Fielding genocide:

post-1979 Cambodia and the geopolitics of memory

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Abstract

This thesis is about the relationship between place, memory and geopolitics. It examines public memorial sites in Cambodia dedicated to the victims of the genocide of 1975 to 1979. Scant attention has been paid to the geographies of Cambodia’s post-1979 reconstruction period. Where commentators have noted the existence of Cambodia’s dedicated spaces of memory they have characterised these sites as culturally and politically inauthentic or marginal (as ersatz religious monuments, or as political ‘propaganda’). Against these accounts, I contend that Cambodia’s memorials are central to, and productive of, cultural, national and transnational politics of the past and present. Like many other late twentieth-century contexts, the Cambodian case demonstrates the link between the texts and practices of geopolitics and discourses of traumatic memory. The dissertation examines how various tropes of memory enact an imaginative topography of Cambodia, both locally and transnationally. I do this by analysing four memorial sites and practices: the development of the Choeung Ek ‘killing field’ site (Phnom Penh); curatorial practices at the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes (Phnom Penh); tourism to Cambodia’s genocide sites as a popular geopolitical practice; and the global circulation and reception of photographs of Khmer Rouge victims. It is argued that these sites and practices of memory have been central to Cambodia’s redevelopment as well as constitutive of the geopolitics of Cambodia’s re-entry into an international state system.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD,
(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
(iii) the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

[Signature]

Rachel Hayford
For my parents
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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

People are always shouting they want to create a better future. It’s not true. The future is an apathetic void of no interest to anyone. The past is full of life, eager to irritate us, provoke and insult us, tempt us to destroy or repaint it. The only reason people want to be masters of the future is to change the past. They are fighting for access to the laboratories where photographs are retouched and biographies and histories rewritten.

Milan Kundera The Book of Laughter and Forgetting

1.1 Introduction

One evening in the late 1980s, my mother previewed the film The Killing Fields for one of her classes. She did this at home, which was not unusual, and we watched the film together. I was around thirteen years old. For some time afterwards, I remembered only one scene from the film. In this scene, a Cambodian man hides from his murderous compatriots in a ditch at the edge of a field. The ditch in which he is crouching is filled with partially decayed human remains. When it is safe for him to flee from his hiding place, he cannot help but walk across the surface of the mass grave, slipping and crunching bones noisily under his bare feet. My memory of this scene is linked to an intense affect — that of my mother’s anger and revulsion. The experience was profoundly unsettling. What had happened in the place depicted? How was it that my mother felt such anger and revulsion for something that had happened somewhere so far away and so removed from our everyday lives? Why did she want to teach her school students in Australia about these terrible things? As I see it now, I was trying to come to an understanding of the affects and actions that can be produced in subjects by a popular visual representation, even at a significant geographical
and temporal remove from an event. These concerns echo in the central questions animating this
dissertation. What comes after a period of mass political violence? How are memories of such
violence represented, practiced and communicated? What sites and scales are involved in such
memorialisation? How might discourses of memory be linked to the geopolitical production,
reception and contestation of space? What sort of motivations might there be for people — those
familiar with popular representations of a genocide — to take up an opportunity to visit places
dedicated to such an event?

The aim of this study is to show, through the case of post-1979 Cambodia, that discourses of
genocide memory are necessarily geopolitical in their generation, contestation and deployment.
Within this larger aim, I describe and explain the emergence of dedicated sites of memory in
Cambodia, the 'laboratories where photographs are retouched and biographies and histories
rewritten' (to allude to the epigraph of this chapter). I show the significance of these sites to the
development of domestic political legitimacy for the 'masters of the future' that came to power in
Cambodia in January 1979. I argue that these sites of memory emerged out of practices of
curation, forensic preservation and narration (in published texts). I then show how these sites
were always already turned to an external (non-Cambodian) audience. Initially this audience was
made up of foreign journalists and popular delegations, but has more recently been comprised of
tourists and figures of international governance. The embodied practices of visiting, testifying and
photography are central to such receptions, and to the subsequent circulation of artefacts taken
from these sites in the world at large. In such discussions I highlight three tropes of memory: the
'killing field' (mass grave), 'the bones' (mass collections of uncremated human remains,
predominantly skulls), and portraits of the dead (photographs of Cambodian victims). These three tropes — Cambodia’s killing fields, bones, and portrait photographs of victims — are common to memorial initiatives generated both within Cambodia and outside of Cambodia. Taken together, I argue that they constitute an ‘imaginative geopolitical topography’ (O Tuathail, 1996: 193) enacted through rhetorical, visual and material forms. This imaginative geopolitical topography is, as will be shown, productive of various effects and relations of power across multiple sites and scales.

In this introductory chapter, I outline the historical transition from the Khmer Rouge state of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), to the post-genocide state of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (1979-1989). Following this, I introduce the question of the relationship between memory and geopolitics by setting out the working conceptualisations of sovereignty, memory and geopolitics as they underpin the analysis contained in this dissertation. The major memorialising initiatives of the PRK period are then outlined. In the final section of this chapter, I outline the organisation of the dissertation and briefly introduce the subject matter, structure and arguments of the subsequent chapters.

1.2 From Democratic Kampuchea to the People’s Republic of Kampuchea

Cambodia is infamous for the mass political violence that occurred in the country under Khmer Rouge rule. The Khmer Rouge came to power in Cambodia in April 1975, giving Cambodia the name Democratic Kampuchea. Less than four years later, some 1.7 million Cambodians (approximately one in five people) had lost their lives. Some were murdered by Khmer Rouge
authorities, many others perished from famine, disease or overwork. The state of Democratic Kampuchea ended as a failed experiment in anti-urbanism, mass collectivisation and non-mechanised agricultural intensification. Although the factors influencing the rise of the Khmer Rouge as a political force remain disputed, there is no doubt that the secret bombing campaign of the United States displaced and killed thousands in the northern and eastern parts of the country. Between February and August of 1973, The United States dropped some 257 465 tons of bombs on Cambodia, more than double the tonnage of bombs than were dropped on Japan during WWII (Shawcross, 1979: 296-297). Support for the Khmer Rouge swelled with the dislocation and disaffection caused by these events. The 'upper brothers' (bong khang loen) of the Khmer Rouge regime were not, however, uneducated rural people. This elite group was comprised of a close circle of friends who had been educated and radicalised in Paris in the 1950s including Saloth Sar (Pol Pot), Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary, and Son Sen and grew to include home-grown radicals such as Nuon Chea and Ta Mok. The upper brothers considered cities to be corrupt and bourgeois spaces, a view that some scholars maintain was a rational response to the manifest rural-urban inequities of Cambodia under the then government of Lon Nol (see Vickery, 1999: 19-28).

In accordance with this view, one of the key policies of the Khmer Rouge was the evacuation of the population of Cambodia’s cities and large towns to rural collectives. The evacuation of Phnom Penh (see Figure 1) took immediate effect on the date of the city’s capture by Khmer Rouge forces: April 17 1975. Residents of the city were forced at gunpoint from their homes and were discouraged from taking any of their personal belongings with them. In the days following April 17, the roads leading away from the city crowded with evacuees, and any resistance to the
Figure 1: Map of Cambodia showing location of six local-level memorial sites.
evacuation was met with the threat or act of execution (see Kiernan, 1996: 31-64; Vickery, 1999: 77-88). The Khmer Rouge established settlements in the form of large-scale work communes in Cambodia's rural areas. Urban populations, referred to as neak thmey ('new people'), were integrated with existing rural populations, referred to as neak moulanh ('base people') in such collectives (Kiernan, 1996: 164). Religious figures were not immune to the evacuations or the requirement of communal living, and there is evidence that monks were disproportionately targeted for execution (Kiernan, 1996: 55-58). It has also been argued that resident ethnic groups such as the Vietnamese, Chinese, Cham (an Islamic minority) and Tribal Minorities were subject to specific programs of extermination (Kiernan, 1996: 251-309).

In many instances, families were separated, with parents and children living at a significant remove from each other. Children were generally thought by the Khmer Rouge to be inherently more trustworthy revolutionaries (see Chandler, 1999: 33-35). As such, many were armed and given powerful roles in the maintenance of order within communes and work collectives. 'Traitors' to the revolution were periodically purged, and many reported cases exist of situations in which individuals were asked to identify themselves as possessing particular qualifications or skills. Cadre would invite people to offer their specialist skills to the revolution, intimating that doing this would relieve them of some of the privations of life in the commune. In most cases, such situations resulted in executions, either covertly or overtly carried out, the rationale being that such individuals, in their self-identification, were demonstrating their true, anti-revolutionary nature. Disobedient or dissenting conduct in everyday life would also bring swift and violent punishment and sometimes death.
The political party of the Khmer Rouge in control of Democratic Kampuchea — the Communist Party of Kampuchea — was highly secretive, and its very existence was kept from the Cambodian people until September 1977 (Chandler, 1996: 225; 256). Khmer Rouge cadre spoke only of *angkar* (the organisation) as the power to whom all must pledge allegiance, and as the only legitimate source of directives about life and labour in the new revolutionary state. Major public works programs were commenced throughout the country, and irrigation systems were targeted. Dam-building and the digging of irrigation canals were especially prized projects, given the emphasis of the regime on an agrarian economic base. Mass manual labour provided the sole means by which such works were undertaken (see Kiernan, 1996: 159-250). The emphasis on agricultural intensification did not, however, guarantee success in food production (see Vickery, 1999: 167-169). Rice production was so low in some areas that people starved to death, or grew so weak from malnourishment and overwork that they succumbed to disease. Cambodia’s health system had been effectively shut down in most parts of the country, and many of the country’s doctors killed, with the result that hospitalisation or treatment for disease was unavailable, resulting in many more deaths.

The population of Democratic Kampuchea was effectively immobilised. Roads within the country were closed to all but official through-traffic by virtue of hundreds of armed checkpoints. Transport routes across Cambodia’s borders were also closed and heavily guarded, and no flights were allowed into or out of the country save those delivering high-level cadre or Chinese advisors and diplomats to and from the country. The isolation of the country was also effected by control.
of media forms. The official radio of Democratic Kampuchea maintained broadcasts but few ordinary people in the country were allowed radios. The international face of Democratic Kampuchea was Khieu Samphan, one of the ‘upper brothers’. Khieu Samham maintained the public fiction of functional governance and policies throughout the Democratic Kampuchea period and beyond (in exile after 1979). In reality, by 1977 the country was imploding under the force of its program of radical social and economic policies, with widespread famine disabling the population. This was the general nature of life under Democratic Kampuchea. However experiences of severe oppression and food shortages were geographically uneven (Vickery, 1999: 148-152; Kiernan, 1996: passim), with life in the eastern zone (bordering Vietnam) being considerably less degraded than other areas. This situation of unevenness is also true for dissent within the ranks of Khmer Rouge cadre. The eastern zone cadre became increasingly disaffected with the policies of the upper brothers after 1976. In response to violent and widespread purges by the CPK of eastern zone leaders in 1977, many of these figures defected to Vietnam, where they recounted stories of the violence occurring in their homeland.

Relations between Vietnam and Democratic Kampuchea were strained for much of the Democratic Kampuchea period. Not long into their rule, the Khmer Rouge turned expansionist with the aim of retaking southern Vietnam. Southern Vietnam is an area popularly referred to in Democratic Kampuchea as Kampuchea Krom (southern Kampuchea) and was considered by the Khmer Rouge to be territory that rightfully belonged to Khmer (see Kiernan, 1999: 357-366). From 1977 onwards, numerous Khmer Rouge attacks were carried out in Vietnam, the most famous of these being the attack on the town of Chau Doc, in southern Vietnam. These attacks
marked the beginning of what is known as 'the Third Indochina War' (see Evans and Rowley, 1990). In the opening discussion of his highly influential book, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson examines the late-twentieth century conflicts between socialist-communist Vietnam, Cambodia and China, including the Third Indochina War between Cambodia (Democratic Kampuchea) and Vietnam. Anderson surmises from these conflicts that the 'end of the era of nationalism' is nowhere in sight, and argues that the increasingly nationalistic expressions within and between socialist-communist states revives the question of nationalism 'as an uncomfortable anomaly for Marxist theory' one which has 'been largely elided, rather than confronted' (Anderson, 1982: 13).

The Vietnamese state, reportedly motivated by Democratic Kampuchea's attacks and reports that extreme violence was occurring inside Democratic Kampuchea, sent 150,000 heavily armed troops into the Cambodian province of Kratie on Christmas Day, 1978 (Gottesman, 2003: 10). Assisted by anti-Khmer Rouge Cambodian forces in the form of the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (hereafter the Front), Vietnam's invasion of Democratic Kampuchea was swift. By January 4 1979, Vietnam controlled the seven provinces east of the Mekong River (see Figure 1). The Vietnamese-led army then captured Phnom Penh on January 7 1979, signalling the effective end of Democratic Kampuchea. Remnant Khmer Rouge forces quit the city and surrounding areas, and retreated to the west and north of the country. On January 8 1979, a new government was announced in Phnom Penh: the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council (KPRC) (Gottesman, 2005: 11). Two days later the KPRC announced the establishment of a new state: the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) (Gottesman, 2005: 11). The new
government faced the reconstitution of a country on the brink of famine and without currency, communications infrastructure, transport systems or health facilities. The Khmer Rouge had also purged the educated and artisan classes. There were few people with knowledge or experience of the bureaucratic functioning of a government, and the KPRC lacked even the most basic necessities (furnishings, writing equipment, communications equipment, etc.) of a modern bureaucracy (Evans and Rowley, 1990: 161).

As Evan Gottesman notes, one of the main tasks of the new authorities domestically was to clearly distinguish the ideology of the new state from that of Democratic Kampuchea:

the PRK’s propaganda spoke of the Khmer Rouge as Maoist rather than communist, sparing Marxism-Leninism the taint of genocidal associations. It also sought to distinguish between Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for the crimes of Democratic Kampuchea and the thousands of Khmer Rouge cadres and soldiers whom the regime hoped to co-opt (Gottesman, 2003: 60-61).

In this way, the new state attempted to stem the ever-increasing exodus of Cambodians to the Cambodia-Thai border in the country’s northwest (see Figure 1). With the breakdown of communes, and the lifting of most restrictions on mobility within the country, hundreds of thousands of people crowded onto roads, travelling back to their pre-1975 place of residence or to where they believed family and friends were residing. It was a time of enormous social upheaval and uncertainty. Humanitarian assistance (food and shelter and, for some, the possibility of repatriation to a third country) was provided at the border, and fear of the new regime meant that many Cambodians chose the uncertainties of the border over an uncertain future within Cambodia.
The future also looked uncertain for the KPRC in 1979. The government, known to the outside world as the 'Heng Samrin' regime (Heng Samrin was the president of the KPRC and PRK head of state) found itself the subject of much geopolitical concern. While the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc nations moved quickly to recognise the PRK, China, ASEAN and the United States decried Vietnam's invasion. A resolution condemning Vietnam's actions in Cambodia was brought by China to the United Nations Security Council and was supported by the United States, France and Britain (Gottesman, 2003: 43). Gottesman reports that:

U.S. policy makers saw Cambodia primarily in terms of America's antagonism toward Vietnam and its hopes that warming relations with China could help stem Vietnamese and Soviet expansion in Asia. ... The United States attempted to isolate Vietnam and Cambodia. ... Throughout the summer of 1979, American diplomats lobbied other countries, charities, international aid organisations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank to suspend aid to both countries (Gottesman, 2003: 43-44).

The situation was exacerbated by the United Nations General Assembly vote in September 1979 that granted the Cambodian seat to the now-exiled government of Democratic Kampuchea (Gottesman, 2003: 44). The material and financial support lent by the USSR and other socialist nations notwithstanding, economic and political isolation ensued for the PRK. This situation, as it continued into the 1980s, was famously condemned by one leading international relief organisation as one of major world powers 'punishing the poor' (Mysliwiec, 1988). Over the next few years, the PRK struggled to reconstruct a country, refugee camps swelled on the Thai border and Khmer Rouge forces — bolstered by Western food aid and the safe haven available at the Thai border — continued to engage PRK forces in open warfare in the west and northwest of the
country. At the same time, the PRK, as masters of the future, were also fighting for access to the past (to allude to the words of Kundera that serve as an epigraph to this chapter). A discussion of their activities in this regard is taken up in Section 1.4 below.

In 1982, the Khmer Rouge, supporters of Cambodia's (exiled) Prince Norodom Sihanouk and a Khmer Republican grouping formed a tripartite government-in-exile, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK). Civil conflict between CGDK forces and Vietnamese and PRK forces continued intermittently for some nine further years, until comprehensive political agreements allowing for United Nations intervention was signed by the four warring Cambodian parties and eighteen nations in Paris in October 1991. Two years earlier, following the withdrawal of the Vietnamese military and many Vietnamese advisors, the PRK had re-named itself as the State of Cambodia (SOC). The United Nations intervention resulting from the 1991 Paris agreements transferred sovereignty from the SOC to the Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) for the period between October 1991 and September 1993. The mandate of UNTAC

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1 This re-naming came about in the context of attempts by the Soviet Union, China and Vietnam to normalize their relations, in part achieved by the withdrawal of Vietnamese military from the PRK, and concomitant hopes for a diplomatic solution to the conflict between the CGDK and the PRK (Gottesman, 2003: 302). For its part, the KPRP sought to do away with the word 'Revolutionary', choosing instead 'State of Cambodia' for its 'nonideological' associations (Gottesman, 2003: 303). After the UN-sponsored national elections in 1993, the State of Cambodia became a constitutional monarchy (with Norodom Sihanouk as King and head of state) known as the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia, the state that persists to the present-day. It should be noted that 'Cambodia', 'Cambodge' and 'Kampuchea' are variant transliterations of the same Khmer word. For reasons of coherence and brevity, I refer generally to 'Cambodia' throughout the thesis, except when engaged in explicit discussions of the historical periods and states of Democratic Kampuchea, the PRK and the SOC.
was to halt ongoing civil conflict in Cambodia, initiate national election processes, conduct the election, and facilitate a democratic transition of power to a new government. At the time, UNTAC was the largest and arguably the most ambitious UN mission ever undertaken (see Heder and Ledgerwood, 1996).

Many questions remain unanswered about the geopolitical reception of Democratic Kampuchea and the civil conflict in Cambodia in the twelve years following. Why did the United Nations for so long refuse to assist the Cambodian state that set out to reconstruct the country in the decade after 1979? Why did the Khmer Rouge retain Cambodia’s representative seats in the General Assembly throughout this period when reputable accounts of their murderous rule were widely available? Why did the United Nations and powerful member states (notably the United States of America and China) license the political and military revival of the Khmer Rouge, and thus civil war in Cambodia, throughout the 1980s? Responses of powerful states and international organs of governance did turn on questions of law in 1979, but not the question of the application of legal prohibitions against genocide and crimes against humanity to the Khmer Rouge regime. Instead, the international community debated the legality of Vietnam’s incursion into Democratic Kampuchea. Undoubtedly, the ‘liberation versus invasion’ debate drew on existing convictions that Vietnam had imperialist ambitions, on United States’ resentment over their own recent loss to Vietnam, and on memories of Russia’s conduct as WWII liberator-turned-imperialist. But more specific geopolitical imaginaries of Cambodia were also in play throughout this last decade of the Cold War, turning on claims and counter-claims, memories and counter-memories. In the case of Cambodia, the link between sovereign legitimacy and memory proved
particularly volatile. The peculiarity of this situation can be introduced by way of an especially pertinent recent account of sovereignty.

1.3 Sovereignty, memory and geopolitics

The Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben has recently written that sovereignty is:

> Not an exclusively political concept, an exclusively juridical category, a power external to law

> ... or the supreme rule of the juridical order: it is the originary structure in which law refers to life and includes it in itself by suspending it (Agamben, 1998: 28).

At the heart of Agamben’s formulation is the figure of the sovereign. The sovereign alone has the power to proclaim a state of exception (the power to suspend the application of normal law). This situation produces a paradox of sovereignty in as much as:

> the sovereign is, at the same time, [both] outside and inside the juridical order. ...[T]he sovereign, having the legal power to suspend the validity of the law, legally places himself outside the law (Agamben, 1998: 15).

In addition to the figure of the sovereign, Agamben introduces the figure of *homo sacer* (sacred man). An obscure figure of archaic Roman law whose essential function nevertheless remains essential to the structure of modern politics, *homo sacer* is he who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed* (Agamben, 1998: 8). *Homo sacer* is that figure excluded from the locale of the *polis* and abandoned by the law, in as much as his being killed can not be considered homicide, and therefore can attract no punishment. A range of figures today can exemplify this function. Agamben’s examples include the ‘Muselmanner’ (living dead) of the Nazi concentration camps and contemporary refugees in the *zones d’entente* of airports, border camps and detention centres.
Most importantly for this study, *homo sacer* is also a figure of memory: he is always already a mnemonic for sovereign power and the constitution of sovereignty. As such:

*homo sacer* presents the originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban and preserves the memory of the originary exclusion through which the political dimension was first constituted (Agamben, 1998: 83, my emphasis).

It is the premise of this study that the memorialisation of a genocide ('an absolute state of exception') produces particular problems for the establishment of a new sovereign state. In the case of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, the memorialisation of the horrors of Pol Pot was a particularly fraught project on a number of levels. Most fundamentally, the memorialisation undertaken by the new Cambodian authorities attempted to preserve the figure of *homo sacer* as symbolic of the aberration of the previous regime alone. In its very attempt to shore up the political and territorial integrity of the new post-genocide state, this memorial project installed, in the figure of the genocide victim, a reminder of the necessary — indeed the constitutive — capacity of all sovereign power to produce bare life. Much of the politics surrounding Cambodia's genocide memory — the contestation over the form and function of the memorial sites, and the ambivalence of local and international reception of images and artefacts of the genocide — can be seen to arise from this fundamental instability. Wreathed around this central mnemonic figure of *homo sacer* (in this case the victim of genocide) are subjective memory technologies (individual and collective practices of remembrance) and institutional memorial techniques (state-sanctioned memorial narratives, the diverse sites and tropes of memory discourses). As such, memory is variously implicated in the determination of juridical order and territorial integrity, that is, in the everyday political maintenance of sovereignty. Within Cambodia, institutional memorial discourses turn on discussions of evidence (of genocide), reconstruction or 'resurrection' (of the
Cambodian people and territory, for an example see Figure 2), reconciliation (of Cambodia's warring political factions), and justice (for Cambodians, with reference to an international legal sphere).

According to scholars of geopolitics, the late twentieth century has been characterised by a restructuring of the role, power and posture of the state and governmentality' (Ó Tuathail et al., 1998: 13). In such restructuring, states may be forced to 'delegate many of their sovereign powers upwards to quasi-governmental and quasi-private transnational institutions and actors' (Ó Tuathail et al., 1998: 13-14). Further observations about what I call 'the geopolitics of memory' may be made in the context of such 'delegation' of political power. Memory, especially traumatic memory, now provides discursive ground for the consolidation and contestation of sovereignty in the international state system. In the case to hand, the sovereign power to memorialise is one power (among others) that the Cambodian state has repeatedly refused to delegate to transnational institutions and actors. As will be seen, the PRK did attempt to gain international political legitimacy through appeals to transnational discourses of genocide memory. At the same time, national and local level memorial initiatives within Cambodia attempted to win over a traumatised domestic population to a new national political project of social and physical reconstruction and revolutionary commitment. A more detailed explication of this multi-scaled memory-work follows in Section 1.4.

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2 I understand Ó Tuathail et al. to be using the term 'sovereign' not in the sense that Agamben uses it, but rather to refer to the normative powers assumed by governments of nation-states.
The resurrection of Kampuchea 1979-1982

Figure 2: Front cover of 'The resurrection of Kampuchea 1979-1982', a 1982 English-language publication of the PRK state news agency (SPK).
1.4 Memory and the People’s Republic of Kampuchea

Despite the dire state of the country in early 1979, the KPRC was immediately occupied with memorial matters. As previously noted, greater national and international political legitimacy for the PRK could be established — or so it was thought — by a concerted reconstruction of the memory of Cambodia’s recent past. Six major memorial initiatives were introduced in the early PRK period.

The first of these initiatives, and arguably the most significant, was the investigation and renovation of the ‘S-21’ site. During the genocidal period, S-21 functioned as the premier facility of the Khmer Rouge secret police (the santerbal) and was located in the grounds and buildings of a former high school in inner-city Phnom Penh. Historian David Chandler (1999) has extensively examined the institutional role and logic of the S-21 facility. He notes that between 1976 and early 1979, S-21 was a place of incarceration that also supported investigative, judicial and counter-espionage activities, facilitating the deaths of some 14,000 ‘enemies’ of the Khmer Rouge state (Chandler, 1999: 36). S-21 was discovered soon after the liberation of Phnom Penh on January 7 1979. It was the smell of decomposing bodies that initially drew the site to the attention of two Vietnamese photojournalists accompanying the Vietnamese troops who were combing the city (Chandler, 1999: 2). Along with the bodies of the last fourteen victims of S-21, a vast store of santerbal documents were discovered at S-21. This store included thousands of ‘confessions’ extracted under torture, and some six thousand identification portrait photographs of those who had passed through S-21. These documents were collected together and organised into an archive for the purposes of study by the new authorities.
Throughout 1979, the larger S-21 site was readied for visitors and renamed the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes (see Figures 3 and 4). The archive was installed in the museum, where it remains to the present day, known as the 'Tuol Sleng Archive'. The first group of visitors — international journalists — arrived at the renovated site in March 1979. A pressing concern of the KPRC was to have Tuol Sleng represent to foreign journalists and international delegations the violence and suffering of Cambodians under Pol Pot (Chandler, 1999: 8; Ministry of Culture, Information and Press, Phnom Penh, 1980).

The second memorial initiative undertaken by the PRK authorities was a trial in absentia of Khmer Rouge leaders Pol Pot and Ieng Sary. The trial was held in Phnom Penh in April 1979, with assistance from international legal representatives from sympathetic socialist states and like-minded organisations. The People’s Revolutionary Tribunal (PRT), held in August of 1979, was made possible by the assistance of legal experts from cooperative socialist states and international organisations. The venue for the trial was the Chatamuk Theatre, a building located on the banks of the Tonle Sap River in central Phnom Penh. The trial lasted four days, and was the first in the world to attempt to bring a charge of genocide against an individual or individuals (see Fawthrop and Jarvis, 2005). The PRT was dismissed by Western observers and governments as a 'show trial' because of the assumption of guilt that pervaded the proceedings, the 'scripted' nature of witness statements brought before the tribunal, and the lack of rigorous legal defence for the accused (see Fawthrop and Jarvis, 2004: 40-51; Gottesman, 2002: 65). The trial did, however, force the issue of justice (legal redress) for Cambodia’s surviving population into both domestic and
Figure 3: Location of national genocide memorial sites, Phnom Penh.
Figure 4: ‘Building A’ of the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes, photographed in 1999.
international discourse, bringing with it issues of testimony and the maintenance of physical evidence, many of which have recently been revived in negotiations between the present-day Cambodian government and the United Nations. Tuol Sleng Museum and Archive were drawn into the legal space of the trial; those participating in the event were taken to view the documents and exhibits held there. Pol Pot and Ieng Sary were found guilty on all charges, including that of genocide, and were sentenced to death in absentia.

The following year, authorities confronted a third task, that of the exhumation and curation of newly discovered mass graves at Choeung Ek — the execution ground and burial site associated with the gruesome activities of S-21. This second national memorial site is located southwest of Phnom Penh by some fifteen kilometres (see Figure 3). A series of open-air exhibition signboards were erected at the site, and the remains of nearly 9,000 victims exhumed from the graves were placed in an open-walled wooden structure. The excavated burial pits were left unfilled, appearing as a series of deep hollows in the landscape of the site (see Figure 5). Further curation of Choeung Ek did not occur until late in the PRK period. In 1987, work commenced on a large memorial structure adjacent to the mass graves. The new memorial, built in the form of a Khmer Buddhist stupa (a monument comprising a base, relic chamber and upper spire) was inaugurated in 1988 (see Figure 6). Remains formerly contained in the wooden memorial were relocated into the new Memorial Stupa (see Figure 7).¹

¹It must be noted that genocide memorials were not the only public monuments constructed during the PRK period. In the later part of the decade, there arose a need to memorialise the fraternal assistance lent by Vietnam in the establishment of the PRK state in 1979 and the reconstruction and development of the country in the decade thereafter. The construction of a number of “Cambodian-Vietnamese friendship
monuments’ coincided with the withdrawal of Vietnamese military forces from Cambodia in 1988-1989. The largest of these was built in a public park in the centre of Phnom Penh, opposite the National Assembly Building (Cambodia’s Parliament) and adjacent to one of the larger city temples (Wat Botum). The architect Lim Ouk designed this monument and the Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa. Friendship monuments also stand in Cambodia’s northern city of Siem Reap, and in a number of provincial centres.
Figure 6: The Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa, inaugurated in 1988, photographed in 2000.
Figure 7: Exhumed human remains inside the Choeung Ek Stupa, photographed in 2000.
The fourth initiative pursued by the PRK was the establishment of a 'Genocide Research Committee' to investigate the crimes of the Khmer Rouge regime. This Committee, in cooperation with relevant Ministries, sought to document the atrocities committed by the previous regime. This work necessitated large-scale interviewing of survivors and eyewitnesses to Khmer Rouge crimes (see Figure 8), and the inspection and exhumation of a number of mass graves in provincial areas between 1981-1983.

A fifth initiative soon followed the research of the Genocide Research Committee. In 1983, the Ministry of Culture and Information requested local authorities to facilitate the establishment of local-level memorials, also in the form of stupas (see Figure 9). Like Choeung Ek, these memorials were to provide a place for the interment of remains exhumed from nearby graves. The use of mass, anonymous human remains in museum displays and memorial stupas was, however, entirely disconnected from prior memorial practices in Cambodia. Scholars of Khmer Buddhism confirm the widespread acceptance of cremation as the correct funerary practice. Only cremation ensures the possibility of rebirth of the soul of the deceased in another life (see Keyes, 1994; Poree-Maspero, 1964). Undoubtedly, the sheer logistical difficulty and cost of exhuming and cremating remains (let alone identifying remains, as is currently being attempted for those buried in mass graves in the former Yugoslavia) militated against further investigation of burial sites and exhumed remains. It is also clear, however, that the official government policy of limited exhumation, the maintenance of uncremated remains, memorial construction and the interment of remains was directly linked to complex political aims.
Figure 8: The Genocide Research Committee conducting interviews with survivors, location and date unknown. The figure at the centre of the photograph (white shirt) is the Vietnamese General Mai L'am, chief curator of Tuol Sleng Museum and the Choeung Ek Centre. Photograph courtesy of the Documentation Center of Cambodia.
Figure 9: Local-level genocide memorial, Kandal Province, photographed in 2000.
The PRK authorities attempted to generate a 'cult of the bones' through the preservation and interment of human remains. In this way, as Leah Dickerman notes in the case of the cult of Lenin, mass popular ephemera provide a kind of monumentality that is peculiarly modern in its horizontal array (Dickerman, 2001: 81). In the Cambodian case, the ephemera were the human remains that had been mass produced during the genocide; what remained was for the PRK to raise to iconic status objects that had rarely before been encountered as such. Working against the traditional dominance of cremation practices, the state installed mass remains in a memorial geography that marked the territorial and political integrity of the new state. Cambodians were asked to remember, in viewing the bones, the horrors from which they had been liberated, and the Cambodian political leaders and the fraternal socialist state they were to thank for their liberation.

A sixth major memorial initiative also emerged in 1983, when PRK authorities decided that an annual national observance would be held each year on May 20. The name of this public holiday commemoration was PRK *tivea chang kambeng* (the Day of Anger), and it was specifically directed towards the remembrance of genocide victims. The local-level genocide memorials were specifically designed to provide a geographical focus for May 20 commemorations from 1984 onwards. Overall, authorities constructed memorial narratives that emphasised collective suffering under 'the Pol Potists'. Memory was rhetorically linked to affirmations of the political accord the PRK enjoyed with its socialist allies, and to Cambodians' loyalty and vigilance in bringing to an end the civil war that still divided the country. Unlike other recent studies of state-socialism, this dissertation does not attempt to evidence 'oppositional' history or memory under a
socialist regime (see Watson, 1994). It instead considers a series of sites and commemorations that have functioned as staging grounds for the Cambodia’s official version of the past. However, in the context of the local-level memorials, it is useful to recall Nuala Johnson’s suggestions that memorials often solicit public participation (Johnson, 1995). As such, they can act as material manifestations of differing political ideologies under circumstances of highly unequal access to political and economic power, and symbolize a measure of independence from a hegemonic power.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

Extending on the themes already broached in this Introduction, in the next Chapter (Chapter Two) I review relevant literatures on the topics of place and memory, nationalism and memory, and critical and popular geopolitics. Chapter 3 sets out the methodologies of the research, describing fieldwork periods in Cambodia and the United States of America, and the manner in which data from the field was subsequently analysed. Four substantive discussion chapters follow in two conceptual ‘pairs’. Chapters 4 and 5 detail the efforts of the Cambodian state to construct a coherent memory of the genocide in the post-1979 decade through the construction of two national memorial sites: the Choeung Ek Center (Chapter 4) and Tuol Sleng Museum (Chapter 5). Chapters 6 and 7 focus on non-Cambodians’ responses to sites and representations of the genocide. Chapter 6 examines the experiences and understandings of present-day non-Cambodian tourists to Tuol Sleng Museum, while Chapter 7 explores the mobile life of the a group of photographs originally held in the Tuol Sleng Archive but subsequently exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City. The aims and structure of Chapters 4-7 are further
outlined below in Sections 1.5.1-1.5.4. The dissertation concludes with a more general discussion of issues raised by my specific studies in Chapter 8.

1.5.1 Fields of bones

Chapter 4 surveys the construction and symbolism of the Choeung Ek Center of Genocide Crimes. This Centre marks Cambodia's most infamous 'killing field'. Chapter 4 first details the political rationale given for the exhumation, forensic treatment and internment of remains at the site in 1980, and goes on to explore the politics of the construction of a large-scale memorial at Choeung Ek in the late-1980s. A recent public event involving a United Nations delegation's visit to Choeung Ek is also addressed, as are recent observances of the May 20 'Day of Anger' commemoration, a commemoration historically associated with the construction and maintenance of local-level genocide memorial sites throughout the country. An examination of the form, location and commemorative function of six such local memorials provides opportunity for critical reflection on the peculiar concatenation of Khmer Buddhist practice (especially those associated with the veneration of ancestors) and the national, regional and geopolitical imaginaries which also animate these sites.

1.5.2 Exhibiting bones and faces

Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the Tuol Sleng Museum. I examine the national, regional and international politics of memory involved in the construction of the Museum in 1979–1980. The contestation of memory at Tuol Sleng in more recent times is discussed with reference to two of
the most controversial sections of the Museum's original exhibition. The first section of the museum discussed contains thousands of portrait photographs taken of prisoners by the S-21 authorities and exhibited *en masse* at Tuol Sleng. The second section is the display known as the 'map of skulls' (subsequently removed). I argue that while there was a pressing need to bolster domestic political legitimacy at the time of the Museum’s inception, the PRK’s ‘remembering’ of Democratic Kampuchea was also internationally directed. Designations of memory at Tuol Sleng worked in excess of the Cambodian nation. Representations of past mass political violence and the associations drawn between ‘Polpotism’ and fascism were calculated to elicit sympathy and support from external actors, nation-states and international organisations.

1.5.3 Putting faces to the bones

Chapter 6 extends the focus on Tuol Sleng Museum by examining past and present-day visitors’ responses to the museum and its exhibits. I am concerned with the subjective mechanisms by which imaginative geopolitical topographies are perpetuated by those who visit Cambodia’s pre-eminent site of genocide memory. In this way, I take such visitors' signifying systems seriously, considering them as constitutive of broader moral and material systems (Anderson, 1999: 14). Members of formal delegations that visited the Museum during the early PRK years were comprehensively interpellated by the institution as ‘witnesses’ to Cambodia’s past trauma. Contra scholars who have claimed that testimony works to challenge sovereign power (see Edkins, 2003), this study examines the ways in which the written testimonies of non-Cambodian visitors to Cambodia’s genocide sites were in fact exploited by the Cambodian state.
Present-day tourists are also called upon — albeit in less formal ways — to act as witnesses to the horrors of S-21 and the Pol Pot regime. Additional discourses of traumatic memory subtend contemporary tourism to the museum. The call to remember Cambodia’s genocide as an event of geopolitical significance is central to the promotion of Cambodia as a tourist destination, constructing the country as a moral destination, rather than a place of purely pleasurable experience. For Western tourists, Tuol Sleng is one of only a few public institutions that are visited during their time in the country. Tourists’ motivations to visit the museum, their embodied experiences of the museum space, and their attempts to make meaning out of the museum, raise crucial questions about the non-Cambodian reception of representations of Cambodian genocide memory. The construction of Cambodia by Western tourists as an at once idyllic yet violated place is considered as a version of tourism’s long-standing fascination with the cultural Other — in this case tourists’ fascination also fixes on a geopolitical Other. The moral disposition of tourists at the Museum provides further evidence of an imaginative geopolitical topography in which Cambodia is constructed as a place of death and ‘authentic’ cultural and geopolitical difference, to be simultaneously admired and despised. For some, visiting the Museum even becomes a source of traumatic personal experience.

1.5.4 Faces from the fields

Chapter 7 explores a 1997 exhibition of Tuol Sleng’s photographs at the Museum of Modern Art, New York City. I focus on the ‘touring’ of these artefacts of memory — a number of the S-21 photographic portraits taken from the Tuol Sleng Archive — to sites outside of Cambodia including museums, galleries and photographic print publications. The status of the Tuol Sleng
Archive, and the work of two photojournalists in the preservation and publication of the prisoner portrait photographs are discussed in light of the 1997 MoMA exhibition. I consider these actors, objects and events as they are connected together in a complex transnational memorial network. It is argued that the responses of visitors and curators to the photographs displayed in the Museum of Modern Art provide insights into a contemporary propensity to memorialise, rather than specify and (geo)politicise, the past violence of Other states and peoples.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a conceptual and historical overview of issues most pertinent to the following study. The transition from the political period of Democratic Kampuchea to the post-genocide state of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea is the wider socio-political and historical context for the ensuing discussion of the (geo)politics of memory in post-1979 Cambodia. I now turn to an examination of recent literature.
CHAPTER 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I review existing studies in geography and related fields that examine the relationship between place, memory and geopolitics. Much of this literature focuses on the ways in which discourses of memory are, in particular places and at particular times, materialised, institutionalised and contested. A larger turn toward memory in the behavioural sciences, humanities and social sciences has provided impetus for scholars to take apart notions of the intrinsic qualities of symbolic or memorial places in favour of a discussion of the socio-spatial constitution of memorial and cultural meaning. These are studies of the operation of public memory in the wake of various forms of mass political violence: colonialism; independence campaigns; genocide; mass human displacement; mass murder, etc.. One of the most significant challenges for a state of any reconstruction of political and social order following mass political violence is the (re)creation of space. In such circumstances, new and renewed symbolic spaces are called upon to symbolise and demarcate significant and traumatic events of the national past.

While the discipline of geography has been central to such work, it must also be recognised that the literature on place and memory itself has a geography; questions of where and whose ‘memory’ is studied are important to the way that memory is understood and investigated in this thesis, as will be discussed below.
2.2 Nation, place and memory

The proliferation of studies of memory has generated significant critical debate about the meaning and operation of social, public or collective memory (Hodgkin and Radstone, 2003; Huysen, 1995, 2003; Klein, 2000; Lambek and Antze, 1996; Maier, 1993). Much recent work on nationhood and the symbolic operation of a nation’s dead has occurred within the recent boom of studies of collective or national memory. The nation-state is routinely called upon to address (in the sense of recognise or mark) the loss of human life through some ‘proper’ or ‘adequate’ form of memorial practice. This practice usually also seeks to directly address (in the sense of ‘meet the needs of’) bereaved national, family, cultural or religious groups. The possibility of tension arises between the demands of the state and those of the particular event and or group being ‘addressed’. Is the memorial intended to be ‘recollective’, ‘hortatory’, ‘celebratory’ or ‘melancholic’? And is it in fact treated as intended? For my purposes, it is also essential to question whether these intended meanings are coherent or consensual.

