

Ea Khau, a Cambodian Governor under French Colonialism

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1 Introduction

The most serious event in Cambodia's modern history was the sacrifice of millions of Cambodians under the Pol Pot regime (1975 to 1979). The Pol Pot regime aimed to cleanse the country of Western and modern forms of wealth. The citizens who enjoyed this wealth, mostly city-dwellers who had received higher education, became the cleansing targets. Because of this, from the mid-1990s, "development of human resources" in various fields became an urgent task in the process of full-fledged revitalization aided by international society.

Modernization in Cambodia was carried out under the rationale of France's "civilizing mission" during the period when it was a French protectorate. The Cambodians (Khmer) were generally described during the colonial period as "lazy" and "submissive" "peasants" of the ruled class. On the other hand, the administration was composed chiefly of "Vietnamese officials" who had made use of their proficiency in the French language to secure official positions. This is believed to have been a major factor for the emergence of anti-Vietnamese nationalism in Cambodia after independence (Chandler, 2008, pp. 167-185). Additionally, it is believed that many economic privileges had been seized by Chinese merchants who had newly flowed into the cities during this period. The destruction under the Pol Pot regime had been justified at the time by the notion that such modern phenomena represented by urban culture had been imposed upon Cambodia from the outside and were therefore un-Cambodian, and that Cambodians were fundamentally peasants who had been oppressed as members of the ruled class.

There has been a general preconception that Cambodians had not been autonomous actors in Cambodia's history during the colonial period. For this reason, not many historians have actively studied the colonial period as a part of the history of Cambodia. Yet, the Cambodian monarchy survived the colonial period, and the National Archives of Cambodia in Phnom Penh store many Cambodian (Khmer) as well as French documents. This leads us to the question of who created these documents and how Vietnamese officials—who were of a different cultural background—governed Cambodia when the overwhelm-

ing majority of the peasants, that is, the ruled class, were Cambodians. Reconsideration of the society of colonial Cambodia will require the accumulation of evidence and research by decoding hitherto unexamined historical information sources written in Cambodian. However, no comprehensive directory of persons has been created to date. Therefore, it would be difficult to construct a specimen image of an average indigenous government official and narrate the changes he underwent with sufficient accuracy. Therefore, I have adopted a method to choose an individual with relatively abundant historical written material concerning him. Then I try to delineate this person in detail by clarifying his origin, education, employment history, and his relationships with both the French colonial authorities and indigenous residents as much as possible. In my previous study, I chose to analyze Ly Sâm, a Cambodian secretary-interpreter who worked at a *résidence* in one of the provinces (Kitagawa, 2016).

This paper will focus on Ea Khau, who was frequently mentioned as a competent provincial governor in reports by French colonial officials during the early 20th century. First, in the second chapter, I will present basic information on this person. Such information will include his place of birth, his parents' social statuses, education, employment history, and evaluations of him by his superiors. The third chapter will examine suits filed against him during his years as governor to discuss this indigenous Cambodian provincial governor's relationships with villagers and French colonial officials. Following this, the fourth chapter will shed light on the state of affairs surrounding the selection and appointment of provincial governors and their re-stationing from one region to another. Finally, the fifth chapter will introduce Sam Ok, Ea Khau's son, who also became a provincial official. The chapter will discuss what sort of future Ea Khau hoped for him, the education Ea Khau gave him, and how Ea Khau's social position and connections influenced his son's appointments and promotions. Further, a work-related complaint filed by Sam Ok will be examined to present a detailed picture of work at a *sala khet* (a regional administrative office).

The main sources of the historical information used in this study were the person files RSC-20317 and RSC-20417 at the National Archives of Cambodia in Phnom Penh. RSC-20317 contains over 160 documents about Ea Khau, and RSC-20417 over 60 documents about Sam Ok. These documents were gathered upon retirement in each case of the two individuals. They included profiles;¹ official requests for leaves and transfers; decrees about them from kings, governors-general of French Indochina, and the *résident supérieurs* of Cambodia; official complaints that the two made; official complaints accusing them and others of illegal conduct; and documents related to investigations about the last. The languages of the source texts cited in this paper will be indicated in each case in parentheses, such as “(ko)” for a Cambodian-language original text, “k” for Cambodian, “f”

1 These files listed information such as age, place of origin, familial status, employment history, work evaluation, and rewards and penalties. They were created every half term.

for French, “o” for the original text, and “t” for the translated text.

2 Ea Khau’s Origin and Employment History

RSC-20317 includes Ea Khau’s profile (kfo) from the years 1902 to 1905, 1907, 1912, and 1914 to 1918. According to these files, he was born in February, the monkey’s year (1860), in a village called Russey Srok of Srey Santhor province (presently in Kompong Cham province). His father’s name was Snang Chhoy, his mother Me Chou, and he was adopted by Oknha Sothum Réachéa, who was formerly a chief judge at a high court in Phnom Penh. He had “no” connections to the royal court or high officials, and he had been a Buddhist monk at Botôm Temple in Phnom Penh. The title, “Snang,” attached to his biological father’s name indicated an official provincial rank just beneath *balat* (deputy governor). Meanwhile, the title, “Me,” attached to the name of Ea Khau’s mother, was given to women in a lower social position (ordinary women had the title: “Neang”).

Ea Khau’s employment history says that after he completed “school,” he was sent to work at *Imprimerie de Saigon* in 1881 and that he returned to Phnom Penh three months later and began to work at *Imprimerie du Protectorat*. The public education system in the Kingdom of Cambodia began around 1903. Though Ea Khau must have learned French before he was employed, it remains unclear what he had referred to by “school” in his profile.

From 1884 to 1887, a time during which anti-French rebellions flared across Cambodia, Ea Khau worked as an interpreter for the military in Stung Trâng province (presently in Kompong Cham province), Kompong Siem province (presently in Kompong Cham province), Samrong Tong province, and Tréang province (presently in Takéo province). In January 1887, he was given responsibility for a base in Kompong Chhnang. After the rebellions were quelled, Ea Khau worked as an interpreter at *résidences*, first in Pursat from August 1888, and later in Kompong Thom from 1892. After resigning to take a break in April 1893, he returned to work as an interpreter at the *résidence* in Takéo from March 1895. From September 1896, he worked at the *résidence* in Kompong Thom, and from November 1897, he worked at the *résidence* in Prey Veng. His post to post-movement during this period covered a large portion of the central part of the kingdom.

