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Cambodian Pagoda Committees and Community Work

Contribution to the GTZ Workshop on 26-29 February 1996 in Sri Lanka

Self Help Projects and their Co-operation with "traditional" and "modern" Organizations on the Local Level

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Promotion of Self Help Activities

within the Project

"Province Development Program Kampong Thom"

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Cambodian Pagoda Committees and Community Work

The following pages are the result of only a short project experience (one year) based however on a long term concern with this region. A workshop with pagoda-committee members in September 1995 has been particularly important to formulate the following pages,

The question to discuss: In development we can design two extreme positions: One position is sticking to a clearly structured project cycle, a stereotyped blue-print applicable in the steppes of Mongolia and the deserts of the Sahara, the jungle of South-America and the suburbs of Calcutta. Another position is open to the local conditions, there are no preset results but the effort to learn thoroughly the historical, socio-economic and cultural background, the routines and habits of the local population and also the local administration. and to design the project in the course of this learning process which is emphasizing the role of the main actors in development. The GTZ practice is somewhere in between; in some cases position one is dominant, in other projects position two. This depends largely on the personalities chosen to implement the German contribution of the project.

In the following pages I clearly take sides with option two and argue that culture and traditions of a partner country are not obstacles to "unlimited technological progress" but can be support structures capable of multiplying development efforts.

I. Shattered community spirit in scattered settlement patterns

The village center is formed by a place, surrounded by the school, the office of the village administration, the building for religious worship. The other houses are built around this central place and along the roads leading to the village. This is exactly the opposite of what a Cambodian village loooks like: A Cambodian village or "phum" is a number of houses (average about 115 families with 600 people) scattered along the road sometimes one house is located quite far from the other. The school is outside the village, mostly between two villages. The religious center, the pagoda or "vat" is also at the edge of a village. There is no office of the leader of the village: His house is the office. The settlement pattern in Cambodia is a very scattered one. The community spirit of Khmer villagers is a true reflection of this pattern: There is traditionally since centuries not much cohesion and little solidarity. The sense of responsibility seldom goes beyond the fence around his house.

This minimum of community spirit has been further diminished by twenty years of civil war (1970 - 1990). People have been fighting each other. Neighbours have been forced to kill each other. Children have been seduced to denounce their parents. There is little or no solidarity between families of different kin: Streets in the cities are not swept by the neighbouring families. Staircases in houses of several floors have not been cleaned for years. In the villages families of other kin do not belong to the kind of trustworthy people except when they are long-standing and proven friends.

Cambodians tell of themselves: "Where there are three Khmers trying to form an association, there will soon be four factions". The tendency to a social life not caring for the community has not been counteracted by the natural conditions. In contrast to Thailand and Vietnam there has always been enough cultivable land in Cambodia for families who wanted to settle elsewhere. There was no constraint to undertake communal efforts (dikes, canals, irrigation works) in order to raise agricultural production. This moment however is now not far off.

the sala as it is practice in most rural pagodas. The sala is the only place where a Cambodian rural community can meet.

The pagoda has traditionally been surrounded by a pond serving as a water reservoir for the neighbouring villages. It used to be also a place with many trees giving shade to big assemblies going beyond the capacity of the sala.

3. Pagoda: religious persons and laymen

In a pagoda there are of course monks, novices and nuns, i.e.the religious personnel living in the Vat (=pagoda) with a certain hierarchy: the abbot with a deputy to his left and right in case of a bigger pagoda. The pagoda committee however has only lay members living in the village. A religious person cannot be part of the committee. The pagoda committee has the task to see to the needs of the monks, to maintain and repair the pagoda buildings and compound and to organize a number of activities in support of the community. According to the size of the pagoda (number of monks around 30 and more, the number of villages served: five or more) and according to the scope of activities the pagoda committee can establish commissions on school construction, road and bridge construction, on finance etc. The pagoda committee members are not paid.

