

The Heritage of Cambodian Rock Music

Project Description

This is a collaborative project between the Academy of Sciences and Literature Mainz, the Global Research Institute of Paris at the Université Paris Cité, and the Department of Khmer Literature at the Royal University of Phnom Penh.



The aim of the project is to provide an online platform connecting three research perspectives regarding the heritage of Cambodian rock music:

- A detailed historical analysis of what sort of musical influences (e.g., US-American guitar music, Latin American jazz, Franco-European pop music) contributed to the development of Cambodian rock.
- Biographical sketches of the main performers in Cambodian rock music between 1955 and 1975, in what way they interacted during their careers and influenced each other, and what different accounts of their fate after the end of the Cambodian civil war under the regime of the Khmer Rouge.
- A 'citizen musicology' portal where people can submit information that they think might be relevant for the history of Cambodian rock music and that would provide additional details to the project output. (For complex reasons, the University of Phnom Penh insisted that the portal should only be available to Cambodian citizens, which for the time being has been accepted by the other project partners.)

The main research output is supposed to be an interactive online portal open to the public, where the results of the project can be explored. Academy of Sciences and Literature Mainz suggested to use Linked Open Data technologies to model and store the complex relations between research data sets, which has been accepted by the other partners without further discussion, mainly due to a lack of expertise on these matters on their side.

Historical Background

Cambodian rock of the 1960s and 1970s was a thriving and prolific music scene based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in which musicians created a unique sound by combining traditional Cambodian music forms with rock and pop influences from records imported into the country. The United States. U.S. armed forces radio that had been broadcast to troops stationed nearby during the Vietnam War was also a primary influence. This music scene was abruptly crushed by the Khmer Rouge communists in 1975, and many of its musicians disappeared or were executed during the ensuing Cambodian genocide.

Ethical Assessment

- What are possible ethical challenges?
- How are we going to handle them?
- Why are we going to do so?