money to travel and as payment for treatment. People who can afford to do so travel to Vietnam, or if they are wealthy, to Thailand or Singapore for medical care. An Oxfam Cambodia/MRD Survey in 2000 (cited in UNIFEM *et al.*, 2004: 89) for example found that health crises can be crippling for poor families as forty-six percent of people who had recently lost their land had lost it as a result of debts associated with health expenditures. As the World Bank (2006: no page number available) report,

'On the supply side, per capita public spending is still far below that required for a minimum standard of basic service delivery. Particularly with regard to healthcare, Cambodian households have to compensate by spending large proportions of their total income on generally low-quality care. High out of pocket spending can easily push non-poor households into poverty'

Evidence also suggests that men have greater access to healthcare and the household budget than women because of women's secondary status in the household (UNIFEM *et al.*, 2004: 90). Combined with women's reproductive care needs, health indicators suggest that malnutrition among women and children is a major health problem with widespread nutritional deficiencies among women

representing the biggest risk for childhood mortality (WHO/WPRO, 2005: 37). Infant mortality remains at 125 per 1,000 births, meaning one in eight Cambodian children will die before the age of five (NIS, 2001: 19). Limited access to skilled health workers is also reported to be a significant factor in the high maternal mortality ratio (WHO/WPRO, 2005: 37), although this varies with poorer women much less likely to access health services during pregnancy and delivery placing them at a higher risk from maternal death (UNIFEM *et al*, 2004: 91). Along with this, malaria and dengue fever pose a considerable burden of mortality and morbidity (WHO/WPRO, 2005). A number of these trends have been incorporated into key health Cambodian Millennium Development Goals including amongst others, reducing the infant mortality rate to 50 per 1000 live births and reducing HIV prevalence to 1.8 percent (*ibid.* 38).

3.3.4 Education

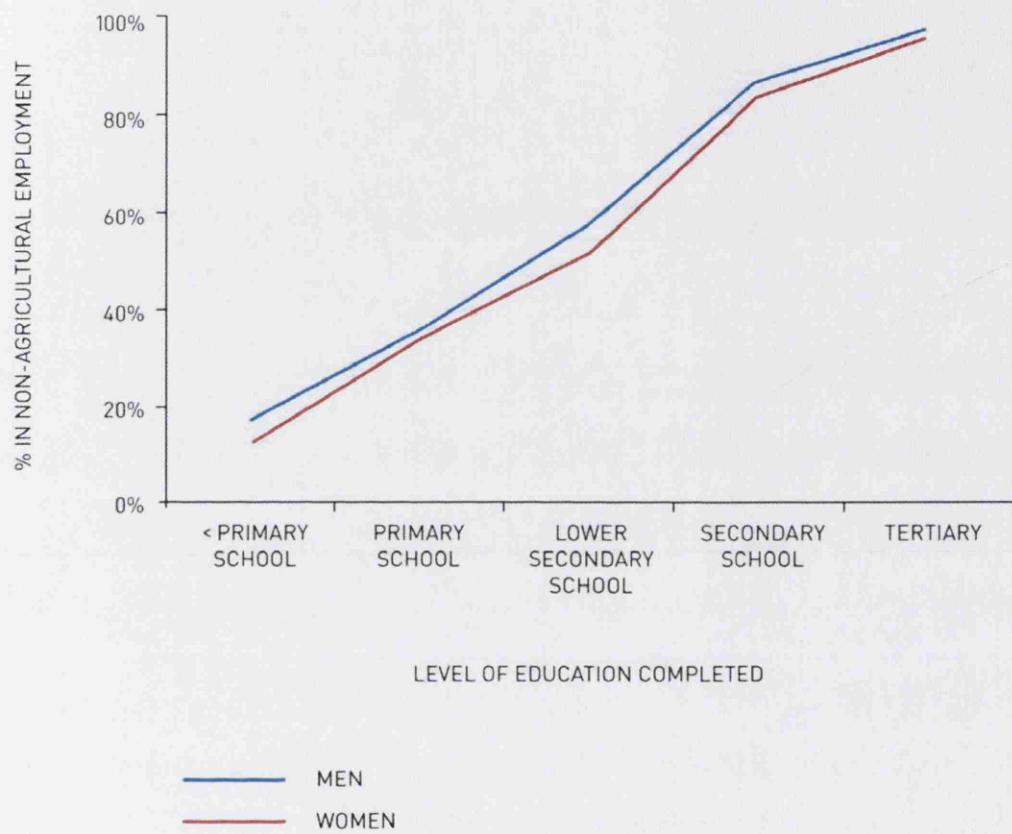
Like health, by regional standards, the general education level in Cambodia remains very low both for men and women and is thus a fundamental development issue for the country (UNIFEM *et al*, 2004: 71). Despite progress in recent years, Cambodia along with Laos has the lowest net enrolment rates in East Asia (*ibid.*).¹² Teachers are being given additional training, but the educational level of teachers remains rather low overall, thus impacting on the educational achievement of the population. Research conducted by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) (2000), which actually administered writing exercises rather than allowing self-identification as readers, found that literacy levels for the country were lower than previously estimated. Combining the first two categories of illiterate and semi-literate, this means that 62.9 percent of the adult population of Cambodia, or 6.5 million people, are basically illiterate (MEYS, 2000). In all of these categories the rates were much higher for women with some 45.1 percent of women reported as completely illiterate and as much as 20 percent of the literate women falling into the self-learning category. Gender disparities in education are also greater among the poor and in rural

¹² Furthermore, in the GDI for Cambodia, the combined gross enrolment rate for primary, secondary and tertiary schools (2004) is 55% for females and 65% for males (UNDP, 2006: 365).

areas. Educational attainment has been found to be much higher in urban than rural populations with 89 percent of males and 77 percent of females in urban areas having some education, compared with only 79 percent of males and 63 percent of females in rural areas (NIS, 2001: 14).

That girls' education is not deemed as important as boys' undoubtedly reflects stereotypical attitudes about gender roles, with men as breadwinners working outside the home and women as domestic labourers and income earners in the home. Even though the gender gap is narrower among the younger generation (Gorman, 1999b) girls are expected to carry both these roles meaning that the opportunity costs of sending a girl to school tend to be higher than those of boys. It has been suggested that although women make independent decisions day-to-day, larger decisions are made either jointly or by the men in couple-headed households (Sonnois, 1990; Ledgerwood, 1992). For this reason perhaps, the proportion of female students is nearly half (46.2 percent) in primary school, but drops to 37 percent in lower secondary school, and 31.8 percent in upper secondary school (MEYS, 2001). This gender gap in educational attainment has immediate ramifications for the employment opportunities of women and gaining gender equity in the formal education system is clearly important to gaining increasing equality in the long term. This can be shown in Figure. 3.3 which shows how as the level of education increases, opportunities open up for other types of employment beyond those related to agriculture and fishing.

Figure 3.3: More education leads to more opportunities



(Source: UNIFEM et al, 2004: 45)

This trend is particularly apparent in the garment sector, which tends to employ women with relatively higher levels of education (Hach et al. 2001). The persistence of a gender gap reflects differential levels of schooling and associated factors including costs of education, distance to school and household work responsibilities which continue to restrict girls' completion of basic education.

3.4 Conclusions

In general, the current condition of the Cambodian economy must be seen within the country's recent historical context of the Khmer Rouge radical Maoist-Stalinist policy, the international isolation in the 1980s and over twenty years of civil war. Assessing the country in light of these developments, Cambodia has made a great deal of progress, for it now has a functioning, albeit debt-burdened economy, a workable, yet limited, transportation system and linkages to the global economy. Great challenges exist associated with these developments, the implications of which are examined through gender relations and the Khmer home.

CHAPTER FOUR

(PRE) REVOLUTIONARY GENDER IDEALS



Figure 4.1: Girls riding to a wedding
(Photograph by K Brickell, Slorkram, April 2005)

4.0 Introduction

The bad kind of woman kicks loudly

When she walks very loudly they consider her step like a lightening sound so that
her *sampot* (skirt) is torn apart

She walks very loudly

So that the house trembles

The bad woman sees something on the ground and then she moves forward
without picking it up

In the future if she cannot get organised

Then her property will be lost

(Translated excerpt from The *Cbpab Srei* (Rules for Women) cited in PADV, 2003:
114)

As pre-revolutionary Khmer poetic tradition exemplifies above, women's virtuousness in Cambodia is intimately tied to her relationship with home. In recent decades however, the country has been through dramatic change in the context of the Khmer Rouge regime, and now reopening to the world. This has resulted in conflicting political, social and religious legacies. Now commonplace, these junctures of history are typified in Figure 4.1 showing the relative freedom and mobility of two young Khmer women, yet their continued observance to traditional clothing customs.¹

Chapter Four details these normative foundations of gender relations (and the 'home'), first, by examining the gender ideals revoked and reworked by the Khmer Rouge (1975-1979) and second by tracing their pre-revolutionary origins (Pre-1975). The latter includes a number of important periods for the evolution of 'traditional' gender norms, which I have approximately divided in Table 4.1 for sake of clarity. Roughly covering a period of two thousand years, the chapter serves as a prelude to my contemporary research findings, which trace the

¹ For histories of Cambodian clothing in the later 19th and 20th centuries, see Daravuth and Muan (2003) and Edwards (2001).

differential ways in which idealisations of gender are becoming destabilised in the work and home spaces of rural and urban Siem Reap.

Table 4.1: Key periods of Cambodian history

	Period of history	Dates	Key historical events
Pre-Revolutionary Cambodia	Pre-classical	C.230-802	Cambodia compromises several political entities
	Classical	802-1431	The establishment of Jayavarman II as King of Cambodia (802), ending with the sack of Angkor by the Thai's (1431)
	Middle	1431- 1867	The four-and-a-half centuries between the abandonment of Angkor as the capital and the establishment of the French protectorate
	French colonialism	1867-1953	Reign of the French Protectorate
	Sangkum	1953- 1975	The period between official independence until the victory of the Khmer Republic (1970-1975). Sihanouk abdicates and places his father, Norodom Suramarit on the throne.
Revolutionary Cambodia	Khmer Rouge	1975-1979	State of Democratic Kampuchea established as cities fall to Khmer Rouge. Regime lasts 3 years, eight months and 20 days.

(Source: Based on Jacobsen, 2003a: Chapters 1, 4, 5 and 6)

Considering the traditional and so-called 'ideal' characterisations of gender in this chapter, links with the symbolic dimension that part constitutes the 'layeredness of gender' identified by Davids and van Driel (2001: 159). Translated in the Khmer context, Thierry (1983:33) believes that local cultural data in Cambodia should be distinguished in two ways: 'one, the ideal woman defined by literary models more mythical and more religious in nature' (examined in this

chapter) and two, 'the real woman according to her statute and function in society' (Chapters 5-8). Although to date limited consideration has been given to the cultural background of the role of women in Cambodian society (Derks, 1996), even less attention has been paid to the role of men. There are a number of authors who emphasise the importance of examining old customs and lifestyles for understanding the disadvantaged position of women in contemporary Cambodia.² This makes more salient the need to examine the ways in which women and men negotiate these traditions and how these are played out today in the Khmer home. In turn, it also means that 'we should get away from a fixed view on the status of men and women, gender and sexuality, because they are symbolic constructs' (Ledgerwood, 1990: 19), assigned various meanings in different cultural and historical contexts, which I turn to now.

4.1 Egalitarianism and Gender Relations during the Khmer Rouge Regime

It has been argued that the reign of the Khmer Rouge can be viewed as the most gender equitable period Cambodia has known since pre-classical times (Jacobsen, 2003a). This argument is based on Pol Pot's aim to create 'the world's most egalitarian, and therefore revolutionary social order' (Jackson, 1989: 7). Difference was deemed to be evil and Buddhism and its vestiges (being at the core of Khmer ideas of social hierarchy) were abolished, including the *Cbpab* 'rules' for men and women I consider later.

Other extreme policies were enacted to try and achieve at least the outward signs of egalitarianism, echoing the motto of Democratic Kampuchea cadres, 'When you pull the grass, you have to pull the root' (Ledgerwood, 2003). These strategies included the elimination of linguistic registers that connoted kinship, age and other social differences, and replacement with the word 'comrade' (*mitt*). Such linguistic changes also included inversions in traditional hierarchy with regard to age. For example, Smith's (1989) analysis of peasant interpretive

² For example, according to the website of the Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs (2005), old traditions, customs and lifestyles 'have long set a pattern of discriminatory attitudes against women' remaining 'until this day despite changing circumstances'.

accounts of the Khmer Rouge years shows how adults were deemed poisoned by the previous regime. In contrast to adults, children were still 'pure' and subsequently given positions of authority to spy and report on their elders, causing widespread distrust and suspicion even within families.

With regard to families, working teams replaced family and household as the new basic socio-economic unit (Ebihara, 1993: 151). These measures, aimed at undercutting sentiment and cohesion among family and kinfolk were extended even to kin who resided in the same commune, being segregated by age and gender (Ebihara and Ledgerwood, 2002: 275-276). Any contact between men and women (even holding hands) was forbidden with penalties ranging from torture, hard labour or death (Vickery, 1984: 95). This included the separation of husbands and wives. The rationale was 'that personal happiness could not be indulged as long as the people suffered, there was too much work to be done in reconstructing the nation' (Jacobsen, 2003a: 223). The conflict affected the family more widely by assigning men and women the same tasks in agriculture, irrigation, and other activities. As Kumar *et al.* (2001: 44) note, although the conflict imposed economic hardships on women, it also opened new opportunities to participate in the economic sphere because of the mass mobilisation of men into the military, mass killing, and increased labour demand for war and rehabilitation work. This led to the undermining of the traditional sexual division of labour that had characterised Cambodian society (*ibid.*). Traditionally, for example, male work in Cambodia included ploughing, felling the jungle, hunting, woodworking, and house building- as well as statecraft and formal religion, while the female domain included transplanting, harvesting, vegetable growing, food preparation, weaving, pottery making (in most areas) and marketing, as well as ancestor cults and mediation with the spirits (Reid, 1988: 163).³

³ According to Surtees (2000: 62) of equal importance to Buddhism is the role of 'animism' and associated supernational beliefs (*Chomneur akruey*). Spirits are generally male and female, representing the gender interdependence of the spirit world (*ibid.*). Significantly, the majority of the spirit mediums (*memot* or *neak bonghchuon araksel*) are women (Ang, 1986: 26-32; Ledgerwood, 1990: 48-50; Surtees 2000: 63).

During the Khmer Rouge regime women not only worked on the fields, but as militia who were mobilised in defence of rural areas on both sides of the civil war- the first opportunity in recent Cambodian history that women could exercise power in the public realm (Jacobsen, 2003a). The Khmer Rouge were also the first to organise women at the grassroots level establishing a women's wing of the Communist Party of Kampuchea in the late 1960s (Kumar *et al*, 2001: 46). This uniformity between men and women is expressed in one of six revolutionary songs,

'O Beautiful, beloved Kampuchea, our destiny has joined us together, uniting our forces so as not to disagree. Even young girls get up and join the struggle'

(Translation of *The Beauty of Kampuchea* in Kiernan and Boua, 1982: 237)

Marston (2002: 120-122) has pointed out that unlike pre-revolutionary Cambodian songs, post-1975 versions such as this did not distinguish between sections to be sung by men and others to be sung by women. This direct involvement of women in the revolution connects with the realisation in conflict studies that women's involvement is not necessarily a passive one (El Bushra, 2000b: 78). Yet while most work has focused on masculinity, female identities have been less subject to elaboration (*ibid.*). In Democratic Kampuchea, women's capability to participate in violent conduct like men, or broadly perform the same tasks, is reflected in the constitution,

'There must be complete equality among all Kampuchean people in an equal, just, democratic, harmonious, and happy society within the great national solidarity for defending and building the country together. Men and women are fully equal in every respect.'

(Article 13 of the Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea cited in Jennar, 1995: 86)

The new participation of women was accompanied by their seeming enforced 'de-feminisation' characterised, *inter alia*, by uniform haircuts in the form of a neat bob just below the ears, loose clothing and the banning of jewellery. The

reasoning behind this lay in the equation made between long hair and fashions such as flared trousers and mini-skirts and the lax morality and corruption of the Khmer Republic and Sangkum periods (Jacobsen, 2003a: 223). In addition, although there were female leaders among the revolutionary government, and the official party line endorsed gender equality, power remained in the hands of those connected to men in key positions. Despite the existence of policies designed to protect women, they were additionally the victims of sexual abuse, enforced marriages (see Chapter 8) and arguably suffered the worst effects in terms of emotional and physical health including miscarriage and enforced separation from children.

4.2 Pre-Revolutionary Cambodia

To demonstrate the relevance of my assertion, that the reign of the Khmer Rouge should be represented as a period of turbulence affecting gender relations (and the home), it is necessary first to consider the pre-revolutionary period of Cambodian history. While the Khmer Rouge modified society in an extreme manner, post-conflict Cambodia must also be referenced to its culture pre-dating this period, which in many cases (such as Buddhism) has been re-instated, albeit in a weakened and diluted form.

Pre-revolutionary Cambodia has been described in a range of religious and literary works. The *Cbpab* are the normative Cambodian poems, or folklore, which incorporate ancient wisdom into the context of Buddhist teaching (Ayres, 2000) (an excerpt from which opened this chapter). The rules probably date from early times and are attributed to the authorship of poet monk Krom Ngoy towards the end of the 19th century (Oveson *et al.*, 1996: 35). Using the *Cbpab* to analyse pre-colonial Cambodian society is difficult because these normative poems are only incidentally concerned with the ways in which society was put together (Chandler, 1996: 45). They do however, as a moral treatise, provide an idealised picture, suggesting norms of behaviour (*ibid.* 46). Furthermore, the *Cbpabs* as cultural texts are a useful basis for discussion about the discrepancies between idealised and 'actual' depictions of women and men, which my research examines.

For this reason, I consider not only Khmer proverbs and codes of conduct (*Cbpabs*), but other sources of information on gender relations in the country which show that the relationship between women and power in Cambodian history are contradictory.⁴ On the one hand, a number of authors stress women's power. Jacobsen (2003b) illustrates in her historical research how creation mythology attests to queens who ruled in their own right while others stress the 'high status' and 'considerable authority' of women (Ebihara, 1968; van Esterik, 1996: 1; Martin, 1994; Népote, 1992; Zimmerman, 1994). Reid (1988: 162) also insists 'that women had a relatively high degree of economic autonomy in pre-modern Southeast Asia'. Correspondingly, observations on the role of women have often been interpreted as a social relic of a lost civilisation or at least indication that Khmer culture in the past was matriarchal (Oveson *et al.*, 1996). Népote (1992: 168) depicts, for example, how every Cambodian, of every social group, is created in the frame of temporal cycles dominated by female personages. The most comprehensive anthropological research on Cambodia underscores this viewpoint, asserting that the relative positions of male and female, husband and wife are virtually equal (Ebihara, 1968: 113-114). The husband is 'technically the supreme authority who is owed deference, respect and obedience by his family. But the peasant wife is by no means a totally docile and submissive creature. Her role in the maintenance of the family is critical and her activities are varied' (*ibid.*).⁵ This depiction will be elaborated upon in Chapter Seven through discussions of household headship.

On the other hand, the idea of a past matriarchy has been firmly rejected by anthropological scholarship, most notably by Ledgerwood (1995: 247). This is because the genealogical records of priestly families and the lineages of Khmer Kings do not support matrilineal designation (*ibid.*). Ledgerwood (1995) explains that the most important reason Cambodian women are viewed as having power is that they are situated within a bilateral kinship system (as opposed to Népote's view of matrilineal kinship organisation) and that therefore either female or male

⁴ See Jacobsen (2003a) for an assessment of which diametrically opposing images of women in Cambodian history are most accurate.

⁵ Several authors have stressed the importance of the nuclear family as the basic social unit in Cambodian society (Derks, 1996; Ebihara, 1977; Népote, 1992).

family lineage can be stressed in different situations (Derks, 1996: 9). Parkin (1990: 213) for instance believes that many writers have been influenced unduly by the fact that women in Cambodia have always been able to hold and inherit property on virtually the same basis as men.

Apart from the example of inheritance (which is more complex in reality than in rhetoric), traditional and pervasive biases exist against women. These are often encapsulated in discussions concerning the Khmer saying 'men are gold, women are cloth'. When dropped in mud, gold does not lose its value but cloth is irreparably soiled.⁶ Concerns have been raised however about the stereotypes of Cambodian women which can be falsely reproduced given that the proverb applies only 'to women's behaviour within one field of interaction (sexuality), and not to other social fields (comportment and activities) (Surtees, 2000: 72).⁷

With this in mind, to generalise proverbs to wider trends in Cambodian society can be dangerous, although as my findings show in Chapter Five, participants' tend to do this personally. In relation to this concern, Ledgerwood (1996) contends that gender and women's status in Khmer society should be understood not simply through didactic codes but within the historical framework of Buddhism. Buddhism became entrenched as the religion of Cambodian sovereigns as well as its peasantry in the 'middle period' of Cambodian history (1431-1860) when Cambodian ways of life began to reflect predominantly Buddhist beliefs and traditions (Jacobsen, 2003a: 112). Using Buddhism as a vehicle to understand gender is not unproblematic however. Van Esterik (2000: 69) argues in the context of feminist writing on Thailand that Buddhist texts are used to make arguments about the subordination of women thus taking single stories as if textual evidence were equivalent to contemporary practice or belief.

⁶ This proverb has a number of variations including men are diamonds (which cannot be ruined) while women are compared to cotton (which can be ruined)

⁷ It is argued that the use of this proverb is misleading since it is metaphor used in a highly specific context of how young women's sexuality is valued in Cambodian culture in comparison with men's (see Surtees, 2000). Similar proverbs are commonly used and adapted as NGO and government report titles, as the UNDP (1993) '*Cotton and Diamonds*' and Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs (1999) '*Neary Rattanak- Women are Precious Gems*' exemplify.

Furthermore, Buddhism only provides part context to gender relations in Cambodia. As Karim (1995:19) reflects,

'Women in Southeast Asia are publicly visible; but they are not visible in formal politics or the great religions endorsed by the state. Their inputs into politics and religion exist in the informal sphere; but this informal sphere is so visible and important that is it hard for social scientists to come up with one general statement'

These complexities show the importance of combining a focus on traditional (Buddhist) ideology with empirical research that explores women's material conditions in all spheres. This is partly because in Cambodia's 'middle period', the introduction of Buddhism according to Jacobsen (2003a: 151) did not bring significant changes for women's lives as the social mores espoused in the *Cbpab* at this stage, differed little from earlier codes. In fact, Jacobsen (2003a) argues that didactic codes, representing 'traditional' Cambodian social values from a time before the colonisation of Cambodia by the French, were paraded strategically in the Sangkum period as models for correct behaviour predominantly as a form of resistance to French influence.⁸ As a result, Cambodian women had a duty to remain as 'traditional' as possible so that Cambodian culture was not lost (ibid. 213). This means that the relative status of women declined significantly as the nationalist movement strove for a return to 'traditional' values (ibid. 198). Through the nationalists' non-critical and

⁸ The main research on gender and colonial constructions of Cambodia is provided by Penny Edwards (1997, 2001). Following the idea of hierarchy pervasive in Cambodian society, in colonial times, 'just as women should not fall from their place, so Cambodian women must not be allowed to rise from theirs' (Edwards, 1997: 115). Edwards (ibid.) explains how it was felt that 'natives' who spoke the wrong tongue or dressed the wrong way were unravelling a status quo predicated on the entrenchment of social distance and ethnic difference. Between the covers of colonial novels, Cambodian women were cast as sexual playthings, such depictions emphasising the degenerate status of Cambodia's present, and again underscoring France's restorative mission (ibid.). Cambodian women were far more active however in the urban and agricultural economy than their French counterparts (ibid; 118). Edwards (1997: 119) identifies a 'trifocal vision of gender'- 'At home the colonial wife and mother upheld the sanctity of the French race and nation. Hidden from public view, the Cambodian concubine yielded intimate knowledge of her body and culture to her French masters. And in the offices of the French administration, men...articulated and preserved native tradition'.

conservative study of old Cambodian literature they sought to oppose imperialism, which meant that once independence was achieved, 'the perpetuation of these mores continued to disadvantage Cambodian women' (ibid.).

4.3 Comparing Codes for Women and Men

In spite of showing a concern for women's place in the home and the nation, studies of gender in Cambodia have neglected the rules of conduct that men were expected to adhere to in the aforementioned period. For example, the *Cbpab Srei* (Rules for Women) and the *Srei Krup Leakh* (The Virtuous Woman) are two of the better known and arguably most quoted, 19th century cultural texts used in social research related to gender issues (PADV, 2003). However less known, 'less widely disseminated and rarely quoted are the gender opposites, the *Cbpab Proh* (Rules for Men) and the *Pros Krup Leak* (The Virtuous Man) which are rarely expounded upon in literature that deals with gender issues and comparative analysis' (ibid. 76). The rules for men and women are presented in Boxes 4.1- 4.3.

Box 4.1: Summary of the *Cbpab Proh* (Rules for Men)

Men are advised to adhere to the following behaviours:

To be concerned with moral behaviour,
To use polite speech,
To think before they act,
To use time efficiently and be thrifty with materials as well as time,
To protect their property,
To be organised and prepared for any situation and to take advantage of opportunities,
Not to give up even if poor but to always struggle,
To be hardworking,
To discuss with wives and children before selling something,
To inform others when they are going out,
To do things with reason rather than for indulgence,
To be honest and hardworking so that women and others cannot find reason to complain or criticise.

Men are advised against the following behaviours:

Not to use strong language or to speak loudly,
Not to be aggressive,
Not to look down on others,
Not to be lazy,
Not to waste time,
Not to be idle or pass off their responsibility to others,
Not to be too nasty or too gentle, too afraid or too brave but to ponder instead,
Not to be concerned with just one thing but to concentrate on different things,
Not to go out without informing others or to go out without a reason or for the purpose of indulging self,
Not to be thoughtless or sacrifice prestige by being careless about actions,
Not to assume that they are right but to take advice from others and
Not to indulge in the 'three madnesses of men' as espoused by monks-gambling, women and alcohol.

(Source and Translation: PADV, 2003: 76-77)⁹

⁹ The Cambodian texts, transliterations and French translations can be found in successive volumes of the *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient* beginning in 1975 edited by Philip Jenner and Saveros Pou under the running title '*Les cpap ou codes de conduite Khmers*'.

In terms of the similarities and differences between the rules for men and those for women, two striking contrasts are evident. First, unlike women's codes of conduct which deal predominantly with obeying and respecting spouses, in the rules for men, wives are mentioned directly only once, in relation to men's responsibility to provide for their families. In comparison to the *Cbpab Srei*, 'a strong individualistic vein exists in texts containing directives for men that deal predominantly with specific behaviours rather than relations except where the consequences of behaviour are outlined in terms of the impact of behaviour on relationships and prestige' (PADV, 2003: 77).

In contrast to men, women's rules lecture mainly in the context of familial relationships and of keeping the 'fire in the house'. This Cambodian Buddhist expression embodies the idea that in order to maintain a harmonious household, women are responsible for suppressing three fires of potential conflict connected with their relationships to parents, husbands and 'others'. Women should not bring fire from outside into the house, not take fire inside the house outside, and should take care not to spread or overheat fires (Derks, 2005: 64). Examples of this are given in Box 4.2 and show not only the consciousness that women must adopt in relation to their parents and husbands at all times but also the emphasis placed on women not to consider themselves equal to men.

Box 4.2: Excerpts from the *Cbpab Srei* (Rules for Women) relating to parents and husbands

Parents:

One flame is to keep gratitude towards your parents,
You have to walk on the way that was paved by your parents and serve them well,
Try to protect them, give them food as desired,
If you are hungry don't keep food for yourself, give parents delicious food regularly.

Husband:

Another flame is your husband who must stay with you forever,
You should serve him and don't make him disappointed,
Forgive him in the name of women; don't speak in the way that you consider him as equal,
No matter what happens we have to wait to listen with the bad word (even if he says something bad you have to listen),
Though your husband speaks inappropriately you shouldn't let the mother know, (Husband) will get angry if the wife is heard telling the (bad) word from the mother then whisper to the husband,
This kind of thing doesn't stop but leads to questioning.

(Source and Translation: PADV, 2003: 113)

Second, while the home is absent in men's rules, it is frequently linked to women's identities and roles. In Buddhist terms, women are deemed more 'attached' to worldly objects than men (Kirsh, 1985: 305).¹⁰ Khmer folktales, for example, typically use material objects (such as the home in Box 4.3) as metaphorical devices to symbolise the dangers and rewards associated with the deportment of different women. In the story 'Our Uncle' (*Mea Yoeng*) which is commonly known as 'The Woman with Holes in Her Basket' (*Srey Kanhchoe thluh*) the fates of two women are contrasted. The first woman carries her husband's catch of fish in a basket but full of holes, the fish escape as she failed to repair it out of laziness. Angered, her merchant husband exchanges her for a new more virtuous wife who patches up the basket and becomes wealthy. As Ledgerwood (1994: 120-121) reflects, the virtueless woman is reduced to begging from house to house while the virtuous woman who is willing to fulfil her

¹⁰ See also Goonatilake (1996) for a discussion of women's relationship to Buddhism in Cambodia.

husband's orders and not let the family's wealth slip through her fingers, is met with happiness.

Women's supposed connection with the material in Buddhism part accounts for women's traditional and predominant role in small scale trading in Cambodia, and men's more religious and political bureaucratic activities. As a result, men's relative lack of attachment 'helps account for their ability to be religiously, socially and geographically mobile compared to women' (Kirsh, 1985: 303)

Traditionally, women who leave the home have been either equated to birds that fly out of the door and bring bad luck on their return, or to women who walk too loudly and make the house 'tremble'. Similarly, should a woman neglect her household responsibilities, act too forcefully or not fulfil the entirety of her husband's demands, then blame can be assigned to her for the breakdown of their marriage (like the woman in the folktale that failed to patch up her basket).

These rules can be seen in Box 4.3.

Box 4.3: Excerpts from the *Cbpab Srei* (Rules for Women) relating to the home

My dear daughter, I want to tell you about bad luck,
It is not appropriate to step over your husband, just because you want to be quick,
The woman is the same as the small bird that flies away,
And then the bird brings bad luck, flying in and out of the door,
Careless,
Consider it as when you light a fire so that the thief can see your location and take your property- you show the way to the thief,
Another kind of girl laughs loudly,
If you are this girl we consider you the bird,
Another kind of girl, when she sleeps, she turns her back to her husband,
This one we consider as a bad snake and it shouldn't be let into the house,
It will bring bad luck and the couple will separate.

(Source and Translation: PADV, 2003: 114)

The importance placed on the containment of women embodied in Box 4.3 is reflected in the rules of house building, which emphasise the importance of order for family well-being. Ill health (both of people and animals) is linked to the improper alignment of the cardinal points of the house (such as columns)¹¹ and subsequent imbalance in natural forces (spirits).¹² Many rural inhabitants consult a traditional healer (*kruu Khmer*) some of whom specialize in medicinal practice with a spiritual component, while others specialize in magic with a medicinal approach. The 'magic man', as he tends to be referred to, often advises householders to rebuild certain areas of their houses to appease their ancestors.¹³ Many families, as a result, borrow money from banks to pay for the house to be moved on their plot. In Cambodian house-building tradition it is also important that the entrance of the house should not face west which is considered the direction of the dead and is bad luck. Instead it should face east to bring good luck as homage to the sun. For fortune, the steps into the house should also be an odd number (i.e. either 3, 5, 7 or 9 steps). In Southeast Asia, the past emphasis on ritual reflects the way that 'the house is very often a symbol of continuity both as a permanent structure that outlives an individual or generation and as a building that contains heirlooms and ancestral altars' (Sparkes and Howell, 2003: 9). This means that just as gender ideals for women are embodied in the concept of domesticity, the physicality of home also requires order and stability and in turn, moulds particular patterns of social relationships. The traditions of house building reflect the strict behavioural demands placed on women and the pervasive principle of hierarchy and order, which I turn to now.

