

How Princess Malika fought: Securing interest in the prince's inheritance and raising children after the Yukanthor Affair

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Lack of materials about women and children poses the biggest obstacle to studying Cambodian women's and family history. While the early-twentieth century French Protectorate period (1863-1953) yielded more historical materials about these populations, these have not been examined extensively. This paper attempts to bridge this gap by examining the behavior of Princess Malika after "Yukanthor Affair" political and inheritance episode. By analyzing her behavior after this affair, it aims to examine several issues related to family relationships, property rights, child rearing, and women's legal and education rights (especially with regard to illegitimate children) in one branch of the Cambodian Royal family. Furthermore, this paper also examines Princess Malika's opinions on the value of the Khmer civilization and its cultural traditions in comparison to the French civilization. Toward these ends, this study examined her documented correspondences with the Cambodian and French authorities. Thus, this paper's analysis showed that, during the French Protectorate period, in some Cambodian Royal families, lineage, capabilities, and education played a major role in determining social status rather than gender.

Keywords: French Protectorate period; Cambodia; Princess Malika; Kram Maradak; Yukanthor Affair

1 Introduction

Since peace was established in Cambodia in the 1990s, Cambodian studies have focused attention on human rights of the politically/economically vulnerable, in particular of women and children, in regards to rebuilding/development aid. However, in the study of history, the collection of materials on women's history and family history, as well as empirical studies based on these, remain underdeveloped. The biggest obstacle is the lack of information; for the pre-Protectorate period, it is difficult to find anything on

women and children, even royals, in historical materials. On the other hand, during the French Protectorate period (1863-1953), and the twentieth century, in particular, more documents about people other than male elites occupying center stage of the political arena, including kings, ministers, and high-ranking clergy, are found. Still, researchers have yet to examine these materials. Due to these circumstances, while Princess Malika made a number of achievements, including the establishment of the Malika School to educate girls, the editing and publication of a classical work in Cambodian literature, *the Story of Kaki*, and the editing of history textbooks after independence, she is virtually unknown. However, her husband, Prince Yukanthor (1860-1934), is remembered as a hero through the naming of a street and high school in the royal capital, Phnom Penh, in his honor.

Princess Malika was a daughter of King Norodom (r: 1860-1904) and her husband, Prince Yukanthor, a son of the same king (her elder brother from a different mother¹), was deemed to succeed the throne. As the princess carried out an important role in her father's funeral² [Osborne 2008:75], she was thought to be his favorite daughter. Gauthier, the Résident supérieur of Cambodia, stated in a letter to the Gouverneur général of Indochina dated August 31st, 1943 that Princess Malika “stands out in her intellect, culture, and integrity in contrast to the general apathy found among the Cambodian royal family” [RSC-18667]. Her husband criticized French colonial rule when sent to the Paris Expo in 1900 to represent the king, and was banned from returning to Cambodia. He moved first to Belgium, then Singapore, and, finally, Bangkok, where he died in 1934. The princess's mother, Néak Mneang Phyeam (1850-1915), is said to have been the daughter of Constantin de Monteiro [Khin 2014]. The Monteiros were descendants of Portuguese Catholics living in Ponhea Lueu near Udong, the former royal capital, and they had served successive Cambodian kings since the pre-Protectorate period as mandarins mainly engaged in negotiations with Europeans. The princess's daughters, Princess Pengpas (1893-1969) and Princess Pingpeang (1894-1966), worked as teachers at the Malika School during the French Protectorate period and occupied important positions like the Minister of Education in independent Cambodia [Corfield 2003: 320, 332].

Princess Malika and her children remained in Phnom Penh after the Yukanthor Affair.³ Résident supérieur Richomme stated in a letter to the Gouverneur général of Indochina dated February 25th, 1935 that “the Yukanthor Family,” i.e., the princess and her daughters, “are wavering in their loyalty compared to the younger brother's family, which is

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- 1 There are multiple cases of marriage between half siblings from a different mother in the Cambodian royal family. For example, Princess Phangam (1874-1944) who also established a girls' school, Sutharot School, in the same period as Malika School was established, was a wife of her half-brother from a different mother, Prince Sutharot (1872-1945, grandfather of Sihanouk) [Jacobsen 2008:165,178].
 - 2 “After the king's body had laid in a gilded urn filled with mercury for nearly two years his bones were reverently removed by his daughter, Princess Malika.”
 - 3 They often visited Singapore and Bangkok to see Prince Yukanthor.

currently in power (i.e., the Sisowath Family), and they are at the center of active opposition and conspiracy.⁴ On the other hand, Gauthier's letter, mentioned above, stated that "constant bitter demands" from the princess and her daughters were never political in nature, but "only directed to improve their material conditions" [RSC-18667].

The National Archives in Phnom Penh holds at least thirteen documented files catalogued with keywords, including "Yukanthor" and "Malika," that can be classified into the following five groups according to content: a) files concerning their property (real estate) [RSC-11965, 29556]; b) those on distributions and investments of "Prince Yukanthor's inheritance" [RSC-18667]; c) those on pension payments [RSC-18667, 31146, 9101]; d) those on the "Malika School" [RSC-11595, 7297, 31312, 1405]; and e) other [RSC-413, 33963, 36380, 35987]. These documents were accumulated over thirty years as Princess Malika took the lead in negotiations with the Cambodian king, the government of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and French colonial authorities; in other words, as she repeatedly made what Gauthier called "constant bitter demands," the files would surely serve as an important historical source, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to researchers of history on women and that of the family in Cambodia. As for Princess Malika's letters, there is one written in French in both a) and c), but the rest are in Cambodian. They are signed "Malika" in Roman letters and contain frequent use of the exclamation mark (!).

Drawing from the documents mentioned above, this article analyzes Princess Malika's claim regarding "Prince Yukanthor's inheritance" and responses from the governments of the Kingdom of Cambodia and French colonial authorities. By doing so, it aims to shed light on the following: a) relationships among the wives, husband, children, father king, husband's mother, and wives' mothers in one branch of the Cambodian royal family during the first half of the twentieth century; b) how they invested their property; c) how they raised and educated their children; d) the perception of property and legal rights of legitimate and illegitimate children, members of the royal family, and commoners, as well as among men and women, and of the education of contemporary Cambodian society; and e) Princess Malika's assessment of the Khmer nation and their cultural traditions in comparison to French civilization.

