

Taxonomies, explanations and solutions to violence in Cambodia

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Background

The Khmer Rouge genocide forces us to reconfigure how we look at trauma, grief and bereavement, PTSD, intergenerational transmission, guilt and responsibility, and transitional justice including reparative measures for victims of Khmer Rouge. How do these Western concepts fit in Cambodia? On the basis of 20 years of clinical and ethnographic research with monks, traditional healers and local communities, we propose that the local religious and healing system makes sense of – and resolves – the aftermath of mass atrocities in Cambodia.

Here is the scene in post-conflict Cambodia. There is an escalating rate of murder, robbery, mayhem, political violence and banditry, higher than most countries in the region (Broadhurst, 2002). One in four women is a victim of **Violence Against Women (VAW)**. There is an escalation of **acid attacks** which maim a woman and isolates her from society. Violent **child abuse including incest and neglect** is common. Children become vulnerable to homelessness or drug use and, to survive, may engage in prostitution; those forced out of school are denied skills needed for future employment, perpetuating the **cycle of poverty**. **Drug use** has increased, 30% are children and on the rise. **Trafficking** of women and child sex tourism is endemic. Violence committed **by children** is said to be on the rise. **Suicide** is lethal violence directed against oneself, and seems on the upsurge, in particular affecting young adults. **Garment workers** are vulnerable to violence and forced drug use. There is a rise in violence committed by **monks**. There is an escalation in **forced evictions and displacements**. Conflict at **national level** has been associated with intimidation; as **interethnic** violence against extremist groups; and at a **global** level, with terrorism.

There is a stereotype that Cambodia is full of violence (Staub, 1989) and a ‘failed state’ (Zasloff, 2002). The consequences for violence lingering on in the here-and-now of not shaking off the Khmer Rouge past are, as Becker (2000) notes, that ‘embodied memories of terror and violence create new meaning and reorder the world, but in doing so they encompass the inexplicable aspects of cultural processes that have allowed the world one lives in to become an unspeakable place, hostile and death-ridden.’ We have been sceptical of any stereotypy of Cambodia as a ‘culture of violence ... a sweeping caricature shot through with Orientalist imaginaries’ (Simon, 2009).

Health and human rights organizations are struggling to make sense of the violence. Most reports are derived from survey research or rapid focus groups, with little room for culture. Allusions to culture tend to pick up ‘essentialist’ norms, e.g. ‘cultural’ studies of domestic violence that focus on cultural factors that ‘cause’ or ‘worsen’ the violence (Bridges, 2008). Seldom do these studies highlight the cultural resources that might encourage victims and perpetrators to change. The rich body of knowledge about Buddhist theories and teachings about violence is largely ignored. Similar questions have arisen in relation to other Southeast Asian Theravadin Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka (Kapferer, 1994). There are warnings that policy makers and planners need to start from a careful picture of the cultural terrain upon which this violence is played out (Surtees, 2003).

Questions

What are the indigenous Buddhist and local theories of cruelty and violence e.g. the legend of Angulimala? What can be learned from media fascination with episodes of violence and murder perpetrated within families? Are people hypersensitive, or numbed? *The myth of PTSD*. What is the taxonomy of mental anguish? How does mental suffering as a result of loss and ‘thinking too much’ show up clinically? What are the local concepts of grief and bereavement, especially in

circumstances of inauspicious death? What traditional ways are there to interpret and cope with catastrophe and mass disaster? ***The régime seen as evil in the spirit world*** -- fear spirits of those who died inauspiciously - How do people cope with the fear of harm by spirits of those who were murdered, especially in the mass murder of the Khmer Rouge period. ***The role of funerals and other ceremonies*** - How are the dead separated from the living? What is the therapeutic role of rituals including the calendrical 'All Souls' (*pchum ben*) for collective grief work and management of survivor guilt, and to fulfil the needs of the *preta*, the spirits of the dead? How might the traditional beliefs affect the attitudes of people to museums and memorials? ***Reliving horror and mass murder*** - what did genocide lead to now as 'repetition compulsion'? - What is the evidence that unresolved violence lives on in contemporary society as a sign of failure to work through the suffering and violence of the Pol Pot years, and how might it be alleviated by Buddhist and other local rituals? How is mass violence and cruelty interpreted?

The approach brings the concept of violence and mass atrocities back to the level where people have to deal with the consequences of it.. **Objective 1: To map violence and mass atrocities and its consequences using local terminologies, descriptions, and taxonomies.** Anyone working with violence in a culturally unfamiliar setting needs to understand the local logic. Discussing these categories of causes brings up ideas as on how the sectors actually deal with these categories. *If the perceived cause of violence is not known, there is no possible step towards effective intervention.* **Objective 2: To document Cambodian 'common sense' or stakeholder perceptions about the causes of violence and mass atrocities.** Armed with the map that of therapeutic options (the Buddhist ritual assistant that restores social bonds and stops domestic violence; the healer that heals a group, the medium that breaks the stranglehold of past violence by the KR), dialogue with all the resources will create its own dynamic and its own response in terms of cross referral and new combinations. **Objective 3: To map the solutions sought – and provided – from the local healing network as well as 'modern' resources such as social services or security forces**

Method

Our design follows WHO's Ecological Model (Krug et al., 2002) which divides violence into three major categories: (1) *self-directed* – we include an examination of suicide (including monk suicide) as lethal violence; (2) *interpersonal* – we examine old and new forms such lovesickness, which may have evolved into acid attack; and (3) *collective* – we examine mass evictions or problems of garment workers. To these three we must add a fourth layer: the population living under the perpetual shadow of potential violence.

Using a snowball strategy, we recruited victims of violence, their families and the perpetrators, as well as those living in the expectation of violence. We recruited in Buddhist pagodas, traditional healing clinics, and the homes of the traditional healers – all are coded already in our database of 1,400 healers. The sample included those affected by different types of violence, e.g., the victims of acid attack. It included those rent by abrupt sometimes violent social change e.g. women who are forced to migrate to urban centres to work in sweat factories, families evicted by developers from their homes. The sample included a cross-section of the community according to the power relationships, social status, and acculturation of each actor.

We discovered how people classify violence (e.g., *kraot*) and the disorders it causes. We map the narratives and experience of violence. We analysed popular, folk, or globalised themes, e.g. reflecting poetics and literature such as the '16 Dreams', and 'Buddha Predictions' (*put tumneay*). We mapped explanations for anger and violence; document attributions for new conditions, new patterns of violence and new approaches to problem-solving; document cognitive maps of impunity (explore narrative of KR survivors co-existing alongside former tormenters), guilt, retribution, responsibility (guardian spirit propels the victim to lethal self-harm), revenge (grudge leading to disproportionate revenge'; acid attack), misfortune (falling astrological configuration, interference by others or sorcery), *karma* ('perpetrators will be punished in the next incarnation'), personal accountability, reconciliation ('if you express remorse ... you lose face and put yourself below the

person you admit you have ... hurt’); traced the logic of violence e.g. sexual abuse (‘If I had raped another man’s daughter in the previous life that father when reborn would rape my daughter in this life,’ or ‘if in a man’s previous incarnation he was an animal, he may not have acquired human morality and commits incest because animals don’t have an incest taboo’).

Solutions sought in local networks. We observed critical incidents e.g. victims seeking help from Western and local healing systems and the impact of these encounters; incorporated in capacity building trajectories to adapt or strengthen healing or care interventions based on the findings from the mapping; and follow up several months post-intervention. **Problem-solving in the face of mass uncertainty and fear:** We explored the behaviour of survivors e.g. dealing with *preta*, the spirits of the dead; seeking ‘substitution rituals’ in forestalling further attacks of violence; why people carry out emergency procedures such as erecting a scarecrow to ward off contagion/violence, or circulating bits of paper to ward off Millennial catastrophe. **If, how and why therapies work (mediate, reinterpret, give meaning to, and mitigate, the effects of violence).** We checked how Buddhist theories e.g. the Three Poisons, are used to treat anger; deciphered the use of stanzas (*gatha*) recited and diagrams (*yantras*) drawn to defend against violence (e.g. ‘cross the triple field of misery, illness and war’) or empowered survivors (e.g. woman scarred by acid) to face life; examine the role of rituals e.g. calendrical ‘All Souls’ (*pcum ben*), for collective management of grief in the wake (or threat) of violence; and verify the value of legends.

Findings

The phenomenon of violence

Linguistic definition

There are at least thirty Khmer terms for anger, and dozens more used in Buddhism. The Buddhist Institute dictionary (Choun Nath, 1967), defined *kəŋ* as ‘trembling or arousing of mind with ‘bad disposition’ which means in Pali *domanassa*, a state of mind ‘due to the disapproving feelings attached to the six doors of the body and mind – the six senses, like the eye, that causes the mind become progressively hotter and hotter’. ‘Anger’ is generally known in Khmer language as កំហឹង *kamhəŋ* derived from ឆឹង *kʰəŋ* or ឆ្លឹង, (‘to be angry; to be erected’). It has been rendered into English as ‘rage, grudge, fury’ as well, for example, យាត់កំហឹង *kʰoat kamhəŋ*, (‘to control one’s anger’); ចងកំហឹង *caəŋ kamhəŋ*, ‘to harbor anger, hold a grudge, stay angry’); ម៉តកំហឹង *bampvək kamhəŋ*, (‘to hold a grudge; to be constantly angry, have a chip on one’s shoulder’); រំលត់រំលាយកំហឹង *rumlvət rumliəy kamhəŋ*, (‘to eliminate anger completely’); លត់កំហឹង *lvət kamhəŋ*, (‘to calm down anger, to curb anger’); អត់កំហឹង *ʔat kamhəŋ*, (‘to control one’s anger’); យកកំហឹងទល់កំហល់ *yvə kaa kamhəŋ tvəl kamhal*, (‘to want to do something badly’). The meaning of the word កំហឹង *kamhəŋ* is equivalent to other words such as ក្រោធ *kraot*, as a noun, (‘anger, fury’), that has originally come from Sanskrit *krodha* ‘anger’, but is normally used in a royal context. Sometimes, it can be observed that a phrase ភ្លើងកំហឹង *pləəŋ kamhəŋ*, literally ‘fire of anger’, is used. ‘Ordinary anger’ can lead to violence, even vengeful killing, at which stage the anger is compared to ‘the boiling over of oil in a hot frying pan’. The intense anger known as ‘*upayassa*’, meaning ‘the extreme wrath’ is comparable to ‘the flame of anxiety and fury in the heart that boil the blood circulating in the body. In everyday Khmer, there are alternative words – ‘កំអាល *kamraol*’, (‘fainting’) or ភាពកំអាល *pʰiep kamraol*, (‘brutality, cruelty, roughness’) and other words such as កំអាលចូល *kamraol cool*, (‘to go berserk’). Violence in Khmer is អំពើហិង្សា *ʔampəə həŋsaa*, (‘អំពើ *ʔampəə*, ‘act, action’ and ហិង្សា *həŋsaa* or ហិង្សា OR ហិង្សា, វិហិង្សា, វិហាសា, ‘fighting, combat, killing, abuse; revenge, malice, spite’.

