

Simone Bijlard

Battered Beauties



Battered Beauties

A research on French colonial markets in Cambodia

by Simone Bijlard

Colophon

Research thesis *Battered Beauties*

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Preface

Large ceiling fans turn lazily overhead, even though the blazing heat has disappeared with the setting of the sun. The rhythmic sound of the fans, combined with my first glass of wine in a while makes me comfortably drowsy. I lean backwards in my large cane armchair and watch the waitresses in their meticulously tailored dresses pass by. A musician plays on a bamboo xylophone, making me even more at ease.

There are other people sitting at the verandah; quietly chatting, reading a newspaper or enjoying the music. White people, to be sure.

A platter of typical Asian starters is served at our table, presented with beautifully carved fruits and vegetables. The crispy *wontons* and spring rolls are handmade, but look nonetheless splendid and taste similarly. The same counts for the terrific *amok*, served with sticky rice packed in banana leaves.

I wonder; this must be a taste of the life colonials have led in Cambodia. Not even sixty years ago. How they must have enjoyed the peace and quiet after a hot and sweaty day; how they must have thought of

home when they drank their own *Chardonnay*. But it is a *rêverie*, only existing in these few restaurants in the colonial quarter of Phnom Penh. For life in Cambodia has moved on. The French left and brought upon the region, one could say, a blood-stricken conflict. It resulted in a genocidal communist regime.

So how much is there to say about the French?

Sitting at a plastic stool in front of a market stall I eat freshly made noodle soup. As a starter, I had marinated chicken thighs. Not your watery European chickens, but with meat on their bones and taste to their flesh. As a dessert, shall I pick some sweet sticky rice or a baked banana?

Next to me sits a Khmer family, slurping their noodles away. Both father and children pour so many dried chilies over their soup that I would start to cry if I had to eat it. At another table Khmer guys, slightly younger than me - but possibly much older as Khmer people seem to have found the key to eternal youth - play a card game. Behind me,

barbecues sizzle with savoury sausages.

While eating my dessert - a baked banana - I wander around the stalls of the market. Although the market is about to close, there is still much to see. Some vendors are desperately trying to sell their last fresh produce. I see whole pig's heads, live tortoises, colourful heaps of fruit, the latest fashion.

Towering above my head is a grand structure, punctured with many openings. The last evening light falls through the openings and casts long shadows on the adjacent walls. Evening has brought a relief from the heat, but a slight breeze inside the market makes it even more comfortable. The building I stand in is French, crafted many decades ago, but still so very much alive. So very useful and smart.

And I wonder again; maybe this built legacy is the one thing there is to say about the French.

Simone Bijlard
Amsterdam, March 2011

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Content

Preface	5
Acknowledgements	7
Battered beauties - <i>Introduction</i>	13
This thesis	15
Cambodia	15
1. Crowds from one end to the other - <i>The indigenous market</i>	17
1.1. Markets in pre-colonial Indochina	19
1.2. Countryside markets in present-day Vietnam	20
1.3. Concluding	23
2. Building a France away from France - <i>The French colonial market</i>	25
2.1. Changing attitudes	27
2.2. Building a colonial town	28
2.3. Société Indochinoise d'Études et de Constructions (S.I.D.E.C.)	30
2.4. Concluding	31
3. A problem with memory - <i>On the relevance of architectural heritage</i>	33
3.1. The preservation of built heritage in Phnom Penh	35
3.2. A problem with memory	36
3.3. The preservation of built heritage in Battambang	38
3.4. Concluding	39
4. Skinned frogs and slithering eels - <i>On the present-day functioning of markets</i>	41
4.1. Shared principles	43
4.2. Four case-study researches	43
4.2.1. Phnom Penh: Psar Thom Thmei	45
4.2.2. Battambang: Psar Nath	46
4.2.3. Kompong Cham: Psar Thmei	48

4.2.4. Ho Chi Minh City: Cho Ben Thanh	50
4.2.5. Stall typologies	52
4.3. Vendors and customers	54
4.4. Concluding	56
Battered beauties - <i>Conclusion</i>	59
Final conclusion	61
Building bridges - <i>Epilogue</i>	63
A typological research on covered bridges	65
Battambang's bridges	67
Concluding	68
Notes	69
Literature	72
Appendices	75
Appendix A: S.I.D.E.C.	75
Appendix B: market plans	79
Appendix C: conversations	83

List of maps, tables and figures

Figures

Psar Nath, Battambang	front cover
Psar Nath's battered clock-tower	12
1.1. Cut-out from "Luang Prabang's Market"	16
1.2. "The city of Luang Prabang"	18
1.3. "Luang Prabang's Market"	18
1.4. "The Phnom Penh Pyramid"	21
1.5. "The Phnom Penh market in the late 1860's"	21
1.6. Countryside market in Vietnam	22
1.7. Countryside market in Vietnam	22
2.1. Aerial view of the Central Market or Psar Thom Thmei	24
2.2. Hôtel de Ville in Saigon	26
2.3. Musée Louis Finot in Hanoi	26
2.4. Shophouses in Battambang	29
2.5. Aerial view of Psar Nath in Battambang	30
3.1. In Phnom Penh, shophouses from the French colonial period	32
3.2. Hotel Renakse	34
3.3. Psar Thom Thmei and its extensions	34
3.4. Battambang's Heritage Protection Area	37
4.1. Fresh fish sold from the street in Battambang	40
4.2. West - East section Psar Thom Thmei	44
4.3. South - North section Psar Nath	46
4.4. East - West section Psar Thmei	48
4.5. East - West section Cho Ben Thanh	50
4.6. A man with an ambulant profession	55
The rear side of Psar Nath	59
E.1. A French colonial bridge in the Mekong, Si Phan Don	62
E.2. Whites Bridge, Michigan, USA	64
E.3. Pont de Rohan, Landerneau	64
E.4. Ponte Rialto, Venice	64
E.5. Ponte Vecchio, Florence	64

E.6. Chenhyang Wind & Rain Bridge, Sanjiang	64
E.7. Steel bridge across Sangker, 1916, demolished in 2008	67
E.8. Concrete bridge across Sangker, 2008, replacement of steel bridge	67
E.9. Concrete bridge across Sangker, 1916	67
E.10. Section across Sangker in front of Psar Nath	67
Psar Thmei, Kompong Cham	back cover

Maps

Indochina and Mekong	14
2.1. Battambang	28
4.1. Phnom Penh	43

Tables

4.1. Stall typologies	52
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Battered beauties

Introduction

Although French rule over Indochina ended in 1954 after the Battle of Dien Bien Phu¹, colonial buildings still dot the towns of today's Cambodia. Among these buildings are covered markets; large concrete structures, stylish in design. Up until today these buildings function from early dawn until nightfall; they vibrate with life. However, as time has passed and war, genocide and poverty have stricken Cambodia, these buildings have fallen into dilapidation. Time has made them into *battered beauties*. How to restore these beauties to their original splendor, while respecting today's habits?

In order to graduate as a Master of Science at Explore Lab - in itself a graduation studio at the Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology - both a research and a design project have to be successfully completed.

This thesis is written in completion of the research project. It is an exploration of the history and daily functioning of the covered markets built under French colonial rule in Cambodia. It shows why these structures should be preserved and explores what has defined their architecture.

This graduation project will be finalised with a design for the modernisation and extension of one of Cambodia's markets.

*Psar Nath's battered clock-tower
(source: author's photograph)*



Indochina and Mekong
(source: author's drawing)

Cambodia

Although one would be better off reading Chandler's *A History of Cambodia* to fully understand Cambodia's history, a brief overview is given here as it will prove helpful with understanding this thesis.

From 1863 the Kingdom of Cambodia became a Protectorate of France, together with Cochinchina at the southern tip of Vietnam. In 1887 Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia were united in the Union of Indochina.²

In 1953, Cambodia gained independence once more, although it was of a short term.³ The war fought against America in neighbouring Vietnam spread over Cambodian territory and plunged the country into civil war, in which a growing communist force named the Khmer Rouge fought a guerrilla war against the military dictatorship of Lon Nol.⁴ In 1975 reign over Cambodia fell to the Khmer Rouge, who returned Cambodia to *Year Zero*: a state in which private property no longer existed and everything, even human labour, belonged to the Khmer Rouge. It let millions of Cambodians suffer and die.⁵

In 1979, Vietnamese troops ended the regime of the Khmer Rouge and brought a certain amount of peace to Cambodia.⁶ Democratic elections however did not take place until 1993, when a UN-force moved into Cambodia to ensure a safe environment and honest elections.⁷ From 1993 onwards the situation in Cambodia has stabilised to some extent, as elections have taken place and people live once again in freedom.

This thesis

To understand why Cambodia's covered markets built under French colonial rule should be preserved and what has defined their architecture two themes are researched in this thesis: their history - both indigenous and French - and their present-day functioning. This understanding is gained in four chapters:

Chapter 1 "**Crowds from one end to the other** - *The indigenous market*" describes the functioning and architectural layout of markets in Indochina that appeared and functioned without colonial interference. Markets in Vietnam and Laos share many similarities with Cambodian markets and are therefore discussed as well. Present-day country-side markets in Vietnam are described as there appear to be similarities between today's and historical habits. Chapter 2 "**Building a France away from France** - *The French colonial market*" discusses the context in which the French administration built its covered markets. It shows how the French administration organised its colonisation and what role architecture in general and covered markets in particular played in it. Questions as to how French intervention has altered the local market, what purposes were served with their realisation, what companies and architects were involved and what architectural language was

used are dealt with.

The relevance of this knowledge is tested in chapter 3 "**A problem with memory** - *On the relevance of architectural heritage*", as it is placed in the context of the current heritage policy of today's Cambodia. An understanding of the processes that lie underneath this policy is given.

Chapter 4 "**Skinned frogs and slithering eels** - *On the present-day functioning of markets*" jumps to the second theme of this research, concerning how these markets function today. In this chapter the three surviving markets in Cambodia are analysed on their programmatical functioning and on how their architecture contributes to it. A market in Vietnam is discussed as well, as it exemplifies a market situated in a country wealthier and more developed than Cambodia.

The conclusion "**Battered beauties** - *Conclusion*" answers how healthy the concept of the covered market is, why they should be preserved and what has defined their architecture.

This thesis ends with the epilogue "**Building bridges** - *Epilogue*". It holds a small research in commencement of the design project. It can be understood as an epilogue for this thesis, but also as a prologue for the design project.



1 Crowds from one end to the other¹

The indigenous market

“On 5 June 1866 at noon, the expedition left Saigon with two French Navy gunboats. It was an emotional departure because the members of the Commission had no idea how long they would be away from the colony of Cochinchina or from France. Eventually, they spent two years struggling through the forests.”

(Francis Garnier in *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong; Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan*, text complimentary to plate 1 “Saigon Harbour”)

When the *Voyage d’Exploration en Indo-Chine*, led by the French Navy officer Francis Garnier, left Saigon the lands surrounding the Mekong had not yet been colonised by France.² The path of the Mekong Exploration Commission went as far as the Chinese Province of Yunnan, fabled for its wealth. In wish to compete with the successful British colony in India the Commission set out to discover a trading route between this far-away land and the French colony. They however found a long and perilous

path that could in no way provide a safe trading passage.

During the exploration Garnier made extensive notes and had the artist Louis Delaporte draw local scenes. Some of these plates and notes describe how markets functioned at that time.

To understand how the Cambodian market functioned preceding colonial interference some plates drawn by Delaporte and complimentary texts by Garnier are surveyed. As markets in Vietnam and Laos share many similarities with Cambodian markets, they are discussed in this chapter as well. Secondly, the description of the present-day countryside market in Vietnam given by Dang Nhat Minh, lecturer Architectural History at the University of Architecture of Ho Chi Minh City, is surveyed. Finally the descriptions of the historical and present-day markets are compared, revealing their similarities and differences.

*Figure 1.1. Cut-out from “Luang Prabang’s Market” drawn by L. Delaporte (source: *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong; Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan*)*

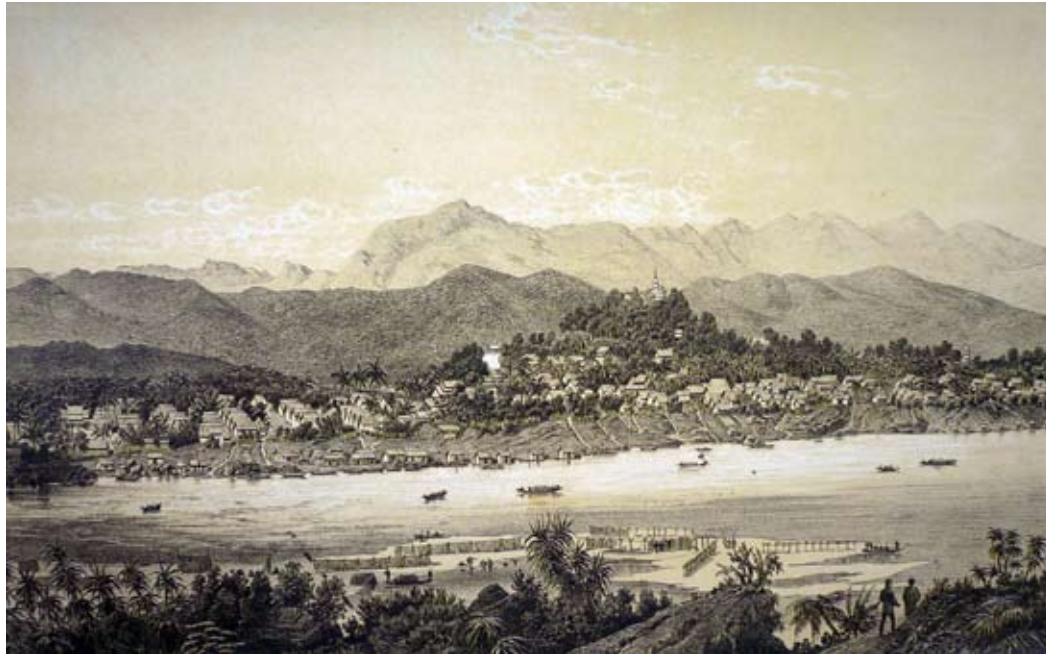


Figure 1.2. *The city of Luang Prabang*, drawn by L. Delaporte
(source: *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong; Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan*)



Figure 1.3. *Luang Prabang's Market*, drawn by L. Delaporte
(source: *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong; Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan*)

1.1. Markets in pre-colonial Indochina

One who has visited present-day Luang Prabang and surveys the plate Delaporte drew, can easily see that time has passed slowly in this provincial town (figure 1.2.). The same observation can be made from the text Garnier wrote for this plate:

“When you cross the Mekong to the side opposite Luang Prabang, and climb the bank, you can see the river strewn with boats far below; there is a distant view of the city, with its streets at right angles to the river and its twenty pagodas with their roofs half-bidden by a forest of palm trees. A small pyramid erected on a marble rock dominates the city. Behind it, a chain of hills rises and in the background there is a curtain of high calcareous mountains with sharp summits. A little to the left, beneath the pyramid, in the middle of the city is the Nam Hou ravine which runs south to north amid coconut trees and flows into the Mekong, two hundred meters up river.”

(Francis Garnier in *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong: Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan*; text complimentary to “The city of Luang Prabang”)

Present-day Luang Prabang is still a small-scale settlement on the peninsula between the Mekong and the Nam Khan river.³ Its streets still lie in the same pattern Garnier described and the twenty pagodas can still be found spread around town, hidden by many palm trees. During the French colonial period an amount of shophouses and villas have been added to the town, but these additions have not altered the sight as drawn by Delaporte significantly.

A plate shows (figure 1.3.) how the market took place in Luang Prabang at the time of the expedition. Garnier added in text:

“The grand avenue of Luang Prabang runs for two kilometres from the city gate to the Nam Hou river. On market days it is filled with crowds from one end to the other. Hawkers and customers come there from early morning, some in the open air, others under large umbrellas or in bamboo boats. Fishermen bring huge fish which they have kept alive in the river. Natives from the mountains, recognisable by their tanned skins, turbans, and striped dress, arrive with baskets full of game, poultry and upland produce. Some Burmese merchants sell cloth, needles and betel boxes. A small number of Chinese sell opium, haberdashery and gemstones.”
(Francis Garnier in *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong: Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan*; text complimentary to “Luang Prabang’s Market”)

As can be recognised from the plate by Delaporte and the text by Garnier, produce were sold either from the street or from small huts, most often protected from the sun. The produce sold were both fresh and dry, both dead and alive. Garnier recognised a clear difference between the ethnic background of the vendors and the produce they sold, as Chinese and Burmese sold more precious items and ‘natives from the mountains’ local produce. The drawing by Delaporte shows a man sleeping on the ground and a couple of children wandering around; vendors and their family probably spent much time at the market.

Luang Prabang’s today’s market has not changed significantly, just as the town has remained the same. The market is located in the same road and still consists of a collection of huts and pieces of cloth on the ground.

At the market of Muong Long, a Laotian village further upstream the Mekong, produce was sold from underneath a Banyan tree:

“The market was held under a great banyan tree with hanging branches in the great square, facing the pagoda. The rainy season had started and the ground had become a swamp in which you sank up to your knees. Farmers and locals arrived from all over the countryside with baskets, pouches, umbrellas and high, pointed hats. Not far away a market selling rice, vegetables, poultry and fish was held. In the background you can see the Burmese who were solely responsible for trading ironmongery, haberdashery and precious metals.”
(Francis Garnier in *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong: Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan*; text complimentary to “Market in Muong Long”)

Although at the background of the drawing some huts are recognisable, the actual market seems to have taken place directly underneath the Banyan tree. The produce sold was just as in Luang Prabang both fresh and dry and again we see vendors chatting leisurely.

However, the pace of life in Phnom Penh has changed much more significantly than the pace in

Luang Prabang. The plate Delaporte drew in 1866 of Phnom Penh shows a string of huts along the Tonlé Sap and a pagoda on a hillock (figure 1.4.). Nowadays, Phnom Penh has grown into a city of over 1 million inhabitants; a growth initiated by the French administration when it moved the Cambodian capital from Oudong to Phnom Penh.⁴ The market preceding French intervention, as can be seen in figure 1.5., seems to have functioned similarly as Luang Prabang's market. Produce were either sold from pieces of cloth on the ground or from small huts with thatched roofs. Again both fresh and dry goods can be recognised. The plate shows that the floors of the huts were raised, probably providing the huts with some protection from seasonal flooding, insects and dirt. And again we seem to be looking at a very relaxed atmosphere; time seems to be at hand.

1.2. Countryside markets in present-day Vietnam

According to Dang Nhat Minh (2010), lecturer Architectural History at the University of Architecture of Ho Chi Minh City, markets in present-day Vietnam follow a lay-out that stems from a Vietnamese tradition.⁵

According to him, the lay-out of the market originates from its location in comparison to local infrastructure (figure 1.6.): a Vietnamese market traditionally appears at a junction of tracks or roads between villages and a river or other body of water. Vegetables, grown by farmers from the surrounding villages, come from the countryside and therefore via the road. They are sold where they are loaded off: directly at the entrance of the market. Other fresh produce, such as meat and above all fish, come by boat and are again sold where they are loaded off: at the rear of the market. Inside the market non-perishable goods are sold, such as dry groceries, clothing, toiletries and household utensils.

The provisioning of the fresh goods happens in the

very early hours of the morning, when temperatures are still moderate. Although refrigeration exists in Vietnam, it is not an integral part of the market. Therefore the provisioning of goods happens every day.

A second non-colonial market typology according to Dang (2010) consists of a collection of small huts made of local materials such as bamboo, teak and teak leaves along a village road (figure 1.7.). The huts consist of a roof, four columns and a raised floor. Adjacent to the road are houses with small private pieces of land around them. Large trees along the road cover it and provide the market huts and produce with extra protection against the elements. The market takes place in the early morning; at around 10 a.m. the produce is stored away. Thereafter the huts are used by neighbours as a place to drink tea or to take a nap in a hammock; waiting for the blazing heat to pass.

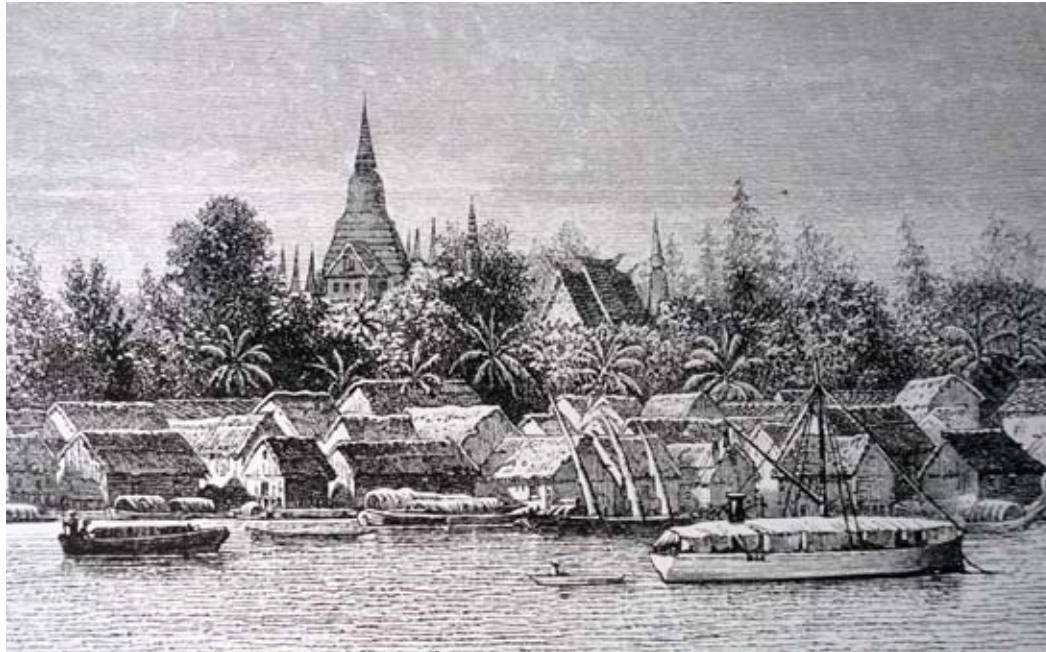


Figure 1.4. "The Phnom Penh Pyramid", drawn by E. Tournois, based on a sketch by L. Delaporte
(source: *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong; Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan*)



Figure 1.5. "The Phnom Penh market in the late 1860's", drawn by L. Delaporte
(source: *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia*)

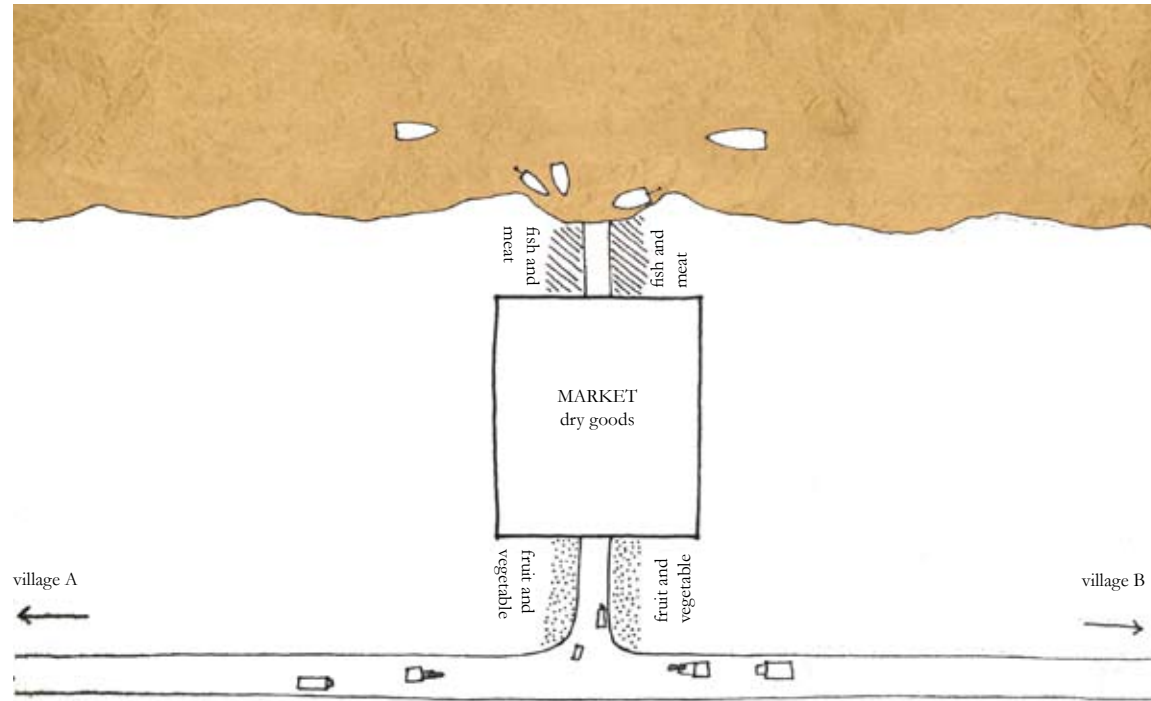


Figure 1.6. Countryside market in Vietnam: its location in comparison to local infrastructure
(source: author's drawing)



Figure 1.7. Countryside market in Vietnam: collection of huts protected from rain and sun by large trees
(source: author's drawing)

1.3. Concluding

The three markets discussed by Garnier have many similarities. All three markets consist of either a collection of huts, a collection of pieces of cloth on the ground, or a combination of these two. Produce is always sheltered from the sun by trees, roofs, umbrellas or even pieces of cloth. A leisurely atmosphere is recognisable at all three markets; it is as if the market is an extension of home. At the markets of Luang Prabang and Muong Long an ethnic difference has been noticed by Francis Garnier. It is unknown whether this was the case in Phnom Penh; it might have been. The market in Muong Long is known to have problems with flooding and the market in Phnom Penh, given the raised floors, seems to have encountered the same problems. At all three markets both fresh and dry goods are sold.

