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Cinematic Rupture: Reading Cambodia's Genocide through Deleuze and Guattari

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This paper will deploy Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy to read the political economy of contemporary Cambodia as a stratum that emerged from the deterritorializing mechanisms of the Khmer Rouge genocide and politicide. The recent documentary *Enemies of the People* offers a cinematic space for the unpunished and now-elderly executioners of Democratic Kampuchea to share their memories of these foundational events of mass murder, thereby forcing ruptures in the body politic of Cambodia through their revelations of the violent processes of deterritorialization that allowed the emergence of this high growth Southeast Asian economy. The paper will proceed by examining the double articulation of stratification in Cambodia, thereby excavating the bodies hidden by the processes of reterritorialization and overcoding, and will conclude with a speculative look at what these cinematic ruptures portend for becoming-Cambodia.

Introduction: The Ontology of Mass Killing

This paper will deploy Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's geophilosophy to read the political economy of contemporary Cambodia as a stratum that emerged from the deterritorializing mechanisms of the Khmer Rouge genocide and politicide. The recent documentary *Enemies of the People* (2010) offers a cinematic space for the unpunished and now-elderly executioners of Democratic Kampuchea to share their memories of these foundational events of mass murder, thereby forcing ruptures in the body politic of Cambodia through their revelations of the violent processes of deterritorialization that allowed the emergence of this high-growth Southeast Asian economy. The paper will proceed by examining the double articulation of stratification in Cambodia, thereby excavating the bodies hidden by the processes of reterritorialization and overcoding, and will conclude with a speculative look at what these cinematic ruptures portend for becoming-Cambodia.

Before examining the Cambodian genocide and politicide, this paper will first consider the ontology of mass killing. The approach is through Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy, which offers a fresh way to regard this vexed question. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari draw on geological and other physical processes to better understand the transformation of, among other phenomena, human societies. DeLanda (1995) reminds us that their use of physical examples is not metaphorical:

> When we say (as Marxists used to say) that "class struggle is the motor of history" we are using the word "motor" in a purely metaphorical sense. However, when we say that "a hurricane is a steam motor" we are not simply making a linguistic analogy: rather we are saying that hurricanes embody the same diagram used by engineers to build steam motors, that is, that it contains a reservoir of heat, that it operates via thermal differences and that it circulates energy and materials through a (so-called) Carnot cycle.
>
> (para. 6)

The diagram that DeLanda mentions consists of the abstraction of the arrangement of the physical components and forces within a particular assemblage and its products, such that it is "a map of the function of an assemblage," namely the production of "affects and effects" (Livesey, 2010: 18). In DeLanda's example, the arrangement of the components and forces within a hurricane can be abstracted to the same arrangement of components and forces, and the forces thereby produced, within a steam engine.

Insofar as countries can be seen as vast assemblages of components and forces (ranging from the individual bodies of their inhabitants and smaller-scale assemblages like societies, institutions and markets, to the natural forces of climate and geology, as well as social forces, including culture, politics and economics), they too may be abstracted to complex diagrams that similarly map the formation of large-scale structures in the physical world; for example, geological strata and meshworks. At one level, the formation of social hierarchies can be abstracted to the same diagram that corresponds to geological stratification: the "double articulation" of sedimentation and folding, through which new forces emerge from the sorting of an undifferentiated mass into distinct layers of related physical components (Bonta & Protevi, 2004: 151). In the complex forces that drove the growth of cities like Phnom Penh—including the flows of migration, trade, and colonization—one may discern the abstract diagram of stratification. At a broader temporal level, stratification may be discerned in not just the historical formation of social hierarchies, but also in the complex formation and transformation of political economies. At this level of analysis, the political economy of a territory prior to colonization may be seen to constitute a stratum that is buried below that of the colonial period, and likewise, the political economy of the period of independence may be seen as being built on the stratum of the colonial political economy. In this same way, one may view neoliberal Cambodia as emerging from the stratum of its revolutionary period of genocide and politicide. To understand how mass killing enables one stratum to change to another, one has to shift to the level of the individual body. DeLanda (2008) reminds us that "politically it is impossible to effect any real social change if the targets of one's

interventions are non-existent entities" (176). Bodies are physical entities through which change may be effected by their deployment or elimination. In such a grim logic, should specific assemblages of bodies be identified as constituting impediments to desired change, their physical removal from the greater assemblage of the State may hence be warranted. The planners of Democratic Kampuchea understood this lesson, and effected social change through the brutal and rigorous elimination of hundreds of thousands of troublesome bodies.