B. PAGODA COMMITTEES

The pagoda is not related to one village (phum) only but to several up to eight or ten villages. The pagoda committee is including representatives of the related villages: Achar Phum, "wise men of the village". These members are mainly but not always men in a mature age but still very competent. They are trusted by the people when they collect the money and decide with the monks how to spend it splitting the funds for the monks, the pagoda and the people.

1. Pagoda in relation to village, commune and district

In Kampong Thom Province there are 203 pagodas (=vat) related to 722 villages (phum), 81 communes (khum) and 8 districts (srok). One pagoda is related to a historically grown cluster of three to four villages and in one commune (khum) there are on the average two to three pagodas. This means that the political-administrative division of Cambodian society is not following the socio-cultural division. The administrative division is a product and legacy of the colonial period under France. The pagoda in Cambodia is a link between several villages. The term "community" in Cambodia does not designate a political entity like village (phum) or commune (khum) but the people of several villages united by their common link to the same pagoda. UNICEF is also using this definition. - The people coming to this pagoda are organized by the pagoda committee in >vein< or "pagoda supporting groups". There are often 15 veins, each vein serving the monks for one day in the period of Pchumben or Kathen festival comprising two times 15 days. One period is mainly the time between a full moon and the moment when the decreasing phase is changing into the rising phase or vice versa. This day is a regular meeting date for the monks assembly to review their performance of the various rules (over 200) to follow. In most villages the >krom vein< (krom = group) are only temporary organizations during Pchumben-Festival in November. In other months the pagoda is related to the village through the achar phum who is contacting the "elders" >chas tum< of a group (>krom<), the type of organization dating back to the time of the State of Cambodia (1979-92). This type of organizations existed also in the 1960s under the name of >dob knon< (= "ten households").

Sometimes one part of a village is going to one pagoda, another part to another pagoda. Some families prefer a "traditional" pagoda (one respecting the traditions and sometimes practicing magic as some people say), other families prefer a "modern" pagoda, which means one emphasizing the studies of Pali-texts. Some families have a personnel relation: a son is a novice in the pagoda.

2. Structure of Committee: Achar Vat and Achar Phum

The pagoda committee is the link and the net between several villages: There are in general two persons in charge of the general affairs: the >Achar Vat<, or the "wise men of the pagoda" and then one or two >Achar Phum<, or the "wise men of the village" of each phum (village). An achar vat can also be the achar phum in the village in which he is living. Pagoda committee members and achars are very respected personalities. The difference between the two is in general: An achar is very well versed in all ceremonies in the family and the community; a pagoda committee member can be a person who is not achar and not very good in presiding ceremonies, but he is considered to be capable of organizing and managing the maintenance of pagodas and - in some cases - the implementation of community projects. An achar is in general also a member of a pagoda committee, but not all members are also achars. - An average pagoda committee has five members; bigger pagodas have seven, ten or more members.

3. Institutional position of the pagoda committee

The pagoda committee is a predominantly social and not a political-administrative institution. It is however reporting to the "department of religious affairs" on the district level. The pagoda committee can somewhat be considered as the lowest level of the Ministry of Religious Affairs passing through the provincial and district (not commune) departments of religious affairs The administrative structure of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is corresponding to the structure of the Sangha, the religious organization or the order of Buddhism in Cambodia. The abbot corresponds to the pagoda committee, the district pagoda (vat srok) corresponds to the district department of religious affairs, the provincial pagoda (vat khet) corresponds to the provincial department and the Sangharaj, the head of the order in Vat Unnalom in Phnom Penh corresponds to the Ministry. - The loyalty of a pagoda committee will be in general with the community and not the government in situations of conflicting interests.

