

CHAPTER ONE

Everyday Privatization

Educational privatization is far more than the private tutoring I first witnessed in Cambodia. It is a social phenomenon and process that has impacted education systems around the world (Adamson, Astrand & Darling-Hammond, 2016). It is also a subset of a broader phenomenon I call everyday privatization, building off scholars such as Geertz (1973) and Berger and Luckmann (1966). Everyday privatization conceptualizes the phenomenon stretching across all of social life, impacting intersubjective experiences of individuals and communities in and outside various institutions. Such a concept relies on a phenomenological sociology where the perspectives of people are used to understand the phenomenon under investigation. In short, everyday privatization is a social construction comprised of behaviour, actions, interactions, and affect, and has real impacts on life. It can be influenced by policies of privatization but not necessarily. It can be influenced by pre-existing cultural norms, but it can also change them. In this chapter, I explore the concept of everyday privatization in more detail, first by reviewing educational privatization in general and then by looking at the case of Cambodia specifically. I combine research from the sociology of education, the economics of education, and anthropology to build my conceptual lens. At the end of this introductory chapter, I provide an overview of the remaining chapters of the book.

Educational Privatization

In an edited volume on educational privatization and social justice, Ian Macpherson, Susan Robertson, and Geoffrey Walford (2014), brought together a collection of case studies from Asia and Africa that provide empirical evidence of the scale, scope, and diffusion of educational privatization into many aspects of education from policymaking to provision. The cases showed that the education sectors in these locations had opened up to profit-making motives by private actors. Additionally, learners across diverse contexts had been conceptualized to varying degrees as consumers. This is the heart of educational privatization: schools are potential sites of immense economic profit, which either turns teachers, students, and schools into customers or the products being sold.

The editors pointed out that issues of privatization were not new. Nevertheless, they argued that the intensity of privatization in public education had become more acute since the 1980s and therefore demanded attention. Their point suggests that the process (or processes) of privatization can ebb and flow across time, dependent on national and global political economic formations (see also Sahlberg, 2016). A similar point was made 20 years earlier. Mark Bray (1994), in his reply to William K. Cummings and Abby Riddell's (1994) article on alternative policies for the finance, control, and delivery of basic education, drew attention to the fact that there is a complex range of possibilities — a continuum of sorts — between privatization and publicization:

At one extreme private schools with no government funding or controls may exist, and at the other extreme government schools with full government funding and control may exist. However, between these extremes private institutions may receive varying amounts of public funding and be subject to varying degrees of control; and government institutions

may supplement their resources through fees and other means, and may have varying degrees of autonomy. (Bray, 1994, p. 820)

The range of possibilities between privatization and publicization that Bray laid out is a useful aid, helping to situate the various processes of privatization not only in relation to each other but also in comparison to the processes of publicization. In the quarter century since Bray's (1994) reply, a plethora of empirical evidence on educational privatization has been produced (see Verger, Fontdevila & Zancajo, 2016). Examining these findings in more detail reveals a diverse array of privatization processes that would likely have been inconceivable in scope and scale in 1994.

The starting point for the increased privatization of education, to which Macpherson, Robertson, and Walford (2014) allude, is the fact that school is potentially a profitable business. That most children around the world attend some form of schooling means large sums of money circulate through the education sector to provide the necessary goods and services. IBIS Capital (2013) estimated that in 2012 global expenditures on education reached US\$4.4 trillion. Moreover, the market for e-learning services (i.e., content creation, management systems, and distribution providers) stood at US\$91 billion in 2012 and was projected to have a compound annual growth rate of 23 percent through 2017. By comparison, the S&P 500, which is a collection of 500 large US publicly traded companies, had a compound annual growth rate of 6.6 percent between 1964 and 2013 (Krejca, 2014). Investing in e-learning returns a higher capital gain than investing in the S&P 500. Today, education is big business.

