



ASIAN REVIEW

Vol. 32 (2), 2019

ASEAN in the Brave New World:
Rising China and Southeast Asia in the Post-Cold War

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Institute of Asian Studies
Chulalongkorn University

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ISSN 0857-3662

Published by:
Institute of Asian Studies
7 F, Prajadhipok-Rambhai Barni Building
Chulalongkorn University, Phyathai Road
Bangkok 10330 Thailand

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Printed by:
Chulalongkorn University Press
Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330 Thailand
<http://www.cuprint.chula.ac.th>

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Introduction

Wasana Wongsurawat

This volume is the second instalment of *Asian Review* vol. 32, which is an extended special issue celebrating the works involved in the Consortium for Southeast Asian Studies in Asia through the two international conferences, SEASIA 2015 in Kyoto, Japan and SEASIA 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand. The main theme of this instalment remains the same. There are three articles and a book review which have been selected for the Asian perspectives they provide as an alternative to the American-centric Cold War narrative that has dominated much of the area studies of Asia since the conclusion of the Second World War.

The first article, “An analysis of the constraining factors on the Greater Mekong Subregion cooperation: A case-study of the Kunming-Bangkok Channel” by Zhao Shulan, explores the difficulties involved in the construction of high-speed connectivity between China and the Greater Mekong Sub-region through the Kunming-Bangkok Channel. This mega project, which is supposed to originate in the southern city of Kunming, the People’s Republic of China, and pass through the northern part of Laos and end at the ports of Bangkok, Thailand, leading to further connectivity both by sea and by land to the rest of Southeast Asia, has been in the making since the late-1980s. Yet, it has suffered many socio-economic and political obstacles through the last decades of the 20th century and remains unfinished up to the present day, even though the Chinese president Xi Jinping’s inauguration of the Belt and Road Initiative in 2013 seemed to have breathed new life into this long stalled project. Zhao Shulan provides a thorough and novel analysis on the challenges and opportunities involved in achieving this long-awaited project of connectivity. What are the possibilities and ways through which close Southeast Asian neighbors, such as Laos and Thailand, could successfully incorporate their developmental policies into China’s BRI grand scheme without

putting themselves in too much of a disadvantageous position? Could the rise of China in the 21st century be managed as a win-win situation for close ASEAN neighbors as well?

The second article, “The urban development of Phnom Penh: “A happy garden with ever bright sun” by Christina Warning, also looks at the difficult negotiations, conflicts and compromises between economic development and social equality in the context of the vast expansion of PRC capital into mainland Southeast Asia—in this case, to the capital city of Cambodia, Phnom Penh. Warning’s article presents, in stark comparison, the two most disruptive cases of mass eviction in the modern history of the city of Phnom Penh—first, that of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1975, and second those undertaken for the city’s land and housing development projects in the 2000s. While both cases were significantly influenced by various forces from the People’s Republic of China and resulted in the displacement of thousands of urban families, the ideology behind the two cases as well as the regional and global political and economic contexts surrounding them differ significantly. The Khmer Rouge regime was strongly inspired by the Maoist extremism of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the PRC while much of the capital behind the development projects of Phnom Penh in the 21st century came from China under the socialist market economy that has flourished since Deng Xiaoping introduced his radical “Reform and Openness” policies since the late-1970s. The first case was a classic example of the Cold War in Asia. The latter is one of the most outstanding examples of PRC capitalist influence in Southeast Asia in the post-Cold War. Yet the impact of these two mass evictions on the inner city communities of Phnom Penh appear to be not drastically different. This article poses important questions related to the transformation—or lack thereof—of the relationship between Southeast Asian regimes and the PRC from the Cold War period up to the present day. What are the different challenges in dealing with China as a Maoist superpower and a post-Cold War capitalistic superpower? How might small developing countries in Southeast Asia, such as Cambodia, deal with the seemingly unchanged power relations in the vastly different context of the globalized world?

The third article, “A short history of the transformation of ethnic Chinese organizations in Thailand: From seditious secret societies to patriotic cultural NGOs” by Zhang Ying and Wasana Wongsurawat,

investigates the transformation of ethnic Chinese organizations in Thailand from the 19th century to the present day, a process which mirrors, quite intriguingly, the development of Sino-Thai relations from the colonial era to the post-Cold War. Ethnic Chinese organizations have long served as an important medium between the states of China and Thailand. They have been widely active both as agents of trade and negotiators of political conflicts, alliances, and influences. They have had their fair share of conflicts with both the Chinese and Thai state through the tumultuous transformations of regional and global political contexts—from the height of the colonial era, through the Cold War and up to the present era of globalization. The history of the transformation of ethnic Chinese organization in Thailand provides an interesting case-study of how Chinese diaspora groups could continue to serve as an important cultural link between China and Southeast Asia even through drastically changed political circumstances from the 19th to 21st century. The case-study of the seemingly successful integration of ethnic Chinese organization into the Thai national narrative and the ethnic Chinese community into the greater Thai national community could provide an interesting—and perhaps even useful—reflection of the possibilities that Thailand and her Southeast Asian neighbors might be able to integrate and benefit from the grand scheme of transnational Chinese economic and political network of the Belt and Road Initiative of post-Cold War Asia as well. Might it be possible for post-Cold War ASEAN members to learn to adjust their relationship with rising China of the 21st century as the ethnic Chinese organizations have learnt to adjust their relationship with the state—in this article, with China and Thailand in particular—so as to survive and flourish through the changing political and economic regional and global contexts?