4. Personality Type of Pagoda Committee Member: trusted, honest, committed, not rich and not poor

The members are mostly men but also some women are pagoda committee members in Kampong Thom. The pagoda committee members are of mature age between 45 and 75 (average 60 years). Most of them have been monks in the past and returned to civilian life after five to six years dressed in the "yellow frock" of a monk. They know the texts of the Buddhist sutras to chant during various ceremonies, they know how to organize the religious and social festivals. The old pagoda committee members have all studied Pali in their time as a monk. The younger ones often did not have the chance. Whether the members of the pagoda committee are elected or appointed is difficult to find out. These persons have the trust of the people and there is a large and solid consensus that they are leaders. In many cases these persons have been frequently in the pagoda and been actively serving the monks and the people; with years passing the people one day acknowledged that they should be considered as members of the committee. In other cases the member has been appointed by the department of religious affairs mostly an

initiative of the provincial level. This is the case when the community has no strong leaders who is "naturally" recognized by the people. - Some people think pagoda committee members are already out of this world and not able to manage any affair; the contrary is true: They are among the most competent people in the village to organize meetings, to delegate the work and to get a job done. If they are too old to perform their duties efficiently, they normally retire from active organizing work in the committee while still being present in the pagoda to help out with advice.

- The members of a pagoda committee do not come from rich families, this would be an exception rather than the rule. Rich people in rural Cambodia are almost invariably of sino-khmer background who also have other ceremonies than those practiced by traditional Khmer people. They worship their ancestors at home and in some cases they bury their kin in the countryside according to Chinese geomantic ("feng-shui") considerations. The pagoda-committee members are mostly "pure khmer" ethnically speaking and thus almost "by definition" not rich. Sometimes the familiy members of these personalities devoted to the wellbeing of the pagoda and the community are not happy that most of their efforts and time is spent in the pagoda rather than in their own house and field.

5. Financial aspects: collecting, accounting, management

The members of the pagoda committee belong to the small number of people in rural Cambodia who are handling other people's money. They are collecting the money and gifts in kind for festivals. They are counting and keeping the money; sometimes the abbot keeps the money, sometimes the pagoda committee. Collecting is done either in the pagoda the year round or on special occasions on the road side: The committee members and other villagers indicate with a Buddhist flag their purpose of collecting money from the people passsing by. They are discussing then with the monks and the other achars of the villages how to use the money. Some have basic knowledge of book keeping like the store keeper in the village; some have no knowledge. The incoming money is listed according to the date, amount and name of sponsor (for a bigger sum); expenses are not listed regularly, receipts however are kept. Almost all members however are able to read and write in an environment with around 60 % of illiterate people. The accounting practices are quite satisfactory to the local people who trust their natural leaders, but strangers and foreigners who do not know them would not consider this kind of book keeping as proof of their actual activities. There is room for training.

6. Actvities and achievements: pagoda restauration, multi-sectoral communal projects

The first concern is certainly to see to the material needs of the monks, novices and nuns: food and cloths. Then the pagoda committee is concerned with the restoration and maintenance of the pagoda buildings (vihear, sala, kot and in a few cases also a library) and compound (pond, fence, trees). The committee can only rely on the contributions of the believers (Puth Borisath); there is no other contribution and no support from the government. Then the pagoda committee is discussing the needs of the community and organizing a variety of communal projects: The pagoda committee is building or contributing to a school or a health center; it is organizing the construction of a small piece of road mostly leading from the mainroad to the gate of the pagoda; bridges and dikes are built under their guidance. Ponds in the compound are restored and deepened in order to provide enough water for men and animals during the dry season, in many villages the only remaining source of water in March and April. Trees are planted around the pagoda, some are fruit trees, other trees are providing fuel wood, another kind is giving shade during out-door

meetings and a small forest of trees has traditionally been a place for meditation. Wasteland is reclaimed. In some pagodas small but long sheds are constructed to store the racing boat for the annual water festival in November. In case poor people do not find any merciful money lender they turn to the pagoda for a small grant or also a credit.

