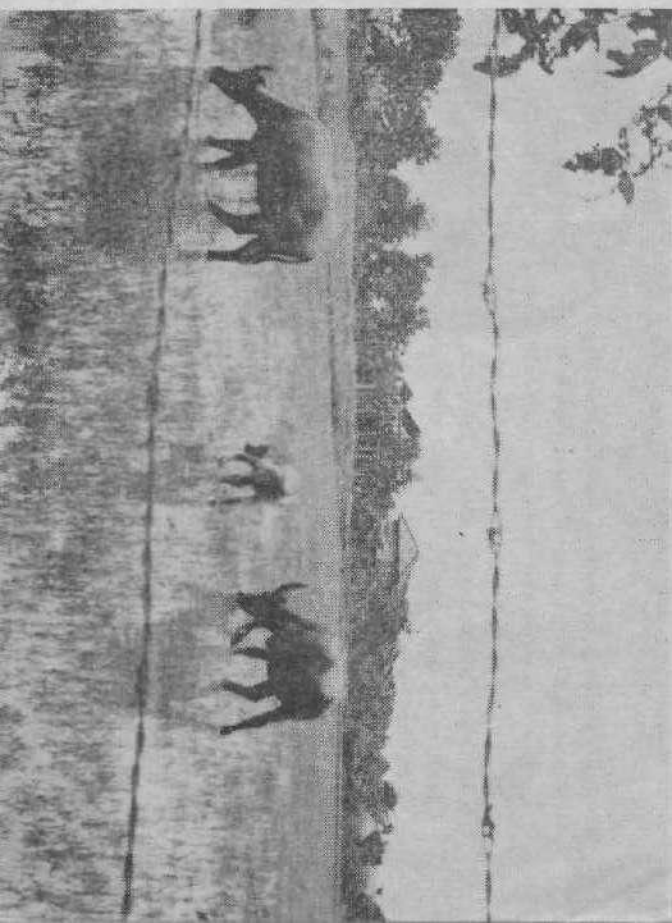


GLIMPSES OF

Cambodia



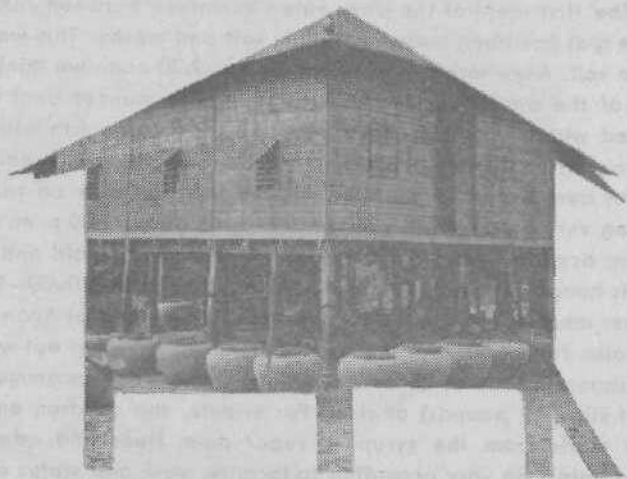
Who are these people? With brown skin, thick black hair, dark eyes, medium height and build, they much resemble their Malayan and Polynesian ancestors. The Cambodian is always ready to smile, even if just to cover his embarrassment. This smile is revealing. In the youth it will show pearly white teeth; in older women, teeth stained reddish-black from beetle nut; and in men often a mouthful of gold plated teeth sometimes with heart shaped inserts of red and green. Men living in or near the cities have turned to the West for their clothing styles, while the women still wear the traditional ankle length black skirt with a blouse, often brightly colored. Clothing in the rural area is much more simple as men wear either black trousers or shorts, and women black skirts and blouses. There is the festive occasion when the ladies will put on their best black silk skirt, or wear a beautifully woven colored silk skirt, but these times are few. One article of clothing indispensable to the Cambodian is the "kanseng." A piece of rough home spun cotton about a yard wide and two yards long, this, when they bathe is their bath towel, when they wash dishes their tea towel, their house duster, their handkerchief. On the road or in the field, they wrap it around the head as a turban. During the heat of the day it will be draped from the crown of the head down across the shoulders to protect the neck from the sun.



