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A Comparative Study of Khmer-Thai Perceptions through  
Historical Writings: Ideologies and Discourse

歴史記述を通して見たクメール・タイの相互認識の比較研究：  
イデオロギーと言説

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## SUMMARY

Cambodia and Thailand are two neighbors in Southeast Asia that share many close cultural affinities, yet they remain mired in chronic antagonism and ‘love-hate’ relationship. The 2003 incident that culminated in the burning of the Thai Embassy in Phnom Penh and the recent border disputes concerning their sovereign rights over the Preah Vihear Temple, as well as the invocations of hostile political discourse of historical memories among the people, have recaptured our attention to the impacts of the ‘history problems’ and history education in these hereditary enemy states. But is history really the root cause and how does it affect the perceptions of the people in these countries? What are the major different perceptions, beliefs and opinions do the Cambodian and the Thai have as invoked by their divided memories? Why are the issues of historical perceptions between Cambodia and Thailand persisting?

There have been many comparative studies by post-modernist scholars on history of Cambodia-Thailand relations and the processes of historical reconstructions in these countries, but most of them tend to provide one-sided views of the others. This dissertation is a fresh attempt to deal with the above-mentioned problem by employing a large body of historical writings and the Multi-Perspective Method or Approach *Croisée*. By using this method, the study is aimed mainly to examine the debates over the authenticity that involve the constructions of the collective memories, portrayals and stereotypes, and how the politics of historical memories and history education has affected and transformed the two peoples’ perceptions. The debates touch upon three main areas including the conceptions of self, the stereotyped and enemy images, and the discourse of irredentism and nationalistic sentiments.

Through historical evidence conceptualized by comparative historical categories, this dissertation has proved that Khmer-Thai historical writings contain a large pool of discrepancies, distortions, ambiguities and traces indicating that the new past has been constructed in a way that induces divergent historical interpretations conveying hereditary enmity to each other. The study reveals that there are two main schools of thought adopted by the Cambodian and the Thai—one being the Originator and the other being the Contriver of the same root of national identities, the Angkor civilization. Within these conflicting schools of thought, various negative stereotypes are created and different enemy images have been painted over each other. These are reflected through their hostile discourses of race-ethnicity, irredentism, cultural ethnocentrism, and civilizational ethno-chauvinism. This dissertation conducts discourse analyses of the core content of these images and proves that the ideologies derived from these images are of different political motives.

In addition to reviewing and assessing the national myth-making of conservative elites, this study suggests that the major cause of the century-long ‘love-hate’ relationship between the Cambodian and the Thai has been their own *identity anxiety*, the enduring fear of losing national identities, as their relations fell victim to the myths of nationalism when the new concept of space was employed and international law was enforced upon them by European colonizers. The transnational policies adopted by the French towards Cambodia and Thailand in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to achieve their colonial purposes not only induced drastic changes in local cultures but also produced new historical traditions, the competing themes of which are bound by hostile myths and emotion-laden symbols.

These traditions have maintained their continuity and retained their popularity in both societies through politics of nationalistic populism played by both Khmer and Thai political leaders from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the post—World War II periods to achieve certain goals of their symbolic politics of chauvinist mobilization. The identity conflict has been caused mainly by the politicized interpretations of the nation’s past based on the existing discourse and the biased historical traditions. It has been institutionalized through biased school textbooks and textbook censorship and propagandized through various government propaganda tools.

This dissertation argues that the identity anxiety is primordial. It gradually emerged prior to the construction and manipulation of the hostile discourse to express its wills and power. The biased historical narratives that carry a huge body of hostile myths transferring emotion-laden symbols and negative stereotypes to the others were constructed by both the Siamese ruling elites and the French/the French-backed Cambodian rulers during the time of conflicts when their identity anxiety was already on the tipping point. In this sense, Khmer-Thai historical perceptions are virtually a product of historical reconstructions triggered by colonialism, reinforced by myths of nationalism and ruled by identity anxiety.

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## Chapter I

### A RESURGENCE OF THE PAST: AN INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction

Cambodia and Thailand are two neighbors in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that share a common border of 798 kilometers long. More than just neighbors, they share many close cultural affinities, similar customs, traditions, architectural designs, arts, religious beliefs, and ways of life. These similarities are also apparent in language, writing systems, mythology, and especially the ‘royal cults,’ in which one would observe that the terminology and the conventional royal practices within both hereditary monarchies are almost the same.<sup>1</sup> In light of these considerable similarities and commonness, it should live up to one’s expectations that both countries would be able to establish durable amity and amicable relationship and that the two peoples could live in peaceful coexistence. However, it is both shocking and unexpected that the *two brothers*, so near yet so far, have always remained mired in animosity, chronic antagonism or the so-called ‘love-hate relationship’, and indeed can be categorized as ‘hereditary enemy states’.

Throughout their shared history from the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the relationship between Cambodia and Thailand had been fraught with wars and destruction, annexations of each other’s territories, forced evictions and movements of mass

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<sup>1</sup> Charnvit, K, ‘Thailand-Cambodia: A love-hate relationship’, *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia* 3, March 2003.

population from each other's boundary, and most importantly the struggles for their own particular identities and political ideologies. From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century until mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Cambodia became a tributary state to her more powerful neighbors, Siam and Vietnam<sup>2</sup>. The French colonialism in Cambodia from the early 1860s to the early 1950s brought the two countries with a new history of their struggles for both freedom and domination. Thailand's superiority and suzerainty over Cambodia was challenged by the new power from the West while Cambodia was just crawling for her own survival. The gloomy image of the past seemed to be deeply imprinted on the mindsets of both the Cambodian and the Thai elites, especially during the 1950s and 1960s when the issue of their sovereignty over the Preah Vihear temple erupted. This might continue to be true among those of the present day. However, it is considered quite contemporary, especially in the wake of the anti-Thai riots in Phnom Penh in 2003, that the side effects of the 'history problems' between the two peoples started to receive much attention from both the Thai and Cambodian political elites, scholars and historians from both countries and beyond. The recent arguments and discourses as will be discussed in the following section are not so much about the past itself but more about the perceptions and interpretations of history.

### **The Melodramatic Historical Backdrops**

The 11<sup>th</sup>-century Preah Vihear temple (*Khao Phra Viharn* in Thai) has been the center of disputes and quarrels between the two neighbors, Cambodia and Thailand, for more than a century. It goes back to the time when the maps of the two countries, which were drawn in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by France, of which Cambodia had been a protectorate, and Siam (changed to

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Chandler, David, *Cambodia before the French: Politics in a tributary kingdom, 1794-1848*, Ph.D. dissertation, the University of Michigan, 1973.

Thailand in 1939), demarcating the temple to be in Cambodia's territory, were rejected as 'unofficial and invalid' by the latter a few decades later.

“When Cambodia obtained her independent status within the French Union in 1950, Thailand promptly recognized the new state and was the first country to establish its diplomatic mission in Phnom Penh.”<sup>3</sup> However, this diplomatic relation, not long after its birth, was cut off in December 1958.<sup>4</sup> Cambodia commenced proceedings against Thailand in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on October 6, 1959, following unsuccessful diplomatic negotiations with the latter on many occasions, and on October 23, 1961, Cambodia once again decided to sever diplomatic relations with Thailand.<sup>5</sup> Then, the Cambodian government led by King Norodom Sihanouk filed a lawsuit to the ICJ, accusing Thailand of illegally taking control of the temple, which Cambodia claimed to be a historical legacy of her ancestors and one of the symbols of her glorious civilization. Thailand also had the legal and historical justifications for her claims on the sovereignty over the temple, which she had occupied since the early 1940s. Based mainly on the French-made annex 1 map and the treaties in 1904 and 1907 between France and Siam, the ICJ ruled on the ownership of the temple to Cambodia in 1962 and “ordered Thailand to withdraw her troops from the temple and its vicinity.”<sup>6</sup>

During this period of diplomatic deterioration and severances, both the Cambodian and Thai leaders were engaged in different political discourses, recalling the historical memories of

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, *Relations between Thailand and Cambodia*, Bangkok, 1958, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cambodia, *Documents relatifs à la suspension des relations diplomatiques entre le Cambodge et la Thaïlande* [Documents concerning the Severance of Diplomatic Relations between Cambodia and Thailand], 1958, pp. 43-45.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, *Facts about the Relations between Thailand and Cambodia*, Bangkok, 9 November, 1961, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> The official Summaries of the Judgment, Advisory Opinions, and Orders of the ICJ of 15 June 1962, ‘*Case Concerning the Temple of Preah Vihear (Merits) Judgment of 15 June 1962 and (Preliminary Objections) Judgment of 26 May 1961*’, retrieved 13 March 2012, <http://www.icj-cij.org/doCKET/index.php?p1=3&p2=3&k=46&case=45&code=ct&p3=4>

their bitter past. Many citizens from both sides were reported in the diplomatic notes<sup>7</sup> by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of both countries to be badly treated and arrested on accusations of spying and of other minor reasons, and the media in both countries were also dominated by wars of political propaganda. The political discourses of historical memories by the former King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia revealed strong influence of history on the Cambodian elite's perceptions of its neighbors, especially Thailand. Such historical animosity and enduring memory of past trauma was illustrated in many of his speeches during the conflict period from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s.<sup>8</sup>

“The history of Cambodia in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is an immense, intense and painful tragedy...Our people and the majority of our kings, princes and princesses suffered and split their blood to maintain the national integrity.” (*Réalités Cambodgiennes*, Jan. 4, 1958)

“...an ancient kingdom, heir to past empires dim shapes on the oceans of time, and...of a race which was draining the Mekong delta at a time when the still *semi-barbaric* Thais were settled in the border provinces of the middle kingdom.” (*Cambodian Commentary*, vol. 2, no.4, Sept. 1963 editorial, p. 4)

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<sup>7</sup> Important official diplomatic notes from both governments during the 1950s and the early 1960s include: 1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand: *Facts about the Relations between Thailand and Cambodia*, Bangkok, 9 November 1961; *Relations between Thailand and Cambodia, Aide-Memoirs and Memorandums*, December 1958; 2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cambodia: *Aide Mmoire sur les Relations Khmero-Thailandaises* [Aide Memoire on Khmero-Thai Relations], Phnom Penh, 1953-1961; *Documents relatifs à la suspension des relations diplomatiques entre le Cambodge et la Thaïlande* [Documents concerning the Severance of Diplomatic Relations between Cambodia and Thailand], 1958; *Livre Blanc sur la rupture des relations diplomatiques entre le Cambodge et la Thaïlande le 23 October 1961* [Documents concerning the Severance of Diplomatic Relations between Cambodia and Thailand], 23 October 1961; *Petite Anthologie de la Presse Thaïe* [A Small Anthology of Thai Press], Long Boret, Secretary of State, Ministry of Information, Cambodia.

<sup>8</sup> These are quotes from the diplomatic notes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, 1958-1963, Annex IX, ‘Statements and Article of Prince Sihanouk’, pp. 18-20; Annex X, ‘Excepts from the Talks and Articles in the Press and Radio of Cambodia’, pp. 21-22; Osborne, M.E., ‘History and Kingship in Contemporary Cambodia. *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1966, pp. 1-13.

“The Thais, or our elder brothers who at one time used to be our younger brothers, are fully prepared in the event Laos should turn communist. They can change their skin. They have a variety of masks. They can put on a monkey mask or a demon mask or anything. They may survive.” (Statement at the Teacher’s Training College, *Anlong Romiet*, May 3, 1961)

“Thai actions in the dispute resulted from the simple pleasure of persecuting a nation that the Siamese have habitually humiliated since the 14<sup>th</sup> century.” (*Cambodia News*, Cambodian Embassy, Washington, vol. 6, no. 2, 1963)

Another example of Cambodian political discourses of past memories was a speech by a high-ranking official Samdach Penn Nouth, who used to serve in the French colonial administration and was appointed seven times as prime minister of “the Royal Government of the National Union of Cambodia” in the *Sangkum Reas Nyum* regime of King Norodom Sihanouk.<sup>9</sup> In his address to the United Nations in 1957 put in print on a French-language magazine *Réalités Cambodgiennes* on January 4, 1958, he referred to the past glory of the Khmer Empire and the decline of Khmer civilization, mentioning that,

at the time when Cambodian civilization attained its highest point, about the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it seemed impossible that an empire as great and as powerful could be reduced to undergo a long period of decline, But after five centuries of glory the Khmer empire succumbed before the attacks of its neighbors and ended by crumbling away, until it became about the 19<sup>th</sup> century a second rank power. It is this lesson of history which we do not wish to forget.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For more information on these appointments, please visit: <http://www.malc.eu/history/Nouth-Samdech-Penn-Kampuchea.biog.html>

<sup>10</sup> Penn Nouth’s speech quoted in Osborne, Milton E, ‘History and kingship in contemporary Cambodia’, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1966, p. 6; for more detailed information about his views of Thailand, see his book: Pen Nouth, *Pravattasas Sangkherb ampi Tumnak Tumnorng Khmer-Thai* [A Brief History of Khmer-Thai Relation], Phnom Penh, March 1958.

The political discourses of historical memories among Thai politicians and on the Thai press were also abundant. These discourses, as in the Cambodian case, also reflects strong influence of the past that seemed to have harbored negative emotions of hostile intentions and mistrust towards each other and resulted in various political propaganda. Some examples of these political discourses during the conflict are also rooted in historical perceptions and are worth mentioning here.<sup>11</sup>

“The accusations of Prince Sihanouk, Head of State of Cambodia, which said that the Thai army had militarily attacked Cambodia, are those of a madman.” (Thai PM Sarit Thanarat, August 17, 1962)

“The Khmers who slip into Thailand have managed to deceive the Thais and massacre them.”  
(*Thai Raiwan*, August 9, 1962)

“Thailand ruled over Cambodia for a hundred years. We could find with our eyes closed as the strategic points in that country.” (Thai General Praphat Charusathien, September 4, 1962)

“Sihanouk the thief wants again to steal the Thai province of Prachinburi.” (*Prachatipatai*, July 27, 1961)

“When Sihanouk is arrested, we shall cut off his head and take his blood to wash the feet of the Thai people. Sihanouk is the descendent of the King of Lovek whose soiled blood he shares.”  
(*Thai Raiwan*, Jane 22, 1962)

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<sup>11</sup> These are quotes from the diplomatic notes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cambodia, 1958-1963: *Aide Memoire sur les Relations Khmero-Thaiandaises* [Aide Memoire on Khmero-Thai Relations], Phnom Penh, 1953-1961, pp. 47-52; See also: *Documents relatifs à la suspension des relations diplomatiques entre le Cambodge et la Thaïlande* [Documents concerning the Severance of Diplomatic Relations between Cambodia and Thailand], 1958; *Livre Blanc sur la rupture des relations diplomatiques entre le Cambodge et la Thaïlande le 23 October 1961* [Documents Concerning the Severance of Diplomatic Relations Between Cambodia and Thailand], 23 October 1961; *Petite Anthologie de la Press Thaïe* [A Small Anthology of Thai Press], Long Boret, Secretary of State, Ministry of Information, Cambodia.

The issue of the ownership of the temple was re-ignited and the case of the 4.6 square-kilometer area surrounding the temple emerged following Cambodia's successful application to unilaterally have the temple enlisted as a UNESCO World Heritage in 2008. Thailand held the view that "the ICJ did not address the question of the land boundary in its proceedings nor did it determine the location of the land boundary."<sup>12</sup> From 2008 to mid-2011, the diplomatic relations between the two countries deteriorated dramatically. Arm confrontations along the border led to major outbreaks of fighting as the two countries reinforced their military presence in the contested border areas. In Phnom Penh, the Cambodian local authority dispatched extra riot police to protect the Thai Embassy following reports of demonstrations over the temple issue.<sup>13</sup>

The ASEAN Summit held in Jakarta in 2011 was also dominated by the Cambodia-Thailand issue but failed to reach any resolution, and the case was later forwarded to the UN Security Council. This international body then returned the case back to ASEAN and requested this regional organization to play a more crucial role in resolving the conflict. The standoff still continued. Tensions and confrontations occurred sporadically along the border, leading to disruptions of various economic activities around the area. Both governments were trying to find a resolution to ease the diplomatic tensions and to prevent potential incidents caused by public misunderstanding and outrages. After rounds of unsuccessful negotiations on the border issue, which has already been ruled by the ICJ in 1962, the Cambodian government decided to submit a request to the ICJ for a 're-interpretation' of the 1962 Judgment rendered by the court on April 28, 2011. The ICJ issued a press release on its decision to hold public hearings on November 29,

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<sup>12</sup> Bora, Touch, 'Who owns the Preah Vihear temple? A Cambodian position', *Journal of East Asia and International Law*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2009, p. 206.

<sup>13</sup> Cheip Mony, 'Riot police deployed to guard the Thai Embassy', *VOA Khmer*, 03 January 2008, retrieved 14 October 2012, <http://khmerization.blogspot.jp/2008/07/riot-police-deployed-to-guard-thai.html>

2012.<sup>14</sup> In the court hearing conducted in April of 2013, Thailand rejected the French-made annex-1 map adopted by Cambodia and the ICJ in its 1962 judgment, presenting to the court another map (annex-85d map), while Cambodia accused Thailand of producing this map that was not adopted by the ICJ in the 1962 judgment.<sup>15</sup> It is obvious that the two countries interpreted the ICJ judgment in 1962 in different ways.

The territorial disputes and arm conflicts resulting from their claims to the sovereignty of the temple and especially the 4.6 square-kilometers area surrounding the temple have been seen by some news analysts not merely as a territorial dispute but as a politically-driven incident. While the incident was coincided with the general election in Cambodia, in which the ruling party was seen to utilize it to their own popularity, the border dispute was observed to escalate as Thailand's domestic politics became increasingly polarized between two political factions—the red-shirts, which supports the deposed Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who has good relationship with Cambodian government, and the yellow-shirts, which are believed to be backed by the powerful Thai monarchy. The Thai government revoked the 2000 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Cambodia and Thailand after Thaksin Shinawatra was appointed as an economic advisor to the Cambodian Royal Government. Both countries recalled their respective ambassadors, and Thailand threatened to close the Thai-Cambodian border many times in response to what Thailand called the Cambodian government's interference into Thai domestic affairs.

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<sup>14</sup> The ICJ, '*Request for Interpretation of the Judgment of 15 June 1962 in the Case concerning the Temple of Preah Vihear (Cambodia v. Thailand)*', 29 November 2012 Press Release, retrieved 12 December 2012, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/151/17196.pdf>. (The Court held public hearings from Monday 15 to Friday 19, April 2013)

<sup>15</sup> Supalak, Ganjanakhudee, 'Thailand rejected the use of Annex 1 Map', *The Nation*, The Hague April 20, 2013, retrieved 12 April 2013, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/national/Thailand-rejects-use-of-Annex-I-map-30204377.html>



This diplomatic stagnation and territorial dispute aroused strong sense of antagonism and brought back to historical consciousness not only the politicians and the public spheres but also those in the academic arena. Both the Cambodian and Thai politicians were again involved in divergent political discourses of historical memories. A prominent Thai historian and political activist Thepmontri Limpaphayom with other eight Thai scholars lodged a lawsuit to the Thai Civil Court accusing Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, Deputy Prime Minister Sok An and Foreign Minister Hor Namhong of “violating the Thai people’s rights and liberties under the Thai constitution by encroaching on the Preah Vihear temple and the disputed area surrounding the temple ruins.”<sup>16</sup> He claimed that “Cambodia has distorted history”. According to his open letter to Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva dated 24 August 2010, which appeared on his Facebook account,<sup>17</sup> he requested the Thai prime minister to respond to a public statement made by Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and his entourage, who have disseminated an article considering Thai King Naresuan as ‘a crocodile or an ungrateful king’ and also requested Cambodia, especially Prime Minister Hun Sen and his entourage, to offer their apologies.

The Thai political discourse on this issue was mainly observed in various printed media and especially the televised discussions concerning land dispute with Cambodia on ASTV and the Thai Asean News Network by top Thai politicians and representatives of the Thai citizens, including Panthep Puapongphan, the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) Spokesperson; Thepmontri Limpaphayom, a prominent Thai historian; Sompong Sucharikul, a former member of Thailand’s legal team on Preah Vihear Temple case at the ICJ, and Veera Somkwarmkid, a

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<sup>16</sup> (cf. Court rejects Preah Vihear lawsuit – Border dispute ‘is not a civil matter’; Writer” POST REPORTERS 15/09/2009); referred to ‘An Open Letter from Dr. Sorn Samnang, a Cambodian historian, in Response to Mr. Thepmontri’s Open Letter dated 24 August 2010’, retrieved 14 August 2012, <http://khemernz.blogspot.jp/2010/08>.

<sup>17</sup> The content of this open letter was noted and recorded in the documents and statements of the Press and Quick Reaction Unit of the Office of Council of Ministers of Cambodia. Thepmontri Limpaphayom’s Facebook account also provides: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.225315437510591.53812.100000964084010&type=3>

well-known social activist. For example, Sondhi Limthongkun, the leader of the PAD (the Yellow-Shirt), criticized the shameful MOU with Cambodia and warned Thai Prime Minister Abvisit of the possibility that the Khmers might “plunder more 1.5 million rai” of the Thai territory. This Thai prominent politician recalled Thailand’s 11<sup>th</sup> boundary loss resulting from the Franco-Siamese Treaty in 1904 and 1907 and also the so-called chronicle of the 14 boundary losses, warning that ‘Thailand may suffer her 15<sup>th</sup> loss.’ He proclaimed that, “one day Thai flagpole dismantling from Preah Vihear Temple will be planted there again.”<sup>18</sup> Similar political discourses on the chronicle of Siam’s 14 boundary losses and the Preah Vihear controversy had also been posted on many Thai websites.<sup>19</sup>

The political discourse from the Cambodian side on this matter was also abundant. Besides the political messages by the top leaders of the Cambodian Royal Government as mentioned earlier, many prominent Cambodian historians who work under the Press and Quick Reaction Unit of the office of the Council of Ministers frequently responded to and rejected Thai political propaganda and historical narratives. The Cambodian media was dominated by strong sense of antagonism and hostility, stereotyping the Thai as ‘thieves,’ ‘historical enemies,’ ‘disgraced and ungrateful people,’ and so on. Televised public forums and history-related

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<sup>18</sup> “An Open Letter In Response to Mr. Sondhi Limthongkun” by Dr. Sorn Samnang, a Cambodian historian, Royal Academy of Cambodia, retrieved 17 November 2011, <http://ihatethailand.blogspot.jp/2010/08/cambodia-pru-responses-to-sondhi.html>; Thailand’s weekly political program broadcasting over ASTV on July 16, 2010 at 20:30 - 23:00, <http://www.astv-tv.com/>

<sup>19</sup> Some examples of these websites include:

1. A Chronicle of Siam’s 14 Boundary Losses:  
[http://www.chiangmai-chiangrai.com/chronicle\\_boundary\\_losses.html](http://www.chiangmai-chiangrai.com/chronicle_boundary_losses.html)
2. Thai 101: Old Video of the Supposed Territorial Losses  
<http://rikker.blogspot.jp/2008/08/old-video-on-supposed-territorial.html>
3. The Kingdoms of Siam, Map of Siam 1909 Showing Territorial Losses  
<http://www.thailandsworld.com/en/thailand-history/thailand-kingdoms--empires/the-chakri-dynasty-1782/index.cfm>
4. Territorial Losses of Siam 1867-1909  
<http://2bangkok.com/2bangkok-news-10643.html>
5. History of Thai Territorial Losses  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fulQrbCc3I>

discussions were attended by people from all walks of life, politicians, professors, university and high school students, military personnel, Buddhist monks and the common people.<sup>20</sup>

Having observed that the border dispute over the Preah Vihear World Heritage site was a controversial issue and had led to a series of highly emotional protests and unwarranted hostility between the two peoples in both countries, especially from some organizations and individuals in Thailand, a group of Thai scholars of Southeast Asian Studies consisting of 48 people from various universities and institutions of Thailand issued an ‘Open Letter for Peace and Preah Vihear’ in July 2008, putting forward the following proposals to teachers, parents, mass media, students, and the people of Thailand and Cambodia:

1. In the case of ‘Preah Vihear’, we fully support the ruling of the International Court of Justice on 15 June 1962 at The Hague, Netherlands; that the sovereignty over the “Preah Vihear” belongs to Cambodia.
2. We support and promote vigorous debate over contentious issues, providing that knowledge should not be used to cause prejudice and antagonism between neighboring countries that may even lead to warfare.
3. We recognize that various countries in the region share a common history and culture. These commonalities should serve as the foundation of international cooperation to protect human dignity and for fraternity among nations, particularly in the face of increasing challenges to all countries in the region posed by globalization.

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<sup>20</sup> For the responses from the Cambodian side, refer to the open letter, retrieved 17 November 2012, <http://ihatethailand.blogspot.jp/2010/08/cambodia-pru-responses-to-sondhi.html>; For more details on the televised political discourses of historical memories from the Cambodian media: <http://www.khmerlive.tv/archive/> <http://www.equitycam.tv/> <http://www.pressocm.gov.kh/>

4. We recommend that the necessary steps should be taken to resolve this dispute through organizational mediation. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) should initiate this process to achieve this goal. (Thammasat University, Siam/Thailand, July 2008)<sup>21</sup>

The 2008 incident, however, was not the first terrible incident that the two neighbors experienced. The extreme violence in Phnom Penh on January 29, 2003, which was believed to have been inflicted by Cambodian rioters, was another incident that culminated in the burning of the Thai Embassy and Thai ambassador's residence as well as other Thai-owned property such as company office buildings and severely downgraded diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The riots were believed to be fueled by a 'rumor' put in print on a Cambodian newspaper *Raksmei Angkor* (light of Angkor) that a famous Thai actress namely Suvanan Kongying, who was generally known by her character's name in a popular Thai movie *Phkay Preuk*, meaning Morning Star, had insulted the Cambodian by her remarks and claimed the Cambodian treasure Angkor Wat to belong to Thailand. The newspaper article reported on January 18, 2003:

Phhay Proek said that if any Cambodian official or director invited her to perform in Cambodia, she would do so only if they first agreed to give Angkor Wat to Thailand...Phkay Proek said that she hated Cambodian like dogs...If this Thai actress said that she hates Cambodians like dogs, we would like to tell her that Cambodians thought the country hate Thais like leaches that suck other nation's blood...If it is true, Kongying must lower her head to the ground and salute by placing palm to palm in order to apologize to Cambodians, who are a gentle and polite race and have

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<sup>21</sup> Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, "An Open Letter for Peace and Preah Vihear from Scholars of Southeast Asian Studies" dated July 2008, The co-singed: 48 people, retrieved 18 January 2013, <http://erikwdavis.wordpress.com/2008/07/25/an-open-letter-from-scholars-of-southeast-asia/>

never encroached on other countries' land. It is insulting enough for Cambodians to hear Thais wickedly saying to their children, "You must not be born a Khmer in your next life" and so on.<sup>22</sup>

This allegation and emotional stimulus was considered a conscious re-production of the rumor which was believed to be the root cause of the flames of anger and violent demonstrations that swept through Phnom Penh in 2003. In spite of the fact that this Thai actress was reported later in other Cambodian newspapers such as *The Phnom Penh Post* and *Raksmei Kampuchea* to have denied publically that she had ever made such comments,<sup>23</sup> the Cambodian rioters seemed to react to this rumor from different grounds. They painted the slogans containing the word '*chaor Siem*' (Thai thieves) on many walls of the Thai Embassy, destroyed the photos of the Thai King and Queen as well as Thai national flags in bonfire, and demanded an apology for her alleged remarks from the Thai Embassy.

The political discourses from Cambodia were mainly observed on televised speeches by top Cambodian politicians and in most of the printed media. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen proclaimed that "the value of Morning Star is cheaper than a few clumps of grass at Angkor Wat" and that "TV channels in Cambodia must reduce or stop showing Thai movies, especially movies showing Morning Star."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the media coverage in Cambodia during the conflicts was dominated by emotional protests, recalling all their historical consciousness of the bitter past with Thailand. Cambodian TV has stopped airing Thai movies and Thai shows from

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Rachel, Taylor S, 'Cambodia/Thailand: Reacting to rumor', *World Press Review*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2003, retrieved 21 March 2012, <http://www.worldpress.org/Asia/1010.cfm>

<sup>23</sup> *The Phnom Penh Post* reported that the editor of *Raksmei Angkor* revealed later that the rumor was based on hearsay and was never verified, in 'Step by step: The road to a riot', *The Phnom Penh Post*, 31 January 2003; 'Miss Morning Star denies that she had ever spoke down to Cambodians but instead is happy to make apologies to the Cambodian people', *Raksmei Kampuchea*, 30 January 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Prime Minister Hun Sen's speech, 27 January 2003, quoted in ADHOC (Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association), 'Monitoring Report on the Riots against the Thai Embassy in Phnom Penh from 29-31 January 2003' retrieved 16 February 2013, [http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/adhoc/publication/riot\\_29\\_01\\_03/monitoring\\_riot\\_report.htm](http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/adhoc/publication/riot_29_01_03/monitoring_riot_report.htm)

that time on in an attempt to respond to this incident and to prevent Thai cultural domination. The Laotian government also banned Thai movies in 2004. An economic consequence of the incident was a Cambodian boycott against all kinds of Thai products, and most of the trade activities between the two countries were also disrupted.

The Thaksin Shinawatra government of Thailand at that time took immediate measures in response to the situation by downgrading diplomatic relations with the Cambodian government, closing the border and beginning to evict thousands of Cambodian traders, beggars and laborers from Thailand. Moreover, The Thai government also demanded an apology, a compensation for all damages done to Thai-owned property in Phnom Penh as well as an investigation and arrests of the perpetrators. *Reaksmei Kampuchea* put it that, “Thai Prime Minister Thaksin decided to reduce diplomatic relations with Cambodia to the level of consul-general, return Cambodian workers from Thailand to Cambodia, prohibit Cambodian nationals from entering Thailand, close Cambodian-Thai border crossings, and stop economic cooperation” and that “the decision affects more than 50000 Cambodians who work in Thailand.”<sup>25</sup>

Demonstrations and protests also erupted in front of the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok by angry Thai citizens but the Thai local authority managed to prevent the crowds from major violent actions. Verbal attacks and political messages along with the burning of the Cambodia’s national flag were also obvious during the demonstrations. Prime Minister Thaksin later announced that the agreement on compensation had been reached between the two governments, and he considered the riots in Phnom Penh as just ‘a minor incident that had been caused by a

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<sup>25</sup> *Raksmei Kampuchea*, 5 February 2003, quoted in Rachel, Taylor S, ‘Cambodia/Thailand: Reacting to Rumor’, *World Press Review*, vol. 50, no. 4, 2003, retrieved 21 March 2012, <http://www.worldpress.org/Asia/1010.cfm>

misunderstanding'. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen declared later that his government would take all responsibilities for the compensation.

On the printed media as well as some web-boards and cyberspace discussions from both countries, a bunch of political discourses of historical memories were also both shocking and unexpected. The Cambodians, who had long been convinced that their wealthier and more powerful Thai neighbors looked down on them, would express their nationalist sentiment by resorting to and recalling from their long history of victimizations by the Thai in the past, accusing the latter of taking over Cambodian territory and calling Thailand 'the Cambodian historical enemy' and 'the thieves' who have stolen Cambodian cultural heritage such as ancient temples, Cambodian script, architectural styles, dramatic arts, traditional dance, music and boxing, and traditional dish. On Facebook and other social networks media, some also expressed their nationalistic sentiments and their hatred of the Thai as well as the Vietnamese, posting photos and comments comparing the former to a 'tiger' and the latter to a 'crocodile' that covets Cambodian territory, while others recalled the legend *Preah Ko Preah Keo*, which portrays the Thai as the 'stealers' of Cambodia's holy property and symbol of Khmer power and prosperity.

Likewise, Thai political discourses and emotion-laden symbols were also abundant and penetrating. Some of the Thai comments appealed to Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen to step down while others pressed the Thai Royal Government to take revenge by chasing the Cambodian laborers, beggars and refugees out of Thailand. Basically, the Thai comments characterized the Cambodians as 'undeveloped, stone age, primitive, barbaric, uncivilized, deceptive and untrustworthy' and so on. Some comments eulogized over the breathtaking views of Thai 'true Buddhism' practices that manifest or result in their better characteristics as gentle

and calm, compassionate, forgiving, generous and mindful, compared to the Khmer who are considered insincere, vicious and war-like, slaughtering each other, etc.<sup>26</sup>

This incident can be viewed from two different perspectives. First, from a political point of view, it has been seen as a spillover of Cambodia's domestic politics as the country's ruling party, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), was trying to manipulate this incident to achieve certain political-ideological goals. This manipulation is seen to work to the CPP's advantages, including reasserting 'nationalist credentials' to the Cambodian public so as to win their favor and support for the upcoming election, discrediting the opposition and diverting the public attention from the controversial border issues with Vietnam, to whom the Phnom Penh government is seen to have a *close* relationship, gaining a pretext to claim down on any possible anti-government protests and any civil society and organizational involvements in domestic affairs, and appealing as well as sending a strong message to the Thai government about the controversial land and sea border issues.

Second, from an economic point of view, it has been seen in a broader sense as a clash between the Vietnamese and Thai interests in Cambodia. Thai investments during this period increased dramatically compared to the Vietnamese as many Thai-owned and Thai backed business such as casinos, airlines, hotels, restaurants, factories, telecommunication firms and so on were booming. According to the Cambodian Trade Promotion Department, the trade figure between the two countries in 2003 substantially increased from approximately US\$ 326.3 million

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<sup>26</sup> For more detailed descriptions of the comments of the web-board posters, *see, e.g.*, Hinton, Alexander, 'Khmer-ness and the Thai 'Other': Violence, Discourse and Symbolism in the 2003 Anti-Thai Riots in Cambodia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2006, pp. 445-468; Rachel, ST, 'Cambodia/Thailand: Reacting to Rumors', 2003; For the electronic dialogue and cyberspace discussion boards in English, see the English website of the Thai newspaper *The Nation* at: <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/opinion/>, /specials/Cambodia\_riot/index1; See also, US Department of State, 'Report to Congress on the anti-Thai riots in Cambodia on January 29, 2003', Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs, 14 May 2003, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rpt/20565pf.htm>



to US\$ 527.4 million, and according to the statistics from the Thai Embassy in Phnom Penh, the figure amounted to US\$ 2.54 billion in 2010, a 54-percent increase from US\$ 1.6 billion in 2009. This economic domination was also accompanied by cultural imperialism as what is Thai—such as Thai music, movies, soap opera, architectural styles and fashion design, cosmetics products and tourism services—took deep root in the Cambodian mind.

The 2003 incident brought Cambodia and Thailand to their historical consciousness, culminating in the establishment of *The Cambodia-Thailand Cultural Commission*, which aims to “promote people-to-people contacts through joint reflection on history and culture education especially on school textbooks for the purpose of constructing a shared historical consciousness towards the alleviation of friction and the enhancement of mutual understanding through a correct and mutual *perception* for the strengthening and developing of long-term bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.”<sup>27</sup> This initiative could be considered the first positive step ever taken by the two countries in resolving differences in their perceptions on history and cultural values. Unfortunately, this progress was hindered by the 2008 incident, after four meetings were held including two general meetings in Phnom Penh in 2004 and in Nakhorn Ratchasima in 2005, a small-group meeting in Phnom Penh in 2006 and the last meetings of the 3 Sub-Commissions in Phnom Penh on March 29, 2007.

Interviews with some delegates from both countries who participated in the joint cultural commission meetings show that the commission’s work ended with no fruitful results but both sides at least agreed to exchange some history textbooks for translation. There was still a big gap of difference and many fundamental misunderstandings stemming from their divergent historical

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Opening remarks by Dr. Sorn Samnang, Cambodian Co-Chairman, First General Meeting of the Cambodia-Thailand Cultural Commission, Phnom Penh – Siem Reap, 18-21 May, 2004

perceptions. Both sides still did not agree on how textbook reforms should be done while a lot of conceptual and historiographical problems remain unresolved.

### **Formulating Questions and Statement of Purpose**

These incidents have witnessed a great deal of the Khmer and Thai perceptions towards each other. The invocations of political discourse of historical memories between the two peoples can be seen from political and economic points of view on the one hand and from a historical perspective on the other. The gap of difference between the two peoples, be it social or economic, might be central to the materialist arguments while the national identity-focused approaches will be centered on identity, symbols and culture as their shared understanding of the conflicts. However, observations on their patterns of behaviors during these conflicts also provide rooms for more explanations from a psychological-historical perspective—the enduring memory of their past trauma related mainly to their perceptions of history.

From the above cases, it goes without saying that the divided memory was apparent not only among the Cambodian and Thai politicians and the general public but also among some of the academicians, professional historians and university students. Despite the fact that the two close-but-distant neighbors share a lot of favorable conditions such as cultural affinities and economic interdependence, both have always developed mutual mistrust and strong sense of antagonism towards each other. The behavioral patterns of the riots and the border disputes could be hypothesized as a product of manufactured categories of identity manifested in the above-mentioned invocations of political discourses. Apparently, most of the political discourses between the Cambodian and the Thai have been driven mainly by their divergent historical

narratives of past memories. Having these distinct historical narratives, people in these countries tend to perceive the other's narratives as both offensive and fake or distorted.

Two main questions arise out of this:

1. How does history shape the perceptions of the two peoples and what are their major different perceptions, beliefs, and opinions as witnessed in these divergent historical narratives? And why?
2. Why are the issues of the historical perceptions between the Cambodian and the Thai persisting?

While there has been conventional/general wisdom that the long history of wars and conflicts between the two nations is the main root of mutual misunderstanding and prejudice, this study will observe the argument that it is not really the product of history itself but that of what come to be termed *Event-Narrating Disease*—the re-constructions and divergent interpretations of historical narratives by both the Cambodian and the Thai ruling classes, each of which has tried to promote a sense of national identity through manipulations of divergent historical memories that engender emotional distress, antipathy, and enduring perceptions of hostile intention between the two peoples.

As He Yanan's national myth-making theory posits, "The harmonization of national memories between former enemy countries can significantly facilitate reconciliation, whereas the memory divergence resulting from national mythmaking tends to harm the long term prospects of reconciliation."<sup>28</sup> By way of this argument, this study will analyze those historical narratives and highlight how the product of 'national mythologization' brings about certain political-

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<sup>28</sup> Yanan, He, 'Comparing post-war (West) German-Polish and Sino-Japanese reconciliation: A bridge too far?' *European-Asia Studies*, vol. 63, no. 7, 2011, p. 1157.

ideological goals and how important and significant the national de-mythification and harmonization of historical memories might be to the two nations' long-term relations.

Since this study will mainly involve content analyses of official historical writings and the public memory and perceptions of history, it is not going to deal with history of relations between the two countries, in a general sense, on a certain period nor does it focus mainly on peace-building or inter-state relations and reconciliation processes which involve theoretical analyses of the relationship of various variables at work in making state foreign policies. Indeed, this study is to determine:

1. how the two peoples, the Cambodian and the Thai, perceive, portray, and stereotype each other as witnessed in their historical narratives;
2. how these negative stereotyped and enemy images harbor their sense of excessive nationalism and invoke discourse of irredentism;
3. why they still prevail and keep on feeding up the introspective and negative 'collective moods,' to use Herbert Kelman's term, within both the Cambodian and the Thai public spheres.

The main aim of this study is to examine the debates over the authenticity and the re-constructions of these divergent historical narratives, their defense of national heritage, and the struggle for their nationhood as key components of their *identity anxiety*, all that which center on a particular conception of self. This dissertation will, therefore, challenge the existing conventional wisdom that the shared history of wars and conflicts between the two countries is the major source of the strong sense of antagonism and irredentism between the Cambodian and the Thai. Furthermore, it will examine the Khmer and Thai conceptions of self as witnessed in

their hostile historical narratives—the central concept argued in this study to have given rise to the debates.

Finally, given the extreme difficulties in revising national historical narratives or changing the popular beliefs and identities between the two peoples, which has been evidenced in the failure of the above-mentioned joint cultural commission, it would be realistic to claim that the history disputes between these countries can only be *managed* rather than *resolved*. Thus, this study, through the content analysis of historical perceptions, is also aimed at shedding some lights on and providing policy implications for the national policy-making processes so as to put the history problems under control.

### **Why Dealing With the Past Matters?**

The above-mentioned cases warrant this study for several reasons. First, it shall be argued that the bifurcation of political discourses of historical memories and the recent violence and conflicts between the two peoples during the incidents found its ways out of both the Cambodian and Thai minds to the surface of prejudice and antagonism due to their failure to work out a harmonization of historical memories which are evoked and constantly rekindled by the divergent historical narratives. The essence of the fluctuating relationship between Thailand and Cambodia from the 1950s, when the two countries established their diplomatic relationship, until the present day, can be deciphered and considered as the backdrop of their long history of wars and conflicts that is reflected through various historical writings and school history textbooks and through the political socialization processes.

Second, the historical misunderstanding arising from their ‘ethno-centric historical narratives’ and the unsettled historical issues can make the two countries, Cambodia and Thailand, more prone to repeating the same conflicts and even wars. It can be seen clearly from the case of 2003 and 2008 incidents that the two countries often continued to make troubles with one another not because the conflicts of interest, be it economic or political, did not get settled but because the past prejudice and the enduring memory of the past trauma was not harmonized and dealt with timely and satisfactorily. Whether or not former adversaries like Cambodia and Thailand satisfactorily or successfully settle the past has important implications for their future peace and stability.

Throughout the riots, both the Cambodian and Thai political elites as well as the common people often constructed their own national identities and meanings of their actions out of the pool of available discourses and symbolism,<sup>29</sup> which they assimilated and accommodated from their education system and political socialization. Maurice Halbwachs called this a ‘collective memory’ of the past or a memory that is associated with particular ideology through imposing repetition of political and ideological rituals. Among the most important political socialization and identity formation processes, school history textbooks are powerful socialization agents that can effectively shape individual’s group consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

Third, the strong sense of antagonism and discourse of irredentism as well as other history-related conflicts between Cambodia and Thailand resulting from their nation-centered

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<sup>29</sup> Hinton, Alexander, ‘Khmer-ness and the Thai ‘Other’: Violence, discourse and symbolism in the 2003 Anti-Thai riots in Cambodia’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2006, pp. 445-468; David, Roberts, ‘Democratization, elite transition, and violence in Cambodia 1991-99’, *Critical Asian Studies*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2002, pp. 520-38.

<sup>30</sup> Foster, SJ & CA Keith, *War, nation, memory: International perspectives on World War II in school history textbooks*, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc., Charlotte, 2008, p. 6.

\_\_\_\_\_, ‘What shall we tell the children? *International perspectives on school history textbooks*’, CT: Information Age Publishing Inc., Greenwich, 2006.

historical narratives can not only inhibit the development of security and economic cooperation between the two countries but also cast a dismal shadow on ASEAN, the prospect of the ASEAN Charter and its principle of peaceful existence. The recent failure of ASEAN to settle the disputes between Cambodia and Thailand has called into questions the effectiveness of its own security mechanisms. To put it more simply, the recent case of Cambodia and Thailand has tarnished the image of ASEAN as an effective regional organization. It can be inferred from this failure that external stakeholders including ASEAN itself can only play minor roles in resolving potential Cambodian-Thai conflicts due mainly to the nature of this conflict which is rooted in their history-based mistrust and past prejudice. Therefore, it is by no means obvious that structural and institutional factors are important but should be secondary to the psychological factor—making friend with the past.

Most significantly, it is unavoidable in the near future that Cambodia and Thailand must resume their attempts to manage, if not resolve, the issues of their divergent historical narratives and historical perceptions as they once did after the 2003 incidents took place in Phnom Penh, if they are to live in peaceful coexistence in the long run. This study is expected to contribute to this prospect, especially through the joint cultural commission.

### **Methodological and Moral Issues**

This dissertation will solve the above-mentioned puzzle by applying the '*Deux Points de Vue*' or 'Two Points of View,' which is known today as 'The Multi-Perspective Method' or the '*Approach Croisée*,' developed by French historian Jules Issac in the 1930s. Extensive content analyses of official historical writings and process tracing will be carefully done based on the

principle of synthesis as underlined by this method by including both the Khmer and Thai views of history and historical perceptions. However, with many exceptions in many cases, this dissertation will not include the third views—the perspectives on the Cambodian-Thai relations written and expressed by foreign historians and the likes so as to avoid implications of moral judgment. Therefore, based on the above-mentioned method, the study will proceed through the following stages:

1. Analyze both differences and similarities of the Cambodian and Thai historical perceptions and classify them into categories according to three main points: the conception of self, stereotyped and enemy images, and discourse of irredentism;
2. Give the contextualization of these categories by analyzing the political motives behind the reconstructions of these divergent historical narratives and image formations;
3. Analyze various socio-political factors behind these persisting historical perception issues by taking symbolic politics approach as a guide.

### **Why this Method?**

This method was applied in the 1930s to construct the two documents of ‘the Recommendation’ of the world’s first bi-national history textbook, *Histoire/Geschichte* (the Franco-German History Textbook Commission consultations, 1930s). It was then followed for the same purposes after World War II by German scholar Georg Eckert, who, establishing The Braunschweig Georg Institute for International Textbook Research in Germany, played crucial roles in the construction of similar documents also called ‘The Recommendation’ for The



German-Polish Textbook Commission under the support from UNESCO in 1972. This model was later followed by Korea-Japan and China-Japan historical committees especially in the early 2000s. Japanese expert of German educational history Nishikawa Masao initiated The Association of Comparative History and Comparative History Teaching after his small group studied the improvement of the German-Polish history textbook project in 1983. A joint history book, titled ‘History That Opens the Future: The Modern History of East Asia’ (Japan-Korea-China Joint History Textbook Committee, 2005), was one of the ‘auxiliary history books’ jointly produced by this committee and the civil society (NGOs, scholars, and teachers) as a result of three years of joint cooperation.<sup>31</sup>

This method is chosen for several reasons. First, it is comprehensive and meaningful to include in-depth coverage and analysis of each other’s historical perceptions so as to achieve a more acceptable balance between different points of view as well as different historiographical concepts. According to Kim Seungryeol, the Franco-German history textbook includes a special section entitled ‘Mutual Perceptions of the French and the Germans,’ which can help readers “understand why and how the concepts of hereditary enemies developed and why this concept has been losing its relevance.”<sup>32</sup> In light of this successful story, the incorporations of both Thai and Cambodian perceptions in this study has a great potential to help readers understand how each side thinks of their own ‘correct’ history and how the truth they have learned sows the seeds of mistrust, hatred, disdain, and even wars.

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<sup>31</sup> Kim Seungryeol, ‘International history textbook work from a global perspective: The joint Franco-German history textbook and its implications for Northeast Asia’, *Journal of Northeast Asian History*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2009, pp. 75-101; Zernack, K, ‘After the *Wende*: The German Polish Textbook Project in retrospect’, n/a, pp. 7-11.

<sup>32</sup> Kim Seungryeol, p. 86.

Second, it can be considered a model of liberal historiographical method. To achieve a higher perspective of one's national history, it has been justified philosophically, one needs to know and understand the others' points of view and to be able to think of one's own nation in that way, whether accept it or not. Peter Geiss, an outstanding German historian in the German-Polish History Textbook Commission, put it clearly when he talked about the *Histoire/Geschichte*: "You always have two views, at least two views, and that allows pupils to develop their own standpoint, their own image of history."<sup>33</sup> In a broader sense, by mixing the concept of 'bi-national historiography' with that of 'nation-centered historiography,' this method places in constant check the nation-centered historiography, which is often considered the object of political-ideological manipulations. Thus, it can achieve a higher 'standard of objectivity' of history. Jacob Wolfgang pointed out that "it is about controlling over historiographical self-depictions, as well as depictions of others - in short about raising the level of objectivity in the identity concepts on both sides" and that "such an increase in objectivity can serve as an indicator of historical enlightenment."<sup>34</sup>

Finally, this method can bring about moral, psychological and therapeutic outcomes. When two conflicting views are put in check, one can explore differing narratives to avoid moral judgment and 'moral relativity'. For example, the Thai might justify the history of their attacks on Cambodia as the right act to save the latter from a 'less pure Buddhism,' while the Cambodian might have different views. Through this moral consciousness, they can understand the nature of 'truth' and how the truth that hurt might be tempered in the interest of promoting amity, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. Above all, if it is the case that truth never exists,

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<sup>33</sup> Kim Seungryeol, op.cit., p. 81.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Zernack, op.cit., p. 7.

the most important task in historiographical writings and the likes is to search for ‘regimes of truth,’ the ones that are acceptable to both sides.

However, it may be true that the perceptions between the two peoples might be influenced by other factors besides these written historical materials, but it is also arguable that historical memory, when transformed through particular ideological orientations and promoted onto a status as national or state ideology, is hereditary and hence does matter. Therefore, rather than based merely on social surveys of people’s perceptions, which are always varied through time and circumstances, this study is based mainly on official written historical materials because these ‘in-system’ historical materials are more permanent and powerful agents of collective memory ingrained in people’s mind through years of schooling in the formal education system and political socialization processes.

### **Assessing the Existing Literature**

This study is a path-breaking work due to fact that there have been so far no academic researches that specifically deal with this topic by applying the above-mentioned method. Due to the nature of this sensitive topic and to the very limited number of academic works in this area, which results in the absence of conceptual frameworks or lenses, general works by various scholars such as Michel Tranet, Manich Jumsai, Charnvit Kasitsiri, Michael Vickery, David Chandler and Henri Mouhot, concerning the history of Cambodia-Thailand relations on certain critical phases will be of use. Moreover, a great many works by post-modernist scholars such as Penny Edwards, Anthony Barnett, and Thongchai Winichakul, pertaining to the processes of

historical reconstructions in Cambodia and Thailand, will be drawn upon for analysis, and the national myth-making theory, which is developed from studies of other cases by Chinese scholar He Yanan, will be discussed with an alternative explanation of symbolic politics approach. However, a number of important academic works relevant to this topic are worth mentioning.

To begin with, a book titled '*Khamen tok Siam*' [Attitudes and Opinions of the Khmers upon Thailand], written in Thai language and published in 2553 BE (2010 AD) by Thai scholar Santi Phakdeekham, provides a good account of Cambodian perceptions of the Thais, which is witnessed in Cambodian historical materials including history textbooks, inscriptions, sculptures, folktales, old songs, and films. This book reveals the Khmer thinking about the originality of the Thai people, an account of the history of wars and conflicts between Siam (Thailand) and Annam (Vietnam) related to the issue of their suzerainty over Cambodian, and their views of the roles of the French, as well as the Preah Vihear issue. This book, overall, tries to explore the negative perceptions the Khmers have on the Thai people as witnessed in those materials from a Thai perspective.

Another work by the same author, titled '*Pravattisat Kampuchea: Beb rean khorng Khamen thi kiev khorng kab Thai*' [A History of Cambodia: History Textbooks of Cambodia Related to Thailand], published in 2546 BE (2003 AD), also provides a good account of Cambodian history from the pre-historic period to the reign of King Norodom Suramrith. This book is also a good and quick review of Cambodian history of relations with Thailand but does not directly deal with the perception issues as the *Khamen tok Siam* does.

Another important work on the historical perceptions between the two peoples was published in 2005 and was written in Khmer by Khmer professional historian Michel Tranet, titled '*Pravatesas nai preah reacheanachak Kampuchea: Sampornapheap roveang procheachun*

*Khmer-Thai chab pi sattavat ti 13 nai ko. so.* [A History of the Kingdom of Cambodia: Relationship between Khmer and Thai People since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century]. This book reveals Khmer thinking of the Thai by providing historical and cultural evidences of the Khmer legacies in Thailand ranging from Khmer art, architectural style, traditional dance, language, magic, superstitions and religious beliefs. Overall, this work embodies a good account of the Khmer views of the origin of the Thai.

*Thai-Khamen: Sangkram kab mittaphap* [Thai-Khmer: War and Friendship] is another book written in Thai and published in 2553 BE (2010 AD) by Thai scholar Chetn Cheriyo. This work is a brief account of the history of relations between the two countries from the Angkor period, when the Khmer civilization was at its peak, until the time when the Thai-Cambodia territorial disputes and conflicts over the Preah Vihear Temple occurred, with a reflection on the present-day situation. This book seems to deal more with political history rather than directly with the perceptions between the two peoples. In general, this work embodies a good account of the history of relations between Thailand and Cambodia from a Thai perspective.

Another academic study related to this topic was done by Khmer scholar Ngoun Kimly at Chulalongkorn University in 2006. This MA thesis, titled 'The Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo and Its Influence on the Cambodian People's Perception of the Thais,' explores the Khmer people's perceptions of the Thais as reflected in various versions of the legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo and examine its influence on the perceptions among young educated Cambodians in Phnom Penh. The legend, according to the author, was manipulated by Khmer leaders in the late 1950s and early 1960s when Cambodia-Thai relation was severely strained, and in the present era, the legend continues to be manipulated by Cambodian politicians both to raise national

consciousness and unity and to provide a political justification of the historical legacy of the past for the present condition of the country. The author found that “all versions of the Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo portrayed Thai people more or less negatively” and that “the Thais were perceived as invasive, ambitious, tricky etc.” Because Thailand had taken Preah Ko Preah Keo, the symbol of peace and prosperity from Cambodia, the former has been considered as the cause of decline of the latter. Although this study focuses on the Khmer people’s perceptions of the Thais as witnessed in the Legend, it has been argued that various versions the Legend have implications of historical fact.

Also, an article written in 2006 by Alexander Hinton, titled ‘Khmer-ness and the Thai ‘Other’: Violence, Discourse and Symbolism in the Anti-Thai Riots in Cambodia,’ is another related work to be considered. This article focuses on the event of the 2003 anti-Thai riots in Phnom Penh and explores the roots of this violence by examining the political discourses among rioters and those participated in the web-board and cyberspace discussions. Hinton argues that “the anti-Thai riots were linked in part to a set of discourses and imagery that have long been central to assertions of ‘Khmer-ness’ and constructions of the ‘Other’”.

Another article titled ‘Reconstructing Angkor: Images of the Past and Their Impacts on Thai-Cambodian Relations,’ written by Serhat Unaldi in 2008, is considered one of the most relevant academic work on this topic. The author analyzes how the Cambodian and the Thai embarked on their historical reconstructions of Angkorean civilization to form their self-identities—the conflicting identities which have great implications for the strained relations between the two countries until the present day. One of the most relevant features in this work is that the author presents and analyzes the issue from both the Cambodian and Thai views with

another third way, the French version, as a verification of the first two. However, this work incorporates small body of written historical materials for evidence.

Last but not least, ‘Cambodia after Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence for the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries’ is also another academic work worth mentioning here. This PhD dissertation was done by Michael Vickery at Yale University in 1977. This study thoroughly examines and compares various versions of the Cambodian and Thai chronicles and weighs them against external sources so as to solve the problems of chronological differences and fictitious aspects of the chronicles. The most important findings of the study reveal that “the entire chronicle history of Cambodia up to the first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is a fiction except for the reign of Bana Yat and an invasion preceding it, which has suffered drastic temporal displacement,” and that “the entries of the Ayutthayan chronicles which seemed to support the Cambodian chronicles are also shown to be fictions, and the *Hluon Prasro’th* record of 1431, which supports the new interpretation, is confirmed as the first certain Thai chronicle record of relations with Angkor.” Although this study is directly not about the perceptions of the two peoples through the chronicles, it is of great importance and relevance to the present study because it draws much attention to the credibility and reliability of various versions of the royal chronicles of both countries.

Even if there are a number of previous academic studies about the history of Cambodia-Thailand relations and their partial examinations of the historical perceptions embedded in those works, none of them have dealt specifically with this topic nor have they examined it in a broad context, and each one mainly tends to provide one-sided views of the other. This dissertation will look beyond the previous works.

