Introduction to the National Archives of Cambodia
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Since 1975 scholars researching documents on modern Cambodian history have had to rely on secondary sources and archives held in France and Vietnam. The holdings of National Archives of Cambodia were thrown into complete disarray during the Khmer Rouge period and remained almost entirely inaccessible until the mid 1990s.

Since 1995 the National Archives of Cambodia has been on the road to rearranging and describing its large collection of documents. Thanks to the support of various international donors, such as the Australian, Swiss and French Embassies, the French Cultural Centre, the Toyota Foundation, and Japan Foundation Asia Centre, the National Archives of Cambodia has been able to implement a program to preserve and make available its collection to Cambodian and international scholars and researchers.

The National Archives is responsible for preserving documents, created by the Government of Cambodia, which possess enduring legal and historic value. These include records of the French colonial administration (1863-1954) and post-independence Cambodian Governments. The holdings comprise of the following collections:

- Records of the Résidence Supérieure du Cambodge (French Colonial Administration)
- Records of Post-Colonial Governments of Cambodia
- Records of the Pol Pot Regime
- Records of the Genocide Tribunal
- Official Journals of Indochina and Cambodia
- Cambodian Publications and Periodicals
- Maps, Plans, Posters and Photographs

Records of the Résidence Supérieure du Cambodge (French Colonial Administration)

These records cover the French colonial period from 1863 to 1954. It is by far the largest and most complete collection of the NAC and contains records from the various services of the French administration, from the commune level up to the national level. These records reflect the activities of the government administration and consist of documents from the various services of the government, including correspondence, reports, registers, minutes to meetings, and
laws. The majority of the collection is in French but documents from the provincial level and from the Palace do contain Khmer language documents. Using the original French classification for Indochina, 70% of these records have been reclassified and their titles entered into the NAC database. At the time of writing the database contained over 30,000 records. Searches can be conducted on the database using classification, title searches, or combinations of both.

**Records of the Post-Colonial Governments of Cambodia**

This collection is far from being complete because of Cambodia’s history of political and civil turmoil during the 1960s and 70s. The majority of ministerial documents from the 1950s and 1960s had not been transferred to the National Archives when, in 1975, the Pol Pot regime seized control of Cambodia and embarked on a 4-year period of destruction that included documents held in the ministries. The NAC has acquired some post-1979 records of the Council of Ministers, which are currently being arranged and described. Consequently, they are not yet available to the public. If you are interested in the post-colonial period, you can consult the NAC collection of Cambodian publications and periodicals and the Official Journals.

**Records of the Pol Pot Regime**

There are over 100,000 pages of documents from the Commerce Ministry of Democratic Kampuchea, including treaties, bills of lading, list of exports, shipping records and a vast archive of other documentation on the internal and external trade of DK. For more extensive primary sources on the Khmer Rouges and the Pol Pot Regime, please consult the documents on the Genocide Tribunal at the NAC or, alternatively, the large collection of documents compiled by the Documentation Centre of Cambodia.

**Records of the Genocide Tribunal of 1979**

This collection consists primarily of testimonies, in French, English and Khmer, of the Genocide Tribunal, organised in 1979 after the fall of Pol Pot’s Democratic Kampuchea. Researchers need special permission of the Council of Ministers to consult this collection of documents. NAC staff will assist you in obtaining authorisation, if you would like to consult these records.

**Official Journals**

The French administration of Cambodia regularly published official journals that reassemble in chronological order laws,
decrees, decisions, appointments etc., i.e. all the official acts of the government administration. In these journals, a researcher can find information regarding the Government of metropolitan France, the Government of the Indochina and the member states of the Indochinese Union, including Cambodia. The journals include:

In French language:
Journal Officiel de l'Indochine 1896-1951
Journal Officiel du Cambodge 1945-1972
Journal Officiel of France 1920-1938
Bulletin Officiel de l'Indochine 1899-1933
Bulletin Officiel of the Ministry of Colonies 1898-1928
Bulletin Officiel du Cambodge 1902-1949
Lists of laws and penal codes of Cambodia
Repertories, economic and judicial bulletins of secondary importance

In Khmer:
Journal officiel du Cambodge 1911-1972

Cambodian publications and periodicals

Includes published materials of the Sangkum Reastr Niyum and Lon Nol Governments, i.e. speeches, party programs, proceedings of conferences, statutes of organisations etc. It also contains a collection of material produced by His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk such as his speeches, ceremonies, political statements and magazines that the King edited. A database of this collection is nearing completion that will permit researchers to search via keyword classification, titles, or combinations of these.

Newspapers are also a feature of this collection and consist of issues from the early 1920s to present day. Titles published before 1957 were printed only in French or Khmer and some Vietnamese. There are Chinese and Vietnamese language newspapers from 1957. Many of the early newspapers are in very fragile condition and cannot be consulted. Currently, early Khmer language newspapers are being repaired.

Collection of maps, plans, posters, and photographs

Maps and plans, found during the current process of reorganising the holdings, have been repaired and placed in special storage. The collection contains maps of Cambodia, of the provinces, cadastral plans, architectural plans of Government buildings and the Royal Palace, various commercial and political posters, public announcements, the majority produced during the colonial period. Most are cross-referenced to specific files within the collection of the Résidence Supérieure from which they originated but were
removed for conservation purposes.

There is also a collection of over 2000 press photographs from the Sangkum Reastr Niyum period, featuring His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk and visiting foreign dignitaries. The NAC is currently assembling a collection of 19th and early 20th century photographs of Cambodia and will be making these available to the general public in the near future.

As institutions such as the Center for Khmer Studies, the Royal Academy, the Royal University of Phnom Penh and the Royal University of Fine Arts grow, there will be an increasing demand by Cambodia researchers for access to research materials. From these institutions will come demands covering a multitude of topics and disciplines and the NAC is now well placed to be able to offer assistance and material to researchers.

In the future the NAC, through the Newsletter of the Center for Khmer Studies, will be providing more detailed descriptions of its holdings.