4 *L'Affaire Yukanthor. Autopsie d'un scandale colonial* reports that the princess "lives in Phnom Penh, and is freely developing conspiracy, and her daughters are attending the school in the palace with other royal children" [Lamant 1989: 161]. *Cambodia under the Tricolour: King Sisowath and the "Mission Civilisatrice" 1904-1927* on the reign of King Sisowath also mentions that Princess Malika was involved with anti-French conspiracy together with Prince Yukanthor and Prince Mayura, and that as she did not agree with King Monivong's accession to Throne, she did not attend the funeral of King Sisowath [Tully 1996:200-208,286-288,301-302].

2 Details of negotiations regarding “Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance”

Princess Malika provided a detailed and chronological account of incidents that occurred regarding “Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance” and the process of negotiation in at least four letters: a letter to the king dated January 12th, 1915; a letter to the Gouverneur général of Indochina dated March 17th, 1917; a letter to the king dated January 26th, 1921; and a document created on or after February 21st in the same year entitled “the details of Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance.” The content of these four documents is largely similar, with minor differences in expression. A summary follows:

When her father, King Norodom, was still alive, Princess Malika, who became responsible for raising four children, was granted a total of 4,800 reals (rendered as piastre in French with the symbol ‘\$’) worth of silver made up of “silver from Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance” and “silver from Princess Malika’s inheritance” with “the king’s handwritten note of 1901.” However, the payment was stopped by the order of Résident supérieur Boullouche.

When Résident supérieur Delamotte took office, Princess Malika asked why Boullouche stopped the payment of silver. Delamotte explained that Boullouche’s action was due to “his concern” that the princess “would use the silver on various Kar (things) Pollitik (politique in French),” and ordered the payment of a small amount every four months.

Seven days after the passing of the father king, there was a meeting in the palace, and when Princess Malika mentioned “the case of not fully paid silver” to the new king, King Sisowath, he said it should be dealt with exactly as in “King Norodom’s handwritten note.”

Twenty days after the passing of the father king, Delamotte summoned Princess Malika and said he would demand the princess seek divorce from the prince “if Prince Yukanthor does not come to Phnom Penh in two months!”⁵ He would arrange a “commoner husband” if she wished, and upon divorce, both “old silver (the portion that the father king gave out before his death)” and “new silver (the portion distributed after the father king’s death)” from “Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance” would be granted to Princess Malika. When Princess Malika said she had four children with the prince,

5 The letter from the Gouverneur général of Indochina to the Résident supérieur dated December 24th, 1904 (No. 704) gave intelligence from the French Consul stationed in Singapore dated December 5th of the same year stating that the prince left Singapore a few weeks before and headed to Colombo via Penang to join “the Great Temple” as a Buddhist monk, that the reason why the prince decided to become a monk was a rumor that the princess might be remarried, and that the princess actually sent many letters to the prince in August and September [RSC-18667].

Delamotte replied that the government would look after them. While the princess withheld consent, a sudden royal decree was issued to confiscate a total of 9,221 reals 78 sens made up of 2,400 reals of “old silver from Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance” that was deemed to be given to Princess Malika by the king’s handwritten note, and 6,821 reals 78 sens of “new inherited silver,” to be stored in “the Royal Treasury” as “inheritance for Prince Yukanthor’s children.”⁶

As Résident supérieur Morel took office, Princess Malika made an appeal about “the silver in question.” Morel said “there is no benefit in simply storing the inherited silver for a long time until the youngest child reaches an age in which he can use it. Let’s deposit all in the Banque de l’Indochine to invest in merchants.” Further, he noted “according to European custom, [to] keep the seed silver as the children’s inheritance and arrange for the interest to go to Princess Malika.” He then ordered the drawing up of “a document to receive interest once every four months” and ordered Pujol, “the Controller of the Royal Treasury,” to arrange this. However, Pujol ordered that “when the silver is deposited in Banque de l’Indochine, place it under Mr. Pujol’s name,” and thus the princess did not consent, retorting that “the Résident supérieur ordered to draw up an investment document under my children’s names and for me to receive interest to use as needed,” and asking, “you say it will be placed under your name, but who are you to my children?” Afterwards, Pujol sent a letter to the princess stating “deposit the inherited silver to invest. Otherwise, I will counsel the king to distribute the inherited silver to the children of Prince Yukanthor (as this works against the princess, the ‘children’ here appears to include illegitimate children).” At the Council of Ministers on May 27th, 1905, the princess said to the king, “according to the law of the country of Khmer, only inheritance of the dead can be distributed, and the distribution of inheritance of living persons such as myself or Prince Yukanthor is not permitted.” In response, Morel gave the excuse that he “only wanted to know who receives how much.”

When Résident supérieur Luce took office, Princess Malika wrote a letter and asked if she could rent a house with “the silver from Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance” and pay for her children’s education with rent income [for more details, please see Section 1, Chapter 3].

When Princess Malika started to gain rent income, “children of Prince Yukanthor from commoner mothers” filed a lawsuit to demand a share of it [for more details, see

6 “On the transfer of inheritance rights of King Norodom” states that when 300,000 piastres that were to be “divided among princes and princesses who are the king’s inheritors” in King Norodom’s will dated March 22nd, 1904 were divided according to King Sisowath’s royal decree of May 14th, 1904, 9,221.78 piastres to be given to Prince Yukanthor were left in “the Royal Treasury” as he had “fled overseas,” and that later a special royal decree was issued to divide them among his children [RSC-18667].

Section 2, Chapter 4].

Someone “forged” “the king’s letter” in 1916,⁷ and the rent income stored in “the Royal Treasury” was invested in French government bonds without notifying Prince Yukanthor, “the master of the silver” and his children, who were designated as “masters of inheritance.” Princess Malika complained to the Gouverneur général of Indochina that this constituted an “invasion of power.”⁸ When the Gouverneur général forwarded this letter to the Résident supérieur in Cambodia, Résident supérieur Baudoin became angry with the princess, and summoned the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers was held on June 18th, 1917, in accordance with a letter from the Résident supérieur (No. 187) dated May 28th, 1917 and sent the transcript of its ruling to the princess. The princess sent it back after correcting it.⁹ [For more details, see Section 2, Chapter 3 and Chapter 5].