There are three most important aspects about the originality of this study. First, as mentioned earlier, this dissertation is probably the first attempt to study the historical perceptions of the two peoples in a broader context by further examining the debate over the authenticity—the re-constructions of historical narratives and their defense of national heritage as key components of their ‘identity anxiety,’ all that which centered on a particular concept of self. Most importantly, this study is conducted with a multi-dimensional framework by applying the ‘multi-perspective method’ or ‘*Approach Croisée*’, as mentioned and justified earlier in this chapter. From the review of the previous studies, it has been observed that this method has rarely been employed to deal with the issue of historical perceptions between Cambodia and Thailand. Thus, this study will be the first of its kind to provide a more balanced view of the topic under discussion.

Second, this study is conducted by analyzing a large body of historical writings. Besides the royal chronicles, history textbooks, governments’ official documents, and ancient inscription texts, this study analyzes school history and social studies textbooks and newspaper articles as well as other online discourses of the modern period, especially from the 1950s. Moreover, this study will also examine the widely-held perceptions that are infused in many traditional legends and folktales—the fanciful stories commonly accepted in these ‘oral culture’ societies.

Finally, this study conducts discourse analyzes of the core contents of the identities and a process tracing analysis of the political-ideological forces behind the rise of these perceptions and the origin and development of the nation-centered historiographies of the two countries from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century until the present day. This would give a contextualization to the historical perceptions under discussion as well as content analyses of the nature and characteristics of symbolic politics of Cambodian and Thai historical memory.



## Collection of Materials

The fieldworks were conducted in both Bangkok and Phnom Penh from November to December 2011 and from June to July 2013 to collect the historical materials and to conduct the interviews. These field trips were sponsored by the **Haraguchi Memorial Asia Research Fund**, and were conducted under the supervision of and assistance from my distinguished academic advisor, **Prof. Murashima Eiji**.

In Bangkok,<sup>35</sup> the material collections were done mainly at the National Libraries, National Archives, the libraries of major universities such as Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, Silpakorn and Mahidon, bookstores, and the likes. Visits to some historical sites such as the Royal Palace of Bangkok and the National Museum were also carried out. Finally, interviews were made to Thai professors from these universities. Many of historical materials such as government's official documents and the like were collected at the Thailand Information Center (TIC), which is an academic service and research support unit at Chulalongkorn University libraries. Besides the above-mentioned, the Manuscripts and Inscriptions Section of the National Library Division, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Department of Fine Arts, the Siam Research Center Library, and the libraries of Thammasat University are also very useful places for collecting these materials.

In Phnom Penh, the same things were done. The most useful places for these materials include the National Archives, the National Library, the library of the Buddhist Institute, the library of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, the libraries of the Royal University of Phnom Penh and the Royal University of Fine Arts, the Royal Academy of

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<sup>35</sup> For a useful guideline, see, e.g., Wyatt, DW & CM Wilson, 'Thai historical material in Bangkok', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, November 1965, pp. 105-118; Damrong Rajanubhab, *Miscellaneous articles written for the Journal of the Siam Society*, Bangkok, 1962.

Cambodia, etc. Interviews were carried out with Khmer historians and government officials as well as lecturers of history at the Department of History, Royal University of Phnom Penh.

Overall, various official historical materials as stated in the last section were collected, and many of these documents, especially the Khmer versions, do not have English versions. Extensive translations and transliterations have to be done. Finally, interviews were also made with some of the Khmer and Thai delegates who participated in the Joint Cambodia-Thailand Cultural Commission meetings from 2003 to 2007.

## **Chapter Outline**

This chapter first provides a brief presentation of the current issues from which the whole image of the study is derived and presented in details. The main aim of this dissertation is to examine the debate over the authenticity—the re-constructions of historical narratives and their defense of national heritage as a key component of their ‘identity anxiety,’ all that which centered on a particular concept of self—by identifying the stereotypes, mutual portrayals, and image formations, between the Cambodian and the Thai as witnessed in their historical writings, as well as the mechanisms that transformed their perceptions and drove the Khmer-Thai strained relationships during the Post-World War II period with an eye towards current circumstances.

Chapter 2 to 4 will basically provide an anatomy of these historical perceptions. Chapter 2 will deal with an account of the Khmer-Thai conceptions of self as reflected in their respective historical narratives. More specifically, this chapter will explore the ways the Khmer and the Thai think about themselves, their name, their origin, language and certain cultural aspects as

witnessed in their historical narratives and legendary stories. Overall, this chapter will reveal the basic concept of self of the Khmer and the Thai in relation to each other by placing the two narratives in thorough comparisons.

Chapter 3 will study the stereotyped and enemy images arising from the narrative structure and contents of the histories of the two countries. Basically, this chapter will examine these negative mutual portrayals in various royal chronicles, history texts, ancient inscription texts, legends and folktales, and the likes. Finally, this chapter will analyze the internal and external political systems that have shaped these images through time.

Chapter 4 will follow the same pattern of analysis but will explore the discourse of irredentism as witnessed in various official documents, historical materials and maps. This chapter will examine the ethnocentric views on the whereabouts of the land and people of both countries as well as the official maps used before and after the modern era, especially from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the modern concept of nationhood and the Western technology of map drawing entered both countries. Finally, this chapter will try to connect the discourse of irredentism with the sense of ‘ultra-nationalism’ especially from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the French entered Indochina and imposed its colonialism on Cambodia.

Chapter 5 will examine the processes of “rediscovering” history and reconstruction of the historical narratives of both countries as well as their impacts on the development of the sense of “Khmer-ness” and the Thai-Others and the sense of Thai-ness and the Khmer-others. It will look first at how the nation-centered historical narratives were ‘rediscovered’ and reconstructed, how the political-ideological incentives drove the creation of enemy images especially from the early 1940s, and how these historical narratives and perceptions were translated into political power

and eventually affected the relationships between the two neighbors. In general terms, this chapter will try to work out a linkage between the nature of the Khmer and Thai ethno-centric historiographies and their divergent ideological orientations and excessive nationalism.

The remaining chapters, chapter 6 and 7 will respectively discuss the anatomy and conclude the study. The discussion and analysis in Chapter 6 will focus mainly on the relevance of the national myth-making theory and how it can be applied in the case of Cambodia and Thailand. First, this chapter will apply the propositions and logics of the theory to explain the case, and then its fundamental holes of logic will be dealt with in order to pave way for future research in this less-focused area of knowledge. From this end, the chapter will also suggest an alternative explanation, the existence and development of fear of losing identity, or *identity anxiety*, as part of the symbolic politics approach. The last chapter will conclude the study and draw policy implications.

## Chapter II

### TWO CONCEPTIONS OF SELF

#### Introduction

The proceeding chapter has revealed certain aspects of how the people of the two countries negotiated their own identities and constructed meanings for their behaviors through different expressions in the political discourses of their historical memories, including the ideas of who they are, where they are from, and how they perceive certain events in their imagination and re-construction of the past. Hinton argues that “the anti-Thai riots were linked in part to a set of discourses and imagery that have long been central to assertions of ‘Khmer-ness’ and constructions of the ‘other.’”<sup>1</sup> Anyway, it might also be argued from a political point of view that the incidents were a product of the clashes of interests between two groups, be it between two groups of the Cambodian politicians or between the Cambodians and the Thais or between two groups of the Thai politicians, yet what is central to the argument is that both the Cambodian and the Thai seem to cling to conflicting identities and indeed distinct conceptions of themselves in their perceptions and interpretations of history.

‘The Invention of Tradition’ by Hobsbawm might have so much to say about how the Cambodian and the Thai have become accustomed to thinking about themselves in relation to the other in term of their nationhood and their cultural heritage. Such a tradition, according to him,

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<sup>1</sup> Hinton, Alexander, ‘Khmer-ness and the Thai ‘Other’: Violence, discourse and symbolism in the 2003 Anti-Thai riots in Cambodia’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2006, p. 445.

has been invented in order to preserve the sense of continuity between the past and the present under circumstances when such continuity was broken. He properly points out that the invented traditions “are responses to novel situation which form the reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetitions” and that “it is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some point of life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes ‘the invention of tradition’ so interesting for historians of the past centuries.”<sup>2</sup>

One of the arguments which find its confirmation in this tradition appeals to the notion of self-concept in the politics of historical memory and identity: “to the extent that our nature – that which we truly are – can be revealed in articulation, we are what we remember. If this is the case, then a study of the way we remember—the way we present ourselves in our memories, the way we define our personal and collective identities through our memories, the way we order and structure our ideas in our memories, and the way we transmit these memories to others – is a study of the way we are.”<sup>3</sup>

This psychological-historical perspective, the idea that “human memory is strongly interwoven with other cognitive and emotional processes,”<sup>4</sup> is considered in this study as one of the approaches which can explain the nature of politics of national history with a clearer vantage point on the changing social environment. For example, Polkinghorne, in his work ‘Narrative and Self-Concept,’ argues that narrative is one of the “cognitive organizing processes” that form

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<sup>2</sup> Hobsbawm, E & T Renger (eds), *The invention of tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge/New York, 1983, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Fentress, J & C Wickham, *Social Memory*, Blackwell, Oxford and Cambridge, 1992, p. 7, quoted in Koczanowicz, L, ‘Memory of politics and politics of memories. Reflections on the construction of the past in post-totalitarian Poland’, *Studies in East European Thought*, vol. 49, no. 4, December 1997, p. 259.

<sup>4</sup> Koczanowicz, L, p.259.

the basis of personal identity and self-understanding. He properly points out that “narrative is the cognitive process that gives meaning to temporal events by identifying them as parts of a plot” and that “the narrative structure is used to organize events into various kinds of stories; for example, the stories or histories of nations, biographical or autobiographical stories of individuals, and imaginative or fictional stories in the form of novels and fairy tales.”<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, since human memories, according to him, include “a vast aggregation of episodes and stories” that is structured in narrative or history, narrative structure is employed to give meanings to various actions or events in the past.<sup>6</sup> It can make meaningful the actions of public individuals or groups, institutions or governments, or the nation as a whole. In this sense, when meanings are given to a national narrative or history which is then translated into political power and directed into certain ideological orientations and when that official version of national history is generally accepted and becomes the only trusted record of history, then the invention of tradition is complete and the so-called ‘collective memory’ is in place.

As such, because the process of constructing this collective memory involves remembering and forgetting certain facts in the past, a narrative or a history, be it official or unofficial, constitutes an imagination of a political community. The reflections on the reconstruction of the past in post-World War II and post-Cold War Cambodia-Thailand politics of history and historical memory as discussed in the preceding chapter provide a great deal of evidence to the effects that it is reasonable to argue that the social memory within their respective society have been transformed, distorted or even changed the past in order to preserve their national identity and unity. Historical memories, therefore, can be an effective tool for a

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<sup>5</sup> Polkinghorne, DE, ‘Narrative and self-concept’, *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, vol. 1, no. 2&3, 1991, p. 136.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 143.

particular group of people in the society, usually those in power, to shape public opinions and attitudes toward other groups or nations. This process might involve injecting some new ideas into the mind and soul of individuals and buried old ideas or ideologies that no longer serve their political orientations or goals through certain political propaganda. This perspective has also been sophisticatedly expressed by Benedict Anderson in his *'Imagined Community'*:

All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesia. Out of such oblivion, in specific historical circumstances, spring narratives...Out of this estrangement comes a perception of personhood, *identity* which, because it cannot be 'remembered,' must be narrated...yet between the narratives of person and nation there is a central difference of employment. In the secular story of a 'person' there is a beginning and an end. Nations, however, have no clearly identifiable births, and their deaths, if they ever happen, are never natural. Because there is no *Originator*, the nation's biography cannot be written evangelically 'down time,' through a long procreative chain of begettings...But to serve the narrative purpose, these violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as 'our own'.<sup>7</sup>

In this sense, Benedict Anderson seems to imply that the stories that provide a nation with particular identities tend to be fanciful stories about the origin (birth), identity, and purposes of that nation—the fanciful stories that can be close to 'myth' in meaning. Anderson continues to contend that 'the frame of these narratives is historical and their setting is sociological.'

Likewise, Lincoln, in his 'Discourse and the Construction of Society,' demonstrates four types of narratives including fable, legend, history and myth. Among these, he argues that *myth* is usually the most powerful instrument for forming as well as reshaping the past and that most

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<sup>7</sup> Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined community: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, revised ed, Verso, London/New York, 1991, pp. 204-205.



often a particular group in any society, for their political outcomes, would try to employ myths as its narrative. He defined myth as “the small class of stories that possess both credibility and authority.”<sup>8</sup> May (1975) also uses the term ‘personal myth’ to refer to self-narratives and he went on to argue that personal myth could play a crucial role in not only providing sense of ‘self-identity’ but also conveying certain ‘cultural and personal values.’<sup>9</sup>

Proceeding with these arguments, this chapter will examine the following questions: What self-concepts do the Cambodian and the Thai have as witnessed in their historical narratives? What are the conflicting identities do the Cambodian and the Thai forge as witnessed in their historical narratives? What are the contents in their divergent historical narratives that make up their basic understanding of themselves as discussed in the first chapter? How do they differ from each other in the ways they describe the events in the past?

## **Who *We* Are and Where *They* Come From**

### **Two Contradictory Schools of Thought**

The historical narratives of the two countries reveal a clear pattern or structure of two conflicting schools of thought racing through different discourses that reflect their conceptions of self. To begin with, the Cambodian tend to think that they are *The Originator*. Mainly, they tend to think that they are the first people who had always lived on the land of the so-called Indochina and thus the people who have first owned this territory from the onset. They adopt the view that

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<sup>8</sup> Lincoln, B, *Discourse and the construction of society, comparative studies of myth, ritual, and classification*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> May, R, ‘Values, myths, and symbols’, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 132, 1975, pp.703-6.

the Khmer-Mon or Mon-Khmer race is the oldest race who has always lived on this Southeast Asia peninsula and who has the most ancient and most sophisticated culture and civilization. According to this narrative, this *Originator* ideology might have been based on various sources including archeological works, inscriptions, foreign sources, mainly Chinese and some European records, and also the Khmer sources. Whether this fundamental nation-centric conception of self has been adopted from internal or external sources, this self-conception is central to and has been observed in various kinds of Cambodian historical narratives.

Many instances in these historical documents, such as the royal chronicles, history textbooks, newspaper articles, school social studies textbooks and so on, have been observed and would fall into this mainstream thought. It has been narrated that the Khmer-Mon or Mon-Khmer race is the oldest race with their culture and civilization dated back to at least 680000 BC.<sup>10</sup> The Khmer people have had their written history for more than 2000 years dated back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and the first kingdom of the Khmers was called Funan. This basic idea is claimed to have been based on various sources such as the Khmer chronicles, inscriptions, legends, and the Chinese sources.<sup>11</sup>

Khmer chronicles, as in many other history textbooks which are said to be based on ancient inscriptions, also narrate the legend of Nokor Kok Thlok (Kingdom of Kok Thlok) to trace the origin of the first Khmer Kingdom. The legend has it that, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, an Indian Brahman priest Kaundinya came to the Great Lake in Cambodia to find fortune and later married a local princess named Soma, the Queen of Nokor Phnom, literally meaning the

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Michel Tranet, *Pravattasas nai preah reacheanachak Kampuchea: Sampornapheap roveang procheachun Khmer-Thai chab pi sattavat ti 13 nai ko. so.* [A History of the Kingdom of Cambodia: Relationship between the Khmer and Thai People since the 13<sup>th</sup> century], Phnom Penh, 2005, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Ros Chantraboth, *Pravattasas Khmer tam reung preng nitean neung tam sela chareuk* [A History of Cambodia through Legends and Inscriptions], L'Harmattan, Paris, 1997, p. 173-5.

Kingdom of Mountain. He founded the Kingdom of Funan and introduced Hindu customs and Sanskrit language from India.<sup>12</sup> Modern historians would refer to the Kingdom of Kok Thlok as Funan, which is considered to have been the first Khmer kingdom and the first Indianized state in Southeast Asia. The capital city of Funan was said to be Vjeathakborak and the name of the kingdom was derived from the Khmer word *Phnom*, literally meaning ‘mountain.’<sup>13</sup>

Another narrative puts it that there have been a lot of evidences to show that the Khmer-Mon or Mon-Khmer race is the oldest race who was born and has always lived in Southeast Asia region and are classified into a race different from the Indian race—a race which has been named as Austroasiatics or Austro-Asian by world anthropologists. The Khmer people are believed to have been born and have lived on this land until the present day, which is a historical legacy of their ancestors. Except for the Cham people, the neighboring peoples are considered all newcomers who came to live on this land only in the historic era, including the Burmese in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, *Yuan* in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, *Siem* in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>14</sup>

In general, this self-narrative and self-concept has been witnessed in various historical materials and has also been incorporated into the school social studies textbooks by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoYES)<sup>15</sup>, which directly reflect the dominant view of the Cambodian about who they are and where they are from. As stated earlier, whether this ideology has been adopted from outsiders’ view as can be seen in the above-mentioned evidence or has been justified historically and archeologically by the Cambodian themselves, this nation-centered historiography has been serving as the dominant ideology in Cambodian society.

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<sup>12</sup> The Royal Printing House, *Pungsavada nai Protes Kampuchea* [The Chronicle of Cambodia], 1<sup>st</sup> ed, Ministry of Education of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2495 BE (1952 AD), pp. 6-7; Ros Chantraboth, op.cit., pp. 173-5.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Ros Chantraboth, op.cit., p. 173.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Treung Ngea, *Provattas Khmer* [A History of Cambodia], Phnom Penh, 1973, pp. 7-9.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., MoEYS, *Pheasa Khmer* [Khmer Language Grade 11], Phnom Penh, 2011, pp. 13-15.

Along with this self-conception, the Cambodian, which is the transliterated name of *Kampuchea* and a once mighty Khmer Empire descended from the Kingdom of Funan, also holds an ethnocentric historical perception towards the Thai. Within this school of thought, the Khmer tend to adopt the view that the Thai, whom they call ‘*Siem*,’ are not original people in Indochina but the ‘newcomers’ who originated in Yunnan province in the southern part of China and had migrated south-ward to settle down on the southern part of the Khmer Empire’s territory in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD. This *Migration Theory*<sup>16</sup> has been witnessed in various versions of the Khmer historical narratives and tends not only to focus on the Siamese migration per se but also to depict the Thai as ‘land robbers’ or ‘land plunderers’ of the Khmer territory and also the ‘thieves’ who have duplicated and adopted Khmer culture and civilization as their own.

This theory has been adopted in various versions of Khmer historical narratives such as history textbooks, royal chronicles, and especially the school social studies textbooks. The Cambodian high school social studies textbooks mainly from Grade 7 to 12 witness the influence of this theory and ideology, mentioning about the origin of the Siamese or Thai people, their gradual migration to Indochina from the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD and the formation of their first state in Sukhothai in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD on Khmer territory being enslaved by the Khmer Empire. For example, the 2011 high school social studies textbook Grade 7 explains that:

Siam is a race who originally lived in Yunnan area in China. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD, Siam formed a state called Nanchao. This state formation forced the Chinese government to militarily force this group out of the region and gradually come down to Indochina. After the collapse of the Nanchao state along with the intrusion of the Mongol in the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Siamese came down into Indochina more and more and formed many small tribes living on the southern and

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<sup>16</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 1

south-eastern part of the Khmer territory. In late 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, these Siamese people formed an independent state and started to threaten Khmer sovereignty thereafter. (pp. 119-120)

This narrative firmly holds the conviction that Nanchao is the first Thai kingdom which was located in the present-day Yunnan province of China. It is closely linked the controversial proposition that this Thai kingdom emerged in about 600 AD and by 800 AD had become a major power and was then conquered by the Mongols in 1253 AD and came under the rule of the Ming Dynasty in 1368 AD.

Khmer narratives are also bombarded with explanations of the origin of the name ‘*Siem*’ [Siam]—a race being shown in the picture on the well-known bas-relief of Angkor Wat temple and depicted in a recorded inscription K289 that contains an ancient word *Syam Kuk*, which is also believed by the Cambodian to refer to the Thai being portrayed as the slaves or unordered troupe of forest-dwelling mercenaries who served in the more disciplined army of King Suryavaraman II of the Khmer Empire.<sup>17</sup> Khmer social studies school textbooks, likewise, have also incorporated this narrative. For instance, the 2011 High School Social Studies Textbook Grade 8 has it that “the first picture of the Siamese people is witnessed on the 12<sup>th</sup> century stone wall of Angkor Wat and some ancient Khmer inscriptions also mentioned *Siam* as ‘barbarian’ people” (p. 162). However, Thai nationalist scholars, refusing to see their ancestors in such an image of enslaved savage, tend to reject this claim as groundless and lacking concrete and

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<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Michel Tranet, op.cit., pp. 12-16; Also visit: <http://www.thecambodiaherald.com/cambodia/detail/1?page=14&token=MmJkMjRhZDIyZjAzNDEzMTk0NDE2YjIzMmI0MDFI>; Santi, Phakdeekham, *Khamen tok Siam* [Attitudes and opinions of the Khmers upon Siam], Matichon Publishing House, Bangkok, 2009, pp. 14-15; (Appendixes, Fig. 2-4)

scientific evidence. As Thai scholar Manich Jumsai puts it, this kind of depiction ‘could easily be made to work for their overlords, the Khmers.’<sup>18</sup>

In the Khmer Dictionary of Chhoun Nat published by the Buddhist Institute, the word *Siam* is also defined to refer to the Thai or Tai: “*Siem*: a name of a country bordered with Cambodia on the west and the north and northern part; people and language are also called *Siem*.”<sup>19</sup> However, one of the Khmer scholars of the present day, concerning the origin of this name, explains that the Thai never used this name to call themselves but *Muang Thai* or *Muang Tai* and that this name became the official name of Thailand only from the periods of 1851-1868 and 1946-1947 AD respectively.<sup>20</sup>

In etymological terms, according to Bora Touch, the word is rooted in “the Sangskrit word *Syama*, meaning dark or black, the name of Siva’s wife; in the ancient Hindu treaties of Vishnu Purana, this word referred to the name of a mountain located on the northwest of the Gulf of Thailand” and Khmer inscriptions from the pre-Angkor to Angkor periods or until the 1400s AD also contain the ancient word *Syaam* or *Syam*. From the post-Angkor period until the present day, most of the Khmer narratives use *Siem* to refer to Siam or Thailand.

On the other side of the same coin, the Thai also create self-narratives that reflect their own identity. This self-depiction, as will be discussed below, would be classified as *The Contriver* school of thought, which is also composed of different theories and propositions aimed at discerning the images and identities of the Thai nation.

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<sup>18</sup> Manich Jumsai, *History of Thailand and Cambodia*, Chlermnit Press, Bangkok, November 1987, p. 2. For more Thai perspectives on this sculpture, see: Chit Phumisak, Sisak Wanliphodom, & Suchit Wongthes, *Siam Kuk = Syam Kuk: kongthap Sayam thi prasat Nakhon Wat pen khrai? Machak nai? Thai, Lao R Kha*, Samnakphim Matichon, Krung Thep, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> Chuon Nat, *Khmer Dictionary*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed, the Buddhist Institute, Phnom Penh, 1966.

<sup>20</sup> Bora Touch, ‘The origin of the name “Siem Reap”’, 24 December 2011, retrieved March 18, 2012, <http://ki-media.blogspot.jp/2011/12/origin-of-name-siem-reap-by-bora-touch.html>

To begin with, some of the Thai scholars would favor self-narratives against the migration theory adopted by the Cambodian. This school of thought has been constructed mainly from recent archeological work in some parts of Thailand. From these archeological excavations,<sup>21</sup> along with other historical and cultural justifications, the Thai also come to claim that the area of Siam, called Thailand today, is one of the oldest inhabited areas in Southeast Asia. Among the most important proponents of these pre-historic discourses in Thai history include Srisak Vallibhatama, Sujit Wongthes, and Dhida Saraya. An example of the historical narratives that falls into this school of thought is '*khon Thai yu thi ni*' (The Thais Were Always Here: A social and cultural history of the Siamese people in Thailand) by Thai historian Sujit Wongthes, who has worked closely with Srisak since the time when they founded an 'Archeological Travel' club in university in Thailand in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

This Thai scholar becomes one of the prominent Thai scholars who have proposed a new theory against the migration theory adopted by the Khmer in their historical narratives. He explains that his work signifies an effort to propose new ideas pertaining to historical and archeological discoveries, and most of the evidences come from the latest archeological excavations that can explain rather clearly different groups of cultural background that used to settle on the land of Siam. This new theory, according to the author, posits that 'the Siamese was born and grew precisely where it is today rather than being traced back to the Altai Mountains or to Mongolia followed by a *migration* into the plains of 'Huang so' and 'Yang Si Rivers' and the

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<sup>21</sup> These archeological excavations were said to be done in many prehistoric sites of the present day Thailand. Some of the most important ones include: *Ban Chheang* in Udon Thani province, north-eastern Thailand, in 1967 (these earliest excavations discovered ruins such as hand-painted patterned ceramics in red colors, bronze weaponry, and jewelry pottery), and in 1974 and 1975 (unearthed human remains, painted pottery, bronze spears and axes, bronze accessories, bronze casts, and glass-bead necklaces) believed to date back to about 3600-3900 BC; *Ban Phak Top*, 26 kilometers south west of Ban Chheang (pottery) believed to date back to 2900-3600 BC; *Non Nok Tha*, 100 kilometers south west of Ban Chheang (evidence of farming of edible grains) believed to date back to 3500 BC.

establishment of Nan Chao Kingdom which was believed to be destroyed later by the Mongol dynasty of Kublai Khan in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century.’<sup>22</sup>

Some of the arguments in this new theory can clearly be seen as contradictory to the old school of thought adopted in the Cambodian historical narratives. For example, Sujit Wongthes contends that Sukhothai was not the first capital of Thailand where the Thai were believed to have been liberated from the *Khom* rule<sup>23</sup> and that “the name *Suvarnabhumi* and Funan which were misinterpreted from Chinese and Indian patterns led to a wrong picture. The name *Dvaravati*, which used to be accepted as a name of the Mon’s territory that covered vast area in Siam, has lately been proved wrong. He further argues that “the *Khom* kings of Cambodia were ‘relative’ to *Khom* king in the Chao Phraya river plain, as against the former belief that *Khom* Kings in Cambodia ‘ruled’ city state in Chao Phraya river plain which had to send tribute to kings in Cambodia.”<sup>24</sup> Proceeding from these arguments, he makes a bold assumption that the old school such as that of George Cœdès has been proved ‘faulty.’

Clearly, this perspective appears contradictory to Prince Damrong’s writings in 1929 in which he proposed that Sukhothai should be regarded as the first capital of Siam on the ground that this kingdom was believed to have ruled over most of the territory of Siam and also stretched its influence over other neighboring countries. As Prince Damrong puts it,

Those Thai who had established kingdoms in Lanna had only occupied the territory of the present Northwestern region and then declined. But the Thai who established the independent kingdom at

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<sup>22</sup> Sujit Wongthes, *Khon Thai yu thi ni* (The Thais Were Always Here), trans. Michael Wright, Silpa Vathanaktham, Bangkok, 2529 BE (1986 AD), pp. 200-3.

<sup>23</sup> Sujit Wongthes, *Sokhotai was not the first capital of Thailand*, Bangkok, 1983; in Sujit Wongthes, *Khon Thai yu thi ni* (The Thais Were Always Here), p. 200. The term *Khom* is discussed in details from page 53.

<sup>24</sup> Sujit Wongthes, op.cit., p. 201. (For more information, visit his website: <http://www.sujitwongthes.com/> or his Facebook account at <https://www.facebook.com/sujitwongthes/photos>)



Sukhothai were able to expand the realm so vastly that it reached other countries. Since then they have ruled and occupied *prathetsayam* up to now. Thus Sukhothai should be regarded as the first capital of *prathetsayam* under the Thai people from B.E. 1800 onward.<sup>25</sup>

Against this new theory, Khmer scholar Michel Tranet explains that the *Ban Chheang* culture is not different from those found in many pre-historic sites in Cambodia and that those prehistoric sites in Thailand are just located in the former Khmer territory. Furthermore, he justifies that *Dvaravati* was the Mon kingdom found only in the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> century AD after the division of the Khmer kingdom of Nokor Phnom, so the propositions in the new theory proposed by Thai scholars are in conflict and thus do not hold.<sup>26</sup>

To some other Thai scholars and historians, however, the proposition in the migration theory has been adopted and completed by new researches. For instance, a Thai scholar explains that “research done by Western scholars helped national historians to complete the long history of the Tai people, believed to be a mighty race that migrated from China.”<sup>27</sup> By giving an example of William Clifton Dodd’s research,<sup>28</sup> which proposes the theory that the Thai or Tai had to move southwards because they were attacked by the Chinese, Sunait also points out the influence of this theory on Prince Damrong’s writing in an article attached to the first publication of the Royal Autograph Chronicle in 1912, which also offers the idea that “the Tai people, in order to establish an independent kingdom separate from the Khmer domain, had to conduct war

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<sup>25</sup> Damrong Rajanubhab, *Laksana kanpokkhrong prathetsayam tae boran* [The Siamese Government in Ancient Times], p. 6, quoted in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A history of the geo-body of a nation*, 1994, p. 163.

<sup>26</sup> Michel Tranet, *op.cit.*, pp. 5-12.

<sup>27</sup> Sunait Chutintaranond, ‘The image of the Burmese enemy in Thai perceptions and historical writings’, *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. 80, no. 1, 1992, p. 96.

<sup>28</sup> Dodd, William C, *The Tai race: Elder brother of the Chinese*, forwarded by B.J. Terwiel, White Lotus Press, Bangkok, 1996.

against the *Khom* (Khmer) who ruled part of the present day Thailand long before their arrival.”<sup>29</sup>

However, there have also been Thai historical narratives that adopt the migration theory on the one hand but also appeal to the idea that the Khmer or the Cambodian also migrated into the Thai area and took over the Mon, who had previously dominated the region, on the other. For example, a Thai narrative puts it as follows: “The Thai migrated into the Indo-Chinese peninsula from their home in China sometime around 400 BC. After migrating into Indo-China, the Thai were within the empire of the Mon, which was the governing race in the area, roughly from the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD onward. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Khmer (Cambodians) began to *migrate* into the Thai area and eventually succeeded the Mon so that the Thai came to be ruled by the Khmer Empire.”<sup>30</sup>

In the new high school history textbooks in Thailand, regarding the history of Thailand, both the migration theory and the archeological works at various places of Thailand are introduced at the same time. The significance of archeological works and pre-historic discourses in modern Thai history has been introduced in Thai school history textbooks from early grades. More significantly, in Grade 1 (Secondary), the excavation works at the *Ban Chheang* prehistoric site in Udon Thani province of Thailand is written to date back to 4300-2000 BC.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the migration theory is also dealt with in this book on page 96-97.<sup>32</sup> Whether or not there is

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<sup>29</sup> *Phraratchapongsawadan chbap Phra-ratchahatlekha, lem 1, ton 1* (The Royal Autograph Chronicle), vol. 1, part 1, Bangkok, 1952, pp. 53, 56-85, quoted in Sunait Chutintaranond, p. 96.

<sup>30</sup> Nantana Ronnakiat, ‘The Thai writing system’, *Department of Linguistics, Thammasat University*, retrieved 23 January 2013, <http://thaiarc.tu.ac.th/thai/thaiwrt.htm>.

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Education of Thailand, *Pravattisat 1* (High School History Textbook Grade 1, Secondary), Bangkok, 2553 BE (2010 AD), pp. 84-85. (Appendixes, Fig. 5-6)

<sup>32</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 7-8

a conflict in the self-conceptions depicted by Thai historical narratives in the school history textbooks, interpretations will be what remain.

Another Thai historical narrative that might partly fall into this school of thought, as also discussed in the Cambodian case, is the historical consideration of the name of the country, Siam or Thailand. On the one hand, this historical narrative goes with the migration theory that the Thai first migrated from the southern part of China. On the other, it tends to reject the idea that *Siam* refers to Thai people because the Thai had never used this name to refer to themselves until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Concerning the word *Siam*, which is believed to be the transliterated name by western writers, for instance, Thai scholar Manich Jumsai traces the first use of the word *Sayam* and its origin back in “the Vichu Purana during the reign of çri-Bharvavarman, King of Tchen-La”, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD;<sup>33</sup> the second mention has been found on a stone inscription of the Cham in 1050 AD and then is also mentioned in a Chinese account of Cambodia’s Angkor by Zhou Dagan, a Chinese Embassy to Cambodia who wrote a record of the country during his mandate titled ‘A Record of Cambodia: The Land and Its People,’<sup>34</sup> which Manich Jamsai claims that the Chinese learned the word *Siam* from the Khmer for their mention of the name on a Khmer inscription at Angkor Wat in 1120 AD. The last mention, according to him, was made by the Malays, who were also considered a vassal state of the Khmer Empire and who employed the

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<sup>33</sup> Adhémard Leclère, *Histoire du Cambodge* [A History of Cambodia], p. 43; cited in Manich Jamsai, *History of Thailand and Cambodia*, Chlermnit Press, Bangkok, November 1987, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Zou Dagan, *A record of Cambodia: The land and its people*, Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai, 2007, pp. 13, 16, 22, 24, 46, 50, 60, 76, 85. (Translated with an introduction and notes by Peter Harris, Forwarded by David Chandler)

word *Sayam* to refer to the Thai, who are believed to have come to live in the region and then taught this name to the European with whom they had the first contact.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, Manich Jumsai justified in his own word: “to this, Professor Rong Sayamananda of Chulalongkorn University, in his ‘Outline of Thai History’ agreed with me in saying that *Siam* or *Sayam* became the official name of the country only in the reign of the fourth monarch of the Chakry Dynasty—King Mongkut (1851-1868).”<sup>36</sup> Similarly, *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn* in his ‘Thailand’s Case’ also contends that “the official name *Siam* was adopted from foreign origin” and that “Thai people from time immemorial call their country *Muang Thai* which exactly means ‘Thai country’ or Thailand.”<sup>37</sup>

The name *Thailand* also receives different perspectives and interpretations among Thai scholars and historians. First of all, Sujit Wongthes forcefully proposes that the name Thailand was introduced in 1939 to substitute the well-known older name *Siam* or Kingdom of Siam, where the so-called Siamese lived and had a harmonious identity and culture. The word *Thai*, to him, ‘identifies the nation or society and when ‘Thai people’ is used, it should signify nationality, not race.’<sup>38</sup> On another front, Thai scholar Thongchai Winichakul, in his ‘Siam Mapped’, mentions that ‘Siam and Siamese are used for the country and its people before change of the country’s name in 1941; Thailand and Thai are used for the post-1941 context.’<sup>39</sup> Manich Jumsai also points out the root of this name in his work that ‘the word *Thai* is a local word used

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<sup>35</sup> Manich Jumsai, pp. 2-5.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, Thailand’s Case*, Bangkok, 1941, p. 121.

<sup>38</sup> Sujit Wongthes, *Khon Thai yu thi ni* (The Thais Were Always Here), translated by Michael Wright, Silpa Vathanaktham, Bangkok, 2529 BE (1986 AD), p.200.

<sup>39</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam mapped: A history of the geo-body of a nation*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1994, p. 18; however, based on the banknote in 1939 in Thailand (see Appendixes, Fig. 44), the change of the country’s name from Siam to Thailand was actually done in 1939.

by the local people to call themselves, and this word must have been used as far back in history as almost 3500 years ago when the Thai were still in China and had not emigrated to this part of Asia.<sup>40</sup>

Within this school of thought, as the Khmer narratives have about the Thai, there have also been Thai narratives that try to provide ethnocentric perspectives on and interpretations of the name *Khmer*, *Cambodia* and *Khom*. For example, *Luang Vichitr Vadamarn* proposes a new theory which makes a bold assumption that:

The Cambodians are otherwise called ‘Khmer’ (pronounced as ‘Khamair’). But it is an established fact that the Khmers and the Cambodians are not the same people. The Khmers who were native of the east coast of the Bengal Bay *immigrated* two thousand years ago into the land which is now called Cambodia. There followed the immigration of Indians from the west coast of Bengal bay in great number to settle in the same place about the same time.<sup>41</sup>

This new ideology was introduced and promoted to be a state ideology by this Thai historian and political leader in the early 1940s, which some Khmer historians claim was part of Thai expansionism under the so-called ‘Pan-Thai’ movement from the early 1930s to the Second World War.<sup>42</sup>

For Sujit Wongthes, on the other hand, the name *Khom*, prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD, was ‘not the name of an ethnic group but the cultural name for the people of the Chao Phraya and the southern part of the Mekong Rivers.’<sup>43</sup> In his provocative work on the origin the Thai people, he

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<sup>40</sup> Manich Jumsai, op.cit., p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Luang Vichitr Vadamarn*, op.cit., p. 129.

<sup>42</sup> Nuon Kheoun, *Roth proha 1932:pi Siem tov Thai* [The 1932 Coup: From Siam to Thailand], Phnom Penh, 1971, pp. 61-101.

<sup>43</sup> Sujit Wongthes, op.cit., p.200.

tries to relate two *Khom* kingdoms, one in Cambodia and another in the Chao Phraya, but this work, as mentioned earlier, does not consider Sukhothai the first capital of Thailand where the Thai people used to be believed to have been ‘liberated from *Khom* rule.’ His work, overall, tries to propose a new idea that the northern part of Thailand of the present day was the sources of the settlement of Chao Phraya river plain since the prehistoric time with a long and close relationship with the central region or the Khmer realm.

“A Thai scholar at the Thai academy Phya Anuman Rajadhon, in his ‘*Laem Indochina*’<sup>44</sup> published in 2515 BE [1972 AD], deals with a question: ‘Are *Khom* and *Khmer* the same race?’, and he proclaims that we should not ask such a question again because we have agreed that *Khom* is a name that we used to call Khmer people in the ancient past and this name was also used to call them as evidenced in the inscriptions at Sukhothai,”—A justification by Khmer scholar Chhatra Bremredy, who continues to argue on this point that the word *Khom* can be found in almost all chronicle histories of *Thai-Liv*[Lao], and besides, this name has been mentioned in inscription no. 2 of the Thai collections.<sup>45</sup>

In Cambodia today, this word seems to be absent in any publications but it is sometimes found in academic debates on linguistics or in ghost stories. As Chhatra Bremredy points out, the fact that there are only *Thai-Liv* publications of the word is not without any reasons, and that Thailand and Laos are countries located in the upper part while Cambodia in the lower. Based on various evidences and the Chinese documents of the Tang Dynasty, the Khmer Empire was divided into two parts around 1296 BE (753 AD) (those in the lower part fled to the upper). The name *Chenla*, according to this scholar, derives from the Khmer word *Chorn Leu*, meaning

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<sup>44</sup> Rajadhon, Phraya Anuman, *Reang Laem Indochin samai boran: riapriang doi Sathiankoset*, Ko. Tho. [i.e. Krung Thep Maha Nakhon], Bannakhan, 2515 BE (1972 AD), 386 p.

<sup>45</sup> Chhatra Bremredy, *Nokor Kok Thlok* [The Kingdom of Kok Thlok], Phnom Penh, 1972, pp. 108-110.

‘upper’, and the Chinese equivalences for this word include *Chhang*, *Chheng*, or *Chheuong*. In the early Udong period, this word was still in use sometimes, and it can also be found in the inscription by Dr. Chey Nun and in the legend *Ream Ke*.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, this Khmer scholar goes on with his linguistic-based arguments that in the old days, a lot of Khmer people in the lower part fled to the upper, and those in the upper (based on the flow of water from the upper to the lower) called those from the lower *Krorm* or *Krom* meaning ‘low.’ This is similar to the way Khmer people of the present day call Khmer people in the lower part *Kampuchea Krorm* or *Khmer Krorm*, meaning ‘lower Cambodia’, which is in the southern part of the present-day Vietnam. If Thai or Lao people read the word *Krom* or *Krorm*, they cannot pronounce the word as clearly as the Cambodian do but they can only make it clearly with the consonant of the word, so they would read this word as *klorm*. For example, in Thai language, the word *Krab* is read by the Thai as *Klab*.<sup>47</sup>

This argument, however, is similar to the linguistics-based ideas proposed by Thai scholar Charnvit Kasetsiri who has pointed out that “the word *Khom* is derived from an old Thai *Khmer Krom* meaning ‘low land Khmer’” and that “in spoken Thai, *Khmer* was gradually dropped, leaving only *krom* which over time became, first, *klom* or *kalom*, and eventually *Khom*.”<sup>48</sup> He continues to highlight misunderstandings among Thai scholars and political elites on this matter:

This lack understanding is reflected in the thinking of a considerable number of educated Thais and members of the ruling class, who distinguish between the *Khom* and the Khmer, considering

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<sup>46</sup> Chhatra Bremredy, op.cit., pp. 111-9.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>48</sup> Charnvit, K, *The rise of Ayuthya: A History of Siam in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1976, p. 123.

them to be two separate ethnic groups. They asserted that it was the *Khom*, not the Khmer, who built the majestic temple complexes at Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom and who founded one of the world's truly magnificent ancient empires.”<sup>49</sup>

Last but not least, another Thai historical narrative, the so-called chronicle of *Thai Nua* [Northern Thai chronicle], can also be classified into this school of thought. This chronicle also tries to trace the origin of the Thai people and the first Thai kingdom back to the Kingdom of *Kok Mann*, which is a similar version to the legend of *Kok Thlok* in the Khmer version. In this sense, there seems to be a conflict of self-concept in these historical narratives because on the one hand, the Thai version claims that this legend derives from Thailand because the Thai chronicle tells even of the origin of *Phra Krerk* and *Preah Thorng* and the date in the chronicle is also before that of the Khmer version. In the introduction to the first volume of the chronicle history of Cambodia written by Preah Samuth, a book forwarded by Prince Nupparoth Harirak Reacheapadhey (King Norodom's son) in 2420 BE, it is mentioned that the chronicle was extracted from the chronicle of *Thai Nua*.

On the other hand, the Khmer version claims that the legend of *Kok Thlork* was the one that existed long ago before the time India put *Sovannaphum* under its colony. The word *Kok Thlork* is mentioned to be a root word and also a Khmer word and Khmer ancestors in the past told of this legend mouth to mouth without any written records. When the Khmer-Mon race was dispersed by the Indians, the Chin-Thai race came in and controlled everything and wrote down the Khmer-Mon history into the *Thai Nua* and *Thai-Liv* history with certain transformations, distortions and duplications. Chhatra Bremredy explains that:

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<sup>49</sup> Charnvit, K, 'Thailand-Cambodia: A love-hate relationship', *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia* 3, March 2003.



In these writings, they could confuse, trick, or assume that *Thlork* was *Mann* or *Snor*. We can notice this transformation or confusion based on the transformation of the history of a people to another—the transformation of the language of the original people into that of a newcomer.<sup>50</sup>

Also, the Khmer version justifies that Major *Luang Thongdi Thanarat*, former Thai Prime Minister *Sarit Thanarat*'s father, translated the royal chronicles of Cambodia into Thai language. In that translated text, he used *Koh Mann* for the name *Kok Thlork*.<sup>51</sup> One of the most important factors that can determine the origin of this legend, and probably the idea of the origin of the Kingdom, therefore, is whether the Thai word *Mann* in the legend in Thai version was borrowed from the Khmer word *Thorng* or vice versa, and the debate over this authenticity might continue between them.

As reflected in this section, both Khmer and Thai historical narratives might present similar arguments but tend to aim at different or diverse goals. This kind of self-centric historiography can be considered part of their struggle for a desired identity which is rooted not only in historical issues but also in socio-cultural and geo-political questions. In general terms, these conflicting schools of thought are attributed to the clash between Khmer and Thai racial nationalism which is reflected in their theoretical and historical constructions that provide justifications for their existence as a race. The conflicting conceptions of self both think-tanks have developed might be central to any other claims concerning their cultural and linguistic identities.

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<sup>50</sup> Chhatra Bremredy, *Nokor Kok Thlok* (The Kingdom of Kok Thlok), Phnom Penh, 1972, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 5-8.

## **Culture and Language: A Defense of National Identities**

As discussed in the last section, because the Khmer tend to adopt the *Originator* school of thought, almost all Khmer historical narratives tend to present cultural and linguistic claims towards the Thai. Within this school of thought, the originator ideology and the migration theory would be at the center of these self-centric arguments. There are always Khmer narratives that hold the view that, since the Thai were not the original people in this peninsula but the newcomers who had migrated from the southern part of China and settled down on the foundation of Khmer culture and civilization, almost all aspects of the present-day Thai culture and art, royal practices, and even traditional political ideas of monarchical system and the likes have been merely a derivative of the Cambodian's.

Such arguments would be witnessed in various historical and cultural narratives in Cambodian context. These historical narratives are generally claimed to have been based mainly on various evidences including the researches done by foreigners, especially Western scholars, the studies through ancient inscriptions in both Thailand and Cambodia, old historical documents, the ruins of Khmer architectural buildings and ancient monuments left throughout the present-day Thailand, the studies of geographical and ethnographic evidences in those historical sites, and so forth.

One of the most prominent examples of all is the works of a prominent Khmer scholar Michel Tranet in a series of articles and books concerning various topics such as the legacy of Khmer culture and art in the present-day Thailand, the origin of the Thai race, history concerning the origin of some historical sites in Thailand, etc. In his works, he would discuss topics such as the influence of Khmer architecture on Thai pagoda buildings, the Khmer roots in Thai *Trai Sol*

and Thai Buddha statues with dragon hat, the origin of Khmer traditional house designs in Thailand, the origin of Thai art influenced from Khmer art, and the influence of Khmer *Yorn* (holy sacred strip of cloth written with Khmer round scripts) on Thai people of the present day and so on.<sup>52</sup> These articles and books are also available online and include more Thailand-related topics such as new scientific researches on the origin of the word ‘Siam’ and ‘Thai,’ the origin of Ayudhya based on Khmer inscriptions, etc.<sup>53</sup>

These narratives, from a general point of view, hold that the dominant similar aspects of Thai art and culture came into being only after their first state formation in Sukhothai in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and were adopted from that of the Khmer and the Mon. They tend to adopt the ideas of Western scholars such as George Cœdès that all aspects of *Thai-Liv* cultural foundation cannot be counted in all the spheres of the pre-historic, pre-Angkor, and Angkor civilization and that the Thai socio-cultural significance in the Sukhothai and Ayudhya periods only reflects a great cultural revolution against the Khmer cultural influence in which all the subsequently created aspects of Thai art and culture must be made different from the Khmer. Distortions, over-simplifications, further incorporations or omissions of certain aspects in the original versions are all unavoidable in this long-standing process. In this sense, they tend to adopt the view that the Thai had always tried to transform Khmer art and culture into their own.<sup>54</sup> As Michel Tranet puts it,

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<sup>52</sup> Michel Tranet, *Pravattasas nai preah reacheanachak Kampuchea: Sampornapheap roveang procheachun Khmer-Thai chab pi sattavat ti 13 nai ko. so.* [A History of the Kingdom of Cambodia: Relationship between the Khmer and Thai People since the 13<sup>th</sup> century], Phnom Penh, 2005, pp. 23-31.

<sup>53</sup> These online articles are also available in printed books written in Khmer language. All of these articles and books might represent and present Khmer cultural and linguistic arguments and claims to the Thais. For more of these studies, visit: [http://www.cen.com.kh/culture/detail\\_culturehistory/NDVIYWZiY2U5OTV](http://www.cen.com.kh/culture/detail_culturehistory/NDVIYWZiY2U5OTV).

<sup>54</sup> Michel Tranet, pp. i-xi, 29-31, referred to Cœdès, George, *The Indianized states of Southeast Asia*, pp. 230-238; *The making of Southeast Asia*, pp. 143-146; Claude, Jacques, ‘The Khmers in Thailand: What the inscriptions inform us’, *SPAFA Digest*, vol.10, no. 1, 1989, pp. 16-24.

It is a big mistake to consider *Lopburi* art as Thai art influenced by Khmer art. Thai art in Sukhothai or other provinces of Thailand must be divided into two different categories—one being art of Khmer origin before Sukhothai and Ayudhya and another one being Thai art coming into existence after Thai independence from Khmer.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, the Khmer narratives also present linguistic claims to the Thai. At the center of these arguments stands the idea that Thai language originates from that of the Khmer or even that the Thai have transformed Khmer language into their own. They hold the view that the first Thai inscription in 1292 AD by King Ram Khamhaeng of Sukhothai was written mainly using ancient Khmer scripts and that this inscription was also found in the former Khmer territory. In addition, they tend to adopt the view that the Thai did not receive the *Pali-Sanskrit* directly from India but through the Khmer and the Thai leaders in Sukhothai borrowed Khmer Theravada Buddhism, which played crucial roles in the foundation of their state formation and state ideology. Along with this linguistic claim, the Khmer narratives also place into questions the authenticity of Ram Khamhaeng inscription.

Researches have shown that the hand-written texts by King Ram Khamhaeng were created using Khmer scripts, which were also influenced by Indian language, but the Thai script that imitated Khmer script at that time did not have the same characteristics like the Khmer scripts. This is because the Thai have their own talent. The reason behind the fact that the Thai had created anything different from Khmer is that they have an intention to revolve against what is Khmer.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Michel Tranet, op.cit., p. 31. For more collections of George Cœdès' works and other Western scholars' works on Cambodia, visit <http://www.nla.gov.au/selected-library-collections/georges-coedes-collection>.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 22-3. For a detailed analysis of this linguistic argument, read articles by the same author 'The Thai did not get the Sanskrit culture' at [http://www.cen.com.kh/culture/detail\\_culturehistory/YTdIYmM1YjVkJkYmI](http://www.cen.com.kh/culture/detail_culturehistory/YTdIYmM1YjVkJkYmI)

It is indisputable that most of these arguments have been adopted from researches and articles done by Western scholars but some of the modern Khmer scholars also claim to have done their own researches through archeological excavations and studies of ancient inscriptions and the likes. It is also apparent that the Khmer cultural and linguistic claims fully develop the characteristic of defending and claiming their language and culture from the Thai and seem to be no moderate at all in nature.

The cultural and linguistic claims of this kind tend to be common in almost all Khmer historical narratives. Such arguments would be seen in many Khmer culture and civilization discourses, history textbooks, chronicle histories, newspaper articles and the likes. Whether these claims are based on internal or external sources, these arguments seem to have received their dominant status within the Cambodian society as a whole. It can be observed that in almost all social institutions, these arguments and claims have often been advocated by different social groups in Cambodian society. This is probably because these discourses have long been incorporated into the Cambodian school curriculum. For example, high school social studies textbooks in Cambodia would present these arguments as follow:

The Siamese who came down from the north in the 13<sup>th</sup> century did not have their own culture and civilization. They had no state institutions, administration and governance, social structure, and political institutions at all. They just gathered in groups or tribes under different leaders or lords. They also had no language and arts of their own, but after conquering some of the Khmer provinces and sacking Angkor for several times, they seized and copied all aspects of Khmer culture and civilization such as letter, language, religion, arts, state governance and other customs and traditions to form what is now called Thai culture and civilization. Many Khmer words have been used in Thai language or been modified by King Reamea [Ram Khamhaeng]. The Siamese

modified and turned Khmer culture and civilization into their own and later forced the Khmer to adopt and practice this after they invaded and controlled Cambodia, especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>57</sup>

In general terms, the Khmer cultural and linguistic claims tend to be absolute in nature and have clearly placed Thai art and culture as well as their linguistic systems under their subject of potential claims from their inception. Put it another way, within the Khmer line of thought, the Thai are regarded as a new race which, in their early nation-building process, embarked on creating and remembering their historical traditions, reviving Khmer native language as literary language of their own, re-appropriating their cultures and folklores that are similar to those of the Khmer, and at last reasserting their historical existence as a nation.

Thai historical narratives, however, also reflect Thailand's struggle for their national cultural identity. Even though the Thai historical narratives seem to have presented fewer claims to Khmer art, culture and linguistic system, Thai historical narratives in general reveal the cultural and historical quests for their own nationhood. The Ram Khamhaeng inscription has generally been accepted in almost all Thai historical discourses as the first Thai scripts invented by King Ram Khamhaeng the Great in 1283 AD.

These narratives can be seen on official websites of various Thai ministries and embassies. For instance, the website of the Ministry of Education of Thailand mentions that “the earliest form of education may be said to have begun in the middle of the Sukhothai period (13<sup>th</sup> century AD) when King Ram Khamhaeng invented the Thai alphabet. Stone inscriptions of that

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<sup>57</sup> *Seksa sangkum thnak ti 8* [Social Studies, Grade 8], MoEYS of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2011, pp. 162-165.

period tell of moral, intellectual and cultural education.”<sup>58</sup> This stone inscription has been considered historical and archeological evidence used as reference for the first Thai alphabets. The inscription states clearly on its fourth side, lines 8-11, as follows:

[IV/8-11] Formerly these Thai letters did not exist. In 1205 saka, a year of the goat, King Rama Gamhen set his mind and his heart on devising these Dai letters. So these Dai letters exist because that lord devised them.<sup>59</sup>

There have also been different linguistic discourses concerning the origin of Thai language. For example, the Ayudhya chronicles would put it that King Ruang “presented an alphabet to the Loe Thai, the Chiang Thai, Lao Thai, the Mon Thai, the Burmese Thai and the Khmer Chiang, and thus there has been *Khom* sacred script from that time forward.”<sup>60</sup> This legendary perspective seems to have presented a linguistic claim that the Khmer script had also derived from King Ruang. Likewise, Sujit Wongthes also contends that “the existence of numbers of Mon and Khmer language inscriptions concerning religious beliefs can be interpreted only as a cultural phenomenon” and that “neither letter nor languages have any relation to ‘race,’ while archeological evidence confirms that there were many ethnic groups living here.”<sup>61</sup>

Another Thai narrative would try to link the first Thai script invented by King Ram Khamhaeng in 1283 AD to the ancient Brahmi script of south India called ‘*Grantha*,’ which is

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<sup>58</sup> Ministry of Education of Thailand, retrieved 12 March 2013, <http://www.moe.go.th/English/>; similar statement can also be seen in all websites of the Thai Royal Embassy. For example, the Royal Thai Embassy in Singapore, concerning Thai Language, states that “Thai belongs to the Thai-Kadai language family, one of the five main language families in Southeast Asia. It is generally agreed that Thai alphabet was created from earlier regional scripts in 1283 by King Rankhamhaeng the Great of the Sikhothai Kingdom”, <http://www.thaiembassy.sg/about-thailand/language>.

<sup>59</sup> Griswold, AB & Prasert na Nagara, ‘The inscription of King Rama Gamhen of Sukhodaya (1292 AD): Epigraphic and historical studies’, *Journal of the Siam Society*, no. 9, July 1971, p. 217.

<sup>60</sup> The British Museum (1807) version, in Cushman, RD & Wyatt, David, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, The Siam Society under Royal Patronage, Bangkok, 2000, p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Sujit Wongthes, *Khon Thai yu thi ni* (The Thais were Always Here), p. 201.

also considered to be the source of Khmer script.<sup>62</sup> Thai scholar Nantana Ronnakiat claims that “the earliest inscription in the Khmer language is dated from 611 AD” and that “the script on this inscription is similar to the Grantha script.” He goes on to contend that “in 1357, in the reign of King Li Thai, the second son of King Ramkhamhaeng, a new script called ‘King Li Thai script’ came to be used” and that “it is evident that shapes of the letter in the King Li Thai script are based on the Sukhothai ones, although some of them were modified.”<sup>63</sup> Related to this point, there has also been a legend that King Ramkhamhaeng, the youngest son of King Si Intharathit, the first king of Thailand, modified the Sinhala (Sri Lankan) Script to create the first Thai script, which was inscribed on King Ramkhamhaeng’s inscription in 1283 AD. As Nantana Ronnakiat clearly put it,

It is stated in Thai history that King Si Intharathit of Sukhothai freed Thailand from the Khmer and established Sukhothai as the capital of Thailand in 1257 A.D. From that time on the Thai became the dominant force in central Thailand. King Ramkhamhaeng, the second son of King Si Intharathit, was a very independent lord. He had a strong national feeling and wanted to form an official Thai script which he wished to have as something purely Thai, free from Mon or Khmer influence.<sup>64</sup>

These arguments, apparently, do not really present any linguistic claims to the Khmer but try to relate both the Thai and Khmer scripts to another common source and thus bear an implication that the Khmer linguistic claims to the Thai do not hold. The new high school history textbooks also deal with this inscription and the root of the Thai language, considering Ram Khamhaeng

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<sup>62</sup> Nantana Ronnakiat, ‘The Thai writing system’, *Department of Linguistics, Thammasat University*, retrieved 23 January 2013, <http://thaiarc.tu.ac.th/thai/thaiwrt.htm>.