Various writers have examined the deliberate construction and preservation of national landscapes and monuments to the twentieth century’s (world) war dead (Diller and Scofidio, 1994; Heffernan 1995; Inglis 1998; Morris 1997; Tumarkin, 1994; Winter et al., 2000). These works share an interest in the particular imperatives that arise in processes of national reconstruction following national mobilisation in defence or the pursuit of victory over another state or set of states. In addition, numerous recent studies have traced the ways in which those individuals and groups exterminated under Nazism and fascism have been reified and variously politicised in unmediated remnant spaces as well as self-conscious memorial landscapes and art of
modern European nations and Israel (Charlesworth, 1994; Cooke, 2000; Huyssen, 1995; Till, 1999 and 2005; Young, 1994 and 2000).

Geographers have a long-standing interest in the nexus of state power, monumental sites and spatialities of resistance. Significant interest in memorial sites has stemmed from a ‘landscape analysis’ approach. This approach has been furthered by studies of landscape formation and contestation at publicly sanctioned historical and ‘heritage’ sites (Johnson, 1994 and 1995; Loukaki, 1997; Lowenthal, 1985; Peet, 1996; Withers, 1996). Analyses of space and nation-building under imperialism — especially in the Middle East, South Asia and Australia — have also extended practices and understandings of landscape within larger spatialities of empire-building (Blunt and Rose, 1994; Duncan, 1990; Said, 1978).

In his wide-ranging study, David Lowenthal (1985) explores the myriad ways in which past events, actors, civilisations and cultures are mediated through coherant and incoherent spatial practices, including the active re-shaping of landscapes and relics into self-conscious memorial and heritage sites. In his examination of the ‘continuing dialogue between ever-modernizing pasts and ever-passing presents’ Lowenthal repeatedly demonstrates a general failure ‘to recognize not only why we alter history, but that we do’ (Lowenthal, 1985: 327, 326). Lowenthal emphasises that one changes the past:

- not only by altering antiquities but by using them as stimuli for subsequent creations. Innumerable acts of imitation and emulation, or re-enactment and commemoration, of imagery and reproduction, add to the stock of what passes for the past and transforms the impact of surviving relics (Lowenthal, 1985: 324).
The form in which the past is made present is also a crucial element of a memorialisation address. Lowenthal draws attention to a difference in the form of public imagination aroused by monuments or events in the nineteenth century as compared to the twentieth century, observing that: 'until recently, most monuments were exhortations to imitate the virtues they commemorated; they reminded people what to believe and how to behave' (Lowenthal, 1985: 322). Following J. B. Jackson’s interest in the Gettysburg Battlefield and Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address of November 1863, Lowenthal concludes that commemoration has come 'to evince a recollective rather than an hortatory purpose in post-civil war America' (Lowenthal, 1985: 322). Kenneth Foote similarly reminds us in the context of Gettysburg that the etymology of ‘monument’ involves practices of both remembrance and also warning, thus a monument may be a reminder and also a portent (Foote, 1997: 8). In place of a prior acknowledgment of the unfinished work of the dead as a contract with the future living, now it is found that histories such as Gettysburg become '[their] own monument, the mere designation a sufficient memorial' (Lowenthal, 1985: 322). Despite Lowenthal’s attentiveness to the dynamism of historic sites, and his rejection of curatorial claims to ‘set the record straight’ and represent the ‘true’ past, he maintains a curious, somewhat melancholic investment in what he terms the ‘unrevised past’ (Lowenthal, 1985: 362). He bemoans the inaccessibility of ‘our predecessors sense of the past’; a past incessantly threatened and extinguished by revised pasts, as ‘each new consensus transforms the very structure and syntax of historical understanding’ (Lowenthal, 1985: 362). Lowenthal at times neglects the explicit politicisation of memorialising expressions and practices. He does not always chart the aggressive deployment of a ‘consensual’ past as a constitutive element of socio-political control in particular places and periods.
Memorials have elsewhere been recognised as central to processes by which powerful groups reinforce specific territorial dominions. Nuala Johnson argues that public memorials inevitably concretise existing narratological exclusions on the basis of citizenship, gender or race. The O'Connell and Parnell monuments aimed to celebrate Irish nationalist leaders in the heart of Dublin and, in their coexistence there with statues dating from British rule, to provide for the arousal of popular national politics (Johnson, 1995: 59). Johnson argues that these monuments provide 'circuits of memory' through which 'individual elements [the figures of O'Connell and Parnell] can be jettisoned from popular consciousness' (1995: 63). In highlighting 'some of the ways in which the material bases for nationalist imaginings emerge and are structured symbolically' Johnson is also concerned with 'the ways in which national cultural identity at the popular level is constructed, maintained, or challenged' (1995: 52). What is here raised is the question of scale. Memorials may speak to local struggles, or they may be an attempt to introduce debate over national meanings, or account for changes beyond the locale, at the local scale.

Focusing on Kikar Rabin square, Maoz Azaryahu claims that the transformation of this public space in the civic centre of Tel Aviv following the 1995 assassination of then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin can be understood as spontaneous communal memorialisation. Azaryahu's discussion is, however, limited by a largely uncritical claim that 'an overwhelmingly authentic expression of popular emotions and sentiments created the semiotic structure of the sacred' at Kikar Rabin. This argument reaches its (anti-)climax in the identification of 'a sacred aura exuded at the square' (Azaryahu, 1996: 511) and in the claim that 'such memorialisations are not
manipulated from above and are not the result of an institutionalised commemoration' (Azaryahu, 1996: 503). Azaryahu's identification of such memorials as sacred is dependent on a series of oppositions: popular to state-sanctioned; exceptional to quotidian. These oppositions are, however, repeatedly contravened in the author's descriptions of the political and religious martyrdom that in part constitute, in Azaryahu's own terms, 'the patriotic culture of Jewish national revival' (Azaryahu, 1996: 503).

In a more expansive frame, Carolyn Cartier examines place-based sacrality in her study of the contestation of Bukit China (Chinese Hill) in central Melaka. As a landscape, the burial ground of Bukit China 'has conveyed simultaneous historical, contemporary, and transhistorical narratives: feng shui hill, internationally important cemetery, weedy eyesore, ethnic monument, prime undeveloped real estate, local and national cultural heritage site, green lung, open space, and local park' (Cartier, 1997: 557). Cartier employs Lefebvre in her theorising of Bukit China as a way of recognising the 'dialectical negotiation of the formation of place from space' and because 'Lefebvre makes rare provision for conceptualising the actual space of tombs and cemeteries in 'absolute space', which he defines as 'above all else the space of death' (Cartier, 1997: 565). Cartier also recognises, however, that:

the real and material spaces that inspire Lefebvre ...[are] western and historical, [and] for the most part they no longer exist in practical reality, having been transformed by either the commodification of space or the distanciation and removal of political economic power from the symbolic religious landscape (Cartier, 1997: 565).

Cartier relies on Lefebvre because he offers 'the opportunity to transcend real-imaginary geographies' which, she claims, is the fundamental tension in the landscape of Bukit China.
(Cartier, 1997: 580). Cartier calls for human geographers to examine the social construction of non-Western places — and especially the local formation of national culture as a component of nationalism — through dynamic, spatial human processes.

Elizabeth Teather (1998) and Brenda Yeoh (1999) both offer examinations of the relationship between burial grounds and the secular state (in modern-day Hong Kong and Singapore, respectively). Both studies are concerned with the role of the state in circumscribing cemetery spaces, and the changing practices of ethnic Chinese burial and caring for ancestors within these spaces. Yeoh's conclusions attest to the success of the Singaporean state over the post-independence period in encouraging cremation practices; the general acceptance of the 'space-saving' means of disposal in place of the traditional but 'space-wasting' practice of burial (Yeoh, 1999: 253). Successive Hong Kong governments have also attempted to change cultural practices of burial and reburial as a means of mitigating problems of land-scarcity in the Hong Kong territory. Yeoh, however, cautions that the general acceptance of cremation and the columbarium landscape does not signal the end of traditional Chinese funerary rites. Instead, in both Singapore and Hong Kong, practices of Chinese geomancy (fengshui) have been re-sited to the columbarium; here too relatives converge to clean 'grave' spaces and make offerings to ancestors during the appropriate festival periods. Despite her recognition of this shift of cultural practices, Teather insists on a dualism between the 'old' and 'new', especially in her description of the Diamond Hill public cemetery where older grave sites and new columbariums (interred with cremated remains) coexist:

In the columbarium, human remains, reduced to ashes, are confined to a standard niche in a corridor among many identical corridors. ...Efficient bureaucratic control characterises the
columbarium, while, outside, the elements of wilderness invade the grave slopes, threatening to
reclaim the dead and their humble monuments, in a natural and ancient cycle (Teather, 1998: 28).

Following Mircea Eliade, Teather identifies Hong Kong's cemetery landscapes as 'hierophanies':
'thresholds where profane space is in conjunction with sacred space, where there is an irruption of
the sacred into the profane' (Teather, 1998: 34). The mass visitation during periods of ancestor
veneration and deserted space of the cemeteries during the inauspicious remainder of the year
signals the ambivalent status of such places, and in some a prohibitive fear of places that link the
material and non-material worlds (Teather, 1998: 34). But Teather also observes that cemetery
managers style themselves as subject to the dictates of the state, pointing out that 'a 'permanent'
grave depends on their leases of government land being continued' (Teather, 1998: 27). Some of
Yeoh's Singaporean interviewees expressed a belief 'that no burial space will survive the inexorable
logic of scarcity, and that burial today will only lead to exhumation, and eventual cremation of
remains, in the future' (Yeoh, 1999: 253). These attitudes denote a hyper-realisation of the state's
aims, whereby individual desires and religious imperatives are abdicated to the sovereign control
of the state, a control which extends in perpetuity on earth, and (for some) has significant
ramifications for those in the afterlife.

Lily Kong (1998) has suggested a recent 'disproportionate surge' in attention to 'deathscapes'. In
her review of such work, Kong further argues that these studies mirror, as well as contribute
insights to, the larger sub-disciplinary concern with space as a contested domain of the sacred and
the secular. The identification of deathscapes suggests that such work is inhered in the
geographical tradition of 'reading' the (textualised) landscape. This theoretical and
methodological orientation toward the landscape as a cultural artefact in whose appearance (as a

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archaeological or semiotic system) it is possible to 'read off' the meaning, uses, politics and popular associations of particular cultures and times. As Jane Jacobs argues:

In their most narrow conceptualisation, textualised readings over-privilege the built form ... More broadly, the claim to readability in 'textual' geographies resonates uncomfortably with the transparency assumed by imperial visionings. (Jacobs, 1996: 9-10).

Following Jacobs, this work seeks, instead, to set forth something of the cultural politics of Cambodia's designated memorial places, by way of attention to 'the various territorialisations and deterritorialisations of space which occur through protest, violence, ironic artistry, or simply dwelling in place' (Jacobs, 1996: 10).

The relatively recent phenomenon of the museum as mass medium, of museummania (see Huysse, 1995: 13-35) has resulted in new disciplinary organs specifically dedicated to an analysis of these institutions. Numerous collections of work have examined the politics of the production of museum exhibitions and the viewing of such exhibitions (Karp and Lavine, 1991; Karp et al., 1992; Macdonald and Fyfe, 1996). Geography has also broached these emblematic and often touristic spaces of nations and cultures (Charlesworth, 1994; Jacobs, 1996; Johnson, 1996). Most museum studies analyses have remained focussed on large, well-funded museums of North America, Europe and Australia, or minority ethnic, cultural or art museums within these larger national contexts. Significant for my purposes are studies of national museums in Asia and the former Soviet Union and Soviet-bloc nations. With some notable exceptions, little critical attention has been paid to historical museums in Asian contexts.
2.3 Socialist and post-socialist memorialisation

Given the close relations between the Soviet Union, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea, some sharing of memorial culture is to be expected, and not only around the construction of symbolic tombs. Programs of cultural exchange took Cambodian state officials to Eastern European sites during the 1980s, and specific attention paid to memorials undoubtedly influenced curatorial decisions at the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes.

Katherine Verdery identifies the contemporary postsocialist period in the former USSR and former Yugoslavia as one in which dead bodies are increasingly taken up as repositories of political profit because prior forms of political or symbolic capital associated with communist party rule have been devalued (Verdery, 1999: 33). Shaun Kingsley Malarney contributes a slightly different view of Vietnamese memorial developments in his examination of the funerary rituals accorded to (North) Vietnamese war dead. In state-sponsored rites within local family funerary gatherings, war dead are named as revolutionary martyrs and their remains ceremonially returned. These rites allowed the state 'to assert that death was not complete annihilation because the memory of the deceased would live on and be celebrated' (Kingsley Malarney, 2001: 72). Families could also perform traditional mortuary procedures that ensured rebirth into the 'otherworld' where the souls of the dead resided (Kingsley Malarney, 2001: 72). The simultaneity of these two sets of rituals persists to the present day:

[do] not imply any incommensurability between the two communities or the popular rejection of the state's assertions (Kingsley Malarney, 2001: 72).

This coexistence of popular religious beliefs and rituals (especially those associated with the dead) as an important aspect of Vietnamese national reconstruction necessarily informs this
dissertation's approach to memorialisation in post-1979 Cambodia. The limits of Vietnamese memorialisation are the unmarked graves of soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam. These individuals are in no place and at no time remembered; ARVN cemeteries were bulldozed after the North’s victory (Tai, 2001: 191). Southern families who lost members in the fighting receive none of the compensation afforded to Northern families (Kingsley Malanney, 2001: 67). The issue remains taboo within Vietnamese politics and, even in contemporary critical scholarship, is largely unremarked upon (Tai, 2001: 227-28).

Nina Tumarkin provides a detailed survey of 'the organised public veneration' of the Great Patriotic War in Soviet Russia. In this work, Tumarkin profiles the Dozor, a small 'search group', a member group of the larger Association of United Search Organisations. The Organisation's many local groups work to find and exhume Soviet war dead scattered across vast former battle territories. Tumarkin relates her personal participation in such activities with the Dozor (Patrol) group, whose founding members began their work of locating graves in the 1960s and 1970s as a patriotic activity geared toward young people and their education and training in group organisation toward a common goal. The aim of participants in these groups is one of finding and decently burying their World War Two compatriots (Tumarkin, 1994: 23). The Soviet search groups fan out across former battlefields in a pseudo-militaristic quest considered to be a communing with the sacrificed, both immortalising and accounting for the national dead. There are, however, important differences between war dead and those killed in a what has been designated a genocide. The dead of a genocide are not 'citizens meriting civic honour' (Inglis,
1993: 9), they are rather victims, and most often killed despite citizenship, and because of racial or religious status.

Although Anderson posits the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as the site most emblematic of modern nationalism, few studies of national war memorialisation have examined the international proliferation of such monuments across various ideological and cultural contexts. Ken Inglis (1993), however, provides an excellent introduction to the cult of the Unknown Soldier. Inglis details the construction and inauguration of the first Tombs (in Britain and France) following World War I, and notes the existence of tombs in Europe, North America, Soviet Russia, Korea, Japan, Vietnam and Iraq. Tumarkin herself makes careful mention of the inauguration of Moscow’s Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on May 8 1967, also noting the interment of ‘sacred earth’ from the six ‘hero-cities’ of the War, earth that was said to be ‘drenched with the blood of the Motherland’s courageous sons and daughters’ (Tumarkin, 1994: 127). In Moscow’s Tomb, Inglis observes not only ‘an expression of Brezhnev’s will to remake the myth of the Great Patriotic War’, but also Brezhnev’s affirmation of ‘continuities with the nation’s past which he believed had been perilously neglected during the Khruschev years’ (Inglis, 1993: 26). But Inglis also compares Moscow’s Unknown Soldier and the embalmed Lenin:

By symbolizing life sacrificed for the nation, Moscow’s Unknown Soldier contradicts or transcends the communist notion that the worker has no country. Buried under marble, the body expresses a less modern view of death than Lenin’s, embalmed as if still alive in representation of the Enlightenment hope that science will liberate us from mortality (Inglis, 1993: 27).

It is curious that Inglis, whose work traces Tombs to the Unknown Soldier in various national contexts, should term this form of memorialisation ‘less modern’ than what he then recognises as
an *Enlightenment* ideal embodied in the embalmed Lenin. Perhaps Inglis's comment seeks to foreground his suggestion that the first Tombs to the Unknown Soldier (in Britain and France) are drawn from Athenian customary honouring of 'the missing', men whose fate remained unknown in the wars against Sparta. Inglis notes, but does not extensively comment on, the particulars of this tradition which have been inverted the modern case. In the Athenian tradition, 'unidentifiable' remains of warriors were not buried, but 'the missing' were symbolically laid to rest in empty coffins. In this sense, the modern version put found bodies in those empty coffins — and not purely 'unknown' bodies either. Inglis attests to the existence of three sorts of missing bodies: those that were irrecoverable (eviscerated by the technologies or duration of battle), those recoverable as bodies, but 'bodies [which] had become wholly anonymous', and thirdly bodies (presumably largely intact) whose nationality, at least, could be identified. The latter category were the company from which bodies were sought by the makers of national Tombs. The unmentionable certainties that underpin the Unknown are the recognition of a corpse as an *entity* (a body, presumably) and by *nationality*.

Categorisations of places and processes common to studies of monuments and memory in socialist-communist states must be reconceptualised in light of the Cambodian context. While it is necessary to understand the cultural politics of dead bodies at the scale of the state, in the Cambodian case such a politics was always already a question of geopolitics. It is to geopolitics that the discussion now turns.
2.4 Geopolitics and critical geopolitics

The term 'geopolitics' traditionally refers to a set of spatialised representations, practices and power-relations that are strategically produced and deployed within an international political domain. Early geopolitics invoked 'the permanent realities of the earth' (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 17), such as the location of different populations and resources, proximity between states, the physical topography and climate of individual states and allied regions. In short, geopolitics was a form of statecraft that engaged with space and place as if these were outside ideology, even as geographical knowledges were the means to state ascendency and ideological pre-eminence.

This way of understanding 'geopolitics' is now all but irretrievable from the comprehensive project of 'critical geopolitics'. In place of viewing geopolitics as an unproblematic science of geographical realities, critical geopolitics examines how it is that international politics is imagined spatially or geographically, thus uncovering the politics involved in writing the geography of global space (Sharp, 2005: 357). Critical geopolitics asks questions about the discourses of international politics, their culturally and historically specific genesis, and their powerful socio-spatial effects. Questioning who is engaged in the production, translation, circulation, re-invention and consumption of such discourses has resulted in significant scholarship and debates in the critical geopolitics literature. This literature offers an especially strong rethinking of early proponents of geographically-informed statecraft among European powers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Atkinson and Dodds, 2000; Heffernan, 2000; Ó Tuathail, 1996).
The critical geopolitics field is also especially rich in studies of Cold War geopolitics. More recently critical geopolitical approaches have examined the post-Cold War period and the ascendency of the United States in the contemporary global and the co-constitution of this new hegemonic power and the logics of neoliberalism (see Roberts et al., 2003). Critical geopolitics questions the construction, deployment and effects of particular accounts of the way the world is and works. One resultant body of scholarship that has emerged from this debate draws attention to the formal or 'practical' geopolitical reasoning of states and state-blocs. A second and related body of work explores the ways in which geopolitical claims and scripts are produced and circulated within popular cultural forms. Practical geopolitics and popular geopolitics are now considered in turn, through various studies that have mobilised the notion of 'imaginative geographies'.

Scholars of critical geopolitics have turned to meta-theories of hegemony (Antonio Gramsci) and imperialism (Edward Said) in their analysis of geopolitical power. Edward Said's notion of 'imaginative geographies' has been repeatedly employed as a way of understanding the representations and practices of powerful geopolitical agents, including individual political leaders, specific governments or administrations, and historical and contemporary foreign policy schools.

An early proponent of critical geopolitics, Gearóid Ó Tuathail, examined the 1990s conflict in the former Yugoslavia and in Bosnia specifically. Ó Tuathail (1996) examines the competing 'imaginative geopolitical topographies' of Bosnia-as-Holocaust, and Bosnia-as-quagmire as they
were configured in the public discourse of the members of the United States administration and
other key figures. Ó Tuathail argues that the activation of the imaginative topography of the
'quagmire', associated with America's Vietnam War, allowed for the production of moral invisibility and indifference towards Bosnia in the instrumental reasoning and bureaucratic
culture of US state institutions (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 220). By contrast, the Holocaust and
associated scripts offered the possibility (although never the guarantee) of producing proximity
and of reclaiming Bosnia within a universe of obligation (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 221).

Ó Tuathail (2002) revisits the case of US foreign policy towards the Balkans to develop 'a
discursive-argumentative perspective' on practical geopolitical reasoning, and to thus examine
how foreign policy decision-makers develop strategies for the treatment and 'solution' of crises (Ó
Tuathail, 2002: 603). Ó Tuathail's framework for understanding practical geopolitical reasoning
'privileges the role of the mass media' (2002: 607). Using Bosnia as a case-study, Ó Tuathail
(2002) examines what he terms the 'grammar of geopolitics' (the categorisation and
particularisation of locations, situations, actors, causalities and strategic implications), as well as
the 'assemblage of storylines' and the performative nature of geopolitical 'scripts', before turning
to a discussion of the problem-solving and regulatory aspirations of geopolitical discourse. In
discussing the US administration's performative geopolitical script on Bosnia enacted in the run-up
to the US elections in 1992, Ó Tuathail notes specifically that the development of a
'humanitarian nightmare' script was 'a performative effort to handle the divergent policy
implications of the emergent 'Balkan Vietnam' and 'European genocide' storylines. The scripting
of Bosnia as a 'humanitarian nightmare' sought to articulate elements of the 'European genocide'
storyline without requiring the administration to forcefully address the causes of the violence (Ó Tuathail, 2002: 620), of which more is said below.

Ó Tuathail also notes that the 'performative contradictions' that subtended the (first) Bush administration — contradictions that (con)fused the 'European genocide' and 'Balkan Vietnam' storylines — would live on in the Clinton administration’s policy towards Bosnia (Ó Tuathail, 2002: 621). Ó Tuathail does not, however, reflect on the ways in which the hegemonic status of the US affects its practical geopolitical reasoning. Can the geopolitical reasoning of relatively less powerful states, inter-state groups or actors be considered within the same analytic framework? ‘Performative contradictions’, for example, in the case of less powerful states, may in fact produce further political crises, and be precisely the grounds for the (rhetorical or material) intervention of another state or political grouping.

Derek Gregory revisits Said’s critique of Orientalism, to note that it was shot through with theatrical motifs, suggesting that imaginative geographies of the Orient were not simply an ‘an internally structured archive’ but were (and remain) ‘in some substantial sense performative; Orientalism ‘produces the effects that it names’ (Gregory, 2004:18, emphasis in original). Gregory argues that this sense of performance matters because ‘for Said, too, space is an effect of practices and representations, valorisation, and articulation; it is fabricated through and in these practices and is thus not only a domain but also a ‘doing’ (Gregory, 2004: 19). It also matters because:

performances may be scripted (they usually are) but this does not make their outcomes fully determined; rather, performance creates a space in which it is possible for ‘newness’ to enter the world (Gregory, 2004: 19).
Gregory works to further embolden the 'performative' nature of imaginative geographies when he writes (after Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha) that performance creates a 'space of potential' which:

carries within it the twin possibilities of either reaffirming and even radicalising the hold of the colonial past on the present or undoing its enclosures and approaching closer to the horizon of the postcolonial (Gregory, 2004: 19)

Gregory is particularly interested in the 'architectures of enmity' implicated in new imaginative geographies of Iraq, the United States, Palestine and Afghanistan. He stresses that these geographies were jointly produced by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2000, in New York City and Washington and in the actions and discursive claims that were licensed in response these events. While Gregory views the contemporary moment in terms of colonial or imperial (re)territorialisations, other scholars have traced the genealogy of present-day interventionist imaginaries to the geopolitical antagonisms of the Cold War.

In the context of southeast Asia, Jim Glassman demonstrates how various scholarly and state groups were concerned to assert a fundamental difference between southeast Asia as a region and China during the 1950s. United States interventions in Thailand and elsewhere in Southeast Asia were thus licensed in order to protect a Southeast Asian 'we-self' from an external Communist Other (Glassman, 2005: 768). In the present, however, a new imaginative geography is being created, with al Qaeda and militant Islam now partially substituting for China and Communism as the dangerous external Other to which social forces within the region must respond (Glassman, 2005: 804). Although Glassman and others attend to the ways in which local elites are co-opted into these processes of construction, what is generally missing from the literature on practical
geopolitical reasoning are analyses of the (often unsuccessful) geopolitical reasoning of non-Western, less powerful states. Ó Tuathail and Dalby's (1998: 7-8) reminder that that geopolitics is not simply a practice concerned with international space, but one that always already concerns both domestic and international space, invites research into how less-powerful states successfully use geographical imaginaries to build domestic political power even as they (often unsuccessfully) contest external demands. Useful direction in such a matter is given by Klaus Dodds in his investigation of Argentine geopolitical imaginaries associated with the Malvinas/Falklands War. Resistance to British rule of the Malvinas/Falklands has its roots in a much older 'Southern project', but 'remains a powerful feature of Argentine political culture' (Dodds, 2000: 179). Dodds notes that recent public statements by the Argentine President regarding the retrieval of the Malvinas, and the patriotism of Argentine schooling illustrate show the ways in which 'particular geographical imaginations can retain considerable symbolic appeal' (Dodds, 2000: 179). Dodds argues that this appeal, associated as it is with 'the geopolitics of territorial security and boundary negotiation', detracts from the potential for geopolitics to act as 'a pathway for the discussion of territorial, resource and developmental questions with a particular reference to a democratic Argentina' (Dodds, 2000: 180).

The development of a 'popular geopolitics' literature in the larger frame of critical geopolitics is generally attributed to claims that 'any reliance upon a division between 'high' cultures of statecraft and 'low' or 'middlebrow' cultures of the media and popular culture is becoming ever more tenuous' (Sharp, 1998: 154). A number of scholars of critical geopolitics have also turned to representations in popular culture — popular periodicals such as Reader's Digest and Time.
political cartoons and patriotic ‘blockbuster’ films — to interrogate the reformulation of Cold War geopolitical antagonisms and the rise of ‘new world order’ geopolitical imaginaries (Dodds, 2000; Ó Tuathail, 2005; Sidaway, 1998; Sharp, 1998 and 2000). Studies falling under the ‘popular geopolitics’ rubric are not simply studies of how popular geographical knowledges are produced and disseminated, but also examine how popular knowledges are (re)produced and consumed by key figures, governments and institutions.

Joanne Sharp cogently argues that recent American films — as representations of relations and events that have been cut adrift from the co-constitutive dualisms of the Cold War — are thoroughly entwined with renegotiations of masculine identity, particularly patriotism (Sharp, 1998: 153). In her analysis, Sharp links the literal film script (film narrativisation) with the metaphoric operation of such scripts as ‘a set of directions for the performance of global politics’ (Sharp, 1999: 159). The rewriting of American (geopolitical) masculinity in the ‘reel geographies’ of the new world order occurs both through the exclusion of women characters from heroic scripts in such films, and the structuring of narratives around heroic individuals’ attempts to beat a feminised bureaucratic state structure (Sharp, 1998: 159-60). Ó Tuathail also examines the project of the ‘remasculinization’ of American geopolitical culture, albeit in post-September 11 American geopolitical culture, pointing to the ways in which the 2001 blockbuster Behind Enemy Lines is ‘yet another parable about the liberation of a war-fighting masculinity from the constraints of multilateralism and diplomacy in order to get the job done’ (Ó Tuathail, 2005: 361). According to Ó Tuathail, this particular film — one of few American financed productions dealing with the Bosnian conflict — articulates an ‘everyman’ frustration with the confusion of
the post-Cold War era, delivering to its audience a Manichean world of clarity and moral
certainty in which the United States military is the instrument of moral righteousness and
international justice (Ó Tuathail, 2005: 370). While attention to the scripts of popular
geopolitical texts is laudable, this analysis might also be extended to what Nigel Thrift has recently
called the 'mundane citations' of national and geopolitical identities and geopolitical cultures.
Thrift refers to 'the constant hum of practices and their attendant territorializations within
which geopower ferments and sometimes boils over' (Thrift, 2000: 385). In the following
chapters, I consider practices around memory in this regard.

2.5 Memory and geopolitics

Derek Gregory explicitly links his project of tracing the lineaments of 'the colonial present' to
critical memory-work. He suggests that contemporary critique constitutive imaginative
geographies that construct Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine must, in the manner of postcolonial
struggle, not only counter amnesiac histories of colonialism, but must also stage a 'return of the
repressed' to resist the seductions of nostalgic histories of colonialism (Gregory 2004: 9).

An additional recognition of the relationship between discourses of memory and geopolitics is
latent in Ó Tuathail's work on Bosnia and the US geopolitical imagination (1996). Ó Tuathail
notes that the dedication of the US Holocaust Museum on April 22 1993, and the agitation of
Elie Wiesel, a 'key figure behind the Museum', eventually produced in President Clinton 'a
compulsion to act' on events in Bosnia (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 212). He writes that Wiesel was
'something of a conscience doctor to the foreign policy establishment', someone with whom
geopoliticians discussed the 'moral implications' of Bosnia (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 210). Ó Tuathail further notes that the 'officially enshrined attitude given the historical experience of the Holocaust' gives rise to the imperative that 'never again should the United States be a bystander while genocide unfolds' (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 192). Here Ó Tuathail implicitly recognises the rhetorical power of (Holocaust) memory as licensing, even demanding, specific geopolitical actions. As is the case for other geopolitical scripts associated with 'containment', 'security', 'national interest' and 'crisis', the 'Holocaust/genocide' script carries with it a set of popular and political meanings. These popular and political meanings come out of more than half a century of Holocaust memorialisation and attendant juridico-political norms of supranational responsibility, accord and cooperation.

In the case Ó Tuathail presents, however, the inauguration of a new national Museum initially provided the grounds for geopoliticians to perform a distinction between 'Bosnia' and the past trauma of the Holocaust, as a performative rationale for the Clinton administration's inaction. In this memorialisation — the inauguration of a spectacular and, paradoxically, national museum space — attention could be drawn to the differences between the historical European Holocaust and the one unfolding in the present. State-sanctioned memorial gestures often perform subtle (often hierarchical) distinctions between different pasts and different traumas that are linked to practical and popular geopolitical cultures. The geopolitics of memory is thus as often about motivated misrecognition and 'remembering to forget' (Zelizer, 1998) as it is a spur for moral geopolitical action.
2.6 Conclusion

Various studies have recently called for work that attends to the transnational nature of memory. In a review of the significant influence of the work of Pierre Nora, Stephen Legg notes that ideas about the Holocaust have become inscribed in diverse national situations:

The idea of transnational memory-scapes brings into question who is remembering, what is being remembered, and to what extent can the nation-state monopolistically interpret historical memory, if it ever could? (Legg, 2005: 497)

Kerwin Lee Klein has charged academia with the materialisation of memory, the elevation of memory to the status of a historical agent, such that we have entered ‘a new age in which archives remember and statues forget’ (Klein, 2000: 136). No less a charge might be levelled at various forms of governmentality itself in the post-war world. Contemporary geopolitics, entwined with provisions of international law, is charged with ‘not-forgetting’ the mass political violence of fascism in mid-twentieth century Europe. This study links the emergence of memory as a ‘metahistorical category’ in the late twentieth century (Klein, 2000: 143) to the deployment (and non-deployment) of geo-power. The relation is evident in the immense amount of resources that are dedicated to identifying, recovering, preserving and memorialising these dead.

What are the major points to be drawn from this survey of the literature? First, that contemporary nationhood is forged, in part, out of a relation to ‘its’ dead. Second, that this relation is always contested and unstable. Third, that this contestation has effects at every scale, from the most intimate and personal to the geopolitical: individual graves, local monuments, national museums all participate. Fourth, that this contestation is as much ideological as it is material and that projects ‘to remember’ have consequences as much when they are popularly
perceived to have ‘failed’ as when they ‘succeed’. Fifth, that space itself is made and unmade in these diverse performances involving the dead; what gives the contemporary world its particular character in these routines of memorialisation is that they are necessarily concerned with deaths that are not easily quietened by narrative appeals to the sanctity of sovereignty. In the following chapters, I explore the potential for a critical geopolitical frame for the discussion of nation-states’ manipulation and reification of dead bodies, with Cambodia being the case in point.
CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

I am blinking in the bright heat of afternoon in the grounds of the Tuol Sleng Museum. I’ve just accompanied a small group of English-speaking tourists on a tour of the museum. We are thanking our veteran guide, Lundi, when a Khmer boy approaches. The boy’s obvious distress captivates the group. I hear him mention the name ‘Sin Sisamouth’, the famous post-war Cambodian pop singer and victim of the Khmer Rouge. The boy speaks urgently and politely. Lundi seems sceptical but, perhaps because he has just spent the last hour interpreting the museum for all of us, or perhaps because he knows I am still tape recording, he duly explains the boy is asking the way to the museum’s photograph of Sin Sisamouth.
Lundi fires a few further questions. In response, the boy starts to sing. He sings in the high pitch and uneven tempo that Khmer pop reserves for love and tragedy. Lundi turns back to the group with wide eyes and reports the boy’s claim: that he is Sin Sisamouth reincarnated.
‘Look at my skin’ Lundi says, pulling up his shirt-sleeve and showing us his goose bumps. The tourists look aghast. Lundi — their accepted authority on the past, at least for this afternoon — believes in ghosts.

I return directly to the office of my host organisation and mention the encounter to Youk, Center director and friend. He laughs: ‘Ah ... an impersonator’.

Adapted from field notes for April 21, 2000.

This study enquires into the discursive production of memorials. The main methodology I employ is discourse analysis, although there are important specifications that must be made to this general statement. Discourses involve representations, practices and performances that are
embedded in various institutions and subject-positions (Gregory, 2000: 180-181). Using the terms of this definition, this study is predominantly concerned with memorial sites, textual and visual representations of these sites, and with the institutional contexts in which memorial sites and representations are produced and received. My methodology has focussed on representational domains over non-representational or phenomenological domains, and on institutions and institutional figures over other social formations and subject-positions. Fieldwork periods were utilised to access and analyse the memorials themselves, textual and visual representations of these sites, and key institutional figures (individuals I have termed 'key players') involved in their production and reception.

This is not to say that the methodology I adopted ignored practices, performances, or the multiple subject-positions involved in the production and reception of the memorials. * Unsurprisingly, given the historical trauma that is signified by the memorials, non-representational practices and affects were ever-present features of fieldwork. The above passage, adapted from my field notes, presents only one of many encounters with situations and individuals about which I have resisted narrative and analytic closure. This is not simply about not being able to know more about the situation (knowing, for example, the motivations of the various individuals involved, their relationships to one another, to what degree the situation was 'staged', or for whom).

Undoubtedly, this was an 'uncertain encounter' (see Rose, 1997: 306). Witnessing this (literal)

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* My use of the terms 'production' and 'reception' here should not be taken to indicate a view of these two processes as discrete. In the larger framing of the study, it is a dialectic of memorial production and reception that I attempt to trace.
performance of victimhood, caught somewhere between the positions of tourist and researcher myself, I struggled for any critical purchase on what was unfolding. In that particular situation, and more broadly, my response was to pursue a methodology and research disposition that was empathetic to the ways in which various meanings of the sites were practised and represented. As Jane Jacobs argues, an empathetic mode of interpretation is part of a larger interpretative tradition through which cultural geographers attempt to:

enter into a dialogue with ... alternative truths as a way of better understanding the world, and the structures that of power that exist there, and the agency of people in relation to those structures (Jacobs, 1999: 22).

In such a methodology, there is no strict dividing line between data collection and data analysis, rather there is ‘a recursive process of analysis and writing’ (Jacobs, 1999: 23). As such, in the following discussion of discourse and narrative texts, and discourse and visuality, I attempt to discuss methodological techniques, types of data collected and the work of analysis as a process, rather than as distinct entities or events. Prior to such discussion, however, it is necessary to set out the process and rationale for the selection of case-study sites, and to outline my affiliation with a host organisation that was central to the feasibility and conduct of the research.

3.2 Selection of case-study sites

There were three main case-study sites around which this study is organised. In this section, I outline these sites and note the main methodological sources and techniques associated with each. In total, I made three fieldwork visits to Cambodia. The first visit occurred in January 1999. At this time I made contact with a host organisation (see below Section 3.3 below) and chose two case-study sites for my study, the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide and the Choeung Ek Centre
for Genocidal Crimes, both located in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh. These two sites, a museum and a 'killing field' memorial, were easily identifiable as the two largest public sites dedicated to the victims of Cambodia's genocidal period. As noted in Chapter 1, Tuol Sleng Museum re-occupies a site of Khmer Rouge atrocity, and comprises the most extensive exhibition pertaining to the genocide found in Cambodia.\(^5\) Unlike Tuol Sleng, Choeung Ek is a 'killing field' memorial, a place in which victims are memorialised in the place where they were killed and buried on masse. I soon discovered that some eighty village-level memorials located throughout the country were — in a manner similar to Choeung Ek — repositories of remains exhumed from local 'killing field' sites. Choeung Ek and the village-level memorials, while obviously dissimilar in terms of scale, are similar in terms of age, form and commemorative function. Given these similarities, and given also that a detailed study of each village-level memorial was beyond the scope of the research, I planned to visit a small number of these sites for the purposes of comparing them to Choeung Ek (see Chapter 5 and Figure 3).

A second visit to Phnom Penh in September of 1999 was timed to coincide with the traditional Cambodian period of pchum ben — a festival of the ancestors — at which time I was able to observe the religious rituals that are performed bi-annually at the Tuol Sleng Museum site. The third and most extensive fieldwork period was undertaken in Cambodia between January and May 2000, during which time I conducted interviews and collected various documents. In-depth interviews with key players, and analyses of visual and textual representations were used to

\(^5\) An archive of documents produced by the Khmer Rouge at S-21 in their administration of incarceration and torture, is also housed at Tuol Sleng.
investigate the role formally prescribed to the two Phnom Penh sites by institutions and individuals (giving rise to Chapters 4 and 5). In my exploration of tourism at the Tuol Sleng Museum, I drew primarily on observation of tourist practices, in-depth interviews with tourists, and analyses of texts, including Tuol Sleng Museum's visitor book comments and contemporary tourism publications (see Chapter 6).

As I came to better understand the transnational nature of Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek, I added a third case-study 'site' to the research. In particular, I was interested in a touring collection of photographs from the Tuol Sleng Museum. This collection had been exhibited in various institutional locales, most famously in the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City.

It is necessary to immediately point out the post-facto nature of this third case-study site. Unlike the two permanent Phnom Penh sites, this site comprised a temporary exhibition within the MoMA that had occurred in 1997. I visited the Department of Photography at MoMA in January 2001. At this time I was able to view and copy documents pertaining to the 1997 exhibition, and also to interview the Director of the Department of Photography about the event. Media reports, formal museum documentation and MoMA visitor book comments were the main sources for my analysis of the MoMA exhibition (discussed in section 3.5.2 below, and in Chapter 7).

3.3 Affiliation with the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam)

DC-Cam is a private Cambodian research organisation with partnership and contractual arrangements with the Cambodian Genocide Program (CGP) of the Center for International
and Area Studies at Yale University. Established in 1994, the mandate of CGP is to undertake research, documentation and legal training relating to human rights violations during the Democratic Kampuchea period. Within this mandate, DC-Cam was formed to develop a number of Cambodian Genocide Data Bases, involving bibliographic, biographic, geographic and image-based materials. I became aware of DC-Cam's extensive archive and site mapping project in 1998, when I first contacted Professor Helen Jarvis (then Professor of Library and Information Studies at the University of New South Wales), an advisor to the CGP and DC-Cam. She arranged for me to meet with DC-Cam in Phnom Penh in January 1999. At this time I was seeking access to documentation associated with the marketing of the Tuol Sleng Museum and the Choeung Ek Center as international tourist destinations. In the course of my meeting with DC-Cam, however, it became clear that their archive and mapping project documentation would allow for significant extensions to my proposed study of tourism at Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek.

A detailed analysis of the social and political role of memorial sites in the post-1979 period thus

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6 DC-Cam staff have worked to systematically identify, research and map genocide sites throughout the country by way of 'mapping trip' excursions, often to remote and rural Cambodia. This work has been enabled by Geographic Positioning System technologies (see Jarvis, 2002).