Finally, the book review of Hiroko Matsuda's *Liminality of the Japanese Empire: Border Crossing from Okinawa to Colonial Taiwan* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2018) provides an interesting comparative backdrop of a brief era during which another Asian superpower established its hegemony across East and Southeast Asia. *Liminality of the Japanese Empire* challenges the mainstream definition of what the Japanese Empire was from the conclusion of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, when Japan first acquire Formosa Island as its colony, to the conclusion of the Second World War. It also questions what

it meant to be Japanese vis-à-vis Okinawan and colonized subjects of Taiwan. Aside from the legal borders between empires, there were also recognized borders within the Japanese Empire. And even beyond those, there were invisible yet potent divisions between the so-called mainland Japanese and their Okinawan counterparts. In this book, Matsuda tells an intriguing narrative of the transformation of the Japanese Empire into the nation-state of Japan in the postwar years and how that affected Japan former colonies, both Taiwan, which gained problematic sovereignty through the Cold War period, and Okinawa, which remained within the Japanese nation, yet was constantly discriminated against. As we progress through the era of globalization towards the end of the second decade of the 21st century, post-Cold War trade and corporate empires appear to transcend the borders of nation-states and propel the world towards an era of capitalistic imperialism once again. There are interesting parallels to be drawn between the transformation of the Japanese Empire in the late-19th century to becoming a postwar nation-state in the mid-20th century and the transformation of China as a Maoist People's Republic to a globalized economic empire under Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative of the 21st century. How similar and how different are these two campaigns of "Asia for Asia," and how might they affect our understanding of basic concepts, such as, nation and sovereignty for smaller and developing neighbors in Southeast Asia? There is definitely much that Asia in the shadow of the BRI could learn from the history of the rise and fall of the Japanese Empire in the 20th century.

There is indeed a whole new horizon to discover from investigating Asia from the Asian perspective. Especially with the Cold War becoming part of the not-so-recent history and with China rising to challenge US hegemony in the 21st century, there is a serious need to reconsider old paradigms of area studies, which have long dominated the studies of Asia since the conclusion of the Second World War. With the collection of new scholarship presented in these articles and book review, perhaps we could help spark some interest and carry the investigation further to build a more critical and comprehensive understanding of Asia in the globalized world.

An analysis of the constraining factors on Greater Mekong Subregion cooperation: A case study of the Kunming-Bangkok Channel

Zhao Shulan

ABSTRACT—Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) cooperation from the perspective of regional development is restricted by political, economic and cultural factors in the process of promotion. The Kunming-Bangkok corridor is the central line of the GMS South-North Economic Corridor, which was jointly launched by the Asian Development Bank and China to connect China and ASEAN Countries. But as soon as the Corridor was built in 2013, it was found to be difficult to break through the bottleneck of development. This can be seen as a common point in different aspects of GMS cooperation. Moreover, the different demands and institutional differences of various countries on the Mekong River are political factors that restrict GMS cooperation development. The gap between countries in the level of economic development makes it difficult to establish complementarity, resulting in the long-term stagnation of regional cooperation at this stage. In addition, people from different countries in the region have different understandings on development, which makes it difficult for regional forces to coordinate and integrate. Although there are various constraints, economic demand will break through the layers of constraint and further promote regional cooperation, once the door to economic cooperation is opened. To sum up, it is expected there are still broad prospects for the development of the Kunming - Bangkok Corridor between China and Thailand.

Keywords: Kunming-Bangkok Channel, restrictive factors, structural problems, mutual complements in economy, cultural difference

Introduction

In 1988, Chatichai Choonhavan, the then prime minister of Thailand, proposed the Indochina Initiative to convert the Indochina battleground into a commercial market. In 1992, the Asian Development Bank, China, and five countries along the Mekong launched a cooperation plan for the Greater Mekong Subregion (hereinafter referred to as *GMS*) covering the six countries and seven parties and the plan has had great achievements in the past two decades. But the bottleneck in its deepening development is also increasingly prominent. The development of the Kunming-Bangkok Channel, the central line of the south-north economic corridor of the *GMS*, which was jointly promoted by the Asian Development Bank and China, reflects some of the problems of *GMS* development.

The Kunming-Bangkok Channel in a narrow sense refers to the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, which starts from Kunming, goes through Yuxi, Yuanjiang, Pu'er, Jinghong, and crosses Mohan Port to Boten Port in Laos, and then goes through Luang Namtha and Ban Houayxay of Bokeo Province, and enters Chiang Khong in Thailand across the Mekong River Bridge. It reaches Bangkok via Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai, covering a total of 1,818 kilometers. The Kunming-Bangkok Channel in a broad sense contains highways, railways, the Mekong River shipping lines and air transport lines. This paper mainly discusses the Kunming-Bangkok Channel in the narrow sense, namely the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, which was opened in 2008, and linked the whole line together after the Mekong River Bridge between Ban Houayxay, Laos and Chiang Khong, Thailand, had been completed and came into use at the end of 2013.

According to the feasibility study for the project's approval and the construction of Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, there are supposed to be considerable economic and social benefits after its completion. Based on a quantitative analysis of its economic benefits, the conclusions are as follows: firstly, logistics time would be greatly saved. It takes only twenty hours by car from Kunming to Bangkok on the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, truly realizing a start at dawn and arrival at dusk. Transportation using the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway could save more than ten days compared to the traditional seaway transportation. Secondly, logistics costs would be greatly saved. For the delivery of

goods, it would mean real savings on transportation time and costs via the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, due to the reduction of intermediate links. Thirdly, there would be huge volumes of goods and visitors with broad prospects. By this calculation, with the completion of the China and ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) and the significant increase in bilateral trade, there would be over 1,000 trucks of 15 to 20 tons participating in busy transportation in this section throughout the year, and there would be 5 million visitors passing through every year (Qichang Li 2004). It could effectively promote economic and social development along the line and realize the magnificent transformation from “transportation corridor” to “economic corridor.”

In fact, the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway has been open for ten years, since 2008. There has been an increase in the volume of trade and direct investment between Yunnan and Thailand, with bilateral exchanges and economic ties between the two. Due to the failure of “one-stop” customs clearance, the logistics cost is actually higher than that of sea transportation and the logistics cycle is two or three days. The volume of logistics and trade between Yunnan and Thailand is far from what is expected on the Kunming-Bangkok Channel. Only the flow of people has reached the expected level. That is to say, due to multiple restrictive factors, the Kunming-Bangkok Channel has not yet been upgraded to an economic corridor from a transportation corridor. This paper analyzes the factors that make it difficult for the Kunming-Bangkok Channel to upgrade from a transportation corridor to an economic corridor, discusses factors restricting the cooperation between China and the GMS, and tries to put forward suggestions for the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway.

