

The history of Cambodia is very long and interesting. Any historian who wants to deal with it ought to be aware of its complexity. Otherwise it may lead to incorrect assessment of facts or misinterpretation of some events.

The origins of Khmer history are associated with the process of Indianization. During this process the Cambodian people absorbed or accepted some elements of Indian culture. This process made Cambodia an Indian-seeming place. Another important factor of Cambodian history is the emergence of the Angkorean empire, which was created by the ancestors of contemporary Khmers at the beginning of 9th century. This great empire reached its peak of development in the 12th and in the first half of the 13th century. The Angkorean empire was at this time the superpower in the region. Nevertheless, in the 14th and 15th century Cambodia had undergone a change from an empire based on territorial expansion into a state whose economic upswing was provided by extensive international trade, which were rapidly developing in the area of the South and East Asia in this time. From the 17th century, however, we can speak about a real decline of Cambodia. The country found itself trapped in between its more powerful and aggressive neighbours: Vietnam and Siam. In the following two and half centuries Cambodia became the practically constant aim of invasions of these two states that tried to enforce their influence and power on the Cambodian territory. The country was experiencing economical stagnation and falling into deeper and deeper isolation. This period had ended by French protectorate over Cambodia, which opened the modern chapter of the Cambodian history. In 1953 Cambodia gain independence from France without bloodshed. Following events was not so peaceful. By the end of the 1960s when war in Vietnam escalated its neighbour Cambodia was inevitably drawn in this struggle.