



Cambodia's Curse: The Modern History of a Troubled Land

By Joel Brinkley

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A generation after the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia shows every sign of having overcome its history--the streets of Phnom Penh are paved; skyscrapers dot the skyline. But under this façade lies a country still haunted by its years of terror.

Joel Brinkley won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting in Cambodia on the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime that killed one quarter of the nation's population during its years in power. In 1992, the world came together to help pull the small nation out of the mire. Cambodia became a United Nations protectorate--the first and only time the UN tried something so ambitious. What did the new, democratically-elected government do with this unprecedented gift?

In 2008 and 2009, Brinkley returned to Cambodia to find out. He discovered a population in the grip of a venal government. He learned that one-third to one-half of Cambodians who lived through the Khmer Rouge era have P.T.S.D.--and its afflictions are being passed to the next generation. His extensive close-up reporting in *Cambodia's Curse* illuminates the country, its people, and the deep historical roots of its modern-day behavior.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Brinkley takes on the pricey pitfalls of nation building and the labyrinth of centuries-old political corruption in this riveting piece of literary reportage. At once a tale of human tragedy and a primer on the future of Western engagement with developing—and autocratic—countries, the book offers a rare look inside a country beleaguered by poverty and imprisoned by patronage and venal leadership since the 13th century; traumatized by colonialism, Pol Pot's brutal Khmer Rouge, and the genocide he unleashed (and later by Vietnam, which overthrew the Khmer Rouge in 1979). Brinkley is merciless in his critique of both Cambodia's leadership as well as the folly of donor countries that placed faith in the U.N. to bring Cambodia into a modern, democratic era. He expresses empathy for "the most abused people in the world," many of whom are in the grip of post-traumatic stress disorders after Pol Pot's reign of terror, but he saves his mercenary eye for the corrupt leaders, including present dictator Hun Sen, who continue to suppress and exploit the country's resources and young, vital population. (Apr.)

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Review

***Kirkus*, February 15, 2011**

"An excellent...account of a country whose historic poverty, exacerbated by the Vietnam War, remains remarkably unchanged."

Publishers Weekly

"A riveting piece of literary reportage."

Booklist

"A heartbreaking but vital status report on a people who deserve far better."

***Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2011**

"Brinkley cuts a clear narrative path through the bewildering, cynical politics and violent social life of one of the worlds most brutalized and hard-up countries."

About the Author

Joel Brinkley was a professor of journalism at Stanford University, and twenty-three-year veteran of the *New York Times*. He worked in more than fifty nations and wrote a nationally syndicated op-ed column on foreign policy. He won the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting in 1980 and was twice a finalist for an investigative reporting Pulitzer in the following years.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kevin Ortiz:

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