Furthermore, Princess Malika later complained to the Minister of Colonies in France in a letter. The Gouverneur général of Indochina, Long, who was instructed by the Minister of Colonies, issued an order to the Résident supérieur in Cambodia to act “in accordance with the ruling of the Council of Ministers on September 1st, 1915.”¹⁰ This was conveyed to the princess by Létang on behalf of the Résident supérieur. He also told her that a decision would be made when Baudoin returned to office and that this would be reported to the king. When he returned, Baudoin issued an order to return “documents about the house,” “documents related to the loan of silver,” and the rest of the silver; however, he retained “the ruling of the Council of Ministers on September 1st, 1915” and “the king’s letter” separate, as they were “forged,” and “did not do as I (Princess Malika) wished.”

Eventually, Royal Decree No. 17, dated June 21st, 1921, determined that documents on rights in regards to rental accommodations and bonds, as well as “2,355 reals 26 sens worth of silver remaining in the box” were “to be returned to Princess Malika, the wife of Prince Yukanthor and mother of the Prince’s children.” It further stipulated that “Princess Malika herself is to manage and protect all kinds of properties in accordance with law, to generate income (through investments), and to continue protecting, honestly and fairly, the whole of the royal family, consisting of her mother and Prince Yukanthor’s mother, Prince Yukanthor and herself (called ‘the Yukanthor Family’).” It also stated “all kinds of

7 Royal Decree No. 17 dated June 21st, 1921 states that “an investment of 890 francs to the French government” was granted by the Royal Decree of October 13th, 1916 [RSC-18667].

8 Letter dated March 17th, 1917 [RSC-18667].

9 In her letter to the Council of Ministers dated September 4th, 1917, Princess Malika states that she received “the transcript of the ruling of the 56th Council of Ministers meeting dated June 18th, 1917” on August 30th, and that she corrected it with red ink, signed it, and sent it back on the same day. Her correction and its content are detailed in the letter from the Council of Ministers to the Résident supérieur (No. 76) dated February 14th, 1918 [RSC-18667].

10 The letter from the Minister of Colonies to Gouverneur général (No. 810) dated June 28th, 1920; the letter from the Gouverneur général of Indochina to the Résident supérieur (No. 1547) dated October 6th, 1920 [RSC-18667]

costs associated with paying respect to the dead in the royal family can be paid for with this property,”¹¹ and that “if, in the future, Princess Malika judges it appropriate to distribute this property among her royal family, she can distribute it fairly so that each one of them benefits.” Moreover, members of the royal family were notified that “if Princess Malika does not obey this Royal Decree, any member of the royal family with a complaint can take her to court and ask for an examination according to law.” Afterwards, Prince Yukanthor drew up a letter of attorney on October 5th, 1928, and mailed it from Bangkok to Princess Malika. Princess Malika announced in her letter to the king on April 12th, 1930 that “Prince Yukanthor has drawn up a document (a letter of attorney), and granted me authority to be responsible for everything,” and requested that “a ruling be made in accordance with the handwritten note approved by King Sisowath and with the ruling of the Council of Ministers on September 1st, 1915.” King Monivong (r: 1927-1941) made a note on her letter that the matter should be examined by the Résident supérieur and Council of Ministers. At a meeting on May 19th, 1930, the Council of Ministers ruled on the Princess’s request [RSC-18667].

3 Princess Malika’s management of household finances

3.1 Rental accommodation management

According to a letter from Princess Malika to the king dated January 26th, 1921, upon learning that “Lok Vei Hin, a Chinese, has put five houses for rent on the market,” the princess immediately drew up a letter to the Résident supérieur asking for permission to purchase these houses for rent using “silver from Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance,” while keeping the seed silver as “the children’s inheritance,” and using rent income to “sustain life for myself and my four children.” In response, Royal Decree No. 6, dated February 5th, 1907, granted permission to purchase “five houses owned by Lok Vei Hin at the intersection of Armand Rousseau Street and Angkor Street¹² in the town of Phnom Penh” with “9,221 reals 78 sens worth of silver from the inheritance given to Prince Yukanthor by King Norodom.” It further stipulated that after paying off the cost of purchase and document production, half of the rent should be used for “Prince Yukanthor’s children to sustain life and to buy clothes” and the other half should be used “to pay for necessary expenses such as house repairs or to be added to the seed silver so that it grows.” It further stipulated that Krom Preah Alakh (the king’s secretary, or Secretary of the Treasury [Fourès 1882: 191]) should supervise all aspects of these rental accommodations, and re-

11 Instruction to allocate part of income to pay for funerals and rituals is also seen in the will regarding the “Royal paddy fields” given from King Norodom to King Sisowath [Kitagawa, 2003:11] and in Alexis Louis Chhun’s will [Kitagawa 2009: 102].

12 Neighborhood near the Royal Palace.

turn the houses for rent and saved rent income to Prince Yukanthor's children when they had grown up.

As for the actual running of rental accommodations, we can consult "the book of accounts of rent of the houses of inheritance of Prince Yukanthor's children" drawn up on April 24th, 1915. According to this document, the houses were purchased on February 21st, 1907 at the price of 9,000 reals, and further payment of 621 reals 10 sens for documentation and 150 reals for fire insurance was made, bringing the total to 9,771 reals 10 sens. Of this, 549 reals 32 sens could not be covered by "Prince Yukanthor's inheritance," which was worth 9,221 reals 78 sens, and thusly were paid by loan from "the rest of the silver for rental accommodations in the former king's properties."¹³ The loan was paid off on December 14th, 1907 from the same year's rent income of 731 reals 86 sens. There was a fire in February or March of 1911, and only one house appears to have survived. On April 1st, fire insurance worth 7,000 reals was paid by Maonisier (Monsieur in French) Dupisang¹⁴ and houses were rebuilt by October. Wages for building work were paid to Vung Seng, a Chinese, in the amounts of 3,000 reals on April 20th, 2,000 reals on July 31st, 1,500 reals on December 7th, and 500 reals on March 7th, 1912. Also, "house repair costs" of 19 reals were paid to Oknha Pitheak Châkhaveath¹⁵ on November 20th, 1909; 19 reals 20 sens were paid to Yin, also Chinese, on June 3rd, 1914; 112 reals 50 sens were paid to Tamrudir, a native of India, for "the cost of building a system to flush out sewage" on December 2nd, 1910; 13 reals were paid to Tav, a Vietnamese, on October 26th, 1914, and 11 reals 70 sens were paid for "soap medicine for the house." Regular expenditures included, in addition to monthly payment of "the portion for Prince Yukanthor's children," 150 reals for the annual fire insurance policy. As for land taxes, 19 real 56 sens were paid until 1910, 24 reals were paid in 1911, and 28 reals 80 sens were recorded in 1914. The balance as of April 24th, 1915 with all these deductions was 4,002 reals 56 sens [RSC-18667].

