



THE QUEEN MOTHER:
An Eventful Life



THE QUEEN MOTHER:
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Editorial

His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah Boromneath
Norodom Sihamoni
King of Cambodia

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Foreword

This book is not a biography of Her Majesty Samdech Preah Reach Akka-Mohesey Norodom Monineath Sihanouk, the Queen Mother. Rather, this book is an attempt to portray the devotion and commitment to duty of this remarkable lady on the auspicious occasion of her 80th birthday anniversary.

Age has not dimmed Her Majesty's effervescence nor diminished her remarkable achievements. During her life, the Queen Mother has survived war and social upheaval, yet she has remained resolute in her loyalty, devotion and commitment to the late King Father Norodom Sihanouk, Preah Borom Ratanak Kaudh, and to Cambodia and her people.

Throughout her life, Her Majesty has shown great dignity blessed with a common touch. As a result, national attention has often been focused upon her during occasions of both grief and joyousness.

The country continues to confront the troubled legacy of its recent past as it strives to compete in today's era of haste, stress and greed. At times like this, there is reassurance in contemplating the Queen Mother, who moves with the gracious confidence of the old Cambodia. The Queen Mother's dignified style always exemplifies the grace and beauty of the Cambodian national dress.

When the King Father Norodom Sihanouk passed away in October 2012, Her Majesty encapsulated the somber mood of the entire country as she greeted citizens outside the gates of the Royal Palace. As she wiped away tears from her eyes, her presence rendered an occasion of profound poignancy in a human context.



80 MOST
Eventful Years

On 18 June 2016, Cambodia's Queen Mother Her Majesty Samdech Preah Reach Akka-Mohesey Norodom Monineath Sihanouk marks her 80th birthday, as well as 64 years as a member of the House of Norodom, Cambodia's Royal Family.

Her Majesty the Queen Mother has lived an eventful life, often enduring long and difficult periods of exile from the homeland.

As Consort to our beloved and much-grieved King Father Norodom Sihanouk, Preah Borom Ratanak Kaudh, my dearest Mother has been a tireless worker for her less-fortunate subjects, a role model for Khmer womanhood and a dignified representative of our country. She has dedicated her life to the service of the country.

From an early age, I recall my beloved Mother's work as President of the Cambodian Red Cross, taking care of our compatriots who were confronted with difficult times. Above all, the Queen Mother became close to the people by showing concern, humility and an abundance of charm.

During my holidays in Cambodia while I was attending school in Prague, I sometimes accompanied the Queen Mother during her visits to provincial towns and villages to deliver aid packages to the victims of natural disasters, erratic bombings by the U.S./South Vietnamese armed forces and subversive activities of the Vietcong. Her Majesty always had kind words of comfort for the victims.

Then, of course, came the difficult years between 1970 and 1979, when my beloved parents were forced to live in exile in China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea



due to General Lon Nol's coup d'état.

I had just visited Moscow with my parents and was returning to school in Prague when I was informed that my beloved father had been the victim of a coup and that my parents had been sentenced to death. It was a heartbreaking time for all of us.

My mother arranged for my brother, Prince Narindrapong, and I to continue our education in Moscow and Prague, respectively, by writing personal letters to the Russian and Czech Presidents, who kindly agreed to her request by granting scholarships to us.

The Czech authorities also arranged for me to leave the Cambodian Embassy in Prague, where I had been living, since the Ambassador and Embassy staff had declared themselves loyal to General Lon Nol. I was then lodged with one of my teachers from the Prague Conservatory.

This was the beginning of the most difficult decade in the life of my beloved parents. Their Chinese hosts, in particular H.E. Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, did their utmost to make them feel welcome and comfortable in Peking, often arranging for them to visit various provinces of China so that my parents could appreciate the Chinese cultural heritage as well as the development of the country.

In Peking, the Queen Mother not only provided moral and emotional support to my beloved father, but also ensured that His Majesty had all the assistance necessary to carry out his important diplomatic and political activities for Cambodia.

After April 1975, my beloved mother also took on the role of our caregiver and nurse while we were imprisoned in the Royal Palace. If we became ill, she treated us using a



The Queen Mother in early 1970.

THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HRH Prince Norodom Duongchak; the Queen Mother and her sister HRH Princess Sisowath Anne-Marie (Nanette) Grasse, February 1970; the Queen Mother (number 4) and the basketball team of the Lycée Descartes, 1950s. Photos: Courtesy of Mme. Gaëlle Rogations, Lycée Descartes



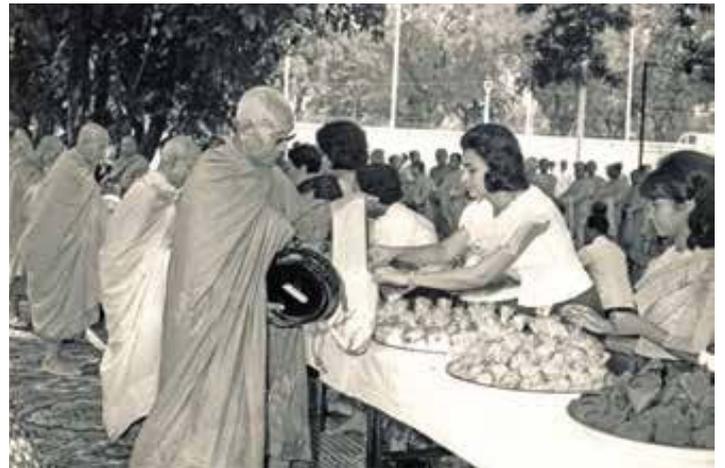
TOP : The Queen Mother with her two sons: Prince (now His Majesty King) Norodom Sihamoni and Prince (Samdech) Norodom Narindrapong (1954-2003).