The meaning of violence

Inbuilt cultural templates to explain and manage social disharmony and violence.

We have identified three clinical syndromes; ‘lovesickness’, ‘magical human interference’ and ‘sorcery’, all of which are markers of social and domestic disharmony and, at the same time, the ritual treatment acts to restore social harmony. People say that the category ‘incompatibility-dissent-opposition’ (*tumnoah*) is the gravest degree of interpersonal conflict and exists between families in the community. The second category is jealousy and envy (*cranaen*), which may exist within and between families. The most popular explanation for magical human intervention was simply ‘they did it’; the term is immediately understood and there is no need to specify *who* is meant by ‘they’, for the person need never be found. Everyone knows who is the victim, who he or she was attacked, what are the characteristic symptoms, and how the condition can be ameliorated by treatment by a monk or healer, such that the person can to some extent be reintegrated into the community.

Violence written into the ‘causes’ of particular disorders

It seemed that someone who had suffered loss after the war, or murder of a loved one, developed ‘madness of the burned brain’ – some went on to lethal violence against the self. A spurned suitor attacked a woman by hiring someone to cast a potentially lethal ‘love charm’. A vengeful person caught in interpersonal conflict hired someone to cast a potentially lethal metaphorical missile that penetrated the victim, who developed ‘madness of magical human interference’ or ‘madness of sorcery’.

- a. ‘Burned brain madness’ is an illness developed by some victims of violence who ‘think too much’ and ‘burn’ the brain; therapy includes the restoration of the four cardinal elements in the brain through ritual means, along with Buddhist sermons e.g. Bandaca and Angulimala.
- b. ‘Madness of ancestral spirit’ affects perpetrators of violence who have trod on the wrong toes, their ancestors who must be propitiated – see too ‘wrong mouth, wrong throat’
- c. ‘Madness of magical human interference’, ‘Lovesick madness’ and ‘Sorcery’ affect people at the wrong end of jealousy involving three parties (a cross-link to the cognitive concept of jealousy), with metaphorical violence exerted through missile attack; therapy consists of magical surgery

Violence and terror belong to a cultural and social logic (Krohn-Hansen, 1997). Here is a snapshot, based on some instances from our preliminary fieldwork, of the kind of logic:

- You are surviving violence that they committed against your family, and now you commit violence against yourself (‘madness of thinking too much’ model)
- You (a sorcerer) committed lethal violence against someone in their previous life, so now their reincarnation commits lethal violence against you
- You (a ‘black magic healer’ or a sorcerer) are hired to commit lethal violence against others
- Your grandfather violated his ancestral code of conduct and played up sexually and got leprosy, his son (your father) inherited syphilis, and this week lots of people who the public health authorities and the media are broadcasting are dying of cholera are actually being attacked by angry ancestral spirits – are you in danger because of your family line? You must hurry to erect the scarecrow to frighten away the violent spirits

The Khmer Rouge and Buddhist logic

The Khmer Rouge twisted Buddhist explanations for horrendous deeds such as murder of a parent. A father might steal a chicken to feed his starving children, and when the Khmer Rouge cadre caught him they would show the child that their father was a thief, and if a child killed their father, they could then say ‘it wasn’t my father, it was the enemy (*kmang*, the term the Khmer Rouge frequently branded someone before execution)’. This reflects the contemporary case of a son murdering his

father because the father took his money, that is, his father didn't have the heart of a father who is supposed to be merciful to their child, he is an enemy. We identified cases where children were affected from their previous life e.g. a mark on the child's skin signalling it had been reborn from the Pol Pot time with a mark of having been bound or tortured. We should explore what explanations such as this might do to a child's behaviour e.g. scenarios in which family and healer believe that children killed during 1975-79 were later reborn and, coming of age, savagely seek revenge.

A man had three daughters. The middle daughter, now aged five, had 'cancer of the tummy' when aged one month. Now she remembers her previous incarnation with her preceding mother.

At that point, the father turned the focus onto his experiences of his previous incarnations. He had been betrayed in his previous life, so now he was filled with vengeance.

He believed – and recalled – that in his previous incarnation he'd studied in Law School and was filled with dreams of academic and career success. But his sister pushed him into an miserable arranged marriage with a girl that he did not learn how to love – and his wife betrayed him. Worse, his ex-wife (in the previous incarnation) put out a contract to have him shot through the left eye. As he lay dying, he vowed that in the next life he would avenge. We learned from him that in fact he had quite school after barely two months, because his teacher too had abused him. Enraged, he avenged by shooting his teacher with two bullets. That's when he joined the army, in 1982, at the height of the Vietnamese-dominated fight against the Khmer Rouge.

He told us that when he had met his 'preceding mother' (he called her literally his mother from his previous life) he clearly recognised her but she could not recognise him as her former son.

The father recounted clearly his recollection of the abuse he had suffered starting as a three-year-old at the hands of his father. He fought back. He was small for his age but he knew what was going on.

He tried to search for his 'preceding mother' from his previous incarnation and met her briefly. He kept trying, even as a senior ranking soldier travelling around the different provinces in search of his elusive 'preceding mother' but she turned him down.

He elaborated upon the way in which his world was divided into 'old stuff' which was dangerous and harmful, versus 'new stuff' which was safe and brought salvation. He had been raised as a Buddhist but some time after the Vietnamese occupation he took on Christianity compared the religious between Buddhism and Christianity in how and why he became a Christian. Nowadays he – actually a former traditional healer - does voluntary work with the a Community Development NGO, an evangelical organisation with a Cambodian mission, to do with credit lending in the village.

We explored the father's experience of his daughter's 'cancer'. He recounted her severe health problems from after the mother's postpartum ritual had been completed a month after the delivery. He showed us the area of depigmented skin on her left flank. He recounted that her skin had reddened then blackened in a spreading pattern.

His child, it seemed, was a Vietnamese from her previous incarnation. Her first words and sentences were in Vietnamese. She sang Vietnamese songs. She liked to watch Vietnamese TV.

Her father dreamt that before his daughter had been born he gone 'gone out' (had sex) with a Vietnamese woman but she was one of several Vietnamese girls who drowned in the river and that she came back as one of the 'ghosts of inauspicious death' who turned into his daughter. Then the father talked about his strong racial prejudice against the Vietnamese whose soldiers, he remembered, had been shooting and killing Cambodians, and raping Cambodian women young and old.

Now, the father told us that his daughter who had had the stomach cancer was fiercely aggressive character since birth. They called her "Youn = Vietnamese". Once, when she was barely a year

old, he had been a bit slow in feeding her on schedule, and she stabbed his hand with a sharp knife. When she was a bit older, she stabbed him in the back.

The father told us how he had heeded the advice of his elders. He had fed his daughters boiled 'chick or duck egg in the nest without a nest (or a shell)' in an effort to induce them to forget their previous lives. His parents had not given him these eggs as they had been too poor. His elders had also told him to threaten them if they dared talk about it. In the end, though, she wouldn't shake it off, and his elders had warned him that she, filled with violence and clearly remembering her previous incarnation, would surely run away from him. He would have wasted all those years of bringing up his child.

Violent children were said to 'remember the previous life' (*cam ciet*). We should observe their responses e.g. do they pity their child, seek help from a healer, or are they unconcerned? It seems that these karmic ideas are extended to explain savagery by children. Popular sayings such as 'the younger brother takes the mother, the older brother takes the child', explained away the child rapist through his previous incarnation.

Angulimala is a Buddhist prototype for violence and mass atrocities.

In the course of our fieldwork since the mid-90s, notably 2002, more monks and healers explain the violence using the Buddhist legend of Angulimala. Here is the story as told by the Buddhist monks, and it matches almost perfectly the legend recorded in the Pali canon (Theragatha, verses 866-91, and Angulimala Sutta in the Majjhima Nikaya):

Angulimala was born in India. At the time of his birth, the weapons in the palace of the king all shone in the dark. The magicians explained a newborn child caused the glittering weapons because he was born under the constellation 'The Robber' and was destined to become a solitary robber. The child was called Ahimsaka that means, 'The Harmless One.' One day, some envious students set him up and his teacher decided to punish him. He told him that he had almost completed his training, but that he had one more task, to kill 1,000 people. This was because he had been born under the Robber constellation, and then he would be free.

Ahimsaka took his weapons and set off into the forest, killing people along the road. To keep count, he would cut a finger from the person's hand and string the finger on a cord. People began to call him Angulimala, the one with the string of bloody fingers. Eventually, his count reached 999. Only one more finger was needed. He left his hut to find his last victim.

The king's soldiers were out hunting Angulimala, and his mother was also searching for him. She wanted to reach him first in order to save him from the soldiers. She was headed in the direction of the forest where Angulimala was lurking, searching for his last victim.

Buddha was staying with his monks, heard a woman crying, and asked her what was wrong. She told him she was the mother of Angulimala and that she must save him from the soldiers who will kill him. The Buddha said that he would find Angulimala and he walked into the woods.

Angulimala was waiting for his next victim. Angulimala shouted that he should stop but the Buddha continued walking. Angulimala ran after the Buddha, so that he could get close enough to hurl his spear. But he couldn't catch up with the Buddha. Gasping for breath, Angulimala stopped. He called, 'How is it you continue walking slowly, and I, running as fast as I can, can never catch you?' The Buddha said to him, 'I have stopped harming people, but you haven't.' Being called Ahimsaka by the Buddha, he returned to his true self. The Buddha told him he could turn to Ahimsaka, and leave Angulimala behind.

The people were amazed. Children heckled the now harmless Ahimsaka. One morning, a group of kids taunted him, throwing stones, daring him to cut off their fingers. Then a magical thing happened. Every stone that was thrown in the city hit not the intended victim but Ahimsaka. Every dagger thrust into the body of a victim in the city pierced Ahimsaka. His body was pierced with knife wounds, spear thrusts, and arrows. In this way, Ahimsaka took upon himself the pain

and punishment of all the victims of the city. In this way, the evil karma he had created found its resolution. Near death and in great pain, he dragged himself back to camp. He was told that all the suffering he had given others is resolved. All the fingers he severed, all the deaths he inflicted, were felt by him. Hearing these words. Ahimsaka at last died, in peace.