Many of these characteristics can be recognised in the descriptions of countryside markets in Vietnam. Not only the produce sold is similar, but also the way it is sold: it is protected from the elements by both huts and large trees, and again we see the necessity of raised floors. It shows that up until today a collection of huts and pieces of cloth on the ground can function as a marketplace. However, a larger structure in the form of a hall has been introduced as well.

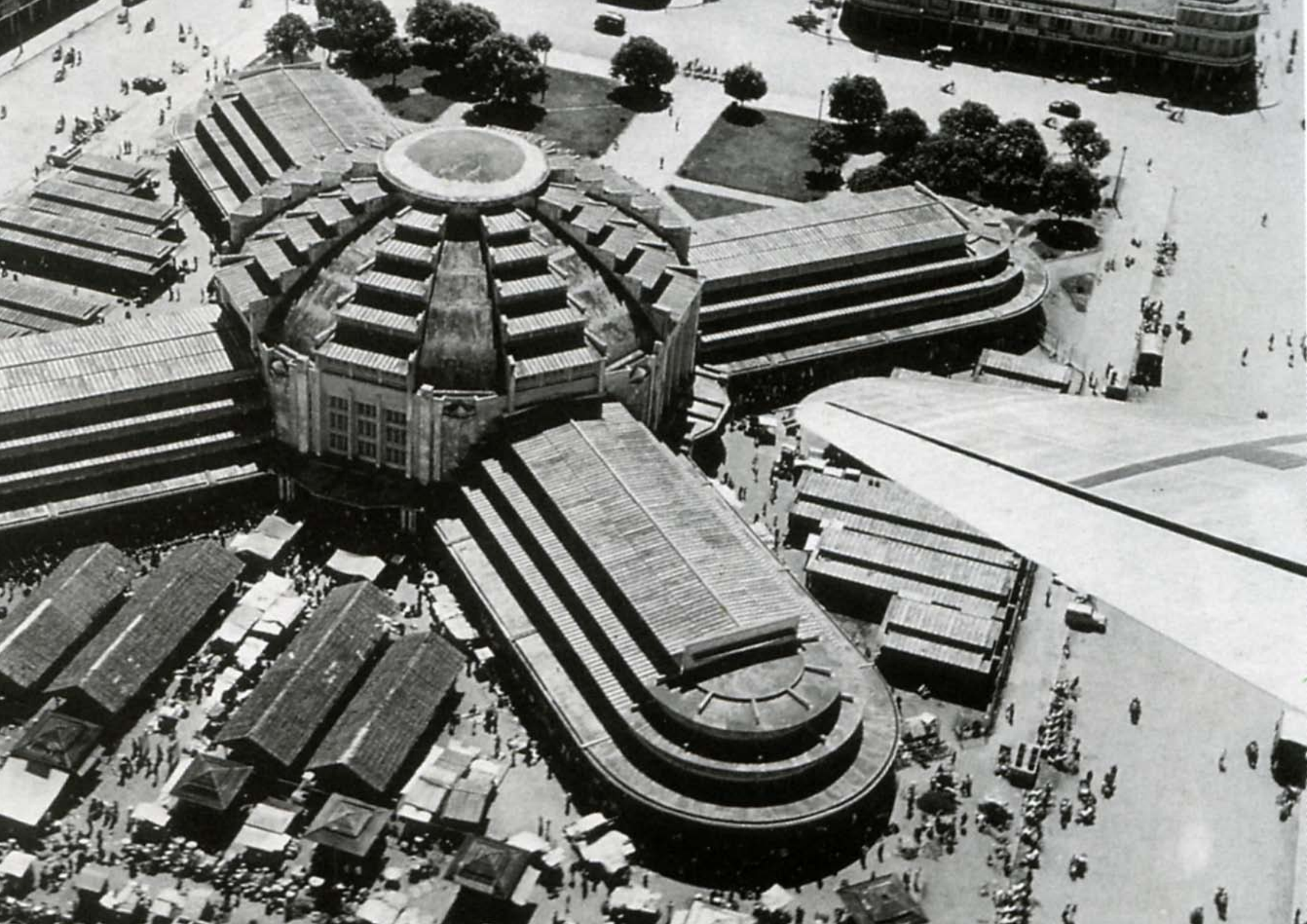
An allocation of goods can be recognised in the present-day market of Vietnam according to local infrastructure. It is unknown whether this was the case in pre-colonial Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia, but it might have been.

The final similarity between the historical and present-day descriptions is the vendor's leisurely

manner - finishing at 10 a.m. and afterwards enjoying a cup of tea together.

Many of the similarities between the historical and present-day markets can be attributed to the tropical climate: the umbrellas, the roofs, trees and raised floors provide for some protection against it and the relaxed atmosphere probably stems from the tropical heat.

This comparison shows that throughout time the large hall has been introduced to the typology of the market. It also shows however that the local, small-scale market has not changed significantly, even though goods and manners have changed over time. The introduction of for instance air-conditioning and the refrigerator has made no clear difference in the way the village market functions.



2 Building a France away from France

The French colonial market

With the establishment of the French Protectorate over Cambodia in 1863 a new form of architecture and urban planning was introduced to the region. Preceding French intervention, Phnom Penh for was just a string of huts on the bank of the Tonlé Sap River.¹ The *Mission Civilisatrice* however obliged France to turn the city into a true *Perle d'Orient*: it was after all her responsibility to share and spread her superior civilisation. This ambition was to be accomplished by architecture and urban planning.² With the realisation of roads, railroads and public works the colonial administration started

to build a colonial infrastructure. Covered markets were just as city halls, prisons, post offices, police stations, schools and hospitals part of this infrastructure.

To understand how the French administration organised its colonisation and what role architecture in general and covered markets in particular played in it, first an examination of the architectural styles used in the colony over time is done. Secondly, the growth of the French colonial town and the role the market had in it is researched and finally the building company that has realised many of Indochina's markets is surveyed.

Figure 2.1. Aerial view of the Central Market or Psar Thom Thmei in Phnom Penh in 1952
(source: Heritage Mission Phnom Penh)



Figure 2.2. Hôtel de Ville in Saigon, designed by Fernand Gardès and built in 1908
(source: author's photograph)



Figure 2.3. Musée Louis Finot in Hanoi, designed by Ernest Hébrard and built in 1932
(source: author's photograph)

2.1. Changing attitudes

At first, French colonial administrations approached their *Mission Civilisatrice* in a manner governed by the principle of *assimilation*: indigenous people were to be subjected to an administration shaped by French values.³ This approach has led to a large number of French public works in Beaux-Arts style, varying from prisons and military barracks to post offices and municipal theatres (figure 2.1.); all fashioned after the latest style in *Le Métropole*.

After WWI a change in French colonial politics in Indochina appeared; the assimilationist approach was replaced by a policy of *association*, which gave more space to local tradition and culture.⁴ With this change a more context sensitive architecture surfaced, which is best described by the work of the architect Ernest Hébrard, head of the in 1923 founded *Service de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme de l'Indochine*.⁵ He introduced the *Style Indochinois*, which derived its detailing and decoration from indigenous architecture and adapted more easily than the Beaux-Arts styled buildings to Cambodia's tropical climate (figure 2.3.). One can imagine the break from the preceding architectural style used in the colony; local culture, which used to be described condescendingly as *métis* (half-blood)⁶, became not only an example from which one could learn but also the face of important public works. However, Hébrard's style relied on formal principles of the Beaux-Arts tradition; his plans were often symmetrical and consisted of volumes arranged in a classical sequence. His style therefore did not differ essentially from the Beaux-Arts tradition.⁷

The *Style Indochinois* seems to have disappeared from the architectural stage in the early 1930s, whereupon a more abstract style appeared. This style continued Hébrard's sensitivity towards local conditions, but it banned his literal citations of indigenous motifs and his formal references towards the Beaux-Arts tradition. Instead, it often consisted of a repetition of one motive, resulting in a more abstract form of decoration. Plans and sections responded primarily to their urban, social or cultural context; especially to the tropical climate. One could say that this last architectural style was most successful in unifying its French and Indochinese conditions.

The three covered markets from the French colonial period in Cambodia that are still standing - Psar Thom Thmei in Phnom Penh, Psar Nath in Battambang and Psar Thmei in Kompong Cham - are from this last period and architectural style. This style is however not unique for Indochina, as the *Style Indochinois* was.

In 1929 a covered market, surprisingly reminiscent of Psar Thom Thmei in Phnom Penh (figure 2.1.), was built in Reims. The two architects, Jean Desbois, architect of Psar Thom Thmei and Émile Maigrot, architect of Les Halles du Boulingrin, seem to have known one another.⁸

The two markets correspond first of all in construction material; both are made from ferroconcrete. In both cases the construction has become the primary aesthetic of the building; quite a difference from the decorative style of the Beaux-

Arts school.

Maybe even more conspicuous is the way the two buildings respond to their surroundings. Although both of the buildings are symmetrical, their functional lay-out is adapted to their urban context: the two buildings have a direct relationship with the ground level, whereas the typical Beaux-Arts facade with its symmetry and decoration ignores it quite bluntly. In the case of the market in Phnom Penh the Cambodian climate has become a leading factor: many grills through which hot air can move out easily dot the facade.

The two buildings also refer on a symbolic level to their location: the position of the four wings of Psar Thom Thmei - which are not north-south oriented, but are rotated at an angle of 45 degrees - refers according to some to the meeting of the four rivers in Phnom Penh.⁹ The large cupola has been compared to the Buddhist *mandala*, a geometrical pattern that symbolises the Cosmos in Hinduism and Buddhism, the two religions deeply rooted in Khmer life.¹⁰ Les Halles du Boulingrin were also compared with local religious buildings, as architecture critics compared the building with Catholic cathedrals just after its realisation.¹¹

Although the comparison of a commercial building to a religious one might seem out of place, it is clear that this architectural style had no need for formal principles as the Beaux-Arts tradition needed. Even though the style is not unique for Indochina, it responds primarily to its local urban, social, cultural (and in the case of Cambodia tropical) context.

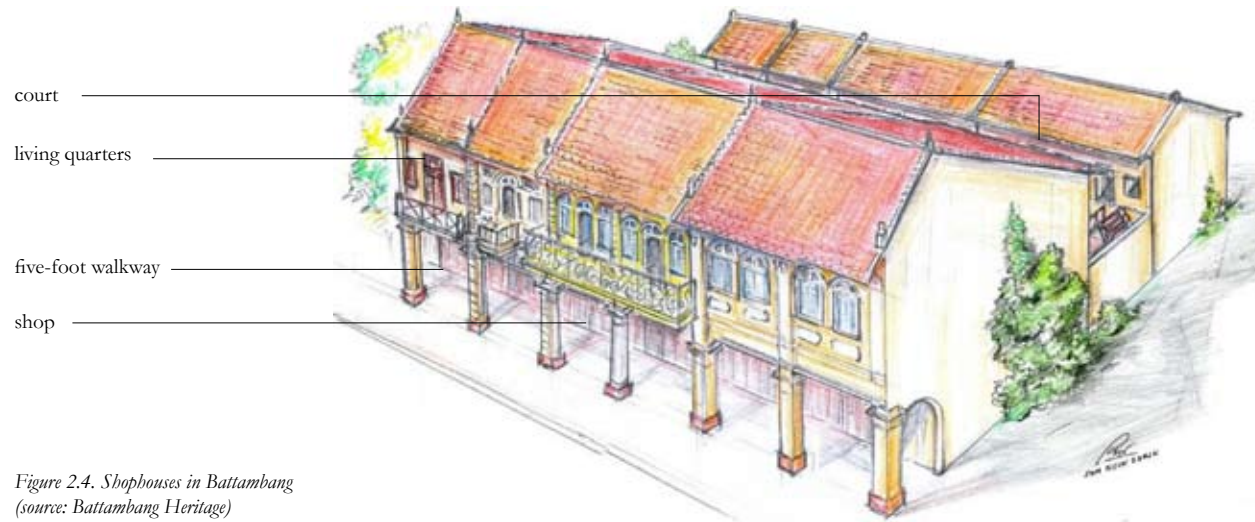


Figure 2.4. Shophouses in Battambang
(source: Battambang Heritage)

staircase, which lead to the living quarters of the family situated on the first floor. The facades of the houses were made of brickwork covered with stucco, creating a uniform exterior. This typology is very common for cities in Cambodia and other cities throughout South-East Asia.¹⁷

Other French (public) works came in the form of a hospital, a prison and military barracks. The last two were cleverly placed on the *Kampbeang*, the original Thai structure of domination. Infrastructural works were, just as the shophouses and hospital, part of the construction of the colonial town: the roads along the river were paved and a metal walking bridge was constructed south of the market, just as a concrete bridge for vehicles in front of the governor's palace. The market continued in the form of an open-air market at its original location.

In 1926 a second urban plan was made for the town of Battambang, in the process of the construction of the railway between Battambang and Phnom Penh. The city was extended towards the west. The extension consisted again of a rectangular grid with shophouses, although some diagonal streets crossed the grid, creating monumental squares and axes. One of these monumental squares was located at the rear side of the market, which was formalised in 1937 by a covered market made from reinforced concrete. The structure improved the market's hygiene and made it easier to regulate and tax market activities.

Battambang's growth continued after Cambodia's independence from France in 1954. This growth resulted in the construction of new covered markets throughout the town. North of the original town

a residential area laid out in a rectangular grid was built. A new market, Psar Boeung Choeuk, was built to serve the new area. The city also extended towards the east, on the other side of the river. An airport and a university were established. In 1968 a new bridge was built north of the central market, creating a new connection between the town centre on the west bank of the river and the new facilities on the east bank.

After the Khmer Rouge regime was overthrown in 1979 the town of Battambang grew again, even though the town had stood nearly empty for four years. A third market, Psar Thmei, was constructed during the development of new houses in the university district.



Figure 2.5. Aerial view of Psar Nath in Battambang in 1960
(source: Grant Ross, *Battambang, Le Bâton Perdu*)

2.3. Société Indochinoise d'Études et de Constructions (S.I.D.E.C.)

Although written documents seem to be scarce on this subject, probably only a few companies engineered the public works of French Indochina.

Three covered markets of Cambodia are known to be constructed by the Saigon based *Société Indochinoise d'Études et de Constructions* (S.I.D.E.C.): the markets of Phnom Penh, Battambang and Kampot (see appendix A).^{18, 19}

S.I.D.E.C.'s involvement seems obvious, as they were 'the only one to present 27 years of experience in working with reinforced concrete' in the colony, as a 1931 encyclopaedia boasts.²⁰

These three Cambodian markets are made from a large reinforced concrete skeleton, creating one or several large halls. Their indoor climate is improved similarly: open plinths and large openings in the roof ensure a constant stream of fresh air.

S.I.D.E.C. has constructed markets in Vietnam as well: in Saigon, Cantho and Dalat.^{21, 22} These Vietnamese markets are structurally similar to their Cambodian counterparts: it are large concrete structures, ventilated by large roof openings. The markets of Saigon and Cantho were constructed ten years earlier, however.

These two earliest markets seem to share an architectural style: they are decorated with motives

that remind of Vietnamese and Chinese temples. The newer markets however, the markets of Dalat and Phnom Penh and to some extent Battambang, share a different, more abstract, architectural language. Their ventilation grills are decorated with a typical v-shaped motive.

This typical motive can also be found in several other buildings throughout Cambodia, such as the Central Station and police office in Phnom Penh and the market of Kompong Cham. The police office is said to be designed by the same architect as the market of Phnom Penh, but S.I.D.E.C.'s involvement in any of the three is unknown.

The other buildings said to be constructed by S.I.D.E.C. - for instance the Bokor Palace, the Throne Hall in Phnom Penh and the Phnom Penh library^{23, 24} - have completely different architectural styles. It leads to the conclusion that S.I.D.E.C. probably worked with different, independent architects.

However, S.I.D.E.C.'s role in the engineering of concrete public works is preeminent: they were active for over thirty years and constructed many buildings during that period. It shows the centrality at which these projects were undertaken: the design of a concrete structure would have led to S.I.D.E.C. immediately.

2.4. Concluding

The research on the realisation of the French colonial infrastructure leads to two conclusions: first of all, this realisation was organised centrally. Secondly, the concept underlying it became more and more context sensitive through time. The colonial purpose was never abandoned, however.

When reviewing the architectural styles used in the colony, one notices that these styles were intertwined with the politics of the administration: public works built under the administration governed by the policy of *assimilation* resulted in Beaux-Arts inspired buildings; an architecture based upon the latest fashion in France. With the political shift from *assimilation* to *association* the architecture shifted as well, resulting in a more context sensitive style. Local culture and above all climate became a leading motive in the architecture of public works. As time progressed, French colonial architecture became even more context sensitive and freed itself from the formal principles of the Beaux-Arts School. Even though this architectural style was not unique for Indochina, it responded primarily to its local - urban, social and above all climatic - setting.

However, the architecture throughout the colony shows no particular regional differences: from the smallest provincial town in Laos to the capital Hanoi the same shift in styles can be noticed. It leads to the conclusion that these styles were conceptualised centrally.

The survey on the growth of Battambang leads to similar conclusions. Upon arrival, the French started planning the colonial town of Battambang. The first French structures were built to dominate: the former Thai administrative centre was altered into a prison and a French military area. Its message was twofold: we, the French, are now in charge and the Thai are definitely defeated.

The body of the colonial town consisted however of shophouses, a typology common throughout South-East Asia. This typology had proven to be successful in local tradition and climate: it unified both the wishes of Chinese merchants and provided a solution in the tropical climate.

The second stage of growth of Battambang was initiated by the realisation of the railway. With French rule clearly set, a new category of public works could be realised. These public works could,

just as the shophouses had already done, focus on something else than domination: they could serve both coloniser and colonised. At this point Battambang's covered market was realised. The most context sensitive style was chosen for its architectural appearance; probably partly because it was in fashion and partly because it felt more appropriate to adjust the building to local conditions. However, French purposes were served by the structure as well: as the building improved hygiene significantly it lived up to the French civilising mission and the colonial administration benefited from lucrative tax revenues.

The central character of the colonial administration surfaces as well when one reviews the construction companies active in the colony. The markets of Cambodia were built by the Saigon based S.I.D.E.C., a company that had already engineered markets and other large concrete structures in the colony. As S.I.D.E.C. functioned throughout the colony in many different projects for over thirty years, the conclusion that the realisation of public works was centrally organised and decided is drawn.



3 A problem with memory¹

On the relevance of architectural heritage

Although Phnom Penh's history does not go much further back than 1866 - when the French administration turned the riverside settlement into the capital of Cambodia² - wandering through the town reveals many layers of history. The Royal Palace, with its shimmering spires, brings to mind the power and grandeur the Royal family had and still has. The National History Museum displays artifacts of Angkor; the most extensive urban complex of the pre-industrialised world.³ Crumbling colonial villas stand in large gardens that have grown wild. The immense boulevards, today thundering with a mass of motorcycles, cyclos, túk-túks, busses and taxis, reminisce of Les Champs Elysées.⁴ Old shophouses are still home to many shops,

although odd extensions, advertisements, electric wires and sun screens have altered their appearance. The museum in the former political prison S-21 of the Khmer Rouge displays the tragic and still very recent history of Cambodia, when it was turned into a communist peasant state.

To research the relevance of the historical knowledge gained in the preceding chapters first a description of the current situation regarding the protection of architectural heritage in Phnom Penh is given. Secondly, the underlying problem is discussed. And finally, the situation in Battambang is surveyed, where a different policy is being put to practice.

Figure 3.1. In Phnom Penh, shophouses from the French colonial period today (source: author's photograph)



Figure 3.2. Hotel Renakse
(source: www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/83676139)



Figure 3.3. Psar Thom Thmei and its extensions. The blue canopies have been added later
(source: author's photograph)

3.1. The preservation of built heritage in Phnom Penh

On the 29th of December 2008 the Phnom Penh police entered the Hotel Renakse, a luxurious hotel housed in a colonial building directly in front of the Royal Palace (figure 3.2.). Municipal officials inspected the building and concluded that it was in 'severe disrepair'⁵. Just 8 days later hotel guests, staff and manager were forcibly evicted from the premises.

The manager had a lease for another 49 years on the premises. Its owner however, a powerful political party, had it sold to a foreign investment company. The manager was offered compensation, but she declined it as it was not nearly sufficient to cover the costs she had made. A court case should have clarified the situation, but scepticism over the objectivity of the judgement ruled from the beginning as the director of the investment company appeared to be married to the nephew of the judge.⁶ The eviction and the threatening demolition were rectified according to the former owner by an order from the Phnom Penh Municipal Court, stating that: 'the building is both in severe disrepair and over a hundred years old'⁷ and therefore should be demolished. The statement of its age has been questioned by both independent architectural historians and UNESCO representatives, just as the statement that it is in severe disrepair. The case has not yet been decided and the hotel stands shuttered up until now.

There are many cases comparable to the Renakse to be found in Phnom Penh. A colonial villa at a

primary real-estate location, in excellent condition, was demolished to make way for a luxurious hotel. Something must have stopped the development however, as the plot has stood empty ever since.⁸ *l'Ecole Professionnelle*, a former French school, was demolished in a few days time without particular reason.⁹

The unsustainable character of development in Phnom Penh also surfaces in other projects. At the time of writing Phnom Penh's the largest lake, Boeung Kak (see map 4.1.), is being reclaimed for high-rise development.¹⁰ Many people living along its shores have been evicted from their homes with little to no compensation. The second problem is that the lake functioned as a buffer for large amounts of rain water. With the reclamation of this buffer, large areas of the city flood in the rainy season.

The demolition of built heritage stems in the first place, according to Darryl Collins (2010), architectural historian, from 'greed'. The high real-estate prices in Phnom Penh - particularly in the former French quarter - result in speculation and demolition. These real-estate prices were inflated by the money the UNTAC-forces poured into Phnom Penh in the period between 1992 and 1993.¹¹ The prices have stayed high, as Cambodians tend to 'hang on'¹² their property as long as possible. This principle leads to a high pressure on built heritage, as Cambodians will sell their property eventually to the highest bid. This bid often comes from a wealthy, foreign developer, who's only priority

is to make money as fast as possible.

At this point, the government could step in to ensure a sustainable future for the city without excluding economic interests. The government however seems to have other priorities. According to Burgeat (2010), communication officer at the Heritage Mission Phnom Penh, a law protecting built heritage in Cambodia does exist since 1996, but the implementation of this law is arbitrary.

Psar Thom Thmei (figure 3.3.) is however one of the buildings from the French colonial period that has recently undergone a renovation, largely funded by the French Development Agency.

Surrounding Psar Thom Thmei new pavilions have been made to house all the shopkeepers from the self-made structures that stood around the building. The original structure has been reinforced and repainted, just as the kiosks inside. The security of the market has been improved by the installation of new surveillance cameras and the installation of new toilets, wash basins and waste facilities have improved the hygiene of the market.

It is not all praise however, as it seems that economic interests were given more priority than the preservation of the original structure. Yam Sokli (2010), architect from the Heritage Mission Phnom Penh, explains: 'more stalls means more money'. As the new pavilions have been made from concrete, the parks that originally surrounded the market have disappeared definitely. The views one had from street-level have been altered as well: the original

3.2. A problem with memory

“Cambodia has a problem with memory; talking about the past is not so easy since the Khmer Rouge. The authorities mostly prefer to focus on the construction of high, new buildings, regarding them as a symbol of the modernisation of the country.”

(Burgeat, 2010, conversation appendix E)

view at the large, nearly floating structure cannot be experienced anymore. Canopies have been added later, to provide the clients and shopkeepers with extra shade. They however have made the view at the market even smaller. The canopies that connect the new structures with the old also proved insufficient, as shopkeepers have hung pieces of cloth in-between.

Collins (2010) is less harsh on the renovation:

“I was a little disappointed with the new fill-in buildings around the market, but compared with what was there before it is far better. The market itself is looking splendid. It’s the first real facelift the building has had probably since the sixties.”

(Collins, 2010, conversation appendix E)

One could say that the use of the market in the future has been ensured. The future of its aesthetics however remains to be seen. It reveals a delicate question: how to value aesthetics and preservation in comparison to use?