BOTTOM : The Queen Mother, her eldest son HM King Norodom Sihamoni and His late Majesty the King Father.

The Queen Mother visiting a temple
in Angkor Wat, March 1973.



THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



TOP LEFT & RIGHT: Her Majesty with the wives of senior Chinese leaders, including Madame Zhang Qiang (Chen Yi), Madame Wang Guangmei (Liu Shaoqi) and Madame Deng Yingtao (Zhou Enlai), 1960s.; Her Majesty during the visit of French President Charles de Gaulle to Cambodia, 1966; MIDDLE LEFT & RIGHT: Her Majesty and the King Father in Belgrade for the Non-aligned Summit Conference, 1965; the Queen Mother presenting alms to Samdech Chuon Nath, 1960s; BOTTOM LEFT: as President of the Cambodian Red Cross in the 1960s, Her Majesty visited hospitals and clinics and distributed assistance to those in need.

medical kit which she had brought from China. She cared for us in a marvelous fashion. For sixty years, Her Majesty the Queen Mother, Samdech Preah Reach Akka-Mohesey Norodom Monineath of Cambodia, has not only been the wife and devoted companion of our much-grieved King Father in his successive roles as Prime Minister, Head of State, resistance leader and King, but she has also been the “*tower of strength*” of the Royal Family, providing much-needed moral support to His Majesty the King Father during difficult times, allowing him to undertake all his political and diplomatic activities for the benefit of the people of Cambodia.

She has, in addition, assumed the mantle of Mother for all my brothers and sisters, royal children of His Majesty the late King Father, whose own mothers died of natural causes or were victims of the Khmer Rouge massacres in Cambodia.

Thus, as a Nation and as a Royal Family, this 80th birthday anniversary is our opportunity to thank Your Majesty, dearest Maman, for inspiring us with your selfless duty and service and for making all of us proud to be Cambodian. I am sure our compatriots will join us in celebrating this most auspicious event with joyfulness and pride.

❧ Norodom Sihamoni ❧



The Queen Mother, the King Father, their two sons and the late HRH Princess (Samdech) Norodom Sorya Rangsey.

THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



ABOVE: Her Majesty, accompanied by HRH Princess Buppha Devi, entertains Madame Jacqueline Kennedy, 1967.

BELOW: The King Father, the Queen Mother and Prime Minister Samdech Son Sann, toasting Madame Jacqueline Kennedy at an official dinner during her visit to Cambodia in November 1967.

THE QUEEN MOTHER:
*A Remarkable Record
of Devotion, Dedication
and Commitment*



Her Majesty during the Sacred Furrow (Royal Ploughing) celebration, 1960s.

Her Majesty the Queen Mother was born Paule-Monique Izzi on 18 June 1936 in Saigon from the marriage between Madame Pomme Peang and Mr. Jean-Francois Izzi, a French gentleman of Italian origin who was posted both in Phnom Penh and Saigon as Managing Director of *Credit Foncier*, a French national mortgage bank which operated in Indochina at that time.

Mr. Jean-Francois Izzi was a close friend of His Majesty King Norodom Suramarit, the father of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk.

Madame Pomme Peang was the daughter of Madame Ouk, who had previously been married to His Royal Highness Prince Norodom Duongchak, eldest son of His Majesty King Norodom.

Miss Monique Izzi acquired her primary education at the Norodom College (Collège Norodom) and completed her secondary education, first at the Lycée Sisowath, and then at the Lycée Descartes in Phnom Penh.

Her Majesty was an active participant in the sport activities of the Lycée Descartes as a member of its volleyball and basketball teams.

Her Majesty married His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk in April 1952 and was then bestowed the title of Princess. They had two sons: His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah Boromneath Norodom Sihamoni, born on 14 May 1953 and elected King of Cambodia on 14 October 2004, and His Royal Highness Samdech Norodom Narindrapong, born on 18 September 1954, who unfortunately passed away on 8 October 2003.

In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, Her Majesty developed into a gracious and beautiful hostess for the many Heads of State who visited Cambodia, and accompanied King Father Sihanouk on State visits to China, France, the United Nations, the Philippines and Indonesia.

The King Father always considered it very important to provide the warmest possible welcome to their official guests from abroad, and the Queen Mother often accompanied His Majesty during his trips to the provinces where she ensured that all arrangements were in order in advance of a visit by a Head of State or government representative.

At home, Her Majesty served as President of the Cambodian Red Cross from 1961 until March 1970, when the Lon Nol coup engulfed Cambodia in the war which was ravaging neighboring Vietnam.