3.2 *Dispute regarding investment in French bonds*

In response to Princess Malika's protest that "Prince Yukanthor's inheritance" was in-

13 By 1872, King Norodom built more than 100 shop houses made with brick along main avenues in Phnom Penh, and rented them to mandarins and Chinese merchants. He continued to expand his rental portfolio. It is said this dramatically changed the cityscape of Phnom Penh, and exerted huge influence on the urban structure. Alexis Louis Chhun also owned accommodation for rent. In Siam, too, drawing from the analysis of "Bangkok Post Code Ledger," it is said that brick houses for rent that the royal family and aristocrats built for investment purpose along the roads under development and that accepted a wide range of renters not restricted to the Chinese and Thai have played a central role in the formation of Bangkok as a city [Igout 1993: 6; Kitagawa 2003: 29, Muller 2006: 92; Kitagawa 2009: 102; Tsubouchi 2011: 38-43].

14 He is assumed to be French and could have been the source of fire or an insurance agent, but it is not unclear as of now.

15 A mandarin belonging to Krom Reaksa Prea Ang that was in charge of the protection of the king's person, construction of houses, and maintenance of trees and the Palace [Fourès 1882:179].

vested in French bonds without her permission, the Résident supérieur instructed the Council of Ministers by means of a letter (No. 187) dated May 28th, 1917 to examine the validity of the princess's claim from "both juridique and politique perspectives" and to ask the king to rule on the issue. On June 18th of the same year, the Council of Ministers translated "juridique" as "Phluv Tolaka (the way of court)" in Cambodian, and ruled that "we cannot distribute the inheritance of a living person" in accordance with *Kram Maradak* (laws pertaining to inheritance).¹⁶

While Princess Malika consistently agreed with this ruling, it appears the ruling was not understood by French high-ranking colonial officers. A letter from Princess Malika to the king dated January 26th, 1921, states that upon receiving a letter from the Résident supérieur conveying the order from the Minister of Colonies on January 13th that year, she responded, "I am not asking for a share of silver from Prince Yukanthor's inheritance...I have only requested to return the document regarding the house on the market (rental accommodation) and rent to me as ruled by the Council of Ministers on September 1st, 1915." The letter also says that Létang, representing the Résident supérieur, asked in response, "wasn't it because Princess Malika appealed to the Minister of Colonies with documentation [that] the minister sent along his order by letter to divide the inheritance silver?" To this, she replied, "I did not ask to divide that inheritance," and, "I only want the ruling by the Council of Ministers on September 1st, 1915 and the king's handwritten note to be respected and honored." In fact, among corrections made by Princess Malika in red ink on "the transcript of the ruling by the Council of Ministers on June 18th, 1917," the phrase "I have never (ever) said I wanted to have a share of that inheritance" appears at least three times [RSC-18667].

One of the reasons Princess Malika did not want to divide the inheritance may have been her judgment that it would be more beneficial to invest her property without dividing it up. In addition, this way of investing one's property appears to have been common among the rich and powerful of Cambodia at that time. Royal Decree No. 17, dated June 21st, 1921, finally resolved the dispute about "Prince Yukanthor's inheritance," conveying the king's belief that "if we were to divide this inheritance, we have no other means than selling the deeds of the five rental houses and investments (bonds) that are Prince Yukanthor's property inherited from his father king." However, the king stated, "I do not want to disperse this property; nor do I want to let them use it up in a short period of time...I want to protect it without dividing it up and want to increase profit...I want to reserve the seed property and let it grow, and then distribute it to this branch of the royal family according to their allocation" [RSC-18667]. Furthermore, the will of Alexis Louis Chhun,¹⁷ a high-ranking official, dated October 30th, 1924, which the author has discussed

16 The preamble of "Kram Maradak" states that it was legislated as the law to follow when a mandarin called Oknha piphéak suon seth died in 1876 [Kram Maradak 1891:1-3, Leclère 1898:339-341].

17 Said to be a descendant of Portuguese Catholics and was in Princess Malika's circle.

elsewhere, also stipulated that “a large two-storied house (main residence) at the intersection of Angkor Street and Fésigny Street” in Phnom Penh and “rental accommodations consisting of 16 large blocks and 10 small blocs on Quai Norodom and Fésigny Street” constitute “real estate that is never to be divided or sold and to remain as common property,” and that half of the rent income from the latter is to be divided among inheritors while the other half is used to pay for maintenance of rental accommodations and grow the seed silver [Kitagawa 2009: 99-100,102-103].

4 Princess Malika and her family¹⁸

4.1 *Princess Malika and Prince Yukanthor, the prince’s illegitimate children, and their mothers*

In addition to four children born by Princess Malika, Prince Yukanthor had three children with different mothers: Prince Nimitthoravong (b. 1880), Prince Kantararak (b. 1890), and Princess Praphaphan (b. 1900). According to a letter from Princess Malika to the Résident supérieur on April 30th, 1905, the princess learned about them on April 29th of the same year. In her letter to the king on January 26th, 1921, Princess Malika stated that the list Prince Yukanthor submitted to the Minister of Colonies when he traveled to France had stated “one wife, which was me, a son and three daughters, which makes a total of four children,” and that “Prince Yukanthor had said there had been no other children than the four with me!” She then speculated that the reason why the names of illegitimate children started to appear in the list when her husband, Prince Yukanthor, was prevented from coming back to Cambodia and when their father, King Norodom, passed away was because “those who determined domestic and foreign politics (ministers of the Kingdom of Cambodia or French colonial officials, or both)” helped “royal children born of commoner mothers of a low rank without enough honor” to receive a monthly royal stipend. She further commented, “as I was not jealous or did not want to revenge, I just went along, as they say.”

