

CHAPTER 4

Khao-I-Dang Refugee Camp

Local Hosts and Hauntings of the Third Indochina War in a Transit Zone

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This is a story of Khao-I-Dang Transit Center (KID) and other former refugee camps/camps along the Thai-Cambodian border for those who escaped the armed fights and political turmoil from their home countries to Thailand during the late Cold War era.¹ Many readers may have heard about the Cambodian genocide carried out by the Khmer Rouge while they were in power between 1975 and 1979. Instead of remembering mass killings in Cambodia as sui generis events, the story of border refugee camps highlights the continuation of the postcolonial regional conflicts and wars. Atrocities from the First Indochina War against the French colonization to the American War in Vietnam and the Cambodian genocide did not simply end when the brutal regime was toppled by Vietnamese military intervention in 1979.² Cambodia's ongoing transition to peace requires a deeper understanding of both postcolonial struggles and of Cambodia's relations to the neighboring countries. I asked people who witnessed or were involved in the camp operation to recount this story from the perspective of Thailand, Cambodia's neighboring country on the west and northwest, where Thailand's border with Cambodia turned into another battlefield during the Third Indochina War, which is also known as the Cambodian Civil War or the Cambodian-Vietnamese War. I take the accounts of former border camps as a point of departure to record not just terrified stories but also the everyday lived experience of the people who resided or worked in the confined spaces that were not necessarily recorded in the official documents.

With a handful of parties involved in the Cold War in Southeast Asia, the Third Indochina War reflected how bipolar politics between liberal-democracy and socialist-communist realms could not simply be explained in such complicated historical contexts of the region. With the shifts of armed conflict from the American war in Vietnam to Cambodia, the splits between the China and USSR alliance, and the divisions among the Communist Parties in mainland Southeast Asia, revisiting how the regional peace processes were negotiated through the operation of Khao-I-Dang and other border camps in Thailand can underline how the idea of humanitarianism landed and developed in Southeast Asia during the Cold War.

Most of the border camps lasted almost two decades, including the Khao-I-Dang (KID) camp, the primary site of analysis for this chapter. Though KID was designated to be a temporary transit center, it became a multidecade site due to the prolonged conflict, which was caused by the failure in peace negotiation among the Cambodian political parties and the international involvement of the USSR, China, and the United States.³ Meanwhile Thailand, a country that itself never experienced colonization or modern warfare, became a site of temporary humanitarian shelters, a resettlement center for asylum seekers, and a pathway for military supplies and essential logistical materials from elsewhere to the anti-Vietnamese resistance troops in the mountains close to the border.⁴ The humanitarian missions during the Third Indochina War delayed the process of reconciliation and peace settlement in Cambodia after the country was ruined by the Khmer Rouge genocide.

The stories told in this chapter are Thai local host narratives. The subjects' experiences shed light on how humanitarianism functioned in Thailand during the Third Indochina War. I had conversations with former camp staff members who were subcontracted employees in Khao-I-Dang and other camps from 1979 until the camp closed in 1993. They were willing to recall their memories about their work experiences in the camps, and I believe that these shared narratives can break the silenced and faded history of the Cold War in Southeast Asia and also help us understand both the presence and absence of it within historical memory and record. These personal narratives offer an alternative way to connect the origin of a war that caused mass displacement and resettlement with Thailand's struggles as a host country. These narratives further complicate this history as those who fled to Thailand were denied refugee status by their host country even as shelters were provided both publicly and clandestinely. The official narrative of the Cold War in Thailand rarely includes the voices of the nearby villagers or the local camp staff that operated as local hosts. Their self-censored, silenced, and untold stories haunt the conversations of these former camps. These firsthand accounts reflect how the violence of war was remembered at the camp sites and highlight how people may not wish or be able to talk about the remembered war directly.