Although high real-estate prices explain the land speculations in Phnom Penh to some extent, a different kind of argument seems to lie underneath it. As Burgeat reveals, dealing with the past has often become a painful experience for Cambodian people. It is not a problem with French colonial history, but with Cambodia’s recent history from the military dictatorship of Lon Nol, the genocide of the Khmer Rouge to the occupation by the Vietnamese, that leads to (especially young) Cambodians wanting to deal with the present and the future and not with the past, according to Collins (2010). This mentality results in unawareness of the historical value of built heritage; French colonial heritage included. This unawareness even stretches to the education of architects according to Burgeat (2010) and she expresses her fear that this lack of education will result in a continuation of the policy that is put to practice today.

Yam (2010) stresses a different approach. According to him, built heritage expresses history and gives a city its identity. Although history attached to built

heritage can be painful, their demolition will not take away that pain. Therefore, according to Yam (2010), it is important for Cambodian people to leave history behind and to start to appreciate the identity it has left.

The construction of high rise is one answer to the prevailing wish to forget history. However, an ambition to return to the traditional way of living pops up in the Cambodian architectural debate as well.¹³ But these two ambitions are conflicting, or as Yam (2010) questions: how to preserve Buddhist tradition while aspiring Phnom Penh to become like Hong Kong or New York?

According to some, these conflicting interests should be unified in a new and unique Khmer architecture. But how should this style look? What is Khmer quality? Collins (2010) claims that the buildings made today do not answer that question, as their quality is poor and have as only objective to make a lot of money, as fast as possible.

Understandable as it may seem that Khmer people aspire their own, new style, the method they are choosing now leads to the rapid demolition of their historical buildings and city centres. To prevent the complete disappearance of their architectural heritage a different approach should be put to practice, sooner rather than later.



*Figure 3.4. Battambang's Heritage Protection Area
(source: DED, Urban development planning)*

3.3. The preservation of built heritage in Battambang

Luckily, just a couple hundred kilometers away from Phnom Penh a different approach regarding architectural heritage can be found. Battambang Municipality has started to actively protect its built heritage.

A team from the German Development Service (Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst or D.E.D.) in cooperation with the Battambang Municipal Administration has had the opportunity to map, research and evaluate the built heritage of Battambang. The involvement of the Battambang Municipality has proven to be key to success, as they have the authority to implement laws and regulation: the research has resulted in a Future Land Use Plan for 2020 for Battambang city and district.¹⁴ The plan records the destination of areas in and around Battambang, designating for instance residential and

commercial areas and green zones. Centrally located in this plan lies the ‘Heritage Protection Area’: Battambang’s colonial town centre, which consists of about 800 historically relevant buildings (figure 3.4.). As more and more tourists visit Battambang for its colonial town centre, the preservation of built heritage has become interesting from both a historical and economical point of view, which makes it easier to convince private heritage-owners to preserve their buildings.

A recent result from the Heritage Protection Area is a law that regulates the size and location of commercial signs on buildings within the area.¹⁵ It puts an end to the proliferation of billboards that transform complete facades.

The relevance of architectural heritage has been brought to the attention of the general public by the campaign *Our City - Our Heritage*. The campaign aims

to reach the public by the publishing of calendars and posters featuring heritage buildings, a website and a walk that guides tourists around Battambang’s historic centre. The campaign seems to be quite successful, as it has received national publicity; some large articles have been published in the *Cambodia Daily*¹⁶ and the *Phnom Penh Post*¹⁷. It also seems to have sorted some effect among Battambang citizens, as a large colonial villa and adjacent shophouse have been recently renovated by a private party.¹⁸

Whether the amount of tourists in Battambang has grown since the initiative took off is unclear, but the project illustrates how administrative policy affects the future of built heritage. And how relatively quickly this can change.

3.4. Concluding

As built heritage expresses history and gives a city its identity, its preservation is highly relevant. In Cambodia however, especially in Phnom Penh, its preservation proves to be of a precarious nature. Economic and political interests prevent the execution of heritage law, resulting in the rapid disappearance of built heritage. Heritage, as it is often located at primary real-estate locations, is often replaced by quickly built high rise. These developments seem to have only one objective: to make money, sooner rather than later. Although one could say that a third-world country has all the right to earn money as quickly as possible, these developments are often done by foreign investment companies. The average Cambodian is not likely to benefit from it.

The renovation of Psar Thom Thmei illustrates that a certain care for the preservation of built heritage exists in the Cambodian situation, but it also shows the delicacy of the subject: how to balance both economic and preservationist interests? Underneath the economic motive appears to lay an even more delicate problem: as Khmer tend to rather forget their past as it is painful, their built heritage is tainted by it. As it is hard to discuss these problems, young Khmer, even Khmer architecture students, are unaware of the consequences of this mentality. Therefore, complete disappearance of built heritage is becoming a realistic scenario for Phnom Penh. And although in the architectural debate in Cambodia a wish for a unique Khmer style - contrasting the cheaply built current developments

- exists, it seems that it is not yet found; it is as if there is still too much to overcome.

The Municipality of Battambang however has taken a completely different stand: it actively protects its architectural heritage. With the tourist potential and therefore economic potential of built heritage in mind, the awareness of private heritage-owners is raised. As the project has received national attention and some private renovations have been done, it seems that the project is a success. It is an example of how municipal policy affects the future of built heritage and how relatively quickly changes can be made. Not all is lost yet.



4

Skinned frogs and slithering eels

On the present-day functioning of markets

Entering a market in Cambodia reveals a range of stimuli you have probably never experienced before. First of all there are the pungent smells of dried shrimp and squid, of rotten vegetables and freshly grilled meat. But also the shocking sight of live fish being gutted and chopped to pieces, of carcasses of dead animals - sometimes covered in fat black flies - of skinned frogs and slithering eels. Vendors, their aprons covered in blood, wield sharp knives to cut off customers' choices, with masses of rotting organic waste piling up around them. Children, barefoot and covered in rags, pick through them in search for something edible. The heat, that is already unbearable outside the market, is even more dense inside. The aisles are cramped and

the kiosks overflow with goods. Strange enough, it is very quiet. Vendors wait patiently for their customers and do not bother them with sales talk. From time to time disputes erupt, resulting in a large crowd, quietly watching the scene.

To research how French colonial markets function, first a description of their general operating will be given. Secondly, the functioning - programmatic and architectural - of three markets dating from the French colonial period in Cambodia is described. A Vietnamese market is discussed as well, as it reveals how a French colonial market in a more developed country functions. The stalls used at these four markets are researched and compared, and finally the vendors are discussed.

Figure 4.1. Fresh fish sold from the street in Battambang (source: author's photograph)



Map 4.1. Phnom Penh
 (source: author's drawing)

4.1. Shared principles

The larger cities in Cambodia have multiple markets, spread out across town. Phnom Penh (map 4.1.) has for instance more than 20 markets, varying in size and scope. On the outskirts of Phnom Penh large, outdoor markets can be found, primarily functioning as wholesale and resale markets. In the city centre both smaller and larger covered markets can be found, all selling similar produce.¹

It is still a custom for Cambodian people to go to the market daily²; the introduction of for instance the refrigerator and the supermarket has not changed this. To speak with Dang's (2010) words:

“The vegetables and meat are fresher – sometimes even alive - at the market, you can haggle your price and pick up the latest stories in town.” (Dang, conversation appendix E)

The provisioning of the goods happens in the early morning. Vendors of fresh goods get up at around 4 a.m. to collect their produce.³ Vendors of city markets generally buy their produce the wholesale markets at the outskirts of town. This produce has already changed hands many times. Vendors of smaller countryside markets butcher their meat and collect and pack their vegetables themselves.⁴ Dry goods sold at the market are stored inside the kiosk. When the kiosk is too small, the produce will

be taken home normally, depending on the market regulation.⁵

City markets generally close at sundown, although some cannot be closed off which sometimes result in vendors sleeping in empty stalls.⁶ Markets function every day in the week except for holidays.⁷

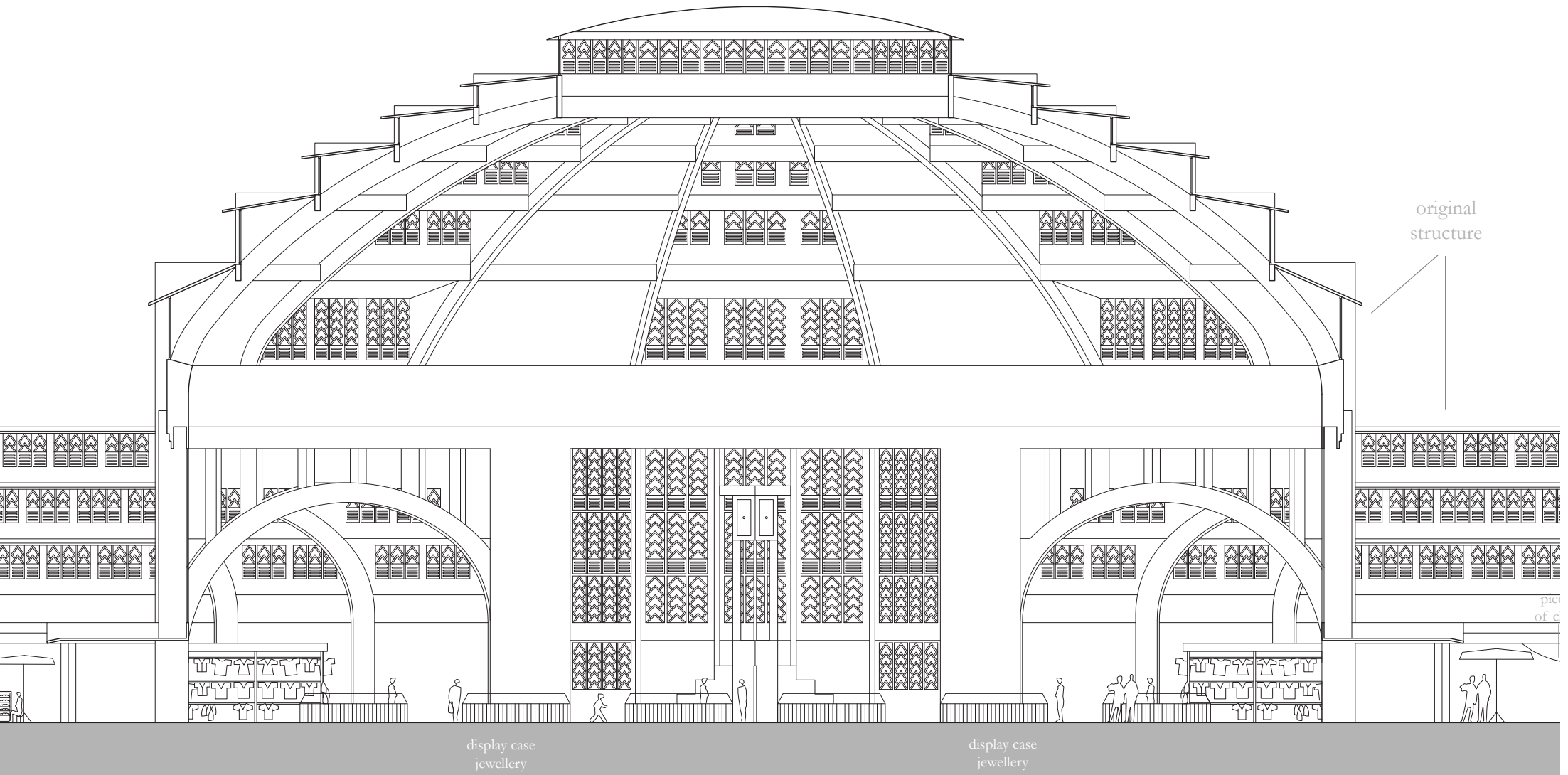
In general, markets are governmental property and are run by a market committee.^{8,9} In Phnom Penh, this committee has the duty to “keep order, manage sanitation and ensure security”, as well as supervise tax collectors.¹⁰ The vendor has generally no voice in the rules the market committee sets.¹¹ The committee designates areas according to the goods that are sold. This designation however has become less fixed since the elections of 1993, stemming, according to one market manager, from the enlarged freedom of people in a democratic system.¹² Some vendors however have asserted that the market committees “do not enforce order in the market on purpose, so that they can freely fine sellers for selling from ‘illegal space’ ”.¹³

Generally, the fixed kiosks are owned by shopkeepers. Apart from this purchase, shopkeepers have to pay tax and a periodical fee for maintenance.¹⁴ The rules for the periodical fees seem to be “somewhat arbitrary”.¹⁵

4.2. Four case-study researches

Four markets dating from the French colonial period will be described in detail and compared in order to discover how they function. Selected are the three surviving markets in Cambodia - Psar Thom Thmei, Psar Nath and Psar Thmei. As a fourth Cho Ben Thanh in Vietnam is researched, as it reveals how a French colonial market in a more developed country functions.

Figure 4.2. West - east section
Psar Thom Thmei 1:200
(source: author's drawing)



4.2.1. Phnom Penh: Psar Thom Thmei

Psar Thom Thmei - or Big New Market¹⁶ - lies in the centre of the French urban plan of Phnom Penh, as it was designed in 1925 (see map 4.1.).¹⁷ The market was built between 1935 and 1937.¹⁸ Psar Thom Thmei has always had an up-market quality for Cambodians:

“Psar Thom Thmei was always the most expensive market. Out of all the markets it’s the grand and special Psar.”
(Collins, conversation appendix E)

The original structure of Psar Thom Thmei consists of a 26 meter high dome to which four identical aisles or wings are connected (see appendix B for complete plan). Although the original structure is entirely symmetrical, the front facade lies to the east, facing the distant river. At the time of writing the market is undergoing a large renovation and extension. The extension consists of a number of one-storey concrete buildings surrounding the original market. They replace self built timber or

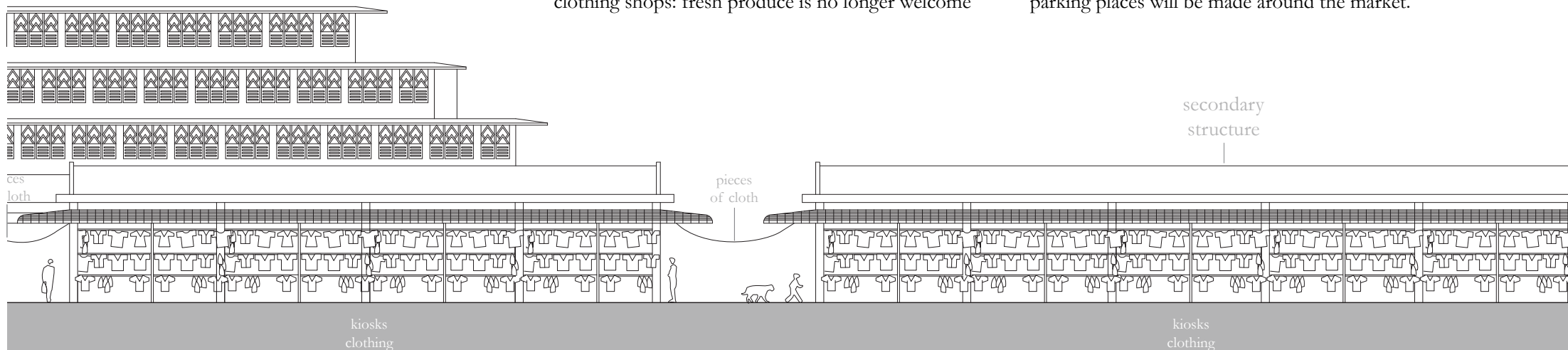
metal structures.

Below the large cupola stands a slender column supporting four clocks. Several shrines stand throughout the market; incense is burning at all time. The many grills in the dome and the open plinth provide for a constant stream of fresh air. It results in a surprisingly moderate temperature. Daylight is naturally filtered by the grills, casting an ever-changing pattern of shadows on the adjacent walls. Surrounding the column stand shops selling luxury items: watches, gemstones and jewellery. This area of the market is quiet and spacious; vendors leisurely await their customers. Kiosks in the wing to the south-east sell electrical appliances such as computer software, game consoles and DVD’s. In the other wings ready-made clothes, fabrics and tailored clothes can be found. Originally, butchers used to sell from one of the wings.¹⁹ However, since the renovation works commenced, they were relocated to large metal structures on the perimeter of the original market, together with other fresh produce.²⁰ The wing will house after the renovation even more clothing shops: fresh produce is no longer welcome

at prime commercial locations.

Besides fresh produce the new structures house other day-to-day items: shoes, groceries, toiletries, household utensils, clothing and ordinary electrical appliances. The temperature is much less pleasant in these pavilions than in the original structure. At noon, temperatures can rise up to 35 C°, leaving vendors with no other option than to wait in front of a fan. Again we see that at prime commercial locations goods with a larger revenue are sold: the kiosks near the entrances to the original structure sell handicrafts and souvenirs. Nonetheless, as food is an important part of Cambodian life, snacks and drinks are sold from whatever location.

The market is surrounded by shophouses dating from the same period as the market. They often sell luxurious articles, such as gold and cell phones. Many of the shophouses have been altered, demolished or replaced over time. Large advertisements cover many facades. The renovation strives for a structured solution for parked cars and motorcycles.²¹ A ring of parking places will be made around the market.



4.2.2. Battambang: Psar Nath

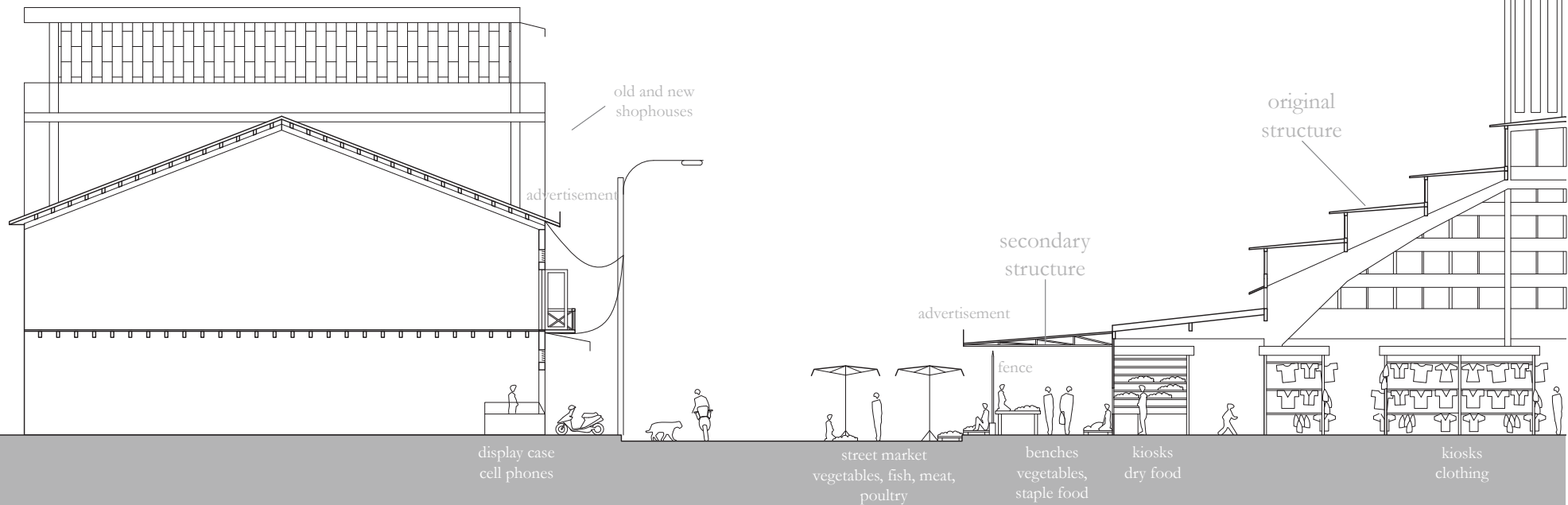
Psar Nath - or Meeting Market²² - lies in the centre of the French quarter of Battambang. Battambang is the second largest town of Cambodia after Phnom Penh, with approximately 140,000 inhabitants. The market was built in 1937.²³

Psar Nath consists of two separate buildings, similar in appearance, but divided from each other by a street (see appendix B for complete plan). The smaller building lies at the Sangker River and holds the main entrance, signalled by a clock-tower. A small building, which originally functioned as a terminal for intercity buses²⁴, extends from the tower towards the river. The terminal held some restaurants for a while, but it stands empty now.

In practice however, the entrance that is most commonly used lies at the rear side of the market. The meeting of two diagonal streets create a square, with many motorcycles running through each minute. It is the most active area of the market as it is where the fresh produce is sold; both outside and inside the market. Outside, produce is sold from baskets, buckets, pieces of cloth, banana leaves: anything available. Vendors sit on stools or squat on the ground for hours in a row. Pieces of cloth and umbrellas provide for some shade. Underneath a canopy fixed benches - finished with what used to be white tiles - serve as a second selling place for fresh produce. The canopy is a secondary structure, extending from the original roof structure.

Even more fresh produce is sold from a corridor adjacent to the street market, again situated underneath a secondary roof structure. At night the market is closed by gates in the fence surrounding the market. The corridor is the only fresh section within this enclosure. It is served by kiosks adjacent to it. Through window openings groceries such as tinned food, sauces and dried squid are sold to people shopping in the corridor. In the larger building's original structure clothes are sold. One would expect a moderate temperature inside, as hot air can move out of the roof structure easily. The many kiosks however seem to block a proper air current, resulting in a hot and dense interior climate. Kiosks selling items made of leather,

Figure 4.3. South - north section
Psar Nath 1:200
(source: author's drawing)

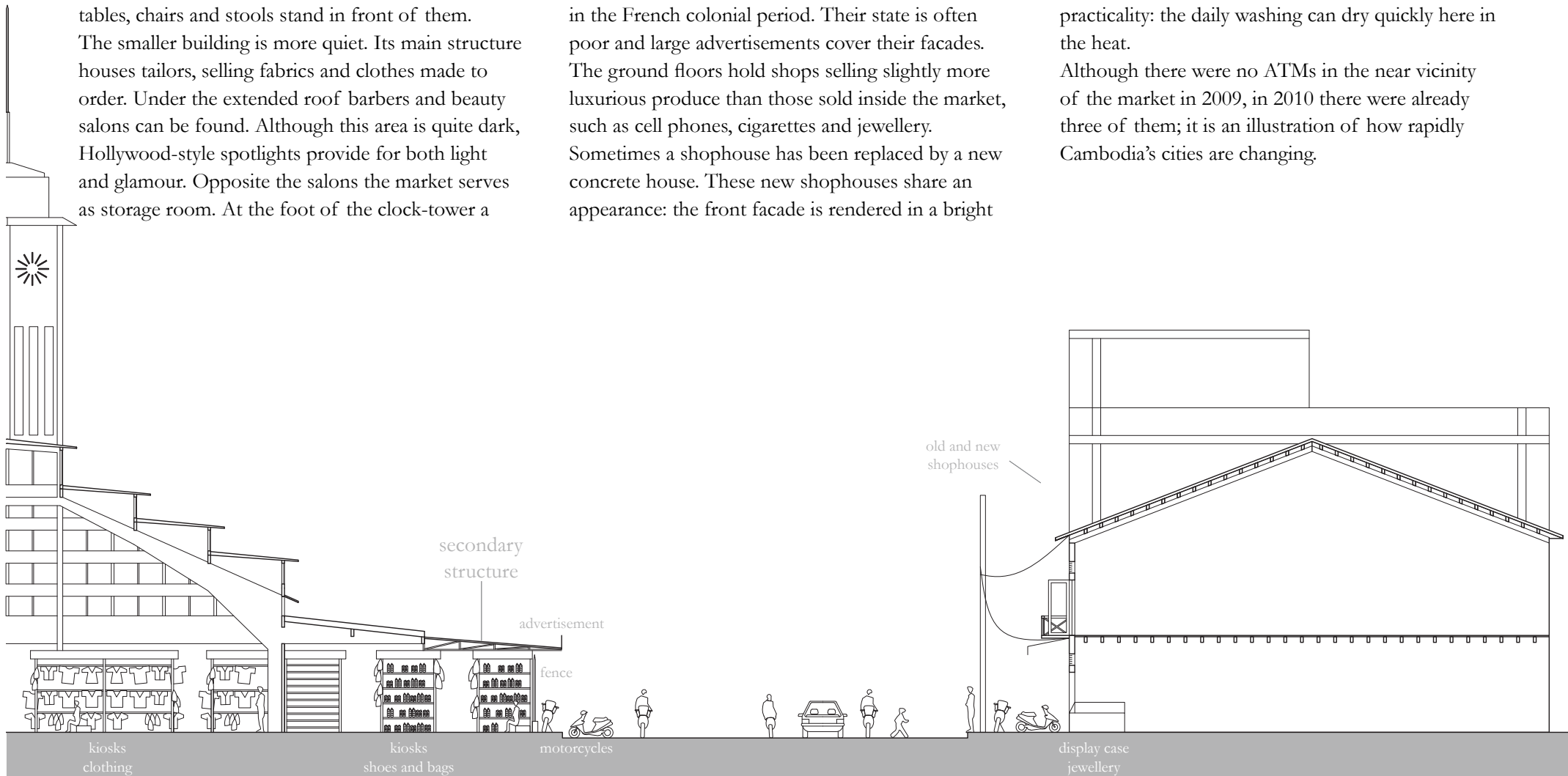


such as shoes and bags, vendor from underneath a second roof extension; exactly opposite of the fresh food corridor. Further on these kiosks are replaced by show cases from which jewellery is sold. In the street that separates the two buildings restaurants make food to order. These restaurants consist of a bench with a gas burner. Some plastic tables, chairs and stools stand in front of them. The smaller building is more quiet. Its main structure houses tailors, selling fabrics and clothes made to order. Under the extended roof barbers and beauty salons can be found. Although this area is quite dark, Hollywood-style spotlights provide for both light and glamour. Opposite the salons the market serves as storage room. At the foot of the clock-tower a

small shrine awaits vendors' prayers. At the entrances snacks like fresh fruit, grilled meat and slices of coconut are sold. And although there seem to be some places designated for parked motorcycles, they are scattered everywhere.