Princess Malika explained her relationship with Prince Yukathor in three letters: one to the Résident supérieur, dated April 30th, 1905; one to the Council of Ministers dated October 13th, 1915; and one written to the king on January 26th, 1921. In these, she stated that they were “truly and fully legal husband and wife” and that “everyone knew” before the prince left for France that they “shared good and bad times,” “shared properties,” and “had the same father.” The last admission, “had the same father,” is most likely an exceptional condition applicable only to the royal family, but there is not enough information to

18 The term “family” is used here based on the author’s judgment. In the documents written by Princess Malika, terms that would usually mean “family” or “household” in contemporary Cambodians are not used, but terms such as “husband,” “wife,” “father,” “mother” and “child” that explain the individual’s position are used.

determine whether the other three conditions were widely shared among married couples in Cambodia at that time or if they constitute Princess Malika's own view. However, from her perspective, her relationship with Prince Yukanthor was completely different from those had with him by his three wives. A Royal Decree on June 21st, 1921 distinguishes Princess Malika as "Patham Pheariyea (the first wife)" from the mothers of Princess Praphaphan and Prince Kantarak who were described as "Teasa Pheariyea (slave wives)."

As for Neang Im, the mother of Princess Praphaphan, at first, the Council of Ministers stated on May 27th, 1905, that, "as the Council of Ministers do not have information about a divorce between this woman and Prince Yukanthor, it is requesting that Princess Malika prove the divorce. If divorce is not proven, Neang Im's child has equal rights to Princess Malika's children." According to a letter from the Council of Ministers to the Résident supérieur (No. 268) dated July 7th that year, it became clear after an interview with Neang Im "reading out for her" "Princess Malika's note," along with a reply from Oknha Narin Neayok Yuv, a mandarin who had Neang Im under his charge, that because Neang Im pawned gold jewelry belonging to Khun Phaltip Soda Chan, the mother of Prince Yukanthor, Khun Phaltip Soda Chan chained Neang Im for three months for punishment and sent her back to the house of Oknha Narin Neayok Yuv. Since then, there had been no contact between Prince Yukanthor and Neang Im. Further, if anyone wished to have Neang Im as his wife, he will be granted permission to do so on the condition that he would send silver of an equivalent value to the pawned jewelry to Khun Phaltip Soda Chan. As a result, the Council of Ministers ruled that "the child of Neang Im is Kon Daum."¹⁹ As she was "read out" "Princess Malika's note," Neang Im might have been unable to read Cambodian. As of now, her lineage is unknown, but she may have been of a low social status having no property of her own [RSC-18667].

In her letter to the Council of Ministers on October 13th, 1915, Princess Malika claimed, "I have been paying attention about everything" regarding the mother of Prince Yukanthor and his illegitimate children. As for Prince Kantarak, the following is reported. "When he turned 13 years old, I took him to Norodom School, which was at that time in the corridor of the Council of Ministers, so that he could learn," but "Prince Kantarak stopped learning in a few weeks, and ceased to listen to me...[W]hen Norodom School stopped teaching in the corridor of the Council of Ministers, I sent him to Kole (possibly École or Collège) ·M·Hvantaen (possibly Fontaine²⁰) to learn and made the same amount of payment for his food as my children." Later, he fled Phnom Penh, moved to "a Siamese region outside the territory of Cambodia (Battambang)," and incited the local people, causing her to experience "something unpleasant" because it was suspected that she may

19 Kon Daum means "the original child." In Leclère's translation of *Kram Maradak* discussed later, it is rendered as "a child from a previous marriage."

20 The teacher's name. He took up a position in the Protectorate School in Cambodia with Bergier in 1880 [Muller 2006:82-85].

have been involved. He was arrested by the Commissaire délégué in Battambang, and detained in Phnom Penh; when he was released upon completing his sentence, the princess gave him clothes and advice, and helped him to become a Buddhist monk by buying necessary items. Three months later, he returned from the temple, and the princess bought him clothes. Later, he wanted to work at the Ministry of Education as a civil servant and was employed with a monthly salary of 15 reals worth of silver, but was fired for “not observing the rules and behaving badly.” As a result, the princess wrote, “by today, Prince Kantarak has made an enemy of me!!!,” and therefore she “cannot share silver from rent!” On the other hand, as for Princess Praphaphan, Princess Malika claimed that while she “had been paying attention,” because Princess Praphaphan had fled the Palace and had gone to Battambang following Prince Kettana, “if Princess Praphaphan was in difficulty, Prince Kettana should take care of everything.” In the letter to the king (No. 618) on November 23rd, 1915, the Council of Ministers compared Princess Malika and her children to the illegitimate children and ruled that there was no need to distribute rent income to the latter because of differences in behavior [RSC-18667].

Princess Malika makes no reference to her mother in her letters, which could be due to her having enough income to support herself or that it was very usual that she was supported by the princess. As discussed in Section 3 of this chapter, while she provided a strong education, including French instruction, to her own four children regardless of gender, she did not say clearly what level of education she offered Princess Praphaphan. Most likely, she did not feel it necessary to worry about it. As of now, there is no information as to the later life of Prince Yukanthor’s illegitimate children. Taking into consideration that Princesses Pengpas and Pingpeang, both daughters of Princess Malika, later served in important positions like minister, it can be seen that the lives of children in a polygamic royal family was largely dependent on the mother’s status, properties, capacities, and whether they had a guardian or not.

4.2 *Distribution of inheritance in accordance with Kram Maradak*

Upon learning about the illegitimate children, in her letter to the Résident supérieur on April 30th, 1905, Princess Malika requested that when “silver from Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance” was to be divided, it should be done in accordance with “Article 31 of *Kram Maradak*.” At its meeting on May 27th the same year, the Council of Ministers ruled that in accordance with “King Norodom’s will” and “Article 31 of *Kram Maradak*,” distribution should be made “at 5 for each child of Princess Malika and at 1 for each child of those wives Prince Yukanthor [had] divorced.” Article 31 of *Kram Maradak* stipulated that when distributing inheritance, “kaun dël koeut phâng knéa²¹” receives the rate of 5

21 The term the author Romanizes as “Kon” in this article is Romanized as “kaun” by Leclère. “kaun dël koeut phâng knéa” can be understood as “children born together.” In Leclère’s translation, it is rendered as “children from bonded father and mother,” or “children from the last marriage.”

and “Kon Daum from the husband or wife’s side” at the rate of 1. However, it also stipulated that when “kaun dêl koeut phâng knéa” is/are very young or when “Kon Daum” is/are serving as a civil servant, the distribution should be made at the rate of 4 for “kaun dêl koeut phâng knéa” and at the rate of 2 for “Kon Daum,” and that if “Kon Daum” was/were not involved with nursing the dying or did not perform various rituals related to funerals, they could not receive any share of the inheritance [*Kram Maradak* 1891:20, Leclère 1898:350-351]. “Kon/kaun” refers to “children” regardless of gender. Consequently, while both the “children from Princess Malika,” who were “kaun dêl koeut phâng knéa,” and the “children from wives Prince Yukanthor divorced,” who were “Kon Daum,” contain princes and princesses, there is no gender gap stipulated in the distribution of inheritance. This idea is also found in Alexis Louis Chhun’s will, as he stated that his inheritance should be divided in reference to “equality and domestically universal laws” [Kitagawa 2009: 100-101].