¹¹ The central column is an important spiritual component of Khmer homes and when monks have completed their prayers to bless the house will beat the central column three times with a chisel and large wood block asking it to protect the spousal couple, their children and bring them prosperity (Srei U in Daravuth and Muan, 2001: 40).

¹² Many Cambodians still believe in Animism. From its earliest beginnings it was a belief that a soul or spirit existed in every object, even if it was inanimate. In a future state this soul or spirit would exist as part of an immaterial soul. The spirit, therefore, was thought to be universal.

¹³ This rebuilding and emphasis on proper alignment, although not related to *Feng Shui* has some similarities with the ancient Chinese practice of arrangement of space to achieve harmony with the environment.

4.4 Hierarchy and Order

Traditional Khmer society has been divided into three strictly hierarchical ordered strata including royalty, officials and peasantry, even if all three are regarded as equally indispensable for the functioning of society as a whole.

Within this tiered system, a key dimension of hierarchy is age. An 'elder' (*bong*) is a person who has authority through his/her higher social status. Such status is not exclusively a function of chronological age, but is determined as the sum total of gender, wealth, knowledge, reputation of the family, political position, employment, character of the individual and religious piety and age (Ledgerwood, 1992: 4; Martin 1994:11). These symbolic markers of place within society are interpreted as signs of personal force and 'energy' and therefore a sign of good *karma* (Oveson et al, 1996). Thus Karmic status, as the cumulative merit of deeds in men and women's previous lives, is according to Ledgerwood (1994) confirmed by women's proper behaviour when a spousal couple are rewarded in this lifetime.

Traditional Khmer language provides a further element and reinforcement of hierarchy. For instance, there is the classic example of the pronouns that designate siblings (*bong* and *p'oun*/older and younger), which stress age and not gender as critical (Derks, 1996: 14; Ledgerwood, 1990; Surtees 2000:66). While there is no inherent gender association to *bong* (older) and *p'oun* (younger) when applied to a husband and wife the implication of *bong* is male while *p'oun* is female (Népote, 1992: 73). The principles of status hierarchy and social order are accordingly manifested in cultural ideas about gender relations.¹⁴

Although true of any hierarchical society, social order (like home order) is felt to depend upon everyone observing this status hierarchy and keeping his/her place

¹⁴ Parallels can be made with China where society in Confucian terms was a patriarchal society with strict rules of conduct. The underlying principles or governing rationale were the teachings of Confucius (551-479 B.C.). The traditional ideal woman was a dependent being whose behaviour was governed by the 'three obediences and four virtues'. The three obediences were obedience to father before marriage, the husband after marriage, and the son in the case of widowhood. The four virtues were propriety in behaviour, speech, demeanor and employment.

in it. The primary social rule according to Martin (1994:11) is to 'be discreet, unobtrusive, keep to your station'. Moreover, should a wife rebel against a husband, the proverb says, 'Don't hit a stone with an egg' (*pong man kom chual neung thma*) since the impact is unlikely to be worthwhile (Fisher-Nguyen 1994:99). According to Martin (1994), the second important social rule, which is partly a corollary of the first, is to avoid losing face and this may occur when not keeping to one's station. Several Khmer proverbs, such as the egg and stone, therefore stress the importance of tradition and respecting the way things have always been done (Fisher-Nguyen, 1994). This means that in Cambodia's hierarchical society, striving for greater gender equality may be seen in two ways: one, as something 'new' to be discouraged, or two, as impervious to change, when the social system dictates that everyone keeps to their position. This is despite the fact that *Cbpabs* and remembered experiences are becoming increasingly untenable as enduring models (Surtees, 2003) in light of the societal change that is occurring (including women's mobility shown in Figure 4.1).

The codes' questionable relevance today is supported by wider suggestions that whilst righteous advice was taught to women in schools and by their mothers as an ingrained aspect of a girl's education in the past, it does not appear to be a strong practice for boys (PADV, 2003: 76). As I elaborate in the context of my research later, men and women's behaviour is also often very different from the values inherent in the cultural and religious texts, however enduring the spirit of the rules and notions of hierarchy remain.

4.5 Conclusions

From the pre-revolutionary customs to the social change associated with its period of genocide, Chapter Four has pointed to different legacies combining in Cambodia's post-conflict transition. In doing so, it has highlighted three issues. First, it has brought to the fore the potential not only for my research to come up against resistance from men and women to admit change, but also the barriers which constrain women's ability to claim their right to equality. This is especially significant, if the world picture transmitted by the *Cbpab* as 'one where deference and fatalism take up more space than rebelliousness or hope' remains (Chandler, 1996: 59).

Second, the chapter exemplifies the manner in which the 'conservatism' of Khmer culture, which 'takes its model for the perfect society from a (mythologised) social order in the past' (Oveson *et al*, 1996: 81) persists. This is despite the egalitarian ideals of the Khmer Rouge having been largely displaced out of a concern to return to 'tradition'.

Third and finally, the chapter has underscored the way that 'home' (and material culture) is an inherent part of understanding female gender ideals. I believe this further justifies the dual focus on gender and home I set out in Chapter One and the approach I now take in the empirical based chapters, which explore the viability and desirability of traditional ideals.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETING TRADITION AND CHANGE

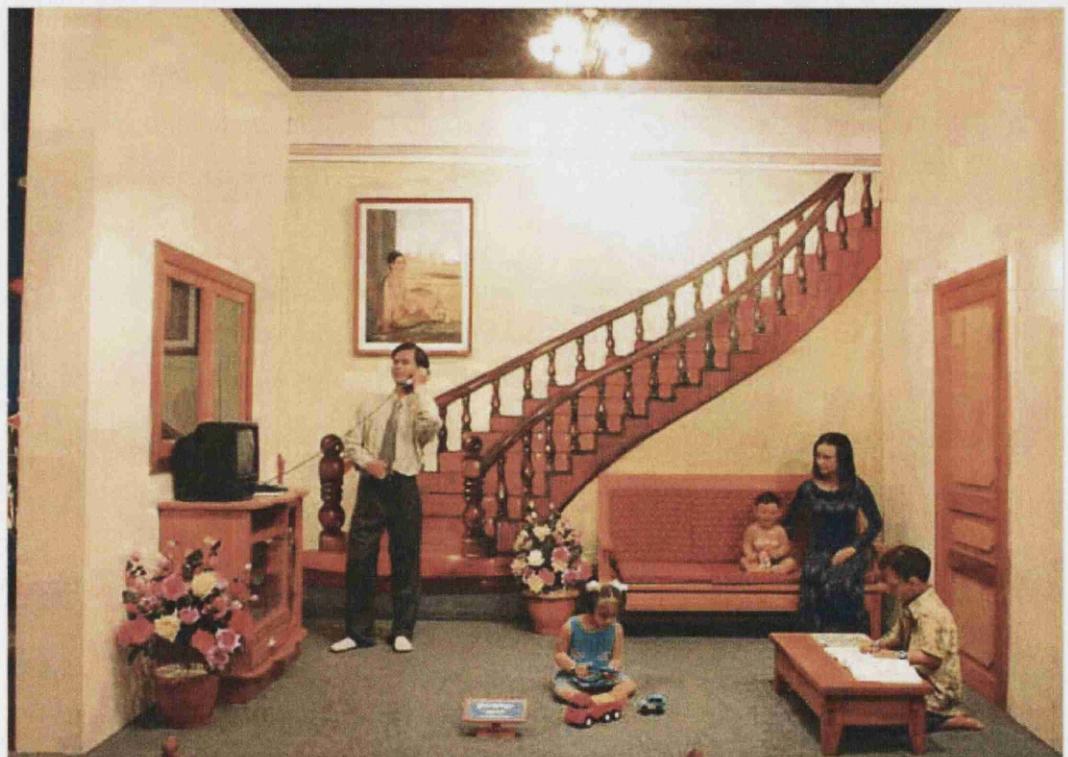


Figure 5.1: 'The Happiness Family'
(Photograph by K Brickell, Cambodian Cultural Villages, Siem Reap, March 2005)

5.0 Introduction

While Chapter Four examined the ideals of (pre) revolutionary times, this chapter draws on my empirical findings, which examine how the normative meanings of 'gender' and 'home' are being re-interpreted in Cambodia's changing macro-environment. By exploring how the ideals are manifest in people's discourses, I make three central and inter-related points. My first contention is that pre-war idealisations have proved highly resistant both to Khmer Rouge doctrine and to a lesser extent, Cambodia's transitional society in which moralistic perspectives continue to embody concepts of 'gender' and 'home'. Second, I highlight the inherent contradictions in the dichotomy between tradition and modernity in which the persistence of societal norms co-exist with narratives of progress. Third, in the aftermath of Pol Pot's extreme attempts at social levelling, I show how inequality is being legitimised in notions of 'gender', 'home' and 'family' under the guise of tradition. Through these key points, Chapter Five provides the basis for subsequent chapters which investigate how historically ingrained equality issues are being reconciled in practice through changing gender roles and mobility, which increasingly characterise contemporary Cambodian society.

5.1 Gender Ideals

My findings show that whilst gender ideals appear impervious to change, the less certain, less monolithic world that men and women are negotiating, is challenging the supremacy of traditional codes of behaviour in five ways. Before I outline these complexities it is important to demonstrate the enduring nature of gender ideologies. I found that across my sample, participants consistently identify the 'ideal' man and woman in concordance with the social norms instilled in the *Chbap* (rules) (I introduced in Chapter 4). When discussing the 'model individual', it is notable that no reference is made to the gender directives of the Khmer Rouge, despite the supposed opportunities it provided for women to participate in the public sphere of the regime- or be 'fully equal' under its constitution. In contrast, the onus of the ideals in Box 5.1 is primarily on women to avoid behaviour that jeopardises their virtue and for men to conform to ideals

relating to their provider role earning money for the family. This lived expectation translates into concern not only verbalised in the interviews but in the photography exercise in which men chose to take photographs of domestic objects that represent their working lives. These include sculptor and mechanics' tools; a throne used by a traditional healer in Slorkram; to fishhooks, paddy fields, cows and bulls in Krobei Riel. Although differing in nature between communities, these 'livelihood tools' are viewed as essential since they allow men to fulfil their perceived provider role, and maintain their position as head of the family (see Chapter 7). For both men and women the issue of respect is also central, with compliance to normative versions of masculinity and femininity related to the importance of showing deference to parents, spouses, elders, and to tradition in general.

Box 5.1: Notions of the 'ideal' man and woman- a summary

The ideal woman should:	The ideal woman should not:
Be mild	Gossip
Be softly spoken	Argue or shout
Do the housework	Drink
Stay at home	Go out without permission
Respect parental advice	'Walk freely with modern style'
Know and follow Khmer tradition	Go out at night to dance
	Be corrupted by western culture
	'Fall for dollars' (become a prostitute)
The ideal man should:	The ideal man should not:
Earn money for their families	Go out at night
Respect parental advice	Cause their mothers problems
Respect elders	Drink
Respect wives	
Have a positive attitude	
Be mild	
Be friendly	
Be quiet	
Be loyal	
Be faithful	

While the ideals identified by participants in Box 5.1 are similar to those in the *Cpbab Srei* (Rules for Women) and *Cpbab Proh* (Rules for Men), when discussing gender ideals, in no cases did men or women refer to the dictates. It was only when I directly asked participants if they had heard of the rules that women, and to a lesser extent men, talked about them. The lack of reference to the guidelines is possibly because they are *Doxa*- traditions and beliefs that are 'undiscussed, unnamed, admitted without argument or scrutiny' (Bourdieu, 1977 see also Kabeer 1999). It could also be because Buddhism, like the *Cpbab* is diminishing in its influence with fewer men entering into monkhood, and of those who do, many are either pressured by parents or elders, or do so to obtain an education and stability of lifestyle (PADV, 2003: 75). My research therefore indicates that although men and women's construction of the archetypal man and woman cannot be directly attributed to the directives themselves, the spirit of the *Cpbab* continues to be embodied in people's viewpoints.

5.1.1 The Recognition of Inequality

While the essence of traditional gender ideals persist, as tenable models to actually follow there is growing, albeit limited, recognition of their inherent inequality. Although some participants do not feel they have in-depth knowledge of the *Cpbab* (rules), or have forgotten them, many consider them as an expression of patriarchal authority within the family to constrain women's behaviour. Fictitious models of the ideal woman are therefore becoming less taken-for-granted in everyday life with some women not merely acquiescing to the lesser value they are assigned by tradition, but instead, critically reflecting on it. Before her husband died, Nakry for example lived for many years under the shadow of violence. She reflects that:

'I have studied the *Cpbab Srei* at school but I have forgotten it. The *Cpbab Srei* teaches us to know about housework and husbands. But now if a woman follows the rules, her husband will be a drunkard. It is impossible.'
(Nakry, female, Slorkram, 50 years old, widowed, retired)

Many women feel that to escape men's domination they need to overcome deep-seated persistent male-biases that dictate that women should be submissive to their husbands. Nakry highlights the paradox that almost all women in my research feel in which abeyance to prescriptive codes of conduct is not necessarily rewarded with a harmonious or violence-free household. In fact, it appears to be predominantly married women for whom a lose-lose equation exists. Whether women uphold or contest the rules is to a degree irrelevant, because it is men's behaviour, which keeps them in a disadvantaged position. It is interesting that a few (highly educated) men also perceive the *Cpbab Srei* (Rules for Women) to be intimately linked to women's continued lack of power. Setha is 48 years old and is a doctor at Angkor Children's Hospital. He previously studied in the US and Thailand and has worked for UNTAC, ILO and UNESCO. Sitting around his family dining table, he explained to me that:

'I feel very bad for women. You have to be constantly aware of not disappointing men- that's the culture. For me, there is no way. But the duties are there for men in the countryside. Men must be physically stronger than females, but mentally in my opinion, no. My wife is smarter than me! Eighty percent still follow strict Cambodian roles like the *Cpbab Srei* [Rules for Women] but yet some people are re-interpreting it in their own personal ways. We have to understand each other and not just understand the *Cpbab Srei* [Rules for Women]!'

Mostly, if you want to do something you need your heart, body and mind- but if it is only partial your heart won't allow you- even if duty is written in law people apply it in different ways according to their environment. We never talk about this but I think this is how most women feel, especially with their increasing employment.'

(Setha, male, Slorkram, 48 years old, married, doctor)

As Setha explains, he does not agree with the gendered rules. He believes that it is more important for men and women to understand each other in the context of their own experiences rather than through literary, abstract comparison. Despite high levels of observance to the dictates, Setha brings to light how some women

are re-interpreting tradition to accommodate their personal values and working lives. The interview shows how the *Cpbab* has to be fundamentally accepted both in thought and action, which many women either by necessity or choice are not able to do in light of their mounting income-earning responsibilities outside the home (this is elaborated on in Chapter 6).

The scenario in which change has to be accepted may go some way to explain why the Khmer Rouge failed to re-orientate people's gender scripts and why participants do not cite any of the egalitarian ideals of the period in their construction of the 'ideal' man and woman. For political dogma to be enacted, it cannot be externally imposed but has to be accepted on an individual rather than collective level. Pre-revolutionary ideology proved resilient in the face of this political upheaval. Ideals are more susceptible to change however from economic forces, which render traditional guidance for women increasingly outdated (again, this will be dealt with in Chapter 6). The overarching durability of the ideals and the unison in which participants refer to them shows the urgency of demonstrating to men why it is in their own interests to pursue more equitable relationships with their female peers. It is also vital that fears about the dilution of the feminist agenda is replaced with a focus on getting men to become aware and accountable for the dominant masculine norms, which are arguably one of the main factors driving gender inequality (Esplen, 2006). This is clearly borne out in Nakry's interview. Unlike the *Cpbab Srei*, the *Cpbab Proh* is not subject to any level of critique by respondents and even in Setha's interview, whilst the rules for women appear to be the topic of more extensive debate, the importance placed on men to be physically and mentally stronger than women, remains largely unquestioned in my findings.

5.1.2 The Disjuncture between Ideals and 'Rights'

My second point, which is partly a corollary of the first, is that the ideals, which dictate how women should act, are being challenged by the ascendance of human rights discourse. It is important to show how the ideological fixities of gender roles are at odds with the principles of equality, which are increasingly promoted in Cambodian society. Male and female participants regularly highlight the

rhetoric of equal rights as one key example of gender equality. With the persistence of strict gender ideals however, a high degree of ambiguity characterises women's interpretation of gender change in comparison to men's. For example, although women are nominally guaranteed equal rights with men in the 1993 Cambodian Constitution, 'the ability to claim these rights is subject to prevailing social ideas and attitudes about power and gender relations' (Gorman, 1999a: 1). This can be seen in two ways in a discussion group where I asked participants if they agreed or disagreed that women should have equal rights with men. The group was conducted with three women and three men all aged between seventeen and twenty-three years old in the rented room of one male participant (Box 5.2). All the discussants were young artists studying at *Artisans D'Angkor*, a company that recruits and trains young people in traditional and contemporary arts and crafts oriented towards the wealthy tourist market.¹

Box 5.2: Women's rights from the perspective of Slorkram artisans

Sor (M):	It depends on your personal vision. Some think yes, whilst others think not, such as riding the motorbike. If females act as if they are men then it is not good and can affect society.
Vana (F):	But male things affect society more seriously than female things.
Charm (M):	Even if male things do affect society more, men are gold.
Li (F)	If we make a mistake it can affect society the same, male or female, but we are both part of society.
Vana (F)	We should change so we get the same rights as men.
Sor (M)	I also think the situation should change but it depends if parents agree or not.
Vana (F):	Having the same rights does not mean that women can work and do everything that men do. For example, if there is violence at home we have the equal right to complain to the police but we do not have the brawn to do the same as men.

¹ For further information see www.artisansangkor.com

The first point relating to Box 5.2 is the ambiguity in Vana's statements, which reflect broader difficulties that female participants have in reconciling old ideals with contemporary rights. Vana seems to be uncertain of what 'rights' mean when trying to square them against the naturalised characteristics of each sex. For example, while she believes in equal rights, this does not mean that women are on an equal footing with men in domestic disputes as men are physically stronger than women. Vana's ambivalent response could be attributed to the way that women in Cambodia simultaneously and creatively switch between various positions and discourses in accordance with social circumstances (Derks, 2005: 225), with the discussion group context guarding against Vana explicitly rejecting ideals of female behaviour in front of men. I believe Vana's perspective is more likely a response to the disturbing trend (I also identify in Chapters 6 and 7), that while in theory women now have equal rights with men, this is not being met with an equivalent change in men's behaviour which renders gender justice somewhat illusionary. Men's continued reference to traditional realms of authority rather than to a new era of fairness is reflected in Sor's beliefs that women's rights are both subject to parental agreement and should not mean that women 'act' like men. This relates back to the equation between tradition and respect, which men believe women must carefully navigate.

Second, although there is disagreement in the extent to which 'male things' (male behaviour) affect society more negatively and significantly than 'female things' (female behaviour), both men and women agree that although men may create problems within households, they remain like 'gold'. When 'gold' (men) is dropped in mud, it does not lose its value, unlike 'cloth' (women), which is irreparably soiled. This proverb is heavily referred to by men and women in my research and is a frequent source of metaphor used to authenticate the differential statuses of men and women (as I suggested in Chapter 4). The way that participants utilise the proverb to legitimate and/or characterise the unequal relationship between women and men lies in contrast to academic canon that old proverbs cannot be used to construct a hegemonic representation of Cambodian society, since 'the range of patterns and meanings assigned to each is far too complex' (Ledgerwood, 1996: 42).

5.1.3 Gendered Interpretations of Tradition

My third main point is that although traditional ideals persist, the rationale informing men and women's adherence to them is perhaps more complex than it would appear. Women fulfil their household obligations not simply out of reverence to tradition but borne predominantly out of necessity. In contrast, men arguably have more to gain by maintaining the status quo and therefore upholding traditional values. This is exemplified in interviewees' gendered interpretations of a historic Khmer proverb:

Better to lose one's father, than one's mother;
It's better to lose one's goods when the boat sinks in the middle of river,
than one's goods when the house burns down

Sauv slâp ba kom aaey slâp mé;
Sauv lang tuk kântal tonlé, kom aoey phloeng chheh phtah

(Cited in Fisher-Nguyen, 1994: 101)

According to Guillou (1993: 17) the proverb above symbolises 'the importance of mothers being seen as stable, like a home, while fathers are represented by a (unstable) canoe [or boat] on a river'. In my findings I discovered accordingly that all participants associate women with prosperity and security. Men and women's interpretation of the proverb diverge however in regard to causation. First, as I mentioned in Chapter Four, men deem women 'closer' to home because of their roles as wife and mother. In men's explanation of the proverb, these naturalised assumptions of women's 'biological rootedness' to home are drawn upon to explain, almost exclusively, that it is better for a father to die, as only women can look after children.

Second, in contrast to men's very literal and unitary interpretations, women tend to be less deterministic in their discussions of the proverb. Women think the association between a father and a canoe is connected with men's failure to act responsibly, rather than women's connection to home justified on the grounds of biological difference. Two premises underpin this. First, women say that a father

cannot look after children, as men are normally not at home enough to do so. It is therefore men's disregard for household well-being that forces women to deal with home-based childcare and housework. Second, men do not fulfil their marital obligations and often remarry, paying more attention to their new wives than to their children. In turn, a father will often fight with his offspring. To compound this, new wives supposedly give little attention or care to their step-children. Typically, new wives do not put salt in the children's soup, despite ensuring that her husband's tastes delicious. According to women therefore, the canoe is unstable like a father, whilst a 'home' is stable like a mother- not because this is tradition necessarily, but because husbands do not conform to the idealised notion of men in Box 5.1 as faithful, loyal and respectful towards their wives. The importance placed by women on their role running the household conforms with evidence from around the world that it is women who with deepening inequalities have been left to shoulder the burden of adjustment as 'shock absorbers' and carers for households on the edge of survival (Elson, 2002).

5.1.4 The Divergence between Image and Reality

Fourth, I want to demonstrate that while there is little conflict between participants in regard to what constitutes the 'ideal' man and woman there is divergence in opinion between ideals and traits, image and reality. In order to examine how 'male' and 'female' are constructed across my wide sample of men and women, respondents were read a series of personality characteristics and then asked which they felt to be male, female or both. According to my research assistants, the traits selected for analysis (from Doyle's 2002 work in Vietnam) are transliterated as the following (Box 5.3):

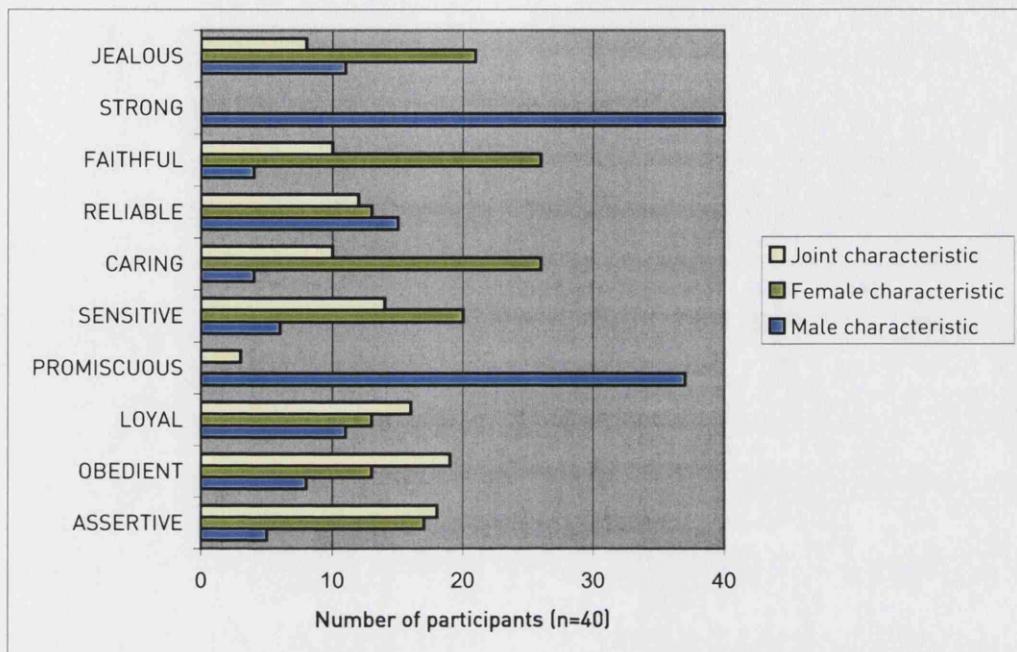
Box 5.3: Gender dimensions transliterated from Khmer to English

Assertive (<i>del tuk chet loe klun eng</i>):	The state of believing in one's own self
Obedient (<i>del sbad bang khab</i>):	Whether people follow orders
Loyal (<i>smas trong</i>):	The state of giving trust to one's partner; not willing to have another partner
Promiscuous (<i>phit kbati</i>):	To have an illegal relationship with another person
Sensitive (<i>ngay chheo chab/nhay tock chet</i>):	To cry and get upset
Caring (<i>kang val</i>):	Thinking about the family a lot
Reliable (<i>del arch ping pak ban</i>):	To be dependable
Faithful (<i>del arch cheak ban</i>):	Giving trust to each other
Strong (<i>klang</i>):	Physical strength
Jealous (<i>Bra chan</i>):	Not allowing spouse to contact

The approach I took obviously has limitations in the way attributes are quite simplistic and do not represent complexity of representation, but are nevertheless useful to grasp the construction and reproduction of gender identities, and the role of gender ideologies in the reproduction of unequal power relations (Saunders, 2002: 11). As Figure 5.2 shows, according to the twenty male and twenty female semi-structured interview participants, predominantly male characteristics are those that befit an empowered group including being strong (40/40 participants), reliable (15/40), and in the sexual realm, promiscuous (37/40). Women on the other hand are the most caring (26/40 participants), faithful (26/40), jealous (21/40) and sensitive (20/40). This leaves obedience (19 participants), assertiveness (18), and loyalty (16) as joint traits, which in contrast suggests a certain ambiguity.²

² Gender -disaggregated findings are not shown on Figure 5.2. Women in both communities (20) predominantly view men as promiscuous and strong, women as assertive, sensitive, caring, faithful, obedient and reliable, leaving only loyalty as a joint

Figure. 5.2: Gender characteristics assigned by male and female participants



Two themes are striking in these findings. First, in the case of promiscuity particularly, it appears that men's ideals are subject to little regard, unlike women's, which men draw on at strategic times to legitimise their power. In fact, masculinity appears to be largely tied to the contradiction of (sexual) codes of conduct rather than adherence to them with licentious behaviour generally valued positively by male respondents in my research. As I highlighted at the outset, the onus of ideals is on women to avoid behaviour that risks compromising her respectability and for men to comply with ideals that improve their status. Paradoxically, while men regularly and purposely go against accepted norms of behaviour, the analogy that men remain like gold takes on renewed significance. Rather than endangering men's reputation as the *Cpbab* dictates, men's behaviour is a way of maintaining their rights and rewards. As Teap explains, slouching outside her rented room combing her hair ready for work,

characteristic. Men (20) allot the majority of attributes to both genders, with no characteristics assigned solely to women, but do isolate strength and promiscuity as a solely male preserves.

'Now when women are mature we can go freely anywhere because we know what is right and wrong and can decide to go to work if we want. For men although they go for walks and do not stay at home, they are good. When they study high and get a job, it is excellent. Women are considered like white clothes, which once they have gone in the mud cannot be washed and cleaned to its original white colour. Men are like gold that can go in the mud, and when we pick it up and wash it, it is still gold- not changed at all.'

(Teap, female, Slorkram, 30 years old, deserted by husband, waitress)

It is clear in Teap's interview (much like the discussion group with young artisans in Box 4.2) that despite the gains in women's ability to participate in education and waged work, underlying ideologies constrain women's equality because of men's prerogatives and identities.

The second striking feature of my data on gender characteristics is the ambiguity present within the traits assigned to women with 'assertiveness' and 'obedience' being pertinent examples. Lilya (2006b) reports, when Cambodian women were asked 'what is a woman?' the question was typically answered more easily and consistently than men who were pictured in a more diverse and fragmented manner. For example, while women were usually described as being shy, honest, humble, gentle, hard working, thrifty and uninformed, men were seen as intelligent, knowledgeable, or as being constantly drunk (*ibid.*). While Lilya (2006b) interprets this as indicative of a greater number of identity positions and/or discourses for men to assume given the restriction and domestication of women, I contend that the ambiguity shown in my research reflects difficulties women are facing. These include aligning traditional visions of femininity with expanding employment opportunities (which arguably signals a certain degree of assertiveness on women's part). In fact, men's identity positions appear more limited than women's, with strength and promiscuity being the only two attributes solely assigned to men.

5.1.5 The Meaning and Desirability of Change

My fifth and final example shows the divergence of opinion concerning the meanings and desirability of change. While the discourse of equal rights in Cambodia's move to democracy has already been acknowledged as a sign of women's advancement, participants give other examples of change. These include the influence of tourism; western fashions on styles of clothing, information technology, and lastly and most frequently mentioned, the importance now placed on education. The environment of change is exemplified in the discussion group I conducted again with young artisans. Charm describes Siem Reap as experiencing 'culture shock' with the behaviour of younger generations moving at a more rapid pace than that of traditional Khmer culture (Box 5.4).

Box 5.4: The meaning and desirability of change from the perspective of
Slorkram artisans

Charm (M): The behaviour of the young generation I see in Siem Reap is progressive. But sometimes I think that no one is ready because it causes problems. Culture shock!

Vana (F): They [older people] should compare the young people of this time who so rapidly have learned to read, use computers and speak different languages in contrast to their generation.

Li (F): It is normal that we interact with each other's cultures. If we don't change something we won't develop, just like a frog in the well that cannot see beyond its immediate environment. We need to change for development.

Brak (M) But we shouldn't completely change our culture. We don't forget the old rice pot when we get the new one.

Vana (F) If the rice pot is old we should forget it.

Charm (M) But we can repair it and use it again.

Katherine: Do you think Khmer culture is compatible with equal gender relations?

Charm (M): Now there are two points: first is that it is equal in the town but in the village (rural) women dare not do anything because they don't have any education or information. Khmer culture is compatible with equality only in the town but not in rural areas.

Li (F): Bearing in mind different locations, I would identify two groups. The town- or more accurately, educated people, and then those in the countryside. You learn the *Cbpab Srei* [Rules for Women] at school and most educated people remember the poem- to act like this and that. People in the countryside, they feel even more though that they must follow their ancestors' advice.

While the examples of change were quite standard across my findings, the desirability associated with them differ greatly according to gender and age. Firstly in regard to gender, Box. 5.4 shows the conflicting perspectives between male and female participants in the metaphorical significance accorded to the rice pot. While females Vana and Li view change as a positive move towards

development, with the loss of tradition (the rice pot) being an acceptable trade-off, males Brak and Charm argue that Khmer culture (the rice pot) should not be sacrificed in the name of development. In this instance the 'trade-off' made by women is a tactical one between cultural losses in the interests of their personal development and equality. The oppositional perspectives of the students reflect both the contested concept of 'development' and the gendered way that change can be viewed. Within this trend, tradition and modernity are branded onto the distinction between rural and urban. Repeatedly in my research, urban areas are perceived as loci of educational attainment where young people learn to think critically and re-interpret tradition. Charm argues for example, that Khmer culture is only compatible with gender equality in towns and cities, since rural women are constrained by their lack of education and information. Education in my research is thus strongly and consistently related to women's autonomy and directly contradicts the abolishment of education in the pursuit of equality between rural and urban by the Khmer Rouge.