<sup>63</sup> Nantana Ronnakiat, ‘Evidence of the Thai Noi alphabet found in inscription’, *Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University*, Bangkok, 1992, retrieved 23 January 2013, <http://sealang.net/sala/archives/pdf8/ronnakiat1992evidence.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Nantana Ronnakiat, ‘The Thai writing system’, <http://thaiarc.tu.ac.th/thai/thaiwrt.htm>.



inscription as the first inscription of Thailand through which Thai scripts were believed to have been invented by the King.<sup>65</sup>

However, in recent decades, especially from the early 1970s when the changing landscape of the past and new histories emerged in Thailand, the authenticity of this secret inscription has been called into questions, throwing the status of Sukhothai as the Golden Age of the Thai past into fierce scholarly debates among Thai scholars.<sup>66</sup> Despite all of this, it can be seen clearly that such doubt remain only within the researcher domain and thus has not penetrated or dominated the existing mainstream thought in Thailand because the meaning and significance of this inscription remain influential in most official government documents and websites and also the current school history textbooks in Thailand. This can be evidence that it has so far survived the test.

Thai historical narratives, in addition, tend to distinguish between Thai art and culture as being Thai and Thai art and culture as being influenced by the Mon and Khmer. The Thai tend to define the boundary line between their art and culture and that of the Khmer as part of their national identity. In this sense, they do not present particular cultural claims to the Khmer but in turn try to neutralize the Khmer cultural claims. For example, the high school history textbook authorized by the Ministry of Education of Thailand, Grade 4-6 Secondary part 1 on page 50, concerning *Lavo* or *Lopburi*, put it that ‘Lopburi period refers to the first period under the influence of a culture called *Dvaravati* culture in the territory of Thailand, which has the same

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<sup>65</sup> See, e.g., *Pravattisat 1* (High School History Textbook, Grade 1 Secondary), Ministry of Education of Thailand, 2553 BE (2010 AD), pp. 132-5. (Appendixes, Fig. 9)

<sup>66</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, ‘The changing landscape of the past: New histories in Thailand since 1973’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1995, 99+. *Gale World History in Context*. Web 26 May 2011.

characteristics to the culture of *Khom* or *Khamen* of the present-day Cambodia, dated back from 16<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> centuries BE.’

The Thai, however, also present certain cultural claims to the Khmer especially on the ground that, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when Cambodia was under Thai control, the Khmer learned many aspects of their culture such as traditional dance from the Thai. In Thai schools, so to speak, it was, and probably has been, taught that Khmer culture, for instance Khmer masked dance drama, originated from Thailand and is merely a duplication or emulation of Thai culture. It should be noted that during this period of Khmer-Thai relations, Thai influence on the Khmer court led to the adoption of what was believed to be Thai customs and ceremonials and other aspects of Thai culture by the Cambodian. Most of the Khmer ruling elites from the reign of King Soryopor (r. 1600-1618 AD) until the time of protectorateship, in which the French were trying to cut off Thai influence upon Cambodian Buddhism from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, received education in Bangkok. Moreover, Thai cultural influence came also through the Thai advisors in the Khmer court. After independence in 1953, so to say, the Khmer started to refute Thai cultural claims when new political figures in the Cambodian government embarked on nationalistic policies.

However, many modern Thai scholars and some members of the ruling class have also acknowledged that Thai culture did originate from Khmer. For instance, Prince Subhadradis Diskul, a noted Thai archeologist and scholar on Thai art history, has also acknowledged that the Thai ‘adopted and adapted’ the Mon and Khmer cultures. In his work concerning Thai art history, he emphasizes this perspective clearly that,

From the linguistic point of view, the Thai people might have originally lived in southern China. They presumably migrated down little by little into the present-day Thailand and encountered the Mon and the Khmer that had been living there before. The Thai adopted as well as adapted the Mon and Khmer cultures until they were strong enough to declare independence against the Khmer in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>67</sup>

Similarly, Charnvit Kasitsiri puts it clearly: “this lack of understanding among a considerable number of educated Thais and members of the ruling class...they further claim that Khmer culture, for instance, its various forms of masked dance drama, is merely a ‘derivative’ of Thai culture.” He goes on to acknowledge that,

Those elements of Thai culture which are generally considered to have originated in India, such as Buddhism, architecture, artistic designs, and even a significant portion of the Thai lexicon, did not enter Thailand directly from India. Rather, they were all second-hand transmissions, so to speak, having first passed through the Sri Lankans (including the Tamil), the Mon, or the Khmers. Even the concept of divine kingship (*devaraja*) and much of the special vocabulary associated with the royal court were, as M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, a noted intellectual and former Thai prime minister, said, “derived from Cambodia.”<sup>68</sup>

As a reflection or confirmation to this perspective, the projects searching for authentic Thai culture of the Tai or Thai people outside of Thailand in the late 1980s by a prominent Thai scholar Chatthip Natsupha yielded considerable insights. This line of thought tends to challenge the dominant mainstream thoughts adopted in the royalist camp.<sup>69</sup> Chatthip’s argument—that

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<sup>67</sup> Subhadradis Diskul, *Art in Thailand: A brief history*, Bangkok, Krung Siam Press, 1970, in *Expedition*, vol. 18, no. 4, Summer 1976.

<sup>68</sup> Charnvit, K, ‘Thailand-Cambodia: A love-hate relationship’, *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia* 3, March 2003.

<sup>69</sup> Thongchai, Winichakul, ‘Nationalism and the radical intelligentsia in Thailand’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 3, 2008, pp. 577-583.

the upper Southeast Asia is naturally the original land of the Thai people who, including Yunnan and Assam, share the Thai culture and language—can be seen within the frame of migration theory which usually favors the Khmer but remains controversial among Thai nationalists.

Overall, the Khmer would present both cultural and linguistic claims to the Thai while the Thai advance with purely cultural irredentist claims. The claims the Khmer have presented tend to be absolute in nature, incorporating almost all aspects of Thai art and culture into their own realm. The similarities and commonness between these two neighbors only breed contempt and emotion of hostile intentions toward each other due to their hyper awareness of national identity that is rooted in these similar cultural characteristics. One of the most convincing explanations for these claims is that both Cambodia and Thailand attach national identity to and develop their respect and admiration for the same root—the sophisticated and dominant culture, art, and civilization of the Khmer Empire, which provide them with self-pride and national unity.

The great civilization and sophisticated architectural designs of the Khmer Empire at Angkor can be considered, in this sense, the source of Khmer and Thai identities which are sometimes hard to distinguish when it comes to various aspects of their cultural affinities. It is also arguable in this sense that the myths of nationalism rooted in their cultural awareness and historical consciousness have brought the two peoples to a crossroad where psychological barriers have been historically constructed through formal education and political socialization. Due to this reason, so to speak, these heated arguments would extend their scopes to include the claims to various objects of their national identity including: tangible cultural heritage such as buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc., and intangible cultural heritage such as

certain aspects of classical drama, traditional music, classical dance, titles of agricultural products, names of food and plants, and the likes.<sup>70</sup>

While the Khmer tend to be in absolute terms with their *Originator* ideology, the Thai have also developed their tremendous respect and admiration for anything of *Khom*-Khmer culture and civilization. Historically, as Charnvit puts it, “the flourishing of Khmer art and culture at the Thai court was the result of war, a war in which the victors adopted elements of the superior civilization of the losing side.”<sup>71</sup> Such adoption and admiration can be seen not only in architecture but also in royal terminology and the likes, which Khmer scholars and historians claim have been indisputable evidence in how the Thai have adopted and transformed Khmer culture into Thai.

One interesting case is witnessed in Thai chronicle of Ratanakosin period of the fourth reign, in which King Mongkut (1851-1868) issued a royal command in 1860, before Siam lost sovereignty over Cambodia to the French in 1863, to have the Khmer temple of Ta Prum (*phathajtaaphrom* in the Thai sources) dismantled and reassembled in Thailand.

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<sup>70</sup> According to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO, intangible cultural heritage is defined as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.”

<sup>71</sup> Charnvit, K, ‘Thailand-Cambodia: A love-hate relationship’, *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia* 3, March 2003.

The King reflected on the fact that there were a great number of stone temples in Cambodia. If some of these temples, of small sizes, could be dismantled and re-erected, one at the *mahaasawan* Hill, another at the *pathumwan* Temple, it would constitute a great glory for the future.<sup>72</sup>

According to the chronicle, encountering the Cambodian local people's uprisings, the minister of state in charge of dismantling the order of the temple structure sent back a memorial to the King about the impossibility of disassembling these too enormously structured temples and asked the King to consider the fact that, "even supposing that these temples could be dismantled and removed to the capital, the Siamese might be unable to reconstruct them, and such would bring dishonor to the very name of the King himself."<sup>73</sup> King Mongkut then issued an order that this work plan be halted and later he ordered to have a small replica of Angkor Wat Temple built in the royal palace, as can still be seen in the present-day Grand Palace of Bangkok. "The King commanded *phra saamphobphaaj* to go and copy the structure of the temple of Angkor Wat, so that a replica of it could be erected in the area of the *phrasiradtanasaad-sadaraam* Temple. This replica of the temple of Angkor Wat was intended for the general public to view as a marvelous wonder."<sup>74</sup>

"Craftsmen constructed a model of Angkor Wat and installed it at Wat Phra Sri Ratanasasadaram (the temple of the Emerald Buddha), where it remains to this very day." (Prime Minister Hun Sen visited the model at the temple of the Emerald Buhhda in early 1990s during an official visit to Thailand for discussions with then-Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Chaophraya Thipakorawong, *The dynastic chronicles Bangkok Era*, Fourth Reign, Bangkok, 2394-2411 BE (1851-1868 AD), p. 222.

<sup>73</sup> Chaophraya Thipakorawong, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 376. Appendixes, Fig. 10

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Charnvit, K, 'Thailand-Cambodia: A love-hate relationship', *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia* 3, March 2003.

This mentality, the appreciation of and respect for the Khmer civilization of Angkor, infused in such cultural and linguistic claims as witnessed in Thai historical narratives, has played central roles in recent events. For example, the 1988 incident of Thailand's nation-wide demonstration against the Art Institute of Chicago for the return of an 11<sup>th</sup> century lintel back to Thailand was evidence of a national reaction by such mentality for, as Thongchai puts it, the Thai had considered that piece of ancient stone as their national dignity and that the American had 'stolen' it from Thailand.<sup>76</sup> This Thai scholar goes on to comment that "in fact, the lintel is a piece, perhaps not even the most important one, of Khmer art in the period before the Thai ascendancy in mainland Southeast Asia" and eulogizes that "a Khmer specimen can generate a world-wide Thai response simply because of the present location of its sanctuary within the Thai geo-body." That piece of ancient lintel was eventually returned to Thailand.<sup>77</sup>

This incident, however, seemed to be free of the Cambodian sphere of nationalistic sentiment due to the fact that during this period, Cambodia was just recovered from a prolonged period of civil strife and conflicts. No protests from the Cambodian counterpart were forcefully made to the Thai claim. Had Cambodia not been thrown into this situation, this historical incident would have been different or might have resembled the 2003 and 2008 incidents as discussed in chapter one. This illusory sense of freedom, therefore, incorporated or displayed the intersections between the boundary of Khmer cultural aspirations and the boundary of Thai-ness.

Similar cases also happened in May 2013 when the Cambodian government appealed to every national museum and other private ancient artwork collectors and auction houses in the United States to consider returning all those Cambodia's ancient artworks claimed to be 'stolen'

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<sup>76</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 169.

<sup>77</sup> Keyes, CF, 'The case of the purloined lintel', pp. 261-292; cited in Thongchai, p. 169.

from Cambodian soil after 1970 following the decision of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to repatriate two life-size 10<sup>th</sup>-century statues back to their sanctuary, Cambodia.<sup>78</sup> These cases reflect Cambodia's growing interest in restoring her cultural heritage as the Cambodian officials at the Ministry of Culture and Fine Art have been compiling evidence for those sandstone artworks.

Likewise, it also appears that these cases seemed to be free of the Thai sphere of nationalistic sentiment when the so-called 'Thai-ness,' as Thongchai claims, 'is actually extended beyond Thailand to include the threshold of the Angkorian Empire.'<sup>79</sup> In this sense, the Khmer and the Thai discourses of cultural nationalism can be argued to be actually a product of this historical backdrop or of the 'emulation factor', to use Chandler's term, in which the mutual influence during the last several centuries has resulted in the 'hybrid culture' that is often the subject of the politics of nationalistic populism.

## Conclusion

This chapter deals with the conception of self in Khmer and Thai historical narratives. It begins with an assumption that historical narrative is a form of self-narrative that reveals basic concepts of self and thus discloses personal or national identities as well as their cultural and political values. Proceeding from this argument, this chapter examines and compares the self-concepts as reflected by both Cambodian and Thai historical narratives. It is truly reasonable to

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<sup>78</sup> Tom Mashberg & Ralph Blumenthal, 'Cambodia says it seeks return of Met statues', *The New York Times*, 1 June, 2012, retrieved 18 May 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/02/arts/design/cambodia-to-ask-met-to-return-10th-century-statues.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/02/arts/design/cambodia-to-ask-met-to-return-10th-century-statues.html?_r=0); For the Khmer art collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, visit: <http://www.metmuseum.org/search-results?ft=Cambodia&x=-1064&y=-58>.

<sup>79</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 169.



contend that, although some of the arguments in the debates might not have similar levels of influence on the thinking and perceptions of the two peoples, such scholarly debates, which also involve some political figures and the royal members, reflect the dominant views, perceptions, and political ideologies the two neighbors have been adopting and adhering to. This self-concept has been clearly shown to be the central concept which on the one hand has been on various political agenda and state ideologies and on the other has been witnessed and adopted in most of the official history documents of both countries.

It has been shown from their official historical narratives that the Khmer and the Thai have divergent conceptions of self which are revealed in the two contradictory schools of thought, the *Originator* and the *Contriver*. These conflicting ideologies might have given rise to such divergent discourses of 'who we are' and 'where they are from.' These are reflected in the adoptions of such theories as the origin of the Khmer or the *Khmer-Mon* or *Mon-Khmer* race and the *Migration Theory* mainly adopted by the Khmer and some Thai scholars in their understanding of who the Khmer and the Thai originally were, within the Originator school on the one hand, and the construction of new theories by some of the Thai scholars against the old school of thought, within the Contriver school on the other.

Through these conflicting lines of thought, they support their basic cultural and linguistic arguments and claims with various social, historical and archeological evidences, as mainly written in those official narratives. The debates over the authenticity of these ego-centric perspectives might lead to no end other than revealing the etymology of their name and certain titles, the imagination of their political environment and above all the clashes of culture and linguistic claims which reflect the quests for their personal identities. In this sense, both

Cambodia and Thailand attach their national identity to and develop their respect and admiration for the same root—the sophisticated and dominant culture, art, and civilization of the Khmer Empire, which defines culturally and politically who they are.

Provided that each side cannot make any concessions and compromises, or that both cannot find the so-called ‘regimes of truth’, what would be prevailing could be such similar events as the 2003 and 2008 incidents when politicians of both sides find a political space to manipulate this pool of historical and cultural discourses at ideological battlefields. However, it has been observed in recent years that some modern Thai scholars tend to accept some of the Khmer claims, while the Cambodian counterpart remains absolute with their *Originator* ideology, in which the Thai are portrayed as a new race which, in their early period of nation-building process, embarked on fabricating and remembering their historical traditions, reviving Khmer native language as literary language of their own, re-appropriating Thai cultures and folklores that are similar to those of the Khmer, and at last reasserting a status for their historical existence as a nation.

Their nationalistic populism, whether the mass population at large like it or not, would be the main driving force behind these debates for decades or even generations to come. It plays and will be playing significant roles in shaping the perceptions between the two peoples. More dialogue is perhaps needed, and the results should be kind of more justifiable arguments and claims.

## Chapter III

### STEREOTYPED AND ENEMY IMAGES

#### **Narratives and the Images of the Enemy**

In the last chapter, it is argued that Khmer-Thai narratives tend to reveal two contradictory schools of thought in which there are clear debates over the authenticity of their origin—who we are and where they come from—as a clear reflection of how their cultural and racial nationalism are at work. These divergent historical narratives might continue to play a determinant role as the basic driving forces in fierce debates over Khmer-Thai perceptions. Likewise, Khmer and Thai historical narratives about events during the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries also show a general picture of wars and conflicts, annexations of each other's territory, forced evictions and movements of mass population from each other's boundary, the political interferences into the court, accusations of betrayals and treacheries, and above all the narratives tend to center on their struggle for a *beautiful picture* of themselves. As a consequence, these narratives tend to project certain stereotyped and enemy images on both the Cambodian and Thai minds and souls. Although some of these stereotyped and enemy images might cease to be important in the present day, some remain a crucial factor and still play a vital role in the formation of Khmer and Thai negative perceptions towards each other, as can be seen in the case presentation in the introductory chapter.

Despite the fact that almost all the historians have acknowledged the controversies of the credibility and reliability of the sources for Khmer and Thai historical narratives about this period, especially the royal chronicles, which have mainly been studied and clarified by Michael Vickery in his 1977 thesis<sup>1</sup>, there have been a great deal of narratives in Khmer and Thai chronicle histories that play a fundamental role in shaping the subsequent periods. This section will examine some of the most important stereotyped and enemy images as witnessed in both the Khmer and Thai narratives about this period and the perceptions about these stereotypes as can be seen in the present-day conflicts. It will mainly examine the debates over this issue.

Within the frame of the two contradictory schools of thought discussed earlier, the Khmer and Thai historical narratives about this period can be characterized as a history of continuous division and warfare fought to protect the country from external invasions on the one hand and to gain and restore independence on the other. Within the frame of these characterizations, various stereotyped and enemy images are implanted and the hereditary enmity is transferred to each other in various ways.

Khmer historical narratives tend to depict the Thai or Siamese as the major cause of the decline and collapse of the Khmer Empire, the dangerous historical enemy who always intruded into Khmer's territory and sovereignty and interfered into the Khmer's internal affairs. Overall, Siam-Thailand tends to be portrayed as aggressive, ruthless, greedy, tricky and thieving. To begin with, one of the controversial issues in the Khmer-Thai historical narratives that shape negative images of the latter is the collapse of the Khmer Empire and the rise of Ayudhya. This enemy image is usually witnessed in various versions of the Khmer royal chronicles, history

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<sup>1</sup> Vickery, Michael T, *Cambodia after Angkor, The chronicular evidence for the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries*, Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1977.

textbooks, legends, poems, old songs<sup>2</sup>, and especially the school social studies textbooks (mainly from Grade 3 onwards). The following example is extracted from the Khmer Social Studies School Textbooks of the present-day version published in 2011:

After Siam moved its city from Sukhothai to Ayudhya in 1351, Siam attacked Angkor, but was fought back by King Lumpung Reachea. Not long after that, Siam led a military attack again and captured Angkor in 1352. (Grade 5, p. 20)

In 1420, Siam sacked Angkor and appointed a Siamese prince to rule at Angkor. In 1421, King Ponhea Yat attacked and drove the Siamese army out of Angkor. Because Siam always had bad intention to invade Angkor to enlarge their territory, King Ponhea Yat in 1431 decided to leave Angkor and move the city to Srey Santhor on an area of land called Tuol Basan. (Grade 3, p. 64)

To this point, the Thai high school history textbooks (the present version) tend to deal less with this issue. The school textbooks mention almost nothing about the shared history with the Khmer from Grade 1 to 6 (Primary), but in Grade 1 (Secondary), it also narrates Thai history related to the Khmer Empire and its 'devolved power and suzerainty' over Thailand especially from the reign of the Khmer King Suryavaraman I (1545-1595 BE) to King Jayavaraman VII, which is mentioned to be based on the Chiang Mai Chronicle, legends, and the inscription in Lopburi.<sup>3</sup>

However, the royal chronicles about this period, which are often considered to be less reliable sources, tend to provide divergent historical narratives on this point. For example, the Khmer chronicles tend to mention that Siam was originally one of the vassal states of the Khmer Empire. During the reign of King Botum Soryavung, because the King thought Ponhea Ruang

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<sup>2</sup> For a descriptive analysis of this in Thai, *See, e.g.*: Santi, Phakdeekham, *Khamen tok Siam* [Attitudes and opinions of the Khmers upon Siam], Matichon Publishing House, Bangkok, 2009, pp. 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> *See, e.g.*, Ministry of Education of Thailand, *Pravattisat 1* (School History Textbook Grade 1, Secondary), 2553 BE (2010 AD), Bangkok, pp. 100-1.

was his elder, he decided to give independence to this vassal state with Sukhothai being its first capital city. At that time, Ponhea Ruang was so powerful that he managed to incorporate many neighboring city states into his sphere of influence and made Sukhothai the great capital city.<sup>4</sup> The Thai version, on the other hand, would put it in a different tone. For example, the Ayudhya chronicles would mention different things: “Now, in the country of *Kamphucha*, the king passed away and no member of the royal family could be found to succeed him. So, all the people raised Prince U Thong, who was the son of Choduksetthi, to be anointed as king and govern the kingdom.”<sup>5</sup>

Modern historians<sup>6</sup> tend to agree that the capital city of the Khmer Empire was defeated by Ayudhya although they differ in their opinions about the chronology and how many times Angkor fell into the hands of Ayudhya as well as the origin of the founder of this new kingdom. But, some Thai scholars and historians do not agree with the language use in Khmer history textbooks such as ‘burn down’ of Angkor, also propose the Cambodian counterpart to consider revisions. This enemy image is considered one of the fundamental aspects of the Khmer’s negative perceptions towards the Thai in their historical narratives as well as in the present-day reality as can be seen in the case presentation in chapter one. There have been so far no signs those historical revisions as such that proposed by the Thai would be carried out.

Another concrete evidence of how the Khmer historical narratives portray the Thai is the controversy concerning the name *Siem Reap*, literally meaning ‘flat defeat of Siam,’ which is the

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<sup>4</sup> Eng Sot, *Erkasa mohaboros Khmer: Preahreach pungsavada Khmer tam sastra sleuk rit pit et klerng klay* [Royal Khmer Chronicle: The Khmer Heroes], Phnom Penh, 1969, part 1, no. 2, pp. 20-22.

<sup>5</sup> Cushman, Richard D & Wyatt, David, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, The Siam Society under the Royal Patronage, a synoptic translation, Bangkok, 2000, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Ros Chantraboth, *Preah Sdach Korn* [King Korn], Angkor Printing House, Phnom Penh, 2007, pp. 21-23, (forwarded by PM Hun Sen); Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A history of the geo-body of a nation*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1994.

name of the present-day province in the north-western part of Cambodia where the capital of the Khmer Empire was located. This name was mentioned to have been given to that place because the Siamese army was 'flat-defeated' by the Khmer army during the reign of King Chan Reachea (1516-1566 AD). This legacy might leave a scare in the heart and soul of the two peoples until the present day.

Khmer scholar Bora Touch explains that the name is claimed to have appeared in a Royal Decree by the king to commemorate his victory over Ayudhya as the kingdom had conquered this province since the old days. The Thai chronicles of late Ayudhya period as well as the chronicles of Thonburi and early Bangkok periods (1500-1839 AD) mainly use the name '*Muang Nakhon Siam Rad*' to refer to this place, which is mentioned to be 'taken by assault by the Governor of Khorat.'<sup>7</sup> The Thai chronicles, however, show that the *Muang* was taken at least three times in 1259, 1595, and 1838 respectively. The royal chronicles of the Bangkok era also mention that the name *Siem Rab* was changed to '*Siem Rath (Syama rastra* or 'Siamese land') after the construction of a citadel in Angkor from January 1839 under General Phra Raja Subhavati (Chao Phra Bodindr Deja).<sup>8</sup>

This account does not appear in any Thai school history textbooks but is generally dealt with in Khmer social studies school textbooks. For instance, high school social studies textbook Grade 3 mentions that "Siam was upset to see that Cambodia developed so fast under the reign of King Chan Reachea, so Siam decided to lead a huge military campaign to Angkor. King Chan Reachea decided to lead a military defense by himself and fought a victory over the Siamese

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<sup>7</sup> Bora Touch, 'The origin of the name 'Siem Reap'', December 24 2011, retrieved 27 March 2012, <http://ki-media.blogspot.jp/2011/12/origin-of-name-siem-reap-by-bora-touch.html>

<sup>8</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakowarong, *The Dynastic Chronicles Bangkok Era*, 1<sup>st</sup> -2<sup>nd</sup> Reign, translated and edited by Thadeus and Chadin Flood, The Center for East Asian Cultural Studies, Tokyo, 1978.

army. The place where the Siamese army was defeated has been called by Khmer people as *Siem Reap* since then.”<sup>9</sup> This kind of portrayal, whether the past confirms itself, can be seen not only from a historical and educational point of view but also from a political standpoint in which the past tends to be maneuvered to shape public opinions and thus appeal to their historical consciousness through formal education system.

However, Thai historical narratives of Ayudhya period also tend to give certain negative images and stereotypes of the Khmer. In most of the versions of the chronicles of Ayudhya and in later historical writings about this period in the modern time, starting especially from King Mongkut’s reign, almost all of the mentions about Siam’s relations with *Khamen* (Khmer) as listed<sup>10</sup> tend to signify a sense of inferiority of the Khmer to the Thai and stereotype the former as a ‘disloyal, untrustworthy, cowardly but opportunistic neighbor against whom Thailand must be on guard’ because the Khmer always attacked Siam when she was in trouble or was engaged in wars with Burma.<sup>11</sup>

As such, the Khmer tend to be negatively stereotyped in some Thai historical catchphrases and legends. One of the best instances is ‘*Khom prae phak.*’ There have been various interpretations of this catchphrase. Some of the modern Thai historians tend to link this phrase to the fact that the Khmer kings of the time were disloyal to the ‘benevolent kings of

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<sup>9</sup> *Seksa sangkum thnak ti bei* [Social Studies Grade 3], MoEYS, Phnom Penh, 2011, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup> These sections concerning relations with Khamen in Ayudhya chronicles include: 1) King Ramathibodi 1351-1369; 2) King Ramesuan 1388-1395; 3) King Cakkraphat July 1548-Jan 1569 (same time with Burmese 1549); 4) War in 1551; 5) War in 1556; 6) King Thamarach 1569-1590 (1570); 7) War in 1575; 8) War in 1578; 9) War in 1582 (twice); 10) War in 1587; 11) Lavek’s bid for alliance with Naresuan & completed later; 12) Military Assistance from Lavek; 13) ‘Naresuan & Lavek army (Insult)’; 14) ‘Lavek Plans Revenge’; 15) War with Lavek in 1594. *See Also:* Sunait Chutintaranond, ‘The image of the Burmese enemy in Thai perceptions and historical writings’, *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. 80, no. 1., 1992; David, Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, p. 100.

<sup>11</sup> *See:* Thongchai Winichakul, ‘Trying to locate Southeast Asian from its navel: Where is Southeast Asian studies in Thailand?’, University of Wisconsin-Madison, in *Siksackr* (Journal of the Center for Khmer Studies), no. 6, 2004, p. 56.; Sunait Chutintaranond, pp. 90, 96-7.; Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 1995, p. 166.



Ayudhya' and often 'switched sides and secretly' attacked Siam when the country was in trouble.<sup>12</sup> This view seems to be well on term with the Ayudhya chronicles with an entry stating that 'because the Khom prae baktr, "the Khom turned their faces," that is revolted or betrayed, the Thai king Ramadhipati sent an army to subdue the *Khom* two times because they turned their face. The second-time military assault, which was led by a prince from Suphanburi, was successful.<sup>13</sup>

Charnvit Kasetsiri explains this phrase through its terminology: *Khom* is an old Thai word for Khmer or Cambodian; *prae* is a verb meaning 'to change' or 'to turn'; and *phak* is a Thai word equivalent to *batra* meaning 'face.' He then defines this catchphrase as literally meaning 'the Khmer have turned their faces away in the other direction' with an implication that the Khmer were 'no longer faithful.' He also gives an assumption that this catchphrase has generally been accepted by the present-day Thai people.<sup>14</sup> However, King Mongkut's writing suggests that this catchphrase means parts of eastern Siam in the old days which were formerly under Cambodia's control had then implicitly 'turned their faces' to Siam.<sup>15</sup>

However, some Thai scholars, such as Winai Pongsriphan, hold a different view that the historical events of that period, which formed the basis of this stereotype as reflected by the catchphrase, are entirely misunderstood due to 'unreliable sources and inaccurate readings.' This perspective can be seen as a reflection of modern historiography within the liberalist school of

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<sup>12</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, 'Trying to locate Southeast Asian from its navel: Where is Southeast Asian studies in Thailand?' p. 56.

<sup>13</sup> Vickery, Michael T, *Cambodia after Angkor: The chronicular evidence from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries*, Ph.D. dissertation, p. 377.

<sup>14</sup> Charnvit, K, *The rise of Ayuthya: A history of Siam in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1976, p. 123.

<sup>15</sup> King Mongkut's writing, cited in Vickery, Michael T, *Cambodia after Angkor: The chronicular evidence for the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries*, p. 378.

thought in Thailand that tends to be critical of the royalist-nationalist camp. This Thai scholar, for example, argues that the catchphrase ‘*Khamen praephak*’ informs and shapes the interpretations of the events in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries—the interpretations that give rise to this misplaced stereotype.<sup>16</sup> To this point, Michael Vickery also writes: “the weight of contemporary evidence is that before the eighteenth or nineteenth century *khom* did not refer to Cambodia, and the Burmese and Mon use of *krom*, which is acceptable as a form of *khom*, refers to Ayutthya.”<sup>17</sup> He continues to give an implication: “assuming that *khom* refers to the Cambodians, the phrase ‘*prae baktr*’, in the sense commonly given it, implies a condition of previous subjection or vassalage, which at the date 1350-51 seems anachronistic.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Fictions and the Projections of Enemy Images**

In addition, the stereotyped and enemy images are also embedded in many legendary stories and folktales which are believed to have been composed about historical events in this period. For instance, the popular Khmer legend ‘*Neakta Khlang Meoung*’ depicts the Thai as greedy enemy who intruded into the Khmer territory in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and was severely defeated by the so-called Khmer ‘ghost’ soldiers. In general terms, the legend signifies a struggle of the Khmer to regain their independence from the Thai and free the country from their sphere of influence. Even though this legendary story sounds less scientific, many Khmer scholars and historians believe that this legend has significant implications of historical and temporal events

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<sup>16</sup> Winai Pongsriphian, ‘Ayotchapura-Sriyasothon’ in Winai Pongsriphian (ed), *Khwan yokyom khong prawattisat* [Problems in Thai History], Essays in Honor of HSH Prince Subhasdis Diskul on the Occasion of his 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday, The Historical Commission, Office of the Prime Minister, Bangkok, 1996, pp. 6-9; cited in Thongchai Winichakul, ‘Trying to Locate Southeast Asian from its Navel: Where is Southeast Asian Studies in Thailand?’, p. 63.

<sup>17</sup> Vickery, Michael T, op.cit., p. 378.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 377.

being mentioned. This legend has also been included into the national curriculum<sup>19</sup>, and a Khmer movie *Neakta Khlang Meoung* has also been produced by the *Morodok Angkor Wat* Production.<sup>20</sup> The place where the Siamese soldiers were defeated by Nakta Khlang Meoung's ghost soldiers has become a historical and sacred site respected and worshipped by Cambodian people until today. It is located in the present-day Snam Preah Commune, Bakan District, about 6 kilometers south of Pursat provincial capital of Cambodia.<sup>21</sup>

The legend '*Preah Ko Preah Keo*' is another legendary story believed to have been composed by the Cambodian to depict a negative picture and stereotype of the Thai. The legend has it that because Thailand had taken these holy objects, the symbol of peace and prosperity from Cambodia, the former was also considered as the cause of decline of the latter and thus is portrayed in a negative way. A number of both Cambodian and Thai scholars, albeit divergent interpretations, believe that this legend is not just legendary but has historical implications. Some Thai scholars relate the legend to the hold of Angkor Wat by the Siamese soldiers in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>22</sup> while some of the Khmer scholars tend to link it to the very event of the capture of Lovek by the Siamese in 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup> A new research on this legend by Khmer scholar Kimly Ngoun shows that "young educated Cambodian people in Phnom Penh at present have both

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<sup>19</sup> See: *Khmer Language*, Social Studies School textbook Grade 5, MoEYS, Phnom Penh, 2011, pp. 10-11.

<sup>20</sup> Visit: <http://www.angkorwat.com/index.php?com=info&wid=2761&wcatid=58&wprdtid=15&wc=0>

<sup>21</sup> For a picture of this sacred place, visit:

[http://www.tourismcambodia.com/travelguides/provinces/pursat/what-to-see/287\\_venerable-site-of-neak-ta-khleang-moeang.htm](http://www.tourismcambodia.com/travelguides/provinces/pursat/what-to-see/287_venerable-site-of-neak-ta-khleang-moeang.htm)

<sup>22</sup> Santi Phakdeekham, '*Lovek: Ratchathani Khamen yuk lang muang phranakhon* [Lovek: The Khmer capital after Angkor]', in Sujit Wongthet (ed), *Phra Naresuan ti muang Lavek tae mai dai kha phraya Lavek* [King Naresuan attacked Lovek but did not kill the King of Lovek], Matichon Press, Bangkok, 2001, pp. 79-120.

<sup>23</sup> Treung Ngea, *A history of Cambodia*, p. 31; Khing Hoc Dy, *La légende de Brah Go Brah Kaev* [The legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo], National Institute of Languages and Oriental civilization: Cahiers de l'Asie du Sud-Est, no. 29- 30, 1991, pp. 169-190; Ang Chuléan, Eric Prenowitz & Ashley Thompson, *Angkor: Past- present- future*, Royal Government of Cambodia, Apsara, 1998, p. 91.

positive and negative perceptions of Thai people,” but that “their negative perception is not much influenced by the legend but more by contemporary factors.”<sup>24</sup>

This legend seems to be absent from any of the Thai historical narratives as well as Thai history school textbooks. However, it can be seen narrated in historical context, which seems to go with that in the royal chronicles, in the Khmer social studies school textbooks of the present-day version. For example, when dealing with the event of the fall of Lovek to the Siamese, the Social Studies Textbook Grade 3 narrates that:

The kings who ascended the throne after King Chan Reachea defended the Siamese frequent attacks. Because the Siamese army could not defeat the Khmer army in Lovek garrison, it played a trick by throwing “Prak Duong” [a kind of coin currency] into the bamboo forest around Lovek. The people living in the capital city started to clear the bamboo forest to collect the money. Consequently most parts of the bamboo walls engulfing the city were destroyed. Seeing that, the Siamese army set out a huge military attack on Lovek and took all the properties in the city including Preah Ko Preah Keo to Siam. (pp. 72-3)

However, modern historians and scholars from both countries have different interpretations of the authenticity of this legend. For example, Treng Ngea describes in his book on history of Cambodia that Thai king Naresuan, after capturing Lovek, not only collected valuable objects such as precious texts, the statue of *Preah Ko* (the bull) and *Preah Keo* (the Buddha statue) but also evicted to Siam the Khmer royal family members including Prince Soryopor, accompanied by Khmer scholars, artisans, educated men and the likes. This seems to go with the content of the Khmer history textbook mentioned above. He also makes a bold assumption that “in front of the

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<sup>24</sup> Kimly, Ngoun, *The legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo and its influence on the Cambodian people's perception of the Thais*, MA thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 2006.

Emerald Buddha Temple (Wat Phra Keo) at the Grand Palace in Bangkok at present, there is a statue of a bull with a hole beneath at its belly. Is this the statue of Preah Ko Preah Keo that the Siamese had brought to Siam after they captured Lovek?”<sup>25</sup>

Contrary to Treung Ngea’s assumption, and probably to the common belief of the Khmer people, Thai scholar Santi Phakdeekham explains in his book that the statue of the bull in front of the Emerald Buddha Temple (*Wat Phra Keo*) at the Grand Palace in Bangkok is not the same as the statue of Preah Ko (the bull) that many Khmer people and scholars have assumed. He justifies that the statue was reconstructed using ‘Western art’ and was used as a decoration during the reign of King Mongkut. Later, King Chulalongkorn ordered the statue to be put in front of the Emerald Buddha Temple in the Grand Palace of Bangkok.<sup>26</sup> He goes on to explain in another similar work that the origin of this legend is more likely to be linked to the event of the fall of Angkor to Ayudhya because from the Thai sources, the Thai king Boromraja II took many statues including *Preah Ko* from Angkor to Siam after taking this Khmer capital by force. When Ayudhya fell to the Burmese, they also took those statues to Hongsavadei, and until the present day, only five statues can be found in Wat Prah Mohamaimony in Mandalay, Myanmar.<sup>27</sup>

However, this legend remains so influential in the Cambodian public sphere as well as among scholars. Many Khmer scholars such as Ang Chulean and Khing Hoc Dy<sup>28</sup> tend to link this legend to the event of the collapse of Lovek when Thai scholars might have different

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<sup>25</sup> Treung Ngea, *Pravatesas Khmer* [A History of Cambodia], Phnom Penh, 1973, p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> Santi Phakdeekham, *Lovek: Ratchathani Khamen yuk lang muang phranakhon* [Lovek: The Khmer Capital After Angkor], pp. 79- 120.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 120. Santi Phakdeekham, *Preah Keo nai tamnan Preah Ko Preah Keo Khamen: Preah Keo morokot ching re?* [Preah Keo in the Khmer legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo: Is Preah Keo the Emerald Buddha or not?], Silapakorn University, Bangkok, 2002, p. 420.

<sup>28</sup> See: Khing Hoc Dy, *La légende Brah Go Brah Kaev* [The legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo], Cahier’s de l’Asie du Sud-Est, no. 29-30, National Institute of Languages and Oriental Civilization, 1991, pp. 169-190.

opinions from the Cambodian counterpart. Ang Chulean, for example, writes in his book that “the event of the capture of Lovek is still remembered and told of many generations until the present day,” and that “the catastrophe was so enormous in the history of Cambodia that a legend ‘Preah Ko Preah Keo’ was made to explain the reasons behind the fall of Lovek.”<sup>29</sup>

These scholarly debates and argumentative discourses have casted great impacts on how the society as whole thinks about this legend and its intended meanings. It has been observed that this legend does not only serve academic and social functions but also from time to time enter its political spheres. The printed media in Cambodia can be seen as an effective tool to echo the nationalistic sentiments provoked by this legend. For example, a local Khmer newspaper put it,

The Siamese used both force and psychological warfare against Cambodia at the time Cambodia faced hardship. Finally in 1593, Lovek was totally under the Siamese occupation. The Siamese brought a lot of precious objects which also included Preah Ko Preah Keo to their kingdom. The capture of Lovek and the loss of many precious things led Khmer people, writers and historians to compose the legend with the aim of educating all Cambodian children of later generations to feel sad about the loss of their ancestral heritage.<sup>30</sup>

From the above discussion, we can see that different perspectives and interpretations have been given to this legend, and the debate over its authenticity might not be ended, especially when the common people and the society as a whole have already absorbed the spirit and meanings that the legend has imposed on them into their heart and soul. Outsiders’ view such as that of a

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<sup>29</sup> Ang Chuléan, Prenowitz E & A Thompson, *Angkor: Past- present- future*, p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Preah Ko Preah Keo khnong sandan chet robos Khmer: chea khlang kumpi khboun khnat del bat bong nov Lovek’ [Preah Ko Preah Keo in Khmer’s Mindset: the Storehouse of Texts Lost at Lovek], *Kosantepheapdaily*, 5 February 2007, [http://www.kosantepheapdaily.com.kh/khmer/cow05\\_02.html](http://www.kosantepheapdaily.com.kh/khmer/cow05_02.html), Quoted in Kimly Ngoun, *The legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo and its influence on the Cambodian people’s perception of the Thais*, MA thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 2006, pp. 50-1.

famous Western historian and expert on Cambodian history like David Chandler should be considered not as a moral judgment but as food of thought: “Although keyed to the capture of Lovek, the legend may in fact be related to the long-term collapse of Angkor and perhaps to the relationships that had developed between Siam and Cambodia by the nineteenth century, when the legend emerged in the historical record.”<sup>31</sup>

Another legendary story which shapes particular stereotyped and negative image of each other and which can also be seen in both Thai and Khmer versions is the legend ‘*Khom dam din*’ (the underground-travelling Khmer) in Thai or ‘*Decho dam din*’ in Khmer. The Thai version has it that in Sukhothai time, when the Kingdom was still under the influence of the Khmer, the Khmer king often dispatched an agent named ‘dam din,’ who was literally believed to be able to travel underground, to guard the Thai king Phra Ruang of Soukhothai in case the latter was disloyal. *Khom dam din*, as the name suggests, emerged from the ground exactly at a temple where Phra Ruang was sweeping at the ground and was turned into a rock by a spell casted by Phra Ruang, who had expected the agent to be there.

The Khmer version, on the other hand, seems to have it a bit differently. ‘*Decho dam din*’ in Khmer version has it that during the reign King Botum Soryavung, there was a magic man who had learned a lot of magic knowledge and was then appointed by the Khmer king to be a General with a title ‘*Decho dam din*.’ The Khmer king assigned him to lead an assault on Siam to regain the lost territories. At that time, as the legend narrates, there was a Buddhist monk with a magic mouth which could turn anything into what he said. Before going, *Decho dam din* wanted to get some advice from the monk, but realized that the monk was doing meditation. So, he tunneled through the cave and popped out of the ground behind the monk, who said ‘stop’.

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<sup>31</sup> Chandler, David, *A History of Cambodia*, 2007, p. 85.

Because of the monk's word, it is believed, Decho dam din's upper body free from the ground was turned into a stone.

As seen in the above discussion, each version has its own claims and implications; nationalistic sentiment is infused anyway. Historically, the Khmer version is said to have been composed in the Khmer chronicle history from Wat Kork Kak (Kork Kak Pagoda) and especially the royal chronicles prepared by Prince Nupparoth (King Ang Doung's son) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and by Onha Veangchey Chuon in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> The Thai version is said to have been found in 'Pongsawadan Neu chbap vicheuy paricha.' It is claimed to have been prepared in 2350 BE during the reign of Phra Bat Somdet Phra Borommarajabongjet Mahesvarasundorn Phra Buddha Loetla Nabhalai (Rama II, Buddha Loetla Nabhalai, 1809-1824).<sup>33</sup> The Thai might claim the legend's origin to their version because the Khmer writers are claimed to have learned it from them during their education in Bangkok whereas the Khmer might also have their own arguments that the legend originated from Cambodia and that the Thai just brought the documents to Thailand during the wars. The debate over the authenticity of the legend might continue. This legend has become even more popular and also dominated public perceptions after it was made into movies, especially in Cambodia, in recent years.

Another well-known negative stereotype, which remains imprinted and influential in both the Cambodian and Thai mind and was reinforced and perpetuated by both the Cambodian and Thai politicians during the 1950s and 1960s and those of the present day as discussed in chapter one, has been attached to the narratives of the late 16<sup>th</sup>-century events of the aggressive wars

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<sup>32</sup> For more information on the origin of the Khmer version, visit: <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=forums&srcid=MDc1MzkyNzAwNTE4NjU1OTU5MTcBMDcyNzIwODU2NDQxOTQzMTUyMzEBSkNCWjk3ZEhmN2NKATQBAXYy>

<sup>33</sup> For a comparative analysis of the legends (from a Thai perspective), see: Santi, Phakdeekham, *Khamen tok Siam* (Attitudes and opinions of the Khmers upon Siam), Matichon Publishing House, Bangkok, 2009, pp. 72-93.



between Ayudhya and Lovek. Here, the Ayudhya chronicles would depict the Khmer kings as ‘cowards’ and ‘opportunists’ for secretly attacking the Siamese from behind when they were engaged in wars with the Burmese. The Thai chronicles narrate that the Khmer king at Lovek took the opportunity to plunder the territories along the Cambodia-Thailand border at that time when the Siamese fell into the Burmese hands in 1569. Outraged by this action, according to the chronicles, the Thai King Naresuan led an assault on Lovek and captured the Khmer king in 1594. The Khmer king was recorded in many versions of Thai chronicles of Ayudhya to have been executed in a well-known ceremony or ritual called ‘*Pathommakam*,’<sup>34</sup> in which the Khmer king’s blood was taken to wash the Thai king’s feet.<sup>35</sup> This event, to the Thai, has been considered as a punishment to the Khmer king for his betrayal and cowardice and as a humiliation for the Cambodian nation as a whole.

We have already issued a pronouncement that, if victory were gained over Your Worship, We would surely perform the Ceremony of the First Duty and bathe Our feet in Your Worship’s blood...The chief functionary of the royal bodyguard took the person of Phraya Lawek underneath the platform, cut off his head, and took the gold salver in which his blood had been caught up to wash the royal feet of the Supreme-Holy-Buddhist-Lord-Over-All.<sup>36</sup>

This kind of ritual or ceremony does not appear in any Cambodian chronicles, but, on the contrary, those chronicles tend to portray the Siamese as arrogant and ungrateful to the Cambodian kings who always helped the Siamese to fight against the Burmese suzerainty and aggressiveness. To this point, the Ayudhya chronicles by Phan Canthanumat (1795), the British Museum (1807), Reverend Phanarat (n/a), Phra Cakkraphatdiphong (n/a), and the Royal

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<sup>34</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 11

<sup>35</sup> Chronicles of Bangkok Era, cited in Rong Syamananda, *A history of Thailand*, p. 60.

<sup>36</sup> Cushman, Richard D & Wyatt, David, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, The Siam Society under the Royal Patronage, a synoptic translation, Bangkok, 2000, p. 153.

Autograph (c. 1855) all mention about the military assistance from ‘Lawak.’<sup>37</sup> In the Khmer historical narratives of this period, in general, Siam is depicted as arrogant and ungrateful to Cambodia as the former never returned favors to the latter for what Cambodia had helped Siam to fight the mighty and aggressive Burmese. Siam is shown to have attacked and destroyed everything in Cambodia for her own sakes after defeating the Burmese.

There is also a big difference in the ways both narratives portray King Naresuan of Thailand. On the one hand, for narratives of his great victory, King Naresuan of Thailand has been considered the famous Thai historic hero with magnetic personality and a born soldier with intelligence and charisma, resourcefulness and courage<sup>38</sup> who also recovered Ayudhya’s independence from the Burmese and who had the moral and ethical values for his forgiving and well treating of the Khmer royal family members evicted to Bangkok.<sup>39</sup> David Wyatt also puts it in his book that “it is difficult to imagine that the history of Ayudhya would have been the same without King Naresuan, for he is one of those rare figures in Siamese history.”<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, King Naresuan of Siam is described in the Cambodian chronicles as arrogant, aggressive and lacking morality and gratitude. King Satha of Cambodia was not captured in the wake of the fall of Lovek but managed to escape to the nearby province as he had asked for help from the Spanish governor in the Philippines by promising the governor with trade concessions as well as facilitation and compromise for the Christian missionaries in the country in return.

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<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>38</sup> Damrong Rajanubhab, *A biography of King Naresuan the Great*, translated and edited by Kennon Breazeale, Bangkok, June 2008; “The greatest Thai hero comes to life”, *The Nation*, 18 January 2007, [http://nationalmultimedia.com/2007/01/18/headlines\\_30024447.php](http://nationalmultimedia.com/2007/01/18/headlines_30024447.php)

<sup>39</sup> Cushman, Richard D & Wyatt, David, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, The Siam Society under the Royal Patronage, a synoptic translation, Bangkok, 2000, p. 142-154.

<sup>40</sup> Wyatt, David, *Thailand: A short history*, p. 100.

However, it should be mentioned here that most of the scholars and historians of the modern time have agreed that this ritual or ceremony is a fiction, based on contemporary sources verified with Western accounts. First, according to an account written by a Spanish missionary in Lovek, which also goes with that of the Khmer chronicles, King Satha was mentioned to have already escaped to Laos with his son, leaving only his brother Prince Soryopor in charge of the capital.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, many Thai sources also clarify this fiction. For example, one Thai source mentions that King Satha of Cambodia had fled to a town called Thaeng and died there.<sup>42</sup>

Another Thai source claims that the meaning of this ritual is not associated with the beheading of the Khmer king as widely accepted in the Thai chronicles and propagandized by some Thai scholars and politicians but that this ceremony or ritual only refers to the ceremony of catching and taming the elephant.<sup>43</sup> This ritual is only mentioned in the chronicles written during the Rattanakosin period with the same plot and even the same wording but does not appear at all in the Ayudhya Chronicle by Luong Prasert, which, according to Michael Vickery, is the most accurate one. According to Chanchai Phak-athikhom, there are three ceremonies of this kind for the king including Phra Ratchapithi Pathammakam, Mathayomkam, and Odomakam.<sup>44</sup> Thongchai also mentions that the ritual “was probably a Thai fantasy signifying that the blood

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<sup>41</sup> Antonio de Morga’s account, cited in Rong Syamanda, *A History of Thailand*, p. 60; Cœdès, George, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, pp. 197-198; Chandler, David, *The land and people of Cambodia*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1991, p. 89; See also: Gabriel de San Antonio, *A brief and truthful of events in the Kingdom of Cambodia*, pp. 9-13.

<sup>42</sup> Manich Jumsai, ‘Phra Naresuan kap krung Lawek chak banthuk khong chao fasangset lae chak banthuk khong batluang chao protukhet [King Naresuan and Lovek from documents by a French and a Portuguese priest], in Wuttichai Munlasin (ed), *Samdet phra Naresuan: 400 pi khong kan khrongkrat* [King Naresuan the Great: the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his reign], The Historical Commission, Office of the Prime Minister, Bangkok, 1990, pp. 160-164, cited in Thongchai Winichakul, ‘Trying to Locate Southeast Asian from its Navel: Where is Southeast Asian Studies in Thailand?’, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Chanchai Phak-athikhom, ‘Praratchaphithi pathommakam nai po. so. 2127: khotoyaeng nai prawattisat thai’ [The ceremony of Pathommakam in 2127 BE: Controversy in Thai history], cited in Sujit Wongthet (ed), *Pra Naresuan ti mueang Lavek tae mai dai kha phraya Lavek* (King Naresuan Attacked Lovek But Did Not Kill the King of Lovek), Matichon Press, Bangkok, 2001, pp. 3- 64.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 3-64.

even from the head of the Khmer king was fit only to clean the feet of a Thai ruler.”<sup>45</sup> The main aim of creating this ritual, according to Rong Syamanda, might be to petrify and overawe the Cambodian and thus to scare them off any future uprisings and rebellions.<sup>46</sup>

However, the new high school history textbooks of both countries do not mention this ritual at all. The Khmer social studies school textbooks from grade 3 onward tend to mention a great deal of the history of Lovek period and especially wars with Siam, depicting the latter in negative images, while the Thai history school textbooks also deal with various accounts of the kingdom of Ayudhya but almost nothing about its relations with Cambodia.<sup>47</sup> It remains debatable whether the Thai school history textbooks are still narrating Thai history which is considered ‘detached’ from that of Cambodia as in the old versions—the Khmer views on Thai school history textbooks. There are also various interpretations from Khmer scholars on the reasons why Thai school history textbooks tend to tell nothing of who the Khmer are, and of course, these interpretations would be guided or influenced by their own political orientations and lines of thought.

Although they differ in the chronology of the events and despite the fact that the benevolence of the Thai king is absent in the Khmer sources, both the Cambodian and Thai chronicles and other sources narrate the burning down of Lovek city. Khmer scholar Michel Tranet explains in his work that normally after the Siamese destroyed the Khmer capitals, they often destroyed and brought to their country all the statues and other cult objects worshiped by

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<sup>45</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, op.cit., p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Rong Syamanda, *A history of Thailand*, p. 60.

<sup>47</sup> See: Ministry of Education of Thailand, *Pravattisat 1* (School History Textbook Grade 1, Secondary), 2553 BE (2009 AD), Bangkok, pp. 141-147.; *Pravattisat 2* (School History Textbook Grade 2, Secondary), 2553 BE (2009 AD), Bangkok, pp. 26-99.; *Pheasa Khmer* [Khmer Language], *Grade 3*, MoEYS, Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2011, pp. 72-73; *Seksa sangkum thnak ti 8* [Social Studies Grade 8], pp. 162-165; *Seksa sangkum thnak ti 11* [Social Studies Grade 11], pp. 180-1.

the Khmer. He posits that the Siamese understood the sense of unity, solidarity and courage of the Khmer behind the cult objects and statues, and thus destroying these objects means warding off the national spirit of the Khmer and placing them in desperation and helplessness.<sup>48</sup>

The vandalistic act of destroying holy object such as sacred statues or taking them as war trophy, which is considered the symbol of power and superiority from a defeated country, has long been observed in Southeast Asia, which might have been associated partly with religious belief and partly with the nature or concept of kingship, *deva-rajā* or *Buddha-rajā*, in this region. For example, when the Siamese captured the Laotian capital, they brought back to Bangkok the sacred Buddha statue, the Emerald Buddha,<sup>49</sup> which the Cambodian thought of as the sacred object of Preah Keo they had lost. Similarly, when the Burmese sacked Ayudhya, they also destroyed and collected many sacred statues and cult objects to Burma.<sup>50</sup> And in the history of Cambodia during the Angkorian period from the early 9<sup>th</sup> century to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, the same things happened when the Khmer kings sacked Champa.

Regardless of the authenticity of this ritual and all the events divergently described in the Thai and Cambodian historical narratives and legends, the symbolism and stereotyped images seem to have captured their imagination of each other. The enemy has its good function in Thai and Khmer historical narratives and political society. The former come up with the image of the *Pathamakam* ritual as a symbol of the Thai greatness and as the Khmer's national humiliation while the latter come up with the legend *Preah Ko Preah Keo* as a lost symbol of prosperity and unity and thus historical and political justifications for the nation's steady decline.

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<sup>48</sup> Michel Tranet, *Pravattasas nai preah reacheanachak Kampuchea: Sampornpheap roveang procheachun Khmer-Thai chab tang pi so. vo. ti 13 nai ko. so.* [A history of the Kingdom of the Cambodia: Relationship between Khmer-Thai since the 13th century], Phnom Penh, 2005, p. 63.

<sup>49</sup> Cœdès, George, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, p. 166.

<sup>50</sup> Baker, Chris & Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A history of Thailand*, p. 23.

These stereotyped and enemy images are not only associated with the historical events and reflected in many legends and folktales but mainly rooted in particular religious beliefs and the nature of social blueprint—the hierarchical relations and the doctrines of kingship within their respective society. And most often, as mentioned earlier, the so-called ‘purified-Buddhism’ doctrine has often been maneuvered by both the Cambodian and Thai ruling elites as a justification either for aggressive wars to *liberate* the others on the one hand or for a lost symbol and a preservation of the recent status quo of the declining society on the other. Therefore, the enemy image is necessary to justify the existing political and social controls against rivals, from without as well as from within, and the image of the enemy might take different forms according to local needs and external threat.