Literature review

In recent years, there has been much academic research on greater Mekong Subregional cooperation (Goh 2007; Osborne 2000; Medhi 2004; Mya Than 1997; Siriluk 2004; Hori 2004). Most scholars believe that GMS cooperation has played a positive role in the development of countries in the region. Chheang Vannarith considers that GMS cooperation schemes and mechanisms have played a significant role in linking the six countries in the Subregion especially through infra-

structure connectivity and economic integration. The development partners, especially the Asian Development Bank, are the driving forces supporting the Subregion by means of financial and technical support (Chheang 2014). The rich human and natural resource endowments of the Mekong region have made it a new frontier of Asian economic growth. Indeed, the Mekong region has the potential to be one of the world's fastest growing areas. With many projects and well-designed programs, the Mekong region has been credited with remarkable progress and achievements in following main sectors (Chap 2006). GMS cooperation is conducive to promoting the economic development of new ASEAN member states and Thailand, narrowing the development gap between new and old ASEAN member states, promoting the integration process of ASEAN and building the ASEAN community (Shao and Liu 2014). A more integrated GMS will improve logistics within the CLMV countries—Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Myanmar and Vietnam—help spread manufacturing supply chains to the CLMV and support a sustained high growth of CLMV, thereby reducing the disparities among GMS economies (Verbiest 2013).

At the same time, many scholars also believe that there are many constraints on the development of the GMS. The restricting factors are mainly concentrated in these aspects, namely, economic factors, political factors such as problems in cooperation mechanisms, and social factors such as the pressure of environmental protection. On the economic level, the major obstacle to economic cooperation in the GMS lies in the fact that most of the developments in this Subregion have been at different stages; thus, there is a development gap between Thailand and other GMS countries. This gap has also become a major problem for the economic integration of the GMS because some members (Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar) tremendously lag behind the other members. The development gaps in the GMS contain the following major aspects: income gap, health gap, knowledge and information gap, and gaps in rights, opportunities and the power of negotiation (Chareonwongsak and Chareonwongsak 2005).

Meanwhile, Mekong countries face homogeneous competition in industrial development. Among GMS, competition to find markets for similar products, especially agricultural products, creates complexity in economic cooperation. The different levels of production capacity

among GMS create different cost factors and make it more difficult for the poorer economies to win in competition (Chap 2006).

At the level of cooperation, the first element is the mechanism of Subregional cooperation. Verbiest (2013) noted that the region will face greater challenges from the software side of connectivity development compared with hardware infrastructure development. The need to involve many institutions in each country and the uneven capacity levels of institutions within and between countries have been indicated. On this issue, it is important to add that a critical problem is the lack of an adequate cooperation framework that will ensure appropriate benefit sharing among the various countries from the physical connectivity (Verbiest 2013). Although the Asian Development Bank has proposed various GMS cooperation projects to promote integration among GMS countries but Dosch's passing comment is that the GMS "look[s] more like a collection of many Subregions, instead of one cohesive Subregion" (Dosch 2007, 269). Because of this, there is another problem at the institutional level in specific cooperation; countries fail to reach a complete consensus on cross-border logistics, which restricts the integrated development of the Subregion.

On environmental protection, the rich and diverse natural resource base of the GMS is suffering from increasing stress as a result of rapid demographic and economic change, unsustainable exploitation, the impact of development programs and projects, and the relative weakness of the protective and regulatory institutions. Hence, the development of the Mekong region has increased the demand for the over-exploitation of natural resources that places excessive pressure on the environment (Chap 2006).

The existing research provides a good reference point for this research. However, most current research is conducted from the perspective of the overall development of GMS, and the achievements of general research on GMS are quite sufficient. It seems that not enough case studies have been conducted from the perspective of specific cooperative projects and development of specific economic corridors in GMS cooperation. In this paper, the Kunming-Bangkok Channel, the north-south economic corridor of GMS, is taken as an example to discuss the factors restricting the cooperation of GMS, which may help us to see the challenges in the cooperation of GMS.

Analysis of political factors restricting the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Channel

The political factors restricting the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway refer to the institutional differences and structural problems in GMS cooperation between China and Thailand. At the institutional level, there are great differences in the government decision-making mechanisms, traffic management systems and customs clearance, inspection and quarantine systems that seriously hinder the upgrading of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway from a transportation corridor to an economic corridor. Structural problems of various countries in the GMS point to the different demands and positions of China and Thailand in the Kunming-Bangkok Economic Corridor and the whole of GMS cooperation.

Institutional problems

Firstly, there are differences in decision-making and implementation systems at all levels. There are great differences between China and Thailand in terms of the national system, such as how major decisions get made. Thailand is a constitutional monarchy. In order to make a decision, the procedure and cycle that the country needs to go through is very different from that of China. The Thai entrepreneurs and politicians whom the author contacted in this investigation, believed that if Thailand's parliament makes a proposal, such as the establishment of an industrial park in Chiang Rai along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, or the construction of the expressway from Chiang Khong to Chiang Mai, it will go through layers of argument, as well as needing the investment of enterprises for completion. Differently, in China, if a development project is proposed, the state will not only dominate from top to bottom but will also bear the cost of construction.

Secondly, the road traffic management standards of China and Thailand are not unified, leading to difficulties in traffic law enforcement. In March 2018, China, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam signed a Memorandum of Understanding or agreement on the facilitation of cross border transport of goods and persons in the Greater Mekong Subregion with an Early Harvest Program (International Road Transport for the Greater Mekong Subregion 2019). However,

things are not unified when it comes to traffic law enforcement standards in China, Laos and Thailand and are not in place in the information exchange of traffic law enforcement in the three countries, resulting in the difficulty of traffic law enforcement. For example, in Yunnan, motor vehicle drivers for cross-border transport can have more traffic violations since they are not familiar with the traffic laws and regulations in China nor the Chinese language. At present, there are no clear regulations on the treatment of traffic violations and accidents for vehicles and drivers of cross-border transport in the laws and regulations of China and Thailand, so the traffic control departments lack operational norms in the process of law enforcement. Moreover, it is difficult to unify traffic law enforcement standards and ensure unobstructed roads.