Afterward, he became governor in several provinces, first assuming office on June 30, 1899, as governor of Choeng Prey (presently in Kompong Cham province), then becoming governor of Sisophon from February 15, 1908, then governor of Thbong Khmum from July 31, 1913, and then governor of Kompong Siem from September 27, 1915.² According to decree No.1052 of the governor-general of French Indochina dated April 9, 1920, he retired, having reached the mandatory retirement age.³ Ea Khau had been ap-

2 The annual pay was \$2,100 as of December 1917.

3 A retirement pension of \$693 a year was disbursed quarterly.

pointed governor each time by royal decree. He had been given the title “Oknha Péch Dêchoû” as the governor of Choeung Prey, the title “Oknha Sorisak Sophon” as governor of Sisophon, the title “Oknha Archoun” as the governor of Thbong Khmum, and the title “Oknha Montrey Phéakdey” as the governor of Kompong Siem. These were traditional titles given from times before the colonial period to each province’s governors, except for Sisophon, which was “returned” by Siam in 1907. While Sisophon was located at the northwestern end of the kingdom, all the other provinces where Ea Khau took office as governor were within the jurisdiction of the *résident* of Kompong Cham, within which Ea Khau was born. In particular, Kompong Siem was the very province of which center was the town of Kompong Cham, where the *résidence* was located. That being said, Choeung Prey, Thbong Khmum, and Sisophon were all remote provinces touching borders of forest regions and were known as the least safe regions to live in. Ea Khau’s financial situation was “normal,” and his evaluators described him with words such as “bright,” “energetic,” and “devoted.” By 1918, he had been awarded a gold medal, a silver medal, a fifth-class royal order of Cambodia, a medal from Alliance Française, a silver medal of the French Colonial Exhibition in Marseille, a fourth-class of public education, a Royal Order of Monisaraphon, a fourth-class royal order of Cambodia, a second-class honor medal in gold, a fifth-class *Légion d’honneur* medal, and a third-class royal order of Cambodia.

3 Cases against Ea Khau

RSC-20317 also includes documents about cases against Ea Khau, respectively: **(1)** from 1895, when he was an interpreter at the *résidence* of Pursat,⁴ **(2)** from 1900 to 1901, and **(3)** from 1903,⁵ when he was the governor of Choeung Prey, **(4)** from 1913, when he was the governor of Sisophon,⁶ and **(5)** from 1915, when he was the governor of Thbong Khmum.⁷ In particular, the documents from **(2)** give a detailed picture of activities that took up a large proportion of a governor’s work at the time. Such activities included punishing criminals in the local regions; conciliating disputes in the local regions; and negotiating with residents in the local regions, the French colonial administration (*résidents* and the *résident-supérieur*), and the administration of the Kingdom of Cambodia (*Conseil des ministres*, or “*kongsei*” in Cambodian-language historical material).

4 In a letter dated May 9 to the *résident* of Pursat, the governor of Pursat complained that Ea Khau would not return \$200 in silver that he had borrowed from his wife, Neang Rot.

5 Moeun Phéakdey Anchit Kléang, a resident of Tang Srey village in the same province, sent a complaint dated January 17 to the *Conseil des ministres*, accusing the governor of Choeung Prey and six others of taking away his red male horse and selling it for \$49.

6 The governor was accused of causing, by physical violence, the death of prisoner Toer at 2 PM on May 3.

7 A letter dated January 22 from Khum Suong and Khum Kandol Chrom residents, and another letter dated September 20 from Phum Champou resident Chau An, both addressed to the *résident supérieur*, accused the governor of taking silver, cattle, and water buffaloes as bribes from criminals.

3.1 *The processes of the suits from 1900 to 1901 ((2))*

Néai Chum, a resident of Sorén village located in Choeung Prey province, sent a complaint dated October 5, 1900, to the *résident* of Kompong Cham province (ft)⁸. Likewise, Néai Mêk of Srâmâ village in the same province sent a complaint dated January 24, 1901, to the *résident* (ko, ft).⁹ These complaints alleged that the governor and regional officials had collaborated to take silver from people who had committed crimes and then embezzled this silver instead of putting it in the treasury. The title, “Néai,” attached to the plaintiffs’ names meant that they were “chiefs” and not ordinary villagers.

According to letter No.523, dated July 8, from the *Conseil des ministres* to the *résident-supérieur* (ko, ft), having received the complaints via the *résident-supérieur*, the *Conseil des ministres* temporarily suspended Ea Khau. They summoned him to Phnom Penh in an order dated January 25. At Phnom Penh, the *Conseil* interviewed Ea Khau and his subordinate officials. Further, the *Conseil* sent an investigator called “*achña kandal*” to the region to interview the people who had allegedly paid the silver. When questioned by the *Conseil*, Ea Khau denied all accusations against him. Sérey Aksâ Kim, one of the officials named by Chum, admitted that he received eight *naen* (1 *naen* equals 378 g) of silver from two people in two incidents. He said, however, that he did not hand this to the governor. Further, the *smien* (secretary) Ros, Vongsa Outey Mey, and the *mésrocs* (village heads) Sok and Yok all answered that they had neither collected silver nor been ordered to do so. The *Mésroc* Ros, who was one of the officials named by Néai Mêk, answered that he had collected \$13 (“\$” was a sign for the currency called “*real*” in Cambodian, or “*piastre*” in French) from one person and sent this to the governor and that the governor had received it. The *mésrocs* Sok, Yok, and Prac and the *smien* Bâvâ Mok all answered that they had not been ordered to collect silver. Ea Khau and his subordinate officials signed their statements, adding their official seals or *thnang dai*.¹⁰ However, later on, the *Mésroc* Sok and Snang Kêo admitted that they had collected by the governor’s order 10 *naen* of silver from five people in three cases mentioned in Chum’s complaint. Also, the *mésrocs* Yok, Prac, and Sok and Bâvâ Mok admitted that they had collected by the governor’s order 13 *naen* of silver and \$28 from nine people in eight cases mentioned in Mêk’s complaint. Further, they explained that the reason for their false statements had been because they had been intimidated by the governor.

In a letter dated June 28 to the *résident supérieur* (ko, ft), Ea Khau gave an account explaining why his subordinate officials had retracted their initial statements. He said that Snang Kêo, who was worried that the *Conseil des ministres* would fine him, had visited Ea Khau on June 25, requesting Ea Khau to pay half of the fine if it were to be imposed. When Ea Khau answered this by saying, “I will not pay anything because I know nothing

8 They were accused of taking a bribe of 31 *naen* of silver, \$12, and one cart in ten incidents.

9 They were accused of taking a bribe of 20 *naen* of silver, \$50, and one male horse in eleven incidents.

10 Five rice-grain-size ovals added over the person’s name.

about the stories,” Kêo threatened that, together with the several *mésrocs*, he would write a letter incriminating Ea Khau to the *Conseil des ministres*. Together with the *mésrocs* Yok, Sok, and Prac and Bâvâ Mok, Kêo wrote a letter dated on 27th, retracting their previous statements to the *Conseil des ministres*. However, Ea Khau said in his account that there had been a witness “present and listening” when Kêo had visited Ea Khau. Ea Khau added that Kêo and the others had made their initial statements and signed the papers by their will at the hearing without his inducement.