Troublesome Bodies

While the actual number of victims of Democratic Kampuchea's revolution of 1975–79 will probably never be known, Heuveline's (1998) demographic analysis concludes that violent deaths during this period range from "a minimum of 1.1 million and a maximum of 2.2 million, with a medium estimate of 1.4 million" (60). The mass killings in Cambodia during the Democratic Kampuchea period straddle politicide and genocide. As Ea (2005) notes, Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea regime recognized two distinct groups of enemies: external and internal. The external enemies primarily consisted of global capitalist powers, in particular the US and Thailand, but also rival socialist powers, primarily the Soviet Union and Vietnam. As a Khmer Rouge cadre recorded of the party line:

> The new strategic line fixes the enemies of the revolution: the CIA, KGB, and the Yuon [Vietnamese] running dogs. The Yuon running dogs are especially vicious and dangerous to the revolution.
>
> (Ea, 2005: 3–4)

The political campaign against the enemy Vietnamese and their alleged Cambodian allies quickly transformed into genocide against ethnic minorities, as Thet Sambath and Rob Lemkin's *Enemies of the People* (2009) documents. In a segment of the documentary featuring Sinoeun, a genocide survivor, she discusses her discovery of a planning document belonging to her commune chief that ordered local Khmer Rouge cadres to "find and eliminate all ethnic minority people," for the reason that "they are Vietnamese supporters." In another segment, Sambath interviews Em, who

led a group of Khmer Rouge killers during the Democratic Kampuchea period. She admits to having received orders from senior officials to "solve" the "ethnic minority problem." This solution involved rooting out and murdering these "traitors" and their "associates." Suon, one of Em's killers, observes that Em cannot remember how many were killed simply because "there were so many." The Cham Muslim minority was especially targeted for extermination. Osman (2002) estimates 400,000 to 500,000 Cham Muslim deaths during the Democratic Kampuchea period, and that "their mortality rate was double to nearly triple that of the general Khmer population" (2).

Apart from genocide, politicide also occurred during the Democratic Kampuchea period (Hamilton, 2013: 173). These mass killings targeted the regime's internal enemies, of whom two sub-groups can be distinguished. The first consisted of "soldiers and police of the Lon Nol regime, and those in the feudalist and capitalist classes." These class enemies also included "those in the bourgeois class or who leaned toward capitalism" (Ea, 2005: 5). Indeed, De Walque's (2005) demographic analysis confirms that "individuals with an urban or educated background were more likely to die, establishing that they were especially targeted" (351). The second sub-group of internal enemies consisted of Khmer Rouge cadres who were suspected of treason (Ea, 2005: 4). Pol Pot's secret S-21 prison was the site of the torture and murder of at least 12,000 of these internal enemies, about 600 of whom were former S-21 guards who had fallen under suspicion (Lim, 2013a: 109, 112). The horrifying segment of Rithy Panh's *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003) where the torturer Prak Khan confesses his sadistic interrogation of the doomed medic Nay Nan reveals the paranoia of the Khmer Rouge Party Center, in particular its proclivity to identify—without any evidence—hitherto innocent individuals as members of vast counterrevolutionary conspiracies, and to subsequently "smash" these invented enemies (Lim, 2012: 124).

Given the heterogeneity of killers and victims, each of whom exists or existed as a haecceity with his or her own facticity and spatiotemporal history, spatial and temporal variations can be observed in the mass killings of the Democratic Kampuchea period. Each space and event of mass killing should hence be considered as a unique assemblage. Chandler (1993) highlights the temporal and regional variations in living conditions across Democratic Kampuchea, where the Eastern Zone, for example,

transformed over time from "one of the most humane in DK to one of the most bru-tal" (271). Indeed, the act of genocide or politicide can be seen as a function of "abso-lute deterritorialization," which as Bonta and Protevi (2004) warn, "can also overcode the earth in the worst of all dangers, the fascist State" (79). Deleuze and Guattari (1987) observe that at this point of deterritorializing intensity, "the lines of flight are not only obstructed and segmented but turn into lines of destruction or death" (510). The act of genocidal or politicidal deterritorialization erases the assemblages constituted by the destroyed enemy bodies, and this is followed by the overcoding that creates new assemblages to replace the old:

> The State apparatus can act directly on any stratum of human society, any regime of signs, and any ecosystem. It has and is the force and power to overcode anything, to put anything to work, to turn anything into stock …
> Once resonating, the overcoded territories can be stratified and organized in numerous ways, segmented and striated to the limits of human tolerance.
>
> (Bonta & Protevi, 2004: 148–149)

Just as the addition of an alkali interrupts the chemical reaction between an acid and a metal, thereby transforming the chemical outcome, the targeted mass kill-ing of large groups of identified enemies interrupts the regular functioning of the political economy, giving those responsible for the killings vast opportunities to reshape it. At the level of the alloplastic stratum, "where the creative production of signs constructs territories" (Bonta & Protevi, 2004: 51), Democratic Kampuchea overcoded the victims of its mass killings as enemies of the people who deserved their violent deaths. The abject corpses of these victims hence served as corporeal warnings against challenging the State. As Schwartz (2013) reminds us, "the corpse combines the organic material of the body with the symbolic power of death" (1). However, this overcoding by the State is not absolute, and corpses may be recoded with other meanings (14). After the fall of the Democratic Kampuchea regime in 1979 to the invading Vietnamese, the Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) regime indeed did recode the corpses of Democratic Kampu-

chea's victims literally as signifiers of the evils of the "Pol Pot and Ieng Sary clique" in memorial spaces like the Tuol Sleng Museum for Genocidal Crime as well as events like the National Day of Hatred (Lim, 2013a: 127–128; De Nike, Quigley, and Robinson, 2000).

Democratic Kampuchea's mass murder of "troublesome" people—the country's educated and capitalist elite—allowed Pol Pot to shut down the capitalist institutions of money and markets, thereby transforming Cambodia into an agrarian Maoist political economy. The mass graves where these bodies were buried mark the socialist stratum of the Cambodian political economy. This socialist stratum in turn would eventually be buried under a new stratum of neoliberal capitalism. After the 3 years, 8 months and 20 days of genocide and politicide, Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea finally fell on January 7, 1979 to the Vietnamese, who promptly set up their puppet PRK regime. The young leaders of the PRK not only had to fill the power vacuum caused by the retreat of Pol Pot's forces to the Thai-Cambodian border, they also had to reconstruct the apparatuses of government in the absence of the murdered educated class. The PRK's gradual reintroduction of the capitalist institutions of money and markets helped restabilize the economy, and this facilitated Cambodia's official transition to neoliberal capitalism in the 1990s with its implementation of "Washington Consensus" structural adjustment policies, including the privatization of its state-owned enterprises. Unlike other developing countries which suffered economic calamity after undergoing structural adjustment, Cambodia's transition was a success, and it has subsequently become one of the world's fastest growing economies (Lim, 2013b: 61–63; Lim, 2014b: 86–89). However, the PRK's reintroduction of money and markets also facilitated the emergence of patronage networks that survived the country's transition to neoliberal capitalism and which persist to the present day (Lim, 2013a: 29).

Following the Paris Peace Agreements of October 1991, the United Nations established a transitional authority that nominally governed Cambodia until the general elections of 1993. As Widyono (2008) points out, the Agreements were flawed; in particular by ignoring the reality of the State of Cambodia's (SOC, formerly the PRK) firm control over the apparatuses of power in the country (35–42). This enabled

the leaders of the PRK/SOC to survive the transition to the neoliberal state, where, in their new incarnation as the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), they have not only maintained their control over the political economy, but also survived opposition challenges to their continued rule, most notably in their defeat in July 1997 of the military challenge from the royalist FUNCINPEC party (Lim, 2013a: 30–31; Widyono, 2008: 253–259). The ruling elites of the CPP have used their long period of political control to consolidate their networks of patronage. As Slocomb (2006) notes: "two decades of nepotism and carefully arranged marriages among families of the ruling elites have created a web of alliances which many fear, if dismantled, would bring down with it the whole structure of the state" (390). Indeed, these networks of patronage have created a kleptocratic shadow state that continues to plague Cambodia to this day (Global Witness, 2007: 6–8; Rollet, 2014).