The educational privatization to which IBIS Capital refers in its investment report is a departure from the historic connection between school systems and the State. Since the mid-1800s education in Western Europe and North America has been organized gradually at the behest of the

State in the form of mass schooling and paid for through the collection of taxes (Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985). Similar versions of this type of schooling supported by the State spread to nations worldwide through various international interventions (e.g., colonialism), education development efforts (e.g., through the World Bank), and global multinational frameworks (e.g., the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights). In Cambodia, mass schooling was imported by the French during the colonial period and had to co-exist and combine with an education system that historically relied on monks who taught religious and moral principles to boys inside pagodas (Clayton, 1995). Today many State schools in Cambodia are located next to and sometimes inside pagodas (WFDD, 2012).

In recent years, there has been a trend for state governments to adopt various privatization schemes to pay for parts of public education. In some cases, State governments allow private entities to operate public schools. In other cases, privatization has emerged not because of the government's desire to privatize, but rather as a consequence of the State's inability to provide public education. Nevertheless, variations of privatization within public schools exist worldwide. For example, the architects of the charter school movement in America hoped to improve quality through increasing choice and accountability (Dempster, 2013), low-fee private schools in India enrolled students where the government had been unable (Srivastava, 2013; see also, Tooley & Dixon, 2006), the rapid growth of shadow education in East Asia prepared students for high-stake examinations (Bray & Lykins, 2012) and the introduction of school fees for tertiary education in Africa shared education costs with students and their families (Varghese, 2004). Notwithstanding their differences in content or context, these varied schemes and trends may be broadly considered part of the privatization of public education movement. This movement includes a range of private

actors from for-profit business to philanthropic organization and has an intellectual history dating to Milton Friedman and James Buchanan in the 1950s (MacLean, 2018, p. xviii).

Ball and Youdell (2007) unpacked some of the ways in which public schools are being privatized by categorizing reforms into endogenous and exogenous privatization:

The first form of privatisation [is called endogenous], where the public sector is asked to behave more like the private sector, [and] is widespread and well established. The second form of privatization [is called exogenous], where the private sector moves into public education, [and] is a newer but rapidly growing form of privatisation. These forms of privatisation are not mutually-exclusive and are often inter-related, indeed, exogenous privatisation is often made possible by prior endogenous forms (Ball & Youdell, 2007, p. 13).

In this conceptualization, privatization is both a process to extract profit from the education system and the reconfiguration of the education system to resemble the ways in which private businesses operate. In other words, privatization is simultaneously “the many and complex ways in which the mentality of the business world has been injected into education, such that it operates like a competitive market, with choice, marketing managers, branding, data on student performance as proxies of quality and so on” (Macpherson, Robertson & Walford, 2014, p. 14) while also the “range of ways in which what was once public-sector activity...have now been outsourced to the private sector through tendering, consultancies, joint ventures or new forms of financing (Macpherson, Robertson & Walford, 2014, p. 15).

But should one be skeptical of educational privatization as the previous authors imply? Advocates of privatization see these changes as an effective and cost-efficient way to administer and deliver education to a nation's youth. Opponents of privatization of education cite a host of inequalities and inefficiencies that result from the reliance on private markets in public education. Despite this on-going debate, a growing number of governments are embracing the logic of privatization to pay for and administer public education. As a policy tool, privatization is commonplace.

The general outcome of educational privatization is the changing role of the nation-state from service provider to service regulator of mass schooling and the increased logic of the market inside the space of schooling. Despite mixed evidence of privatization reforms leading to increased student achievement (Zimmer et al., 2009) or of equity issues between rich and poor students, there has been the rise of charter schools in America, free schools in Britain, low-fee private schools in India, and Pearson Education operating worldwide (to name but a few notable cases). Although the world is not at the extreme of total privatization along Bray's continuum – as is evidenced by the fact that State governments still allocate large sums of money to public education – the array of privatization processes and private actors in education certainly suggests that the contemporary manifestation of privatization has moved towards the privatization end of the spectrum. Pasi Sahlberg (2016) calls these various privatization practices the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM for short), highlighting the “global” nature of the policy regime and the political nature of the international development “movement.” More recently, Diane Ravitch argues that the GERM has been overcome, at least in the USA because of the effectiveness of teacher union strikes (Ravitch, 2020).