7 The DC-Cam archive (including the CGP Bibliographic Database) includes documents dating from the Democratic Kampuchea and PRK, including government memos pertaining to the construction of local and national-level memorials. The DC-Cam mapping project has located around five hundred genocide sites across the country, identifying these sites as either former prisons, burial sites or memorials. Around eighty memorials are represented in DC-Cam's mapping project records. Field notes detail the location, general appearance, material composition and physical condition of the memorials. Records also include photographs of memorials and (sometimes) brief 'local informant' statements about their construction and role in commemorations.
falls outside the main research mandate of DC-Cam. With DC-Cam's support, my research was able to extend to an analysis of the emblematic roles of these memorials in the politics of the post-1979 period. During my larger fieldwork period in 2000, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) facilitated my in-situ research activities at the Tuol Sleng Museum, nominated numerous key players, and furnished me with translations of relevant documents from their archive. DC-Cam sources provided me with details of the local political and cultural contexts of both the physical construction and commemorative function of the memorials.

The professional relationship between DC-Cam and I was characterised by reciprocity. DC-Cam provided me with basic support in the form of a desk and phone, and fax and photocopier access. On DC-Cam's recommendation, the Cambodian Ministry of Information provided me with a research visa and a letter instructing all government employees and others to assist me in my research enquiries (see Appendix 1). DC-Cam staff located and translated numerous documents pertaining to the memorials contained in the CGP Bibliographic Database and the Tuol Sleng and DC-Cam archives. I accompanied DC-Cam on two mapping report trips into Kandal and Kampong Speu provinces areas in September 1999 and April 2000 respectively. In return, I produced an article on the local-level memorials for the Center, which was published in DC-Cam's magazine Sveng Rok Kapet/Searching for the Truth. I read and commented on DC-Cam staff research papers, and assisted with the editing of the Center's genocide site Mapping Report.

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As DC-Cam is funded to research and collect documents about the genocide of 1975-1979, the post-1979 memorials are of limited interest to DC-Cam. The memorials are important only inasmuch as they mark burial sites and act as repositories of the physical evidence of atrocities of genocide.
for 1999 (see http://www.decam.org/Projects/Maps/Mapping.htm). I also donated a number of
original documents to the Center’s archive that I obtained in the course of my research, for
example, an original architect’s plan used during the construction of the Choeung Ek memorial.

My affiliation with DC-Cam also provided significant personal support. I was able to raise issues
of method, interpretation and cultural protocol with the staff of DC-Cam, particularly with the
Director, Youk Chhang, and also with Helen Jarvis. Helen and Youk became my personal friends,
as well as operating as ‘gatekeepers’ in the course of my study. However particular constraints
attended the personal relations I enjoyed with Youk and Helen. Most significantly, I deliberately
avoided extensive critical examination of the specific role of DC-Cam in the ongoing
development of the Cambodia’s genocide memorial sites (and the Tuol Sleng Museum site in
particular). At the time of my substantive fieldwork in 2000, DC-Cam’s affiliation with the Tuol
Sleng Museum was largely one of reciprocal access between the DC-Cam Archive and the Tuol
Sleng Archive. In that year, DC-Cam also assisted in the production of a new English-language
Tuol Sleng Museum visitors’ brochure (I analyse this text in Chapter 6). Since 2000, however, a
much closer relationship has developed between DC-Cam and the museum. I have not pursued
an analysis of the resultant changes at the museum. In part, this is because I have been unable to
visit Cambodia since 2000 to observe and record these changes. In larger part, however, it is
because I’ve felt that it is more important for me to remain faithful to the relationship originally
negotiated with DC-Cam, and the friendship that developed there. In this relationship, DC-Cam
was a facilitating institution for my research interests, not itself an object of my research. A critical
assessment of DC-Cam’s post-2000 curatorial interventions at Tuol Sleng Museum remains a possible future extension to this study.

3.4 Discourse and narrative texts

Narrative is central to the founding and functioning of Cambodia’s memorial sites. Through my methodology, I was concerned to enquire into the relationship between the memorial sites and the dominant national narrative of the liberation and reconstruction of Cambodia. But I did not presume that this story to be a priori bound to the nation. As discussed in Chapter 1, this study attempts to trace the way in which sites of the post-1979 Cambodia have a double geography that is both ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of the nation. I enquired explicitly about both the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of the nation in interviews and in my reading of visual and textual sources, especially state publications such as state press agency media releases and state-sponsored publications. In approaching individuals and representations, I solicited both re-iterations of the ‘official story’ of nation-building vis-à-vis the memorial sites, and more spontaneous and personalised responses that (often) de-centered these dominant narratives. Doing so, I was mindful of Homi Bhabha’s identification of a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation. This ambivalence, he argues, stems from:

- a growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of the ‘origins’ of nation as a sign of the ‘modernity’ of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional reality (Bhabha, 1990: 1).

It is this cultural temporality that I attempted to find out more about through texts and key player interviews. This enquiry necessarily involved thinking about and through political and cultural silences. This way of thinking about these places involved thinking through questions
such as: 'What alternative narratives have been excluded from the national narrative which binds together these sites?'; 'What role have the curatorial idiosyncrasies of individuals played in the curation of these places?'; and 'Who doesn't visit these places, and why?'.

Beyond questions of narrating the nation I also solicited narratives from tourists. As Stuart Hall observes:

Both in daily life and in inquiry, a web of narration connects storytellers and audiences, giving substance to social meaning and historical experience as a constitutive practice of social life itself (Hall, 1997: 74).

Tourists' narratives ranged from seemingly banal reports of travel itineraries to stories of other experiences in (as they saw them) comparably disturbing places, to memories of being aware of Cambodia through media reports, books or films, to reports of their immediate experience of the museum's exhibition. These narratives allowed me to better understand the meanings they afforded to Cambodia and to the memorial sites. This was not, of course, a simple operation of my being 'informed' of such meanings. Narratives were not framed in terms of 'meaning'. Similar to Gillian Rose's reported interviewing experience, my interviewees instead 'talked of practice, process and the facticity of objects, and for very good critical reasons' (Rose, 1997: 318). Like Rose, I have tried to be mindful of this 'gap' in my interpretative project, because I understand that it demonstrates a specific and important politics in my interviewees' interpretative project.
3.4.1 Finding, accessing and analysing documentation

Locating and copying unpublished and published documents formed a significant task of the fieldwork period. The DC-Cam archive contained original historical documents, as well as copies of documents sourced from the Tuol Sleng archive and the National Archives of Cambodia. I was assisted in finding relevant documentation by DC-Cam staff. Documents were then translated from Khmer to English by a DC-Cam staff member. Many government documents relevant to my research interests were held in the DC-Cam archive. I collected official memorandums, reports of meetings and other bureaucratic communications between various levels or institutions of government dating from 1979 to the present. I was particularly interested in documents specifically concerning genocide sites, memorials and commemorations. Other documents of interest included those generated by the PRK authority's early research into the nature, extent and magnitude of the mass political violence of Democratic Kampuchea. Many petitions attesting to people's suffering under the Khmer Rouge were forwarded at this time to the authorities concerned. I viewed these documents, and took copies of selected examples.

Documents obtained from Chey Sophora, Director of the Tuol Sleng Museum, included six museum visitor comment books dating from 1979 to 1995, and a 1999 report to the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts on the current state and future plans of the museum. Architect Lim Ouk allowed me to copy the three design versions for his Choeung Ek stupa, and his drawings and plans for other memorials and monuments. Noun Someth, an officer of the Municipality of Phnom Penh, provided me with copies of communications between the Municipality and external funding organisations about current plans to upgrade the Choeung Ek Center.
Academic, fictional and autobiographical publications by local and international authors were extracted from local bookshops and galleries. I consulted international guidebooks and tourist brochures generally available in Phnom Penh (in which Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek are routinely depicted). From non-government organisations I gathered state press news sheets and broadsheet newspaper articles. Local English-language newspaper articles provided various commentaries on the proposals to try former Khmer Rouge with international assistance.9

I coded documents collected during my fieldwork period using both *in vivo* codes (terms used in the documents or by interviewees themselves that I considered significant) and analytic codes that I abstracted from documents (see Jackson, 2001: 202). I also used such coding techniques in my analysis of the Tuol Sleng Museum visitor books (dating from 1979-1982) and the visitor books from the Museum of Modern Art's *Photographs from S-21* exhibition (1997). In working with documents translated from Khmer, however, especially those from earlier periods, I was more cautious in my use of "analytic codes". Because of the heterogeneity of collected documents, it was necessary to attain some idea of the authorship of each document, what was being discursively enacted by its issue, and the targeted audience of such documents. In many instances, however, documents were of unknown or collective authorship, and/or the intended audience was not clear. In such cases I allowed my coding of documents to be influenced by my understanding of

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9 From Australia I accessed a database of reports of trial negotiations between the Cambodian government and the UN, available on the internet via the NGO Forum. DC-Cam databases and maps were similarly accessed via the internet.
the sites themselves, and my readings of other sources, including visual sources (film, photographs, and the museum's exhibited displays).

3.4.2 Interviews with key players

A key concern in this study was with the role of particular individuals and institutions in the construction, management and reception of the memorial sites. Such information could, in part, be obtained through the informal and formal documentation of state and other institutions. Beyond such texts, I sought interviews with individuals involved with the production of the memorials to ascertain the intended meanings of the sites. I also investigated the subjective ideals and associations held by visitors about the memorial sites through interviews. In-depth interviewing not only provided for the collection of a diversity of opinions and experiences, it also allowed interviewees to dictate which issues were relevant to them. As my interview subjects were either professionals or tourists on the move, repeat interviews were not feasible. I worked from a semi-structured interview schedule (unseen by interviewees), demonstrated to my interviewees that I was competent, while also allowing them adequate time to reflect, speculate and dictate the line of conversation (see Appendix 2). In the course of interviews, I also noted non-verbal responses.
I conducted in-depth interviews with seventeen key players (see Appendix 3). Some of these individuals were involved in the design or management of the memorial sites, while others had contributed to local public discussions about the sites. All key players were long-term residents in Cambodia, and sixteen of the seventeen were ethnic Khmer. Only one of the seventeen key players was female, reflecting the larger gender imbalance in senior government and non-government professional roles in Cambodia. The predominance of middle-aged, professional men in the key player group presented some methodological difficulties, as discussed below. The large number of government employees in the interview group reflects the significant role of the state in the initiation and management of the sites. Key players were generally members of a national political elite; most of the key players I interviewed were Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) members or affiliates. The CPP, having initiated the construction of the memorials in the years after 1979, still enjoys political pre-eminence in contemporary Cambodia, as discussed in Chapter 1. The CPP has also retained a significant relationship to the sites and their ongoing management. There were many professional, political and personal differences across the key player group, but

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10 In my general analysis, I have made use of three additional recordings of individuals relevant to my research interests. Two recordings are of museum guides providing commentary in English to tourist groups at Tuol Sleng Museum. My taping occurred with their knowledge and verbal permission, and also the knowledge and verbal permission of the individuals in their tour groups. The third recording is of a lecture given by a Cambodian academic at the opening of an exhibition of his photographic and written work at a Phnom Penh Gallery on an important aspect of Khmer cultural practice.

11 A number of key players had returned from diasporic communities in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand after the UNTAC period (1991-1993). Others had lived through Democratic Kampuchea, and had moved into positions in government or non-government sectors after 1979.
all were figures regularly called upon to speak in professional registers about the genocide, as well as other political issues.

Interviews with key players were initiated by a letter of introduction, commonly provided in both English and Khmer. This letter explained my interest in the role the Tuol Sleng Museum and Choeung Ek Center play in Cambodian society, commemoration events, official documents and other published materials on the memorial sites, the views of those who manage the sites, and the views of those who visit them.\textsuperscript{12} I sought verbal consent to be interviewed, and for the interview to be taped, at the outset of each interview; consent was granted in every case.\textsuperscript{13} Nine interviews were conducted in Khmer with a translator, the other eight interviews were conducted in English (see Appendix 3). I used my own basic language skills to offer formal greetings and thanks.

Most key players were experienced spokespeople and interviewees. My key player interview schedules were composed of open-ended questions that invited the exploration of issues meaningful to the individual. Where appropriate, these schedules were tailored to the

\textsuperscript{12} This letter of introduction also set out that: I planned to audio-tape all interviews to aid with note-taking; the information provided by interviewees would be used for the purposes of illustration and publication in research only; all information would be safeguarded subject to legal requirements; interviewees were free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data; and that interviewees could choose to remain anonymous if they so wished.

\textsuperscript{13} No key player requested anonymity, though two ministerial officials requested copies of the tapes and transcripts of their interviews. These were later released back to me with minor changes to the transcripts, requesting that the corrected versions become my official records. Key player interviews took place in ministerial and municipal offices, on-site at the museum and memorial, in public meeting places and in private homes.
interviewee's past or present relationship to the memorials. I began by asking interviewees about their own work and the work of their organisation, where applicable. I then asked why the Tuol Sleng Museum and the Choeung Ek Center were set up, and how this happened. I staged such questions early in the interview to demonstrate my interest in the initiation and construction of the memorials. I then proceeded through a series of questions about the history, current role of the sites and commemoration events. The interview schedule also commonly included questions pertaining to the work of Cambodian and international organisations on issues of memory and reconciliation in Cambodia. Further to such issues, I raised the Cambodian government's 1997 request for international assistance to try former Khmer Rouge leaders with some key players. I used the proposed trial further solicit key players' views on the memorial sites, national reconstruction and reconciliation after 1979, and contemporary representations of Democratic Kampuchea. My final question asked key players what they thought should happen to the sites in the future.

In the context of my interviews with key players I paid attention to diversions, evasions and repetitions that occurred. In part, this was an attempt to sensitize my conduct to cultural norms. In interviews conducted with an interpreter, interviewees' attention to expression and word choice — in their attempt to foster greater understanding in the difficult process of shuttling between two languages — produced various diversions and repetitions. I also believed that interruptions and diversions in the conduct of the interview could provide me with additional information about the key players and their opinions on the issues I raised. Repetition of statements was often accompanied by other signs of frustration with my interest in details, and
key players sometimes evaded questions which I believe they may have felt risked a loss of personal face, or placed them at risk of political dissension.

At other times, divergence from a line of conversation or no response to a question indicated a political problem, such as the question soliciting information that inadvertently exposed informal or irregular work practices in institutions. In a competitive funding environment (for both government and non-government sectors) the exposure of this to an ‘outsider’ would have been considered risky. There were also risks associated with expressing an opinion for some key players. For example, I broached with some key players the issue of the use of human remains in museum and memorial exhibits, and the public proposal made in 1994 by Cambodia’s King that these remains be cremated. In this context key player interviewees were extremely cautious about responding to questions dealing with the cremation debate. They could not be seen to disagree with the King’s proposal, but again the arguments against cremation were central to the origin and ongoing justification of key memorial practices, and specifically those at Tuol Sleng Museum and Choeung Ek Center.

Another politically controversial topic that I broached in the interviews was the proposed trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders. At the time of my interviews the announcement of such a trial was pending. The issue of whether Cambodian and United Nations negotiators would agree to the terms of the trial, and what form of trial any such terms might provide, was being debated in the local and international media, and also within government and non-government institutions in

14 As I discuss in Chapter 5, the suggestion was subsequently withdrawn by Sihanouk.

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Cambodia. Given these debates were ongoing during my fieldwork period, I was able to refer to the public debate already in play on these controversial matters. Questions about the trial solicited some strong responses from some key players. Although I took great care in constructing such questions, as a young woman, and as a non-Cambodian, I risked being perceived as indelicate or aggressive. My affiliation with a widely-respected organisation and my care in maintaining respectful interpersonal conduct at all times mitigated against such perceptions.

Key players' answers to questions about the initiation and construction of the memorials drew forth personal narratives as well as 'official' accounts of the sites. The personal testimony was an important and prominent genre within key player responses. Interviewees often recounted a personal experience of one or both of the sites in explaining the importance of the memorials. For example, an Under-Secretary of State opened one interview by telling me about his visit to Choeung Ek in 1980, only a short time after the discovery of the mass grave. A number of key players also responded to my questions about the memorials by first explaining to me what had happened to themselves and their families under the Khmer Rouge, and in the subsequent PRK period. This shuttling between personal narratives and 'official' accounts of the memorials is just one way in which I observed the everyday representation, dissemination and (in some cases) destabilisation of the idea of the nation.

15. Three particularly contentious issues were being publicly debated: where such a trial should be located, who should be tried, and who should preside over such a trial (Cambodians or an international body).
The assistance of a Khmer interpreter was essential to my conduct of nine key player interviewees. Despite the skill of my interpreters I believe subtle, partial and culturally specific narratives were missed. Both the in-situ interview communications, and my post-facto transcription of the interview, were less nuanced than I originally envisaged.

3.4.3 Interviews with tourists at Tuol Sleng Museum

International tourists now comprise the largest visitor group at Tuol Sleng Museum. As such, they were an essential interview group for my study. Two major international visitor groups can be found at Tuol Sleng Museum, organised tour participants and independent tourists. Organised tours deliver large numbers of international tourists to the Museum. Two types of organised tour are common in Cambodia, tours run by international tour companies as part of larger southeast Asia itineraries, and tours that originate in Phnom Penh with a Cambodian operator which visit a handful of tourist sites around the capital. Both types of organized tours spend 20-40 minutes on average visiting the Museum. Unlike organised tour visitors, independent tourists engage more extensively and enthusiastically with the museum during their visit. Their visit to the museum is

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16 I did not interview tourists at the Choeng Ek memorial because of limited fieldwork time. My observations of tourists at this site also suggested that fewer tourists visited the memorial, and that tourists spent less time here than at Tuol Sleng, possibly because there were relatively fewer interpretative displays. I asked interviewees at Tuol Sleng whether they had visited Choeng Ek. If they had, I asked further questions about their experience of the memorial. My discussion and analysis of tourisms of genocide in Cambodia is, however, generally focussed on Tuol Sleng (see Chapter 6).

17 As discussed in Chapter 5, significant numbers of Cambodians visited the museum during the early 1980s, soon after the museum was opened. In the contemporary period, Cambodians visitors make up a far smaller visitor group at the museum than international tourists.
highly deliberate and, once there, they spend a longer period at the site than other visitors. The independent tourists I observed engaged in lengthy explorations of the museum space, both ‘backstage’ and ‘frontstage’ areas. They often made recordings of their visit, and they responded to the displays in various fashions. Individuals from this visitor group were also more likely to request information, support and access from museum staff. I surmised that independent tourists were also most likely to agree to an interview, in part because they were not impeded by an externally-contrived tour schedule, but also because they were themselves engaged in a deliberate interpretative project. And it was their engagements and interpretive projects that I was most interested in.

During March and April of 2000 I interviewed eighteen tourists about their visit to the museum (see Appendices 4 and 5).\footnote{I conducted an additional interview with two American citizens who had been resident in Phnom Penh for around one year.} Given my own language proficiency, I was limited to English-speaking interviewees. Interviewees were generally employed in social services sectors, although a number were tertiary students. Almost all were visiting Cambodia for the first time and were travelling on to other parts of southeast Asia as part their current trip. Most were staying in guesthouses or cheap hotels and planning their days in the city by using an international guidebook (such as \textit{Cambodia: a Lonely Planet travel survival kit}) or the free, locally-produced \textit{Phnom Penh City Tourist Guide}. 
There are clearly methodological implications for interviewing such a select group. It was not my intention to systematically or comprehensively account for the range of motivations and responses of visitors to the museum. Nor was I attempting to compare the views of tourists who visited Tuol Sleng with others who had decided not to visit the museum. I was instead interested in the motivations and responses of an articulate and enthusiastic visitor group at the museum. Their narratives, associations, and practices are loosely representative of a larger (independent tourist) visitor group, but not necessarily illustrative of the total visitor population. I considered their subjective responses as being both contextualised and specific, but also indicative of larger social practices.

Interviews occurred in the museum's southern quadrangle immediately following the interviewees' visit.\(^{19}\) I advertised my research activity by way of a letter of introduction (in English) available from the museum's admission desk. In this letter I asked visitors to approach me if they were willing to be interviewed. As such, my interviewees were all 'self-selected'.

Tourists often narrated what might best be described as an 'internal dialogue' of their experience of the museum's exhibition space. Other narratives of tourists reported on how and why they had come to the museum, and how they had responded to the exhibition whilst there. Many such interviewees constructed stories about their experience of the museum to raise questions, for example, about what it meant to be amongst images of the victims, or to contest the historical

\(^{19}\) Excepting three interviews curtailed by the museum's closing time which were held the following day at a city restaurant.
accuracy of the museum's exhibited narrative. Some preferred to recount additional stories of travelling in Cambodia to offer up larger meanings about what it meant to them to be in such a place.

Early in the interview, I sought to ascertain interviewee’s motivations for coming to the Museum. After an initial set of biographical questions about the individual and their travel itinerary, I installed the direct question: ‘Why have you come to the Museum?’ I found that a number of interviewees found this question difficult to answer, and many responded by asking if they could return to the question after we had talked in more detail. What I had initially thought was a straightforward question, I came to understand as asking: ‘What knowledge or interest do you have in relation to this place?’ or ‘Are you able to communicate the basis of your actions?’ It seemed that it was impossible for interviewees to respond that they had come unthinkingly or indifferently to the Museum. This question, and interviewees’ responses to it, told me much more than expected about the meanings tourists held about the memorials and their own motivations and visiting practices.

A subsequent line of inquiry asked tourists to reflect on their expectations of the place prior to their arrival, and also on their first impression of the museum on arrival. In this way, I asked individuals to declare any (conscious) preconceptions about the place and their projected experience of it, and also recall their immediate impressions of the museum. I asked interviewees to reflect on the museum in relation to experiences of Cambodia at large. I wanted to gauge what independent tourists generally knew about Cambodia as a nation-state, and their ideas about
Cambodian history, culture and society. I tried to get a sense of how they made sense of Cambodia — for example, through borrowed narratives, or through a series of (seemingly disconnected) opinions or observations. Some interviewees responded to such questions by raising the issue of whether sense-making was possible given the transient nature of their encounter, and their lack of knowledge about Cambodia’s modern history.

I also asked interviewees — if they had not broached this issue themselves — whether the museum was reminiscent of any other place they had visited. I asked a further set of questions about what similarities, and what differences, they could identify between Tuol Sleng and the other place(s). The readiness with which interviewees responded to this question has been important to my overall analysis of the Cambodian sites as contemporary tourist destinations (Chapter 6). Others rejected outright any suggestion that the museum might be comparable to another place. I asked whether interviewees considered the museum to be, foremost, a place of international importance, or a place of national (Cambodian) importance. This question drew interviewees further on of the theme of the museum’s symbolic register: what was being symbolised by the museum, for whom, and at what scale? This series of questions undoubtedly drives at a larger problem in my study are the politics of memory and memorial sites elsewhere relevant to the Cambodian case? If so, in what way?

Particular questions in my interview schedules allowed me to approach tourists’ ideas of authenticity in relation to the museum. For example, I asked tourists’ opinions on a proposal to renovate the museum’s buildings, and what the effects of re-housing the exhibited materials in
another physical location would be. The ensuing discussion allowed ideas about the degree of management, and 'appropriate' use of the place to be shared. I asked interviewees for their opinion of the curatorship of the museum. Last, I invited interviewees to speculate on what they thought 'should' be done with the museum in the future. This was also a very successful technique for soliciting criticisms of the current museum and ideas held about Cambodia in general.

My place in the social engagement that is the interview varied. At times, interviewees considered me a fellow visitor. In many ways, the interview conformed to an almost universal mode of interaction between tourists, involving questions such as: 'Where are you from?'; 'What have you been doing around here?' or 'What is that place like?'. In some situations, in response to direct questions from interviewees, or as a way of prompting interviewees, I spoke about my own experiences of the museum. At other times, I was identified with the museum institution itself. During these occasions I was addressed as a 'guide' to the museum and asked about the history of S-21 prison, and about aspects of the museum, including particular objects and images. While I tried to minimise my role as proxy museum guide, it was useful for me to hear about the specific demands for information visitors had and the frustrations they felt with the museum. It was obvious from such asides that interviewees craved further information about particular aspects of the exhibition. I was able to ascertain that many considered the signage (and especially English-language signage) in the Museum to be inadequate, and a small number of respondents intimated that they felt this was an intentional exclusion (see Chapter 6).
As well as paying attention to the direct statements of interviewees, I was also interested in what could not be said, or what could not be said directly, about their experience of the museum. I was careful to encourage interviewees to freely express their opinions and responses, however seemingly peripheral or nonsensical. For example, I was interested in the literary associations made by interviewees in speaking about the museum, in their strong emotional reactions of sadness, anger or despair, talk of supernatural presences, the reportage of bodily responses, lapses in speech, and repetitions of expressive manner, word-choice or idea or narrative being expressed. At these points, I engaged in a reiteration technique, re-wording what an interviewee had said in my own terms, and then asking the interviewee to evaluate my understanding. Clarification or elucidation by interviewees often followed this echo-probe (Bernard, 2002: 212), but this technique also often produced an emotional response, for example: embarrassment; annoyance; defensiveness; excitement. This told me something about how the interview subject imagined their responses were being received.

In analysing both tourist and key player interview transcripts, I drew on concepts provided by Peter Jackson in his work with focus groups (see Jackson, 2001). Thus, for the tourist interview transcripts, I characterised the ways in which tourists attempted to make sense of the museum as specific ‘discursive repertoires’. These discursive repertoires included (but were not limited to) the following: Cambodia as a place of impoverishment (monetary, social and memorial); Cambodia as a geopolitical ‘pawn’; the Museum as a (paradoxically) tranquil place; the Museum/ Cambodia as a haunted/ haunting place; the necessity of the Museum in the promulgation of the notion of ‘Never Again’; the futility of educative investments (such as the Museum) in the ‘fight’ against
‘evil’ in the world; the commodification of ‘heritage’ sites; the Museum as a site of global/international importance. Further, I noted the ‘discursive dispositions’ of tourists — how different individuals and groups related (to) different discursive repertoires at different moments in the interview (Jackson, 2001: 209). The discursive dispositions identified included (but were not limited to) the following: disturbed; apprehensive; uncomfortable; adamant; supportive; studious; self-effacing; sympathetic; ambivalent; apologetic; cynical; deferential; frustrated; sceptical; derogatory; prescriptive; excited. By noting the dispositions that attended various statements by interviewees, I hoped to avoid the danger of noting every reference to a particular discourse as an endorsement of that position (Jackson, 2001: 209). In my conduct of the interviews (as discussed above) I attempted to respond to both verbal and non-verbal communications — silences, emotional or ironic inflections and gestures used to emphasise the verbal expressions. Tourist interviewees often spoke critically or cynically about particular discursive truth-claims or narratives, some recognising their own subjective entanglement with these.

3.5 Discourse and visuality

The ‘ways of seeing’ invited or licensed by monuments, tourism and geopolitics are central to the interests of this study. Gillian Rose usefully identifies two forms of discourse analysis that are

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20 I also identified broad discursive repertoires when analysing transcripts of key player interviews, but did not extensively identify discursive dispositions. This was especially the case for those interviews conducted in Khmer (unless I encountered an explicit statement of personal disposition towards an issue). This was because my primary motivation for interviewing key players was to explore the ‘official’ narratives wreathed around the memorial sites.
often engaged in analyses of visuality. The first is most concerned with visual images, discursive formations and their productivity, while the second is more explicitly concerned with issues of power, regimes of truth, and institutional practices and technologies (Rose, 2001: 140). I have used both forms of discourse analysis in this study. In the first place, I have been interested in the ways in which discourses have been articulated through everyday images embedded in texts (of tourism brochures, for example) and moving images (film). In each case, I have been interested in the production of such images, the images themselves and the audiencing of such images (see Rose, 2001: 16). In the second place, I have attended to the institutional production of particular images and ways of seeing.

3.5.1 Visual methodologies at Tuol Sleng Museum

My approach to the museum as a discursive space drew on the Foucauldian notions of the institutional apparatus and its composite technologies, an analytics that Gillian Rose has usefully elucidated. An institutional apparatus engages and gives a particular organization to the forms of power-knowledge which constitute institutions: for example, architecture, administrative regulations, scientific treatises, philosophical statements, laws or morals (Rose, 2001: 166). Institutional technologies are 'diffuse, rarely formulated in continuous, systematic discourse...often made up of bits and pieces...a disparate set of tools and methods' (Foucault in Rose, 2001: 167). A Foucauldian approach to museums and art galleries has previously been employed by cultural theorists such as Tony Bennett (1995) and Stephen Greenblatt (1991).
Tony Bennett (1995: 11) focuses on 'the plans and projections' of 'advocates, designers, directors and managers' of the public museum. Bennett explores the historical formation of the public museum as thoroughly imbricated with 'the fashioning of a new discursive space in which 'Man' functions as the archactor and metanarrator of the story of his own development' (Bennett, 1995: 45). Importantly, the public museum is 'an apparatus whose orientation is primarily governmental', producing for visitors 'new types of conduct and self-shaping' (Bennett, 1995: 46). Rose notes more particular studies of the institutional technologies of major metropolitan museums, such Henrietta Lidchi's (1997) study of the Museum of Mankind in London, and Mieke Bal (1996) and Donna Haraway's (1989) readings of galleries in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Despite their interest, Rose notes that these practices of reading museums concentrate on the power of the discourses that saturate such institutional apparatuses and technologies to produce their subjects, and appear less interested in the complexities and contradictions of discourse (Rose, 2001: 186).

Through representations of the museum and my own experience of the site, I sought to characterise Tuol Sleng's institutional technologies of exhibition. These technologies included, extensive photographic displays, glass-fronted display cases, open display, and material reconstructions of prison spaces. I considered the museum's formal 'front-stage' exhibition as it intersected with the 'back-stage' spaces of the institution such as archives, gardens and staff offices.
Importantly, aside from some brief text on an initial signboard, there is little at Tuol Sleng in the way of permanent 'technologies of interpretation' (Rose, 2001: 178). Few labels, captions or text panels exist in the museum, and those in evidence are predominantly written in Khmer, with only a few appearing with translations in French or English. One reason for this lies in the fact that the work of interpreting the museum for non-Cambodian visitors was originally performed by the museum's tour guides. These guides routinely escorted the formal delegations, journalists, and visiting scholars through the exhibition.\(^{21}\) The lack of fixed interpretive technologies in the display generated some specific responses from visitor interviewees (as discussed in Chapter 6).

Given this, many visitors engage very carefully with the museum's (English-language) visitor brochure,\(^ {22}\) which they receive upon payment of an admission fee. The brochure is an important mobile technology of interpretation which accompanies tourists throughout their visit and beyond. I attempted a close reading of the brochure, treating it as both a textual source (it provides both a narrative of the functioning of S-21 as an institution of the Khmer Rouge, and of the development of the museum) and as an institutional technology of interpretation (providing information about some of the displays) and the overall aims of the museum.

\(^{21}\) Tours are rare for visitors who arrive at the museum independently (not as part of an organized group). A request and additional payment can solicit a guided tour, but there is no displayed information about the availability of a guide, and a guide is not always available. This situation limited my discussion of technologies of interpretation.

\(^{22}\) As noted above, this brochure was written and designed by DC-Cam, with approval from the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (see Chapter 5).
3.5.2 Photographs

Photographs comprise a particular and important sub-set of visual sources in this study. I found it difficult to access photographs outside of the DC-Cam archive, the Tuol Sleng Museum and archive, the National Archives or in the private collections of cooperative individuals. A significant store of photographs are held in the Ministry of Information’s state press bureau archive. These photographs were made available to me on a view-only basis. This was extremely disappointing, given the richness of these images as sources. Many of them had been taken during the early PRK period by state-sanctioned photojournalists. They appeared to focus on the country’s redevelopment, including state-sanctioned commemorations in both urban and rural areas. Despite my repeated attempts, and written approval for my larger research project from the Ministry of Information itself, I was not successful in having the photographs released for copying.

The group of photographs known as the ‘S-21 prisoner portraits’ played a significant role in this study. Given their production within the genocidal period, these photographs were important not as images that, in their semiotic content or pragmatic depictions, said something of the post-1979 period. Rather it was the ways in which these photographs operated as objects held and displayed by the Tuol Sleng Archive and Museum and other institutions, and as icons of victimisation under the Khmer Rouge that made them important to my study (discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7). As such, I have considered these photographs as 'artefactual' images, in both physical and electronic circulation, as showing something of the ways in which particular places, subjects and forms of power are in networked operation. I looked to the shuttling of such image-objects
through time and space and particular spaces of representation as constitutive of, and constituted by particular memorial discourses and affects.

Another significant set of (visual) methodological challenges was posed by my fieldwork visit to the Department of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. While the S-21 prisoner portrait photographs had been exhibited in a number of institutions in North America and in other places in the world, I chose to examine MoMA's exhibition because of its high profile (which had generated significant debate in media sources) and for the fact that MoMA's archive held a large number of relevant documents that would allow me to apprehend the 1997 event (including media clippings, exhibition visitor books, communications between curators and the group providing the photographs, records of the lay-out of the exhibition, and public responses to the exhibition sent directly to the Museum). 21 Obviously, the exhibition was not one I could visit in real-time. Given I could not view the exhibition myself, I was particularly interested in facsimile images of the S-21 photographs exhibited (these had been transacted between curators and providers of the photographs) and in photographs taken by MoMA curatorial staff of the exhibition itself. From the facsimile images, for example, I could ascertain exactly which of the S-21 photographs had been selected by MoMA. From the latter, I was able to ascertain details of the exhibition event: the mounting and spacing of the photographs; the intimacy of the gallery space (afforded by its relatively small size, low lighting and comfort able

21 I copied many of these documents for later close reading and analysis. I used both in vivo and analytic codes (as discussed in section 3.4.1) to analyse these documents, especially the Museum's own communications and published reviews of the exhibition.
lounges), and the number and placement of interpretative technologies (wall-mounted text).

These photographs did not, however, depict any audience.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the various field locations, methods and forms of analysis undertaken in the course of this research. This multi-sited endeavour sought to analyse interviews, formal and informal textual sources, encounters and observations, visual representations, and institutional apparatuses and technologies of display. In written, oral and visual forms, the operation of particular discourses of genocide memory was my driving concern. The richness of my methodology arose from the necessity of working cross-culturally, employing (at least) two languages, and in asking difficult questions about places of the dead.
CHAPTER 4: Fields of bones: exhuming the evidence

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to investigate the politics and symbolism of Cambodia’s ‘Killing Field’ memorial sites, dedicated to the victims of the Democratic Kampuchea period of 1975-1979. These national and local-level memorials were built during the decade of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). I will concentrate especially on the Choeung Ek Center of Genocide Crimes, located in the semi-rural outskirts of Phnom Penh. The chapter also examines local-level genocide memorials24 found throughout Cambodia. These two types of memorial — the large, central, national-scale memorial, and the smaller, local memorial — command significant popular attention in contemporary Cambodia. An analysis of these two memorial types offers insights into PRK national reconstruction and the contemporary place-based politics of memory around Cambodia’s traumatic past.

American journalist Sydney Schanberg was the first to use the phrase ‘killing fields’ to refer to Cambodia under Khmer Rouge rule in his well-known New York Times article ‘The Death and Life of Dith Pran’, published in 1980. The major international film released four years later took this article as a basis for its screenplay, and adopted Schanberg’s phrase as its title. Dith Pran himself attests to the appearance of the phrase in 1979:

One day, soon after my return to Siem Reap, two women from my village went looking for firewood in the forest. They found bones and skulls everywhere among the trees and

24 Some eighty local memorials have been visited and mapped by DC-Cam in cooperation with the University of New South Wales (Australia) and the Cambodian Genocide Project at Yale University, see http://www.gmat.unsw.edu.au/researchseet.html

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in the wells. So I went to see the 'killing fields', as we called them (Pran in Greenfield and Locke, 1984: 96).

Although the phrase *veal pikhiet* (killing field) is used in Cambodia to refer to particular sites, it by no means has the import that it does in English-speaking contexts. At least one commentator attributes the frequent use of the expression 'killing fields' by journalists writing about Cambodia to 'the highly emotive associations deriving from the film of the same name' (Knight, 1997: 106). In such usage, 'the killing fields' evokes a general territory: an exotic, agrarian space littered with shallow graves. The trope of the killing field has become integral to an imaginative geopolitical topography in which Cambodia remains a dangerous and peripheral place, outside of a modern spatial order. Cambodia's peripheral status is reinforced by another popular expression associated with Pol Pot's Cambodia: 'year zero'. The notion of 'year zero', a time outside extant temporal order, was drawn from the French Revolution, was in fact never explicitly adopted by the Khmer Rouge, who followed the Christian calendar throughout their time in power (Chandler, 1999:161-2n4).

4.2 The Choeung Ek Center of Genocide Crimes

The Choeung Ek Center of Genocide Crimes,35 featuring a large Memorial Stupa, is located fifteen kilometers southwest of Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital. The site lies just outside of the urban fringe in Dang Kao district, but falls within the jurisdiction of the municipal authority of Phnom Penh. The Choeung Ek site, originally a Chinese graveyard, operated from 1977 to the end of 1978 as a killing site and burial ground for thousands of victims of Pol Pot's purges (Chandler, 1999: 139-140). Most of those killed and buried in mass graves at Choeung Ek were transported to the site from the secret 'S-21' Khmer Rouge prison facility

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35 The site is also popularly referred to as the 'Choeung Ek Killing Field'.

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in inner-city Phnom Penh. The S-21 site now houses the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes, also an important national memorial site.

Phnom Penh's 'liberation' from Khmer Rouge rule came on January 7 1979, by virtue of the advance of the army of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and assisting anti-Khmer Rouge Cambodian forces. Close to a year after liberation the killing field at Choeung Ek was discovered. As it became clear to Khmer and Vietnamese investigators that Choeung Ek was a major site of the recent mass violence perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge, the work of further physical examination and documentation of the site was initiated.  

4.2.1 Choeung Ek during the PRK period

Mass exhumations took place at Choeung Ek in 1980, with 89 mass graves disinterred out of the estimated 129 graves in the vicinity. Some 8985 individual skeletons were removed. With assistance from Vietnamese forensic specialists, the skeletal remains were treated with chemical preservative and placed in a long, open-walled wooden memorial-pavilion. After the initial work of exhumation, further preservation of the Choeung Ek site was not proposed until the mid-1980s. A new memorial, further chemical treatment of the remains, new fencing and an additional brick building for exhibition purposes were all suggested at this time (Instructions to construct buildings, Tuol Sleng Archive document). Large-scale construction work on the site did not commence until early 1988, when Ministerial and municipal authorities set about implementing the formulated changes to the site. The skeletal

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*Genocidal Center at Choeung Ek* (Visitor Brochure), published in 1989 by the Municipality of Phnom Penh.
remains housed in the original wooden memorial were relocated to a sealed glass display case within the large new concrete Memorial Stupa. Large sign-boards, giving information about the Choeung Ek site and its victims, were also added at this time.

4.2.2 ‘A center for typical evidences’

The most distinctive feature of the Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa is the prominent display of exhumed human remains. The role designated to the exhumed human remains is as quantifiable evidence of the crimes of Democratic Kampuchea. That Choeung Ek serves to illustrate ‘typical evidences’ of mass political violence is explicit in the official English-language visitor brochure and signboard information on-site. The necessity of holding on to human traces as evidence is echoed in the sentiments expressed by key individuals in contemporary Cambodia when speaking of the Choeung Ek Center, the local memorials and the Tuol Sleng Museum. The Vietnamese General, Mai Lam, under whose curatorship both the Tuol Sleng Museum and Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa were developed, has spoken of the preservation of human remains as being ‘very important for the Cambodian people — it’s the proof’ (Mai Lam quoted in Ledgerwood, 1997: 89). These multiple declarations demand further attention.

Given that the Democratic Kampuchea period significantly affected all sectors of Cambodian society, there seems little need to have prioritized such evidence for a population who had had proof enough; that is, for survivors who had themselves been materially and psychologically affected. The education of the next generation of Khmer is a common rationale given in

27 Quotation from the preface piece to Genocidal Center at Choeung Ek.

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official communiqués and public orations in favor of the preservation of evidence in the post-1979 era. This preservation-for-education practice sees remains, objects and sites — ‘primary’ artifacts — as capable of instructing and unifying the society around a knowledge of what has gone before. Topographically, by maintaining a mass of human remains in the physical memorials, deaths considered valueless under Pol Pot are reclaimed as artifacts to be ‘known’ by the nation. What is ‘remembered’ via the Memorial’s display is a fundamental political principle of the Khmer Rouge: that all life in Pol Pot’s Democratic Kampuchea was considered by the Khmer Rouge authorities as potentially traitorous to the regime and thus as life abandoned by the law. Recalling Agamben, such life is that designated as distinct from and external to political life, as ‘bare life’. It is impossible to restore value to such life lost, even in somber, costly memorialisation, because the victims of a genocide cannot be understood as having been sacrificed. This is one of the most important and most disturbing understandings available to individuals visiting the memorials. It is this understanding that is broached by visitors when they speak of — or express an inability to comprehend — a politics whereby Khmer systematically killed Khmer.