C. COOPERATION

Cooperation is a two way process with each side having its own interests not necessarily shared in total by the other side. There are areas of common interest and then there are areas of distinct interest not shared by the partner. GTZ sponsored development cooperation with pagoda committees must of course take note of this situation and discuss the possibilities of cooperation on the basis of common interest. But it should also be sensitive to the interests of the pagoda committee normally not in the scope of development activities. The partner mainly in the role of the donor agency like GTZ could also respect other needs of the pagoda as a cultural center and finance the purchase of Buddhist literature, the organization of workshops even if they are not entirely devoted to discuss development cooperation - not only to demonstrate that the donor agency is not belonging to those dubious organisations engaged in proselytizing, but also simply because the pagoda is serving social peace and community building.

1. First experiences: contacts, workshop, rice banks

The GTZ advisor tries to keep a constant contact to the pagodas and to talk about the problems of the community. He has been invited to meetings of the department of religious affairs on provincial (1) and district level (2). A work shop "Learning from traditional Cambodian community work" has been organized from September 28 to 30, 1995.

a) Workshop with Achars in Vat Srayov

The workshop was organized by the Provincial Department of Religious Affairs with the organizational and financial support of GTZ-SHF-Project (since January 1st, 1996 merged into the larger "Province Development Program Kampong Thom"). After an intensive preparation concerning the number and characteristics of the pagodas in Kampong Thom Province those pagodas were invited which had already a record on community projects: Out of 203 pagodas in the province 40 have noted that they are doing some kind of community work and were invited. 29 pagodas sent their members (total of 60 persons) to attend the workshop; eight members of the Department of Religious Affiars on provincial level and also eight from district level took part. The purpose of this workshop was to learn from traditional Cambodian community work, to intensify contacts to relevant pagodas and and to present possibilities of cooperation with GTZ and WFP. The main activities were group discussions, lectures by department heads of the provincial government and working on a questionnaire designed by GTZ and the Department of Religious Affairs. The success of this workshop could be measured by the analysis of the questionnaire presenting a more or less complete picture of community projects and the interest of practical cooperation.

The questionnaire has been filled out for 25 pagodas in the seven out of eight districts (except District Prasat Sambo) represented through pagoda committee members. The present paper is one result of the qualitative analysis of these questionnaires. The data given have often been estimates or were not given at all. Pagodas which are involved in community projects are mainly bigger ones: More than 20 monks (provincial average 14) , more than 5-6 villages related to

the pagoda (provincial average: 3-4); it is also noteworthy that these pagodas include also nuns in a distinctly higher percentage than others; whereas on the average only every second pagoda is also the home for one nun; in these bigger pagodas there are three nuns per pagoda on the average.

The record of the pagoda committees is quite impressive: Here the average calculated from those pagodas which could give figures:

Unit	Renovation of Pagoda since 1979	Money collected in 1994	Money collected in the last 5 years
No. of Pagodas	25	19	22
Riel	40.000.000	1.426.0000	10.000.000
U.S $	15.000	570	4.000
in tons of rice	65	2	16

This result has been achieved during three consecutive years of flood and drought bringing the province at the brink of famine in 1995.

The communication process during the workshop among the pagoda committee members who never attended such a workshop before was in itself very important for the participants. The prospects to start a relation of cooperation with GTZ or WFP found a very positive response.

b) Ricebanks: First step in the "Pagoda Project Programme"

In a first step GTZ facilitated the organization of 13 rice banks in eight pagodas. The cooperation in the villages, where GTZ staff assisted by staff of the Department of Rural Development on district level has been introduced by achars, has been invariably open and without reserve. In some villages which were briefed by government officials, who also introduced GTZ staff, the cooperation has been very tactical and practically invalidating the findings of a PRA exercise. So far - status: 26/01/96 - nine ricebanks have a repayment rate of 100 %; the rate of the remaining four ricebanks is not yet known.