Thirdly, there are great differences between China and Thailand in terms of standards for customs clearance, inspection and quarantine, which seriously hinder the upgrading of the traffic corridor into an economic corridor. For example, in respect of inspection and quarantine, there are only provisions in line with those at the relevant international health organizations and international agreements in the Inspection and Quarantine of Food, Animals and Plants, Article 9 of Part 4 in the Transport Agreement. Regulations are different in the inspection and quarantine management systems of China, Laos and Thailand. There are great differences in the legal and standard systems and information exchange is not smooth, resulting in difficulties in the promotion of the inspection and quarantine. On April 21, 2011, China's Inspection and Quarantine Bureau and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives in Thailand signed protocol on requirements for the inspection and quarantine of fruits imported and exported through the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, marking the import and export of fruit in China and Thailand in the mode of general trade. (Shijie Ribao 2011). However, there are yet no unified standards for the inspection and quarantine of imported and exported vegetables, which severely restricts the agricultural trade between Yunnan and Thailand, so that agricultural products with advantages in China and Thailand fail to smoothly enter each other's markets, suppressing the trade volume of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway.

The signing of the cross-border transport facilitation agreement between China and Thailand was delayed by the domestic political

situation in Thailand in 2014. Prayuth was re-elected prime minister after Thailand's 2019 general election but he will face more complicated political trade-offs at home. Changes in Thailand's internal affairs will also have a negative impact on the progress of GMS cooperation, especially the signing of relevant agreements.

Structural problems

Each country sits in a different geographical position along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway and the whole GMS, and has different levels of social and economic development, leading to different demands and positionings of countries on the Kunming-Bangkok Channel. The countries have different understandings of their positions in the resource development and trade divisions and have inconsistent starting points, interest points and senses of urgency regarding cooperation, which all leads to uncertainty affecting cooperation. For example, the focus of Yunnan province is to help the frontier areas in Yunnan to be able to get out of poverty and develop to become China's frontier area connecting with the Indochina Peninsula. But interest in that particular mission is not shared by neighboring countries. Thailand is more concerned about its economic and social development, more dependence on the Chinese market to catch up with the rapid growth of China's economy and whether or not Thailand can play a leading role in Subregional cooperation. Because of their different demands concerning the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, they have different attitudes towards infrastructure construction along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway. For example, the agreement on cross-border transport facilitation between China and Thailand started negotiations in 2012 but it did not sign the memorandum of "Early Harvest" until 2017. In addition, the Chinese section of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway completed highway construction, for high-speed travel, for the whole line before 2013 but the agenda for the expressway construction from Chiang Khong to Chiang Mai has not yet been included in Thailand's national agenda, a situation closely connected to the wait-and-see attitude of the Thai government on the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway.

Economic factors restricting the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Channel

Examining the economic factors that restrict the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Channel, the different levels of economic development among countries along the line lead to different degrees of development and different focuses on development, affecting the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Economic Corridor. Additionally, there are also the following factors: the logistics infrastructure is not perfect; the advantages of frontier trade are restricted by the disadvantages of the policy; and the competitive industries of the countries along the line have not been fully developed.

The imperfections of the logistics infrastructure

The logistics foundation for this project is weak and this is reflected in several aspects of the undertaking. Firstly, the needs for infrastructure construction are not compatible with the countries' capabilities. There are different levels of roads that have been built. The Chinese section of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway has already readied roads for high-speed traffic along the whole line but the section from Chiang Khong to Chiang Mai in Thailand is only a provincial highway. Not only that, most of the roads in Thailand are not closed off and there are many sections where motor vehicles, people and livestock mix together. The inconsistent levels in the construction of highway pavements seriously affect the traffic efficiency of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway.

There are some problems in port infrastructure construction as well. Most of the ports along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway are lagging behind in terms of port and channel inspection facilities, inspection sites, warehousing and logistics facilities, duty, offices, living spaces and other infrastructure projects failing to comply with the regulations of "two inspections at one port," and the development of the international logistics industry. Because of these problems, the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway fails to achieve "one-stop" customs clearance (Jianxun Kong 2015).

Therefore, the current Kunming-Bangkok Expressway is riddled with issues. This includes customs clearance, high transaction costs and many links in transportation, high shipping and delivery costs,

many links for highway tolls, high transportation costs, low-grade highway, a high breakage rate of goods, long logistics cycles and all in all high trade costs, leading to a lack of comparative advantages of logistic costs for the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway.

The restriction of advantages of frontier trade by the disadvantages of the policy

There are two aspects to this legislation problem. One is that China's relevant policies have restricted the play to the advantages of frontier trade in Yunnan. The other is that exemptions or reductions of customs duty are not really being realized between countries along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, suppressing the advantages of frontier trade.

The development of frontier trade for many years has made all of the economic development of the Yunnan frontier rely on frontier trade to a great extent and has created a situation wherein frontiers are prosperous when the frontier trade is flourishing and the frontiers decline in tandem with the frontier trade. However, since the mid 1990s, the Chinese government has implemented border trade according to general trade policy and the advantages of Yunnan's border trade have disappeared. Countries along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway have also adjusted their tariff policies for frontier trade. In addition, trade between Yunnan and neighboring countries continues to show an unbalanced trend, so that it is difficult to eliminate tariff barriers of countries along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway. Thus, the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway is unable to play the role of trade channel.

The restriction of corridor advantages by the disadvantages of unbalanced regional economy development

At present, the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway has advantages when it comes to short-haul logistics and trade. However, more than 50% of the areas along the expressway between Kunming and Bangkok, covering a distance of 1,800 km, are fairly undeveloped, mainly in southern Yunnan, Laos and the northeast of Thailand (Tiejun 2010). The people in these areas have not been involved in the construction of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway and fail to share in the benefits from the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Economic Corridor

and are not even able to provide the commodities for the Sino-Thai trade. The production of poor areas is still dominated by traditional agriculture, which is low in income per capita and the absorptive capacity of products for international trade and there are not many commodities available for export. Low income and purchasing power, in turn, inhibit the development of the market and a number of residents are still unable to obtain adequate food and clothing, making it impossible for them to have the desire to exchange and to develop the economy. The Kunming-Bangkok Expressway has been opened but the poor areas between Kunming and Bangkok, covering a distance of nearly 1,000 km, need appropriate industries to promote their development, so that the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway can be upgraded from a transportation corridor to an economic corridor.