The displays of physical horrors of Pol Pot’s rule also served to justify Vietnam’s military intervention into Cambodia in 1978 and 1979. At the Tuol Sleng Museum and the Choeung Ek Center, the extreme actions of the ‘Pol Pot clique’ — the internal killings, the border attacks on Vietnam — are presented as reasons for Vietnam’s decision to wage war against, and ultimately invade, Democratic Kampuchea. As anthropologist Judy Ledgerwood argues

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*a In contrast, a nation’s war-dead are routinely understood as having been sacrificed. When this understanding is transposed to the building of monuments, a single soldier’s anonymous remains are often called upon to stand in for the larger number of lives sacrificed.
in the context of the Tuol Sleng Museum, for Khmer "the metanarrative of the PRK state, of criminals committing genocide ousted by patriotic revolutionaries, framed and provided an explanation for seemingly incomprehensible events" (Ledgerwood, 1997: 93). The presentation of physical evidence in the service of such a metanarrative also evokes a legal functioning of evidence; evidence of an (universally-defined) genocide necessarily motions to universal (international) laws. As Gary Klintworth observes, Vietnam has made ambiguous claims as to the 'humanitarian' purposes of its invasion of Cambodia. This is, he notes, a result of the 'uncertainty of that concept in international law'. Yet, as Klintworth (1989: 11) further notes, Hanoi has always alluded to its humanitarian purpose by referring to 'the extremely barbarous policy of Pol Pot'. Thus, the evidence of the mass violence perpetrated in Democratic Kampuchea made public by the PRK government after 1979 'morally justified' Vietnam's invasion (Klintworth, 1989: 11, Keyes, 1994: 59, see also Ledgerwood, 1997: 87-94). In this light, for the PRK government, 'the initial illegality of its formation may be offset by the fact that it was preceded by a regime that engaged in gross violations of basic human rights' (Klintworth, 1989: 96). International law and United Nations provisions for territorial sovereignty, human rights, and the indictment of former state leaders for crimes against humanity are now, undeniably, considerations of domestic political activity worldwide. This is true even as such supra-national provisions for sovereignty (of the state and the individual) are criticized, dismissed or enacted unevenly, and so freight other claims to geopolitical influence. Thus the physical evidence of mass political violence also testifies to international humanitarian law, especially in cases where few witnesses can be found — or found willing — to speak of past crimes. Evidence of trauma and its international exposure

*Klintworth elsewhere notes: 'Vietnam's foremost justification for its attack on Kampuchea was self defence' and shows 'self-defence' as enshrined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.*
was integral to the political economy of post-1979 Cambodia. This was a political economy fueled by actual and speculated international legal, humanitarian and economic aid.

Consciously or unconsciously then, the forensic activities at Choeung Ek speak to both a political and moral economy at work during the PRK decade. Human remains as 'typical evidences' were deployed within a political economy of the petitioning of international legal, economic and humanitarian groupings. Human remains as evidence, enshrined in national and local scale memorials, also lent legitimacy to a moral economy in which Vietnam's invasion was understood as imperative in the face of Pol Pot's genocidal regime.

4.2.3 Symbolism of the Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa

Traditionally, the stupa is the sacred structure which contains the remains of the deceased — especially those of greatly revered individuals — in Buddhist cultures. The construction of stupa has, since ancient times, been a significant and costly activity, producing merit for the living and encouraging the remembrance of the deceased. The particular context of the construction of the Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa in 1988 was one of a revival in political interest in Khmer Buddhism — its scholarship and cultural heritage.

In the domestic political context that followed the outing of Pol Pot in 1979, moral condemnation of the Khmer Rouge provided the PRK government with only a negative legitimacy... [and being] unable and probably unwilling to reclaim the monarchical tradition as part of its own legacy... [the PRK government] had, therefore, to find institutions other than the monarchy through which to bolster its legitimacy (Keyes, 1994: 60).
Thus, in the early-1980s, limited political support was given to the re-ordination of monks and the rebuilding of wat, and representative posts were set aside on high-level government councils for religious figures (see Keyes, 1994 and Harris, 1999). Although such reinstatements of religious authority and spaces or worship were widely welcomed, the problems faced by people everywhere in terms of cultural life and religious connections were close to insurmountable. For many it was impossible to know if or where loved ones had perished. Moreover, performing adequate ceremonies for the dead was difficult without senior monks, many of whom had been killed during the Democratic Kampuchea period. Nevertheless, among the first religious rituals and observances to re-appear spontaneously after 1979 were commemorations for the dead. In some places these ceremonies were performed by non-ordained individuals who shaved their heads and wore white in the absence of a quorum of monks (Harris, 1999: 66). However, still facing domestic illegitimacy and a civil war on its border, the new government sought (up until the late 1980s) 'to severely circumscribe the role that religion could play in Khmer life' (Keyes, 1994: 43), in favor of a consolidation of a centralized political authority.

In the late 1980s, a change in the PRK government's policy with regard to religion encouraged the flourishing of Buddhism at many levels of life. Charles F. Keyes (1994: 62), dates this change of political will as occurring in 1988, the year that construction of the new Memorial Stupa commenced at Choeung Ek. Keyes suggests the transformation of the state-religion nexus at this time was precipitated by the imminent withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia, PRK meetings with Sihanouk (in 1987 and 1988), and a subsequent in principle agreement to the creation of a government that would include the PRK, Sihanouk and republicans (the 'Khmer Right'). With the possibility that it would be contesting
general elections with these groups in the near future, the PRK government sought broader popular appeal by becoming — as had kings in the past — conspicuous patrons of Buddhism (Keyes, 1994: 62).

In the months prior to 1988, local architect Lim Ourk was employed to design a new Memorial stupa for Choeung Ek. He drew three possible designs for the site, directly inspired by the sublime architectural forms of the Royal Palace of Cambodia in Phnom Penh. His final three designs varied only in height, roof structure and degree of carved detailing. Of the three designs, the tallest, most traditional and most decorative ‘stupa’ design was chosen by the municipal committee. According to Lim Ourk, the final decision of the committee members was made with the local people of the Choeung Ek area in mind, considered to be rural folk with traditional tastes.\(^\text{10}\)

I argue that the Choeung Ek Memorial (although officially and popularly termed a stupa) is an inescapably modern monument. Although it draws on a number of traditional religious architectural forms, these forms are transformed under a thoroughly late-twentieth century dilemma: how to memorialize a genocide. The total monument is a somewhat dizzying assemblage of cultural signs which are disturbing, if in different ways, to both Cambodians and non-Cambodians.

The Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa is also architecturally related to the traditional pavilion of a Buddhist temple complex. The temple pavilion is used to house sacred objects; it is sometimes

\(^{10}\) However the local people of Choeung Ek area were not directly consulted as to the choice of Memorial design.
part of a funerary display of a revered individual (housing an urn containing cremated remains) or oftentimes a library, containing Buddhist texts (see Matics, 1992: 43). Salient pavilion features include: redented walls, four projecting porches with tall doorways which lead into a central square area, and a series of roof tiers ascending to a palace-like superstructure which forms the roof. The roof superstructure of the Choeung Ek Stupa is especially reminiscent of the pavilions of the Royal Palace. Because the Royal Palace is also a preeminent space of scriptural and ritual learning, this borrowing of Royal styles transposes associations of Khmer cultural splendor, supreme political power and religious knowledge to the Choeung Ek Memorial. Five stages in the middle section of the uppermost roof portion of Choeung Ek symbolize the five rings of the subsidiary mountains around Meru, the sacred mountain of Buddhist cosmology. The central pillar which emerges from the Memorial’s roof also speaks to this cosmological composition as the *axis mundi*, ‘world mountain’ or ‘pivot of the universe’ evident in the earliest stupa structures (Fisher, 1993: 31). The monument’s fine uppermost spire is ringed with two sets of seven disks which may be abstract lotus forms or umbrellas — the ‘honorific and auspicious emblems’ associated with monks and royalty in Buddhist cultures (Fisher, 1993: 31). Elongated ‘sky-tassels’ at the extremity of the roof gables ward off unsavoury spirits that fall from the sky and giant *naga* snakes of ancient Khmer mythology guard the lower four corners of the roof structure. The pale color of the lower half of the monument is also highly symbolic, white being representative of death, decay and impermanence in Khmer Buddhism.

*The Royal Palace, commenced in the late-nineteenth century, is strongly representative of the Rattanakosin (or Bangkok) style, which was the predominant architectural style of Thailand at the time. This Thai style, and preceding architectural forms in Thailand, nonetheless involves considerable Khmer engineering and artisan expertise dating from the Siamese sacking of Angkor in 1431 (Broman, 1998: 53).*
Despite these more traditional aspects of the Memorial's upper-half, the lower-half of the Choeung Ek memorial quite obviously breaks with the form of both traditional temple pavilions and stupa. The vestibule at the center of the Memorial is a tall rectangular glass prism. This part of the monument presents a very different architectural, and socio-cultural, story. Traditionally, the sacred pavilion and the stupa contained the cremated remains of a single person.\(^4\) This individual, someone of high social status (such as a senior monk) would have been a central figure in the community building the pavilion or stupa, and the family or community 'make merit' for themselves and the deceased in their doing so. It is crucial too, that this individual has been known in life and in death to this community. The placing of the individual’s cremated remains in the urn or the relic chamber concludes a long and complex funerary journey involving significant, ritually-mediated contact with the corpse. In its traditional form, the urn or relic chamber encloses the cremated remains. The Choeung Ek Memorial is an exception to all these principles. Most significantly and controversially, it contains the uncremated remains of many individuals. The Stupa discloses the remains interred inside, deliberately exposing these to public view. Hundreds of skulls are neatly shelved, and some labelled, like objects in a glass cabinet of a museum or private collection.

In the context of the Memorial it is important to recall that, according to Buddhist belief, there are a number of different deaths one may die.\(^3\) A violent or unexpected accident is one possible — and highly inauspicious — demise. Cremation is most urgent in the case of a

\(^4\) In special circumstances, relics of the Buddha may also be interred within stupa structures. These important stupa often become important sites of pilgrimage.

\(^3\) As articulated by Phra Khru Anusaranasasanakari and Charles F. Keyes in their detailed article on Buddhist funerary practice in Theravada Buddhist Northern Thailand (1980).
violent or accidental death. In such circumstances it is widely believed that the spirit of the deceased remains in the place of death as a spirit or ghost, instead of moving on to the realm of re-birth (see Anusaranasasanakiarti and Keyes, 1980: 14-15). Ghosts may harm the living by causing great sickness and misfortune. For this reason, Choeung Ek is considered by many Cambodians to be a dangerous place, and they refuse to visit the Memorial. To have the uncremated remains on display is considered by some to be a great offence, and tantamount to a second violence being done to the victims (pers. comm., Youk Chhang, 2000). It is difficult, however, to trace the specific, local contours of the politics of exhumations and exhibition at Choeung Ek. The formal declarations or deliberations of the Municipality contain no trace of local, popular dissent to exhumation and exhibition at Choeung Ek. Elsewhere in the country authorities faced problems of spontaneous exhumations and cremations undertaken by communities (as discussed below, the outlawing of such activities is explicit in government communications). Choeung Ek appears to have had no such constituency. Two factors may be important here: Choeung Ek’s dead were not local, they were already displaced persons (having been brought to the S-21 facility from various parts of the country); when ‘discovered’, the site was immediately subject to national and international scrutiny as Cambodia’s ‘largest’ mass grave, thus removing it from local people’s purview. However, some accommodation of the views of local people (albeit some years later) is intimated in Lim Ourk’s suggestion (as noted above) that the final ‘more traditional’ design for the Memorial Stupa was chosen with them in mind.

So while the form of the Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa seeks religious restitution, merit and a permanence of memory that recalls the traditional role of the funerary pavilion or stupa, it also contradicts that role. It does so through disclosing a state of incorrect religious practice
— the maintenance of uncremated, multiple and anonymous human remains. This tension is openly recognised by architect Lim Ouk, who wants the uncremated remains to convey directly to the viewer the horror of people's experiences under Pol Pot. The memorial does not attempt to 'show justice' to — or in any way symbolically redeem — the dead, as is the case in other memorial traditions. Instead it preserves, and thereby further illustrates, the political injustice of the victims' deaths through a larger signifier of socio-religious injustice or impropriety.

Here the PRK government’s memorialising initiatives might be usefully compared to those of its political allies — socialist states such as the former Soviet Union, eastern European states, Vietnam itself and Laos. I will mention just one especially fruitful avenue of comparison; that of the PRK with the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR). Grant Evans (1998) provides a detailed analysis of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) engagements with Lao Buddhism in the post-1974 era. LPDR national monuments and commemoration events, like the PRK's memorial initiatives, sought political legitimacy through a 'reorganization of the ritual calendar' and have, more recently, 'signaled a clear shift away from socialist iconography [to] the promotion of recognizably nationalist iconography' (Evans, 1998: 41). Under these conditions, the That Luang (Grand Stupa) of Vientiane has become 'the central symbol through which the (Lao) nation remembers itself' (Evans 1998, 41). In addition, in 1977, a large, white 'stupa to the unknown soldier', acknowledging the revolution's war dead, was built at the far end of the parade ground in front of the That Luang (Evans 1998, 16). Like the local-level genocide memorials in the PRK, 'stupa to the unknown soldier' have been constructed in provincial capitals across the LPDR. Evans here recalls Benedict Anderson's seminal argument that, in light of the fact that only modern states
construct tombs to the unknown soldier, ‘Nationalism is more properly assimilated to religion than political ideologies because most of the deepest symbols of nations are symbols of death’ (Anderson 1991 quoted in Evans, 1998: 120). The major divergence between the Lao and Cambodian cases is that Cambodia’s national Stupa monument is not symbolic of its war dead, but symbolizes the magnitude of a genocide, which, as I noted above, cannot properly be understood as constituted by sacrificial deaths.

The occasion of the official inauguration of the Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa reflected the tenor of religious freedom that characterised the later years of the PRK period. Senior PRK government officials addressed an audience of invited monks, Khmer and foreign guests. Rites of giving food and other offerings to the monks were performed and the assembled crowd made a counter-clockwise circumambulation of the Memorial. The involvement of a number of foreign guests in the ceremony anticipated, consciously or unconsciously, future international tourism to the site. The giving of food to the monks at the Choeung Ek inauguration recalled both the quotidian Buddhist act of morning alms-giving, as well as the specific practice of food offerings at pchum ben, an ancient Khmer Buddhist festival of merit-making for ancestors. I will return to the specific relation between pchum ben and genocide memorials in the discussion of the local-scale memorial sites below.

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4 Some explanation of this unusual counter-clockwise circumambulation may be gleaned from a source dealing with northern Thai funerary custom: ‘When a funerary procession reaches the cemetery, it makes a three fold circumambulation around the pyre. During this circumambulation, the living keep their left side (the inauspicious side) towards the pyre, but the body, carried around head first, has its right side nearer the pyre’ (Sanguan, 1969, quoted in Anusaranasasanakiarti and Keyes, 1980: 12).
4.3 Local Memorials

4.3.1 Initiation of local memorials

Scores of local-level genocide memorials mark former Khmer Rouge prisons, killing and burial sites throughout Cambodia. The majority of these local memorials were built by municipal, district or village authority collectives in the early 1980s. Their development was promulgated by the central government of the PRK, specifically the Ministry of Information and Culture under the then Minister, His Excellency Chheng Phon. Exhumations of burial sites had been widely carried out in the years following January 1979, both under the direction of an official government Genocide Research Committee into the Khmer Rouge crimes,\(^n\) and also by local communities seeking knowledge of events in their area. A small number of graves were reportedly exhumed in search of valuables buried with the victims, while others were exhumed with victim’s remains then being reburied, possibly following cremation. In yet other cases, unexhumed mass graves have been reincorporated into the productive space of the village as grounds for stands of fruit-bearing trees.\(^n\) However, given the desperate economic

\(^n\) The Genocide Research Committee, made up of government figures and cultural scholars, traveled to provincial areas of the country to inspect sites of Khmer Rouge violence. The Genocide Research Committee reported its findings to the PRK’s National Front for the Salvation and Construction of Kampuchea.

\(^n\) These observations are based on statements given by local informants interviewed by DC-Cam staff and recorded in the DC-Cam mapping project database of genocide sites. On Khmer Rouge disturbance of exhumed remains see, for example, entries for sites: 010602 [Wat Sopheak Mongkul, Banteay Meanchey], 020801 [Wat Po Laingka, Batembang]. On exhumations for valuables see entries for sites: 060802 [Vityealei Reaksmei Sophorn, Kampong Thom] and 050204 [Wat Amphe Phnom, Kompong Speu] and 200501 [Thlork, Svay Rieng]. Remains were reported as having been taken from the memorial site 080701 [Wat Roka Koang], while reports of reburial were given at 031003 [Kra Ngaok, Kampong Cham], 040301 [Wat Khosam, Kampong Chhnang] and 170903 [Wat Khach, Siem Reap]. Replanting of mass grave areas as orchards has occurred at: 030301 [Wat Skun,
and human circumstances of the early 1980s, it was nigh on impossible that the state embark on a formal policy of exhuming all known mass grave sites. A great part of the country was still engaged in civil war or was extensively mined, and labour available for such undertakings elsewhere was scarce.

A Ministry of Information and Culture memo, dated October 5, 1983, directs municipal and provincial officers to inspect local genocide sites, prepare statistical data on the sites, create a ‘file of evidence’ on genocidal crimes committed in the area and to report this information to the Ministry. The officers are also instructed to widely encourage local people to ‘carry onward their vengeance’ about the ‘crimes and suffering’ not by further exhumation of mass grave sites but by preparing ‘memorial sites’ to ‘the victims of the Pol Pot-leng Sary regime’.

According to the two-page memo, at least one memorial was to be completed in each province or municipality prior to the fifth anniversary of National Liberation Day on January 7, 1984. The nominated memorial site was also to provide a focus for a ‘Day of Anger’ commemoration of May 20, 1984. Nine days later, another memo from the Ministry of Information and Culture to all provincial and municipal People’s Revolutionary Committees stated that the construction of memorials to the victims of the genocidal regime was ‘an important historical matter of national and international political note’ (Ministry of Information and Culture memo, October 14, 1983). It is likely that the impetus for the official encouragement of local memorial building stemmed from a Report of the Genocide Research Committee of the National Front for the Salvation and Construction of Kampuchea (hereafter ‘the Front’). The Research Committee’s Report was tabled on July 25

Kampong Cham], 030703 [Wat O Trakuon, Kampong Cham] and 060802 [Vitsaalei Reaksmei Sophorn, Kampong Thom].

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1983, and discussions of its findings ensued during the August 1983 session of the National Assembly. Like the October 5 memo, the October 14 memo was signed by the Minister — Chheng Phon. These two documents indicate the PRK government's concerted program of memorialisation of sites throughout the nation.

4.3.2 Construction of local memorials

Local memorials provided a public space for relics of victims that, in most places, both government and non-government groups were reluctant to re-bury. These sites provided an opportunity for the sanctification of the dead. This sanctification resided not in the act of cremation, but by their providing a location where religious rites could be performed. The building of local memorials, predominantly in the form of stupa, fused pre-existent religious injunctions with official concern for the maintenance of evidence of crimes against the populace. Though the use of uncremated human remains in local memorials is likely to have been controversial in some local communities, no resistance to the memorials is intimated in the official documentation of the time. Undoubtedly, forms of memorialisation — especially Buddhist rites associated with death — occurred in the post-1979 period outside of the deliberate memorial activities of state. However, significant uniformity in the age, form and commemorative function of the memorials across some fifteen provinces suggests that Ministerial directives were carefully followed through.

* In many places exhumation was an economic necessity as much as it was about political or cultural protocol, given the demands on agricultural land to meet serious food shortages in many provinces in the immediate post-Democratic Kampuchea and ensuing decade of civil-war.

* As well as religious festivals, pre-existing Buddhist and 'animist' beliefs about death, re-birth and haunted places have provided continuity in post-1979 Cambodian society. See discussion of neak ta (guardian spirit) beliefs below.
Local memorials were built in places where victims had been buried, incarcerated or executed. Almost without exception, local memorials contain (or formerly contained) human remains. In almost all cases these remains were taken from graves in the local area, left uncremated and are visible inside the memorial structure, as at Choeung Ek. As the Khmer Rouge often used temple buildings and compounds for imprisonment and mass burial, memorials consistently occur inside or near to wat to mark the location of this past violence. A second reason for the location of memorials within wat follows from these spaces being always already auspicious for the human relics comprising the memorials. It is notable that, while the official government memos prioritized the role of local government and the People’s Revolutionary Committees in constructing these memorials, anecdotal evidence and the physical location of the majority of memorials emphasizes the importance of religious space and practice for the memorials. Their maintenance has often been shared between key charismatic individuals and religious, political or other collectives.

4.4 Commemorations

4.4.1 Tivea Chang Kambeng, May 20 Day of Anger

During the PRK period, and the following State of Cambodia (SOC) period (1989-1991), tivea chang kambeng (the 'Day of Anger') was a well-organised public holiday marked by significant ceremonies in Phnom Penh, provincial and district centers throughout the

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* Based on extensive interviewing by DC-Cam and my own site visits to six memorials in Kandal, Kampong Speu, and Siem Reap provinces (see Figure 3 for locations of these six memorials).
country. Observed on May 20, these ceremonies acknowledged the hundreds of thousands of deaths attributable to the 'Pol Potists'. After the Paris Agreements were signed by Cambodia's warring political factions in 1991, the May 20 commemoration was no longer formally promoted by the Cambodian government. There is evidence to suggest that May 20 has continued to be marked at some local memorials beyond this time (see below). The Day of Anger is not a commemoration of seasonal or lunar cycles, as is the case for other major Cambodian observances: kathen, pehnum ben, the Water Festival and the Royal Ploughing Ceremony, for example. Like the contemporary observances of National Liberation Day, Constitution Day, Paris Agreements Day and Human Rights Day, the Day of Anger is linked to the Gregorian calendar as an important modern political event.

In the PRK and SOC periods the May 20 commemoration was coordinated by the Front, in cooperation with various Ministries and provincial and district authorities. Factories, schools, hospitals and other enterprises were instructed to make banners and posters condemning the crimes committed by the Pol Pot regime. Banners and placards were carried to the public meetings and other events of the Day, which commonly revolved around the local memorials (Instructions to organise May 20, 1990). Ceremonies involved wreath laying, song, prayer, ritual offerings to the dead, poetry and speeches by local officials (Report from Stung district, Kampong Thom May 20, 1989 and Day of Anger, May 20 1991, Stung Treng). At the

*The date marks May 20 1973 when, in Khmer Rouge controlled areas of the country, the collectivisation of agriculture was introduced. Chandler writes of this period: 'So-called 'cooperative farms' (sabakar) were introduced in 1973. Other features of life in liberated zones included all-night political and cultural rallies ... systematic puritanism affecting dress, hair-styles and sexual behaviour; the abolition of money, badges of rank and private property; and a stress on collective leadership, ownership and self-reliance' (Chandler 1996: 211, see also 225).
emotional climax of the ceremony, survivors of Democratic Kampuchea were asked to come forward to testify to crimes known to them, to speak of their personal history and loss. These individual declarations of memory and personal insight were teamed with political speeches by local officials. Such speeches turned on the necessary unification of singular emotions and allied people to share in their vigilance against forgetting. Emphasis was given to the strong feelings and actions fed by recollection, rather than on the detail of the memories themselves, as is evident in the following transcript:

Beloved comrades and friends ...those who died are reminding us to be vigilant, to strengthen our solidarity and practice revolutionary activities. We must be on the alert against the cruelties and poisonous tricks of the enemy, even though they try to hide themselves in multiple images (Speech of Comrade Chea Sim, May 20 1986).

In this way, people’s participation in communal declarations of memory was integral to their ongoing individual service within national reconstruction; or as it was termed after 1987, ‘national reconciliation’.

Day of Anger declarations of traumatic memory consistently aimed to instill amongst Cambodians a sense of solidarity with the Vietnamese people. The continuing cooperation between the two nations was sometimes expressed at May 20 meetings as a direct statement of thanks to Vietnamese soldiers and the Vietnamese people. Such a statement occurred at the 1986 ceremony when Chea Sim paid homage to ‘Vietnamese of three generations’, soldiers who had been 'sacrificed in our territory and for the sake of our people' in the war against the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. He continued, conveying his 'respect and gratitude to the Vietnamese mothers and sisters who have sacrificed their children, grandchildren and husbands to fulfill a glorious international obligation in our country' (Speech of Comrade Chea Sim, May 20 1986). As evidenced
by Chea Sim’s words, the May 20 commemoration was a time when people’s concerns also turned to bilateral and international state affairs. In the same speech, Chea Sim spoke of the ‘foolish, dark tricks’ of the regrouped Khmer Rouge within the tripartite government CGDK\textsuperscript{41} waging war from the western border. And it was not only the large Phnom Penh ceremonies that turned to geopolitical debate. Matters of international solidarity were reportedly raised at a district-level ceremony of a few thousand people at Tuol Phlorng Memorial in Stung district, Kampong Thom province on May 20, 1989 (\textit{Report from Stung district, Kampong Thom}). Cambodian intellectuals meeting in a run-up conference to the May 20 commemoration of 1988 used the occasion to launch a petition to the United Nations and the World Peace Council. The petition:

\begin{quote}
... called on these organisations and the world public to take measures against the universally condemned criminals Pol Pot, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan and their associates and denounces the dark schemes of certain countries and forces for giving material support and moral assistance to the genocidal Pol Pot clique in its attempt to return to Kampuchea to massacre the Kamuochean people and undermine the national revival (SPK [State Press Agency], May 18 1988: 3).
\end{quote}

In 1990, a communiqué of the Front reiterated that the Day of Anger must ‘make people realise the current crimes committed by the Pol Pot clique, and be dedicated to the prevention of the return of the regime’. May 20 1990 also petitioned international groups — including ‘the international tribunal in the Hague and religious figures the world over’ — to concern themselves with the State of Cambodia (\textit{Instructions to organise May 20, 1990}).

\textsuperscript{41} The Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea comprised of remnant Khmer Rouge forces, Khmer royalists (under Sihanouk) and Khmer republican factions.
Initiated within the period of Vietnamese military and administrative presence in Cambodia, the Day of Anger did recognise, and arguably promote, the close and beneficial relationship between the PRK and Vietnam. As Ledgerwood notes, the oft-repeated phrase of PRK propaganda, *kamheng chheu chap* (a rage born from the pain of an irresolvable grief) ‘was not necessarily a ‘natural’ or ‘logical’ reaction to Democratic Kampuchea atrocities; arguably the case could be made that for many Buddhist Khmer such a response was not forthcoming’ (Ledgerwood, 1997: 91). But again, it is also important to recognise that the May 20 commemoration provided, over many years and in diverse settings, a public, sympathetic space in which Cambodians expressed their pain and sorrow. However, the central aim of the commemoration was to activate memories of the genocide, precisely to invigorate popular support for the war against the Khmer Rouge perpetrators still threatening the nation. In this sense, it is inadequate to term the Day of Anger a day of memorialisation. The Day of Anger marked a traumatic period that was not strictly past, or certainly had not been neutralised. This sense of suspended historicity continues to figure in the more recent commemorations, as it continues that no person has ever publicly appeared before a Cambodian court to be tried for the crimes of Democratic Kampuchea. There remains a widespread perception in Cambodia that the issue of memory and accountability in regards to Democratic Kampuchea has not been adequately resolved. This long-standing situation underscores the current debate around a future trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders with international assistance. It is this situation that has also increased domestic and international interest in the ‘remembering’ that May 20 ceremonies have again staged in recent years. In 1999, 2000 and 2001, May 20

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42 My interview sources indicate that the Day continued to be observed in Phnom Penh by CPP officials, within CPP offices and at local memorials throughout the provincial areas and at city
ceremonies at Choeung Ek, promoted by the Phnom Penh municipal authorities, once again
drew large crowds. A contemporary May 20 event at Choeung Ek is examined further below.

4.4.2 Phchum ben, *Festival of the Ancestors*

For many Cambodians today, remembering and grieving for loved ones lost under
Democratic Kampuchea occurs most intensely during the annual Buddhist ‘festival of the
ancestors’ — *phchum ben*. This ancient commemoration takes place at the local *wat* of villages
and cities throughout Cambodia. Phchum ben is a fifteen day period during which offerings
are made to the spirits of ancestors. The festival begins on the first day of the waning moon
during the period of *photrobhat* (September-October) (Kalab, 1994: 67). Milada Kalab
describes the contemporary festival at length, noting that during daily prayer at the temples
over the festival period

the monks chant the *parabhava sutta* (the sixth sutta of the *sutta nipata*), also chanted
daily on radio during these fifteen days. On the last day people bring enormous
quantities of Cambodian cakes wrapped in banana leaves to the temple, and most
families [have] *bangeolkud* performed for their ancestors. *Bangeolkud* is a ceremony in
which four monks recite texts while connected by a white cord to an urn containing
ashes of ancestors. In this way, merit is transferred to the departed (Kalab, 1994: 68).

Monks receive food, drink and other offerings as intermediaries, passing this nourishment to
the spirits of the dead. Spirits are believed to search for offerings from family throughout the
compounds. Reports of May 20 commemorations continuing annually to the present day are not
uncommon at the local memorial sites.

*“The sixth sutta of the sutta nipata outlines the Buddha’s teachings on the causes of a person’s
downfall, effectively prescribing ways of life by which a person may avoid his or her downfall.”*
*phchum ben* period, and most families visit seven *wat* over the fifteen day period to ensure the goodwill of their hungry and restless ancestors.

*Phchum ben* is also marked by a gathering at Choeung Ek, despite the site not being a *wat*. In the early years after Choeung Ek was discovered, people living locally in the district visited the killing field at Khmer New Year, *phchum ben* and on the Buddhist fast day of each month. One explanation for the popularity of Choeung Ek as a site for *phchum ben* is the great and chaotic dispersion of populations throughout Cambodia during 1975-1979. The post-1979 period has undoubtedly witnessed the emergence of a new social geography of *phchum ben*. Survivors embrace the Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa as a proxy location for the passing of merit to the spirits of their deceased or missing relatives. For such people, the true resting place of their relatives remains unknown. In this way, Choeung Ek allows for the performance of rites for spirits who lack a proper place of death.44

4.5 Contemporary states

4.5.1 Memory and reception at Choeung Ek

In 1999, during a period of intense pressure and speculation about a trial of former Khmer Rouge, the May 20 Day of Anger was again observed at Choeung Ek A banner at the 1999 event stated: ‘Remember forever the criminal acts of the genocidal Pol Pot regime’. Another

44 Evans (1998) drawing a comparison between the Northern Thai Buddhist context explicated by Keyes (1987) and Laos, concurs with the view that the common practice of merit transference could be understood as a type of ancestor worship. He also notes that this is most apparent during the Lao festival of the dead, where offerings with the name of a dead person are given to the monks (Evans, 1998: 28-29).
banner read: 'Long live the Cambodian People's Party'. A crowd of around one thousand people watched as monks and state figures enacted religious rites and made speeches. The ceremony was covered by international mass media — reaching, for example, readers of the *New York Times* and audiences of the Australian evening television news. The commemoration made public the Cambodian government's *remembering of the genocide*. The event undoubtedly set out to counter both local and international disquiet around a perceived lack of commitment of the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and Prime Minister Hun Sen to a Khmer Rouge trial. But perhaps the most surprising moment of the May 20 1999 ceremony came with the Phnom Penh Deputy Governor Chea Sophara's direct address to the victims' remains inside the Memorial Stupa. He said:

> I am here today to inform all of you who died that owing to the win-win policy of the Prime Minister Hun Sen all Khmer people have reconciled and united. The Khmer people are now at peace, and the Kingdom of Cambodia has become a full member of ASEAN (Chea Sim quoted in Seth Mydans, 1999).

The ruling party of the Cambodian government — pushing for stability in the face of potentially divisive international trial negotiations — understands precisely the challenge 'to attend not only to the needs of the living, but also to those of the dead [in Cambodia]' (Keyes, 1994: 68). Choeung Ek's dead, Chea Sophara indicates, are still unable to escape concerns of liberation by an external force. In 1999, however, it was not an incoming Vietnamese army, but the economic 'liberation' granted by Cambodia's recent ASEAN membership, that was to comfort their souls.

Almost one year later, on March 19 2000, members of a UN delegation performed a short ceremony at the Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa. The group, led by the UN Undersecretary General for Legal Affairs, Hans Corell, was visiting Cambodia as part of the on-going
negotiations around a possible trial of former Khmer Rouge with international assistance.

Taking time out from the negotiations, Hans Corell and other members of the delegation laid a wreath of yellow flowers on the steps of the Memorial — the wreath’s sash simply read, in English: ‘Mr Hans Corell, Head of The United Nations Delegation, in Memory’. The inevitable response must be: in memory of whom or what? Questions from accompanying journalists reminded Corell that long-term economic and political assistance was lent to the Khmer Rouge by the UN and other international groups during the post-1979 period. Corell deflected this criticism of the past actions of the UN by invoking a state of personal responsibility: ‘We can, of course, all ask ourselves where we were when all this happened’, was his somewhat amnesiac response. In public visitations such as Corell’s, Choeung Ek is represented as a place that illuminates universal humanitarian concerns. Simultaneously, and seemingly paradoxically, the site is also taken to symbolise a specific (that is to say, local) and unthinking — or ‘uncivilised’ and even ‘unspeakable’ — horror. It is this doubled construction, a sort of moral polarisation, that at once exoticises, racialises and universalises the memorial sites and, by extension, Cambodia’s past. This construction is replicated in many non-Cambodian representations of Cambodia’s memorial sites and Cambodia in general: media reports, films and documentaries, humanitarian and tourism literatures and travel narratives.

4.5.2 Changes to the local memorials

Many local memorials have been rebuilt since the early 1980s. Generally communities nearby have provided the impetus, labour and funding for such projects. Other memorial reconstructions have enjoyed explicit party-political support. One such new memorial is found near Lake Bati, at Trapeang Sva in Kandal province, a few hours south of Phnom Penh.
Before 1999 the memorial at Trapeang Sva was made up of a large collection of human remains shelved inside a derelict building (a former teacher’s college turned Khmer Rouge prison). The new memorial, located close to the old memorial site, is a small, pale blue concrete stupa (see Figure 10). The new stupa houses part of the collection of remains from the previous memorial. Adjacent to the stupa is a large rectangular concrete signboard listing, in Khmer script, the names of donors and the inauguration date of the memorial — July 2, 1999. According to the signboard, the major funding for the new stupa came from the local temples, the CPP of Kandal province and a number of individual donors — including prominent CPP political and military figures and their wives.

Reconstructed local memorials are supported by individuals who seek to make merit by their assistance. These are individuals who believe that the sites should be maintained for the education of others and out of respect to the dead. Tourism, both domestic and international, has also had an effect on the upkeep of some local memorials. Commonly, communities are able to gain donations from visitors to the site or the area and thereby upgrade local memorials. A small stupa memorial on the outskirts of Siem Reap city (see Figure 11), also repaired in 1999, is flanked by a concrete signboard in English. The signboard (see Figure 12) informs visitors that the aim of the wat in building the stupa is 'to honor these innocent people' and indict 'the savage Pol Pot regime' as responsible for the deaths of the local victims whose remains are visible inside the stupa. A collection box nearby allows the tourists who visit the site to leave a donation.

Other local memorials built during the early 1980s appear now in a state of disrepair. In most cases, exposure to natural elements has resulted in the deterioration of the built structure and
Figure 10: Local-level memorial at Trapeang Sva, Kandal province, photographed in 2000.
Figure 11: Local-level memorial at Wat Adthekaram-Thmei, Siem Reap, photographed in 2000.
Figure 12: Signboard adjacent to local-level memorial at Wat Adrhekaram-Thrnei, Siem Reap, photographed in 2000.
the physical remains contained within. Roaming cattle often cause additional disturbance to the memorials and the further disappearance of remains. The economic and labour costs of maintaining these sites are often luxuries that poorer communities simply cannot, or choose not, to afford. In other places, local memorials displaying human remains may have been unpopular ventures from the outset; they may have been considered unhelpful or offensive as local sites, and as a result, left largely unattended.

In an address to a public rally in the provincial capital of Kampong Chhnang on April 25, 2001, Hun Sen indicated his willingness to hold a national referendum on the issue of cremation of the remains held in memorials throughout the country. In this statement, he maintained that such a referendum could only occur after the proposed trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders was complete, given the possible role of the remains as evidence before the court. The return to a discourse of evidence directly echoes the justifications of the PRK government some two decades ago. Hun Sen’s comments indicate the CPP’s ongoing consideration of the memorials as capable of encouraging gratitude and consolidating political loyalty for the CPP as the party of ‘justice and liberation’.

4.5.3 Neak Ti

However, before concluding that the unrenovated local sites are neglected or unimportant, it may be necessary to consider the topographical sites of another belief-system of Cambodia —
that of the neak ta spirits. In Khmer cosmology, powerful neak ta or guardian spirits reside in
the landscape. The neak ta:

is the most omnipresent figure of the divinities which populate the supernatural world
of the Cambodian countryside... the neak ta is not just a kind of simple spirit but rather a
phenomenon or energy force relating to a specific group such as a village community

(Ang Choulean, 2000).

Scholar of Khmer culture, Ang Choulean, notes that shrines or ‘huts’ to the neak ta are
denoted by small collections of natural and human-made objects, representative of land (soil,
nature) and spirit (mythic ancestor, being) elements. There is great variation in the size,
location and assembled objects (usually offerings brought by local people) that make up a neak
ta place. At these sites, Choulean notes, the deterioration of the human-made or human-form
objects within the overall morphology is quite acceptable. The principle of land within the
land-spirit nexus comes to dominate when, for example, wooden carvings rot,
anthropomorphic stone weathers out of shape or when animals disturb or home-build in the
auspicious microcosm. When such changes occur they serve to confirm the dynamic and
fecund presence of the neak ta. Given that some genocide memorial sites are also neak ta sites
(or occur near to them)\(^{\text{a}}\), it is possible that there has been a transference to the local
memorials of cultural understanding and practice that was once proper to neak ta worship. In
light of this possibility, it is insufficient to assume that the physical deterioration of a genocide

\(^{\text{a}}\) Neak ta are generally understood to belong to an ‘outside realm’ because their power is not
constrained by the moral injunctions of the Buddha; they are traditionally associated with forested
areas (prei) as opposed to the realm under a king (rok) (Keyes, 1994: 44).

\(^{\text{b}}\) Ang Choulean (2000) depicts a collapsed stupa in his visual images of neak ta sites, with the caption
'A ruined stupa, deliberately not restored, similar to the stone without specific shape and the termite
hill...'.

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memorial indicates that the local population pay no attention, or attribute no importance, to the site⁷.

4.6 Conclusion

While there are definite plans to further curate the national-scale Choeung Ek Center, especially with regard to increasing international tourism to the site (pers. comm., Noun Someth, 2000), the future of many local genocide memorials is less certain. Citizens of other nations — once petitioned in absentia by forensic practices, the maintenance of remains and commemorations at the Choeung Ek site — now visit the memorial as tourists or diplomatic figures. In the geopolitical present, Cambodia’s genocide is publicly and internationally acknowledged by such visits, at the same time as memorials provide the ground on which such diplomatic figures may invoke memory as a legitimating discourse in their prescription of certain legal processes as necessary for the Cambodian state (see Fawthrop and Jarvis, 2004). Thus, the orchestration of Cambodian memorials can be characterised as a competing set of determinations advanced by Cambodian party-politics, Khmer Buddhist beliefs about death, and local and transnational notions of justice, education and memory. To not seek out the complex fit of these various determinations is to risk participating in a denial of their political and dynamic nature.

⁷ Further research is necessary to substantiate this hypothesis. However, the new memorial at Trapeang Sva is an example of a local genocide memorial being rebuilt close to a neak ta site. The presence of the neak ta is marked by shrine under a low, gnarled tree a few meters from the new stupa structure.
CHAPTER 5: Exhibiting bones and faces: fleshing out a collective memory

5.1 Introduction

This chapter interrogates a second memorial site of the mass political violence of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. The site of the most significant Khmer Rouge secret police facility, located in Phnom Penh, is now the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes. The Museum is a place of national traumatic history that has also been taken up in significant international political discourses, and film and tourism literature representations of Cambodia. To discuss Tuol Sleng Museum, it is necessary to examine the local and international discourses that have conspired to produce the symbolic spaces and memorial declarations of a post-genocide nationalism in contemporary Cambodia.