During the 1960s, the Cambodian Red Cross played an important role in caring for Cambodians who suffered as a result of incursions by Vietcong, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces into Cambodian territory. The organization also served as a humanitarian intermediary between the families of American prisoners of war and Vietcong authorities, helping facilitate the release of many prisoners.

Following the 18 March 1970 coup d'état by General Lon Nol, His Majesty the King Father, the Queen Mother, members of the government and the Royal Family were granted asylum in the People's Republic of China, where they lived until December 1975, when they returned permanently to Cambodia.

Between late December 1975 and January 1979, Her Majesty lived under house arrest at

The Queen Mother at the Annual National Tree Planting Day, 1996.



the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh with His Majesty the King Father and their two children, Princes Sihamoni and Narindrapong.

Her Majesty often extends compassionate acts of kindness toward others who might be experiencing bereavement or illness.

King Norodom Sihamoni recalls that during the years when the family was under house arrest at the Khemarin Palace in Phnom Penh, the Queen took personal care of everyone:

“I remember one of the women that stayed with us fell and cut open her head badly. My mother went straight to her medical kit, took out the instruments, cleaned up the wound which was deep and stitched it up.”¹

After the Paris Agreements of October 1991, which ended the second exile of the royal couple, Her Majesty and the King Father returned to Cambodia on 14 November 1991 and she once again became involved in the activities of the Cambodian Red Cross.

In 1992, Her Majesty was elevated to the rank of Samdech Preah Cheyea, and in September 1993, following the proclamation of the new Constitution, Cambodia again became a monarchy. The throne was given to His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk Varman, who became King of Cambodia. Her Majesty was given the rank of Samdech Preah Mohèsey and became Queen of Cambodia, with the name Norodom Monineath Sihanouk.

On 2 January 1996, Her Majesty was elevated to the rank of Samdech Preah Reach Akka-Mohèsey by Royal Kret (Decree).



THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Her Majesty poses with students from a Cambodian Red Cross training course, 1960s; the King Father, HRH Prince Norodom Khemanourak and the Queen Mother (Prince Khemanourak was never seen alive after 1976.); Their Majesties with HRH (Samdech Preah Ream) Princess Norodom Buppha Devi, 1997.

THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



Her Majesty the Queen Mother at the Throne Hall, late 1990s.





TOP: The Queen Mother visiting Cambodian refugees at Khao-I-Dang camp on 6 July 1982; BOTTOM: The Queen Mother, High Representative of the King Father, visiting Cambodian refugees at Site B on the Thai-Cambodian border, July 1987.



The Queen Mother with Cambodian refugees at Phnom Malai camp on the Thai-Cambodian border, 1983.



TOP: Following the passing of the King Father in October 2012, the Queen Mother was the object of the affection of the people of Cambodia, who gathered by the thousands every day in front of the Royal Palace to share their grief with “Samdech Me.” BOTTOM: His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni and the Queen Mother greet the people outside the Royal Palace, October 2012.



Opening of the Preah Sihanouk Raja Geriatric Center, August 2015.

Following the abdication of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk as King of Cambodia, the National Assembly unanimously gave her the title of Samdech Preah Mohaksatrei Preah Vorakreach Meada or Her Majesty the Queen Mother of Cambodia.

The Queen Mother often displays a genuine pastoral, if very private, thoughtfulness for other people, which is an admirable quality in a Queen. While she is a very public figure, she has also managed to remain a very private person, and for that the people of Cambodia are very grateful.

Behind her simplicity and modesty, she maintains a profound knowledge of contemporary Cambodian events. Queen Noor of Jordan wrote that she was very impressed by the grace and extensive knowledge Her Majesty the Queen Mother had shown about Cambodia's landmine tragedy, when the two met during Queen Noor's visit to Cambodia in October 1999.²

In recent years, the Queen Mother has called for an end to the trafficking of women and domestic violence against women. Her Majesty has stated that "*physical abuse and trafficking cost Cambodian women and girls their dignity and lead to a breakdown in family values.*"³

Though it has rarely been remarked upon, the humility shown by the Queen Mother when she is in the company of her less-fortunate compatriots reveals a truth about the hidden Queen. Her actions demonstrate that she regards them as her equals. It is indeed very touching to observe The Queen Mother together with her people.

The Queen Mother remains immensely popular in Cambodia, especially in the rural areas of the country, where the monarchy is still regarded with a certain aura of

semi-divinity. Her Majesty's commitment as a tireless charity worker has only enhanced her standing in the community.

Every 18 June, Cambodians celebrate the Queen Mother's birthday, which they affectionately refer to as "*Samdech Me's Day*." The cities and towns are decorated with displays of Her Majesty's portrait and the national flag as a testament to the high degree of loyalty and esteem felt for Her Majesty the Queen Mother of Cambodia.

Since the passing of His Majesty the King Father Norodom Sihanouk in October 2012, the Queen Mother has continued the charitable work the late King undertook in favor of less-privileged Cambodians through the building of schools, clinics, and fish ponds and by providing assistance to the disabled and ailing.