Surrounding the market stand shophouses built in the French colonial period. Their state is often poor and large advertisements cover their facades. The ground floors hold shops selling slightly more luxurious produce than those sold inside the market, such as cell phones, cigarettes and jewellery. Sometimes a shophouse has been replaced by a new concrete house. These new shophouses share an appearance: the front facade is rendered in a bright

colour, but their side facades are left untreated, as if they expect other buildings to cover them up. The balconies of the new buildings remind of the balconies of the French colonial buildings adjacent to them, but they are heavier in appearance and therefore less elegant. The original pitched roofs have been replaced by flat roofs. It is probably a practicality: the daily washing can dry quickly here in the heat. Although there were no ATMs in the near vicinity of the market in 2009, in 2010 there were already three of them; it is an illustration of how rapidly Cambodia's cities are changing.



4.2.3. Kompong Cham: Psar Thmei

Psar Thmei - or New Market²⁴ - lies in the centre of the French quarter of Kompong Cham, a provincial town with approximately 65,000 inhabitants on the west bank of the Mekong. The exact construction date of the market is unknown, but it is probably from the end of the 1930s.²⁵

Psar Thmei consists of a vaulted building surrounded by a secondary structure and other self built kiosks (see appendix B for complete plan). In front of the vaulted building stands a bus terminal where, just as in Battambang, the intercity buses

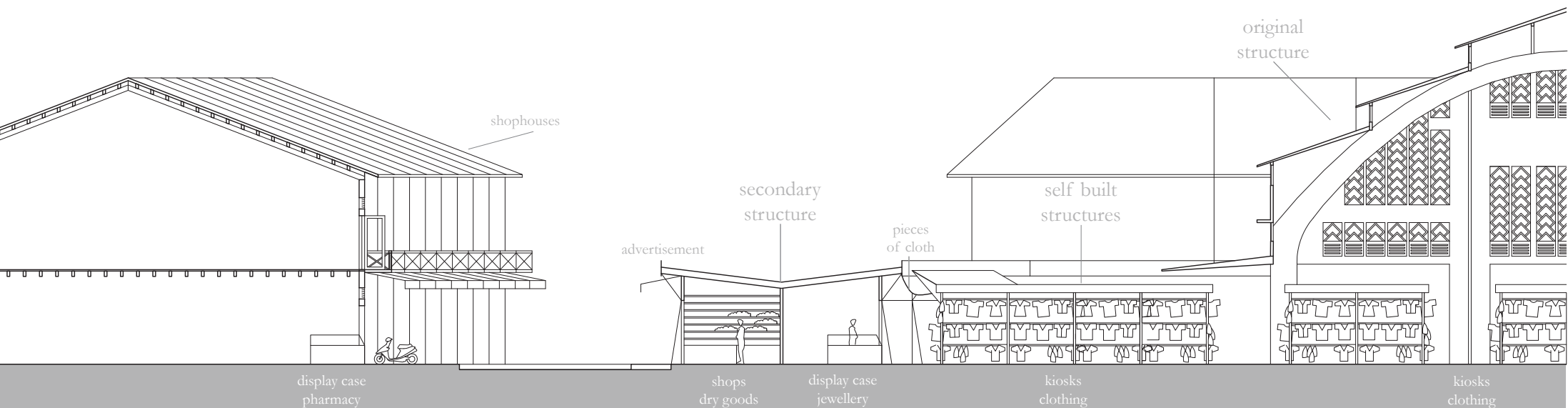
used to stop.²⁶ This bus terminal now functions as a canopy for restaurants: a bench with a wok burner and some plastic furniture. Between the restaurants is what could be called a waste facility and a washing basin. Much more waste is piled up around the market however and the washing basin is filled with tepid water.

Behind the restaurants a timber roof provides shade for parked motorcycles. Pieces of cloth hang between the roof and the vaulted building. Inside the main building - which is closed off at night - clothes, toiletries, shoes, bags, groceries and

staple food are sold from kiosks. The edible produce is placed at the rear, close to the fresh section. Although these benches are outside the original building, they are protected from the elements by metal sheeting and pieces of cloth. As this area cannot be closed off, vendors have to clear their workspace every night.

Beauty treatments are sold directly next to the fresh section. Bottles of nail polish and small jars of make-up await stand in glass cases. Vendors await customers sitting on plastic stools. Meanwhile they chat the day away.

Figure 4.4. East - west section
Psar Thmei 1:200
(source: author's drawing)



Again we see a shrine at the market: it is housed in a small octagonal structure close to the fresh section.

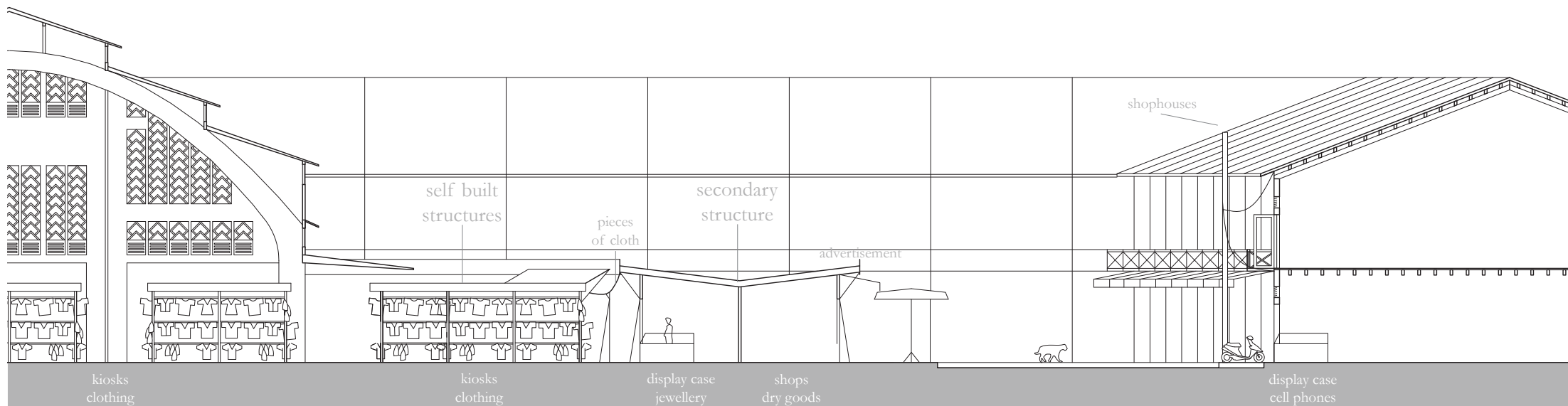
The secondary structure that surrounds the main building contains shops with their own shutters: they can choose their opening and closing time individually. The shops on the inside sell mostly jewellery and household articles and those near the fresh section however sell groceries such as sauces, dried shrimp, squid and staple food. The shops on the outside sell dry goods such as household equipment and groceries and more luxurious

produce as phone cards, cigarettes, rice whiskey, calculators and medicine. Near the several entrances food carts selling Cambodian snacks serve both vendors and shoppers.

The shophouses surrounding Psar Thmei date from the French colonial period. Commercial growth and development seems to have gone somewhat slower here than in Battambang, since many shophouses seem to be in their original state and few new houses have been built inbetween.

From the ground floors articles of use, such as

sewing machines and household equipment, and luxury articles, as cell phones, are sold. Corresponding with the assumption that Kompong Cham has known a slower pace of development than Battambang is the lack of ATMs in town. There is an office of Western Union nearby the market, but there are no banks or other opportunities to withdraw cash.

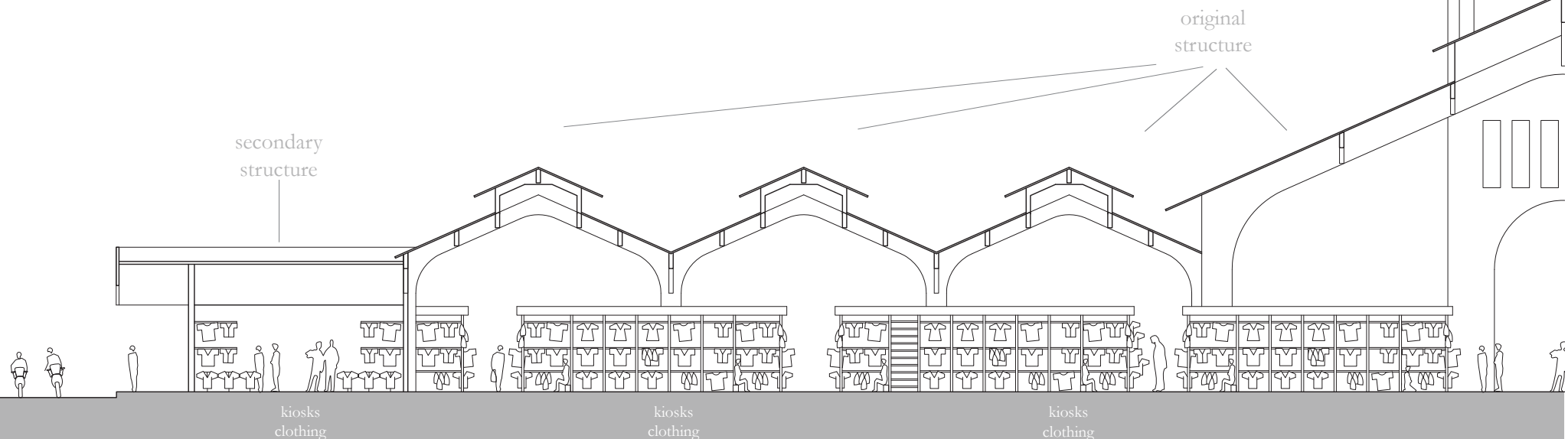


4.2.4. Ho Chi Minh City: Cho Ben Thanh

Cho Ben Thanh lies in the heart of the French colonial area of Ho Chi Minh City or Saigon. Its name - with *Ben* meaning 'wharf' and (*Quy*) *Thanh* meaning 'Turtle Citadel' - is derived from the former location of the market near the river and the Turtle Citadel. In 1912 this market moved to the centre of the French colonial town, taking its name with it.²⁷ Cho Ben Thanh was constructed in 1914.²⁸ Present-day Ho Chi Minh City is with its 7 million inhabitants quite different from whichever Cambodian town; it is of course more crowded, but also more modern with its skyscrapers and well maintained boulevards. It is therefore interesting to see what place the market has in this society. Cho Ben Thanh lies with its front facade - signalled by a large tower with four clocks - at a

large roundabout, in front of an important public transportation hub. The four main entrances are oriented north, south, east and west (see appendix B for complete plan). On the axis of these entrances lie the main halls. The corners of these main axes are filled with three smaller halls, resulting in a rectangular plan. Surrounding this original structure is a newer construction, which follows the original building along its full perimeter. This ring contains small shops selling handicrafts and souvenirs, clothing and jewellery. The ring is wider at the rear of the market. This is where the fresh produce is sold, sorted in a row for vegetables, fish and meat. Inside the original structure, in the area near the front entrance, clothing is sold. Again we see a shrine, secludedly located inside the tower.

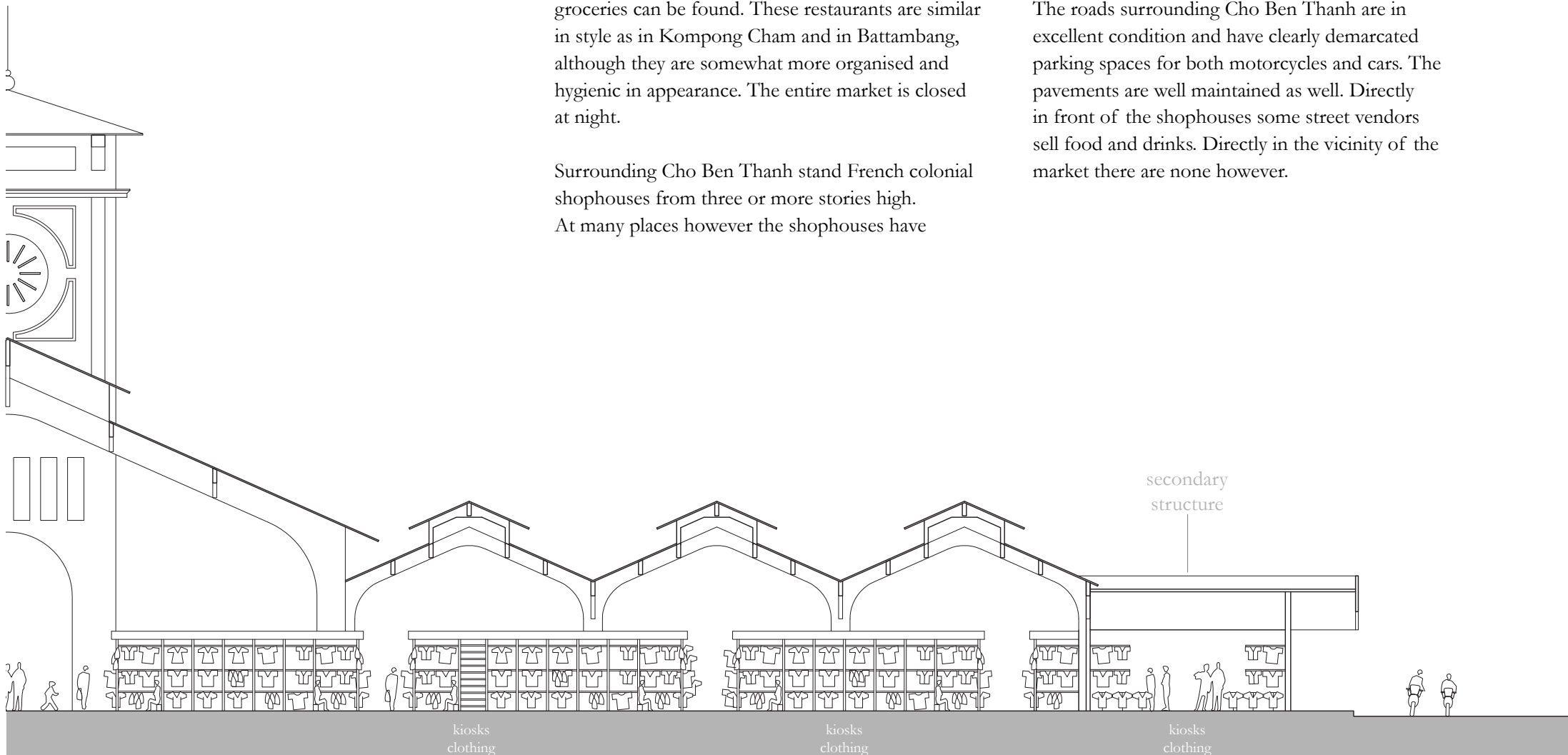
Figure 4.5. East - west section
Cho Ben Thanh 1:200
(source: author's drawing)



In the two main axes produce made of leather, handicrafts, electrical appliances and cosmetics is sold. These shops seem to cater for the greater part to tourists, as the produce has a souvenir-quality to them. Away from the main axes the articles and their quality become less tourist-oriented. Near the fresh section the restaurants and the kiosks selling groceries can be found. These restaurants are similar in style as in Kompong Cham and in Battambang, although they are somewhat more organised and hygienic in appearance. The entire market is closed at night.

Surrounding Cho Ben Thanh stand French colonial shophouses from three or more stories high. At many places however the shophouses have

disappeared and have been replaced by newly built concrete houses. There is quite a differentiation in the ground floor shops: there are tailors and clothing shops, beauty salons, fast food restaurants, banks and jewellerys. Many of them have glass front facades, which generally means that the shops inside are air-conditioned; a rare sight in Cambodia. The roads surrounding Cho Ben Thanh are in excellent condition and have clearly demarcated parking spaces for both motorcycles and cars. The pavements are well maintained as well. Directly in front of the shophouses some street vendors sell food and drinks. Directly in the vicinity of the market there are none however.



4.2.5. Stall typologies

Different kinds of stalls can be recognised at the four markets discussed (see table 4.1.). These stalls differ first of all in their location: either inside or outside. Generally, the outdoor stalls sell perishable goods, whereas indoor non-perishable goods, both food and non-food, are sold.

The outdoor stalls can be subdivided into three typologies: the cart, the street market and the street vendor. Generally, from the cart snacks are sold and from the street market all sorts of fresh produce. The street vendor is often specialised in a certain product, for instance eggs or lotus flowers. From indoor benches fresh produce is sold as well, but prices are slightly higher here. The interior of the hall is for the greater part filled with kiosks, selling dry goods differing from clothes and shoes to rice and fish sauce. Luxury items, such as watches and jewellery, are singularly sold from display cases. In all four markets vendors specify their ware, but do not distinguish themselves from their direct colleagues, neither in articles nor in display: both of them will sell dried shrimps from large bags, both of them will sell Colgate toothpaste.

Table 4.1.
Stall typologies
(source:
author's
drawings)

	Outdoor		
	cart	street market (directly at the street)	street vendor (at a stool/box/table)
Phnom Penh: Psar Thom Thmei	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grilled meat - sweet corn - drinks - coconuts - sticky rice - backed bananas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fresh fruit - cigarettes - phone cards 	none
Battambang: Psar Nat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grilled meat - sweet corn - drinks - coconuts - sticky rice - backed bananas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fresh fruit - cigarettes - phone cards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - meat - poultry - fish - vegetables - fruit
Kompong Cham: Psar Thmei	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grilled meat - fresh fruit 	none	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - baguettes - fruit - flowers
HCM City: Cho Ben Thanh	none	none	none
	<i>[visited at the end of the day; stalls might have been cleared out already]</i>	<i>[visited at the end of the day; stalls might have been cleared out already]</i>	<i>[visited at the end of the day; stalls might have been cleared out already]</i>

Legend

Groceries: tinned food, oils, sauces, noodles, dried shrimp, dried peppers, sweets, toothpaste etc.

Staple food: rice, beans, corn etc.

Household equipment: pots, pans, buckets, mops, boxes etc.

Cosmetics: beauty products (make-up) etc.

Toiletries: shampoo, shower gel, detergent etc.

Restaurants: noodles, stir-fries, curries, drinks etc.

Indoor			Indoor / outdoor		
(fixed) benches	kiosk	display case	restaurant	individual shop	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vegetables - fish - meat - seafood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clothing - shoes, bags - cosmetics - household equipment - video games, DVDs - electrical appliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - groceries - handicrafts - toiletries - dried meat - dried fish - fabrics (tailors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - jewellery - gemstones - sunglasses - watches - religious articles 	- restaurants	none
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vegetables - dried fish - dried meat - eggs - groceries - staple food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clothing - shoes, bags - toiletries - household equipment - fabrics (tailors) - toys, school equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - groceries - barber - beauty salons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - jewellery - religious articles - calculators - cigarettes - phone cards 	- restaurants	none
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vegetables - fish - meat - household equipment - beauty salons - barber 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clothing - shoes, bags - toiletries - household equipment - toys, school equipment - staple food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - groceries - dried meat - dried fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - jewellery - watches - religious articles - calculators - cigarettes - phone cards 	- restaurants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fruit - household equipment - toys - groceries - phone cards - watches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - toiletries - pharmacy - money exchange - lottery tickets - liquor - tailor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vegetables - fish - meat - seafood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clothing - shoes, bags - cosmetics - household equipment - tea, coffee - electrical appliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - groceries - handicrafts - dried meat - dried fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - jewellery - gemstones - sunglasses - watches - religious articles 	- restaurants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clothing - spices - suit cases - fruit - flowers - watches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - handicrafts - bags

Two typologies differ from the others as they are sometimes indoors and sometimes outdoors: the restaurants and the individual shops. The restaurants make food to order and consist of a work bench and some plastic furniture. Individual shops can be found in Kompong Cham and Saigon. These shops have their own shutters and can therefore choose their opening- and closing time individually.

The typologies differ secondly in how produce is stored when the market is closed. Vendors from the outdoor typologies cannot store their ware for instance, meaning that they have to take their produce home at dusk, just as the vendors selling from benches and the restaurant keepers. Vendors selling from kiosks and display cases can store their produce inside.

*Figure 4.6. A man with an ambulant profession;
a garbage collector near Psar Nath, Battambang
(source: author's photograph)*

4.3. Vendors and customers

Although a sociological research on the vendors and customers of the markets in Cambodia is outside the scope of this thesis, some observations are helpful in order to understand their daily functioning.

When observing a market in Cambodia, one immediately notices that the vast majority of the stalls are run by women. A study on the vendors of the markets in Phnom Penh reveals that women constitute 85% of all market traders.²⁹ Men generally seem to prefer the more ambulant jobs: parking attendant, security guard, police officer or cleaning staff. When a man is involved as a vendor, he most often sells more luxurious items - especially electrical appliances.

The same research recognises four types of vendors: those selling luxury items from a stall, those selling non-perishable goods from a stall, those selling perishable goods from a stall and those selling without a stall.³⁰ Female vendors can be again categorised into four different groups based on their family background, resulting in different situations and goals.³¹ Women coming for instance from

government officers' families often own a market stall and sell luxury items. They have a middle-class background and a higher education level and consider themselves quite successful in business. A second group of women can be categorised on their business background. Their husband is also engaged in business, sometimes joined, sometimes independently. These women strive primarily for business growth. A third group of women comes from small vendor families. These women own a stall and sell perishable goods. Their husband is often engaged in a different small business, such as a driver or a barber. The fourth group of women can be categorised as coming from a manual labour family. They generally do not own a stall and are therefore forced to sell from the street as a hawker. This group is poorest and sells for basic survival. As they are often solely responsible for their families' income they often bring their children to the market as an extra hand.³² A second observation of the present-day market in Cambodia reveals an ethnic differentiation among the vendors. Most of the market stalls are owned

and run by Sino-Khmer - Cambodians of Chinese descent.³³ Vendors selling without a stall are however often Khmer coming from the countryside in search for a better life.³⁴

A sociological research done by Prigent (2010) at Psar Thom Thmei reveals that the most important customer of the market is the regular customer or *moy*, as they provide for a stable income. Examples of *moy* are customers returning to a specific tailor, local women who visit certain shops every morning or friends enjoying a snack at their favourite cart. A second group of customers at Psar Thom Thmei are tourists. But, although they are wealthy, they are often frowned upon as they are unaware of local habits. A woman selling drinks explained to Prigent (2010): “they are meaner than the Khmers. Sometimes they drink but refuse to pay the listed price when they leave!”³⁵. As it is in Cambodian society a lack of respect to mention the price to a customer - as it suggests doubts about the client’s resources - these misunderstandings appear.



4.4. Concluding

The markets of Cambodia share many similarities. As it is Cambodian custom to shop for groceries daily, the market is opened every day of the week even though refrigeration has made this unnecessary. This leads to a daily provisioning of fresh goods. Markets are governmental property and are run by a market committee that sets the market's rules, supervises tax collectors and collects periodical fees for maintenance.

There are many other similarities between the four analysed markets. All four of them are located in the French area of the city. The markets in Cambodia date from the same period; the end of the 1930s. The market in Ho Chi Minh City has been built quite some years earlier, probably due to the fact that the French colonisation of Cochinchina had started earlier.

All four markets consist of a large structure of reinforced concrete. Especially the three markets in Cambodia seem to be mere variations on the same concept: whether they are stretched or dome-shaped, structurally they are similar.

The same can be said about the measures that have been taken to enhance the indoor climate; the ventilation concept based on an open plinth through which fresh air can move inside and large openings in the roof through which hot air can move out can be recognised at all four markets. One could say however that this capacity is at its best at the three Cambodian markets, as it has evolved into an independent architectural aesthetic: Psar Thom Thmei would be completely different without its many v-shaped grills, just as Battambang without its terraced roofs.

The four examples however also illustrate the

difficulty of maintaining this ventilation capacity when the market exceeds its original structure. New pavilions block fresh air currents and pieces of cloth appear when necessary shade is lacking.