At their 45th session on August 3 (ft), the *Conseil des ministres* decided to fine Ea Khau \$60 plus \$49.75 for illicit acts confirmed based on statements under oath by Suos and Ea Khau himself, respectively. The \$60 was double the amount of the two *naen* (worth \$30) that Ea Khau had purportedly collected from Suos after the latter had been accused of stealing two cattle. The \$49.75 was the sum of court fees and \$13 that Ea Khau had taken from the *Mésroc Ros* as expenses for a festival for the king’s birthday.¹¹ The *Conseil* also decided to punish some of Ea Khau’s subordinate officials, having confirmed them guilty in some other cases. Additionally, the *Conseil* fined the two plaintiffs for making four erroneous accusations and paid a portion of these fines to the governor as damages. Out of consideration for the *résident-supérieur*, the *Conseil* limited their disciplinary action against Ea Khau to “reprimand with a record on profile” and returned him to office as governor of Choeng Prey.

3.2 The low-rank officials involved in the complaints

The *résident-supérieur* had received a letter from Ea Khau and another from the *résident* of Kompong Cham, dated March 11, 1901 (ko, ft) and July 9, 1901 (fo) respectively. These letters stated that the *balat* Luong Sék had been behind Chum and Mêk’s accusations. Meanwhile, letter No.387 from the *Conseil des ministres* to the *résident supérieur*, dated December 27, 1900 (ko, ft), stated that Chum, for reasons of illness, was represented by his younger brother Luong Ossa Rukhét Din. The “Luong Ossa Rukhét” that preceded the individual name, “Din,” was a title for low-rank officials.

In a letter dated July 29, 1901, to the *résident supérieur* (ko, ft), Din stated that he fully grasped the details of the incidents, that he was an official and was therefore aware of the fact that—in exchange for receiving regular pay—officials were prohibited by royal decree from taking bribes. He stated he was aware that receiving bribes of \$5 or more would result in a fine and dismissal, adding that he had seen many governors, *balats*, *yoksbats* (an official regional position), and *sophéas* (judges) dismissed for taking bribes. Din also pleaded with the *résident supérieur* not to restore Ea Khau to office as governor because doing so would be against the law and the king’s decree. At the end of this letter

11 According to the written complaint, in the ninth month of the year of the mouse (1900), Chau Mau, who was a *khñom* (the French translation for this term was “*serviteur*”) of Chau Prum and Neang Rot of So Sên village, insulted the wife of *Mésroc Ros*, and the governor ordered Ros to tell Mau to pay \$13 in silver.

is Din's name and official seal, accompanied by the names Chau¹² Suos and Chau Mao as "owners of the silver."

3.3 The details of Chau Suos's bribery incident

In a letter dated August 1, 1901, to the *résident supérieur* (ko, ft), Ea Khau argued that the bribe of 2 *naen* from Suos that was to be punished by the *Conseil des ministres* had "not been stated in the complaint," that "no one had made an official complaint" of it. Chum's complaint had stated that in August 1900, when Chau Méas Srâ Kapas of Bông-nay village accused Chau Suos of Tompor village of stealing a pair of cattle, Suos did not defend himself but instead handed "1 *naen* of silver" to the governor and was released. The letter from Ea Khau stated that, when interviewed by *achña luong*, Suos changed the amount in his statement from "1 *naen*" to "2 *naen*." Ea Khau then gave the following account to explain this change. According to Ea Khau, in April and June 1900, Ea Khau had been ordered in letters No.84 and No.120 by Kompong Cham *Résident* Lorin to capture A¹³ Yos and A Mao of Phum Svai Aréak and A Sêm of Tompor village for stealing water buffaloes and cattle. However, Sêm could not be captured because he was at Suos's house in Tompor village, and he managed to escape. Later on, Seney Khéng of Russey Srok village in Srey Santhor province had visited Ea Khau and asked him to allow Suos to capture Sêm. Khéng had said at this point that Suos had entrusted him with a total of 2 *naen* to be divided equally between Ea Khau and himself. Ea Khau had then instructed Khéng to return the silver to Suos and order him to capture Sêm. There had been the presence of "witnesses who knew, listened, and saw" this exchange, Ea Khau wrote.

The *résident* of Kompong Cham summoned and interviewed Seney Khéng on August 7, the *achña kandal* Neak Oknha Ritthirung Phakdei Balat on the 8th, and Suos on the 13th.

According to Seney Khéng's testimony (ko), there had been a dispute between Chau Suos and Neang Kim of Tompor and Chau Méas of Phum Trapeang Ancañ. Suos had been accused of stealing Méas's cattle. Therefore Suos had visited Khéng and hired him as a *smakdei* (a pleader for the defendant) for two *naen* of silver. Khéng said he used all of this silver for himself and did not send any to a *balat*, *yoksbat*, or *sophéa*, let alone the governor. Khéng said that, therefore, Suos's statement that he had handed two *naen* to the governor opposed facts. Khéng's signature is at the end of this testimony. The *achña kandal*'s testimony (ko) was similar to Khéng's. Moreover, it included a statement saying, "When Seney Khéng answered thus, Chau Poñea Sraen Reachea Praeng was listening," providing his signature and official seal followed by the *thnang dai* of Seney Khéng and Poñea Sraen.

12 A title attached before the names of ordinary men.

13 A title attached before the names of men of lower classes other than "*chau*," such as men of subservient peoples and criminals.