Cinematic Rupture

In the alloplastic stratum, the political and economic transformation of Cambodia that followed its revolutionary period of mass killing was accompanied by occlusions of memory. Among the survivors, the killings became open secrets that were seldom spoken of. The Cambodian state, for its part, politicized the official memory of these killings. Parr (2006) reminds us that minoritarian memories can be reterritorialized by the majoritarian State as official history:

> Memory, for Deleuze, can be either a reterritorialising movement or the double becoming of history. For instance the memory that collects the memories of minorities is described as a 'majoritarian agency' that colonises minoritarian memory . . . Or, finding investment in the form of history memory enters into circulation with exchange and commodity value at which point it once again turns into a powerful reterritorialising movement. So when Deleuze and Guattari describe becoming as 'antimemory' what they are referring to is the reterritorialising function of memory that integrates the molecular memories of children, women and blacks into a majoritarian system of history.
>
> (128)

For the killers, their acts of mass killing served as a constitutive secret that bound them together, prompting them to "maintain an order of appearances" (Dean, 2002: 41). This silencing of the killers' voices would have a range of effects on the post-genocidal political order. After their successful invasion of Cambodia, Vietnam transformed Pol Pot's secret S-21 prison into the Tuol Sleng Museum for Genocidal Crime, both to vilify the ousted Khmer Rouge government as well as to valorize the Vietnamese invaders. This politicization of official memory has been accompanied with the occlusion of personal memory. Many survivors of Democratic Kampuchea have chosen "not to share with their children their traumatic memories," thereby contributing to a rise in myths and genocide denial among Cambodia's youth. With a history textbook on the Democratic Kampuchea period only entering the official school curriculum in 2009, this long occlusion of memory has contributed to the paranoid strand of Khmer anti-Vietnamese racism that libels Vietnam as being responsible for Democratic Kampuchea's killing fields (Lim, 2010: para. 39; Lim, 2013a: 65–66, 109–110). This occlusion of memory is the target of the Khmer Rouge killers showcased in *Enemies of the People*. Two of the now-elderly killers, Khoun and Suon, explain that they have agreed to confess their acts of murder on camera for the purpose of recording the truth of what happened under the Pol Pot regime. As Suon points out, if they choose to remain silent, "we will be gone soon and the new generation won't know the story." The confessions of Khoun, Suon, and the other Khmer Rouge killers in *Enemies of the People* constitute cinematic ruptures in that they generate breaks in the silences and occlusions surrounding the genocide and politicide that shape today's Cambodia.

In terms of affect, the power of *Enemies of the People* lies in its intense focus on the ordinariness of the killers: Thet Sambath's frequent close-ups of their faces present the viewer with faces that look just like those one would find on the streets of Cambodia's cities like Phnom Penh or in the Cambodian countryside. The confessional words that these men utter are horrifying precisely because their faces are so ordinary. In effect, the viewer is presented with the disorienting disconnect between the Deleuzian regime of signs constituted by language and the structure of social coherence constituted by the abstract machines of faciality. As Bogue (2003) reminds

us, language constitutes a regime of signs which "forms individual subjects and places them in social and political relation to one another" (83). The verbal confessions of Khoun, Suon, and their fellow Khmer Rouge killers hence immediately identify them as the unrehabilitated and unpunished homicidal functionaries of the Democratic Kampuchea regime, whose continued freedom makes a mockery of the ongoing proceedings of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. The face constitutes a different regime of signs. The abstract machines of faciality allow us to organize our world by connecting "elements into regular assemblages . . . thus establishing structures of coherence." The subject's world is hence formed when a sufficient set of such assemblages cohere together, and Deleuzian territorialization occurs when a coherent set of such assemblages of meaning becomes privileged over contesting sets. It is this dominant regime of signs that counts as a "face." The human face offers a good illustration of the functioning of the Deleuzian faciality machine qua primal frame of meaning, as the faces of human strangers are capable of drawing affective responses in the viewer including sexual attraction and the feelings of friendship, disgust, or fear. Conversely, the neurological condition of prosopagnosia or face-blindness demonstrates the cognitive dysfunction that can occur when this abstract machine of faciality breaks down (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 172–173; Bignall, 2012: 395; Lim, 2013a: 106; Sacks, 2010). In the case of *Enemies of the People*, the ordinary faces of the self-confessed killers rupture the viewer's hitherto coherent visual understanding of Cambodian society by triggering the realization that the faces of men one long assumed to be harmless may actually be undercoded: brutal killers may wear the masks of harmless faces. Apart from the self-identified killers in *Enemies of the People*, how many other Khmer Rouge killers walk free in Cambodia today? The anxiety thus generated by the realization of the undercoding of the abstract machines of faciality can also be felt in Rithy Panh's *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*, when the viewer learns that many of the tortured and murdered victims of the secret prison were in fact Khmer Rouge cadres who had fallen victim to the paranoid regime's frequent internal purges. Indeed, experts estimate that at least 563 of the cadres who worked at S-21—a third of its personnel—eventually ended up getting arrested, interrogated, and executed there. Knowledge of this adds an indeterminacy to the tragic affect of viewing the prisoner mug-shots at