The monks were trying to explain that there are some monks who, like the Buddha, have special means to stop violent people from committing further violence. These stories are not confined to the scholars – the average rural villagers, entering the wat, look at the pictures on the walls and they know what they are from the parents and are reminded by the *’acaa*. Also, the old songs are about this – e.g. the famous pre Pol Pot singer Sin Sisamouth sang about Angulimala and about Maha-Moggallii, and there used to be films about them as well.

Such classic Buddhist explanations for horrendous deeds such as murder of a parent were further modified by the Khmer Rouge, who picked up on the Buddhist notion of karmic predestiny. A father might steal a chicken to feed his starving children, and when the Khmer Rouge cadre caught him they would show the child that their father was a thief, and if a child killed their father, they could then say ‘it wasn’t my father, it was the enemy (*kmang*, the term the Khmer Rouge frequently branded someone before execution)’. This reflects the contemporary case of the son murdering his father because the father took his money, that is, his father didn’t have the heart of a father who is supposed to be merciful to their child, he is an enemy.

The sweet tip of anger – a Buddhist take on violence

The rage that leads to revenge attacks by women upon one another is hard to stem. Some monks offer this logic: Women used to know that adultery is punished by going to Hell where the punishment fitted the crime. Today, there are some who fear, but there are others who are like animals – an animal is hungry, it eats, it is thirsty, it drinks. A dog runs after the rabbit that runs and if the rabbit has no bad karma it will run into the forest and the dog doesn’t reach it, whereas if it has bad karma, it won’t seek refuge in the forest, and the dog will bite it. In other words, it’s not the dog. The dog is simply the instrument for the fate of the rabbit. Our karma, like the dog, will pursue us until it catches us and there is no escape. A child does bad to his father, your child will do bad to you. In that sense, the acid burns are like the punishment from Hell has already come in this life.

Violence as a symptom of ‘poison’ in Buddhist terms

We observed the monks’ techniques of anger management, it seemed when treating trauma and loss – and often diagnosed as ‘nerve tubule disorder’—by explaining the Three Poisons, the ‘unwholesome roots’ (*akusala-mula* or *kilesa*) in which people develop (and manage) anger (Leifer, 1999; Loy, 2008; Bubna-Litic, 2009).

Cognitive templates

Hinton noted the roles of rank (*bon sâk*), guns, raw power (*amnach*), and a back (*khâng*) (Hinton, 2005) and described ‘disproportionate revenge’ among Cambodians who are publicly insulted (Hinton, 1998) in which “Drawing on an alternative set of Buddhist norms, they may choose "to block/control [their] hearts" (*tuap chett*) or to "disperse [their] anger" (*rumsay komhoeng*).

One might have anticipated that, with the publicity about acid attacks and the rights of women, that people would change their attitudes towards the perpetrators. Not so. There is a cluster of cases – even as recently as 2009 – in which the victim and her family continue to blame the ‘other woman’ rather than the man who coerced her. It seems to us that the classic popular depictions of impunity in Cambodia have to do with the victims of the Khmer Rouge time coexisting alongside the former tormentors in local village life. The perpetrator acts with impunity, and the rational in the Buddhist view of karma and cause and effect, e.g. ‘perpetrators will be punished in the next incarnation’. Some informants felt that the ECCC was irrelevant as ‘it would all be taken care of in the next life’.

Racism and violence

The newspapers pick up on the prejudice that marital trouble comes from the Vietnamese. In former times, a husband might use expressions such as ‘the curved tail of the dog cannot be forced to straighten out’ to convey that it was impossible to change the character of his wife. This sentiment was taken up by healers who tried to take the spotlight off the Vietnamese (who, according to many people, were believed to be the prostitutes) and onto the prostitute; he cited the old Khmer Rouge saying ‘*kam put sralav, kam pradav srey khooc*’ that is, ‘don’t try to bend the firm tree, don’t give advice to the prostitute’, meaning that a straight tree will always rebound and grow straight, just as a prostitute who has already done wrong many times over and even if she ‘goes straight’ and marries she will never be sexually satisfied with him and will take lovers. We have recorded stereotypes that link domestic violence to national conflict. e.g. Vietnamese prostitutes break Cambodian marriages and bring AIDS to destroy the country from within.

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The Three Poisons (greed, anger, ignorance) as causes of suffering and mental illness

Poison was first identified in Indian sources as *Kleśā* (sanskrit क्लेश) is a term from Indian philosophy and yoga. The original Buddhist term for poison was the *kilesa* (Pali; Sanskrit: klesha) which is also typically translated as ‘adulteration’ or ‘defilement’. These Three Poisons are the ‘unwholesome roots’ (*akusala-mula* or *kilesa*) and lead to mental suffering (*dukkha*). The term was first applied to mental states that caused the person to act vindictively. According to Madden, the term ‘The Three Poisons’ was actually coined by Mahayana Buddhism in East Asia. The phrase refers in Buddhism to the ways in which people develop (and manage) anger (Leifer, 1999). The term also has been linked to forgiveness, to understanding ‘why we love war’ (Loy, 2008), and to humanistic management and corporate social responsibility (Bubna-Litic, 2009)

Sometimes the monks who treated mental suffering caused by trauma and loss – and often diagnosed as ‘nerve tubule disorder’, explained to their patients that they had developed their illness because of ‘The Three Poisons’.

What is interesting is the manner in which each of these states of mind are linked with a form of ‘poison’ and which – through changes for example in the blood, can spread through the body and lead to both physical and mental disorders. Furthermore, the monks, through linking the cause with particular teachings of the Buddha, are able to recite these Suttas to help ease the suffering of the patient.

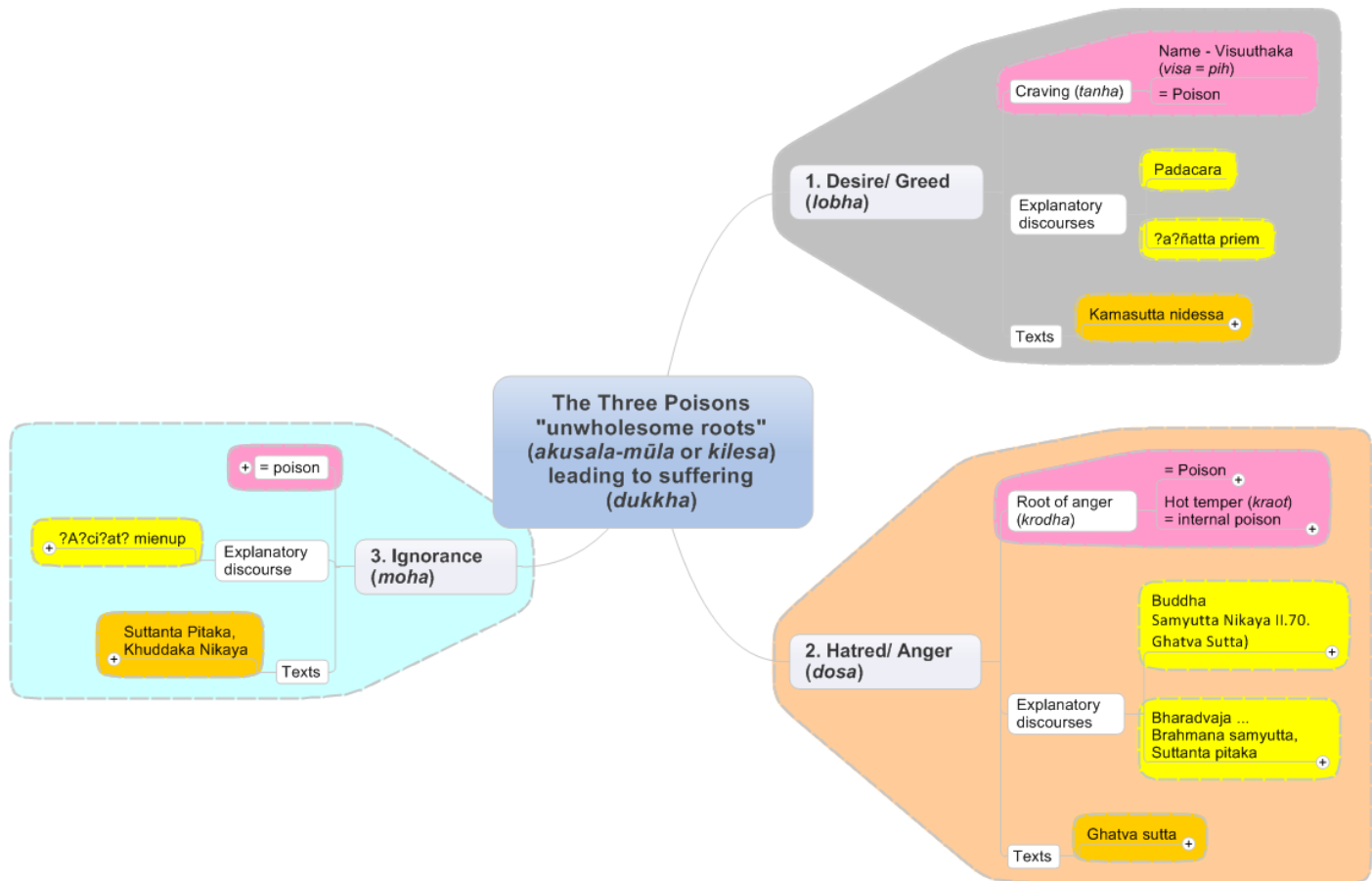


FIGURE 1 THE THREE POISONS THAT LEAD TO SUFFERING

According to the Visuddimagma, each of these three poison roots gives rise to blood of a particular colour which emerges from the brain and is distributed by the blood vessels all over the body. The state of craving leads to red blood, anger and hot temper leads to black blood, and delusion and ignorance leads to blood with variegated colours. As the person moves into health, i.e. appraising the world correctly (known as *sattie*⁰, the blood resembles the creamy colour of jasmine (*ka?ne?kaa*). With the state of intelligence, intellect and reason, the blood develops a clear, pure, uncontaminated clear colour.

Some of monks in Cambodia are familiar with this theory and they preach about it to the people. We have identified six relevant Buddhist Canonical and Commentary texts. These texts can be used for moralising against falling prey to all three variants of bad character and behaviour described above. There are three pairs of Canonical Suttas and extra-Canonical Commentaries. We group those according to the triplet in the Buddhists sources to do with ‘the unwholesome roots’ (*akulasa-mula or kilesa*) that lead to suffering.