### **From Enemy to Dependency**

The fall of Lovek in 1594 and the inception of a new dynasty in Bangkok in 1782 after the fall of Ayudhya in 1767 might have marked a new perspective in the ways both historical narratives reveal their own conceptions. From the Cambodian perspective, as witnessed in her historical narratives, Cambodia has always prided herself in her past glory and considered herself independent of any external power until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The manner in which the historical narratives tell about the country before the collapse of Lovek might be different from that after this event. For example, such perspective as “*We used to be a great and glorious empire and if we agree to become a Siam’s vassal state, it would be our embarrassment and any*

*other states would look down on us,*<sup>51</sup> would be what will be found in most of the chronicle histories about this period. Tit-for-tat warfare, division, and treacheries between Siam and Cambodia are all that tend to shape particular enemy images, and as discussed earlier, many narratives in the form of legends and folktales also inform us about how the Cambodian think of themselves before the collapse of their great capital city and what Siam was before this event.

The meanings and implications of this self-conception seem to have been modified when Vietnam emerged as a new dominant power and started to play growing important roles in Cambodian politics in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and eventually became arch rivals to Siam in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The issues concerning the internal disputes and divisions among different stakeholders within the Khmer court, the conflicting polarized factions among ‘*Oknha*’ or provincial governors who sometimes considered themselves independent from the kings and the interference of the two more powerful neighbors Siam and Vietnam into the Khmer court dominated almost all the historical narratives of this period. It is signified and reinforced in King Norodom Sihanouk’s speech and writings recalling this bitter history of his country, which was put in print by a French-language magazine *Réalités Cambodgiennes* in the late 1950s: “the history of Cambodia in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is an immense, intense and painful tragedy...Our people and the majority of our kings, princes and princesses suffered and split their blood to maintain the national integrity.”<sup>52</sup>

The change in Khmer perspective of Siam in these historical narratives can be observed in different ways. On the one hand, Siam is still portrayed as aggressive enemy and land

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<sup>51</sup> Eng Sot, *The Khmer Heros*, No. 2, pp. 20-22; Ministry of Education of Cambodia, *Pungsavada nai protes Kampuchea* [The Chronicle of Cambodia], 1<sup>st</sup> ed, The Royal Printing House, Phnom Penh, 2495 BE (1952 AD), pp. 48-141.

<sup>52</sup> Milton, Osborne E, ‘History and kingship in contemporary Cambodia’, *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1966, p. 6.

plunderer who always interfered into Cambodia's internal affairs. For example, the Khmer narratives would depict the rebellions of Prince Siwatha against King Norodom in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as caused by Siamese trick to destroy Khmer's sovereignty and unity when the latter came to the throne as a result of his good relations with the French.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, Siam is also considered as a counterbalance to another aggressive expansionist neighbor, Vietnam. Some of the modern Khmer historians,<sup>54</sup> such as Michel Tranet, have acknowledged Thailand's roles in resisting the Vietnamese expansionism in Cambodia during this period but also put forward an elaboration that Siam did it for her own sakes. Study by David Chandler has informed a bi-tributary state from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when Cambodia had to pay tribute annually to Siam and triennially to Vietnam as a strategy for survival.<sup>55</sup> The questions of suzerainty over Cambodia developed tensions between Thailand and Vietnam leading to many protracted wars on Cambodian soil in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and ended with a ceasefire by the two polarized factions.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, it seems more likely that, while both neighbors, Siam and Vietnam, claimed suzerainty over Cambodia and viewed Cambodia as a tributary state, Cambodia herself, as witnessed in most of her official narratives, often considered herself independent and portrayed the two powers in negative images.

However, in Thai perspective, Cambodia had always been considered a vassal state of Siam, not just reflected by the narratives about the Bangkok era but also during the time of the Siamese kingdom of Ayudhya since these narratives tend to be compiled or composed by people

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<sup>53</sup> Treung Ngea, *Pravattesas Khmer samrab machsum seksa neung udom seksa* [A history of Cambodia for general and higher education], Part 1 & 2, Phnom Penh, 1973, p. 278.

<sup>54</sup> See, e.g., Michel Tranet, *Pravattesas nai preah reacheanachak Kampuchea: Sampornpheap roveang procheachun Khmer-Thai chab tang pi so. vo. ti 13 nai ko. so.* [A History of the Kingdom of the Cambodia: Relationship between Khmer-Thai since the 13th Century], Phnom Penh, 2005, pp. 117-129.

<sup>55</sup> See, e.g., Chandler, David, *Cambodia before the French: Politics in a Tributary Kingdom, 1794-1848*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1973.; Chandler, David, *A history of Cambodia*, pp. 94-7, 113-116.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 150-187; Chandler, David, *A history of Cambodia*, chap. 7; Vella, *Siam under Rama III*, Chap. 7.



of later periods.<sup>57</sup> For example, various versions of Ayudhya chronicles would depict Cambodia as a tributary,

Because previously the Capital of Kamphuchathibodi was accustomed to offering the silver and gold and the other paraphernalia of royal tribute, the two royal metropolises shared the same golden earth and the Buddhist monks and nuns, the Brahman professors, and the subject population achieved continuing happiness. Wherefore has the Holy lord of the capital of Kamphuchathibodi not remained in a position of constant loyalty, but plotted arrogantly to turn into an adversary and caused offense beneath Our pairs of royal feet by bringing blood to wash the swords of Thai soldiers?<sup>58</sup>

Such narratives do reflect Thai understanding of herself in relation to submissive neighbors to her power as an overload. This mentality and egocentric perspective can also be witnessed in all chronicle histories of the Bangkok era. For instance, from the chronicles of the first reign, Cambodia is depicted as a tributary of Thailand and almost all of the Khmer kings were crowned in Bangkok, had to be arranged for the throne in Cambodia, had to report to Bangkok (even the royal chronicles were all sent to Bangkok for record), and had to send tribute to the Thai Court annually for protection and vanguard against another enemy, the Vietnamese and so forth<sup>59</sup>.

After cracking down on the *Tayson* rebellion in the 1780s, with Siamese help according to the Thai source and with manpower from Battambang of Cambodia according to the Khmer source, Vietnam grew stronger and started to challenge the Siamese authority and suzerainty

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<sup>57</sup> This point will be elaborated and dealt with in greater details in chapter 5.

<sup>58</sup> Ayudhya Chronicles by Phan Canthanumat (1795), the British Museum (1807), Reverend Phanarat (n/a), Phra Cakkraphatdiphong (n/a), and the Royal Autograph (c. 1855), in Cushman, Richard D & Wyatt, David, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, The Siam Society under the Royal Patronage, a synoptic translation, Bangkok, 2000, p. 150.

<sup>59</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *First Reign*, pp. 19-30, 55-58, 170-173; 286-9; also in *Third Reign*, vol. 2.

over Cambodia. Due to this shared interests and sovereignty, Thailand and Vietnam were engaged in many wars with each other on Cambodian soil.<sup>60</sup> The above-mentioned tributary relationship into which Cambodia had been forced by her two more powerful neighbors is best reflected in a letter by the Vietnamese emperor Gia Long to King Rama II of Thailand in 1811:

[The Cambodian King] has depended on both [Siam] and Vietnam for a long time. The Thai king is like his Father and the Vietnamese one like his mother. Now [King] Uthairacha has committed an offense against his father, then requested his Mother to beg for the Father's pardon; I could not simply abandon him. So, I write for Your Majesty's pardon.<sup>61</sup>

The content in this letter is also similar to the quotation of Gia Long, recorded in the Khmer chronicle of Wat Prek Kuy, which reveals how the Vietnamese emperor viewed Cambodia in relation to Siam.

“Cambodia is a small country,” the emperor said. “And we should maintain it as a child. We will be its mother. Its father will be Siam. When a child has trouble with its father, it gets rid of suffering by embracing its mother. When it is unhappy with its mother, it can run to its father for support.”<sup>62</sup>

Chandler describes these parental disputes of the first half of the nineteenth century nicely in his study, pointing out that the wars led to no decisive victory and both sides had to return to the

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<sup>60</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *The Royal Chronicles of Bangkok Era*, vol. 1-2, The Khurusapha edition, Bangkok, 1961, entries from 2376-2390 BE; cited in Thongchai, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>61</sup> ‘*Chomaihet keiokap khamen lae yuan nai ratchakan thi 3, tonthi 1* [Accounts concerning Cambodia and Vietnam in the third reign, pt.1], in *Prachum Pongsawadan* 41/67, p. 235; quoted in Thongchai, Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 85.; The same statement also appears in Chandler, D, *A history of Cambodia*, p. 116; David Chandler made use of Vietnamese sources to verify this point.

<sup>62</sup> Wat Prek Kuy Chronicle, p. 23, quoted in Chandler, David, *Cambodia before the French: Politics in a tributary kingdom, 1794-1848*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1973, Chap. 7-8, p. 69.

previous 'status quo' that existed before the wars.<sup>63</sup> The bi-tributary condition that Cambodia was thrown into can also be clearly reflected in the Cambodian king's message as recorded in the Thai chronicles: "Please let me be subjected to the merit and power of both great kingdoms, so that my people can live in peace and happiness."<sup>64</sup>

According to Thongchai, Thailand was probably a bit regret helping Vietnam just to stand up to challenge her authority and suzerainty over Cambodia. But in Rama III's perspective, Thailand was still seen to have gained more advantages, as the king put it "Vietnam took our Cambodia ...36 years ago, only now have we got it back."<sup>65</sup> Chandler considers the truce between Siam and Vietnam in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as Cambodia's restored independence but put forward an implication of its meaning in Vietnamese emperor Gia Long's word that Cambodia was "an independent country that is slave of two," as translated by Chandler from the Vietnamese sources.<sup>66</sup> This depiction seems to run counter to the Cambodian self-conception in her understanding of her neighbors, but it also reveals so much of how Cambodia is viewed from Thai perspectives.

As shown in the previous quotation from Thai chronicles, the Gold and Silver trees Cambodia had to send to Thailand annually have been considered a symbolic act of submission. This custom has its implications that Cambodia agreed to be a tributary of Thailand and also signified her loyalty to the latter. According to Chadin Flood, such customary conventional practices had been observed not only in the case of Thailand and Cambodia but throughout the region of Southeast Asia in the past. The Siamese practice of this custom was just a duplication

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<sup>63</sup> Chandler, David, *op.cit.*, Chap. 7-8, pp. 150-187.

<sup>64</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *Third Reign*, vol. 2, p. 107; quoted in Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*, p. 85.

<sup>65</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *op.cit.*, p. 85.; From *Waduai hetkan muang khamen ton set songkhrum thai yuan* (On the Situation in Cambodia after the Siamese-Vietnamese war), in *Prachum Pungsawadan* 31/56, p. 207.

<sup>66</sup> Chandler, David, *A history of Cambodia*, p. 119, 133.

of a Chinese model in which “a vassal state to the Thai court of Bangkok (or Thonburi and Ayudhya) was not directly governed as an integral part of the Kingdom, but was left quite free in the handling of its domestic affairs, with the exception that all of its foreign relations had to be handled by Bangkok.” In return, “Bangkok also guaranteed protection of vassal state from external threats and the vassal state was obliged to furnish armies to the Thai government when requested to do so; the vassal chief or his representative was expected to go to Bangkok on important occasions, such as coronations of a new king.”<sup>67</sup>

This custom, however, casts a lot of light on how the Cambodian narratives tell us about the Khmer court and its officials in comparison with the reflection from Thai perspectives. Many Cambodian princes, especially from the reign of King Soryopor in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century after the fall of Lovek, were mentioned to have been adopted as sons of the Thai kings in Bangkok and were also educated there. In the writing of King Rama II of Thailand, he described Cambodian King Ang Chan as “obstructive child who loves only the people who pay attention to him,”<sup>68</sup> when this Khmer king is mentioned to have displayed unaccepted behaviors in the Thai court and later turned to Vietnam for help.

The presence of the Khmer Princes in Bangkok was rotated from one to another when each of them had to be sent back to rule Cambodia. This custom of holding son or sons of the ruling king of a vassal country, according to Chadin, had long been observed in Southeast Asia as well. This adoption could be viewed as an act of moral and ethical values on the one hand and

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<sup>67</sup> Chadin, Flood, *The Dynastic Chronicles of Bangkok Era*, First reign 2325-2352 BE (1782-1809 AD), *Annotations and Commentary*, 1967, vol. 2, p. 41.

<sup>68</sup> ‘*Chotmai het krung rattanakosin ratchakan thi 2*’ (Official Correspondence of the second reign of the Bangkok period), quoted in Chandler, David, *Cambodia before the French: Politics in a Tributary Kingdom, 1794-1848*, p. 75.

or an image of guarantees or even hostages on the other.<sup>69</sup> For example, when Ayudhya fell to the Burmese in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the son of the Siamese king was also adopted as son of the Burmese king. Likewise, when King Ang Doung of Cambodia sent a letter to the Siamese king in Bangkok to ask for a return of his two sons, Norodom and Sisowat, back to Cambodia to help him with domestic affairs, he sent Prince Siwatha in replace of the two princes he asked for.

Another aspect that reflects Cambodia's state of dependency on Thailand during this period is that most of Cambodia's royal regalia, utensils and weapons of sovereignty had been brought from Cambodia to Bangkok in the early Bangkok era, around 1783.<sup>70</sup> For example, the Royal Sword (*phrasaengkhan* in Thai) is mentioned in Khmer chronicles to have been brought to Thailand by some Khmer officials who had conflicts with one another at Udong and turn for help from the Thai king. To this point, it appears that both the Cambodian and Thai sources seem to provide convergent narratives. These royal objects<sup>71</sup> are necessary for the customary royal practices of coronation ceremonies in both countries in the past and can be traced far back to influence of ancient Indian civilization. Chadin Flood explains that "in any case their sociological value was merely to array the king outwardly in splendor and to impress on the people the respect and awe due to the royal institution."<sup>72</sup> According to the Khmer sources, due

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<sup>69</sup> Chadin, Flood, *The Dynastic Chronicles of Bangkok Era*, Fourth Reign 2339-2411 BE (1782-1809 AD), *Annotations and Commentary*, 1967, vol. 1-2, p. 127.

<sup>70</sup> Chadin, Flood, *First Reign*, pp. 61-64; Wales, HG, Quaritch, *Siamese state ceremonies: Their history and function*, Bernard Quaritch, London, 1931, pp. 92-106.

<sup>71</sup> These objects, according to Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, include, for example, the five Royal Regalias, namely, 'the Royal Crown, the Royal Sword, the Royal scepter, the Royal Fan, and the Royal Slippers'; Eight Weapons of Sovereignty (in Thai *phrasaeng-atsadawut*), namely 'the Royal Victory Spear, the Royal Hostage Sword, the Royal Sword and Buckler, the Royal Gun of the Crossing of the River Satong, the Royal Discus, the Royal Trident, the Royal Bow and the Royal Curved Sword'; in *The Dynastic Chronicles of Bangkok Era*, The First Reign, pp. 75-80.

<sup>72</sup> Chadin, Flood, *First Reign*, pp. 61-2.

to the lack of these objects, the crowning ceremonies of the Khmer Kings during this period had to be done in Bangkok and the Thai chronicles of Bangkok era have confirmed this point.

## The Systems

In general, the conceptions of self the Cambodian and the Thai might have developed, up to this point, can be analyzed from either a bottom-up or a top-down approach. To begin with, the strained relations the two neighbors had in the past, which might cast great influences on the political views as well as historical perceptions they have toward each other in the present, might have been associated with or conceptualized in the nature of kingship system and the hierarchical social structure rooted within both societies. This long-standing 'patrimonial tradition' which nurtures 'patron-client' relationships among the people has its long history that can be traced back to the Khmer Empire of Angkor era where the Indianized concept of *deva-raja* (God King) and the concept of *Buddha-raja* was adopted and practiced by the kings at Angkor<sup>73</sup> before and after the Thai were believed to come down to Southeast Asia to be influenced by this system.

In this patrimonial system, both the ruled and the authoritarian rulers, who often wielded absolute power, tend to conceive power in 'zero-sum' terms, and any oppositions, disobediences or disregards for submission to the rulers, whether it be violent or peaceful, tend to be considered an act of disloyalty and tyranny. David Chandler explains that "a Cambodian king, like most Chinese emperors, could rule only by extending networking patronage and mutual obligations

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<sup>73</sup> Cœdès, George, *The Indianized State of Southeast Asia*, East-West Center, USA, 1968; Chandler, D, *The tragedy of Cambodian history: Politics, war and revolution since 1945*, Yale University Press, New Heaven, 1991, pp. 3-4.

outward from his palace, at first through close associates and family members but becoming diffuse—and more dependent on local power holders—at the edges of the kingdom.”<sup>74</sup>

This patrimonial characteristic is argued to be able to preserve its time-honored existence due mainly to a strong belief of the general public in the Buddhist concept of karma and fate and the doctrine of relative merit, in which one tends to accept sufferings, social injustice, and one’s place in the social hierarchy because that is the consequence of one’s deeds in his or her previous life.<sup>75</sup> This led to a sense of powerlessness and a perception that social change is unlikely or impossible among the ruled, and as a result, state affair has always been accorded to those in power, and those in the lower status tend to take their status quo for granted or as a given and tend to develop strong expectation for the powerful to provide them with dependency and with a chance to gain merits. In this sense, the Buddhist doctrines have predominantly exposed both peoples to a process of enculturation in which they naturally internalize norms and values in their patrimonial system.

In the case of Cambodia, it has been pointed out by a World Bank report that “power tends to be highly centralized, steeply hierarchical and personalized rather than institutionalized” and that “informal patrimonial power structures have penetrated formal bureaucratic institutions.”<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, it has been found out that in recent years, the power of patrons and their networks of clients in Cambodia has merged with the formal structure of government to

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<sup>74</sup> Chandler, David, *A history of Cambodia*, p. 48.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4; Morris C, ‘Peace building in Cambodia: The role of religion’, available at <http://www.peacemakers.ca/research/Cambodia/Cambodia2000ExecSum.html>; Cœdès, George, *The Indianized State of Southeast Asia*, East-West Center, USA, 1968.

<sup>76</sup> The World Bank, *Linking citizens and the state: An assessment of civil society contributions to good governance in Cambodia*, Phnom Penh, 2009, p. 5.

form what has been termed “*neo-patrimonial*” system of governance, under which decision-making power and influence are largely determined by powerful patrons.<sup>77</sup>

The division of Khmer citizens into different classes had been observed since the early period of its own history, which is considered the influence of the Indianized concept of social classes—the Indian caste system. This concept had tended to be conducive to the slavery system prevailing in this country for centuries. The emancipation of this slavery system was only carried out in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of King Norodom. On 15 January 1877, after his official visits to many cities such as Hong Kong, Macao and Manila, and his cracking down on internal uprisings led by his brother Prince Siwatha, King Norodom conducted all-out reforms including the directive principles and regulations on the royal practices, government structure and its administrative governance, tax and judicial system, and on the abolition of slavery.<sup>78</sup>

In the case of Thailand, this kingship system and patrimonial relations had been observed in most of her history from Sukhothai to Ayudhya and Bangkok era, in which ego-centric rulers and local lords enforced demands for absolute authorities and also challenged one another for power and submission. This system could be argued to have remained in most of the early Ratanakosin period and received neutralizations and revisions in the wake of the nation’s opening up to Western concepts of administrative system in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Historically, the Siamese Corvee system was established by King Ramathibodi II of Ayudhya in around 1581 in which the lives of the Siamese commoners and slaves were closely regulated and monitored by the monarchy, leading members of the royalty or under a nobleman’s master. This system

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<sup>77</sup> The World Bank, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup> Treung Ngea, *Pravattesas Khmer samrab machsum seksa neung udom seksa* [A History of Cambodia for general and higher education], part 1 & 2, Phnom Penh, 1973, pp. 278-9.



declined after the Bowring Treaty and came to an end when the Conscription Act was established for military conscription by King Chulalongkorn, who was particularly well-known for his abolition of the Siamese slavery system in 1905.<sup>79</sup>

This in-system hierarchical relation, then, can be argued to have been closely interwoven with the hierarchical inter-state relations especially prevailing in this so-called region of Southeast Asia. This patron-client state relation had been observed in this region in the past in which the relations between major regional states or kingdoms and their vassals followed these patterns or networks of hierarchical lordships—the hierarchical relationship among the less powerful or inferior kingdoms and the more powerful overlords or superior kingdoms.<sup>80</sup> Thongchai argues that this pattern applied to the case of Siam or Burma in the past as regional major kingdoms and its tributary kingdoms such as Lanna, Lan Sang, and the Malay states. In Thai context, according to him, a tributary kingdom was called *'prathetsarat.'*<sup>81</sup> Cambodia, as discussed earlier, had been considered as one among many within this tributary system, in which she was allowed to have her own court, administrative, financial and judicial system, tax collection, her own army but had to submit to the overlord Siam by sending annually the Gold and Silver trees—the artificial trees with gold and silver leaves and flowers.

Historically, there were many major overlord states in this region including, among the most notable ones, the Khmer Empire of Cambodia, Bagan in Myanmar, Ayudhya in Thailand,

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<sup>79</sup> Crulkshank, RB, 'Slavery in Nineteenth Century Siam', pp. 319-326; Akin Rabibhadana, *The organization of Thai society in the early Bangkok period: 1782-1873*, Data Paper No. 4, Cornell University, Ithaca, 1969, pp. 5-9; Wales Quaritch, HG, *Ancient Siamese government and administration*, Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., London, 1934, pp. 60-71.

<sup>80</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, pp. 81-2; See also Maja Rajo Sathian, 'Suzerain – tributary relations: An aspect of traditional Siamese statecraft (c. 19<sup>th</sup> century)', *Jeti*, vol. 11, December 2006; Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian, *Thai-Malay relations: Traditional intra-regional relations from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1998.; Chandler, David, 'Cambodia's relation with Siam in the early Bangkok period: The politics of a tributary state', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 1972, vol. 60, part. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, p. 82.

Srivijaya Empire of Sumatra, successive kingdoms of Java, Vietnam and China.<sup>82</sup> Oliver Wolters, who coined the term ‘*Mandala*’ in 1982, a Sanskrit word meaning ‘circle,’ to depict the patterns of diffused political power or scheme of power relations in early Southeast Asian polity, explains that “the map of earlier Southeast Asia which evolved from the prehistoric networks of small settlement and reveals itself in historical records was a patchwork of often overlapping mandalas.”<sup>83</sup> He goes on to contend that “mandala represented a particular and often unstable political situation in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries and where smaller centers tended to look in all directions for security” and that “each mandala contained several tributary rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when opportunity arose and try to build up their own networks of vassals.”<sup>84</sup> In Thai context, upon the country’s encounter with and appreciation for European civilization in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Siamese rulers were mentioned to have denounced this traditional view of the world system. For instance, according to Thongchai, King Mongkut was mentioned to have ridiculed the Chinese self-proclamation to a status of overlord as nonsense and have broken away from the Chinese tributary system when he started to look to Western power and considered the past Siamese kings who were considered Chinese enthusiast as stupid and narrow-minded: “without intelligence to learn more about other countries...knowing very narrowly only about China.”<sup>85</sup>

The image of Cambodia within this system, as reflected in Vietnamese Emperor Gia Long’s word discussed earlier, was an image of a tributary state to two countries at the same time. Such overlapping sovereignty is best described in the chronicle records of both overload

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<sup>82</sup> Wolters, Oliver W, *History, culture and region in Southeast Asia perspectives*, 1999, pp. 27-40, 126-154.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>85</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, ‘The quest for “Siwilai”’: A geographical discourse of civilizational thinking in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Siam’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 59, no. 3, Aug, 2000, p. 533; (King Mongkut’s quotation from Mongkut 1973, 41-58, pp. 43 and 56)

kingdoms, while the vassal state tends to have different self-narratives and self-conceptions. For instance, the writing by King Rama III in the 1840s would depict Thai perspective of Cambodia in this bi-tributary system within that frame:

The Cambodians always fight among themselves in the matter of political succession. The losers of these fights go to ask help from a large nation nearby; the winners must then ask for forces from the other.<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, the writing accounts of the Thai ruling class in later reigns also reflect how Thailand viewed Cambodia when the latter ask for help from France. For example, in King Mongkut's account, he stated that Siam agreed to let Cambodia pay tribute to Vietnam at the same time and also agreed later to allow the Cambodian rulers to pay respect and tribute to both France and Siam at the same time.<sup>87</sup> In another version of his discourses, he also depicted Cambodia as a '*half-civilized, half-barbarian*' people who were a tributary and dependency to the 'more civilized' race of Siam.<sup>88</sup> Likewise, the Cambodia rulers, such as King Sihanouk, also tended to embark on similar discourses, portraying the Thai as a '*semi-barbaric*' race who was settled in the border provinces of the 'middle kingdom' Cambodia.<sup>89</sup> These contradictory mentalities can be seen as being shaped by the whole system on the one hand and by their own political orientations as well as historical and cultural consciousness on the other.

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<sup>86</sup> Rama III, *Collected Royal Writings*, p. 140, quoted in Chandler, David, *Cambodia before the French: Politics in a tributary kingdom, 1794-1848*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1973, Chap. 7-8, p. 69.

<sup>87</sup> King Mongkut's writing, '*Ruang Phaendin Khamen pen si phak*' [The Cambodian Realms Partitioned into four Parts], in *Prachum phraratchniphon nai ratchakan thi Amuat borankhadi* [Collected writings of King Mongkut: History section], pp. 91-3, cited in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, pp. 91-3.

<sup>88</sup> Osborne Milton E & Wyatt, David K., *The abridged Cambodian chronicle*, pp. 189-197, cited in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, pp. 93-4.

<sup>89</sup> King Sihanouk's speech, printed in *Cambodian Commentary*, Phnom Penh, vol. 2, no. 4, September 1963 editorial, p.4; in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, 1958-1963, Annex IX, 'Statements and Article of Prince Sihanouk', pp. 18-20,

Thai scholar Sunait, concerning the nature and practices of this system in Siam, has demonstrated that “three assumptions responsible for the view that Ayudhya was a strong centralized state” did not hold and that “in Ayudhya the hegemony of provincial governors was never successfully eliminated.”<sup>90</sup> This tributary system, however, came eventually to an end in the wake of the presence of European power in Southeast Asia in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, including the colonization of Dutch East Indies, British Malaya and Burma, and most relevant of all, the French Indochina, in which Western concepts of geographical practices were introduced and the tributary states like Cambodia and Laos were then divided between the old overlord Siam and the newcomer overlord France.

This new power has been depicted in Khmer narratives as ‘the savior’ of Cambodia from this hegemonic system and out of a possible extinction from the world map as a result of the greed, viciousness and expansionism of the two mighty neighbors Siam and Yuan (Vietnam). For instance, an old text written by a Cambodian elder named Meas, born in 1828, who, in his early 80s, identified himself as a son of the Lovek district chief and who used to join the army during the Siam-Annam wars, outlines the Khmer mentality about the system and their sufferings:

When France arrived [in Indochina], our country had already become smaller and smaller...Siam considers us only as one of its districts, let alone province...during the reign of King Ang Doung and Norodom, due to the intense pressure from France, Siam agreed to give back many provinces such as Battambang, Mongkultborei, Sisophon, Siem Reap, Koh Kong, Mlou Prey, and Steung

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<sup>90</sup> Sunait Chutintaranond, ‘Mandala, segmentary state and politics of centralization in medieval Ayudhya’, *Journal of the Siam Society* (Siam Heritage Trust), vol. 78, no. 1, 1990, pp. 97-98; Wolters, Oliver W, *History, culture and region in Southeast Asia perspectives*, 1999, pp. 142-14.

Treng. We are fortunate to have the French, and without them, we would not survive as we do until these days. The French are our good friend and also our teacher.<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter discusses the major stereotyped and enemy images as witnessed in both Khmer and Thai historical narratives. It has examined the debates over the authenticity of these stereotypes and enemy images with concrete evidence from various sources and perspectives from various scholars. It is also argued that the basic self-conceptions discussed in the last chapter are also reflected in these fundamental aspects of all the stereotypes, portrayals, and enemy images as can be found in various versions of their official historical narratives such as the royal chronicles, historical textbooks, government documents and the likes, as well as history and social studies school textbooks.

In addition, these ego-centric perspectives are also reinforced in many legends such as Neakta Khlang Meoung, Preah Ko Preah Keo and Decho dam din or Khom dam din and many catchphrases in both Thai and Cambodian such as Khom praephak, Pathamakam, *Khmer chea preah ream Siem chea preah leak* [Khmer is elder brother; Siam is younger brother], an analogy to the characters' names in the well-known legend of *Ream Ke*, etc. These legends and catchphrases are mainly believed to have been linked to actual historical events from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries although debates over their authenticity and their implications remain. It also

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<sup>91</sup> Ta Meas (Grandpa Meas), *Bandam Ta Meas* [The message of elder Meas], National Archives of Cambodia, pp. 37-40. This old text was the first printing text when modern printing technology was brought from France into Cambodia in 1907-8 and has often been considered an important document by Cambodian historians of the modern time. For example, see: Khing Hoc Dy (presented & annotated), *Bandam Ta Meas* [Recommendations of Ta Meas], Angkor Printing House, 2007.

reflects the nature of both Khmer and Thai historiographies which are inherent in and conformed to the characteristics of the social structure and the fundamental aspects of their ‘oral culture’.

Finally, the image of Cambodia as a tributary to both overlords Siam and Vietnam has been projected and portrayed in all of these narratives while the Cambodian elites seemed more likely to prefer self-narratives that portray themselves as independent. These schools of thought are seen to be part of their ego-centric perspectives that are associated with a broader context of their internal political culture, patrimonial social structure, and the hierarchical inter-state relationships in the region. Put it another way, this ego-centric perspective, which is considered typical in both internal patrimonial system and the broader hierarchical inter-state relations in Southeast Asian polity, reflects Thailand’s ego-centric views of Cambodia while Cambodia’s ego-centric, anachronistic views of Thailand, which is commonly linked to its past glory, seemed to gradually vanished throughout the historical narratives of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

However, this was reignited by a new power from Europe—the French, who introduced Western concepts of geographical practices and the idea that each nation state must be subject to only one sovereign to the Cambodian society of the time and who have also proclaimed themselves to be the cultivator of the Khmer national culture. But at the same time, this new power had also been considered by Thailand as an arch-enemy and an axe of evil. This historical turning point might play a vital role in forming and stimulating our hostile discourse of irredentism in the modern time. This will be thoroughly examined in the next chapter.

## Chapter IV

### DISCOURSE OF IRREDENTISM

#### Introduction

The case presentation in chapter one has brought to the surface certain aspects of how the people of the two countries embarked on the debate over the authenticity of their ‘spatial conceptions’—their intended meanings and imaginations of their cultural and geographical boundary as well as the symbols of their cultural identity. On the one side, the Cambodian, within their school of thought as discussed in the previous chapter, tend to adopt anachronistic views concerning their territory and cultural enrichment linking these aspects to the past glory of the Khmer Empire. Cambodian politicians and the likes were always bombarded with the ideas that ‘the Thai and the Vietnamese wanted to take control of Cambodia’ and that ‘the Thai had for several periods since independence taken controls of a portion of Cambodian territory.’<sup>1</sup> Many of the Cambodian commoners also displayed their nationalistic sentiments, claiming that all of the land of the present-day Thailand used to belong to Cambodia and that there are still a lot of Cambodian people living in many parts of Thailand until the present day. Some appealed to public awareness that the Thai scripts and all aspects of Thai culture nowadays come from Cambodia.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, speeches and lectures by King Norodom Sihanouk, May-September 1961, in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, *Facts about the Relations between Thailand and Cambodia*, Bangkok, 1961, Annex IX-X, p. 18-20.

On the other side, the Thai also defined the boundary of Thai-ness through various discourses on their territorial losses and their cultural domination. One of the most noticeable discourses of this kind was observed especially among the Thai politicians who recalled the so-called ‘chronicle of Siam’s 14 boundary losses,’ among which the 11<sup>th</sup> loss was claimed to be the result of the Franco-Siamese Treaty in 1904 and 1907. Some of the Thai politicians also mentioned that ‘Thailand had ruled over Cambodia for a century’<sup>2</sup> before the arrival of the French. Some historical and cultural theme parks, such as the ‘Samut Prakan Historical Park,’ also signify Thailand’s boundary-loss consciousness to the Thai public and especially to Thai students on their regular study tour programs.

These spatial depiction dichotomies as well as the presentations of their ‘irredentist’ claims seem to be at the center of disputes between the two neighbors. But, is this concept alien to these Southeast Asian nations? Etymologically, the term *irredentism* originated from an Italian word ‘*irredento*,’ meaning ‘unredeemed’; it was coined in Italian context from a phrase ‘*Italia irredenta*,’ meaning ‘unredeemed Italy’ in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to promote unification of the Italian speaking peoples and the annexation of territories deemed to be Italian lands formerly or currently inhabited by Italian ‘indigenous population.’ It refers to “any position of a state advocating annexation of territories administered by another state on the grounds of common ethnicity or prior historical possession, actual or alleged.”<sup>3</sup> It is considered one of the

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<sup>2</sup> For example, a Thai General Praphat Charusathien mentioned on September 4, 1962: “Thailand ruled over Cambodia for a hundred years. We could find with our eyes closed as the strategic points in that country,” quoted in *Aide Memoire sur les Relations Khmero-Thaiandaises* [Aide Memoire on Khmero-Thai Relations], Phnom Penh, 1953-1961, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Chisholm H, (ed), *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., Cambridge University Press, 1991. Based on relevant entry and explanation of the concept in the encyclopedia, irredentism is not a formal organization but an opinion movement advocated by different groups within a boundary or a nation as a whole for their claims over ‘natural borders’ or territories inhabited by their race. For a history of Irredentists, visit <http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Irredentists>



major advocacies by the pan-nationalist movements, especially in Europe as well as Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the context of Cambodia-Thailand irredentist perceptions, likewise, the so-called “*Pan-Thai*” movement believed to flourish for a short period of time from the late 1930s to the mid-1940s in Thailand can be considered an example of the pan-nationalist movements in this region that presented particular irredentist claims to neighboring countries such as Cambodia and Laos.<sup>4</sup> But is Thailand the only country that has presented irredentist claims to neighbors?

Irredentism is not to be confused with the historical events that lead to it nor should it be mistaken for the political philosophy of nationalism. As discussed in the last chapter, the shared sovereignty of Siam and Vietnam over Cambodia prior to the arrival of the French might be considered a pretext for the new master France to penetrate into this existing multiple-tributary system. The colonization of the French Indochina in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is regarded by the Cambodian as a turning point in history from which their sovereignty and some of the territories they had lost in the past were later recovered from Siam. The Thai, however, tend to think of this historical inflow as an illegal persecution of her time-honored suzerainty over Cambodia, which led to the losses of her territory eventually. This turning point in history, as discussed in the last chapter, might be regarded as the root of the modern time irredentist arguments between these two countries.

Moreover, when dealt with in a broader perspective, the discourse of irredentism towards one another might be beyond this historical turning point. It can, therefore, be studied in two different ways. The first approach is to look at perspectives of international relations by

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Kratoska & Ben Batson, ‘Nationalism and modernist reform,’ in *The Cambridge history of Southeast Asia*, vol. 2, The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 309.

observing a proviso that this historical turning point has played a vital role in forming the strong 'sense of irredentism' among these former colonies and the superior Kingdom of Thailand. Therefore, by way of this argument, the irredentist claims presented by the two sides can be examined through diplomatic negotiations between France, Cambodia and Siam concerning demarcation of their borderline and their historical claims to it. Within this vein, the studies would involve the examinations of the colonialist policies, Siam's territorial policies, various Franco-Siam treaties and the effects of the treaties on their sense of irredentism and the likes.

The second approach is to embark upon eventful descriptions in compliance with cultural and historical discourse that this sense of irredentism has been provoked by the overlapping between the boundary of Khmer-ness and that of Thai-ness which reflects the dominant discourses and ideologies in their historical narratives. Studies within this vein have examined the territorial perspectives reflected in their official historical narratives advocating the acquisition of the territories in their respective country by reasons of common cultural, linguistic, historical, ethnic or racial ties, which might go beyond the historical turning point discussed above.

It appears that the first approach tends to deal with Cambodia-Thailand irredentism in a modern sense stemming from its modern mapping technology and its historical descriptions of the time whereas the second will incorporate more dimensions and a broader scope beyond the time when Western concepts of mapping and nation state entered the region. Proceeding with these arguments, however, this study will examine both approaches in terms of historical narratives and their images on maps, both indigenous and modern, by tracing its development as well as its impacts on the two people's perceptions of each other. The following questions will

be thoroughly examined: How are these irredentist arguments linked to the self-conceptions discussed in the previous chapters? What irredentist claims do the Cambodian and the Thai historical narratives theoretically present? What is the nature of their sense of irredentism?

### **The Irredentist Discourse and Maps of Ancient Spatial Depictions**

It appears from the discussions and analyses in the previous chapters that the Khmer and Thai historical narratives tend to present certain irredentist arguments to each other. These self-narratives and depictions of the other, once again, can easily be deciphered within their contradictory schools of thought. From a general point of view, within the realm of their Originator ideology, the Khmer tend to be more anachronistic in their conception of themselves and their portrayals of the Thai and especially in presenting their irredentist claims to the latter. For this school of thought, the Khmer irredentist claims might be seen from the inception of their written history in the early period of the Common Era to the *Funan* Kingdom (68-550 AD), and as such, almost all Khmer historical narratives about events in the subsequent periods tend to center around how Thailand, as well as Vietnam has encroached on their territory. This main theme has also been witnessed in their school textbooks, the printed media and the likes.

The Thai, on the other hand, within their school of thought, consisting of different views and theories either conforming to or against the migration theory as well as their ego-centric descriptions of themselves and of the Khmer, tend also to theoretically present their irredentist claims to the latter especially from the Ayudhya period (1351-1767 AD), in which Cambodia is depicted as a vassal state of Siam. Of course, it might be argued from a historiographical point of view that this is the case because these historical narratives were reconstructed in the later period

when the Thai ruling class portrayed Cambodia in that picture to match their status and their world view of the time. However, in all veins, these narratives constitute Thai perspectives and perceptions of the Khmer in the same way the latter has of the former.

These irredentist arguments and claims, which their historical narratives depict, have also been projected onto various maps. As discussed earlier, these irredentist maps can be divided into two types, one being the indigenous or ancient maps drawn out of their imaginary spatial depictions in accordance with their historical narratives about the periods before Western concepts of geographical practices penetrated or were introduced into this region and another one being those maps drawn with modern technology from the West after this period.

These historical depictions, which are inherent in their oral tradition and culture through various kinds of narratives such as legends, folktales, fable, or myths told from mouth to mouth as well as written sources such as chronicle histories and inscriptions, have given rise to such legendary geography and ancient maps. This idealized geography has also been termed ‘*Tamnan* geography’ in Thai context.<sup>5</sup> However, in Cambodian context, such indigenous conceptions of space and maps are also present. According to Chandler, various kinds of maps depicting small localities such as villages and travel routes also exist but only a few typical examples of a ‘national map’ can be seen, which, based on Chandler, is a sign of Cambodian people’s self-centered characteristics resulting in sporadic and isolated patterns of village life and thus less interaction with the whole region or the outside world.<sup>6</sup> In the case of Thailand, according to

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<sup>5</sup> Vickery, Michael T, ‘The lion prince and related remarks on northern history’, pp. 361-2; Winai Pongsripian, *Traditional Thai historiography and its nineteenth-century decline*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Bristol, 1983, pp. 69-82; cited in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Chandler, David, ‘Maps for the ancestors: Sacralized topography and echoes of Angkor in two Cambodian Texts’, *Journal of the Siam Society* 64, part 2, July 1976, pp. 170-187; cited in Thongchai Winichakul, p. 28.

Thongchai, who has thoroughly and systematically studied the mapped Siam, “the pre-modern maps of small localities and routes are rare, perhaps due to the lack of interest in this subject.”<sup>7</sup>

For the purposes of this study, nevertheless, such indigenous concepts of cartography are not going to be dealt with in great details. What matters more here is a comparative content analysis of how the historical narratives of these countries reflect their sense of irredentism and how these self-narratives are reflected in their imaginary spatial depictions on both ancient and modern national maps which clearly disclose their irredentist arguments and perceptions towards each other.

To begin with, adopting the idea that the Thai have their written history only after the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Khmer would claim to have their written history from the early period of the Common Era, the spatial and geographical location of their first kingdom of *Funan* or *Phnom*, stretching all over the Indochina peninsula. These written historical narratives are claimed to have been based on inscriptions,<sup>8</sup> foreign sources such as the Chinese documents, as well as some legends and folktales. Although there have been different perspectives from different scholars, both Khmer and foreigners, about the geographical location of the Kingdom of *Funan*, the widely accepted proposition is that *Funan* was the first kingdom of Cambodia which had a vast area of land across the peninsula.<sup>9</sup> The Chinese documents show that the Kingdom of *Funan*

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<sup>7</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, op.cit., p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Examples of Khmer inscription textbooks by Khmer authors include: Maha Bidur Krassem, *Selachareuk Nokor Wat* [Modern Inscriptions of Angkor], Center for Documentation and Research on Khmer Civilization, Paris, 1984; Vong Sotheara, *Selachareuk nai protes Kampuchear samai mun Angkor I* [Pre-Angkor Inscriptions of Cambodia I], Editions Angkor, Phnom Penh, 2003; Hom Chayly, *Selachareuk Kampuchear 1&2* [Inscriptions of Cambodia 1&2], Editions Angkor, Phnom Penh, 20011.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Ministry of Education of Cambodia, *Pungsavada nai Protes Kampuchea* [The Royal Chronicle of Cambodia], 1<sup>st</sup> ed, The Royal Printing House, Phnom Penh, 2495 B.E (1952 AD), pp. 5-13; Ros Chantraboth, *Pravattasas Khmer tam reung preng nitean neung tam sela chareuk* [A History of Cambodia from Legends and Inscriptions], L'Harmattan, Paris, 1997, p. 173-5; Treung Ngea, *Provattasas Khmer* [A History of Cambodia], Phnom Penh, 1973, pp. 49-54.

was a large country bordered with *Champa* to the east, with *Yunnan* of China to the north, and with Burma to the west.<sup>10</sup> More specifically, the distance from China to this Kingdom, according to the Chinese sources, was approximately 1,728 kilometers long, which is assumed to be the middle part of the present-day Thailand and the present-day *Kampuchea Krom*, meaning lower Cambodia, in the present-day southern Vietnam.<sup>11</sup>

This historical perspective has led to the projection of the land area of the first kingdom of Cambodia on its approximate ancient map,<sup>12</sup> which depicts the Kingdom of *Funan* in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD encompassing vast area of land including the present-day Thailand. This map of the Kingdom's geographical location, therefore, is drawn out of their imagination based on the sites mentioned in texts and the proposed maximum of its land area. This historical proposition and approximate map has been very common in Khmer history textbooks and collections of maps used in various institutions in Cambodia.

However, for the Thai, if different Thai views and theories within the Contriver school of thought such as those against the migration theory as discussed in chapter two were widely held, then, the above-mentioned historical proposition and its imaginary spatial depiction adopted by the Cambodian would appear completely irredentist. But, for those who adopt the migration theory concerning the origin of the Thai, there would be no historical propositions nor is there any Thai map depicting Thailand's geographical location and land area in Indochina during this period of time as the Khmer do.

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<sup>10</sup> Ros Chantraboth, op.cit., p. 179.

<sup>11</sup> Treung Ngea, *Provattasas Khmer* [A History of Cambodia], Phnom Penh, 1973, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 12

A set of Thai historical maps produced in 1935-1936 AD by the Royal Survey Department under the Ministry of Defense, however, is a powerful example of Thai conceptions of ancient spatial depiction of Thailand that seems to conform to the migration theory. This set of Thai maps covers the entire scheme of Thai history showing the movement of Thai people from the far north since the first millennium<sup>13</sup> and the Thai historical kingdoms from the 8<sup>th</sup> century up to the Rattanakosin period.<sup>14</sup> This set of maps has been considered by Sternstein as ‘The Historical Atlas of Thailand.’<sup>15</sup> It also appears in the so-called Thongchai’s *Geographical Atlas*,<sup>16</sup> which, according to Thongchai, has been the most popular in Thailand since 1963 and also well-known in Thai textbooks and atlases. However, although Sternstein considered this atlas “the most comprehensive and accurate account of the number, location, and status of centers known to have been in existence during several important periods prior to the nineteenth century,” this scholar emphasizes that this set of maps also contains ‘errors and shortcomings.’<sup>17</sup> Thongchai’s work, likewise, has demonstrated that the maps in this atlas have the power to project a grandeur picture of Thailand’s geo-bodies in the past that never existed in reality:

This map is in no way a scientific record of any geographic reality outside itself. It is a visual text of a historical proposition, a codification of the crisis, indeed a purely semiotic manufacture. The theme of this map is not how Siam was created but how Siam’s present axe shape came about.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 13

<sup>14</sup> Royal Thai Survey Department, *Development of Mapping in Thailand*, pp. 13-14; cited in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 153.

<sup>15</sup> Sternstein L, ‘An historical atlas of Thailand,’ p. 7; cited in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 153.

<sup>16</sup> See Thongchai Taengnoi, *Phaenthi phumisat prayok mattayom-suksa tonton lae tonplai* [Geographical Atlas for Junior and Senior High School], pp. 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37; the illustrations also appeared in Thongchai, W, *Siam Mapped*, pp. 80-81 (mid-illustrations), which, based on Thongchai, are virtually the same as the original version produced in 1935-1936.

<sup>17</sup> Sternstein, L, ‘An historical atlas of Thailand,’ p. 12, quoted in Thongchai Winichakul, pp. 153-4.

<sup>18</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, p. 152.

One of the maps in this atlas which depicts the Kingdom of Nanchao in Thai history is an example of Thai concept of their geographical location and land area during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.<sup>19</sup> This ancient illustration shows the Thai kingdom of Nanchao bordered with the Chinese Kingdom to the north and especially depicts the vast area of the ‘*Khom*’ kingdom. Whether or not the name *Khom* in that illustration was used to refer to the Khmer or Cambodian of the present day receives different interpretations and as discussed in the previous chapters, some Thai scholars and politicians tend to claim *Khom* different from the Khmer or Cambodian of the present day. This depiction and illustration, however, also coincides with those of the Khmer Empire from the early 9<sup>th</sup> century to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century as widely adopted in the Khmer historical narratives.

Another historical proposition that Khmer historical narratives would generally and most importantly present, as stated earlier, is the depiction of the Khmer Empire and its land area during the reign of King Jayavaraman VII at Angkor in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century and early 13<sup>th</sup> century, which covers all area of the present-day Thailand. This historical proposition as well as its irredentist indigenous depiction is also mentioned to have been based mainly on historical texts, ancient inscriptions, architectural ruins in those areas, and foreign sources, especially the Chinese. This historical narrative and imaginary spatial depiction remain widely-accepted and very popular in Khmer history textbooks, online sources and the likes. For example, the High School Social Studies Textbook Grade 6 would depict the Khmer Empire as follows:

During the Angkor period, the Khmer territory spread over the present-day Thailand and from the Northern part of Laos to the sea. The most famous King during this period was king Jayavaraman

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<sup>19</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 14; According to Thongchai, the original title in this map in 1935 was “Kingdom of Nongsae,” believed to be the capital of Nanchao, and Sternstein claimed this map to be the kingdom of King Koolfeng, 748 AD; cited in Thongchai Winichakul, p. 198.



VII. The Khmer kings of later periods were all so weak that the Siamese grasped an opportunity to stand up and form a state along the Menam River in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. After forming their own state, the Siamese attacked and burned Angkor several times. Finally, King Ponhea Yat decided to give up Angkor and moved the capital to Chaktomuk in 1431. (p. 14)

Although the approximate or proposed geographical locations of the kingdom appear slightly different in different versions, it represents and signifies the Khmer's self-centric historical perspective and the national pride of their past glory. One of the common examples of this indigenous spatial depiction is the map of Cambodia during Jayavaraman VII's reign prepared by the Cambodia Cultural Commission in 2008, which shows Cambodia's vast area of land covering all over the present-day Thailand, Laos and the Southern part of Vietnam.<sup>20</sup> As a matter of fact, this proposed ancient map appears slightly different from the one used for school history textbooks written by Chea Ouem, Phai Pheng and Soam Im during the 1970s.<sup>21</sup>

However, Thai historical narratives also depict the first Thai kingdom in Indochina in which Sukhothai is believed to be first kingdom from the reign of King Sri-inthrathit in approximately 1392 BE or around the 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Clearly, this historical narrative seems contradictory with that of the Khmer version, which presents grandiose irredentist claims over the same period of history believing that the Thai just migrated from the southern part of China and settled down on the Khmer territory in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, such controversial historical depiction leads to an ancient spatial depiction of the Thai kingdom of Sukhothai, which widely appears on the Thongbai's atlas and Thai school history textbooks.<sup>22</sup> The maps that are used in these documents are the same version which show the vast area of land

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<sup>20</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 15

<sup>21</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 16

<sup>22</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 17-18

of the Kingdom of Sukhothai during the reign of King Ram Khamhaeng (1822-1841 BE) with the contracted kingdom of the Khmer on the south.

These contradictory historical narratives tend to lead to strong sense of irredentism among the Khmer whose dominant school of thought often trigger lost-territory mentalities as witnessed in their historical narratives about the subsequent periods after the fall of the Khmer Empire to Ayudhya in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. For instance, the Khmer chronicles tend to infuse such mentality in the ways they describe their quest to restore their lost territories from the Siamese:

Reaching Ayudhya, the King sent a letter to the Siamese king asking him to return all the eastern provinces till the sea, which used to be Khmer territory, back to Cambodia. The Siamese king sent back a letter rejecting the proposal. The King decided to attack Ayudhya but did not succeed because he did not have enough soldiers, and Ayudhya was also surrounded by water. So he decided to withdraw from Ayudhya but asked his army to be well prepared because he would attack Siam against in the next rainy season.<sup>23</sup>

This similar kind of irredentist arguments would appear in most of the Khmer history textbooks and the likes. On the contrary, the Thai historical narratives about Ayudhya period, as discussed earlier, tend to depict Cambodia as a vassal state of Siam. These irredentist claims would be common in many Thai history textbooks, online sources, and the likes.

They ordered the chief functionaries to respond to the articles of royal tribute [with return gift] and then bestowed clothing and silver coins on the ambassadors as appropriate. After three days

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<sup>23</sup> Eng Sot, *The Khmer Heroes*, no. 25, pp. 385-9.

the envoys prostrated themselves to render homage and take their leave, and returned to the Capital of Kampuchathibodi.<sup>24</sup>

Even if there seem to be no clear descriptions of the geographical location of the Siamese kingdom of Ayudhya, historical descriptions of the time, which depicted Cambodia as a tributary state of Siam after the fall of the Khmer Empire, lead to the mapping projection of imaginary spatial depiction of the kingdom as can be seen in Thongbai's atlas.<sup>25</sup> This map shows the vast area of Ayudhya kingdom during the reign of king Naresuan (2133-2148 BE) covering all of Cambodia and Laos.

On the contrary, the Khmer narratives tend to depict their own territories to cover many provinces in Thailand before the collapse of Lovek in 1594. This historical description can be seen not only in the royal chronicles but also in Khmer school history textbooks and the likes. For example, the Khmer school social studies textbook Grade 5 would present this irredentist claim and its justification as follows:

Because Siam was fighting with Burma in 1570, King Borom Reachea ordered an attack to get back the Nokor Reach Seyma (Korat) province, which Siam had previously controlled. Being afraid of the possible attacks by the Khmer army, Siam agreed to sign a peace agreement with Cambodia in 1574 returning the 3 provinces, Nokor Reach Seyma, Pachem Borey and Chan Borey, back to Cambodia. After that, Cambodia did not have any wars with Siam at all.<sup>26</sup>

Although there are some problems with the chronology of the events and vagueness of the geographical locations, historical narratives of both sides reflect their irredentist claims towards

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<sup>24</sup> Cushman, Richard D & Wyatt, David, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, The Siam Society under the Royal Patronage, a synoptic translation, Bangkok, 2000, p. 160.

<sup>25</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 19

<sup>26</sup> *Seksa sangkum thnak ti 5* [Social Studies Grade 5], MoEYS of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2011, p. 154.

one another. The Cambodian irredentist spatial depiction of the time can be seen in an ancient map describing their territory before the fall of Lovek which appears on most of the Khmer history textbooks and illustration collections as well as online sources.<sup>27</sup> This map shows many provinces in the present-day Thailand such as Buriram, Nokor Reach [Nakhon Rachasima], Serey Saket [Sri Saket] were still in the Cambodian boundary.

Thai historical perspectives and their portrayal of Cambodia as a tributary state remained the same even after the fall of Ayudhya in 1767 and Thailand's restored independence leading the country into a new period in Thai history namely Thonburi period (1767-1782 AD). The Thai royal chronicles of Bangkok era report of the internal conflicts within the Khmer royal family. Some of the Khmer royal members are mentioned to have fled out of Cambodia to seek asylum from the King of Thonburi. Moreover, the Khmer king's refusal to pay tribute to the King of Thonburi as customarily done in the Ayudhya period is also mentioned:

Therefore it was requested that the King of Cambodia sent tribute the Gold and Silver Trees as symbols of submissions, as done in the old Ayudhya kingdom. The King of Cambodia sent an answer stating that since the King of Thonburi was not of the royal blood of Ayudhya, he refused to submit as vassal.<sup>28</sup>

The Thai spatial depiction of the Thonburi period still presents an irredentist claim to the Khmer. In this sense, the maps which appear on both Thai high school history textbooks and Thongbai's atlas show Thailand's territory covering all part of Cambodia.<sup>29</sup> And this spatial depiction

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<sup>27</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 20 (a & b)

<sup>28</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *First Reign*, vol. 1, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 21-22

continued until the Rattanakosin period showing similar map of Thailand in the reign of King Rama I (1782-1809 AD), which also appears in the Thongbai's atlas.<sup>30</sup>

However, Khmer narratives also feature similar events with Vietnamese interventions into the Khmer court at the same time. Thus, during this period, from Khmer perspective, the Thai and the Vietnamese were arch rivals who fought each other to control Cambodia, and the Khmer court was polarized with two different factions supported by both masters. As discussed in the last chapter, Cambodia was forced into this bi-tributary system in which she had to submit to both Siam and Vietnam. So, the Khmer perspectives reflected in their historical narratives of this period tend to be centered on their lost-territory mentality as depicted in an ancient map showing the boundary line between Siam and Vietnam dividing Cambodia into two parts.<sup>31</sup> This main theme has always been the major matter in Cambodian history.

The above-mentioned lost territory perspective in Khmer historical narratives is further reflected and reinforced in another case of the loss of the western provinces of Cambodia, namely Battambang and Siem Reap, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of King Ang Eng at Udong. The chronicles of both countries narrate the same cause of the event in which these provinces were ceded to Siam in 1794 due to the quarrels and disputes among different groups of the Khmer officials or *Oknha* at Udong Capital, among which the group led by Chao Ponhea Apheythibes Ben (Chaophraya Aphaiphubet Baen) was mentioned to turn to Thailand for protection and promise to pay tribute to the Thai king so that he could control these provinces and did not have to obey the Khmer king at Udong. However, the chronicles of Bangkok describe this in a bit different manner:

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<sup>30</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 23

<sup>31</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 24

The King feared that he [Baen] might not get along with the new King Phra Narairamathiphadi and Somdet Fa Thalaha. He therefore asked for the territory of Battambang with the attendant provinces under its jurisdiction and for the territory of Siem Reap as well, these being proximate to the Thai border... King Phra Narairamathiphadi and Somdet Fa Thalaha were pleased to grant the king's request.<sup>32</sup>

Khmer chronicles mention that at first King Ang Eng did not agree but later endorsed the Thai King's proposal on condition that these provinces shall be returned back to Cambodia after the reign of King Phra Phutthayotfa Chulalok (Rama I).<sup>33</sup> Tauch Chhuong mentions in his book that unfortunately King Ang Eng died in 1806 before the Thai King and that 'the Khmer kings who followed Preah Ang Eng were preoccupied with different problems and did not reclaim the two provinces.'<sup>34</sup> The Khmer ruling class's failure to reclaim these provinces can also be reflected in a letter King Ang Doung sent to the French Emperor Napoleon III in about 1854 to ask for French protection over Cambodia, in which the King seemed to present no irredentist claims to the Thai as he did to the Vietnamese.