the Tuol Sleng Museum for Genocidal Crime, for the photographed faces of the prisoners do not reveal their lives before their fatal incarceration at S-21 (Lim, 2012: 125; Lim, 2013a: 109). Which of these victims had served as S-21's interrogators or killers before they themselves had fallen afoul of the regime?

Becoming-Cambodia

Writing of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-democratic, Patton (2008) observes that "like all the concepts that philosophy invents or reinvents in order to counter-actualise the present, it enables us to perceive the world differently" (180–181). One way to understand this in the context of post-genocide Cambodia is through the understanding of the State as "an apparatus of organisation, capture and exclusion, which stratifies, polices, striates, codes/decodes, territorialises/detteritorialises, interiorises, counts, occupies, controls and regulates" (Watson, 2008: 199). The brutal confessions of the Khmer Rouge killers in *Enemies of the People* serve to shatter the Cambodian state's silence on the Khmer Rouge killers. In particular, their testimonies of the targeted slaughter of the Vietnamese and other ethnic minorities contradict the aforementioned blood libel of the killing fields as being a product of Vietnam rather than the Khmer Rouge. Such confessions are especially important given that ethnic violence against the Vietnamese and other ethnic minorities has long been a cyclical feature of Cambodian history, and which still persists today. In the 2013 general elections, for example, the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party deliberately "stoked anti-Vietnamese sentiment, seeking to capitalize on long-ruling Prime Minister Hun Sen's association with Vietnam." The anti-Vietnamese racism that continues to poison Cambodian ethnic relations today works partly on the Deleuzian logic of faciality, with Khmer mobs periodically attacking and killing those with Vietnamese faces (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 178–181; Bignall, 2012: 396; Lim, 2013a: 83–85; Lim, 2013b: 68; Prak, 2014: para. 8; Robertson, 2014: paras. 1–3).

At another level, one may draw on Deleuze's understanding of the present as constituted by both an actual and virtual present, the latter of which remains real even though it has not been actualized in the present moment. In this sense, the virtual present represents what the actual present could have been and could still

be (Deleuze, 1989: 79; Deleuze, 1991: 96–7). In the same way that Al-Nakib (2014) traces the virtual presence of the missing Palestinians of Kuwait, one may try to trace the virtual presence of the missing Cambodians of post-genocide Cambodia. How do these estimated 1.1–2.2 million victims of the Khmer Rouge "coexist with the present they once were and could yet become" (36)? At one level we have a hauntology. While Holt (2012) has argued that Pchum Ben, the Khmer festival of the dead, has taken on new significance after the Khmer Rouge genocide, becoming "the arena for the expression of actions that assuage the pains of a collective horror for some, and a way to manage a collective guilt for a few others" (10), Guillou's (2012) fieldwork in two communes in the Bakan district of Pursat province—an area which suffered some of the worst violence during the Democratic Kampuchea period—reveals the development of peasant modes of remembering the genocide's dead and missing, especially the unknown dead who were interred in mass graves (208–209). Guillou's informants describe these spirits as exhibiting behavior similar to those of the guardian spirits of the land (*neak ta*), for example, punishing individuals for desecrating the land or for other acts of bad behavior (221). Indeed, some Cambodians have begun making offerings at these mass graves as a means of propitiation of angry spirits or to seek boons from what they perceive as powerful spirits. In this fashion, Pol Pot's grave has itself become a site of pilgrimage (224–225). This actual present, in turn, suggests possible futures for becoming-Cambodia. As Deleuze and Guattari (1994) note:

> The present, on the contrary, is what we are and, thereby, what already we are ceasing to be . . . It is not that the actual is the utopian prefiguration of a future that is still part of our history. Rather, it is the now of our becoming.
>
> (112)