Talking to these local hosts also allows me to portray how Thailand's policies on humanitarian intervention changed throughout the conflict, often resulting in confusion and muddled understandings of the country's humanitarian processes. Initially, Thailand was reluctant to receive the displaced persons. Border camp shelters were only allowed to be built as temporary structures since the Khmer Rouge seized the power in Phnom Penh and after the disagreement on the recognition of the Vietnamese-backed government at Phnom Penh in 1979. Later, instability within domestic politics of Thailand caused swings in refugee management that were undeniably tied to political interest within the region after the United States—Thailand's Cold War closest ally—had left Vietnam.⁵ Since the US withdrawal, displaced persons could either reside with the guerrilla troops on the Cambodian side or walk across the border to Thailand and then reside in the border camps. This pattern of movements became common until the end of the conflict in the late 1990s.⁶ Each camp location had different protocols for receiving the residents depending on the permission from the Thai authorities and Cambodian political affiliations, including the Khmer Rouge, the FUNCINPEC, and the KPNLF.⁷ These three anti-Vietnamese political resistance groups even formed the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) as Cambodia's government-in-exile in 1981 at the Thai border. Throughout these years, Thailand has always firmly stated that eventually every refugee must leave Thailand and either return to their home country or resettle in a third country. Around 235,000 Cambodians succeeded in resettling through KID, and the rest were sent back to Cambodia through the repatriation program in 1993.

The Evolution of Thailand as a Zone of Transit and Shelter

“Perhaps, it is because of our strategic location,” my diplomat friend told me. At the heart of mainland Southeast Asia, Thailand, formerly known as Siam, has kept itself from being completely colonized or attacked by any colonizers, as has occurred in other Indochinese territories and Burma. Transforming from a traditional political entity reigned by Chakri Dynasty to become Siam, an early twentieth-century nation-state that grew from the monarchy's success in territorializing the lands through negotiation with the French and the British during the colonial era.⁸ As a newly established nation-state, Thailand did not find border and immigration controls necessary until the arrival of emigrants from China and later from Indochinese countries fleeing the civil war.

Since humanitarian intervention was first introduced to Thailand during the Cold War, Khao-I-Dang became one of the best-known and largest border camps in Thailand, co-operated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross

(ICRC) between 1979 and 1993. It was a special camp that functioned as a final relocation place for the Cambodian displaced persons who were qualified to receive a refugee status, but only if they successfully applied for the resettlement program. The Thai authorities created a few terms relating to the refugee issue that are not abided by the UNHCR, which led to the exception for those who had not yet received a refugee status to reside in United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO)–supported camps.⁹ By these means, they were able to relocate to any border camp, including secret paramilitary bases, except KID. Not only were a large amount of Cambodian displaced persons allowed to reside in the border camps, but the personnel of all Cambodian resistance factions were also secretly permitted to patrol and train with Thai soldiers along the border. The border control here was flexible, though the Thai government said otherwise to the public and international community. Undoubtedly, this act did not help resolve the conflict among Cambodian political factions. It was used as a way to balance power among internal factions, China, and the West and to protect the country's sovereignty from potential attack by Vietnam, a political rivalry from the past that was rising with communist ideology, which was considered a national threat at that time.¹⁰

Locating a Silenced yet Haunted Story of Khao-I-Dang

My first field trip to Khao-I-Dang was in 2018, twenty-five years after the camp was demolished. I visited the site with help from the caretaker who worked for Thailand's Royal Forestry Department (RFD). There are only a few drivable roads inside the conservation areas left over from when the camp was active. The caretaker told me that the RFD intentionally let the trees grow thicker to stop people from conducting wood-smuggling activities in this area. All the remaining roads are reserved only for staff transportation. There are also a few residential buildings for the RFD staff and soldiers who are currently assigned to look after and patrol the conservation project. Walking into the forest conservation area, now fully covered by trees, I found it difficult to imagine how the camp operated back then.

Topographically, Khao-I-Dang is located in Sakaeo Province, Eastern Thailand, where it sits on a lower plain and slightly farther from Sankampaeng Range and Phnom Dangrek Range, a mountain range that is used for border delineation resulting from the 1904 and 1907 Franco-Thai treaties. Unlike the Phnom Dangrek region (Lower Northeastern Thailand), the estimated elevation of the Sakaeo area is lower, more akin to the Khmer Plain toward the central Mekong basin and the Angkor complex in the southeast and the foothills of the Kravanh Mountains in the south. With similar landforms, traveling routes across the Khmer Plain and to the Dangrek region during the precolo-

nial and colonial eras had been popular and convenient either by foot or by vehicle until the Khmer Rouge seized power in 1975. The borders were then closed for safety reasons. If we start a journey to visit KID from Dan Klóng Luk (Aranyaprathet)—Poi Pet, a Thai-Cambodian border pass—it is located thirty kilometers north of the border pass.