At the same time that education is cast as an essential route to women's empowerment and development at large, it is also viewed with concern. Laced within participants' perspectives is the feeling that education contradicts tradition since it teaches young people to question and challenge the hierarchies of authority. This process goes against educational culture in Cambodia whereby 'importance is given to recitation rather than to reflection' (Thion, 1993: 98). The ambivalent position adopted by some women in regard to this, is reflected in Sophoan's account of societal change,

'There is change because in the past, children did not study so they lived under their parents. Parents' didn't want their children to study or write a letter to their boyfriend or girlfriend but now children study to develop the country. When children study more and know more, they act opposite to the culture. Now it is common to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. Now we are hybrid and we are not pure Khmer culture. If we were completely Khmer culture, society would be very strong.'

(Sophoan, female, Slorkram, 35 years old, married, newspaper seller)

Sophoan's observations mirror the concern in the Sangkum period that 'education was blamed with inverting the 'traditional' position of women in society' (Jacobsen, 2003a: 204). More specifically this manifests itself in a concern shown by parents that if 'their daughter could read and write love letters before they had the opportunity to arrange a marriage' they 'could be used to prove that the girl was not a virgin' which would degrade their social prestige and the number of presents received (ibid. 205).

This historical legacy within contemporary thinking is particularly reflected in perspectives of older participants leading to clashing ideological viewpoints on the desirability of change between generations. In concordance with the *Cpbab*, older generations are universal in their criticisms of children and young people who have boyfriends or girlfriends (as Sophoan highlights), who 'go out for walks' too much and who dare to oppose their parents by failing to seek permission to leave the home. As 82-year-old Buntha told me, these concerns relate to the wider issues of respect between generations, which are again plotted onto the ambiguous relationship between education and the subversion of tradition. As Buntha told me,

'We can see bad boys- they park un-orderly, ride very fast- they are not tolerant of each other. Some have education and are good; others who have not are bad. In the past the young boys were uneducated but they followed and respected their parents. Now they speak to their parents' impolitely- some children do not respect their parents and kill them'

(Buntha, male, Slorkram, 82 years old, single, Buddhist monk)

Buntha in Khmer terms is referring to *Daeleng*, which in its literal translation means 'walk for fun'. *Daeleng* are the leisure activities that are pursued outside the home including Karaoke, gambling, drinking, meeting with friends, dancing and hiring prostitutes. This socially disruptive behaviour is highlighted by young and old as increasingly focused around the consumption of drugs (*yama*), and the popularity of the motorbike, which means that young people have greater mobility than in the past. Ideal men, rather than riding around on their highly prized motorbike, should be instead using their spare time to prepare for the future through education, earning money or assisting family members. Arguments between parents and their children are most commonly caused by the divergence between ideals and young people's 'deviant' behaviour.

5.2 Ideals of 'Home'

While gender ideals have been shown to both express and reproduce social inequalities, at the same time they are increasingly subject to critique. The home is an integral part of this process in which the resilience of pre-revolutionary ideology is combining with new empirical realities in a very different era. There are three main ways that this conundrum is unravelling through the meanings associated with 'home'. First and foremost, gender ideals remain closely linked to, and constitutive of 'home'. 'Home' in Cambodia is a power-laden concept, which epitomises normative expectations about familial relationships and spatial geographies of morality. Second, related to this, despite the turbulence of recent decades, 'home' is generally characterised by fixity rather than mobility in which women's residence away from family, or living alone (and men's presence away from the home on their motorbike) is construed negatively. Third, somewhat illogically while the 'home' represents tradition, urban migrants who view 'home'

in multiple terms also increasingly equate it with mobility and modernity. Before examining the re-construction of 'home' in these three ways, I want to provide some context surrounding the destruction of the Khmer home in order to show how since the reign of the Khmer Rouge has ended, inequality has been 're-homed' under the facade of restoring tradition.

5.2.1 The Impossibility of 'Home'

According to most research participants, experiences of the Khmer Rouge regime took the form of separation from family members, everyday practices and familiar environments.³ Male and female respondents describe the regime as characterised by complete regulation with a highly disciplined approach to every aspect of everyday life.⁴ Many participants talk literally and metaphorically of living in the face of a gun with soldiers having absolute control over their lives and of being forced to adjust or to be killed.⁵ In this period, the home was deliberately targeted either by being pulled or burnt down in order to construct

³ In people's everyday lives today however, these experiences are rarely spoken about, and some younger participants say that they have not heard about the experiences of their parents since they would be too hard to hear. When parents do transmit knowledge about the conflict, the vast majority of them explain about the killings that were committed without reason, the acute hunger they felt and the necessity to steal food as a result. Stealing food is an interesting example of the behavioural resistance shown by many, even though the crime of having food and eating it outside the collective was punished with torture or death. Instead, many family members resisted this policy by gathering food such as foliage or broken rice to eat.

⁴ This is akin to Soviet society which was based on 'the profound reconfiguration of domestic relations, the individual, the home and daily life as a part of a larger, highly contested and demiurgic process of social reform' (Buchli, 2004: 210). Along with the Khmer Rouge, Soviet social reformers the sphere of daily life was the arena in which fundamental restructuring of society was materialised (ibid).

⁵ As a reaction to the fear instilled by the Khmer Rouge, some male and female participants referred back to old customs and beliefs to ensure their survival, thus contradicting the notion of *Year Zero* (see Ponchaud, 1978). Some participants prayed to the old spirits (*Nek Ta*) and smeared soil on their heads for help, while others wore what they referred to as 'magic waist strings'. Magico-religious articles such as amulets, strings, and Buddha images are common. *Katha* (amulets or what appears to be a piece of string) are commonly worn around the neck by children or around the waist by adults. Amulets attain their power from prayers or incantations, from the words inscribed in the metal portion, from the material from which they are made, or from other attributes. Adults and children may wear strings or chains around their necks with an amulet containing Buddhist transcription for protection.

communal buildings. The death of family members either by force or through illness co-existed with material dispossession as Charya explains,

My children and I escaped and were crying in the paddy field as the sun rose. My husband was sick and passed away and while we were cremating his body, Pol Pot troops came and burnt down the house. Everything was burnt, even my rice pots.

(Charya, female, Slorkram, 63 years old, re-married, retired)

The personal narratives of loss from all participants alive at this time are most commonly expressed through the concept of the 'empty hand', being symbolic in its meaning in Buddhist philosophy as 'rendering oneself empty'. For respondents this took both material and emotional form. The sense of bereavement associated with the destruction of participants' birth-house is particularly acute. The Khmer Rouge thus rendered obsolete the empirical reality of home and challenged the conceptualisation put forward by Somerville (1992) of 'home' as 'hearth' (sense of warmth, relaxation and comfort providing physiological security), as 'heart' (the site of love, emotion, happiness and stability- emotional security), and as 'privacy' (being a private space and having the power to control one's own boundaries). The scale of destruction suggests that the Khmer Rouge understood the important relationship between place, space and familial relations and in destroying the domestic landscape aimed at substituting it with sentiment and emotion for the regime. By putting society in a perpetual state of flux, allegiances between villagers could also not be formed. In current daily life however, I found that despite the Khmer Rouge's repressive use of migration, in the migration histories of participants, none included movement during the conflict. This is exemplified by oral history testimonies I conducted with two men of similar ages, who despite being from vastly different backgrounds have largely identical experiences of the period (thus mirroring the enforced uniformity that the communist regime tried to achieve)(Box 5.5).

Box 5.5: The impossibility of 'home' from the perspective of male participants

In Pol Pot I never had an exact place to live. They ordered us to work in a co-op. Moving from place to place I felt scared. It was very difficult making relationships also because I was always rapidly moved on staying in short temporary places. It was difficult when we moved from place to place but if we didn't move we would die from the fighting. Each time we moved we only had money for transportation and never for rebuilding a new house. Also when we were moving we slept along the way in the day and night- that is not easy. When we moved to a new place we felt sad because of what we had lost. I also felt unsafe because we had no security and I was scared of robbery.

(Chantol, male, Krobei Riel, 41 years old, married, farmer)

The feeling of moving around is like moving from any house in a disaster situation- awful. During the Pol Pot regime, you don't get to feel at home- your heart...your feeling doesn't stay in the same place for a long time. It simply doesn't occur when people are forcing you to be in a certain place. When I experience places from my real heart, they stay with me forever. In my dreams.

(Nimol, male, Slorkram, 44 years old, married, teacher)

Both interviews in Box 5.5 confirm how periodic movement was not conducive to forming bonds of friendship, assigning meaning to places and spaces, and thus feeling 'at home'. Chanthol for example had always lived in Krobei Riel, and recalls his happiness and comfort before the war but trouble during it as he had to escape from place to place and was separated from his family. To compound this, he was not even happy when he returned back to his homeland as he was offered land in a different plot than before. This is a viewpoint shared by Nimol who talks about his migratory experiences and their affect on his attachment to different places. Living in Phnom Penh in 1975 when the Khmer Rouge regime took hold, Nimol was evacuated to Takeo Province, Pursat and when the

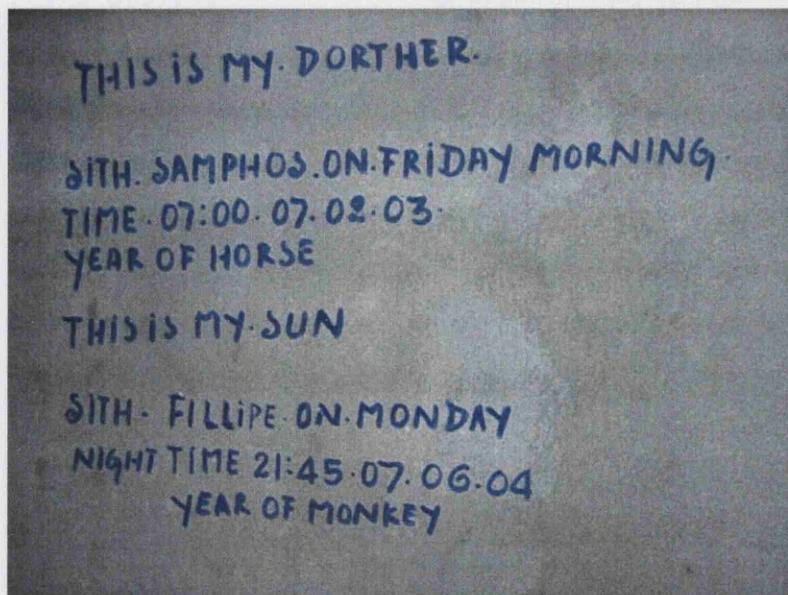
Vietnamese invaded, to the Thai border where he lived in the jungle for ten years before moving to Siem Reap.

The interviews demonstrate three things. First, the longing for 'home' during and after the conflict re-iterates my argument that while the Khmer Rouge were successful in destroying the physical manifestation of home, they failed to replace home with some other emotional anchoring. More broadly, the dislocation that participants feel typifies the manner in which the Khmer Rouge is viewed as a temporary rupture rather than permanent reconfiguration of people's spatial allegiances. Second, the regime could not create loyalty to its cause (or modify people's gender ideals) because many Cambodian people fundamentally did not agree with their intentions (as Nimol illustrates through his reference to forced migration). Third and finally, the examples emphasise the importance of accounting for structure, but also agency in academic discourse on the Khmer Rouge and of avoiding the danger of reducing 'concrete subjects to compelled, unreflexive performers of dominant discourse(s)' (Nelson, 1999: 349).

5.2.2 'Home' as an Expression of Normative Familial Relationships

The resilience of 'home' in the face of extreme upheaval is displayed in the family- oriented conceptualisation of 'home' in which a 'normed' set of familial relationships are supposedly played out. While I am fully aware of the dangers of equating home with family, it is interesting that despite the attempts by the Khmer Rouge to destroy bonds of kinship, these very relationships are now viewed as constitutive of 'home'. Despite the loss of family members in the war, inequality has been re-inscribed onto 'home' with access to it differentiated according to family situation in which the nuclear household is valued and judged as the ideal. This is my first example of how the meaning of 'home' is re-configured post-Khmer Rouge and is encapsulated in Figure 5.3, a photo taken by a sixty-one year old woman from Slorkram who directly wrote her children's names and birth details on her walls in order to show her guests that although being widowed, she had once borne children within a 'conventional' spousal couple set-up.

Figure 5.3: Ork's annotated plastered wall



(Photograph by Ork, Slorkram, July 2004)

The reconstruction of the home life is also aptly displayed in the 'Happiness Family' waxwork at the Cambodian Cultural Villages theme park in Siem Reap, which according to its description shows the prosperous Khmer family (Figure 5.1). The scene shows a nuclear family sitting on modern western-style furniture relaxing together, with the son studying, the girl playing in her mother's company and the father speaking on the phone. The scene is extremely atypical in respect of the usual layout and atmosphere of Khmer homes but while it seems 'easy to criticize the Cultural Village for its superficiality, its lack of "authenticity," or its apparent irreverence', as a new space of analysis, it is an important and worthy point of enquiry (Chau-Pech Ollier and Winter, 2006: 5-6). Through the tourist attraction, the Khmer family is represented in a gendered way with the man on the telephone controlling the permeable external boundary to the home whilst the woman looks after the children. The woman in the family is also reproduced as child carer and the bearer of tradition through her traditional Khmer style dress (variations of which are extremely common in Cambodian tourist publicity). In contrast, her husband's wears a western style shirt and tie. As a result, women as hosts are subject to gendered tourism marketing privileging male authority.

The association made between 'happiness', the nuclear family and tradition is further legitimised through the concept of 'home' identified by participants themselves. I first came across this association through Noung who had learned about the supposed difference between 'house' and 'home' in English. Noung emphasises 'home' as a familial space with it not being possible to have or to feel 'at home' if one is of marital age but remains unmarried or lives outside their family group. Furthermore, 'home' is the 'ideal' but is not available to everyone as she articulated:

'The house is for staying in. Home is when you have a father/mother who you can receive warmth from. For me, when I lived with my friend, I didn't know what home was. I worked hard and after would just go home to sleep. Home is now living with my mother for the last year. I have feelings. It is hard to explain.'

I then questioned her what she meant by warmth? Noung replied that,

'I know from my English teacher that the house is different from home. The home is sweet- you miss it. It touches your heart. I think some people who marry and have lovely children find their place called home but for unmarried or divorced people, they are not home although in Khmer there is no distinction between house and home.'

(Noung, female, Slorkram, 30 years old, single, NGO employee)

The idea that 'home' signals privilege has particular relevance for Noung who remains unmarried. As she describes herself, living in her friend's house was not sufficient in itself to provide a sense of being 'at home', and thus she projects this experience onto other unmarried and divorced people who she feels are also denied this sense of 'warmth'. The sense of 'home' as 'heart' and belonging is also common. This can be seen in Nimol's earlier reference to 'home' being his 'real heart' and dreams (Box 5.5). It is also supported by Sambath who had no English language knowledge.

'When we talk about the house, we could be talking about the house in one's hometown, the house you rent...but you will get different feelings. Most people don't think they live in a home. My wife doesn't feel at home living here- she wants to go back to her homeland where her family is. So I say to her- are we going to split from each other just because you want to live in your homeland?'

(Sambath, male, Slorkram, 42 years old, married, motorbike driver)

For Sambath's wife, 'home' still means her homeland and the house she now lives in, is just a 'surface shift'. This shows how people re-orientate themselves not only to their new home, but to their old home and memories. Despite the removal of participants from their villages of origin during the Khmer Rouge, migrants' homeland (*srok kamnert*) remains influential in participants' lives. Many migrants from Slorkram return to their homeland at Khmer New Year and Pchum Ben.⁶ Significant meaning is ascribed by participants to their birthplace, which they define as where they were brought up, where their parents cared for them and where food was prepared and served by their mother on a daily basis. At the micro-level also, the importance of family and homeland in articulations of home are manifest in household possessions, and especially those that failed to be confiscated by the Khmer Rouge which are now highly valued in terms of their

⁶ On the 15th day of the waxing moon during the tenth month of the Khmer calendar, called Pheaktrabotr, Cambodian Buddhists celebrate Bonn Pchum Ben- the Festival of the Dead. This is a time when the spirits of the dead ancestors walk the Earth and the living can ease their suffering by offering them food to eat.

ancestral heritage. As Ponchaud (1989: 163) describes, for Khmers in traditional society, 'no place else offered as much protection as the village where the "ancestors" were familiar'. In Cambodia, walls do not necessarily bound the home, but spiritual and emotional attachment is felt towards the rice fields, temples and ancestral sites of participants' homelands. I therefore believe that biographies of home and homeland are being re-written in opposition to the Khmer Rouge's vision of the domestic world as detached and emotionally devoid of meaning.

5.2.3 'Home' and Stability

The second way that 'home' upholds traditional biases is through the relationship that exists between 'home' and stability (as the discussion of the 'canoe proverb' illustrated in Section 5.2.3). This has negative implications for two groups especially- migrants and women. First, since 'home' is conceptualised by participants as characterised by fixity, the migratory strategies that many families are using to reduce their vulnerability to poverty, are also rendering 'home' less attainable. In my research, the migration histories of participants show that forty-six percent of male and female respondents from urban Siem Reap originate outside Siem Reap Province and that seventy-five percent of all respondents do not have familial relations beyond their village. In Krobei Riel, ninety-seven percent of all respondents were born inside the province itself with only twenty-seven percent of respondents not having village relations beyond their household.

Tenure and landlessness are part of the exclusivity of 'home' which is reflected in the experiences of many urban participants. While in the aftermath of Pol Pot, villagers report no conflict over land on return; migration and urbanisation are now creating problems.⁷ In Slorkram commune there are 298 families (1594 people, 777 females) who are living landless on APSARA land along the bank of

⁷ As van Acker (1999:5) writes, starting in 1989, the government reintroduced the possibility of private property, according rights to claimants based on possession- or should we rather say, according rights to the first to have reposessed a property in the general confusion after 1979.

the river (Slorkram commune chief, September 2004). Despite being judged illegal they have not been moved because the authorities have as yet been unable to find alternative land.⁸ For those who live on the illegal land along the river in Slorkram there is a fear that if they are moved their livelihoods will be affected (see Figure 5.3). The threat of eviction (not applicable in Krobei Riel) also means that inhabitants of the area tend not to repair their houses despite growing more dilapidated as they do not feel they warrant investment. This is partly because they are fined if they do make changes with authorities disallowing further development.⁹ Like those that rent property, householders do not grow vegetables and herbs on squatter land either. Furthermore, they feel they are constantly burdened with anxiety about the potential temporality of their homes, as those who borrow houses from friends or family members also experience.

⁸ While in both communities the majority of properties are according to participants 'owned', in my Slorkram sample I interviewed a greater proportion of rented and 'illegal' households. Although the legal framework- a poor synthesis of three different historical legacies of land tenure regimes – gives only possession rights to agricultural land, all economic agents treat them as if they were ownership rights. Consequently, the activation of the land market gives rise to a host of ownership disputes and contributes significantly to intensifying problems of land access for farmers (van Acker, 1999: 3).

⁹ One female participant (Orm) was fined \$10 by local police in 2005 for reconstructing her dilapidated house. Local officials claimed she has not sought the proper permission and accused her of being a new resident. I was therefore asked to give her some of the photos I had taken of her house in 2004 so she could show them evidence of her living there the year before.

Figure 5.3: Squatter land along the Siem Reap River, Slorkram



(Photograph by K Brickell, Slorkram, November 2004)

I found that some participants try and counteract the impermanence of their homes by saving money to buy land just in case they are moved, although for the majority this is not possible. For one resident of the squatter land who had had no title papers but who had paid to live on the river's bank, his home represents relative permanence, having spent the last twenty years moving around Cambodia as a musician. This shows how 'home' is not merely permanent or impermanent but can be viewed along a continuum of (in)stability. Living with his housewife and two children he explains that,

'Before 2002, I was living near the market north from here, but that land belonged to some one else so they moved us. This means my family don't have a real home. I have spent my life moving from place to place following the play. But 2 years ago I received advice from people that I should have a real home- that is why I am here and have made space to build a home. It took all of my money to buy it. Everybody loves home.'

(Bunroeun, male, Slorkram, 50 years old, musician, married)

The advice given to Bunroeun relates to the second group of people who are stigmatised for living away from their family or living alone- women. The living arrangements of women are constrained by social and cultural constructions of gender in which the ideal woman should stay at home, never go out without permission and know and follow Khmer tradition (Box 5.1). This is shown in the discussion group in Box 5.6, which illuminates the discrimination against migrant women, that results in many female students migrating with family members to enrol in higher education rather than alone like men.

Box 5.6: Living alone from the perspective of Slorkram students

Tan (F):	I came here with my family
Sok (M):	I moved here with my mother the first time because I didn't know Siem Reap but after a week she went back and I lived at Wat Bo pagoda before moving into student accommodation
Seang (M):	For me I came here by myself
Et (M):	My brother took me to study at Siem Reap but we lived separately from him because he is living in the district office with other people.
Katherine:	Why did you men move on your own, and you women with your family?
Tan (F):	Yes, it is because the female in Cambodia follow Khmer tradition
Et (M):	I prefer to live alone from the family because it is good for me
Sok (M):	I think that female can't live by her own because of tradition. There is supposed to be a female at home. A woman living alone is like having a toilet in front of the house- it does not smell good to the other people
Doung (F):	If we live alone we will be disdained by other people

As Box 5.6 displays, according to Tan and Doung, if women live alone they will be looked down upon since they are disobeying female gender norms. From a male perspective, a female living alone is compared with a lack of moral cleanliness and hygiene, showing the strength of moral feeling towards household arrangement even by young people.

5.2.4 'Home', Mobility and Modernity

The negativity directed towards mobility is further confirmed in the discussion group with young artisans (Box 5.7) who place an immediate focus on Vana for studying and living outside her parental home. Although laughing, males Charm and Brak make reference to Vana's transgression of accepted gender roles and her 'geographical promiscuity' having migrated alone from Kampong Thom Province.

Box 5.7: Female migration from the perspective of Slorkram artisans

Brak (M): [Turning to Vana] Do you have anything to tell us because you are a Khmer girl and do outdoor work and travel away from your parents? We think the neighbours will talk about you in a bad way. [Laughing]

Charm (M) Oh modern lady! [Laughing]

Vana (F): Yes, sometimes facing people's mouths is hard and getting them to stop talking.

Despite being viewed negatively though, it is notable that mobility is simultaneously viewed as an integral part of being 'modern'. This highlights my third main point- that 'home' increasingly illuminates the disjunction that exists between ideals and the desirability of change. In fact, despite the traditional association made between deviance and mobility, in the participant photography exercise many participants chose to take pictures of their motorbikes. Vannary's driving related experiences of independence are common. She told me that,

'My motorbike has changed my life because I can go out and have friends- I have male and female friends and sometimes we go to Angkor and sing Karoake. But sometimes I stay at home and do the housework. My mother and grandmother had to stay at home, and were not allowed out. In the past, we could not speak freely but now girls can speak loudly. Girls can now leave the house but must respect their parents and must find a balance between inside and outside. I stay at home a lot and do not go out alone. If we live far from the past, we will be criticised.'

(Vannary, Female, Slorkram, 26 years old, single, airline ticket seller)

Vannary brings to the fore the new value placed on mobility and the associated changes in women's rights. This is tempered by a concern to balance time spent between public and private. The need to maintain equilibrium between tradition and change is expressed in Vannary's concern to uphold tradition while at the same time re-orient her life outside the home. It also reflects the wider situation that women find themselves in of having to negotiate their liminal position 'in-between' the past and present.¹⁰

The more positive associations placed on mobility and migration can be paradoxically viewed as consequence of the increased impetus and necessity for migration instilled by the Khmer Rouge. This can be seen by the post-modern sensibilities and moveable concepts of 'home' that some participants appear to have developed. While it can be argued that the Cambodian house built to a modular system whereby houses could be taken down and rebuilt in new locations has always supported multiple understandings of territorial attachment¹¹, the continual movement resulting from the Khmer Rouge's strategic use of migration has created a population for whom movement has become an integral part of their psyche and identity. Furthermore, while at times

¹⁰ 'Liminal' is a term favoured particularly by post-colonial critics, and which refers to the thresholds, boundaries and borderlines of binary constructions (black/white, masculine/feminine). These oppositions are often false, producing blurring and gaps, which might be exploited in order to deconstruct these oppositions.

¹¹ In the past 'when dissatisfied with local conditions, Khmer farmers, who do not bury their dead in the ground, could easily dismantle their house, load it on an ox cart and move elsewhere' (Thion, 1993: 226).

painful, migration is also regarded as a means of personal development. As Setha explained,

'Sometimes I feel I don't want to live here [Siem Reap] any longer. It is good to be in one place but I will not allow my children to stay here, they must have other experiences. You get used to moving around from house to house and learning new things. Your perspectives are different moving from and to varying places, at different times and under different circumstances. You learn something from different people, cultures and lifestyles. For example, in Pursat and Battambang I lived under the same regime yet had a different perspective on life management. I grew up moving- its hard to adapt but you have to make something special at every place- in your environment. In some of the places during your movement you cry...I meet someone special there- my wife- a friend- your neighbours- almost everywhere I go I turn my mind to meeting people. When you move you make something special in each place. For most people of my age, we don't think about this anymore. Especially for me, since I grew up independently- outside the home.'

(Setha, male, Slorkram, 48 years old, married, doctor)

As Setha demonstrates through his comparison of different places, 'home' becomes one point in a more dispersed geography of everyday life. For Setha who has long been separated from family, and for others for whom the war played a part in the breakdown of traditional values, disintegration of families, and the loss of trust amongst neighbours and communities, these factors all combine to make migration easier on the personal psyche. With it both 'new' and 'old' ancestral homes come to mean different things. This is likely to become increasingly relevant with migration and diversification away from farming increasingly viewed as necessary livelihood strategies (these are detailed in Chapter 6). These empirical realities will call for a new, and fundamentally different approach to defining 'home' in order to deal with the spatial reality of the family unit spread across provincial and national borders and may erode the divisive definition of 'home' as it currently stands.

5.3 Conclusions

Chapter Five has demonstrated three main points. First, ideals of gender and 'home' are intimately linked and can reveal new insights into the persistence of inequalities. Despite the egalitarian ideals of the Khmer Rouge, the social constructs related to men and women's behaviour have been 're-traditionalised' and have been mapped onto the morals contours of 'home'. This demonstrates the importance of considering women's but especially men's relationship to different spaces and the underlying social norms, which can otherwise undermine actions directed at women or render them ineffective. Second, I have shown how tradition and change co-exist in people's discourse, which is leading to a number of contradictory standpoints at the individual level. These predominantly concern the tenability of gender ideals, the impact of education on tradition, women's mobility in the public sphere, migration and the identity politics of modernity, and of course, the overall desirability associated with change. As Khmer sociologist, Vandy Kaon observes, 'Khmer society is a like a kaleidoscope, a combination of the old and the new but neither one nor the other' (Ebihara, 1993: 165). This mosaic of past and present relates to my third and final conclusion, that individual actions and beliefs need to be located within the wide framework of social, economic and political change in Cambodia, the effects of which are now considered in regard to the shifting terrain of gender, work and identity.

CHAPTER SIX

GENDER, WORK AND IDENTITY



Figure 6.1: Leakthina resting in the shade
(Photograph by K Brickell, Hotel construction site, Siem Reap, March 2005)

6.0 Introduction

Having considered the divergent ways that men and women are interpreting Cambodia's post-conflict society, Chapter Six examines how people are responding to the changing environment of employment and associated rise of livelihood-related migration. The chapter is structured around two sections. In the first, I consider women and men's experiences of trying to reconcile work and mobility with normative gender expectations, and in the second how this balancing act is affecting women and men's identities and relationships to home. Through this framework I argue three points. One, that while Cambodia's move to a free-market economy is leading to the subversion of gender ideologies in practice, social norms of behaviour and morality are not changing at the same rate. Two, I illuminate the diversity of experiences and perspectives between and within communities in relation to work and home-related developments. Three, I show how the meanings and materialities of 'home' are deeply embedded in these macro-level economic changes. In building on debates in previous chapters and by critically considering the sources and consequences of gender transformations through paid work and migration, Chapter Six lays the foundations for Chapter Seven which examines how these developments are influencing and are in turn, being influenced, through daily life within the home.

6.1 Women, Work and Identity

In contemporary Cambodia, the outward manifestations of gender roles are in the process of being re-ordered in the country's move towards a market-driven economy. Although Cambodian women have for centuries been involved in informal trading, women's work is extending geographically beyond village boundaries. While at the national level tourism does not seem to have contributed much in terms of employment creation, as the main driver of the local economy in Siem Reap, the situation is very different.¹ Although some

¹ Even though percentage wise, the increase in people that are employed in hotels and restaurants is large, the actual employment increase since 1993/4 to 1999 has only been 19,6000 jobs, while for manufacturing the increase for the same period was 124,921 (Kusakabe and Malika, 2004: 16).

researchers emphasise that in Cambodia employment is divided along gender lines (Shams and Ahmed, 1996), women's presence in my research on building sites, in petrol stations, banks and hotels not only challenges this broad-stroke perspective, but contradicts the gender ideals that locate women in the home.

In terms of female employment, I found that the widening of women's workforce participation is primarily related to economic imperatives rather than to in-depth attitudinal change. The impetus for going to work is governed primarily by one or many of the following requirements; to pay school fees; to financially cope after the death of a family member (most commonly a father); to increase household income; to compensate for declining agricultural conditions and related to this, to counterbalance the precariousness of male employment. In Chapter Five (5.2.1) I pointed out for example how ideals can be susceptible to change from economic forces in which women's need-driven work infringes on traditional gender norms. Researching further, I discovered that women have an ambivalent record of progress with regard to work-related gains. They appear to result more from unplanned and spontaneous responses to economic pressures rather than to conscious or systematic attempts to improve the situation of women or to embrace equal rights. Considering the financial motivations behind many women's waged work, it is therefore important to understand the influence of need-driven change more widely in development processes.

Second to concerns for the collective welfare of households, women work out of choice and from an individually driven desire for socio-economic mobility. In Krobei Riel I found that the aspiration to work outside the home is commonly created by peer group discussion of its benefits and the status women feel they gain from other women if they work and travel beyond their rural origins. The route to this is via negotiation with parents in which men typically override young women's aspirations. Lack of education is strategically cited by men as one of the main barriers to rural women's participation in the waged labour market in Siem Reap. The diverging interests of female household members in relation to extra-familial roles are reflected in empirical case studies drawn from my oral history interviews that show the complex relationship between employment, work-related migration, home and 'empowerment'.

6.1.1 The Subversion of Gender Ideals in the Construction Industry

One of the most conspicuous signs of the expansion of work opportunities for Cambodian women is their role as construction workers. This personal observation mirrors the more general pattern noted for Cambodian women to do more 'non-traditional' work than in the past (ADB, 2001). In the later stages of my research, I interviewed those directly involved in these changes on several hotel construction sites along 'Airport Road' (see Figure 2.3 for location). In many ways, the experiences of Leakthina, whose life history I turn to now, resonates widely with other participants. First, her rationale for working is primarily (albeit not completely) motivated by household survival imperatives.² Second, Leakthina's livelihood-related migration to work as a labourer transgresses gender ideals, going against her husband's wishes and traditional notions of 'women's work'.