Although all three poisons can lead to illness, I shall focus on the second, hatred or anger, known in Khmer as *kraot*, from the Pali *krodha*. (see figure below). It is this understanding of ‘the sweet tip of anger’ – explaining as it does the sense of momentary pleasure derived from hurting others – that makes this condition potentially useful in understanding the current epidemic of violence within families and communities. It may also help to understand what happens to victims who, powerless in the face of violence committed by the more powerful in the society, nevertheless may feel a welling of rage and anger against the perpetrators.

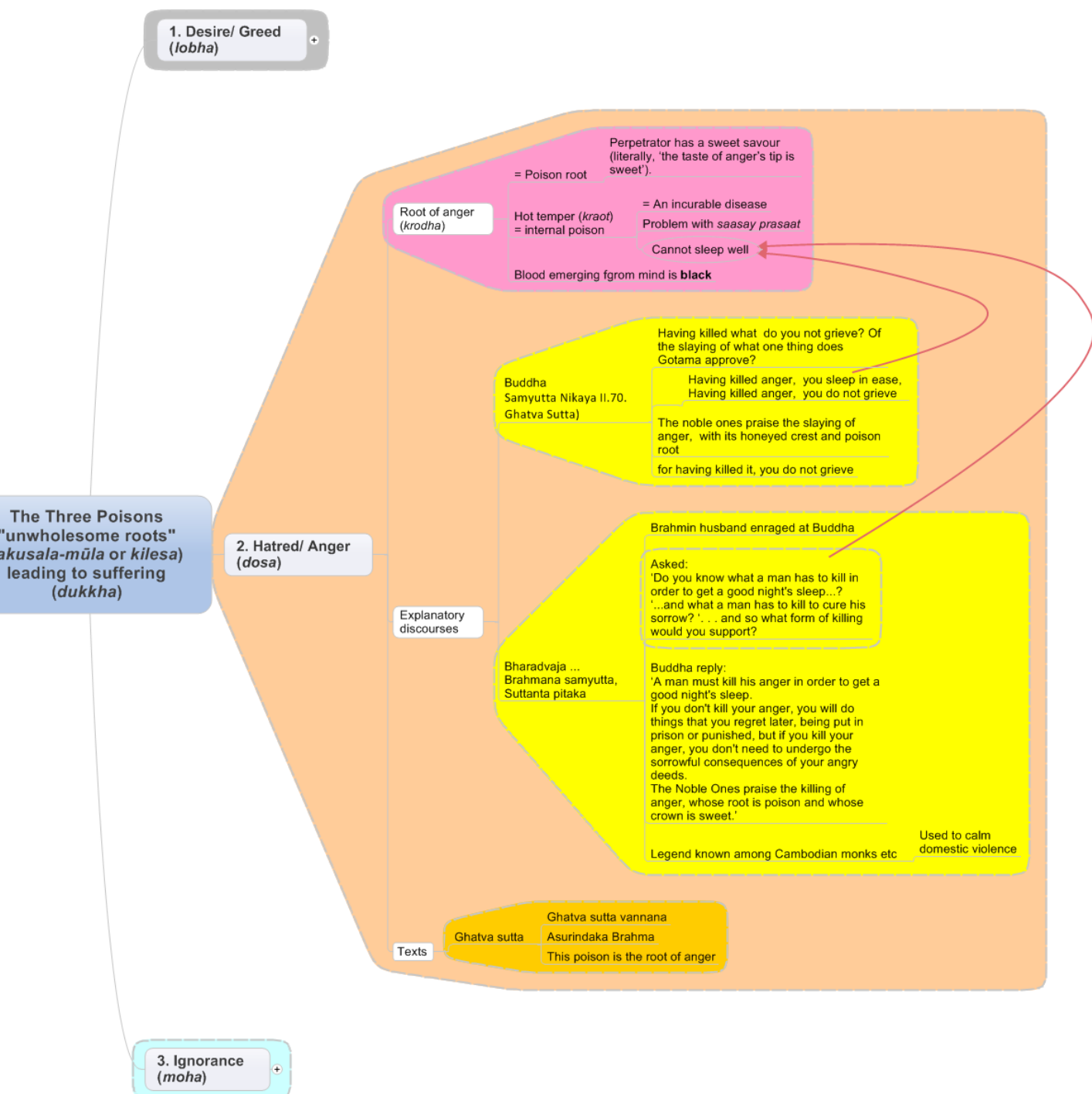


FIGURE 2 HATRED AND RAGE, SHOWING 'THE TASTE OF ANGER'S TIP IS SWEET'

The Canonical sources such as the Ghatva sutta teach that this sort of poison is the root of anger. The Buddha saw anger as the one thing that could and should be killed. Here is one example from the Samyutta Nikaya II.70. Ghatva Sutta - Having Killed:

As she was standing to one side, a devata recited this verse to the Blessed One:
 Having killed what
 do you sleep in ease?
 Having killed what do you not grieve?
 Of the slaying of what one thing does Gotama approve?

[The Buddha:]

Having killed anger
you sleep in ease.
Having killed anger
you do not grieve.
The noble ones praise
the slaying of anger
-- with its honeyed crest
& poison root --
for having killed it
you do not grieve.

The Buddha explained that *kraot* (anger) is a poison within the person's heart because it induced the hot and irritating state which none of us should wish to have.

The post-Canonical Commentary, the Ghatva sutta vannana tells us that the poison is associated with anger which has 'a sweet tip' because the perpetrator derives pleasure and satisfaction through hurting others by jeering and mocking or by retaliation against another to the extent that you might want to kill them. The enraged person can't sleep and, giving vent by hurting and killing, seems to feel a sense of happiness and satisfaction, with not a trace of remorse. The angry person at the end of the day has a sweet savour (literally, 'the taste of anger's tip is sweet') but it leads to mental suffering.

Several monks told us the story of Bharadavaja and his wife in an account straight from the Tripitaka - Kindred Sayings (I, Sagāthā-vagga, Chapter VII, The Brahmin Suttas, 1, Arahats, §1:

The Buddha was staying near Rājagaha, in the Bamboo Grove, at the Squirrels' Feeding ground. The wife of a certain brahmin of the Bhāradvāja family was a fervent Buddhist. The husband called Bharadavaja was a strict Brahmin and had never shown any interest in Buddhism.

One day the husband wanted to hold a feast for all the most high standing Brahmins worshipped as 'arahants' in their religion. He and his wife started their elaborate preparations, but when it came close to the 'big day', because it was the habit of the wife always to exclaim 'Buddho!' whenever something surprised her, her husband appealed to her on the day of the feast not to mention anything about Buddhism. The wife said, 'My mind is unified with the Dhamma, therefore whatever I say will also be Dhamma - there is nothing you can do to stop my mind from being that way!

And what about if I take a sword and cut you into small pieces - will that help you to educate your mind?' Even if you were to make mincemeat of me, said the wife, I could not help myself from having the Dhamma as my refuge!

The husband didn't know what to say. Everything went well until the wife slipped over on a pile of spilled rice. She exclaimed, 'Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa!' and the assembled Brahmins were angered as they had found out that she respected not them but the Buddha. Those who had finished their meal immediately stood up and shouted insults at the couple. Those who had not finished eating overturned every plate of food on the table. They stamped their feet and walked out.

The husband was so angry and thought to go off and kill his wife's teacher - the Buddha. He buckled on his sword and off he went. He shouted rhetorically at the Buddha, 'Do you know what a man has to kill in order to get a good night's sleep...?' The Brahmin thought that putting an end to the Buddha was the only way he could save face and sleep soundly that night. He continued, '...and what a man has to kill to cure his sorrow? . . and so what form of killing would you support?

The Buddha replied, 'A man must kill his anger in order to get a good night's sleep. If you don't kill your anger, you will do things that you regret later, but if you kill your anger, you don't need to undergo the sorrowful consequences of your angry deeds. The Noble Ones praise the killing of

anger [the Sutta uses the Pali term *krodha*], whose root is poison [the Khmer translation of the Buddhist Institute edition is *pih* or poison] and whose crown is sweet [the Sutta from the Khmer uses the term *cong* or tip].’ He meant that the root of anger is poisonous and has suffering as its result, and that the crown is sweet and leads to a strange, twisted satisfaction out of expressing our anger.

The Brahmin was impressed that the Buddha was not angry in response to his anger. He threw away his sword and invited the Buddha to teach him and he was ordained as a monk.

The Buddha neutralises the husband’s venom, showing him the impact of his anger, ‘with its poisoned root and fevered tip, murderously sweet’. The Cambodian meditation monks today advise the people, as in other Theravadin societies: ‘Through the development of vipassanā anger can be slain and through the development of samatha it can be suppressed’ (Boriharnwanaket, 1995).

Someone who builds up or expresses anger may be prone to develop mental symptoms such as insomnia. At another level, the anger could be interpreted as a kind of metaphysical internal poison. At that moment, according to Buddhist theory, his feeling of hot temper was transferred to and heated his blood, changing its colour from red into black. The black blood descends from the brain through the veins to the heart and then is ‘sprayed’ through the vein all over the body. Hence the husband’s poisoned mental state has an impact on his whole body. Taking the analogy between hot temper and internal poison, a popular Cambodian perception is that black blood is poisonous and the person full of poison ‘*pih*’.

The local Khmer term for anger and hot temper is ‘*kroat*’ from Pali *krodha*. It is considered an incurable disease (other than by eliminating one’s anger, as in the story of the Brahmin). It seems that the legend of the Brahmin is well known among Cambodian monks. It is used to calm down or to solve domestic violence and to explain the laymen during sermon by the monk.

The manifestations of violence

Extrapolating from violence of victims and perpetrators, to violence as an ever-present threat

Living among murders and suicides affects the family and community survivors – we found that premature and violent death causes people to fear the worst, often from violent (should we say disproportionate) revenge attacks by the enraged spirits of the dead. In a similar logic, we gained the impression that those living in fear of a potential catastrophic event that would kill them - mass deaths from cholera, for example, as has just happened in Cambodia – behave in ways similar to the survivors of violent death.