I begin with a discussion of the national, regional and international politics brought to bear upon the museum during the People’s Republic of Kampuchea period (1979-1989). I trace the politics of memory in the People’s Republic of Kampuchea through to recent years by examining two contentious sections of the Museum’s display. The first of these sections involves photographs of the victims of the genocidal regime — images that have become centrepieces of international representations of modern Cambodia. The second section is built around human remains which are arranged in the shape of a ‘map’ of Cambodia. Public declarations by Cambodia’s King Sihanouk and by prominent government figures have long contested the religious, political and curated role of these remains.
Tuol Sleng Museum is a renovation of the 'S-21' Khmer Rouge secret police facility — the largest interrogation centre of Democratic Kampuchea. Strictly speaking S-21 was an interrogation and torture facility rather than a prison; although people were confined and punished there, no one was ever released (Chandler, 1999: 15). Tuol Sleng Museum retains a strangely quotidien, unmonumental appearance. This appearance is a legacy of its origin as an inner-city high school of 1960s Cambodia. The Museum, as a collection of curated objects and spaces, opened to the general public in July 1980. Despite its unremarkable appearance, Tuol Sleng Museum is a highly significant national monument which seeks to educate visitors about the period 1975-1979 and to honour the near-to-two million victims of Cambodia's genocide, especially those 14,000 victims who passed through S-21. The Museum’s official brochure states that the victims of S-21:

were taken from all parts of the country and from all walks of life. They were of different nationalities, but the vast majority were Cambodians (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum [Visitor Brochure], 1999: 3).

'Tuol Sleng Museum seeks to preserve the artefacts and extensive secret police files of S-21 'for future Cambodian generations' (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Brochure, 1999: 6). As symbolic of the traumatic past at the (urban) centre of the modern nation, the Museum seeks both individual, inter-generational and national renewals. However, as I will detail, the Museum envisaged in 1979 by the PRK government was already vexed by political and popular demands within Cambodia and other nations.

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48 The 'S' stood for sala, or hall, while '21' was the number assigned to tantebal, Democratic Kampuchea’s security police, or special branch. See (Chandler, 1999: 3).
5.2 The politics of national and international legitimacy

Throughout the PRK period Ministerial conferences were convened at the Museum, and schoolchildren and army cadres were regularly chaperoned through the Museum's halls (Lundi, 2000). Many such visits and conferences coincided with May 20 observances (discussed in Chapter 4). After 1984, these solemn gatherings were centred around a small stupa erected in the north quadrangle of the Museum. Buddhist rites and political oration were fused into a single ceremony involving song, speech, prayer and offerings. Survivors like Ung Pech, the Museum's first Director, and painter Vann Nath⁴⁹ played a key role in such events through their re-telling of personal experiences of incarceration in S-21.

Tuol Sleng Museum draws primarily on visual material (without explanatory text) to foreground the calculated violence of S-21. Distributed between the Museum's four main buildings are thousands of photographic portraits of prisoners⁵⁰ produced by the S-21 authority in the course of the facility's meticulous self-documentation (see below). Also displayed are torture implements used at S-21. By way of secondary sources the Museum displays S-21 survivor Vann Nath's paintings of incarceration, torture and execution at S-21.

⁴⁹ The irony of the participation of S-21 survivors in public memory as staged through various artistic mediums and activities is that it recalls the type of work that afforded their survival, literally, in the first place. This small group of S-21 prisoners was required to sculpt busts and paint portraits of Pol Pot. Towards the end of 1978, they were entrusted with a task of monumental proportions. They were to construct 'an eight-meter-tall concrete statue of Pol Pot standing with farmers carrying flags and such' — intended to show the history of class struggle. The monument was never completed. At the request of the new government in November 1979 Vann Nath agreed to contribute a number of oil paintings to the Museum. See (Vann Nath, 1998: 82). These painted works are displayed in Buildings B and D.

⁵⁰ While I have noted that S-21 was not technically a prison, I do use the term 'prisoner' — in line with Chandler and others — to refer to individuals detained, tortured or killed at S-21.
alongside wall-mounted, hand-painted maps of Cambodia. One map represents the
demographic scale of forced urban-rural migration under Democratic Kampuchea. Another
map details Democratic Kampuchea's 'acts of aggression' toward Vietnam on the Democratic
Kampuchea-Vietnam border during 1975-1978. Also shown are photographs of exhumed
remains in various locations (most numerous are those of the 'killing field' of Choeung Ek,
which serviced S-21) and other images of the general desecration inherited by post-1979
Cambodia. The largest single exhibit of the Museum is a wall arrangement of skulls in the
shape of the Cambodian territory, with rivers and lakes painted in 'blood' red. Numbers of
persons killed under Democratic Kampuchea, tallied by province, are posted on an adjacent
wall. The 'map of skulls', located in the eastern end of Building D — is the final section of the
exhibition for visitors who perform a clockwise circumambulation of the Museum (through
Buildings A, B, C and D) — as encouraged by Museum signs and staff. Issues pertaining
specifically to the 'map of skulls' exhibit are addressed below.

The map which depicts the location and escalation of Democratic Kampuchea's 'acts of
aggression' toward Vietnam is one of the most important and polemic of all the displays in the
Museum. This map presents Vietnam's invasion of Democratic Kampuchea as an act of self-
defence by Vietnam. The Museum's photographs and artifacts recount the horrors of S-21
(and, by extension, of Democratic Kampuchea) so forcefully that Vietnam's incursion appears
as a humanitarian intervention, providing the salvation of the Cambodian people from
further suffering under Pol Pot. According to the Museum, liberation of Cambodia was
enacted by a regional ally. Legitimacy was thus afforded to the government of the PRK, which
in turn retained Vietnamese (and Soviet-bloc) aid and advisors throughout the following
decade.
William Shawcross attests to the shock experienced by foreign correspondents in Cambodia in spring and summer of 1979. At this time, reports from Tuol Sleng prison in particular, as well as photographs of collections of human remains and mass graves elsewhere in the country, 'had an enormous impact as they flashed around the world.' (Shawcross, 1985: 45). Having successfully initiated the development of S-21, the governing apparatus of the PRK drew widely on museum spaces as zones of ‘evidence’ and authoritative explanation, capable of fostering both popular national unity and international sympathy and assistance.51 Long after the first wave of foreign media and local visitors (discussed further in Chapter 6), Tuol Sleng Museum continued to seek national and international audiences. While the United Nations continued to support the exiled Khmer Rouge as the legitimate governing body of Cambodia over the PRK government in Phnom Penh, foreign diplomats, journalists and working visitors to Phnom Penh were escorted on compulsory visits to Tuol Sleng Museum and the Choeung Ek ‘killing field’. In such moments of global exposure, the S-21 site came to function as the archetype of prison and killing sites reported throughout the country. Printed texts for foreign consumption and radio broadcasts of the PRK state made careful mention of the horrors of S-21. These publications explicitly narrated a rekindling of Vietnamese and Cambodian solidarity against the China-backed Khmer Rouge. One such text declares:

At least two million and perhaps three out of Kampuchea's seven million people died.
Kampuchea was drained of blood. The cities and villages were utterly devastated ...Such was the Pol Pot – Ieng Sary regime, installed with the aid of Chinese advisers and

51 Also a priority for the new government was the National Museum of Khmer Arts and Culture, which re-opened three months after liberation on 13 April, 1979 (Peters, 1995: 52).
Chinese weapons. As a tool of Peking policy, Kampuchea got involved in an atrocious war against Vietnam (Pol Pot's Legacies, 1979).

The text — written in English, French and Spanish — also features images of the battered bodies of the last victims found in S-21 ‘when revolutionary forces arrived’. But the motivations of Vietnam’s incursion into Cambodia in 1978, and the value of the resulting changes wrought in Cambodia’s reemergence as the People’s Republic of Kampuchea, remain grounds for bitter contention, dividing Cambodian commentators and political parties to the present day.

This contention has generated a range of accusations directed at Tuol Sleng Museum. Andreas Huyssen suggests that ‘a modern society’s memory is shaped by such public sites as the museum and, thus employed, museums are spaces in which the social and symbolic order is produced and affirmed’ (Huyssen, 1995: 15). Western administrations’ scepticism about Tuol Sleng’s narrative in the post-genocide period was fuelled by the assumption that Vietnam’s invasion of Democratic Kampuchea was the first in a series of imperialist annexations which Vietnam was planning for the Indochina region. Such sentiments were, unsurprisingly, echoed by remnant Khmer Rouge as they profited from the support of the US, China and ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) on the Thai-Cambodia border. The Tuol Sleng site, seen as ‘Vietnamese trickery’, furthered the Khmer Rouge contention that Democratic Kampuchea had been illegally invaded by Vietnam. Extreme versions of this story accused Vietnamese curators of bringing human remains from Vietnam.

52 The use of these three languages suggests that the publication was destined for English-, French- and Spanish-speaking nations, or was to be read by international visitors to Cambodia and, possibly, Vietnam.
to display at the Museum. The Vietnamese were held to have entirely fabricated S-21 and exaggerated the extent of the killings. In a 1997 interview with Nate Thayer shortly before his death, Pol Pot himself dismissed Tuol Sleng Museum as simply 'a Vietnamese exhibition'. He added: ‘People talk about Tuol Sleng, Tuol Sleng, Tuol Sleng... When I first heard about Tuol Sleng it was on the Voice of America [radio]. I listened twice’ (quoted in Chandler, 1999: 8).

5.3 Internationalised memory? The application of Holocaust discourses

One of the most notable aspects of the Vietnamese-inflected memorialisation of Cambodia's genocide sites was the deployment of an internationally recognised discourse of genocide — consistently aligning Cambodia's genocide with the European Holocaust of the Second World War. Shawcross traces this phenomenon to 1978, when, following border disputes, Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese officials engaged in 'public warfare and violent recrimination'.

Vietnam and its allies in the Soviet bloc now directed their own considerable propaganda resources towards blackening of the reputation of the Khmer Rouge. Vietnamese propaganda began what was to be a long campaign to equate Pol Pot with Hitler (Shawcross, 1985: 64).

There can be no doubt that such comparisons sought purchase within international political and humanitarian forums. While official representations of 1975-1979 as the 'Cambodian Holocaust' persist in Cambodia to the present day, issues of the political genealogy, i.e. the communist basis and Maoist influences of Khmer Rouge ideology, are elided. Instead, Democratic Kampuchea is represented in two (seemingly incompatible) ways. First, that the genocide was an aberration of humanity, unimaginable in any experiential sense and in its true effects. Alternatively, the genocide is traced to the obscene misdeeds and malevolent temperaments of the top Khmer Rouge leaders. In fact, these two explanations — the
'inexplicable aberration' and 'a few bad men' theses — are mutually supportive. That the few bad men had their orders carried out clearly indicates that an aberration had indeed gripped the populace, while the unimaginable consequences of the aberration are neatly localised as having originated in the specific psychologies of the kbal main (literally the 'leading apparatus'). The complexity of the political, military and socio-cultural circumstances which fostered the Khmer Rouge, the unique concatenation of ideological, isolationist and nationalist desires pursued by an educated party centre, and the various horrific acts carried out by the middle-hierarchy under the threat of their own death, are not part of the past memorialised by the new Cambodian state.

But external commentators, in their shock at what was revealed to them in 1979, also drew premature comparisons. John Pilger's report for the British Daily Mirror in September 1979 was among the first to expose (to a mass Western audience) Pol Pot's Kampuchea (Pilger cited in Shawcross, 1985: 139-141). As Shawcross notes, Pilger described the political and intellectual basis of the Khmer Rouge as 'anarchist' rather than communist, and on a centre spread depicting Tuol Sleng and a killing field, his account invoked the spectre of fascism with the words: 'Murder, Nazi style'. Tuol Sleng prison, Pilger wrote, 'might have been copied from the original [Auschwitz]'. Evans and Rowley recall that Pilger was later criticised for being simplistic and sensationalist and that Shawcross made a specific objection to Pilger's denunciation of Pol Pot as 'an Asian Hitler' (Evans and Rowley, 1990: 155). However, Evans

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53 This is Chandler's translation. He states: 'the collective leadership of Democratic Kampuchea [was] known as the Upper Organisation (angkar loeu), the Organisation (angkar), or the "upper brothers" (bong khang loeu) to outsiders and as the Party Center (mochhim pak) or leading apparatus (kbal main) to members of the Communist Party of Kampuchea [the party of Democratic Kampuchea]'. See (Chandler, 1999: 15).
and Rowley also comment that: 'The images of starvation and suffering Pilger presented to television audiences may have been overdrawn. But they did much to alert the western public to a disaster that was indisputably real'. They continue by arguing that Pilger 'had also compared Pol Pot's rule to Stalin's rule of terror and Mao's Cultural Revolution' and, moreover, pointed to the fact that 'Shawcross had no objections to those who compared the Vietnamese with the Nazis' (Evans and Rowley, 1990: 155, my emphasis).

Although the new wording of the Tuol Sleng Museum visitor brochure makes no comparison between Democratic Kampuchea and other states of mass political violence, the connection is still drawn on the English-language signboards at Choeung Ek:

the most tragic thing is that: — even in this 20th century, on Kampuchean soil, the clique of Pol Pot criminals had committed a heinous genocidal act, they massacred the population with atrocity in a large scale, it was more cruel than the genocidal act committed by the Hitler fascists, which the world has never met [sic].

Courtesy of the fraternal relationship between the PRK and East Germany, curators from Tuol Sleng did visit European Holocaust museum and memorial sites. Exactly which European sites were visited, when and by whom, remains unclear. On this question, Judy Ledgerwood draws on an interview conducted by Sara Colm with Mai Lam, a Vietnamese curator who provided significant expertise to Tuol Sleng Museum. Ledgerwood notes that Mai Lam 'traveled to Germany, Russia, France and Czechoslovakia to research other museums' and also notes 'help from specialists in East Germany where 'death camps were memorialised as monuments to socialism and Soviet liberation' (Ledgerwood, 1997: 89).

Serge Thion suggests that Vietnamese working at Tuol Sleng Museum in 1979 'had been trained in Poland' and that an effort had been made to 'attract part of the sinister character of Auschwitz' to Tuol Sleng (Thion, 1993: 181-2). The current Director of the Museum, Chey
Sophera, reports that he visited East Germany with the then Director Ung Pech by official invitation in 1982 (pers. comm. Sophera, 2000). In Ledgerwood’s view, what is at issue in this controversy is not the degree, nature or route of East German or Vietnamese curatorial influence, but the fact that many Khmer regard the Museum as inauthentic because of these external influences (Ledgerwood, 1997: 89).

The ‘Tuol Sleng = Cambodian Auschwitz’ and ‘Pol Pot = Asian Hitler’ equations, and their continuing and often confused reformulation in mass media and popular discourses, demonstrate the multiple, internationalised, ideological investments in representations of Cambodia’s recent past.

5.4 The improper place of objects

5.4.1 A memory for faces: the prisoner portrait photographs

The Museum’s Building B displays thousands of photographic portraits of individuals incarcerated at S-21. The portraits were taken by Khmer Rouge cadres assigned to the prison’s photography sub-unit. The photographs were proof of each prisoner’s entry into S-21. The cadres in S-21’s photography sub-unit were also responsible for photographing those prisoners who died during incarceration and important prisoners after they had been killed (Chandler, 1999: 27). Prisoner portraits were proof of extermination, as death was the only possible ‘exit’ for individuals from the institution. Photography thus also confirmed the efficacy of the institution; through photography the regime enjoyed total recall, a memory for faces. Photo prints and negatives were part of the extensive documentation discovered at S-21 in January 1979 (Chandler, 1999: 3). The prisoner ‘mug-shot’ photographs now occupy the entire ground floor of Building B — exhibited in banks of hundreds of faces. Some portraits
of well-known individuals of pre-1975 Cambodia have been enlarged and hung individually, other portraits are grouped in 'family' series to illustrate the commitment of the Khmer Rouge to the total liquidation of the bourgeoisie, including their potentially vengeful progeny.

The prisoner portrait photographs have long been a focus for Cambodian and non-Cambodian engagement with the Museum. Visitor and curatorial interest in the photographs has resulted in the photos being dislocated both physically and semiotically from the physical and representational confines of Tuol Sleng Museum. They are now promoted in multiple international domains and, in this sense, operate as undisciplined envoys of the Museum. Particularly in non-Cambodian contexts, the images are a synecdoche for all victims of Pol Pot. For Khmer survivors, the great majority of whom knew only rural life and death under Khmer Rouge cadre, the portraits signify a familiar brutality in an unfamiliar setting of urban, highly institutionalised incarceration.

An East German film group assisted in the initial printing from negatives for display at Tuol Sleng. The resulting prisoner portrait photographs and other images of S-21 appeared in early films produced by the PRK government for domestic consumption, such as Kampuchea: 3 + 4. Further cleaning, archiving and printing from negatives took place in 1994 and 1995 with assistance from the Photo Archive Group, a non-governmental organization set up by

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54 See (Chandler, 1999: 27); see also Department of Ancient Temples Conservation, Museums and Tourism Report, 1980. The East German film group — of Heynowski and Scheumann Studios, East Germany’s only private documentary film company — first visited the S-21 site in 1979. The three films on Cambodia made by Heynowski and Scheumann Studios were: The Angkar, Jungle War and Kampuchea: Death and Rebirth. See (Maguire, 2005: 93-98). The 1980 Report also states that other negatives were to be taken to be printed in Vietnam.
American photojournalists Douglas Niven and Chris Riley (as discussed in Chapter 7). In 1996, Niven and Riley facilitated the publication of a selection of the S-21 prisoner portraits in a photographic book titled *The Killing Fields*. Innumerable news reports, documentaries and films about Cambodia have featured the Museum's prisoner portraits display. Through these and other media — including local and international tourism literatures — the prisoner portrait photographs have attained wide exposure.

Many Khmer, particularly in the first two years of the Museum’s operation, came to view the photos in their search for missing relatives (Ledgerwood, 1997: 90). During this period, a number of individual photographs in the prisoner portrait display were recognised by visitors. When recognised, relatives or friends wrote the name of the individual on the displayed photograph in an act of personal and public remembrance. To name and thereby individuate one of the anonymous mass of S-21 victims was also to symbolically reject the inhumane treatment perpetrated *en masse* by the S-21 authorities. But such permanent, public memorial inscriptions were not unproblematic. The practice of inscribing the photographs with names was subsequently disallowed by the Museum, and a sign to this effect remains in place in Building B (see Figure 13). For the Museum, the photographs are evidential materials that ought not to be tampered with. Once ‘damaged’ they are expensive or impossible to replace (they must be reprinted from the negative, where it exists). The current Museum Director’s alternative course of action is to offer family or friends a copy of a recognised individual’s photograph (pers. comm. Sophera, 2000). What this circumvents is the permanent, public

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55 Many of the images contained in this publication, and others displayed only at Tuol Sleng Museum, were also included in a CD-ROM collection of the Cambodian Genocide Project (CGP) of Yale University. The collection is now accessible via the internet website of the CGP.
Figure 13: Sign prohibiting the addition of names to portrait photographs in Tuol Sleng, photographed in 2000.
recognition of a victim as a named individual. Also implicit in the alternative offered is an official determination that the proper place of memorialisation and mourning for an individual victim is the private, non-institutional space of the home — not the Museum. The most obvious explanation for the prohibition on naming 'ordinary' victims is that the setting apart of singular, named victims threatens the narrative emphasis of the Museum's display: one of collective suffering engendering popular resolve and resistance, bringing prosperity for all in a new revolutionary (territorial) whole. This whole was, naturally, only that whole which was supported, arbitrated and authorised by the state.

To name a prisoner portrait was also problematic in light of the fact that the majority of S-21 victims were themselves Khmer Rouge cadres, suspected of traitorous activities or tendencies. That is, to identify an individual in the Museum's display also identified that individual as having been Khmer Rouge. A noteworthy ellipsis within the larger political imperative to demonise the Khmer Rouge made such an identification of victims possible. This was the official, positive recognition of a small number of high-profile individuals purged at S-21 for their opposition, or perceived diversion from, policies or ideologies adhered to by Democratic Kampuchea's Party Central. At Tuol Sleng, this group emerged as martyrs of the true revolutionary state — the (future) PRK. This subtle canonisation centred on Hu Nim, former Minister of Information and Propaganda of Democratic Kampuchea. Hu Nim, a dedicated leader whose revolutionary life was well known to his comrades, was arrested in April 1977 and executed three months later (Chandler, 1999: 64). For many years the Museum has singled out one of the bricked-in cells of Building C as having been the cell where Hu Nim was imprisoned. Hu Nim's confessions and cell are pictured in each of five
versions of the Museum’s visitor brochure used between 1980 and 1999. Photographs of Hu Nim remain on display in Building D, as do images of two of his associates also purged at S-21: Koy Thoun and Hou Youn. The names of these three men, their office in Democratic Kampuchea, and confirmation of their execution, appear on a list of the ‘upper brothers’ which includes the names of those who remained powerful at their expense: Pol Pot, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan. Within this context, relatives of victims pictured at Tuol Sleng were able to approach the Museum authorities as if their loved ones had also been sacrificed for their fidelity to the future state.

Named or unnamed, the prisoner portrait photographs persist as macabre souvenirs of the efficiency of S-21. The standard composition of the images blurs different faces, ages and expressions, in turn forcing a consideration of the magnitude of the killing carried out by S-21. The isolation of each individual in the stark environs of the photograph invokes a sense of the collapse of community or society under the force of pure, reactionary governmentality. Roland Barthes explicates a general situation where photographs whose meanings are too ‘impressive’ — too affective or disturbing — are quickly deflected, resulting in a situation of aesthetic rather than political consumption (Barthes, 1993: 36). In my own experience, non-Cambodian visitors to the Museum regularly comment on the aesthetic attributes of the photographs — their clarity or size, their obvious physical deterioration as exhibited objects. Such comments often come as prefaceing or concluding remarks to those expressing their own

56 In the most recent version of the museum visitor brochure (1999) the reference to Hu Nim has been omitted.
57 Veteran documentary film maker Gerhard Scheumann, who led the East German film crew into Cambodia in 1979, was reportedly ‘most impressed [by] the high technical quality of the [original] photographic work [of the S-21 portraits]’, see Maguire (2005).
reaction to the emotion, or lack of emotion, 'there in the faces'.\(^58\) An understanding of photography as 'an art of non-intervention' whereby 'the person who intervenes cannot record [and] the person who is recording cannot intervene' is fiercely intimated in this area of the Museum (Sontag, 1973: 11-12). The political import of the situation is clarified in thoughts of one's own inability to intervene on behalf of the victims, and of the photographer's non-intervention in the horror despite the emotion shown in the faces before him.

The portraits concentrate the intensity of what (now) has passed and of what (then) was about to become. Barthes relates a cognate response to a photograph taken in 1865 of a young man waiting in a cell to be hanged for an assassination attempt. Barthes is shocked by what he terms:

> the lacerating emphasis of the \textit{ruine} (\textit{that-has-been}): The photograph is handsome, as is the boy; that is the \textit{stadium}. But the \textit{punctum} is: \textit{he is going to die}. I read at the same time: \textit{This will be and this has been}; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. ...I shudder \textit{...over a catastrophe which has already occurred} (Barthes, 1993: 95-96).\(^59\)

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\(^58\) Most often visitors reported that they had been moved by one or many of the various emotions 'evident' on the faces of the prisoners, nominated as: fear, courage, defiance, confusion, anger, distraction. Others insisted their own sadness and confusion arose as a result of what they perceived to be the passivity and 'unknowingness' of those pictured. Overall, the non-Cambodian visitor population overwhelmingly named the prisoner portrait photographs in Building B as the space in which they spent most time during their visit.

\(^59\) Barthes defines the 'field of cultural interest' of the photograph as its \textit{stadium}. The 'unexpected flash' which breaks or punctuates the photograph's \textit{stadium} is the \textit{punctum} of the photograph. However, in the 1865 photograph, Barthes identifies a \textit{punctum} 'which is no longer of form but of intensity, [it] is \textit{Time}', p. 96.
The S-21 photographs similarly gesture to an anterior space in which surveillance, interrogation and torture are the stake. A recognition of the modernity of S-21 as a horrific amalgam of repressive ideologies and techniques of physical and psychological violence toward victims is inescapable. Paradoxically, S-21 appears more modern as a prison than Tuol Sleng does as a Museum; the latter is beholden to the former for its ‘best’ exhibited images, for example. The portrait photographs may at first glance be confused with objects produced after 1979 as part of the curatorial project of the Museum (the Museum contains many photographic images taken after 1979, and photographs generally appear without a date or source). In this confusion, the Museum and the prison seem to coexist — with unsettling effects. Historian James F. Young has observed a similar operation in the work of contemporary German artist Jochan Gerz. Examining the Dachau Museum as it appears refracted through an installation by Gerz, Young sees:

the uncanny resemblance between the language of ‘administering memory’ at the Dachau museum and the language that once administered the concentration camp itself.

It was as if the Nazi’s efforts to control the lives of the former inmates had become both the latent content and the method of the museum’s exhibition of the past (Young, 2000: 124).

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10 On the question of the genealogy of S-21, Chandler writes: ‘Comparisons have frequently been made between S-21 and the Nazi extermination camps. ... Writers who have examined the Nazi camps illuminate the culture of obedience that suffuses total institutions and the numbing dehumanisation that occurs, among perpetrators and victims alike, within their walls. [T]he Nazis, like the Cambodians, coupled [indifference] ... with the pleasure they derived from causing pain. The same callousness toward “guilty people” and similar bursts of sadism characterised, among others, the judges in the Moscow show trials in the 1930s, the perpetrators of the massacres in Indonesia in 1965 and 1966, the military torturers in Argentina, and those who organised the mass killings in Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s’ (Chandler, 1999: 143-4).
Young interprets Gerz as suggesting 'that what we finally 'learn' from such museums may be less about history than how to comport ourselves in its vicinity'. In order to break the unhappy confusion of the experience of the museum with the history we've come to remember, we should take care never to 'mistake one for the other, even as we cannot know one outside of the other' (Young, 2000: 124). In the interstices of the Museum populated by such uncanny objects, histories and effects, questions arise for the visitor and theorist alike. What are the limits of the museum as a space of empathy? How is it that the museum and the death camp may casually share artifacts? What of the contradiction of a museum's bureaucracy and archive being put to work to further visitors' understanding of a place when these same phenomena are central to the violence and terror of the past now represented?

5.4.2 Map of skulls: the King (and the) remains

In 1994, Cambodia's King Sihanouk requested that the government cremate the remains contained in the Museum's 'map of skulls' exhibit (see Figure 14). The King's main rationale was that such a ceremony would honour the dead and allow their spirits to be re-born — following the beliefs of Khmer Buddhism. The King offered ten thousand dollars (US) for the cremation ceremony, and another ten thousand dollars to build a memorial stupa for the cremated remains. Importantly, the cremated remains were not to be retained on-site at the Museum, but were instead destined for nearby Wat (Temple) Botum. Sihanouk suggested that, after the ceremony had been completed, 'the role of the skeletons would be to bring our country to peace' (Sihanouk cited in Peters, 1995: 61). The King's request invites an analysis of the relationship between the Museum, the dominant political party, the monarchy and Buddhism in contemporary Cambodia.
Figure 14: Monks bless the 'map of skulls' exhibit at Tuol Sleng during prachum ben observances, 1999.
In 1991, Sihanouk returned to Cambodia after some thirteen years in exile. For many Cambodians, the expectation that normal life would soon return was symbolised by Sihanouk's homecoming (Heder and Ledgerwood, 1996: 12). Buddhist monks played critical ritual roles in many of the festivities staged for the Prince's return, and he himself resumed his royal role as supreme patron of the *sangha* (Keyes, 1994: 64). Sihanouk also resumed his position as head of state with the presidency of the Supreme National Council in 1991. In one of the final chapters of the UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia) period, Sihanouk promulgated the new Cambodian constitution on September 24, 1993 (See Heder and Ledgerwood. Eds, 1996: 266-7). Sihanouk was central to the political and symbolic life of the 'reconciled' nation.

Prior to his Tuol Sleng request, during treatment for cancer in Beijing, the King had pledged a large sum of money toward the continued construction of a significant new religious structure — Preah Cakyamoni Chedi — at Wat Phnom in central Phnom Penh. The construction of the Chedi was to provide for the re-housing of a much-revered relic of the Buddha. Following his pledge to Preah Cakyamoni Chedi, another communiqué was released by the King. This statement contained specific instructions as to the treatment of his own body on the occasion of his death. His funeral pyre was to be small and simple, with fresh flowers and natural timbers, and 'if possible, some sandalwood' (See *Agence Khmer de Presse*, 11 October 1994: 3). The King took the opportunity to forbid the government to invite foreign leaders to

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61 The *sangha*, or Buddhist order of monks, is seen as the exemplar, teacher, and embodiment of the *dhamma*, the message of the Buddha. See (Keyes, 1994: 44).

62 This relic — a 'bone of the Buddha' — was brought to Cambodia by a delegation of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks as an expression of Buddhist kinship on the occasion of the 2 500th anniversary of the Buddha's death in 1957 (see Channo, 1992: 8).
be present at any ceremonies of mourning as, he reasoned, 'our country is very poor and not equipped to receive [them]' (Agence Khmer de Press, 11 October 1994: 3). Interest in the success (or otherwise) of the King’s treatment in Beijing fuelled constant political speculation as to a successor to the Cambodian throne, implying that Sihanouk was close to death.

However the presumption of Sihanouk’s imminent death far from diminished his symbolic authority. Instead it reinforced a status already present in the traditional and persistent notion of Sihanouk as a mythic figure, a god-king.

Following his generous gesture towards a relic of Buddha, and the arrangement of his own funeral, one meritorious in its humility, Sihanouk’s next turn was to the question of the proper treatment of another set of remains, whose traces also provoked questions of national identity and sovereignty. In a third communication in as many months, the King requested the cremation of the Tuol Sleng remains. In doing so, the King sought to settle a number of ghosts. As Ledgerwood has argued:

The king was trying to lay to rest not just the souls of the dead, but the deep divisions between the coalition partners in the new royal government — those placed in power by Vietnamese ‘liberators’ and those who fought a ‘war of Liberation’ against Vietnamese ‘occupation’ (Ledgerwood, 1997: 95).

64 ‘The King requested only the Queen and several ‘very close’ and ‘very loyal’ people be present at his cremation, and that four Buddhist monks be ready to travel from Cambodia to Beijing or Pyongyang in the event of his death in either of these residencies. The statement also divulged that the King wished his final resting place to be the Silver Pagoda in the grounds of the Royal Palace.

64 The traditional Khmer King embodied a supreme religious being. His direct involvement in the agricultural, cultural, and spiritual life of the nation via his symbolic interventions (organised around particular lunar moments or festival periods), and through his exemplary personal behaviour, provided for prosperity and peace throughout the Kingdom. See (Keyes, 1994: 46).
It is unlikely that Sihanouk was wholly unaware of the volatility of his strategy. While simultaneously declaring an intention to avoid political activity on his return to Cambodia from Beijing, Sihanouk engaged the new coalition government in what has become a controversial, long-running and unavoidably politicised debate. At the time of the request, Tuol Sleng Museum remained, some fifteen years after its inception, the central symbolic site of the founding of the (modern) Cambodian nation, the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) and, officially, of the population’s gratitude to Vietnam and the CPP for their defeat of the Khmer Rouge. Sihanouk’s plea was bolstered by his own personal authority and the Khmer Buddhist dictate that, following death, cremation was the correct, indeed the *correcting*, practice.

The Royal Government agreed to the King’s request. Further, the government made public its intention to create film and photographic records of the ‘map of skulls’ in preparation for its destruction. Given the post-election climate of political cooperation instigated by UNTAC, and Sihanouk’s role at the apex of Khmer Buddhism, direct opposition by the CPP was politically unwise.65

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65 Prior to the Tuol Sleng request, Sihanouk had stated that, on returning to his ‘beloved country’, he would serve the little people of Cambodia [in] social, humanitarian, water policy, public health, national education [fields], and would not ‘engage in political activity with anyone’ (*Agence Khmer de Presse*, 3 December 1994: 8).

66 It is also important to note here that King’s request, and the government’s initial acceptance, speaks plainly of the almost universally recognised importance in contemporary Cambodian society of the role of the benevolent dead. Demands of ancestral responsibility, essentially to feed the hungry spirits, are keenly felt by Khmer. This is especially the case during the fifteen-day period of the Buddhist festival of *phchum ben* (the festival of the ancestors) which occurs in the period of *photrobot* (September/ October).
Then, in a complete reversal, the King announced he would drop his request. This change was purportedly 'in response to a plea from the Central Committee of the CPP [to] keep the bones as evidence of the genocidal regime' (Agence Khmer de Presse, 19 January 1995: 2). This refusal of Sihanouk's request was somewhat depoliticised by its apparent origin in the hearts and minds of Sihanouk's own 'little people'; the state press agency reported that most Cambodians did not agree with the planned cremation and sought the maintenance of 'the history of Pol Pot's genocide against the people'; opinion had been garnered by 'polls conducted in 16 provinces and cities throughout the country', the results of which demonstrated that '83.20 percent [were] against [the cremation]' (Agence Khmer de Presse, January 19, 1995: 2).

It remains of key importance that there was the supposition of a national disquiet in Sihanouk's original request — such that, in being cremated, 'the role of the skeletons would be to bring our country to peace' (cited in Peters, 1995: 61, my emphasis). In such a phrase, Sihanouk broadcast his own de facto recognition of Tuol Sleng Museum as a national monument. However the King's recognition of the remains as fused to determinations of future sovereignty and social stability was undermined by his insistence that these remains should be treated like any other — that is, subject to the formal religious requirement of cremation. Exhumed remains had everywhere been placed, uncremated, in local stupa and museums. These relics were unlike any other: they were designated as 'evidence' which indicted perpetrators and proclaimed the legitimacy and necessity of the new state.
Voices and interests both internal and external to Cambodia have repeatedly called for the cremation of the Tuol Sleng 'map of skulls'. Running counter to the dominant political sentiments of contemporary Cambodia, an expatriate Khmer publication contends:

In concentration camps or goulags [sic] of the world, there is not such a display of contempt towards the bones of the martyrs...It is necessary that UN and the great powers say openly if these bones of our martyrs are 'exhibits' for a possible court to trial the Khmer Rouge leaders (Khemara jati, April 17 2001).

In 2001, Prime Minister Hun Sen signalled one possible resolution by expressing his willingness to call a National Referendum on the issue. But Hun Sen cautioned that any future trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders must be concluded before such a Referendum, in case remains were needed as evidence before the court.67

The debate around the cremation of the remains currently displayed in memorials throughout Cambodia — and as to who might, or should, intervene on the issue — was thus a prolonged and complex one. In an unexpected final turn, however, the question of Tuol Sleng's displayed remains was brought to a conclusion. On March 10, 2002, the map of skulls was dismantled. The removal of the remains was accompanied by a ceremony in which Buddhist monks performed prayers and chanting. The Museum's Director, Chey Sophara, was reported as saying that the decay of the skulls had hastened their removal. Chey Sophara also stated that by removing the skulls the Museum would 'end the fear visitors have while

67 This caution is evinced in Section 4 of the Report of the United Nations Group of Experts for Cambodia, 1999. This report investigates of the scope and ramifications of a possible trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders with international assistance. The Report states: 'The physical evidence most relevant for any proceedings can be divided into three categories: human remains, structures and mechanical objects, and documents'.
visiting the Museum’. It seems curatorial devices once considered essential to an understanding of the true horror of Democratic Kampuchea are now committing improprieties in their very frightfulness, and are considered antithetical to the peace-time encouragement of tourism. It has not been reported where the cremation of the skulls will take place, nor where the cremated remains might be finally placed. The map of skulls is to be replaced by a large colour map of Cambodia, identifying the location of mass graves and prisons created by the Khmer Rouge. A large ‘photographic reproduction’ of the map of skulls will also be displayed. Past comments of the King supporting the skull’s cremation were reported in the press, but he appears not to have made any direct comments on the event *(Associated Press Report, 10 March 2002).*

In March 2002, a brief article on the removal of the ‘map of skulls’ appeared in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (*FEER, 21 March 2002: 12*). An accompanying colour photograph showed the original ‘map of skulls’. The article stated that officials feared the remains were frightening visitors to the museum. The photograph showed a figure of a man standing looking at the map. Little could be seen of the individual but the rear of his upper body, with his arms raised and hands clasped to his head. Although the *FEER* article noted that the human remains were a ‘grim reminder of the brutality of the Khmer Rouge regime’, no mention was made as to whose remains these were, or how long they had been on display. Both these representations, the ‘map of skulls’ display and the article about its demise, equate the Cambodian territory with brutality and death. More particularly, the article gestured to a brutality beyond the recognition of Cambodians themselves: in the article and the

68 Assistance in the creation of the new colour map will come from the Documentation Center of Cambodia.
accompanying photograph — in which it is a Western visitor who is recognising the remains and Cambodian officials are charged with acting in response to the fear of the visitor, not their own.

Although the map of skulls has been removed from Tuol Sleng Museum, ten 'new' skulls, and their attendant ghosts, are to be installed. These ten skulls will comprise a new 'forensic' exhibit (an exhibit of physical trauma, with explanatory text, a showcase of various 'cause of death'). The new exhibit, however, makes explicit provision for the ghosts of these ten individuals. Though encased in plastic chambers, they have been placed on wooden plinths, wood being a material that it is believed ghosts can pass through, plastic not — recognising that, though locally peripatetic, the ghosts must remain near the bones.

5.5 Conclusion

The practice of naming of victim portraits, the rhetorical and material 'referencing' of European Holocaust memory, and the removal and reinstallment of human remains at Tuol Sleng are three key instances of curatorial practice that have been contested by various groups within Cambodian society. These groups — including Cambodians who visited in the first years of Tuol Sleng's operation, the Cambodian political activists represented by the publication Khemara Jati, and even the broad coalition of Cambodians who support the work of DC-Cam in the current period — have held, or still hold, significant misgivings about the museum. For different reasons, they see the museum as failing, or perhaps even preventing, correct cultural and religious practice, and thus social renewal.
Tuol Sleng Museum initially attempted to portray extreme circumstances and events, at the same time as it serviced local political and also geopolitical demands by gesturing to the mass political violence of the European Holocaust. Specific discourses of memory are promoted within the museum's exhibition. Most notably the museum sought to have the victimhood of those killed in S-21 stand in for the suffering of all Cambodians under Pol Pot. As well, the museum aimed to designate the actions of the Pol Potists as genocide, and thus as worthy of international interest and condemnation. Exhibiting bones and faces carried, however, significant political risk. The Tuol Sleng site opened up space for the contestation of dominant memorial narratives. Where contestation arose — between the anonymous victim and the named individual, between a story of wanton, undifferentiated violence and one of calculated, differentiated purging, between the territorial ubiquity of the killing fields and the specificity of DK territorial incursions — curatorial ambivalence appears to have followed. By conflating what had occurred at S-21 with what had occurred in other parts of the country, Tuol Sleng's curators had set themselves an impossible task: to restore some, but not too much, political meaning to the bare life being disinterred from mass graves throughout the country.
CHAPTER 6: Putting faces to the bones: moral itineraries

... And it's a holiday in Cambodia
Where you'll do what you're told
A holiday in Cambodia
Where the slums got so much soul

I fought the law (and I won)
Drinkin' beer in the hot sun
I fought the law and I won

...
I am the law
So I won

The Dead Kennedys 'Holiday in Cambodia' from the LP Fresh Fruit for Rotten Vegetables

6.1 Introduction
In the previous two chapters I have charted the ways in which memorialisation of the Cambodian genocide has been undertaken at the Choeung Ek and Tuol Sleng sites. The emphasis in these chapters was on the processes of production of the sites, with only limited reference to their consumption and use. In the context of Choeung Ek and the local-level memorials, I was able to demonstrate how these sites were taken up into particular memorial practices and rituals. In examining Tuol Sleng in Chapter 5, I showed how the museum and specific exhibits were
generated so as to construct particular narratives of suffering and solidarity in the service of the PRK's post-genocide nationalism, and point to some of the ways in which transnational discourses of genocide were promoted by the museum's curators.

This chapter investigates Tuol Sleng primarily through visitors' reception of the museum. In using the term 'moral itineraries' in the title of this chapter, I raise a long-standing concern in critical human geography. Examining the avowedly moral motivations of individuals, and explicit moral discourses of institutions and governments, allows for thinking about the construction of social space and collective experiences, as well as the role of affect in the making and meaning of place. The notion of a moral geography also activates questions of social and (geo)political justice at local, national and international scales. To think about the moral geographies of Tuol Sleng is to reflect on the emotional register of past and present-day visitors' reception of Tuol Sleng, a reception which is both caused by and causes the (re)presentation of the site by such actors.