Educational privatization is often examined as part of government policy reforms. This “top-down” approach focuses on particular government policies such as the school-based management approach to decentralization or the growth of private universities. It also focuses on the amount of recurrent expenditures spent on education by national governments and new policy schemes in national development plans, such as outsourcing the publication and printing of textbooks to private companies.

The top-down perspective conceptualizes the structure of educational privatization as deriving from government policies and a network of actors pursuing agendas that foster privatization, sometimes unknowingly (Burch, 2009). The latter includes not only international agencies such as the World Bank and UNESCO but also private companies (e.g., Pearson, Inc.) and civil society organizations (Ball, 2012). All of these actors participate and advance different neoliberal agendas in global educational reforms. The actors advancing this neoliberal agenda are all-powerful, hence the metaphor to the Biblical David and Goliath in Ravitch’s (2020) title: *Slaying Goliath*. From this perspective, privatization is part of neoliberalism, which is best defined as a “political project carried out by the corporate capitalist class as they felt intensely threatened both politically and economically towards the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s. They desperately wanted to launch a political project that would curb the power of labor” (Harvey, 2016). Over the preceding decades, national and global capitalist classes slowly retooled states and societies as capitalism became dominant. In education, this has resulted in a political economic restructuring that has promoted, to list but a few outcomes, individualism, self-realization, competitiveness, decentralization, managerialism, and student-centered learning (Carney, 2009). Teacher unions were slowly undermined, and new ways of deskilling teachers were found with every technological innovation (Apple, 1982, 2003). Public education, as a result, was undermined

by various privatization practices, including by NGOs, perhaps unknowingly (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). Returning to Ravitch: The power of labor in the form of teacher strikes (across the USA starting in 2012) was the proverbial David slaying the almighty Goliath.

In the “top-down” approach to privatization, agency is held by elite actors (or oppressed labour unions). At the school level, actors are mostly *affected* by privatization policies, through such changes as school management, funding, and operations. The processes of privatization, in other words, are constituted by macro structures conceived and implemented by (inter)national actors, which then affect local actors, such as teachers and students. What happens at the top, impacts what happens at the bottom.

An alternative way to understand the structures of privatization – and the agency of those involved in the process – is through social practices, a “bottom-up” approach. In this perspective, it is the very social practices that constitute the phenomenon of privatization, not simply government policy dictated by the capitalist elite. What happens at the bottom is not simply determined by what happens at the top.

Although this dichotomy between top-down and bottom-up is artificial and simplistic, the separation is helpful in showing different foci and underlying assumptions about the way in which social structures and human agency function. It is most likely the case that both types of privatization exist simultaneously. They are relational.

Theoretically this “bottom-up” perspective highlights how the interactions of people not only construct society but are also simultaneously constructed by it. This is not a new insight in the social sciences (Harvey, 1982, 1985, 2006; Lefebvre, 1974; Massey, 1994, 2005; Soja, 1980, 1996) and can be considered a sociological approach to privatization (Robertson, 2010). For me, the most important part of the bottom-up approach to educational privatization is that it extends

the gaze to other institutions in social life. Schools do not operate in a vacuum, apart from religious, family or government life. These institutions operate simultaneously, at times reinforcing certain social practices while at other times diverging.

The study of educational privatization has seen a nascent use of these types of sociological theories. Steven Ball (2012) used network theory to understand the diverse groupings and interactions of global education businesses participating in policy making; Susan Robertson (2010) applied a spatial lens to the processes of privatization (namely, decentralization and markets) affecting educational governance; and Prachi Srivastava (2006) developed an idea called “mental models” to highlight how children learned proper practices of schooling through the environment around them. Whereas Ball (2012) and Robertson (2010) were focused on educational privatization at the level of governance and policymaking, my approach begins with the lived experiences of teachers, parents, and students within a situated context, similar to Srivastava (2006). This particular approach requires historical and anthropological analyses to understand the changes to school and society and in-depth engagements with individuals to show “how people make policies and the ways that markets are oh-so human in their construction” (Forsey, 2010, p. 239). It requires an in-depth understanding of the social patterns in a given context. Utilizing insights derived from anthropology allows for such an analysis of privatization from the bottom-up, something that has rarely if ever (to my knowledge) happened in the academic literature on educational privatization.