I would like to inform you also that Cambodia was originally a large country with extensive land, but later, the Vietnamese, who are malicious people, made friends with Cambodia and then started oppressing the latter by taking away its towns, one or two at a time.<sup>35</sup>

This failure to reclaim the lost territories from Thailand as reflected in the letter might have been driven mainly by the fact that Siam helped King Ang Doung to the throne when he was allowed to come back to rule Cambodia on his people's request to the Siamese King Phra Nangklao. A

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<sup>32</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *First Reign*, vol. 1, p. 207.

<sup>33</sup> Eng Sot, *The Khmer Heroes*, no. 64, pp. 1012-1025; Tauch Chhuong, *Battambang during the time of the lord governor*, trans. Hin Sithan, Carol Mortland, & Judy Ledgerwood, CEDORECK, Phnom Penh, 1994, pp. 5-6.

<sup>34</sup> Tauch Chhuong, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *Fourth Reign*, vol. 1, p. 168.

copy of this letter was even mentioned to have been sent to King Mongkut, who also expressed his expansionist view during the period of French expansionist policy in Indochina in his writing: “Thailand thought it suitable to enlarge itself (at this time) because it had the greater power.”<sup>36</sup>

The Thai chronicles, however, do not mention King Ang Eng’s condition at all but hold the assumption that these two provinces were annexed by Thailand as an integral part of the Thai Kingdom under her jurisdiction. The Chaofa Ben family governed these provinces for six generations, from Ben to Kathathan Chhum from 1795 to 1907, under the Thai jurisdiction and thus had to send tribute gifts to the Thai King annually.

The above proposal of King Rama I to King Ang Eng might be seen as motivated by his political and personal interests on the one hand and by his willingness to reward Chaophraya Aphaiphubet Baen for ‘oath allegiance’ to the King, which appears in his writings of *chotmai het* about Cambodia during this time, on the other. As discussed earlier, the chronicle histories of both countries reveal vagueness of this territorial transfer, which further reflects the under-institutionalization and traditional bureaucratization practices of both courts at that time. Chandler, in his study of Cambodian politics during this period, also puts it clearly that,

The lack of documentation about the “loss” of Battambang and Siem Reap is not surprising, in terms of early nineteenth century Thai bureaucratic practice, and in terms of Rama’s unwillingness to accept his client, King Eng, as an independent ruler worthy of respect.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Wilson, Constance M, *State and society in the reign of King Mongkut, 1851-1867*, Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1971, p. 983.

<sup>37</sup> Chandler, David, *Cambodia before the French: Politics in a Tributary Kingdom, 1794-1848*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1973, Chap. 4, p. 79; ‘Rama’ here refers to King Rama I.

One of the possible explanations for this assumption, however, is that Thailand was still holding an ego-centric perspective that Cambodia was under her suzerainty and these provinces were just part of her territory within this tributary system. However, according to the Vietnamese ruler's perspective, Emperor Gia Long claimed in his writings that "Battambang belong to Cambodia, and should not have been occupied by Siam."<sup>38</sup> But, from Thai perspective, Thai chronicles of Bangkok era mention that "Article four of the French-proposed treaty holds that the cities of Battambang and Siem Reap were recognized as being under Siam's suzerainty but there were no clear indications as to where the borderline would be in that region."<sup>39</sup>

This lack of documentation is further reflected in a report a French official in Cambodia, who sought to verify and to undermine Thai claims to the provinces, sent to his governor of Cochin China, which seems to go with that in the Thai chronicles mentioned above.

(Siam) is unable to present any documentation about the cession. The present King of Cambodia, his officials, old men who have been consulted, and King Eng's widow, who is still alive—are all of the opinions that none exists.<sup>40</sup>

Overall, as discussed in this section, it goes without saying that, while the Thai tend to adopt the views that Cambodia as a whole, let alone the two provinces, had been under its jurisdiction since the old days of Ayudhya period, the Cambodian tend to adopt anachronistic views as part of their irredentist arguments in which Siam as well as Vietnam are considered the 'plunderers' of Cambodia's land. This nationalistic mentality has always been reflected in Khmer school

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<sup>38</sup> Emperor Gia Long's writings in *Dai anm th'uc chinh biem* [Primary compilation of the veritable records of imperial Vietnam] (22vols), Bureau of Historical Research, Hanoi, 1963; quoted in Chandler, David, op.cit., p. 95.

<sup>39</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *Fourth Reign*, vol. 2, p. 344.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from E Doudart de Lagree to the Governor of Cochin China, dated January 8, 1866; quoted in Chandler, David, op.cit., p. 79.



history textbooks. For example, the High School Social Studies Textbook Grade 11 published in 2011 puts it clearly that:

Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the reign of King Ang Duong (1840-1859), Cambodia was still under the influence of Siam and Yuon. They retained interference in the Khmer court in order to control all state affairs. Since his ascending to the throne, King Ang Duong was really upset and expressed his deep regret for the provinces illegally controlled by Siam and Yuon. He tried to find ways to reclaim those provinces. (p. 199)

However, Thailand's ownership perspective of Cambodia has been evidenced mainly in Thai chronicles and some official royal writings. For example, King Rama III's ownership perspective of Cambodia is apparent as the king stated that "*Vietnam took our Cambodia ...36 years ago, only now have we got it back,*"<sup>41</sup> when he commented on the outcomes of the wars with Vietnam on Cambodia's soil in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century—the wars in which both Siam and Vietnam claimed to protect their 'sons'. Furthermore, this perspective was also reinforced when King Mongkut presented a copy of Cambodian chronicle history to the French diplomats to support Thailand's claim to sovereignty over Cambodia during Thailand's territorial disputes with France in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This sense of ownership has also been recorded in Thai chronicles of the Bangkok era, in which the letter sent by King Ang Duong of Cambodia to the French official Monsieur de Montigny at Kampot city was commented and elaborated by the Thai writers as follows:

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 85; From *Waduai hetkan muang khamen ton set songkhram thai yuan* [On the Situation in Cambodia after the Siamese-Vietnamese war], in Prachum Pungsawadan 31/56, p. 207.

The letter stated that Cambodia was a small country and a protectorate of Siam, and therefore could not sign any treaty on its own authority. Thus, the treaty in question would require a delay in time so that it first could be sent to Bangkok for consultation.<sup>42</sup>

The vagueness of this territorial transfer, in a broader perspective, not only reflects the administration and governance issues within the Khmer and Thai courts during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries but also constitutes an image of their ego-centric historical narratives of the time, in which the Khmer adopt anachronistic views about their territorial sovereignty whereas the Siamese develop an ownership perspective of Cambodia. This might play significant roles in the territorial disputes between Siam and France from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the period of World War II over some of the northern and northwestern parts of Cambodia as these provinces contain Angkor Wat and many other historic sites surrounding the ancient ‘Great City.’

### **The Irredentist Discourse and Maps of Modern Spatial Depictions**

As discussed in the last chapter, the European colonization of Dutch East Indies and the British Malaya and Burma were on the way in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Most importantly, the colonization of French Indochina had challenged and eventually terminated the pre-dominant tributary system in which Siam and Vietnam were fighting with each other over their suzerainty and sovereign rights over Cambodia and Laos.

Due mainly to their colonial ambitions, France and Britain were having political confrontation everywhere up to the 1830s. The French had an intention to establish their colonialism on nations in Africa and Asia to compensate the loss of their colonies in America in

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<sup>42</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *Fourth Reign*, vol. 1, p. 163.

which the Louisiana state was sold to America and Canada was conquered by the British. In Asia, France had wished to project her power and control over the southern part of China and the countries in Indochina including Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Siam. In these countries, many French Catholic missionaries had been on their missions to spread Christianity. Through these religious missionaries and their surveys in Cochin China and Cambodia, France foresaw a lot of advantages. Most important of all is that France considered the Mekong River to be an important water way which can offer easy access to southern China, so establishing its colonialism in Cochin China and Cambodia was a vision. Therefore, The French must remove all obstacles that obstruct their colonial ambitions, especially Siam, which was backed by the British. After France and Britain could reach a memorandum of understanding in fighting against the *Thaiping* movement in China, some agreements between France and Britain over the British-backed Siam were made. This marked a great turning point in Khmer-Thai history.

However, these events have been translated and interpreted differently in the Khmer and Thai historical narratives, which is reflected in their discourse of irredentism towards one another. According to the Khmer narratives, in 1854, a French bishop named Monseigneur Miche, who was close with King Ang Duong, advised the king to contact Emperor Napoleon III for help. Upon receiving the letter and some tributes, Emperor Napoleon III sent immediately his delegation led by Monsieur de Montigny to Cambodia to study the situation. When this French official arrived in Kampot province, Siam was informed about the situation and was outraged by the secret move of the Khmer king and such interference. Siam threatened King Ang Doung that if he signed a treaty with France, Siam would not return all the royal crowning tools and would destroy Cambodia by force.

Unfortunately, the king died in 1859 and his eldest son succeeded the throne with his reign name ‘Norodom.’ In 1862, Admiral Bernard, the administrator of Cochin China, came to Cambodia to study the situation again and to also meet with King Norodom and a treaty was signed on August 13, 1863 with King Norodom putting Cambodia under the protectorate of France. In 1864, France imposed both diplomatic and military pressure on Siam so as to force Bangkok to return the royal seal, sword and other necessary royal utensils for the crowning ceremony of King Norodom at Udong on March 3, 1864. Admiral Bernard emphasized Siam’s bad intention on the Khmer and that France had to protect Cambodia’s sovereignty as this proceeding had serious implications for the security issues in Cochin China. France then abolished all Cambodia’s existing administrative system by taking away the king’s authority and administration in 1884. Cambodia was admitted into the ‘French Union of Indochina’ established by France in 1887.<sup>43</sup>

However, the Thai sources have it differently from the above-mentioned. After annexing Cochin China,<sup>44</sup> the French found the defunct claim of the Vietnamese suzerainty over Cambodia as a pretext to also annex the latter by sending their warships to Phnom Penh to process protectorate-ship document with Khmer King Norodom. As reflected in a letter sent by King Norodom to the Thai king in Bangkok, which is recoded in the Thai chronicles, King Norodom was not willing to sign the treaty with France, and in spite of the treaty, the French

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<sup>43</sup> Ministry of Education of Cambodia, *Pungsavada nai Protes Kampuchea* [The Chronicle of Cambodia], 1<sup>st</sup> ed, The Royal Printing House, Phnom Penh, 2495 BE (1952 AD), pp. 187-190; Treng Ngea, ‘*Provattas Khmer*’ [A History of Cambodia], Phnom Penh, 1973, pp. 271-; Eng Sot, *The Khmer Heroes*, no. 64-7, pp. 1030-1068; no. 68-9, pp. 1087-1104; no. 70, pp. 1105-1152; no. 73-5, pp. 1155- 1198; *Seksa sangkum thank ti 11* [Social Studies Grade 11], MoEYS, Phnom Penh, pp. 199-207.

<sup>44</sup> By the Treaty on 5 June 1862, Vietnamese Emperor Tuduc ceded 3 provinces of Cochin China to France.

indeed did not forbid Cambodia to maintain her tributary relation with Siam, including the tributary payment.<sup>45</sup>

According to the Thai sources, which show Monsieur de Montigny's letter to King Mongkut addressing the Thai king: "To His Majesty, the King of Siam, Sovereign of Laos, Suzerain of Cambodia, of almost the whole of the Malay peninsula,"<sup>46</sup> it might be clear that the French were shown to have acknowledged the suzerainty of Siam over Cambodia. According to King Mongkut, the French, like the British counterparts, was not only hesitated to interfere with Siam's domestic politics but also refused to support the polarized factions within the Khmer court, which had asked for their protection following the power struggle in 1861.<sup>47</sup>

Based on the Thai narratives, there seemed to be a bifurcation of political discourse the French had adopted in their diplomatic negotiation and confrontation with Siam. On the one hand, France was mentioned to have manipulated an excuse that Cambodia used to be a tributary to Vietnam to play her political card as a Vietnamese suzerainty over Cambodia or an inheritor of Vietnamese land and thus was legitimate to annex Cambodia. On the other hand, the French admiral and navy commander reasoned that Cambodia was a sovereign, independent state and therefore could negotiate and sign a treaty with the French Indochina without consulting Siam.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Siam was mentioned to 'lodge a protest' to the French concerning the French treaty with Cambodia in August 1863. In a letter to King Norodom of Cambodia, King Mongkut

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<sup>45</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *Fourth Reign*, vol. 2, pp. 46-7; cited in Thongchai, W, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Manich Jamsai, *History of Thailand and Cambodia*, Chlerrnmit Press, Bangkok, November 1987, p. 99 and 104.

<sup>47</sup> King Mongkut, *Ohraratchahatthalekha phrabatsomdet phrachomklaochaoyuhua* [The Royal Correspondence of King Mongkut], pp. 65-6 and 633-641, cited in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 92.

<sup>48</sup> National Library of Bangkok, Manuscript Section, *Chotmaihet r. 4 ch.s. 1225* [Documents of the Fourth Reign 1863], no. 63, Admiral to the Phraklang, dated 5 October 1863, cited in Thongchai Winichakul, p. 92.

diplomatically revealed the political bifurcation the French consul Monsieur Aubaret had adopted and how Thailand viewed Cambodia in relation to France and Vietnam:

Monsieur Aubaret, the French consul ...suggested that both [Siam] and France should together crown the king of Cambodia. This follows the example of [the previous kings of Cambodia], who received the golden parchment [of appointment as king] from Bangkok and then received the Hong (Chinese rank for a tributary king) from Vietnam...In those cases, in correspondence with [Siam], they used the Thai titles; in correspondence with Vietnam, they used the Vietnamese titles. Vietnam and Siam are hostile to each other, hence separate appointments. Each claims Cambodia as their own. On the issue where both Siam and Vietnam claim Cambodia as their own, France remains neutral. After the French took control over the south of Vietnam, however, Cambodia became France's neighbor and a treaty was negotiated for France to foster Cambodia as Vietnam had previously done. Because France was on good terms with Siam, all amicable relations between Siam and Cambodia remain. [Both France and Siam] have equal power over Cambodia...What the French consul said was in accordance with the agreement made with you at Udong (the 1863 treaty)...After the consul's briefing, the senior ministers have discussed the matter among themselves and have decided unanimously to depute Phraya Monstrisuriyawong to bestow on you the golden parchment and insignia as your coronation.<sup>49</sup>

After conquering Laos in 1887, the French had already devised a plan to create a union for all the land under their control, namely the 'French Union of Indochina.' Therefore, in Thai perspective, the French played diplomatic tricks in order to interfere into Thailand's domestic politics and to achieve her colonial ambitions. In late 1863, Siam and Cambodia also signed a secret treaty, proclaiming that Cambodia had been a tributary of Siam, to whom she paid homage and tribute

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<sup>49</sup> King Mongkut's writing, *Royal Correspondence*, pp. 115-6; quoted in Thongchai Winichakul, *op.cit.*, pp. 92-93.

and received protection. This 11-article treaty,<sup>50</sup> signed on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1863, seemed to run counter to the Franco-Khmer Treaty signed in August 1863. It was a foreign newspaper *The Straits Time* that broke the news of this secret treaty to the French, who then considered this treaty a ‘back-handed and dishonest’ proceeding of Siam.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the unresolved tension between France and Siam was heightened.

France, by 1893, had become a major colonial power in the Far East, controlling vast area of land including Annam, southern parts of China, Cambodia and Laos. On January 15, 1896, the British and French signed a memorandum of understanding called ‘Declaration between Great Britain and France with regard to Siam and the Upper Mekong,’ which guaranteed that both France and Britain would not encroach militarily on Thailand, making Siam a buffer zone between these two powers. It should be noted that Britain’s commercial interests in Siam were so tremendous at this time.<sup>52</sup> In the wake of this agreement, the British tried to be neutral in the Franco-Siamese issue. The Foreign Secretary of State of Great Britain was mentioned to have forbidden his minister from any assistance pledges to Siam and even pressed the Siamese government to accept any terms of agreement the French would propose.<sup>53</sup>

Siam and France signed many treaties and conventions from 1867 to 1907, which, to the Cambodian, worked more to the advantages of the French and also played as a legal foundation for Cambodia’s claims to her lost territories. But, in Thai perspectives, Siam was forced to sign

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<sup>50</sup> Manich Jamsai, *History of Thailand and Cambodia*, pp. 145-160.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, p. 183.

these ‘unfair’ treaties that led to the losses of her territories. The treaties and conventions as listed below thus came into play.<sup>54</sup>

- The Franco-Siamese Treaty on 14 April 1865 (signed by Chao Phraya Sri Surywongse and the French official Aubaret): The Siamese-Cambodian treaty signed in December 1863 was annulled (Article 2); Siam recognized the French protectorate over Cambodia (Article 1); “The boundaries of the provinces of Battambang and Siemreap and those of the Laotian States bordering on Cambodia are hereby recognized by H.M. the Emperor of the French and will continue as the limits acknowledged as the present time” (Article 4).
- The Franco-Siamese Treaty on 19 July 1867: The Siamese-Cambodian treaty signed in December 1863 was declared null and void (Article 2); Siam recognized the French protectorate over Cambodia (Article 1); “The Provinces of Battambang and Angkor (Siemreap) shall remain with the kingdom of Siam. The frontiers of these provinces as well as other Siamese provinces, contiguous to Cambodia as known at present to the one and the other, shall be exactly demarcated without delay by the help of pillars or other marks, by a Commission of Cambodian and with the help of French officers designed by the government of Cochin China. Once the demarcation done, an exact map will be drawn by French officers” (Article 4).
- The Franco-Siamese Treaty on 3 October 1893: The Siamese government renounced all its claims to the whole of the territories on the left bank of the Mekong and on all the

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<sup>54</sup> See also: ‘Khmer Preah Vihear Temple and Siamese Expansionism: Past and Present’, *The Scientific Journal*, International Relations Institute of Cambodia (IRIC), Royal Academy of Cambodia (RAC), no. 1, October-December 2008, pp. 4-25; Manich Jamsai, op.cit., pp. 167-200; Original texts of these treaties and map collections can be found at: The National Archives of Cambodia, Collection Section, visit: [http://nac.gov.kh/english/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=36&Itemid=29](http://nac.gov.kh/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=36&Itemid=29); also visit: The National Archives of Thailand, Bangkok, (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Private Collections, Office of Prime Minister, Public Record Office); archive site: [http://www.nat.go.th/web/history\\_en.htm](http://www.nat.go.th/web/history_en.htm)



islands in the river (Article 1); “The Siamese government shall not build any fortified post of military establishment in the Provinces of Battambang and Siemreap and within the limit of 25 kilometers on the right bank of the Mekong” (Article 3).

- The Franco-Siamese Treaty on 13 September 1902: The return of Cambodian provinces in the previous treaties was still in effect and the Siamese government agreed to cede two provinces of Mlouprey and Bassac (Champasak) in return for the French evacuation of Chantaboon.
- The Franco-Siamese Convention on 13 February 1904 to replace the treaty in 1902: Siam returned the provinces of Melouprey and Tunle Lapov on the east bank of the Mekong as well as Trat province along the sea back to Cambodia, and the Siamese government also gave up military postures and control in the provinces of Battambang, Siemreap and Sisophon.
- The Franco-Siamese Treaty on 23 March 1907: Siam ceded the three provinces of Battambang, Siemreap and Sisophon to France in exchange for Dansai district and Trat province with all the islands situated to the south of Lem Ling including Koh Kut.
- The Convention of 25 August 1926: This convention decides the demarcation of the borderline between the French Indochina and Siam along the Mekong and establishes security cooperation between the two counterparts in this area.
- The Treaty on 07 December 1937: This treaty reinforces the agreement on the borderline between Siam and Cambodia as stipulated in the convention and treaty of 1904 and 1907.

It goes without saying that these treaties and conventions worked more to the advantages of Cambodia, especially the 1907 Franco-Siamese Treaty considered by the Cambodian as their historical milestone in which they could recover their territorial losses from the Thai. The statue

of King Sisowath, along with a French soldier representing the French protectorate of Cambodia and the 3 ladies carrying the symbols of the three provinces, was commissioned in 1908 to commemorate the retrocession of the three provinces to Cambodia during his reign. The commission of the statue is mentioned to have been awarded to a French sculptor Theodore Riviere, who did almost the entire sculptor in France, and the French government was said to have paid for its transportation to Phnom Penh. This statue was installed at the base of Wat Phnom Park in 1909, which remains until the present day.<sup>55</sup> This commemoration was also depicted on the Cambodian 100-Riel banknote in 1972.<sup>56</sup>

However, in the thinking of the Thai, due to their existing ownership perspective of Cambodia as discussed earlier, this outcome has been considered big losses for the Thai nation as a whole. Such a sense of territorial losses came into being out of narratives about this period when their long-standing tributary system was first challenged by the Vietnamese and then broken by the colonization of the French Indochina and the British Malaya and Burma. From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Thai irredentist arguments were reflected in their struggle to set up their modern borderline on modern maps to catch up with these Western powers that were doing so. On the one hand, it was thanks to the Siamese ruler, King Mongkut, who could catch up with world politics and who had developed deep interests in astronomy and modern geography. On the other hand, Siam was put under pressure by the two colonial powers, France and Britain, who were at the same time applying their mapping technology to set up their own colonial boundaries. Furthermore, it can be argued that this struggle reflects Siam's self-aspiration and ambition as a greater kingdom in the region.

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<sup>55</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 25

<sup>56</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 26

Upon acquiring a legal status as the Cambodian protectorate in 1863, France started mapping survey at Sisophon with some communications with the Siamese court, and in 1866 a French exploring team was also surveying other areas along the Mekong. This proceeding pressed the Siamese ruling class to be on steady alert and to do likewise. As recorded in the Thai royal chronicles of Bangkok era,

It was contemplated by the King [Mongkut] that the Mekong River separated the territory of Siam from those of Cambodia and Vietnam. Now France had been surveying and making maps of the river area, and France was the only country that was doing this. It seemed unwise for the Siamese not to do the same.<sup>57</sup>

Although there was no record of any Siamese surveys of their boundary until the 1880s, the Siamese government's mapping and topographical surveys were on the way after more pressure was built up by the British India government in 1880. Thus, many European experts were hired for the mapping job by the Siamese court, among whom James F. M'Carthy was employed as an official in the service of the Siamese government with his Thai title being *Phra Wiphakphuwadon*.<sup>58</sup> James F. M'Carthy expressed his interests in his own words:

It was very great satisfaction indeed I accepted service under the King of Siam. For geographical research alone a grand field presented itself, the greater part of the country not having been previously explored by any European.<sup>59</sup>

Needless to say, the map produced by this official would work more to the advantages of Siam and would reflect the Thai's perspective and their discourse of irredentism as well as their

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<sup>57</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *Fourth Reign*, vol. 2, p. 368.

<sup>58</sup> Maha-ammattayathibodi (Seng), *Kamnoet kantham phaenthi nai pathetthai* [The Birth of mapping in Thailand], pp. 2-3, cited in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 118.

<sup>59</sup> M'Carthy, James F, 'Siam', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Survey and Monthly Record of Geography*, March 1888, vol. 10, no. 3, p. 117.

irredentist claims towards their neighbors.<sup>60</sup> This map shows the boundary of Siam covering vast area in Indochina, stretching to most parts of the present-day Vietnam and the whole of Laos. M'Carthy's description of the Siamese territory would mainly outline this mapping.

To begin: Siam comprises nearly the whole of the Malay Peninsula north of the fourth parallel of latitude. With the Bay of Bengal on one side and Gulf of Siam on the other, we travel north and come in contact with the British possession of Burma. How much of the countries contiguous to the northern boundary will be English, Chinese, or French remains yet to be decided. Tonquin is on the north-eastern boundary, and Annam on the Eastern, While Cambodia is on the south. Thus Siam occupies the heart of Indo-China, surrounded by powerful neighbors-let us hope, as merciful as they are powerful.<sup>61</sup>

Obviously, this map would run counter to the one produced by the French, who was doing the same thing around the Mekong and along the Cambodia-Siam border at the time. This map was mentioned to have been used by the Royal Thai Survey Department in 1985 to produce a similar map titled "The 1887 Map of Siam and Its Dependency," but, according to Thongchai, it was not M'Carthy's 1887 map since it shows Siam's boundary after the 1893 treaty with France.<sup>62</sup>

However, there were also conflicting propositions in determining the boundary and frontier between Siam and her neighbors as different European mapping experts came up with different hypothetical frontiers at different occasions. The vagueness and diversity in the determination of the Siamese boundary issues have been analyzed in Georg Curzon's '*Siamese*

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<sup>60</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 27

<sup>61</sup> M'Carthy, James F, p. 117.

<sup>62</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 125; (Dissertation), pp. 197-308.

*Boundary Question*' in 1893.<sup>63</sup> As seen in Figure 28, the frontier between Siam and Annam proposed by a French expert Francis Garnier<sup>64</sup> in 1864 seemed to be undecided over the borderline between Cambodia and Siam whereas the Siam's frontier proposed by Schrader in 1892, before the Franco-Siamese crisis in 1893, was less stretching than the one proposed by M'Carthy in 1887. Needless to say, the production of the map like the one by M'Carthy was politically influenced by the local ruling class whose sense of irredentism had been clearly reflected in their political discourses discussed earlier.

Therefore, while the lost-territory mentality tends to be one of the most important competing themes that run through the course of Khmer historical narratives about historical events from the fall of the Khmer Empire in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the lost-territory mentality among the Thai also became an important competing theme of Thai narratives when their dominant tributary system had been broken. This mentality was further reinforced and translated into national political ideology by the Thai political elites of later periods. It was done not only through the formal education system and political socialization, as in the case of the Cambodian, but also through national political activism led by chauvinist political leaders in Thailand from the early 1930s to the end of World War II. The so-called 'Pan-Thai' movement was a radical irredentist campaign launched by Phibun Songkram government with *Luang* Vichitr Vadakarn being the chief ideologue. This irredentist movement

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<sup>63</sup> Curzon, Georg, 'The Siamese Boundary Question', *Nineteenth Century* 28, July 1893, no. 197, pp. 34-55. Appendixes, Fig. 28

<sup>64</sup> Garnier F, *La Cichinchine Francaise en 1864*, Challamel aine, Paris, 1864.

was aimed at abolishing the existing border demarcations resulting from what the Thai tended to consider as ‘unfair’ treaties with France.<sup>65</sup>

The lost-territory mentality among the Thai came at the same time with a popular caveat that Thailand had never been colonized by any European powers—a proviso which seems to be widely accepted as the proudness and blissfulness in Thai history of independence which they believe makes them unique among countries in Southeast Asia. The sense of losses could be deciphered from a request the Thai government of this movement submitted to the French government:

His Majesty’s Government would be also grateful if the French government would be so good as to give them a letter of assurance to the effect that in the event of a change from French sovereignty, France will return to Thailand the territories of Laos and Cambodia.<sup>66</sup>

In this sense, this irredentist campaign rested on the assumption that a large part of the French Indochina had always been an integral part of Siam and was ‘stolen’ by the French during her invasion of mainland Southeast Asia in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This canonized ‘lost territories’ were defined in the early 1940s by *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn* in his ‘*Thailand’s Case*’ and was also amplified in another book by the Publicity Department of Thailand, in which Siam is mentioned to have signed five treaties with French in 1867, 1888, 1893, 1904 and 1907 that

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<sup>65</sup> Paul Kratoska & Ben Batson, ‘Nationalism and Modernist Reform’, in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, vol. 2, The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 309.

<sup>66</sup> Ivarsson, Søren, ‘Making Laos ‘Our’ space: Thai discourse on history and race, 1900-1941,’ in Goscha, Christopher E & S Ivarsson, (eds), *Contesting visions of the Lao past: Lao historiography at the crossroads*, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Copenhagen, 2003, p. 256.

deprived Thailand of 467, 500 square kilometers.<sup>67</sup> In the early 1930s, such historical narratives and the lost-territory propaganda were also circulated and disseminated to the Thai public in many articles on the Thai military journals and periodicals.<sup>68</sup>

The image of these lost-territory narratives have also been projected on the maps, which, besides these documents,<sup>69</sup> can be found in various places in Thailand. For example, this lost-territory mentality has been projected onto a similar map found in the National Archives of Thailand with two political propagandas: “This land belongs to Thailand; if they will not give it up, then we must fight for it,” and “If you want peace, hurry and submit to Thailand’s demands!”<sup>70</sup> Another example of this propaganda is a current map found at the National Memorial in Pathum Thani, which also depicts the five territorial losses mentioned above.<sup>71</sup> Also, this lost-territory mentality has been propagandized on many Thai websites with its clear mapping and calculation, as shown in the case presentation in chapter one.

As stated earlier, Thai education system had played a vital role in infusing this lost-territory mentality since the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, following the educational reform in 1887 initiated by Prince Damrong, who was the new education minister, under the leadership of King Chulalongkorn for his criticism of the old textbooks. The new curriculum in 1892 incorporated modern geography as a compulsory subject at every level of secondary schools in

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<sup>67</sup> Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, *Thailand's Case*, Bangkok, 1941, pp. 56-62; Department of Publicity, *Thailand: How Thailand Lost her Territories to France*, Thai Commercial Press, Bangkok, 1940, pp. 1-13; Appendixes, Fig. 29

<sup>68</sup> Murashima, Eiji, ‘Opposing French colonialism: Thailand and the independence movements in Indo-China in the early 1940s’, *South East Asia Research*, vol. 13, no. 3, p. 336.

<sup>69</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 30-36

<sup>70</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 37

<sup>71</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 38

Thailand.<sup>72</sup> Thai geography textbooks published in 1908 would depict this lost-territory mentality by referring to the territories on the left bank of the Mekong as a region once belonging to the Siamese Kingdom.<sup>73</sup> By the late 1930s, when the above-mentioned irredentist movement was in place, school textbooks in Thailand were observed to have also infused this mentality through lost-territories narratives and further incorporated the map indicating Cambodia as well as Laos as part of Thailand's 'territorial heritage'.<sup>74</sup> For example, a high school textbook by Thomya Sophonchit published in 1938 would reinforce this lost-territories mentality as follows:

Good citizens have to do military service so they can protect their nation (*prathet chat*) in time of war. We must not forget the times when our country was invaded by enemies. During the Ayudhya period, we fell to the Burmese two times In the Bangkok era, we again lost our north-east Lao territory, Cambodia and Battambang district [circle] (*monthon*) to the French. This was not all; in 1893 a French fleet operated to close the Gulf of Siam. Two of their warships moved up towards Bangkok. In order to avoid any confrontation, we had to sacrifice the territory on the left side of the Mekong River to the French.<sup>75</sup>

The present-day high school history textbooks in Thailand might also be considered to have still incorporated this sense of territorial losses in an implicit and indirect manner. For example, the high school history textbook Grade 1 of secondary level authorized by the Ministry of Education

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<sup>72</sup> Warunee Osatharom, 'Kansuksa nai sangkhomthai ph.s. 2411-2475' [Education in Thai Society 1868-1932], pp. 67-85, cited in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 48.

<sup>73</sup> Ivarsson, Søren, op.cit., p. 243.

<sup>74</sup> Thompson, Virginia, 'Thai irredenta – internal and external', *Far East Survey*, 23 October 1940, p. 248, cited in Shane Strate, *The lost territories: The role of trauma and humiliation in the formation of national consciousness in Thailand*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009, p. 33.

<sup>75</sup> Thomya Sophanchit, *Nathi phonglamuang samrap chan matthayom pi thi 4 tam laksut mai* [The duties of citizens for the Junior High School level], Rongphim Lepachan, Bangkok, 1938, p. 34, quoted in Sunait Chutintaranond, 'The Image of the Burmese Enemy in Thai Perceptions and Historical Writings', *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. 80, no. 1, 1992, p. 97.



of Thailand, when discussing the independence of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, has included a map of Cambodia showing the Mekong River as the natural borderline.<sup>76</sup> This seems to be primarily influenced by the ideology established and adopted in *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn's* writing in the early 1940s:

It is quite clear that we did not ask for the return of all our lost territories. All we want was to have the Mekong as natural border in conformity with acknowledged principles of International Law and international usages. If this request be accepted, France will be called upon to cede only one-tenth of territories she had taken from us. The world knows that our request is just and reasonable...The loss of Thai territories can never be effaced from the memory of the Thai people until the said territories are fully restored to them.<sup>77</sup>

However, like the Cambodian irredentist arguments as projected on their ancient maps of the Khmer Empire and the country in subsequent periods before the French colonization in 1863, the images depicting the territorial losses of Thailand appeared to be vague and varied according to time and location as well as political inclinations. Thongchai has contended that “it is impossible to figure out exactly what was Siam before the loss or even whether there was really a loss of territory.” He has shown clearly that there are various versions of the losses, among which the most popular one was the eight losses classified according to its historical background and was projected on a popular and influential map in the early 1940s titled ‘*Phaenthi prawat-anakhet-thai*’ [Map of the History of Thailand’s boundary].<sup>78</sup> While the version in *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn's* work presents only five losses, the 1935 version of this map accounted for seven

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<sup>76</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 39

<sup>77</sup> *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*, op.cit., p. 50 and 129-130.

<sup>78</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, op.cit., pp. 150-1; Appendixes, Fig. 40 (The map appears in Thongbai Taengnoi, *Phaenthi phumisat prayok matthayom-suksa tonton lae tonplai* [Geographical atlas for junior and senior high school], p. 39)

losses. Also, there is also a version of nine losses of Thai territory<sup>79</sup> while the present-day Thai politicians, as discussed in the case presentation in chapter one, tend to elevate and modify this version to 14 losses. This similar version of Thailand's territorial losses can also be seen in the newsletter of the National Museum of Bangkok published in December 2010.<sup>80</sup>

Moreover, this irredentist campaign did not only present its irredentist claims through the above-mentioned historical narratives of territorial losses but also through propaganda of cultural and ethnic/racial ties. *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn* presents this kind of propaganda clearly in his work that 'the Cambodians also realized that they belong to the Thai race.' He then makes a bold assumption that,

The place now called Cambodia once belonged to an ethnic group called '*Khom*.' They were eliminated by the Thais. The Khmers of the present day are part of the Thai race...It is an established fact that the Khmers and Cambodians are not the same people...the coming into existence of this new name '*Camboja*' marked the end of old Khmer race and the birth of a new people who have 90% of Thai blood.<sup>81</sup>

The Thai government of Phibun Songkhram also made use of the concept of the legendary '*Laem Thong*' (literally meaning 'gold peninsula,' a Thai word translated from a Sanskrit word for *Suwannabhumi*), as anti-French propaganda on special radio programs directed to the Lao and Cambodian as well as the Vietnamese people in their respective language—the idea that these people, with the 'same skin' and the 'same blood' to the Thai, comprise the 'people of

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<sup>79</sup> For example, this version is presented on *Discover Asia Thailand's World* at: <http://www.thailandsworld.com/en/thailand-history/thailand-kingdoms--empires/the-chakri-dynasty-1782/index.cfm>

<sup>80</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 41; *National Museum Volunteers*, Bangkok, no. 12, December 2010, accessed: <http://www.museumvolunteersbkk.net/pdf/2011/news/2010/NMVDecember2010.pdf>

<sup>81</sup> *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*, op.cit., pp. 129-130.

*Laem Thong*.<sup>82</sup> The Publicity Department of Thailand made an announcement on 5 November 1940 on its special radio program in Khmer language that “The Thais and Khmers are not unrelated people; since long ago they have been of the *Laem Thong* Thai race (*Phao Thai*),” and that “the Khmer language was one of the Thai dialects of *Laem Thong*.”<sup>83</sup> However, according to *Luang Vichitr Vadamarn*, when the Thai called the Cambodian “brethren of the same race,” the Saigon Radio also vehemently protested to the propaganda, taking three days to explain that these two peoples are of quite different races.<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, it is shown here that this irredentist movement propagated the notion of ‘Greater Thai’ race through ethnic/racial ties to rally popular support for the return of Thailand’s lost territories, among which the right bank of the Mekong handed over to France by the 1904 and 1907 treaties was a significant goal of the Thai government of that time. However, after the Vichy government of France rejected Thailand’s territorial recovery proposal in the 1940, the Thai government was considered flexible enough to cooperate with the Japanese army in order to gain political support from this new power during World War II. This military cooperation led Thailand’s irredentist movement to its climax point resulting in the Thai Government’s temporary possession of several provinces in the western and north-western part of Cambodia, with its own designed map and governance seals or logos.<sup>85</sup> This territorial control was approved in the Franco-Thai Treaty on 9 August 1941 in Tokyo under the Japanese intervention. However, this temporary possession was cancelled after the Japanese defeat at the end of World War II, and the territorial transfer was signed in the Franco-Thai Treaty on 17 November 1946 in

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<sup>82</sup> Murashima, Eiji, ‘Opposing French Colonialism: Thailand and the Independence Movements in Indo-China in the early 1940s’, *South East Asia Research*, vol. 13, no. 3, p. 333-383.

<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Murashima, Eiji, p. 341.

<sup>84</sup> *Luang Vichitr Vadamarn*, op.cit., p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> Thadeus, Flood E, ‘The 1940 Franco-Thai border dispute and Phibun Songkhraam’s commitment to Japan’, *Journal Southeast Asian History*, vol. 10, 1969, pp. 304-325; Appendixes, Fig. 42.

Washington, in which the Franco-Siamese treaties in 1893, 1904 and 1907 were reinforced and the 1941 treaty was declared ‘null and void.’

In spite of its short life, this irredentist movement has been viewed from different perspectives. On the one hand, as Murashima Eiji argues, the Thai government of Phibun Songkhram played an important role in encouraging the Indochinese independence movements which was mainly instigated by the Indochina war in the 1940s.<sup>86</sup> In this respect, the liberation of Cambodia, Laos as well as Vietnam from the colonial rule was seen as quite a major achievement of Thailand, mainly attributed to its ‘Greater Thai’ movement. On the other hand, it has been argued that the Pan-Thai movement through its propagandized anti-colonial struggle against the French during this time should be viewed as a ‘self-liberation,’<sup>87</sup> with its main aim of recovering the lost territories and promoting the ideology of ‘Greater Thailand’<sup>88</sup> in Southeast Asia.

However, from a Cambodian perspective, this movement has been viewed as an irredentist movement which further reflects Thailand’s imperialism and expansionism towards her neighbors. As discussed earlier, Thailand’s time-honored ownership perspective of Cambodia prior to the breaking down of her tributary system as well as the lost-territory mentality resulting from the colonization of the French Indochina in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century have been considered the main driving forces of Thailand’s manufactured irredentist sentiment that was passed on from the old to the new generations of Thai leadership. This expansionist ambition, which was reflected mainly in *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*’s new theory and ideology of

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<sup>86</sup> Murashima, Eiji, op.cit., pp. 333-383.

<sup>87</sup> Shane Strate, *The lost territories: The role of trauma and humiliation in the formation of national consciousness in Thailand*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009, Ch. 1, pp. 22-63.

<sup>88</sup> See, e.g., Thompson, Virginia, *Thailand the New Siam*, MacMillan, New York, 1941; Christian JL & Nabutake Ike, ‘Thailand in Japan’s foreign relations,’ *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 14, 1942, pp. 195-221.

ethnic-racial nationalism, has been viewed by the Cambodian as groundless or having no historical proof, and the fact that the Thai never mentioned the territories they had 'stolen' from the Khmer in the past is a clear evidence that this irredentist movement is irrational and self-centered. This expansionist campaign, to the Cambodian, has also been considered a continuous process that prevails until the present day, as in the case of Preah Vihear Temple dispute in 1962 and 2008 and beyond. The Khmer high school social studies textbook Grade 12 clearly highlights Thai irredentism:

In 1954, the Thai army illegally controlled the Preah Vihear Temple, which is Khmer's ancient architectural monument on Dangrek mountain range. This proceeding can be considered an act of robbery of Khmer's historical legacy on the one hand and an act of cheating on a new borderline by placing Preah Vihear Temple as a new border pole between the two countries on the other. Cambodia filed a lawsuit to the International Court of Justice. Having studied the case seriously and found all evidences, the International Court of Justice ruled on 15 June 1962 that the temple belongs to Cambodia and ordered Thailand to withdraw its troops from the temple. (p. 159)

In another respect, despite the fact that their irredentist arguments have never been translated into political activism like the 'Pan-Thai' movement in the 1940s, the Khmer have also presented their irredentist claims to the Thai through cultural and demographic evidence. One of the main evidences the Khmer provide for their irredentist arguments is the Khmer cultural and architectural legacies throughout the present-day Thailand, which signifies that those areas used to be Khmer territories in the past. According to Khmer scholar Michel Tranet, there are two main reasons why the Thai in the past tried to destroy some of these cultural and historical legacies, such as secret texts, Buddha statues, historical monuments, and the likes. First, such an act can root out the historical as well as archeological evidences the Khmer can accumulate and

establish for their claims to sovereignty and legitimacy of the their motherland. On the same token, the loss of such evidences would also pave way for Thai cultural revolt against what is Khmer and transform what can identify Khmer into what culturally belongs to Thai.

Another reason behind Thai act of cultural vandalism is that these holy objects not only represent Khmer historical and cultural values but also constitutes Khmer national spirit and unification that would provide them with social harmony and prosperity. The loss of these secret texts and other holy objects from Khmer society has been viewed and justified as the loss of self-confidence and national unity and ideology which results in the steady decline of Khmer civilization following the fall of the Khmer Empire in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>89</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapters, the struggle for their nationhood, which is reflected fundamentally in their defense of cultural and civilizational values and their debate over the authentication of these historical and cultural legacies, which are sometimes also embedded in legends and folktales, also constitute the Khmer's irredentist claims to the Thai. Furthermore, this irredentist claim proceeds with reasons that there are a lot of Khmer ruins in many provinces in the present-day Thailand such as temples, ancient highways and man-made water streams where the Khmer used to commute, which signifies that those regions used to be the former Khmer territory. This is reflected in the calculation of the number of Khmer provinces annexed by Thailand and its projected map published in '*Les Avaleurs des Terres Khmers, Kamboja*' by the former Khmer King Norodom Sihanouk in 1966.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Michel Tranet, *Pravattasas nai preah reacheanachak Kampuchea: Sampornapheap roveang procheachun Khmer-Thai chab pi sattavat ti 13 nai ko. so* [A History of the Kingdom of Cambodia: Relationship between the Khmer and Thai People since the 13<sup>th</sup> century], Phnom Penh, 2005, pp. 59-65.

<sup>90</sup> These articles, written by Michel Tranet, are available at: <http://khmerization.blogspot.jp/2011/10/khmer-provinces-annexed-by-thailand.html> and [http://khmerbloodkb.blogspot.jp/2011/11/blog-post\\_25.html](http://khmerbloodkb.blogspot.jp/2011/11/blog-post_25.html).

Apart from this, the Khmer also raise their irredentist claims through demographic evidence. Demographic studies of the Khmer people living in Thailand mainly provide concrete evidence and support for this argument. For example, this irredentist claim proceeds with reason that there are still a lot of Khmer people living in many parts of the present-day Thailand, that is, the areas along the northern provinces bordered with Cambodia, the eastern and western areas of Korat or Nakhon Ratchasima in Thai, the western and northwestern parts of Ubun province, and the along the Dangrek Valley and Nam Moon River.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the Khmer people are also claimed to be living in their original communities south of Surin province, Buri Ram and Khon Kaen, Chantha Buri, Prachin Buri, Trat, Pathum Thani, Ratcha Buri, Suphan Buri, Kanchanaburi province and so on. The argument arising from this study has also been projected onto a map showing where the Khmer and Lao people are in Thailand.<sup>92</sup> Most of these Khmer citizens are mentioned to be the descendants of the old Khmer generations that the Siamese evacuated from Cambodia during the wars in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Thai government is well aware of this demographic evidence and from time to time tries to fake demographic statistic accordingly.<sup>93</sup>

This irredentist claim can also be seen mentioned in the current Khmer school textbooks. For example, the Khmer Language textbook Grade 11 presents this irredentist argument explicitly as follows:

It should be noticed that outside of the present-day Cambodia, there are millions of Khmer people who are living in many parts of Thailand and southern Vietnam. Those Khmer communities still

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<sup>91</sup> The word 'Korat' is mentioned as a short form of Khmer word 'Angkor Reach' and the word 'Nam Moon' of Khmer word 'Prey Moul'.

<sup>92</sup> The National Archives of Cambodia, *About the Khmer in Thailand*, translated from Pierre Andel, pp. 4-6; see Appendixes, Fig. 43, p. 7

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

preserve their custom, tradition and their mother tongue until nowadays. The Cham people, who worship Islam, also have the same blood type as the Khmer, leading to an assumption that they are in the same race.<sup>94</sup> (pp. 13-15)

As seen here, whereas the Thai presented and implemented their ethnic-racial irredentist arguments and policies by incorporating the Khmer into the Thai race—the *Laem Thong*, the Khmer's ethnic-racial irredentist arguments and claims tend to distinguish the Khmer race from the Thai. Within the realm of their Originator school of thought and ideology as discussed in chapter two, the Khmer tend to present absolute ethnic-racial irredentist claims placing the Thai into the subject of potential irredentism from their inception. The first state of the Thai has been narrated by the Cambodian as being founded on the Khmer territory, and thus the present-day Thailand has been seen as a former Khmer sovereign.

In spite of the fact that the Khmer irredentist claims tend to be absolute in nature, these irredentist arguments, since the time Cambodia started to 'rediscover' and reconstruct her history, have always been paper works and thus have never been translated into any political activism as the Thai did during the 1940s and for the time being. Although the Khmer historical narratives present tremendous irredentist arguments and claims to the Thai, it should be noticed that the Khmer leaders from the time of independence until the present day have never made any irredentist movement or any political activism aimed at recovering the territorial losses.

One of the most convincing explanations might be something to do with Cambodia's political, economic and military weaknesses as the country experienced serious social unrest. Another reason might be that the French influence and their determining role in the border

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<sup>94</sup> An extract from Michel Tranet, *History of Cambodia from prehistoric time to the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, Phnom Penh, 1996.



demarcation of the two countries during the previous century had already provided a lot of advantages to the Cambodian when they were just crawling for survival. This perspective seems to be partly implied in Thai historian Manich Jumsai's writings when he expressed his views and feelings on the Thai lost-territory mentality:

...It is here only to show that Thailand has had her grievances, too recent to be forgotten, and that this grievance was an affair between France and Thailand, nothing to do with Cambodia. It was France which had left this aggrieved feeling behind. Now that it looked as though France was going to lose all her colonies to the Axis Powers. It would be unfair that an old territory, once belonging to Thailand for centuries should pass to third hands by this mishap instead of being returned to her. She had also another grievance...<sup>95</sup>

## **The Constitution**

From a legal perspective, even though irredentism tends to be opinion-based in nature and thus is not a formal organization, modern nation states might formalize and legalize irredentist arguments and claims by stipulating them in the constitutional documents. Such stipulation will not only reveal the irredentist mainstream thoughts and arguments of the society as a whole but also display and reaffirm the government's genuine commitment to territorial sovereignty and recovery which would be, in one or another way, more likely to be translated and activated into political or ideological movements.

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<sup>95</sup> Manich Jamsai, *History of Thailand and Cambodia*, 1987, p. 203.

It has been widely argued that the constitution-making process in Cambodia was strongly influenced by the country's ancient, colonial, and recent history.<sup>96</sup> As Stephen Marks puts it, “a legal system and formal constitution defining the functions and powers of national institutions only arrived with French colonialism and the realization of independence.”<sup>97</sup> Thus, in this respect, the constitutional system did not exist in this country before this period, and the first constitution of the country on May 6, 1947, which was successively modified until March 31, 1964, drew most heavily from the French model. After the Paris Peace Agreement, the new Constitution adopted on September 21, 1993, which was later amended five times from 1994 to 2006, still contains many elements of the first constitution in 1947 and reflects the return of the strong influence of the French legal tradition, despite some differences from the French Constitutional Council.<sup>98</sup>

The present constitution of Cambodia reflects the strong influence of history characterized by a sense of grandeur of her past attached to the Angkorean tradition, a sense of decline as national trauma and humiliation, and a possibility of renewal. This mentality has been clearly disclosed in its preamble:

Having known a grand civilization of a prosperous, powerful, and glorious nation whose prestige radiates like a diamond,

Having endured sufferings and destructions and having experienced a tragic decline in the course of the two decades,

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<sup>96</sup> Marks, Stephen P, ‘The process of creating a new constitution of Cambodia’, in Miller, Laurel E (ed), *Framing the state in times of transition: Case studies in constitution making*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, D.C., 2010, p. 209.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>98</sup> The Constitutional Council of Cambodia, ‘Background’, retrieved 20 May 2013, <http://www.ccc.gov.kh/english/history.php>

Awakened, stood up with a resolute determination to strengthen the national unity, to preserve and defend Cambodia's territory and its precious sovereignty and the prestige of Angkor civilization, and to restore Cambodia into an "Island of Peace" based on a multi-party liberal democratic regime guaranteeing human rights and the respect of law, and responsible for the destiny of the nation always evolving toward progress, development, prosperity, and glory,

On the one hand, this stipulation clearly signifies the Cambodian's anachronistic views about the nation's image as a great empire with their great civilization and a glorious culture followed by an enduring mentality of territorial losses which has been implied by the phrase "to preserve and defense Cambodia's territory and its precious sovereignty." In this respect, this stipulation shows that the Cambodian remain bombarded with historical perceptions of threat to their territorial and cultural integrity and thus have never been indifferent to what they used to be in the long past and what they have become as a result of those threats.

On the other hand, although this stipulation might imply Cambodia's sense of irredentism by reason of their cultural and ethnic-racial elements, it does not appear at all that the Cambodian constitutions formalize and legalize their irredentist claim—the claim through history of territorial losses as discussed earlier in the last section. This perspective has been clearly confirmed by the stipulation in Article 2 of the current constitution:

The territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Cambodia, shall absolutely not be violated within its borders as defined in the 1/100, 000 scale map made between the year 1933-1935 and internationally recognized between the years 1963 – 1969.

Whereas the Cambodian legal conception of political system came as a product of colonial rules, Thailand's constitutional discourse or an operated political system based on the concept of

constitutional monarchy came as a result of a coup in 1932,<sup>99</sup> a turning point in Thai history when the absolute monarchy was brought to an end, leading to an unprecedented change of the country's name in 1939 from 'Siam' to 'Thailand'—'the land of the free.' Before this turning point, the notions of public law, like the Cambodian counterpart in one or another way, centered fundamentally on the 'interpretation of the concept of monarchy,'<sup>100</sup> which, as discussed in the previous chapters, was influenced by the Indianized concept of *Devaraja* or 'God King' and *Buddharaja*—the practices of political leadership in accordance with the Buddhist principles and doctrines. This concept was clearly expressed by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) in the preamble to the Penal Code promulgated on 1 April 1908:

In the ancient times the monarchs of the Siamese nation governed their people with laws which were originally derived from the Dhamasutra of Manu, which was then the prevailing law among the inhabitants of India and the neighboring countries.<sup>101</sup>

Since 1932, Thailand has had a great many charters and constitutions, many of which promulgated and implemented following military coups. Up to the year 1991, the constitution promulgated in December was the fifteenth constitution Thailand had.<sup>102</sup> This extremely large number of constitutions has generally been correlated with the nature of Thai political upheavals in which military coups and elections constituted its feature.<sup>103</sup> In this respect, after each

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<sup>99</sup> Reynolds F, 'Dhamma in dispute: The interactions of religion and law in Thailand,' *Law and Society Review*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1994, p. 433.

<sup>100</sup> Hooker MB, 'The South-East Asian law texts: Cultural borrowing and the concept of law,' in *A Concise Legal History of South-East Asia*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978, Ch. 4.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Masao T, 'Siamese Law: Old and New', 1908, in Arnold Wright & Breakspear, Oliver T (eds), *Twentieth century impressions of Siam*, Lloyds Greater Britain Publishing Company, London, p. 91, (Digitized 2008), retrieved 23 May 2013, <http://ia600406.us.archive.org/6/items/twentiethcentury00wrigrich/twentiethcentury00wrigrich.pdf>

<sup>102</sup> *Radthathammanoon* [Constitution], 2534 BE (December 9, 1991), translated in *Constitution of The Kingdom of Thailand* (Int'l Translation Office, Thailand, 1992).

<sup>103</sup> Clark, Neher D, has shown that until 1991 there were in total thirteen successful military coups and eighteen elections. See Clark, Neher D, 'Political succession in Thailand,' *Asian Survey*, vol. 32, 1992, p. 585.

successful coup, the existing constitutions were suspended or abrogated by the military regimes and new constitutions would be promulgated; general elections were held, and as time carried fierce competitions among civilian politicians, the perceived political unrest brought in place subsequent military coups. Thus, Thailand's operated political system based on the concept of constitutional monarch has been in accordance with this 'cycle of Thai politics,' in which the three elements—constitutions, coups, and elections—are strongly interwoven.<sup>104</sup>

With this regard, it can be argued that Thailand's constitutions are strongly influenced by the above-mentioned two factors—the interpretation of *Rajadharma*, the roles and duty of the monarchs, and general features of the cycle of Thai politics. Reviewing these charters and constitutions, these factors remain the main features in Thai constitutional documents, and as in the case of Cambodia, it does not appear at all that Thailand's constitutions formalize and legalize their irredentist claims by ways of history of territorial losses as discussed earlier in the last section. For example, the main features in the 1932 'Provisional Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand'<sup>105</sup> as well as the current Constitution promulgated in 2007<sup>106</sup> all center on these two factors.

Several reasons might account for why both the Cambodian and Thai Constitutions have not formalized and legalized their irredentist claims. First, as discussed earlier, before the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, both Cambodia and Thailand did not have any ideas of operating their political system based on the concept of constitutionality. Both the Khmer and Siamese court were

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<sup>104</sup> Chai-anan Samudavanija, 'Thailand: A stable semi-democracy', in Diamond L, et al., (eds), *Democracy in developing countries*, 1989, p. 336; cited in McDorman Ted L, 'The 1991 Constitution of Thailand', *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal*, vol. 3, no. 2., p. 258.

<sup>105</sup> For an English version of the Constitution, visit:  
[http://robinlea.com/pub/Nitirat/constitutions/Provisional\\_constitution\\_of\\_1932.html](http://robinlea.com/pub/Nitirat/constitutions/Provisional_constitution_of_1932.html)

<sup>106</sup> For an English version of the Constitution, visit:  
[http://www.senate.go.th/th\\_senate/English/constitution2007.pdf](http://www.senate.go.th/th_senate/English/constitution2007.pdf)

accustomed to their inherent political system based on monarchical power centralization and absolutism. The idea of setting up a constitution for political practices was a pure Western concept, which arrived with either colonialism or the influence of western education and western political socialization during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

The absence of irredentist constitution in this case also points to certain aspects of Khmer and Thai under-institutionalization and traditional bureaucratization practices in the courts of both countries in the past. For example, as discussed earlier, the territorial transfer of the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap under the Thai jurisdiction in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was done within the framework of indigenous polity, in which the annexation of these territories was supposed to both courts without any formal documentation. As European colonization was on its way through Southeast Asia, this lack of formal institutionalization and bureaucratization became a pretext for Europeans, with their modern legal practices and international polity, to penetrate into system. Thus, it bears a historical implication that both the Khmer and Thai court did not have even any conceptualization of institutionalized political system up until the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, let alone formalizing and legalizing irredentist claims by stipulating them in their constitutions which only existed after the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

Second, those codified constitutions were drafted and promulgated not for the purposes of formalizing and legalizing irredentist claims to another nation but mainly for the purposes of resolving domestic political issues. This perspective might appeal more to the case of Thailand in which the relationship between constitutions, coups and elections was outlined and evolved within the cycle of the nation's domestic politics. However, it should be noticed that the

Cambodian constitutions touch more upon her territorial integrity and sovereignty despite the fact that such stipulations do not legalize the abundant irredentist claims as written in their official historical narratives.