Tuol Sleng has attracted large international audiences, and it is to two subsets of these visitors that I turn my attention here. I first investigate early receptions of the site, when official delegations were routinely escorted to the museum by PRK officials. In this context, I explore the role of such visitors as 'witnesses' to Cambodia's genocide as it is represented at Tuol Sleng. Before moving to an examination of the second visitor group, I discuss more recent mediations of the site for the purposes of promoting tourism to the site (tourist brochures and guide books). I then turn to contemporary western tourists, and analyse their visits to Tuol Sleng. I begin this later section with an engagement with recent work in critical tourism studies on the so-called 'moral tourist', and then continue the discussion by way of three main
themes: consuming otherness; the popular geopolitics of humanitarian sympathies; and the moral excess of tourists' experience.

6.2 Cultures of witnessing at Tuol Sleng Museum

As discussed in the previous chapter, thousands of Cambodians visited Tuol Sleng Museum in its first few years of operation, many searching the photographs on the walls of Buildings B for some indication of the fate of lost family members and friends. I am aware of no written or visual record of these visits. Also visiting the museum in this period were formal delegations of international visitors. These delegations were escorted through the museum by staff, including Ung Pech (Tuol Sleng's first Director and S-21 survivor), Keo Lundi and Lor Chandara. Keo Lundi and Lor Chandara report that tours were conducted in Vietnamese, English and French languages (pers. comm. Keo, 2000; pers. comm. Lor, 2000). Following the guided tour, these visitors were ushered into a large meeting room at the rear of the administrative buildings at the centre of the complex.\(^1\)

The formality of such occasions was underscored by the provision of seating and refreshments for visitors (pers. comm. Herod, 2000). In this more hospitable space, visitors were asked to contribute comments to a visitor book. Six visitor books, totalling around a thousand pages of responses and dating from 1979 into the early 1990s survive to the present day. In the early books, page-long responses are common, but in the later books a number of responses crowd across single pages. It is difficult to estimate the total number of responses contained in these books, but there are certainly many thousands. In the following discussion, I focus on the earliest two books, which

\(^1\) After the discovery of the mass graves at Cheoung Ek, photographs of the exhumed human remains of Cheoung Ek (nearly organised onto the two long shelves of the open-air wooden memorial originally erected there) were posted on the walls of this room. A banner welcoming international delegations was also hung on the west wall of this room, with text in Khmer, English and French.
span the years of 1979-1982. I have examined the English-language responses only. My strategy in doing this has been to capture something of the early reception to the site by international (English-speaking) visitors. The responses contained in the visitor books represent the sole source for insight into the way in which Tuol Sleng was being experienced by visitors at the high tide of PRK efforts to reconstruct the country and to disseminate knowledge about Democratic Kampuchea to the outside world. It is in pursuit of this elusive experience that I have turned to these books.

Visitor response books are now an indispensable institutional technology of many public museums, monuments and galleries (see MacDonald, 2005). They provide an opportunity for museum visitors to record their personal experience and are often viewed as a kind of reverse souvenir, a site where individuals gain some satisfaction from recording their transient presence in the museum for posterity. Visitor books are also used by staff of museums as a way of accessing visitors' views and suggestions. In this sense visitor books are a pragmatic tool of communication between a visitor and an institution. However visitor books generally give little information about visitors themselves — beyond enticing mentions of age or names or places of residence — and thus are generally not considered as legitimate sources in more systematic studies of museum

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2 Responses in the visitor books are written in a number of different languages. Aside from English, I have identified the following languages: Russian, Vietnamese, French, Lao, Czech, Spanish, Indonesian, Japanese and German. The funding limitations of my research militated against the full translation of the visitor books. Because I have only included English-language responses in my analysis, I am unable to draw conclusion about the geopolitical significance of Tuol Sleng and the PRK for a number of key allies, most notably the USSR and Vietnam. There is significant scope for a specific and very fruitful study of Soviet and Vietnamese delegations' responses in the Tuol Sleng visitor books vis-à-vis a geopolitics of solidarity between these powers and the PRK during the 1980s.

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visitors. The Tuol Sleng visitor books display many of the features of standard visitor books, yet are also anomalous to such books in a number of ways. In the Tuol Sleng books dates, nationalities, names of visitors, and personal accounts are recorded. Unlike standard visitor responses, however, the entries within the Tuol Sleng books are lengthy, impassioned and often written in a formal register. Often responses written by individuals are offered on behalf of other individuals, either other members of an immediate delegation, or on behalf of absent constituencies: for example fellow citizens of other nations, members of political organisations, peace collectives and trade unions. They address not only the curators of the museum, but also the new government and the larger population of the People’s Republic.

Curators and guides were present while visitors wrote their responses (pers. comm., Herod, 2000), and curators took a keen interest in what visitors had to say about the museum. Pages from the two earliest books provide evidence of this interest: marginal annotations appear here in the distinctive hand of Ung Pech. In both French and Khmer scripts, Ung Pech has added small details (for example, dates and the number of individuals in delegations that have been represented by a single response) to a number of responses. These annotations act as an official witnessing of the fact that the Tuol Sleng site was being visited. It is not known whether the visitor books were ever examined by anyone other than the Museum Director and staff, though it is possible that party officials or office-bearers in the Ministry of Culture saw the books. But this official witnessing speaks of the larger curatorial logic of the museum, which was precisely to produce witnesses and testimonial records. It is to the interpellation of international visitors as witnesses to Cambodia’s recent and traumatic past that I now turn.
6.2.1 Artefacts of witnessing

In the visitor books of modern western museums two types of responses are commonly found: those that compliment and perhaps thank the museum on the display or experience offered, and those that complain about or criticise the museum. In both cases, although in a rather pragmatic register, these entries are artefacts of the act of witnessing. They record the fact that the visitor was there and they convey something about what was felt and thought in that moment of witnessing. Some responses in the Tuol Sleng books refer directly and self-consciously to the task of witnessing. One Australian journalist writes in May 1979:

In forty years of reporting, I have never witnessed anything as atrocious as this death factory of the Pol Pot regime.

Indian, Palestinian, Indonesian, Thai, Swedish, Japanese, Norweigan and Australian journalists’ response are found in the visitor books from 1979-1982. As noted in Chapter 5, international print and television journalists reported the atrocities of S-21 and other sites in Cambodia to large audiences in 1979. The most significant of such TV reports in the West was John Pilger’s 1979 documentary Year Zero, which aired to huge TV audiences in Australia and Britain. Pilger’s various reports on Cambodia, which drew on imagery from S-21 and mass graves elsewhere in the country, generated an Australian contribution to relief appeals greater (per capita) than anywhere else in the world (Gunn and Lee, 1991: 153).

There were also more direct political outcomes that followed reports such as Year Zero. After Pilger’s documentary was shown on Australian television, the Australian government set up a Kampuchean Disaster Relief Appeal (Gunn and Lee, 1991: 153). Year Zero is also credited with contributing to internal Liberal Party division between the then Prime Minister Malcom Fraser
and his Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock over the question of the continued recognition by Australia of the Democratic Kampuchea government at the UN General Assembly (Gunn and Lee, 1991: 158). In early 1981, Fraser’s hard-line foreign policy on Vietnam was overturned, and Australia ‘derecognised’ the Pol Pot regime (Gunn and Lee, 1991: 158). Gunn and Lee suggest that this policy change was attributable to popular Australian perceptions of the human rights record of the Khmer Rouge (Gunn and Lee, 1991: 158).

In addition to journalists, many international visitors came to the museum as members of professional and political delegations in the 1979–1982 period. These include: the Organization of Democratic Lawyers of India; Lawyers Committee on American Policy Toward Vietnam (USA); the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom; the Left Socialist Party (Denmark); the Communist Party of Australia; the Socialist Party of Australia; the National Conference of Black Lawyers of the (USA and Canada); the Union of Australian Women and peace delegations from Africa, Finland and Czechoslovakia. The representation of lawyers associations in this group speak to the priorities of the PRK government in 1979. A large number of lawyers — Syria, Cuba, India, Japan, Laos, Algeria, Vietnam, the Soviet Union and the United States — came to Cambodia in mid-1979 to participate in the trial-in-absentia of Khmer Rouge leaders Pol Pot and Ieng Sary (as discussed in Chapter 1). At this time, the Tuol Sleng Museum became an adjunct space to a court of law. Many of the visiting lawyers were taken to various genocide sites, including Tuol Sleng (Gottesman, 2002: 64). There they viewed material evidence of torture and incarceration. They also viewed the significant archive of secret police documents that are housed in the museum complex, but are not part of the exhibition. On April 29, Hope Stevens, the Co-Chairman of the National Conference of Black Lawyers of the USA and Canada,
and the man who eventually acted as defence lawyer for Pol Pot and Ieng Sary in the later trial visited Tuol Sleng. In the visitor book, he wrote:

I have viewed with other members of our Commission of Inquiry ... the death lists dated and detailed [sic] hundreds of daily executions with names and vital statistics [that] have been preserved. I have read them. I give credence to what I have seen.

Others visitors record their willingness to testify in other places, and into the future:

It has been a shocking experience to walk around in this Pol Pot prison. We have heard of all the atrocities but could not imagine the full extent of the horror. We will do our best to spread information of the Pol Pot-crimes and we wish all the best for the future of the new Kampuchea.

International aid organizations visiting the museum in the early years include: OXFAM, World Vision International; the Red Cross; the Seventh-Day Adventist World Service; Catholic Relief; UNICEF; and the Quaker organization American Friends Services Committee (USA). They too undertook to report back to the members of their organizations and societies a conviction that extreme, orchestrated violence had indeed occurred under Pol Pot. Representatives of religious organisations pray or seek peace for the victims of S-21 in their responses. Many responses, altruistic in intention, are also patronising in their address: they write of a 'beautiful' land, populated by 'gentle' and 'smiling' Khmer. Continued financial, technical and emergency relief are also pledged in these responses.

Agamben, writing about the case of Auschwitz, reminds us that there are two words for 'witness' in Latin:

The first word, testis, from which our word 'testimony' derives, etymologically signifies the person who, in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties, is in the position of a third party
The second word, *superstes*, designates a person who has lived through something, who has experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bear witness to it. (Agamben, 1999: 17).

The visitor to the museum assumes the role of *terstis*, the witnessing third party. Their viewing of the museum display acts as a kind of intervention between two parties: the former state of Democratic Kampuchea to the new state of the People’s Republic. These visitors, as they testify to the authenticity of the exhibits, also testify that the new state PRK is not violent, not oppressive. The visitor book responses verify that this place is now part of a modern and progressive nation, a nation that can withstand the scrutiny of visitors, and no longer has anything to hide. The very presence of such visitors is in and of itself adequate testimony to the legitimacy of the PRK, founded on the absolute illegitimacy of the state it replaced.

6.2.2 *Prison books* and political instruction

There is an additional institutional rationale for the existence of the Tuol Sleng visitor books that must be acknowledged. A clue to this rationale is found on the front cover of the second visitor book (see Figure 15). The book is titled in French *‘Livre D’or’ (Golden Book)* and a subtitle in Khmer script gives the same meaning. While French was the official administrative language of both Cambodia and Vietnam, the words *Livre D’or* suggest a particular value of this object that transcends its bureaucratic operation as a repository for responses to the horrors of Democratic Kampuchea. The title alludes to a famous publication of Democratic Kampuchea, the *‘Livre Noir’ or Black Book*, which was published in 1978. Published at a time of escalating military conflict between Democratic Kampuchea and Vietnam, the Black Book was a polemical text which identified what was Cambodian with what was not-Vietnamese and what was Vietnamese with all
Figure 15: Front cover of the Tuol Sleng visitor book (dating from 1980-1982).
that was evil in the world (Chandler, 1996: 301). The Vietnamese curators working at Tuol Sleng were undoubtedly aware of this text, and as such the titling of the visitor book appears to 'reply' to this text and the racist, nationalist, and separatist ideologies that it sought to promote. This reading of the title of the second visitor book raises additional questions about the relationship between Vietnamese curators, the visitor books, and traditions of Vietnamese political instruction. I now wish to explore resonances between the visitor books installed in Tuol Sleng and Vietnamese texts from a revolutionary literary genre that is itself heavily indebted to French writings.

Historian Peter Zinoman has argued that the 1960 publication and dissemination of Ho Chi Minh's poetic Prison Memoir raised the prison memoir genre to the status of primary autobiographical vehicle for the leaders of Vietnam. Zinoman traces the lineage of these Vietnamese 'literatures of confinement' to twentieth-century Communist prison memoires more broadly, and notes that the lives and writings of Alessandre Dumas and Victor Hugo were 'staples of the elite Franco-Vietnamese educational curriculum of the 1920s and beyond' (Zinoman, 2001: 29). Unsurprisingly, there is a strong spatial symbolism that pervades the Vietnamese prison memoire genre:

The central theme of Vietnamese revolutionary prison memoirs is the transformation of colonial jails into revolutionary schools. ...In the scholastic prisons of such accounts, revolutionaries spend their first months in confinement studying Marxism-Leninism and practical skills and then apply what they have learned to protest poor conditions, organize fellow inmates, and convert non-Communist offenders to the cause (Zinoman, 2001: 31).

As I have argued in Chapter 5, Tuol Sleng Museum sought to promote a public history that damned 'the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique' and praised the Vietnamese-led liberation. But for the Tuol
Sleng curators, there were few openings for a redemptory narrative of S-21. No-one had been liberated from this prison in the larger liberation of Phnom Penh, and there were no stories of incarcerated revolutionaries who had transformed the prison into a place of learning and the radicalisation of others. In fact, S-21 represented the inversion of such a narrative: it was a place of learning, a high school, which had been turned into a prison in which no-one had prospered or lived anything approaching a political life. S-21 few survivors did so because they had cooperated with the Khmer Rouge, and they were ordinary people, mainly artists, not revolutionary heroes. Rather than an experience of revolutionary asceticism that allowed for the production of political texts, those imprisoned in S-21 assisted, under violent duress, in the production of fantasmatic confessions of CIA and KGB plots which implicated thousands of fellow Cambodians (sometimes leading to their arrest, incarceration and death).

It is useful, then, to understand the visitor books installed in the former prison in relation to these proximate histories of narration and political education. As well as providing a space for witnessing, the visitor books offered perhaps some small accommodation of the prison memoire genre for the Vietnamese curators. They operate as texts of political reflection and in an institution that has belatedly assumed an educational function. Their 'students' are not prisoners, but the many official and touristic visitors attending the museum. Zinoman notes that one of the features of the Vietnamese prison memoir is 'how little they have to do with personal memories' (Zinoman, 2001: 21). The same can be said for the Tuol Sleng visitor books. The revolutionary prison memoirs of Vietnamese leaders drew heavily on existing revolutionary scripts to promote an official public history of their rise to power (Zinoman, 2001: 22). The 'education' provided by the museum and by the written responses of visitors similarly promote a official public political
line on the old and new Cambodian state: that Democratic Kampuchea was feudalist and fascist not socialist-communist, and the PRK is the true revolutionary Cambodian state. Alan Miller, Central Committee Secretary of the Socialist Party of Australia responds somewhat unconsciously to such a revolutionary master-script here, mistaking Kampuchea for Vietnam:

True communists condemn the hideous PP regime and welcome the new revolutionary government and party of Kampuchea which, with the Kampuchean people, will build a socialist Vietnam [sic].

Another response declares: ‘to have such things linked with the name of communism seems to me a final obscenity’. As noted in Chapter 5, curators did enshrine a small number of ‘revolutionary martyrs’ in the exhibition at Tuol Sleng. While martyrdom was fundamental to the memorialisation of the war dead in Vietnam, it was only a minor part of the curatorial agenda operationalised by Vietnamese curator Mai Lam at Tuol Sleng. In part this is due to the nature of martyrdom: martyr is someone who has lived a political life. It is much more difficult to identify martyrs in the Cambodian case because, as I have argued in Chapters 1 and 4, the victim of genocide is a figure of ‘bare life’, one who has been excluded from or ‘taken outside’ political life.

One popular Khmer Rouge slogan that directs cadre in their attitude towards the general population recites this very designation: ‘spare them, no profit; remove them, no loss’. In this way, life was killed and yet not sacrificed (Agamben, 1998: 8), that is to say there could be no ‘loss’ or punishment associated with the murder of life in this category. Tuol Sleng could not have been consecrated in the same way as a Tomb to the Unknown Soldier or a District Revolutionary

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1 In Vietnam, all those killed in battle fighting the Americans were categorised by the state (and popularly referred to) as ‘revolutionary martyrs’ (see Kingsley Malanney, 2001: 51).

4 Ben Kiernan makes note of this slogan (1996: 4) and reports two additional sources that testify to its usage by Khmer Rouge cadre.
Martyrs Cemetery (in the Vietnamese case) might have been, and a Tomb to the Unknown Victim is nonsensical to twentieth century sacrificial nationalism.

More straightforwardly, because so many of those who were brought to S-21 were themselves Khmer Rouge cadre (victims of the regime’s widespread purges), raising individual figures up as heros would become problematic if, at some time in the future, these same individuals were recognised as significant perpetrators of crimes. Given this, the ‘martyrs’ singled out at Tuol Sleng — Koy Thoun, Hou Youn and Hu Nim, all onetime Khmer Rouge cadre — occupy an ambiguous position. The significance as radicals and leaders who disputed or dissented from the strict policies of the ‘upper brothers’ (and were killed for such action) seems to have gone largely unnoticed by Western visitors, as none of the English-language responses in the visitor books mention these individuals in their responses. In this respect, it would be useful to compare English-language responses to those written by high-level Vietnamese visitors written in Vietnamese.

Thus the authorities looked to international visitors to act as third-party witnesses, to support and disseminate the ‘truth’ of Cambodia’s situation internationally. Foreign visitors were to return to their countries of origin and tell people what ‘really’ happened in Cambodia (Ledgerwood, 1997: 90). Encouragement of this role was provided by the visitor books, in which visitors testified to their having witnessed the crimes of Pol Pot in the very place they had been committed. In time, it was hoped, the Khmer Rouge would be universally condemned and the support of the UN General Assembly removed from its remnant political and military forces. In turn, it was thought, broad international assistance in the form of financial aid and material
assistance would flow to the People's Republic. A 1979 statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides an early example of the promotion of such a view:

[We] believe that, if given the correct picture, the people and governments of countries who love peace and justice ... will provide the people of Kampuchea and the [Kampuchean] People's Revolutionary Council with basic assistance.

Despite the thousands of witnesses produced by Tuol Sleng in its early years of operation, these desired events did not come to pass. Cambodia remained a pariah in the international community, and a country embroiled in civil conflict. It was not until July 1990, for example, that the Bush Administration announced that it would no longer recognise the United Nations General Assembly seat as belonging to the CGDK (the coalition grouping which included the Khmer Rouge). It was not until December 1997, almost 19 years after the establishment of Tuol Sleng, that the United Nations General Assembly played its part in acknowledging that massive human rights violations had occurred in Cambodia during the Democratic Kampuchea period (Fawthrop and Jarvis, 2004: 124). In line with this recognition, in January 1998 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, became the first high-level UN representative to visit Tuol Sleng Museum (Fawthrop and Jarvis, 2004: 118). Within the nation and the institution of Tuol Sleng the visitor books functioned somewhat differently. Taken together, they provided a post-facto text of political instruction, a text that precisely allowed for the declarations of political fervour and resolve that were impossible for those imprisoned at Tuol Sleng.

6.3 Promoting Tuol Sleng

Visitor arrivals to Cambodia in 2000 (when interviews with tourists were conducted for this study) totalled 466 365, a figure which represented a 27% per cent increase on 1999 arrivals
(Ministry of Tourism, Cambodia, 2005). In 2004, visitor arrivals totalled over 1 million, representing a 50% increase on the 2003 total. Tourism remains one of Cambodia’s most important sources of foreign capital. Since January 2000 the Cambodian government’s ‘open skies’ policy has promoted direct international flights to the northern city of Siem Reap, home to the world-renowned Angkor temples. One-fifth of total tourist arrivals in Cambodia in 2000 flew in to the country on direct flights to Siem Reap, reflecting the significance of the temples to Cambodia’s larger tourism industry. While recognising the singular significance of Angkor, the Ministry of Tourism is committed to the development of a broader tourism focus in Cambodia.

Veng Sereyvuth, Minister for Tourism, has stated:

I paint a beautiful picture of the future ... there will be linkages across the country and across the region. ... Look at Ratanakiri and Mondolkiri [Provinces] — they are magnificent. Imagine a resort built there with a beautiful airport like Koh Samui [in Thailand]. ... The Tonle Sap [Lake and River] is unique. ... There should be no high-rise, blue-glass luxury ... [development] should be integrated into the environment. (Veng Sereyvuth in Carmichael, 2001: 4-5).

Within the expanding geography of tourism in Cambodia, and despite the direct flights now available to Siem Reap, Phnom Penh continues to play a ‘gateway’ role for the rest of the country. In the city, the Ministry promotes sites such as the Cambodian Royal Palace, Wat Phnom (the hill temple at the centre of the city), the National Museum of Khmer Arts and Culture, and the Independence Monument (marking Cambodia’s independence from France in 1953). Tuol Sleng Museum does not appear in the larger official Ministry of Tourism publications. There is no mention of the museum in their Cambodia: Discover the Hidden Kingdom (1994) colour magazine, nor in the Cambodia: Tourist Guide 2000 brochure. In contrast to the compulsory tours of Tuol Sleng required by the government throughout the 1980s, there is little direct
government promotion of the museum as an international tourist destination at the present
time. Ministry officials now consider photographs of the museum or the Choeung Ek Memorial
as undesirable for major promotional advertising, as such images 'may give the impression that
Cambodia is not a good destination for a holiday' (pers. comm. Tith Chantha, 2000). Such a
statement indicates a significant change of government view on the role of Tuol Sleng and the
type of visitor it might attract. While there is still a view that Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek might
educate foreigners about Cambodia's past, there is far less interest in guaranteeing that the effects
of such exposure benefit Cambodia in the international system. In short, the (geo)political stakes
are not nearly as high. Of course, tourism to genocide sites in Cambodia is highly economically
significant but — as with other sites of violence in other nations, overseen by other national
governments — their profitability remains largely unspeakable in the formal corridors of
government.

Both the Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek sites are routinely listed on the Phnom Penh itineraries of
local private tour operators. Locally-produced 'tourist maps' include the Tuol Sleng Museum and
the Choeung Ek 'Killing Fields' Memorial. The museum also appears in tourism publications
widely available in the streets and guesthouses of Phnom Penh, such as The Phnom Penh Visitors
Guide, published by a consortium of local businesses. Here the museum is advertised as one of
seven 'points of interest' in Phnom Penh. The entry for Tuol Sleng states that the site is:

a former detention and torture facility [that] has been preserved in the state in which the KR

A link on the Ministry of Tourism main website (see www.mot.gov.kh) directing viewers to the
museum's website is the only direct advertising of the museum by the Ministry.
Perhaps most importantly for international tourism, Tuol Sleng (and Choeung Ek) are listed in all the major 'independent traveller' guides such as the Australian-based *Lonely Planet Cambodia, Let's Go (Southeast Asia)* and the North American *Moon Travel Handbook Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos*. Here Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek are promoted as important sites to be visited in Cambodia, *Lonely Planet* terms Tuol Sleng a 'testament to the crimes of the Khmer Rouge'. In its 'Things to see' section for Phnom Penh, Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek are listed second (and third) only to the National Museum of Khmer Arts and Culture. The entry for the museum provides warning (or encouragement) of an affective experience of Tuol Sleng:

Altogether, a visit to Tuol Sleng is a profoundly depressing experience ... wall after wall of harrowing black-and-white portraits conjure up images of humanity at its worst. Tuol Sleng is not for the squeamish (Taylor et al., 1996: 83).

In the context of a 'travel survival kit' (*Lonely Planet*’s generic title) such a statement implicitly valorises the 'intrepid' nature of a decision to visit Tuol Sleng. *Lonely Planet* also draws a parallel between the Khmer Rouge and fascist oppression by reporting that 'Like the Nazis, the Khmer Rouge were meticulous in keeping records of their barbarism' (Taylor et al. 1996: 83). Comparisons of this nature were echoed in my interviews with tourists (as discussed below).

As noted in Chapter 5, the museum falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. Entrance fees taken at the museum accrue to the Ministry, and funding for its further improvement and promotion is also dependent on the Ministry. Chronic shortages in government funding exist across most Ministerial sectors in Cambodia. Due in part to low levels of economic growth and poor infrastructure, Cambodia’s state institutions have limited efficacy (Downie and Kingsbury, 2001: 61). The general economic privations of the state
notwithstanding, a lack of funding for Tuol Sleng is cited by some as an indicator of genuine ambivalence on the part of the many in the current government as to the future of the museum not only as a national monument but also as an international tourist site. A former office-bearer in the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts reports that if it wasn't for the direct political support of the ruling political party, the Cambodian People's Party, the museum would be forced to close (pers. comm. Pich Keo, 2000). The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts approved and partially funded a new brochure for the museum in 1999; however, the brochure was instigated, written and designed by the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), a private research organisation with significant professional ties to the Tuol Sleng Archive and a growing international profile. Another significant change at the museum 1999 was the construction of a new souvenir shop in the north quadrangle, which is to generate direct income for the museum, allowing the museum to meet shortfalls in Ministerial funding. It sells generic souvenirs that have no direct reference to the museum's display, including general handicrafts, jewellery and historical currency.

The museum has long portrayed itself as an educational site, capable of presenting the crimes of the Khmer Rouge to a national audience for the benefit of Cambodia's future. Recognition of the historical significance of Tuol Sleng and its important work is also designated as the proper labour of its internationals visitors. The museum's visitor brochure states that:

[1]rom 1979 until 1989, part of the national budget was always allocated to Tuol Sleng museum for its repairs and exhibitions. Unfortunately, for the past several years, this funding has dried up.
This is politically-charged statement, although international visitors to the museum would not necessarily recognise it as such. It infers that since the end of the People's Republic of Kampuchea period (1989) the museum has not been adequately maintained. The brochure names sources of possible funding support as 'international organisations and individuals that despise and condemn crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide' (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, 1999). The brochure thus invites visitors to participate in the financial viability of the museum in the name of global humanitarian good. This statement immediately interpellates present-day visitors to the museum as moral, indeed humanitarian, agents (of which more will be said below).

6.4 Contemporary tourism at Tuol Sleng

Present-day tourists enter the museum from Street 113, an unremarkable inner-city residential street. The museum comprises four three-floor exhibition buildings, an administration or reception building and two grassed quadrangle spaces. The exhibition buildings ringing the complex are known (south to north) as Buildings A, B, C and D. Although most rooms in the buildings are accessible to visitors, the main exhibition is located in the ground-floors of the four buildings. Tourists pay an admission fee of $2US and receive an English-language tour brochure at the reception pavilion opposite the museum entrance gate. They then set out on a south to north (clockwise) circuit through the site as initiated by the English-language sign to the left of the reception pavilion. Continuing along a path which borders the southern quadrangle, visitors arrive at fourteen small 'tombs' fronted by a plaque (also in English) dedicated to the last fourteen victims of S-21, whose cremated remains are interred in the tombs. One can then enter the ground floor of Buildings A.
Building A typifies the room-sized cells in which important prisoners were kept. Original objects have been arranged in these cells: bed frames; metal shackles; clothing, metal bars and ammunition ‘toilet’ boxes. Photographs are the main feature of the exhibition in the next building encountered: Building B. Thousands of photographic portraits or ‘mug-shots’ of prisoners that were produced by the S-21 documentation unit are exhibited in this building. A collection of prisoner’s clothes is also mounted on pegs on the southern wall (enclosed in a large glass case) of the largest room in Building B. The final room of Building B displays postmortem photographs of prisoners — those who died during incarceration or torture at S-21. (Relatively few prisoners were killed on-site at S-21; the majority of prisoners were taken in trucks to Choeung Ek and executed there.) On the wall opposite the postmortem photographs, is a large photomontage of Choeung Ek site during its exhumation in 1980 (but this image is not identified as such). Below this image are glass cases containing a collection of metal shackles. Progressing to Building C, visitors confront a series of rooms that have been partitioned into many narrow cells with wood or brick walls. These are the spaces in which less important prisoners were kept. In the final building encountered by visitors, Building D, a display of objects used for torture is kept. This display includes agricultural tools and purpose-built water (immersion) tanks and benches on which prisoners were restrained whilst they were tortured.

By way of illustration, Building D houses a collection of oil paintings by the S-21 survivor Vann Nath. Vann Nath’s paintings show various forms of torture that occurred at S-21, and in many cases these scenes of torture include depictions of the objects that are present in the room. His paintings are accompanied by other visual displays: maps, tables and historical photographs. One map of represents the evacuation of Cambodia’s cities and towns, and includes population
statistics and diagrammatic indications as to where various urban populations were relocated. A second map (discussed in Chapter 5) details the attacks carried out by Democratic Kampuchea in Vietnam. Proximate photographs depict, for example, crowds on the streets of Phnom Penh being forcibly evacuated by the Khmer Rouge in 1975, the evacuated city and photographs of the Khmer Rouge leadership. In Building D visitors pass the photographs of the 'martyrs' Koy Thoun, Hou Youn and Hu Nim, which are not marked as such. Here too, are photographs taken during the original discovery of S-21 by liberating forces in January 1979, including photographs of scattered 'confession' document left behind by S-21 authorities as Phnom Penh came under Vietnamese fire.

Up until 2003, the last room of Building D dominated by a large 'map' of Cambodia covered in human skulls and other bones (as discussed in Chapter 5). The Tonle Sap Lake, and the Bassac, Tonle Sap and Mekong Rivers flowed between the skulls in 'blood' red. The exhibit was not enclosed but open to the air, and it was apparent that many of the skulls were deteriorating and discolouring as a result of this exposure. Since 2003, a photograph of the former 'map of skulls' exhibit has accompanied a large printed map of genocide sites (showing prisons, memorials and burial sites) in this final room of Building D. Finally, tourists pass the museum's new souvenir shop in the north quadrangle. A drinks stand against the north edge of the reception hall (which pre-dates the souvenir shop) sells other items of interest to tourists: books by western academics on modern and ancient Cambodian history, a collection of Khmer autobiographical writings, *Lonely Planet* (Cambodia); English-Khmer and French-Khmer dictionaries, postcards (unrelated

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6 This map has been produced by DC-Cam from their geographic database of sites. See [http://www.decum.org/Projects/Maps/Mapping.htm](http://www.decum.org/Projects/Maps/Mapping.htm)
to the museum), photographic film, pirated video-documentaries, and outdated versions of the museum's visitor brochure.

Unimpeded by the shared schedule of a larger group, independent international tourists who visit Tuol Sleng generally spend a significant period of time at the museum. As discussed in Chapter 3, these visitors are motivated individuals who expect — and even may make direct demands in regard to — physical access, access to information and other forms of support. As Tim Edensor notes of international independent 'backpackers' in India, the reluctance of such tourists to be grouped with package group tourists manifests in their critical and highly self-conscious approach to narrating a symbolic site (Edensor, 1998: 101). Edensor identifies 'backpacker' or independent tourists' non-standard narrations of the Taj as arising from a touristic experience which:

is less supervised, predictable and subject to collective pressures, permitting experimentation, dialogue with other story-tellers, and un-monitored diversion from established and commodified scripts (Edensor, 1998: 103).

At Tuol Sleng, independent tourists often record their experience of the museum by way of photography, video or writing, either in situ or after their visit. As noted in Chapter 3, these individuals are engaged in their own 'interpretative project' (see Rose, 1997). Some later represent their visit to the museum in the context of their travels in Cambodia on worldwide web-travelogues. These travelogues generally include personal writings and photographic images, and sometimes links to other sites or published sources.

There are two general types of response of English-speaking tourists at the museum I want to detail. The first set of responses are about cultural difference, and the exploration of the museum
as an exotic and authentic site, but one of incommensurate aesthetic, musical and cultural difference. The second set of responses involves tourists’ reported desire to pay homage to the suffering of the Cambodian as a geopolitical Other whose experience is recognised as being integrally linked to geopolitical processes, actions and inequalities. This type of response is also interested in assisting and contributing to Cambodia in a positive fashion. Within this second set of responses are echoes of the responses of earlier visitors to Tuol Sleng Museum. These later visitors, like their earlier counterparts, find that the museum actively solicits and supports their ‘witnessing’ of the crimes that were perpetrated at S-21.

6.4.1 Consuming otherness

Much theorising of practices of leisure travel has concluded that the contemporary tourist is an amoral figure. Zygmunt Bauman levels that:

Moral responsibility vanishes when ‘everybody does it,’ which, inevitably, means also that ‘everybody can do it’... The tourist is bad news for morality (Bauman, 1996: 54).

However the view of the promiscuous tourist fails to explain tourism of places that seem decidedly un-fun, places that offer self-critical reflection and sober recollection, rather than pleasure and the dissolution of the self. In explaining such developments, various sociologists of tourism, geographers and cultural theorists have been concerned to make links between transformations in travel forms, destination creation, and the different degrees of mobility of people and cultures more broadly under postmodernity (see Bauman, 1996; Clifford, 1997; Urry and Rojek, 1997). Tourism studies scholar Jim Butcher (2003) recently drawn attention to the ‘New Moral Tourist’: a tourist who consciously seek to mitigate against what they perceive to be the exploitative and harmful effects of mass tourism on host environments and cultures by

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promoting alternative forms of tourism (see Butcher, 2003). In the remainder of this chapter I raise some of the issues associated with New Moral Tourism, and the attributes of the postmodern or moral tourist, in the context of existing theorisations of post-tourism, in order to demonstrate some of the ways in which such theories are deficient. I will argue that these theorisations are particularly deficient in relation to the complex moral discourses of war and genocide tourism.

According to Butcher (2003), the fragility of host sites and societies in the face of increasing tourism is a central concern of a new breed of self-aware tourists, tourists he has termed ‘New Moral Tourists’. However travel has long inspired moral debate, especially around different travel styles and the realities they appeared to confirm (Adler, 1989: 1384). All travel styles link representations of reality with deliberately cultivated forms of subjectivity, throwing the traveller as a figure into relief as well as charting the ground against which this figure moves (Adler, 1989: 1384). It is the manifest detrimental effects of modern mass tourism, Butcher argues, that leads New Moral Tourists to deliberate and develop ideological positions on the question of how one should travel, and where one should travel. Central to the advocacy of New Moral Tourism is the question of culture (Butcher, 2003:77). Further:

    There are three facets to this: first, the host’s culture is celebrated as holding things together and maintaining the status quo in a society. Change becomes defined as an attack on culture. Second, culture is rooted in the past, in tradition, rather than being connected to the making of a future. Third, and most vitally for this discussion, culture is seen as what makes people different from one another — culture is read as cultures (Butcher, 2003: 81).

The notion of the New Moral Tourist contradicts existing ideas of the postmodern tourist or ‘post-tourist’. The term ‘post-tourist’ has been used to describe those tourists who know there is
no authentic tourist experience, that there are merely a series of games or texts that can be played (Urry, 1990: 11). The post-tourist retains multiple and simultaneous understandings of tourist objects — be it monuments or souvenirs — as kitsch, as socially revealing and/or as historically remarkable (Feifer in Urry, 1990: 100-101). John Urry suggests that destinations such as 'the Leprosy Museum in Bergen, the Japanese Death Railway in Burma and the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin' are typical of the 'out of the ordinary experiences demanded by post-tourists' (Urry, 1990: 11). But is the post-tourist, as Urry has suggested, simply interested in places such as war sites because they are — in a world of touristic 'play' at home and abroad — something truly different? Neither Urry's 'post-tourism' nor Butcher's 'New Moral Tourism' adequately explains tourism to sites of war and other events of mass political violence. Tourisms to war and other so-called 'dark' sites are not simply about difference or declaredly moral actions. Neither are these forms of tourism simply attempts to invert previous, unequal touristic relations. They significantly more complex encounters, involving both individual and collective imaginaries, and are cause for self-interrogation and reflection on questions of morality. The figure of the apologetic, self-deprecating tourist represented by Butcher’s New Moral Tourism merely speaks to the author’s moralising attitude towards the entirely generalised tourist figure that he purports to describe and explain. Explanations of tourisms of war and genocide demand that attention be paid to the declarations of tourists (specific in time and space), their responses to the materiality of such places, and to the ways in which other representational media and practices have generated in such visitors prior expectations and understandings of such phenomena.

Tourists at Tuol Sleng generally profess an interest in Cambodian 'culture'. These interests are often structured as minor ethnographic studies, and encompass observations of Cambodians
relations with each other and their work, the environment, symbolic sites and religious icons, figures of authority, and of course, Cambodians' relations with tourists. Such interests often, reportedly, give rise to conversations with Cambodians, and discussions with fellow travellers. These interests turn on a central, internal paradox of contemporary tourism articulated by the question:

[How can I come to terms with that which is Other without reducing it to the terms of my own understanding? (Frow 1991: 130).]

One popular response to this paradox in tourism discourse is to collapse all difference into a monolithic 'culture'. For some tourists in Cambodia, historical events are seen to have been directly caused by Khmer 'culture', outside of political and economic systems. For these tourists, past events are understood as having direct and unmediated expression in present-day Cambodian 'culture'. According to such thinking, history (and memory) is an inescapable part of all present-day Cambodians' lives; affecting their bodies, permeating their inter-personal interactions and giving rise to all manner of mores. A young Canadian student reported that:

history just forms the present, right? And the reason that there's beggars outside [the museum] there ... is the history of the place ... and to me, it's not just [a case of] look at it [the museum] and go 'Oh that's terrible', but it's still something ongoing (pers. comm., R2/040402, 2000).

His travelling companion (when I asked whether they'd experienced such a scene before) replied by saying:

I can't quite put my finger on it, I don't know if it's the different culture ... I'm not used to the style of it, I don't think it's as desperate a kind of poverty in Toronto [as here] (pers. comm., R1/040402, 2000).
For other tourists, culture is not monolithic, and trauma not indefinitely installed there. Rather their interest in Cambodia stems from their knowledge of, and interest in, what they term 'world history', and the events in Cambodia are considered to be inextricable from the geopolitics of southeast Asia and the world in the late twentieth century.

6.4.2 *The popular geopolitics of tourism*

Interviewees generally considered Cambodia to represent 'a different side of southeast Asia' (pers. comm., 040402) in terms of its history of civil and political unrest, greater economic and social disadvantage, fewer tourists and a less-developed tourism infrastructure. Comparisons between travelling in Cambodia and travelling in other southeast Asian nations were often accompanied by comments on Khmer culture as a more accessible, and more authentic culture:

[I]t's a lot easier to see Khmer culture as it is, maybe, a bit more... I guess it's a little bit more honest than... Thailand (pers. comm., R1/040401).

Most Western visitors come to Tuol Sleng Museum with some knowledge of the disturbing events that occurred during Democratic Kampuchea, and following their arrival in Cambodia become aware that the Tuol Sleng site was an important facility of the regime. Visitors expect that the museum will present information about this period of Cambodia's history, and information specific to the site itself. Prior to visiting, tourists see the museum is considered an educational institution capable of informing and verifying aspects of the Cambodian genocide for visitors.

Visitors also expect to experience a memorial space, into which sympathetic advances might be made, and where considerations of the disturbing events of Democratic Kampuchea are possible. In this mind, a visit to the Tuol Sleng Museum is held to be a performance of respectful
consumption. Beyond these motivations, tourists are interested in the origin, ideology and
technologies of rule particular to the Khmer Rouge at S-21, the identity of prisoners, and how the
prison came to be abandoned. Further, some are self-reflexively interested in the museum’s project
of curation and memorialisation, the politics of memory in Cambodia at large and, given these
conditions, how the museum addresses them, as non-Cambodians. Many tourists conceived of
the central role of the museum to be to expose as many people as possible, Cambodian and non-
Cambodians, to the traumatic events that occurred in Cambodia under Pol Pot. Some
emphatically declared that visiting the museum was a moral imperative for tourists in Cambodia:

It’s a stop [on tour itineraries], a **must** stop, which is not [a] bad [thing], not bad at all (pers.
comm., R2/270302).

