

Human Sciences Encounters in Phnom-Penh: Past Presentations: The Economics of Comics: Cambodian Popular Culture in Three Eras

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The Economics of Comics:

Cambodian Popular Culture in Three Eras

This presentation provides a simple overview of the history of Khmer comics in three distinct phases, noting prominent creators from each time, as well as their aesthetic influences.

- From the 1960s to the 1970s Cambodia had a thriving comics culture. During Cambodia's socialist era, Cambodian comics experienced a resurgence in popularity.
- Cambodia's transition to a 'free market' economy in the late 1980s/early 1990s saw an influx of alternative entertainment options.
- This led to a downturn in the comics market that continues to this day, leading to a market primarily of reprints.

Most new comics are commissioned and published by nonprofits for education and outreach purposes. In a change from earlier times, the local and international art community have demonstrated a growing interest in Khmer comics, via exchange projects, exhibitions and workshops. It is possible this trend may lead to a more sustainable culture for comics art in Cambodia.

John Weeks is an independent scholar researching Khmer comics history. He has worked as the Assistant Director at the Center for Khmer Studies and currently is Managing Editor of local nonprofit Our Books. His areas of interest are Khmer visual art, literature and popular culture.

[John Weeks' Profile.](#)