After the camp's demolition in 1993, this area was transformed to the forest conservation project named "Tabtim Siam 08." It is one of eight projects first established in December 1992 after Princess Chulabhorn—the youngest daughter of the late King Bhumibol—visited border camps Site K and Site E in Borai, Trat Province, next to the Pailin Province of Cambodia.¹¹ According to the UNHCR and former Khao-I-Dang staff as they explained it to me, there were seven *sangkat* (units) in KID consisting of traditional bamboo huts made with *ya kba* (thatch) and protective barbed-wire fence that were laid out in a parallel fashion. The camp logistics, facilities, and food and water supplies were provided by more than twenty international aid agencies. The humanitarian agencies assigned a number of NGOs to carry out the camp construction and maintenance. The refugees themselves were responsible for the construction of their own shelters.

The humanitarian support in the Khmer border camp system beyond Khao-I-Dang was limited because it oftentimes depended on negotiations between Thailand as a host country, the Cambodian resistance group leaders, and international humanitarian organizations. In other words, the UNBRO and Western countries withheld certain humanitarian actions to avoid political conflict with Thailand and the Cambodian resistance groups that controlled the camps. Despite international hesitance, most of the resistance leaders were allowed to receive medical treatment at the hospitals in Thailand, and many guerilla soldiers had regained their physical and financial strength while residing in the camps, where they received international humanitarian aid. The leaders of the CGDK were permitted to travel to Bangkok with the protection of the Thai army. These negotiations were one of the reasons the resistance coalition party was able to maintain its international recognition and hold onto its seat in the UN General Assembly until 1990.¹² Indeed, the amount of financial assistance through Thailand, China, and the United States was an essential factor in maintaining the encampment along the border throughout the civil war in Cambodia.

However, the ongoing political tension still caused frustration and ambiguity to the aid workers, both foreigners and Thai staff. A terrible example of this was the Preah Vihear incident, where a large group of Cambodians were ordered to walk back to Cambodia through the steep cliff mountain areas of the Phnom Dangrek range.¹³ Many Cambodians were pushed over and killed by Thai soldiers in 1979, and the aid agents came to realize that humanitarian assistance and funds had been misused for the military activities of both

Thai armed forces and Cambodian resistance parties, specifically the Khmer Rouge. The ethical concerns among the aid workers were different than those among foreigners and the locals. On the one hand, the foreign staff began to question whether their involvement was helping or actually might be perpetuating the civil war. On the other hand, the local hosts, both camp staff and government officials, mostly avoided these topics or were reluctant to share, asking me not to mention the unpleasant parts in my writing.

Khao-I-Dang from the Perspective of the Local Hosts

A sign in front of a Spanish-style building indicates the Khao-I-Dang learning center. The learning center is on the left side when entering Tabtim Siam 08 forest conservation area. The exhibition inside the building displays texts and images documenting the life of Cambodian refugees in KID. There is a guest-book for visitors to sign and share their impression of or personal connection to KID. Entries range from former camp residents or their children who were born in the West to former soldiers and staff of KID. Skimming through the guestbook was emotional. KID holds so many memories that are impossible for someone who didn't share that experience to comprehend. Even though the situation was temporary, those experiences affect people for the rest of their lives.

The precise location of Khao-I-Dang is next to the office of the Sakaeo Wildfire Control Station, where first-time visitors like me could mistake this office as the location of KID. For those who wish to visit this place for the first time: the staff members of the wildfire station are still willing to guide visitors to the correct entrance. These staff members are deeply knowledgeable about KID as they have lived through and witnessed the camp era that lasted more than a decade. The camp's existence undoubtedly has had an impact on them. There are haunting stories told by the wildfire station staff about the history of their workplace, which used to be a ritual cemetery zone of KID. "That car sometimes moved by itself . . ." recalled one. Another described "skeletons of dead bodies covered by fabric sheets [that] could be found in the jungle and in pots that were thrown into the reservoir, alongside discarded medical equipment . . ."

