

King Norodom Sihanouk



King Norodom Sihanouk was born on October 31, 1922, in Phnom Penh; son of King Norodom Suramarit and Queen Sisowath Kossamak.

The King commented his formal education in a Phnom Penh primary school, the Ecole Francois Baudoin. He continued his secondary education in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City) Vietnam and military school in Saumur, France.

When his uncle, King Sisowath Monivong, died on April 23, 1941, the Crown Council selected Prince Sihanouk king of Cambodia. He was crowned in September 1941.

After World War II and into the early 1950s, king Sihanouk developed more of a nationalist approach and began demanding that the French leave the country. He went into exile to Thailand in 1952 and refused to reenter Cambodia until it was independent. He returned when Cambodia was granted full independence on November 9, 1953.

In March 1955, he abdicated in favor of his father. A few months later he became the prime minister. At the death of his father in 1960, Prince Sihanouk was elected head of state. He held this position until he was overthrown in a coup in March 1970. After the coup Prince Sihanouk fled to Beijing and organized forces to resist the Lon Nol government in Phnom Penh. When the Khmer Republic fell to the Khmer Rouge in April 1975, Prince Sihanouk became the head of state. Within a year he forced out of office and went into political retirement. The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978 and ousted the Khmer Rouge.

Although wary of the Khmer Rouge, Prince Sihanouk eventually joined forces with them in order to provide a united front against the Vietnamese occupiers. In 1982, he became president of the coalition government of Democratic Kampuchea, which consisted of his FUNCINPEC, Son Sann's KPNLF and Khmer Rouge. The Vietnamese withdrew in 1989

and left behind a pro-Vietnamese government under Prime Minister Hun Sen.

The peace negotiation between CGDK and PRK lasted until 1991 when all sides agreed to a comprehensive peace settlement which was signed in Paris. Prince Sihanouk returned to Cambodia in Nov 1991 after thirteen years in exile. In 1993, he was reinstated as king of Cambodia.

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