The Queen Mother also sponsored construction of the Preah Sihanouk Raja Geriatric Center at the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Hospital in Phnom Penh. The \$2.9 million Center was funded by donations from the Queen Mother and members of the Royal Family, as well as other donors.

A LOVE STORY,
Not a Fairy Tale



The Royal Couple in early 1970 in France.

On Monday, 30 January 1956, the American magazine *Time* published an article entitled “*Monique Meets the King*,” mistakenly suggesting that Paule-Monique Izzi, a slim, delicate, bronzed student at Phnom Penh’s Lycée Descartes, had the idea of marrying a Cambodian prince, not a European one.

According to the magazine, Monique, the daughter of a Cambodian lady and a French-Italian gentleman employed by *Credit Foncier* in Indochina, had met the young King of Cambodia, Norodom Sihanouk, for the first time at a beauty contest organized by UNESCO in the Cambodian capital.⁴



To
 my wife
 The only true love of my life.
 Avec mon amour et ma reconnaissance
 sans bornes.
 N. Sihanouk
 R. Cambodge

Pour
celle que j'aime et admire la plus
au monde, après mon auguste
Maman, pour celle qui a tant
fait pour moi : mon épouse,
S. A. R. La Princesse Norodom
Monique, avec ma plus profonde
affection et mon immense
reconnaissance.

S. Sihanouk

Le 6 juillet 1984





The Queen Mother shared a love of music with the King Father and they often sang together.



In fact, the future Queen of Cambodia had known King Sihanouk since a young age because her father, Mr. Jean-Francois Izzi, was a close friend of Prince Suramarit, while her mother, Madame Pomme Peang, was very close to the King's grandparents, Prince and Princess Norodom Sutharot.⁵

Mr. Izzi, who held a strong affection for the Suramarits, frequently visited the Suramarit residence located on the then-named Boulevard Leng Sisowath (near the Independence Monument). He felt very comfortable and at ease in their company. Mr. Izzi also offered the young King Sihanouk many illustrated books from France, such as *Ali Baba, A Thousand and One Nights, Bicot Bicotin* and others.

When Monique was aged 12, she accompanied her mother on a visit to the residence of Prince and Princess Suramarit and met the young Sihanouk, who told Madame Pomme Peang that in a few years' time, he would ask for the hand of Monique in marriage. However, Madame Peang responded:

*“Sire, you are a well-known Casanova. Every six months you change your “Dulcinea.” Please allow my daughter to find, when the time comes, a good and loyal husband. A monogamous not a polygamous like you, Sire.”*⁶

Years later, at the UNESCO-sponsored beauty contest, the young King was present and encouraged Monique to participate in the contest, but she was not prepared to do so and shyly asked the King; *“Sire, if I do not win, I will cry. What will you do to console me?”*⁷

King Sihanouk replied that if she were unlucky and did not win, he would present her with the most beautiful engraved silver cup and the whole audience would

enthusiastically applaud her.⁸

At the event, the future Queen of Cambodia won the beauty contest and soon afterward, the King asked Madame Peang for her daughter's hand, since Mr. Izzi had unfortunately died during the Second World War.

Counseled by Khun Preah Moneang Bopha Norleak Meak, the Doyenne of the widows of the late King Sisowath Monivong, and mother of HRH Prince Sisowath Kussarak, a cousin and tennis partner of King Sihanouk, Madame Pomme Peang agreed to the marriage of her younger daughter to King Sihanouk.

In 1952, in celebration of his forthcoming marriage, King Sihanouk composed one of his most popular songs, *The Night I Met You* (*Le soir où je t'ai rencontrée*) a cha-cha-cha, whose lyrics are as follows:

“In the past, I was like a ship without a home port and was sailing aimlessly in the breeze. But, at present, you are here, my beloved. I will not move more and always stay with you and you alone. For you are and will always be my one and true happiness.”⁹

In 1953, the King Father composed the bolero *Monica* (Monica being, of course, the translation into Italian and Spanish of “Monique”), in which the late monarch, once again, expressed his love for the Queen Mother in the following terms:

“Monica so beautiful you are, like a gentle evening star, my sweet Monica. Your love, your laughter and your charms fill my empty arms with happiness. Monica you are the world to me, always in my thoughts you'll be my one true love.”¹⁰

Monica was followed, in 1954, by *Rose of Phnom Penh*, a rumba in which the King Father

THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: The Queen Mother's 50th birthday, Pyongyang, June 1986; the Royal couple in the film *Twilight*, 1969; the Royal Couple at Tiananmen Square in Peking in October 2011, as honored guests of the Chinese government on the occasion of Chinese National Day; Pyongyang, 1982.



The Royal Couple in the film "Twilight", 1969.

confirmed his love for the Queen Mother. Interestingly, from that year onward, the King Father chose to become monogamous, abandoning the centuries-old tradition of Khmer kings having multiple wives.

Their love story lasted 60 years until October 2012, when the King Father passed away.