Finally, the legal documentations and official mapping that came during the territorial disputes between Siam and France in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries might have already played determining roles in defining and demarcating the boundary lines between the two countries. Although strong sense of irredentism and the political movement and activism to achieve such irredentist claims came much later, as in the case of Thailand, the chauvinist political campaigns in Thailand seemed to be less influential at the end of World War II and in the wake of the ICJ's judgment in 1962.

But its nationalistic sentiment and its moral meanings to the Thai national integrity might remain high among Thai nationalists of later periods and of the present day. One of the most striking examples of this point is the Samut Prakan cultural theme park of 'Ancient City' or *Muang Boran*, 33 kilometers southeast of Bangkok, established and opened on February 11, 1972. This open-air museum displays Thailand *en miniature* on 130 hectares in which a replica of Preah Vihear temple was displayed on Thai soil. Shane Strate's study on '*The lost territories: The role of trauma and humiliation in the formation of national consciousness in Thailand*' has signified and clarified the important roles of Thai irredentist discourse in Thai nationalism during the 1940s. The present-day territorial disputes between the two countries, therefore, can be seen as a historical backdrop of this strong sense of irredentism on the one hand and the possible vagueness of the ICJ's judgment, which might give some pretexts for certain divergent political interpretations of the case on the other.

## Conclusion

This chapter examines and discusses the abundant discourse of irredentism between the Cambodian and the Thai through their historical narratives. It has shown that the lost-territory mentality is one of the main important themes which exist in both Khmer and Thai historical narratives that run through the course of their history. First, this strong sense of irredentism emerges both as a reflection of their historical, cultural, ethnic and linguistic groupings. Also, it is argued to come as a result of the power struggles among the European colonial powers and the local governments in which these former colonies had their borders and territories determined and demarcated in a way that sometimes left all of these nations in this region unsatisfied. In this sense, the irredentist arguments among them have continued past World War II and on to the present day.

Within the Khmer school of thought, the *Originator* ideology, Thailand has always been the subject of potential irredentism from their inception. Cambodian historical narratives mainly depict the Thai as a new race migrated into Indochina to settle down on the former Khmer territories and started to dominate the region. Thus, the lost-territory mentality is one of the most important themes in Khmer historical narratives related to the Thai, and the irredentist arguments presented in such historical narratives would be absolute in nature placing the latter in potential irredentist claims in all dimensions—historical, cultural, ethnic-racial and linguistic.

Thailand's ownership perspective of Cambodia runs its ways through Thai historical narratives most apparently from the Ayudhya period up to the Bangkok era and became eventually the root of Thailand's lost-territory mentality and national trauma and humiliation when their tributary system was broken by the French colonization of Indochina in the mid-19<sup>th</sup>



and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Whereas maintaining her freedom and independence in the face of aggression of these foreign powers reflects Thailand's national pride, heroism and the brave fighting spirit of the Thai people, the lost-territory mentality also becomes another important themes in Thai historical narratives, which was translated into political activism by chauvinist Thai politicians from the early 1930s up until the end of World War II, in which the irredentist claims to adjacent territories in neighboring countries on the grounds of historical, ethnic-racial ties were maneuvered with an epithet "Greater" attached to the Thai nation.

These irredentist arguments and claims have conveyed the images of national territory at its maximum conceivable extent with the country proper at its core. These images have been projected onto their irredentist maps showing their territories before and after the losses and have always remained influential in both Khmer and Thai perceptions until the present day. Although it has been shown clearly that such imagination of territorial dimension and its spatial depictions is in no way a scientific record but a product of certain political inclinations adopted by agonized elites in both countries to rally support for their chauvinistic policies and nationalistic populism, these historical irredentist arguments and claims have long captured the national spirit of the two peoples and remain the dominant mentality among the Cambodian and the Thai in all spheres of life—political, academic, and ordinary and the likes.

Although both Cambodia and Thailand have never formalized and legalized these pools of irredentist arguments and claims by stipulating them in their constitutional documents, the constitutions themselves seem to matter no more than a logically speculative realm in terms of the issues of irredentism when all other official documents, school textbooks, the printed media and the likes are bombarded with these irredentist arguments and claims. This bears certain

implications that the issue of Khmer-Thai irredentism would be most likely to retain their continuity and varying intensity through time, especially when political tension between the two countries is increasingly heated and when politicians of both sides find loopholes in manipulating public perceptions and turn to this collective memory of history to achieve certain political and ideological goals. As the case presentation in the introductory chapter reveals, this has always been the central political issues in Cambodia-Thailand relations since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which the politics of history and historical memory has always been the driving force behind the strategies they employ to gain sovereignty, to shape public opinion, to rally political support for certain state ideologies, and to arouse excessive sense of nationalism. The next chapter will deal in details with this issue.

## Chapter V

### THE POLITICS OF HISTORY AND ITS IMPACTS

“He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.” – *George Orwell, 1984*

#### Introduction

The discussion so far has shown different patterns of thought the Khmer and Thai narratives reveal to our understanding of the controversial issues of Khmer-Thai perceptions. In a general term, these patterns play crucial roles in providing background and even evidence for one of the central arguments in this study that, even if they describe the same past, both Khmer and Thai histories contains different plots, perceptions, values and techniques that, in some instances, make it difficult for people to perceive the past as it actually was. As such, the discussions in the previous chapters have also shown that both Khmer and Thai histories tend to display a large pool of discrepancies, distortions, ambiguities and traces indicating that those plots, perceptions, values and methods are employed to describe the past and reflect the broader socio-political context of the time.

Although it is not easy to draw a line of moral judgment, for some of the cases, in their patterns of thinking and perceptions toward each other as seen in Khmer and Thai narratives discussed so far, the discussion or debate itself is expected to play the role, directly or indirectly. As seen in the previous chapters, the Khmer and Thai racial and cultural nationalism can be

considered a by-product of the colonization process in Indochina on the one hand and as a local or internal quest for power and superiority on the other. So the study can be conducted in two ways. Within the first vein, the study shall explore into the French colonization process in Indochina, which can be seen as the driving force that not only put an end to the tributary system believed to be dominated by Siam in the area, as discussed earlier, but also shaped local perceptions through its so-called '*mission civilisatrice*.' Therefore, in this approach, Khmer-Thai historical perceptions can be viewed as being shaped by the French reconstruction of historical memory for Indochinese countries, especially Cambodian history related to the Thai.

Within another realm, study can be directed towards the power struggle between local governments of the Cambodian and Thai court when their struggle for nationhood and national identity through their historical reconstruction processes emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in the case of Thailand and in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in the case of Cambodia, right before the presence of the French in the region. This 'rediscovery of history,' to use Kan Kimura's term, can be seen as the unique way both the Thai and Khmer develop their sense of the past and thus their sense of self in relation to one another after having been destroyed for times by wars and divisions. The close examination of this historical reconstruction is expected to provide a clear vantage point from which to look at the modern history, which, needless to say, cannot completely expropriate or detach itself from the old one. This leads us to a perplexing dilemma as to whether the pre-modern history and similar historical literature about the past that was re-constructed before the French in Indochina contain that pool of discrepancies, distortions, ambiguities and its own plot that produce certain perceptions and paint certain stereotyped images of each other.

From these approaches, the study can be done within the framework of the *Approach Croisée* or Multi-Perspective Method by presenting different versions of history from both the Khmer and the Thai perspectives as well as bringing into account the third version by foreigners such as the French, as elaboration or verification. As done in the previous chapter, these approaches will shed light on the political motives behind the reconstruction of history during the colonial period in Cambodia and in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Siam. This exploration, then, will be theoretically linked to the politics of historical memory in Khmer-Thai relations in the 1940s, the post-World War II period and beyond.

By dealing with this historical background, this chapter is aimed at providing contexts and explanations to the discrepancies, distortions, ambiguities and different plots of Khmer and Thai historical narratives, which, as discussed in the previous chapters, have revealed divergent identities, atrocious self-concepts, and enduring perceptions of hostile intention. Put in another word, this chapter will give background as well as supporting evidence for the argument that the issues of historical perceptions between Cambodia and Thailand as in the present day is actually the by-product of their identification of nationhood through historical reconstruction and the myths of nationalism when the new concept of space, as discussed in the last chapter, was brought into the region along with the European colonialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Benedict Anderson also argues that the nation, nation-ness and nationalism are ‘cultural artifacts that are attributed to a historical institution that emerged in as early as the eighteenth century—print capitalism.’

However, from this methodological issue, it can be further contended that historical narratives have always been one of the most significant instruments in the identification of

nationhood of the two countries, and as the modern concept of nationhood, patriotism, cultural ethnocentrism and the likes propped up in the mind of these people, the past itself will not be able to retain its originality when people are compelled to read it in one way or another. Therefore, in the area of knowledge, history plays a vital role in providing us with foundations for everything that has happened to point and that we might be trapped in its plots. Due to this caveat, as stated earlier, it is significant and meaningful to deal with some critical perspectives and conceptual lens concerning the nature of history.

### **The Nature of History: Facts, Perceptions or Myths?**

A number of theoretical perspectives have been casted on the nature of history. For instance, Paul Cohen, in his study of the Boxer Movement in China, sophisticatedly reveals plural forms of history by ‘juxtaposing’ different ways of ‘knowing the past.’ This bears serious implications of the objectivity of history itself. By eliciting the different ways in which the Boxers present and represent particular reading of the past, he has clearly demonstrated that there has never been such a thing as ‘the absolute truth of the past’; that is, history never appears to us as *history* in its true sense and thus should never be conceived in its singular definite form as ‘History’. In this sense, it is justifiable that one can put into questions the singular form of the so-called ‘national history’ in a particular country in which its government has long promoted to an orthodox status without taking into account the competing views of history.

In the preface of this famous work, *History in Three Keys*, Paul Cohen presents useful distinction of three different modes of history including ‘experiencing,’ ‘writing’ and ‘using’ history. Through this differentiation, he forcefully puts forward the argument that history can be

divided into three types. First, the history that people make can be classified as ‘experience,’ in which what people did in the past became parts of their own life that cannot be reversed. The second type of history is the version created by historians and this can be classified as ‘event.’ This kind of history is sometimes closed to what we mean by ‘narrative’ as historians may come up with different techniques, plots and language in their different ways of describing events in the past. The last type of history, according to him, is myth, which he refers to as the history that people use or manipulate in terms of their relations to the past as well as the present. Through this classification, it goes without saying that Paul Cohen is trying to draw our attention to the possible difference between what actually happened in the past and what people come to believe happened in the past. This is elucidated and elaborated in Paul Cohen’s comparison of the ways the Boxers read the past:

The Boxers as *event* present a particular reading of the past while the Boxers as *myth* represent an impressing of the past into the service of a particular reading of the present. Either way a dynamic interaction is set up between the present and the past, in which the past is continually being reshaped, either consciously or unconsciously, in accordance with the diverse and shifting preoccupations of people in the present.<sup>1</sup>

Through the quote emphasis, we can see clearly that Paul Cohen has made a critical point concerning the distinctions between *history* and *myth*. It is usually the reading of the past or the descriptions of events or what actually happened in the past by people in the present with different socio-cultural and political inclinations that the past has taken up different forms of history or narrative, and those forms of history will eventually be turned into myth when it is continually reshaped by modern minds. Paul Cohen points out that “even when mythologization

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<sup>1</sup> Cohen, Paul, *History in Three Keys*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997, p. xii.

is at its least innocent (and most premeditated), it achieves its effect typically not through out-and-out falsification but through distortion, oversimplification, and omission of material that doesn't serve its purpose or runs counter to it."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, in a study of the persisting issues of "Historical Perceptions" between Japan and South Korea, Japanese scholar Kimura Kan puts a nice description of the differences among 'the past,' 'history' and 'the perceptions of history.' Building upon Max Weber's concept in methodological anti-positivism, which argues for the study of social action through interpretive rather than purely empiricist means, he contends that 'history is a unique constellation of facts assembled from the infinite material provided by the past and selected intentionally or unconsciously by individuals or members of a particular group based on their values or perspectives.'<sup>3</sup> History, so to say, is usually not the complete whole of the past but a complex linkage of certain events or 'facts' in people's life into that unified and meaningful whole. So, under this concept, what we come to call 'History' is usually a product out of a *conscious* process in which people select certain facts from an infinite 'constellation of facts' in the past to construct a history or a narrative. And that is what Kimura calls 'historical perceptions,' which he defined as 'the standards that people use when they choose some facts from an infinite constellation of facts from past.'<sup>4</sup>

This, however, brings us to another conceptual dilemma: whether facts in the past are relatively independent and in turn influence the on-going socio-economic and political processes of the present or vice versa? This remains a heated debate among scholars and historians. Put it

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>3</sup> Kimura, Kan, 'Why are the issues of "historical perceptions" between Japan and South Korea persisting?', *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2011, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.



another way, there is always a dilemma to find a rule to determine the balance of influence and significance between “facts in the past” and “facts in the present” but, as stated earlier, because the former are independent and never change, the latter sometimes gain more attention and significance, and this can determine people’s perceptions of the past.

Weber’s main intellectual concern is to understand the complicated process of rationalization, the purpose and meaning that individuals attach to their own actions. Under this perspective, history or narrative in most cases, as implied earlier, involves not only selecting facts from the past but also interpreting them. From a historiographical point of view, since there can be various forms of interpretations of facts in the past due to the nature of human perception, history itself can take different forms and as such there is no “absolute truth” of the past. For example, the statement: ‘on 15 June 1962, the ICJ in The Hague ruled on the ownership of the Preah Vihear Temple to Cambodia’ provide a correct fact in the past but does not really represent a “correct history,” as can be seen during the ICJ court hearing in April 2013 that both sides, Cambodia and Thailand, interpreted this fact in different ways. So, a history tends to contain both fact and interpretations, and, due to the political and social situation of the present, the level of “objectivity” of history tends to be reduced by its interpretations. This can be one of the side-effects about Weber’s sociological approach, the methodological anti-positivism, when it comes to be applied in historiography.

This point leads us back to Cohen’s perspectives on the distinctions between a good historian and a mythologizer. Cohen elucidates the difference by providing a few criteria on the level of their intentionality and the range of perspectives they incorporate into their historical writings. Within the first dimension, a good historian and a mythologizer differ in that the

former's main objective is to provide as much as possible the un-biased descriptions of the past so as to gain an understanding of it as truthfully as possible although they might not be able to free themselves entirely from perceptual bias. The latter, however, attach meaning to the past as they read it in relation to the present situation regardless of the credibility of their historical reconstruction. These interpretive and non-interpretive historiographical approaches clearly draw a boundary line between the empiricist and anti-positivist approaches to history.

Within the second dimension, according to Cohen, historians often take into account different views or a variety of perspectives of history as they realize that a balanced view of the past can be attained only when this multi-perspective method is applied. This point goes in line with the historiographical philosophy adopted in this study. Mythologizers, on the other hand, tend to stick to and propagandize only one single form of history as the orthodox view of history. The essence of the past, to a mythologizer, is the versions that 'serve the political, ideological, rhetorical and/or emotional needs of the present.'<sup>5</sup> In this sense, mythologizers would create and put forward a more beautiful, simplified and dogmatic version of history that usually provides political and ideological justifications and supports for the authorities of the state, and this one single view would usually become the official version or the only acceptable record of history through political propaganda and formal education system. The other versions that express challenging views of history tend to be explained away or removed from the stage through ideological suppression or falsification.

Through this process—'the invented tradition,' again to use Eric Hobsbawm's term as already discussed in chapter two—state authority is legitimized, and the nation is kept alive

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<sup>5</sup> Cohen, Paul, *op.cit.*, p. 213.

through repetition of political rituals or continuous transformation and reconstruction of its tradition. This codified tradition, to a great extent, become so strong that other competing views that challenge it can be considered tyrannical or even alien, and once the society at large strongly believes that this version is the only 'correct' version of history, a moral line distinguishing between *history* and *myth* become blurred and much less detectable to the public eyes. Maurice Halbwachs terms this the 'collective memory,' a set of generally-accepted believes in which a set of collective identities would shape individuals' group consciousness in their society.

From this historiographical literature, one can always place a national history which is endorsed by a state or authority into questions: Is it dominated by one single politicized interpretation of the nation's past? Does it allow any rooms for other interpretations? In most cases, when 'what to be remembered' and 'what to be forgotten' become ideological, as usually reflected in state policies on history textbooks, a national history tends to be the product of mythologization, and in those cases, as stated earlier, it is not easy to set a line to distinguish between history and myth. This is usually true in countries with a long history of power centralization where the political leaders of the state regime tightly control the interpretations of the national history.

It is no exception in Cambodia and Thailand, where, in their early processes of historical rediscovery and reconstruction, the royal chronicle records organized and produced by the royal institution represented and consolidated this tradition. These mythologized and politicized official histories were usually dogmatic in nature. This tradition was then reinforced and transformed by various forms of nationalistic discourses during the period of European colonialism, in which the relations between the two countries fell victim to myths of nationalism.

These myths become the dominant views of history and a convenient tool for these modern nation-states to forge the comparatively recent historical innovation in the shape of antiquity in later periods such as the 1940s-60s and beyond. Although there have been some recent political and scholastic attempts and initiatives from various societal groups to challenge this official version of history or the royalist historiography, as in the case of Thailand, the time-honored domination of the old tradition and official history of the past continues into the modern era in both countries. The following sections will respectively explore into these processes and highlight the impacts on the historical perceptions between the two countries so as to provide backgrounds and contexts for the perceptions discussed in the previous chapters.

### **The Past Rediscovered and Reconstructed**

In both kingdoms, their new sense of ‘kingdom-ness’ as a prerequisite of the modern concept of space began or was reinforced actually in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in the case of Thailand and in the middle of the same century a bit later in the case of Cambodia. This new sense was reflected in their move to rediscover and reconstruct the history of the kingdom, namely the *Pungsawada* (Khmer)/*Phongsawadan* (Thai) or what is widely known as the royal chronicles.

This kind of history can be considered ‘official’ history or history of the state because it is usually composed under the royal institution and was mainly concerned with the history of the kingdom as well as state ideologies. The royal chronicles usually begin with the birth of the state and the political activities, war and relationship with other countries and especially the activities of successive kings of the kingdom. Due to a prolonged period of wars and destructions, the

chronicle histories in both Cambodia and Thailand were actually rediscovered and reconstructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period of time when, as discussed in the previous chapters, Siam was believed to have been running her tributary system with Cambodia being considered one of the vassals. In this sense, it is probably not an exaggeration to say that both courts projected the pictures of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries onto the historical events of the early periods of their history.

In the case of Thailand, most of their *Phongsawadan* histories were reconstructed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century during the first reign of the Chakry Dynasty. The Siamese King Rama I had a policy of compiling histories of the kingdom by collecting from both within and without the historical documents left after the fall Ayudhya to the Burmese in 1767, which was believed to result in complete destruction of the capital city and most importantly the old historical documents recorded of the previous time, as well as related documents collected from other neighboring states like Cambodia. According to the Thai source, the task was shouldered mainly to Somdet Phra Phnonnarat at Phrachetuphon Pagoda in 1807, a Buddhist monk and a literati who, with great historiographical skills, had already written a number of works such as a short history of Siam, the Pali chronicles of the Mon and of Ayudhya, and a learned history of all the Buddhist Councils. Later in 1869, a royal request was made to Chaophraya Thiphakorawong to be in charge of compiling the chronicle history of the Bangkok Era subsequent to that time.<sup>6</sup> As the original preface of the chronicle reveals:

...This is because there are no written records. The longer this goes on in the future, the more things will be forgotten with each new generation. It would be impossible to look up past

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<sup>6</sup> Chaophraya Thiphakorawong, *First Reign*, vol. 1, p. xix.

incidents for documents would be scattered and lost. Even if someone would want to write a history, the effort would not be successful.<sup>7</sup>

The dynastic chronicles were reconstructed and revised subsequently until the fourth reign when a new concept of historiography from the West entered Siam. For example, during the third reign, the Siamese King Rama III (Nangklao, r. 1824-51) ordered preparation of ‘an abridgment of the royal chronicle’ concerning ‘the succession of the kings of the old capital,’ which resulted in a new version ‘Abridged Royal Chronicle’ prepared by Prince Paramanuchit in 1850. Even if the oldest version of all, widely known as the Luang Prasoet version, is thought to have been written by a court scribe or astrologer named *Luang* Horathibodi around 1680,<sup>8</sup> it was not discovered until 1907 and thus it might be logical, according to Wyatt, that the abridged version by Prince Paramanuchit ‘should have been selected for use as a textbook in the first public schools in Siam, where it seems to have continued to be employed well into the twentieth century.’<sup>9</sup>

All of these versions represented the Siamese court’s new sense of kingdom-ness, which had great impacts on the historical writings in the later periods and which, as discussed earlier, had serious implications about how they portrayed Cambodia as Siam’s ‘*muang khuen*’ or ‘colony’ and as a ‘younger’ or smaller country to Siam.

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. xxiv; Note by Prince Damrong Rajanuphab, A.D. 1901.

<sup>8</sup> Cushman, Richard D & Wyatt, David, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, The Siam Society under the Royal Patronage, a synoptic translation, Bangkok, 2000, p. xviii.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Wyatt, David, (trans. & ed), ‘The Abridged Royal Chronicle of Ayudhya of Prince Paramanuchitchinorot’, TIC, Bangkok, Jan 1973, p. 28.

In the case of Cambodia, the first royal chronicle was prepared by King Ang Eng (r. 1794-97) in 1796 and was sent to the Siamese court in Bangkok to be translated into Thai.<sup>10</sup> This, however, cannot be considered the Khmer sense of kingdom-ness due to the fact that King Ang Eng did not really have a clear policy of restoring his own kingdom's national archive. He did that only in conformation or response to the Siamese court's policy stated earlier. It should be noted that since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, after the fall of the capital city of Lovek, Cambodia fell under the influence of Thailand both politically and culturally. Both the Khmer and Thai sources reveal that, from the 1770s onward, Cambodia was dominated by Siam, with King Ang Eng being the first Khmer ruler directly anointed by the Siamese court. Besides the royal family members, most of the political elites and the Khmer literati within both secular realm and Buddhist councils sought their education in Bangkok. Thai influence was something indisputable.

The Khmer new sense of kingdom-ness is considered to actually emerge during the reign of King Ang Doung (r. 1847-59), who ordered preparations of the Kingdom's *pungsawada* and initiated full-fledged reforms within the Khmer court and its administrative system. It should also be noted that King Ang Doung, according to both sources, was brought to the throne by the Siamese upon a request from the Khmer officials in the Khmer court and the appeals from the Khmer general public. This was after the end of the civil wars on Khmer soil between the Siamese and the Vietnamese forces, widely known in Thai context as 'Anam-Sayam yut.' The King had received his education in Bangkok. He was a priest who had discussed Buddhism with King Mongkut or Rama IV, who was considered 'an enlightened monarch' of Thailand in the

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<sup>10</sup> Ros Chantraboth, *Pravattasas Khmer tam reung preng nitean neung tam sela chareuk* [A History of Cambodia through Legends and Inscriptions], L'Hammattan, Paris, 1997, p. 15.

modern sense and who started to develop appreciation for Western civilization as a result of his Western style education. Thai historian Manich Jumsai compares the level of education and the degree of learnedness the Thai monarch had acquired that was not acquired by Khmer King Ang Doung, 'who received just only the classic form of education from a Buddhist temple and who could not speak any foreign tongue except Thai, and in very clumsy Cambodian, because he spent most of his life in Bangkok.'<sup>11</sup> This made the Khmer king have a shorter vision and could not catch up with the changing nature of international politics as the Thai king did.

The first-ever known chronicle, called the 'Nong Chronicle,' is thought to have been written by a Khmer official namely Nong in 1818 and most of the chronicle histories written between this year and 1903 were usually short and brief. It was in 1896, during the reign of King Norodom (r. 1860-1904), that a new version of the chronicle was ordered compiled and rewritten. For example, by revising King Ang Doung's version, a chronicle was prepared in 1878 by Prince Nupparoth, King Ang Doung's son, and was sent to Thailand's national library in 1907 to be kept as 'Phongsawadan Khamen' (Manuscript No. 45/d, kh 111). King Norodom ordered formation of different committees in charge of preparing and composing the royal chronicles subsequently from 1896 until 1903. This historical task was continued during the reign of King Sisowath and later by King Monivong in 1928 with cooperation and assistance from the French government and French scholars. The absence of the Cambodian national archive is witnessed in the preambles of the 1818 and 1869 versions, which mention that the royal chronicles from the previous kings until the present king had been lost.

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<sup>11</sup> Manich Jumsai, *History of Thailand and Cambodia*, Chlerrnmit Press, Bangkok, November 1987, pp. 94-6.



It should be noted that the Khmer royal chronicles discovered and composed before the colonial period were all sent to Bangkok in compliance with the Siamese court's policies discussed earlier. In this sense, it goes without saying that the Cambodian past seemed to be controlled by the Thai as the Siamese court always held an 'ownership perspective' of Cambodia while the latter seemed to understand herself that way. The motives and impacts of such politics of history rose to the surface for the first time during the Franco-Siamese crisis in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when both sides were trying to manipulate history in negotiation for their *sovereign* rights over Cambodia.

### **The Past Reshaped**

The Franco-Siamese crisis in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a significant event in the history of Cambodia-Thailand relations that bears serious historical implications on the problems of historical perceptions between the two peoples. While the threat from European powers was considered a driving force behind the Siamese elite's awareness of the importance of history and the nation's boundary line, the French, pursuing their colonial ambitions, was already on their way to 'cultivating' a nation like Cambodia, whom the French considered 'a fallen race.'<sup>12</sup> This historical turning point brought about not only a new concept of sovereignty and jurisdiction but also a new chapter in the history of Cambodia-Thailand relations in which new narratives were to be remade and the past had to be reshaped to fit into it.

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<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., Edwards, Penny, *Cambodge. The cultivation of a nation, 1860-1945*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 2008; Chandler, David, *History of Cambodia*, p. 300; Anthony Barnett, 'Cambodia will never disappear', *New Left Review*, vol. 180, 1990, pp. 101-125.

The historical reconstruction in this period, thus, can be seen as being inspired by both external and internal factors. Externally, it can be attributed to the reinforcement factor in international politics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when European colonial powers started to spread their influence and project their power onto Southeast Asia and especially the Indochina peninsula. As discussed in the last chapter, the new concept of sovereignty and jurisdiction that the Europeans brought to Indochina forced the local governments, especially the Siamese court, to react to the situation in a reinforced manner. When the French was doing their surveying along the Mekong, the Siamese ruling elite was compelled to follow suit in order to avoid being exploited. Cambodia, already economically and politically weak, had no choice but accepted or even ‘called for’ the imperialism. This reinforcement factor might have given birth to what Thai scholar Thongchai Winichakul called the ‘geo-body’ of Siam, the new collective concept of We-self advanced mainly with the West-style concept of border-bound and ‘mapped’ territory of the kingdom which might extends itself to encompass other dimensions including cultural and ethnic-racial identities as a source of pride and loyalty to the monarchy and the Siamese state.<sup>13</sup> Thongchai also puts forward the argument that ‘the emergence of the geo-body demanded a new history to seal the rupture in the life of the nation.’<sup>14</sup>

The French could also be considered to be on their way to build the ‘geo-body’ of Cambodia. In so doing, the French not only implemented the European concept of sovereignty and jurisdiction but also reconstructed and manipulated history and historical memory to provide them with historical and cultural justifications for and legitimation of their grip on power and control over Cambodia. The French was willing to work in collaboration with the Khmer

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<sup>13</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, 1997, p. 147.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161.

officials in the Khmer court, especially in the national committees created by King Norodom and the successive Khmer monarchs for preparing and composing the royal chronicles of different reigns in order to be able to respond to and neutralize the claims made by the Siamese court over its claims to sole sovereign rights over Cambodia. History, thus, became an effective tool not only to secure the local government's legitimacy but also to uphold the claims for the sovereignty and territory believed to be previously under its control.

In addition to this, the French was also trying to root out all Siam's cultural and history-based claims to *sovereign* rights over Cambodia and degrade Siam as a mere appendix to Indochina—a vision in which, by the 1890s, the French had actually worked out a plan to deprive the Siamese of their self-perception as an overload in the region and eventually annex the country considered just interspersed by Asian tribes. An instance of this plan is Article 9 of the Convention '*traité d'amitié, de commerce et de navigation*' concluded on August 15, 1856 with King Chulalongkorn as part of the French *protégé*-policy which granted territorial rights to French citizens living in Siam. Furthermore, the terms of the treaty also equipped the French with the rights to register foreign nationals or former inhabitants of the left bank as French subjects to provide them with *protégé* status.<sup>15</sup>

Another example of the French attempt to annex Siam after taking Cambodia is to prove that Siam had once been historically, culturally and politically Khmer territory through archeological evidence. This was worked out and maneuvered by a French Consul Auguste Pavie, who was working for the colonial telegraph service in Cambodia and as an assistance of

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<sup>15</sup> For a translation of the treaty and convention as well as detailed analysis of the French policy, *see, e.g.*, Patrick, Tuck, *The French wolf and the Siamese lamb. The French threat to Siamese independence 1859-1907*, Studies on Southeast Asian History, White Lotus, Bangkok, vol. 1, 1995, pp. 240-253, 291-295; *see also*: Manich Jumsai ML, *History of Thailand and Cambodia*, Chlermmit Press, Bangkok, November 1987, pp. 183-6.

the Siamese government on a telegraph project from 1878 to 1879. In order to live up to all of this ambitious plan, which eventually proved fruitless due to the long historical tradition in Siam and the obstacles of the British economic interests in Bangkok, the French had to *reshape* the existing historical narratives in Cambodia to justify their exclusive occupation of the territory as an entity and also to elevate themselves to a status as the ‘savior’ of Indochina, particularly the declining race.

The French started to collect and translate historical documents in Cambodia, working with the Khmer literati in the national committees in order to establish a national history which would serve the colonial purposes when they encountered the Siamese realm through Thai rhetoric and historical discourses, the Thai version of Khmer history which the Thai had collected and Khmer rulers had previously sent to Bangkok. For instance, during the reign of King Norodom, the French governor of Cochinchina Le Myre de Vilers proposed the king to send the Khmer royal chronicles composed by Bangkok-educated Khmer literati and a Buddhist monk named Pan to French scholar Etienne Aymonier to translate into French language. In 1895, the French Resident in Cambodia, Mr. Adhémar Leclère, published his first work on Cambodia, ‘*Cambodge: Contes et Légendes*,’ which became an important source for Khmer historians in later periods. In 1914, after the French could restore the province of Siam Reap and Battambang from Thailand back to Cambodia, he published another book ‘*Histoire de Cambodge*’. From 1903 onwards, many Khmer chronicles were published jointly by the French and Khmer scholars and historians who worked collaboratively in the national committees. A great number of Khmer royal chronicles were collected and preserved by the French researchers in various institutions in France such as the French National Library, the Alençon City Library, ‘Ecole Française d’ Extrême-Orient,’ ‘Société Asiatique,’ and ‘Société des Missions Etrangères de Paris.’

In another vein, the analysis can be directed towards internal or domestic politics and personal political aspirations of the Siamese and Khmer rulers as well as the French in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the same time when Siam was surrounded by colonial threats, she was also on a clear vision to catch up with the West. Western civilization became another source of the Siamese rulers' appreciation and respect besides the old Angkorean civilization of the Khmer Empire. New concepts of how to make Siam more modern or more 'siwilai' like the Europeans became a goal. This was mainly the result of King Mongkut's western-style education and his vision to open up to the West. This comparative perspective, the desire and anxiety to keep up with the West in particular, is another factor behind the rise of the new concept of historiography in Siam which eventually resulted in a newly-invented Thai image of French-backed Cambodia. The new concept of We-self and the 'Others' was actually influenced by the Europeans. This area has been properly analyzed by Thongchai in his study of the Siamese ruler's civilizational thinking in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries:

In many ways, what the Siamese elite did was similar to the colonial construction of the Others: that is, they traveled, wrote ethnography, and organized exhibitions and museums as means to construct the otherness. Unlike the colonial otherness, however, the Others of the Siamese elite included their subjects, hence the Others within.<sup>16</sup>

It goes without saying that the emergence of the new concept in Siam in this period can be seen partly as a result of changes in international politics that fostered Siam to look to the West as a new standard and partly as a self-aspiration for superiority and domination in the region. All

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<sup>16</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, 'The quest for "Siwilai": A geographical discourse of civilizational thinking in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Siam', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 59, no. 3, 2000, p. 534; Also see: 'The Others Within: Travels and ethno-spatial differentiation of Siamese subject, 1885-1910', in Andrew Turton (ed), *Civility and savagery: Social identity in Tai states*, Curzon, London, 2000.

these factors combined, a ‘new history’ that was based on the old texts from the previous reigns shaped Thai image of her neighbors, especially the Khmer, through new tactics and methodology particularly adopted from the West to meet the local needs. The Siamese rulers from King Mongkut and later his sons King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) and Prince Damrong (1862-1943) were considered ‘the fathers of modern Thai history’ or the ones ‘who bridged the old Thai world view with the new one.’<sup>17</sup> King Chulalongkorn’s visit to Europe in 1907 has serious implications for this shift in Thai historiography and Thai perspective of her neighbors, and a great deal of historical writings during this period was mainly done by these ruling elites.<sup>18</sup>

As shown by Thongchai, the travel literature or ethnographic records by the Siamese elite were ‘instrumental to the discursive construction of a conceptual scheme of two kinds of Others, differentiated by two spatial domains’—one being the *chaopa*, literally the ‘jungle people’ or ‘people of the wilderness’ or the ‘uncivilizable’ ones, and another being the *chaobannok* or the uneducated, loyal and backward villagers.<sup>19</sup> As discussed in the previous chapters, the Thai image of the Khmer as ‘*Khamen Padong*’ or the jungle Khmer or the uncivilized Khmer, or the Khmer as a ‘*half-civilized, half-barbarian*’ people, was witnessed in these literature such as King Mongkut’s writings as well as Prince Damrong’s accounts, which have been considered the most important works of modern Thai history in existence.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Charnvit, K, ‘Thai historiography from ancient times to modern period’, in Anthony Reid & David G. Marr (eds), *Perceptions of the past in Southeast Asia*, Heinemann Educational Books, 1979, pp. 160-5; Kobkua Suwannathat, ‘Kansuksa prawatsat sakun Damrong Rajanubhab,’ *Aksonsat Phichan*, vol. 2, no. 6, 1974, pp. 28-44.

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Pornsan Watanangura (ed), *The visit of King Chulalongkorn to Europe in 1907: Reflecting on Siamese history*, The Center for European Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, op.cit., pp. 534-7.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed list of his work, see: Kennon Breazeale, *The writings of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab: A chronology with annotations*, Foundation for the Promotion of Social Science and Humanities Textbooks Project and Toyota Thailand Foundation, 2008.

A few conceptual problems can be observed concerning the creation of images and stereotypes described in these historical writings and ethnographic field notes. First, it is not quite clear whether the stereotypes and discursive constructions were actually directed towards only the people within the boundary of Siam at that time or to the whole population of the ‘Others’ in general. Ethnic minorities in Siam and Cambodia were sparsely populated due to a prolonged period of wars and the ambiguities of indigenous concept of political space, and when the new concept of space came along with European colonialism, a ‘mapped’ Siam appeared, probably with many different kinds of Khmer ethnic groups in its body. As discussed in the last chapter, from 1863 onwards, Cambodia was placed under the protectorate of France and the French had already done mapping surveys of the local people and the area along the Mekong and along the boundary between Siam and Cambodia.

Another inconsistency of this stereotype formation is that while King Mongkut, in a Thai version of Khmer history discussed earlier, described the status of Cambodia as a ‘*half-civilized, half-barbarian*’ people and a tributary to the more civilized Siam, the King also admitted that Siam was *half-civilized* and *half-barbarian* when he sought explanations of the concept of *siwilai* from his Western friends before ascending to throne.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, it goes without saying that the Siamese elite’s encounter with and appreciation for Western civilization gave rise to their own standard for Thai image of its neighbors—a standard which might have also included themselves, consciously or unconsciously. Vague and indefinable as it might be, however, this new concept of self might have played a vital role in providing the source of the Siamese elite’s political and cultural aspiration for superiority over their smaller neighbors in the region.

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<sup>21</sup> Charnvit, K, ‘Siam/Civilization, Thailand/Globalization’, Unpublished paper presented at the International Association of Historians of Asia (IAHA), Bangkok, 1996; Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 94; ‘The Quest for “Siwilai”’, p. 530.

Overall, these factors cast great impacts on the processes of historical reconstruction in Cambodia and Thailand in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a unique historical turning point that not only shaped self-perception and inter-personal perception but also induced drastic changes in local cultures and political institutions in these countries. It led Cambodia and Siam to a historical crossroad where their cultural affinities and commonness became the basis for their hostile intention and strong sense of antagonism resulting from the myths of nationalism. It constituted a fantastical appeal to their collective memory and stimulated their imagination of the past that make all historical and cultural legacies vulnerable to ideological exploitation. And the starting point of the *realpolitik* of this huge pool of historical memory was at the moment when King Mongkut presented a copy of the Thai version of the chronicle of Cambodian history to French diplomats to sustain his claims to the sovereign rights over Cambodia. The French counterpart asserted their claims to the world community in a similar way but employed modern methodology and polity of international law.

### **The Politics of Historical Memory**

The historical reconstruction based on political motives of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century French-backed Cambodia and the West-oriented Siam can be considered the early form of nationalism in a modern sense in these countries—a kind of nationalism that is akin to royalist conceptual internalization centered on cultural aspirations and discoveries. In this sense, it can be argued that new nationalism in modern Cambodia and Thailand was either shaped or brought in by European colonialism, which was a great politico-cultural and intellectual project that casted a great deal of influence on domestic politics as well as political interactions between them. In



Siam, the royalist and cultural nationalism was transformed into a kind of racist nationalism during the revolution of the early 1930s, resulting in the collapse for the first time of the Siamese monarchy and eventually the change of the name of country from Siam to Thailand in 1939. This change could be observed on the Thai banknotes in use of the time.<sup>22</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapters, the ideologue or the prime mover of this wave of nationalism was *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*, whose notable role was advisor to the Phibun government until the mid-1940s and later to the Sarit government in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The ideological foundations for his fascist-leaning policies were believed to have been influenced by the Nazi fascist writings and the Japanese nationalism, which resulted in a new interpretation of Thai history based on the notion of the purity and glory of the Thai race. Unlike the royalist nationalism in the last century which was based on ‘creation of enemy images’ as an ideology to unite the Thai nation against all odds as well as European imperialism, the new regime employed the concept of the legendary *Laem Thong* to incorporate the people of Laos and Cambodia into the Thai race based on the ideology of Pan-Thai-ism or ‘Greater Thai’ with a justification that it was an anti-colonialism movement.<sup>23</sup>

Similar to the way the French did in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*—in an attempt to deprive the Cambodian of their self-perception as the descendent of Angkor and thus a proof of no connection to this ethnic group who built the great civilization—gave a new interpretation of the ethnic name *Khom* as being referred to that ethnic group, not the present-day Cambodian. In this sense, it is clear that *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn* made use of the old term to

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<sup>22</sup> Appendixes, Fig. 44

<sup>23</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, pp. 156-161; Charnvit, K, ‘Thai historiography from ancient times to the modern period’, pp. 166-8; Saichol Sattayanurak, ‘The construction of mainstream thought on “Thainess” and the “truth” constructed by “Thainess”,’ Chiang Mai University, pp. 8-13.

create a new ethnicity in order to place an emphasis that there is a clear-cut break between Angkor and Cambodia.

Besides his famous work, *Thailand's Case*, he was also ‘an exponent of the powerful nationalist historiography, a novelist of many historical fictions, a renowned playwright of historical plays, and writer of many well-known militaristic songs.’<sup>24</sup> Although it is not significant and rational to consider him as a good historian, as his methodology is criticized by many Thai scholars as groundless, ignoring fact and accuracy, his history and plays became very popular on stage and the Radio of Thailand, and his officially-sanctioned ideas about Thai nationalism, which can be regarded as state ideology, were often directed at arousing nationalistic sentiments within Thai society that remain pervasive until today. Thongchai has shown that although his play’s story seems to closely follow the old texts of the Thai royal chronicles, *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn* once admitted that the historical plays are not history. “Although they must be based on history, they are colored, embellished, or even invented stories to create particular effects.”<sup>25</sup>

Likewise, the politics of historical memory in Cambodia is no exception, and the transmission of political ideas, values and nationalistic sentiments is by no way different. The historical legacy of the French was so tremendous and significant that it casted great effects on the Cambodian self-perception and the construction of mainstream thought on Cambodian nationalism and the ‘truth’ constructed by Khmer-ness. The works of Western scholars such as Penny Edwards, David Chandler, and Anthony Barnett have shown this significance and its impacts. As discussed earlier, the French established themselves to be the ‘savior’ of Indochina

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<sup>24</sup> This description is quoted in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 156.

<sup>25</sup> Pra-onrat, *Luang Wichitwathakan kap lakhon prawattisat* [*Luang Vichitr Vadakarn and historical plays*], pp. 79-80, quoted in Thongchai, W, *Siam Mapped*, p. 158.

and the one who ‘rediscovered’ Angkor and who helped construct many of its symbolic associations, fashioning a historical legacy of a ‘*geo-cultural body*’ of Cambodia with a fixed race, border-bound and mapped territory, culture, language, religion and heritage.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, while depicting the Cambodian as a ‘fallen race that had degenerated into a child-like state of ignorance and primitivism,’ the French also shaped certain new aspects of the national characters and stereotypes for the Cambodian. Here, the origin of the image of a ‘gentle, smiling people’ who are characterized as ‘altruistic, peaceful, and morally superior’ is revealed.<sup>27</sup>

However, whether all of these historical reconstructions are fictions or facts, it did fit with the French colonial ideology and colonial ambitions that went along with the vision of a French Empire against the British counterpart. And to achieve that, Siam must be depicted as the ‘Others,’ the enemy or even alien race. In addition, the French found it necessary to establish certain policies to undermine or disrupt the time-honored religious exchange between the Khmer and the Thai—an ‘emulation factor’ which also resulted in the popularity of Thai-style Theravada Buddhism in Cambodia brought in by the Khmer monk named Pan, who had sought his education in Bangkok. Apart from the enactment of a new travel restriction banning all members of the Khmer Buddhist communities from traveling to Siam for religious education, the French also established many Pali schools in Cambodia.<sup>28</sup>

This pool of historical reconstruction and imagery was also manipulated by King Norodom Sihanouk when the dispute over Preah Vihear Temple erupted in the late 1950s and

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<sup>26</sup> Edwards, Penny, *Cambodge: The cultivation of a nation 1860-1945*, p. 423; See also Chandler, David, *History of Cambodia*, p. 300; Barnett, Anthony, ‘Cambodia Will Never Disappear’.

<sup>27</sup> Edwards, Penny, ‘Imaging the Other in Cambodian nationalist discourse before and during the UNTAC period’, in Steve Heder & Judy Legerwood (eds), *Propaganda, politics, and violence in Cambodia*, Armonk, New York, 1996, p. 54; and Panivong Norindr, *Phantasmatic Indochina: French colonial ideology in architecture, film, and literature*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 1996; Chandler, David, *History of Cambodia*, p. 300.

<sup>28</sup> Edwards, Penny, *Cambodge: The cultivation of a nation 1860-1945*, p. 423.

early 60s after a short period of good diplomatic relation with Thailand. Similar to the way the Thai did in the last few decades and the last century, King Sihanouk's regime placed strong emphasis on the need for national unity and patriotism, and in so doing, the image of the Other or the enemy needed to be conjured up. As shown in chapter one, King Sihanouk's speeches often reflected the influence of history and the manipulation of historical memory in order to arouse sense of nationalism. Moreover, he often had the legend of *Preah Ko Preah Keo*, which depicted the Thai as the root cause of the Cambodian decline, performed in National Theater and broadcasted on Radio during the time. Distrust and suspicion of Thai values and motives was reinforced, and a high level of popularity and legitimacy of the regime was achieved.

It goes without saying that the strong sense of antagonism towards the Thai among the Cambodian ruling elites never come without reasons. First of all, less well known outside Cambodia and most important of all within was the appeal to that large pool of historical legacies left by the French 'civilizing mission' and the historical rediscovery and reconstruction of the last century. This appeal could often be found in King Sihanouk's and his entourages' speeches as well as in many elite publications such as an article titled 'The Lessons of the Past' by King Sihanouk's uncle, Prince Monireth, in March 1960.<sup>29</sup> The legacy of distrust towards the Thai, which the centuries of conflict have left, and actually the over-amplification of historical memory by the French, played a crucial role in shaping the Cambodian attitudes towards the Thai. But the Khmer nationalists, of course, had no reasons to reject this historical discourse and, as Penny Edwards noticed: "In Cambodge, nationalists did not produce a national culture.

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<sup>29</sup> Milton, Osborne E, 'History and kingship in contemporary Cambodia', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 7, no. 1, March 1966, p. 11.

Rather, the elaboration of a national culture by French and Cambodian literati eventually produced nationalists.”<sup>30</sup>

Second, it can be seen as a spillover of domestic politics in Cambodia during the 1950s and 60s. In order to discredit his political rivals such as Son Ngoc Thanh and Tou Samouth (nicknamed *Sok*), the latter of whom became one of the leaders of the Leftist *Issarak* group along with another communist politician Son Ngoc Minh (nicknamed *Achar Mean*) and who were accused by King Sihanouk’s regime of using Thailand as a base to criticize his government, the King saw a stronger need to induce public perception of Thailand as a threat to Cambodia’s sovereignty and a historical enemy who always interfered into Cambodian domestic affairs. The rivals were portrayed as ‘national traitors,’ collaborating with the enemy.

Finally, in response to this tactic and strategy, which the Thai themselves had always been using for century, the Thai government always portrayed the Cambodian as ‘communists’ or an alignment with the communist bloc in the region, which was believed to pose a threat to the Thai nation as a whole. As shown in the first chapter, the mass media including radio and the printed press were manipulated and became a political tool both Khmer and Thai politicians used to propagate and circulate that large pool of historical memory and history-myths. Regardless of whether it is fueled by personal reason, such as the unfriendly welcome from the Thai government to King Sihanouk who fled to Bangkok on a self-imposed exile in 1953, this personal reason can be viewed just as part of the broader historical perceptions which had already penetrated into the heart and soul of the Cambodian and the Thai for centuries. And this remains the case until the present day as elaborated in the introductory chapter.

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<sup>30</sup> Penny Edwards, *Cambodge: The cultivation of a nation 1860-1945*, p. 7.

## **Textbook Censorship**

Both Cambodia and Thailand have a long history of power centralization and absolutism. The Constitutional Monarchy as a new form of political regime emerged in Thailand after the coup abolishing the absolute monarchy in 1932 while in Cambodia this form of government mainly emerged after her independence in 1953. Up until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, both countries had been ruled by various kings, on whom all kinds of power and divine sources of authority were centered. The upholder of social order, the defender of faith and also the patron of myriad religious foundations, the kings were also social engineers who held absolute control over all social organizations and could appoint favored individuals to particular privileged social ranks, and thus categorized the whole society into numerous classes and corporations. And most important of all is that the states controlled public memory through education system and other socialization agents.

As hinted in the last chapter, textbook censorship in Thailand might have been in place since the educational reform initiated in 1887 by Prince Damrong, who is a son of King Mongkut and a brother of King Chulalongkorn and whose notable title was the new educational minister of the regime and the ‘father of Thai history.’ Studies have shown that school textbooks in Siam-Thailand in 1908 and later in the 1930s to 60s incorporated this historical reconstruction and state ideologies as major parts of the new curriculum based on the political system of the state. Different main themes such as the canonized discourses of Thailand’s past as a continuous effort to maintain independence and freedom in the face of aggression by the enemies, national humiliation and sense of victimhood resulting from the lost-territory mentality, and the effective

roles of the Thai kings in getting rid of those issues, have always been the main concerns in Thai school history textbooks.

While these major themes tend to depict Siam-Thailand as an all-time independent state, a glorious victor, and at the same time a victim of imperialism, the Thai school textbooks seem to depict Siam-Thailand as a closed entity with few or even no connections with neighbors. Khmer scholars and historians tend to consider Thai textbook censorship as a political strategy aimed at detaching Thai history from that of Cambodia and censoring Thai public perceptions of who the Khmer are. Prominent Thai scholars and historians such as Thongchai and Chanvit have shown that ‘the plot and meaning of this melodramatic past have become a paradigm of historical discourse, making history an ideological weapon and a source of legitimation of the state.’ As a result, textbook censorship in Thailand is no exception.

In addition to the nationally-confined history textbooks, which only deal so little with Khmer art and culture, this study has argued that these problematic textbooks tend to present myth-history, and certain censorship related to Cambodia such as the attack on and fall of Angkor, the Khmer civilization, history of wars with Cambodia, and above all who the Khmer are, have not been included. Put in another word, the realm of the Khmer seems to be non-existent in Thai textbooks. The current version of Thai school textbooks, which is used in this study, remain to some degree a reflection of these main themes, although some major revisions, from a vantage point, have been made in accordance with ASEAN education schemes, which results in some descriptions in the new textbooks of the realm of the Khmer.

In Cambodia, formal education system in the modern sense emerged during the French colonial period in which the French left Cambodia with a legacy of Western ideas of formal

school system. However, The French seemed to neglect the educational processes or did not pursue this modern educational system with enthusiasm as they only wanted to make education accessible to only an elite group to serve their colonial purposes. After Cambodia's independence in 1953, King Sihanouk pursued a policy of mass education system operated on the existing French model but was aimed at promoting nationalism and legitimation of the state. As in the case of Thailand, similar themes were incorporated into the school textbooks which featured mainly the sense of grandeur of the Khmer Empire, the long period of decline and perceptions of threat from outside forces, and a new era of renewable glory of the past in the present and the future. For instance, speeches and a series of articles by King Sihanouk from May to September 1958, in which he dealt with the supreme role of the Khmer Kings in preserving Cambodia from complete destruction and control in the face of repeated attacks by her neighbors, were consolidated into a book which was used in Cambodian secondary schools.<sup>31</sup>

Until today, although educational decentralization policy is being implemented, the traditional practices of state control of school textbooks remain. In this sense, the fact that school textbooks in Cambodia are authorized and issued only by the Ministry of Education makes it reasonable to conclude that only one single version of history that serves the purposes of the state has always been promoted. Unlike school history textbooks in Thailand, which contain high level of censorship, those in Cambodia deal densely with the realm of Siam-Thailand, including different episodes and themes ranging from the origin of Siam, the long history of wars and conflicts and Siam's interference in the domestic affairs in the Khmer court, Siam-Thailand's expansionism and the lost-territory mentality of the Khmer, Siam-Thailand's duplication of

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<sup>31</sup> Milton Osborne E, 'History and kingship in contemporary Cambodia,' *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, vol. 7, no. 1, March 1966, p. 10; For more details of these speeches and articles, see Armstrong, John P, *Sihanouk Speaks*, New york, 1964.



Khmer art and culture, and so forth. And above all else, Siam-Thailand is depicted as Cambodia's hereditary enemy state. Such contradictions remain the core issues of Cambodia-Thailand perceptions which have not been satisfactorily dealt with. It might be a resurgence of the past or the preoccupation of the present. The quote on the top reflects this fact: it is the politics of historical memory!

## **Conclusion**

This chapter makes two main points. First, the public perceptions of these historical memory and history-related issues come mainly as a result of the historical reconstruction during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Both external and internal factors, which are attributed to the change in international politics of the time, provided a favorable political environment in which this reconstruction became an effective tool making history an ideological weapon. Stood at the center of the issue were the weak historical tradition and the absence of national archives for many centuries in both countries.

Second, these public perceptions came to be reinforced by or stemmed from the policies of national history formulated by the governments of both countries mainly from the 1930s to the 1960s for the sake of their political orientations and ideological goals. In both countries, public historical memory and popular views of history reflect the propagandized 'official' or 'correct' history, which have been penetrating into the mind and soul of the public through state-run education system and political propaganda tools. While the Thai ruling elites were manipulating this pool of historical memory to serve their ideological goals and to induce different waves of

Thai nationalism, the Cambodian elites had no reasons to turn aside and thus consciously and unconsciously internalized the official version propagated by the French.

In retrospect, it might not be an exaggeration to say that in the case of Cambodia-Thailand perceptions, the past itself, or the facts in the past to put it more precisely, had been buried by time, and what actually stands at the center of the controversy between these countries over the history problem is the effects that the national collective memory, which has been fueled by the historical reconstruction of the past, has transformed and changed the past itself in order to preserve the society's identity in the present. Had the Quai d'Orsay in France been more serious and not accepted the Siam's proclaimed sovereign rights over Cambodia and had the Siamese rulers been not smart enough to draw the British and other powers' interests into Bangkok at that time, which resulted in the Franco-British treaty keeping Siam as a buffer, a French absorption of Siam into Indochina would have been a possible event in Khmer-Thai shared history. If that was the case, the story as we learn today about the historical perceptions between Cambodia and Thailand would have been different, after a possible decolonization in Indochina at a particular different time. The lost-territory discourses would have been different, and of course the French, out of sympathy, appreciation, and respect for the great Khmer civilization, would have remapped the greater Indochina in favor of Cambodia. The discourses and myths of nationalism would also have been different and there might have been a shift in the discourses on the sense of victimhood and decline from Cambodia to Thailand. The stereotypes and images as well as certain emotion-laden symbols and mythologies would also have been different.

With this caveat in mind, the next chapter will examine the national myth-making in both cases, elaborating on the perception lines dividing between history and myth, which are very blurred in the popular views of and believes in the ‘correct’ history among the people of these Southeast Asian countries. The chapter will also present an alternative explanation: identity anxiety as fear factor in the formation and manipulation of Khmer-Thai historical memories.

## Chapter VI

### NATIONAL MYTH-MAKING AND ITS HOLES OF LOGIC

#### Introduction

The previous chapter has discussed the processes of historical rediscovery and reconstruction in Cambodia and Thailand from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the political motives behind these processes that gave rise to divergent historical interpretations and different patterns of thought about the controversial issue of Khmer-Thai perceptions. While these historical narratives have displayed a large pool of discrepancies, distortions, ambiguities and traces—which point out that those plots, perceptions, values and methods have been employed to describe the past to embrace certain concerns of the modern time—different competing themes or major schemes in these historical narratives have also appeared to display fundamental contradictions.

In the case of Cambodia, these major schemes range from the historical and archeological discourses of the nation's origin and the sense of grandeur of the past civilization of the Khmer Empire followed by a sense of steady decline from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century onward due mainly to the perceptions of threat of her greedy neighbors and finally a new outlook on modern sense of nationalism which apparently appeared in the kingdom from the 1950s. Within these schemes, it has been observed that Khmer historical narratives incorporate two grand themes or layers that come into existence in an irresolvable tension—the first one being the

Victors and the other being the Victims. Throughout the course of these historical narratives, the Khmer sense of victimhood tend to dominate their sense of victimizer, and this must serve its role so well that it fits into the current socio-economic and political condition this kingdom has experienced.