Lethal violence against oneself – suicide

Some victims of violence go on to attempt suicide; for example, commercial sex workers (Geurtsen, 2005). We have noticed that in cases of lethal violence involving suicide the family seems to evoke the spirit known as *mrityu?* – associated as a herald of violent death. We explore the linguistic and historical connections of *mrityu?* with a deeper Vedic concept of deities associated with death – and lethal violence. *The community – alerted by the healer to the significance of clinical symptoms – could prevent violence against the self.* The tell-tale ‘black’ face – actually, depressed facies – the fear of leaving the house, the goose bumps, and the listlessness – are give-away signs that family and the village must keep a suicide watch. The monks too are called in to perform the ritual pouring of lustral water. The healer may call the local police to protect the person affected by violence from harming themselves.

Mrityu? is linked with the indigenous explanations of suicide in two ways: *mrityu?* is related to the belief in the presence of at least 19 souls in the body, all required to maintain life. The *mrityu?* spirit sucks out some of these. Someone may inadvertently offend the domain of the guardian spirit, which avenge this slight by commanding the person to kill himself. And the *priey?aaavasae* are

homeless spirits who enter the victim's body in search of a place to lodge – once the nest has been built in the victim's body it cannot be dislodged, and death must follow.

Suicide was viewed by surviving spouses and neighbours as caused by me *promat ta yoev* . (possibly Me= leader; Promat= bile, gallbladder; Ta Yeuv= name of the old man? = bile/ gall bladder problem). The family or neighbours were alerted when they observed the person as headless by day and it was just the shadow that they saw for a moment of time. Such a sign meant that the person was about to hang himself.

We met a couple afflicted that year by great misfortune. One of her sons had suicide by hanging. He had been a student at the local high school. He had taken up with a bad crowd and never heeded his parents' advice. One day he fell ill, icy cold, goose bumps, stabbing abdominal pain, easily startled – and developed the tell-tale 'black face'. The parents took him to Takeo hospital where the doctor diagnosed 'nerve tubule disease' but could offer no treatment. The parents couldn't find him and ran into the forest where they heard the sound of the invisible *kmaoc pramatyiev* ghost crashing and running through the forest, and when they re-emerged to the clearing near the house. Joined by his wife, they ran forward but too late, there was their son already hanged.

The second son, a motor mechanic, also became very sick and he got the symptom (*kdao ñeak*) and too talkative. They knew it was caused by *baarea?m@y yiey mao*. They believed that it possessed him when he failed to prepare an offering for it. Their son had ventured from home to do business at the Thai-Cambodian border, the zone where the *baarea?m@y yiey*. After returning from the malarial highlands and developed fever, lost his memory, and his voice changed and shouted out (i.e. *baarea?mey yiey mao* anger him and demand the offering from the patient).

Their fourth daughter, a garment worker in Phnom Penh, got sick too, shouting loudly, her eyes staring, and the parents believed she had the same illness as their son who had killed himself. The mother thought that this *kmaoc pramat?yOv* had followed her daughter from the factory district in Phnom Penh, enraged that she has decided to rent a house (i.e. the ghost house) near her garment factory. The enraged *kmaoc* followed her to home village. Nothing helped. One medium tried the ceremony to banish the *kmaoc pramat?yOv* but it feared nothing. One monk tried putting up a yantra at the top of the central pole supporting the house, and the daughter became just a little less vicious. So the mother tried the *kruu* in the village, who also tried the ritual to banish the *pramatyiev* and, for good measure, suggested that the family call for help from the police and the chief of this village. First, the police arrived at the house and 'arrested' and shackled her and took her to the fork in the road outside the village. There they fired their weapons many times over her head, and the *kruu* recited the magical to *boh kamroal* i.e. leave her body as shown by the girl momentarily losing consciousness.

Monks who carry out bad actions against themselves or others

The Cambodian press is full of reports of monks accused of pornography, physical violence, murder, or suicide. In late 2009, the Angkor Thom magazine reported this story:

According to the monk's mother he was the second child among her seven children in the family. Once, he became a samaner, ('novice monk') and later was also ordained for five years at Wat Mien in his native village and then he left the monkhood. Some time later, he rejoined the Order and moved to Samrith Jey temple in order to continue his study on the Vinaya Code and vipassanaa kammathan meditation. Now he reached the stage of incineration leaving his mother.

Another 18-year-old monk, Jeam Kim Srieng, said that there had been a noisy period during some new construction at the temple, which somehow had annoyed the incinerated novice monk, who complained that he could not sleep. On the 4th of September, after the monks' lunch, at noon, the

monk went into the hall of the temple and turned on a cassette player on to listen for three hours to a recording of the Buddhist preaching of the High Ranking Doctor Buth Savong.

Early the following morning he came across the scene of the monk incinerated in front of the Buddha's statues.

The monk wrote a suicide note to explain his reasons. He said that he did it because he valued the Triple Gem of Buddhism, he found that life is annihilation, and that there was nothing of his body that could be compared with that of the Buddha. His body was just worthless like the substance of a banana tree, or akin to the body of a character in a drama directed by someone. Any 'being together would end with separation; any separation would end up with reunion; any life would end up with death; any living creature would get old; any sickness would cause death'. In this situation, his absolute determination to attribute his body to the Triple Gem is in response to the Buddha's metaphysical discussion about the truth, (*'paramattha vityie'*). As he declared in his suicide note, with 'tremendous magical devotion' to devote his body to the Triple Gem. He wrote that he did so intentionally and with clear determination. He used the term '*ba?amatth baarea?møy dien*'. This level of devotion, he seemed to feel, could only be performed by a Bodhisattva, that is, he aimed to become fully enlightened, just like the Buddha had done.

Managing the threat of individual or mass violence

Violence targeted in the ritual therapies

Treatments across the board – appeasement, propitiation, substitution rituals, metaphoric surgical excision, and restoration of the balance of body elements – seemed to be linked with the management of violence. The survivor of violent attacks on family was treated by restoring balance to the four essential elements in the brain and psychologically by Buddhist-inspired homilies about the ontology of attachment and loss, and anger. The woman attacked by a love-charm, or the recipient of jealous rage, were treated by metaphorical surgical excision of the missile cast on behalf of the assailant. The man who had perpetrated violence on his neighbours and thereby violated his ancestral spirits was treated by propitiation of his ancestral spirits - the formerly bad man became a sick man and finally a cured man; his neighbours accepted him, and social harmony was strengthened. Community members suspicious of a marginal man would take the law into their hands and, declaring him to be a sorcerer, murder him. Even monks and healers were not immune – a monk who violated the Vinaya code developed 'madness of the dhamma', a healer who violated his 'former master's code of conduct' fell mad with 'wrong healer'.

Cultural architecture of violence

We began to see some elements of a language and grammar for violence old and new; for example, the Buddhist term such as 'hengsa'; the homilies used in therapy alluding to Buddhist figures such as Angulimala and Bandacara.

The meaning of 'prediction' and puzzle codes in the face of mass disaster or catastrophe

Puzzle codes and predicting the future as a way to combat helplessness and regain hope. Westerners might misinterpret the Cambodian word *tiey* as 'prediction' and *kruu tiey* as 'a fortune teller'. We saw in our fieldwork numerous examples of those who suffered ill-health or poverty and for whom the 'fortune teller' was not simply to promise that everything is going to be okay, but instead, to offer an explanatory model to help her come to terms with what had and was happening, and to come into contact with the dead and help overcome unresolved grief reactions extending back to the Khmer Rouge times.

These ways of logic are deeply embedded. Here is a domestic example: the husband goes out to collect honey comb. Apart from the danger of being stung by the hive, maybe the honey is the property of the guardian spirit of the tree bearing the hive, not to be expropriated by the human. Even

if he did remember to seek permission, he faced further hazards. People know of the dance and song to solicit the spirits before harvesting the cardamom, or wax; he should not utter wrong words for example, the words ‘tiger’ or ‘elephant’ because, by sympathetic magic, the jungle beast will magically appear and trammel the husband. Or, scaling the trunk to reach the hive, he might slip on an insecure stave; a wild jungle spirit masquerading as a human messenger, even announcing his name as someone known to the husband, calls up: ‘Oh, I’ve come to summons you, your wife is about to have your baby, come home now!’ and when he descends, the messenger, in fact a tiger, devours him.

Dreams are a code to help the person who dreamt to manage uncertainty and cope with stress. We need to differentiate the local content of predictions of dreams and other folk and popular stories versus those described in the Buddhist texts.

During the 1970s

Here is an example of a fragment of popular phrase that used to be passed from parent to child, and when people got together in the Buddhist temple, for some several generations in Cambodia:

The rays of the moon will cross the road [hear the term *clong* is used to depict the crossing]]
The son was born before his father
The son strolls carrying his grandfather on his hip

With the post-conflict era, parents began to feel challenged by their children’s new style, and retorted with the above saying, to place their children in their place. This prediction gives voice to a scenario that is out of the ordinary logic. A son is never born before his own father. A little boy cannot stroll down the road carrying his own grandfather. These are biological impossibilities as far as ordinary life of an ordinary person is concerned. But there is more. The life of ordinary people in traditional thinking in Cambodia is embodied in the Parent-Teacher-King triple layer. We can note the conflict that was potentially existing in terms of the succession of the kings of the line of Ang Duong, back from the time of King Norodom I, through King Sisovath, and which at that point she would have passed to Norodom II as the sign of the other branch of the family, but which in fact passed to the young Sihanouk who was the son of the paternal branch. In the end, when King Sihanouk decided to abdicate in 1955, he gave the throne to his own father King Suramarit. And the prediction came true one hundred percent. The ordinary people believed in the “Three Fields” prediction more than ever

During the 1970s

The Millenarian narrative had another resurgence during and since the Khmer Rouge regime. Survivors trying to make sense of the national destruction turned to the *tumneay* texts, which were back in wide circulation not only in Cambodia but in Cambodian diaspora communities.

In Cambodia these dreams, along with the others in the series, are believed to reflect precisely what took place during Khmer Rouge.: the disruption of the parent-teacher-king and person-nation-kingdom structures. During that time, the low-born became collectively the Angkar, the faceless top layer of society. This toppling of the old hierarchy was “Democratic” Kampuchea. The prediction depicted what happened before 1975: the illiterate peasantry assumed power.

The events which took place during Khmer Rouge are linked with Put *tumneay* and the interpretation on the three kappas, The older generation in particular often talked about the Khmer Rouge time and told their younger generation by raising phrase that is an astrological result by the Buddha. The phrase is ‘there are houses but nobody lives in, there are paths but nobody walks, there are stairs but nobody steps on’. This event happened in Khmer Rouge time while people were exiled from towns; nobody lived in the house, nobody walked along the road or went up stair. This event is also called ‘the country faces with calamity’ (*srok koet kalayu?*k) or the field of war that many people died.