A few years after the princess’s purchase of houses for rent, on July 30th, 1914, Princess Praphaphan and Prince Kantarak requested distributions of “Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance” in their letter to the Résident superieur. In her letter on January 12th, 1915, Princess Malika asked the king to rule in accordance with the rulings of “the Council of Ministers on May 27th, 1905” and “the Council of Ministers on July 7th, 1905.” In response, the Council of Ministers ruled at the meeting on September 1st, 1915 that they would not overturn “the ruling of the meeting on May 27th, 1905.” It clarified that the inheritance to be distributed was limited to seed silver worth 6,821 reals 78 sens, and suggested the following distribution:

The four children of Prince Yukanthor and Princess Malika were to receive the rate of 5 per person—that is, silver worth 1,482 reals 95 sens. The total for the four comes to 5,931 reals 80 sens.

Prince Kantarak, the child of Prince Yukanthor and Neang Chhean, was to receive the rate of 1—that is, silver worth 296 reals 59 sens.

Princess Praphaphan, the child of Prince Yukanthor and Neang Im, was to receive the rate of 1—that is, silver worth 296 reals 59 sens.

Prince Niminthoravong, the child of Prince Yukanthor and Neang Sa-Em, was to receive the rate of 1—that is, silver worth 296 reals 59 sens. As he was already deceased, his children, Kantaup and Kantang, were to receive a half each—that is, silver worth 148 reals 29 sens and a half.

Rent income generated due to Prince Malika’s ingenuity should be used by Princess Malika to support her four children, assuming that the capital was paid off. Princess Malika was permitted to share half of it with the children Prince Yukanthor had with other women if their behavior was good.

In a letter to the Council of Ministers dated October 4th the same year, Princess Praphaphan and Prince Kantarak conveyed their dissatisfaction with the ruling made by the Council on September 1st. Princess Malika refused to distribute rent income to them, as

stated in her letter to the Council of Ministers dated October 13th. Princess Malika's children (Pengpas, Pingpeang, and Tauch) communicated to the Council in writing on November 9th that they would leave everything to their mother.

On November 23rd the Council of Ministers sent a letter to the king (No. 618) rejecting the request made by the prince and princess in October, having confirmed that *Kram Maradak* only stipulates cases for the deceased and, as Prince Yukanthor was alive, his inheritance could not be distributed in the same manner; instead, distributions should be determined when the prince returned to the country or when he passed away. The Council ruled on the distribution of rent income as follows:

While Prince Kantarak and Princess Praphaphan make claims for rent income by saying, "because this was done by Princess Malika, not by securing silver elsewhere, but by using silver from Prince Yukanthor's inheritance, we request that all children of Prince Yukanthor would be treated equally in its distribution," the Council believed they should not be given shares since they "committed unlawful behavior and have not taken corrective [action] to protect the honor of their grandfather king or their father" by inciting rebellion in Battambang and Siem Reap after fleeing from the Palace. Subsequently, and because "Princess Malika and her four children are minded to behave to correctly protect the honor of their grandfather king and their father, and they have contributed to the Kingdom's intellectual prosperity by educating a large number of girls (i.e., Malika School)," the ruling ordered that it should be given only to Princess Malika for supporting her children.

The king made a note on this: "Do as the Council of Minister's ruling."

Later at the Council of Ministers meeting on June 18th, 1917, the amount of "inheritance to be distributed" was changed from 6,821 reals 78 sens (noted in the previous ruling on September 1st, 1915) to 9,221 reals 78 sens (listed in the Royal Decree dated February 5th, 1907), and the rate of distribution to each inheritor was to be determined in accordance with the Royal Degree dated May 27th, 1905. The king made the following written comment: "I approve the Council's ruling and determine in accordance to all articles in the ruling" [RSC-18667].²²

4.3 Supporting Princess Malika's children

Princess Malika owned property, including 2,400 reals inherited from her father king.

22 In her letter to the Minister of the Royal Palace dated March 11th, 1933, Princess Malika requested that as the Résident supérieur had removed "King Sisowath's handwritten note that approved the decision in accordance to the ruling 48 by the Council of Ministers on September 1st, 1915" from the Ministry of Interior, they should recover it and store it again in the Ministry of Interior as "evidence regarding inheritance" [RSC-18667].

In his letter to the Minister of Colonies dated February 27th, 1934, the princess's son, Prince Aréno = Heanh claimed that his family owned a vast area of land handed down from "my maternal grandmother" in the Treang region worth more than twenty million francs, and that he should be compensated with an equivalent amount. The document that was drafted in response and entitled, "On the transfer of the right to inheritance from King Norodom," stated that the princess managed "a small piece of land in the Takeo region that used to be part of the Treang region," and that "she only managed to yield profits of less than a hundred piastres per year from it." Though there is a gap between this claim and the estimated value of said property, these comments do confirm that the princess owned properties handed down by her maternal family [RSC-18667].

In a letter to the king on January 26th, 1921, Princess Malika argued her own properties were used by Prince Yukanthor by claiming that "when Prince Yukanthor was with me in Cambodia, much of my properties were used," and, "when Prince Yukanthor returned to Singapore from France, I sent him my own silver and spend thousands of reals." As for supporting her children after the Yukanthor Affair, she recorded, "I sold my properties, as well as gold and diamond jewelry, and provided them with clothes and maintained their life[styles]; I [also] paid for their education in art and two languages (Cambodian and French)." "Before having rent income (by purchasing houses for rent)," she wrote, "I only used my own property." Further, "I had enough presence of mind to maintain and raise four children, supported them to learn art, and helped them so that they could serve as civil servants." Next, she repeatedly argued that "the law of the country of Khmer and laws of various other countries say husband and wife who share good and bad times, if they live together and are provided for by the husband or if they live separately, the one who supports the child(ren) can use properties without restriction," and therefore, it is her belief that, "I, as wife of Prince Yukanthor, can use the prince's properties in accordance with law since I support my four children." Her letter to the Council of Ministers on October 13th, 1915 conveys a similar message: "To educate my four children, I am paying more than Cheat (nation) Khmer can bear...; I have knowledge to protect the seed silver" and "I only used silver yielded from Prince Yukanthor's seed silver [rent income]." However, she continues, "If I had used the seed silver, it would not constitute a crime...because I am granted the power to support my children by law [and] the law permits me as the wife of Prince Yukanthor to use silver from his inheritance and his properties to support the children." In other words, Princess Malika argued that regardless of who—husband or wife—physically raises the children, the associated costs were born by the parent(s) who has(have) the appropriate economic means to support their children, and both the wife and husband had the right to use the other's property at her/his discretion, and that this was a universal right established not only in Cambodian law, but also those of other countries. Unfortunately, documents drafted by the Council of Ministers and French colonial authorities do not specify any responses to her claim [RSC-18667]. Presumably, the reason why the Council of Ministers did not argue against her was because they did not find

the claim unusual. Moreover, French colonial authorities largely delegated judgment about this kind of issue to the Council of Ministers.