Leakthina: A woman in the hitherto 'male' world of construction

Leakthina (pictured in Figure 6.1) is forty-three years old and is married with five children. She was previously a farmer in Kampong Thom and has left her eldest daughter to do the housework for the duration of her absence. She now works and sleeps on the building site and interacts congenially with her colleagues, even calling the younger employees her 'sons' and 'daughters'. Just as I found that a different approach is increasingly required to define 'home' to account for the spatial dislocation of the family unit in Chapter Five (5.2.4), Leakthina's use of kinship terms for her co-workers suggests that (at least semantically), women may temporally form 'replacement' families whilst away. This suggests that with autonomous female migration, the conceptual foundations of 'family' like 'home' may become multiple. For this to occur, linkages between rural and urban are required. Leakthina knew about the job because the supervisor from the

² That said, Leakthina was also keen to see Angkor Wat. Angkor has widespread populist appeal and iconic status as a national, ethnic and cultural symbol which attracts Cambodians, particularly at Khmer New Year when the monument comes to represent a recovery from the social, political and economic oppression which characterised the country's recent past (Winter, 2004)

construction site came from her homeland. In the Cambodian context, Derks' (2005:88) description of how migrants rely on, use and maintain family and rural-based networks as they move to the city (as well as extending and creating social networks) is particularly relevant. Consistently in my research, friendship and kin networks like Leakthina's are exposed as prerequisites for securing a job. In this way, it is especially important to have *Ksae*, or literally 'string', 'rope' or 'line' (Derks, 2005:88), which are more commonly referred to as patronage networks (Chandler, 1999:89).

Returning to my first point about the applicability of Leakthina's experiences, I found that labouring is not surprisingly based on a number of economic rationales. More specifically, for the majority of women in their early twenties, these include wages for parental support, and/or to enable them to pay for their own, or their siblings', education. For older women who are present in smaller numbers, the motivation for working is based on the failure of spouses to sufficiently provide for the household. Leakthina for instance explains how her husband's attempts at growing and selling vegetables profitably are failing and her family are falling into greater poverty. For Leakthina, labouring is her first job outside the house and since she is now the primary earner in the household she views herself as household head- especially since she feels her husband is not 'man' enough to be so (Chapter 7 considers household headship in greater detail). As Leakthina says,

'My husband does not have any creative ideas about earning money for the family and although he didn't agree, I came anyhow! He asks people to tell me to come home soon. He doesn't have enough characteristics to be a man!'

I work as a labourer because my family are poor and I cannot find an alternative job. My husband had the job beforehand. My husband did not suggest I work. I decided by myself. I said to him, 'I feel real pity for you, but how can we deal with the difficulties?' Working here is harder than at home. My husband is hopeless now and refuses to work. Nowadays women can

make more money than men. Men cannot do all the things like women. That's why men need women! Without women it is a deplorable situation!

(Leakthina, female, Slorkram, 43 years old, married, construction labourer)

Leakthina's negative views on her husband's failure link to my second point, namely that women's work often undermines social norms. Despite her husband's disapproval, Leakthina moved to Siem Reap regardless and despite statistical evidence that suggests that the decision to work or not to work is rarely one made by women alone (9 percent) (NIS, 2001: 212). Leakthina equates the flexibility of women's roles with their heightened earning capabilities and financial importance in the lives of men and their households. The way that women are adapting to change perhaps more readily than their male counterparts, links back to data on female gender traits (5.1.4) which shows a greater ambiguity in identity positions for women than men.

Women's work on building sites further violates gender ideals regarding the gendered division of labour and the definitional basis of 'women's work'. As I found in Chapter Five, strength is deemed a strictly male attribute, which is related to men's predominance in the construction sector internationally. However, in coming to terms with her new job, like the majority of women on site, Leakthina does not consider doing what is traditionally viewed as 'men's work' as an issue of concern. For a number of women the 'natural' divisions between 'men's work' and 'women's work' are neither accurate nor desirable and only constrain their employment opportunities as Leakthina explains,

'I am happy to get a job here because it is the first I have had outside the home. Other women and I do the easy work like carrying bricks and sand for men. Women should not do the hard work- that's men's work'

(Leakthina, female, Slorkram, 43 years old, married, construction labourer)

Other female labourers also believe that although working within a male-oriented industry, they are conforming with gender norms by playing a supportive role to men carrying only bricks. Women carry them two at a time and mix cement, thereby avoiding the heavy manual work associated with masculine strength. Perspectives vary however between generations. Older women tend to vocalise that work (like Leakthina's) is breaking tradition since it remains a male domain. Nevertheless, when I asked about the evolution of women's role in society I was typically met with indifference from older participants who defined their existence by practicing *Darma* and visiting the Pagoda. This could be related to the hierarchical nature of Khmer society where for 'mature women who have successfully lived up to their destination by bringing up children and running a household- ideal rules are considerably relaxed in practice' (Oveson *et al*, 1996: 36). In rural West Bengal for example, the rituals and rigorous codes of conduct prescribed for high-caste Hindu widows is relaxed in practice as they are no longer regarded as sexually dangerous beings (Lamb, 1999: 553). Similarly, expected forms of discipline and control shifts over the life-course as my research in Cambodia demonstrates.

In connection with older participants' more traditional viewpoints, while the notion of 'women's work' is being extended, gender stereotypes still persist, revealing the resilience of pre-conflict working cultures and values. Unlike the advantages identified by garment workers in a study on Vietnam of the ease of entry and 'suitability to women' (Kabeer and Thi Van Anh, 2006: 49), in construction, old rules persist with women 'too weak' and 'unskilled' to do the better-paid jobs of plasterers or plumbers. On building sites men are better paid than women. One contractor told me that men receive US\$1.5 (6000 Riel) per day as opposed to women's US\$1.25 (5000 Riel.) Men can also earn up to US\$3 (12,000 Riel) a day if they are skilled labourers. In contrast, women do the 'easy' work according to the foreman and thus experience a pay gap. This imitates the situation globally that even with the growing 'feminisation of employment', men's market work is generally paid more than women's (Perrons, 2004: 120). In Cambodia more specifically, men's wages on average are thirty- forty percent higher than those of women with similar qualifications (UNDP, 2001: 6). The

resilience of unequal gender relations against changing forms of employment leads onto my second and following argument pertaining to the resistance of social norms.

6.1.2 The Resistance of Social Norms

While I have indicated that women are now participating in 'new' forms of work in the construction industry, it is important to demonstrate how societal attitudes have not adjusted to the same extent and the implications these hold for women. Furthermore, mobility and migration appear to be becoming integral parts of women's experiences of work, which also are subject to moralising precepts. This can be seen through the experiences of two migrant women. Srei Mom's experiences are used, first, to illustrate the significance that gender ideals play in experiences of work and migration. Conversely, in the second instance, I draw attention to Orm's insights into the successes and failures that migration holds as a means of escaping social stigma.

Srei Mom: Virtuousness and employment

As I highlighted in Chapter Five, constraining women's equal participation in the workplaces of Siem Reap are the clear associations made by participants between virtuousness and the type of employment one is involved in (especially in Krobei Riel where women are more reluctant to break gender norms). This creates a hierarchy of and for women in which employment tied to the home is virtuous, but outside the home less so. Those jobs, which involve being in the sun (such as construction work), are especially low on the hierarchy of employment since they result in darker skin, which is associated with lower status. In other countries this is also the case where a fairer complexion is a symbol of status for many Asian women, and where skin whiteners are popular.³ In Bangladesh and northern India example, the system of *ghungat* (covering of the head) and avoidance of communication with males discourages women from engaging in outdoor work (Ahsan, 1997: 56). In Cambodia, the hours of work also have an

³ In fact, I was repeatedly criticised by the village chief's wife in Krobei Riel as the research progressed for looking too much like a 'Khmer girl' with increasingly tanned skin.

impact. For example, working after dark in restaurants and especially bars is often demonised in people's accounts, being associated with immorality and shame- even for those employed in such industries. Srei Mom is a good example. Working as a waitress, Srei Mom earns US \$50 per month, lives alone and pays US \$15 per month for an identical rented room to that depicted in Figure 5.4. As Srei Mom informed me,

'I work from 5-12pm and sometimes when it is busy, until 1am. I want to find a job in the day but I haven't found one yet. I don't like this work because I work amongst people who have drunk and sometimes the guests disdain me and show no respect. In Khmer culture, the girl that works at night is not good, but I have to do this for economic reasons.'

(Srei Mom, female, Slorkram, 28 years old, deserted by husband, waitress)

The harassing conduct which Srei Mom alludes to is not uncommon in Cambodia where women are often purposely employed to attract male customers (Aafjes and Athreya, 1996). Srei Mom tolerates such behaviour because of the economic difficulties she faces following her husband's desertion to marry another woman. Srei Mom also has a fourteen year-old son to support through school.

An additional element of Srei Mom's difficulties is her migrant status. Srei Mom migrated from Kandal Province with a female friend in 2003 (who subsequently moved to Phnom Penh). It was the first time she had migrated except at a young age during the Khmer Rouge when she was evacuated to Battambang Province for three years. Like Srei Mom, most female migrants experience a series of problems on arrival. Her son (Sok) lives in her homeland with his grandmother and as a result she feels considerable emotional pain living away from him. I found that women use coping strategies such as photography to deal with this separation. As Rose (2003: 11) contends, the more distant people are, the more important photography becomes. Absence also inflects the viewing of photographs, with photos looked at more when the people pictured are far away (*ibid.*). Srei Mom for example, carries around a photo of her son at all times on her mobile phone (Figure 6.2) and in the participant photography exercise

deemed this as her most valued possession.⁴ Sitting on the tiled floor by her bedside she described the following feelings,

'I miss my home very much...every day whether it be sleeping, walking or sitting, I always miss my old house. I miss my son also because I feel more emotionally attached to my son than my parents. I worry about my son because he lost his father when he was young and he hasn't the comfort from his mother either because I have left him. Sometimes I think I will go crazy thinking about him. When I go anywhere I miss him and everyday all I do is for him. I brought only my son's photograph because it is very important to me. I keep the photo at the bedhead because if I keep it at the head you will know that I love my son. Although I am active, I always carry it on my mobile phone, call him everyday, and sacrifice all I can for him.'

(Srei Mom, Slorkram, 28 years old, deserted by husband, waitress)

The mobile phone illustrates the capacities of technologies to transform origin-destination relations. For migrant women like Srei Mom who temporarily move to Siem Reap and who leave their children with extended family, the mobile phone offer a powerful form of solace. The use of the phone allows them to stay in contact, functioning as Castelain-Meunier (1997) argues-in the context of divorced and separated fathers from their children- as a kind of umbilical cord linking the two in a form of virtual parenting. Srei Mom attaches great value to the phone because of the isolation she feels in her destination community, and from her family in Kandal Province.

⁴ The phone was bought for her by a women's poverty community organisation

Figure 6.2: Srei Mom's mobile phone



(Photograph by Srei Mom, Slorkram, October 2004)

The longing for home, which Srei Mom expresses, gives further weight to my argument (articulated in Chapter 5), that home and homeland remain significant in people's lives, even when they are physically apart from them. In this instance, the feeling of being 'at home' is absent (not because of the conflict), but because of the new era of mobility which is separating parents from their children and thus breaking with the traditional conceptualisation of 'home' as family. Srei Mom's concern for her son is therefore partly tied up in her inability to provide him with a sense of comfort (as she phrases it) and thus 'home'. Female migration while not following certain ideals deemed proper for Cambodian women is a means through which women can fulfil their growing economic responsibilities. Despite the persistent emphasis on women's domesticity, it is not strong enough to override women's participation in work and migration-related activities with women willing to subvert long-standing norms in the

pursuit of economic security. This situation reflects the dilemmas and contradictions inherent in the majority of women's lives I learned about.

Orm: Migration as a means of escaping social stigma

Other gender specific conditions act as catalysts for migration, including broader social and cultural reasons. Much research fails, however, to consider the problems that women face in the new communities they migrate to. Orm's story is a pertinent example of this. When the thirty-nine year old's youngest child passed away and her first husband also died, Orm decided to leave her homeland as she felt 'looked down upon'. For a number of months she was disturbed at night by male villagers hitting the underside of her house with sticks. This is supposedly because they were the type of 'greedy' men who wanted to have sex with her outside lawful marriage because she was a widow living as a female head of household. Similarly in India, one of the greatest perceived problems of widowhood is how to control the sexuality of the widow who has not remarried and the associated moral alarm it creates (Lamb, 1999: 546).

Perceived to be more promiscuous than her married counterparts, Orm migrated in the hope of escaping social stigma.⁵ On moving to Phnom Penh to work in a drinking water factory she continued to be discriminated against and as a result moved to Siem Reap in March 2000. The first day she rented a house and bought a few pieces of kitchenware to sell porridge. Yet even in a more urbanised and anonymous context, Orm still feels she is not respected within the community and told me of the constraints she has to deal with in her everyday life,

'In my life I have never had a husband who supported me or my children-they [men] have only caused me disappointment and trouble. I have survived much of life through villagers distributing things to my children when they are sick or I am in trouble. It isn't just food that is a problem though. My house leaks when it is raining because I cannot ask a husband to repair it. What can I do? I can't ask a neighbour for help. I had parents

⁵ In Cambodia not to belong to a nuclear family headed by a husband and comprising children, is to be socially incomplete, and this means that a woman without a husband is in a certain sense equivalent to a person missing a limb (Ovesen *et al.*, 1996).

but they didn't live for long dying during Pol Pot and I am struggling to live by myself (to comfort and support myself)'

(Orm, female, Slorkram, 39 years old, widowed, palm juice seller from home)

While support was given in the past with villagers buying produce and lending Orm money, in urban Siem Reap, this has not been replicated. There remains today a longstanding debate over the state of village-level social relations in post-conflict Cambodia. Based on research first in the 1960s and again in the same village (called Svay) in the 1990s, it is suggested that intra-village cooperation is still alive (Ebihara, 1993). Bonds within a village are not those artificially created through solidarity groups but bonds of kinship (Ledgerwood, 1998). Orm serves to testify that in urban Slorkram these 'bonds of kinship' do not necessarily exist. For example while no Khmer household exists in social and economic isolation, 'the nature of the individual household's relation to others is not grounded in any *terra firma* of easily recognisable organisational structures' but depends on the 'social navigational skills' of its inhabitants (Oveson *et al*, 1996: 85). Orm's problems are constrained by her limited 'social navigational skills' and thus her difficulties repairing the house without any additional unpaid help.

As a result of the aforementioned factors, Orm says she feels defeated having migrated several times and thereby demonstrates the complex relationship between migration and women's empowerment. Enhanced gender equality is not necessarily an automatic corollary of migration. The treatment and experiences of migrant women in cases like Orm's does not differ greatly from female heads of households who do not migrate. Similarly, while other migrants from across the world can 'often become particularly aware of the relational and contextual nature of gender as they attempt to fulfil expectations of identity and behaviour that may differ sharply in the several places they live' (Donato *et al*, 2006: 6), these spatial tactics to avoid gender discrimination avoidance may in fact prove futile.

6.1.3 Meanings of 'Home'

In terms of the third argument structuring this chapter, I found that the meanings of 'home' are embedded in women's experiences of work and migration. Many women use home as a kind of barometer of gender inequality in which progress is measured against their participation in public life outside the home. Rural and urban women's 'thresholds of equality' differ and are mapped onto education and wider employment changes (or lack there of). This can be seen by comparing the interview with Sophie from Slorkram with those of Melea and Dha from Krobei Riel (all in Box. 6.1).

Box 6.1: Work and home from the perspective of urban and rural women

'I am a woman who works outside the home. I am happy despite the fact that I have to work because my father died and my mother has a disease. Being a carver is my first job outside the house. It was my decision although a friend worked here first and took me to work with her. I haven't found carving any harder than housework. It is a normal part of my life. I couldn't find women's work outside the home because I have no knowledge. If I had a choice I would be a tour guide or a seller because a women who does men's work is not good. My mother did not react to me working here. She controls the money I earn and the overall family expenses. After I got this job, we spent more money on rice and clothes, although it doesn't give me enough to study.'

(Sophiep, female, Slorkram, 22 years old, single, cement sculptor)

'I have never worked outside the home. I only take vegetables to the local market. Women can work outside the house- in agriculture and vegetable planting- all because of the increasing demand and market from the development of tourism. We now have the freedom to choose an occupation and improve our standards of living. Women can now do men's work- helping with the farm and making decisions about family work.'

(Dha, female, Krobei Riel, 39 years old, married, vegetable seller)

'Before young women in the village went to work in Siem Reap as construction workers. But now they have decided not to go anymore because they can earn money by making baskets at home. The market has increased because of tourism. But this is also because women are weak and cannot work outside the home. They cannot think well. But for educated women, they can. Generally though, only women whose families are rich enough to study 'higher' can do this. For our poor families, there is no chance. Only if a woman's mind is developed does she have a choice to stop staying at home all the time.'

(Melea, female, Krobei Riel, 47 years old, married, basket weaver)

The interviews in Box 6.1 bring to light a number of points. First, both Sophiep and Melea believe that 'women's work' outside the home requires prior education in order to be accorded respect rather than disdain. Although Sophiep works outside the home, like Melea and Dha, she has received no formal schooling. Instead her two younger sisters' school fees are paid through her daily commute to work (from rural Puok district) as a sculptor on hotel building sites. Despite this reality, in all interviews I conducted, education is equated with mobility outside the home, which is almost unanimously viewed positively by women. However, while Sophiep immediately describes herself 'as a woman who works', Melea's ingrained attitudes remain regarding women's limited mental capabilities. As a result, while employment outside the home is an increasingly integral part of female identity for some women, for rural women it is their lack of waged work that defines their lives as they are conscious that with lack of schooling they will be criticised for working outside the home.

Second, related to this, Krobei Riel women consistently stress the lack of change in comparison with their urban counterparts as they continue to perform the home-based activity of weaving. In fact, the rural home has become more important in recent years with basket weaving taking on new economic significance as a backward linkage from tourism. Rural women thus measure their disadvantaged position against their containment in the home, which has been strengthened by this globalising force. Third, bearing in mind this reality, Sophiep and the other women define 'outside the house' differently. While Melea and Dha view gains in gender equality relative to their participation in agriculture within the village, Sophiep and other participants' who work in Siem Reap view empowerment in much wider terms because of the severity of their economic need (this is more absent to Krobei Riel women with the ascendance of the market for baskets). This means that the home/work, private/public divide is not simply an ideological construct that is socially produced and morally charged, but is also reproduced in material and social relations and practices. This also shows how home is viewed as a symbolic space of inequality in contrast to the public sphere of waged work. In relation to this theme, I now turn to men's perspectives on women's employment.

6.2 Men, Work and Identity

This section gives a sense of the challenges and vulnerabilities that men confront in regard to work-related developments in Cambodia. It shows how socio-economic reconfigurations are challenging the perceived hegemony that Cambodian men previously held in regard to employment, and how men are responding to these trends. I explore this in two ways. First, I examine men's perspectives on women's employment and second, investigate the notion put forward by many men that women's participation in the public sphere of work, along with wider economic changes, are leading to the 'end' of 'men's work'.

6.2.1 Men's Responses to Women's Waged Work

Men's perspectives on women's waged work result from their own employment situations and the progression now associated with women. While women view their increasing participation outside the home as a positive development (6.1.3), men, in contrast, define it in more ambiguous terms. Although both recognise the importance of women's income- the desirability accorded to this development tends to vary between genders. Men's ambivalent position is reflected in the interviews with Seang and Heng (Box. 6.2).

Box 6.2: Women's work from the perspective of Krobei Riel men

'A man without a wife is a man that cannot save money for the future. In my opinion, living without a wife would be like living like a canoe in the middle of a river! I would not mind if my wife got a job as a civil servant or teacher but I would not allow her to earn more than me because I must earn the money...also she would have to work locally and not in another province. If I allowed her to support the family then I would not be a man!'

(Seang, male, Krobei Riel, 24 years old, married, motorbike driver)

'Women now wear the trousers, not just sarongs. Now women are stronger than men because they can weave baskets to get money whilst men study. Now the rights of men and women are the same and if cultivate rice we do it together whereas in the past the male was on the farm, and the wife would stay at home. This means that although people say women are weak and cannot do everything that men can do- often men now cannot do the things expected of him- to provide for the family- so women have to do this on their own. Being dependent on a husband's income is not enough.'

(Heng, male, Krobei Riel, 40 years old, married, farmer)

For men in Krobei Riel and Slorkram, the main rationale for women working is almost exclusively to earn money and no deeper meaning is assigned to it. Box 6.2 suggests that men's perspectives on women's work can be crudely delineated in three ways: there are men who are compliant with women's work, those who place conditions upon it, and those who disagree with it. Taking the first category of men, poorer respondents feel if they do not want the family situation to deteriorate further, they have very little decision-making power concerning the participation of female family members (not just wives) in waged work outside the home. Heng (like Leakthina earlier) realises that sole dependence on male income is insufficient and alludes to women's ability in performing a variety of roles. His comment about women's aptness at doing 'everything that men can do'- defying traditional norms of female submissiveness- relates to wider

attempts by national level machinery to promote women as 'Precious Gems' vital to the economy. As Ing Kath Phavi (The Secretary of State for Women's Affairs) says, 'If you keep women as white cloth, we cannot use all our human resources to develop this country. We have to change the image and value of women's status' so that women can live in harmony with men (cited in Kruger, 2004). While confronting the underlying ideologies that keep women in a disadvantaged position is undeniably needed, I think the focus of the five year plan developed in 1999 to improve women's status somewhat misses the point. As Heng's interview demonstrates, women are essentially used for financial gain with no equivalent versatility adopted by men: the burden is placed squarely on women to respond to changing circumstances.

Seang is a typical example of the second group of men, who place conditions on women's work outside the home. Although Seang would not mind if his wife got a job as a civil servant or teacher (or equivalent positions requiring education), he is conscious that his primary responsibility is to support his family and to maintain his position as household head. Consequently, Seang believes his wife should not earn more money than him (or work outside the local vicinity) and rather than becoming the primary income-earner become a wife and mother 'with economic responsibilities rather than breadwinners' (Safa, 1995: 48 in the context of the Caribbean). This means that while women's income earning potential is accorded with increasing value, (with Seang describing living without a wife being like marooned in a canoe, akin to 5.1.3), women must negotiate their partners' egos and sensitivities concerning men's 'provider' status. This suggests the incompleteness of change regarding the subversion of gender ideologies through work.

Third, for some men who provide adequate income for their family, women's income generation amounts to a sign of failure and is discouraged on personal and status grounds. In line with this, for other men the perception of women's relative increase in economic power is seen as a violation of gender norms. This can be seen through Chanya's experiences of her policeman husband's refusal to allow her to work, despite a desperate desire to earn her own income,

'I used to work outside the house in a restaurant. I stopped in 1991 because my husband did not want me to work after we got married. He wanted me to do the housework. But I still long to work outside the home and although I have asked him several times, he will not allow me. I prefer making money. I used to keep it, earning money like a husband would. At the time, my aunt tried to persuade me to get a husband but I didn't agree as I still felt too young. My mother even ignored me when I worked in the restaurant. She didn't want me to get divorced again- but I should say that it isn't just divorcees that can work outside the home. I worked as a single woman too. And married women can work if their husbands aren't jealous- unlike mine.'

(Chanya, female, Slorkram, 45 years old, married, housewife)

In the context of Slorkram in particular, men's feelings of insecurity are not simply connected to women's increasing economic power, but the concern that if their wives work they will meet men who are richer than themselves and remarry (this is most acute when related to the perceived threat of Western men and their wealth). Although jealousy is an attribute assigned mainly to women, (even wealthy) men are increasingly exposed to this emotion as Chanya believes. With an unemployed son, Nakry also told me how her daughter does not respect her low-income husband and would be willing to remarry if she met a wealthier man,

'The husband follows his parents and respects his wife. He speaks politely with her. But my daughter, she does not follow me. She does not respect

me. She does not even respect her husband. Sometimes she says she wants to kill him. They often argue together when she asks him to fix the baby's milk or when he is sleeping; she wakes him to spite him. She scolds him. If he does not wash the baby's clothes, she insults him and forces him to sleep outside. She does not respect him because his salary is so low, that when she meets a wealthier man, she will leave him. While she is young, she can find a better man to marry.'

(Nakry, female, Slorkram, 50 years old, widowed, retired)

Nakry's commentary on the lives of her daughter and son-in-law is a vivid illustration of the importance placed on men's income-related status by some women, the implications this holds for daily life, and why some men are not willing to risk their wives working outside the house. The broader sequence of examples shows the importance of looking at the interaction between changes in men and women's employment, both of which impact on each other. This is because men's responses to women's employment are viewed in relation to their own, which I turn to now.

6.2.2 The 'End' of 'Men's Work'

Market forces and declining agricultural conditions have generated uncertainty regarding men's roles as breadwinners. In Krobei Riel the perceived 'end' of 'men's work' (deemed to be that related to 'outdoor work' and largely connected with farming) is matched by national data that shows outside of agriculture there have been relatively few new employment opportunities for men in their 'traditional' occupations⁶ whilst for women these are in the process of expanding (UNIFEM *et al.*, 2004). While men's loss of their family 'provider role' during Pol Pot's regime did not receive any mention by participants, it is the subject of vehement discussion by all ages of men in the context of the changes now

⁶ See Rigg (1998, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2006a, 2006b) for research on rural change in Southeast Asia.

occurring in the Cambodian economy (this can be seen in Heng and Seang's interviews in Box 6.2). As Jones (2006: 366) notes worldwide, 'whether in the South or the North, globalising trends- notably western-style liberal democracy and neoliberal economics- have eroded traditional masculinities'. In light of this trend, there is therefore a need to differentiate between men's lived experiences and their lived expectations of masculinity, which are contained in the set of ideals (Box 5.1) which define being a man.

The experiences of Pen illustrate the tempestuous relationship that many men feel towards the national economy. Pen, a farmer, migrated from Kampong Cham province in 2000 with his family to find work in Siem Reap. This was because he could not earn enough money in his homeland. Despite this motivation, in Siem Reap Pen has found it hard to find a job. He puts this down to the poor state of the national economy and his lack of foreign language knowledge, which means he cannot persuade guests to ride on his motorbike. In Pen's words, he works 'infinite hours' and enjoys doing the housework when his wife is selling (from outside the house). Pen encourages his wife to work because they are poor and he believes that husband and wife must generate household income. Reflecting the lack of ideological change, he nonetheless remains a strong believer in Khmer tradition that men have the 'first priority' to be household head. Pen's impressions include the following,

'For men, our role isn't changing. It remains the same and sometimes is actually moving backwards rather than developing. It is because of the end of men's work because the policies of the country are economically poor. In this time, we need to have self-confidence and self-provision...we cannot depend on other people or the government.'

(Pen, male, Slorkram, 49 years old, married, motorbike driver)

The perception that men's work is being eroded is because a large proportion of participants from Slorkram (like Pen) are former farmers who have moved away for the very reason that traditional men's work in farming is in decline. Migration

in some instances is thus held to signify a 'failure' of rural livelihoods. This echoes what Rigg (2005: 174) has coined in the context of Southeast Asia as 'deagrarianisation' with the progressive shift from farm to non-farm work. In the Slorkram sample for example, I recorded that over half of men have changed their occupation in the last 5 years in contrast to the few in Krobei Riel who are responding to the challenges they feel by diversifying their livelihoods (alongside women's basket weaving). Salad growing for example has been introduced by a NGO to supply the locality's many hotels and according to Kusakabe and Malika (2004: 17) provinces such as Siem Reap are trying to cultivate high quality rice to cater to the needs of tourists. However, the more permanent local effects such as supplies of fresh foods to hotels and restaurants have been less significant in Puok District where Krobei Riel is located (World Bank, 2006: 70). Some families in the village are nevertheless trying to supplement their poor income from rice farming by producing rice wine, breeding crocodiles⁷ and going to work in Siem Reap as casual labourers. According to the World Bank (2006: 70), construction is now showing signs of slowing down in the country and may arguably result in the re-entrenchment of livelihood related difficulties for uneducated men (and women) who work on such sites.

⁷ The crocodiles are bought for around \$30 each and fed in the village for up to 2 years. They can then be sold for around \$80 each to middleman who sells for their meat and skin. They are subject to theft and are therefore kept close to the house in small brick pens.

6.3 Home and Livelihood Diversification

According to Youngs (2000: 44), global restructuring and the processes of globalisation are disrupting traditional conceptualisations of political and economic space. In Cambodia's climate of transition, I found that men are increasingly using home space to shore up their resources and income in the face of declining male job opportunities. This means that somewhat ironically while it is women who have traditionally been involved in homework (such as weaving), men are also turning to their own 'home-making' practices to supplement their incomes and in doing so express masculine dominance. Using the home and its land as an economic resource is also compatible with accepted male roles as creators of its external framework.⁸

In Slorkram commune a number of male respondents are capitalising on rising land prices whilst others who also own property are renting rooms on short-term bases. These consist of two forms. First are one-roomed, ground floor purpose built blocks shared sometimes by whole families but also a growing number of single person households (Figure 6.3). Second, are the concrete rooms created underneath the main first floor living area to rent or to store goods, which traditionally would be left open (Figure 6.4). In Slorkram, fifty percent of all the households I interviewed live in a part wood, part concrete dwellings.⁹ In

⁸ In terms of tenure and land titling procedures, since the land liberalisation of 1989 and the confusion that followed due to unclear legislation, women's land rights, especially for female-headed households have been eroded (UNIFEM *et al.*, 2004: 7). Across the two communities, 86 percent of homes were defined as 'owned', 6 percent as rented and 8 percent as borrowed. Within this trend, out of the 50 women I interviewed in the oral histories, 18 participants believe that the home is female owned, 5 male owned, and 19 jointly owned by the marital couple. In contrast, out of the 50 men, only 4 men class the home to be female owned, 15 male owned and 25 jointly owned. It is clear therefore that women's ownership of land rights is subject to a variation in opinion between men and women. The identification of women and men as dual owners of the land does however fit within the aim of land law passed in 2001, which includes a progressive measure to ensure that both partners are vested in name within titling documents. It should be noted that these figures are only indicative since many respondents do not have formal deeds yet consider themselves 'owners' of the properties they live in.

⁹ Urban homes are not only used to generate income but to communicate 'modernity'. The men interviewed in Slorkram vow to develop and follow fashion whilst trying to uphold tradition by building a wooden first floor on top of a concrete ground floor. This decision is

contrast, in Krobei Riel only one house of this type exists. The villagers refer to the owner as the most 'rich' and 'clever' man in the area since he is one of few that has diversified his income as a rice merchant and crocodile farmer.

Figure 6.3: Typical migrant accommodation



(Photograph by K Brickell, Slorkram, October 2004)

also motivated by the rising cost of timber and the relative airiness that a wooden upper storey creates.

Figure 6.4: Part concrete, part wooden house



(Photograph by K Brickell, Krobei Riel, August 2004)

Mirroring how middle class men are benefiting from the migration flows to Siem Reap, in Cambodia 'for those with the means to exploit it, the free market economy has brought a better standard of living and financial security. For those who had few resources to start with, life has become even more of a struggle to survive' (Brown, 2000: 10). While tourism has had a beneficial effect on job creation for example, at the same time participants believe that life has become monetarised and increasingly individualised. Previously a teacher with two daughters, I was told by Bona that,

'Before we shaved coconut together- not like today. People do not trust each other- believe me! They do not believe in religion do not follow their parents, teachers or elders. Also, although Siem Reap is now developed, it is not as safe as before. Now people kill each other for money or property. As I said, before we shared everything, like vegetable, but now, everything is measured- even a small pumpkin!'