The earlier experiences of GTZ - SHF-Project (assisting 64 rice banks in May / June 1995 in training and rice delivery) have been discussed very intensively by the pagoda committee members: For ex. for electing a rice bank committee in one village GTZ is normally proposing to nominate at least eight candidates for five positions (traditionally only five persons have been nominated), to include at least three women among the nominees and to propose to the village meeting the option for a open or a secret balloting. The procedure of nominating has been however not very transparent to us: The leading member of the pagoda committee presented a list of eight candidates, certainly after some discussion with other respected persons, but whether the nomination was discussed in a village meeting, we do not know. All these proposals have been taken up by the pagoda committee and the result of the elections (all in secret balloting requested particularly by women) has been very encouraging: (A manual "How to establish a rice bank?" including a chapter on organizing secret balloting among illiterate people is in preparation.) At least two women were elected by secret balloting in each committee; in one village there are three women in the committee of five. Again, it remains to be seen whether they are given the role in the management committee by the fellow men members as it was intended by the election.

(1) **Institutional aspects: intermediate position between village and commune**

The role of the pagoda committee in these first steps of cooperation has not been to take over the responsibility of a rice bank and to function as a management committee of a rice bank. A pagoda committee is not rooted in one village, it is related to **several** villages. So they quite naturally played the role of a local ("sub-regional") facilitator and moral guarantor who will be actively watching in the background the performance of the village rice bank committees over the year. In this process - which has not been planned - the pagoda committee as an institution is strengthened since outside assistance came to the villages through their mediation; it will play a greater role than in the past overlooking the ethics of the rice bank committee and it will become the organizational focus for other activities discussed in PRA (Participatory Rapid Appraisal) and other village visits. On the other hand it is not entangled in the day-to-day routine affairs of the rice bank committee and not in danger to lose its moral authority in the population. - The rice bank is well placed in the institutional setup of traditional rural Cambodia being introduced by the pagoda committee and functioning under its auspices. - The government policy of establishing "village development committees" can be effectively supported, since the two types of committees operate on different levels and can support each other.

(2) **Role of monks: moral support**

The role of the monks in these activities has been marginal. GTZ staff is always paying the respect to the abbot in the beginning and at the end of the stay explaining also at length the workings and the meaning of a rice bank. In the future a workshop with interested monks will be discussed and organized. It is important to have at least the understanding and tacit approval of the monks; an explicit warning of the abbot to the pagoda committee would spell the end of such a cooperation. Such a move is however extremely unlikely since it is also the traditional duty of the monks to be responsible for the well being of the community interpreted mostly on the spiritual level but not exclusively

(3) **Role of nuns: on the periphery**

There are 146 nuns ("ye chi" or "don chi") in 39 pagodas as compared to 2829 monks and novices in all 203 pagodas of Kampong Thom province; id est just about 5 % are nuns compared to monks and novices. The status of nuns in the hierarchy is clearely subordinate to the monks and even novices. However their functions are important in social services and the discipline of the nuns is said to be much better than among the monks and particularly the novices. So far nuns - as well as monks - have not been involved in project activities; this point however will be explored in the future. Main emphasis will however remain the cooperation with the laymen and laywomen..

IV. Conclusion

There are certainly advantages but also problems in a cooperation programme with pagodas in rural Cambodia.

A. **Advantages: integrity, people's participation, efficiency, sustainability**

The advantages are manifold: The personnel engaged in pagoda committees are known be be honest, to have the trust of the people; they are

experienced in organizing, settling conflicts and handling money affairs. There are slightly over one thousand persons in the pagoda committees of the province with a total population of over 500.000 people; in quantity more numerous than government staff and they are all on grass root level. When pagoda committee members support a project, the mobilization and participation is far easier to achieve than without them. The prospects of such a cooperation are quite wide in scope: If the projects undertaken are not only an advantage to the community but also an asset to the pagoda many activities can be discussed and initiated: digging ponds in the pagoda compound, planting tree in pagoda and village, organizing road and bridge construction, setting up village funds and credit groups.