Princess Malika's argument examined here contains noteworthy points. First, the princess's education policies aimed to enable her children "to serve as civil servants." In other words, her goal to raise children that could make their living as salaried employees adapted to contemporary society and was unlike conventional goals among members of the royal family. Furthermore, the establishment of the Malika School provided her daughters with income and a place to work and led to future appointments as the Minister of Education. Given that her children, despite being royal, were deprived of the possibility of acceding the throne or marrying a spouse with appropriate status and properties (due to the Yukanthor Affair), her decision to raise her children as economically independent adults was, perhaps, the most rational.

Secondly, her letter to the Council of Ministers dated October 13th, 1915 states that she paid more for her children's education "than Cheat (nation) Khmer can bear." This demonstrates the princess's self-image as a member of Cheat Khmer and that she viewed Cheat Khmer as powerless compared to the French. Furthermore, since the princess valued education as a means to ensuring livelihood, it can be assumed that she believed the economic gap between Cheat Khmer and the French could be lessened by education. Similarly, the Council of Minister's appraisal, of Malika School made September 1st, 1915 indicates that contributing to "the intellectual prosperity of the Kingdom" can be understood as sharing the theory that norms for "prosperity" in the kingdom were actually those of modern Europe as represented by its colonial master, France, and that education is an effective means of closing this gap.

5 Princess Malika and the Yukanthor Affair

On June 18th, 1917, the Council of Ministers wrote regarding the investment in French bonds, expressing the word "politique" in the Résident supérieur's instruction as "Phluv Kol Reachkar Pollitik (the way of political tactics of Pollitik)." It then stated: a) Prince Yukanthor remained abroad in contravention of orders to return by the late King Norodom and King Sisowath; b) intelligence suggested that he maintained "the heart that resents the king and the French protection," expressed in a writing published in France in 1900; c) Princess Malika, his wife, agreed with her husband while remaining in Phnom Penh, and they had been exchanging information; d) as "a couple and their children should, under normal circumstances, help one another with everything" the government could not trust the princess or her children; e) the princess "is often disloyal to the king, the government of the protectorate, and that of the Kingdom," and she conspired with Prince Mayura (1862-1918, a son of King Norodom) who was expelled from the Kingdom of Cambodia by Royal Decree No. 31 dated April 24th, 1917 for inciting rebellion. Despite these problems, it continued, the government had been attentive to the needs of Prince Yukanthor

and Princess Malika, and had pardoned her for the crime of conspiring with Prince Mayura with mercy and generosity; therefore, the Council concluded that there were no “violations” as reported in the princess’s letter to the Gouverneur général.

Princess Malika argued against this declaration using red ink for the following reasons. As for a), she stated, “my father king did not do any Pollitik with Prince Yukanthor.” As for b), she suggested that “if the French government also judges that Prince Yukanthor is hostile to [it], the French government should have detained Prince Yukanthor in France and punished him.” (This may imply that the prince did not contravene anything subject to punishment by law in France.) As for c)-e), she stated, “I have never behaved dishonestly towards the king, the protectorate government, or the government of the Kingdom,” and “as I stated in my letter, I disagreed with Prince Mayura.” She explained that the suspicion of her conspiring with Prince Mayura had been “an attempt to trap me with a forged letter” and had not been accurate fact, and that “the Council of Ministers had already investigated” this. Furthermore, as for the “violation” that the Council of Ministers denied, she added: “What I called violation is the fact that they used my properties without telling me anything (referring to the investment in bonds) after confiscating the king’s handwritten note that approved the ruling by the Council of Ministers.” At the end, she wrote “what those with power want to do and what they want to say can be decided, but weak people without power cannot even argue. Are they left to accept that those in power are always right (to accept the ruling by the powerful without complaint)?” Finally, she writes, “We are people without power, and I cannot agree with you or be satisfied accepting this ruling by the Council. I do not agree” [RSC-18667].

Both the Council of Ministers and Princess Malika use the French word “Pollitik/politique” in the writing in Cambodian, which suggest that this was a difficult concept to translate in Cambodia at that time. The princess added in red ink “I have not acquired knowledge about Pollitik as the country of Khmer has never appointed a teacher to teach this” to the part written as “... has agreed honestly and fairly and in accordance with law and Kol Reachkar Pollitik” in the preamble of the “transcript of the ruling.” Also in the letter to the Council of Ministers dated September 4th, 1917 that acknowledged her receipt of the “transcript of the ruling,” she stated while the Council of Ministers said they had examined from both aspects of “Phluv Tolaka” and “Phluv Kol Reachkar Pollitik,” she did not have knowledge of “law of Pollitik” as she had never learned it. She further stated “all kinds of things for Pollitik are dealt with as important people with power wish,” and “for me, what is left is to behave in accordance to the law of the land, and in accordance to the way of politics, make efforts honestly and correctly so that prosperity will follow.” Furthermore, a document entitled “On the details of Prince Yukanthor’s inheritance” that the princess drafted on or after February 21st, 1921 is concluded with a sentence “please do not do Pollitik with me ever again” [RSC-18667].

6 Women's legal capabilities: disputes over Princess Malika's residence

Notes on Princess Malika's school were drafted January 18th, 1912 and describe the Malika School as set up "in her residence...behind the Palace," noting that "there is one classroom in which nineteen young students were learning to read and write Cambodian and there was one studio where nine young women were practicing Cambodian embroidery" [RSC-11595]. The princess's own residence was involved in a lawsuit in June 1904 regarding the borders with Préah Phéakdey Phéasa, a justice in the Prey Veng region, and documents drafted for the lawsuit show that both were gifted property by Préah Sdach Prom, a relative of Princess Malika [RSC-11965].