THE LONG EXILE

At just thirty-four years of age, Her Majesty's life was altered suddenly and completely as she found herself in exile in China with His Majesty the King Father. In July 1972, during one of the few interviews ever granted by Her Majesty, she confided that she had changed.¹¹

“In the past, I never had a political life. I never participated in politics. My sole concern was the Red Cross and my official duties as wife of the Head of State.”¹²

She added that since the coup d'état, she had been compelled to participate actively in political life, developing an awareness of international affairs and, of course, of circumstances within Cambodia.

“My life before was very simple....but now, it is a bit more complicated. After the liberation (of Cambodia), I think it will continue to be so.”¹³

When that interview took place in the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang in July 1972, it was unthinkable that Cambodia would be liberated from the pro-U.S. regime of Lon Nol only to fall prey to the whims of Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge, who placed the King Father, Queen Mother and their immediate family under house arrest.

In Peking, the Queen Mother assisted the King Father with secretarial work, including the classification of letters, news cables and press cuttings which contained news about events back home in Cambodia.

In the same interview, she confided that even though this kind of work was completely new to her, it was an important part of her dedication to the liberation of Cambodia. She also continued her activities as President of the Cambodian Red Cross under the



The Queen Mother during a visit to the Summer Palace outside Peking, 1970s.

尊敬的諾曼敦. 西哈努克國王閣下:
頃收到你親手做的三種名貴特
菜, 特向你表示衷心地感謝! 你親
手做的菜, 看起來很美好, 吃起來
一定更美味. 你對我們的非常
珍貴的友誼, 使我們非常感動!
現由隨員專誠致謝. 請你
接收我們最誠摯的敬意和良好
的友誼和祝福. 同樣向你的夫
人致意!
鄧穎超 周恩來
一九七〇年七月

A handwritten message from Madame Deng Yingchao and Prime Minister Zhou Enlai, 1970.



**Translation of Zhou Enlai's letter to Norodom Sihanouk
Dated 7 February 1972**

Respected Samdech Norodom Sihanouk

We have received the three dishes which you have cooked yourself for us. These dishes were beautiful to look at and certainly delicious. We were very touched by this extraordinary gesture of your precious friendship towards us. We would like to waste no time in sending you a few words to thank you.

Please accept the expression of our high esteem as well as friendship and best regards, which we also convey to Princess Monique.

**Deng Yingchao
Zhou Enlai**

7 February 1972

framework of the newly-established Royal Government of the National Union of Cambodia (GRUNC).

Immediately after the coup in March 1970, the Queen Mother felt betrayed and disillusioned by the actions of many persons in Phnom Penh whom she had considered to be good friends:

*“It was precisely these people whom I considered good friends who were the first to betray me.”*¹⁴

Indeed, soon after the 18 March 1970 coup, a well-orchestrated campaign began in earnest against Samdech Norodom Sihanouk and the Queen Mother’s immediate family, who were accused of gunrunning for the Vietcong.¹⁵ There was no evidence whatsoever for such allegations and in fact, in the early 1990s, declassified U.S. and Australian reports suggested that the arms, mostly Chinese, had been smuggled by a shadowy Chinese-Cambodian named Kuch An, who was operating while in exile in Hong Kong.¹⁶

Kuch An was an associate of Lon Nol who had been exiled from Cambodia in 1967 following a dispute with Cambodian officials over the extent of bribes paid for their cooperation in the smuggling activities.¹⁷ He had settled in Hong Kong and co-founded the Hak Ly Transport Company, based in Cambodia, as well as a Hong Kong shipping company whose ships were used to transport arms to the Vietcong.¹⁸

On 24 March 1970, the Queen Mother spoke at a press conference in Peking and stated that *“neither she nor her husband held large personal fortunes and that neither had bank accounts in Britain or Switzerland.”*¹⁹

The Queen Mother added, *“Our names are being dragged in the mud. Our enemies are pouring out an endless stream of lies about us.”*²⁰

When the above allegations, deemed by intelligence agencies to be *“presumptive evidence,”* failed to produce any positive outcome, the campaign changed tactics and the late monarch and the Queen Mother were alleged to have left Cambodia in January 1970 with cases of gold which were used to fund the construction of their residences in Peking and Pyongyang!

This allegation was also false. The residences in Peking and Pyongyang were placed at the disposal of the King Father and the Queen Mother by the governments of the People’s Republic of China and the D.P.R of Korea, respectively.

After the Khmer Rouge took over Cambodia, a last attempt was made to denigrate the Queen Mother through the allegation that she felt so optimistic about her future that, in September 1975, she had ordered a crown for herself from Cartier in Paris, one of the world’s most expensive and fashionable jewelers.²¹

By the time this allegation was published by what was a reputable magazine in Hong Kong, the King Father, the Queen Mother and their two children were already prisoners of the Khmer Rouge in the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh, while many members of the immediate Royal Family of the King Father had disappeared at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, never to be seen alive again.

As King Sihamoni has recalled:

“Many people do not realize that we lost two sisters and three brothers during the war, as well as eleven



TOP: The King Father, the Queen Mother and members of their immediate family after a badminton game in Peking, 1970s. LEFT: The King Father and the Queen Mother during one of the tours of “liberated Cambodia” organized by the Khmer Rouge leadership, 1976.