These short stories sent chills down my spine. Even if the history of Khao-I-Dang and the border camps have been silenced by the locals themselves, their echoes continue to haunt the region through stories. The locals do not speak about these things overtly for several reasons, among them their refusal to partake in the story to take back individual agency, or as an act of social control to manipulate collective memories and national history. However, these ghost stories allow the willing to relive the history and speak when there is a chance

to do so. This brought me to the question: What would be an appropriate and meaningful way to tackle the silence of the camp stories thirty years later and from the local host perspectives?

A few years after my first visit to Khao-I-Dang, I was introduced to Uncle Lek, a former KID staff member who had a special connection to KID. Uncle Lek worked for Christian Outreach (COR), a subcontracted nongovernmental organization for the UNHCR.¹⁴ He was responsible for building and maintaining the systems of electricity and water lines for the whole camp since the beginning of the KID operation. With such a crucial task, he remembered this place well enough to be able to take the former refugees to the exact spot where they used to live in KID, even though the postcamp landscape had been replaced by the forest conservation project. Uncle Lek gave me this analogy: “Imagine your life being confined within limited space for more than a decade, like we have been locked up because of the COVID-19 pandemic but within only four square kilometers and with much more difficult conditions.”

After the opening of the Khao-I-Dang learning center, former colleagues occasionally asked Uncle Lek to be the lead tour guide for the Cambodian returnees. These returnees had once lived in KID and had made their way to the West, and they now wished to see where they or their parents had lived in KID.

The experiences of the returning camp residents themselves are distinct from those of the local staff, villagers, and authorities. Uncle Lek told me that he once took care of a visitor who wished to find the location of the *sangkat* where they used to live in KID. He detailed that it was heartbreaking for him to witness as the visitor could only stand in front of the exhibition building and cry for two hours, never stepping inside the conservation areas. Throughout these times guiding visitors, he was able to take most of them to the spots they wished to see. I asked how he could remember a landscape that had gradually changed for decades. He told me that he could recall each section through the marked trees that had grown since the camp operation, as he had been one of the mappers for the camp's electricity plan. He was confident that there was no way he would get lost, even though the place is full of new trees that had been planted well after the establishment of Tabtim Siam 08. His experience was one of many stories that, to be understood, one needs to be aware of how each narrative is tied to unique and layered experiences and positions within the camp. What makes Uncle Lek's stories stand out from others was that he had opportunities to meet so many former refugees as they returned to the site. He was able to witness not only the refugees' lived experience during the camp's operation but also the wave of emotions that poured out during the returning visits and the impact of those memories. These witnessed emotions and experiences complicate, expand, and go beyond the words written in the guestbook at the learning center.

Some Inconvenient Truth from the Former Camp Staff

Another former member of the camp staff, Aunt Fang, displayed her thirty-year-old Khao-I-Dang photo albums to show me what she looked after in the camp (see figure 4.1).¹⁵ Aunt Fang graduated with a vocational certificate degree from Surin Province and heard about a contract job in KID through a newspaper advertisement passed along from her aunt in Bangkok. She was qualified for the job as she was a Thai citizen who could speak Khmer, which the application requested. Many people from Surin and Buriram had taken advantage of their ethnic Khmer heritage to join the mission of the international nongovernmental organizations that were the subcontractors of the UNHCR and the UNBRO. She was recruited by CARE International, a non-governmental organization as kitchen staff. She told me that she had to learn how to drive a truck to distribute food supplies for the camp residents in each *sangkat* every day. The supplies consisted of steamed breads (one to two thousand pieces a day) and rice with pickles and other side dishes. These supplies made up three meals a day for those who could not cook for themselves and for those who worked in camp facilities such as the hospital, the mental health clinic, and the church—the last of which also had a children’s learning center. Along



Figure 4.1. • Aunt Fang showing her Khao-I-Dang photo album, 2018.
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with the daily kitchen routines that ensured the basic quality of food services, the photographs shared with me recorded leisure times and the ordinary life of Cambodian refugees in the camp. These photos showed events such as a Halloween party, a sports day, and a wedding ceremony.