While some tourists were pessimistic about the idea that the museum might somehow guard
against the dissolution of moral order in the world, they nonetheless saw value in the museum’s
narration of the specific incidence of such as it occurred in Cambodia:

I think it’s useful for people to be reminded of what can happen, of what human beings can
do to other human beings. ... I think it will happen again ... it does happen again in places like
Rwanda, ... it happens in Yugoslavia, Serbia, Bosnia ... [but] individuals can play a part in
altering events as well, therefore it’s useful to have places like this to work on an individual
level and affect people, because when things happen, you can act ... in terms of saying things
are wrong and shouldn’t happen (pers. comm., 030405).

The basis of this hope was the effect they themselves had experienced as an individual visitor to
the museum. There was significant value placed on tourism as a way of participating in
development work. One young American woman reported:

I’ve heard of all the difficulties, the civil war, and I wanted to, you know, not necessarily see
the civil war, but just see how things were after that, if there’s a way — because I still have a
desire of helping out an NGO — if there something I could do here (pers. comm., 130401, 2000).

Other tourists spoke enthusiastically about the aims, implementations and outcomes of UNTAC’s ‘humanitarian intervention’ in Cambodia as bringing an end to the country’s conflict. For these individuals, enjoyment is derived from participating in tourism as a sort of ‘peace industry’, a form of second-order humanitarian work whereby touristic consumption (injection of capital) and their individual actions carry on the work of diplomats and peacekeepers. Other interviewees turned this enjoyment into pragmatic donations: of money, clothes, and in one case, blood. Two interviewees (travelling together) answered an advertisement to donate blood at a local hospital. With so much discussion amongst tourists regarding giving money to beggars in Cambodia, I read their donation of blood as an attempt to depart from a realm of capital exchange. To my mind the blood donation also contrasts with the other fluid ‘donations’ routinely given by tourists in Cambodia: the seminal fluids of sex tourism. Sex tourists in Cambodia, and child sex tourists especially, are widely considered by other tourists to be the most immoral of all actors, exploitative and debasing. National and international media reports, and also popular travelogues7, routinely sensationalise the issue of sex tourism in Cambodia and paedophilic activities of foreign persons visiting or working in Cambodia.

In most international guidebooks to Cambodia, reference is made to Cambodia’s significant interconnectedness to international aid and governance bodies. Western guidebooks also

7 A notable text in this regard is Amit Gilboa’s Off the rails in Phnom Penh: into the dark heart of guns, girls and ganja (Asia Books, Bangkok, 1988). This ‘investigative’ text, widely available in the capital’s bookstores and markets, details the sexual exploits, relationships and drug experimentation of a number of long-stay tourists in Phnom Penh.
regularly provide a short history of Cambodia that notes the ancient world of Angkor, the French-colonial, post-colonial, Lon Nol (1970-1975) and Khmer Rouge periods to UNTAC (1991-1993) and the post-UNTAC period to the present-day. The signs of Western intervention, aid and facilitation are ubiquitous in Phnom Penh: residential and business compound gates display names and logos of international organisations, while larger vehicles, conspicuous expatriate restaurants and bars and a significant resident non-Cambodian population all attest to Cambodia’s unusually high degree of economic and political intervention. This condition is lampooned in a locally-produced, expatriate-authored guide book to Cambodia which proclaims: ‘Phnom Penh — only ten minutes from Cambodia!’ (Zepp, 1996).

That the Cambodian genocide is a relatively recent geopolitical event is important for tourists at Tuol Sleng. Many interviewees reflected on the fact that they themselves had been alive when the genocidal events were taking place in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. One interviewee, an American NGO worker based in Thailand, reported:

I remember being on a bus in Detroit, Michigan, going to work, when Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge, so I remember that. And then I remember following the reports about what had happened here... (pers. comm. R1/270302, 2000).

Another interviewee drew the following distinction:

If you’re looking at the dungeons, fourteenth century dungeons or something like that, and I’ve been to many places, a few places like Gallipoli, where lots of people died ... you just get a sense of an enormous tragedy, but you’re at a long way away from it, for me... You’re a little bit more involved with things [that happened] twenty or thirty years ago (pers. comm., R2/030402, 2000).
Recent events history, even those occurring somewhere very geographically remote, are thus thought of as more accessible than events outside one's own lifetime. Another interviewee, a British mental health worker, reported that the museum had made him think more about:

how the country [Cambodia] got caught up in macropolitics, you know, Americans, Chinese, Vietnamese all [with] their own interests ... and [it] ended up with Pol Pot (pers. comm. 030405, 2000).

Personal memory of visual media and popular geopolitical texts — media reports, or documentaries — initiate interest and emotional involvement, and later travel. One middle-aged British nurse remarked that:

I obviously knew about Cambodia, and Vietnam, really because of the war and having lived through it ... [it was] when my children were born [and I was exposed to] newspapers and newsreels (pers. comm. R2/030402, 2000)

For younger visitors, their formal education was also a context in which they had gained prior knowledge of Cambodia's modern history:

I remember in high school, just for one day learning about the Khmer Rouge ... and just being absolutely riveted by hearing about the killings fields (pers. comm. 270301, 2000).

The museum was thus placed within a larger context of being educated about, or exposed to, world politics and southeast Asian politics more specifically. Interviewees expected that their visit to the museum would assist in their understanding of such events. In many instances, tourists are disappointed in this regard, because of the lack of official guidance at the museum. The visitor brochure presents some facts about the operation of S-21, but fails to present any analysis of these facts. Tourists' confusion and discomfort at Tuol Sleng arises from an expectation that they will be informed as to how they should behave, and how and what they should remember. Their anxiety increases when they find no expert or text-based information to perform the labour of
explanation or commentary. This anxiety, common amongst my interviewees, highlights the
degree to which earlier visitors to the museum were reliant on their accompanying guides to
present additional information about the history of S-21 in oral form.

Interviewees emphasised the importance of the museum’s location within the former prison site.
For some, it was exciting to experience a coincidence of their everyday tourism geographies and
the place of extraordinary geopolitical events, although this excitement was usually tempered by
additional statements that recognised the disturbing nature of the events. Overwhelmingly,
interviewees appreciate the spatial coincidence of the two institutions, one the site of atrocity, the
other a memorial to these events. One interviewee, stated:

    I think it is extremely important to mark and identify, to memorialise the sites, I think it’s
critical, and publicise their existence. I think everything else is sort of technical, but that’s the
first thing no matter what you do you’ve got to keep these places ... you can’t have the places
lost, [if] so people forget (pers. comm. R1/270302).

Following this idea that the materiality of the site protects memory, interviewees paid particular
attention to the unmediated physical space of the museum. The effect of the museum’s obvious
state of disrepair was to increase their sense of seeing and experiencing things ‘as they were’.
Interviewees offered various explanations as to why the museum contained very little signage,
mediation or accommodation (beyond the exhibited materials) of their gazes. Some considered
the run-down appearance of the museum to be the result of a conscious curatorial decision to
maintain the appearance of the complex as it would have appeared during Khmer Rouge rule.
Other tourists found the decay and disintegration of the site intolerable, even disrespectful to the
dead, and most were frustrated to some degree with the lack of support offered by the museum:
that there were no guides available, and few English-language signs. Some felt that the condition of the museum was an indication of a lack of funds for repairs or renovations, and speculated that this might stem from wider societal ambivalence about the museum.

Of all the exhibits, the thousands of prisoner portraits photographs exhibited in Building B receive closest inspection from tourists. On the whole they are considered with the utmost seriousness, accompanied by expressions of pity and sadness. It is not uncommon for tourists to be moved to tears as they walk through this section of the exhibition, as room after room of portraits of victims are encountered. The standard head-and-shoulders composition of the images blurs different faces, ages and expressions, forces a consideration of the magnitude of the killing carried out by S-21:

I kept doing this thing like: ‘God, I think I saw this photo before, I think I saw this photo’ ...

and then I thought: ‘No it’s not the same photo’ ... it’s not like one person was killed off in [this] manner, it was so many. You [the visitor] are always trying to rationalise, in some way ...

(pers. comm. 270301, 2000).

But small differences between portraits were reported to me by interviewees. A number noted different emotions ‘evident’ on the faces of these prisoners:

After a while you’re looking at faces and you don’t kind of look at them, then when you start looking at the eyes ... some were just incredibly sad and hopeless, and some were filled with hate and rage (pers. comm. R1/040401, 2000)

The photographs produce a kind of affective excess for tourists:

the photos of all those people who had been killed? I think there was just a range of people there that I wouldn’t have been expected to, you know, have been victimised (pers. comm., 140401, 2000).

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Some considered the photographs to be art; others spoke of them in terms of evidence; still others considered them unintelligible (in part because little information was available to contextualise them), thus refusing to take up a position of authority regarding interpretation of the images.

Additional confusion arose around a signboard prominently displayed outside Building A. This sign appears in Khmer and English, and it shows a set of ‘S-21 rules’ as they applied (and were made known) to S-21 prisoners. One of the rules set out for prisoners was silence. One of my interviewees referred to a sign in the museum that demanded his silence. There is no such sign. My interviewee had mistaken the ‘S-21 rules’ for rules set out by the museum for visitors. Part of the reason for this mistake, I believe, was that such a prohibition (against speaking) was entirely in accordance with the interviewee’s own beliefs about proper, moral conduct in spaces associated with death and its memorialisation.

A number of interviewees explicitly recalled the European Holocaust and sites that seek to memorialise these events such as Auschwitz in Poland, Yad Vesham in Israel, the Holocaust Museum in Washington. One young American woman reported that:

I was also comparing it to the Holocaust, because well I’m Jewish, and so within the collective Jewish memory you are always relating ... [I was] also a little angry that the world knows so much about what happened to the Jewish people, but the world does not know about what happened here (pers. comm. 270301, 2000).

This comparison is most often drawn in regard to the moral act of demonstrating respect for the dead, to return political value to lives that were, under both Democratic Kampuchea and National Socialist regimes, evacuated of any such value. Tourists also compare Tuol Sleng with spaces such as cemeteries and columbaria, shrines, battlefields, and spaces of religious observance.
in other places that they have also experienced. Many reported that they had deliberately not brought cameras, or had not used their cameras in the museum, and that they had found it necessary to refrain from speaking whilst moving through the exhibition. These practices, many reported, were testament to the gravity of the events represented by the displays, and one way in which they might demonstrate their respect for those who suffered and died at S-21.

6.5 Conclusion

The topic of Vietnam’s involvement in Cambodia during the decade 1979-1989 remains ground for bitter contention, dividing Cambodian commentators and political parties to the present day. The Tuol Sleng Museum attempted to suppress the contestation of the new state by emphasising all those ways of (political) life that had been denied to Cambodians under Democratic Kampuchea and, in extremis, at S-21. The museum and the visitor books produced witnesses to the immoral crimes of the former regime and expressions of geopolitical solidarity between the PRK and sympathetic states and collectives.

The decisions and actions of contemporary visitors at Tuol Sleng are also re-enacted within discourses of morality. Thus such visiting is not only about perception of ‘righting’ geopolitical wrongs, absolution through reconciliation with the past, or prevention of the recurrence of war through education, but also involves returning oneself to an individual moral terrain, where immediate decisions are made about living well and faring well, involving self-reflexivity and ‘positive’ relations (financial, emotional, interpersonal) with others. Many who visit Tuol Sleng do so because, as Karen Till identifies in the case of German atrocity sites, they desire to be haunted (see Till, 2005). The museum is considered to be a space in which they might learn more
about the geopolitics of the Khmer Rouge regime — something they have only previously experienced via visual or textual sources. They seek to put faces to the bones, and to express their sympathy for those still affected by this period. Their experience is often emotionally taxing and intellectually frustrating, but it remains ultimately desirable to have submitted oneself to the ghosts of others.
CHAPTER 7: Faces from the fields: Cambodia's genocide on tour

Dominant images of the world and its workings do not emerge from a single source, but from the complex — and fragile — workings of hegemony (Sharp, 2000: 333).

To curate these days means to mobilize collections, to set them in motion within the walls of the home museum and across the globe as well as in the heads of the spectators (Huyssen, 1995: 21).

7.1 Introduction

During my interviews with tourists at Tuol Sleng Museum in 2000, a significant number of tourists professed a familiarity with the S-21 prisoner photographs. Few could recall exactly where they had first seen the portraits, but were adamant their contact with the images had occurred prior to their arrival in Cambodia. These comments sparked my interest in how and why these photographs have become the undisciplined envoys of Cambodia's traumatic past, circulating on a global scale and through various media.

This chapter examines the politics of representation around a 1997 exhibition of a small number of S-21 prisoner portrait photographs in New York City. The institutional home of the photographs, the Tuol Sleng Archive, and the work of a private group in the preservation and publication of the prisoner portrait photographs, is also examined. It is argued that responses of visitors and curators to the photographs, displayed at the Museum of Modern Art, provide significant insights into a contemporary propensity to memorialise, rather than specify and politicise, the past violence of 'peripheral' states and peoples. I wish to explore the
various and ambiguous origins, trajectories and effects of the exhibition *Photographs from S-21: 1975-1979* as an *ex-locus* memorial event.

The S-21 prisoner portrait photographs have been exhibited in various Western institutional locations since 1994. The exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (hereafter MoMA), titled *Photographs from S-21: 1975-1979*, generated significant debate both in published reviews and in unpublished visitor comments books which MoMA had installed in the exhibition space. For the purposes of this chapter I principally examine published reviews, academic analyses, visitor book responses and public statements of the co-instigators of the exhibition — the Photo Archive Group (PAG) and the MoMA Department of Photography.76

I begin with a discussion of the production of the portraits and their passage, following the fall of Democratic Kampuchea, into the Tuol Sleng site as evidence of the genocide, where they have remained from 1979 to the present day. I examine the assistance given to the museum and archive in 1994 by PAG — a private, non-Cambodian, non-profit organization — in the conservation and printing of the S-21 photographs, and the subsequent removal from Cambodia of a number of photographic prints under the auspices of this organisation. PAG offered the prints for exhibition to numerous galleries in North America, Europe and

76 Exhibitions of S-21 prisoner portrait photographs organised by the PAG also occurred at: the Zurich Museum of Design (Zurich, Switzerland) in 1995-1996; the Ansel Adams Center for Photography (San Francisco, USA) in 1995; the Museet fur Fotokunst (Odense, Denmark) in 1996; the Australian Centre for Photography (Sydney, Australia) in 1997; the Recontres Internationales de la Photographie (Arles, France) in 1997; the Parc de la Vilette (Paris, France) in 1998; the Columbus Museum of Art (Ohio, USA) in 2000; the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University (North Carolina, USA), the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography (Ottawa, Canada) in 2001-2002; and the Weisman Museum (Minneapolis, USA) in 2001.
Australia. MoMA selected a small number of prints for the 1997 exhibition. I argue that the removal of the photographs from Cambodia was enabled by contemporary, internationalised discourses of humanitarian intervention and cultural memory, subtended by specific cultural-geographical imaginaries. By examining the formal and informal responses to a specific visual media — a Western art-museum exhibition — I raise various questions about the politics of ownership and curatorship of objects within the study of media and memory.

7.2 Memory, sovereignty and the archive

As previously discussed, Tuol Sleng displays thousands of photographic portraits of prisoners produced between 1975 and 1979 by the documentation sub-unit of S-21. These portrait photographs, taken of every incoming S-21 prisoner, were used primarily for identification purposes within the facility. Important prisoners, including officials of the former regime and high-ranking Khmer Rouge cadre purged by their own party, were also photographed after death. Single copies of these photographs, along with confession documents, were forwarded to the collective leadership, or 'upper brothers', of Democratic Kampuchea who were not directly involved in running S-21 (Chandler, 1999: 27). Photographs of less important individuals were presumably also attached to their confessions in the internal operation of the prison. Confessions were extracted under duress or torture in the pursuit of 'strings' or 'networks of traitors' (khbae kbot) which the leadership believed threatened the entire revolutionary state (Chandler, 1999: 6). The meticulous production of the prisoner portraits was an important element of administrative control. While the experience of being photographed undoubtedly intimidated prisoners, it is also imaginable that this repeated submission of individuals to 'identification', the extensive photo archive produced and portrait photographs in circulation in the prison served to captivate workers in the total
institution (see Chandler 1999: 14-40). The photographs were, for both prisoners and their masters, emblems of the regime’s omnipotence and efficiency.

The Tuol Sleng Archive, as an important repository of historical materials of the Democratic Kampuchea period, has been central to historical analysis and Cambodian cultural politics in the post-1979 period. The archive provided Cambodian researchers and curators associated with Tuol Sleng Museum with significant insights into Democratic Kampuchea. These insights have been variously incorporated into local scholars’ historical and political analyses, state press agency publications, as well as the museum’s display.

Foreign observers of Cambodia were especially interested in the Tuol Sleng Archive from 1979 onwards as they attempted to make sense of what had happened during Cambodia’s isolation under Pol Pot, and the new state of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea. As a visiting scholar, William Shawcross was able to view the archive during his 1980 visit to Tuol Sleng Museum. He later described the visit to Tuol Sleng in some detail, but commented that access to the archive ‘was increasingly restricted’ (Shawcross, 1985: 40). Further, Shawcross declared that there was neither ‘Western interest’ nor support from ‘the Vietnamese ‘experts” in Cambodia ‘in establishing or remembering what happened’. He wrote that

[1]n significant ways it seemed by 1983 that propaganda threatened to bury the real and dreadful history of the recent past so deeply under new lies, new exaggerations, new ideological contraptions, that it was in danger of being obliterated and thus forgotten.

(Shawcross, 1985: 360-361).

Journalist Elizabeth Becker, writing in The Washington Post on February 28 and March 1, 1983, claimed that the Tuol Sleng Archive was in fact closed to foreign scholars, inferring that the new government included remnant Khmer Rouge and the archive was effectively hiding
details of present government members' participation in the atrocities of the former regime. Michael Vickery, in his book *Cambodia 1975-1982* (first published in 1984) countered that Becker was 'completely mistaken' in this claim (Vickery, 1999: 312). Vickery maintained that 'every qualified foreign researcher has been given a virtual *carte blanche* to examine [the archived documents]' and that Becker herself had copied from dossiers there (Vickery, 1999: 312).

It is evident from these exchanges that the Tuol Sleng Archive was considered by foreign scholars to be key to history and memory work in Cambodia. The archive was held by various groups to indicate the general political openness (or otherwise) of the new government and, importantly, its willingness to investigate and memorialise the past. Cambodia 'watchers' who were most critical of Vietnam's involvement in Cambodia assumed that the archive contained information pertaining to the political genealogy of individuals now central to the new government, that is, information linking these figures with Khmer Rouge violence. The accusation was that the archive held information these individuals wanted forgotten. The heralded 'obliteration' of the past was not borne out by developments at the archive or elsewhere in Cambodia during the early 1980s or in the years following. Two crucial memorial undertakings of the Phnom Penh government in 1983 — the annual May 20 Day of Anger commemoration and the construction of local-level memorials to the victims — gave lie to Shawcross' heralding of amnesia in the People's Republic of Kampuchea. Although these two features of memorialisation were politicised — and thus were largely dismissed by Western commentators as propaganda exercises (see Becker, 1984: 45; Martin 1994: 237) — they have been popularly adapted and maintained throughout Cambodia to the present day.
Human rights activist David Hawk researched in the Tuol Sleng Archive during the early 1980s. His experience was one of 'patience, cooperation and assistance' on the part of the Tuol Sleng Museum and archive staff toward his work (Hawk, 1982). Further indication of the willingness of the Cambodian government to facilitate access to the archive came in the early 1990s with the granting of permission and assistance to Cornell University to carry out a massive project of document preservation and microfiche copying at a number of archives in Phnom Penh. After more than two years of work, the project resulted in one set of microfiche copies for the archive and one that was installed in Cornell University Library. The Cornell project did not copy the extensive photographic materials resident in the archive. The main reason for this was that David Hawk had created back-up negatives of the photographic materials in the Tuol Sleng Archive during his time there in the early 1980s, copies he later donated to Cornell's collection (Ledgerwood, personal communication, 2002). In sum, the figure of the Tuol Sleng Archive was harnessed to various scholarly theories as to how the past was (mis)represented during the People's Republic of Kampuchea, both to Cambodians and internationally.

Philosopher Jacques Derrida has argued that the archive takes place at the disintegration point of the very memory it seeks to preserve (Derrida, 1996: 11). This is true for Tuol Sleng Museum and archive, which dwell in the very place where it is most evident that Democratic Kampuchea is now gone, that is, is now history. Disintegration of the memory of Democratic Kampuchea also results from the museum and archive being turned toward an international audience, where they have been met by the eroding forces of both denial and interest. While the Tuol Sleng archive, like every archive, assures particular 'possibilit[ies] of memorisation, of repetition, of reproduction' (Derrida, 1996: 11), it perpetuates an instability also noted by
Derrida. Installed within the archive is 'repetition compulsion', a condition of repetition and reproduction which constitutes the archive, and is in turn fostered by it. For Derrida, following Freud, repetition compulsion is understood as indivisible from the death drive, and the archive — all archives — necessarily harbour this destructive, anti-archive 'archivialithic' intentions (Derrida, 1996: 12). A certain fragility results from this internal contradiction: 'right on that which permits and conditions archivisation, we will never find anything other than that which exposes to destruction, and in truth menaces with destruction' (Derrida, 1996: 12). In the case of the Tuol Sleng Archive, this susceptibility has been read as a purely physical condition, with much concern about the physical materials of the archive as damaged and decaying. For non-Cambodians especially, concern about this literal condition has led to a perception that a condition of susceptibility is specific to the Cambodian archive, and is ultimately open to remedy, neither of which is the case.

This situation in part explains non-Cambodian responses to Cambodian monuments like Tuol Sleng Museum and Tuol Sleng Archive. The archive or monument is seen to hold the true memory of past events, and can act as a rallying point for those who seek the truth. But the physical difference and deterioration of an archive or a memorial site may distract the visitor, and can be perceived, quite literally, as a lack of memory; for some, a lack of memory is indicative of a cultural incapacity to remember, or evidence of guilt. This brings me to a crucial point about the archival status of the portrait photographs I am discussing here. They are at once images (supposedly unproblematic, particular, of a real person) and also objects (physical things that have survived actual events as evidence, although they cannot directly 'show' those events). I want to refer to this doubleness of the S-21 photographs as 'artefactual'; such an artefact is both image and object, with all the contradictions that this
implies. In the subsequent fate of the S-21 prisoner portrait photographs, it is possible to see how this inherent contradiction has determined the varied uses to which they have been put. It is in this context that I turn to the case of the private, United States-based PAG and its work at Tuol Sleng.

7.3 Intervention and evacuation: the politics of dislocation

7.3.1 The Photo Archive Group

In 1993, two North American photojournalists, Douglas Niven and Christopher Riley, visited the Tuol Sleng museum and its archive. On viewing the photographic materials which had not been part of the Cornell project, Niven and Riley conceived of a specific photographic archive project for Tuol Sleng. On being approached by Niven and Riley, the Cambodian government gave permission for a project of cleaning, cataloguing and printing of the S-21 photographs. Support was forthcoming from various sources in the United States, including funding from the Lucius and Eva Eastman Fund and private individuals, and photographic materials at discounted prices from various commercial photographic supplies groups.

The original Project Proposal document of Niven and Riley's PAG stated that the photographic archive was 'threatened by a volatile political situation, years of neglect, a lack of resources and the absence of trained staff'. The project sought to 'rescue an endangered photographic archive' while also providing an 'opportunity to train Cambodians in archive preservation and advanced photographic techniques' (Project Proposal, 1993). The work of cleaning, indexing and printing some six thousand original photographic negatives commenced in 1994. One hundred of the six thousand negatives assisted by the project were
finally selected for six 100-print editions. Negatives were chosen for 'photographic quality, historical value and to present an accurate cross-section of Tuol Sleng's victims' (Project Summary, no date). Two of the six 100-print editions produced by the project remained in Cambodia, and the remaining four editions were 'brought out of the country for safekeeping' (Project Summary, no date). This 'safekeeping' of the photos is in part attributable to the political uncertainty that followed the UN-sponsored Cambodian national election of May and June of 1993. The Project Proposal document also reports talk by various political factions of closing Tuol Sleng, though no documented substantiation of such talk is cited. Further justifications for safekeeping of the photographs may have been made in light of reports that S-21 photographs had gone missing early in the life of the museum. David Chandler (1999: 170n42) confirms that an unknown number of portrait photographs recorded in an East German documentary made in the early days of the museum disappeared some time later. Aside from these disappearances, some six thousand negatives lay in the archive for some thirteen years before they were viewed by Niven and Riley.

The Project Proposal also notes that such a project presented 'a rare and timely opportunity to preserve and present to the world a lasting record of genocide'. Further statements argue that 'it is impossible to forget the victims' faces' and that '[i]t is in humanity's interest that they be preserved and seen by as wide an audience as possible' (Project Proposal, 1993). Lindsay French attests that the primary motivation of Niven and Riley was their conviction that the photographs could 'serve the purpose of drawing viewers closer to their [photographed] subjects' and motivate people to 'become aware of the things that happened in Cambodia, and educate themselves about what is going on there now' (French, 2002). It is clear that, from the outset of the project, Niven and Riley's aims were twofold: the revival of
the S-21 photographs *in-situ*; and the circulation of the S-21 prisoner portrait images through various media outside of the Cambodian context. The former intention, to revive the negatives as nationally-significant visual records within the museum, displays all the hallmarks of a contemporary humanitarian aid project: an effective response to an urgent situation which involves local skilling and empowerment (the training of Cambodians in safeguarding cultural artefacts for the future). The second intention — to go global with exhibitions and a publication (which involved holding copyright on the photographs) — necessarily involved the photographs in the circulations of international news and visual arts media. French reports that, 'in exchange for their work', Niven and Riley were 'given the rights to 100 images' (French, forthcoming). This granting of rights to the images is not noted in the Photo Archive Group’s own Project Proposal or Project Summary documents. Neither was any formal arrangement of rights reported in the local Phnom Penh press (see Peters, 1994). The publicity surrounding the Photo Archive Group intensified in late 1994 and 1995 when the group’s work was featured in various print articles and other media reports: *Time Magazine, Photographers’ International, The New York Times, See magazine, American Photo, Daily Telegraph* (UK), *The Age* (Australia), Associated Press and Australian Radio. The interest continued throughout the following year — the British Broadcasting Corporation shot a documentary about the work of the Photo Archive Group which aired on British television in May 1996 (Project Summary, no date). The *Photographers International* and *Time* features were timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Khmer Rouge’s 1975 capture of Phnom Penh in April, 1995. In 1996, art and photography publishers Twin Palms released *The Killing Fields*, a nine-by-twelve inch, casebound text which reproduced seventy-eight individual portrait photographs. The generation of sympathy for, and interest in, Cambodia’s past and present has undoubtedly been fuelled by the global exposure of the photographs.
Crucial questions regarding this exposure, however, remain underexplored. What sort of recognition and interest has been facilitated by the images' repeated exhibition? What representational politics are involved in the continued circulation of these images?

### 7.3.2 Material memory

Historian Kerwin Lee Klein (2000) has recently characterised the contemporary academic and popular concern with memory as a discourse of memory in which 'memory' is an essentialised super-category. Klein argues that, despite claims to the contrary, the study of memory (as 'Memory') has been deployed to covertly restabilise the postmodern and poststructuralist destabilisation of History. In the context of Klein's critique of the comprehensive trend toward the materialisation of memory — 'to identify memory as a collection of practices or material artefacts' — it is possible to further identify the archive and photographs as part of a 'memorial trope' involving 'dramatically imperfect piece[s] of material culture' that are 'imbued with pathos':

> Such memorial tropes have emerged as one of the common features of our new cultural history where in monograph after monograph, readers confront the abject object; photographs are torn, mementos faded, toys broken (Klein, 2000: 135-6)

The veracity of this claim can not be ignored; the pages of the monograph may equally be the walls of the museum, or the screen of the news report, or another media. The disintegrating archive and the S-21 victim portrait are just such abject materials, as they are gazed upon by scholars, photographers, readers, viewers and visitors.

The figure of the portrait photograph heralds the materialisation of memory in representations of the Democratic Kampuchea period. Three specific occurrences of portrait
photographs support this thesis. The first occurs in the 1984 film *The Killing Fields*, directed by Roland Joffé. The film is a unique and detailed portrayal of Cambodia between 1973 and 1980, and was responsible for alerting audiences worldwide to the Cambodian genocide. An early section of the film depicts the April 1975 fall of Phnom Penh to Khmer Rouge forces and the subsequent detention of foreigners in the French Embassy in Phnom Penh prior to their evacuation from Cambodia. In the Embassy, American journalist Sydney Schanberg and others attempt to have their Cambodian counterpart, Dith Pran, included in the evacuation from Cambodia. Their claims to asylum and hopes for diplomatic influence become impotent fictions. They attempt to forge a foreign passport for Dith Pran, for which a portrait photograph is taken. Standard chemicals for the development of the photographic negative are, however, unavailable. One after another the photographs fade to overexposed pieces of photographic card. The fading photograph symbolises the foreigners' inability to safeguard their Cambodian friends, families and colleagues. The blank photograph forewarns of Pran's impending subjection to the obliterating exigencies of the new Khmer Rouge state.

Although Niven and Riley were concerned with photographic quality when they chose their 100 prints, a significant number of damaged images were removed from the museum and placed into the Photo Archive Group folios. A number of faded, water marked and scratched photographs are among the seventy-eight individual portraits reproduced in Niven and Riley's *The Killing Fields*. Ghostly shapes and presences appear in these plates, blotting out the side of a face, coiling around the edge of an image, or strewing a strange starry wash of lights across an otherwise underexposed image. Such images often receive specific attention from audiences, who welcome the atmospheric effects as relief from the intentional, technically perfect image. For explication of the portraits reproduced in *The Killing Fields*,

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the book relies on an essay by David Chandler and the recollections of S-21 survivor Vann Nath as recorded by Sara Colm.

One other important portrait is discussed but not reproduced in Niven and Riley's book. Vann Nath's testimony of the physical and psychological brutality of incarceration at S-21 is followed by his escape from certain death on account of his artistic skills. Shifted from prisoner to prison-worker, Vann Nath was first employed to paint portraits of Pol Pot (apparently as part of a plan by 'Brother Number One' for a cult of personality late in the Democratic Kampuchea period). For this task, Vann Nath worked from a portrait photograph of Pol Pot, about which he has commented:

Pol Pot's face looked smooth and calm. But the feeling in my heart was that he was very savage and evil. I wondered how he could look so pleasant and yet treat people so cruelly


Furthermore, Vann Nath has written in his own autobiography that he considered this portrait photograph to reveal Pol Pot to be not-Khmer, that is, racially and culturally foreign.

Was he a Khmer person? With such an appearance and complexion, he could be Chinese (Vann Nath, 1998: 59).

In these various representations of Cambodia's recent past, the motif of a disappearing or disappeared portrait may be traced. These forms evidence the transnational and transcultural trade in the abject artefact of the past as memory itself; this is a trade facilitated by a 'revival of primordialism' (Klein, 2000: 144) — largely Western designations of the susceptibility, singularity and humanitarian potential located in the non-West.

The public knowledge of the S-21 photographs is inextricably linked to the activities of the Photo Archive Group. The 'history' of the photographs is narrowed to those details emerging
from the Photo Archive Group. Many such reports assert that Niven and Riley discovered the negatives in Cambodia, a framing of the photographs which dismisses the prior (if limited) curatorial handling. This narrative of discovery lends a certain heroism to Niven and Riley's actions, which contrasts dramatically with the anti-heroism and victimhood of the S-21 prisoners. Niven and Riley's own Project Proposal constructs Cambodia as 'threatened' by political volatility, as 'neglected' and 'endangered'. The Project Proposal promises a technobureaucratic transformation of the current archive's chaos into order, an arrest of decay, and the production of a permanent set of clean, archived copies to located in Cambodia and, importantly, elsewhere. Within the imagined geography of powerful nations and their citizens, genocide occurs on (and against) the territory of humanity, and indicates, when geopolitically convenient, new cultural and moral peripheries. While the root cause of the violence is considered endemic to Cambodia or 'Cambodian-ness', the instructive value of evidence of a genocide to other audiences is seen to transcend local (Cambodian) institutional concerns. Artefacts like the S-21 portraits, which are both representations and residues of 'bare life', develop a curious status as heritage artefacts of global interest and cultural memory by a distant, powerful few.

In Cambodia, the Tuol Sleng Photo Archive Project is considered by some as having wrongly wrested control of the artefacts (and their use) from Cambodians. Youk Chhang, Director of DC-Cam, expressed his frustration about the 'generic' nature of the work of the Photo Archive Group. He argues that the initial, specific focus of the project — to assist in the preservation of a national archive of Cambodia — has been overtaken by other priorities:

This is the photograph of Tuol Sleng, it is the history of Cambodia, and everyone should have access equally (pers. comm., Youk Chhang, 2000).
An alternative scenario for the use of the S-21 photographs was recently provided by Phnom Penh-based artist Ly Daravuth, with assistance from Youk Chhang. Ly's installation, *Messengers*, was shown as part of a group show he co-curated in January 2000 in Phnom Penh, titled *The legacy of absence: a Cambodian story*. The work comprised numerous photographic portraits of young Cambodians. The physical condition of the photographs, their colouring, composition and their subject matter — solemn, black-clothed girls and boys of various ages — are immediately recognised as S-21 prisoner portraits. These are portraits of children taken during the Democratic Kampuchea period, but those depicted were not prisoners of S-21. These are portraits of children who were used to run messages between various local cadre for the regime, known as *angkar* (the organisation). Interspersed with these photographs are photographs of children living in present-day Cambodia, whose portraits were taken by Ly. These photographs were composed and doctored so as to mimic the appearance of the historical photographs. *Messengers* questions the truth-claims made about victim photographs and documents from the Democratic Kampuchea period in contemporary Cambodia. In a cultural context in which images of S-21 victims are well known and charged with considerable emotion, Ly seeks to interrupt the immediate recognition of victimhood. The child messengers' identities are suggested only by the title of the work (and given in the exhibition catalogue), and so these portraits are only recognised as such after an assumption has been made that all the photographs are of victims. By producing in the viewer this initial recognition of an iconic form (a victim of the Khmer Rouge), and then divesting the viewer of this assumption (reminding viewers that the genocidal regime photographed its faithful cadre as well as its incarcerated enemies), the installation questions the ease with which victims are designated. It calls into question the non-Cambodians' designation of Cambodians as victims, but also questions Cambodians' view of themselves:
For the young who come after and have no direct connection to such terrible events, the images of what happened can become the vocabulary by which to construct that all too seductive position of 'I am Cambodian and therefore a victim' (Ly and Maun, 2000).

Ly Daravuth and Ingrid Maun observe that some Cambodian artists who were very young during the Democratic Kampuchea period 'investigate[s] without reverence what it means to live in partial memories' (Ly and Maun, 2000). In addition to this work, Ly and Maun note work in which refusing to testify is offered up as a way of living with the past. Little such space is opened for any of these memorialising stratagems — the refusal of victimhood, the refusal to testify, or the active questioning of the truth-artefact — in the MoMA exhibition.

7.4 MoMA and zones of affect

Twenty-two S-21 prisoner portraits went on public display at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in May 1997. The exhibition, titled Photographs from S-21: 1975-1979 was curated by the MoMA Department of Photography. It was mounted in Gallery Three, a smaller gallery configured as 'a place where visitors may pause to sit and read, to rest and reflect' (MoMA internal document Gallery Three). Two lounges and a low table at the centre of Gallery Three provided those viewing Photographs from S-21 with the opportunity to sit, write comments and read from various books (including Niven and Riley's aforementioned book The Killing Fields). The exhibition's wall text provided a brief history of Cambodia 1975-1979 and an outline of the Niven and Riley's role in bringing the photos to 'a wider audience'. It read:

When the Communist party, the Khmer Rouge, seized power in April 1975, Cambodia had just concluded five years of a disastrous civil war. Between 1975 and 1979, more than 14 000 Cambodians were held captive in S-21, a former high school in the Phnom Penh area.
Penh district of Tuol Sleng (MoMA, wall text and press release for Photographs from S-21, May 1997).

The text confirmed that prisoners had been photographed on arrival at S-21, and that all save seven of those incarcerated and interrogated at S-21 survivors had met with 'brutal execution'.

Many visitors and reviewers were prompted to view the MoMA exhibition in light of events coincidently unfolding in Cambodia, and reported worldwide. In July 1997, Cambodia's then Second Prime Minister, Hun Sen, staged an armed ousting of Cambodia's First Prime Minister, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, leader of the Cambodian Royalist party. Hun Sen's consolidation of power was considered as having undone much of the democratic process that had been fostered by the UN transitional authority in Cambodia some four years earlier (Mydans, 1997). A few weeks later global news media screened extraordinary video footage of Pol Pot himself, alive in western Cambodia. The video showed the former leader being put on trial, denounced and sentenced to life imprisonment by his own remnant Khmer Rouge forces. Two portrait photographs of Pol Pot, one taken in 1979 and the other a still from the video, appeared on the front page of The New York Times on July 29, 1997. In the context of speculation about a trial of Pol Pot under international law, the S-21 photographs at MoMA were seen less as tragic reminders of a peripheral past and instead as contemporary, crucial evidence. Ironically, commentators in the West were now taking up a position on the photographs that had long been held by the Phnom Penh government and the Tuol Sleng Museum. Tuol Sleng (with its display of thousands of prisoner portrait photographs) and its counterpart site, the Killing Field of Choeung Ek, had long been considered centres of 'typical evidences' in Cambodia. Now, almost two decades after their initial discovery, the
photographs' arrival in a major metropolitan museum exhibition was lauded as 'important and timely' (Williams, 1998).

The exhibition space for Photographs from S-21 was, in the words of one visitor, evocative of 'a memorial [and] a sacred place'. One reviewer experienced the 'small squarish room, carpeted, enclosed' as being 'like a vault, a crypt' (Nahas, 1997). Another wrote of the exhibition as a space in which it felt as if 'a memorial service [was] taking place' (O'Sullivan, 1997). These references, made in only in passing, belie an important consideration of earlier functions of the collections of cultural artefacts and museums. According to Shelton (1994: 181), Renaissance collections of New World curiosities, 'like the great medieval churches that were filled with sacred remains', served to contribute 'to the fame and reputation of Europe'. Later, European colonialism and the personal fortunes and ambitions of imperial and New World-settler collectors also generated museum-mausoleums of plants, animals, human remains and ritual objects (see Elsner, 1994; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998; Stewart, 1994). As Clifford (1997: 197) argues, the long history of 'exotic' displays in the West provides a context of enduring power imbalance within and against which the contact work of travel, exhibition, and interpretation occurs. Such museum 'traditions' urge consideration of the MoMA exhibition as a 'contact zone' in which the museum's 'organising structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship' (Clifford, 1997: 192).

Like colonial spoils, the photographs from S-21 are of 'exotic' temporal, geographical and cultural origin (the Cambodian genocide) and of unknown authorship and function. Their removal from Cambodia and appearance at MoMA was primarily due to the actions of two individual, expert collectors.
In addition to news of events in Cambodia in mid-1997, the exhibition itself generated heated debate in New York liberal arts circles. Guy Trebay's review in Village Voice was least sympathetic of all reviews of the exhibition. Trebay openly criticised Niven and Riley for their decision to sell art-quality prints from the Tuol Sleng archive, and to hold copyright over the images. Trebay's criticism did not reflect well on the S-21 exhibition or MoMA itself, who had purchased a small number of the portraits on display in 1995. His review asks:

Who are the people in the Tuol Sleng photos? Who are their families? What is the role of our own amnesiac culture in the atrocities that took place in a former public high school and beyond it in the killing fields? (Trebay, 1997: 34)

It is true that Photographs from S-21 failed to recall the interconnectedness of Cambodia's modern history and that of the United States. For example, the opening sentence of the wall text and press release accompanying the exhibition stated simply: ‘[I]n April 1975, Cambodia had just concluded five years of a disastrous civil war’. No mention was made of the fact that this 'civil war' was a conflict gravely exacerbated by the secret bombing campaigns visited on Cambodia by the United States during the later stages of its war in Vietnam, and by concurrent United States' support for the corrupt Lon Nol regime in Phnom Penh, against which the Khmer Rouge were able to rally a significant section of the country's population (Kiernan, 1989, 1996; Chandler, 1991, 1996; and Vickery, 1999). It was not, however, MoMA's intention to provide visitors with a political history of Southeast Asia within which to couch the S-21 photos. The curators wished to present the S-21 photographs as a relatively unmediated exhibition of non-mainstream works and argued that there were clear precedents for such a curatorial approach. MoMA had previously exhibited works from other violent contexts: Gilles Peres' photographs of the 1994 violence in Rwanda; a show of overt political art entitled The Path of Resistance; and a show representing post-1960 works which critically explored ideas of counter-monuments and memory. In the view of MoMA's senior curator of
photography, Susan Kismaric, the presentation of Photographs from S-21, like those other exhibitions, functioned as 'bearing witness to violations of civility and human rights' (pers. comm., Susan Kismaric, 2001). Kismaric viewed the controversy around the S-21 images from within the confines of art aesthetics and art curation. She considered the controversy around Photographs from S-21 to have been arisen from a schism between 'vernacular photography' and an aesthetic photographic-arts tradition (pers. comm., Kismaric, 2001; Kismaric quoted in Trebay, 1997). The assistant curator in the Department of Photography with principal responsibility for Photographs from S-21, Adrienne Williams, considered the images as 'belong[ing] in a museum', 'inviting', 'sorrowful', and 'very striking' (Williams, 1997; Williams, 1998).