(Bona, male, Slorkram, 64 years old, married, home-based knife sharpener)

The perceived widening inequality within the town and can be seen in the variable quality and size of housing within Slorkram commune itself. While many low-income interviewees live on squatter land (see Figure 5.3) there are those who are using tangible assets to survive and prosper through the monetarisation of home. Home is thus a reflection of men's success in providing for their families. Dith who also rents the ground floor of his house to a local association, reflects upon this,

'I feel I most belong in this house as others were temporary and we were informed only a couple of days before we had to leave. I feel close to this house because it is my own- I have collected the soil to fill the ground- and because we have the economic flow to sell things from it. I like it because it is a representation of my hard work. For this reason I took the photos of my wooden chairs. The two birds represent the marital couple and the fruit represent me earning money fruitfully. They will be lasting heirlooms for 100 years or more.'

(Dith, male, Slorkram, 47 years old, married, wood trader)

Figure 6.5: Dith's wooden chair



(Photograph by Dith, Slorkram, October 2004)

In the participant photograph exercise Dith took photos of his wooden chairs (Figure 6.5). As a new and quite often expensive addition to Khmer homes, furniture is one means of exhibiting status and economic prowess.¹⁰ In Dith's interview it is clear that employment only marks men's contribution to households when it is converted into material capital to represent lasting hard work.¹¹ Closeness to home is also produced through physically building the house and being in a location which it is commercially viable to sell products from. In this case, the meaning of 'home' is fundamentally framed around work as a means of symbolising successful familial provision and ascendant status over women through the material representation of the spousal couple (birds) and the fruits of Dith's labour.

¹⁰ According to male participants in Slorkram, the furniture people own is dependent on wealth with traditional carved furniture becoming fashionable (*hoe han*) and available only to those that can afford at least US\$300 for the cheapest set and up to around US\$2000 for better quality wood.

¹¹ Similarly in Thailand. Hirai (2002) explores the status gained through factory women's use of housewarming ceremonies.

6.4 Conclusions

This chapter has considered the employment-related challenges and vulnerabilities which Cambodian men and women are confronting and how these reconfigurations are impacting on their relationships to home. Mirroring the ambiguous imagery discussed in Chapters Four and Five, practices of gender (and 'home') have been shown to be in the process of significant re-orientation reflecting a country in transition. Women, particularly from Slor Kram, are constructing their identities in a dynamic environment and challenging the way that in many societies 'being feminine has been defined as sticking close to the home- masculinity, by contrast, has been the passport for travel' (Enloe, 1989:21). But while women are distancing themselves from home (for either economic and/or personal reasons), men are increasingly drawing upon home as an economic and material resource to reflect male status and power. As a space that has traditionally been ignored or overridden in analyses of men and masculinities, this research shows the importance of viewing the home as a validation of hegemonic male identity in the face of macro-economic change. The extent to which this is replicated by men from all socio-economic backgrounds through their household-level relationships is the subject of the following chapter which considers men and women's micro-level behaviour and experiences of living within the home itself.

CHAPTER SEVEN

INTRA-HOUSEHOLD (IN) EQUALITY

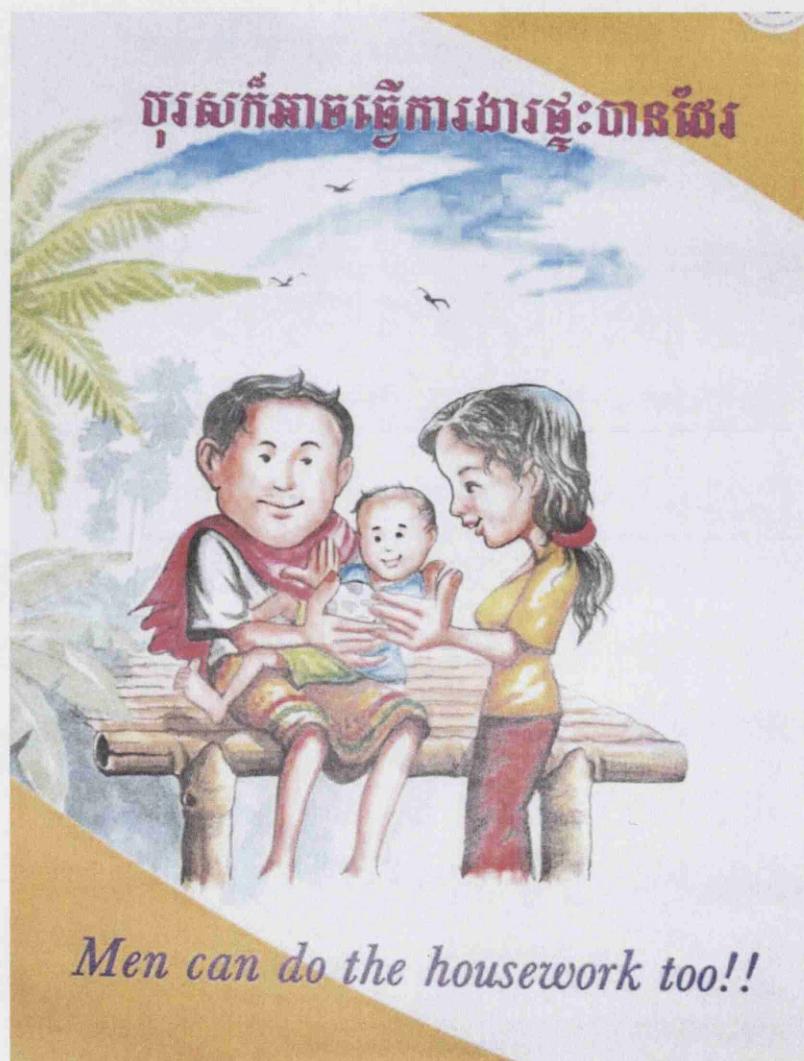


Figure 7.1: 'Men can do the housework too!!'
Poster produced by the Cambodian Men's Network (CMN)

7.0 Introduction

'If the framework for the implementation and fulfilment of the MDGs does not confront and overcome...discrimination against women in the "private" sphere, with no recourse to arguments of culture, tradition and custom, we will reach 2015 with few if any changes in women's position and role in modern society'

(Abeysekera, 2004: 7)

As Abeysekera contends, household level change both in ideology and practice is essential for achieving the global targets enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Chapter Seven directly addresses the paucity of knowledge surrounding the 'gendered micro-politics of negotiation, co-operation and contestation' (Hart, 1995: 61), by examining intra-household (in) equality. After an introduction to the household structures of each community, the chapter examines the gendered territories of household headship, divisions of labour (including housework and childcare), decision-making and resource allocation.

My key observation in this chapter is that in all of these arenas men are using household relationships as a means of creating continuity against the change that surrounds them in the sphere of work. Combined with the persistence of traditional norms, this means that despite women's greater liberty to extend household responsibilities to paid work, they cannot necessarily abandon or even reduce their domestic activities, and are also poorly recompensed in terms of decision-making power. As Chant (2007a: 338) asserts, 'the mounting onus on women to cope with household survival arises not only because they cannot necessarily rely on men and/or do not expect to rely on men, but because a growing number seem to be supporting men as well' (author's emphasis). I argue in this research that while men are able to maintain their power and privilege, the image and reality of women's role in household affairs is not necessarily submissive, but can be characterised as comprising a measure of resistance and assertiveness. The home as a result has become a central site for the battle between 'traditional' values and gender traditions and a new generation of

Cambodians who are trying to reconcile these inappropriate constructs with modern life.

7.1 Household Structures

Before I examine the nature of intra-household dynamics, it is important to outline the household structures present in Slorkram and Krobei Riel (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: Household Structure

Household Structure ¹	Slorkram and Krobei Riel (140)
Nuclear	54% (75)
Extended	26% (37)
Non-kin	3% (4)
Lone father household	2% (3)
Female-Headed (Extended household)	9% (12)
Female-Headed (Lone mother household)	4% (6)
Female-Headed (Lone female)	2% (3)

The figures in Table 7.1 are drawn from the oral histories (100) and semi-structured interviews (40) and show overall that nuclear households predominate (54 percent) with extended households being less common (26 percent). In terms of community comparisons, nuclear households are more prevalent in Krobei Riel (51) than Slorkram (24). This works in reverse with extended households more common in Slorkram (26) than Krobei Riel (11). The predominance of extended households in the urban field site correlates with the largest household size of twenty in Slorkram compared to nine in Krobei Riel (although the average household size between field sites is comparable at 6 and 5 respectively).²

¹ The households are classified on the basis of Chant's (2003b: 170-171) typology as follows: nuclear households constituted by a couple and their biological children; extended households by one or both parents and children joined by other blood relatives or in-laws; female-headed extended households comprising a lone mother, children and other relatives; female-headed lone mother household with a mother and co-resident children; and female-headed lone female with a woman living alone.

² This situation correlates with data from the *Cambodia Demographic Health Survey 2000* (NIS, 2001: 12), which shows that rural households have 5.3 persons per household in comparison to 5.7 persons in urban households. Furthermore, households with nine or

Female-headed households make up a total of fifteen percent of households (with the disaggregated data reflecting the different types). My identification of such households follows most national and international definitions, which 'report a "female" or "woman-headed" household as a unit where an adult woman (usually with children) resides without a male partner' (Chant, 1997: 5).³ The six lone mother households are those who have been widowed, while the three lone female households are independent migrants. All but one of these households is located in urban Slorkram. The total number of female-headed households is therefore larger in Slorkram (25 of them) than Krobei Riel (6), which matches national data showing that the proportion of female-headed households is higher in urban areas (see Miwa, 2005 for further characteristics). Lastly, the four non-kin households are made up of unrelated students living together in Slorkram commune, while the three lone father households are widowed and live with co-resident children (with 1 in Slorkram and 2 in Krobei Riel).

7.2 Household Headship

In terms of definition, according to the 1998 census and survey a head of household is:

'A person who is recognised as such in the household. He or she is generally the person who bears the chief responsibility for management of the household and takes decisions on behalf of the household'

As a corollary of this, the NIS state that in the case of an absentee de jure 'head', the household head is the person on whom the responsibility of managing the affairs of the household falls at the time of house listing.⁴ The answers given to

more members are more common in urban areas (11 percent) than in rural areas (8 percent) (ibid.).

³ I have been unable to find the definition used by the NIS, which refers to female-headed households without specification of what is meant by the term.

⁴ See www.nis.gov.kh for further information on the census

the question 'who do you consider to be household head(s)' in my own research are presented in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Household headship (disaggregated by gender)

Household head	Women and Men (140)	Women (70)	Men (70)
Male	41 % (57)	27	30
Female	35 % (49)	33	16
Joint	24 % (34)	10	24

The figures in Table 7.2, combined with qualitative evidence demonstrate three main trends. First, household headship is assigned to men more than to women (41 versus 35 percent respectively). Second, women are not completely passive in household affairs (24 percent of households for example are classed as 'joint headed'). And third, around one third of households are in fact, female headed (35 percent). These three findings reflect the complexity that surrounds headship with men's enduring household authority not unchallenged by, or immune to, the asymmetries of power that constitute family life.

7.2.1 Male-Headed Households

Taking each trend in turn, I found first, that in regard to the pre-eminence of male headship, men portray this as immutable to change. Men are reluctant to assign headship to women with thirty out of seventy participants naming their households as male-headed in comparison to only sixteen identified as female-headed. Headship is cast as an automatic and natural right with the response, 'I am household head because I am a man' regularly cited. This certainty dovetails with the idea that 'given their relatively powerful position, men are often unaware of the fact that many of their privileges...are derived *purely from being male*' (Ruxton, 2004: 8 author's emphasis).

The inevitability of male headship reflects the more general tendency for men to refer to biological difference and 'tradition' in order to conserve their power, in

place of nurturing more equitable domestic relationships with women. The prevalence of male-headship is compounded for example by male attitudes and 'traditional' social constructs in the form of the *Cbpab*, which maintain the idea that men are superior to women. This has a historical legacy as civil codes, dating back to the 1950s, stipulated that women as an extension of their husbands were 'bound to obey' them (Articles 194-203, 1959 cited in Jacobsen, 2003a: 201). Furthermore, older men especially refer to the idea that a man is always 'bigger' (*thum cheang*) than a woman. This also has historical origins in popular literature published between 1953 and 1975, which reflected an attempt to retain tradition in a modernising society. Middle-period (Chapter 4) stories were re-published in illustrative form in government magazines and as school resources depicting men as physically larger than women. Once Cambodia was re-established as a Kingdom in 1993, post-Khmer Rouge, the educational syllabus further reverted to these pre-revolutionary norms, 'including the non-critical study of so-called "traditional" literature without reflection on the social or cultural biases of its authors or its relevance' in current times (Jacobsen, 2003a: 273). The notion instilled within the texts of men being physically 'larger' than women is something which male informant, Boran, reflects upon in his analogy to intestinal size,

'Women have shorter intestines than males so the male's nerve is stronger than women's⁵. Men also have five arms of intestine which means men are again stronger than women, so, in any arguments, while women can only curse men can dare to fight'

(Boran, male, Slorkram, 74 years old, re-married, retired home-based banana grower)

In concordance with men, some women (27 out of 70) conclude that male-headed households are the status quo and thus women only become household heads 'by default'. This occurs when they are widowed, have no father, or, temporarily, when their husbands are away. Official statistical data shows for example that the twenty-six percent of all households which are headed by women (NIS, 2001:

⁵ I have searched for the Buddhist significance of intestinal size, but have not been able to find out the religious meaning ascribed.

65) are directly attributable to the high mortality rate of men during the civil war and its aftermath creating an imbalance of the population between the sexes (see Chapter 4). As a result, men can often rely on women's observance of tradition and perception that female-headed households which do exist have arisen primarily out of these structural factors. Some women also allude to official practice with men's names put first in their 'Family Book'⁶.

7.2.2 (Fe) Male-Headed Households

The second trend I identified lies in contrast to the supremacy of male-headed households portrayed by many participants. Instead, some women demonstrate a degree of assertiveness within the household (hence my subtitle (Fe) male-headed households). Like much academic work on Buddhism for example, 'there has been a tendency to exaggerate female submission, without recognising women's capacity to play and subvert the (male) game well and to laugh off "small men" (Faure, 2003: 5). Reversing the Buddhist notion that men are 'larger' than women, women do exert influence over their husbands as the participants in Box 7.1 explain.

⁶ This is surprising considering that at least legally, women can take out loans and sign contracts independently of their husbands. In the context of the 'Family Book' also, it is interesting that women are not put first in the birth record and child immunisation booklet despite the fact that they bear predominant responsibility for child care.

Box 7.1: Women's assertiveness in the household

'Although my son-in-law is household head because the village chief said I was too old, he is often ordered to do things by his wife. For instance if he wants to buy anything new and his wife does not agree, then he cannot get it.'

(Kolthida, female, Krobei Riel, 49 years old, widowed, cares for grandchildren)

'I have been chosen as household head because I am a man. I am the president of the family and my wife is the vice president of the household. We have equal rights so when I die she will become president. Whilst I can advise my children on their behaviour however, I cannot advise my wife- I am afraid she will fight me! In Khmer society it has been said that a major in the army always obeys the colonel at home- his wife!'

(Piseth, male, Krobei Riel, 41 years old, married to Jorani, carpenter)

'Women are now powerful. I can order my husband to change his work. If the family does not have enough money to spend then I can force him to work to earn it. Or if he doesn't fish much, I will ask him to find rattan for making baskets.'

(Jorani, female, Krobei Riel, 42 years old, married to Piseth, housewife and basket weaver)

The perspectives of Kolthida along with husband and wife, Piseth and Jorani in Box 7.1 indicate that although women may not be officially 'household head', their presence is by no means an inert one. For example, although Piseth places his wife in a hierarchically subordinate position, the carpenter admits that women are powerful within the home. Referring to Khmer wives being like 'colonels' in the home, Piseth's interview strikes at the heart of much tradition Khmer literature, which paradoxically asserts that a woman must be 'soft and sweet; and yet in difficult situations, she must also be the hard-headed businesswoman, the woman manoeuvring to get her husband "in" with the king, and a strong solid worker' (Ledgerwood, 1994: 123).

All three participants are pragmatic enough to realise that what is stipulated in officialdom is not necessarily what plays out in everyday life. I therefore suggest that household headship is not necessarily the most appropriate analytical tool for understanding gender equality for three reasons. First I believe, like other feminist writers (Chant, 2003b: 163; Folbre, 1991: 90; Harris, 1981) that for one member to be nominally responsible for others and be the sole authority of the household unit, is essentially a construct of patriarchy and can act as a tool to reinforce inequalities. Second, while household headship is a means of gaining insight into the persistence of ideological structures, it can obscure the empirical realities of household dynamics. For example, the official NIS conception of headship as a person who has chief responsibility for management of the household and takes decisions on its behalf is problematic- power does not work in perfect asymmetry, as Piseth and Jorani's relationship demonstrates. As a result, it is important that a more sophisticated understanding of household headship is developed within programmes, policy formation and implementation. For one person to represent the household as current measurements dictate may be inaccurate and at worst re-instate the idea of dominance rather than equality in household relations.

With these criticisms in mind, I found that twenty-four percent of all participants (34/140) define their households as 'joint-headed'. Within this trend, male respondents identify a greater number of joint headed households (24) than women (10). Unlike Hamilton's (1998: 186) identification of the 'two-headed household' in the Ecuadorian Andes in which a dualistic, cooperative and egalitarian pattern of authority and headship presides, this 'gender parallelism' cannot be mapped onto Cambodian headship. Moreover, even when both husband and wife are identified as dual heads, the meanings underlying this may not be so equitable as it might immediately appear without qualitative elaboration.

Exploring this in the interviews with male participants I discovered that men are developing alternative markers of status within the home by manipulating the meaning of household headship. While linguistic evidence in the past has been

taken as an indication of matrilineality by authors such as Népote (1992) and Martin (1994) who demonstrate how the term *me* (which means mother) is frequently used in various constructions in the sense of chief, head or leader, men are using other ways to reinforce their power within the household.

As indicated in Chapter One, *kruosar* is roughly equivalent to family, with the word *phteah* (literally meaning 'house') having a closer meaning to 'household'. There exists a degree of slippage therefore in the term 'household head' which is referred to as *me krousar* (head of family), or *me phteah* (head of household). This is a nuance which some men are capitalising upon. Combined with women's traditional role as household manager and their expanding involvement in waged work, men's exclusive role as provider, and thus as sole household head, is being challenged. Some men understand that women now have greater claims on headship, but believe as 'head of the family' they have ultimate dominance in controlling their wives, children and other members' lives. This suggests that although female household headship may increase, their agency may not, since men develop new or alternative markers/ conceptualisations of power such as 'head of the family' and women as 'head of the household' under a notion of 'joint headship'. This in many cases is to reinstate men's own agency at a time when a conception of unitary headship could in many instances exclude them. A typical example can be seen in Piseth's hierachal conception of his role as 'president' of the family and his wife 'vice president' of the household (Box 7.1).

The situation in which 'family' is used in a strategic, political manner and as a legitimate and identifiable institution to assert male dominance is an analytical and political reminder as Castells (1997: 134) notes, 'not to forget the rooting of patriarchy in the family'. The family is thus more easily drawn upon by men to assert a set of normative relations based on patriarchal control than the household, which is less charged with gendered familial ideologies as a more procedural unit of co-residence (see Chant 2003b: 162). In Chapter Five for example, I illustrated how inequality is legitimised under the guise of tradition in a number of notions such as 'gender', 'home' and indeed 'family'. In fact, in direct contrast to destruction of family bonds during the Khmer Rouge, the family-oriented conceptualisation of 'home', which I previously identified mirrors the

way that some men are 're-traditionalising' their relationships with household members by asserting their cultural and traditional authority over household and family affairs.

7.2.3 Female-Headed Households

The third and final trend that emerges is the fact that thirty-five percent of male and female participants (49/140) name their household head as female. In terms of community specific figures, twenty-four participants in Slorkram and twenty-five participants in Krobei Riel class their households as female-headed. This is despite the fact that Slorkram has a greater diversity of household structures and Krobei Riel technically has only six female-headed households (see Section 7.1). This indicates that the orthodox label of 'female-headed household' could well be obscuring the existence of female heads in households where men are present and where women can choose a position as female head. National data shows for example that nearly ten percent of males present in women-headed households are husbands (Rao and Zaan, 1997: 22).

The fact that a household head is 'a person who is recognised as such in the household' indicates that women's personal claims to headship differ in comparison to men's designation of female heads. As I have shown, sixteen (out of 70) men define their households as female headed while conversely thirty-three women (out of 70) think that women head their households. Furthermore, while, overall, forty-one percent of participants (57/140) name their household head as male, women feel that men head fewer households than women. Only twenty-seven (out of 70) female participants name their households as male headed, thereby highlighting the contested nature of household headship. Women (excluding those who believe women only become household head by default), tend to emphasise their improved education, role as manager and mother of the family, and control over household expenses in their justifications for female headship. On account of these factors some women therefore resist the naturalised assumption that household headship is a male-dominated domain. Furthermore, in relation to the second trend, even for those who live in male-headed households, some women can assert their power- albeit

constrained by a myriad of constraints including men's reverence for tradition and the damaging inaccuracies perpetuated through household headship as a measure of gender equality.

7.3 Gendered Divisions of Labour

The second arena in which men are exploiting the household as a site of continuity is through the gendered division of labour. This manifests itself in three inter-related ways: through the inflexibility of women's domestic workloads; the contrasting flexibility of the productive tasks which men and women perform; and finally, the lack of male involvement in housework and childcare.

With regard to the first point, I found that domestic workloads are heavily biased against women. In the participatory exercises conducted in the discussion groups (see Appendix 2 for explanation of tools), women are exclusively responsible for a greater number of chores than men. This ranges from twenty-six activities identified by a female discussion group held in Slorkram to only ten roles assigned to women by a men's group in Krobei Riel.⁷ For men this ranges from one role identified by Slorkram women (fishing) and one role by Krobei Riel men (collecting firewood) to only two roles identified by the remaining groups (carrying water and looking after cows). In wider discussions across my research, men's roles are deemed to be: to collect and chop firewood; collect and carry water; clean wells; fish (Krobei Riel only); and look after cows (Krobei Riel only). Women's are to: weave baskets (Krobei Riel only); cook; clean the house; do the laundry; look after children; mill rice; prepare the sleeping area; look after parents; and make clothes. Women's continued responsibility for domestic tasks

⁷ It is interesting that the female discussion group that assigned the most roles to women was held with a local NGO, probably since they had previously been sensitised to the inequalities in divisions of labour. Banteay Srei works in Battambang and Siem Reap provinces to improve the standard of living for the poorest women and their families. More broadly than this, women were very detailed in their list of chores listing all the variants associated with caring for children including bathing and feeding them. This reflects the multiple roles that women undertake in the unpaid domestic economy.

is reflected upon by Chenda (the village chief's daughter). Making reference to her father's leverage in household affairs, she told me that,

'I get up at 4am and water the vegetables and take the cows to the field. After that, I weave the baskets. At 3pm I take the fertiliser to put in the garden, water the plants again and take the cows back to the house. My sister cooks but when I am free, I try to help. I go to bed at 10pm. I agree that women should spend their time at home looking after their husband and children. Here, the only place for a woman is home- but for women in other villages, this is not necessarily the case. I am powerless about this because the father orders everything in the family... also men are not good at looking after children. They can take care of them for only short time and they will go and get new wives and leave their children.'

(Chenda, female, Krobei Riel, 27 years old, single, vegetable grower)

The inflexibility shown in domestic chores is not replicated in production-related duties, which can often be performed interchangeably between genders.

Activities which both men and women supposedly attend to include: eating; taking a shower/bath; taking the children to school; cleaning-up the cow manure; transplanting rice and ploughing; childcare (Krobei Riel); and watering the vegetables.⁸

⁸ Discussion group participants were also asked to rank activities in terms of importance. According to men in Krobei Riel, sleep/sex, basket weaving and taking the children to school are of equally high importance. This sits against cooking and cleaning highlighted by women from both communities. This is partly because the way a woman cares for her household is linked to her virtuousness. For example, if she cooks very tasty soup and knows lots of recipes then she is a good wife, but if it tastes unpleasant then she will be criticised. Least significance is given to sleep/sex for women in Slorkram and weaving baskets in Krobei Riel- the inverse to men's views. Men feel that laundry in Krobei Riel and cleaning the wells in Slorkram are the most unimportant roles. The oppositional findings from men and women with regard to the importance of sleep may be attributable to women waking before and going to sleep after men. See also ADB (2001: 39) for national statistics (which correlate).

Combined with evidence presented in Chapter Six, these findings endorse national data which shows that women have to take on a wider range of domestic and non-domestic roles than men (ADB, 2001: 39).⁹ For instance, while reproductive tasks such as cleaning and cooking are almost exclusively limited to women in both communities, productive ones including the transplantation of rice and ploughing of fields are viewed as joint pursuits.¹⁰ This situation is most prevalent in Krobei Riel and connects back to the way gendered traits are assigned to both sexes (5.1.4). This purported flexibility is not as it first appears however. Older men from both communities talk about joint pursuits in a more 'fixed' way, much like Khmer proverbs which emphasise the complementary nature of social relations. An example of this is the popular proverb, *somnab young dey srey young prous*, which translates as 'the rice gives the soil its cultivated appearance and the soil helps cultivate the rice seeds' (Surtees, 2000: 70). While proverbs can be used to emphasise the importance of reciprocal behaviour they can also at the same time chide inequality. As Siran (1993: 231) explains in the context of Africa, proverbs can be used 'to laud a hard worker and flay the indolent, to praise the one who gives without keeping accounts or remind the stingy that it is dangerous not to give in return for what has been received'. Male perspectives on the ideal of interdependence (inscribed through Khmer proverbs) and their transgression by women is detailed in Box 7.2.

⁹ These findings, in turn, are reflected in gender differences in time input for domestic tasks. For example, notwithstanding the crudity of my analysis, adding up information from all the discussion groups, women's weekly overall activity/time total comes to 54 hours against men's 18 hours. Tasks which either/both gender perform come to a total of 82 hours. These figures can only be read as indicative however. Participants found it difficult to assign the number of hours to roles, especially those that they intersperse or monitor throughout the day such as looking after the cows, weaving or childcare. This overlapping of activities is an important dimension of time that has received little attention in economic analysis. Most time use studies for example have only looked at primary activities, ignoring the fact that individuals often perform two or more activities simultaneously (Floro and Miles, 2001).

¹⁰ While these roles are interchangeable, in reality 'whilst men and women in the sphere of rice cultivation cooperate on most tasks, there is a pronounced tendency that men should do ploughing and women transplantation' (Oveson *et al.*, 1996: 62), and is sometimes changed in the face of practical necessities (Ledgerwood, 1992:93).

Box 7.2: The complementary nature of gender relations from the perspective of male retirees

'There is no real division in tasks between mother and father. In the family it is rather like the right and the left hand. I am the man and I work, but in practice, my wife manages the money. Khmer history shows that the man is like a cow carrying the cart and woman orders around the ox cart and cow. The relationship is like in the past- in traditional Khmer daily life. Men work outdoors making money and women do the housework and small-scale business at home...in 2004 the divorce rate is higher than the crime rate. The girls don't respect their husbands because they are equal and whoever arrives home first cooks. In Khmer culture men aren't allowed to cook and do the laundry except when the wife is delivering the baby. This is the only time when male will help for a week doing this kind of work. For the under 50s everything is changing but for the over 50s tradition is still important so when the husband comes back from work his wife helps him to take his clothes and shoes off then cleans her husband's feet. Young wives go out too much and expect their husband to cook and clean'

(Teng, male, Slorkram, 66 years old, married, retired)

'It is very different from the past when the woman respected the husband very much and she would organise something in the bedroom, tidy for the husband and cook when he arrives home from work. At that time both of them reciprocally respected each other like the ideal husband and wife. Husbands responded to this by supplying money to the wife and making the main decisions. The wife's duty was to work around the house and not outside. They didn't have as high an education as now. Now girls can study more and even work as a district governor or prime minister. Sometimes this isn't good though when the wife has higher education than her husband because women are very talkative and sometimes blame a poorly-educated husband saying 'you are dependent on me to live'.

(Ros, male, Slorkram, 80 years old, re-married, retired medicinal healer)

The viewpoints of Ros and Teng in Box 7.2 demonstrate the value placed on reciprocity between genders, yet fixity associated with women's familial roles. Both also conjure up the same associations made between tradition and respect, which I highlighted in Chapter Five. Older men like Ros and Teng understand changes (such as equal sharing of cooking or women spending more time outside the home) as violations of men's rights, suggesting that women's roles are going against the ideals instilled in Khmer tradition and such tendencies should be arrested. Correspondingly, as Jacobsen (2003a: 274) acknowledges, 'men and women have always had complementary roles in Cambodia, but the values ascribed to these roles, whether one is worthier than another, has changed over time' with women's subservience being emphasised by Ros and Teng. 'Home', for example still represents the complementary of tradition and a space associated with female domestic work.

Related to this, men in Slorkram are particularly conscious of how the house communicates their respectability and status to the wider community. Although primary importance is attached to the size of the house, its orderly nature is a key way to reflect the elevated status and identity of its inhabitants. As Teng continued to explain,

'The big house shows the class of the owner and the decoration reflects the culture of a nation. The curtain on the internal and external doors and windows also shows how well the house is organised. I mean, how much people love their home. We can interpret how people live in their home from it- whether they take care of it and whether it is clean or dirty'

(Teng, male, Slorkram, 66 years old, married, retired)

As Teng explains, it is important for a house to have curtains, as without them a house is supposedly like a person with no hair- incomplete. It thereby follows that a house without a women to uphold these aesthetic standards is looked upon as lacking. As I detailed in Chapters Four and Five, 'home' is essentially a reflection of a woman's virtuousness and domestic skills. Moreover, normative ideas include an engendered division of labour with men responsible for its construction and women for its internal running. In Krobei Riel, traditions related

to house building continue to be practiced with domestic building and repairs remaining men's responsibilities, especially with regard to the traditional use of wood.¹¹ Observing the construction process of one house in August 2004, I was laughed at by one man, when I asked if women ever helped in the construction process,

'Wood is traditional. Only men deal with it...though if we were dealing with a concrete house that would be different- women would mix the concrete. Otherwise, they are not physically strong enough to lift wood. Women only cook.'

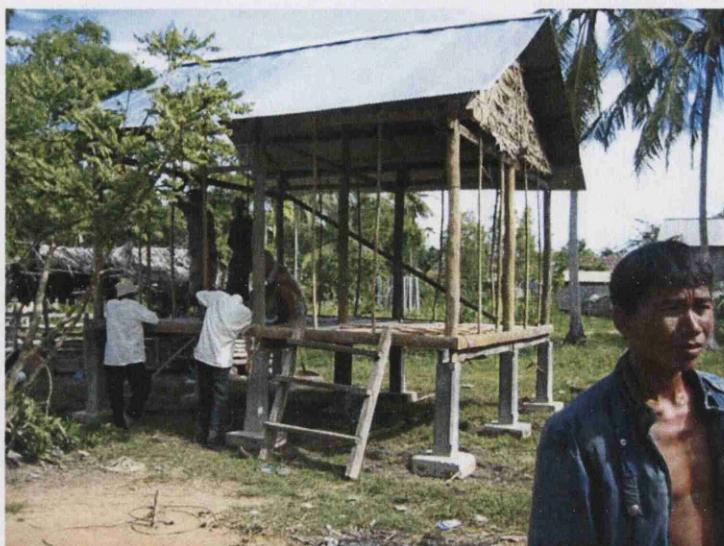
(Romduol, male, Krobei Riel, 24 years old, married, farmer)

While the Khmer Rouge denied its citizens a celebration of their own cultural heritage (Gottesman, 2003), in Krobei Riel the traditions of house construction and ceremony persist. As the traditional building material of Khmer homes, wood-working remains a male craft in which masculine associations with strength and skill are particularly pronounced. Due to women's perceived biological weakness in contrast, while men construct the wooden frame and fasten palm thatch to it (Figure 7.2), women often make the palm thatch sections in advance for house siding and roofing, and sections for internal partitions which requires less 'manpower'¹².