The lack of full development among the competitive industries of the countries along the line

As mentioned above, the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway is not dominant in the long-distance transport of goods but the flow of people has more advantages than logistics. In other words, the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway has a prominent advantage in the realm of short-distance travel, as its tourism cost is much lower than that of air travel, and it has a wide variety of possible tourist attractions. For example, the border tours of Mohan Port in Yunnan, China and Boten Port in Laos and the Dai-Thai cultural tours from Yunnan to Chiang Khong, Chiang Rai and Northern Thailand, have potential. However, the current highway tourism industry, or “highway + waterway” tourism industry, has not yet been fully developed.

In addition, due to the higher transportation costs of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway compared with sea transportation, it has the advantages of a short transportation cycle, which requires both ends of Kunming-Bangkok Expressway to develop light industries that can minimize transportation costs. This works as long as they carry products of smaller mass, such as the biopharmaceutical industry that is dominant in Yunnan and light industry dominant in Thailand. However, so far, neither the tourism along Kunming-Bangkok Expressway nor the light industries have been fully developed. That is to say, countries along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway have failed to develop dominant or pillar industries with strong competitiveness, which is a

major obstacle to the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway upgrading from a transportation corridor to an economic corridor.

Cultural factors restricting the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Channel

The restrictions of cultural factors on the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Channel mainly manifest themselves in two aspects. One is the influence and restriction of different cultural traditions and modes of thinking on economic cooperation between countries. The other is the influence of the different perceptions of communication relations in history between the neighboring countries and China on the Subregional development.

The effects of different understandings of development in different countries on Subregional development

Cultural traditions will strongly affect a nation's thinking and national strategy. China is greatly influenced by Confucian culture in paying attention to worldly affairs, actively seeking development and actively solving problems in development. For example, in order to strengthen cooperation with neighboring countries, China takes the lead in improving their infrastructure, starting with the transportation system. It pays attention to efficiency and actual effects when handling matters.

Thailand is a Buddhist country and Buddhist tradition has a great impact on its thinking and national strategy, which is reflected in the pace of life and decision-making considerations. Buddhist religious activities are an important component of daily life and religion has great influence on life and social development. Many people take their time when meditating and praying to Buddha and are prone to feeling satisfied with their current life. They work at a slower pace and are generally less efficient than the Chinese. It takes a long time to collaborate on projects or make decisions. During our investigations in Thailand, Thais often asked the author why the Chinese are able to make decisions so quickly, such as in the case of the construction of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway. Thai people need a long time to think about this issue. Not only that, they tend to do more research on the possible negative effects. For example, in discussions

about the upgrading of the highway from Chiang Khong to Bangkok to an express way with an officer at the Thai Ministry of Transport, he answered seriously that it would take a long time to study whether it would have a negative impact on local people's lives. The great difference in thought processes inevitably affects cooperation between China and Thailand and if communication is not smooth, it is apt to lead to misunderstandings.

The likelihood of different perceptions of the relationship between China and neighboring countries as a cause of distrust

Historically, the Chinese have regarded their exchanges with neighboring countries as a good foundation for developing bilateral relations and cooperation. In the past, the countries on the Indochina Peninsula were either part of China and its tributary system or had many cross-border ethnic groups with China. Therefore, the countries are closely related, with frequent exchanges and a mutual understanding that is far greater than that of other regions. These historical foundations contribute to the cooperation between countries. However, some enterprises and investors have a feeling of "great power superiority," which has seriously affected cooperation between China and the other countries in the region.

The GMS countries have had close contact with China throughout history and have been greatly influenced by her. Because of these long relationships, these countries have a complex and contradictory attitude towards China's development. On the one hand, they want China to develop and to get a "free ride" from it, so that they can develop themselves. On the other hand, they are wary of China's advance due to the huge differences in land area, population and the absolute strength of the country, as well as the complex historical relationship. Moreover, these countries comprehend their relations with China in history and China's influence differently. Some countries believe that the history of communication with China is a history of Chinese colonization. Moreover, after the "tributary system" of China and its neighboring countries was demonized, the original trading system became alienated into a colonial system. These issues have also had an impact on cooperation between China and these countries today. For example, the rumor that Chinese immigrants are pouring in often surfaces in countries along the Mekong and politicians in Thailand have spread

the rumor that the construction of hydropower stations upstream in China will have an adverse impact on Thailand, thus reflecting these countries' distrust and encouraging the taking of precautions against China.

Therefore, it is necessary to think about how to allow historical exchanges and relations to develop in order to play an active role in today's cooperation and exchanges.

Recommendations for promoting the development of the kunming-bangkok channel

With regard to cooperation between China and the GMS, domestic academic circles mostly seek ways of promoting Subregional cooperation from the perspective of regional economics. Obviously, the economic development gap and the restrictive factor of economic systems in Subregional economic cooperation are affecting the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, as well as the overall progress of GMS cooperation. But it is not enough to look for reasons of this kind. Firstly, in 1988, the then-prime minister of Thailand, Chatichai Choonhavan, proposed the idea of regional cooperation not only to promote regional economic development but also to communicate Thailand's political demands to the area, by becoming the GMS leader. On this basis, the Asian Development Bank and relevant countries proposed the GMS cooperation concept and development projects, to include not only economic goals but also political intentions. Secondly, with the completion of the China and ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA), the economic dependence of China and ASEAN countries has been continuously strengthened, though mutual political trust between China and ASEAN countries has not grown stronger with the completion of CAFTA . On the contrary, due to changes in the international patterns of the Asia-Pacific region and the rapid rise of China's economy, there have been various disharmonious problems and mutual political trust between China and these countries has also been declining. Therefore, it makes sense to discuss the restrictive factors for the Kunming-Bangkok Channel and even GMS cooperation from the political and cultural angle. It should be said that there are economic, political and cultural factors restricting progress, and because of the complexity of these restrictive factors, there have been

difficulties in the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Channel and the overall promotion of GMS cooperation.