Like the formal, published reviews of Photographs from S-21, visitors to the exhibition were moved to record impassioned, personal comments in the visitor books provided. Some comments address co-visitors, others are directed towards the exhibition's curators, and some are explicitly self-addressing. Visitors debated historical events and individual and state actions, and specific notions of justice, memory, and moral responsibility. Some comments suggest a deliberate visit to the exhibition, while other visitors report coming upon the exhibition in the course of larger exploration of the photography galleries. Most visitors considered the photographs to be more than documentary evidence. People wrote of the images as providing a way of 'seeing' an otherwise unseen history. Many termed the photographs 'art' in a wholly positive sense, as something which enables greater consideration and understanding of events, thoughts and emotions not experienced by oneself. Like Trebay, however, other responses questioned the appropriateness of Photographs from S-21. For some of this mind, the inappropriateness of the exhibition was due to insufficient contextualisation
of the images. Such comments were often confrontational in tone, some accusing the curators of exploitation:

I don’t believe MoMA had the intention to completely objectify these terrible images, but this mute and ‘neutral’ exhibition does that in the coldest possible way. ...As a child of Holocaust survivors, I feel that this kind of behavior is at best indicative of a smugness and an intellectual laziness — AT WORST IT IS INHUMANE (capitals in original).

Others considered the photographs as worthy of exhibition but felt that MoMA, as a bastion of modernist art traditions, was an inappropriate location for such an exhibition. One visitor suggested that the exhibit would be best shown at the offices of the UN, or ‘at the site where these atrocities took place’. MoMA invited a sombre consideration of the S-21 photographs as examples of vernacular photography, as a media capable of participating in political repression and violations. Controversy arose when MoMA was perceived to have violated the already-fraught contact relationship by narrowing the ‘history’ and the characterisation (as part of a ‘vernacular’ body of art) of the photographs. As a result the curators attracted some of the affective excess already in production in the form of accusations of a lapse in morality and a violation of the dead.

Various consistencies and inconsistencies were discernible within the visitor comments. Four major themes may be noted: the identification of the sacred or mystical (unspeakable, ineluctable, inexplicable); the identification of the aesthetic (as [not] art, innocent, tragic, beautiful); an intellectual response (more information needed to contextualise the images, more knowledge needed generally); and an explicitly political response (more care should have been taken, or less interference made, by the museum, or the exhibition as being symptomatic of an apolitical condition at home or in Cambodia/ the ‘third world’). It is clear from these multiple characterisations that the photographs produced an affective excess. One review
considered Photographs from S-21 'one of the year's most moving exhibitions', 'a heartbreaking triumph' (Nahas, 1997). This affective excess, experienced as the memorialisation of the victims of S-21 instead, as Klein identifies, risks edging into the stereotypical identification of the savage and the sacred ...[as] memory's subaltern status turns upon its affinity to the Hegelian notion of people without history (Klein, 2000: 137).

Cultural stereotyping and sensationalised reportage flourished in response to Photographs from S-21; one writer claiming the exhibition staged 'the neutral gaze of the camera meet[ing] the blank stare of a benighted humanity' (Griffin, 1997). The horror of knowing that each photographed individual had been brutally executed is displaced onto minor, visible ruptures of bodily integrity seen in the photographs. An example of the latter is found in a number of visitors' and reviewers' (O'Sullivan, 1997; Pinchbeck, 1997) particularly noting the photograph of the boy whose identification card appears pinned into his bare chest. One quite fantastic response to the exhibition was the writing of a draft screenplay titled 'Photographs from S-21' which was forwarded to MoMA's Department of Photography along with a request for the material assistance. The opening scene of the screenplay is set in a gallery space hung with the S-21 portraits. After gallery closing time the room's television monitor 'CLICKS on. Without explanation'. The portraits spontaneously reappear, in rapid succession, on the television monitor, until a portrait of a young woman

...freezes [and] becomes larger/ And larger until just/ Her EYES then/ The WHITE background of her photograph fill [sic] the screen/ Then suddenly everything bursts into WHITE/ ...The framed black and white portraits seem to float in a sea of whiteness (Soruri and Nolletti Productions, 1999, capitalization in original).
Seeing the gallery as a space haunted by the ghosts of those captured in the photographs was echoed in some visitor comment-book responses: 'It's hard to sit here comfortably with all these dead eyes staring'.

In his review of *Photographs from S-21*, the *New York Times* critic Michael Kimmelman recalls the publication of the workplace identification photographs of two Brooklyn police officers recently charged with a beating and sodomy. Kimmelman did not explicitly comment on the irony of the police officers' official identification photos being used as 'mug-shots' (that is, in the place of police-generated suspect identification photos). He went on: 'We expect somehow to find in these mug-shots, as in any portrait, something true and essential about the subjects', and also argued that 'even mug-shots, notwithstanding their basic function as simple ID's, have roots in artistic conventions as old as the renaissance' (Kimmelman, 1997: C12). Kimmelman remarks upon the flattery and trickery in portraiture, but he stops short of suggesting that the S-21 photographs are aligned to such trickery. Instead he comments that the S-21 portraits are 'tricky to judge' and 'mute'. In his attempt to link portrait traditions and mug-shot photography Kimmelman misses crucial differences between the two. Unlike portraiture, whose involvement in the technologies of the modern state is irregular and relatively minor, mug-shots (and here too, colonial photographic portraiture) are an explicit technology of intervention and control over both subject-citizens and those from whom all political rights have been stripped. A mug-shot does not attempt to show what is true and essential; rather it attempts to fix a subjects' individuality as criminality.

With historical hindsight, and from behind the curatorial lens of MoMA and the Photo Archive Group, the photographs function as reverse mug-shots, for it is the authority behind
the lens who we now know occupies the place of the criminal. Where 'criminals' (or traitors)
once were, now appear victims unjustly subjected to violent deaths.

Many audience members, like Kimmelman, remarked on the 'muteness' of the S-21
photographs: that the photographic medium prevents the deceased subject from speaking, or
the medium as mirroring the incapacity of the subject to have spoken in the moment in which
they were alive and being photographed. Reviewer Dominique Nahas observed a 'mute
dignity' in the photographs. Bearing witness, others' speaking of the crimes of the Khmer
Rouge and communication as consultation are all variants of a problem of speech and
speaking associated with the exhibition. A consideration of photography as 'an art of non-
intervention' whereby 'the person who intervenes cannot record [and] the person who is
recording cannot intervene' (Sontag, 1973: 11-12) is being extended in such comments. Not
only is it not possible to intervene (when various moral orders might suggest it should not be
possible to not intervene), but it is also being suggested that the person who is being recorded,
or whose image intervenes, is considered somehow incapable even outside the photographic
moment to bear witness to any past, present or future. Barbie Zelizer, also writing of the
difficulties of viewing photographs of atrocity to bear witness to such events, argues that
'photography may function most directly to achieve what it ought to have stifled — atrocity's

7.5 Authorship and ownership

The curators at MoMA could not have communicated (and presumably would not have
wished to communicate) directly with the original Khmer Rouge photographer/s.

Nevertheless, the authorship and ownership of the photographs (and to a lesser extent the
identity of the twenty-two victims) were issues that dogged the MoMA exhibition. In the same months that Photographs from S-21 was showing in New York, a man claiming to have been the chief photographer at S-21, Nhem En, gave a series of interviews to international journalists in Phnom Penh (McDowell, 1997; Smith, 1997). In Cambodia, Nhem En returned to the S-21 site, and viewed the portrait photos now displayed in the Tuol Sleng Museum. According to a report in the Wall Street Journal in September 1997, Nhem En, in interviews with foreign journalists

offered only one careful detail to set the record straight: The number on the chest of the shirtless boy, whose picture is frequently reproduced in the West, wasn’t pinned to his skin [but] stuck ... laminated in plastic, to the boy’s clammy skin for the few seconds it took to take the picture (Smith, 1997).

The ‘truth’ about the number being pinned or unpinned is unknowable and, of course, in the scheme of a genocide, irrelevant. In Nhem En’s reported articulation, however, ‘the record’ — the visual and iconic ‘truth’ of the photograph which he aims to expose as a fiction — is itself unmasked as a complex play of representation, interpretation and counter-representation.

The MoMA curators sought clarification of Nhem En’s authorship of the photographs by contacting Peter Maguire, one of the historians with whom Niven and Riley had previously collaborated. Nhem En has subsequently been interviewed by historians David Chandler and Peter Maguire, and Photo Archive Group co-founder Doug Niven (Chandler, 1999: 27-8). Significant new information about the use and production of the photographs has been offered by Nhem En in interviews, but his claims to authorship of the photographs has not resulted in any public recognition appearing with the work. The other names not recorded on the walls of Gallery Three are those of prisoners identified by historians and the Photo Archive Group. Facsimile copies of five portraits included in the final exhibition were

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forwarded by the Photo Archive Group to MoMA with 'the names we have' (Riley, 1997). To my knowledge, these names were not included in the exhibition.

7.6 Conclusion

Practices of photography, journalism and museum curatorship necessarily engage with materiality. But this materiality is, as we have seen in the photographic artefact, inevitably a function of 'doubleness', a relationship between image and object. The exhibition *Photographs from S-21* engaged New York audiences with faces from the fields of a relatively less well-known atrocity. But the museum also received criticism from visitors for presenting such artefacts as if it were simply necessary and desirable (in a moral or practical sense). It seems that visitors, more so than curators, struggled most with questions such as 'whose memory is this?', 'what form of memory?' and 'how might these photographs be exhibited?'. Suggestions that the S-21 photographs might have been better exhibited if they had been juxtaposed with maps, authority statements, with the involvement of diasporic Khmer communities are, however, equally problematic. As Paul Crang has argued of the juxtapositional aesthetics of 'ethnic design' — juxtaposition may simply mean that different elements (cultural arteacts) are obtained, displaced and stitched together, but the existing understandings of those differences are used rather than fundamentally challenged (Crang, 1996: 62). Far less likely then, in the case of MoMA, was the juxtapositioning of the photographs which other cultural artefacts or cultural texts that would instead:

- show connections between 'different' elements, to refuse the equation of difference with separation, and thus ... to destabilise each of the elements in the [work] and with them the dimensions on which their difference is constructed (Crang, 1996: 62).

Instead of 'enlisting cultural differences and dichotomies for aesthetic effect' (Crang, 1996: 63) as at MoMA, the Phnom Penh-exhibited work *Messengers* was concerned with the
'cultural routes' by which the S-21 prison portraits have come to circulate both within Cambodia and beyond.

As Ian Buruma argues, it is possible to support 'the aim of fostering tolerance and understanding of other cultures and communities' while opposing 'the steady substitution of political argument with the soothing rhetoric of healing' (Buruma, 1999: 9). But the S-21 photographs, their history already narrowed and overdetermined, arrived in a metropolitan art space which too readily gestured toward humanitarian sensibilities supposedly above public political contestation.
CHAPTER 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

On January 28 2006 the United Nations observed the 61st anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The UN hopes this will become an annual event. Jewish camp survivors spoke of their experiences of liberation in the UN General Assembly. A ceremony was also held at Auschwitz. Direct references were made to Iran, whose President has recently made statements denying the magnitude of the Holocaust. The new geopolitical evil of the twenty-first century is whoever refuses the memory of an exemplary trauma of the twentieth century. In this performance, it is clear that discourses of traumatic memory and global power are increasingly interwoven. As memory moves centre stage in the most pre-eminent symbolic forum for the airing and solving of geopolitical grievances, so there is also a palpable sense that such practices are at best talismanic, at worst hypocritical, given that the champions of memory and human rights sponsor global political and bodily violence to ever greater degrees. Memory is never innocent, and the evocation of memory is always political. This dissertation has provided an account of some of the acts that have been licensed in the name of memory.

8.2 Findings

As Ben Kiernan notes, throughout the 1980s the United Nations General Assembly regularly had to decide who was to represent Cambodia: a de facto government, or an insurgent and exiled coalition (Kiernan, 1993: 9). This thesis has been concerned with the places and people who were enlisted in attempts to have the de facto government of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea win sway in this period, not only in the halls of international governance, but in the villages, towns and cities within its own putative borders. The post-1979 reconstruction
of Cambodia was as much advanced through the production of symbolic spaces capable of exhibiting evidence of the crimes of the former regime as it was through military campaigns against the same regime. This evidence included disinterred human remains, physical structures used for torture or incarceration, and documents, film and photography produced by the Khmer Rouge. Sites such as Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek were investigated and reorganised according to a new political demand: that they might host both commemorative and everyday memorial practices. These places, centred on visual technologies, were undoubtedly designed authenticate the charges of genocide that the PRK authorities were elsewhere pursuing (via the People’s Revolutionary Tribunal, for example). As I have shown in Chapters 4 and 5, however, the curated ‘memory’ of the horror of Democratic Kampuchea was not an uncontested project.

My analysis of practices of curation at Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek has centred on the narratives and truth claims propounded by the exhibited materials in these places, as well as the production of subject/visitor positions. I considered the Tuol Sleng Museum site to be an apparatus indebted in no small way to the institution it replaced, the Khmer Rouge S-21 prison. Echoes of particular disciplinary practices associated with the prison apparatus, and before it, the school, are still felt. Architecturally, the S-21 prison capitalised on the surveillance and segregation provided by the existing school buildings, changing some sections to provide more or less space for different prisoners. The museum’s retention of this architecture of the prison stemmed from a desire to imbue the museum’s representation of the past with the pallor of authenticity. Here, and at the ‘killing field’ of Choeung Ek, ‘shock-value’ was consciously sought by curators, producing unintended and unsettling consequences.
Throughout the 1980s, Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek attempted to memorialise a trauma that had not yet fully ended — the country continued to suffer an ongoing civil war between the perpetrators of genocide and the new rulers in Phnom Penh. In this way, the sites are also markers of the instability of the decade following Pol Pot than of Pol Pot's crimes. But their persistence to the present day, and the new ways in which they are being taken up in political and tourist performances, also tells a story about the longevity and power of the Cambodian People's Party within Cambodia politics in the face of significant political and economic change.

Discourses of memory and commemorative performance is never far from post-conflict national reconstruction — that necessarily spatial undertaking that marks out new spaces as meaningful for the new nation (see Matless, 1998). In some cases, such spaces are also explicitly articulated to actors and institutions beyond nation populations. In the case of Cambodia, this articulation must be understood as an attempt to intervene in geopolitics: the 'envisioning and writing [of] space-as-global' (Ó Tuathail, 1996: 16). In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I have argued that the Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek sites have long petitioned an international humanitarian order, an appeal that has been consistently marginalised by international institutions of governance and political leaders. The discomfort produced by Cambodia's sovereign status vis-à-vis international institutions such as the UN continues to frame discourses of memory about Cambodia's past. Explanation for this state of affairs should not simply run to problems of formal geopolitical intransigence, denial or semiotic illiteracy, but should instead be cause for an investigation of the power relations inherent in transnational discourses of traumatic memory.
As I have argued throughout, problems arise for both Cambodians and non-Cambodians when faced with Cambodia’s genocide memorials. Instead of symbolising life sacrificed for the nation, these memorials symbolise life that became sacred (that is, became life that could be killed but not sacrificed) under Democratic Kampuchea. Thus the memorials express a truth of sovereign power: that such power may produce a genocide. This situation is at odds with national and international (humanitarian) projects that make claims on such sites in purporting to guard against the repetition of genocidal violence.

Non-Cambodians now outnumber Cambodian visitors at the two national genocide memorial sites in Phnom Penh. As I suggest in Chapter 4, this is largely due to Cambodians’ preference for traditional religious spaces and practices over national (and, for some, party-political) spaces for the purposes of remembering and placating the dead. In Chapter 6, I have considered non-Cambodians’ visits to such sites as popular geopolitical practices. I have argued that tourists visiting these places are interested to test the representations offered by popular geopolitical texts against what is perceived to be a different cultural representation (a ‘Cambodian’ version of events), or the (perceived) authenticity or ‘truth’ of places where traumatic events took place. Visitors are invited to adopt the position of witness, seeing their role as being one of testifying to the singularity of the past violence represented by the sites. In part, their witnessing responds to an older curatorial motivation installed in the sites.

Significant differences arise, however, in the ‘testimonies’ of early and present-day visitors. Issues of cultural difference, historiography and individual agency debated by present-day visitors differ significantly from earlier visitor responses concerning legal justice, collective agency and socialist-communist political ideologies in the world system. Present-day visitors
mistake their role as tertis (a witness who intervenes between two parties) for a personal experience of the horror that has in fact been mediated through museal representations. It is as if an experience proper to the figure of the superstes (a witness who has survived an event) is what they seek.

In the last decade, Cambodia’s national genocide museum has also been ‘on tour’ in the form of an exhibition of S-21 prisoner portrait photographs. The mobility of representations of Cambodia’s past violence necessitates a rethinking of the relationship between place and memory. As is argued in Chapter 7, the images in the touring exhibition are at once representations and residues of violence, and the effects of these mobile evidentiary artefacts on institutions and advocacy groups in the West have been significant.

8.3 The Killing Fields

I have, to this point, given an account of memory work that responds to the mass political violence of the Khmer Rouge and its aftermath. One of the most significant transnational representations of Cambodia in the contemporary period is the 1984 film The Killing Fields. An analysis of this popular geopolitical text and its reception brings into focus many of the issues charted in the discussion so far.

As I have argued, it is the geographical trope of the ‘killing field’ that routinely stands in for the mass political violence that occurred during Cambodia’s Democratic Kampuchea period. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) gives two definitions for ‘killing field’. The first is
‘killing ground’ (elsewhere defined as ‘an area in which animals [are] hunted and killed’77) and the second ‘a place of warfare or unrest associated with heavy loss of (civilian) life, especially as the result of massacre or genocide [or] any place in which a murder or other killing occurs’. The OED confirms that the latter meaning of the term is used to refer specifically to events in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge regime.

The title ‘The Killing Fields’ was taken from an article written by US journalist Sydney Schanberg and first appeared on a draft of the film’s screenplay, written by Bruce Robinson, in 1981. The film won international critical acclaim for its depiction of the ‘real-life’ friendship between Schanberg and a Cambodian journalist, Dith Pran. The 1984 film re-tells Dith Pran’s survival of the years 1975–1979 and his escape from Cambodia in 1980. A complex set of events occurring before and during Khmer Rouge rule in Cambodia are portrayed by the film, as are some of the significant social and political changes wrought by these events in both the United States and Cambodia. The film also provides a self-conscious, ‘sensitive’ exploration of a human relationship caught up in a geopolitical conflict, and of the tensions and emotions thus produced. The film shifts uneasily between three genres: political fiction, melodrama and documentary.

77 The proof provided is: 1915 Science vol. 41 p. 903 ‘Commercial killing had been cut off and the killing fields were bare’. The article is referring to ‘the fur-seal killing grounds’ (also p. 903) of the Pribilof Islands. An earlier instance of the use of the term ‘killing field’ not noted in the OED occurs in an 1894 article in the Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York vol. 26, also pertaining to fur-seal killing. In this article, J. Stanley Brown writes that: ‘Every incident of the killing field is most distressing to one in the slightest degree sensitive’ (p. 346). The process by which this term — used to describe a place in which animals were killed — has developed a meaning related to mass human political violence is worthy of further attention.
While claims of genocide coming from within Cambodia and from the Thai border camps were topics of Western media reports around the time of the film's release, extended popular portrayals of Cambodia's people and recent history were rare. *The Killing Fields* was important not least because it depicted the consequences of America's military and political intervention in Cambodia. The inbuilt foil to the depersonalised blundering of American foreign policy is the heroic figure of Schanberg, whose journalistic drive, personal skill, and sense of responsibility for Pran carry the melodrama of the film. *The Killing Fields* attempted to do justice to the 'truth' of history without sensationalising the suffering of the Khmer people (see Greenfield and Locke, 1984).

The manifold and brutal techniques of Khmer Rouge repression and the variation in these under different cadre groups in different locations is vividly portrayed in the film. Its staging of Khmer-language and cultural details of Cambodia's Lon Nol and Democratic Kampuchea periods is unsurpassed. But, despite this attention to cultural, historical and linguistic detail, as David Chandler has noted, subtitles are not shown for the Khmer-language dialogue sections, though these sections form the greater part of the second half of the film (Chandler, 1986: 96). In place of sub-titles, Dith Pran's voice-over in English traces his thoughts and relays the directives of the Khmer Rouge cadre as he attempts to hide the traces of his class, education and opinions. One effect of the omission of sub-titles is a heightened dramatic tension in the second half of the film; the audience fears Dith Pran will be caught out speaking and thinking to himself — that he'll be heard or seen and punished, as occurs when he is caught tapping the veins of cattle for food. A closer identification with Dith Pran is forced. His voice-over becomes the medium through which the visual rendering of the demands of the Khmer Rouge characters, as well as his own fears and suffering, is interpreted.
for the audience. The film is first and foremost a story for non-Cambodians, and the decision not to provide sub-titles for the Khmer dialogue is evidence of this larger priority (Chandler 1986: 96). Yet, as we shall see, the Khmer dialogue generates unexpected truth-effects for Khmer communities.

In the United States, *The Killing Fields* was generally received as a serious political film. The film won several Academy awards, including 'best supporting actor' for Haing Ngor, a Cambodian survivor himself, who plays Dith Pran. As Chandler so rightly identifies, this award says much about American geopolitical views of mainland southeast Asia and the Vietnam-American War:

> The region and the war are seen, by many writers, centripetally, as places and events that happen to Americans; the war becomes *America’s longest*; it is inconceivable that the Vietnamese — or the Cambodians — should be allowed onto the center of their own national stages, competent to make their own decisions and their own (occasionally mismanaged) history, and the perception is that Americans are something happening to them, rather than the reverse (Chandler, 1986: 93, original emphasis).

Other criticisms were also levelled at the film. These criticisms respond, in various ways, to the simultaneous but contradictory intents of the three genres noted above: political fiction, melodrama and non-fiction documentary. One of the more serious critiques suggested that the film’s political import lay solely in its choice of subject and not in the way the film treated that subject (Wood, 1986: 62). It was argued that *The Killing Fields* relied on a ‘sentimentalised dramatic structure’, ‘hovering in anxiety over an abstract issue — war, poverty, corruption’ within ‘a pot-boiler of a story’ (Wood, 1986: 62). The same reviewer levelled that the film was so ‘sufficiently removed in space and time’ as to be ‘incapable of inviting the viewer to action, or even the contemplation of action’ (Wood, 1986: 62).
A heroic narrative of a escape dominates the film, with none of the ambivalence that Dith Pran himself has expressed: 'I would like to return to Cambodia. It is after all my home. But I am not optimistic' (Pran in Greenfield and Locke, 1984: 123). Escape to the West is the happy ending for Pran (and, by extension, all Cambodians). Pran’s escape after 1979 is also depicted as a victory over the evils of the Khmer Rouge. In reality, Pran quit Cambodia (along with many thousands of his compatriots) in the period after Pol Pot. The flight to the border and beyond as deleterious to the reconstruction of Cambodia during the 1980s is not reflected in the film. Here The Killing Fields might be usefully contrasted with early documentary films like Kampuchea: Death and Re-birth — made by the East German Heynowski and Scheumann Studio in cooperation with the PRK government. Kampuchea: Death and Re-birth portrays refugees’ willingness to leave Cambodia in a negative light, and narrates the worsening situation produced by Western support for remnant Khmer Rouge on the border with Thailand.

A significant audience for the film was the Khmer diaspora in countries such as France, the USA and Australia. It seems that these communities were not the primary audience for which the film was intended. Nonetheless, the film The Killing Fields operates as the ultimate visual-media memorial for some diasporic Khmer. Frank Smith notes that in several Khmer refugee communities in the United States, the film is valued as a largely accurate record of their personal experiences under the Khmer Rouge:

They watch this movie over and over again, both on cable television and on videocassette, constantly discussing it, analyzing it, and arguing over its fine historical points. So much do they perceive this film as an accurate historical record of the Pol Pot
years that many peasant refugees believe it was actually filmed in Cambodia while the
Khmer Rouge ruled (Smith, 1994: 153).

For these refugee groups, the brutality that the urban evacuees like Dith Pran face in *The
Killing Fields* brings home the truth of their own experience. Following the Pol Pot years, the
wage-levels and social status this group had known in their pre-1975 life remained
unattainable in the emergent socialist state of the People's Republic of Kampuchea. Other
emigration incentives for this group included a general mistrust of socialist ideology and the
Vietnamese military presence, and an expectation that their being educated would result in
more immediate repatriation to a Western nation. The mirroring of their journeys in Dith
Pran’s undoubtedly heightens the truth and affect of the film for a Khmer diasporic
population. Thus, despite the film not being made for them, Cambodians inscribe in it new
meanings about home and exile, suffering and redemption, memory and experience. 78

In recent years Cambodia’s state media has screened *The Killing Fields* within a larger
commemorative tradition. Television broadcasts of the film have taken place on May 20, a
day reserved since 1983 for the remembrance of the victims of the Pol Pot regime (as
discussed in Chapter 4). In Phnom Penh, many people watch the film in their local shops and
restaurants. Here, as in diasporic communities, the film promotes debate and personal
remembrance about the period, and is considered as a largely accurate portrayal of events in
Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. Bootleg copies of the film are sold in Phnom Penh

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78 David Chandler writes of those Cambodians he observed at a showing of the film in Melbourne,
Australia, in early 1985: 'They had come to the film, in a sense, to visit a cemetery and pay their
respects' (Chandler, 1986: 96).
markets, and are also available to tourists at the souvenir stand at Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocide Crimes.

*The Killing Fields* vividly re-enacts the fall of Phnom Penh and life under the Khmer Rouge. The rarity of such depictions guarantee the film’s status as an important popular text for Cambodians and non-Cambodians. But *The Killing Fields* is also an amalgam of geopolitical scripts, memorialising intentions and genres. One effect of this unstable amalgamation is the reiteration of dominant Western views of Cambodia as an 'unfortunate' victim of history, and the concomitant marginalisation of another story; a story of specific interplay between Cambodian communism and conservative geopolitical practices in the region in the 1970s.

### 8.4 After memory

The correct question to pose concerning the horrors committed in these camps is, therefore, not the hypocritical one of how crimes of such atrocity could be committed against human beings. It would be more honest and, above all, more useful to investigate fully the juridical procedures and deployments of power by which human beings could be so completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives that no act committed against them could appear any longer as a crime (Agamben, 1998: 171).

In the case to hand, formal and popular geopolitical representations and practices have long scripted the territory of Cambodia as *peripheral* and *primordial*. This script is underpinned by the persistence of Eurocentric geographies and Orientalist fantasies, but also hinge on the hoary claim that memory belongs to people without history (Klein, 2000: 137). When regarding Cambodia, formal geopolitics is faced with the repetition of genocide, something that the principle 'Never Again' was supposed to remind the world to prevent. The failure of
this principle is restaged as Cambodia’s failure. Various iterations of this are found in external representations of Cambodia’s (obstinate) sovereignty, (violent) ‘transition’ to democracy, (compromised) reconciliation, and (arrested) development. Prescriptions for Cambodia run thus: the future is the past, and with it a profitable politics of victimhood. Humanitarian assistance and institutions of global governance are thus set to play an even greater role in Cambodia’s new century than they have in times past, the upcoming trial of former Khmer Rouge (with international assistance) being a case in point.

This study has demonstrated that Cambodia’s genocide memorials are not only sites of competing religious and political discourses at a local and national levels, but that they were and remain international sites. Cambodia’s memorials are continue to be of interest to large and powerful international NGOs, the mass media, tourism, diasporic groups and diplomatic delegations. I have also argued that in institutionalising the memory of violence there is a danger of reifying the very conditions that produced the violence in the first place (the sovereign decision). In Cambodia, this reification saw the installation of a highly problematic figure (homo sacer, the genocide victim) into the heart of a state-sanctioned memorial project, with a variety of ambivalent effects.

The humanitarian ethos that is at work in present-day performances at Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek — as well as those occurring in New York and Auschwitz described at the outset of this chapter — identifies and yet displaces genocide. Genocide is allegedly the ultimate evil, and must not happen again; yet, because it is so evil, it remains beyond our comprehension, geopolitical purview, and indeed our power. Such events remain external and unknowable.
Far from being undermined by genocide, humanitarianism requires its continual representation.

Cambodia’s memorial sites are now subject to apotropaic, or talismanic, practices. In these places, geopolitical figures and tourists perform momentary, ritualised performances that rehearse the hypocritical question of which Agamben speaks: ‘How could such crimes of atrocity be committed against human beings?’. While the intention of such visiting practices is to recognise and understand events of mass political violence, calcified discourses of memory put to past (and put elsewhere) the numinous, ‘unspeakable’ horrors that continue to be perpetuated by modern geopolitical orders. The challenge that remains is to recognise the indivisibility — within of current formulations of sovereignty — of the protection of rights and the licensing of genocide. The talismanic sites of memory I have examined here currently serve to ward off the confusion, instability and possible action that such a realisation would entail.
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Khemara Jati (17th April 2001) “Cambodia, right of death to burials and the puppet regime; are the bones of our martyrs exhibits?”


McDowell, R. (7th February, 1997) "Lens captures Khmer Rouge genocide", *The Bangkok*


Soluri and Nolletti Productions (29th July, 1999) Photographs from S-21, facsimile of draft screenplay, Department of Photography MoMA files.


Archival Materials

1) DC-Cam archive documents (originals in Khmer, translated by Sour Bun Sou)


Instructions to construct buildings for keeping of evidentiary materials of genocide crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge regime in Choeung Ek, Phnom Penh, Tuol Sleng archive document no. 2217.

Instructions to organise the Day of Anger against Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan May 20, 1990, Council of the Front for the Salvation and Construction of Kampuchea, DC-Cam archive doc. no. 331.

Ministry of Information and Culture, PRK, memo No. 3123 dated October 5 1983, DC-Cam archive copy.

Ministry of Information and Culture, PRK, memo No. 3275 dated October 14 1983, DC-Cam archive copy.

Report on the meeting of anger against Pol Pot, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan held on May 20 1989 at Tuol Phtorng Memorial, Front for the Salvation and Construction of Kampuchea of Stung district, DC-Cam archive doc. no. 581.

Statement on the verdict of the People’s Revolutionary Tribunal (trial of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Phnom Penh, dated September 28, 1979.

2) Tuol Sleng Archive

Visitor Book 1979-1980

Visitor Book 1980-1982

3) Miscellaneous
Documentation Center of Cambodia: D06358.


unpublished.


Riley, C. (21st April, 1997) Facsimile communication to Adrienne Williams, MoMA
Department of Photography files.

and Fine Arts.

Williams, A. (7th July, 1997) Letter to William Dunlap and Linda Burgess, MoMA
Department of Photography files.

-------------------------. (31st August, 1998) Letter to Paul Ellis, MoMA Department of Photography
files.

**Interviews (Personal communications)**

See Appendices 3 and 5.
ឈ្មោះ: សូ្ម៉ាសសិន បុរ៉េសា សិល្បៈអូត់
ទិញ: ទី៣ ឈីស្ក៊ី រុងក្តោស់ លេខ ១ ខេត្តសុខភាព មាន់ក្រុង ក្រុងកែម៉៉ា ក្រុងសៀមរាប

លេខ៦៣-១ លើ ប៊ីរ៉ាប៊ី១ និង ប៊ីរ៉ាប៊ី២ មាន់ក្រុង ក្រុងសៀមរាប

សន្នេសេ្លី សិស្ស ទូកសំរេ្លី ឆ្នាំ ១៩៩៩

ប្រការពិសេសរបស់តុលាការពិសេស ២៩ ខែមេសា ឆ្នាំ ២០០០

ក្រុងសៀមរាប ២០០០ ខេត្តសៀមរាប ក្រុងសៀមរាប
Appendix 2: Interview Schedule key players [Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts/ Tourism].

[Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts]

**general details**

**Do you require anonymity?**  yes  no

(1.1 Name)
(1.2 Gender)

1.3 What is/ was your position in the Ministry?
1.4 How long have you worked/ did you work in the Ministry?
1.5 Where did you work previously?

---

**I am interested in Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum — can you tell me how this place came to be?**

Who was involved in setting up Tuol Sleng Museum (which people, or which organisations)?

Was there international funding or involvement in the Museum?

Where were you (working) at this time?

In your opinion, what was the aim of the museum when it opened in January of 1980?

Is there any documentation about this?

Were there any controversies when the museum opened in 1980? And during the 1980s?

Who designed the ‘presentation’ of Tuol Sleng Museum

In your opinion, what is the Museum’s message?

The museum is twenty years old now — how has it changed over this time?

Why have such changes occurred?

How is Tuol Sleng is important to the nation?
Are there plans to update the Museum in the future?

I would now like to ask you some questions about visitors who come to the museum...

Who came to the Museum when it was first opened?

Why did these people come to the Museum?

(Did foreign tourists visit the Museum during the 1980s?) (What nationalities?)

Did Cambodians visit the Museum during the 1980s?

(Do you think Cambodians only came from Phnom Penh to visit the Museum or did they come from the countryside as well?) (Why did they come to visit?)

Were school students taken to the Museum at this time?

Do schools nowadays organise for their students to go to Tuol Sleng? (Do you know if they go at any particular time of year?)

These days many foreign tourists visit the Museum — why do you think these people visit the Museum?

Do you think Tuol Sleng will become more or less popular as a place for foreign tourists in the future? (Why?)

I would now like to talk to you about Choeung Ek...

Can you tell me how Choeung Ek came to be?

How was the design for the Choeung Ek Memorial Stupa agreed upon?

What is the message of the Choeung Ek Memorial’s design?

Has there ever been any controversy around Choeung Ek? Can you tell me about this?

I would now like to ask you some questions about visitors who come to Choeung Ek...

Who came to Choeung Ek when it was first discovered (in 1980)?

Why did they come?
(Do you think Cambodians only came from Phnom Penh to visit Choeung Ek or did they come from other places as well?) (Why did they come?)

Were schoolchildren taken to see Choeung Ek? Are they taken nowadays?

Did tourists visit Choeung Ek in the early 1980s? (Before the Memorial Stupa?)

These days many foreign tourists visit the Memorial — why do you think these people visit?

Do you think Choeung Ek will become more or less popular as a place for foreign tourists in the future? (Why?)

I now want to ask you some questions about Choeung Ek and Tuol Sleng Museum together.
In your opinion, what are the major differences between Tuol Sleng Museum and Choeung Ek Memorial?

In your opinion, what are the major similarities shared by Tuol Sleng Museum and Choeung Ek Memorial?

Do you see Tuol Sleng or Choeung Ek as places of 'reconciliation'?

How does the trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders currently being proposed relate to these two places?

Are there any additional comments you would like to make?

Thank you for your valuable time.
I would like to begin by asking you some questions about tourism in Cambodia. In your opinion, how important is international tourism to Cambodia?

Do you keep figures on how many tourists come to Cambodia — on organised group tours? — traveling here independently?

What countries do these tourists originate from?

In your opinion, what are the major attractions that tourists come to see in Cambodia?

I would now like to ask you some questions about tourists and the Choeung Ek Centre and Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum.

In your opinion, why was the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum developed?

In your opinion, why was the Choeung Ek site, and later the Choeung Ek Memorial, developed?

I would now like to ask you some questions about the different people who visit the TS Museum and the CE Memorial.

First, in the past...
Who visited Tuol Sleng Museum during the 1980s?

Who visited Choeung Ek during the 1980s (before the Memorial Stupa)?

Are there any records kept on visitors that would be available to me?
Now some questions on the present situation...

In your opinion, is Tuol Sleng Museum a place that Cambodians visit?

Is Cheoung Ek a place that Cambodians visit?

Does the Ministry of Tourism promote local and international tourism to the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum or to Cheoung Ek? (I have here, for example, a 1994 Ministry of Tourism promotional magazine Cambodia, Discover the Hidden Kingdom. In this publication there is no mention of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum or the Cheoung Ek Memorial. Why is this so?)

How do you think international tourists find out about the Museum and Cheoung Ek?

Why do you think international tourists come to Tuol Sleng or Cheoung Ek?

What is the future of international tourism at Tuol Sleng Museum and Cheoung Ek?

There is much talk in Cambodia now about 'reconciliation' — how does reconciliation relate to tourism?

How does the trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders currently being proposed relate to these two places?

Are there any additional comments you would like to make?

Thank you for your valuable time.
## Appendix 3: Table of key player interviews

<table>
<thead>
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<th>CODE</th>
<th>DAT</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
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</thead>
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Appendix 4: Interview Schedule visitors at the Tuol Sleng National Genocide Museum.

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<td>What is your nationality?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been in Cambodia?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long do you plan to stay?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which places do you plan to travel to inside Cambodia?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following best describes your travel mode?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organised tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent - hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>independent - backpacker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I would now like to ask you about your decision to travel to Cambodia...**

Is your travel to Cambodia part of a larger trip?

Why did you want to come to Cambodia specifically?

Prior to being here — how much knowledge did you have of Cambodia’s modern history?

How had you gained this knowledge? (Through education, guide books, academic books, film, your employment, other people...?)

What were the specific places in Cambodia you knew of prior to being here?

**I would now like to ask you some questions about the Museum.**

How did you find out about the Museum? (guide books, other people...)

When and where was this?

How did you travel to the Museum from town today?

What were your first impressions of the museum?
Why have you come to the Museum?

About how long have you spent here at the Museum today?

Have you:
− listened to a guide? (A member of museum staff or an independent guide?)
− taken photographs?
− taken a video?
− talked to other visitors?
− signed a visitor comment book?
− made a personal gesture?

What overall story did the Museum tell you?

How did it affect you?

What part of the Museum’s exhibition did you find most informing?

Which did you find least informing?

What did you find most disturbing?

Where did you spend most of your time? (Building A, B, C, D, outside, souvenir stand?) (Why?)

Tourists outnumber Cambodians most days at Tuol Sleng Museum — why would you imagine this is so?

What would you see as appropriate future plans for the Museum?

Have you visited the Choeung Ek Centre of Genocide Crimes?
(If yes, how do the two places compare?)

(If ‘I plan to’, when? Why?)

Now I want to ask you some questions about how visiting Tuol Sleng Museum compares to other places you have visited...
Have you ever visited a place comparable to this Museum?

(How has your experience of Tuol Sleng Museum been different to your previous experience/s?)

Is Tuol Sleng most important as a *Cambodian* or an *international* place?

Are you aware of the burial and prison sites present throughout provincial Cambodia?
(If yes, have you visited any of them?)

If no, would you be interested in visiting these local-level memorials?

Are there any additional comments you would like to make about your experiences?

*Thank you for your valuable time.*
### Appendix 5: Table of tourist interviews

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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Employment Type</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Date of Visit</th>
<th>How knew</th>
<th>Recorded</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<td>Canada</td>
<td>Engineer/Student</td>
<td>45 days</td>
<td>198902</td>
<td>Friend</td>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Guidebook</td>
<td>35+ days</td>
<td>200402</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>France</td>
<td>Other tourists</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>23</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Other tours</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Engineer/Student</td>
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</table>

**Notes:**
- Yes/photographs: Yes/photographs recorded during visit.
- No: No photographs recorded during visit.
- Yes: Yes, photos or videos recorded during visit.
- No: No photos or videos recorded during visit.
- Friends home & guidebook: Friends home & guidebook used to plan visit.
- Friends home: Friends home used to plan visit.
- Other tourists: Other tourists used to plan visit.
- No: No deliberate planning.
- Deliberate: Deliberate planning.
- 60 minutes: 60 minutes of visit.
- 90 minutes: 90 minutes of visit.
- 120 minutes: 120 minutes of visit.
- 180+ minutes: 180+ minutes of visit.
Author/s:
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