¹¹ This has been noted elsewhere. While Gutmann (1996: 149) notes in the context of urban Mexico that the overall erecting work- laying bricks, pouring cement, hanging doors, building closets- is typically performed by men, the oral history work by Viikko (1998 cited in Järvinluoma *et al.* 2003: 58) based on Finnish autobiographies in the 1990s similarly demonstrate how women focus on the interiors of their homes and men are more inclined to cross the boundary between the interior and exterior, concentrating on the outward appearance of the buildings, technical details, the yard or the scenery (*ibid.* 58). For case studies of Mexico also see Chant (1987) on dwelling construction and the experience of women in Querétaro.

¹² As wood has been increasingly abandoned in favour of concrete especially in Slorkram, women have become increasingly involved in commercial construction of Siem Reap (see Chapter 6 for details), though to a lesser extent in vernacular architecture.

Figure 7.2: House construction in Krobei Riel



(Photograph by K Brickell, Krobei Riel, August 2004)

In a similar fashion, men also draw on naturalised constructs of male and female qualities to validate their own lack of participation in cooking or doing the laundry. Women as a consequence feel pressure to follow prescriptive female roles with men trying to create stability in their own lives by insisting that women continue to bear sole responsibility for housework. This means that combined with more recent developments associated with women's growing participation in the productive economy, a large burden has been created for women who cannot rely on others to take on the housework. These effects are felt within female and male-headed households alike, and resonate with what Chant (2007a: 336) has ventured as a 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation' whereby rising numbers of poor women of all ages are not only working outside the home but continuing to perform the bulk of unpaid reproductive tasks for husbands, fathers, brothers and sons. For example, after a day's labour on the construction site, many female labourers in Cambodia still have to cycle over an hour back to their village to cook and clean for their families. I discussed this with Phoung, who was deserted by her husband and has two sons aged three and eight who are looked after by her aunt when she is at work,

'This is my first job outside the house. I have been working in construction for two years and finished two hotels. I saw the construction site and asked for work. I do this because of family difficulties, working more and more. But everyday, I continue to have to cook for my sons before and after work. Luckily my aunt looks after my sons. I do not pay her. I have a pushbike to cycle to work and back- it takes over an hour in way. I get up at 4am and go to sleep at 10pm working 6 days a week. When I am away from home, my eight-year old son cooks and looks after his brother. Sometimes his cooking is raw or sometimes burnt. They often ask me for money and I am broke. I can't give it to them and they cry. I feel so pitiful.'

(Phoung, female, Slorkram, 29 years old, deserted, construction worker)

Like Phoung, who is doubly burdened with paid and unpaid labour, women with male partners are also expected to perform all domestic tasks even if they work. Paid work is taken on in addition to, rather than in place of, household responsibilities. The prevailing perception in the eyes of men and women is that failure to achieve balance between the two spheres leads to family breakdown and leaves men at liberty to desert non-conforming wives.¹³ Seda told me for example about her electrician husband and her reasons for moving with him from Kandal Province in 1997.

'We moved to Siem Reap because my husband was offered a job and the company sent him here. I did not want to move but I was afraid that if I didn't my husband would find a new wife. A man far from home finds a new wife quickly because he wants his food cooked for him- so a girl is a first priority! My child always cries when he comes home and this makes him want to go outside again. If someone else could do the housework and looked after the children, I would like to do the same!'

(Seda, female, Slorkram, 42 years old, married, housewife)

¹³ Deserion is a major issue in Cambodia, which I explore in Chapter 8. A serious legal problem is that Cambodia's laws do not require child support from men following divorce- or more commonly desertion- which leaves many women and children fearful of destitution.

While UNIFEM *et al.* (2004) claim that in Cambodia the rate of unpaid family labour for men is on the rise, it is clear that gender inequalities in household workloads remain as unevenness in gendered contributions to household life grows. In fact, a spectrum of male perspectives exists on unpaid domestic work, the majority of which revoke the claim made by UNIFEM *et al.* (as Seda confirms). These patterns of participation differ according to employment status. In general, working men who fulfil their perceived provider role believe that domestic work is essentially female work. As a consequence, many women are reluctant to ask for their husbands' help because it contravenes assigned gender roles and would be inappropriate to propose. Employed men respond by saying that if a man does 'women's work', then they would be deemed gay or 'effeminate'. Domestic work is also accorded with lower status despite the fact that in the Cambodian Constitution housework is valued as equal to work done outside the home. Men distance themselves and make excuses why they are unable to assist, typically claiming that they are too far from the house earning money for the family. This is vividly played out in Amara's household where he lives with his wife, three children and son-in-law. Amara told me,

'There are problems in my house- like the Khmer saying that "when plates rattle in the basket you can hear the sound of family life", although all is quiet at night. Annoyance comes from my life full of work and my wife who nags me to do more in the house. I say, no way! I can't do that- my job is as a carpenter. I can only help if my wife is ill or if she has just given birth to my child.'

(Amara, male, Slorkram, 53 years old, married, carpenter)

As Amara demonstrates, men often draw upon proverbs to 'naturalise' disagreements within the household and thereby remove their responsibility or agency to rectify conflict. As Siran (1993: 227) argues, proverbs embody 'norms' which can be simply quoted and without having to admit it publicly or directly, may reflect the 'sender' (in this case Amara). Just as Amara is very clear-cut in his refusal to engage in domestic work apart from when absolutely necessary, for unemployed men, this often remains the case. Some continue to view housework as a transgression of masculine norms and refute any suggestion

that they should participate. To retain a sense of masculinity their 'household work strategy' is to do very little (see Pahl and Wallace, 1985 on Isle of Sheppey, UK).

In Mexico for example during the 1980s crisis, household case studies show while there was a marked rise in labour force participation of members *other* than male household heads, there was no counterpart movement of men into the private sphere (Chant, 1994: 207 *et seq*). Instead, household workloads were simply reallocated inter-generationally (*ibid.* 210). In Cambodia also, while economic imperatives are driving men and women's waged work, there are few counterpart market forces dictating that men engage in housework and childcare, apart from when men (like Amara) have no alternative but to help their wives when ill or in labour. As a result, men who are unemployed are no more likely to be doing informal work in the household than those employed since men's differential levels of involvement in housework are cross-cut by ideological beliefs pertaining to men and women's role in society.

Other men in light of their unemployment do help more as a result of familial and ego-related pressures. While some men's explanations for doing housework are based on an ethic of cooperation, with men making adaptations for the general good of the household collectivity, accounts also reveal an objective of individual material gain. A number of men were inspired by their friends who told them about the better standards of living achieved through their wives' paid employment. Unemployed men who take on domestic chores, likewise, only do so because of their wives paid labour when children are young and/or numerous. For example, as one father of five, reported:

'I help my wife, cleaning the clothes and doing the ironing. I want to help as much as I can. I have no way of being head of the family apart from this. This isn't traditional; I just want to help my wife. It is not my work; it is my wife's duty. If I am head of the family and I can't do something in the house, it would feel wrong.'

(Thy, Slorkram, 49 years old, married, unemployed)

Although some unemployed men do seem to help with housework, this is a tactical choice made when men, like Thy, think that their contribution to the household can be utilised to maintain their status as household head. Furthermore, although Thy's participation in housework is relatively active compared with Amara's, their viewpoints are remarkably similar- domestic tasks remain a woman's domain regardless of whether men participate in housework or not.

Strategic participation in housework also applies to older retired men who use it to retain a sense of self-worth and value. Although tending to help more when retired, older men also take on additional activities that they can do at home but which are monetarised (such as sharpening knives for neighbours or growing vegetables around the house to sell). This is so that they avoid being 'de-gendered' by still bringing in an income to the household, however small.¹⁴ For example, seventy-two year-old Rot from Slorkram worked for the French scientific teams at Angkor but now, retired, spends his time at home growing fruit trees and occasionally selling them. Rot contrasts this with the past when he would spend very little time at home. Mackay (1995) similarly met some families in Phnom Penh where men were taking on more domestic work because of their wives working outside the home, especially where the husband was disabled and housebound. Likewise, the variety of perspectives and levels of involvement in housework shown by different men reveal the importance of making clear

¹⁴ See Varley and Blasco (2000: 121) in the context of Mexico where many men apparently feel disadvantaged and vulnerable in their later years when they lose their connection to the world of work.

analytical links between household level behaviour and men's employment statuses as they shift with changing circumstances over the life course.

7.3.1 Childcare

The lack of adjustment shown by many men to women's participation in waged work extends to their involvement in childcare. As the poster in Figure 7.1 illustrates some Cambodian men (under the auspices of the Cambodian Men's Network) already understand that issues such as childcare are not only women's issues but ones that men themselves must address in order to promote peace within the community.¹⁵ The network uses an illustration of a father holding his baby to communicate the key message that, *'Men can do the housework too!!'* Aligning childcare with household responsibilities, the poster tries to place greater emphasis on paternal obligation to adopt more gender-egalitarian ways. In doing so, 'such interventions may be more successful still where attempts are made to promote male participation in 'family' activities which extends beyond the generation of income, to emotional support and practical care' (Chant, 2007a: 342), which the poster promotes.

In the field sites, unexposed to the work of the CMN, the majority of men do not follow this exhortation but typically only aid with childcare (like housework), again when their wives are absent. Men often say they are not very confident with their children, regularly discussing the way the baby or child always cries when they come home and their difficulty in comforting them (since they are not naturally good with children). Both men and women agree that these are significant barriers to men's contribution to child rearing. Furthermore, with hegemonic masculinity remaining largely tied to waged work outside the home, as Aitken (2002) describes in a western context, 'the awkward spaces of fathering' rarely fit into the geography of public ventures and power. The day-to-day work of fathering, which I did witness is therefore almost completely hidden in men's accounts. Like Gutmann (1996: 155) who had the sense that housework

¹⁵ The poster forms a part of the lobbying, advocacy and media dissemination work the CMN do in order to raise public awareness.

was not a common topic of discussion for young men in Mexico, childcare was not a topic of significant debate in my research communities in Cambodia.

There are, of course, diverse types of fathering. Some men obviously feel that they have emotional bonds with their children and feel sad when they are away. Men deal with this by reminding themselves of their primary earner role. Setha for example, feels his active role as a father is very important in the limited time he has outside work. He talked over his worries and concerns and told me that,

'I get very concerned and afraid about being a father. So many people, especially children do things- like gangsters. Frankly, I always tell my wife, 'you need to be an educator'. I go against the tradition, which dictates that parents should eat separately from children. We eat together- I am away enough already! I tend to steer away from Khmer culture. It says that the old should not play with children, but my children should be close to me- say anything they want. That way, I can correct them if they say anything dirty. We can be equals'

(Setha, male, Slorkram, 48 years old, married, doctor)

In Setha's interview, his nonconformist approach to parenting is related to the equality he tries to maintain with his children which goes against the tradition that the greater a person's age, the greater level of respect must be granted to them. Setha's parenting has been heavily influenced by his past. For many years Setha lived in a pagoda.¹⁶ In his words, he was the boy who stayed away from his family, who always studied and worked hard. This is why when Pol Pot came he describes himself as 'flexible' since he had apparently lived seventy percent of his life away from his family. Today he has tried to form closer relationships with his children to counteract his own experiences of dislocation. In Setha's case, the children in his care are not all biologically related as many families in Cambodia either temporarily or permanently foster their brothers' or sisters' children. In Setha's case this was because his rural-based family wanted their children to

¹⁶ A pagoda is a religious building, especially a multi-story Buddhist tower in the Far East, erected as a memorial or shrine.

attend high school in urban Siem Reap. This means that the father role may be more accurately described by a 'social' rather than 'biological' father (see Engle, 1997 on Latin America for elaboration).

Where fathers do seem to play a particularly active role is in the socialisation of daughters. Girls are deemed to require more advice than their male siblings. Setha for example, stresses to his wife the need to educate their children, and many men interviewed feel that girls particularly, need guidance on the importance of virtue. Srieng, a father of ten told me that,

'I always advise, order, talk and scold my children. I do not know if they follow me. It is hard. I give less advice to my sons than my daughters as we don't need to keep ties on them. Daughters need extra advice. They are not allowed to go out to other houses and chat. They need to stay at home to learn how to do housework for the future'

(Srieng, male, Krobei Riel, 41 years old, married, carpenter)

Srieng's approach to parenting clearly shows how gender norms can be transmitted inter-generationally through practices of parenting. His emphasis on female prescriptive behaviour is a reminder that unless there is a greater focus on gender equality then another generation of women will once more be brought up in a cult of domesticity. This is especially so in rural Krobei Riel which is less subject to discourses of modernity than urban Slorkram. Furthermore, since the beliefs about power which boys also grow up with seem to concern their 'authority' over women, and the sense of cultural entitlement to services they 'should' receive from them, it is clear that long-term efforts need to be placed on socialisation and parenting in general. Part of this focus on socialisation should be placed on the regular reference that men make to proverbs to justify traditional patterns of behaviour. For example, just as Penfield and Durn (1988) argue that the metaphorical and quotative nature of proverbs contributes to the process of child development in daily interaction in oral societies (such as Nigeria), language also has a role to play in the acquisition and perpetuation of gendered-biased attitudes in Cambodia.

7.4 Decision-Making and Resource Allocation

The final means via which men are attempting to maintain power in the household is through their dominance in decision-making and the control and management of household resources. Existing evidence suggests that while it is the woman's responsibility to manage household finances in Cambodia (Gorman, 1999a: 48), their control over major assets and decision-making actually remains quite limited (NIS, 2001). In my research, inequalities in household members' decision-making capacity are quite marked despite some assertiveness shown on women's behalf in this chapter so far. The two main variables include the type of decision being made, and the educational level of female household members. Gendered perspectives on these themes are presented in Box 7.3.

Box 7.3: Household decision-making dynamics

'In the family, I am the boss, even with regard to the house and things in the house. My wife must consult me. I am the one who makes the decisions. In public for example, I have a signature- my wife doesn't. My wife is basically my assistant. She keeps my income, prepares my food and looks after my children. This is a woman's duty and it is smaller than a man's duty. To be a woman is to be weak in the social, whilst a man in business has a head. The wife is quiet and the husband talks loudly with his wife. I used to be a soldier so I can shout loudly.'

(Amara, male, Slorkram, 53 years old, married, carpenter)

'Generally, all family-related decisions should be made by wife and husband. If he [the husband] decided to do something without asking his wife, he will be blamed if it goes wrong, but this also works with the wife. A man can make decisions about his own work, as women's character is too weak- they can only make decisions about food. The children's education should also be a man's decision, as he wants them to be like him - clever. Some men when they get drunk say that they do not want their children to go to school- that it isn't important. Maybe they want their children to have a job as a drunkard!'

(Sov, male, Krobei Riel, 24 years old, married, motorbike driver)

'In my opinion, men and women have equal rights to make decisions. This has not changed from the past. Mainly though, the husband makes the decision, but it usually needs to be discussed. The husband initiates and finalises the decision-making because he earns the most money for the family.'

(Sunthy, female, Krobei Riel, 39 years old, married, housewife)

'I only make decisions on small things like clothing and food. All decision-making must be discussed with my husband. Some women can make decisions by themselves though, but only if they have more knowledge than men. Women are powerful or powerless depending on whether they have knowledge. Women who are highly educated are powerful and those with little are powerless. I am illiterate and only have my own money for food and rice bran for the pigs.'

(Bopha, female, Krobei Riel, 47 years old, married, basket weaver)

In respect to the type of decision being made, in all four excerpts in Box 7.3, it is patently clear women have a weaker bargaining position than men at all levels. While men have control over the most 'significant' decisions such as the education of their children, women are involved in what are perceived as lower tier or 'minor' decisions relating to the everyday purchase of food and clothing.¹⁷ In this way some choices are deemed to be of greater importance with men feeling they dominate what Kabeer (1999:3) has coined 'strategic life choices' key for people's desired lives. Women's role in the decision making process with regard to 'first order choices' are ones of being consulted but not necessarily participating. Amara for example determinedly states, 'I am the one who makes the decisions', while Sov who moved to Krobei Riel in 2004, and Bopha, believe that women can only make decisions about food. This means that whilst it is accepted that women keep the household's money and physically spend it, according to men and women, their control can be in fact quite limited. As Sunthy contends, 'the husband initiates and finalises the decision-making'.¹⁸

Inherent with this unequal distribution of power, are the normative stereotypes of female docility and lack of rational thought that men use to justify their control over decision-making and resources. Male respondents Amara and Sov, for example, use adjectives such as 'weak' and 'quiet' to describe their wives' position in the house. This contrasts with the perspectives of participants in Section 7.1 who accord women with a larger degree of informal influence over household affairs. Withstanding the dissonant voices evident between men, a greater uniformity is clear in educational choices. For example, a number of male interviewees respond bluntly, 'if the husband decides the children are going

¹⁷ This situation is common elsewhere. For example, see Sathar and Kuzi's (1997) research on Pakistan.

¹⁸ Decision-making is not a process that solely exists between husband and wife however, but can occur across generations, from grandparents to children and varies between types of household. In female-headed households women tend to have autonomy in their decision-making, their children's choices being limited to clothing. Sometimes however when children (and particularly sons) grow older they take control and make decisions on women's behalf. As Miwa (2005: 451) concurs, it happens that elderly widowed women in Cambodia living with a daughter and her husband (son-in-law) might not be household head if the responsibility for the household's livelihood was already transferred to the daughter and/or the son-in-law.

to school, then they will go', leaving a sense that negotiation is not an option. Sov's reasoning for his dominance in decision-making concerning education is rooted in the egotistical desire for his children to be like him i.e. clever. The importance placed on education throughout my research is a direct reversal of Khmer Rouge mantra that 'the rice field is the university' and 'the hoe is the pen' (see Ponchaud, 1989: 157 for further examples). As a result of this, the costs associated with having children and educating them is of growing concern to urban men especially.¹⁹

The overarching influence of men detailed in this section highlights the way that 'with a decision-making process in which different household members have different preferences and varying abilities to enforce these', gender inequality can result (Quisumbing, 2003: 6). In order to overcome this, a number of women attempt to put aside discretionary income. These women report lying about what they earn and keeping it secret, as the expectation is that it should be shared. One bar worker explained her guilt yet pride having \$400 hidden in a bank account her parents knew nothing about.²⁰ Like headship, this reveals often hidden realities, which can show the household as a space for subversion, as well as for the reinforcement of gendered tradition and male authority.

¹⁹ In terms of having children, women appear to have the ultimate decision, but only if they already have more than one child. Particularly in Krobei Riel, this control is not so prevalent if the couple is childless since children remain more important in the agricultural community.

²⁰ See Sweetman (2000) for a discussion of the social and economic roles of younger (and older) women in households and communities across the lifecycle.

7.5 Conclusions

Chapter Seven has demonstrated the deep-seated inequalities which remain within Cambodian households and which are biased in favour of men. Even when the material basis of traditional conceptions of masculinity are undermined by the perceived end of 'men's work' (Chapter 6), and associated unemployment, men seem to be capable of asserting alternative forms of power to preserve their relatively superior social status; first through manipulating the meaning of household headship; second through their non-participation in housework and childcare; and third through their insistence on referring back to revolutionary and pre-revolutionary norms and proverbs. This situation makes women's work-related gains somewhat superficial, and suggests that there has not been a corresponding or proportionate increase in women's rights and rewards in relation to their mounting responsibilities (see Chant, 2007a). This chapter therefore echoes Abeysekera's (2004) argument that without critical attention given to the 'private sphere', progress towards the MDGs will be fundamentally undermined.

In fact, the greatest gains I have identified for women lie outside officialdom where women's education-related power and their leverage over men's working lives are recognised. With this, women's assertiveness in household affairs is increasingly seen to characterise the reality of household dynamics, even if this behaviour is not licensed under 'tradition' or macro-economic measures of equality. These findings remain overshadowed, however, by evidence which points to the home as a site of inequality, an argument that Chapter Eight now develops through its focus on the less discreet, more forceful ways that men assert their dominance.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE 'TREMBLING' HOUSE? MARRIAGE, VIOLENCE AND THE CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL



Figure 8.1: Wedding photograph
(Photograph by K Brickell, Slorkram, September 2004)

8.0 Introduction

Chapter Eight is my final empirical chapter and takes an in-depth look at experiences of marriage (and its dissolution), violence and alcohol consumption. While Chapter Seven demonstrated how men make recourse to traditional gender norms to maintain intra-household power, I want to examine how men also use coercion (such as intimidation or violence) to achieve the same goal. After an introduction to the (pre) marital statuses of participants, the chapter is divided into three parts. The first considers the nature of marital relationships and argues like Sweetman (1996:3) that they are 'a paradoxical mix of love, companionship, and support, combined with friction, domination, and cruelty'. Extending from this, the second section explores the impact of domestic violence against women and the perceived significance of alcohol as a causative factor. Lastly, I examine men-on-men violence and the significance it holds for understanding the legacy of conflict in upholding hierarchical relationships not only between men and women, but also within the gender politics of masculinity.

Through the themes of marriage, violence, drink and drunkenness, Chapter Eight argues that the house is 'trembling' (see Chapter 4 for the lyrical significance of this term in the *Chbap Srei*) as gender ideals are routinely flouted. Cambodia has not made a complete transition from conflict to peace, but has instead moved contours of violence from the omnipresent public sphere of the Khmer Rouge to the privacy of Cambodia's post-conflict homes. However since the home has traditionally been cast as a space of potential conflict as both the proverbs, '*Fire in the House*' and '*Plates in a Basket will Rattle*' depict (the first embodying the idea that 'home' contains areas of anger and trouble (fire) and the second that family members, like plates often collide with one another), there has essentially been a 're-domestication of conflict'.¹ This process has been intensified both by the legacy of Pol Pot's divisive rule and the new pressures resulting from the country's changing socio-economic fabric.

¹ UNICEF (1994) have used '*Fire in the House*' as the title for their publication on strategies to reduce intra-household violence.

8.1 (Pre) Marital Statuses

Before I examine the nature of marital relationships in Slorkram and Krobei Riel, it is helpful to interrogate the contextual data I collected on marital status in the participant profile forms completed before the oral histories (100) and semi-structured interviews (40). Table 8.1 shows that patterns of marriage in my sample are more diverse in Slorkram (with 19 participants divorced, widowed or remarried), in contrast to the more unitary experiences of those living in Krobei Riel (with no remarriages and only 5 people divorced or widowed).² In Slorkram these figures reflect the multiplicity of household forms identified in Chapter Seven compared with Krobei Riel.

Table 8.1: Marital Statuses of both sexes aged 15+

Marital Status	Slorkram (70)	Krobei Riel (70)
Single	21	20
Married	33	45
Divorced	3	1
Widowed	5	4
Remarried (after divorce)	6	-
Remarried (after widowed)	5	-

Disaggregating the data in Table 8.1 and relating it to marital age gives further insight. Women tend to marry younger than men, although the majority of single participants tend to be under twenty-five years old. For women, the average marital age is eighteen in Slorkram and twenty in Krobei Riel. For men, the average age of marriage is twenty-six in Slorkram and twenty-three in Krobei Riel. The youngest marital age is fifteen for women and nineteen or twenty years for men in both field sites. The oldest age at first marriage is fifty-one years old in Slorkram (a man) and thirty-one in Krobei Riel (a woman).

² These figures have not been calculated in percentage form, since they total under 100

In terms of pre-marital relationships, these remain extremely rare in Krobei Riel. In Slorkram however, they are an increasingly common part of growing up (despite varying viewpoints on their desirability). In the following discussion group held at a school with students between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one (two men and four women), the moral, cultural and educational implications of having a boyfriend or girlfriend are debated.

Box 8.1: Pre-marital relationships from the perspective of Slorkram students

Katherine:	Do any of you have or would like to have a girlfriend/boyfriend?
Seung (M):	I want to have a girlfriend before I marry because I want to understand girls so it is easier after marriage and we can reciprocally understand each other.
Yearm (F):	I don't agree with you Seung because now we are studying and we haven't enough time to think of such useless things. We need to think of our future goals.
Seung (M):	I know. I will wait until I am twenty eight to have one then!
Katherine:	Why can't you have a girlfriend when you are studying?
Chay (M):	We can have girlfriends but if we do, our mind will not focus well and also Khmer tradition and culture has said it is not good.
Peang (F):	No one forces us to follow the culture though. Instead, we have to understand our own ideas.
Seang (M):	For my friend, after he had a girlfriend, his study started to go really well whereas before he would always go flying around on his motorbike and go for walks too much. His girlfriend was a positive influence and he became a good man.
Yearm (F):	I would like to add that for someone that has a boyfriend or girlfriend, they never get married. And as for Khmer culture, we don't like to have been with more than one person. Those who don't think about this and have more than one only end up disappointment.

The conversation in Box 8.1 reveals two things. First, opinions vary among young women and among young men as well as between women and men. While one female student (Peang) does not see tradition as something one is forced to follow, fellow female (Yearm) is hesitant about having a pre-marital relationship out of concern to uphold her virtue (including virginity). Chay (male) also believes that having a girlfriend is not only a deviation from tradition, but is an unhealthy distraction from studying. This connects to my second point, that opinions on having a boyfriend or girlfriend in Slorkram are just as likely to be related to their effects on educational success (or failure), than to the transgression of traditional codes of conduct. For example while consciousness is shown by Chay (male) and Yearm (female) that pre-marital relationships are not a priority for achieving future goals, Seang (male) believes that they can have a positive impact on educational attainment as women are a stabilising force in young men's lives.

The association made between youth and deviance by Seang (with boys flying around on their motorbikes) both mirrors the concerns brought up by older participants in Chapter Five and also seems to translate into parental concern for young people to get married as early as possible (especially for females). Waiting, it is felt, either leaves too much time for young people to make mistakes and thus jeopardise their marital prospects, or as time progresses will mean that they cannot find anyone to marry. As a Khmer proverb reminds daughters specifically, 'you should be married before you are called an old maid' (cited in Heuveline and Poch, 2006: 102).

The variation of opinions in Box 8.1 is reflected in the contrasting perspectives on parental consent to marry. At one extreme is thirty year-old Dy (female). She told me that in the past, she had asked her boyfriend to marry her. He asked his parents but came back saying they would not allow him to get married to her because she was 'half blood'- half Chinese, half Khmer.³ They broke up as a

³ Despite this, it is important to note that in Cambodia, 'in deconstructing the notion about the ideal marriage partner, the poor appear pragmatic enough to realise that a young woman with money, irrespective as to how she earned it, enhances her marital prospects'. In this respect, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (2001: 44), even ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia sit in a similar situation to ethnic Khmer.

result. Other young people have contradictory experiences and defy parental advice. I met for example a small number of young unmarried educated women from Slorkram who are single-minded in their decision not to get married (yet) for fear of losing their independence. These are quite explicit attempts to challenge dominant gender norms, as Noung (who remains unmarried) told me,

'I am different. I like to go everywhere. I am not a typical Khmer girl. I once lived with my sister and followed her way, obeying their traditions, her rules- but after that, I decided to live alone, to take control of my life with my own hands. I wanted to be independent and resist the idea that I must keep my dreams in my pocket.'

(Female, Slorkram, 30 years old, single, NGO logistics)

Noung now lives alone but cares for her seventy-four year-old mother. While Noung says she does not believe in marriage and many of her friends remain single, all admit that at times they do at least think about marriage. All the women feel that education and their resulting employment give them leverage in their marital choices and enjoy greater freedom. Thus by participating in the waged labour market many educated women feel that they have alternatives, if not to marriage, at least to financial independence from male partners.

8.2 The Nature of Marital Relationships

According to Heuveline and Poch (2006: 100), the Cambodian marriage system has experienced three major changes since 1975 which affect marital stability: first, the conditions under which the spouses of the 1975-1978 cohorts were matched⁴; second, the potentially destabilising context of a gender imbalance in the marriage market in the post-KR period; and third, the swift opening of

⁴ During the Khmer Rouge, sexual contact was prohibited and this extended to courtship. Marriages were 'suggested' with varying degrees of force by local cadres on behalf of Angkar (Jacobsen, 2003a: 225). Couples would then have to wait until a certain number of couples in the village were ready to marry for the ceremony to take place (*ibid.*). In my research, female respondents report between 10 and 100 couples could be married at the same time.

Cambodian society in the most recent period'.⁵ Using retrospective questions from the nationally representative 2000 *Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey* (NIS, 2001) to analyse divorce or separation trends over time and across marriage cohorts, it is argued that the conditions under which spouses were initially paired during the Khmer Rouge matter less for marital stability than does the 'contemporaneous environment' (ibid. 99).

In my own research I found that all three aforementioned factors have a role to play in marital conflict, dissolution, or in Noung's case, not marrying at all. But unlike Heuveline and Poch (2006) who downplay the role of enforced mass marriages during the Khmer Rouge, for many women in my study, marriages do not 'forget their past'.⁶ Khmer Rouge marriages dissolved the idea of romantic love and compatibility- a legacy that continues to affect the quality of marital relationships today. This is vividly illustrated in Box 8.2.

⁵ The marriage ceremony itself is changing. Recent adaptations identified include: the ceremony being cut to 1 day rather than 3 or 4; the hair cutting ceremony in which the groom cuts the bride's hair and visa versa now being performed on synthetic hair; and eating on tables rather than on floor mats.

⁶ Heuveline and Poch (2006: 117) admit that the result, which showed a lack of notable difference in the marital stability experienced by the Khmer Rouge marriage cohorts, is unexpected and quote sampling and questionnaire limitations. Further to this, they also attribute this finding to another possibility, that some of the forced marriages contracted under the Khmer Rouge were not deemed 'real' weddings, ceased as soon as the Khmer Rouge regime collapsed, and were never reported in the data. In Krobei Riel many women reported to me that this had occurred.

Box 8.2: Experiences and legacies of marriage under the Khmer Rouge

'My marriage was arranged by Pol Pot authorities. I did not love my husband, but if I did not accept him, I would have been killed. My parents did not know about it, like all parents at that time. They were angry but they couldn't do anything about it. Everyone was so scared of being killed. I always had arguments with my husband because I wanted him to get away from me, but even now he doesn't want to leave me. My wedding was celebrated with 13 couples. Only three of those are still together as they said it wasn't a real ceremony- we had to stand in a row and be chosen by men. On the wedding night there was a honeymoon and Pol Pot investigators checked us. If we had a problem during that night, we would be killed. The soldiers were cruel. Many were young boys but we were afraid. They were scattered across the fields where we were working. We called them Sir! They were immature. I really wanted to come back home'

(Achariya, female, Krobei Riel, 47 years old, married, basket weaver)

'When my husband was alive I had no freedom. I could not go anywhere. When I was young I worked as a guide. I spoke fluent French and had French friends. I worked at the Angkor temple and studied history. My husband made me lose that knowledge I had studied and I became a dull person. He always scolded me. He was violent so often and broke everything in the house. Although I made good food to eat he was never happy- and neither was I. I did not love him. Pol Pot arranged our wedding. My marriage was destroyed by my husband's rudeness. He did not know about honour. He did not think about earning. He drank alcohol but he was worse than a drunkard [tear in her eye]. For other women, when their husbands die, they feel like they are in the middle of the sea. For me, I am happy. After he died I could do what I wanted. I can go to the pagoda. I can make cake to sell. I can cook for wedding ceremonies in the village. Although I have only salt water with rice I am happy. For other women, a husband is a golden mountain. For me, my husband was not- he drank us into poverty- and if I had lived with him much longer I would have died young'

(Nakry, female, Slorkram, 50 years old, widowed, cake maker at home)

The very personal depictions provided by Achariya and Nakry reveal both the contradictions inherent within the Khmer Rouge regime itself, and the lasting repercussions the marriages have for women's unhappiness. First, although the communist force endorsed gender equality, in practice men had preference choosing women according to Achariya, thereby reinforcing rather than challenging traditional norms. The Khmer Rouge also seems to have had more success in destroying the emotional familial bonds between husband and wife as both Achariya and Nakry starkly declare that they have never loved their husbands. In fact, at the time no romance was allowed and couples were only allowed to call each other *mit p'dai* ('comrade husband') and *mit bprapouan* ('comrade wife') (Jacobsen, 2003a: 225). Furthermore, every affair of social life was policed including the 'honeymoon'. Privacy became obsolete and orders were laced with the threat of death.