In his reading of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, Bogue (2011) identifies the different modes of the future connected with Deleuze's passive syntheses of time. Of interest is the third synthesis of time, which tears an asymmetric cut in time, creating

not just a "before" and "after," but also a temporal split in the subject. This temporal division in the subject is echoed in Deleuze's notion of the people to come: "in the present there is no people, and the people to come, *le peuple à venir*, is only possible in some future that has not yet arrived" (78–79). The creation of the people to come is nothing less than the creation of new "modes of existence" and "new possibilities of life" (Deleuze, 1997: 4; Bogue, 2011: 89). In the case of post-genocide Cambodia, what would the people to come look like? Hybridity is key to understanding the possible futures for becoming-Cambodia. In terms of Deleuzian geophilosophy, the process of hybridization is akin to the geological process of composition that assembles heterogenous components like fossils and minerals into limestone (Bliss, Hayes, and Orris, 2012: 1). Cambodia's past has likewise been shaped by the process of hybridization. This dates from the Angkorean period, whose culture has been revealed by archeologists and historians to be hybrid and cosmopolitan, with influences from foreign merchants and missionaries from the lands of China and India mixed with those of indigenous traditions. In terms of religion, for example, the people of Angkor practised Brahmanism and Mahayana Buddhism alongside the indigenous worship of local ancestral spirits. This hybrid assemblage changed over time, with the influence of Mahayana Buddhism eventually supplanted by Theravada Buddhism (Harris, 1999: 54; Harris, 2005: 22–24; Heder, 2007: 290; Mabbett and Chandler, 1995: 114–116). Angkorean culture itself was eventually superseded by a regional hybrid culture that encompassed both the ethnic Thai and Khmer. Even after the Angkorean period, the precolonial Khmer kings continued to recognize the multiculturalism of their realm as a sign of their royal power (Chandler, 2008: 95; Heder, 2007: 292).

Today, new hybrid identities continue to be created in Cambodia (Lim, 2014a: 492). One of the key hybridizing forces today is the Cambodian diaspora, which has reshaped local Cambodian culture through the influence of overseas Cambodians like the Cambodian-American rapper praCh Ly, or returnees from the diaspora like Tuy Sobil, whose school Tiny Toones promotes hybrid musical and dance forms like Khmer hip-hop and Khmer breakdancing (Amery, 2011: paras. 7–13; Mellen,

2010: para. 26). The strong influence of American hip-hop culture in the current wave of hybridization reflects the urban lives of diasporic Cambodian-Americans like Tee Cambo and CS, whose rap music "reflects the gang culture and hard-knocks life that have characterized their experience" (Bennett 2014, paras. 5–8; Lee 2014, para. 1). Some returnees do have backgrounds in American gang culture, for example the aforementioned Tuy Sobil and the hip-hop poet Kosal Khiev, both of whom had been arrested and deported from the US (Cheung, 2014: paras. 1–5; Roy and Mom, 2009: paras. 2–7). The Cambodian-American communities from which these returnees were ejected were generally the result of the resettlement in the US of Cambodian refugees from the civil war. Hence these returnees offer outsiders not just a glimpse into the Cambodian diaspora, but also a speculative look at their virtual counterpart—the unscattered Cambodian population consisting of the people who would have constituted Cambodia today had the Khmer Rouge not come into power. At present, the intervention that began with Tuy Sobil and other returnees is currently expanding through the innovative work of new groups like Wat A Gwaan and Sliten6ix, who are hybridizing Cambodian music with other musical traditions like Jamaican reggae and heavy metal (Chan and Ngo, 2010: paras. 1–3; Lomas, 2014: para. 1; Thompson, 2014: paras. 1–2). Such fecund hybridization today is the latest cycle in a Deleuzian spiral repetition dating from the cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism of the Angkorean past.

While the ethnic Vietnamese, as we have seen, remain Cambodia's despised "other," this could change (Villadiego, 2014). The mutating fate of Cambodia's ethnic Chinese shows a possible path forward for the ethnic Vietnamese. During the Democratic Kampuchea period, the ethnic Chinese were persecuted by the anti-capitalist Khmer Rouge because of their pre-revolutionary capitalist activities. Many Chinese quickly learned that they had to pass as Khmer in order to survive, and this occlusion of their ethnic identity continued even after the ouster of the Pol Pot regime in 1979. By 1991, when Cambodia was on the cusp of its transition to neoliberal capitalism, few Chinese "were willing to openly converse in Chinese, or to share any claim to a Chinese heritage or name, with an outsider" (Edwards, 2012: 127–130).