According to a letter from the Résident supérieur to the mayor of Phnom Penh dated October 20th, 1922, when this piece of land was confiscated to build an art school in 1919, Princess Malika and "other Cambodians" claimed ownership of the land. A ruling by Sala Outhor (the high court) on September 22nd, 1922 confirmed the princess's ownership. In a letter dated October the same year (no date), the mayor of Phnom Penh communicated this to Princess Malika and notified her that a compensation of 800 piastres would be paid. According to a letter from Princess Malika Yukanthor to the Résident supérieur dated April 5th, 1923 (handwritten in French, with signature), the princess signed the deed of sale on January 23rd that year. In the same letter, the princess noted that the Résident supérieur had told her March 13th to wait until "the end of the month" for the issue to be resolved, and since that date had passed, she requested a speedy resolution [RSC-29556].

However, no compensation was made to Princess Malika before mid-June 1927. The Résident supérieur issued certificates dated May 28th and June 15th of that year, while King Sisowath issued a certificated on June 2nd; these certificates prove that the land in question was "owned by Princess Malika, the wife of Prince Yukanthor, by herself/her own asset" because it had been "transferred/gifted in accordance with the Royal Decrees of January 24th, 1908 and May 13th, 1909."²³ Certificates from both then added that Prince Yukanthor was exiled by King Norodom in 1901 and that Princess Malika "cannot [acquire] her husband's permission." It then goes on to state that "while Cambodian laws are silent/there is no stipulation in Khmer's laws about the wife's capacity to enter a contract while her husband is absent," in the case of Princess Malika, royal decrees issued after her husband's expulsion—on January 24th, 1908 and May 13th, 1909—and the ruling of the Cambodian appeal court, Sala Outhor, on September 22nd, 1922 confirmed "her ownership [of the two blocs of land]/Princess Malika is the Master of the land gifted by the king." As such, she was regarded as "an individual who can appear in court without prior consent from her husband / be able to file a suit in a court without her husband's permis-

23 Translated from French before the slash, after the slash translated from Cambodian.

sion.” Therefore, it was ruled that she was entitled to compensation for the confiscated land [RSC-29556].

In the Kingdom of Cambodia, under the guidance of France, the Civil Code and the Code of Civil Procedure were enacted in 1920. Article 195 stipulates that “a wife can file a suit and enter into a contract only when her husband has consented.”²⁴ As there is only one letter by Princess Malika (dated April 5th, 1923) in this document file, it is unknown what the princess thought about the enactment of new codes not included in conventional “laws of Khmer” that were instituted in order to restrict women’s rights.

7 Conclusion

Princess Malika could read and write French, in addition to Cambodian. She had knowledge of Cambodian laws and was equipped with skills to develop and argue her case with French colonial officials and ministers of the Kingdom of Cambodia by drawing from articles of law, prior Royal Decrees, and rulings by the Council of Ministers. Her communication regarding the deposit in the Banque de l’Indochine shows that her level of understanding of financial dealings eclipsed what female members of the Cambodian royal family at that time were supposed to know. As seen in praise given by Résident Supérieur Gauthier, quoted at the beginning of this article, we can conclude that Princess Malika had particular and outstanding capacities for a member of the Cambodian royal family, despite her gender. As the princess inferred in statements like, “I have enough presence of mind to maintain and raise four children,” and, “I have knowledge to protect the seed silver,” she was both proud of and dependent on her capacities. Furthermore, she owned properties inherited from her father and mother. After the Yukanthor Affair, the household known as “the Yukanthor family” was clearly run by Princess Malika’s intentions and judgment—rather than by Prince Yukanthor, who was abroad—and there are no descriptions on the Cambodian perspective, that is, only documents drafted by the princess, the Council of Ministers, or the king that questioned or censured the issue. We should therefore adopt the view that in Cambodia at that time, once someone was deemed to be the best person in reference to age, social status, capabilities, and wealth, gender did not matter when deciding who would run the household.

Why the princess decided to open a school, why it was a girls’ school, and what was the princess’s vision of female education remain unknown. While she arranged educations for Prince Yukanthor’s sons, both legitimate and illegitimate, when it came to the

24 The 1804 Civil Code (the Napoleonic Code) of France contains similar stipulation (Articles 215 and 217). Exceptionally, when the husband does not grant permission (Article 218) or when the husband is incompetent or absent (Article 222), the permission should be sought not from the husband but the judge. As part of this exception is missing from the new Cambodian codes, we can speculate it was made an issue as “the Cambodian laws are silent.” This has been suggested by KASAYA, Yushi of Nagoya University

daughters, she appeared to pay more attention to her own, who received excellent educations, in contrast to her husband's illegitimate daughter. This may suggest her view was that even among members of the royal family, there were women who should be educated and those for whom education was not necessary. However, as far as we can see, taking into account the education she gave her daughters and their subsequent achievements in adulthood—the fruit of that education, it does not appear she perceived any difference in intellect between men and women. Furthermore, while the princess thought Cheat Khmer was powerless compared to the French, it appears she owed this to differences in social environments, such as education. The princess's writing suggests she thought the difference between the royal family and commoners, which was determined by birth among the same “Khmer” people, was unsurmountable and absolute. The style of her argumentation, in which she contrasted “laws of the country of Khmer” and “laws of various countries,” along with the declaration that she would only act in accordance with “laws of the country of Khmer” suggest the princess thought “laws of Khmer” were of equal value to the laws of multiple countries, including France. Her editing and publication of a work of classical literature and editing of a history textbook also demonstrate her appreciation of the culture and history of “Khmer” and her way of expressing and sharing its value as a nation.

Lastly, this analysis has shown that *Kram Maradak* was effective at that time. According to this law, there is no gender difference regarding the right to inheritance, and any difference is due to the mother's status. Except in the June 18th, 1917 ruling by the Council of Ministers, initiated by the Résident Supérieur, to give attention to “politique,” the kings of Cambodia and its Council of Ministers ruled largely in accordance with the princess's claim. This suggests that they shared a standard of judgment with the princess, who argued for basing the ruling on the “laws of Khmer.” Therefore, our future research agenda is to investigate to what extent the new codes, whose content was extremely divergent from the “laws of Khmer,” were effective and whether these codes permeated into Cambodian society to change popular awareness on the family and gender roles.

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