Working life inside the camp gave Aunt Fang the opportunity to befriend Cambodians through the language study program. There Cambodians would take Thai- or English-language classes in preparation for the resettlement program while Aunt Fang would learn the Phnom Penh dialect from the Cambodian staff. From time to time, she was also assigned to visit other camps in case there were special requests from the UNBRO. These experiences helped her understand how different camps were organized and separated by political affiliations or resistance groups. Her work experience with Cambodians was full of complex issues and competition, as she said, “I somehow became a rude person because I had to shout and ask the camp residents to be in lines or to be on tracks as there were so many people. Waiting could frustrate their satisfaction; some of them were choosy and demanding.”

In her final year at Khao-I-Dang (1993), she was asked to help with departing registration for those who were leaving for third countries or being sent back to Cambodia by buses controlled by the UNHCR, the ICRC, and the Royal Thai Army (RTA). Departure names had to match those given by residents when they first arrived and registered at the camp. She recalled the difficulty of this task: there was no way to ensure that the registered numbers would match with the actual ones as people often secretly left or entered the camp, eluding the guards and soldiers. However, in the end, no one was allowed to remain in Thailand. They were forced to leave to participate in the general election sponsored by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) as agreed by all parties that signed the 1991 Paris Peace Accord—excepting the Khmer Rouge. That was how she looked back and reflected her decade of experience. Our conversation ended with her reflection:

It was a feeling of excitement and anxiety rather than being scared. My *farang* (white) colleague once expressed their curiosity about why Thai staff were not scared as much as they were. It was actually scary, but my teenage self was not scared at all. Thinking about the dark scenery of the mountain near Khao-I-Dang at night when there were bombings. I had to hide myself and anxiously waited in silence or even had to relocate to other area by bus, it was surely not enjoyable but CARE and other organizations, they took care of the local staff very well.

For the local staff members, camp was a workplace, a place to earn money, and an opportunity to interact with foreigners in an international environment. This job came with much more flexibility compared to jobs with Thai government agencies or private companies. Their relationship to the Aranyaprathet

area was slightly different from the camp neighboring villagers depending on where they came from. The work experience in Khao-I-Dang and other border camps had affected their lives afterward. Uncle Lek lived in Aranyaprathet for many years before moving back to Buriram for retirement while Aunt Fang returned to Surin Province and continued working as a cook at the Surin School for the Deaf.

I also got to talk to Uncle Rath, a man who used to work as a driver for the French mission during the last part of the war. He had a chance to travel to several camps, namely Site B, O'Trao, Site 8, and Khao-I-Dang.¹⁶ His experience was not attached to any single camp. He managed to earn money not only from the foreign aid agency but also from the camp residents who asked him to run errands. One of these errands was developing camera film at the store in Muang Surin District. "Photographs were very important to people in the camp," he explained. "Photographs could help people find their lost family members."

Uncle Rath's experience during the war reflected his feeling toward the situation and his interaction with the Cambodian resistance groups. He stated that he felt more connected to and sympathetic toward the Khmer Rouge because they were more sincere and treated him like their comrade, unlike people in Site B (Surin Province). Site B housed mostly middle-class people who often interacted with Thai staff more like employees of the Westerners. In his opinion, there was a highly hierarchical relationship within Site B between staff and residents. At the same time, he witnessed how the Khmer Rouge remained financially strong. They did this through receiving secret aid from foreign states supplied to challenge Vietnamese influence over the government at Phnom Penh. Just as significantly, they conducted illicit business that enabled them to buy weapons and keep their troops along the border despite internal conflicts and weak control by Khmer Rouge leaders.

The Untold Story from the Neighbor of Khao-I-Dang

While the Cambodians fled to Thailand, the Thai villagers along the border were also impacted by the war. The fraught border situation came not solely from the influx of the Cambodians but also from the damage to the border communities caused by armed fights, bombs, and looting. Cross-border mobility and business were disrupted. The border villagers on the Thai side were already in a marginalized part of the country with a lack of access to financial support and infrastructure development. The fact that Thai locals were relegated to begging for food exchange or distribution from the border camps indicates that the Thai state did not provide for these citizens or their com-

munities. Some regional authorities would even secretly establish political or economic deals with Cambodian resistance parties.