Suos's testimony (ko) was more detailed, realistically portraying scenes of sending a "bribe" to a village chief and a governor and requesting conciliation. According to this testimony, Suos had been accused of stealing cattle from Méas of Phum Trapeang Ancañ and had been summoned to the *sala khet* and ordered to search for Sêm. Suos was unable to find Sêm, so he was returned to his home. When he arrived at his home, his wife told him that the Mésroc Ok had come to apprehend him by the governor's order. Suos handed one *naen* of silver to the *mésroc* to pass it on to the governor in fear. Next, Suos had gone down to Phum O Ksach (a village neighboring Russey Srok) in Srey Santhor province and asked Seney Khéng to be his *smakdei*. At this point, Khéng had said that he would first visit the governor at his home to discuss the matter, that he would visit Suos's home about two days afterward, and that they would then go to the governor's house together, after which Suos should provide two *naen* of silver. Having said this, Khéng had returned Suos to his home. After returning home, Suos had retrieved one *naen* of silver from Mésroc Ok and handed it to Khéng as a fee. Then, he had slaughtered one pig and laid one round on a tray together with five duck eggs, two *naen* of silver, and a sash. Then, accompanied by Seney Khéng, Kralapeas Koh, and Chau Kim, he had taken this tray to the governor's home in eastern Moat Svar. Inside the house, the governor had sat at the north side and said to Suos, "I will capture you and tie you to a chain." Then, Khéng had made Suos go outside of the house, telling him to wait by the *srah* (pond) at the front. Suos had done as he was told. Eventually, Khéng came down from the house and told Suos that the governor had freed Suos and that Suos should pay a total of four *naen* in suit costs: two *naen* as Méas's suit cost and two *naen* as Suos's. Suos did not see the governor receive the two *naen*. However, Khéng and the others had been present when Suos placed the tray with the silver on it in front of the governor. Four days later, Suos had visited the governor and asked, "What happened to my case?" The governor told Suos to speak with Méas and to pay the suit costs of four *naen*. Suos tried to meet with Méas. However, Méas had been too busy to meet because his child had been sick, and meanwhile, the governor had left for Phnom Penh. There is a *thnang dai* at the end of this testimony.

3.4 *Involvement by the résident supérieur and the résident of Kompong Cham*

In two letters dated respectively March 11, 1901, and June 28, 1901, addressed to the *résident supérieur* (ko, ft), Ea Khau reported on the hearing held by the *Conseil des ministres* and requested the *résident supérieur* to intervene in the matter, so that Ea Khau's suspension would be lifted, and so that he would receive his pay. Ea Khau wrote that he had "worked for eighteen years as an interpreter serving *résidents* in many provinces," that he had been "an old-time official of the protectorate of Cambodia since 1881," that he had "never until now committed any mistakes," and that he had "all the certificates from former superiors" to prove this, thus asking the *résident supérieur* to take into con-

sideration his work-related performance and past behavior. A letter from the *Conseil des ministres* dated July 8 to the *résident supérieur* (ko, ft) answered questions asked in a letter dated July 4 from the *résident supérieur*. The *Conseil des ministres* described the progress of the investigation while explaining that they had taken a long time to process other cases in which governors had received similar accusations, that it was inevitable to conduct a careful investigation and to pass judgements that were in good faith and adhered to the law, that the governor under suspension would receive no pay until the case had concluded, and that this would not hinder operations because there were still one *balat*, one *yoksbat*, and two *sophéas* in Choeung Prey province.

In a letter dated July 9 to the *résident supérieur* (fo), the *résident* of Kompong Cham wrote that, though it was “impossible to know the details since the documents are not at hand,” Ea Khau had been a “good assistant” to the *résidence* in Kompong Cham. After mentioning that Ea Khau had exterminated a gang of thieves in Choeung Prey in only a short while after being stationed in that province, the *résident* explained that “the old Cambodian law” allowed subjects to “circumvent a wide range of criminal punishments by (monetary) payment,” that there still existed a “custom” that allowed the accused to “expiate their crimes through the intervention of a *mésroc* that is the person of power who lives nearby,” and that “conciliation for amicable settlement always takes place before going to court, in the case of minor crimes in particular.” At the end of this letter, he asked the *résident supérieur* to try to spare Ea Khau from dismissal, out of consideration for the latter’s contributions during the “time of rebellions from 1884 to 1887.” In fact, up until the beginning of the 20th century, there had been no fixed pay for government officials. They were instead allowed to receive as part of their income a portion of fees and fines collected through judicial procedures (Kasaya, 2017, pp. 168-169).

Records from the 43rd session of the *Conseil des ministres* dated July 23 (ft) mentioned that the *résident supérieur* had pointed out that the hearing had already continued for six months and that he wished to know if the local interviews and investigation could be entrusted to the *résident* of Kompong Cham instead. A record from the 45th session dated August 3 (ft) mentioned that the *résident supérieur* proposed Ea Khau be reprimanded, fined, and the incident recorded on his profile, but still restored to office as governor of Choeung Prey in consideration of his past work performance.

In early August, the *résident* of Kompong Cham did interview three witnesses concerning Suos’s case and sent the results to the *résident supérieur* in a report dated September 8 (fo). Based on the witnesses’ testimonies, the *résident* said it was possible to conclude that “Governor Ea had not accepted two bars (a bar was equal to a *naen*) of silver,” that the fine of four bars of silver imposed by the *Conseil des ministres* was “unjust,” and that efforts should be made to “overturn the last ruling and have the four bars of silver returned to Governor Ea.”

As a response to letter No.2821 from the *résident supérieur*, the *Conseil des ministres* wrote in letter No.577 dated August 14 (ko, ft) that Suos had testified under oath that he

had paid two *naen* of silver, that as of August 3 the *Conseil des ministres* had already ordered the governor to pay a fine of \$66, that the governor had paid this, that the *Conseil des ministres* had already deposited this into the treasury, and that the case had therefore already concluded. Meanwhile, in a letter dated September 10 to the *résident supérieur* (ko), Ea Khau mentioned that he received \$44.34 as his pay for August, but that he still wished for conciliation, so that he could receive payment for the period of suspension from January 25 to August 2.

As far as the above exchanges are concerned, both the *résident* and the *résident supérieur* dealt with the *Conseil des ministres* with a constant aim of giving Ea Khau more advantage. In particular, the letter from the *résident* of Kompong Cham dated July 9 confirms his view that Ea Khau's service as a governor had been far more valuable than the abolishment of the acceptance of bribes by officials, that is, the old custom in which conciliation was requested from familiar people in power by giving them silver. As a French official in charge of a region, it was far more beneficial to keep competent Cambodian officials at the scene of public security, having them fight vicious bands of thieves instead.

4 Ea Khau's Restationings

4.1 Stationings by order

The Battambang region that included Sisophon was "returned" by Siam to Cambodia in 1907. A periodic report from Battambang said that the public security in the area had deteriorated severely after its return. Therefore, the acting commissioner of Battambang had suggested the appointment of the competent official Ea Khau to Governor of Sisophon, which was located along the border (INDO-RSC355). Further, documents included in RSC-20317 reveal the following. On February 8, 1908, the *résident supérieur* sent a telegram (fo) to the *résident* of Kompong Cham and the acting commissioner of Battambang. The telegram said, "Choeung Prey governor Ea Khau has been appointed Governor of Sisophon and will board a ship on the 16th." The minister of internal affairs was the one who notified (fo) Ea Chau of his appointment to Governor of Sisophon, telling him to board the next ship, which was the ship departing February 16 and to commence office. He told Ea Khau that his luggage would be sent afterward.