At all four markets a similar allocation of goods exists: at the rear - in Cambodia outside the original structure, in Vietnam inside - is always the fresh section, inside always singularly dry goods. Produce is clustered: clothing shops stand next to other clothing shops. There are however some intrusions on this pattern, as at the busiest locations - at corners or near important entrances - more expensive items are sold. This seems so be a continuing process, as the butchers were removed from the original structure of Psar Thom Thmei recently.

The shops surrounding the markets however signal something else: more luxurious items - as cell phones, jewellery and electrical appliances - move

out of the market to specialised shops. This process seems to have taken a flight in Ho Chi Minh City, as there are little jewellery shops left inside the market and many surround it.

Another conspicuous similarity between the four markets is the observation that vendors specify their ware, but do not distinguish themselves from their direct colleagues, neither in articles nor in display. The research on the stalls shows that the kiosk is used most at all four markets and that outdoor stalls can mostly be found in the two smaller Cambodian markets. Both Psar Thom Thmei and Cho Ben Thanh no longer make use of these typologies, probably because they are situated in a wealthier area and cater to a wealthier clientele. The produce sold at these two markets suggests the same, as it is more modern and luxurious. The amount of kiosks selling handicrafts and other souvenirs is tell-tale of the

many tourists that are catered to.

In essence, however, all four markets provide for the same needs. All four markets sell both fresh and dry food, clothing, shoes and household utensils; all four markets cater principally to the average Cambodian or Vietnamese.

The similarities between the markets also stretch to the area surrounding them. All four markets are surrounded by shophouses from the French colonial period, which strengthens the commercial character of the area. Over time, the many shophouses have been altered or replaced by 'modern' shophouses - quickly built and less elegantly detailed. Advertisements and other commercial expressions have left their traces on the facades. The area surrounding Cho Ben Thanh however again signals a wealthier situation, as the roads are well-maintained,

the shops are more differentiated and often air-conditioned.

Most of the shops at the Cambodian markets are run by women. Men seem to prefer different, more mobile or physical professions.

The success of the women's business is often depending on her family background: women married to a government official sell generally more luxurious items and consider themselves to be more successful than women coming from manual labour families, who generally vendor perishable goods from the street. Especially this last group of women - often ethnic Khmer - is cause for concern, as they struggle for basic survival. Most of the other vendors are Sino-Khmer.

The regular customer appears to be most important for vendors, as they provide for a stable income.

Battered beauties

Conclusion

As time has passed and war, genocide and poverty have stricken Cambodia, the covered markets built under French colonial rule have fallen into dilapidation. Time has made them into *battered beauties*.

How to restore these beauties to their original splendor, while respecting today's habits?

This thesis' goals are first to understand why the covered markets of Cambodia should be preserved

and second to understand what has defined their architecture, as the next phase of this project consists of the modernisation and extension of Psar Nath in Battambang. To answer these two questions a research on the history and daily functioning of this typology has been performed. This chapter is written in conclusion of this research and answers why these structures should be preserved and what has defined their architecture.

Final conclusion

One could say that the protection of built heritage is completely irrelevant to a country struggling with malnutrition, insufficient health care and inadequate schooling, as Cambodia is. Why should Cambodia be bothered with the preservation of built heritage in general and covered markets built under French colonial rule in particular?

The answer is obvious and simple: built heritage gives a city its identity and simply because it is there, it has to be dealt with.

Cambodia's built heritage has a great need for protection for another reason as well: Cambodia's growing real-estate prices and its collective problem with the past result in the rapid disappearance of built heritage. As many heritage properties have disappeared over the past few years, the protection of built heritage becomes more urgent each day. So yes, there are clear reasons to preserve and actively protect the covered markets of Cambodia.

Fortunately, this wish for protection is not a foreign or Eurocentric concept as it might seem.

As architectural tourism is becoming an important source of income, the protection of built heritage is becoming useful to Khmer people. The social basis for protection of built heritage is becoming broader, which makes the preservation of the covered

markets more likely. The balance between protection and economic development is of a delicate nature however: how many market stalls can be realised without damaging the original concept of the market?

But what has specifically defined the architecture of these market?

To understand the architectural lay-out of the Cambodia's markets, one has to understand the influence of its tropical climate.

This influence surfaces first of all in the leisurely atmosphere at the markets of Cambodia: vendors chat, nap, clip toe-nails and slurp noodles inside their kiosks in front of a fan, meanwhile waiting for customers. Could one image this at a Dutch market? A vendor snoozing between his tulip bulbs?

The architectural lay-out of the pre-colonial market was directly based on the protection from the tropical elements: trees, canopies, umbrellas and pieces of cloth made up the market. The French introduced however large-scale structures, as a result of their civilising mission: it was after all France's responsibility to better the indigenous situation. The halls indeed improved the hygiene of the market considerably, as produce and vendors

were better protected from sun, rain and flooding. The architecture of these structures was however, just as the architecture of the pre-colonial markets, directly based on Cambodia's tropical climate: the ventilation system of open plinths and ventilation grills dominate the market's architecture.

But apart from the introduction of the large hall, the French did not alter the lay-out of the market considerably. The produce of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial market are allocated similarly: fresh produce are available outside the structure, dry produce solely inside. The allocation of fresh produce at the rear of the market has survived French intervention as well, even though the French moved the markets away from the river. Their focus on hygiene however has resulted in fresh produce grouped together, whereas the vegetables were traditionally sold apart from the fish. The architecture of today's outdoor stalls is similar to those of the pre-colonial market as well: vendors still squat on pieces of cloth on the ground under the protection of an umbrella. The ethnic differentiation noted at the pre-colonial markets exists up until today: Sino-Khmer generally sell more luxurious, dry produce and Khmer sell

fresh produce. Although this observation has no clear architectural embodiment, it strengthens the connection between the pre-colonial market and the present-day market: these two markets are in fact very similar.

A scenario for the markets of Cambodia can be derived from the analysis of the market in Ho Chi Minh City. First of all, it shows that the outdoor typologies will probably disappear and that its produce - vegetables, fish and meat - will be sold indoors. Secondly, it shows that the more luxurious items will probably move out of the market into nearby shophouses, as it enables shopkeepers to install an air-conditioner, for the market is still ventilated naturally.

But apart from these small differences, the market of Ho Chi Minh City still functions as it has always done: it caters day-to-day produce to the average client and it probably will for a long time. It shows that the concept of the market - without air-conditioning, refrigeration, multiple stories or escalators - is still very strong.



Building bridges

Epilogue

In the early hours of the morning it is as if Psar Nath's tower blushes; eastern light shines freely over the flat and wide Sangker River onto the white tower. The people of Battambang however flock the rear of the market, as it is the area where the fresh produce is unpacked and sold. The connection between market and river has become lost somehow, even though the river used to be the market's *raison d'être*.

With the growth of Battambang however, it seems justified to connect Psar Nath with the river once more. After having researched Cambodia's *battered beauties*, this project will focus

on *building bridges*: a covered bridge to house a part of the market.

This epilogue is a commencement of the design project. It holds a survey on several covered bridges, exemplifying covered bridge's functioning and architectural lay-out. A study on the bridges of Battambang is performed as well, as it reveals how they are used and made and respond to their surroundings. Finally the river-bed near Psar Nath is surveyed, as it shows in what environment the design will be made.

Figure E.1. A French colonial bridge in the Mekong, Si Phan Don (source: author's photograph)



Figure E.2. Whites Bridge,
Michigan, USA
(source: author's drawing)

Figure E.3. Pont de Roban,
Landerneau
(source: author's drawing)

Figure E.4. Ponte Rialto,
Venice
(source: author's drawing)

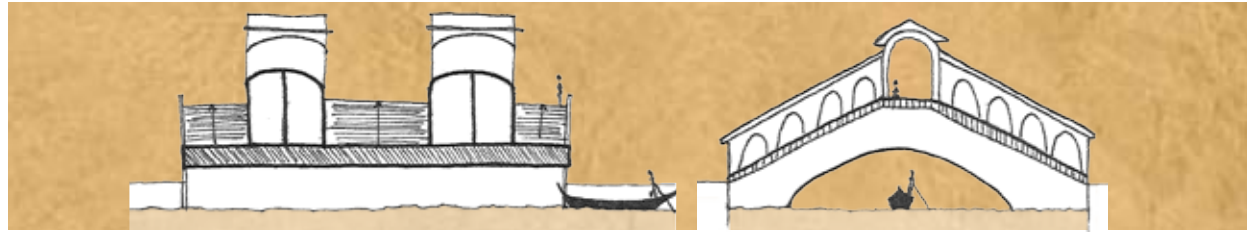


Figure E.5. Ponte Vecchio,
Florence
(source: author's drawing)

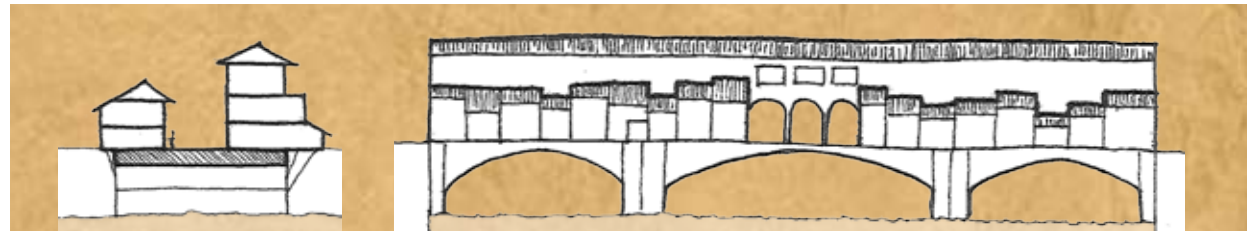
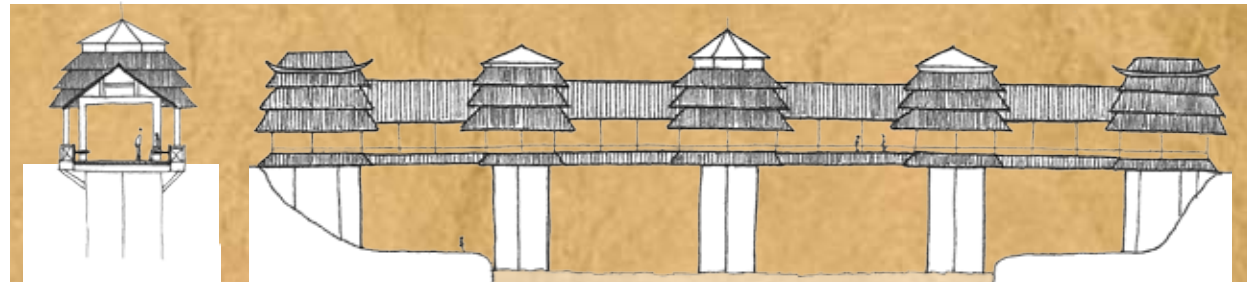


Figure E.6. Chenhyang Wind & Rain Bridge,
Sanjiang
(source: author's drawing)



A typological research on covered bridges

Covered bridges have been constructed throughout the world and ages. Their appearances and objectives differ; one can find simple, timber examples in the United States, entire shopping streets in Europe and places for contemplation in China. But how have these bridges been made, what is their specific function and what is their relation to the river?

The *Whites Bridge* (figure E.2.) was built in 1869 to accommodate a single lane of traffic.¹ The 37 meter span is made by the *Brown Truss*, a timber truss construction consisting of diagonal compression beams and vertical tension members. This patented system was invented in 1857 by Josiah Brown, naming it after himself along the way. The construction is covered by shingles and pine boards to protect it from the elements, extending its lifespan from approximately ten to eighty years. Its construction, its reason for covering and its function are thus closely connected.

The *Pont de Rohan* (figure E.3.) has no clear connection between its construction and its function; its today's appearance is fruit of additions and alterations that have been made over time. The bridge has existed from 1336, although the oldest part of today's structure dates back to 1510.² The 67 meter span is made by seven stone arches alternated by two ramparts. A water mill, located

directly underneath the bridge, benefits from the river current. In the seventeenth century buildings appeared, accommodating housing, shops and a prison. One could say that these buildings have made the bridge into a street; rather than a covered bridge, the Pont de Rohan is an inhabited bridge.

The *Ponte Rialto* (figure E.4.) is located in the centre of Venice and covers the 29 meters of the Canal Grande with a single span. The original timber bridge, that had appeared around 1200 to create a passage to the market at the east bank of the Canal Grande, was replaced in 1591 by the current stone structure.³ The structure houses two double rows of shops. The inner shops are served by the central staircase and the shops on the exterior by the outer ones. Especially these shops and staircases benefit from the view at the Canal Grande.

The interior staircase could again be compared to a street; a direct relationship with the river is lacking, although the height difference covered by the steps signals the existence of a passage underneath. The porticos at the top of the bridge however connect the interior street to the river. This bridge does benefit from its river-setting, albeit singularly with its views and perspectives.

The *Ponte Vecchio* (figure E.5.) covers its 90 meter span with three arches.⁴ Again we see that the bridge became occupied by houses over time. In this case,

butchers and leather tanners used to hold shop at the bridge as they could easily dispose waste in the river. In 1565, however, nobility wanted its share as well and constructed a corridor overhead, the *Corridoio Vasariano*, through which the nobility could pass without having to interact with ordinary people. Meanwhile, the butchers and tanners were prohibited to hold shop at the bridge and were replaced by jewelers and gold merchants. A clear relationship between the river, the construction, the covering and the function of the bridge is lacking; the bridge is, just as the Pont de Rohan, a result of years of adding, extending and altering.

However, a close relationship between function, construction and covering can be recognised in the Chinese *Wind & Rain Bridges*, of which the bridge in Sanjiang is just an example (figure E.6.).

The timber bridge is nearly 65 meters long and rests on five stone piers.⁵ The timber construction has been made without the use of nails or rivets. The bridge not only connects the two shores of the Linxi River, but it also serves as a place to relax, meet and socialise. Along its full length and in the five pavilions benches provide seating. The covering has been made to protect this socialising from wind and rain, hence the name 'Wind & Rain Bridges'.

Battambang's bridges

The bridges of Battambang cover the Stung Sangker (see map 2.1.), the river that originates in the Cardamom Mountains, flows into the large Tonlé Sap Lake and passes Battambang along its way. As the river collects monsoon rains, its water levels fluctuate significantly: the average difference between dry- and wet season is 2.5 meter.

Large boats are a rare sight at the Sangker River. The river is mostly navigated by fishermen on small and shallow boats. Once a day a ferry - only slightly larger than the fishing boats - navigates the river and the Tonlé Sap Lake all the way to Siem Reap; a journey that takes eight to twelve hours, depending on the season. In the high season, this journey - rustic en scenic - attracts many tourists. The low water levels of the dry season however result in its temporary cancellation.

During the French colonial period two bridges have been constructed, both in 1916. One of them, a steel bridge (figure E.7.) was located a few hundred meters south of Psar Nath and gave passage to pedestrians and (motor)cycles. In 2008 it was demolished and replaced by a concrete bridge (figure E.8.), giving passage to larger vehicles as well.

Its architecture is simple: it consists of four concrete piers spanned by concrete beams. The banisters are with their 1.4 meter height remarkably large; it is as if the municipality wanted to move as far away as possible from the former steel bridge, that had become very rickety towards its end.

More significant however is the complete lack of any slope; the bridge is completely flat. Larger boats are apparently not to be expected.

The other bridge dating from 1916 is still in use (figure E.9.). It is located directly opposite the Governor General's Palace and is made of reinforced concrete. Its structure is aesthetically pleasing with its slope and elegant openness, although it remarkably enough does not respond to the asymmetrical profile of the river-bed. None of the bridges do, actually.

The river-bed in front of Psar Nath has a similar profile as at the other bridges, although the slope of the east bank is slightly steeper and reinforced with concrete (figure E.10.). The river-bed is again quite asymmetrical. Concrete water barriers at both river banks protect the city from flooding, although it seems that this water level is seldomly reached.

Figure E.7. Steel bridge across Sangker
1916, demolished in 2008
(source: author's drawing)

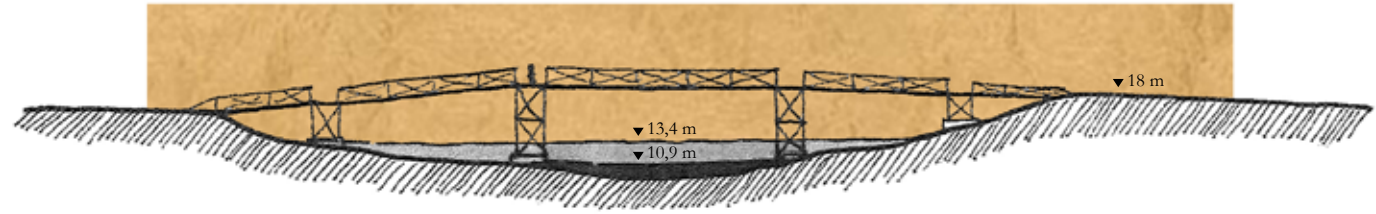


Figure E.8. Concrete bridge across Sangker
2008, replacement of steel bridge
(source: author's drawing)

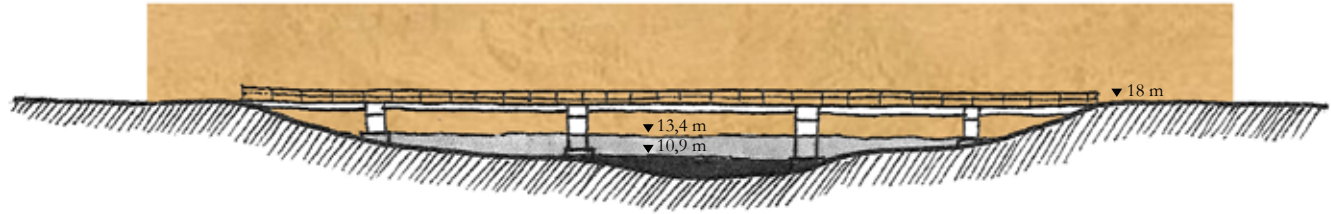


Figure E.9. Concrete bridge across Sangker
1916
(source: author's drawing)

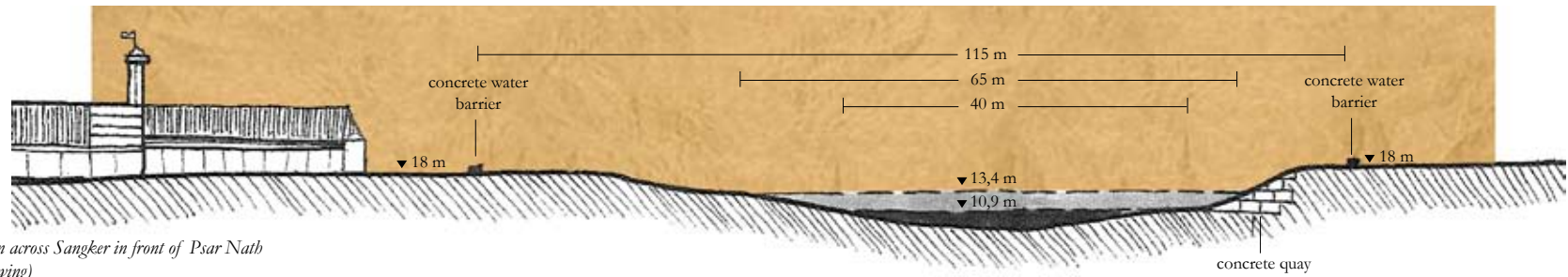
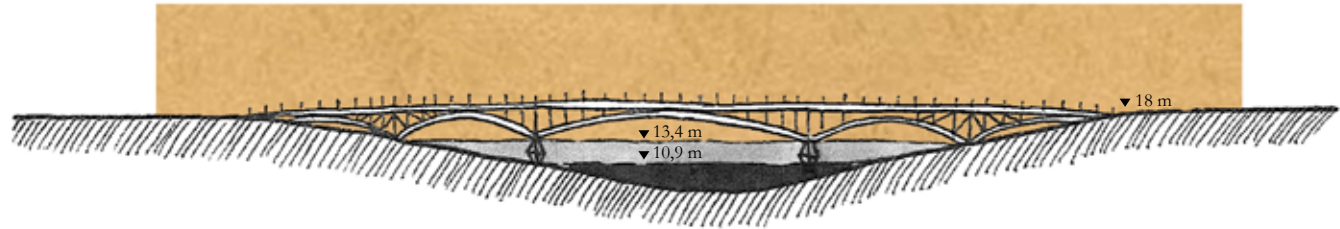


Figure E.10. Section across Sangker in front of Psar Nath
(source: author's drawing)

Concluding

The researches on both the covered bridges and the bridges of Battambang give some insight helpful to the design project.

Covered bridges seem first of all to differ in their structure. Some of them are simply fruit of time: they have been extended and altered continually, resulting in a constructional patchwork. Others are result of coherent reasoning: they are constructed with for instance the least material or the most economical span. Their covering is simply there to extend the construction's lifespan.

Covered bridges also differ in their functioning. They certainly always accomodate passage of some sort. It seems however that especially the bridges that have changed continually over time can be interpreted as streets: with shops, houses, prisons and workshops. It is as if they are incidentally placed above a river. As the shops and houses have turned their back towards the water, the only relationship with the river is one of convenience: waste is easily disposed. China's *Wind & Rain Bridges* however exemplify a covered bridge that has a closer relation to its environment. These bridges serve as a place for socialisation and contemplation, which is - or ought

to be - encouraged by the view on the river and landscape.

The survey on the bridges of Battambang shows the environment in which the design will be made. Battambang's Sangker River's profile is dominated by its asymmetry and its height fluctuation. The monsoon rains of July and August result in an average height difference of 2.5 meter compared to the dry months of April and May. The eastern bank, reinforced with concrete, is slightly steeper than the western bank. No quick development is to be expected in this profile: no large boats navigate the river, and as the newest bridge of Battambang shows no slope at all, no significant growth is to be expected in this navigation either. Surprisingly enough however, none of the bridges of Battambang respond to the asymmetrical river profile: they are all entirely symmetrical. The cause for this symmetry does not seem to lie in Battambang's urban lay-out, as the buildings on the western- and eastern bank of the river are quite different. It seems that constructional convenience has led to this symmetry.

Notes

Introduction

1. Brocheux, P., Hémery, D., 2009. *Indochina, An Ambiguous Colonization | 1858 - 1954*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 370.
2. Ibid., p. 1.
3. Chandler, D. P., 2008. *A History of Cambodia*. Boulder: Westview Press. p. 7.
4. Ibid., p. 7.
5. Ibid., p. 7.
6. Ibid., p. 8.
7. Kamm, H., 1998. *Cambodia: report from a stricken land*. New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc. p. 212.

Chapter 1

1. Part of Garnier's description of the market of Luang Prabang. Full quote can be found on page 19.
2. All information on the *Voyage d'Exploration en Indo-Chine* and its members is derived from the book *A Pictorial Journey on the Old Mekong: Cambodia, Laos and Yunnan* published by White Lotus in 1998, which is in itself a partial reprint of the popularised version of the "The Official Publication of the Commission of Exploration of the Mekong" which was published in 1885.
3. It is unclear why the text mentions Nam Hou River since the description clearly points towards the Nam Khan River.
4. Osbourne, M. E., 2008. *Phnom Penh, A cultural and literary history*. Oxford: Signal Books, p. xii.
5. Dang, N. M., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.

Chapter 2

1. Igout, M., 1993. *Phnom Penh: then and now*. Bangkok: White Lotus. p. 4.
2. Wright, G. 1991. *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p. 162.
3. Wright, G., 1987. Tradition in the Service of Modernity: architecture and urbanism in French colonial policy, 1900 - 1930. In *The Journal of Modern History*, episode 59, # 2, p. 298.
4. Ibid., p. 299.
5. Ibid., p. 305.
6. Ibid., p. 305.
7. Gwendolyn Wright goes even further and calls Hébrards *Style Indochinois* "a pastiche of exotic details superimposed on a Beaux-Arts plan, rather than the more radical change in direction that he advocated." From: Wright, G. 1991. *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. p. 207.
8. Photographs of Desbois's buildings in Phnom Penh have been found in Maigrot's archives. Written correspondence between the two architects is lacking however. From: Taylor, B. B., 1996. *Inventing a Colonial Landscape; The New Market in Phnom Penh*. In Hoffman, A. (ed.), *Form, Modernism and History*, Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 178.
9. "Market and Myth: the four cruciform arms of

the market stretch to the compass points (NW, NE, SW and SE), perhaps a subtle reference to the original name of Phnom Penh: Chaktomuk Mongkol. Translated this means "the four faces" - a reference to the *quatre bras*, or four arms, of the waterways that converge in front of the Royal Palace."

From: Collins, D., 2003. *Marketing Triumph*. In *Sarika*, juni 2003, p. 21.

