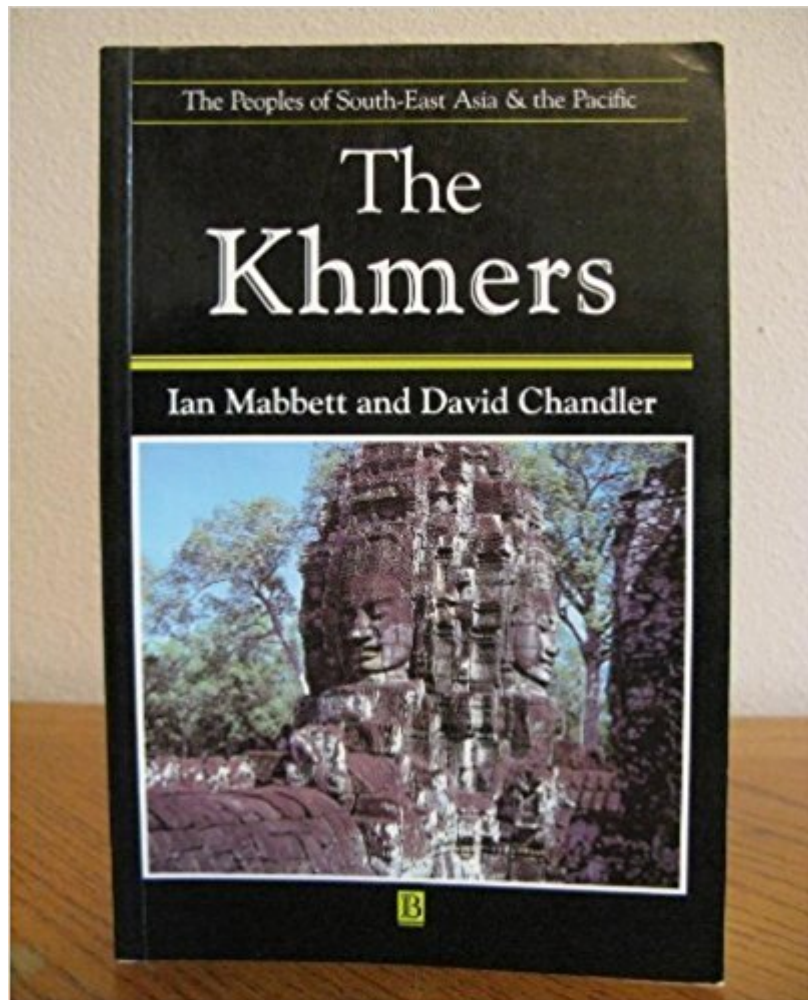




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Khmers (The Peoples Of South-East Asia And The Pacific)



Synopsis

This is a history of the Khmers, the people who for thousands of years inhabited the wooded interior of Cambodia. One hundred and fifty years ago the representatives of imperial France were astonished to find half-buried within the jungle the still magnificent ruins of vast temples. Justly described as one of the wonders of the world, these were the remnants of the once great Angkor empire. Since then archaeologists and historians have attempted to piece together its history. This book presents the result of these endeavours in the first account of the history of Khmer civilization to be published for many years.

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continued over many centuries. By the eleventh century the empire claimed dominion over large parts of Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. The authors describe its organization, the daily life of kings, priests and farmers, and the work of the craftsmen who created in stone and bronze the imperial and religious centres of power. One enormous temple housed no fewer than 24,000 deities. During the fifteenth century, constantly harried by their neighbours in Thailand, the Khmer rulers moved their capital from the interior to Phnom Penh at the confluence of the Mekong and Tonle Sap Rivers. From then on Cambodia was a minor state at the mercy of its neighbours in Thailand and Vietnam, subject to invasions by rival enemies over a period that has continued almost to the present. Independence from the French in 1953 opened up a fresh era of suffering. Political instability was exacerbated by incursions from the Vietnam war; by 1970 most of the country was under the control of Chinese-backed guerrillas. Phnom Penh fell to the communists in April 1975 and within two years the Khmer Rouge had all but destroyed the country. In 1979 for the first time in their long history the population welcomed an invasion by the Vietnamese. The Khmers is a readable and vivid account of its fascinating subject. It is fully illustrated with maps and photographs, and concludes with a detailed account of further reading by subject.

Ian Mabbett is currently in the History Department at Monash University, teaching courses covering traditional Asian cultures and religions. His present research interest is in the history of Buddhism. His previous books include Kings and Emperors of Asia (1985), Modern China (1985) and A Short History of India (second edition, 1983). David Chandler is currently Visiting Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Professor of History at Monash University and concurrently research director at the centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University. His previous books include Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot (1992), The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War and Revolution since 1945, (paperback edition, 1993) and A History of Cambodia (second edition, 1992).

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