In a letter dated February 15 to the *résident supérieur* (fo), Baudoin, who was the *résident* of Kompong Cham at the time, described Ea Khau's situation. He wrote that the "sudden order to depart" left Ea Khau with "only six days to settle administrative and personal matters." Baudoin also mentioned the "isolation of Beng Chroui village where the *sala khet* is located" and the fact that "the governor will not be receiving furniture from the administration, so he will have to sort his movable properties and luggage in a short period for this sudden relocation." Baudoin wrote all the above were "clearly an

adversity for him in anyone's eyes." Baudoin also wrote that "the governor's wife is expecting to give birth in two months" and that the governor himself was in an "unstable condition," due to "overwork caused by the assignments" that Baudoin gave him, suffering from a "chronic disease of the intestines" and "at risk of losing vision." However, Baudoin added that after being "denied his plea to postpone the departure for ten days," and then undergoing a "period of disappointment," Ea Khau had set off to his new station.

The February 1908 report from Battambang said that the new governor of Sisophon was to arrive on February 18, work at the government office in Battambang for several days with his colleague, familiarize himself with his new duties, and then go to his station. After that, almost every month, the reports mentioned the governor's performance in fighting a thieves' gang in the Sisophon region. In particular, the report of August the same year praised the vigorous work of the "old-time *serviteur* of France" Ea Khau, thus calling him by his name. Further, the report of May 1911 said that the "intelligent and proactive" Sisophon Governor Ea Khau had been "completing important duties without the intervention of European officials," bringing drastic improvements to the same region since 1908. Furthermore, the report of February 1912 credited the governor alone for "last year's" successful prevention of theft of over 150 cattle and water buffaloes by a gang of thieves, who were going to take them toward Siam (INDO-RSC355).

Ea Khau's appointment to Governor of Thbong Khmum, dated July 31, 1913, likewise, had been because the French administrators relied on his abilities. The first-quarter report from the Kompong Cham *résidence* of the same year, a little while before Ea Khau assumed this office, described Thbong Khmum as a "constantly difficult" region, the majority of its population is composed of ethnic minorities that had not yet been subjugated. It said, "It would be useful if we could place a dignified character at the head of this region—someone who is energetic and capable of leading," since the locals "cannot be allowed to stay outside the boundaries of the *droit commun* forever" (INDO-RSC369).

4.2 Ea Khau's requests for transfer

In 1902, when he was the governor of Choeung Prey, Ea Khau said in a letter to the *résident* of Kompong Cham (ko) that the governor post at Kompong Siem had opened up and that he wished to be appointed. There are two letters (ko, ft), both dated October 8, 1914, during Ea Khau's years as Governor of *Thbong Khmum*. These were sent to the minister of internal affairs and the *résident* of Kompong Cham, respectively, and they requested for transfer as well. In these letters, Ea Khau wrote, "Thirty-three years have passed since I began working for the administration." "I have worked hard and struggled, relocating from province to province as ordered by the upper administration." "I am now old, and my strength and cognitive abilities have declined." "My profile lists the many places where I have worked as an official, from interpreter to governor." "I still have no real home," and "I have seven children, which is many." "Please pity this old-time official

and ask the *résident supérieur* to give me the rank of *oknha thipadei séna*”(one of the high officials). Neither of these two requests by Ea Khau was granted.

4.3 From loss of vision to retirement

Ea Khau suffered from a decline in the vision for over ten years until his retirement. The earliest document that confirms this decline of vision is the letter mentioned in the first section of this chapter, dated February 15, 1908, from the *résident* of Kompong Cham to the *résident supérieur*. Ten years later, a letter dated May 14, 1918 (fo), mentioned that Ea Khau had been granted a leave of forty-eight hours for the purpose of “going to Phnom Penh to choose eyeglasses.” Then, a letter dated the 18th from the *résident* of Kompong Cham to the *résident supérieur* (fo) mentioned that Ea Khau had been sent to a hospital in Phnom Penh. On September 16, the same year, Ea Khau sent a letter to the *résident* of Kompong Cham (ko, ft), requesting a leave. In this letter, Ea Khau explained his physical condition. He wrote, “I have never requested a leave for the purpose of respite in all of the thirty-seven years since I began to serve the French protectorate administration.” “Both the recognitions and criticisms that I earned during these years are exactly as they appear on my profile. “Today, I feel that I am in poor physical condition; I have lost strength, and I cannot even see letters as clearly as I could in the past because my vision is blurred.” “Now I understand that I can no longer persevere in my duties without rest.” Attached after this explanation was a medical certificate from a doctor in charge of medical projects in Kompong Cham, and Ea Khau requested a leave of twenty-nine days. At the end of the letter, Ea Khau noted his arrangements for his leave. He wrote, “All operations in my province will be entrusted to the *balat* during the twenty-nine days of my absence, and he will judge and handle all matters per the law.” “If there are any important matters, I will assist him appropriately and ensure there are no delays.” Ea Khau was granted a leave of twenty-nine days by a decree of the *résident supérieur* dated September 28 (fo). However, a letter dated October 18 from the *résident* of Kompong Cham to the *résident supérieur* (fo) said that Ea Khau had returned to work from the 15th by “request of the *résident*” and had been therefore requesting a leave of fifteen days starting November 25 in exchange. The *résident supérieur* approved this request as of the 21st (fo).

The following year, on May 31, 1919, the *résident* of Kompong Cham said in a letter to the *résident supérieur* (fo) that Ea Khau had been sent to Phnom Penh Hospital as per his doctor’s judgment to have his eyes treated. Later on, Ea Khau was ordered by a royal decree dated July 31 to work at the ministry of internal affairs in Phnom Penh. After this, in a letter dated August 23 (fo), Ea Khau asked the *résident* of Kompong Cham to help him stay in Kompong Cham because he wished to continue his eye treatment by a doctor there. In a letter dated September 7 to the *résident* of Kompong Cham (fo), the *résident supérieur* permitted Ea Khau to stay in Kompong Cham until the end of the year of his

retirement. On December 15, the same year, Ea Khau sent a petition to the *résident* of Kompong Cham (ko, ft). In this petition, he wrote, “Since April 1919, I have neither been able to read nor distinguish one person from another.” “I have requested a leave of absence for treatment and have received my pay in full for up until December.” “I am still receiving medication from the doctor in Kompong Cham.” “I ask you to kindly make arrangements so that I can receive my pay for the entire year of 1920, so that I can provide for the other eight members of my family.” “If this cannot be granted, I request for a leave of six months starting January 1920.” “Please take into consideration my service records on my profile.” The *résident* of Kompong Cham transmitted Ea Khau’s request to the *résident supérieur* on the 17th, supporting it with a “very favorable opinion,” and attaching to it a letter (fo) saying that, though he thought “it would be going a little too far to keep him [Ea Khau] at his current post for one more year,” he wished that the *résident supérieur* could “wait to decide the retirement until July 1920 or later.” The *résident supérieur* responded to this in a letter dated the 30th (fo), saying that the retirement should occur in January or February. As mentioned in the second chapter, Ea Khau retired from a decree of the governor-general dated April 9, 1920, having reached the mandatory retirement age.