10. Taylor, B. B., 1996. *Inventing a Colonial Landscape; The New Market in Phnom Penh*. In Hoffman, A. (ed.), *Form, Modernism and History*, Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 180.
11. "The beauty of a grand nave of cement is similar to that of a grand gothic nave. The same has inspired the architects of 1225 as those of 1928." From: Lavedan, P. 1929. *Les Halles du Boulingrin*. In *Architecture*, # 44, July 1929
12. Brocheux, P., Hémery, D., 2009. *Indochina, An Ambiguous Colonization | 1858 - 1954*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 185.
13. All information on the history of Battambang is based on Grant Ross, H., 2003. *Battambang - Bad Dambaung - Le Bâton Perdu - Histoire d'une Ville*. Phnom Penh: 3DGraphics Publishing.
14. Ibid., p. 5.
15. Engraving published in Ibid., p. 9.
16. Ibid., p. 19.
17. Ibid., p. 19.
18. Percheron, M., Teston, E., 1931. *l'Indochine*

Moderne, Encyclopedie Administrative Touristique, Artistique et Economique. Paris: Librairie de France, p. 1009.

19. Kandaoureff, W., 1938. Le Marché de Phnom Penh (Cambodge). In *Le Génie Civil*, # 2941, 24 December 1938, p. 1.
20. Percheron, M., Teston, E., 1931. *l'Indochine Moderne, Encyclopedie Administrative Touristique, Artistique et Economique*. Paris: Librairie de France, p. 1009.
21. Ibid., p 1009.
22. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Da_Lat, accessed on February 16th 2011.
23. Percheron, M., Teston, E., 1931. *l'Indochine Moderne, Encyclopedie Administrative Touristique, Artistique et Economique*. Paris: Librairie de France, p. 1009.
24. Taylor, B. B., 1996. Inventing a Colonial Landscape; The New Market in Phnom Penh. In Hoffman, A. (ed.), *Form, Modernism and History*, Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 183.

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1. Burgeat, T., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
2. Osbourne, M. E., 2008. *Phnom Penh, A cultural and literary history*. Oxford: Signal Books, p xii.
3. Stone, R., 2009. Divining Angkor. In: *National Geographic*. July 2009.
4. Charlie Chaplin visited Phnom Penh in 1936 and made the same comparison between the Phnom

Penhois boulevards and the Parisian.

- From: Collins, D., 2002. Charlie Chaplin in Phnom Penh. In: *Sarika*, Oct-Dec 2002, p. 14 - 23.
5. Corey-Boulet, R., Titthara, M., 2009. Landmark Hotel in the Firing Line. In: *Phnom Penh Post*, January 30th 2009.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Referring to the Tourist Office at Quai Sisowath. Collins, D., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
9. Burgeat, T., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
10. Ko, V., 2010. China Firm in Lake Deal. In: *Phnom Penh Post*, December 28th 2010.
11. When the first elections in Cambodia were held after the Khmer Rouge period an UN force named United Nations Transitional Authority Cambodia (UNTAC) took over control to ensure safety. From: Kamm, H., 1998. *Cambodia: report from a stricken land*. New York: Arcade Publishing, Inc.
12. Collins, D., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
13. Ngo, M., Sun Narin, T. S., 2010. Carrying Khmer Style into the Future. In: *Lift*. July 28th 2010, p. 8.
14. Koditek, W., 2009. *Urban development planning and heritage conservation on a local level -> an endeavour in Battambang District, Kingdom of Cambodia*. PDF.
15. http://www.battambang-heritage.org/recent_

achievements.htm, accessed on January 5th 2011.

16. Neou, V., Wallace, J., 2010. Preserving Battambang; Battambang officials are discovering the beauty - and economic potential - of the city's historic buildings. In: *Cambodia Daily*, July 31st - August 1st 2010.
17. Ainge Roy, E., Titthara, M., 2008. Battambang's Battered Buildings: Preserving Battambang's architectural past is the key to protecting its tourism future. In: *Phnom Penh Post*. December 17th 2008.
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2. Collins, D., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
3. Stout Banwell, S., 2001. *Vendors' Voices; the story of women micro-vendors in Phnom Penh markets and an innovative program designed to enhance their lives and livelihoods*. Phnom Penh: Asia Foundation, p. 14.
4. Dang, N. M., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
5. Ibid.
6. Stout Banwell, S., 2001. *Vendors' Voices; the story*

- of women micro-vendors in Phnom Penh markets and an innovative program designed to enhance their lives and livelihoods.* Phnom Penh: Asia Foundation, p. 20.
7. Collins, D., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
 8. Dang, N. M., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
 9. Stout Banwell, S., 2001. *Vendors' Voices; the story of women micro-vendors in Phnom Penh markets and an innovative program designed to enhance their lives and livelihoods.* Phnom Penh: Asia Foundation, p. 19.
 10. Ibid. p. 19.
 11. Ibid. p. 20.
 12. Ibid. p. 20.
 13. Ibid. p. 20.
 14. Ibid. p. 24.
 15. Ibid. p. 24.
 16. Collins, D., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
 17. Taylor, B. B., 1996. Inventing a Colonial Landscape; The New Market in Phnom Penh. In Hoffman, A. (ed.), *Form, Modernism and History*, Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, p. 175 - 186.
 18. Kandaouroff, W., 1938. Le Marché de Phnom Penh (Cambodge). In *Le Génie Civil*, number 2941, 24 December 1938, p. 1 - 4.
 19. Collins, D., 2003. Marketing Triumph. In *Sarika*, June 2003, p. 18 - 27.
 20. Prigent, S., 2010. History and Portraits. In: Burgeat, A., *Psar Thom Thmei*. To be published May 2011.
 21. Municipalité de Phnom Penh, Mairie de Paris, Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme, les Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 2006. *Phnom Penh Centre; aller, venir, circuler, marcher, rouler, stationner, traverser, transporter, approvisionner, livrer, acheter, vendre, voyager, visiter, flâner*. Phnom Penh: -, p 51.
 22. Collins, D., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
 23. Grant Ross, H., 2003, *Battambang - Bad Dambaung - Le Bâton Perdu - Histoire d'une Ville*. Phnom Penh: 3DGraphics Publishing. p. 23.
 24. Collins, D., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
 25. The market is probably slightly younger than the markets of Phnom Penh and Battambang, as it is not mentioned in the article on the market of Phnom Penh published in 1938. Article: Kandaouroff, W., 1938. Le Marché de Phnom Penh (Cambodge). In *Le Génie Civil*, number 2941, 24 December 1938, p. 1 - 4
 26. Collins, D., 2010. Conversation to be found in appendix C.
 27. <http://www.saigonscene.com/Markets.htm>, accessed on February 16th 2011.
 28. Percheron, M., Teston, E., 1931. *l'Indochine Moderne, Encyclopedie Administrative Touristique, Artistique et Economique*. Paris: Librairie de France, p 1009 - 1010.
 29. Kusakabe, K., 2001. *Women's participation in the market: women retail traders in Phnom Penh, Cambodia*. Bangkok: Gender and Development Studies, School of Environment Resources and Development, Asian Institute of Technology. p. 4.
 30. Ibid., p. 11.
 31. Ibid., p. 48.
 32. Stout Banwell, S., 2001. *Vendors' Voices; the story of women micro-vendors in Phnom Penh markets and an innovative program designed to enhance their lives and livelihoods.* Phnom Penh: Asia Foundation, p. 33.
 33. Kusakabe, K., 2001. *Women's participation in the market: women retail traders in Phnom Penh, Cambodia*. Bangkok: Gender and Development Studies, School of Environment Resources and Development, Asian Institute of Technology. p. 49.
 34. Ibid., p. 49.
 35. Prigent, S., 2010. The Customer at the Central Market. In: Burgeat, A., *Psar Thom Thmei*. To be published May 2011.

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1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whites_Bridge
2. <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landerneau>
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rialto_Bridge
4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ponte_Vecchio
5. http://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/guangxi/sanjiang/winds_rain.htm

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Appendix A: S.I.D.E.C.

MARKETS BY S.I.D.E.C. CAMBODIA

Location: Kampot

What: Cho Kampot (demolished in 2009)

Building company: S.I.D.E.C.

Architect: ?

Year: Before 1931

Source: *l'Indochine Moderne, Encyclopedie Administrative Touristique, Artistique et Economique* (1931)



Location: Battambang

What: Psar Nath

Building company: S.I.D.E.C.

Architect: ?

Year: 1937

Source: Kandaouroff, 1938 in *Génie Civil* and Grant Ross, 2003, *Battambang, le Bâton Perdu*



Location: Phnom Penh

What: Psar Thom Thmei

Building company: S.I.D.E.C.

Architect: Jean Desbois

Year: 1937

Source: Kandaouroff, 1938 in *Génie Civil*



MARKETS BY S.I.D.E.C. VIETNAM

Location: Saigon

What: Cho Than Din

Building company: S.I.D.E.C.

Architect: ?

Year: 1927

Source: *l'Indochine Moderne, Encyclopedie Administrative Touristique, Artistique et Economique* (1931)



Location: Can Tho

What: Cho Can Tho

Building company: S.I.D.E.C.

Architect: ?

Year: Before 1931

Source: *l'Indochine Moderne, Encyclopedie Administrative Touristique, Artistique et Economique* (1931)



Location: Dalat

What: Cho Dalat

Building company: S.I.D.E.C.

Architect: ?

Year: 1937

Source: Vietnamese Wiki Dalat



BUILDINGS REMINISCENT OF PSAR THOM THMEI

Location: Kompong Cham (Cambodia)

What: Psar Thmei

Building company: ?

Architect: ?

Year: probably after 1938 as it is not mentioned in *Le Genie Civil*

Source: none



Location: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

What: Gare de Phnom Penh (abandoned)

Building company: ?

Architect: ?

Year: 1932

Source: Igout, 1993 in *Phnom Penh then and now*



Location: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

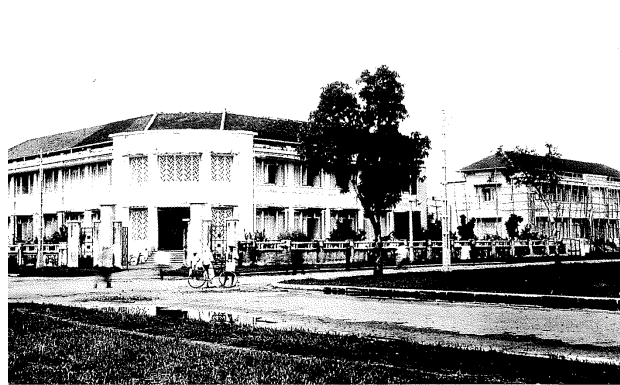
What: Commissariat de police municipale (demolished in 2005)

Building company: ?

Architect: Jean Desbois

Year: 1935

Source: Igout, 1993 in *Phnom Penh then and now*



OTHER BUILDINGS BY S.I.D.E.C.

Location: Bokor (Cambodia)

What: Palais de Bokor (abandoned)

Building company: S.I.D.E.C.

Architect: ?

Year: 1917

Source: *l'Indochine Moderne, Encyclopedie Administrative Touristique, Artistique et Economique* (1931)



Location: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

What: Throne Hall Royal Palace

Building company: S.I.D.E.C.

Architect: ?

Year: Before 1931

Source: *l'Indochine Moderne, Encyclopedie Administrative Touristique, Artistique et Economique* (1931)



Location: Phnom Penh (Cambodia)

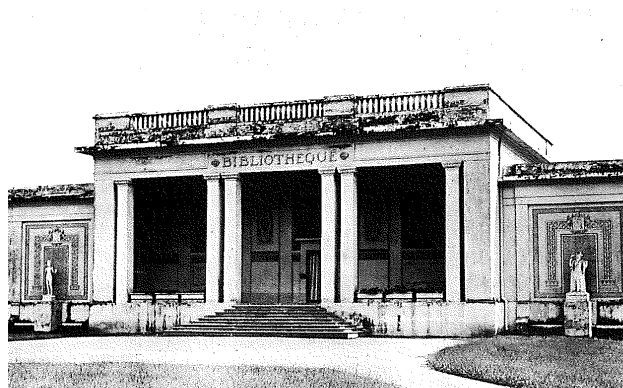
What: Bibliothèque Nationale

Building company: S.I.D.E.C.

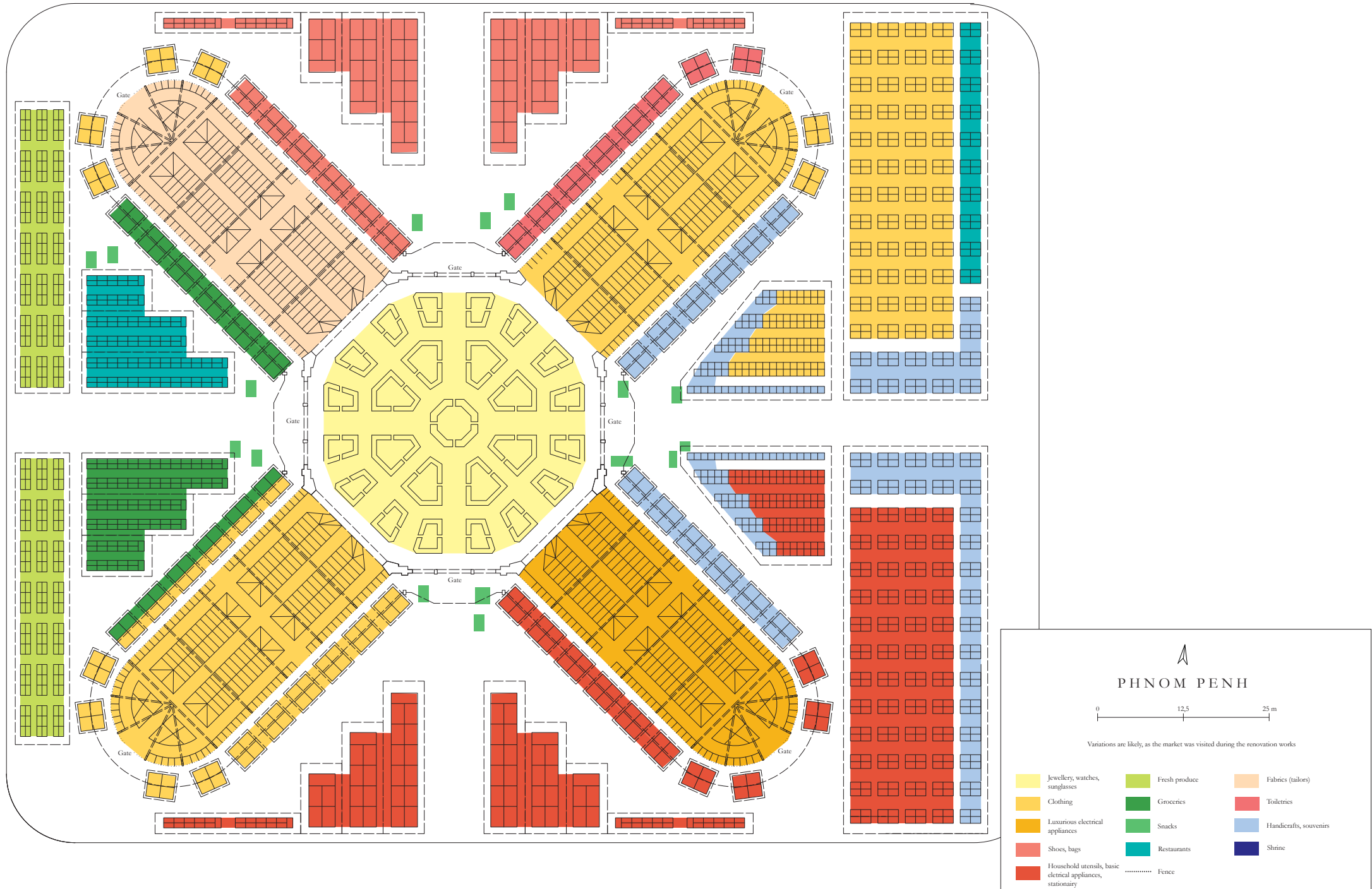
Architect: ?

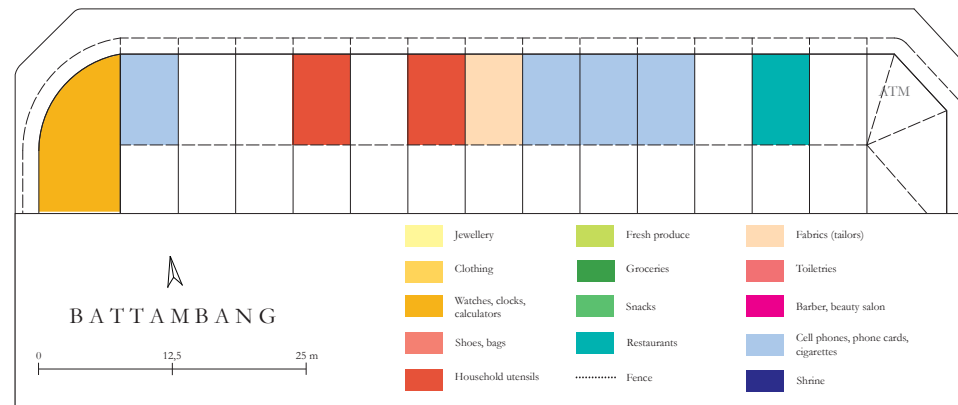
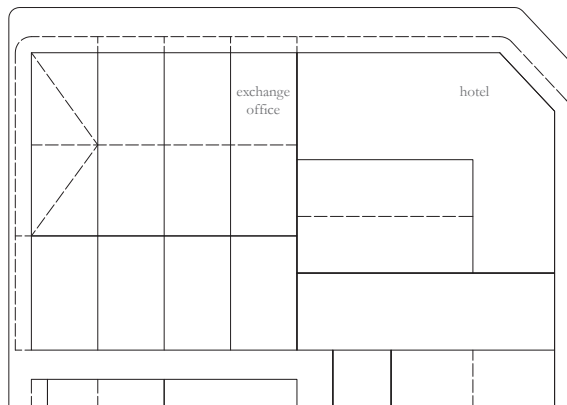
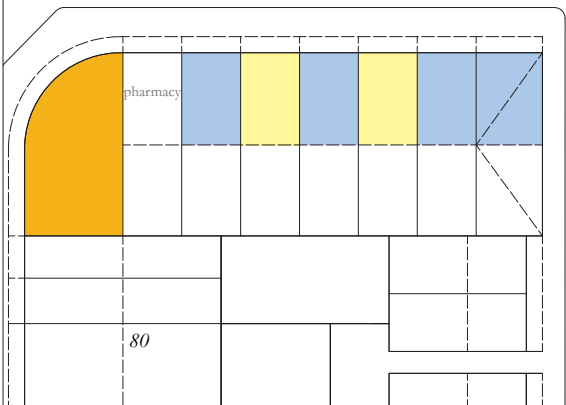
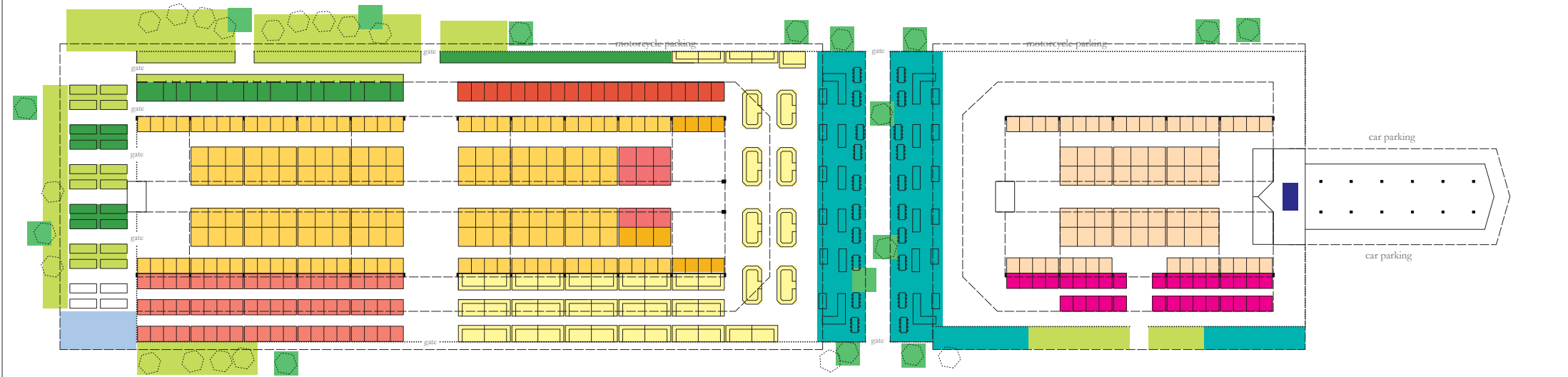
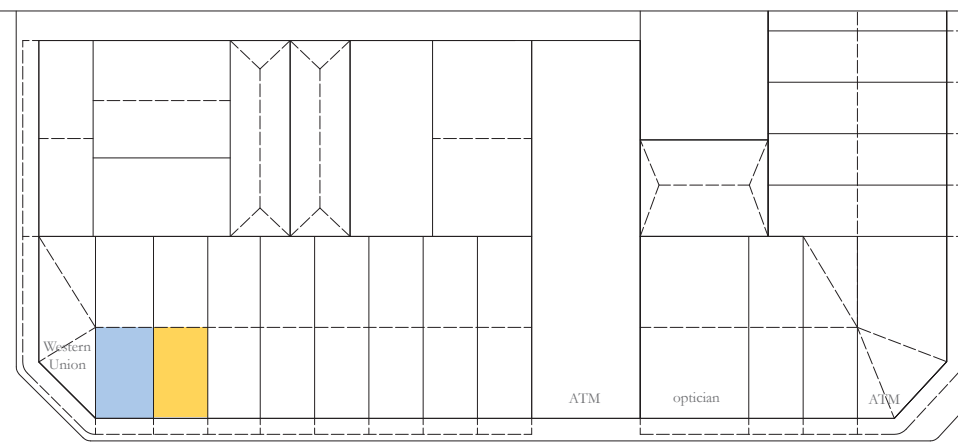
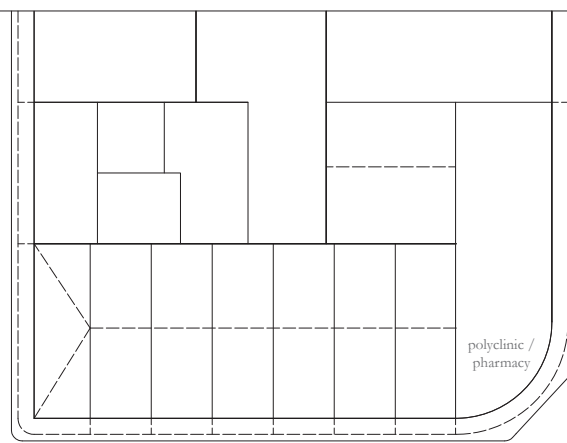
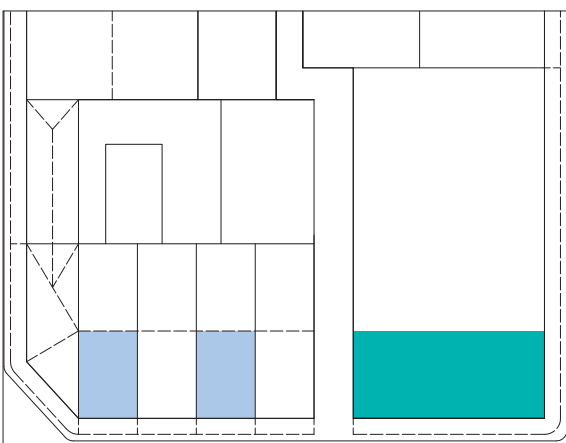
Year: ?

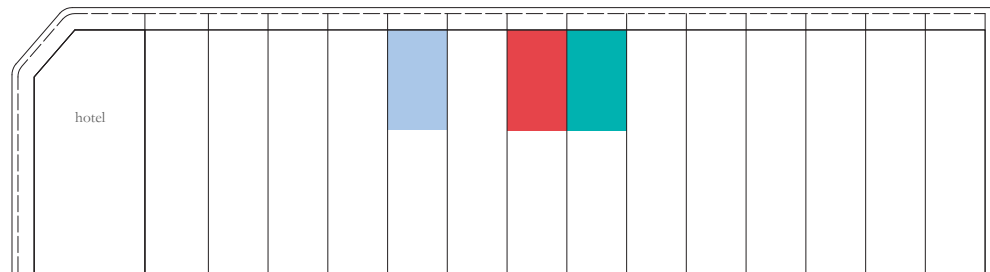
Source: Taylor, 1996 in *Form, Modernism and History*



Appendix B: market plans



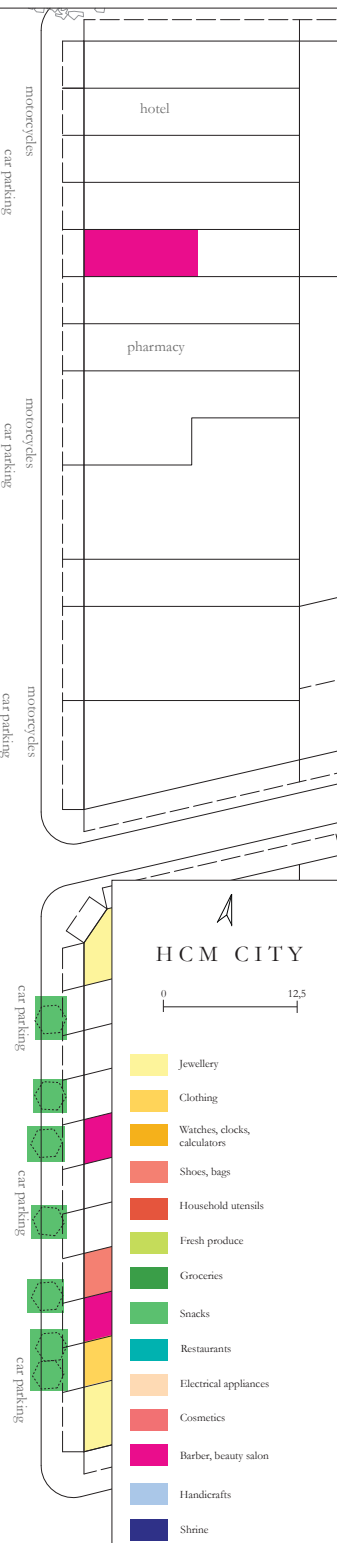




KOMPONG CHAM

0 12.5 25 m

Jewellery	Fresh produce	Fabrics (tailors)
Clothing	Groceries	Toiletries
Watches, clocks, calculators	Snacks	Barber, beauty salon
Shoes, bags	Restaurants	Cell phones, phone cards, money exchange, cigarettes, lottery tickets
Household utensils	Fence	Shrine



Appendix C

A conversation with Dang Nhat Minh

A conversation with Yam Sokli and Théodora Burgeat

A conversation with Darryl Collins

A conversation with Dang Nhat Minh

Dang Nhat Minh is a lecturer Architectural History at the University of Architecture of Ho Chi Minh City. He has followed the Heritage Training Course, organised by the Heritage Centre in Phnom Penh in 2008.