Likewise, Thai historical narratives have also displayed similar schemes wherein different historical and ideological discourses have been constructed in accordance with the political and social needs in each regime. As Shane Strate has discussed in his study on ‘the role of trauma and humiliation in the formation of national consciousness in Thailand,’ these two discursive themes, which have been termed “Triumphant Survival” and “National Humiliation,” coexist in a single cohesive narrative which ‘must be assigned either a dominant or a subordinate role in order to alleviate the inherent contradiction.’<sup>1</sup> These themes have been manipulated in order to produce different discourses which are then translated into different waves of nationalistic sentiments such as the royalist-nationalism and the racist and cultural nationalism. Therefore, these competing themes play vital roles as a political pool to construct those ideologies.

As already discussed in the previous chapters in this study, the notion of historical perceptions based on these historical narratives must be conceptualized in comparative perspectives. In another word, these competing themes, both of the Khmer and Thai narratives, have displayed not only *intra*-contradiction but also *inter*-contradiction, which shows clearly that the processes of historical reconstruction have produced certain mythical-historical patterns. And

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<sup>1</sup> Shane Strate, *The lost territories: The role of trauma and humiliation in the formation of national consciousness in Thailand,* Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009, pp. 3-5.

within these patterns as well as the competing themes, this study has debated a large pool of ambiguities, discrepancies and distortions.

In this sense, in addition to the linguistic strategies discussed so far, the study of Khmer-Thai perceptions could also be conceptualized in terms of myths. As shown in the last chapter, the fluctuation of Khmer-Thai security relations and the continuation of the low level of bond of friendship between the two countries result from the myths of nationalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when the new concept of space entered the area along with European colonization. Apparently, the political motives behind this reconstruction prompt both Khmer and Thai scholars and politicians of the modern time to read and interpret their history in one or another way. It might also be argued from another standpoint that these divergent interpretations stem from the large pool of ambiguities, discrepancies and distortions which make up those competing themes. Therefore, this chapter would examine the nature of this national myth-making from these vantage points.

He Yanan's theory of national myth-making has been formulated from the case studies of the reconciliation processes in post-war Sino-Japanese and German-Polish relations in an attempt to capture the influence of historical memory on interstate reconciliation among these nations. Although developed from different case studies with distinct socio-political and cultural background, He Yanan's theory could also be a useful lens through which one can better examine the impacts of historical memory on the bilateral relationship between former adversary states like Cambodia and Thailand. She argues that 'ruling elites, harboring special political-ideological goals, tend to construct historical myths that glorify the actions of their own nation in a past conflict while blaming others for causing the tragedy,' and that 'these myths cause sharp

disagreement between former enemy countries on matters of historical interpretation.’<sup>2</sup> In This sense, myths can play crucial roles in not only giving particular meanings to certain events and actions by defining enemies and heroes but also inducing the notion of right and wrong to a particular identity.

The ruling elites, according to He, tend to create three types of pernicious myths about past external conflicts including self-glorifying myths, self-whitewashing myths and other-maligning myths.<sup>3</sup> The collective memories of former adversary states would clash as these national myths glorify and whitewash the actions of their own group and criticize those of the other groups. Through mutually divergent historical interpretations, negative emotions and perceptions of other nation’s hostile intentions would be gradually provoked, whereas convergent historical narratives, which are produced by memory harmonization and national de-mythification processes (i.e. bilateral joint history research and interstate restitution measures), promote societal contacts and long-term official cooperation that eventually results in ‘deep reconciliation’.<sup>4</sup>

For the purpose of this study, this chapter would only look at how the propositions of the national myth-making theory can be applied to explain the case of Cambodia and Thailand with no emphasis on theoretical analyses that involve the relationship of various variables at work in making state foreign policies and interstate relations. The following sections will respectively deal with the mythical-historical complex, the holes of logic and empirical evidence of the national myth-making theory which can pave ways for future researches in this case, and an

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<sup>2</sup> Yinan He, ‘Comparing post-war (west) German-Polish and Sino-Japanese Reconciliation: A bridge too far?’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 63, no. 7, September 2011, p. 1157.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1161.

<sup>4</sup> Yinan He, *The search for reconciliation*, Ch. 1.

alternative explanation: the existence and development of fear of losing identities (hereafter termed *identity anxiety*).

### **Mythical-Historical Complex**

Although many professional historians and scholars from Europe and the West place little or even no value on Cambodian and Thai histories that are based on legends and folktales on the grounds that they are ‘unscientific’ and thus lack empirical evidence, mythology is very common in these histories and still casts great influence on their interpretations and perceptions of the past. This is clearly evidenced in the royal chronicles of both countries, which often begin with myths that tend to be out of human control and detached from social reality. However, what is more concerned here is whether the modern Khmer-Thai historiography, which is claimed to have employed modern historiographical methodology, can free itself entirely from myths or not when they cannot completely expropriate, and are based on, the old texts and when the creation and perpetuation of the new discourses of the past, as discussed in the previous chapter, have been shown to be bound by different political motives. The myths could be uncovered by closely examining the important main schemes and their meanings and some examples within the main historical and political discourses that have always been propagated by both sides throughout their history of conflicts.

To begin with, the discourse of the fall of the Angkorean civilization of the Khmer Empire considered mainly to be caused by the destruction from the Siamese forces has been put to the test of time by new discoveries in various academic researches. In this vein, different perspectives have been casted upon the root of the decline. For instance, a study by Michael



Vickery suggests that “Angkor did not “fall” but through changing patterns in the international economy of the time, wealth and power gradually accumulated both in Ayudhya and in a Cambodian center on the middle Mekong until they became more powerful, competing centers of government which supplanted Angkor both politically and culturally.”<sup>5</sup> More precisely, according to him, the maritime trades with the Chinese through the Malacca Strait became more significant that the city states which had more access to the sea such as Ayudhya grew up to be the centers of the Khmer power instead of Angkor. This perspective clearly focuses on a ‘shift’ of power rather than a ‘fall’ of a civilization. Similar to this perspective, Will Durant also implies non-defeat perspective of Angkor, mentioning that ‘a great civilization is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself from within.’ Although different perspectives about the fall of Angkor have challenged the existing discourse, the myth of the ‘fall’ of Angkor remains powerful among the Cambodian while the Thai themselves sometimes also embrace their grandiose image as the ‘destroyer’ of a great civilization.

Along with this comes another main theme: the discourse of the ‘steady decline’ of the Khmer in post-Angkor period which also becomes mystical. While the Khmer always depict the Thai as the major cause of their decline, as clearly reflected through the controversial legend of *Preah Ko Preah Keo*, both the Khmer and Thai chronicle histories and similar sources tend to suggest that up to the fall of Lovek in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the two kingdoms were just engaged in tit-for-tat attacks. This clearly shows that up to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was actually no ‘declining’ trend as the Khmer claim but just two powers, Ayudhya and Angkor and later Lovek, squeezing each other for domination and sovereignty under the same name Angkor. A

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<sup>5</sup> Vickery, Michael T, *Cambodia after Angkor, The chronicular evidence for the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries*, Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1977, Abstract.

clear example is the legacy of the name Siem Reap province in the north-western part of the present-day Cambodia. The Thai Ayudhya chronicles also tend to depict the Khmer attacks ‘from behind’ many times, which lead to the Khmer being negatively stereotyped in Thai history. Thus, the pervading myth of Cambodia’s steady decline does not seem to hold with this fact or what is actually written in both sources.

Also in consistence with this perspective, Michel Vickery’s comparative studies suggest that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Ayudhya was not yet Thai but still Khmer and the real change of Ayudhya from Khmer to Thai occurred only after 1569 AD when the Burmese invaded and conquered Ayudhya. The old Khmer royalty at Ayudhya was replaced by the Sukhothai royal family in the north, who were really Thai and who had supported the Burmese in the wars. He continued to suggest that, in this respect, the wars between ‘*Sien*’ and Angkor reported by the Chinese Ambassador to Angkor, Zhou Dagan, in 1296 were not between the Siamese (Thai) and Khmer but between two groups of the Khmer—one centered in Angkor and the other in Ayudhya—who fought destructive wars against each other to control their ancient capital city of Angkor. Vickery has verified existing records also show that the kings of Ayudhya used Khmer as an official language until the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and after 1569 AD, which was about 100 years’ time, Ayudhya began to write Thai language but used Khmer alphabet, not the Thai alphabet created in Sukhothai in the north.<sup>6</sup> Seen from this perspective, it seems to go line in line with Will Durant’s non-defeat perspective that it was Angkor itself that was in transition when the two main groups of the Khmer under the same Angkor umbrella adapted themselves to a new political platform at different centers.

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<sup>6</sup> Lectures given by Michael Vickery at the faculty of Archeology, Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2001-2.

This uncovered myth also relates to the myth of Thai' popular discourse and assigned status of Cambodia as a vassal of Siam in Ayudhya period and their anachronistic maps showing their territories based on this inflated discourse as discussed in the previous chapter. First, while this assigned status and popular discourse tend to run counter to the way in which the Thai royal chronicles describe the cowardice, behind-the-back attacks from the Khmer, which the Thai found it tough to defense, it also contradicts with the popular discourses from the Cambodian side mentioned above, all of which have been clarified as myths. Furthermore, in order to censor this myth, the Thai have reasons to employ different discourses to explain away their expansionism by ascribing certain negative stereotypes to the Cambodian and by propagating the ideology of 'saving these peoples from a less perfectly Buddhist governance.'<sup>7</sup> This propaganda has provided strong justifications and legitimacy for their invasions of Angkor and their successive wars against the Khmer. And the Khmer themselves also employ similar discourses and tactics but based on their Originator ideology.

Since the myth of Cambodia being a vassal state of Ayudhya before the late 16<sup>th</sup> century is indisputable, there is clear flimsiness and distortion of the arguments in the Thai' discursive discourses and the anachronistic maps depicting their own ancient kingdom in this period. But, albeit with high level of ambiguity, the Thai tend to prefer descriptions of their ancestors in grandeur, and a map of the history of Thailand's boundary was finally in place to serve its role in the new political regimes from the early 1930s. Also, the Thai need to construct an image of the war-like Cambodian to go along with this myth. As Thongchai's *Siam Mapped* reveals, the Thai have to project the 'geo-body' of Thailand back in time in the wake of Thailand's defeat in the Franco-Siamese crisis in the 1890s, and by employing this tactic, which the French also did, it

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<sup>7</sup> Chris Baker & Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 32.

looked as if the Thai had fought victorious wars against the Khmer to free the nation, which seems as if it belonged to other, from Khmer imperialism. In this sense, the myth of the harmony-loving Thai fighting to maintain freedom and independence in the face of aggression of outsiders was created and propagated. It does place a strong conceptual problem to the main theme of Thai historical narrative, the Triumphant Survival.

On the same token, as in the case of the Cambodian in which the anachronistic maps of their ancient kingdom often run contradictory with one another due to historical ambiguities, the above-mentioned myths also place under serious questions the Thai political discourses on Thailand's lost territories which the Thai have always adopted and propagandized to become high on national agenda until today. And of course, this is also applied to the discursive maps depicting the losses. Thongchai has also confirmed this myth, mentioning that

...it is impossible to figure out exactly what was Siam before the loss or even whether there was really a loss of territory. By what means can a historian establish a legitimate realm, with all modern geographical conventions, before the end of nineteenth century in order to identify or talk about the loss? How can any of these studies say with authority which parts counted or did not count as Siam's realm and hence which constituted a loss or not?<sup>8</sup>

Apparently, Thongchai's argument fits so well into this history-myth perspective and it would become even more justifiable when it is conceptualized in comparative perspectives with the Cambodian history-myth discourses. Thus, this history-myth perspective also puts more conceptual problems to another main theme of Thai historical narrative, the National Humiliation, and especially the lost-territory discourses. In other words, if one looks at those

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<sup>8</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, pp. 151-2.

anachronistic maps, it does not seem to be the Thai nation's perceived humiliation but the glory of development of the Thai state indeed. Thongchai proclaimed that "the origin of these historical maps is not the remote past as it is purported to be; the origin is the geo-body of Siam in the present."<sup>9</sup>

The strained relations between Cambodia and Siam-Thailand for centuries following the supposed dominant roles of the Siamese in Angkor polity from the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, to go with the above-mentioned perspective, also place a conceptual problem to the Khmer claim of the Thai being depicted as barbarians, forest-dwelling mercenaries or the *Syam Kuk* on one of the bas-relief at Angkor. Of course, as shown in the previous chapter, Thai nationalists would always reject this claim showing their ancestors to be enslaved savages. As Bernard Groslier argues, 'it is more likely that *Syam* was used as a general term for people with darker skin, and that *Kuk* may have been an ornithological term hinting to tribes practicing some kind of bird cult.'<sup>10</sup> However, seen from another perspective that both sides were fighting for their name and decadency of Angkor, different myths would be uncovered. For the sake of their colonial purposes, the French had to employ different political and cultural tactics including archeological and historical foundations to uproot the cultural-based claims of the Thai, while the latter had to embark on new discourses and new interpretations of the old mystical *Khom* as referring to different powerful ethnic group who built Angkor, not the declining backward Khmer of the present day, in order to achieve the same result as the French had done. Thus, this tactic was employed to cut back each other's cultural-based claims to ethnic tie with Angkor.

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<sup>9</sup> Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 154.

<sup>10</sup> Groslier, Bernard-Philippe, 'Les Syam Kuk des bas-reliefs d'Angkor Vat', in *Orients pour Georges Condominas*, Paris, 1981, pp. 122-3; cited in Serhat Unaldi, *reconstructing Angkor*, p. 12.

In retrospect, one would observe that the myth of victimization does exist in both the Cambodian and Thai historical narratives. While the Thai sense of victimhood runs its course first in their early period of history of Sukhothai and then in the perceived trauma or national humiliation of the 1893 defeat by the French, which explicitly incorporates inflated or over-amplified claims of the Thai national virtues and competence, the Cambodian sense of victimhood also laid foundations in its discourses of the ‘steady decline’ of Angkor that eventually bestow the Khmer nationals with an inflated sense of moral superiority over the aggressive, greedy Thai. Hence, new stereotypes, which are better and more virtuous, had to be bestowed to the Khmer, while the Thai would justify their past actions by superior religious practices and the likes, denying or rationalizing their nation’s invasions of Cambodia and eventually denigrating the latter as inferior, evil or culpable and contemptuous.

Overall, both Cambodian and Thai historical narratives incorporate all kinds of myth—self-glorifying, self-whitewashing, and other-maligning myths—that explicitly aim at addressing domestic political concerns such as regime legitimacy, social mobilization needs, factional or organizational interests, and most importantly colonial purposes. This can be seen happening mainly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and from the 1930s to 1960s. It is a by-product of the projection of the present onto the past or, in Thongchai’s word, ‘the geo-body’ of the country in the present. These highly hostile myths and emotion-laden symbols, unfortunately, have become the hegemonic national collective memory in both societies through government policies on institutionalized school textbooks and other propaganda tools that serve to perpetuate and promote their collective identity. It has ‘sealed the rupture of the life of the nation’ but eventually resulted in the lack of historical responsibility and mutual trust and respect. Therefore, due to national myth-making of Khmer-Thai conservative elites, the Khmer and Thai people have

always been programmed to hate each other—the ‘love-hate’ relationship programmed in our schools, written in the textbooks we read, and propagandized in the media we take for granted.

### **Holes of Logic**

The last section has verified the main part of the significance and sophistication of the national myth-making theory. It has shown clearly that the long history of wars and conflicts between Cambodia and Thailand does not really stand at the center of the controversy but it is how the memory of the conflicts is reconstructed, reshaped, and manipulated that matters. Due mainly to the nations’ traditional, socio-political and cultural structure, the ruling elites have always played decisive roles in creating and perpetuating national myths that cause sharp disagreement on matters of historical interpretations. This eventually affects the likelihood of reconciliation between the two countries at present.

Despite its theoretical sophistication, the theory also suffers some holes of logic in the case of Cambodia-Thailand historical perceptions. These holes of logic point to its claim that, “if the former enemy countries agree on a basic interpretation of the history of their conflict and take substantial *measures* to redress the trauma, they will be more likely to remove the historical roots of bilateral tensions and significantly promote reconciliation.”<sup>11</sup> First, elite myth-making theory has no room for explanations of Thailand’s diplomatic behaviors towards Cambodia in the early 1950s when the latter was obtaining her independent status within the French Union. The Thai government promptly voiced its recognition of the new independent state and was also the first country to establish diplomatic mission in Phnom Penh. Furthermore, the Thai

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<sup>11</sup> Yinan, He, 2011, p. 1158.

government, claiming that it was willing to help Cambodia in her work of rehabilitation, also provided Cambodia with various forms of assistance in the field of education (i.e. scholarships offered particularly to Cambodian Buddhist monks), health, forestry, meteorology and so forth.<sup>12</sup> This variation in Thailand's behaviors towards Cambodia came at a time when no programs on national de-mythification and memory harmonization had ever been created by the two countries. Thus, this variation seems to run counter to He Yinan's empirical evidence which implies that the conservative ruling elites have always created national myths to work for their political and instrumental purposes and thus impede reconciliation processes, especially the restitution measures.

Second, there is always a conceptual dilemma as to whether it is logical to consider those various forms of assistance from Thailand to Cambodia as 'restitution measures' that are accorded by a perpetrator state to a victimized state. As discussed earlier, both countries have always preferred discursive myths of victimization and self-righteousness that embrace their own respective country's grievances, which are translated into a sense of entitlement, national virtue and moral superiority over the other. In this sense, it is not clear whether this proposition—the restitution measures that require reconciliation to include apology and forgiveness, legal accountability and material compensation—can be applied in the case of Cambodia-Thailand relations. In other words, the case itself resists simplistic comparison of external experiences or the application of theory developed from different case studies with diverse socio-political, cultural and historical background.

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<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, *Relations between Thailand and Cambodia, Aide-Memoirs and Memorandums*, December 1958, Bangkok, p. 1.



Finally, this theory also has no room to adequately explain the emergence of the joint cultural commission established by both governments in 2003, which clearly reflects the two countries' efforts to resolve historical conflicts and to harmonize contradictory national memory through 'correct' mutual perception. More precisely, the theory would never be able to adequately show the mechanism by which the joint cultural commission emerged and came true because it solely focuses on the ruling elites while neglecting the crucial roles played by various societal actors such as civil society groups, NGOs and individuals in influencing the government policy making and stimulating the birth and achievement of the historical settlement mechanism. For instance, as discussed in the introductory chapter, the 'Open Letter for Peace and Preah Vihear' issued by a group of Thai scholars of Southeast Asian Studies in July 2008, putting forward the proposals to the people of the two countries concerning the border dispute over the Preah Vihear World Heritage site, can be a clear example of how this group has influenced the government policies on historical settlement with neighbors. And the effects of this group can be deciphered from how the new official versions of high school history textbooks in Thailand change from censorship and negative portrayals to an incorporation of a better realm of the Khmer. Therefore, the roles of various societal and non-governmental stakeholders in affecting the launch and achievement of historical settlement cannot be disregarded in this matter.

Overall, in spite of its theoretical holes of logic and lack of empirical evidence for the case of Cambodia and Thailand, it should be noticed that national myth-making of conservative ruling elites can be considered a sophisticated theory that can analyze variance in the degree of reconciliation between former enemy states. More importantly, the theory fits well into the case under discussion in its prediction that 'the more two countries' historical narratives of their past

conflict diverge, the more difficult they will be to reconcile, and *vice versa*.<sup>13</sup> This theoretical prediction also goes line in line with a key hypothesis of the symbolist theory: ‘the more a group’s myth-symbol complex focuses group hostility on a particular adversary, the greater the probability of a violent clash with that adversary, and the greater the likely intensity of the violence.’<sup>14</sup> Albeit with some flaws in this theory, more questions emerge: How can the case be explained more sufficiently and explicitly? What is it that really shapes the preconception of the Cambodian and the Thai concerning their historical memories and perceptions and the behavioral structures in effect?

### **Identity Anxiety as Fear Factor: An Alternative Explanation**

In the last section, the national myth-making of ruling elites has offered to some degree good explanations of the case study under discussion. The existence of various forms of mythology produces emotion-laden symbols that make the long-standing mass hostility between the two peoples easy for the chauvinist ruling elites of both governments to provoke nationalistic sentiments and make extremist policies popular. These hostile historical narratives tend to provide symbolic vocabularies and certain negative stereotypes that the rulers used as political tools to mobilize supports for their ideologies. However, as discussed earlier, this theory cannot adequately account for the great variations of political behaviors between the Thai and Cambodian rulers in shaping the public’s historical perceptions. This section will suggest another possible explanatory model, the *identity anxiety*, or fears of losing identity.

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<sup>13</sup> Yinan, He, 2011, p. 1164.

<sup>14</sup> Kaufman, Stuart J, ‘Symbolic politics or rational choice? Testing theories of extreme ethnic violence’, 2006, p. 51.

Fears are common as human nature, and especially at times of external threats, our fears will automatically be mounted, prompting us to embark on various actions in response to the threats. Identity anxiety here is defined as the fear of losing one group or one nation's identity or the extinction of the group or nation as whole; it typically has deep roots in history and culture of the group that cannot be easily ignored. This emotional precondition carries provocative appeals that justify hostile narratives and symbolic vocabularies leading to powerfully hostile mass attitudes. Kaufman has argued that this kind of fear 'first appears one-sided and eventually, both sides come to fear that the existence of their group is at stake.'<sup>15</sup> How can identity anxiety as fear factor justify the existence of Cambodian and Thai hostile narratives, which have produced emotion-laden symbols provoking emotion of hostile intentions among the people in both societies?

As discussed in the previous chapter, the new sense of kingdom-ness in both countries emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when both courts started to rediscover and reconstruct their own historical documents or official history of the state as a form of legitimation of the new government. It was a time when Siam already considered Cambodia as a tributary and a 'savage' country. This preconception has been shown to have shaped Thai perspectives of Cambodia even of the previous era as reflected through the Ayudhya chronicles, let alone the Bangkok ones. In this sense, it does imply that even if the Thai chronicles of Ayudhya depict from time to time the threats from the Cambodian, it does not serve as the perceived or realistic threats the Thai actually had but as mythologies that provide the Thai nation with different justifications for their current actions—be it a sense of victimization that bestows the Thai nation with moral superiority over the Khmer or be it a form of other maligning myths and self-righteousness that

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<sup>15</sup> Kaufman, Stuart J, *Modern hatred: The symbolic politics of ethnic war*, 2001, p. 31.

fuel the nation's grievances and denigrate the Cambodian as inferior, evil, or culpable, and eventually stimulate the Thai nation's feelings of contempt for the morally despicable Khmer.

The Cambodian, under the Siamese domination mainly from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century until the French colonization, also understood themselves in relation to the elder and stronger Siam. To this point, it should be justifiable to argue that this condition of fear is applied more to, or more prevalent among, the Cambodian than the Thai. This fear is reflected through the Cambodian discourses, which from time to time describe how the Siamese intruded into their territories and how the Khmer ruling elites as well as the nation as a whole have mourned the alleged losses of their territories to the Thai. This condition of fear was also indisputable when King Ang Doung in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century made several failed attempts to beg the French Napoleon for protectorate-ship and paternalism so that Cambodia, at a time of deep despair and even on the brink of her extinction, could escape from the jaws and free herself from the external threats of the two more powerful neighbors, Siam and Yuon (Vietnam).

The emergence of the French colonization in Indochina rendered the scene into different forms. Siam's encounter with European civilization brought the Siamese rulers to their consciousness and heightened awareness of the importance and significance of political and cultural identity. Identity anxiety emerged accordingly among the Thai. This form of fear—the fear of losing their identity as legitimate heirs to Angkor which is the basic foundation for all their claims over cultural possession of the Khmer civilization and thus their sovereign rights over Cambodia—have shaped the Thai historical reconstruction of that time and Thai perspectives of Cambodia in subsequent periods. For instance, this identity anxiety was obviously indisputable when King Mongkut, upon his realization that his country would lose its

sovereign rights over Cambodia to the French, issued a royal directive in 1860 to have some of the great ancient temples in Cambodia such as Angkor Wat and Ta Prum dismantled and re-erected in Bangkok. Also, this identity anxiety was reflected through the Thai mythical-historical discourses of the lost-territory mentality and their policies on school textbooks from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which tended to detach Thai history from that of the Khmer by imposing strict censorship on both textbooks and the press. This identity anxiety is also outlined in the construction of the Thai image of the Khmer as ‘uncivilized,’ ‘nature-bound barbarians,’ ‘backward’ and ‘uneducated,’ and their continuous attempts to highlight a clear-cut break between Angkor and the post-Angkorean Cambodia by giving new interpretations or creating new meanings for the mystical *Khom* and by inventing legendary story showing the Khmer King who moved the capital from Angkor to Phnom Penh as descended from the gardener of the last Angkorean ruler and so forth.

In retrospect, it should be noticed that prior to the emergence of the identity anxiety, the Thai, during the times of their political dominance over Cambodia, had never done what the author would call *cultural execution* done by the Vietnamese in the 17<sup>th</sup> century—a kind of cultural brainwash which led to fatal uprisings of the Khmer against whom they sarcastically called ‘Yuon.’ This behavioral pattern of the Thai might have resulted partly from the non-existence of their identity anxiety due mainly to their ownership perspectives of the country at that time and partly from their awareness of the cultural affinities and cultural links with the Cambodian. The Vietnamese were different; they made their intrusion into the Khmer-dominated Mekong delta in the 1620s and dominated both Khmer politics and culture, attempting to render the country *Vietnamese*. And since then, the perception of threat from the Vietnamese and fear of group extinction among the Khmer have been growing its intensity to the degree that the

Vietnamese have always been portrayed in all Cambodian historical narratives as ‘hereditary enemy’ state and the land-plunderer on whom Cambodia must be on guard.

On another front, being aware of the Thai identity anxiety, the French, upon gaining their sovereign rights over Cambodia in 1863, also developed Cambodia’s identity anxiety. It was fueled mainly by the French line of thoughts to serve the cultural and political interests of the Cambodian on the one hand and the aggressive cultural and demographic policies against the Thai to serve the supreme interests of their own colonial purposes on the other. For example, this identity anxiety was reflected through their so-called ‘*mission civilisatrice*’ (civilizing mission), or what Penny Edwards calls ‘the cultivation of a nation,’ including the invention of a historical tradition that highlights the continuity of culture from Angkor to the present-day declining Cambodian, the reconstruction of Cambodian national archives, the re-shaping of the Cambodian images and stereotypes, and the invention of the political discourses and mythical-historical complex against the Thai counterpart. Also, this identity anxiety was reflected through the French strategies aimed at cutting back cultural-based territorial claims of the Siamese, such as the searches for archeological evidence in Thailand made by a French consul, August Pavie, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to prove that Siam had once belonged both culturally and politically to Cambodia. This identity anxiety was also indisputable when the French was attempting to curb the Siamese cultural influence on the Cambodian by issuing a new travel restriction in 1914, prohibiting the Cambodian from travelling to Bangkok for education and flow of life.

After the decolonization period and Cambodia’s independence in 1953, this identity anxiety, especially provoked by the large pool of historical narratives and political discourses the French had already shaped, has always been internalized and reinforced by the Khmer ruling

elites and modern literati. Most significant of all to reflect this identity anxiety are the speeches and articles by the Khmer ruler King Sihanouk and his officials in the government as shown in the introductory chapter and his historical policies on school textbooks and the media, which was quite similar to what the Thai had done before. Thus, due to this long-standing identity anxiety, the official recognition of Cambodia's independence, the establishment of diplomatic relations, and all forms of assistance to Cambodia done by the Thai Government in the 1950s seemed meaningless to the Cambodian and tended not to fit into the Cambodian line of thought as well. The eruption of the Preah Vihear case in 1962 sealed the rupture of this fluctuated relation and fueled even to a higher degree the century-old fear of losing identity. As a result, while King Sihanouk has become a national hero in Cambodia, he has been portrayed as an axe of evil in Thailand. Likewise, while King Naresuan has held as a national icon in Thailand, he has been portrayed in Cambodia as an ungrateful, aggressive, evil king. And the inflated image and its moral remain in our brain now.

Overall, identity anxiety as fear factor has been standing at center of the issue of Cambodian-Thai historical perceptions, and this preconception and precondition of conflict must have existed as a result of their shared gloomy past on the one hand and their cultural affinities on the other. It was greatly transformed and reinforced by colonialism. The hostile historical narratives and political discourses, the discourse on religious and cultural ethnocentrism, and all forms of hostile mythologies and emotion-laden symbols have been manipulated to deal with this fear and anxiety, leading to powerfully hostile mass attitudes that most often produce a favorable context for politicians in both countries to resort to extremism and predatory policies rather than positivism and moderate agenda. And it would remain an effective pool of discourses from

which the politicians in both countries can draw to serve their political inclinations and ideological goals, if careless enough.

If conceptualized in comparative perspectives, this identity anxiety and fear of group extinction might take different prevalence among the Cambodian, the Thai and the Vietnamese. To the Thai, identity anxiety, especially their cultural claims to heirs of Angkor, must be of more concerns compared to perceptions of military threat or fear of group extinction in the wake of a stronger Cambodia. To the Vietnamese, due to the fact that they have no cultural links and affinities with the Cambodian, cultural identity anxiety must be of little or no concern for them as for their own internal insecurity and the burden of mass population growth. To this point, the argument that Vietnam must make all her way southwards to the Khmer-dominated Mekong delta because the northern part of the country does not equip Vietnam with favorable environmental and natural conditions to feed her own population seems to go line in line with this perspective of the fear of group extinction. Seen from this angle, it is a must that these two more powerful countries, which sometimes got into conflicts with one another due to unsatisfied division of interests, *squeeze* the one in the middle. And history is the only proof in this regard. In this sense, it goes without saying that, to the Cambodian, their deep identity anxiety and perceptions of threat or fear of group extinction remain high on national agenda and it is evidenced in their hostile historical narratives and political discourses, school history textbooks, the press, and even the Constitution.

Up until the present day, the identity anxiety among the Thai is clearly reflected in various forms: the national museums and theme parks around the country such as ‘Muang Boran’ in Samut Prakan, The Thai National Memorial in Pathum Thani and ‘Phuket FantaSea,’



the preservation of a miniature replica of Angkor in the Grand Palace of Bangkok, the cultural appeals that provoke public protests such as the case of the ‘purloined lintel’ at Phnom Rung temple and the 2008 Preah Vihear case, and all kinds of mythology and ethno-chauvinism against the Khmer which still exist especially in the press and history textbooks in Thailand. And in the same manner, the less wealthy Khmer would always voice their protests, sometimes with violence, against any Thai claims to the Khmer cultural heritage. This reminds us of the 2003 case and the Khmer legal appeals to the Thai to return some documented pieces of Angkorean ruin ‘stolen’ from Cambodia back to the sanctuary. This reminds us of Charnvit’s words: “It was obvious that the Khmer were angered by the theft of their property and responded violently.”<sup>16</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Although Khmer and Thai historical narratives are bombarded with hostile mythologies and emotion-laden symbols—which are outlined by a large pool of discrepancies, distortions, ambiguities, and their methods—national myth-making of the ruling elites has proved to be unable to provide adequate explanations for the case of Khmer-Thai historical perceptions. In addition to this limitation, this chapter has suggested an alternative explanation, *identity anxiety* or fear of losing identity and fear of group extinction, which has more explanatory power to account for the significant variations in the political behaviors influenced by that hostile mythical-historical and symbolic complex and the mechanism in historical settlement between the two countries.

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<sup>16</sup> Charnvit, K, ‘Thailand-Cambodia: A love-hate relationship’, *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia* 3, March 2003.

This identity anxiety and fear of group security or extinction has been proved to be pre-conditional to the historical reconstruction processes and the revivals of hostile collective memory in both countries. It was at its culminating point when the region fell victim to the jaws of European colonization in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century—a period in history when identity anxiety was aggravated to the degree that new myth-history, deeply rooted in culture and symbols, had to be constructed to ‘cultivate’ a nation and to mobilize mass supports and unite the country against external threats. These national mythologies display high levels of ethnocentrism and ethno-chauvinism, to which the subsequent governments in both countries from the 1930s to the present day turn in order to find ‘hostile vocabulary’ for making up their chauvinistic foreign policies towards each other.

The long-standing identity anxiety and deep-seated mistrust of each other comes mainly from their remembrance of their past and from their current nationalistic attitudes. This kind of fear has its basis on the symbolic threat to each other’s identity, rather than on a real tangible military attack even though it led to minor military clashes sometimes, as in the case 2008 Preach Vihear dispute. Thus, the constant exposure of the two countries to mutual symbolic threats of their national identity is the root of their time-honored strained relations, failed diplomatic and security cooperation, and especially the enduring feelings of contempt, the strong sense of antagonism and emotion of hostile intentions among the common people, let alone political leaders. From what David Chandler called ‘emulation factor,’ which has led to a kind of hybrid culture of these nations, it might not be an exaggeration to say that both countries do have a share in the Angkorean heritage. Unfortunately, it is just that each of them has hardly adopted a give-and-take perspective, but a win-and-lose one. And this is the failure of the system itself.

## Chapter VII

### CONCLUSION

#### Concluding

Apparently, this dissertation suggests that the major cause of the century-long ‘love-hate’ relationship between the Cambodian and the Thai has always been their own *identity anxiety*, the enduring fear of losing their national identities which was seriously fuelled and instilled by the jaws of European imperialism. It is indisputable that both countries share a lot of cultural affinities and commonness, but this shared characteristic needs not to be a favorable condition; it is a real product of their long history of socio-political and cultural interactions albeit with fraudulent intents and dominance purposes. As many scholars have reflected, these fundamentally related national characteristics should play significant roles in attaching the mind and soul of the two peoples together, and this factor was also one of the major reasons why the Thai never embarked on *cultural execution* and a ‘civilizing mission’ like the Vietnamese and the French did respectively during their time of dominance and control over the Khmer. However, the case of Cambodia-Thailand perceptions reflect the broader context of international politics and the force of international imperialism in which European colonialism in this region was not only a political and economic program aimed at gaining territories and wealth but also a cultural and intellectual plan that served as an invisible weapon to facilitate and achieve those projects on the one hand and as a stereotypical vision to shape the world in particular forms on

the other. The trans-national policy towards Cambodia and Siam the French had adopted at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to achieve their colonial purposes has made a point in this perspective.

This study has also argued that this identity anxiety is primordial. It gradually emerged before the historical narratives were created and manipulated to express its wills and power. Put it another way, the biased historical narratives that contain a huge body of hostile myths conjuring up emotion-laden symbols and negative stereotypes of the other were opted and produced by both the Siamese ruling elites and the French/the French-backed Cambodian rulers during the times of conflict when their fear of losing identity was already on the tipping point. It might be quite strange to see how and why one of them seemed to be hostile and allergic to European imperialism while the other seemed to embrace and even beg for it. But things never come without reason and these were just coincident with that large pool of *intra*-contradictions and *inter*-contradictions as well as the enemy images painted to each other in both the Cambodian and Thai historical narratives. It might be logical to consider the vast chronological errors in these historical narratives, as also shown in Michael Vickery's study, as being caused in part by the long-time absence of national archives in both countries and in part by their cultural characteristics and conventional historiographical tradition. The new historical tradition in Siam, which emerged in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century along with their new sense of kingdom-ness, a bit earlier than that in Cambodia, posed a big obstacle to the French construction and the threat eventually shaped the whole story into conflicting forms. In response to that dangerous situation, both sides had to invent a new historical tradition to overcome or even dispel their identity anxiety.

This new historical tradition shaped the Cambodian and Thai perceptions in different ways when their relations fell prey to the myths of nationalism. In Siam, this new tradition was

invented mainly by the Siamese rulers King Mongkut and Prince Damrong, who were considered ‘the father of modern Thai history.’ It was first invented by these modern men who was imprinted with Western minds but had already been gripped with that existing identity anxiety, by new perceptions and new methodologies but still employing the old texts, and by the power of cultural and intellectual projects of colonialism in order to account for Siam’s defeat in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This tradition was then adapted and transformed by the major ideologue *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn* of the Phibun government in the 1930s and 40s, who seemed to have rendered Thai royalist nationalism of the previous era into new forms of nationalism—the ethnic-racial and cultural nationalism. These political leaders had envisioned a new Thai identity through the so-called ‘Pan-Thai-ism’ or the ‘Greater Thai’—a new identity that could be enforced upon the Cambodian as well as the Lao people when the jaws of the French colonization of Indochina were broken during the Second World War. In this respect, new plots and discourses on Thai irredentism, racist and cultural nationalism evolved over times as Thai conservative ruling elites and nationalist historians needed them to account for the changing nature of internal and external politics. Thus, the Sarit government of the 1960s and the subsequent Thai governments would be seen as descents of these ideologies. The influence and impacts of these hostile discourses and their discursive myths and emotion-laden symbols has not yet to subside or abate in the present-day Thai society.

In Cambodia, the effects were also tremendous. In a weaker position, the Cambodian rulers, who were all educated in Bangkok, were already trembling with fear of group extinction when the new historical tradition was initiated and their new sense of kingdom-ness emerged. For their own colonial purposes, The French had to help the Cambodian build this new tradition but they did that with some fraudulent intent which was considered beneficial to the Cambodian

but unfair to the Thai. In a similar way to what the Thai did, the French adapted the old tradition and the existing discourses of royalist nationalism in Cambodia and added up new flavors of racist and cultural nationalism to it. Thus, new plots and new hostile discourses of race and irredentism, cultural ethnocentrism and civilizational ethno-chauvinism were added up to the old texts, making the new history in Cambodia a large body of myth-symbol complex. After independence in 1953, this tradition was internalized and taken for granted by the Khmer politicians and literati under King Sihanouk's government, who were mostly educated with French-style education system. This historical tradition has become the hegemonic historical view in Cambodia and its large pool of hostile mythologies and symbolic vocabularies have been preserved and in use until today although it varies in the level of ethnocentrism and the degree to which it is set to portray the other as the enemy, especially Thailand. Thus, the stereotyped and enemy images that reflect our perceptions of each other discussed from chapter two to four have been shaped by this tradition.

This dissertation has dealt with how these historical traditions have brought about the dominant views of history clash and why they have been set into conflicts with each other. It has also exemplified and elaborated to a great extent on both the *intra-* and *inter-*contradictions through that large body of discrepancies, ambiguities and distortions within the Khmer and Thai historical narratives, when conceptualized in comparative perspective, by examining not only the original or old texts but also the debates over the authenticity of these divergent historical narratives and their interpretations. These debates touch upon three main schemes including the conception of self, the stereotyped and enemy images, and the discourses of irredentism and mapping. Through this multi-perspective method and process-tracing, various forms of mythology have been uncovered in this study. In effect, it has casted negative reflection back

upon the long-standing historical tradition in both countries—the tradition in which myth and history have become hard to distinguish and the contrast between what is ‘We-self’ and what is the otherness has been turned an ideological weapon.

This tradition has reserved its place in the Khmer and Thai society through two main factors. First, it points to the symbolic politics of chauvinist mobilization of Khmer and Thai ruling elites mainly from the 1940s and 1960s, in which the politicized interpretations of the nation’s past based on the existing hostile discourses and biased historical tradition have always been preferred through government’s propaganda tools to rally public support. It is this so-called ‘nationalistic populism’ in modern-day Cambodia and Thailand that has greatly transformed the evolution of these hostile discourses and transmitted their perceptions and values through generations.

Second, it has been institutionalized through school textbooks. This study has shown that biased school textbooks and textbook censorship have been in place since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Siam and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Cambodia. The current version of the new school textbooks mainly employed in this study also remain mired with this tradition. This has been part of the government’s policies in shaping the public perceptions of the otherness, and the functions of these policies and more specifically of the enemy image itself have been in accordance with the politics of nationalistic populism, with identity anxiety deep inside. The speech of Thai Prime Minister Sarit after losing the case of Preach Vihear to Cambodia in 1962 would highlight this point:

I know full well that the loss of Phra Viharn [Preah Vihear in Khmer] is a loss which afflicts the entire Thai nation. Therefore, even though Cambodia may have Phra Viharn, only the ruins and

the piece of land on which the Temple is situated will be theirs. The soul of the Temple of Phra Viharn remains forever with Thailand. The Thai people will always remember that the Temple of Phra Viharn was robbed from us by the trickery of those who disregard honour and justice. As Thailand behaves in the world society as a member imbued with the highest sense of honour and morality, sooner or later the Temple of Phra Viharn shall revert once again to Thailand...The incident of Phra Viharn will remain in the memory of the Thai people for generations to come and will leave an indelible mark on the nation's history as if it was a wound in the heart of each and everyone in the entire nation.<sup>1</sup>

Even though such provocative comments reflect Thai politicians' defense of his nationalistic populism in the wake of the loss, it also reveals how the manipulation of the episodes and discourses of national humiliation help shaped the image of the enemy or the otherness and eventually unit the Thai nation. In a similar way, the Cambodian politicians like King Sihanouk also employed similar tactics and discourses. The school textbooks in Cambodia from his time until the present day, as shown in the previous chapters, have always negatively portrayed Siam-Thailand as hereditary enemy and as a 'robber' of Cambodian heritage. Due to such identity anxiety, politics of nationalistic populism must be preferred and the enemy image must exist in both Cambodian and Thai historical narratives and political discourses, albeit with or without clarity and rationality.

The new generations of both Khmer and Thai politicians remain mired with this conventional historical tradition. Whether it is the Hun Sen government of Cambodia or the Abhisit Vejjajiva government of Thailand, all have frequently turned to that large pool of nationalistic discourses, which seem to be a sustainable resource available at hand at any time,

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Publicity, 'The Prime Minister's Address on the Temple of Phra Viharn Case,' Bangkok, July 1962, quoted in Shane Strate, 2009, p. 247.



for effective solutions to local needs and serious domestic political tensions. These so-called ‘democratic’ regimes are not the only group who prefer indoctrination; the communist like the Khmer Rouge also found this resource juicy, resorting to the martial ‘tradition’ of Angkor<sup>2</sup> and manipulating the image of the enemy as a source of legitimation of their regime. And what could be achieved at hand are public tensions and powerfully hostile mass attitudes between the two societies at large.

Of course, the effect is more than just an economic matter. In Thailand, a public survey conducted in 1985 on the nationalistic attitudes of local leaders, medical practitioners and teachers at the district or village levels revealed the effects of the projection of such hostile discourses on the Thai people’s minds. On the ‘scale of disliked nationals’ or of which neighboring countries they hate the most, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos scored the highest followed by Burma which came fourth on the list, and Thai people should not have a close relationship or marriage with the people of these nations whom they considered ‘the most untrustworthy.’<sup>3</sup> The survey result is unsurprisingly shock and unexpected but if it was done in Cambodia at the same or in 2003, the Thai would have been the first on the list while the Vietnamese would have been *unclear*. Unfortunately, the tradition as well as the anxiety remains and will remain with us and it has pointed to my own experience during my fieldwork in Bangkok in 2011. The tradition seemed to fit itself so well into the rumor-bound nature of our societies and oral culture—the so-called ‘kingdom of make-believe.’

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<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Community: Reflections on the origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed., Verso, London/New York, 2006, pp. 159-160, 182-4; Chandler, David, *A History of Cambodia*, 2000, pp. 6-98, 182-3; Bennett, Anthony, ‘Cambodia will never disappear’, *New Left Review*, vol. 180, p. 106, 121; McCargo, D, ‘Burning down the house. The anti-Thai riots in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 29 January 2003’, Paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Thai Studies, Bangkok, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Likhit Dhiravegin, ‘Nationalism and the state in Thailand’, cited in Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*, p. 168.

### **Achieving True Reconciliation: Can we?**

True reconciliation should be the ultimate goal for the two former enemy states. The failure of the Cambodia-Thailand Cultural Commission established in 2003 has made an appeal to how important and significant the political and cultural identity is in the determination of the bond of friendship between the two countries. As this study has pointed to identity anxiety as the most important factor in this issue, dealing with the deeply-rooted problems of national identity should be the priority both nations, especially the ruling elites, should focus their attention on. Given the extreme difficulties in revising national historical narratives and thus changing popular beliefs and national identities between the two peoples, which has already been evidenced in the failure of the above-mentioned joint cultural commission, it would be realistic to argue that the history problems between these countries can only be *managed* rather than *resolved*. It would take not only time and deep understanding of the nature of this history problem among the people, which this study is attempted to reveal, but also the good and virtuous leadership among politicians in their respective country as well as a favorable political environment in the region.

Theoretically, to address the issue of identity conflict resulting from the inter-subjective knowledge such as hostile and biased history and cultural ethnocentrism, constructivists have argued that a shift or change of identity and the image of the self might be virtually possible when the conventional practices and interactions between the practitioners or actors are changed. Within this perspective, Alexander Wendt argues for a shift or transformation of identity from being egoistic or hostile to being collective or cooperative.<sup>4</sup> In order to achieve this shift in identity and to overcome the psychological barriers, more extensive, intentional and

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is what state make of it,' *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 391-425.

consistent/transparent bilateral efforts are needed. The internal and external experiences, such as the case of the Franco-German and German-Polish history problems as well as similar cases in Northeast Asia, might provide valuable ideas and reliable sources to deal with this problem to a satisfactory level.

To begin with, it takes the lead from the ruling elites, and it should be rational and realistic to suggest that politicians from both countries should refrain from manipulating that 'inconvenient' history-myth and their ethnocentric views about conflicting history to implant nationalistic populism or to rally public support for their chauvinistic policies. In contrast, political leaders should display their positive attitudes and amicable symbolic vocabularies towards one another so that good examples would be given to the general public at large. This might be the most difficult and most resistible as political interests might mean something more than a change of politicians' world view.

Also, both governments should show strong willingness to control biased reporting practices and encourage more balanced reporting and educating practices of the mass media. On the one hand, the government should establish mechanisms or working groups for giving instructions and content analysis to media institutions on matters of history, their ethnocentric views, and its nationalistic tones. On the other, they should encourage and instruct those media institutions to include views of history from the other side so that the general public can understand different perspectives and place themselves into the shoes of others when thinking about their own nation. This new practice would ameliorate mutual antagonism and hatred and de-popularize any hard-line policies adopted by particular political factions, or they might be softened by other factions from their own government and from the population at large.

Third, the national de-mythification and harmonization of memories should be handled with greater care and clearer framework. The failure of the joint cultural commission in 2007 could be attributed mainly to the disruption of historical disputes on the one hand and to the politically-driven composition of the commission itself on the other. Provided that realistic cooperation between the two countries has been restored, the joint cultural commission should be free from politics with full support both financially and psychologically from both governments. In other words, both governments should vow to support this project but leave the tasks of the joint historical researches to non-political individual experts such as history researchers and professional historians from various universities and the likes in order to push for better reforms of biased national history in a way that could be accepted by both sides. The mechanism and methods employed to create a bi-national history textbook, such as the *Histoire/Geschichte* (the Franco-German History Textbook Commission consultations, 1930s) and ‘History That Opens the Future: The Modern History of East Asia’ (Japan-Korea-China Joint History Textbook Committee, 2005), should be good examples for this commission to consider.

Along with this, curriculum reform should be a priority. Textbook reform is one of the most urgent for these countries since biased and problematic school history textbooks would continue to cast serious impacts on people’s perceptions of the past for generations to come. In addition to local mechanisms, both governments should leave rooms for ASEAN educational development mechanism within the ASEAN/GMS+3 or 4 framework (i.e. Japan, South Korea, China and India) as well as for other education-oriented organizations, NGOs and civil society groups, to join together with local universities and history research institutions to work out new textbooks and better histories for the sake of peace, security and bond of friendship in the region. Due to the fact that school textbooks in these countries have always constructed hostile national

narratives and collective identity among youth for generations, the revision of textbooks in a way that does not convey the image of ‘hereditary enemy’ to the others should be a vital part of this reconciliation process, the most critical point of which is dealing with the intrinsic aspect of Khmer-Thai divergent and dangerous thinking and worldview that is rooted in the two contradictory schools of thought discussed in the previous chapters.

Furthermore, creating social network and linkages is also crucial to this process. The Franco-German rapprochement since the 1950s could be considered a good example for these ASEAN nations albeit with different socio-cultural and political conditions. Experiences show that France and Germany could reach their ultimate goal of national de-mythification and harmonization of historical memories through the advancement of peace building strategies including the use of cooperative linkages, community building and the expansion of the societal and cultural linkages.<sup>5</sup> Thus, educational and cultural exchange programs in the forms of communities to communities, universities to universities, schools to schools, and youth to youth should be promoted, and private initiatives to resolve historical and psychological concerns should be encouraged. In the Cambodia-Thailand case, this kind of thing can hardly be seen now.

It might be an over-optimistic expectation to claim that such things as modern information technology and online social networks, the generational change and more extensive human and cultural exchange as well as the economic interactions and interdependence, would gradually affect and change the hostile perceptions of the people but it should be noticed that it is possible only when the two neighbors are not in conflicts. The present situation is not so much favorable for this expectation to come true since the two countries’ amicable relation has been

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<sup>5</sup> Alice Ackermann, ‘Reconciliation as a peace-building process in postwar Europe: The Franco-German case,’ *Peace and Change*, vol. 19, no. 3, July 1994, pp. 229-250.

disrupted by the border disputes and the Preah Vihear Issue since 2008. The ICJ ruling this time should be respected by both governments without any reservations and further divergent interpretations, and a joint report of the case with a balanced view and interpretation should be conveyed to the general public so that they can think for themselves in terms of peace and friendship. Although it has been observed from the case of the border disputes between Cambodia and Thailand that ASEAN has proved more clearly to be a loosely structured organization, ASEAN should be turned into a good political platform where Cambodia and Thailand, as well as other members, can achieve a necessary move from a hostile identity to a collective identity, not from a neutral identity. This study has sent a strong message: in order for ASEAN to achieve that move, it must first address and overcome the psychological barriers resulting from the history problems among its member states. At the heart of that future prospect stands *political willingness*.

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## **APPENDIXES**

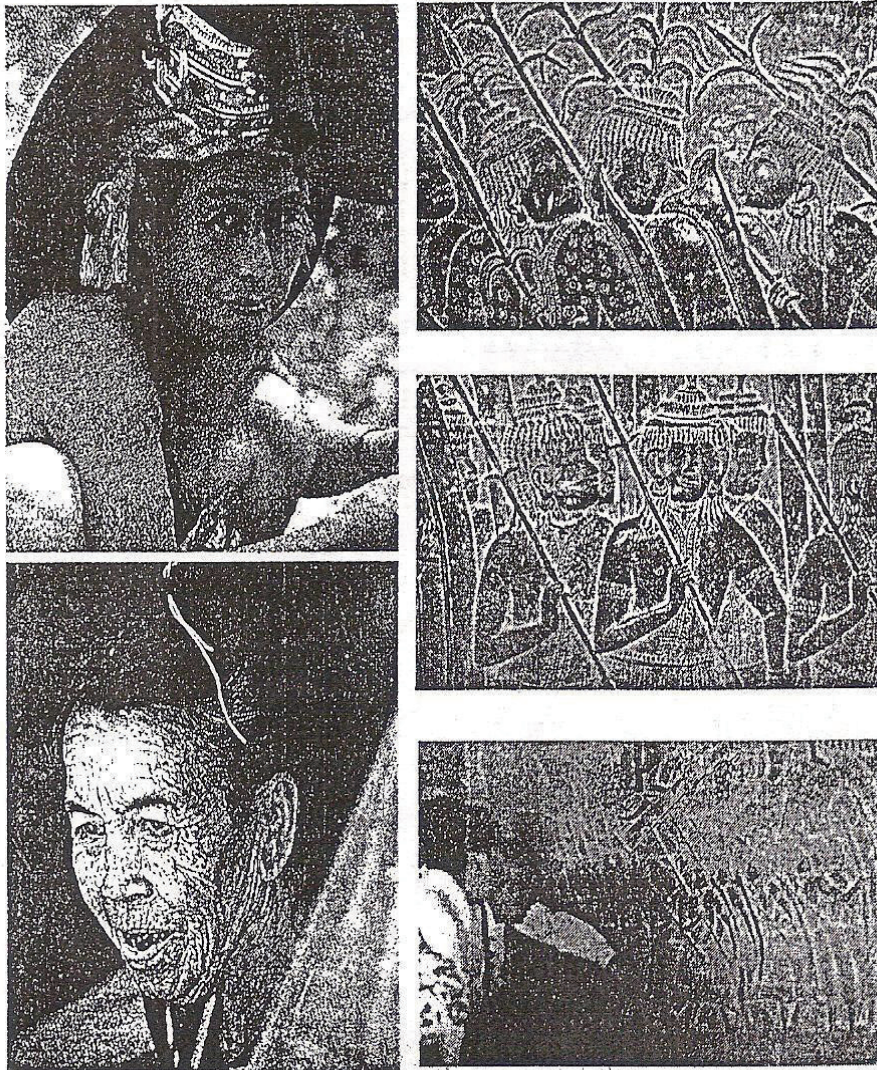
(Illustrations)



Figure 2: Depiction of the Thai race on the bas-relief of Angkor Wat Temple

The text below reads: “Picture: The Thai people in Laos with Chinese-like appearances resembles the sculptures of the *Syam Kuk* people on the bas-relief of Angkor Wat Temple, and Prince Diskul looking at the sculptures (1996)”

Source: Michel Tranet, *Pravattesas nai preah reacheanachak Kampuchea: Sampornapheap roveang procheachun Khmer-Thai chab pi sattavat ti 13 nai ko. so.* [A History of the Kingdom of Cambodia: Relationship between the Khmer and Thai People since the 13<sup>th</sup> century], Phnom Penh, 2005.



រូបភាព : ជនជាតិអប្សរូរថៃនៅលាវដែលមានលក្ខណៈចិនដូចចម្លាក់ជនជាតិសៀមកុក នៅលើប្រាសាទអង្គរវត្ត និង ព្រះអង្គម្ចាស់ឱស្តលកំពុងទតចម្លាក់(១៩៩៦)

Figure 3: The sculpture on the bas-relief of Angkor Wat Temple



Figure 4: Inscription 'Syam Kuk' at Angkor Wat Temple (recorded K289 in 1911)





Figure 5: Prehistoric discourse in a current Thai history textbook  
(*Ban Chheang* prehistoric site, Udon Thani)

Source: *Pravattisat 1* (secondary), Ministry of Education of Thailand, Bangkok, 2553 BE (2010 AD), p. 84.



เครื่องปั้นดินเผา ที่บ้านเชียง จังหวัดอุดรธานี



Figure 6: Prehistoric discourse in a current Thai history textbook

Source: *Pravattisat 1* (secondary), Ministry of Education of Thailand, Bangkok, 2553 BE (2010 AD), p. 19.