I was fortunate to meet with Yai Lah, an elder who has lived next to Khao-I-Dang and had a special connection with the Thai soldiers and the camp residents.¹⁷ She provided insightful details of the dark side of the camp that I would never have been able to learn from the government authorities or foreign aid agencies. Yai Lah told me that there used to be only six households in the village, including hers. At nights, the villagers had to hide in the jungle from the frequent looters who came to rob their belongings. She and her husband hid money under the soil so that the thieves could not find it. Although Thai authorities tried to dissuade villagers from living close to the camp, the villagers depended on the money they made doing business with the camp. Yai Lah and her husband participated in these exchanges to survive the economically desperate conditions of the border region. Villagers would take requests from camp residents to get goods such as cigarettes and silk from Aranyaprathet or Bangkok, or exchange Thai baht for US dollars. Despite the high chance of being shot, whether intentionally or accidentally, Yai Lah risked her life many times to deliver goods to her clients in the camp. In secret she would pay bribes or squeeze through two- to three-layered barbed-wire fences. At some point during these exchanges, she believed that there might be spy targeting and following her during the daytime, only to attack at night because of her wealth from this gray business. Because of the danger, she was forced to send her kids away to another province, and she herself sometimes had to hide in the jungle or in the temple at night, where the monks would give her a temporary safe haven. She endured it all because it was the only way to reliably earn enough for almost a decade. After the camp closure, she struggled to find that amount of income anywhere else.

The story told by Yai Lah is rare, and its type is impossible to find in official documents. I learned this from other informants who mentioned the violence they witnessed but refused to share any details or asked me not to write about it. Yai Lah's story exposes another side that only the locals in these border communities could experience. As she lived at the edge of the camp, she learned where and how she could get into the camp and to what *sangkat*. Her intimate encounters and business with the residents allowed her to learn about the camp in detail, including a hospital (the only spot that Thais could access the camp to receive medical services), a hair salon, a kitchen, small shops, a Buddhist temple, a Christian church, a learning and training center, and places to access sex work services, all in Khao-I-Dang. She also remembered how each *sangkat* was operated and affiliated with different, often unfriendly political groups. Violence easily broke out in KID between Thai special forces and the Cambodian refugees, or simply armed Cambodians who used guns or poisons to resolve interpersonal conflicts.

Rewinding Ambiguous Voices: Pathway to Reconciliation

“This is not our history, why do you study about this?” one of the villagers who lived near Tabtim Siam 08 inquired of me when I asked them to talk about Khao-I-Dang. This sentence has stuck in my mind since then. Still, I believe that the above should not be the only way to represent how the KID camp stories have been silenced or became an unapproachable history to the public in Thailand. Various forms of silence operate within Thailand regarding its time as a refugee host country during wartime. Standard education avoids and neglects this particular event in Thailand’s national history. However, the local hosts who lived nearby, who witnessed and experienced the violence of the war, as well as those who worked inside the camp themselves, express this history in other forms. It comes out in ghost stories, in intimate memories, and in photographs, but also in some of their refusal to reengage with the violence caused by the Thai State.

Understanding this paradox and ambiguity in Thailand’s refugee and humanitarian history as told by the local hosts complicates traditional accounts that often obscure the human element of these conflicts and their consequences. These hidden stories regarding complicated and controversial humanitarian aid can provide further insight into why the Third Indochina War lasted for over twenty years. Cambodian refugee management from the host perspectives could be characterized as flexible and welcoming, but it simultaneously displayed a fear of communist expansion from Vietnam. These mixed impulses motivated policies that were designed to protect national sovereignty through a complicated process that turned the border zone into a mix of battlefields, guerilla strongholds, and humanitarian shelters all at the same time. The Thai-Cambodian border became the front line of the Cold War, a zone of transit, and the site of clandestine movements that contributed to the prolongation of Cambodian civil war and the continuity of political faction in Cambodia until the present. Lastly, I hope this chapter, and the stories contained within it, becomes a useful resource for political reconciliation within Cambodia and across the region.