A second striking feature of the interviews is the pain which women experience as a by-product of the forced marriages. While Achariya remains locked into marriage with her husband (who she is surprised will still not leave her), the death of Nakry's husband has had a significant impact on her sense of well being. Like many older women, Nakry feels that her husband's death has enabled her to live without fear of violence, fulfil latent ambitions and to spend more time devoted to Buddhist practice in preparation for the next incarnation. In fact, she questions how she could have managed to get through life with her husband being violent towards her any longer and considers her husband's death as an acceptable 'trade off'. This idea of 'trade offs' is particularly relevant to many women's lives as they make tactical choices between different dimensions of poverty and well being (see Chant, 2007b: 14 and Kabeer, 1997). Although being without a male partner is associated with heightened levels of deprivation (only having 'salt water with rice' rather than having an ideal husband who is a 'golden mountain' (providing for his family), this can simultaneously be met by spin off benefits.

Younger women who have married in the post-Khmer Rouge period replicate the tactical choices made by Nakry. Before considering the impact of domestic violence on the nature of marital relationships, I want to explore this through the experiences of Orm (who I introduced in 6.1.2). The single mother's oral history is indicative of other women's stories- of their husbands' infidelity, desertion and the difficult choices that some women make as a result. Sitting inside her house on squatter land running along the river in Slorkram, Orm started telling me about her first husband. Sobbing, she told me that,

'I don't want to live in this world. But I worried that if I committed suicide, who would my children live with? My eldest daughter could survive because she works, but my smallest, I just don't know. I always ask my neighbours that if pass I away, could they please take my small child to the orphanage centre.

Again and again I ask the gods what was the sin that caused me to meet so much trouble. It is accumulating continuously and if it carries on I will not live for very much longer. My neighbours have explained and encouraged me that it happens to many Cambodian families and have asked me to struggle through to support my children.

After being cheated on by my first husband I met a military policeman. It lasted for 5 months before he left me. In the anguish I lost weight- from 64kg to 50kg because I was sad that I was continuously cheated on again and again. I didn't know the man very well because I had just arrived here but I expected that he had a job and that I could depend on him, but when I fell pregnant he left me and asked for it to be aborted. Whenever I asked for money he would answer 'wait until I have it' but even when he did have money, he did not give it to me. He even asked me for money although I had none.

I then met another man, a motorbike taxi driver in front of this pagoda but he had contracted AIDS...but I still loved him despite this. I needed someone to love me, someone to live with me, as I have been alone from when I was young and have never had cousins or siblings. I am living in constant mourning, living a life of serving sex to people. They never looked after my children, only I do.'

I then asked Orm, if she experiences greater well-being living with a partner or supporting herself alone. She told me that,

'I give in now. I don't want to live a miserable life because of cheating men. The taxi driver came to persuade me to love him because his family had disowned him from having AIDS. He came and implored me to allow him to live with me until the day he passed away. Later I decided and agreed with him because I wanted to help him. In the end, his wife took him away from me again. Because I am a Cambodian girl I was very upset and felt my situation uncommon because I am not a prostitute- I want only heart, not wealth.'

I finally asked if she had received any support from anyone. She responded that,

'No, because we cannot complain. I can only stay and hold the pain in my chest. I am hopeless because I am alone. I depend on my daughters'
(Orm, Slorkram, 39 years old, divorced, home-based palm juice seller)

Orm's interview illustrates two main points. First, many women like Orm are reluctant to seek help and in doing so uphold the idea that women should not take fire outside the house, but let it smoulder inside. Orm for example, asks the gods what she has done so wrong to deserve so many failed relationships, which have led her to consider suicide. While Buddhism represents an ethos of non-violence, on the other 'it promulgates the rather merciless law of *karma*, according to which your present life situation is the cumulative result of deeds in your previous incarnations' (Oveson *et al*, 1996: 77). So if one has a failing

marriage, it is because of one's *karma*, and there is very little that the individual concerned can do about it. Second, the desperation of Orm's situation is mainly due to the infidelity and desertion of partners. As I explained in Chapter Five (5.1.4), masculinity is largely tied to the contradiction of sexual codes of conduct with licentious behaviour valued positively by male respondents. As Orm's interview clearly demonstrates, men's disregard for traditional ideals has momentous consequences for women and rather than men endangering their own reputation, actually endangers marriages, family cohesion, and women's status in the community.

The desertion that Orm has experienced is not uncommon and can be linked back to the post-conflict gender ratio in which there is a shortage of eligible men relative to the number of eligible women. This means that a possible way for the low gender ratio to have been accommodated while maintaining almost universal female marriage (bearing in mind the strong stigma associated with never marrying) 'is, of course, by an increase in the average number of marriages per adult male through increases in divorce rates and in gender differences in remarriage rates' (Heuveline and Poch, 2006: 103). In the oral histories I conducted with men for example, experiences of marriage and its breakdown were notably absent. They told me that since remarriage for divorced men is socially acceptable, their experiences of being single and being self-sufficient are extremely limited because they can seek divorce or simply abandon their current marriage and find another wife without difficulty.

8.3 Domestic Violence

The unstable nature of the marriages I have detailed is compounded by the pervasiveness of domestic violence in the aftermath of Khmer Rouge rule. As I cited in Chapter One, domestic violence is persistently identified as having increased in scope and intensity (Ebihara, 2000; Kumar *et al.*, 2000; Ledgerwood, 2003; Mackay, 1995; Oveson *et al.*, 1996; Pickup, 2001; Surtees, 2003). As in other post-war situations in former Yugoslavia, sub-Saharan Africa and East Timor (UNRISD, 2005: 223), I argue that women not only face a continuation of aggression from war but are also subject to new forms of violence as the country

undergoes change. This, in turn, is leading to what I propose is a 're-domestication' of conflict. The insidious nature of domestic violence has been highlighted (as I indicated in Chapter 1), by the 2005 progress report on achieving Cambodia's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and which benchmarks domestic violence as the major challenge to reaching its targets of promoting gender equality (MOP, 2005, my emphasis). The government response to this has been slow and inadequate. While Cambodia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1992 and the Optional Protocol in 2001, it was not until September 2005 that the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims was passed (LICADHO, 2006). My research suggests that to combat domestic violence, wider ideological changes will have to accompany these legal steps. As the *Cbpab Srei* advises, women are encouraged to respect their husbands by tolerating violence for the sake of family unity (as I explained in Chapter 4). Chanya for example, although forfeiting work and adhering to traditional female ideals is subject to verbal abuse. She told me that,

'We often argue. In the house there are always arguments because when I advise him or tell him to do things, he never listens. I am scared to live in this here. He doesn't respect me because he doesn't listen. In families, we live together and have respect for one another. If we don't, arguments result. For me, I don't want to live in this house. I want to work. My husband constantly criticises me because of this. For childcare though, I am happy. I don't like my house or husband but I love my children'

(Chanya, female, Slorkram, 27 years old, married, housewife)

Chanya married at the age of twenty and lives with her mother, child and husband who works as a labourer but fails to take responsibility for any childcare or housework. The violence early on in Chanya's marriage correlates with national data indicating that three fifths of violence occurs in the first five years of marriage (NIS, 2001: 241). The lack of respect shown by her husband shows that ideological change will have to occur in men's lives for women to live free from

violence. Until then, women like Chanya may remain scared in their own homes and critics who suggest that the characterisation of home as haven is a representation of an idealised and nostalgic notion of 'home' (Wardaugh 1999; Jones 2000) will have further evidence to base their argument on.

8.3.1 Alcohol-Related Violence Against Women

In terms of causation, alcohol is perceived by participants as a principle catalyst behind domestic violence and a central problem impinging on marital relations. Given that domestic violence is arguably a social outcome of alcohol consumption, the reasons behind men's violent outbursts against women need to be examined.⁷ This is important considering that 'while it is both men and women who get drunk, it is particularly wives, subordinated by gender and affinity, who are vulnerable to male violence' (Harvey, 1994: 227 in the context of Peru). Data on the presence of alcohol in domestic violence or abuse situations involving physical violence in Cambodia shows that in the twelve months preceding the quantitative study (NIS, 2001), 10.8 percent of perpetrators never drank, 7.9 percent drank but never got drunk, 11.3 percent got drunk sometimes and 41.1 percent got drunk very often (cited in PADV, 2003: 87). The World Health Organisation (2004: 63) points to this strong and consistent correlate between excessive alcohol consumption and marital violence.⁸ The association made between alcohol consumption and violence against women is displayed in Box 8.3.

⁷ See the work of Brandes (2002, 2003) on abstinence in Mexico City.

⁸ A study of Nigeria for example, showed that alcohol was involved in 51 percent of cases in which a husband stabbed a wife (Obot, 2000) and in an Indian study it was found that 35 percent of spouse-abusing husbands were using alcohol and that more than half of the spousal abuse took place during periods of intoxication (AIIMS, 1997).

Box 8.3: The association between alcohol and violence from the perspective of male and female participants

'There is violence in the family when he is drunk but when he doesn't drink it is fine. Drinking is only one problem and I am not scared to live in the house because I have always lived in this situation. I think Khmer drink too much. In terms of rice wine, they drink 2 litres but for beer they can drink 2 boxes each and still not be drunk. I don't know why they drink. Sometimes they drink along the road from Siem Reap, sometimes in the village. And when I ask my husband why he drinks every day he says that 'while I drink I am strong to work but if I don't drink then I am weak'. But for me, if he doesn't go to work he always meets friends and drinks nearly everyday but if he goes to work, it is fine'

(Socheatha, female, Krobei Riel, 25 years old, married, farmer)

'We never have arguments except when we are drunk. I don't know why I liked to drink. I just drank and was addicted so when I saw someone drinking rice wine I wanted to drink too. When I was drunk I would cause arguments in the house and no one would speak to me but after I was sober I realised I had made a mistake to drink. If I don't drink then everything is OK in the house'

(Vichet, male, Krobei Riel, 35 years old, married, farmer)

'It is popular to drink for all generations. My father does, and so do I- to forget about all the bad things in my life. Near the airport the men drink and then beat their wives. I wonder why so many drink? We drink either because we are happy or because there are problems in the family and alcohol is one way of dealing with it'

(Kamol, male, Slorkram, 24 years old, single, tour guide)

The perspectives in Box 8.3 on the relationship between alcohol and domestic violence represent three interrelated findings. First, drinking and domestic violence are framed as everyday events that manifest themselves almost inevitably. UNIFEM *et al.* (2004: 13) believe for example that one of the most serious and alarming aspects of domestic violence in Cambodia is the culture of impunity and tacit acceptance that surrounds it. While Socheatha's reference to her lack of fear at home stems from the 'normalisation' (*tomodah*) of the violence she suffers, Vichet relates men's propensity to drink (and then argue with wives) to a medical discourse of addiction. The normalisation of alcohol consumption and conflict relates to my second finding that men see domestic violence as something they are associated with, but which they are not necessarily in control of. The widespread belief that alcohol is the biggest cause of violence and marital conflict in Cambodia thereby shifts the burden of responsibility off men and on to some external factor (PADV, 2003: 87). As Gutmann (1996: 178) observes in Mexico, with violent outbursts, men are actually capitalising on this belief that 'drunks should be held less responsible for their words and actions'.

Vichet who uses the equation of drunkenness and conflict, sobriety and peace to 'naturalise' the verbal abuse he directs towards his wife, transfers individual responsibility to alcohol. Vichet admits that he is mistaken to drink, but does not apologise for his behaviour towards his wife. Men generally, admit that excessive alcohol consumption is a problem because it causes domestic violence but fail to show an understanding that it is them rather than the alcohol that is accountable. Some academic authors feel that alcohol-related behaviour is arguably just as culpable to criticism as any other factor in that 'although our will is always frightened with causation, each one of our actions is free in the sense that we might have done otherwise' (Valverde, 1998: 14). Drinking also goes against the advice espoused by monks not to indulge in the 'three madnesses of men' - gambling, women and drinking.

My third finding relates to the reasons why men drink. In my research, the violence directed at women is not understood by men to be the product of unequal power relations but derived purely from factors such as poverty, which

mean that men drink as a form of leisure to relax and forget their worries. As Kamol highlights, men drink 'because there are problems in the family and alcohol is one way of dealing with it'. These difficulties tend to relate to the fragility of men's livelihoods and the challenges this holds for their perceived provider role within the family. Men in Slorkram for example say that they like drinking because they eat and work separately, no longer working on the rice fields together, so they want to drink beer together (the significance of group drinking is elaborated on in section 8.4). The pressure to conform to men's 'breadwinner' role in Krobei Riel proved so extreme that villagers report there having been two suicides in the last couple of years, both as a result of alcohol and gambling addictions. The two men in question were forced to sell their land in order to pay off their debts and supposedly felt so distraught that they could not support themselves or their family, that they took their own lives.

A secondary reason why men drink is to give them license to commit adultery and thus conform to the gender trait of promiscuity I identified Chapter Five. In this case drinkers are viewed as manly not only because they drink, but also because their drinking is linked with other behaviours which are also connected with the image of being masculine (Lemle and Mishkind, 1989). The link made to promiscuity by many male participants accounts for the experiences of Orm and other women who are married to men who view licentious behaviour as a validation of their heterosexual identity. Thus some men associate drink and drunkenness with other forms of risk-taking behaviour such as gambling and sleeping with prostitutes. Like the pressures associated with employment, this can expose men to higher risk of HIV/AIDS transmission and other forms of gendered health vulnerabilities including depression and suicide.⁹

⁹ It was these behaviours that made women feel powerless with men bringing HIV/AIDS in to the home. See the work of Ian Lubek (2002) at University of Amsterdam for further information on confronting HIV/AIDS and alcohol in Cambodia.

8.4 Men-On-Men Violence

While it is clear that domestic violence may increase in post-war situations and women face the threat of violence, men are also at risk of death or injury through violence perpetuated by other men (Cleaver, 2002: 17). In fact, alcohol-related violence is not only an expression (or excuse) to dominate women but is also a way of distinguishing between different men. Like domestic violence, many participants allude to the way that coercion has been normalised in relationships between family and community members as a result of the Khmer Rouge period, which eroded the rights and feelings of the individual. As Keating (2004: 54) argues, after a long period of chronic conflict through all the trauma, it can be difficult for people to distinguish abusive behaviour resulting from the accepted and feared hierarchical systems to which they have learned obedience. Setha told me for example that,

'People went through hard times, in different environments and situations. I see something unresolved...people were forced, not through their heart to adapt- they were scared, forced- and this mentality sticks. To be controlled has been normalised. If we educate our children for the future not to be violent, by not being violent ourselves, the current situation may change. Today's violence arises from people's experiences during Pol Pot and the Vietnamese. You had to do whatever to survive. Even me, I resorted to under the table ways of living to stay alive. If you still bring the bad experiences into your life- this problem will still happen. They bring it from their suffering. Make an example of my Prime Minister who grew up in warring times- morality- dignity- like him, we lost all of those'

(Setha, Male, Slorkram, 48 years old, married, Doctor)

Setha's interview brings to light the dominant role of the state in generating violence and conflict, and in creating conditions, which lead to distorted and anti-social expressions of masculinities. Illuminating the legacy of aggression from

the war, Setha assigns blame to the lack of positive role models for men to emulate in contemporary society, and makes particular reference to Prime Minister Hun Sen whose supposed lack of dignity represents and perpetuates current behaviour of society as a whole. The politician, who rose quickly through the ranks of the post-Khmer Rouge government, has been Cambodia's prime minister since the mid 1980s and is seen by many participants as increasingly authoritarian, corrupt and in 2003, of fanning anti-Thai sentiments which led to rioting in the capital, Phnom Penh.¹⁰ The 'culture of conflict', which now pervades many social relationships in Cambodian society is arguably a product not only of the Khmer Rouge but the contemporary political situation defined by coercion and corruption. Women (such as Nakry in Box 7.2) for example believe that their husbands in the aftermath of the regime became like new people. In Zimmerman's (1994: 17) study of domestic violence in Cambodia, women also allude to men as 'broken' and 'damaged'. In my research, this character mutation is accredited to alcohol with men who did not drink before the war becoming addicted after its resolution due to its psychological impact.

The lack of respect women feel in comparison to the past is related to this development alongside the new levels of violence against them. But while women believe that men's regular and repetitive drinking is a sign of societal breakdown, some men view drinking as representative of a strong and supportive cultural framework. Alcohol and drinking works to solidify group identities while at the same time isolate 'others' who men are suspicious of. In July 2003 a drink-fuelled murder occurred in the rural commune as the Village Chief explained to me,

¹⁰ As McCargo (2005:104) comments, 'the more people in Cambodia and abroad focus on the murders and other acts of brutality that the Khmer Rouge committed a quarter-century ago, the notion runs, the less these citizens and observers will focus on the increasingly authoritarian nature of the Hun Sen regime itself'. Furthermore, it is argued that Hun Sen and his cohorts continue to 'get away with' authoritarianism because strongman rule is a lesser evil than mass murder (*ibid.* 107).

'The members of the Sam Rainsy group¹¹ asked him to drink with them during the night. When they drank, they ate dog meat and accused him of being a magic man and killed him. They buried him away from the village so we couldn't find the body even after 18 days. Many villagers suggested that he had gone back to his homeland as he was from Kampong Kdei but had moved to marry my sister in Krobei Riel. When men are drunk they supposedly go back to their homeland.'

All the villagers accused those involved in the murder. There is still anger. During the party campaign, Sam Rainsy gives 50,000 Riel per member and gives the party members drink- and dog meat. His wife asked him to come home again and again but he refused. At 9pm she could see dancing and the smashing of bottles of rice wine because there was no music. At 1am my sister saw that all was quiet but she couldn't see her husband singing or dancing. She just thought he must have fallen asleep having drunk too much'

(Male, Krobei Riel, 52 years old, married, Village Chief)

As the murder in Krobei Riel demonstrates, drinking can be a powerful expression of the gender politics within masculinity in which relations of alliance, dominance and subordination can be dramatically enacted through violent behaviour (see Connell, 1995). Alcohol is therefore a medium for expressing, reproducing and shifting social relations between men, rather than a cause in its own right. The murdered man's refusal to return home reflects the fact that men must have very strong, concrete reason not to attend and will rarely refuse or leave early.

¹¹ The Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) is a personalist and more or less liberal party in Cambodia. It is in opposition to the ruling Cambodian Peoples Party (CPP). For further information see Hughes (2001).

According to PADV (2003: 85), in Cambodia men often coerce each other in peer pressure (*tam mith pheak*) situations by threatening to end the friendship if the other does not conform, and likewise in turning down an invitation.¹² This relates back to Setha's contention that controlling behaviour is a routine part of social relations. The pressure to conform to a hegemonic model of masculinity (aided and validated by alcohol consumption) often disenfranchises men who do not wish to behave in this way. Instead, some men use home as a refuge from norms of 'masculine' performance. As Vannak told me,

'I not only miss my old home but my friends. In the countryside we drink and dance at home which is different from in the town. If we want to do this we have to go to a bar or restaurant. During the Khmer New Year we have meetings and drink together in the village. Family life here is very separate- we live in our home and the others live in theirs. I like sitting here as opposed to outside also because I don't want to meet any of the neighbours- they drink every day. They always drink and if they see me they ask for drink because they don't have any money. At my homeland I did drink though because my wife made rice wine but now no because we haven't the money for my children to study. I must save my money as we are poor.'

(Vannak, male, Slorkram, 41 years old, married, motorbike driver)

As Vannak illustrates, home represents privacy away from societal expectations, community-level definitions of masculinity and associated drinking. Home represents a subordinate style of masculinity away from the persuasion of those in the public sphere who have the power to define what is normal, or 'ordinary', male behaviour. This behaviour differs between rural and urban. Vannak highlights the lack of community cohesion in urban areas where men predominantly drink in bars and clubs (although lower-income men do drink in the vicinity of their homes where they consume industrially brewed beers). This is

¹² This has been shown in other societies around the world. Williams (1998) for example shows the strong pressure prevailing in the Mongolian community in China to drink at an even pace and heavily. A refusal to drink signifies a refusal to engage the other on equal and respectful terms.

contrasted with the home-based drinking of Vannak's rural homeland. In rural areas like Krobei Riel the production of alcoholic beverages are a regular part of the household economy with many families making their own rice and palm wine (*sra sor* or *sra ongkor*) for consumption and sale in the villages.¹³ As Vannak found, like in other developing world countries, 'it should not be automatically assumed that drinking is more common or heavy in the urban environment than in the countryside' since moving to the city may be associated with reduced drinking (Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies, 2002: 113). In fact, as I highlighted in Chapter Seven, new priorities emerge in urban areas, which means that some men (like Vannak) are conscious of the need to curtail their drinking into order to pay for their children's education instead.

8.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I have argued that there has been a 're-domestication' of conflict in post-Khmer Cambodia. While some men draw upon home as a space of retreat from public pressures to transgress male ideals (such as drinking or being violent), women's experiences of marriage and home (life) are often conversely vested with fear and even loathing. The houses of many women are thereby 'trembling' as men folk use the privacy of home to re-instate their dominance over women through domestic violence. This verbal or physical brutality is of course in a subtler guise to that of the Khmer Rouge when conflict was played out in such a dramatic fashion on the world stage and through the tragic loss of life. Nevertheless, legacies from the reign of the Khmer Rouge do persist in 'cultures of violence', which have been normalised in the social relationships both between men and women but also among men. In looking at men's drunken behaviour for example we are not just considering alcohol but several types of empirical contingencies. These include the impact of war on men's identities, methods of conflict resolution, rising frustrations in the new economy and the pressure to conform to normative male traits of promiscuity. Women's adverse experiences of marital breakdown and alcohol-related violence therefore means

¹³ Rice wine has an alcohol percentage of approximately 30-40 percent. 1 Litre costs around 1,200 riel (about \$0.30 cents) and can make one person very heavily drunk (Rammage, 2002: 23)

that much of the development made in the world of work masks rising inequality within the home. This not only renders progress deceptive but also illuminates the importance of micro-level chance both in the ideologies and practices of men.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION



Figure 9.1: Kunthea selling Khmer New Year decorations
(Photograph by K Brickell, Old Market, Siem Reap, April 2005)

9.0 Introduction

This thesis has explored the relationships between gender, the Khmer 'home' and a country encountering shifting patterns of social change as it moves from a nation dominated by conflict to one re-orientating itself to new economic, political and cultural forces. These themes formed the basis of my work and of the conclusions that follow, which trace the research findings and their relation to the three avenues of enquiry (and associated research questions) I set out in Chapter One.

First, I critically review my findings on men and women's perspectives and experiences of gender relations and inequalities (9.1) and second, inter-relate this analysis with that of the home (9.2). By synthesising connections between the two and by bringing out major theoretical and policy implications, I argue three central points. First, that the home is as a key space for the realisation of gender equality, and which therefore should be seen as an integral part of achieving the MDGs. Second, that in order for a paradigm of transition to be grounded in reality, the beliefs, roles and identities of men need to be subject to greater attention (and change) in order to benefit women. And third, that gender relations in the home and beyond are *affecting*, and at the same time being *affected*, by two other, more significant, forces than the Khmer Rouge. Namely, there exists a disparity between need-driven change in Cambodia's globalising economy on the one hand, and the continued significance accorded to pre-revolutionary customs (some of which disadvantage women), on the other.

Through these three key points, I conclude by reiterating that while the Khmer Rouge is an important and inherent part of the fabric of Cambodian history, using it as the major benchmark for tracking change fails to encapsulate the everyday empirical realities, which men and women are negotiating. Instead, a broader focus on pre and post-conflict Cambodia needs to be adopted both in scholarship and policy if the revitalisation of Khmer culture and moves towards gender equality are to be realised.

9.1 Gender Relations and Inequalities

Throughout my thesis what has become eminently clear is that while the outward appearance of gender relations appears to be shifting with market forces, in rural areas particularly, there has been less in the way of change in the gender ideals from pre-revolutionary times. This has resulted in three main disjunctions which reflect that to study gender 'is inevitably to study paradox' with the cultural and social systems that distinguish and organise men and women's lives 'continually confronted with incongruities, ambiguities, and outright contradiction in patterns of belief and practice' (Eberhardt, 1988: 73). Furthermore, woven within all three contradictions I now detail, are the diversity of people's lives and identities, which rather than being characterised by the uniformity and homogeneity which the Khmer Rouge regime attempted to impose, are mediated and inscribed through gender and locality-related differences.

9.1.1 Need-Driven Change and the Transgression of Gender Norms

The first disjunction revealed in my findings is between the perceived need for women of all ages to take on financial responsibility beyond the traditional remit of household livelihoods, and the social mobility and assertiveness required for this, which is often construed by men as transgressing gender norms. Wives and daughters (like Kunthea in Figure 9.1 selling Khmer New Year decorations) find themselves in an impossible situation where they are increasingly accountable for their households' poverty burdens but risk losing respect should they disregard tradition. As Tanabe and Keyes (2002: 10) write in the context of Thailand and Laos:

'Associated with the turn toward the market as the primary institution shaping economic life, social life has been re-oriented towards practical mean-ends relationships rather than with reference to the authority of tradition'

Not necessarily adhering to 'the authority of tradition' is challenging for Cambodian women to negotiate given that their participation in the market economy as one tenet of the 'development worldview' seems to run counter to a number of elements inherent within the 'Khmer worldview' (Oveson *et al*, 1996: 81). These incongruities range from the promotion of democracy and relative equality in a society which has traditionally been structured by strict hierarchy and additionally, that the attainment of equality is deemed especially important in the sphere of gender relations, where traditional Khmer culture has favoured the ideological supremacy of men (*ibid.*).

Given these inconsistencies, one notable pattern is that there remains strong demarcation between what are labelled 'male' and 'female' occupations. Notwithstanding the aspirational value women now place on working outside the home, (see 9.1.3 for elaboration), when women perform 'men's jobs' these tend to be deemed as compromising morality and disrespecting tradition.¹ This is partly because men perceive a feminisation of employment (and declining viability of agriculture) linked to an erosion of 'men's work'.

As one way of shoring up their identities in the face of economic change, some men are developing supplementary status markers as 'family head' to reflect their continued cultural and traditional authority over household affairs in the face of economic change. This points firstly to the strategic and political manner through which 'the family' can be reconstructed post-conflict. Secondly, it shows how the unit can be drawn upon as a more legitimate and identifiable institution than the household through which to assert male dominance. It also typifies the need for the unitary concept of household headship both to be recast to reflect the reality of household dynamics and dual-income households, but also to negate the danger of re-instating and promoting inequality within household relations. As Mortland (2002: 159) observes, in Cambodia, people often try to

¹ Conversely, 'female' work is seen to uphold the traditional ideals I detailed in Chapter Five. Urban women show greater flexibility in their characterisation of different forms of work. Rather than classing certain occupations as either 'male' or 'female', female construction workers particularly, inscribe work with degrees of 'maleness' or 'femaleness' along a continuum. This differs from Krobei Riel where work is thought of in a stricter, more oppositional way.

recreate 'the continuity that they see as an antidote to change and the threatening chaos that seems to them to accompany this'. Men act this continuity out through the family and by emphasising the legitimacy of tradition to try to avoid the paid and unpaid work associated with women.

For advances in gender equality to be made, my research demonstrates that deeper ideological change regarding men and women's societal roles has to accompany the surface re-ordering of Cambodian gender relations. More specifically, I believe that two major challenges remain for changing cultural norms which are keeping women in a disadvantaged position. First, men's recourse to their supposed biological/intellectual superiority over women and their sense of naturally ordained entitlements must be overcome. Second, (older) men's calculated use of 'tradition' as an unchanging ideal, which can be harnessed to justify discrimination against women, must be scrutinised. However, since 'changing gender culture is a long-term process and not immediately tractable to government policies and projects' (Jackson, 2003: 476), more research is required on how individuals are socialised and gender norms transmitted inter-generationally. To do this it is not only critical that the role of the domestic unit as a key arena for socialisation is examined, but that far more is known about 'how men live their lives, both now and in the past, what is going on (and has gone on) inside their heads, and what guides their presentation of masculinity' (Beynon, 2002: 156).

9.1.2 The Slippage between 'Opportunities' and Exploitative Structures

The second disjuncture relates to the slippage that exists between opportunities unfolding for women in tourism and other industries, and the exploitative structures within which they become enmeshed. My concern mirrors popular perceptions Asia wide that 'recent social changes in women's place in society, often expressed as "progress towards modernity"', are intertwined with the recognition that 'not all change is "progress" and not all "modernity" enhances women's status' (Edwards and Roces, 2000: 1). As I have already intimated, it is economic necessity, rather than alluring new opportunities that have been the motivating force behind the increase in female labour force participation globally

in the last twenty years of neo-liberal restructuring (see Chant 2002b: 551 in the context of Latin America).

In my research, this observation is particularly valid in regard to men who although being quick to highlight women's recently elevated roles within society, emphasise financial imperatives rather than equality as the driving force behind women's extra labour loads. Moreover, bearing in mind the dominance of monetary concerns for low-income households, I also found that men who find difficulty provisioning for their family are more likely to support their wives' or daughters' participation in the labour market. While crudely delineated, it is arguably disturbing that women's work is attributed almost exclusively to a discourse of household survival with women remaining additionally responsible for the everyday running of the home. As Mills (2001: 31) argues in the context of Thailand there exists as a result, a serious contradiction:

'Meanings of modernity in Thailand offer young women attractive models of personal autonomy and cosmopolitan citizenship; however, these same gendered meanings engage young women in practices that tend to reproduce the exploitative structures in which their own lives and those of their families are enmeshed'

Bearing in mind this paradox, programmes based on employment need to account for the social norms and obstacles that remain ingrained in ideas about gender roles and responsibilities (see Bradshaw, 2002: iv in a Latin American context). Otherwise, as observed in a number of developing country contexts, women's combined familial and financial obligations will contribute to a so-called 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation' (Chant, 2007a: 336) with an equivalent rise in male unpaid reproductive labour noticeably lacking. As Chant (*ibid.*) further warns, 'while the onus of dealing with poverty is becoming progressively feminised, there is no obvious increase in women's rights and rewards' whether of a material or a non-material nature' leading to deeper forms of female exploitation and inequality as women disproportionately bear the responsibility for ensuring that household needs are met. In my research likewise, while women's equality in their ability to participate in the public sphere

is growing through market forces, this is not being matched in terms of gender equality in the domestic sphere. As I have suggested, this is leading to a slippage between the potential for gender equality from the growth of women's employment opportunities on the one hand, and the deepening forms of gender inequality resulting in their labour burdens on the other. Along with household power dynamics, this continues to be ignored in the UN Joint Framework for Support of Gender in Cambodia (2006: 7) where its priority is only to 'Economically empower women' so as to reduce poverty among Cambodian women (my emphasis).