Here is an example of a fragment of popular phrase that used to be passed from parent to child, and when people got together in the Buddhist temple, for some several generations in Cambodia:

The rays of the moon will cross the road [hear the term *clong* is used to depict the crossing]]
The son was born before his father
The son strolls carrying his grandfather on his hip

With the capitalism of the 1990s, parents began to feel challenged by their children's new style, and retorted in vain with the above to restore the status quo, that the parent knows best. This prediction gives voice to a scenario that is out of the ordinary logic. A son is never born before his own father. A little boy cannot stroll down the road carrying his own grandfather. These are biological impossibilities as far as ordinary life of an ordinary person is concerned.

But there is more. The life of ordinary people in traditional thinking in Cambodia is embodied in the Parent-Teacher-King triple layer. Consider what might be going on in this prediction at the level of royalty. We can note the brewing conflict about succession of the kings of the line of Ang Duong, back from the time of King Norodom I, through King Sisovath, and which at that point it would have passed to Norodom II as the sign of the other branch of the family, but which in fact passed to the young Sihanouk who was the son of the paternal branch. In the end, when King Sihanouk decided to abdicate in 1955, he gave the throne to his own father King Suramarit. And the prediction came true one hundred percent. The ordinary people believed in the "Three Fields" prediction more than ever.

Kaylanee Mam (Mam, 2006) at Yale University tells of a monk fleeing Cambodia for the Thai border on the morning of 17 April 1975. The monk told the bystanders along the way that the 500 Thieves, a popular story that foretold that bandits would come and 'would reverse the order of Cambodian society, turn life completely upside down, and halt all time for a period of years'.

During the 1990s

We came across accounts of elderly women dressed in white who wandered from house to house circulating a leaf of text entitled 'Lord Buddha's Speech of Hermit Mu?nea?isi Phnom Kulen'. The bit of paper said:

On the full-moon day, there will be two moons in this year in the north-western direction and there will be various types of epidemic diseases or causing sudden death.

From the full-moon day of the 9th month to the 9th day of the 10th month, there will be many corpses and, soon after, there will be an outbreak of headache, diseases of the bowels, liver, stomach, uterus, and heart. There will be meningitis, and pains migrating all over the body. There will be strange diseases. Some will die, others will suffer uncountable diseases. Preah Mu?nea?isi said that it is so distressing.

So, I wish all human beings to gain merit, to donate charity, to observe Buddhist precepts. Please pass on this information from one to another so that they would know about this and copy and then hand them out for everybody. If each writes 10 or even 20 copies, they will have more merit. If 30 copies, their children and grand-children will be healthy and safe, or they might win a big-prize lottery or gain rank as an official. Beware, if you sell the copies to make profit, you will encounter danger. The hermit's Buddha prediction advises that at night time, if someone knocks on the door, please do not answer because there are evil spirits outside which know your names.

It is predicted that in the 10th month a huge number of people will die; the rooster won't crow; and dogs won't bark because they will see ghosts standing in lines along the roads.

In that month a person with merit and magical power will descend from the heaven to rescue human beings, those who adhere to the moral precepts and practise concentration meditation.

On the 25th and the 26th of the 10th month, those travelling past water along a distant road will be eaten by a huge fish which will have transformed itself into a human. Buddha advises that on the 29th of the 10th month, one should not drink rain water as it would provoke abdominal pain and immediate death.

Men or women, when you have seen this dharma, please pass on the information of the dharma and then you will earn a lot of merits indeed.

The leaf states that the world will be destroyed by fire (*pleung che?h kaal*), and that all humans will face the Three Fields and many will die. During those days many felt the same sort of fear of war as they had previously experienced during the 1970s and 1980s, and they avidly followed these prophecies. We identified cases where the predictions were used either by the healers - paying attention both to kruu as such and also to Buddhist monks in their own right --- or by the patients to help deal with life situation, whether that life situation was a problem of lovesickness, or handling famine or starvation, or handling some other conflict situation, or having a particular disease. Cambodians, certainly in rural areas, took these bits of paper very seriously indeed.

The Buddhist sources depict cosmic epochs, or *kalpas*, when it is believed that social violence will be at its worst. Anne Hansen (Hansen, 2008) summarises:

‘The cycles were associated with the dissemination, practice and decline of the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddhas on ‘what is right’, and also with the generation, degeneration, destruction and rebirth of the universe itself. The kalpa itself is then subdivided into periods of decline and degeneration of the Dhamma and periods of moral regeneration and prosperity. At some points in the cycle, the knowledge of the Dhamma is lost, violence is at its worst, human life span is reduced to ten years, and even parents and children are unable to recognize one another. It is then that a righteous ruler may appear to restore justice and the teaching of the Dhamma, and the whole cycle begins anew. At the very end of the kalpa, however, the world fills with fire, water, and ice, and the world dies off. It is then gradually reborn’.

Bits of paper going around

In 1994, we received these stanzas from a healer in Siem Reap province. He said that the stanza was derived from twelve Sanskrit words and was made by Maha Ghosanda in the United States, from which it came to Cambodia.

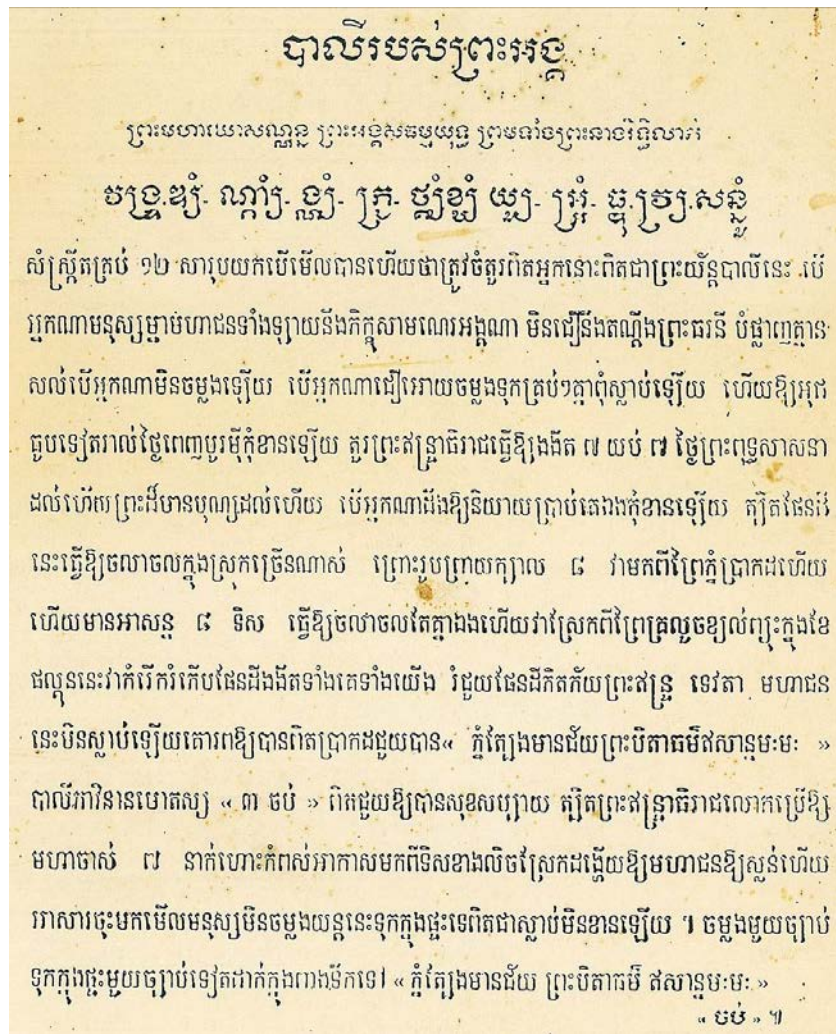


FIGURE 3 BIT OF PAPER DERIVED FROM HEALER IN CAMBODIA AND SAID TO HAVE BEEN STARTED IN CIRCULATION BY THE LATE MAHA GHOSSANANDA

The paper says:

If someone could properly read these twelve syllables written in Sanskrit, it would be good. But if not, or people didn't believe, didn't copy the information contained herein, the earth would destroy that person [the formal term *preah t^hɔwreaⁿnii~t^hɔw(r)nii* was used].

If someone believed in this stanza and copied and shared with one another and burned incense stick each full moon day, they would not die.

Indra would make the earth dark seven days and nights, [indicating that what was predicted by the Buddha had already come to pass]

The fifth Buddha, the meritorious one, has arrived

If you know the information, please pass it around to everyone. You have to do so.

The earth would be cause severe chaos because many eight-headed spirits would emerge from the forests-mouttains and would cause calamity in all eight cardinal directions.

The people would be in utter chaos and crisis. The eight-headed spirits shouted from the forest with a very shrill and high-pitched voice [characteristic of those spirits].

In the fourth month of the lunar calendar, February-March (ឆ្នុន *p^halkun*) there will be a storm leading to a tremor or earthquake, then the countries all around the world, as well as in our country (Cambodia) would plunge into darkness.

The earthquake would strike terror into Indra, the other devas, and all citizens, but if you really believe these stanzas, then you won't die – none of you, the Indra, the devas, or the citizens.

This Great Dhamma stanza comes from Mount Tbheng Meanchey of the north-east.

Oh [Brahmanic deity], Oh come [*mea?mea?*] and we should meditate and recite the stanza of the *nea? moo ta sa?* three times. By listening, or by copying these stanzas, you would be fine because the King Indra ordered 'seven old people' [who have accumulated merit] fly so high from the west and shout out to terrify all those who failed to copy this Pali stanza and store it in their house. Those who failed to do so would surely die.

Each person should keep a copy of the stanza in their house, and place a second copy in the large water storage jar.

We were told that such bits of paper could save the people from being *loophea?*, *toosa?* and *mohaa?* and promote health and community harmony. The forest monk urged everyone to copy and distribute these four pictures. This female devotee told us that she her copies on the shelf as it immunised her against the Three Fields and Four Depths. Other people might place their copies in the house or on the dashboard of their motor cars.

Correlating the dreams of people with The 16 Dreams of the Jataka - an early Buddhist account of the aetiology of suffering and mental disorders

We took as a starting point the story of King Pasanedi's dreams.