Sustainability is another basic advantage of copoerating with a traditional institution like the pagoda committees. Institutions and values of the various cultures are however not only instruments of a project strategy to reduce poverty but ends in itself which have been shaped by the people of this area to ensure peace and wellbeing for all members of the community. They ought to be supported in its entirety - without following blindly the traditions nowadays regarded as quite reactionary like the tradition to exclude women from public life or the authoritarian style of decision making by a few traditional leaders. When studying the history of these societies one will discover that they had periods when women were military leaders or scientist or when large meetings decided about the fate of the community.

B. Problems: Gender, authoritarian style

Of course the pagoda committee has also all the problems of a traditional social institution: It is not the strength of a pagoda committee to promote the status and situation of women. The status of women in Buddhist teachings reflects the historical situation of Buddha's lifetime in 600 B.C.: it is low, the role of nuns in the Sangha and the pagodas is equally low. When working with pagoda committees the gender problem needs to be given permanent and special attention. There has however never been resistance or even silent disapproval to have women elected - on the contrary the members of the pagoda committees agreed readily to such a proposal. The reasons given to py special attention to women were: Women constitute more than half of the population; they are more interested in changing the actual state of affairs than men since their role and situation is lower. - It should be kept in mind that the problem of gender equity is not better solved in other institutions or organizations whether governmental or non-governmental.

Since institutions in general are relatively weak in Cambodia the effort to find suitable support structures has to rely also on identifying **personality types** rather than organizations. One very positive personality type is certainly the pagoda committee member; others should complement such a person in a leadership body of a rice bank, credit group or any other association: In the Cambodian context this can be two more types: active and dynamic women, competent and committed teachers (women and men).

The decision making process is traditionally taken by the elders after some discussion; but it is still a rather authoritarian style. Although the style may be authoritarian the elders would not dare to threaten the consensus of the community by an arbitrary and unpopular decision.

C. Framework of cooperation

Without anticipating too much some points can already put foreward for discussion.

1. Pagoda Committee and other self help groups

The pagoda committees in our short experience of project cooperation have never tried to take the implementation of a project activity into their own hands. They alway tried to delegate the functions to other persons. They will also be in the best position to activate other types of traditional self help groups mentioned above. This depends largely on the type of activity.

2. Pagoda Committee and government structure

Historically there has not been any antagonism between the political structure and the cultural-religious structure. Only with the advent of French colonialism public administration, education and health has been separated from the traditional Cambodian structure. The French "republican tradition" of separation between church and state has been stamped on Cambodian society and "modernization" began. There is no political or other necessity to follow the colonial path.

What can be the relation of a Village Development Committee (VDC) or a Commune Development Committee (CDC)? It is government policy to establish development committees on each level of administration. So far these committees have been established on the provincial level. There is as yet no clear indication on which level these committees will be established next. For practical reasons probably on village or commune level. The village development committees are supposed to be elected by the villagers; their role will be to coordinate all development activities in the area. The VDC will represent the lowest level of the state administration; it will be a governmental body subject to the next higher level.. As such the VDC can have an implementation role in "Food for Work" programmes of WFP and in all other non-credit programmes. It can also have an important advisory and coordinating role in credit programmes. According to most experts in credit schemes a member of a government body should not at the same time be a member of a committee managing a credit programme.

Concerning the functions of each body there is complementarity in a well defined development policy. Gifts, grants and Food for Work can be implemented by government bodies; credit schemes should be implemented by the people themselves and their traditional or modern self help organizations. In credit programmes government bodies have no management role; they cannot tell a rice bank committee what to do with the capital or interest. If they start interfering in credit schemes these are bound to collapse. But besides management roles there are important functions to perform by government bodies: establishing rules for credit programmes, informing the villagers on the various possibilities of credit programmes; they can get involved in training and extension services.