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Top: The Queen Mother accompanied by Madame Kim Il Sung, visiting a factory in Pyongyang, 1970s. Bottom: Their Majesties visiting the tomb of the late President Josip Broz Tito of the former Yugoslavia, 1980s.





TOP: The Queen Mother and her elder sister, Princess Sisowath Anne-Marie (Nanette), taking care of Her Majesty Queen Sisowath Kossamak in Peking, 1974. BOTTOM: King Norodom Sihamoni, the Queen Mother, the King Father and Madame Deng Yingchao (wife of Zhou Enlai), 1979.







The Queen Mother in Paris after their liberation from the Khmer Rouge, 1979.

of their children. The four of us were imprisoned in the Palace, along with three women who were close friends of my mother.”²²

Exile life in Peking consisted of work in the Secretariat of Samdech Norodom Sihanouk, where the Queen Mother assisted with his correspondence as well as performed her own duties as President of the Cambodian Red Cross under the framework of the Royal Government of the National Union of Cambodia. The Queen Mother interrupted her duties only for a lunch break followed by a brief rest, after which she continued her work. In the evenings, they played badminton or watched movies.

Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and his wife, Deng Yingchao, were the perfect hosts and often visited or sent freshly-prepared dishes to the Royal couple, always accompanied by brief words of encouragement and friendship. The Chinese also scheduled visits to ancient sites and new developments around China, where the royal couple were always welcomed with great respect and camaraderie.

Samdech Norodom Sihanouk also prepared Cambodian or French dishes for the Chinese Prime Minister and his wife, who took such great care of them.

During March and April 1973, the Queen Mother was courageously at the side of the King Father as the late King undertook the long journey back to Cambodia via the Ho Chi Minh trail for a visit that lasted almost a month. In her diary, the Queen Mother noted that they were constantly in danger of being bombed by U.S. planes.

She was also at the side of the King Father when he paid State visits to Albania, Romania and the former Yugoslavia in July 1973, and then again in 1974 and 1975 on visits to

several African countries and on return visits to the above-named countries, which were strong supporters of the Royal Government of the National Union of Cambodia (GRUNC).

In November 1973, Her Majesty Queen Sisowath Kossamak was allowed to leave Cambodia to rejoin Samdech Norodom Sihanouk in China. The Queen Mother supervised all the arrangements to make Her Majesty's stay in China as comfortable as possible.



As President of the Cambodian Red Cross under the framework of GRUNC, the Queen Mother visited a hospital in Hanoi after a U.S. bombing, 1970s.

A ROYAL AMBASSADOR
For Cambodia

Article 16 of the 1993 Cambodian Constitution states that the Queen of the Kingdom of Cambodia shall not have the right to engage in politics, assume the role of Head of State or Head of Government, or assume other administrative or political roles.²³

It further states that the Queen of the Kingdom of Cambodia shall perform activities that serve social, humanitarian, and religious interests, and shall assist the King with protocol and diplomatic functions.

Her Majesty the Queen Mother has been respectful of the Constitution in all her endeavors from September 1993 until the abdication of the King Father in October 2004, when the Cambodian National Assembly conferred upon them the official titles of King Father and Queen Mother, with the same prerogatives and immunities as the reigning King.

It is not well-known, however, that in the late 1980s, Her Majesty the Queen Mother was destined to play a significant diplomatic role in the settlement of the Cambodian conflict.

The story began when Khmer Rouge forces attacked elements of the National Sihanoukian Army (ANS) in early May 1987, killing several soldiers. This kind of incident had occurred in the past, however in order to maintain the unity of the tenuous Cambodian resistance (formed by FUNCINPEC, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front [KPNLF] and DK Party [Khmer Rouge]), the King Father had not commented publicly but instead wrote letters to his coalition partners, drawing their attention to the human rights violations.

Furthermore, in handwritten comments in his Monthly Bulletin of Information (BMD),



The Queen Mother and Madame Chirac, Paris, 1996.

he threatened to leave the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea if the DK Party did not cease to commit violations of human rights, not only against ANS forces, but also in the DK-controlled refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border, as had been documented in Amnesty International reports.

This situation changed, however, on 6 May 1987, when the King Father received a confidential report from Prince Ranariddh informing him of the above-mentioned attack on ANS forces by the Khmer Rouge.

On 7 May 1987, Samdech Norodom Sihanouk announced that he was terminating, for a period of twelve months from 7 May 1987 to 7 May 1988, all diplomatic and political activities on behalf of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK).²⁴

The late King stated that his decision was based upon the continuous violations of human rights, not only against the Sihanoukist forces, but also against innocent civilians who were living in refugee camps under the control of the DK Party (Khmer Rouge) along the Thai-Cambodian border.

The late King's decision took the major sponsors of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) by surprise. After a series of meetings in different ASEAN capitals, it was decided that Indonesian and Thai delegations would be sent to Pyongyang in North Korea, where Samdech Sihanouk was staying, to speak to the Cambodian leader and determine what could be done to allay his concerns.

It was at this time that Samdech Sihanouk made the decision to send his wife, as his High Personal Representative, on a mission to Thailand to explain to his supporters in the

FUNCINPEC camps why he had taken such a drastic position. At the same time, the Queen Mother was charged with explaining Samdech Sihanouk's decision to the relevant Thai authorities.