Kosala was an ancient Indian Kingdom in the 6th Century BCE, in the region of present-day Uttar Pradesh state in India. The Buddha was a Kosalan. The Mahasupina Jataka relates sixteen upsetting dreams which King Pasanedi (Prasenajit) had one night. The king summoned his Brahmin advisors to interpret them and to prevent the evil they seemed to portend. The Brahmins forecast disaster unless the king ordered a great sacrifice of living animals. The Brahmanism of that day often involved bloody sacrifices, which meant feasting and increased wealth for the greedy Brahmins. But first Queen Mallika urged her husband to consult with the Buddha and to learn the true significance of his dreams. Upon hearing the dreams, the Buddha reassured the king that he had nothing to fear. The Buddha explained that these dreams described a future time when rulers would be dishonest, avaricious, and wicked. Since King Pasanedi himself had nothing to fear from the dreams, there was no need to slaughter any animals. This is repeated on page 8 In this instance, as in many others, Buddha prevented bloodshed and taught the value of the non-harming of living beings (Francis and Thomas, Davids and Davids).

We confirmed that contemporary Buddhist scholars have linked this theme with modern-day repression in Asia and Southeast Asia. Various disasters and calamities were foretold in Japan based on the sutras when a land turns its back on the correct teaching (Daishonin, 2007). Kawasaki and Kawasaki (2010) note that in Myanmar, depictions of Mahasupina Jataka became popular after the 1962 military coup, when huge painted panels were commissioned by pious believers and hung in temples, an expression of the frustration ordinary Burmese Buddhists felt about the dictatorship. In Cambodia, a recent autobiography of the author's life under the Khmer Rouge is entitled 'When Broken Glass Floats' (Him, 2000). So through work such as this the Buddhist beliefs has shifted to the level of popular consciousness/belief

The Buddhist canon has for more than two millennia provided a ready-made source of astrological prediction. At a more popular level of problem-solving, the Mahasupina Jataka is even cited as a cost free source on a range of websites (Sharma, 2010).

We could have chosen any dream as an example, but here is dream 13 of the Mahasupina Jataka including its interpretation and "prediction" by the Buddha:

Then the king described what he saw. In dream 13 he said: "I saw huge blocks of solid rock, as big as houses, floating like dried gourds upon the waters. What shall come of it?"

This dream also will not come to pass until those times of which I have spoken. At that time unrighteous kings will show honour to the low-born, who will become great lords, while the true nobles will fade into obscurity. The nobles will receive no respect, while the ignorant upstarts will be granted all honours. In the king's court and in the law courts, the words of the nobles, learned in the law, will drift idly by like those solid rocks. They will not penetrate deep into the hearts of men. When the wise speak, the ignorant will merely laugh them to scorn, saying 'What is it these fellows are saying?' In the assemblies of monks as well, people will not respect the excellent monks. Their words will not sink deep, but will drift idly by, the same as the rocks floating on the water. However, you have nothing to fear from this.

Are they the basis for *put tumneiy* documents that map what happened during the reign of the Khmer Rouge: the disruption of the parent-teacher-king and person-nation-kingdom structures. During that time, the low-born became collectively the Angkar, the faceless top layer of society. This toppling of the old hierarchy was Democratic Kampuchea. Remarkably, the prediction depicts just how the lowborn stands for the illiterate peasantry who assumed power and who took for themselves royal titles and also bestowed lower royal titles on those who would buy them. It seemed that at least some of the Cambodian populace during the 1990s were fearful of the future. Would there be another civil war? Could the Khmer Rouge come back to power? Would peaceful protestors be gunned down in the streets – as happened in 1997? Would people seriously be reassured by the voice of the border in the last sentence saying to them: "don't worry, the bad things won't happen again".

Yantra of the 'Three Fields' (of illness, poverty, and war)

A powerful depiction of the Three Fields is through the yantra drawn of them, as cosmic maps in which the Buddhist elements are embedded to combat the calamities predicted.

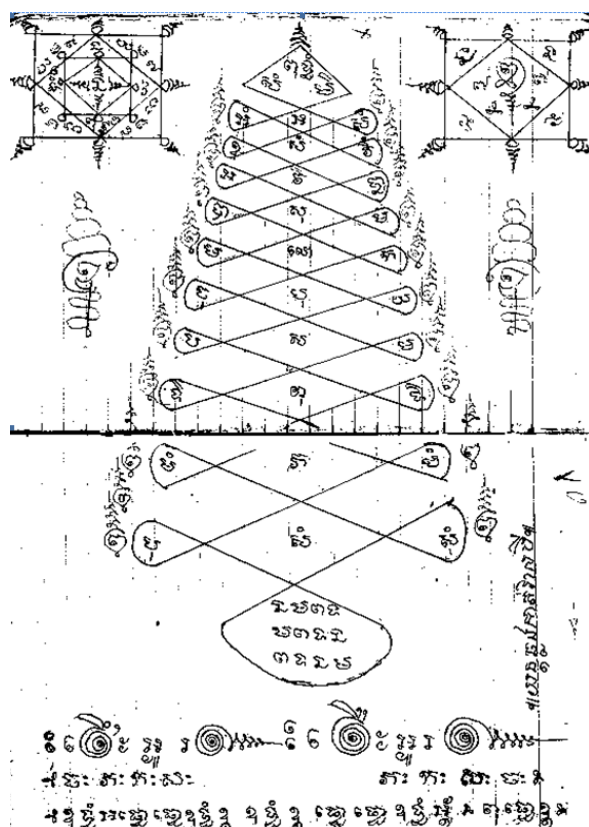


FIGURE 4 YANTRA OF THE THREE FIELDS

Here is an example of a stanza recited by the healer and anchored in the magical Pali letters inscribed in the diagram of the yantra.

‘The Buddha, and the person who has arrived at the state of worthiness or Arahatsip, our country has befallen war,

Oh Buddha help us, I have planted three Bodhi trees but they have not yet ripened [into their full magical power]
Oh Buddha help us, please help us to cross the three vast plains.
The [three] huge plains that break the mirage
and [the three] wide plains, of which there is dearth of anything wider,
oh, please help us to manage to cross the three vast fields,
help us to encounter the renowned one with merit who can bring an end to it.”

This yantra can be used to protect as well as to heal some types of illnesses based on the Buddha’s metaphysics of the balance of the body elements.

Violence targeted in the ritual therapies

Treatments across the board – appeasement, propitiation, substitution rituals, metaphoric surgical excision, and restoration of the balance of body elements – seemed to be linked with the management of violence. The survivor of violent attacks on family was treated by restoring balance to the four essential elements in the brain and psychologically by Buddhist-inspired homilies about the ontology of attachment and loss, and anger. The woman attacked by a love-charm, or the recipient of jealous rage, were treated by metaphorical surgical excision of the missile cast on behalf of the assailant. The man who had perpetrated violence on his neighbours and thereby violated his ancestral spirits was treated by propitiation of his ancestral spirits - the formerly bad man became a sick man and finally a cured man; his neighbours accepted him, and social harmony was strengthened. Community members suspicious of a marginal man would take the law into their hands and, declaring him to be a sorcerer, murder him. Even monks and healers were not immune – a monk who violated the Vinaya code developed ‘madness of the dhamma’, a healer who violated his ‘former master’s code of conduct’ fell mad with ‘wrong healer’.

Extrapolating from violence of victims and perpetrators, to violence as an ever-present threat

Living among murders and suicides affects the family and community survivors – we found that premature and violent death causes people to fear the worst, often from violent (should we say disproportionate) revenge attacks by the enraged spirits of the dead. We are interested in one of those, the disembodied *mrityu*? that commands the survivor to kill themselves. In a similar logic, we gained the impression that those living in fear of a potential catastrophic event that would kill them - mass deaths from cholera, for example, as has just happened in Cambodia – behave in ways similar to the survivors of violent death.

Social change

It seemed that people affected by violence – ‘acid attack’; community violence, the dross of society being swept into jobs as beer girls or garment workers, and families forcibly evicted, swept into the streets – shaped their old ways of understanding the causes of violence to the new scene (‘lovesickness’, for example, come to be expressed as ‘acid attack’).

Discussion

It seemed that people affected by violence – ‘acid attack’; community violence, being swept into jobs as beer girls or garment workers, and families forcibly evicted– shaped their old ways of understanding the causes of violence to the new scene (‘lovesickness’, for example, come to be expressed as ‘acid attack’).

We suspect that acid attack might share a foundation with the erstwhile ‘lovesickness’, in which people sought help from traditional healers to induce *snae* to defeat rivals in love or to cope with having been spurned. *Snae* would not necessarily destroy the victim and as an indirect act it does not cool down the ‘hot temper’ of the perpetrator, whereas acid attack or razor attack is a direct act which wrecks the victim in an instant, and the perpetrator is pleased. The love charm maker is a direct perpetrator and the person who asks for the love charm the indirect perpetrator.

The actions of spirits, e.g., the indigenous explanations of certain instances of violence as caused by the actions of malevolent spirits. The violence to oneself or to others in contemporary village life continued to be attributed by the community – with the validation of the traditional healer – to the actions of invading spirits, or to ‘magical human intervention’ (*?ampee*) caused by a jealous or wronged neighbour casting a missile into the body of the aggressor. In this way, the violent person, rather than being stigmatised as an aggressor, could be viewed as a victim.

In Cambodia, the same cultural templates guide aggression and violence in both the spirit and the human realms. The reactions to the threat of the spirits, political violence, acid attacks, etc., have the same logical underpinnings. We think that the malevolence of the vengeful spirits, mirrors the savagery of violent men (and women); those spirits were once men, they witnessed violence, were victims of it (or the perpetrated). In a Buddhist cosmological system, it is inevitable that this template of violence will connect the world from before with the world of the living now. Therefore, to understand violence in Cambodia, we need to consider the spirit as well as the world of the living and the way in which the two interact.

A proposed model of therapies for anger and violence

Contemporary Western therapies are shown in grey, lower left. There are three targets (in yellow), victim (e.g. post acid attack), perpetrator, and potential victim (e.g. garment worker or person in zone of epidemic). The mauve circle on left shows cosmic solutions to managing uncertainty and looming violence. The orange circle in the centre shows the methods related to Buddhist psychotherapy. The pink circle to the right shows methods used for what ‘anger management’. The trail begins with terms analysed by Hinton, leading to a decision point. If the person has power to act, lower right branch shows possible outcomes of potentially lethal violence against another – (1) intervention by patron; (3) classical or traditional form of violence e.g. sorcery, ‘magical human intervention’ or ‘love charm; (3) a contemporary path e.g. acid attack. If no, upper right branch shows effect of burying the grudge inside oneself, leading to potentially lethal violence against the self. These paths are interrupted by Buddhist teaching schools (saffron) and by healing interventions such as substitution ritual or metaphoric surgery (depicted in green) as are mantras recited and yantras drawn.