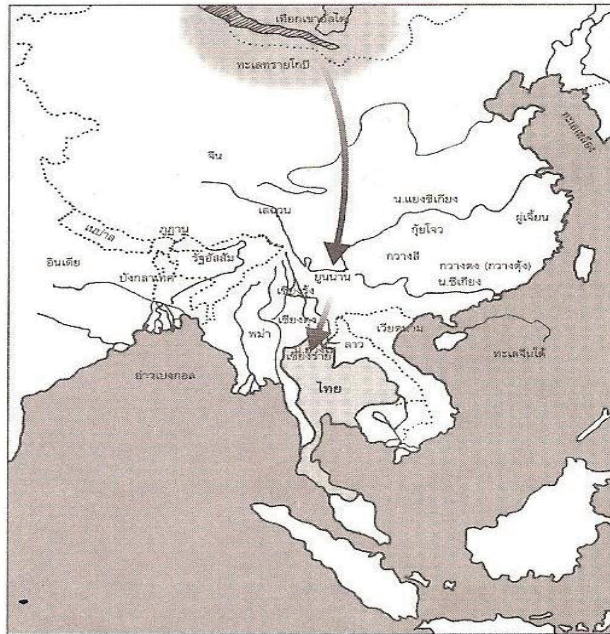
มนุษย์สมัยก่อนประวัติศาสตร์  
ที่พิพิธภัณฑสถานแห่งชาติบ้านเก่า จังหวัดกาญจนบุรี



ภาพเขียนสีสมัยก่อนประวัติศาสตร์ ถ้ำผาแดง  
อำเภอศรีสวัสดิ์ จังหวัดกาญจนบุรี

Figure 7: Migration theory in a current Thai history textbook

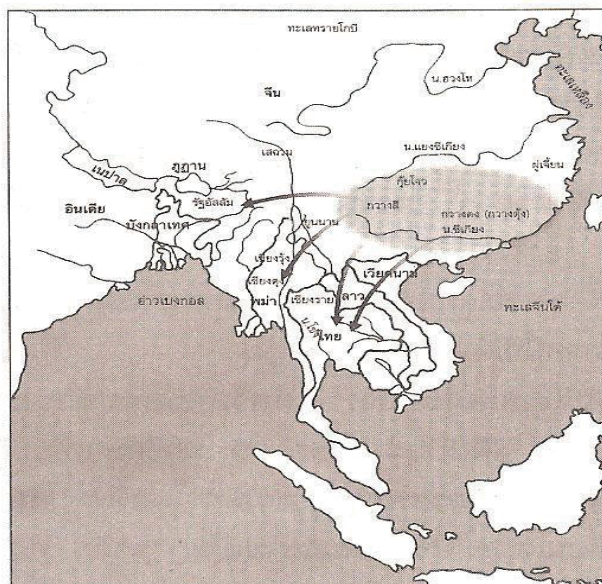
Source: *Pravattisat 1* (secondary), Ministry of Education of Thailand, Bangkok, 2553 BE (2010 AD), p. 96.



แผนที่แสดงถิ่นกำเนิดของชนชาติไทย แนวคิดที่ ๑

Figure 8: Migration theory in a current Thai history textbook

Source: *Pravattisat 1* (secondary), Ministry of Education of Thailand, Bangkok, 2553 BE (2010 AD), p. 97.



แผนที่แสดงถิ่นกำเนิดของชนชาติไทย แนวคิดที่ ๓

Figure 9: Ram Khamhaeng inscription in a current Thai history textbook

Source: *Pravattisat 1* (secondary), Ministry of Education of Thailand, Bangkok, 2553 BE (2010 AD), p. 133.

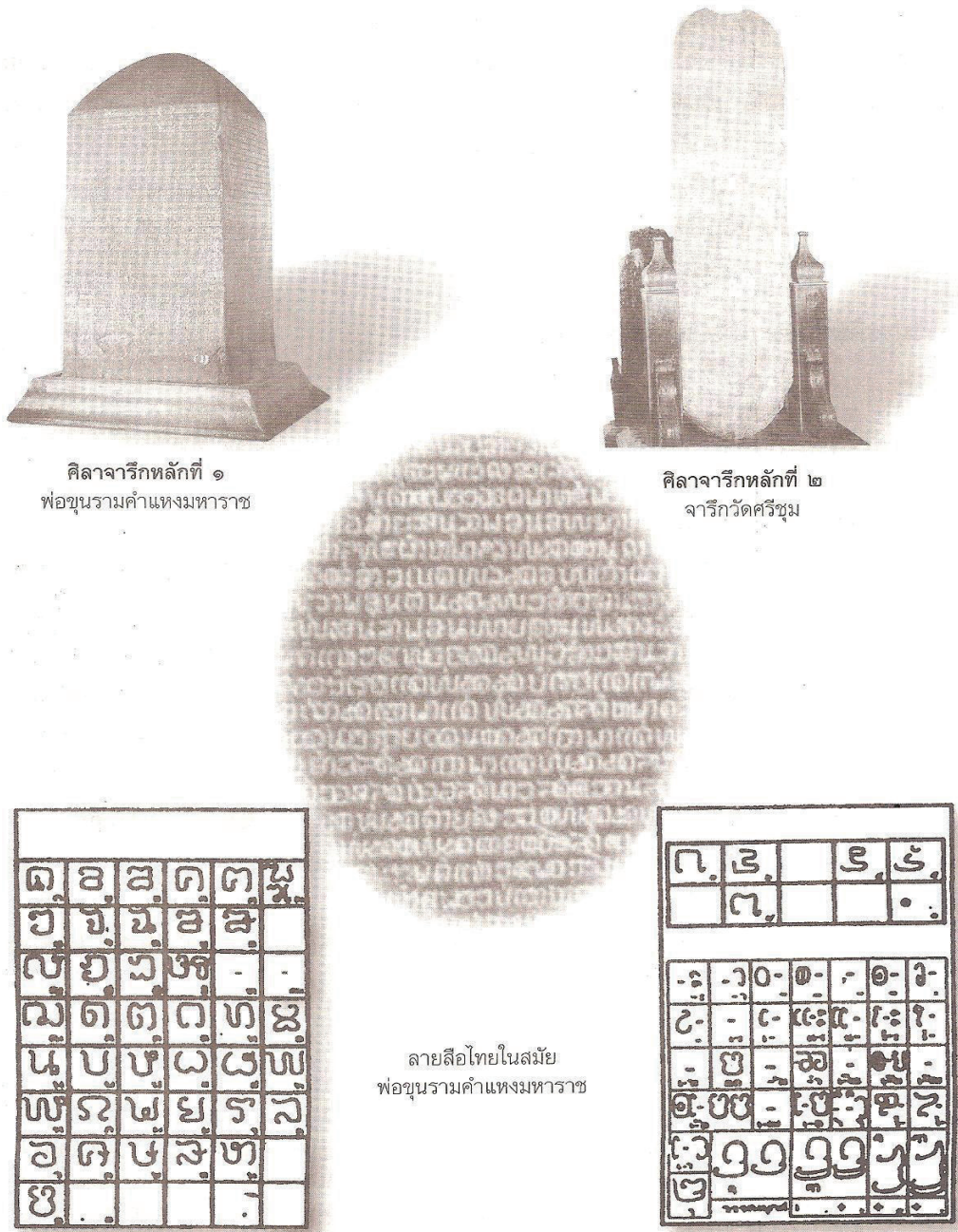
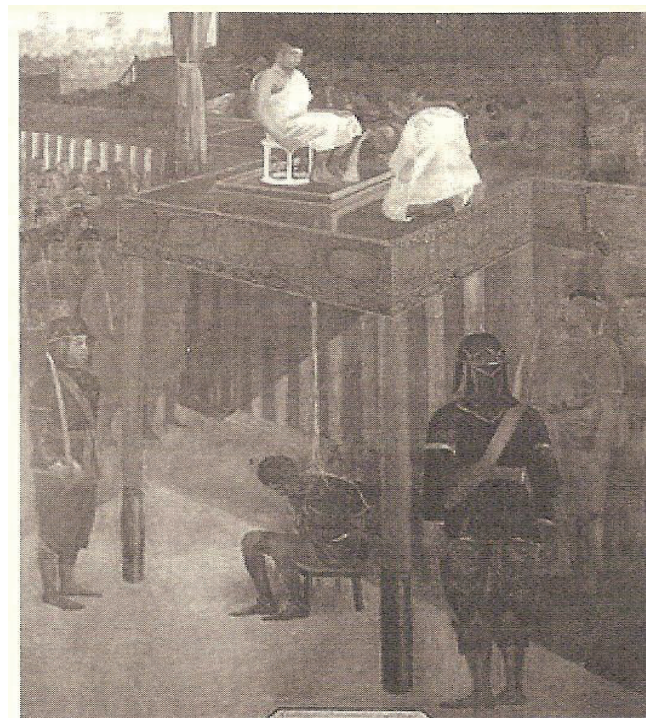


Figure 10: The miniature replica of Angkor Wat Temple in the Grand Palace of Bangkok



Figure 11: The Ceremony of Pathommakam

Source: Chetr Cherytho, *Thai-Khmer: Sangkram kab mittaphap* [Thai-Khmer: War and Friendship], Bangkok, 2553 BE (2010 AD), p. 37.



ภาพเขียนการปฐมกรรมพระยาละแวก

Figure 12: Map of the Kingdom of *Funan* or *Phnom*, 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD

Source: Treung Ngea, *Provattas Khmer* [A History of Cambodia], Phnom Penh, 1973, p. 59.

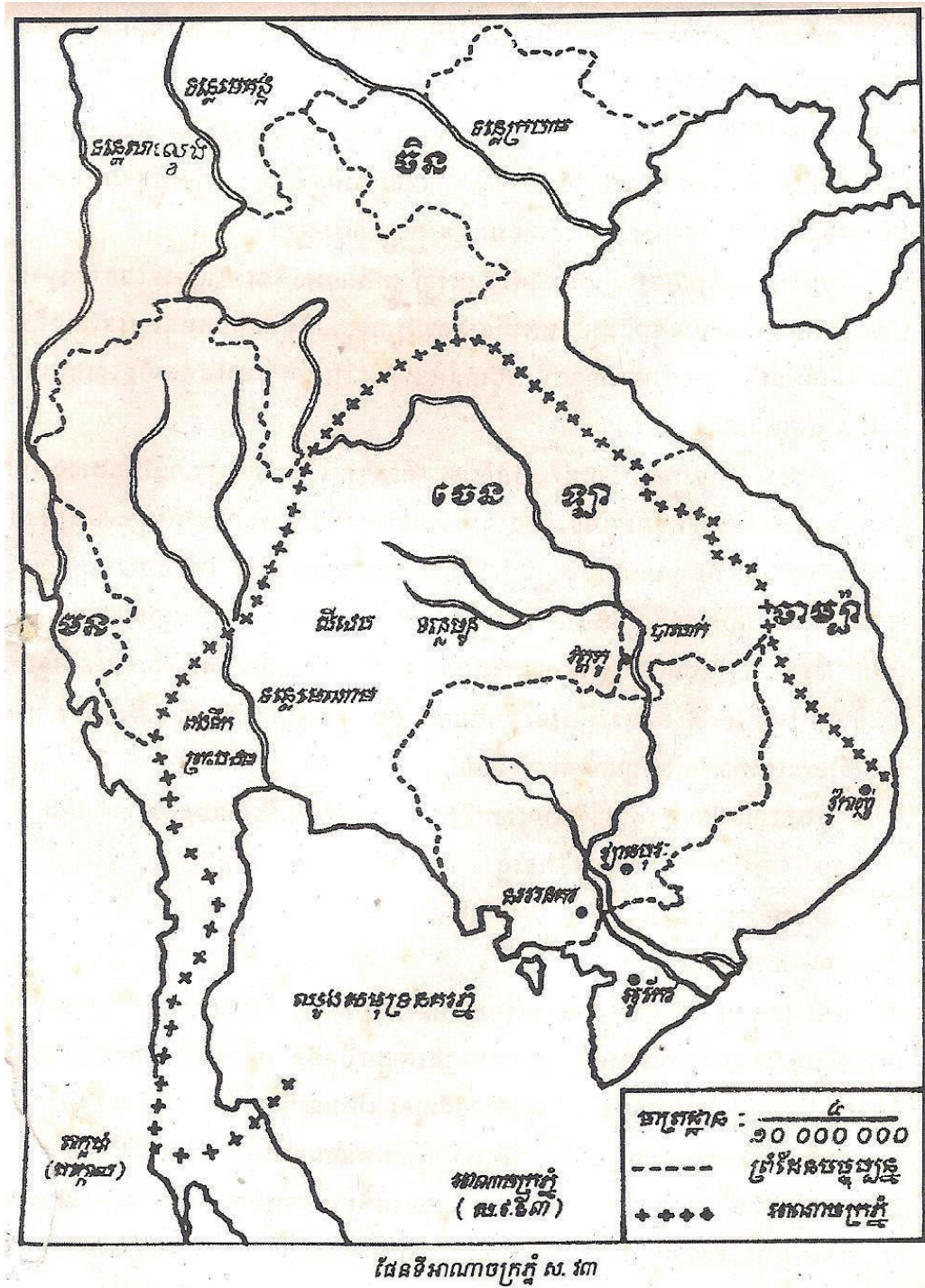


Figure 13: Migration theory: Movements of the Thai people from the north

Source: Thongbai Taengnoi, *Geographical Atlas*, 1935-1936, p. 27.

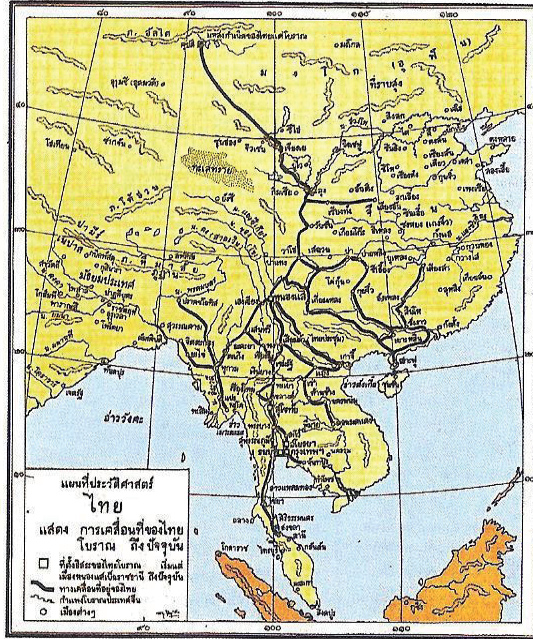


Figure 14: Kingdom of Nanchao

Source: Thongbai Taengnoi, *Geographical Atlas*, 1935-1936, p. 29.

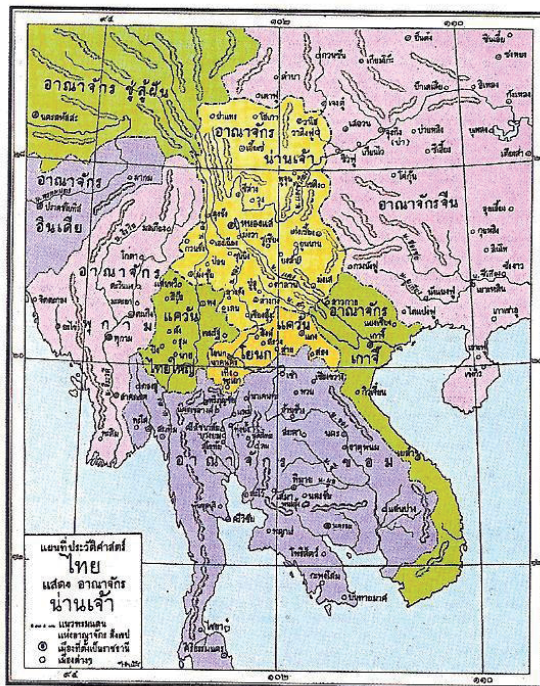


Figure 15: Map of the Khmer Empire by the Cambodian Cultural Commission in 2008

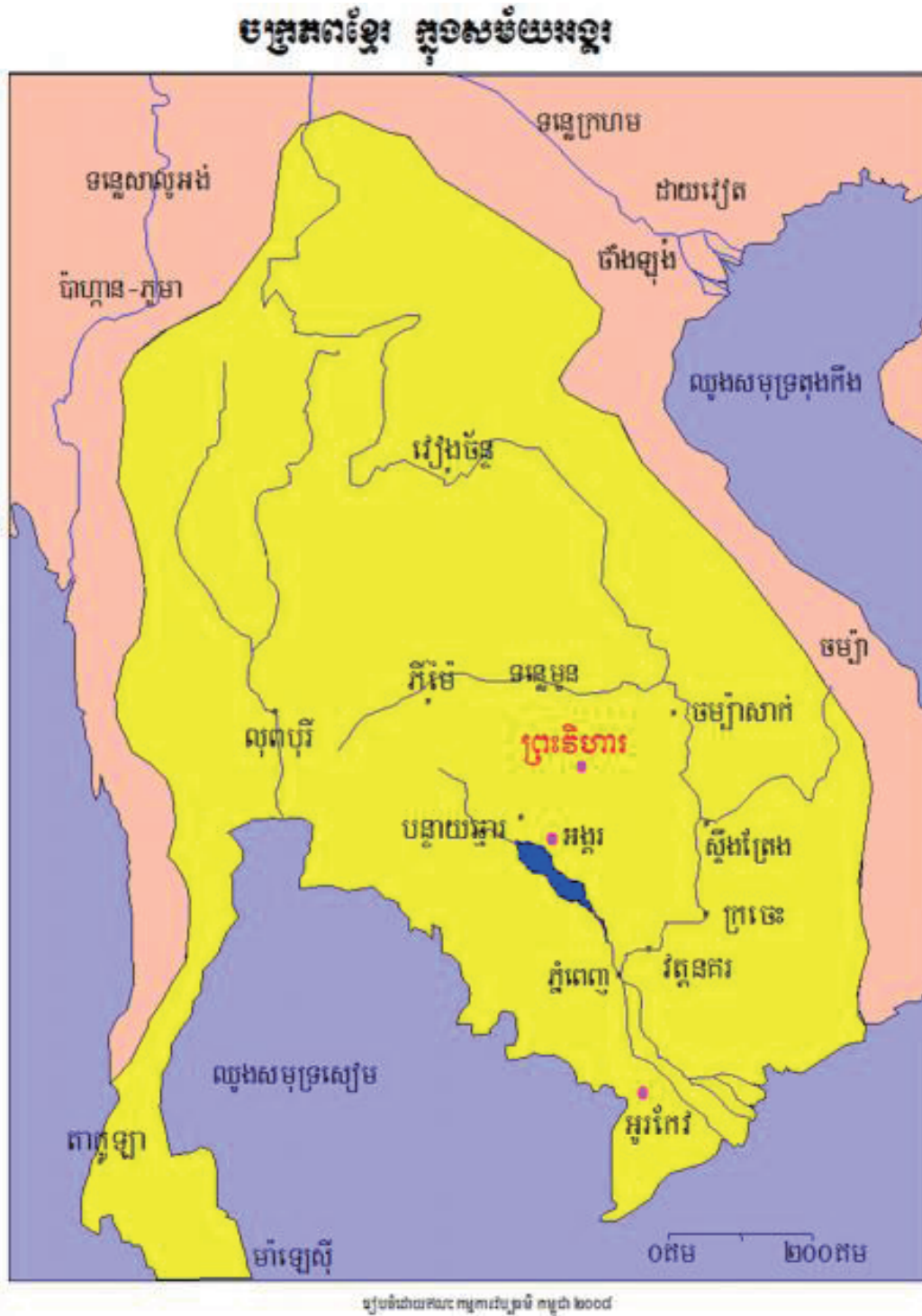


Figure 16: Map of the Khmer Empire during the reign of King Jayavaraman VII

Source: Chea Ourm, Phai Pheng, & Soam Im, *History of Cambodia for Grade 9, 8 and 7, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, 1973.

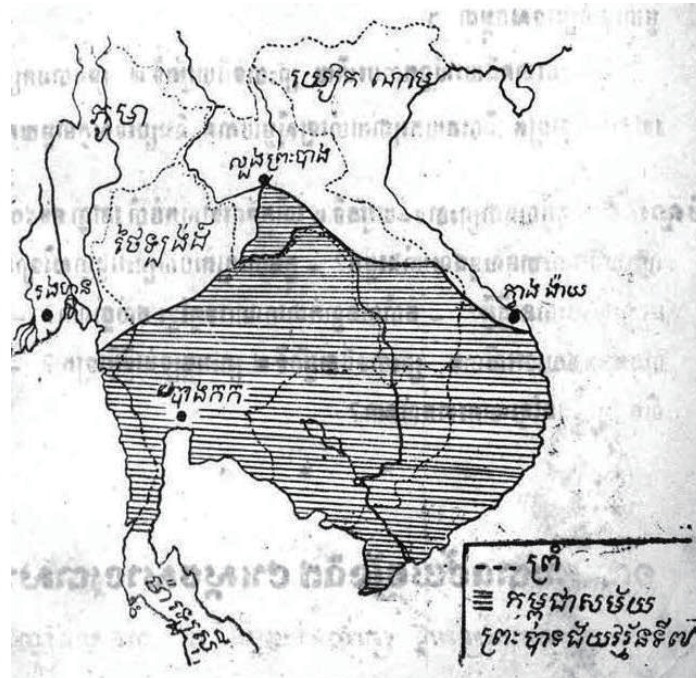


Figure 17: Kingdom of Sukhothai

Source: Thongbai Taengnoi, *Geographical Atlas*, 1935-1936, p. 31.





Figure 18: Kingdom of Sukhothai

Source: *Pravattisat 1* (secondary), Ministry of Education of Thailand, Bangkok, 2553 BE (2010 AD), p. 110.



แผนที่แสดงเมืองสำคัญในสมัยสุโขทัย

Figure 19: Kingdom of Ayudhya

Source: Thongbai Taengnoi, *Geographical Atlas*, 1935-1936, p. 33.



Figure 20a: Map of Cambodia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century before the fall of Lovek

Source: Treung Ngea, *Provattesas Khmer* [A History of Cambodia], Phnom Penh, 1973, p. 151.

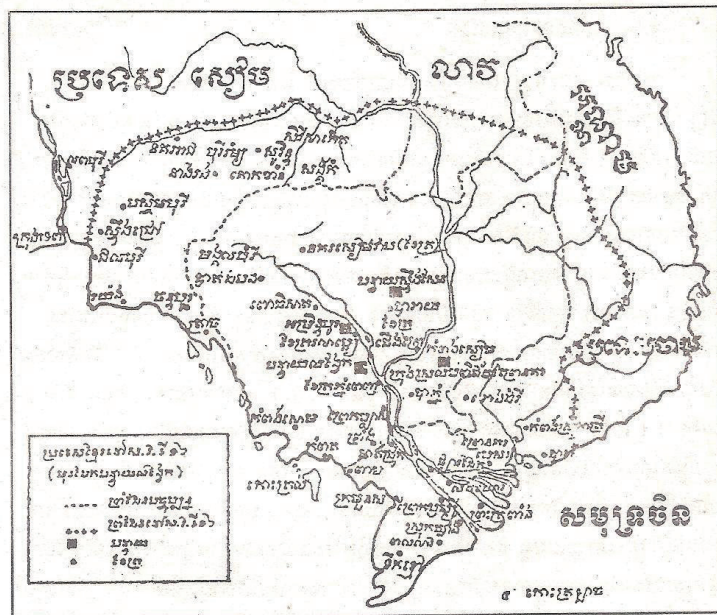




Figure 21: Kingdom of Thonburi

Source: *Pravattisat 2* (secondary), Ministry of Education of Thailand, Bangkok, 2553 BE (2010 AD), p. 109.



แผนที่แสดงอาณาเขตของอาณาจักรธนบุรีในสมัยสมเด็จพระเจ้าตากสินมหาราช

Figure 22: Kingdom of Thonburi

Source: Thongbai Taengnoi, *Geographical Atlas*, 1935-1936, p. 35.

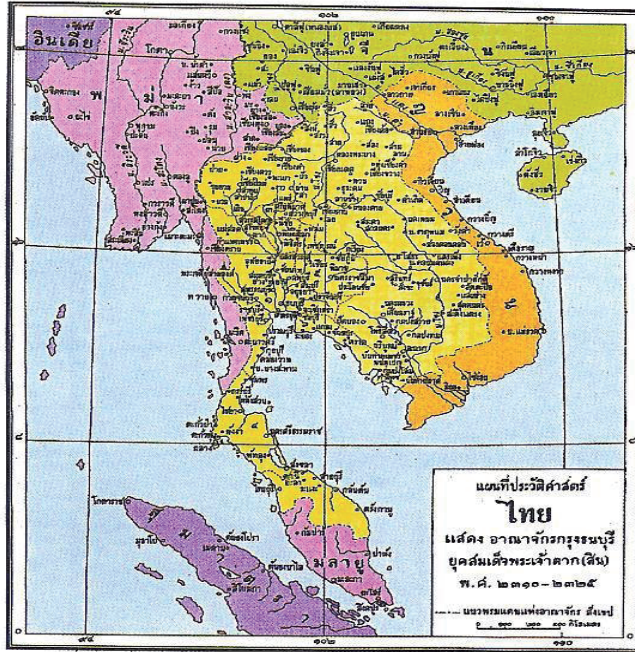


Figure 23: Kingdom of Ayudhya

Source: Thongbai Taengnoi, *Geographical Atlas*, 1935-1936, p. 37.

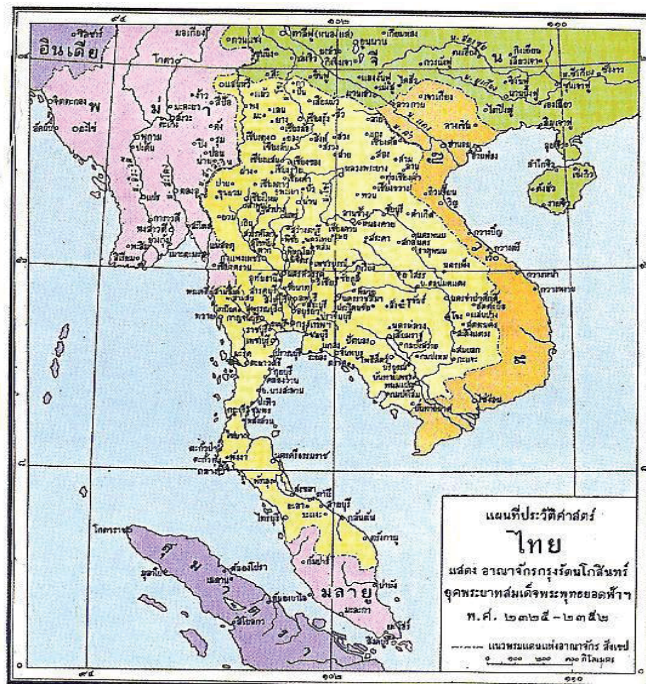


Figure 24: Siam and Vietnam divided Cambodia into two parts in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Source: Treung Ngea, *Provattesas Khmer* [A History of Cambodia], Phnom Penh, 1973, p. 259.

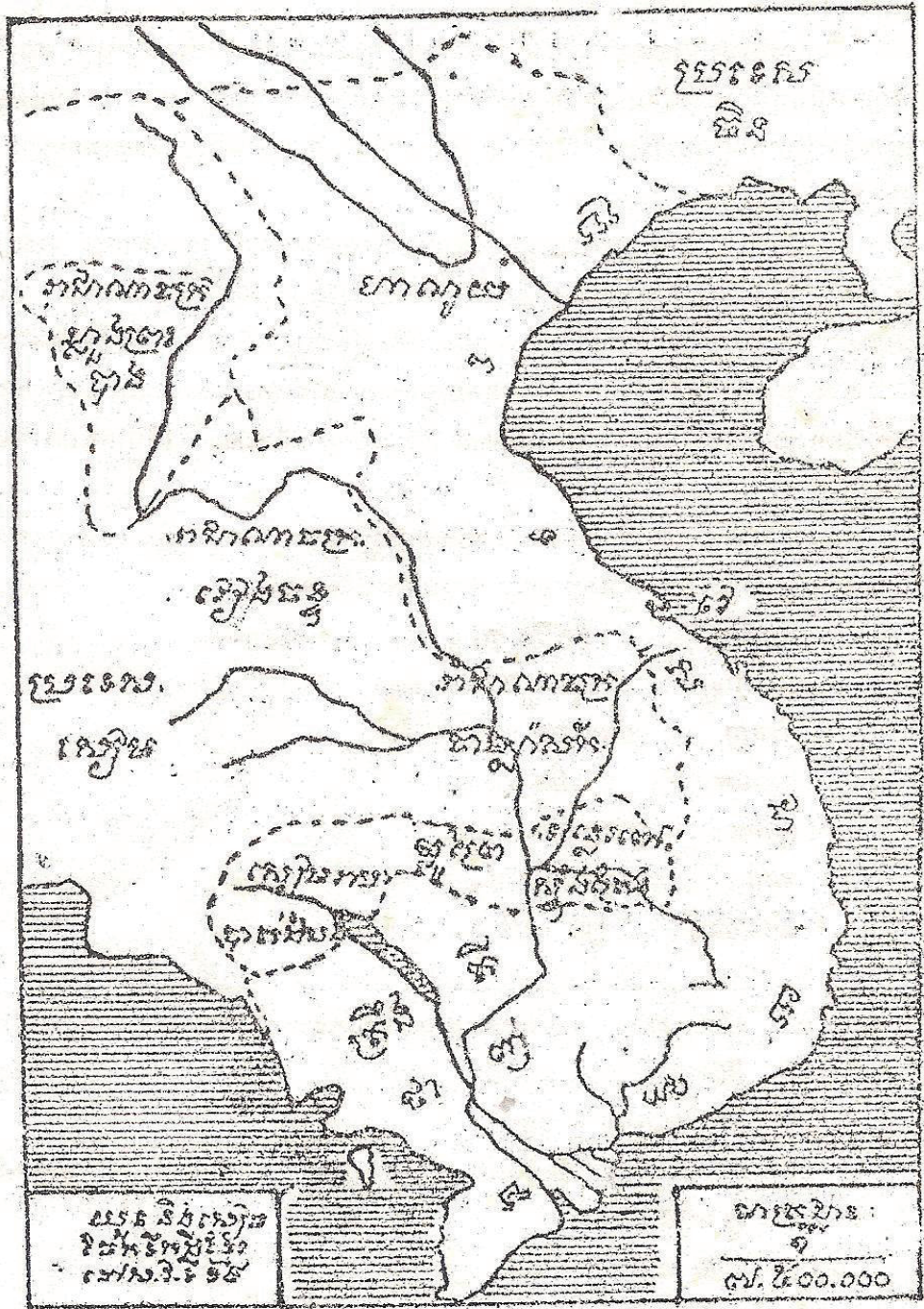


Figure 25: The statue of King Sisowath at Wat Phnom Park, Phnom Penh



Figure 26: The 1972 Cambodian banknote depicting the retrocession of the three provinces



Figure 27: Map of Siam and its dependencies by James F. M'Carthy in 1887 (The British Library)

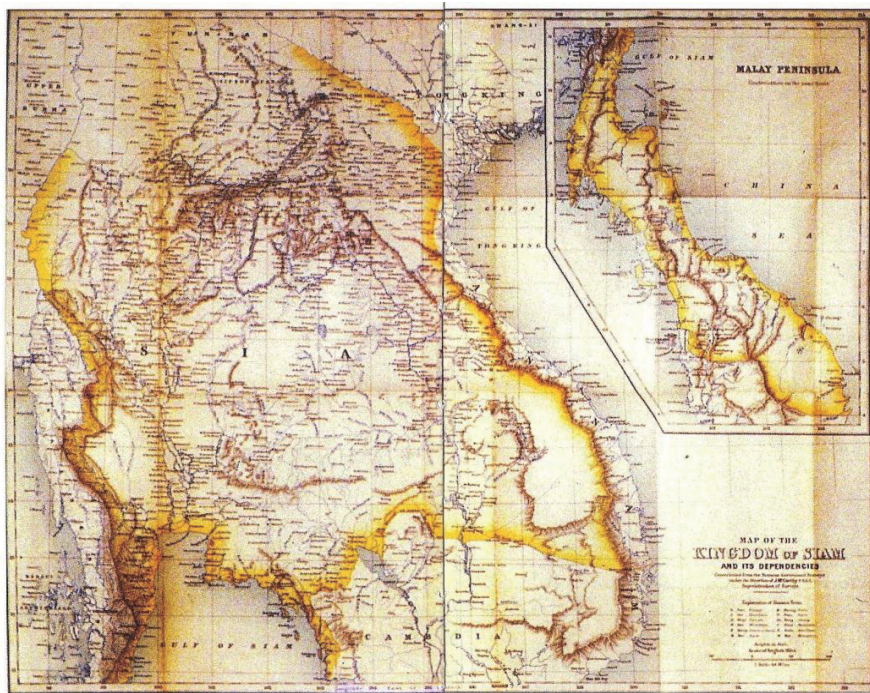


Figure 28: George Curzon's 'The Siamese Boundary Question', 1893

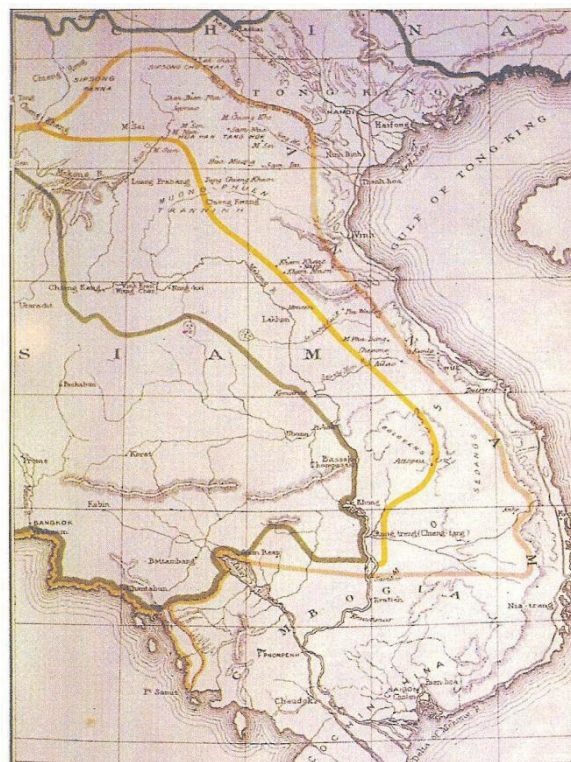




Figure 29: List of Thai Territories Lost to France

Source: Department of Publicity, *Thailand: How Thailand Lost her Territories to France*, Bangkok, 1940.

## LIST OF THAI TERRITORIES LOST TO FRANCE.

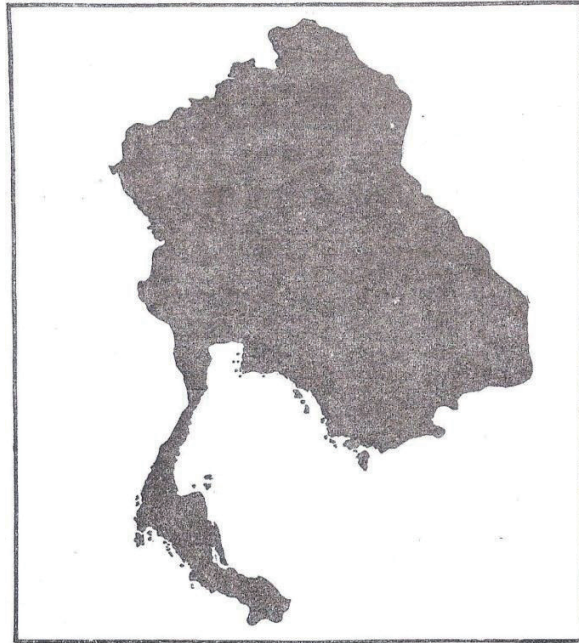
| <i>Occasion</i> | <i>Year</i> | <i>Territory Lost</i>   | <i>Area about sq. km.</i> |
|-----------------|-------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1               | 1867        | Cambodia and 6 islands  | 124,000                   |
| 2               | 1888        | Sipsong Chuthai   | 87,000                    |
| 3               | 1893        | The left bank of the Mekong   | 143,000                   |
| 4               | 1904        | The right bank of the Mekong<br>opposite Luang Prabang<br>and Paksé | 62,500                    |
| 5               | 1907        | Battambong, Siemrat, Srisophon                                      | 51,000                    |
|                 |             | Total of territories lost:  | <u>467,500</u>            |
|                 |             | Territory now belonging to Thailand                                 | <u>513,447</u>            |

The number of population cannot be separated, but the total may be arrived at as follows:—

|                                 |                  |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| The entire country of Cambodia: | 2,900,000        |
| The country called French Lao:  | 940,000          |
| Total of population:            | <u>3,840,000</u> |

Figure 30: Map of Thailand before French invasion as defined by *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*

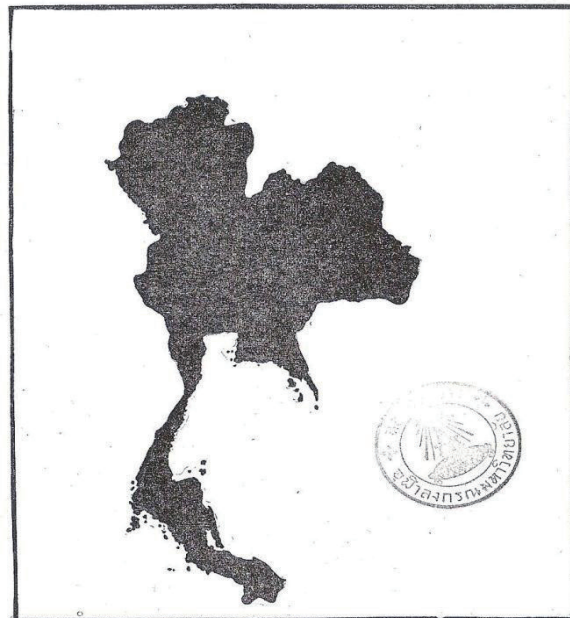
Source: *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, Thailand's Case*, Bangkok, 1941, p. 56.



*I. Thailand before French invasion. Area 980,947 sq. kms.*

Figure 31: Map of Thailand after French invasion as defined by *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*

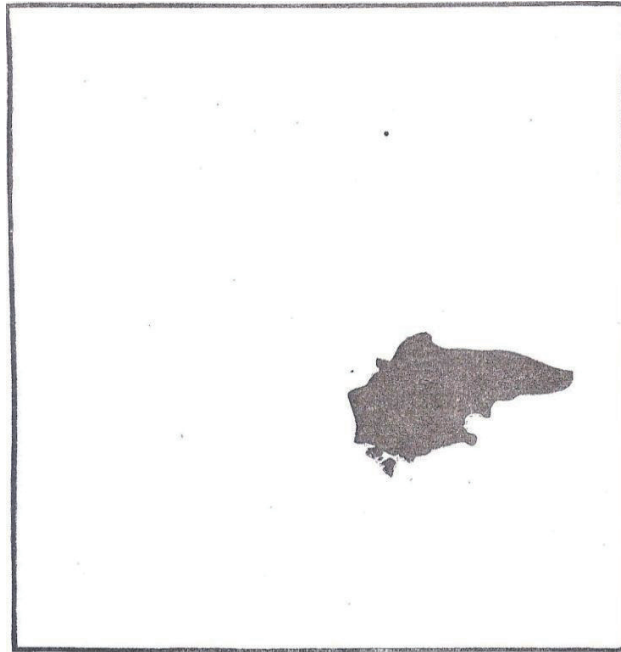
Source: *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, Thailand's Case*, Bangkok, 1941, p. 57.



*II. Thailand after French invasion. Area 513,447 sq. kms.  
Total loss 467,500 sq. kms.*

Figure 32: The first loss as defined by *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*

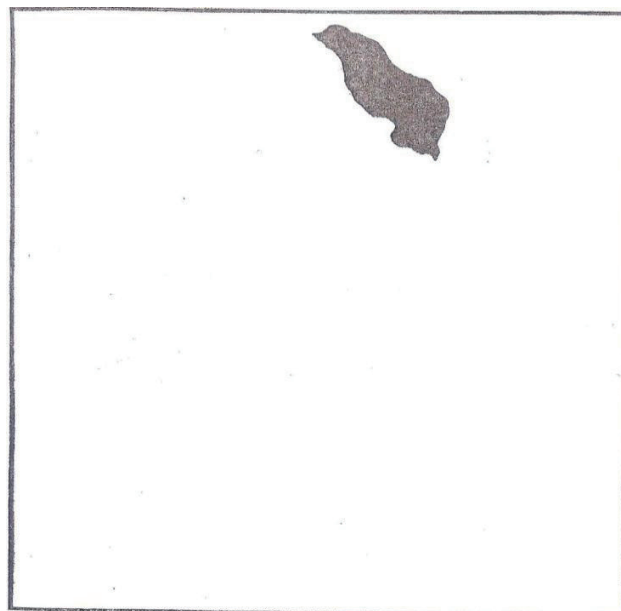
Source: *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, Thailand's Case*, Bangkok, 1941, p. 58.



III. Our first loss in 1867—Cambodia. Area about 124,000 sq. kms. with six large islands and three millions of population.

Figure 33: The second loss as defined by *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*

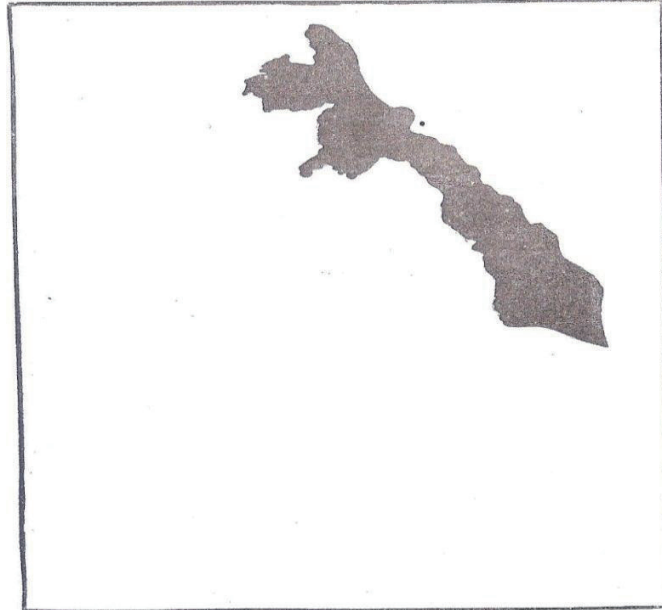
Source: *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, Thailand's Case*, Bangkok, 1941, p. 59.



IV. Our second loss in 1888—Sipsong Chuthai. Area about 87,000 sq. kms. This loss means closing forever the gate of our connection with 20 million souls of Thai race in South China and upper Tongking.

Figure 34: The third loss as defined by *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*

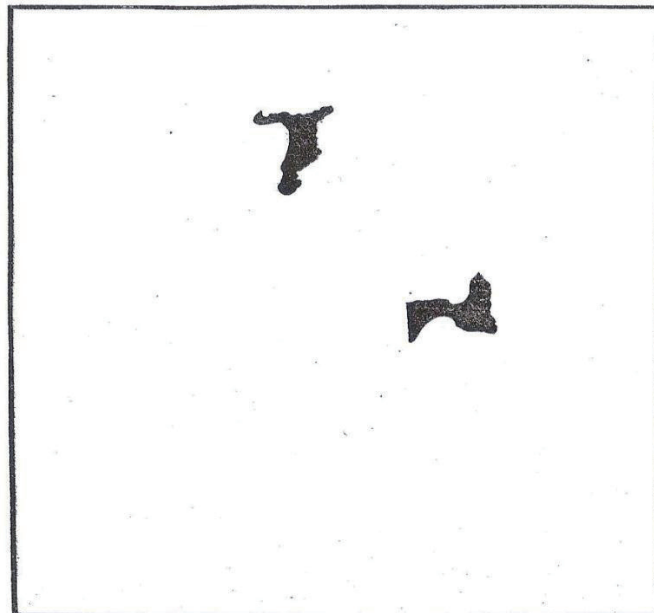
Source: *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, Thailand's Case*, Bangkok, 1941, p. 60.



V. Our third loss in 1893—The left bank of the Mekhong river. Area about 143,000 sq. kms. This loss is the most extensive and accompanied by the sum of three million francs.

Figure 35: The fourth loss as defined by *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*

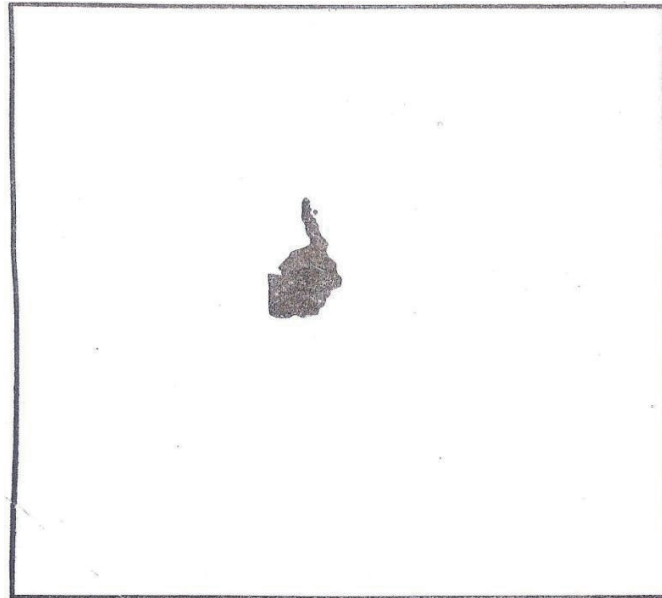
Source: *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, Thailand's Case*, Bangkok, 1941, p. 61.



VI. Our fourth loss in 1904—The right bank of the Mekhong opposite Luang Prabang and Pakse. Area about 62,000 sq. kms. We only requested for the return of these two strips of land shown in this map in order to have the Mekhong as natural frontier. But the French said, "No, not an inch!"

Figure 36: The fifth loss as defined by *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn*

Source: *Luang Vichitr Vadakarn, Thailand's Case*, Bangkok, 1941, p. 62.



VII. Our fifth loss in 1907 — Provinces of Siemrat, Battambang and Srisophon. Area about 51,000 sq. kms.

Figure 37: Propaganda map (August 1940) of Thailand's lost territories of Laos and Cambodia

Source: National Archive of Thailand (NAT)



Figure 38: A current propaganda map of five territorial losses at The National Memorial, Pathum Thani province, Thailand

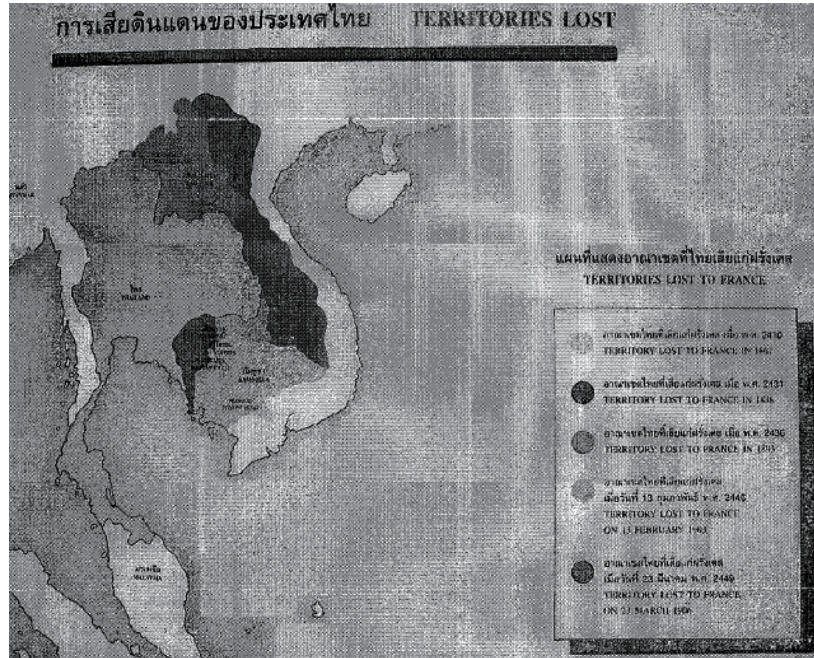
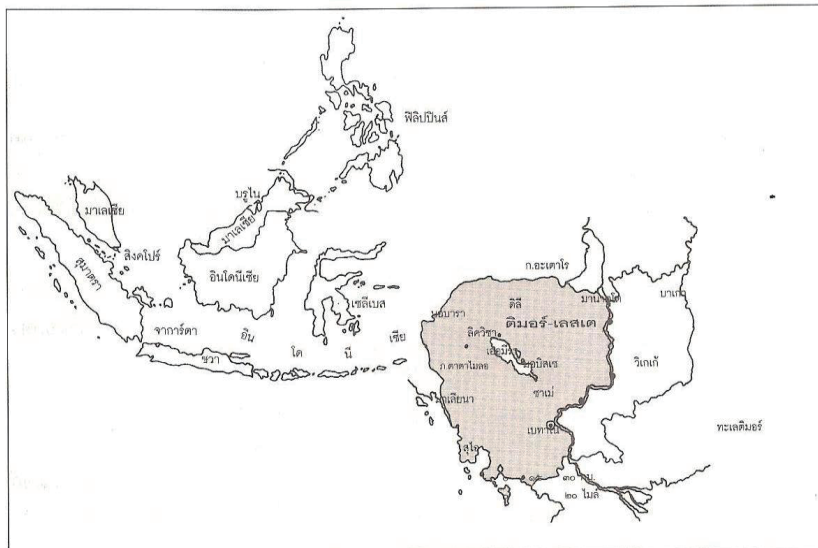


Figure 39: Map of divided Cambodia in a current Thai history textbook

Source: *Pravattisat 1* (secondary), Ministry of Education of Thailand, Bangkok, 2553 BE (2010 AD), p. 81.



แผนที่ประเทศสาธารณรัฐประชาธิปไตยติมอร์-เลสเต



Figure 40: Map depicting history of Thailand's boundary

Source: Thongbai Taengnoi, *Geographical Atlas*, 1935-1936, p. 39.

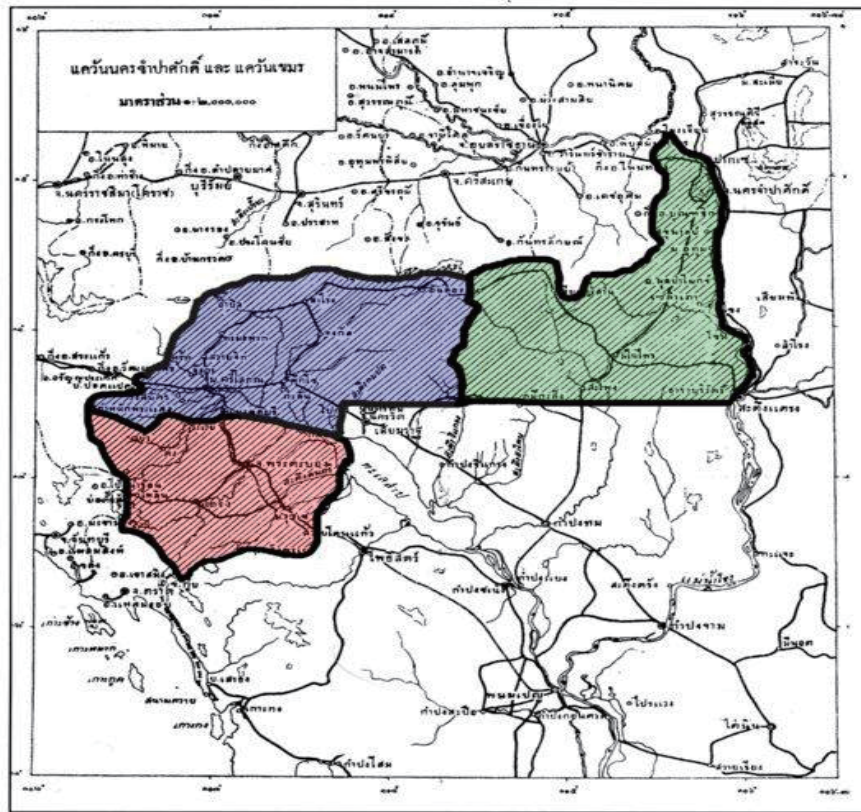


Figure 41: Map of Thailand's territorial losses

Source: *National Museum Volunteers*, Bangkok, no. 12, December 2010.



Figure 42: Map from the Thai Military showing their controls over the three provinces in the north and north-western parts of the present-day Cambodia and part of Champassak Province of Laos with the provincial seals representing the provinces in the 1940s.



พิมพ์ที่กรมแผนที่


 เครื่องหมายอาณาเขตที่จะโอนมาเป็นของไทย ตามอนุสัญญาสันติภาพ  
พื้นที่ประมาณ ๕๑,๓๒๖ ตารางกิโลเมตร





Figure 43: Map showing where the Khmer and Lao people live in Thailand at present

Source: Anel, Pierre, *Ampi chiet Khmer nov khnong protes Thailand* [About the Khmer people in Thailand], National Archive of Cambodia.

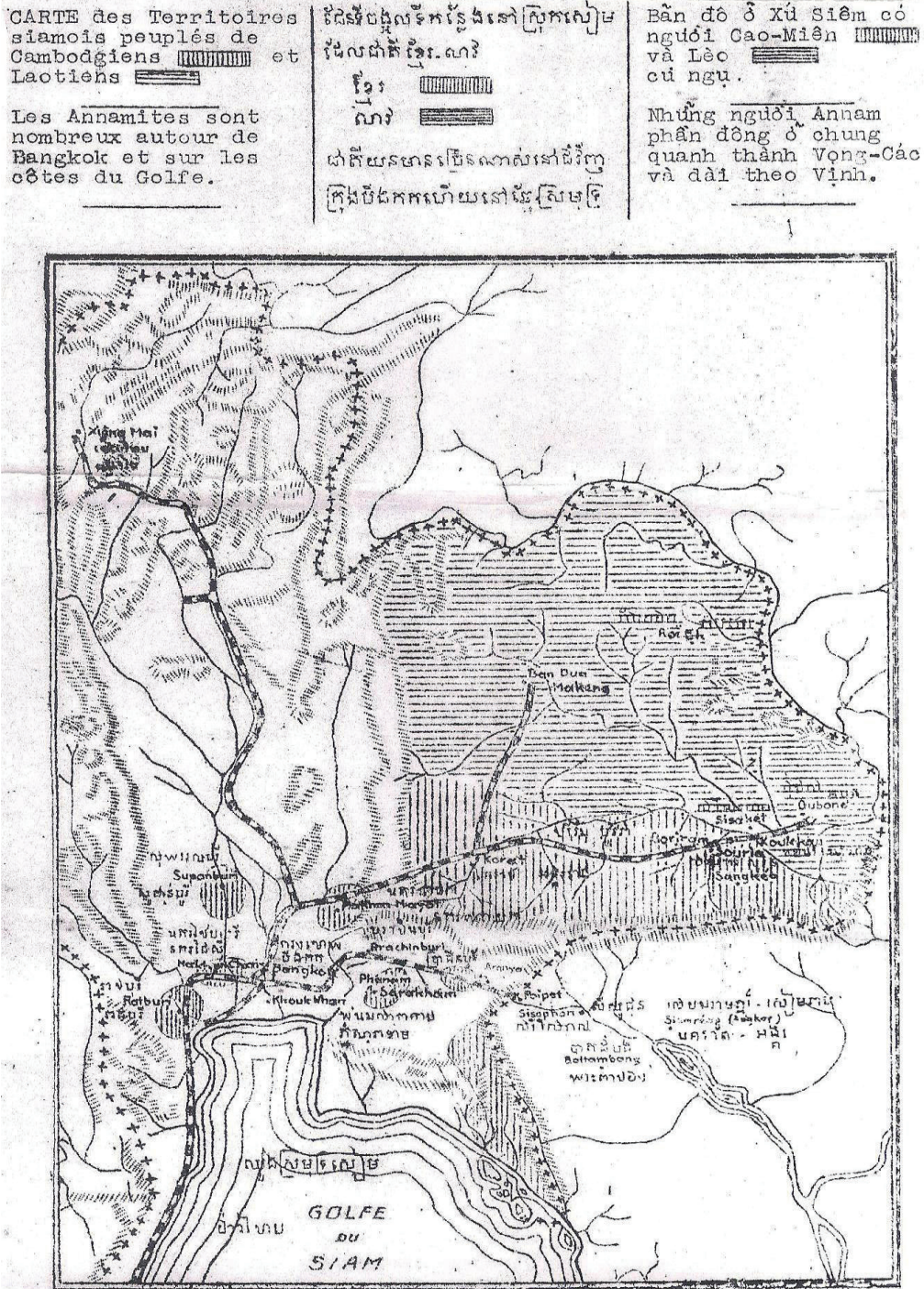


Figure 44: The change from Siam to Thailand on Thai banknotes in the late 1930s.