Village life in Cambodia

The anthropological literature on village life in Cambodia makes clear that there is a central debate concerning the organization of society. On one side are scholars who view post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia as being “stuck” in a particular way of being. From this perspective, people are unable to build community ties and relations with each other because of past traumatic experiences (e.g., Frings, 1994; Ovesen, Trankell and Öjendal, 1996). The Khmer Rouge genocide created an abrupt social dislocation that has not yet been overcome, leaving individuals disconnected from one another. On the other side are scholars who view Cambodian villagers as actively involved in the re-configuration of social life after the Khmer Rouge (e.g., Ledgerwood, 1998; Ebihara and Ledgerwood, 2002). These scholars see deep interconnections between people in society, forming patterns of social life that exhibit both new and old features of traditional formations. In my encounters with myriad villages over the past decade, there appeared deep connections among people in society. Being “stuck” didn’t seem conceptually correct, at least in the 2010s. Nevertheless, some of the social relations in villages I witnessed did seem problematic. Many people I met, for instance, took out debt (often through micro-finance lenders) to pay education-related costs. Some families were even indebted to teachers for providing private tutoring. A debt relation is certainly not a dislocation from social life, although it is premised on a form of inequality (Graeber, 2011). It seemed to me that village life was not stuck at all but was rather actively in the process of becoming.

What then are the traditional features of village life in Cambodia? May Ebihara was the first American anthropologist to do field work in Cambodia starting in 1959 and has had outsized influence on the English-language scholarship ever since (see Marston, 2011). One of the reasons

her work is so influential is because she provides a forensic view of village life before the dislocations of the Khmer Rouge. She therefore provides a sort of baseline to think about social life in modern Cambodia. Her insights have been connected in various ways to the longer-term history of the country, which has been perhaps best captured by David Chandler (see Hansen & Ledgerwood, 2008).

The main features of village life can be summed up through three interconnected concepts: kinship, clientelism, and hierarchy. Kinship in Cambodia has been found to exist beyond known blood relationships. Kinship is not limited to legal definitions of family or marriage. These bonds among people beyond immediate family members create extensive social systems of moral obligations, including respect among large groups, assistance in times of need, and required participation in various religious festivals. Ebihara (1968) conceptualized kinship in a set of concentric circles starting from one's immediate family, working outwards to most members of the village. At some point most people (so long as they are considered "good people" rather than "bad strangers") in a village are interconnected through various informal patterns of kinship and moral obligation.

Clientelism is an elaborate system of patron-client relations where people in positions of power provide protection to some group of lower people, known as the clients. Clients provide something – gifts, rice, money, votes, etc. – in return for various types of protection, be it physical, spiritual, or material. This system of clientelism is elaborate, creating cases where a patron in one context is a client in another. In village life, this might mean a wealthy patron providing the capital needed for the construction of a pagoda and in return villagers provide loyalty and respect to the patron, likely giving small gifts whenever the patron visits. When that patron then visits wealthy people in a city, he or she might then become clients of people above.

This is where hierarchy enters social life. Hierarchy emanates most likely from the system of God-Kings who built the temples of Angkor Wat and beyond. These kings were both human and divine. They sat at the top of an elaborate social pecking order with everyone slotted into various lower positions all the way down to the lowly villager. Social mobility in such a system was rare, especially when notions of Buddhist merit were seen as determining one's position in the hierarchy. The most one could hope for was to be reincarnated in future lives with a higher status based on accumulated merit from a past life.

The social practices of kinship, clientelism, and hierarchy intersect with educational privatization in important ways. As will be seen in the chapters below, sometimes the traditional practices are furthered by privatization processes while other times privatization alters the very traditional practices and social norms. In the chapters that follow, I will draw on the anthropological literature on Cambodian village life as a way to make sense of bottom-up educational privatization. The ways in which kinship, clientelism, and hierarchy intersect with and socially construct privatization provides new conceptual thinking that can be utilized in other settings in Cambodia (and likely beyond). To understand the everyday transactions of educational privatization, it is important to situate local practices within the wider socio-economic reality of the country. I first noticed the complicated set of everyday transactions of educational privatization inside the Cambodian education system when Sok Vandy,² mother of a Grade 9 student, told me this:

My child wanted to go to private tutoring. Although we did not have enough money, she still went to study [in private tutoring] and owed her teacher for months. When I earned

money, I paid off the debt. The teacher did not mind (quoted in Brehm, Silova & Tuot, 2012 p. 31).

