



The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945

David P. Chandler

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The political history of Cambodia between 1945 and 1979, which culminated in the devastating revolutionary excesses of the Pol Pot regime, is one of unrest and misery. This book by David P. Chandler is the first to give a full account of this tumultuous period. Drawing on his experience as a foreign service officer in Phnom Penh, on interviews, and on archival material. Chandler considers why the revolution happened and how it was related to Cambodia's earlier history and to other events in Southeast Asia. He describes Cambodia's brief spell of independence from Japan after the end of World War II; the long and complicated rule of Norodom Sihanouk, during which the Vietnam War gradually spilled over Cambodia's borders; the bloodless coup of 1970 that deposed Sihanouk and put in power the feeble, pro-American government of Lon Nol; and the revolution in 1975 that ushered in the radical changes and horrors of Pol Pot's Communist regime. Chandler discusses how Pol Pot and his colleagues evacuated Cambodia's cities and towns, transformed its seven million people into an unpaid labor force, tortured and killed party members when agricultural quotas were unmet, and were finally overthrown in the course of a Vietnamese military invasion in 1979. His book is a penetrating and poignant analysis of this fierce revolutionary period and the events of the previous quarter-century that made it possible.

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