

A QUICK GUIDE TO  
**The French Protectorate  
in Cambodia and the Franco–  
Siamese Treaties (1863–  
1953)**

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History, Diplomacy and Transformation of a Kingdom



Pascal Médeville – Wonders of Cambodia



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*By Pascal Médeville / Wonders of Cambodia*

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Between 1863 and 1953, Cambodia lived under a French protectorate that reshaped its borders, its monarchy, and its place in the region. Yet this crucial chapter is often reduced to a handful of images: faded colonial postcards, restored temples, and a few dates leading up to independence.

This concise guide offers a clear, engaging introduction to how the protectorate actually worked in practice and why it still matters today. Moving from Cambodia’s fragile position between Siam and Vietnam to the key treaties with France, it follows the diplomatic turning points that defined the modern kingdom, including the Franco–Siamese treaties of 1904 and 1907 and the “return of Angkor”.

Along the way, readers meet the kings, officials, scholars, and ordinary Cambodians who navigated a layered colonial reality: dual administrations, economic change, urban transformation in Phnom Penh, and the rise of new elites and nationalist movements. Designed for travelers, students, and general readers, this booklet combines a readable narrative with timelines, glossaries, and short case studies, making it an ideal starting point for anyone wishing to understand Cambodia’s colonial past and its lasting legacies in the present.

### The author



Pascal Médeville is a writer and independent researcher based in Cambodia. Through his online project *Wonders of Cambodia*, he explores the country’s history, heritage, and everyday life, making complex historical questions accessible to a broad international audience.