This conversation took place on July the 23rd 2010 at Alexandre de Rhodes in Ho Chi Minh City.

Although my graduation subject focuses on French colonial markets, I am also interested in how the market took place before the French introduced their large covered markets.

Can you tell me what a market looks like in Vietnamese tradition?

When I was a child I lived in a very small and quiet town in the countryside near Hué. This village lies at a shallow bay. Outside the village are rice paddies and fruit and vegetable plantations. Some tracks run from my village to the other villages around. At the junction of the tracks and the bay the market takes place.

People from not only my village but also from the villages around get up very early - at four or five a.m. - to collect their produce; they pack their vegetables and fruits and butcher their meat.

The vegetables - coming from the surrounding countryside - come over the tracks; by ox, cart, motorcycle, whatever. The fresh vegetables are sold where the produce is loaded off: at the entrance of the market, directly off the dirt track.

The fresh meat and above all the fresh fish come by

boat from the surrounding villages. Therefore, the place where these produce are sold is there where the market meets the water: at the back.

Inside the market dry goods are sold, such as clothing, jewellery, toiletries, etc.

The old market of colonial Saigon used to be at the river as well. It moved however after it had burnt down; it was made of traditional Vietnamese materials, wood and leaf. The French governor of that time decided to move the market to where Cho Ben Thanh is now, deciding to move it away from the river.

But the general lay-out - as I described with the market of my youth - has remained the same.

Although the river is missing, the fresh meat and fish can be found at the back. Inside the market dry goods are sold. The one difference is that the vegetables have moved from the entrance of the market to the back of it, at the same place as the other fresh produce.

Do you mean that fresh produce - as meat and vegetables - were never sold inside the market?

In Vietnamese tradition, generally, fresh produce are not sold inside the market.

You might also be interested in another market. The market I am referring to does not exist anymore, unfortunately. It used to be in the village where my grandparents lived. It consisted of a collection of small wooden huts along a road. The huts were actually nothing more than four columns, a roof and a raised floor, to protect the produce from insects

and flooding. The road and the huts were protected from the sun and heavy rains by very big trees - maybe more than a hundred years old - , giving a natural filter.

The market used to stop at around 10 a.m.. After that, people would sit in the huts to drink tea with their neighbours or to take a nap in a hammock. This market has been replaced in the 90s by a big metal structure. Of course, it covers much more than the huts and the trees covered, but I think it is a shame. It has nothing to do with our traditional way of living and it has no architectural or cultural value whatsoever.

The problem is, if the authorities want a project like this, they will have ways to do it.

Who has to pay for the new market? The government or the people in the market?

The government does.

In Ben Thanh, at the front, you see most of the time the expensive products, like jewellery. Is that also in the smaller markets?

Yes, that is also the case in the countryside. But there are less luxurious articles sold.

These stalls are more expensive.

What does more expensive mean? Do people pay more rent for their shop?

No, you buy a shop. The shops at the front are more expensive than the shops at lesser locations.

Besides the price for the shop the shopkeeper has to

pay tax each month.

And the market itself, is it owned by the government?

Yes, the building itself is owned by the government.

Does that mean that the government maintains the building? Do they fix things when they are broken?

Yes, that is the job of the government, just as the cleaning and the security. The shop owners pay for these activities.

The produce that are sold in the market; where do the shopkeepers keep it when the market closes?

It depends on the rules of the market. Normally, after 8 p.m. the market closes and everybody has to leave the building. The things that are sold are stored inside the kiosk.

What do you think could have been the reason for the French colonial administration to build these markets?

In my opinion, there were two reasons for the French to build a big market like this. The first is to manage trading activities, and not only the economic activities. In the French wartime, my grandmother smuggled things of the Vietnamese army in her baskets to the market. The market was the place where information was exchanged. The second reason for the French to build these markets was I think, to develop economic activity.

So, summarising, the typology of the market did exist before French rule. However, they altered it from small scale structures to a large building.

Yes, that's true. The French introduced concrete and large scale buildings.

Where do the produce of the shopkeepers of city markets come from?

Generally, from the countryside. In the case of large scale markets in big cities: the farmers sell their produce to wholesale vendors – often a friend or family member - at markets at the outskirts of the city. From there, the produce is resold and transported into the city during the night.

Has tourism changed the larger markets like Ben Thanh?

Yes, in my opinion it has. Ben Thanh has become more expensive because of tourism, but the government has put regulation on that. Besides that, the 'night market' at Ben Thanh is typically there for tourists. It doesn't exist at other markets. Some produce have changed as well; there are more handicrafts for sale. But Ben Thanh still caters mostly to the Vietnamese population. Produce can also be ordered and delivered at your home for an extra fee.

In Vietnamese tradition, how often do people go to the market? Do they go every day?

Vietnamese people go everyday to the market, although it has changed somewhat with people getting richer. Some rich people prefer to go to a supermarket instead of to the market. But

Vietnamese people with an average income go to the market. The vegetables and meat are fresher – sometimes even alive -, you can haggle your price and pick up the last stories in town.

I think the concept of the market is still very strong; I do not think the supermarket will replace it.

Why should a market built under French colonial rule be preserved?

That is a good question. First, I think we should respect the French period we have had. It has shaped the face of Vietnam. Secondly, we actually know no other way; we are struggling to develop our own architectural style. Vietnamese traditional architecture is often quite small-scale, which means that when we have to build a larger building, our first point of reference is the French colonial heritage in Vietnam.

The markets that were built after the French colonial rule often do not fit in the urban fabric or in Vietnamese custom. Some of them have for instance several stories, with the upper stories unused. These stories are unused because the temperature up there is insufferable and in Vietnamese custom shops are to be found at ground level. The markets of the French colonial period are most often just one story. Secondly, they are quite open, which is good in our climate. This layout fits perfectly in Vietnamese habit. It is not necessary to change it structurally, except clean it up and make it a bit more spacious. Our urban layout is also still French and it will not change soon. The French system is still so much part of our lives, that we should incorporate it and respect it.

If you look at for instance China or Thailand, countries richer and further ahead than Vietnam, you see that they have replaced their original covered markets by large, closed and air-conditioned shopping malls. What do you think of that development?

That is of course a difficult question. We [architects] try to convince people not to use air-conditioning. But, especially in summer season, it gets so hot that people really want it. I think we must accept this to some extent. We have to keep trying to design buildings in which it is not necessary, but it remains a fact that it is very hard to convince your clients of it.

The face of your building really changes with the use of air-conditioning. Which means that the face of your city changes. For example, Bangkok with its closed facades has a very different atmosphere than Hanoi. I think we should be aware of that.

Yes, I agree. But the shopowner of Ben Thanh market will say, especially at the end of the dry season: "I want an air-conditioning". What must we do? If we can create a space that is very fresh and has a moderate temperature, it will satisfy them. But if we cannot do that, we have to provide air-conditioning. We must accept this.

Still, if you ask me, the market underneath the trees is the best.

I will keep that in mind...!

(Chuckling)

A conversation with Yam Sokly and Théodora Burgeat

The Heritage Mission was created in 2005 by the French architect Michel Verrot. Its aim is to protect the (non-Angkorian) built heritage of Phnom Penh. The organisation is a bilateral project between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the French Embassy in Cambodia. The Mission falls under the Heritage Centre, a public institution supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of Cambodia.

Yam Sokly studied Architecture and Urbanism at the Royal University of Fine Arts and now works as an architect for the Heritage Mission. Théodora Burgeat works as a communication officer for the Mission.

This conversation was held at July 30th, 2010 at the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts in Phnom Penh.

Could you tell me something about the Heritage Mission and the work you are doing in Phnom Penh right now?

Théodora: The particularity in Cambodia is that when we talk about architectural heritage, we immediately think about Angkor and the temples around it. We forget that there is also other important heritage.

Inside the Heritage Centre, there is the Heritage Mission and the Regional Heritage Training Centre; a school where students follow a one year training on heritage. They work with teachers from France, from l'Ecole de Chaillot. The architects of the Heritage Mission come from this school. Our purpose is that

in a few years the Heritage Mission is independently run by Cambodian architects.

At the moment the Heritage Mission focuses on Phnom Penh, because of its emergent situation. I have been here for just one year but I can really see that the city is changing. Fortunately, many buildings are still left, but a lot of destroying has already taken place.

Last year we have been focusing on the realisation of a safeguarding and development plan of the Post Office area. The area consists of some exceptional buildings; the architecture is very harmonious, all from the same period; early 1900.

We finished the plan and presented it to the the Ministry of Culture and Fine-Arts. The Minister is quite sensitive about this question; since about a year I feel that there's a change of mentality going on. It seems that the authorities are more aware of the importance to protect their heritage than before. But I think they don't know what to do, yet.

Some months ago, we organised an international round table in Phnom Penh with the ministers of Culture and Tourism, to talk about architectural heritage in Cambodia and the concrete things that can be done with it.

Officially, there is since 1996 a law that protects heritage. However, there is no decree specifying how the law should be enforced. It just exists.

That's a problem. Many buildings have been destructed the past couple of years and I am afraid that in a few years time there will be nothing left.

So that's why we tried to organise this round table,

which was in itself not easy. Heritage is quite an economical and political issue and it is not easy to convince authorities to protect it. Cambodia has a problem with memory; talking about the past is not so easy since the Khmer Rouge. The authorities mostly prefer to focus on the construction of high new buildings, regarding them as a symbol of the modernisation of the country.

Well, finally, we organised the round table. There were some people talking about their own experience with heritage; people from Vietnam, Laos, Venice and France. They showed how heritage is successfully dealt with in their countries and tried to convince the Cambodian authorities to do the same.

We also talked about our project on the post office area and that we basically have all the tools to realise it, but that we need an approval. That is by the way one of the important reasons for us to be inside the Ministry of Culture and Fine-Arts.

We also work with other associations that try to protect heritage in Phnom Penh, for example Khmer Architectural Tours. The advantage of working with them is that they can do complementary actions concerning built heritage. What we are doing is quite political and sensitive.

The Heritage Mission has done some renovation works; we have worked on the National Museum for an exhibition of Rodin drawings. We had to redesign one room for these drawings, because they are very fragile.

We also worked on the Bophana Centre, a centre created by Rithy Pan, a Cambodian filmmaker. Rithy

Pan wanted to create a place of memory, a place that gathers the film archives about Cambodia. You can go there and see lots of videos.

Is this the same as the National Archive?

Théodora: No. That's west of Wat Phnom. It can be useful for pictures or official documentation.

Do you think I can find original drawings?

Sokly: Not really... But they do store a lot of maps there.

Ok.. What work has the Mission done on the Bophana Centre?

Théodora: We have done its renovation, in which we tried to respect the original concept of the building. There is up until this day no air-conditioning inside; we tried to respect the air circulation and we tried to find as much light as we could. For us it is a good example of what we can achieve. People working there are I think quite happy with it.

Besides the Bophana Centre, we also did some private buildings. I think our team is quite uncommon here; we are actually the only ones who can do this specific work.

Besides these renovations, we also organise activities that communicate our view. This year we've organised some seminars at universities, to try to show the students of architecture the heritage situation. I was quite surprised to see that they sometimes don't know anything about heritage.

What kind of things do they learn then in university?

Théodora: I think they learn mostly about modern architecture.

Many countries surrounding Cambodia try to be modern; they modernise their cities; want a modern capital. This model might be suitable for Bangkok and Singapore, but it is not suitable for Phnom Penh; it's quite a small city. Which has its own charm: it gives the city a human dimension and some very harmonious areas. For sure, the city needs modernisation, but it's essential to define an urban area for these buildings. For the moment, the urbanisation is too wild.

That's what we do in Amsterdam actually. Amsterdam also has a small and historically fragile centre. Amsterdam's high rise have been put on the outskirts. In that way it also has the infrastructure it needs.

Théodora: Yes... But that's of course a difficult discussion. It's hard to find a place where this could happen. But yes, I think that's a good example. But even students do not have an idea about the heritage here in Phnom Penh. That's very sad I think, because in three years they will be professionals without knowledge on their built heritage. Exactly for this reason we try to raise knowledge on this subject.

To give an example: last February l'Ecole Professionnelle, a nice building dating from 1903-1905 - structurally in a good state - was destroyed in three days time. Nothing left. There was a Cambodian photographer who was doing a project in which he recorded old buildings. He was interested in this building and took at some point

pictures of it. A few days later he returned to take some more, but the destruction had just taken place. Fortunately, he was able to take some pictures from the demolition. It is now a great tool for us to raise awareness.

Sometimes it just happens like that, from one day to the next. And nobody knows about it of course.

Do you think Psar Thom Thmei is at risk? Although it's being restored now.

Théodora: I don't think so.

Sokly: Structurally it's not, but functionally it is. Before, it could accommodate about a hundred stalls, now they pushed in 300. This is really not a nice way to treat a building.

A French team has done the renovation, right?

Théodora: Yes. But we do not support it at all. They did not respect the original building at all. Also from an aesthetical point of view... From the adjacent streets you had a beautiful view on the building and its ensemble. The renovation has blocked it all.

Sokly: That area is not about the building. It's about the building, it's space and the buildings around. If you demolish that space, there is no point renovating the building.

Théodora: Actually, it is an urban project. You really have to think of the building in its environment.

Sokly: The problem is the commercial or financial aspect of the renovation. There is an awful amount

of money involved in the decision to renovate. The problem is: more stalls means more money. It's all about money.

The market has become something else. It's not the Psar Thmei anymore. It's like a new Psar Thmei, a 'New New Market'. Instead of a light structure, they have built a new concrete structure. The light structure gave us vistas; the concrete structure blocks it all. Before, you could see the market from everywhere. Now, you have to peak and somewhere far up is the market.

After the renovation, the shopkeepers added even more canopies, because of rain and sun, making the view on the market even smaller. The space between the wings and the new structure was supposed to be empty and to provide more ventilation. But you know what happens: shopkeepers fill it up with their goods. So right now, the area surrounding the market is even more cramped than it used to be before the renovation.

Architecturally, I think the pavilions are - sort of - ok., because the market is high enough to be still the main structure. But the sight, the original idea of a large, seemingly floating structure, is gone.

Are there other people objecting the renovation?

Sokly: The general public is happy, because they have more space for business.

I can agree with the decision to fill in the areas north, south and west of the market; if you desperately need to commercialise it. But I do not agree with the filling of the eastern part. That part has always been the 'grand corridor' from the market towards the river. I understand that we cannot

preserve everything, but we must at least preserve something.

Perhaps the architect should have chosen a different structure; maybe a wooden structure. And lower. That's already better I think. It would be the best if you could preserve the whole spirit of the market. The garden; in the front, in the back.

But the garden didn't exist from the 60s onward.

Sokly: Yes, that's true. That surface has been occupied for a 100% for about thirty or forty years; after the war. Expect for the period during the Khmer Rouge of course.

For my project, this is of course interesting. But it is very sad that it has actually happened.

Luckily there is still Battambang.

Sokly: Battambang, Kompong Cham...

Is there also one in Kompong Cham?

Sokly: Yes! It's beautiful! It's almost the same as in Battambang. If you want to see the covered markets, you have to go to Kompong Cham and Battambang. The only ones that still exist. Kampot is already demolished. There's not that much left. Kompong Cham is still what it used to be.

The shape of Kompong Cham is different from Battambang, but constructionally it is similar, just as Psar Thmei here in Phnom Penh. They're all made from a concrete structure.

Do you perhaps know the architect of these two markets?

Sokly: (*Chuckling*) Not really... But they might be the

same as the Psar Thmei architects.

What do you think the future should bring for these buildings? We have an example of how it should not be done; but you mentioned with Psar Thmei that the east side should have stayed empty. What is the best way to treat these buildings in your view?

Théodora: I think that's quite difficult to answer. In the book Alexandre Burgeat, director of Melon Rouge Agency, is going to publish about the renovation of Psar Thmei some architects give their vision on the future. That might answer your question.

When will the book be published?

Théodora: It is expected to be published in May 2011. It's a huge project. It consists of three parts: a historical part, a part on the renovation and a part on what the market could be in the future. (*To Sokly*) You have also added something, right?

Sokly: Yes... From a professional point of view, the future of the market seems troublesome. Still, we have a chance to reverse it. We're at a decisive step: if you follow the steps that have just been taken, the future will bring the demolition of the market. Because, why not demolish it and build a shopping centre?

At the site of Psar Chas they proposed to build a shopping centre with big towers. It's a historical market! So who knows what happens to Psar Thmei?

It's a hard question for all of us to answer: why

should we keep these buildings?

Sokly: Because that is what we have. The original shophouses that surround Psar Thmei are now slowly being replaced by towers. Some of them are 5 stories high. The original urban setting is broken down by this.

It looks nice to the people living in it. But if you look at the whole city, the whole area, these structures are completely alien. But the people don't really think about this. They think of themselves.

Théodora: People generally have a very short view here. They often don't care. This mentality has been very difficult for me when I arrived here. I came here with my western values, with my own ideas about protecting heritage. But people here generally do not care about these aims as much as I do. How to deal with that? That has been and still is very difficult. But I should nuance this. We have made a part of a documentary. Its aim was to raise knowledge and awareness on architectural heritage. We interviewed some Cambodian people living in some of these buildings. We were quite surprised to hear that many of them regret that these buildings are being demolished at such a scale. They all told that their homes had a good quality of living: the air circulation was good, the light was beautiful and their homes were often really peaceful and pleasant. That's very interesting. It means that it is not only our foreign point of view, but that there are also Cambodian people who feel like that. These people are a minority for the moment, because of the lack of knowledge about this topic. But, I think that if we keep on trying to tell the

authorities that Cambodian people are also interested in this architectural heritage and that it is not just a foreign view, we might succeed. That's exactly why we work with Cambodian people.

To change the subject a bit; do you know how the covered markets served the French colonial government? How did the French government manage them?

Sokly: In the case of Psar Thmei: it was built by the French government. After that, it was handed over to the local government. Inside there were separate areas selling gold, silver. And all around people really sold whatever they wanted.

And in the current situation? Are there rules for putting up your stalls outside the market? Do you have to pay someone?

Sokly: Generally, you have to. We have no documents about the French time, however. There are different rents to pay, when you have your own stall, sit outside etc. But first of all, you have to buy the name.

You buy the name? What does that mean?

Sokly: It means that you buy the right to sell on that stall. That's an amount of money to pay and after that you pay for utilities every month.

Is it payed to the local government?

Sokly: There is a management for each market, which falls under the municipal government.

Were the renovations paid by the municipality of

Phnom Penh?

Sokly: Ninety percent was paid by the French development agency AFD (*Agence Française de Développement*).

Why did they pay for that?

Théodora: It is a huge project and it's heritage from the French colonial period. Psar Thmei is a well-known market in Cambodia.

And in general, when something is broken, will the market management make sure that it is restored?

Sokly: (*Chuckling*) ... it could be... But normally, people just fix it themselves.

Do you know how the situation is in Vietnam? How does Vietnam deal with its architectural heritage?

Sokly: I am not sure. Generally, what we see from Vietnam, is that they are more involved with their heritage than in Cambodia, even though the destruction is similar. The government of Vietnam has a more active policy of protecting historical buildings. They have some very nice restauration projects. In Hanoi, you have a protected area: the old quarter.

Théodora: In Cambodia, I think, there is also a bigger process that wants to modernise. There is a very quick evolution here.

Sokly: In Vietnam they – I cannot say that they have a proper foundation for future development - but at

least, they are quite willing to accept a slower pace of development. Cambodia says: I don't care, I want it now! Cambodia wants to have skyscrapers, but its inhabitants don't even know how to use a lift. Cambodia wants to build a shopping centre, but its people cannot afford to buy from it.

How do you think tourism has influenced this process? Like shopping malls; you could say that tourists go to shopping malls.

Sokly: To be frank, if tourists want to do shopping, they will go to China. They won't come to Cambodia.

Ok., I agree, but tourists do come and in the time they spend in Cambodia they will do shopping.

Sokly: Sure, but there is enough to choose from. But it has influenced Phnom Penh; partially. At least, I think I can see a change in the last five years.

But if you look for instance at the the central dome of Psar Thmei. Right now they sell watches, jewels, sunglasses etc. Has that always been the case?

Sokly: Yes, that has always been the case. They are selling the same products, but yes, the clients have changed. Before the client was 100% local, now it is 50/50.

Théodora: Tourism is an important argument to protect the heritage. A long term one.

I agree. Before I visited Cambodia I traveled a

couple of weeks through Thailand. In general, Thai cities are quite unattractive. Cambodia was a pleasant surprise after that. I think that is a big asset of Cambodia compared to Thailand.

Théodora: That's why it is so urgent to protect this country - full of wealth and charm.

Do you think there are people who have a problem with French colonial built heritage?

Sokly: Some Cambodians do. But at the same level as it exist in every other former colony. This is part of Cambodia. Some of my friends say: why should we be bothered with this or that French building! These friends are actually university students.

But it is a very relevant question: why should we keep it?

Sokly: It is part of Cambodia. Historically, physically. There are some extreme historians who say: we should only keep the pagoda, we should destroy the contemporary city and build our houses on stilts. But should we reverse things? History has happened. But we can appreciate it and its identity. What we have is what we have; we cannot ignore it.

There is a paradox; people say that we should stick to our tradition, but at the same time they want to live on the 36th floor. What do we want? Tradition or the so-called modern life? We want to keep our Buddhist Wat, but at the same time we want Phnom Penh to become like New York or Hong Kong.

Is there actually something like city planning in Phnom Penh?

Sokly: There is the masterplan of Phnom Penh for

2020. Hopefully they can implement it.

As a last question. The latest, large scale renovation in Phnom Penh: the new boulevard along the riverfront. What is your opinion on that?

Sokly: Great job, but wrong trees. It is a great job that the river bank has been beautified, but I cannot accept the palm trees they planted. It has nothing to do with the identity of the city. Why not replant what it used to be? Replant something that is very typical for Cambodia, instead of this Miami beach reference. Also from a practical point of view: we deserve more shade!

A conversation with Darryl Collins

Darryl Collins is an Australian architectural historian, who has lived for over sixteen years in Cambodia. He has worked as a lecturer at the Royal University of Fine Arts of Phnom Penh at the Department of Archeology. He co-authored the book “Building for Cambodia: New Khmer Architecture 1953 - 1970”, together with Helen Grant Ross.

This conversation was held at July 31st, 2010 at K-West in Phnom Penh.

As a start, could you tell me something of the situation here in Cambodia concerning the protection of French colonial architectural heritage?

I am aware of the French programme of heritage restoration, which tries to preserve as much of the French colonial architecture of Phnom Penh that is left. It is hard to put a percentage on it, but I would say that about 40% has already gone.

Just speaking of it, this big blank space over here (*Darryl points out of the window*) had a huge colonial villa sitting on it, just a few years ago. It was lovely; it was used by the Ministry of Tourism as an office. It had a city map outside for tourists, just to show them the area. About three or four Khmer New Year holiday periods ago I happened to be in Phnom Penh and they just started wrecking it; it just disappeared. This is of course one of the scandals of the city; there is no protection.

Officially there is....

Officially there is not! That's the problem!

When I spoke to the Theodora of the Phnom Penh Heritage Mission she mentioned some form of regulation.

Well... (*chuckling*)... In the 1990s a French team from the *Urban Centre of Paris* made classification documents. They classified the whole of Phnom Penh and they produced a book. In mid 1990s they had an exhibition at the French Cultural Centre, which listed all the architectural and urban heritage of Phnom Penh.

