



Memoirs of Montagnard religion, traditions and legends: Indigenous people under siege in Cambodia

Patrick Hughes Ph.D.

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"Memoirs of Montagnard Religion, Traditions and Legends: Indigenous People under Siege in Cambodia" When I set aside academic life to sign on as a Human Rights Officer with the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Cambodia 1992-3, I never expected to work with an indigenous people for whom a democratic election, rule of law and the free market would usher in new forces that threaten their very existence. The Epilogue outlines the destructive consequences of modernity for the highlanders. "Memoirs of Montagnard Religion, Traditions and Legends: Indigenous People under Siege in Cambodia" is a non-fiction memoir that takes the reader inside the Kreung culture and way of life in northeastern Cambodia. Having been a professor of community studies and the sociology of religion in New York for many years it was only natural that I was going to do more than my official human rights work in Ratanakiri Province. The manuscript relates the highlander's views in interviews with teens talking about growing up, with a priestess who explains their religion, and much more. There are four hitherto unpublished legends told by a charismatically endowed storyteller, over fifty photographs, plus an account of the sacrifice of a water buffalo presided over by Ye Arak, Highlander priestess. The memoir also relates how Choung Pheav, a Kreung highlander and I founded the Khmer Highlander Association to promote their economy and confront new challenges to their identity and lands. However General Bou Thong, also a highlander would have none of it. He alone should decide the fate of the Province's rich soil, tall trees and highlander peoples. He was overheard saying, 'When Patrick is gone, Choung Pheav will be as nothing'.



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