5 Ea Khau’s Son Sam Ok

5.1 Sam Ok’s employment history

According to family information on the profile forms in RSC-20317, Ea Khau was married by the time he was 41, his spouse was Neang Yem, and he had four sons: two biological and two adopted. By the time he was 53 (1912), he had two daughters and four sons. By the time he was 55 (1914), his spouse’s name had changed to Neang Soun, and the number of his sons had increased to five. Further, by the time he was 57 (1916), he had five sons and three daughters, which remained the same until he was 59 (1918).

According to profiles forms and other documents about Sam Ok in RSC-20417, he was born in Phnom Penh on July 5 in either 1894 or 1895.¹⁴ His father was Ea Khau, his mother Soun. His spouse was Pin Tonn, and they had no children. He had “no” connections to the royal court or high officials. He received higher education at the *Collège de Sisowath*, and he also studied at the *École primaire supérieure Salies-de Béarn* in France from October 1, 1912, until July 31, 1913.

Sam Ok began working as a part-time secretary at the *résidence supérieur* from August 27, 1917. On October 15, 1918, he was appointed *kromokar* (a mid-rank government official) trainee in Khsach Kandal province. On March 2, 1920, he was transferred

14 A “criminal record excerpt” issued October 24, 1918, says he was born in Phnom Penh on July 5, 1894, while a “resume” from the time he was twenty-four says he was born in July 1895.

to Kompong Siem. On October 18, 1923, he became a *balat*. These were all appointments by royal decree, and he was given the titles “Luong Vises Sena” when working in Khsach Kandal and “Luong Phéakhdey Montrey” when working in Kompong Siem. The comments sections of his profile forms include positive notes such as, “He is a son of a good official, working hard to follow his father’s footsteps,” “He is very intelligent, sincere, and diligent; speaks excellent French, and is knowledgeable of his work as befits a son of the former governor Ea Khau.” He was awarded a bronze medal and a gold medal.

5.2 Interventions by his father and grandfather

RSC-20417 also includes: (1) a letter dated May 7, 1918, to the *résident supérieur* (fo), in which Ea Khau requested Sam Ok’s appointment, (3) a letter dated August 11, 1920, to the *résident supérieur* (fo) asking to give Sam Ok a promotion, (4) a letter dated May 27, 1922, to the governor-general (fo),¹⁵ and (2) a letter dated June 5, 1919 (ko, ft), in which Sam Ok’s grandfather Oknha Norin Néayok Mau requested Sam Ok’s promotion. All of these letters were received by Baudoin.

These exchanges reveal the existence of handing down the profession of being a provincial government official from father to son and the existence of personal connections between Cambodian officials and French colonial officials. Further, during this time, the French colonial administration spearheaded the establishment of rules concerning government officials’ appointment. The above exchanges shed light on how “old-time officials” like Ea Khau perceived this change and how the French officials responded to these old-timers’ demands.

Ea Khau and Mau generally cited the following three reasons when requesting recruitment or promotion of their son/grandson. The first reason was the financial need at the given point in time. A study on judicial officers points out that, as of the time of a governor-general’s decree of October 3, 1922, mid-rank and low-rank officials had not been receiving pay and benefits sufficient to provide for their families (Kasaya, 2017, p. 181). Administrative officials were apparently in a similar situation. Letters (1) and (2) mentioned that Sam Ok had frequently been requesting financial support for general living expenses because his pay was “not enough to provide for a family,” and that he had been complaining that the “bad habits acquired while studying in France” made it “difficult to live like the other secretaries/officials.”

The second reason was the need to secure sources of income for the family’s future. Letter (1) was written by Ea Khau during the final years when he was already aged. He expressed in this letter his hope that, even after he died, Sam Ok would have a job, live without financial difficulty, and provide for his younger siblings. Letter (4) was written

15 In this letter, Ea Khau requested his other son Saï-Ân be included in the delegates to the 1922 *Exposition coloniale de Marseille* because Ea Khau wanted to “show the great and wonderful civilization of France” to Saï-Ân.

two years after Ea Khau's retirement. In this letter, Ea Khau expressed his anxiety in light of a continuous diminution of his savings because of frequent, large expenditures to treat his eye disease and because he still had many young children, in addition to the fact that Sam Ok's pay was not even sufficient to support his own family.

The third was the wish to see one's child (grandchild for Mau) follow one's footsteps. This wish was expressed in letter (1), where Ea Khau wrote, "I wish to see one of my sons appointed to the same position as the one I have served in." Similarly, in letter (2), Mau wrote, "[Sam Ok] is a person that should become a model for officials of the protectorate's administration in the future, and I wish to see my grandson join the administration with my own eyes." Letter (4) says, "My son always uses this aged and pitiful father as his model." "I cannot continue to live without seeing my son appointed special-class *kromokar*. If I could see him climb to a sufficient rank as a government official and enjoy circumstances commensurate with that rank before I leave this world, I will be very happy."

These letters also emphasize Ea Khau and Mau's tie with Baudoin. Letter (3) begins with an apology: "Were I not blind, I would have visited you myself." Ea Khau then recalls personal exchange memories from when he stayed in France as a member of a delegation from 1905 to 1906. He wrote, "Even after returning to my country, I had never forgotten the time when you came to the station and invited me to dine with you," and ended this letter by saying, "Should I have the opportunity to go down to Phnom Penh, I will certainly be visiting you." In letter (4), Ea Khau wrote, "I am a very loyal, devoted, and diligent servant who has been very positively regarded by the administration and by you, and I know that you will not forget the name of Ea Khau."