Mr. Heng, would you please tell me about the eating habits of the Cambodian?

"The first meal of the day, eaten sometime between 7:00 and 8:00 a. m. consists of rice that has been boiled until it is soft and mushy. This we eat with dried fish and a little salt. Anywhere from 11:00 a. m. to 12:30 noon we think about eating our main meal of the day. Rice, cooked in the regular manner until it is white and fluffy, is covered with a thin stew. This we make by cooking fish with various kinds of leafy vegetables, beans, the flowers of the banana plant or sugar palm. Once in a while pork or beef will be substituted for the fish, but only on rare occasions. If a man is working very hard he will want to eat again about 2:00 p. m. At this time he will finish off any rice left over from the noon meal. It will be cold and hard, but it tastes good if he is hungry enough. At night before going to bed (8:00—9:00 p. m.) we often have another meal of the same stew over rice like we had at noon."

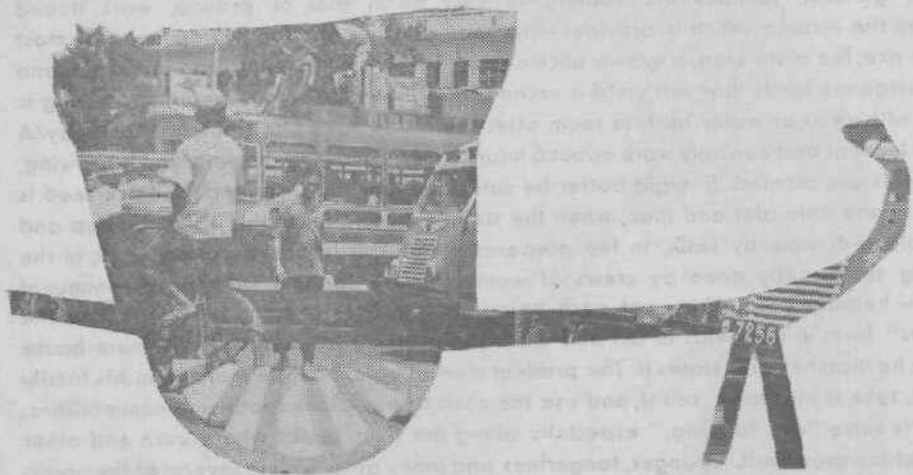
I also found out that the Cambodian would rather eat with a large spoon, like a tablespoon instead of chopsticks. In one day it is not uncommon for him to consume at least 1 kilo (2.2 pounds) of rice. For sweets, the children enjoy eating the cakes of sugar made from the syrup of sugar palm trees and adults will drink the syrup. Eating habits do vary according to locality, work and status of living.



For the most part houses are made either of thatch or wood. There is some construction in brick and concrete, but this is limited to the larger cities. Thatch (palm leaves, dried and strung on a stick to form a sheet about 4 feet long and 2 feet wide) is very versatile since it can be used as both siding and roofing. As it dries though, fire is an ever present hazard. To build a thatch house the owner simply erects long wooden or bamboo poles atop concrete or brick bases that have been set into the ground. He joins these poles with others to form the roof and sides. To this structure are tied the sheets of thatch. Moving is simple; untie the thatch, take down the poles, dig up the bases, put the whole thing on the ox-cart and off you go. Wooden houses are more permanent and usually have tile or corrugated tin roofs. Built high off the ground they offer room underneath to keep pigs, oxen, chickens, the ox-cart and other implements of the household. Often the "kitchen and dining room" are here too. A structure up high like this is cooler in the hot season and drier during the rains. The flooring has as many cracks as boards. This keeps the air circulating and facilitates sweeping—not too much need for a dustpan. Furniture is scarce. A bed is normal, but many times a mat spread on the floor will suffice. Rarely does the Cambodian sleep on a mattress. There might be a desk or table, a few chairs and a small cupboard.