Vandy lived with her husband and three children in the Preah Go village, about 10 kilometers north of Siem Reap, Cambodia and about an hour's drive to the Thai border. Its close proximity to Siem Reap city makes the village semi-rural: although most residents farm, many people benefit from the tourist economy (the UNESCO heritage site of the Angkor temples are nearby) in the more populous city center. Vandy and her husband worked in the non-formal sector of the economy, finding temporary work in the rice fields during harvesting season and laying bricks in the city of Siem Reap when the occasion arose. To say money was tight would be an understatement.

Vandy's daughter understood the importance of attending private tutoring lessons. Without it, she was likely to score poorly on school and national examinations, which would consequently prevent her from moving on to Grade 10, the start of upper secondary school. Entering a debt relationship with her teacher was preferable to not attending the extra lessons and illustrates the power imbalances inherent between debtors and creditors.

Private tutoring was the phenomenon that initially brought me to research the school in Vandy's village. The reasons students attend these classes can be to finish lessons teachers did not complete during the four- or five-hour school day, practice additional example problems to remediate or enhance mainstream lessons, or prepare for school examinations as previously described. Much of this sounded familiar to my experience growing up in New Jersey, USA: I had attended private tutoring lessons in second grade to improve my reading skills because mainstream schooling was insufficient. Years later as a college student, I taught SAT examination preparation

courses during summer holidays to Taiwanese students who wanted to enroll in American universities.

Yet, my experience with private tutoring was wholly different to that of Vandy's daughter in one fundamental way: my mainstream school teacher was never my tutor. Moreover, I never was financially indebted to teachers or tutors alike. This particular circumstance led Stephen Heyneman (2011, p. 185) to comment that there "is a thin line distinguishing an investment in learning and an investment in the result of that learning": the latter of which Heyneman labelled corruption. What I discovered in Cambodia was that there were other, more sinister reasons students attended private tutoring lessons. Some teachers who could not live on their low government salary coerced students to attend and pay for extra lessons or face consequences such as corporal punishment or lower grades in mainstream school. Other times students paid teachers for answer keys on upcoming examinations. Walter Dawson (2009) labeled these reasons the "tricks of the teacher": some teachers "tricked" students into attending private tutoring by threatening them with lower grades or physical punishment. Taken together, there seemed to be a complex set of relations between students and teachers born out of the wider political economy of education that differed between public and private forms of schooling.

After reflecting on stories such as Vandy's, my attention turned to the effects of the private costs of education on the social practices inside a school system. In particular, I was interested in the way in which power worked in and through the blurred boundaries between public schooling and private tutoring. What did it mean for Vandy's daughter to engage in a debt relationship with her public-school teacher to attend private tutoring? How did she navigate between her desires to learn with her ability to afford such learning? What happened between her friends and neighbors who perhaps knew of the debt arrangement made with the teacher? I realized that within Cambodia,

like in many other countries, households must navigate the educational experience of their children through both public and private markets, which often results in diverse social practices that typically alter the way in which power works. This was the aspect of educational privatization that interested me.

It is not only the costs of private tutoring lessons that families such as Vandy's face within the Cambodia education system. Bray and Bunly (2005) compiled a list of typical household costs that included enrollment and record books, uniforms and equipment, learning materials, tests and examinations, transport, and pocket money. While I was living in Cambodia, I realized that money could be extracted from nearly every situation or opportunity inside school. In a sense, everything was — or seemed to be — for sale. Indeed, empirical research (Bray 1999; Bray & Bunly 2005) found that households paid for 77 percent of total primary education costs in 1997 and 66 percent in 2004. In lower secondary schools, households contributed 66 percent in 2004 and 48 percent in 2017 (see Towne, 2020). Taken together, households paid a large share of school costs, which caused a burden to families such as Vandy's that struggled to earn enough money simply to buy food every day. Therefore, if I wanted to understand educational privatization, I had to broaden my focus from private tutoring to other private transactions in society.