To Ea Khau and Mau, Baudoin was practically the most influential person in the Kingdom of Cambodia and French Indochina. He had the power to deviate from the rules as much as to make them. Their ties with Baudoin put Ea Khau and Mau in a position where they could expect to enjoy privileges. In letter (1), Ea Khau explained that his son had not received his diploma because he had had to return to his home country because of poor health due to his inability to adapt to the French climate, that he would therefore have to attend years of classes at the administrative school in Cambodia to begin his career as a *smien* (secretary) if he were to follow the rules, and that this would "delay his participation in the administration to some time far in the future" when Ea Khau would be "no longer able to supervise him constantly." Ea Khau thus requested Baudoin to expedite Sam Ok's career as a special exception for the "old servant," noting that he was aware that his demand went against "the new rule ("Article 14" of a royal decree dated November 14, 1917).¹⁶" Similarly, in letter (2), Mau wrote, "I know that this will go against the royal decree." "Yet, royal decrees are created by men, that is, by the virtue, power, and

16 Qualifiers to take the exam to become a governor trainee were limited to first to fourth class *kromokar* and *chau krom*, indigenous officials and secretary-interpreters who had served for over ten years, and graduates of the *École supérieure de droit et administration de l'Indochine*.

influence of the great and powerful.” Mau asserted that, therefore, Baudoin had the power to grant his wish. He followed this by saying, “The great and powerful should exercise their power and grant me my wish if they do not wish me to remain the laughingstock of people across this country. I say this because people across this country are waiting with their eyes open to see how the administration will pay its debt of gratitude to me in forms other than medals.” In letter (4) appear the words, “You are now already the leader of French Indochina, and you can fulfill my wish without feeling any constraint.”

The *résident* of Kompong Cham forwarded letter (1) to the *résident supérieur*, attaching a note dated May 7, 1918 (fo). The note asked the *résident supérieur* to “entertain [the request] with as much favor as possible in consideration of the great service, enthusiasm, and devotion of this official.” In a letter dated June 11 to Ea Khau (fo), Baudoin refused to use his authority to recruit Sam Ok, noting that special exceptions were prohibited even for “the son of a senior servant of the protectorate” as per an agreement between the protectorate government and the royal government. He explained that allowing such an exception could create an inconvenient precedent. In the same letter, however, he also suggested that Sam Ok take the next exam to recruit additional officials, which he would “surely pass.” He wrote, “Once he is allowed to work in an official post in the Cambodian administration, he is sure to seize upper-rank positions before long with his intellectual advantages.” Records dated October 10 from the Conseil’s 326th session noted that Sam Ok had passed the employment exam at 15th-place out of 16, was appointed as a *kromokar* trainee, and was stationed Khsach Kandal.

Letter (4) was forwarded on June 27, 1922, from the *résidence supérieur* to the governor-general’s office with a letter (fo) attached to it. The letter mentioned that Sam Ok had just been promoted from fourth-class *kromokar* to third-class *kromokar* after the shortest possible years of service “out of special consideration for the father’s service.” It said that, however, the “father’s title” alone was insufficient to allow Sam Ok to skip six ranks at once and become a special-class *kromokar*, having his pay instantly increased from \$600 to \$1,380. This letter shows that the father’s position as an “old-time official” had, albeit within certain limits, favorably affected the son’s promotion. The French colonial officials also likely considered men useful—their abilities and loyalties guaranteed to a certain degree—if they were sons or younger brothers of familiar indigenous officials.

5.3 Sam Ok’s requests for transfer

RSC-20417 also reveals that Sam Ok submitted petitions for transfers and leaves to nurse his father and that these requests were granted. The first petition is dated January 27, 1920, and it was sent to the governor of Khsach Kandal (ko, ft). Sam Ok wrote that his father was in an extremely difficult situation due to his blindness, that none of his siblings but himself were able to take care of Ea Khau and arrange medical help responsibly, and that he, therefore, wished to have the permission to replace Balat Yong in

Kompong Siem, so that he could nurse his father while continuing to work as a government official. In a letter dated the following day, the 28th, and addressed to the *résident* of Kompong Cham (ko, ft), the governor of Khsach Kandal asked the *résident* to grant Sam Ok's request in consideration of the past achievements of Sam Ok's father, Ea Khau and the fact that Sam Ok was an intelligent man who could handle administrative work of various types without trouble. Sam Ok himself also wrote a letter dated February 2 to the *résident supérieur* (fo) and pleaded to be transferred to Kompong Siem.

Balat Yong, who Sam Ok named as the person he wished to replace, sent a letter dated February 7 to the governor of Kompong Siem (ko, ft), writing that he wished to be transferred to Kand (district) Komchéai Méa of Prey Veng province because Balat Mao wished him to take over his post. Yong's request was transmitted to the *résident* of Kompong Cham on the 10th (ko, ft), and the governor added to this a note saying that, while he had no problem should Sam Ok be granted his request, he wished that Yong's request would be granted as well. A letter dated February 6 from the *résidence supérieur* (fo) stated that the opinion of the *résident* should be sought on the matter because Sam Ok was "very young and a little inexperienced for a quite important province as Kompong Siem." In a letter dated the 12th (fo), the *résident* replied that he agreed with Kompong Siem's governor.

Because Mao was transferred to Spong by the request of the *résident* of Prey Veng, the *Conseil des ministres* decided (f) to transfer Sophéa Po from Péarang to Khsach Kandal, as he wished to be promoted to *balat*; transfer Sophéa San from Stung Trâng to Po's post, since San had been falling ill many times and had been desiring transfer; and select San's replacement on February 20, from candidates who had passed the exam to become *kromokar* trainees or *chau krom* trainees; thereby granting both Sam Ok and Yong's requests.

Later on, Sam Ok wrote in a letter dated December 7 (fo) that he wished not to be transferred from Kompong Siem and separated from his parents. He had to nurse his father and was responsible for supervising his younger siblings and making them go to school. The next year, in a letter dated March 10, 1921, to the governor of Kompong Siem (ko, ft), Sam Ok applied for a leave of fifteen days to accompany his father to Saigon where the latter wished to receive treatment for his eyes. A decree of the *résident supérieur* dated the 18th (fo) permitted a leave with full pay for fifteen days.