Nevertheless, Yunnan in China, Northern Laos and Northeastern Thailand are underdeveloped areas which need to develop. Once the door to economic cooperation is open, economic demand will promote the deepening of regional cooperation. For the development of the Kunming-Bangkok Channel, we should search further for complementarity between China and Thailand in terms of trade and investment, reduce logistics costs, improve logistical efficiency and explore resources and economic advantages along the channel, so as to promote economic development along its length. With all this aid, there should be broad prospects for the development of the channel.

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the “One Belt One Road” initiative. Greater Mekong Subregional cooperation is part of the Maritime Silk Road under the “One Belt One Road” initiative. The Kunming-Bangkok Channel is a part of the China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor proposed under the “One Belt One Road” initiative. Under this initiative, the Chinese and Yunnan governments will pay more attention to improving infrastructure, from roads to customs clearance, and encouraging more enterprises to develop logistical and agricultural processing industries along the route. The following suggestions are therefore proposed from the three angles of logistics infrastructure, coordination of relevant systems and industrial development.

Logistics infrastructure

The road upgrading of the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway must also work to improve the logistical infrastructure, such as through the promotion of road upgrading in Laos and Thailand through financing and loan projects.

In terms of the coordination of traffic regulations, the construction of a comprehensive transportation system utilizing the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway is necessary. This would include the gradual promotion of expressways along the whole line and the implementation of a traffic facilitation agreement to achieve mutual recognition of drivers' licenses, unified traffic signs and signal standardization.

In terms of port infrastructure construction, China should first strengthen the informatization of Mohan Port and vigorously tackle

the construction of an electronic port. Meanwhile, it may provide financial, technical and equipment support for the construction of Boten Port or Chiang Khong Port, based on the needs of Laos and Thailand, to realize the coordinated development of the ports along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway and improve the efficiency of customs clearance.

In terms of perfecting the logistics infrastructure, Yunnan Province and Thailand should also make great efforts to improve the logistical infrastructure for the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway.

Promoting the coordination of relevant systems

It is necessary to enhance the customs clearance facilitation between the three countries along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway as soon as possible. To do this a trilateral coordination mechanism must be established based on China-Thailand and China-Laos transportation facilitation agreements and an effort must be made to eliminate the policy barriers on the customs clearance system for transportation. Additionally, communication and collaboration of customs and frontier inspection between various countries should be strengthened and one-stop services for customs and frontier inspection of vehicles and goods should be implemented to speed up customs clearance.

Industrial development for areas along the line

These countries should accelerate the development of multi-level modern commercial circulation in Kunming, Jinghong and Mohan, construct a convenient and efficient modern logistical system with a reasonable layout, speed up the development of the logistics industry, construct a modern logistics center in Kunming for South Asia and Southeast Asia and set up modern logistics sub-centers in Jinghong and Mohan.

In terms of the industrial development of areas along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, these should include plateau agriculture, a competitive industry in Yunnan in order to promote development in Yunnan, northern Laos and northeastern Thailand. Furthermore, the resources along the line can contribute to development with options such as coffee, sugar cane, tea and fruit, including the processing of these characteristic agricultural products in order to attract investment and promote development along the line.

These countries can also try to construct corridors for transnational tourism and human communication. The areas along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway are potential tourist routes, integrating multi-national cultures, ethnic customs, natural landscapes and other features, while the scenic spots are over 100 km apart, which is attractive to tourists. In addition, the the Mohan-Boten cross-border economic cooperation zone from China and Laos should be considered as a pilot and tourism enterprises in Yunnan or China found to establish companies in the cooperation zone and develop more tourist routes along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, such as original ecological resorts, forest parks and animal parks, thus attracting tourists. Moreover, more travel conveniences for the self-driving tourists in China and Thailand should be provided to attract more tourists.

Strengthening the cooperation between industrial parks along the line is also important. In areas along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway there are a number of industrial parks and special economic development zones, such as the Mohan-Boten cross-border economic cooperation zone. The relevant institutions in China and Thailand should study and construct a cooperation mechanism for the industrial parks of the countries along the Kunming-Bangkok Expressway, define the policies available in the countries, promote cooperation between industrial parks and explore the way to common development.

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The urban development of Phnom Penh: “A happy garden with an ever-bright sun”

Christina Warning

ABSTRACT—Phnom Penh has been one of Southeast Asia’s fastest growing cities. Throughout the past decades the urban development processes throughout Southeast Asia have led to evictions, many of which have been violent. In many countries, evictions and the violent removal of entire communities has become a defining feature of modern urban development. Phnom Penh is no exception. This paper provides a condensed account of some of the essential urban policy decisions over the past four decades that help to understand the conflicts and fault lines that have shaped the contemporary urban landscape of Phnom Penh. Using the example of an inner-city community, which was home to many artists with close connections to the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, the article shows how entire urban spaces in Phnom Penh have been re-designed in line with the needs of an increasingly inter-connected and wealthy political and economic elite.

Keywords: Urban development, Phnom Penh, forced evictions, privatization of urban spaces

Während seines [Pen Sovan] Aufenthaltes in der DDR [Deutsche Demokratische Republik] im October 1979 konnte er sich von den großen Errungenschaften des Volkes der DDR überzeugen. Er habe gesehen, dass das Volk der DDR in einem glücklichen Garten mit immer strahlender Sonne lebt, wo die Parteilinie gerecht und klug verwirklicht wird.¹

During his [Pen Sovan’s] stay in the GDR [German Democratic Republic] in October 1979, he was able to witness the great achieve-

ments of the people of the GDR. According to him, he had seen that the people of the GDR live in a happy garden with an ever-bright sun, where the Party's political line is being wisely and justly implemented [own translation].