What I realized is that household financing to education is different from community financing (see e.g. Bray 1996a; Bray & Lillis 1988). Whereas community financing aims to, but certainly does not always, benefit the community at large (typically through taxes), household financing, for the most part, provides individual benefits to the children within that specific household. In the Cambodian context, an example of community financing is the money contributed by many households for the construction of school desks. This financing theoretically benefits all children in a community as multiple generations of students pass through the

classrooms containing the desks. By comparison, an example of household financing is paying for private tutoring, which provides additional learning time to the student who paid. The extra learning by one student does not directly impact the other students.

The concept of household financing becomes even more interesting inside an education system such as Cambodia's that has, for the last 30 years, attempted to increase the role of the government in the education system. The country has a nascent system of taxation after undergoing a process of publicization since the 1990s. The World Bank (online data) reports that in 1998, education accounted for 9.4 percent of total government recurrent expenditures. That number increased to 12.4 percent in 2004, before falling to a low of 7.5 percent in 2012, likely a result of the Global Financial Crisis. The number rose to nearly 10 percent the following year and continues to rise. The government's Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018 aimed to increase recurrent expenditure to 26 percent. Efforts at publicization have worked: since 2004, the contribution by the government to the cost of lower secondary school has increased 19 percent (Towne, 2020).

Despite various attempts at developing public school, private tutoring continues to thrive and demands households to make large financial contributions. Households still contribute large share of total education expenditures. How then do different people within an education system respond to the private costs of education? What happens to the relationships between people in society, such as Vandy, her daughter, and her teacher, when education services and goods must be purchased individually? Does the reliance on private finance for public education change how individuals understand themselves and one another?



This book examines the contemporary Cambodian education system using in-depth, qualitative studies of six people. By looking at their histories, biographies, and social relations (in the form of kinship, clientelism, and hierarchy) in one community, Preah Go, I focus on the everyday transactions that constitute and are constituted by everyday privatization. The Harvard sociologist, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005), calls this type of enquiry “portraiture.” Portraits are written “life drawings” that try to capture the essence of a subject, providing historical insight into human experience and social life. By looking at a part of social reality through one individual, new understandings of the whole of social reality emerge. Looking at multiple people adds texture and depth to the whole. From this perspective, it is possible to see how educational privatization is socially constructed and to what effect.

This book constructs portraits of six people who collectively span Cambodia’s recent history. They range in social position: some are teachers or parents and grandparents, others volunteer for the local Pagoda; they come from different political backgrounds, some supporting the ruling party of Hun Sen and others working for the opposition. Everyone lives in the same village, Preah Go, but some have spent their whole lives there while others moved in after the Khmer Rouge or for personal reasons years later. Everyone has had direct experience with education. Collectively they portray social life in Cambodia since independence and show exactly how, at a local level, children *learn* privatization.

The first portrait is of Botum Chenda, a teacher in the Preah Go lower secondary school. Chenda was born when Cambodia was supported by Vietnam and the Soviet Union. She was educated during the period of liberal democracy and now teaches science in the school where she used to be a student. Since her government salary does not provide enough money to survive, she also offers private tutoring to her own students, charging them a fee to attend. Chenda’s life story

shows the emergence of educational privatization in the 1990s and the resultant social relations experienced between students and teachers that stretches notions of kinship while reproducing systems of clientelism.

Moving from formal to non-formal education, we next meet Mean Sokhem, who was born after the Khmer Rouge era. He clearly remembers the change in the education system after the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) redesigned the country as a liberal democracy. He disliked the new education system. Sokhem's experiences led him, after graduating from university, to start his own school, called an NGO school. He moved to Preah Go to open his school, teaching English and Computer skills. His life story showcases the emergence of NGO schools as a key feature in the contemporary history of education. Today, his school relies on foreign volunteers and donations, creating new systems of hierarchy beyond the village's boundaries. However, the precarious nature of donations forces Sokhem to make compromises to student learning to keep his school financially solvent.