Concerning the level of operation there is no competition because on the level of the pagoda committee there is no government structure and at the level of a village and a commune there is no pagoda. The scope of operation will also be different: The pagoda is serving several villages, which can be considered as historically grown clusters. Several clusters form a commune.

D. Perspectives

It is quite realistic to initiate development cooperation with 20 % of all pagoda committees, that is 40 (out of 203) in Kampong Thom province and 600 (out of around 3.087) in Cambodia. Once this type of cooperation is known, the number will certainly increase substantially. The activities can be manifold as described above: ricebanks, credit associations, pond digging, tree planting, construction of schools and healthcenters, bridges and roads.

Time frame: The project in which GTZ is responsible for the German contribution is guided by two considerations or objectives: to reduce poverty and to strengthen the self-help capacities of the people in rural areas. In a first phase rice banks have been facilitated responding to a pressing food shortage. This programme started on a trial basis is likely to be expanded with particular emphasis on human resource development and gender specific training. In a second phase ponds around the pagodas may be deepened with the assistance of WFP and trees may be planted; special attention will be given to the reactivation of traditional village organizations through the pagoda committees. A furthere important step will be the management of village funds - a question open for discussion in the near future.

Of course there are voices opposed to such an approach to work with traditional institutions like pagoda committees: From the government side it is feared that important roles and functions are taken over by other institutions. There are also voices in the Buddhist Sangha who are opposed to this kind of worldly activity and who argue it is more important to reach the state of extinction of one's self and to end the cycle of reincarnations repeating only suffering.

The question to discuss: The short experience has shown us that rural Cambodia is a complex network of groups of personal and family loyalties, social organizations, traditional institutions and modern administrative structures. To insert in this web of relations a preset blueprint would lead to the disintegration of local structures as long as outside assistance is going on; and it is a matter of speculation whether they can be reactivated after the departure of the foreigners. But it is quite possible to strengthen existing structures with project modules based on experiences of other countries preferably of those countries belonging to the same cultural family (for ex. countries with theravada-buddhist tradition, with mahayana-buddhist tradition, with confucian tradition, with hinduist tradition, with islamic tradition, with animist tradition...).

A concrete proposal on the way to a vision: There are century-old experiences of project work by all communities around Asia and other continents. Why are projects undertaken in the first plac? What are the goals and objectives? How are these projects structured; how does their project cycle looks like? How are funds collected, by whom? Who is deciding about the use of these funds? How is the problem of accountability solved in the different cultures? How is the implementation organized etc? A synopsis of such experiences would certainly demonstrate the differences in form but also a basic common ground in function. Then it could be discussed which modules of the GTZ project cycle are relatively appropriate, how can they be modified to be culturally more acceptable?

In a wider perspective such a synopsis could serve to elaborate **conflict preventing project designs**: Samuel Huntington predicted that the type of conflict in the future will not be one between nation-states and their conflicting economic and strategic interests. A new type of conflict will emerge: The conflict between different cultures. Huntington's analysis is certainly confirmed by reality,

for example the course of events in former Yugoslavia. His conclusion however must not be shared: He warned the Western world to be prepared also militarily. Another conclusion however needs to be testet: peaceful cooperation. There can be project designs integrating social groups of different ethnic and cultural character. Such a design however can only be done when the type of traditional projects are known and analyzed; when the differences in form are respected and the similarities (is there such thing?) in function related to each other. Such a type of project could help to prevent a conflict and not clear up the human and material debris of wars and civil wars - as so many projects are now doing.