Introduction

January 7, 2019 marked the fortieth anniversary of the official ending of the Khmer Rouge regime with the assistance of the Vietnamese armed forces. "On December 25, 1978, the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia. By January 7, 1979 they had captured Phnom Penh." (Becker, 1998) Later, 7 January became a national holiday in Cambodia. Over the next four decades, Phnom Penh followed a development path spanning from a socialist command economy to a free market system. According to the World Bank, Phnom Penh grew from 110 to 160 square kilometers between 2000 and 2010, while its population increased at a rate of 4.4 percent per year, from 920,000 people to 1.4 million during this ten-year period. (World Bank Group, 2015) Together with other Southeast Asian cities, Phnom Penh faced the rapidly evolving urban challenges of the 21st century. With that came the proliferation of new urban policies, strategies and legislation on how effectively to respond to these challenges of urban modernization.

When Pen Sovan, in his capacity as head of the Cambodian government, visited the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in October 1979, he gave a diplomatic address in which he thanked his hosts for their moral and financial support to the People's Republic of Kampuchea. East Germany, embedded in the Warsaw Pact and an ally of Vietnam, stood ready at the time to actively assist the Cambodian government in alleviating the dire humanitarian crisis in the country. In his speech, Pen Sovan made a poetic reference to the living conditions of people in the GDR, whom he said would live in "a happy garden with an ever-bright sun." With this statement, he outlined his government's vision to redevelop the country and its capital city, Phnom Penh, for the benefit the entire Cambodian population. The GDR was one of the first countries that officially recognized the Revolutionary People's Council of Kampuchea, when the GDR Ambassador presented a letter of accreditation on April 7, 1979, following Laos, Vietnam and Cuba. (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61)

In retrospect, almost forty years down the road, what has become of the late 1979 vision of livable and peaceful community development in Phnom Penh, including equitable access to urban spaces for all citizens?

A new socialist Phnom Penh: The re-creation of public facilities in 1979

Mit den Sieg der vereinten kampuchanisch-vietnamesischen Streitkräfte über die vom Pekinger Regime ausgehaltene Pol-Pot/Ieng Sary-Clique im Januar 1979 und mit der Ausrufung der Volksrepublik Kampuchea wurde ein neues Kapitel der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung Kampucheas eröffnet... Geführt vom revolutionären Volksrat und der Nationalen Einheitsfront für die Rettung Kampucheas, beraten von der Partei- und Staatsführung der SRV, wurde der Weg zur Schaffung eines unabhängigen, friedliebenden, demokratischen, nichtpaktgebundenen und zum Sozialismus voranschreitenden Kampuchea bestritten. (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61)

In January 1979, following the victory of the joint Cambodian-Vietnamese armed forces over the Pol Pot–Ieng Sary clique, which had been sustained by the Beijing government, and the proclamation of the People's Republic of Kampuchea, a new chapter in the societal development of Cambodia was opened.... Led by the Revolutionary People's Council and the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea, advised by the Party and State leadership of the SRV [Socialist Republic of Vietnam], Cambodia entered on a path towards the creation of an independent, peace-loving, democratic, non-aligned and progressive nation [own translation].

In 1975, the Khmer Rouge regime evacuated Phnom Penh and all provincial towns under duress and forced all the residents to move to rural collectives. Thus, during the entire Democratic Kampuchea regime (1975–1979), Phnom Penh was largely empty. (Corfield and Summers, 2003) All land titles were destroyed and buildings and homes became the property of the state. According to the above East German diplomatic sources, when the Khmer Rouge was ousted from the capital city in January 1979, with the help of Vietnamese forces, a

new chapter for the development of Phnom Penh began. The particular brand of communism that was introduced with the victory of the Vietnamese-backed People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea (PRPK) did not subscribe to the ideological animosity towards any aspect of urban culture held by the Maoist Khmer Rouge and began to resettle Phnom Penh in line with the tenets of a socialist society. At that time, Cambodian citizens suffered from severe famine. A Vietnamese soldier who was stationed in Cambodia in 1979 reported: "They were dying everywhere. They were dying of hunger.... We didn't have rice to feed the starving. We only had army rations to feed ourselves in battle." (Doyle, BBC News) The East German Ambassador, Rolf Dach, wrote on May 3, 1979, that more than 60,000 people "are living under difficult circumstances in the outskirts of Phnom Penh." He referred to the overall difficult situation as follows: "every second refugee is ill. There is a shortage of doctors, medical staff, medicines and hospital beds." (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61)

The GDR, within the firm parameters of its close alliance with the Soviet Union, saw the necessity for Vietnamese forces to be stationed in Kampuchea in order to defeat the remaining forces of the Khmer Rouge.² East Germany justified the stationing of the Vietnamese forces on Cambodian soil for the reconstruction of Cambodia and its armed forces, which included the reconstruction and re-urbanization of the capital city, Phnom Penh.

Two of the main strategies of the 1979 resettlement process of Phnom Penh consisted of the division of the city into two halves, the dual city, (Kolnberger, 2014) as well as a structured re-entry roadmap for its future citizens. In January 1979, the population of Cambodia was informed in a radio announcement about the creation of a new government under the KPRP. Following that radio announcement, large numbers of people gradually began to flock back to Phnom Penh. However, the KPRP government decided to seal off the city from a sudden influx of new arrivals, as it had planned to re-establish public services prior to the return of entire communities. Thus, the prospective returnees were forced to settle along the various entry roads leading into Phnom Penh, where they formed temporary urban settlements over several months. In general, the public policy was to bring the people back in an orderly and organized fashion to prevent a sudden influx of large groups of individuals. For reasons of security

and existing supply problems, the initial plan was to allow only 15,000 people to resettle in Phnom Penh during the entire year of 1979. (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61) Authorities bisected the city into two administrative divisions: the eastern side of the central traffic artery, Monivong Boulevard, was allocated to and managed by the central committee of the ruling party, earmarked for the settlement of national state officials, whereas the areas west of Monivong Boulevard were under the supervision of the Municipality of Phnom Penh and reserved for the placement of municipal officials. (Yao, 1979) Furthermore, the military was added as a “third power,” which was stationed in the district of Toul Kork and at different bases around Phnom Penh. (Kolnberger, 2014)

When Phnom Penh became “the capital of the independent nation of Cambodia” in 1953, under the leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the focus had been on the construction of “Universities, Ministries and a Large National Sports Complex. Large areas of the city were turned into landscaped gardens surrounding water reservoirs.” (Molyvann, 2003) At that time, the character of Phnom Penh was described as a garden city. (Molyvann, 2003) The Pol Pot administration either misused or completely destroyed much of Phnom Penh’s public infrastructure between the years 1975 and 1979.