This classification, however, became a blueprint for development. These mad Khmer moved in on everything they could get their hands on. Every old building was grabbed and demolished, just to put something else there. A new shopping mall for example, or just nothing.

This plot has remained empty ever since it was pulled down. There was a plan to put a high hotel on this corner. However, there is no room for parking, two busy streets merge here, it has no free land around it; in short, there is nothing to provide a luxurious hotel. So, the whole idea was blocked and the developer just let it vacant.

Do you think it has to do with some sort of anti-French sentiment?

No.... It has to do with greed. Basically. The land in Phnom Penh is incredibly valuable, particularly in the colonial area; the riverside area. It is priced by the square meter. And now, this city, its value equals any

city in the world. You would not believe it.

But you see all these very simple restaurants at the quay.

These are held by people that rent. Cambodians make a lot of money by renting rather than selling out. A family that owns any property along the riverfront will not sell, but rent. It's the ground floor that is the valuable part. In property terms generally the western concept is: upper floors are most valuable. You have a view, beautiful scene, a look at the river.

But the Cambodians believe, probably rightly based on the idea of the shophouse, that the ground floor is the key. Certainly for the riverfront, where the ground floor usually holds a restaurant. But also in other parts of the city the Cambodians love to hold the ground floor and its shopfront; the old Chinese ideal of having a shopfront. Cambodians will even if they can't rent it, let it sit there for two or three years and rot. Do nothing. Just wait.

The property values here were destroyed by UNTAC. Before UNTAC, property was comparable in value. But when UNTAC came in, millions of dollars poured into the capital and resulted in an explosion of prices. People made millions with investing in rental properties, which were rented to the UN forces. The value of property went artificially high and it has never really gone down again.

How is a restaurant keeper able to pay such a

high rent?

I don't know. I would think in the case of restaurants, most of them are leased. So people don't buy the property and the lease is reasonable, but the property value is incredibly high with the Cambodians hanging on their property. It's their country of course, they've got every right to do this, but it means that they keep the property value artificially high.

But then it is not really that high. If no one sells it for that price.

But it is when a developer moves in. Certain properties along the riverfront do change hands. Sometimes for even a 1000 US dollars per square meter or more - which is really high for here. And for what you get... I mean, you get a million dollar view, but this city is just not on a par with Singapore or Bangkok or whatever other city. I think for what you get it's not a true value.

And that puts a high pressure on historical relevant buildings.

It does. In the early 1990s were certain programmes to promote registration of architectural heritage. The government accepted 50% of the findings of the commission. They threw out 50% of the findings, saying something to the effect of: the buildings owned by the government can be considered, but the buildings that are in private ownership cannot be classified. In other words: they weren't willing to control or put restrictions on private ownership. This means that private owners can do whatever they like; they can demolish. So in effect, there is

only a heritage law that refers to ancient monuments. The government has agreed that a building of a hundred years or more is heritage property. But, having said that, they then say: if the building is over a hundred years and in bad condition, you're free to do whatever you like. So to survive, the building has to be both over a hundred years old and in super condition.

Who assesses the condition?

The government. (*Chuckling*) Let's take the Renakse. It's a hotel, just in front of the Royal Palace. It has a dark green fence around it, which generally means that the building is coming down. It has caused a scandal, because it's a favourite building. It's over a hundred years old and very beautiful. It used to be a Franco-Cambodian school. The government, who owned it, sold it to a developer, who wanted to demolish it. The woman who had the lease on the building was charged with not renovating it to a certain standard. Therefore, the government declared it was not being maintained and her lease was terminated and she was chucked out. They tried to demolish it, but there was such an outcry from the general public, that the demolishing was stopped. The lady headed for a long court case where she challenged the right to sell the property and to throw her out even though she had a lease. She had something like twenty years to go on her lease, but they just ignored that. Anyway, it's frozen and it has been like that for nearly two years. Years ago, when I first came here, the precinct of the Royal Palace was protected from larger developments. There used to be a height restriction:

you couldn't build above four floors within the view of the Royal Palace, so you couldn't block the view on the Palace. Now, there is the casino overshadowing it, just as these huge, ugly apartment blocks behind the Independence Monument. Now, when you look down Norodom Boulevard you see the Independence Monument with the backdrop of twenty story apartment blocks. They completely destroy the boulevard.

It's Korean money, by the way.

So it's not even Cambodian.

No, most of the development here is not just Cambodian. It's an international partner with Cambodian partners, because you can't develop here without a Cambodian partner. The Cambodians win by taking a cut of the profits and development, and the developer wins by investing money and getting return on their investment. Usually it takes 20, 30 or 40 year before the property is handed over to Cambodian ownership.

Considering the question why heritage should be preserved in a third world country, this makes the situation even harsher: it's not the Cambodian economy that benefits from these 'bad' developments, but the Korean.

Only wealthy business people or people high up in the government make money from these developments.

There is a little bit of a Cambodian mentality problem here. Not with the French *persé*, but with recent history. This has to do with the period from 1970 to 1989, the period covering Lon Nol's military

dictatorship, the Khmer Rouge period and then the Vietnamese occupation. These twenty years is a black period; either genocide, occupation or a dictator. The Khmer don't particularly like dealing with it, because it's a painful and often a bad period in their mentality. If it's old, it's connected with the past. And young Cambodians do not want to deal with the past; they want to deal with now and the future. Recently I was interviewed for the magazine 'Lift' on colonial and New Khmer architecture. Other people were interviewed for current architecture. It's quite revealing to see what they're saying. The young foreign architects and developers and the young Khmers are saying: "well, let's get on!"

Also foreign architects?

Yes. Some architects want to talk up the place. Let me make myself clear: I have no problem with development, but I have a problem with poor quality.

I don't mind if people put up really contemporary buildings; buildings that are going to mean something for the people, buildings that are useful and well-designed. None of that; *it ain't here*.

I see that old buildings are torn down and the stuff that is put up is rubbish. It's not going to last. It's bad quality, it's cheap and it is only there to make a lot of money, fast.

People here say that buildings have to have a Khmer quality, but all they do is make a concrete box and stick some concrete decoration on the outside. Is that supposed to be Khmer?

There's a Korean development outside of town, as we speak: the peninsula is being filled up with sand. It's going to become high rise development. Which

is ok., but again they're doing it in a very unstable way. They're filling the point with river sand and building directly on it. It lies between two rivers that both flood regularly. The land that is being filled is very flat and low-lying. There are some pilings and foundations, but nothing holds the sand together. The trouble is of course: the rivers will still flood and the water will find a way through the sand and underneath the buildings.

Phnom Penh as a city floods, especially with heavy rain. Not the quay, because the French were clever enough to raise it. The riverbank on this side of the city is artificially high. But leave this area and go behind to Norodom Boulevard, you will find a big dip that floods. The Japanese have recently built a huge new drainage system with pumping stations under this pavement that are supposed to deal with flood waters of the town. However, it doesn't work properly.

They should have called some Dutchmen!

Yes, some people with fingers in the dike!

The French were actually terrible at drainage. They did a lot of reclamation here: the market is on a swamp. The roads around the market still flood. The French threw out the village people living around the lake – they are doing exactly the same at the Boeng Kak Lake; they don't change their tactics... - and filled it up with sand.

The filling of the Boeng Kak Lake is I think a big mistake and is going to cause a really big problem: that lake took an enormous quantity of rainwater. Many engineers are predicting that the western part of the city - the part that was serviced by the lake -

will flood badly. It is already happening to the north, in Russei Keo. That was also connected to the lake for drainage; now that's flooding.

Around Phnom Penh the French built a dike of raised earth, to protect the city from floodwaters coming in from low-lying areas around Phnom Penh. Now, a bypass road and housing and shops have been built on that dike. So, the dike has been virtually destroyed. When there are serious floods in the Mekong, not only the rainwater can't come out of the city fast enough but a lot of water will come from behind the city, flooding from the back.

I think, ultimately, the city is not lost, but there have to be huge infrastructure- and water projects that correct all these errors. There is no long-term planning; that's basically the problem.

Is this something that's written about in the newspapers?

When there is a serious flooding it is discussed.

And the government answer usually is: garbage is blocking the drainage system. Or that they are in the process of putting 3 meter drainage pipes instead of the normal 1 meter pipes up. Then the next article says: 3 meter pipes are not nearly sufficient, in years to come we need to install 5 meter pipes. So yes, there is reportage and usually it is quite negative and no answers are given.

The weather pattern in Cambodia is changing too; it is becoming hotter and dryer generally and during the rainy season it gets wetter. The seasons are not as distinct anymore. They used to be very predictable; the rains would come then and stop then. Now it is much more blurred. And the heat, this year is a

record year for hot weather in the world.

This reveals how short-term planning prevails here in Phnom Penh. But let us talk now about the market.

What do you think of the recent developments around Psar Thom Thmei?

Yes! Your markets!

I was a little disappointed with the new fill-in buildings around the market, but compared with what was there before it is far better. The market itself is looking splendid. It's the first real facelift the building has had probably since the sixties. They did some cosmetic work about ten years ago. It made it look better but only for a short time. Then they said it was all right to put up big advertising boarding all over it, until there was an outcry over that and it never happened, fortunately. That would have ruined everything.

It is very loved by the Cambodians. Foreigners love it too, but Cambodians love it a lot.

Phnom Penh has probably ten regional city markets. There's three within ten minutes from each other; Kandal, Chas and Thmei. And then, as you go back through the city, there are some among Monivong Boulevard and then in the west there is more.

Mostly on arterial roads. It is still a Cambodian and Vietnamese custom to go to the market every day in the morning and buy fresh produce, to cook it and eat it that day.

So, the lifestyle, even though we have refrigerators and all that – people have refrigerators –; it's not part of daily existence. People always buy fresh vegetables and meat and fish and cook it straight away.

Psar Thmei was always the most expensive market. It has the symbolic position in the Cambodian mind of quality and expense. Out of all the markets it's the grand and special Psar. If you want imported goods, you would look for it at the Psar Thmei. It has an upmarket quality for Cambodians. Imported electrical goods, the latest DVD or CD; you would get them there. Even household goods are of better quality; you would get more variety to choose from. Psar Thom Thmei means literally the 'new, big market', because it was new compared to Psar Chaa, 'old market'. Historically however, Psar Chaa used to be Psar Kandal, which means 'central'. When the city was first made by the French, the north part of the city was the French Quarter, the area around Wat Phnom. You had Psar Chas and the southern part of the city with the Royal Palace, which was the Cambodian section. In the middle of these two quarters you had some Chinese merchants. The Chinese merchants were running the general businesses.

Psar Chas was actually Psar Kandal, because it was in the middle of all the sections. It separated basically the Cambodian and Chinese section from the French section. But then another market started and was called Psar Kandal; shifting the centre of the city slightly to the Khmer side of things. By this, Psar Kandal became Psar Chas, the 'old market', which made the French market, Psar Thmei, the 'New Market'.

But, to make things more complicated, the French called Psar Thmei *Marché Central*, because of its geographic location in the bigger city. And then we had confusion, (*buckling*) because the

Cambodians called Psar Kandal 'central', the French called Psar Thmei 'central' and the former central market became the old market.

But please, take a look at the cross in the plan of Psar Thmei. I think that was - I don't know whether this is my daydream or not - the cleverest thing the French designer of the market could do. It refers to the crossing of the four rivers: the Upper Mekong, the Lower Mekong, the Tonlé Sap and the Bassac. Why do you put a circle with four arms - the four arms not based on west and east - on a 45 degree angle? I think it's a very subtle play on the four rivers. If it was truly a French design - ; if you look at the 1925 map of Hébrard, it shows the market in the same position, but as a series of square buildings lined up, sitting in a nice little square, aligned north south. And I think here came in the brilliance of the architect Desbois.

Wasn't the building a result of a competition?

Yes, and Desbois won it. He also did the design of the buildings surrounding the market - the lovely square - and he is I believe responsible for the arms and the concept. But before the market was actually built he was pushed aside and Chauchon was put in his place as the engineer. I'd love to know why. Desbois probably got on the wrong side of somebody.

Chauchon was also responsible for the rather fascist building next to Wat Phnom, on the riverfront. That was finished in 1942 I think, so about 5 years after the market. Today it is used by the Development Counsel for Cambodia. It looks like the Palais de Chaillot in Paris.

Chauchon died in bombing in Saigon in 1945, the year the war ended. I don't know what happened to Desbois. He probably left Cambodia and just disappeared. I don't think anyone knows much about Desbois.

I think he made the Cèrcle Sportif here in Phnom Penh.

That's gone. It was demolished for the American embassy. There was a scandal over that too, because the Americans choose that place and the Cèrcle Sportif disappeared. A lot of people said they had no right to take over that prime position and build a sort of fortified castle.

What do you know about the Psars in Battambang and Kompong Cham?

I don't know that much about Kompong Cham. But it looks like a mini combination of Psar Thmei and Battambang. Battambang is very stylish, it's lovely. The Psar in Battambang is almost exactly of the same age as the Psar Thom Thmei.

They have done a lot of work on Battambang, because there was a German heritage group. It is easier to deal with Battambang than to deal with Phnom Penh. (*Reading from the article in the Cambodia Daily addition*) "Psar Nath was built by the same architects responsible for Phnom Penh's Psar Thmei. There is a close family resemblance."

I think it was built around the same year. The architectural group responsible was called S.I.D.E.C.. It built the main markets in Cambodia. I am sure it built the Kompong Cham market, but I don't know the date. I haven't heard someone say a date for

Kompong Cham nor an architect. Both markets look like a mini version of Psar Thmei in Phnom Penh. S.I.D.E.C. was based in Saigon. Many architects, like the famous Hébrard, were based in Hanoi. Actually, you had a Hanoi based design group for Indochina. They were very adaptive, because when they got a good design they would just reformulate it. The Battambang market, the Psar Thmei and the Kompong Cham market were redesigned and handed to S.I.D.E.C. I think.

You know about the famous 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris, in Bois de Vincennes? They produced a huge book for it, called *l'Indochine Moderne, Encyclopedie Administrative Touristique, Artistique et Economique*. The encyclopaedia took everything of colonial Indochina and literally organised it from A to Z. This book lists all the buildings that S.I.D.E.C. had done up until 1931. So it doesn't include your markets, but it tells you what S.I.D.E.C. was doing.

It's interesting that everything went through the central government; not the city government.

Very French of course.

Very French, very bureaucratic. But not only the governmental issues were very centrally organised. The five big colonial hotels of Indochina, like Le Royal in Phnom Penh and the Grand Hotel d'Angkor in Siem Reap were built by a private consortium; a syndicate.

But, let us return to the three markets here in Cambodia. I think their architectural style corresponds to the stage of colonial rule in

which they were built.

Yes, I noticed your remark on that. It's very interesting, this stylistic division between what I would call much more colonial looking architecture with brickwork and then these rather modernist ferroconcrete structures, much more adventurous. It does show in the markets. I guess it shows in smaller buildings as well, but not so many have survived. There are some 30s houses around that would match this in style.

We have seen some in Hanoi in the area around the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum. You can find some very beautiful Art Déco examples there.

I think Hanoi and Saigon were far more focused, architecturally. The French were much more present there and these cities were key cities: Hanoi for government and Saigon for commerce. Phnom Penh was always considered number three. Vientiane was considered number four. That was a definite ranking: if you were a bureaucrat and you were appointed to Vientiane, you were bottom of the list.

If you look at the architecture of Indochina, many of the colonial buildings are Beaux-Arts inspired. But if you for instance look at Morocco, things are completely different. Casablanca is not Beaux-Arts, but Art Déco or Modernist. What could be the reason for that do you think?

I think that architects who came to Indochina absorbed quite a lot of the local style and adapted to it. If you look at Beaux-Arts style it's quite decorative, in my view sometimes a pastiche. Some

colonial villas from an earlier period, 1915, show this pastiche. They were still building that style into the twenties here. Maybe architects reacted on the severity of the climate. Tropical climates maybe encourage a sort of... (*chuckling*)

Certain Vietnamese art is heavily influenced by China. The French would have registered a Chinoise approach. Chinese art is always more decorative; Khmer is not, it is rather plain. Traditional Khmer architecture is made from wood or if you go back to the temples it's made of stone. It's not Chinese in any way. It's rather severe. These are dreadful blanket statements, but you know...

So I think Vietnam has a much more decorative approach in its local style. I think that when the first French architects came they sort of adapted. They were mixing French Beaux-Arts, which is a pastiche of styles anyway, with local decoration. I've seen examples of colonial buildings in Saigon that look like the Chinoiserie gone mad.

There was praise for Hébrard when he did these hotels (*referring to the Hotel Royal and the Grand Hotel d'Angkor*), saying that these hotels were extremely comfortable and airy.

Charlie Chaplin came here on a trip in 1936; the year before the market was finished. He stayed at the Hotel Royal and was interviewed by reporters. However, he also had some criticism: "The city is lovely. I visited the Palace. I visited the Chinese quarter. I've met some of the colonists. But I have some reservations about some of the housing being suitable." He actually said that the comfort of some houses was open to question.

He meant French housing?

Yes. He was talking about French architecture; French colonial architecture. He said that it was just not suitable for this climate. Well, that was reported in the newspaper. Then he said: "O well, the big boulevards are lovely." They reminded him of the Champs Elysées.

He said that he was told in Saigon that he had to camp in a broom closet in Phnom Penh. When he got here, he found Le Royal. He is reported in the newspaper saying how lovely and wonderful the staff are and he was just having a good time. It's interesting to see - he was very diplomatic of course - what nice things he says about Phnom Penh. It obviously surprised him.

About the typology of the market. Dang Nhat Minh, teacher of Architectural History at the University of Architecture in HCMC, told us that the market used to be a collection of little huts on stilts.

The original market here used to be on the ground. Houses were on stilts. People used to just spread out their vegetables and things on the ground. On mats maybe. With Psar Thmei, when the market exceeds the space, the same thing happens again. Some paintings in pagoda's show small nineteenth century shops; something between a market stall and a shop; a booth with a thatched roof and a raised floor.

The French introduction of this new and large typology; is this part of "Le Mise en Valeur" – the wish to exploit the colony – or is it part of

"Le Mission Civilisatrice"?

Hygiene was a big thing in the French colony; it's why they closed the canals, which they originally dug, to serve as a huge flushing system for the city and allowing boats to come into the city and take produce in and out. The reason why Psar Chas is where it is, was that it was alongside the canal. Fresh produce came in on the boats, were unloaded and went straight into the market. Psar Thmei was on the lake, but they filled it, so that was a change of tactics. After twenty or thirty years of these canals fulfilling their function the drainage system became overloaded. And what was seen as the cleansing property of the canal was gone and the canals became unhygienic. That was a big thing; the French decided to fill them all in. So... after digging them all out and extending them they filled them all in. What did that say about mentality...? I don't know...

You suggested that the introduction of the large market had to do with hygiene.

Yes! I think the markets were registered by the French as important, an important part of Cambodian life, and that it was in their best interest to have it as hygienic as possible. Psar Thmei is a wonder. You can walk into that market on a hot day and the air is cold. It can be a 110 degrees outside and all those arms are comfortable; the huge height in the dome sucks air from all over the place, just as the grills in all the wings. It flows with fresh air. Perfect design.

It actually worked even better when it was first built. The Psar used to be a big open skirt. It is all blocked now by external stalls. It was virtually floating.

It was considered hygienic and well ventilated. The French were clever; they built these markets and handed them over - not to the French, the French couldn't run them - but to the Chinese and the Vietnamese. Not the Khmer. The Khmer rented.

Poor Khmer. What were they doing in their own country?

The cities in Cambodia are basically centres of Sino-Khmer populations. Phnom Penh isn't Khmer. If you look around Phnom Penh everyone looks white. When you go into the countryside you see the agricultural Khmer – I am not being nasty – a different type of Khmer people. The immediate area around Psar Thmei is run by Chinese Khmer who have lived here for several generations, mostly selling gold and jewellery. Wealth is concentrated, still, around Psar Thmei. It is the richest business heart of Phnom Penh.

Does this also apply for Kompong Cham and Battambang? Are they also mostly run by Chinese Khmer?

Yes, Battambang is full of Sino-Khmer, with some Thai thrown in. It's the way the economical system works. I do not think Cambodians are being dispossessed; they are working in an agricultural area. They are very important, because otherwise there would be no supplies if they don't sell. But they are not the functional race of the market; the functional race are the Sino-Khmer.

It seems such a harsh division.

Yes, but it is not an issue in Khmer society.

Cambodians don't react like: they're Sino-Khmer, they're Vietnamese.

I thought there was a bit of a problem with the Vietnamese population in Cambodia?

O yes... There is a problem with the Vietnamese and with the Thai. It's not recent, it's centuries old. But that's a neighbour problem. There are border issues.

Do you think the French had any other motives to build a market and rent it out? Maybe to keep everything and everyone in one place?

Very early maps of the Phnom Penh markets show open markets. They have developed into structures. Psar Nath in Battambang exists on early maps as a crossroad of dirt tracks, where people squatted on the ground and sold items. The covered market is the structural answer of where people bought and sold produce.

But if you create such a structure, it's much easier to regulate and tax.

Yes, of course. The French would have gained property tax and things like that. It's also part of the growth of a colonial city. If you start building shophouses and markets and all that, you're putting up an infrastructure. Like police stations and hospitals etc. It's part of the fabric of a colonial city.

We heard from Dang Nhat Minh, lecturer Architectural History in at the University of Architecture of HCMC, that it might also be a way to keep an eye on people. If there was going

to be a revolt, the market would be the place to start.

(Chuckling) I think that's Vietnamese propaganda. Cambodians turned on French tax collectors in the countryside and killed them for exacting too much tax from the local people. But I don't think they plot in the market place. They got them when they went out of the city.

There's a famous incident in the 20s with a French tax collector, called Bardès. He went out with his interpreters to a village somewhere in the Kompong Cham Province. This tax collector and his interpreters were murdered, which resulted in a huge crackdown; the French going paranoid. They feared that this activity would spread to other centres. They went straight to king Sisowath and had these village people punished. The name of the village was changed into something like 'evil beasts' and the villagers were rounded-up and executed. Really horrible.

The village people were just reacting badly to an intolerable situation. Afterwards, this incident was contained and the French sort of loosened up a bit. It never happened again.

There were slight uprisings against the French but I don't think it was ever housed in a market atmosphere. I think the markets were quite free places. For trade, not for treason.

Again about Psar Thmei; I remember reading somewhere that it also sold French goods; did it cater the French public as well?

I guess so. As I told you, it was a modern market; it has always been the premier market. If any French

goods were to be sold, that's where it happened.

Even today, you can buy imported electrical goods and the latest things.

But actually, these produce are no longer in the market, but are becoming specialty shops. Things like telephones and cameras and all moved outside. Inside you still get watches and gold and jewels. But I don't know examples of rich French goods that were being sold, but it did cater to the French market. But the most important part of these markets is that they cater for daily use. They're fresh markets. As well they sell clothing, textiles, fancy goods, kitchen ware, fashion etc., but their principal function for Cambodians is fresh produce.

These fresh produce all come from the other side of the river. It gets boated across from the vegetable farms on the other side. Right on the other side of the Mekong is a huge vegetable area. Everything comes across in the early hours of the morning and transported straight to Psar Thmei.

That's different from Ben Thanh. That market is being catered through other markets.

Of course. Here it goes on the oxcart or car or whatever and is then boated across and moved directly to Psar Thmei.

Do you know what Psar Nath means?

'Nath' means to gather as for a meeting or, in this case to sell; a gathering that becomes a market; a perfect description!

How do you think the markets will change in the near future? What will happen?

I think they are very healthy. The only question at the moment is that some of the markets are getting a little bit unhygienic. But some have already been replaced.

Actually, you should know what Psar Chas and Psar Kandal looked like before the Vietnamese rule in Cambodia. These were wrought iron markets. Beautiful. French. They had big decorative gateways with fan lights. They were probably made by the Eiffel Company. It was however all taken away by the Vietnamese as scrap metal. Both markets were built at the turn of the century. Psar Chas' structure was probably from 1910.

The current Psar Kandal was probably built in the early nineties.

To conclude: the concept of the market, as it is right now, is it sustainable for the near future?

Absolutely. It's part of Cambodian society. If refrigeration and air-conditioning, that have been here since the 60s, hasn't got rid of the markets by now, it never will. It would have done it already. If the market after 40 years is resisting refrigeration it's going to resist it forever.

At the front of Battambang there used to be a bus terminal; a little extension which thereafter used to be a café. The intercity buses arrived there originally. You arrived in Battambang at the market. Kompong Cham is the same. They're busy as anything. They're not dead or creaky, they're very lively.

If you ask a family what mum and dad do for a living, I think you will hear 80% of the time that someone in the family is a seller. Usually the women

in the family. Women control the markets. They rent their spaces, sit there all day and make extra money for the family. The husband is out at a government job or teaching at a school but the wife, because it's easy to have a young child at the market, will sit there. The exceptions are the jewellery and gold sections; perhaps these are more often run by men.



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