In general, families are content to stay on a plot of ground, work it and live on the income which it provides—rice and a little cash for fish or meat. In most areas rice, the main crop, is grown once a year. There are, however, some lowland and well irrigated lands that will yield a second, and even third crop annually. Plowing is done with an ox or water-buffalo team after the fields have been flooded for a day. A good team at best can only work about 6 hours a day. Following plowing and harrowing, the fields are planted. It might better be said they are “transplanted” for rice seed is sown in one little plot and then, when the stalk is a certain height, it is pulled up and transplanted, stalk by stalk, in the prepared field. This is backbreaking work in the boiling sun usually done by crews of women. These farmers work on a communal basis—helping each other—yet each being his own boss. Again, at harvest time the “crews” form in the fields to cut and stack the grain. It is taken to the owners house where he thrashes and stores it. The prudent man will plant a little more than his family needs, take it into town, sell it, and use the cash to buy other foods and commodities. There is some “dry farming,” especially along the river banks where corn and other vegetables grow well. Oranges, tangerines and limes grow well in several of the northern provinces, while papaya, mango and banana trees can be seen almost everywhere.



The shrill squeal of a full sized pig protesting its ride to market, tied to the back of a bicycle; ox-cart wheels groaning and creaking as they grind over the dusty rutted trail; the roar of a four engine Constellation revving for take-off at Phnom Penh's new International airport; bare, callused feet slapping the path leading from the village water hole to the house; the swaying rumble of the train as it "clickity clacks" its way to Battambang; gears whinnying as buses, packed with people and piled high on top with sacks of cement, boards, vegetables and everything else, move from the market toward rural areas; the low hum of tires as the latest in automobiles glide along the American built highway toward the new seaport; the throaty tooting of a river boat whistle, calling all passengers on board; the gentle dipping of oars and paddles as smaller craft ply hundreds of miles of waterways; trucks roaring down the roads loaded well beyond capacity; the tinkling clunk of bicycle and cyclo bells; the whanking of motor bike and motor scooter horns—sounds of transportation in Cambodia.



Scattered throughout the land are numerous ruins of old temples and fortresses. The most famous of these is located in Siem Reap Province about 195 miles north of Phnom Penh—Angkor. Built in successive stages from 900—1200 A. D. it stands today as a history of ancient Cambodian art and culture. Into the stone walls, all hand carved and fit without mortar, have been cut the legends of that day. For years Angkor served as the capitol of Cambodia and center of religious thought. Many sights will impress the tourist: Angkor Thom, the great walled city, Angkor Vat the most famous and beautiful of all the ancient Cambodian temples and the Bayon, located in the exact center of Angkor Thom with its 200 brooding faces. These and hundreds of other monuments and murals complete the picture of antiquity. The casual visitor will be amazed at the magnitude of what he sees and will marvel as he realizes that all this was done without modern machinery. The patient scholar will be overwhelmed at the store of information bound deep inside the legends depicted by these grotesque figures, and intrigued by the similarity between past and present culture.



Buddhism, the state religion, has Cambodia's five million people in its grasp. There are 80,000 saffron robed priests living in 2,600 temples located everywhere throughout the country. For over 38 years the Gospel of Christ has been presented in this land, yet today thousands still wait to hear and understand clearly. The monumental task of reaching these is more and more becoming the responsibility of the National Church. At present with but 400 baptized believers, 11 National Workers and 4 Long Term Bible School students, the situation seems impossible. Daily, however, we see signs that Christ is building His Church. And, try as they will, the gates of hell will not be able to prevail against her. For these, the pastors, students and believers we seek your prayer interest.

Cambodia today is the product of years of tradition and superstition, however, a great change is seen to be taking place as she seeks her position in a modern world. But the basic spiritual need remains the same. The Cambodian is spiritually lost. His religion has no salvation. His real need is Christ. Pray that Cambodians as they are will become *Cambodians in Christ*.

—Copy for this issue by Donald R. Furniss

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Mr. C. M. Westergren, Editor

Mrs. B. D. Dunning, Assistant Editor