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Notes

1. There were displaced persons from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam that escaped the wars to Thailand. This chapter discusses only the camps for the Cambodians during the Third Indochina War.
2. The Second Indochina War was also known as the Vietnam War (1955–75).
3. There is no evidence of direct involvement from either the USSR, China, or the United States; however, the ongoing demining projects in Cambodia and Thailand have found landmines produced in these countries. For example, models found in the Surin area include antitank mines (AT), unexploded explosive ordnance (UXO), and antipersonnel mines (AP). Sirisai, “Background of TDA.”
4. Thun, “International Responses.”
5. There was a brief moment of open-door policy welcoming all displaced persons (late 1979–early 1980) before it was disrupted by the regime change and evolved to the phase of humane deterrence (1980–89), when the heavy fighting occurred between the Vietnamese-backed troops and the anti-Vietnamese troops at the border.
6. The final phase lasted beyond the general election in 1993 as some resistance groups were dissolved or banned from the election. For example, the Khmer Rouge was able to maintain their armed troops along the Thai border until 1999. Rogge, *Return to Cambodia*; Muntarbhorn and Mantāphōn, *Status of Refugees in Asia*.
7. Full name of FUNCIPPEC is in French: Front Ui National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique Et Coopératif, or the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia in English. It is a royalist political party of Cambodia founded in 1981 by King Norodom Sihanouk, while the KPNLF (Kampuchean People’s National Liberation Front) is a right-wing and pro-Western political group in opposition to the Vietnamese-backed government in Phnom Penh, founded in 1979 by Son San.
8. Mead, *Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*.
9. The first term relating to refugee issues in Thailand is “*Phu Lee Phai*,” or “refugee,” which referred only to the those who would be qualified for resettlement programs to third countries. The rest of the refugees were classified as “*Phu Oapphayop*” (displaced persons, or those “who escape from dangers due to an uprising, fighting, or war, and enter in breach of the Immigration Act”) or “*Phu Lopnbeekaomuang*” (illegal immigrants who have received a special allowance for a temporary stay in the provided shelters or border camps administered by the UNBRO). The UNBRO was a temporary humanitarian agency that provided services in the controversial and politicized border camps, including to the displaced persons under the Khmer Rouge and other anti-Vietnamese factions. Vickery, “Refugee Politics.”
10. Vietnam had been a political rival to Siam (Thailand) since the precolonial era. Later, Thailand engaged with the idea of domino theory to portray communism as a dangerous ideology, necessitating the country’s protection from Vietnam’s influence, which had already succeeded in Laos and Cambodia. Terry, *Condemned to Repeat?*
11. *Tabtim* in Thai means “red sapphire,” while *Pailin* means “blue sapphire.” The Tabtim Siam project consists of Sites K and E (01); Site 8 (02); Site 2 (03); Site B (04); Site 8 (05); O’Trao (06); Huay Chan (07); and Khao-I-Dang (08), covered in Sakaeo, Trat, Surin, and Sisaket Provinces.
12. Amer, “United Nations and Kampuchea.”

13. The documentary film *Ghost Mountain* (2020), produced by a son of the survivor from the killing fields, depicts the Preah Vihear Massacre as the second killing field, or “Dangrek Genocide.” Around forty-three thousand Cambodian refugees who had recently arrived in Khao-I-Dang refugee camp were forced onto buses and driven fourteen hours east to the area near Preah Vihear. They were then forced down the Dangrek cliff, and over ten thousand lost their lives due to injury, starvation, malaria, and landmines. Those who refused to go down the cliffs were mercilessly shot by Thai soldiers. Deth, “Geopolitics of Cambodia”; Hinton, “Khmerness and the Thai ‘Other.’”
14. Interviewed on 18 May 2022. Uncle Lek gave permission to use his actual nickname for his story.
15. Pseudonym, interviewed on 28 June 2018.
16. Pseudonym, interviewed on 2 June 2018.
17. Pseudonym, interviewed on 6 July 2018.

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