5.4 Sam Ok's conflict with Smien Kêm

Sam Ok had a conflict with Smien Kêm, his subordinate, in early March 1921, when he worked in Kompong Siem. RSC-20417 includes a letter dated March 3 from Sam Ok to the governor of Kompong Siem (ko) and another one dated the 4th from Sam Ok to the *résident* of Kompong Cham (fo). These letters present us with a picture of work at a *sala khet*. According to these letters, on February 28, Sam Ok ordered Kêm to transcribe the

monthly report, but the latter refused to do this, saying he wished to apply to take half a day off on March 1. Sam Ok was annoyed by this refusal but did not say anything. Around 3:30 or 4:00 PM on the 2nd, Kêm brought to Sam Ok letter No.11 of March 2. It was from the *mé khum* (village chief) of Péamchikang, and it reported a breakout of smallpox in the village. Because Kêm tossed the letter onto Sam Ok's desk without a word, Sam Ok reproached Kêm for the disrespectful gesture and demanded an explanation. With a contempt demeanor and display of anger, Kêm repetitively replied, "The governor told me to bring it," and made a gesture as if giving an order. Sam Ok said to Kêm, "I am Cambodian, so I understand the meaning of the words well enough. You do not need to keep on repeating them or speak in an angry tone." He then ordered Kêm to do the necessary paperwork and forward the letter to the *résidence*, explaining that his hands were full making payslips for the personnel of the *sala khet*. However, Kêm yelled again, "The governor told me to bring it," so Sam Ok admonished Kêm to obey his orders, telling him not to "show such an arrogant behavior," that he was "a *smien*," so there were times when Sam Ok, his superior, would give him orders. "Fix that disrespectful manner of yours, stop yelling, and let me work in peace," he had said. However, Kêm stood next to the table of the temporarily-hired Smien Im, that is, to the side of Sam Ok's desk, and said, "I cannot bear being used by a worthless man." In response to this, Sam Ok said, "Then let us get the governor's permission, go outside, and duel in front of witnesses." "That is the way that the civilized people approve of France." Kêm responded to this by saying, "That is not the way of man; it is the way for animals," He made a series of sarcastic remarks as Sam Ok stayed silent. The letter from the village chief was left on Smien Ngin's table and was still there the afternoon of the 3rd, so considering its urgency, Sam Ok processed it himself and forwarded it to the *résidence* on the 4th. Kêm also acted disrespectfully when being handed his pay, and this time the *smiens* Sou and Ngin and the first-class guard Chou witnessed the whole exchange. Sam Ok requested that either Kêm or he be transferred from Kompong Cham because it had become "mentally impossible" to work with Kêm after the above series of conflicts. Sam Ok also noted in his letter that Kêm was an apprentice of the late Balat Mok of Sithor Kândal province, but that he tended to slander his colleagues, and that he had been transferred to Kompong Siem after having an open altercation with Governor San in the *sala khet* where he worked at in Samrong Tong province.

In a letter dated March 4 to the *résident* of Kompong Cham (ko), the governor of Kompong Siem explained that he summoned Kêm, made him apologize, and tried to persuade Sam Ok to forgive Kêm, but that Sam Ok was still very angry and refused to do so. The governor requested the *résident* to reprimand Kêm but not transfer him because Kêm was a better *smien* than others. At present, Kêm's treatment after this incident is unknown.

These letters revealed that at least four *smiens* worked under Sam Ok and communicated with one another in Cambodian. The ability to translate from Cambodian to French

and vice versa was necessary, as their jobs involved transmitting monthly reports and reports from villages to the *résidence* and transmitting instructions from the *résidence* to the villages. While Vietnamese men could apply their proficiency in the French language to work in *résidences*, it would have been very difficult for them to work in *khet* and less central provincial posts since this required fluency in Cambodian.

5.5 Sam Ok's death

According to letter No.498 dated July 3, 1924, from the *résident* of Kompong Cham to the *résident supérieur* (fo), Sam Ok died in a boat crash that occurred around 10 PM on June 25 around the separation point of the Mekong and the Tonlé-Tauch, upstream of Chihé. The collision was between a special compact steamer named “*Tau-Leng*” (owned by Nou, a Cambodian lumber merchant from Chhlong) and a steamer named “*Petrel*” that belonged to the *Messageries fluviales de Cochinchine* (River Shipping Company of Cochinchina). During this boat crash, Sam Ok fell off from the *Tau-Leng* and went missing. He was the only victim of this accident. The two boats' crews stayed at the site for about an hour to search for him without success. His body was discovered near Chihé on the 27th in the afternoon, was brought to Kompong Cham that evening, and was returned to his family after being checked by a doctor. Sam Ok's funeral was held on the 28th at noon. It was attended by the *résident* of Kompong Cham and his deputy, several other Europeans, a representative of secretaries and the militia, several government officials, and various notables from in and around Kompong Cham.

6 Conclusion

The analysis of written material related to Ea Khau and Sam Ok revealed that the rural society and the French colonial administration were mediated by Cambodian officials who were appointed by royal decree and had traditional titles bestowed upon them, that they created documents written in Cambodian and translated these into French as necessary, and that conversations within the regional administrative offices were carried out mainly in Cambodian. The French colonial rule thus functioned on the traditional government structure of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The traditional system for employment decisions and compensations for government officials was replaced during Ea Khau's career by a modern, bureaucratic system with clearly-stipulated rules for recruitment, promotion, and penalties. The system provided fixed pay according to rank. The preexisting custom that allowed officials to receive processing fees and fines as income was gradually subjected to punishment for “taking bribes.” Since promotion was not only an honor but also meant an actual raise in pay, and because it was determined based on evaluations by French colonial officials, the indigent officials made efforts to oblige the French officials, also developing personal

connections with them. Residents and low-rank officials sent complaints to a *résident* or the *résident supérieur* to fight excessive demands by a governor or remove a particular individual from the governor's office. Yet, such tactics were not necessarily successful. The reason was that French colonial officials tended to favor the useful "competent officials" who could help them carry out their duties.

Ea Khau made efforts to hand down his socioeconomic status to his children. However, an exam-based appointment system had been introduced by the time his children were about to enter society, and completion of school education had become a prerequisite. Ea Khau let his son Sam Ok study at *Collège de Sisowath*, which was at the top of Cambodia's public education system, and he also let him study in France. Though I was unable to touch upon this in the main discussion, Ea Khau had displayed an active interest in education, partly as a means to gain the favor of French colonial officials. On January 6, 1908, when he was the governor of Choeung Prey, he opened the first regional school in the jurisdiction of Kompong Cham's *résidence*, and he also founded a school in Thbong Khmum in 1917 (Kitagawa, 2004, pp. 68-71). Through such initiatives, he developed personal connections with high officials of the French colonial administration, and he used these connections for his children's appointments and promotions. The colonial administration, on its part, had been continuously struggling to secure competent indigenous personnel, and it likely saw an extent of promise in the sons and younger brothers of officials, since they could receive hands-on supervision from their fathers or brothers, and since their abilities and loyalty were to some extent guaranteed. Sam Ok received preferential treatment beyond what his abilities could merit at the time.

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