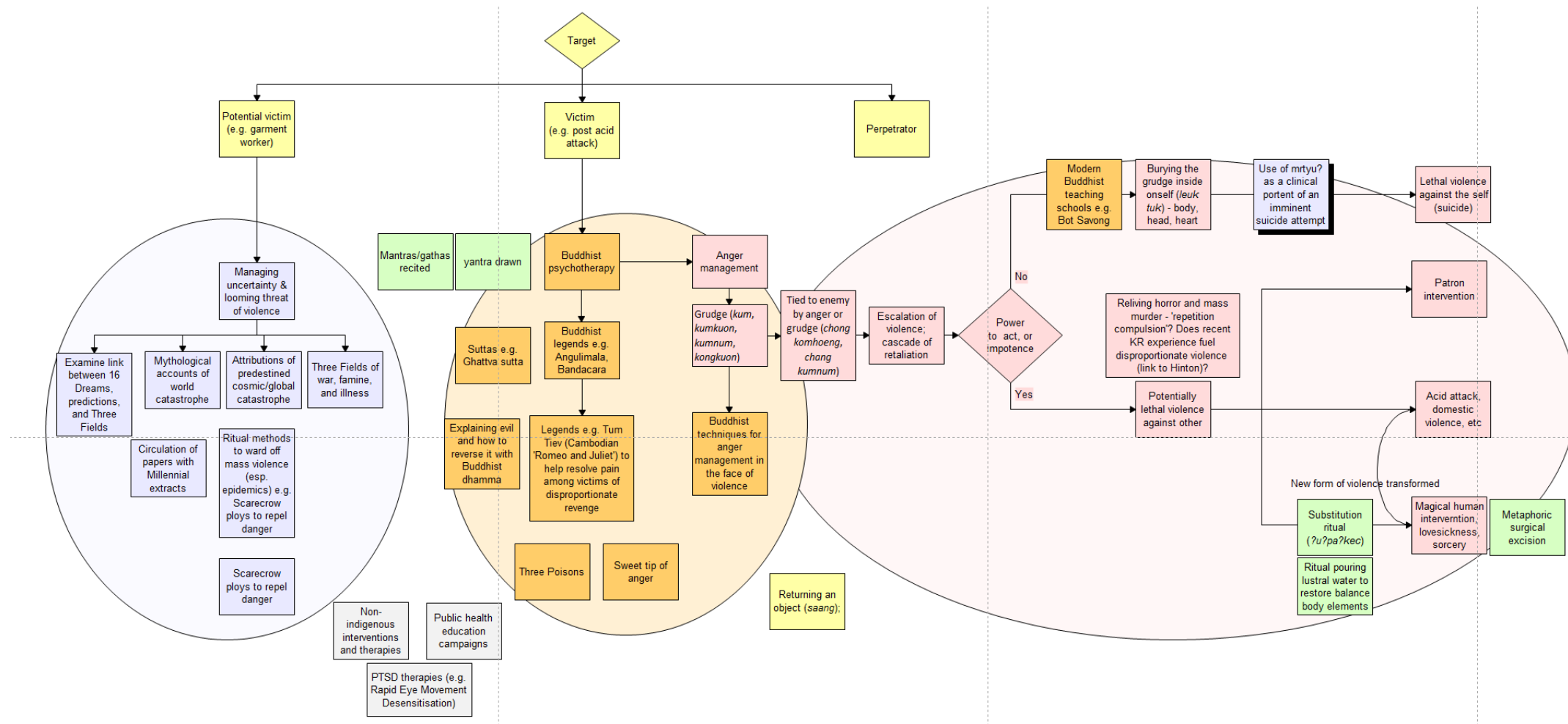


FIGURE 5 PROPOSED MODEL OF THERAPIES FOR ANGER AND VIOLENCE. CONTEMPORARY WESTERN THERAPIES ARE SHOWN IN GREY, LOWER LEFT. THERE ARE THREE TARGETS (IN YELLOW), VICTIM (E.G. POST ACID ATTACK), PERPETRATOR, AND POTENTIAL VICTIM (E.G. GARMENT WORKER OR PERSON IN ZONE OF EPIDEMIC). THE MAUVE CIRCLE ON LEFT SHOWS COSMIC SOLUTIONS TO MANAGING UNCERTAINTY AND LOOMING VIOLENCE. THE ORANGE CIRCLE IN THE CENTRE SHOWS THE METHODS RELATED TO BUDDHIST PSYCHOTHERAPY. THE PINK CIRCLE TO THE RIGHT SHOWS METHODS USED FOR WHAT ‘ANGER MANAGEMENT’.

Traumatology: After decades of international interest in the violent history of Cambodia there is still no common ground in understanding and addressing the violence. The results critically analyse the relationship between violence, past trauma, and remembering through the rituals of healing. We also need to know whether our interventions for trauma may be doing more harm than good; the ‘trauma industry’ may create a ‘new trauma’ where NGOs exert political/social control – in particular if the interventions are culturally incompetent.

Buddhism for healing: The results show how Buddhist meta-theories about anger management might be utilised e.g. how to harness the ‘Three Poisons’ are unknown to busy trauma therapists in post-conflict settings.

Cambodian society has a culturally inbuilt method for helping, and – while it is obvious that culture is constantly changing and we should not romanticise ‘the world we have lost’ – the Western theories of ‘bereavement and grief work’ and the ‘PTSD industry’ would become more effective by harnessing and revitalising rather than replacing this irreplaceable cultural capital. We propose that the traditional healing sector and Buddhist pagodas offer valuable cultural resources which for a significant proportion of the population re-arms the afflicted individuals and their families through:

- Grounding their predicament in familiar explanatory models, and terms which they were able to use to make sense of violence
- Dealing with uncertainty about security and the reversal of proper hierarchical relations. For example, the Buddhist sources depict cosmic epochs, or *kalpas*, when it is believed that social violence will be at its worst (Hansen, 2008; Siddhattho, 1952). The Millenarian narrative had another resurgence during and since the Khmer Rouge regime (Mam, 2006). Survivors trying to make sense of the national destruction turned to the *tumneay* texts. (Ledgerwood, 2010) which explained the violence in terms of reversals in the proper hierarchical order of social relations (Smith, 1989)
- Maintaining community cohesiveness and combat social disintegration and the loss of bonds between people living in the climate of violence
- Managing the continuing threats to survivors of lethal violence by spirits . and dealing with menacing spirits after inauspicious death, for example, how the *preta*, the spirits of the dead, attack survivors
- Kent (2008) describes the fears of Cambodian informants at ‘power escaping the regulation of the sel/sima/robe symbolic complex’ and argues ‘that under these cultural circumstances Khmer imagine their universe and identity to be dissolving. Both security and legitimacy would seem to be at risk’. Traditional rituals ease conflict resolution (1999). Popular cultic rituals serve, in traditional Buddhist society, to help resolve social conflict e.g. in Laos (Reynolds, 1969).
- The healers and monks, as therapists, use their insider view to mediate old as well as new forms and suffering to do with violence, reinterpret it and give meaning to it in ways that make sense to the local folk at this time, and draw upon culturally meaningful solutions for the individual, and their communities.

Implications

- *A framework for the medical anthropology of violence* - Over the horizon, this may enable us to map emic ‘syndromes’ which draw together, or overarches, the multiplicity of violence-related problems including acid attack, personal violence, state violence, reactivation of PTSD e.g. ECCC
- *From Cambodia to the region* - The framework of violence in Cambodian may provide insights for regional studies of violence especially in post-conflict settings such as Sri

Lanka or Timor Leste. The analysis of responses to uncertainty will add to scholarship in Japan (Daishonin, 2007) and Myanmar (Kawasaki, 2010).

- *The ethics of the trauma industry* - The findings will have implications for the ethics and morality of the role of the 'psychosocial trauma and violence industry' Buddha predictions in post-conflict countries such as Cambodia and which, bypassing the cultural construction of the victims, can unwittingly produce harm.
- *Justice and human rights* - A more accurate cultural mapping of concepts such as guilt, responsibility, justice, retribution, and reconciliation can inform the policy and strategies, and the evaluation, of psychosocial services for trauma, the victim unit of the ECCC in Cambodia. Gregory Stanton, Genocide Watch, has proposed a culturally relevant policy and program development for the Khmer Rouge Victims' Participation Program of the ICC. He also has inspired the work of local NGOs such as Centre for Centre for Justice and Reconciliation (CJR). Through the links with the Psychosocial Support Program of CJR, we plan to raise the capacity of NGOs to create culturally meaningful and effective interventions for those affected by the genocide. From another angle, the protection of cultural heritage is linked to 'cultural rights' as a form of human rights (Logan, 2007; Vadi, 2007).
- *Cultural erosion and cultural revitalisation* - There are implications for suggesting how cultural erosion may weaken the capacity of people in the local society to find their own solutions to the causes and therapies for violence (1998a; Varan, 1998b). There are implications for the value of intangible cultural heritage in responding to global problems of violence. The findings will have implications for the on-going debate about the relationship between cultural erosion of traditional healing and the epidemic of violence in Cambodia. Although this is not addressed by this project, nonetheless the findings will enable a better exploration of this topic.
- *Buddhist psychotherapy* - There is global interest from the Mindfulness movement in Buddhist psychology. This project will explore in depth the preferences of the victims of the violence in choosing methods of treatment, the result will pave the way for further research on the effectiveness of Buddhist and ritual therapies in the management of violence.
- *Buddhism* - It will add to our understanding of the social potential for cultural revitalisation of Buddhism, as in Sri Lanka (1982; Brow, 1999; Vail, 2006; Premsrirat and Malone, 2003). See the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank Regional Consultation on Social Cohesion and Conflict Management, at which the obstacles to social cohesion in the region included ethnic religious and cultural factors (Colletta et al., 2001). Social relations (horizontal social capital) with democratic and authoritarian governance (vertical social capital) shaped the management of conflict. The greater the degree to which vertical social capital (that is, the responsiveness of the state to its citizenry) and horizontal social capital (cross-cutting, networked relations among diverse communal groups) intersect, the more likely that the society mediates and prevents conflict before it turns violent. To the extent that the traditional healers provide local solutions and enhance keen and communal bonding, there is an antidote to conflict and violence.
- *Memory and trauma* – We can better understand the relationship between past trauma, remembering through the rituals of healing, and violence. Recovery from collective trauma may depend on an understanding of how societies remember (Connerton, 1989) and in which culture is the context for memory in the healing of trauma (Antze and Lambek, 1996)

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