During meetings in Bangkok with the Thai Foreign Minister (ACM Siddhi Savetsila), U.S. representatives, French senior diplomats and the Indonesian Foreign Minister (Dr. Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, who had made a special trip to Bangkok to meet with the Queen Mother), she articulated the concerns which had led Samdech Sihanouk to defend the human rights of Cambodian refugees living in camps controlled by the Khmer Rouge.

Her Majesty was also invited to visit Malaysia for talks with that country's then-Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, who dispatched a special plane to Bangkok to fly the Queen Mother and her entourage to Kuala Lumpur.

Her Majesty's diplomatic discussions in Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur were very successful and were supported by ASEAN, with a firm position toward the DK Party violations of human rights in the refugee camps under their control, as well as inside occupied Cambodia.

Further talks in Pyongyang between Samdech Norodom Sihanouk and the Indonesian and Thai Foreign Ministers established the road map which led to the first round of intra-Cambodian discussions hosted by the King Father at Fère-en-Tardenois (France) in December of that year, and to further intra-Cambodian meetings leading to the 1991 Paris Agreements on Cambodia.

Whether as Queen Consort, Mother of Royal Princes, Royal Ambassador or Queen Mother, Her Majesty has always been guided by a fundamental principle: duty to Cambodia



and her people, and to the institution of the monarchy, which has survived foreign bombing, civil war, genocide and foreign occupation. For all that, Cambodians must be truly proud.



The Queen Mother at the side of the King Father, at the first intra-Cambodian meeting held with Prime Minister Hun Sen and his delegation at Fère-en-Tardenois in December 1987.

THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



LEFT: The Queen Mother accompanies the King Father and visiting HRH Princess Margaret of the United Kingdom during a visit to Angkor, 1968. RIGHT: The Queen Mother and Royal Princess Anne of the United Kingdom during the latter's visit to Cambodia. BOTTOM: The Queen Mother welcomes HRH Princess Astrid of Belgium to her residence, April 2013.





ABOVE: The Queen Mother being greeted upon arrival in Kuala Lumpur, 1984. BOTTOM: With Malaysia's founding father, Tunku Abdul Rahman, in Penang, 1984.



AMBASSADOR



EMBASSY OF MALAYSIA
BANGKOK

1 July, 1987.

Your Royal Highness,

I have the honour to convey to you the following telegram which I have received from the Honourable Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Quote:

Your Royal Highness Princess Monique,

Your Royal Highness, I have great honour and pleasure to extend to your Royal Highness an invitation to visit Malaysia on July 3, 1987 as guest of the Government of Malaysia.

The visit by Your Royal Highness will provide a valuable opportunity for us to renew our friendship as well as to exchange views on the latest development on Kampuchea.

I look forward to meeting Your Royal Highness in Kuala Lumpur.

Please accept Your Royal Highness, the assurances of my highest consideration and respect.

Sgd.

Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad

Unquote

Please accept Your Royal Highness, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Bakri'.

(Bakri Aiyub Ghazali)
Ambassador

HRH Princess Monique
BANGKOK.



No. 0305/54583

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Saranrom Palace, Bangkok.

๓๓ July B.E. 2530 (1987)

Your Royal Highness,

I have the honour to acknowledge with sincere thanks the message from Your Royal Highness dated 4 July 1987. The Thai Government and people were very pleased to have the opportunity of welcoming Her Royal Highness Princess Monique to Thailand, where she represented Your Royal Highness with distinction during this visit. The presence of Her Royal Highness at the Thai-Kampuchean border helped to boost the morale of the Kampuchean people, who have always looked to Your Royal Highness as the source of their hope for the rebirth of an independent and peaceful Kampuchea.

I look forward to the honour and pleasure of having an audience with Your Royal Highness in Pyongyang in August.

Please accept, Your Royal Highness, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.

Air Chief Marshal

(Siddhi Savetsila)

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand

H.R.H. Prince Norodom Sihanouk,
President of Democratic Kampuchea,
DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA.

THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



TOP: The Queen Mother visiting a factory in Somalia, 1970s. BOTTOM: The Queen Mother joins the King Father in receiving guests at a United Nations reception, October 1975.





TOP: During a visit to the former Yugoslavia in 1973, the Queen Mother and the King Father were the honored guests of President Josip Broz Tito and his wife. BOTTOM: The Kantha Bopha residence within the compound of the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. Her Majesty the Queen Mother has lived in this Royal residence since October 2004 following the abdication of the King Father.



THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



The Queen Mother welcomes the people to the Royal Palace grounds, 2000.





TOP: Her Majesty the Queen Mother receiving HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand, February 2016. BOTTOM: The Queen Mother prays with Buddhist monks outside the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh after the passing of the King Father, October 2012.





The Queen Mother at Phnom Penh International Airport on April 6, 2011. (photo by Mak Remissa)



Top: The King Father and Queen Mother in October 2004. Bottom: The Queen Mother presiding an official function in 2001





His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni and Her Majesty the Queen Mother with the U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia greeting members of the U.S. Air Force String Quartet at a concert in Phnom Penh , May 8, 2016.