Everyday privatization happens beyond the school system. Khemera Sambath brings us into the religious institution at the village level. He was born near the end of colonial period and received nearly all his schooling inside the French education system. He came from a wealthy family who rented boats to villagers wanting to sell produce downriver. This wealth endured throughout Sambath's life, helping him survive the country's tumultuous history. Today, Sambath is a respected layman managing the affairs of the local pagoda. His biography shows how generational privilege continues despite massive changes to the socio-political structures of life and the ways in which the market of religious good deeds can take on new meanings in the neoliberal era where bottom-up privatization has become commonplace in village life.

The economics of selling educational services and religious good deeds are mediated

through community level politics. Noreaksey Pheakdei, who was born right before the Khmer Rouge came to power, won a seat on the commune council as a member of an opposition party. As an adult, in the early 1990s, Pheakdei became politically active in the taxi driver union. Moving to Preah Go after marrying, Pheakdei was convinced in the mid-2000s to run for local government. Little did he know how his work would be stymied by the ruling party's elaborate system of clientelism. His life story offers a window into the politics of opposition inside Preah Go. Pheakdei shows exactly where corruption emerges in the structures of government as well as schools, implicating the role of NGOs in largess disguised as development aid.

The political economy of the local education system must be put in a historical perspective, acknowledging the social destruction caused by the Khmer Rouge. Rotha Serey, who lived his entire life in Preah Go (he passed away in 2016), received his education in a traditional Buddhist pagoda during the final years of colonialism. His life story reveals the history of education, providing a long-term perspective that shows how the restoration after the Khmer Rouge of kinship, clientelism, and hierarchy in and beyond the education system is a positive feature of social life today. After surviving the Khmer Rouge, he subsequently married, had children, and eventually grandchildren. He has seen his children and grandchildren go through the school system from the period of Vietnam's occupation through to the era of liberal democracy. From his perspective, educational development has continued to progress over time. It has been mostly positive despite the traumatic setbacks.

The final portrait looks at the intersection of kinship, clientelism, and hierarchy in educational privatization in more depth. Tina Punthea was born into a poor family as the Khmer Rouge was losing power. Today, she is a mother of four children and must navigate the contemporary education system, which she believes will provide a way out of poverty for her

family. She is poor and a supporter of the opposition party, so her choices are limited. Without access to foreign donations, which are only given to ruling party supporters, Punthea goes to extraordinary lengths to support her children's education, putting her life in danger for higher paying jobs so she can afford her children's private tutoring fees. Punthea provides a complex account of the realities families face in contemporary Cambodia where paying for education is a fact of life. It is here where social hierarchy is seen as a major barrier to the social mobility promised by education.

The six portraits show how life at the village level has privatized, weaving together international development efforts and new and old forms of kinship, clientelism, and hierarchy. By looking across time, enduring legacies are found in the present *mélange* of social norms and behavior. Contemporary privatization did not arrive simply because of certain government policies or development efforts. Rather, history has shaped the present, ingrained practices of educational privatization, which sit within a larger sociology of social relations across village life. Readers will learn to see educational privatization as a historical and social process comprised of different actors, agendas, and outcomes. The social practices of privatization change based on dominant political economic structures, and diverse outcomes are possible. These insights demand the concept of educational privatization in any country, not only Cambodia, be understood through micro analyses of social relations coupled with the macro analyses of global political and economic structures. Such insights are possible through the method of portraiture, which combines context, history, and biography using anthropological insights into village life.

A final note on the site of my study. My engagement with the Preah Go community stretches back to 2011 when I worked as a Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation officer for a local NGO. It was in this role that I undertook my study of private tutoring in 2012. I met the six

individuals who make up the majority of this book in 2013. They volunteered to have me shadow them on-and-off for over two years. It is their stories I offer as an entry point into the complex phenomenon of everyday privatization that seems to be spreading around the world. On top of this, my insights are informed by my longer engagement at multiple levels in the country dating between 2010 and 2020. Before turning to the portraits, however, it is important to review the moments in history that have created the environment under which everyday educational privatization became possible.