This "legacy of fear" has ended under the rule of the current Royal Government of Cambodia, with the reemergence of the Chinese press and institutions like associations, schools, and temples marking the ethnic Chinese minority's confident reassertion of their identity (Edwards, 2009: 175). While the late King Father Norodom Sihanouk did not include the Chinese in his classificatory scheme of favored ethnic minorities who could be assimilated under an expanded definition of the Khmer, Cambodia's Chinese have taken it upon themselves to designate their community as "Khmer Chen" (Chinese Khmer), performatively invoking their membership in the Khmer nation (Ehrentraut, 2011: 789).

A similar challenge by the ethnic Vietnamese to claim their place in the Cambodian nation would exemplify the ceaseless political struggle of the Deleuzian "people to come," as the people to come is a people "perpetually generating differences," with their politics defined "from within . . . as that people continues its becoming" (Bogue, 2011: 90). The flows of capital that characterize Cambodia's contemporary neoliberal political economy will be key factors in this generation of difference, as it is the tendency of such flows to challenge the State in their perpetual task of recoding all social flows into the commodity form (Bogue, 2005: 19–20). The case of Cambodia's ethnic Chinese is again exemplary, as their confident reassertion of Chineseness in the 1990s was a result of the entry of overseas Chinese investment into the Cambodian economy. This inflow of overseas Chinese capital—itself a result of the neoliberalization of the Cambodian political economy that emerged, as *Enemies of the People* reminds us, from the Khmer Rouge genocide—was followed by an increase in inbound migration from China and Taiwan, as well as strengthened political ties between Beijing and Phnom Penh. These factors boosted the cultural pride of Cambodia's ethnic Chinese, and led to their re-Sinicization (Heder, 2007: 309). As Nyíri (2012) notes, this surge in overseas Chinese investment created employment opportunities for the ethnic Chinese, especially as middlemen between the overseas Chinese investors and the Cambodian state, and between the Chinese employers and their Khmer employees (94). The ethnic Khmer themselves have been transformed by the arrival of overseas Chinese capital. Entrepreneurial Khmer

businesspeople are increasingly enrolling in Mandarin language classes, as they recognize that Mandarin has become the new language of business in Cambodia and the region (Verver, 2012: 31–32). Increased flows of capital from Vietnam could have similarly beneficial effects for Cambodia's ethnic Vietnamese. One of the popular anti-Vietnamese stereotypes in Cambodia is of the Vietnamese as economic exploiters of the Khmer people (Lim, 2013a: 60–63). The establishment of Vietnamese enterprises in Cambodia that create jobs with decent wages, if done in sufficient numbers, could effectively recode the Vietnamese people in the Cambodian imagination as good neighbours and economic partners. This would also set an important precedent for future foreign direct investment as neoliberal Cambodia is a magnet for international capital precisely because of the low cost of Cambodian labour. Cambodia's garment sector—which has become the country's primary export sector—offers wages that are so low that wages in the sex industry appear as attractive to the underpaid garment workers (Alvi, 2014). This optimistic possible future for Cambodia's ethnic Vietnamese, if actualized, would mark a significant departure from the spiral repetition of ethnic violence that characterizes Cambodia's deep history, of which the Khmer Rouge genocide was just a recent iteration (Lim, 2013a: 68–69).

Returning to geophilosophy, one may be reminded that while Cambodia is an exemplary case of a neoliberal economy built on a stratum of mass killings, it is unfortunately not unique in Southeast Asia. Joshua Oppenheimer's recent documentaries *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Look of Silence* (2014) reveal the parallel case of Indonesia, whose politicide of 1965–66 helped establish the foundation of the country's neoliberal economy (Ransom, 1970: 48–49; Klein, 2008: 85). These events of mass killing were not the last to occur in Southeast Asia. Today in Myanmar, state-sponsored violence against the Rohingya Muslim minority that amounts, in the eyes of some experts, to a "slow-burning genocide," serves to consolidate majoritarian Buddhist control over the liberalizing economy (Maung Zarni & Cowley, 2014: 684–686; Shams & Wolf, 2015: para. 7). A clear-sighted recognition of the violent foundations of Southeast Asia's high growth economies will be necessary for the region to find an ethical path for its future development. A political economy built

on a stratum of mass killing is not destined to fall into a spiral repetition of violence, as its people to come may decide on a better course.

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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