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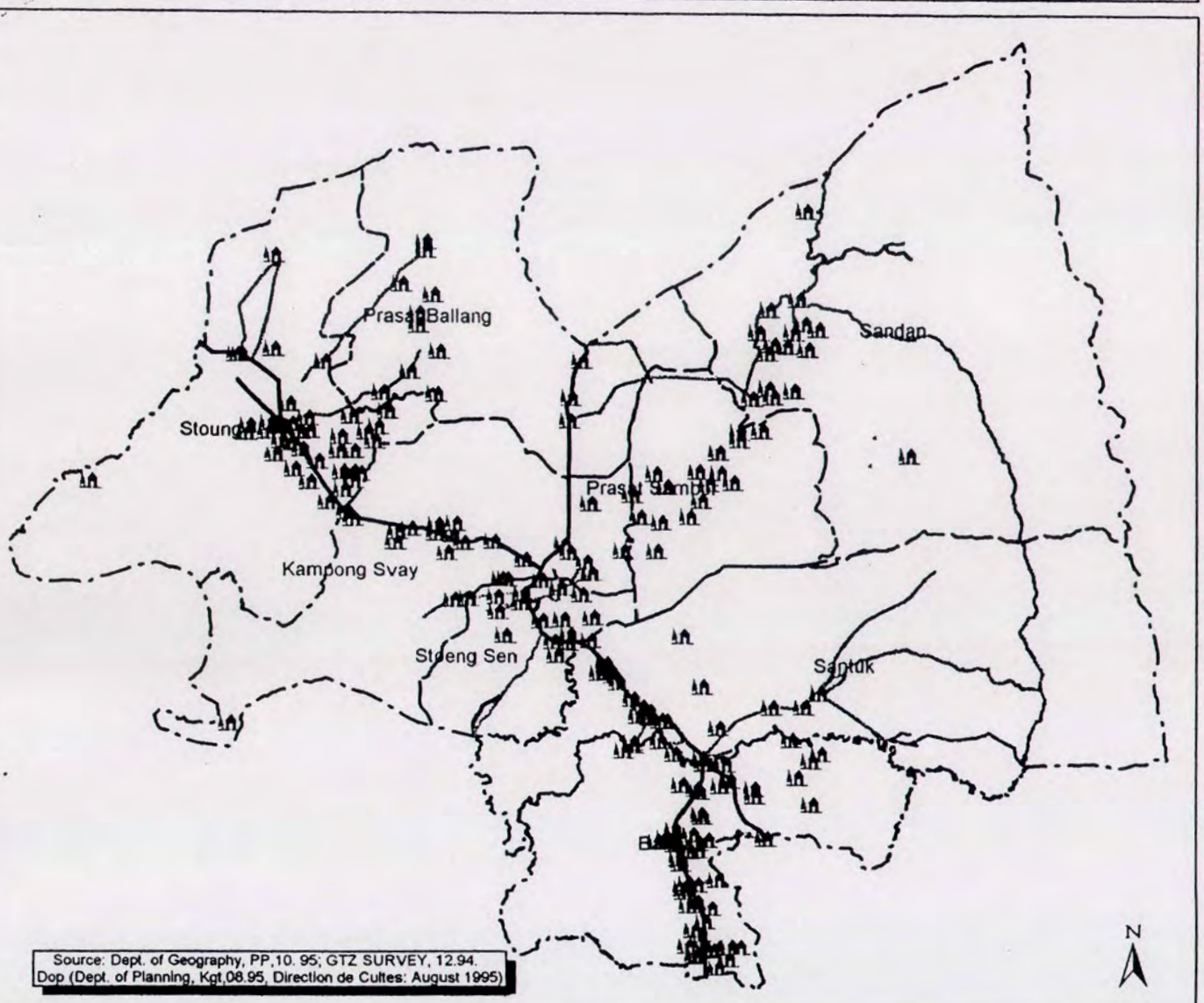
Pagodas in Kampong Thom Province



Location of:

- Districts
- Roads
- Villages

NO. VAT

- Vat in Kampong Thom Provinc

National and Provincial Roads

- Nat. Road No. 6
- Nat. Road No. 12
- Nat. Road No. 21
- Provincial Roads

KM

0 10 20 30