(photo courtesy of U.S. Embassy)



THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



ABOVE: His Majesty King Norodom Sihamoni and Her Majesty the Queen Mother with the U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia greeting members of the U.S. Air Force String Quartet at a concert in Phnom Penh , May 8, 2016. *(photo courtesy of U.S. Embassy)* BELOW: The Queen Mother welcomes the people to the Royal Palace grounds, 2000.





ABOVE: The Queen Mother receiving members of the Battambang Women's wheelchair basketball Team, April 2016. BELOW: The Queen Mother and His Imperial Highness Prince Akishino, High Representative of HM the Emperor of Japan, at the Royal Funeral of the late King Father.



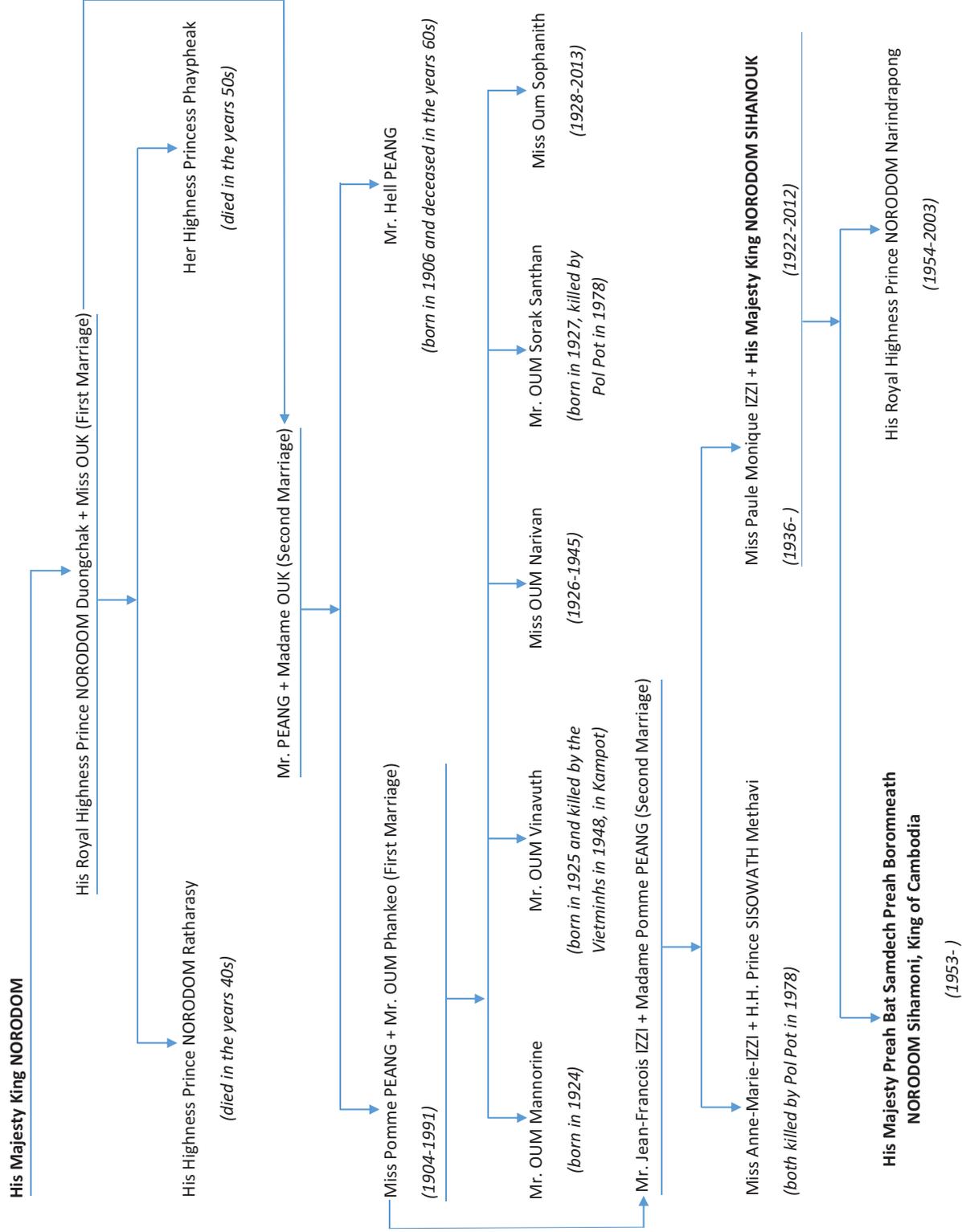
THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE



A poster of the Queen Mother in Phnom Penh.

GENEALOGY TREE OF
*Her Majesty the
Queen Mother*

GENEALOGICAL TREE OF H.M. THE QUEEN MOTHER NORODOM MONINEATH SIHANOUK OF CAMBODIA



ENDNOTES

THE QUEEN MOTHER: AN EVENTFUL LIFE

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2 *Associated Press*, 19 October 1999.

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21 *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Hong Kong, 28 May 1976.

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