9.1.3 The Complex Relationship between Employment and 'Empowerment'

The third disjuncture I found relates to this, and the fact that while women's participation in the paid economy is in itself not going to achieve equality of empowerment (Pearson, 2004), an averaging portrayal exists of the 'empowered' Khmer woman as one who works in the public sphere.² Although the public/private dichotomy has received much criticism in academia, the division between work and home is still a key spatial threshold via which men and women locate certain traits. Work and home are mapped onto empowerment and subordination, deviance and virtuousness, male and female domains respectively (however ambiguous these maybe in reality). The daily negotiations between these thresholds resonate in the often-contradictory standpoints at the individual level, which are characterised by this liminality or 'in-between-ness'.

Certainly however, women's claims to 'empowerment' through paid work result not only from economic reward but also from the aspiration of becoming a 'modern' woman and gaining self-esteem. These personal motivations have been noted in other studies, which argue that employment has come to occupy a significant part of personal pride and identity for women (Chant and McIlwaine,

² Empowerment is also very difficult to translate directly into Khmer, as it is a very abstract concept. The literal meaning is 'to have power within oneself'. Khmer terms include, *p'dal sut chia m'cha* (offering rights of ownership), *komlang chut* (strength of heart) and *p'dal sut omnach* (offering rights of power) (Rasmussen, 2000).

1995 on the Philippines; Chant, 1997: 162-163 and García and de Oliveira, 1997: 381 on Mexico; Safa, 1995 on Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic). These more intangible benefits from work, sit in contrast to the pragmatic, economic rationale that men use to explain women's growing contribution to household livelihoods.

The diverging perspectives between men and women also map onto the dissonance shown between women from rural and urban localities who experience the equation between work and empowerment differently. While the economic significance of weaving in Krobei Riel is expanding rapidly with tourism, this traditional home-based activity falls within accepted gender norms and continues to enshrine women in 'the cult of domesticity' (see Safa, 1995: 42). As a result, women in Krobei Riel define their lives in contrast to their Slorkram counterparts who they imagine to be more advantaged in their access to education and thus employment. As the United Nations (2006: 6) confirms, in Cambodia, 'there is a need to effect change in the economic situation of women, particularly in rural areas'.

Although the Khmer Rouge abolished education, women's ability to work was viewed as highly contingent on educational background and class, a situation to which all men and women were highly attuned. In both communities, Khmer culture is not seen to be compatible with gender equality in rural areas where women continue to live through a culture of recitation (including the *Cbpab*) rather than imagination or even interpretation (which women gain through education and allows them to re-think traditional dictates). This henceforth produces stereotypes of 'rural' versus 'urban' women (despite the fact that many 'urban' women are rural migrants who have contributed to the growth of urbanisation in Siem Reap). This is a further example of the heterogeneity or as Stivens (1998: 10) terms, 'divergent modernities' that characterise Cambodian society today.

9.1.4 Tourism and Internal Migration as Agents of Change

In relation to the disjunctions I have highlighted, I found that they are predominantly attributed to the influence of tourism-related employment and associated internal migration. This has a number of important policy implications. First, given the significance of tourism in Slorkram especially, it is crucial to analyse how tourism processes both contest and reinforce power relations (see Chant and McIlwaine, 1995; Kinniard *et al.*, 1994: 27).³

This is especially pressing considering the potential now accorded to tourism for poverty alleviation.⁴ With poverty elimination being at the heart of the international development assistance agenda it is crucially important that the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women as a primary Millennium Development Goal (MDG) is integrated into these efforts. With 'pro-poor' tourism strategies tending to concentrate less on the overall size of tourism but focusing more on unlocking opportunities for specific groups within it (DFID, 1999), it follows that a gendered lens must account for the varying effects that tourism is having on different men and different women, as my study demonstrates.⁵

Second, my findings on the significance of internal migration for gender relations, household structures and employment patterns, also have two main policy implications. First, the inadequate understandings of rural-urban linkages need to be improved in order to understand 'the complexities of people's livelihoods and their strategies which often include some form of mobility and the diversification of income sources' (Tacoli, 2006: 3). Second, the role of migration

³ 'Tourism Opens Doors for Women' is the theme for the next United Nation's annual World Tourism Day in September 2007. In the context of UNWTO's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, the organisation intends to join with UNIFEM to enhance further the role of women in tourism. It will be reviewed annually through until 2015, the year targeted by the UN to reach the MDGs. See www.gendertourism.com for further information.

⁴ The WTO with backing from the UN, public, private and civil society decision-makers worldwide in 2005 identified tourism as one of the most effective tools for development in the world's poorest countries (ODI, 2006:1).

⁵ This is an important policy arena for Cambodia as its involvement in tourism is extended to other parts of the country such as Sihanoukville, Kampot, Kep on the Southern coast and Rattanakiri and Mondolkiri provinces in the Northeast.

in policy circles, like tourism, should be related more directly to achieving the MDG 3 on gender. Otherwise, Cambodia risks becoming like Thailand where the focus of media attention on the sex industry has given rise to a singular image of Thai migrant women, that of poor peasant girls who migrate to work in Bangkok's massage parlours (Osaki, 1999: 450).⁶ My research exemplifies for example how women are not necessarily 'victims' but strategically use migration not only to ease financial difficulties, but also to relieve the social stigma of living alone (admittedly with varying levels of success).

9.2 The 'Domestication' of Development Agendas

Bearing in mind the incongruities I have pointed up between normative expectations and practices, I feel it would be appropriate to call for the 'domestication of development agendas' in international and national level policy-making. This is an obligation for which governments should assume responsibility and encourage through directives, which take a more proactive approach to 'private' issues, rather than resting solely on NGOs such as the Cambodian Men's Network to facilitate.⁷ It is time as Jackson (2003: 477) argues, that '...rather than wishing the family or household away, more detailed understanding of them is necessary'.

In terms of priorities, despite the transition from 'women' to 'gender' remaining an incomplete and mystifying one in Cambodia (Gorman, 1999a: 11), men's relationship both to home and work (across the world), must be the focus of sustained attention. As Barker (2006: 10) claims in relation to programme interventions, the challenge is now 'how to scale up and imbed' this 'in public institutions and practices that go from reaching a few dozen men and boys to reaching millions'. This challenge is paramount given that men are clearly

⁶ See also Pearson and Theobald (1998) for similar concerns in Thailand about the connection between sexual and economic exploitation

⁷ Even within DFID, at the programme planning level gender seems to evaporate. At the implementation level this is particularly poignant since social development advisor (SDA) support for Cambodia is covered by the Bangkok office. According to Johnson (2005: 27), gender is not a priority and there are no clear voices for equity. This is reflected in Cambodia's Country Programme Evaluation in which there is no mention of gender at all (Watkins, 2004: 19).

implicated in one of most striking findings in my research- that since the end of the Khmer Rouge, the home remains a site of conflict in which gender relations are implicated in four main ways.

First, as a result of the Khmer Rouge, coercion tends to be normalised in social relationships, including those structuring familial and marital relationships. This is an area of increasing concern with domestic violence identified by the United Nations (2006: 3) as a significant source of conflict, particularly at the commune level, where twenty three percent of women report violence by a spouse. Second, combined with the Buddhist concept of *Karma* and the idea of keeping 'fire in the house', this normalisation extends to women's reluctance to seek help concerning domestic violence. Third, it needs to be recognised that women not only continue to face aggression from the war but that, according to participants, this is compounded by the country's contemporary political situation. It is seen for example, to be one imbued with corruption and the mis-use of power, which permeates through society and condones men's sometimes aggressive behaviour. The fact that political control remains largely in the hands of men, as elsewhere in the world, shows the importance of positive role models and of directly targeting men in violence prevention at all levels of society.⁸ With this, policy should start to consider how to focus on men's roles both as victim and aggressor, particularly within work on conflict and post-conflict (Edbrooke and Peters, 2005: 2 in the context of DFID).

Fourth and finally, the perceived increase in male alcohol consumption since the war has meant that combined with men's frustration in the market economy, alcohol seems to be a key factor in marriage (breakdown), domestic violence and conflict between men. But while alcohol is viewed as exerting a major influence on experiences of home (life), in the most recent gender assessment of Cambodia (UNIFEM *et al*, 2004) alcohol is not addressed as a domestic or societal

⁸ This is increasingly being recognised in international circles such as by Amnesty International who in April 2006 held its 'Involving Men' conference with WOMANKIND Worldwide as a part of its Stop Violence Against Women Campaign. This must be translated on the local implementation level by NGOs such as the Cambodian Men's Network (CMN) and previously the 'Men Against Violence Against Women (MAVW) project that emerged from Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV) work.

issue. Furthermore, Cambodia's *Participatory Poverty Assessment* (ADB, 2001: 15) mentions substance abuse (sniffing glue) in relation to people living in poverty, and fails to make reference to the everyday practice of drinking which affects a much larger proportion of society.⁹ Yet sentiment widely expressed in my findings was that, 'Khmer men are literally killing their insides with rice wine'.

This neglect points first and foremost to the critical importance of extending analyses to the developing world which has long been neglected and where alcohol problems are likely to increase at an alarming rate in the future (WHO, 2004).¹⁰ Geography (unlike anthropology) for example, has predominantly concerned itself only with the relationship between alcohol and drunkenness in the public sphere of the western world (the progress report by Jayne *et al*, 2006 typifies this). There is arguably a valuable contribution for Geography to make as a discipline to move analyses of drinking from a peripheral concern of political-economy to looking at the impact of this within the context of global economic restructuring on the 'private' spaces of the Global South.

9.3 Informing Development Outcomes Through the Windows of the Home

My preceding conclusions have summarised how household gender relations can be characterised by division, individualism and inequality. The home as a space in which gender relations are lived out is therefore a key tool in which to analyse these issues and in turn, inform development outcomes. Adhering only to the developmental practice of analysing the 'household' or as Lawrence (1995) argues, narrowing the usage of 'home' in the name of intellectual rigour, would result in the social meaning of the 'home' being lost. It would also mask original insights into the depth and nature of gender inequality and the direction of societal change that is achieved by looking at the 'home' as an actual place of lived experience and a metaphorical space of personal attachment and identification. My research has thereby extended the conventional remit of

⁹ As I am aware, there are also no NGOs in Cambodia working explicitly on this issue.

¹⁰ The two regions in the world showing recent and continuing increases in consumption are South-East Asian Region (SEAR), and the Western Pacific Region (WPR), the first of which Cambodia is located within (WHO, 2004: iii).

gender and development (GAD) work on the household, and the work on the home, on which the vast bulk of investigation and theorisation to date has been located in the advanced economies. In turn, my thesis has shown that in order to examine household gender relations, a more holistic understanding of gender equality can be generated by looking at the social, cultural and material significance of home. This argument has been illustrated in three main ways.

9.3.1 Change in Gender Relations and the 'Home' are Linked

First, I have demonstrated that the transformation of gender relations and the 'home' are intimately linked by the forces of change affecting Cambodian society. My findings show that much like the tensions identified between gender ideals and practices, the Khmer 'home' is caught up in parallel negotiations between pre-revolutionary customs on the one hand, and the impact of post-conflict reconstruction on the other. Like the ingrained ideas associated with gender norms, many of the traditional meanings assigned to 'home' persist. As the political saying of the Khmer Rouge movement acknowledged- as 'only the newborn baby is spotless' (Courtois *et al*, 1999:620)- it follows that neither 'gender' nor the 'home' are 'blank slates' on which post-conflict reconstruction has been founded. The Khmer Rouge fundamentally failed to destroy persistent gender inequalities and the essence and memory of 'home'. If anything, people's biographies of home are now being re-written in opposition to Pol Pot's emotionally-devoid cultural landscape.

The rule of Khmer Rouge remains important, nevertheless, for understanding the physicality of home, in the sense that houses are being built in direct opposition to those during Pol Pot's dictatorship. They exist. They are private rather than communal. They comprise bonds of kinship and/or friendship rather than comradeship. As I have noted at various junctures of this thesis, despite the aim of the communist movement to render victory and change, linear, continuous and permanent, it did not achieve an absolute repudiation of the past. The symbolic (and socio-economic) importance still placed on migrants' homeland typifies this. As Blunt (2003b: 717) writes in the context of an Anglo-Indian homeland called McCluskieganj in Bihar during the 1930s, 'whereas sites of

memory often invoke, but also extend far beyond, spaces of home, nostalgia invokes home in its very meaning'.¹¹ This dislocation from, and nostalgia for, 'home' during the Khmer Rouge, resonates with the spatial and economic reality of people working and living away from home today, with Rigg (2006a: 80) highlighting the difficulty of 'ascribing a definition of "home" which is geographically rooted when the psychology of 'home' may still be centred on rural villages'.

Further reminiscent of the resistance in gender ideals, is the resilient nature of the conceptual foundations of 'home' against Khmer Rouge doctrine. As Neupert and Prum (2005: 240) assert, if a political plan 'goes against usual or traditional forms of life, it must be based on terror and has to be accepted and practiced not only by the leader and close colleagues but also by all the members of the revolutionary organisation or party'. Although based on force, this acceptance did not occur during the reign of the Khmer Rouge, with Kiernan (1996: 215) even going as far as to suggest that it was actually Pol Pot's 'attack on the family that alienated peasant supporters'. In fact, the idea of 'home' as a part of the traditional hierarchical structure of Khmer society failed to be destroyed, and continues today in the family oriented conceptualisation of 'home' through which a 'normed' set of social relationships are theoretically played out. This relates back to the importance placed by some men on not only having authority in the household, but additionally of the family. 'Home', much like family, is viewed as the ideal, and thus households which do not follow the stereotypical model of a spousal couple, but rather non-standard arrangements, are 'not at home'.

¹¹ See Blunt (2003b, 2005) for a more detailed discussion of the desire for both proximate and more distant homes.

9.3.2 The 'Home' Embodies Normative Attributes which are Mapped onto Gendered Patterns of Discrimination

Second, the normative attributes ascribed to the 'home' shows how the meanings linked with different spaces can be directly mapped onto the social exclusion of certain individuals and groups with the deviance associated with female-headed households a prominent example. Gender ideologies and societal values more broadly are not changing at the rate as gender roles, in the same way that the notion of 'home' has not altered to the same degree as the empirical diversity of household types. These have partly proliferated through the mobility of the post-conflict climate, which has fragmented the household in spatial terms. In Cambodia, 'home' is therefore an expression of what Blunt and Dowling (2006: 25) describe generally as 'a "power geometry" whereby people are differently positioned in relation to, and differentially experience, a place called home'. While 'home' may originally be a bourgeois western construct, participants differentiate, if not linguistically in Khmer, between places they feel they belong to, and others that they do not, regardless of what particular term is ascribed to it. Just as 'it sometimes seems that the more we talk and think critically about the public/private dichotomy, the more we get trapped in its conceptual framework' (Lacey, 1998: 171), there are therefore potential dangers of empirical studies falling into a self-defeating preoccupation with the conceptual differentiation of 'home', 'household' and 'house' which could obscure cross-cultural interpretations of place and space. The restriction to the 'household' in development studies for example, jeopardises stripping the domestic sphere from the emotional and gendered investments that people make and that men mobilise to uphold uneven power relations in the home.

9.3.3 The Home is an Increasingly Influential Site for Male Identity Formation in Comparison to Women

Related to this, my fourth and final point that the home is a key site for identity formation. In the thesis I have considered the role of home a material and

symbolic space, which not only contains gendered behaviour but is also mobilised in defence of 'practical' and 'strategic' gender interests (see Molyneux, 1985). While for women working in Cambodia, personal identity is increasingly formed outside the home, for men accumulating capital, the home is a space through which to communicate their prosperity and status. Viewing work as narrowly definitive of male identity is too simplistic. Employment only marks men's contribution to their households when it is converted into social, material and symbolic capital to mediate through the home to the public sphere. The home is a point and process of communication within which men negotiate their identity, rather than only through their roles within it. Rather than a workplace for men, the home represents an 'asset'. The complex relationships and masculine identities that men have to the home however remain rarely the subject of consideration in academia (see Chant 2000 for a brief discussion in relation to Costa Rica).

Home remains a space that is associated with female domestic work, in which aesthetic standards must be maintained to communicate respectability to the wider community. While poorer men are unable to use consumption in quite the same way as richer men, they can none the less place responsibility on women to keep the home tidy, ordered and clean. The home as a neglected academic sphere of men's lived experience must thus be looked upon as a validation of masculine dominance at a time when their traditional roles in the public sphere are being challenged. Home is thus harnessed by men as a symbolic and material representation of continuity, both through the monetary rewards it increasingly brings in Slorkram, to men's insistence on women's continued responsibility for housework and childcare, which ties women to domesticity.

9.4 Conclusion

Bringing these points together, I would like to return to my opening argument that while the Khmer Rouge is an integral part of Cambodian history, it is better viewed as a historical rupture rather than a permanent reconfiguration of Cambodian society. While people's lives have been deeply affected by the conflict,

they are now inevitably going through change of a different kind. Moreover, despite the discourse of egalitarianism that the Khmer Rouge regime try to enforce within societal practice, Pol Pot and his cadres did not manage to unseat persistent gender, class or urban-rural inequalities which continue to structure people's contemporary lives. 'Conflict' and 'transition' cannot easily be collapsed, with the over-emphasis on the 1970s somewhat misplaced from the perspective of gender. My findings thus concur with the argument expressed by Marston (2005: 501) that it is time 'to view the Pol Pot period from a greater distance—perhaps distinguishing it more dispassionately as part of larger historical and political processes'. Many atrocities of the twentieth century were committed in the name of egalitarianism, targeting people whose success was considered as evidence of their criminality (Pinker, 2002: 152). Now at the beginning of a new century it is necessary for difference and conflict to be defined as a 'normal' part of social relations in order for policy initiatives to respond to this reality.

Connected to this, a new, more complex and equally fundamental set of institutional and policy changes will be called for as Cambodia enters its second 'post-conflict' decade (World Bank, 2006) with the free market increasingly being left to direct the shape of events in the developing world (Potter and Lloyd-Evans, 1998: 204). However, while market forces and the globalising direction of change in the Cambodian economy are now affecting gender roles and relations to some degree, this is mainly at the level of the economic rather than the social and ideological. Despite the motto of Democratic Kampuchea cadres- 'when you pull the grass, you have to pull the root'- people's past or inherited ideological predispositions both in regard to the 'home' and especially 'gender', play out heavily and call for more thorough understanding of these normative legacies. Moreover, in order for gender equality to be realised, not only will the perspectives, roles and identities of men need to be subject of greater attention (and action), but the home as a persistent space of inequality will need to become an integral part of future international development agendas. This is particularly the case if the Millennium Development Goals are to have a positive and meaningful impact on the lives of women in Cambodia and the Global South.

APPENDICES



Figure 10.1: Household activity exercise with Krobei men
(Photograph by K Brickell, Krobel Riel, July 2004)

Appendix 1: Discussion Group Structure

SECTION ONE- The Family

PARTICIPATORY EXERCISE QUESTIONS-

- 1) Can you name the basic needs and activities of a family?
- 2) Who in the family is responsible for meeting these needs?
- 3) Where do men and women do these things - sleep, eat, entertain, work?
- 4) How many hours are spent on these?

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS-

- 5) Do you all agree with this? (If no, why not?)
- 6) Is there anything you would change or is different in your own houses?
- 7) Are there any reasons for the division of labour among family members?
- 8) Who makes the decisions in the house?
- 9) How has this situation changed over the years?
- 10) Is it changing now?
- 11) What are the traits of a woman?
- 12) What are the traits of a man?
- 13) Are these changing?

SECTION TWO- The Village

- 14) Does anyone know when the village was founded?
- 15) Are there any myths in the village or old stories?
- 16) What are the most important places to you in your village? Why?
- 17) What have been the most significant events in the history of the village?
- 18) Do you know what happened to the village during Pol Pot?
- 19) What happened to your family, house and land?
- 20) Did you all come back to the same place in the village after the regime? Why?
- 21) How did it work? Was conflict with other people caused by this?
- 22) How has the village changed since?
- 23) What are the main problems in the village today?
- 24) Are there any cases of domestic violence in this village?
- 25) What do you think about domestic violence?
- 26) What are the reasons for it?
- 27) What should be done?
- 28) How do you think the village will change in the next 10 years?
- 29) What do you think will cause this change?

Appendix 2: Discussion Group Household Activity Charts

Figure 10.2:

Completed household activity chart

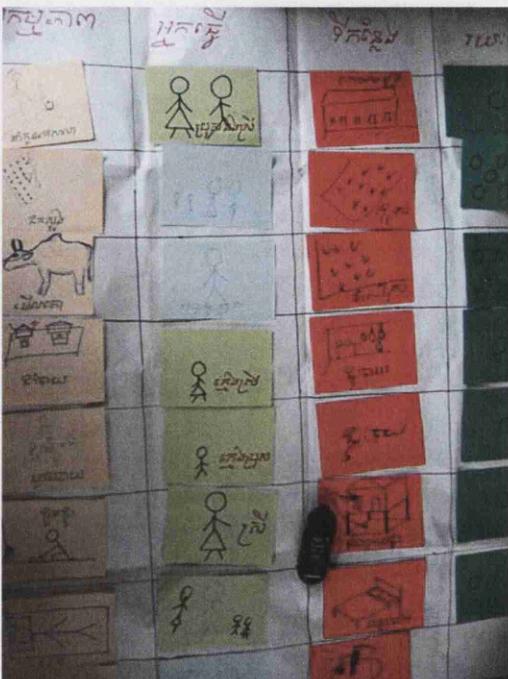
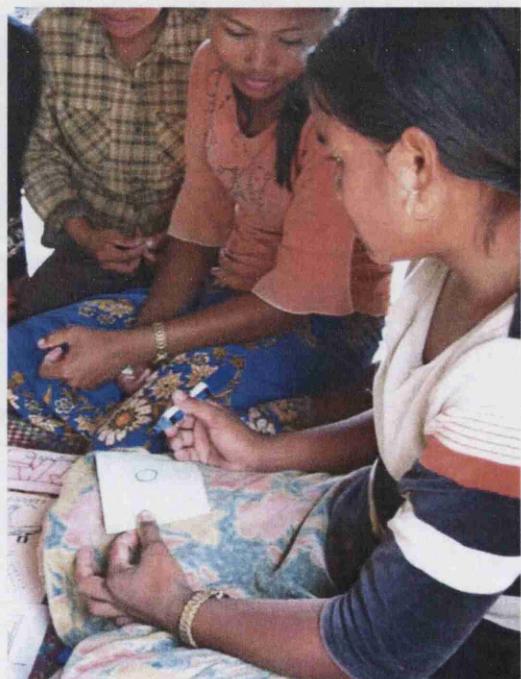


Figure 10.3:

Household activity exercise with
Krobei Riel women



(Photographs by K Brickell, Krobei Riel, July 2004)

Each column represents the following:

Activity- Participants asked to name the basic activities of their family

Who- Participants asked to describe who in the family is responsible for meeting each of these needs. For each household need, they can use ten beans (or small stones) to illustrate the levels of responsibility.

Where- Participants use ready made pictures of different spaces and if desire, can draw their own.

Time Spent- Circles were used to represent hours as not everyone could read numbers- i.e. one circle equals one hour

Appendix 3: Oral History Interview Structure

SECTION ONE- Family History Pol Pot Onwards

[35+]

- 1) Where does your family originate?
- 2) Can you tell me about your childhood and growing up?
- 3) Before the war, what was your life like at home?
- 4) How did your life change during the conflict?
- 5) What happened to your house and land?- Were your family able to live in the same house under Pol Pot?
- 6) What happened to your family? Were you separated?
- 7) How did you cope with it? How did it make you feel?
- 8) Did you come back to the same place in the village after the regime? Why?
- 9) How did it work? Was conflict with other people caused by this?
- 10) [If house destroyed]- did you rebuild the house in the same place? Why?
- 11) Are there any features about the old house that your family tried to recreate? Or was your aim to build something different?
- 12) How has your family life changed since the Pol Pot regime?
- 13) Are there any objects that were special in your life, but which you lost during Pol Pot?
- 14) Are there any which you managed to keep?
- 15) How important are they to you?

[35 or cannot remember Pol Pot regime]

- 16) Where does your family originate?
- 17) Can you tell me about your childhood and growing up?
- 18) Do your parents or grandparents still talk to you about the conflict?
- 19) What do they say?
- 20) How important is this in your life?

SECTION TWO- Past Houses

[For people who have not always lived in the village or changed houses in the village]

- 21) Do you miss your old home?
- 22) What do you miss about it?
- 23) Which is your favourite- your previous or current house(s)?
- 24) Why is this?
- 25) Is there anything that you have brought from previous house(s)?
- 26) Why did you choose this?
- 27) Which place do you feel that you most belong?
- 28) Did family life change at all when you moved houses?

[For people who have always lived in the same house in the village]

- 29) How important was the home to you during the Pol Pot Regime?

SECTION THREE onwards (2nd Interview when possible)- History of Current House

- 30) How old is your house/ what year was your house built?
- 31) Do you know why it was built in this position in the village?
- 32) Is this the original location where the house was built?
- 33) How many generations have lived in this house?
- 34) Who constructed it?
- 35) What is your house made of? (Note down style of roof and material used: the roof, walls, floor, style of windows, doors and other notable features)
- 36) What are the most important possessions in your home to you?
- 37) Do you have any family heirlooms you will pass down the family?
- 38) Who will inherit your house and land?

SECTION FOUR- Spatial Organisation/ Arrangement of Current House

- 39) What are the different spaces within the main part of your house?
- 40) What do you do in these different spaces?
- 41) Where do you spend most time in the house?
- 42) Which is your favourite place in the house? Why there?
- 43) Where does your husband/ wife (or parents if young) spend most of their time?
- 44) Why do you think this is?
- 45) Are there certain areas of the house, which are considered male spaces?
What about female spaces? What are about age?
- 46) Who decided how it would be designed/built?
- 47) What changes have been made to the house? (*In the spatial organisation, the original structure of the house?*)
- 48) Why were these made?
- 49) Do you plan to make any improvements in the arrangement/structure of the house to meet your needs today?

SECTION FIVE- A Day in the Life

- 50) What time do you get up?
- 51) What do you do in the morning?
- 52) What do you do in the afternoon?
- 53) What do you do in the evening?
- 54) What time do you go to bed?
- 55) Does this vary weekly or seasonally at all?
- 56) What do your husband/wife/ parents/children each day?
- 57) What activities do you do together?
- 58) Are there any reasons for the division of labour among family members?
- 59) Is there anything that your husband/wife/parents/children did before the conflict that you now do or do not do?
- 60) Is there violence or conflict in your house?
- 61) If yes, why do you think so?
- 62) Does it make you scared to be in the house?

SECTION SIX- Contemporary Living and Influences

- 63) Are you and your family happy living in this house?
- 64) Do you feel emotional attachment to your home?
- 65) What significant events have taken place in this house?
- 66) What is the greatest problem(s) you have in the house today?
- 67) What are the personal traits of a woman?
- 68) What are the personal traits of a man?
- 69) Do you think these are changing?
- 70) Has tourism in Siem Reap affected your lives at all?
- 71) If it has, how do you feel towards it?
- 72) How often do you watch TV?
- 73) Have you learnt anything new from it and/or has it changed your attitude towards anything in the home today?
- 74) What do you see as the greatest problems in the village today?

SECTION SEVEN- Photography Exercise

- 75) Why did you take this picture?
- 76) Can you tell me what is happening in this picture?
- 77) Do you have any family photographs or old pictures you can show me?

Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interviews

FOR EVERYONE:

Village Relations

Do people within your community help each other?
How do they help each other?
When have you most needed them?
Is the village friendlier now or in the past?
Why do think this is?
What are the main problems in the village?

Household Organisation

How it is decided who is household head? / What makes someone a household head?
Who inherits property? How is this determined?

QUESTIONS FOR MEN:

Work

What alternatives do you have to working in agriculture/tourism?

OR

Why have you not taken them? /Why do you chose to stay working in agriculture?
What hours do you work?
What time do you get up and then go to bed?
Do you have breaks in the day?
What do the men you know like to do most in their leisure time?

Family

How often do you look after children?
How long do you look after them for?
Do you enjoy it?
Why?
What work does your wife do?
How do you feel about your wife working?
Is men or women's work more or less valued?
What pressures or worries do you have?

What are you doing/ or planning to do about them?
How do you cope with them?
Are these concerns common?
What are they caused by?

QUESTIONS FOR ALL WOMEN:

Are more women working outside the home? Today than in the past? 10 years ago? 20 years ago? 30 years ago?
Why do you stay at home?
Is men or women's work more or less valued?
What hours do you work?
What time do you get up and then go to bed?
Do you have breaks in the day?
Do you know of the Cbpab Srei?
Do you follow it? Which Bits?
Do you follow it more or less than in the past?

QUESTIONS FOR WOMEN WHO WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME:

How do you feel doing what has been traditionally seen as men's work?
Is it your first job outside the home?
What made you start working?
Did anyone suggest it to you?
Do you find it hard or easy?
Why did you choose to be a?
What hours do you work?
What time do you get up and then go to bed?
Do you have breaks in the day?
Has it improved your social standing?
Do you enjoy working outside the house?
Which occupations are best for women to do?
Why?

Would you recommend it to other people?
Has it changed how you feel about yourself?
What has been the reaction from your friends?
What has been the reaction from your parents?
What has been the reaction from your husband?
Did you have to pursue your husband?
If you did- how did you do it?
Has your relationship with your husband changed?
Has the burden of work increased or decreased?
Have other family members taken over any jobs you previously did?
Do you do the same, more or less housework now you work outside the house?
Who looks after the children?
Do you keep all your pay?
Has your control over the expenditure improved?

What does your salary pay for?
Have you increased your household expenditure since working?

What is your salary used for?
What is your husband's salary used for?

QUESTIONS FOR BOTH MEN AND WOMEN:

Why is it that some men think it is ok for women to work outside the home and others not?

'Women should spend their time at home looking after their husband and children' -Do you agree or disagree?

What duties do you have in the home?

Have they changed? Why have they changed?

Have any of you received any gender training from NGOs in the village?

What did you learn?

How has it affected your life, if at all?

Are women powerful or powerless?

Are the following characteristics male, female or both?

Assertive

Obedient

Loyal

Promiscuous

Sensitive

Caring

Reliable

Faithfully

String

Jealous

Do you know the phrase *'it is better for a father to die than a mother, and better for a canoe to sink in the middle of a river than for a house to burn down'*?

What does it mean?

Decision-Making and Household Expenditure

Who makes decisions about your children's education?

Who makes decisions about food?

Who makes decisions about family planning/contraception?

Who makes decisions about medical care?

Who makes decisions about the maintenance of the house?

Do you have money for personal consumption?

What do you spend it on?

Who is in charge of income?

Homeland

How important is your homeland to you?

Why is it important?

Do you still have family there?

How often do you visit it?

Do you share money?

Appendix 5: Participant Profile Form

Oral History (OH) No: _____ Date: _____

Siem Reap *Krobei Riel*

$$M \qquad \qquad F$$

1. NAME AGE RELIGION

a. _____ b. _____ c. _____

2. Birthplace (Province): _____

3. Have you always lived in the house you are living in now? _____

4. (If no), where else have you lived and when?

Place of Residence

Date

5. How many people live in your house (including you?) _____

6. Who are they?

Relationship to participant Age Occupation

7. Are you married- if so at what age/year? _____

8. Head(s) of household: _____

9. Rented, Owned, borrowed? _____

9a. If owned, do they have land title documents? _____

10. (If owned) Who by? _____

11. What is your relationship to the original owner? _____

12. Do you have any other family in the village or commune that live in other houses? If so, where do they live? _____

13. Electricity? _____ 14. Running Water? _____

15. TV or radio? _____ 16. Share Anything? _____

17. Education a. Number of Years: _____

b. Between what ages: _____

18. Working? _____ 19. Occupation _____

20. Previous Occupation(s) _____

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