Throughout 1979, the Cambodian authorities received support from the Vietnamese forces to rebuild the city’s health care system. According to East German documents, until the end of 1979, three central hospitals in Phnom Penh were returned to their original purpose. (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61) In November 1979, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Cuba and the GDR received permission to dispatch medical teams. The Cuban medical team, consisting of 21 medics, was responsible for the reinstatement of the “7 January” hospital, while the GDR medical team took care of the “17 April” hospital. (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61) However, it was not possible at that time to carry out any complicated surgery due to the lack of technical equipment. In the last months of 1979, the conditions for the reopening of the medical-pharmaceutical faculty of the University of Phnom Penh had been met and 500 former medical- and 200 former pharmaceutical students were allowed to enroll. (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61)

During the Pol Pot administration, the educational system was wiped out. All schools were closed, teaching materials were destroyed

and teachers were persecuted. Similar to the reconstruction of the health care system in Phnom Penh, the socialist partner countries also assisted with the reorganization of the educational system. On February 15, 1979, the Ministry of Education had already been re-established and, on February 26, 1979, teaching at schools in Phnom Penh recommenced. (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61) Along with the reopening of the Medical-Pharmaceutical Faculty, the Royal University of Fine Arts had been restored and was functioning. (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61) The first steps towards the normalization of Phnom Penh's social life were accompanied by activities aimed at revitalizing culture and sports. This included the creation of a national song and dance ensemble, together with groups for classical and modern dance, song and music. According to East German documents, these ensembles achieved international standards in terms of their equipment and performances. They visited Laos and Vietnam during the first year of their inception. Furthermore, in 1979, two movie theaters reopened and film production consequently resumed. Documentaries were shown during the national holidays of the GDR, the Soviet Union, Laos and Cuba in order to "familiarize the population with real socialism." (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61) Regarding sports, the National Stadium was repaired and friendly matches were organized between teams from Cambodia and representatives of its communist allies stationed in the capital. (PA AA, MfAA, VS 61)

The allocation of sustainable housing and the Dey Krahom community

In the first weeks of 1979, only 110 future municipal employees were officially invited to reside in the city in order to receive technical and administrative training on the spot. These officials were told to settle in the vicinity of their respective training venues and workplaces. (Yao, 1979) As of March 1979, Phnom Penh was still largely deserted. From May until June 1979, only state officials were allowed to return and they were instructed to move into properties that were located close to their workplaces. Subsequently, starting in June 1979, trained officials from within Phnom Penh began to visit the temporary settlements on the outskirts of the capital to register and recruit people with the specific technical skills needed for the development of city

infrastructure. The idea was to bring in people in groups of 100, led by state officials, and to make them settle in the vicinity of the institutions and ministries, where they had been assigned to work. (Yao, 1979) However, since this process was moving along very slowly and the pressure of people squatting on the outskirts became too strong, the government decided to lift the strict re-entry policy and allowed the returnees to settle in the city wherever they could find space. One of the consequences resulting from the attempt of the KPRP government to guarantee structured resettlement was that many people moved to housing assigned to them, close to their workplaces. After the termination of this first phase of resettlement following the defeat of the Khmer Rouge regime, the 1980 population census reveals that, not counting military personnel, the city was re-inhabited by 90,000 civilians. (Yao, 1979)

The post-1979 re-population of the central Phnom Penh area of Dey Krahom (which means “red soil” in English), located east of Monivong Boulevard, also occurred under the “dual city” resettlement plan. Dey Krahom was assigned by the government to the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, which formally invited its employees to settle in this area. These early arrivals cleared trees and brought in the red soil that gives Dey Krahom its name. They were artists, such as musicians and dancers performing in the nearby Bassac Theatre, but also athletes competing in traditional Khmer boxing, as well as the administrative personnel of the Ministry. Over the coming years, subsequent waves of new arrivals to Dey Krahom rented space from the initial families that had been assigned official housing by the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. The newcomers earned their living as construction workers, drivers and small-scale vendors.

Although private property was not recognized until 1989, land and house possessions were tolerated by the state authorities and people in Dey Krahom continued to occupy and build houses on plots in the area with the full knowledge and tacit approval of the Ministry. Simultaneously, the population of Phnom Penh continued to grow considerably over the next decade. From a baseline of 90,000 (Yao, 1979) in 1979, it increased to 427,000 (Gruss, 2007) in 1985 to reach 615,000, (Gruss, 2007) in the dawn of the global communist era in 1990. 1993 records show that the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts transferred land to the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Plan-

ning and Construction for reasons unknown to the long-term residents of Dey Krahom.

A liberal land market at loggerheads with socialist resettlement policies

The new regime that emerged after the gradual collapse of the Soviet Union and the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops in 1989, which called itself the State of Cambodia (SOC), swiftly set out to introduce a free market economy. In the land property sector this included the introduction of legislation that aimed to introduce a new system whereby citizens could eventually own private land. Following the signing of the 1991 Paris Peace Accords, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) seconded a further 30,000 military personnel, administration staff and foreign experts to Phnom Penh. (Blancot, 1997) The massive influx of capital and spending power triggered a first, serious wave of land speculation. Many buildings in Phnom Penh were renovated to serve as offices and residential housing for the UNTAC staff. Simultaneously, wetlands and lakes were filled with sand to create developable city space. In 1992, a new land law was passed to formally reinstate private property rights. Comprehensively introduced by the cadastral state authorities, this new land law should have offered many ordinary long-term residents of central Phnom Penh the opportunity to register for official ownership of property if they were able to prove that they had possessed the land over a specific stipulated period of time. Instead, as research has shown, the new legislation seemed to have a particular bias towards the political elite and ruling class:

Liberalization of the land market was born in large parts from the desire of high-ranking officials to officially legitimize the residential land they had amassed in Phnom Penh, land left by the Vietnamese high-ranking military... Many of the biggest land deals (especially in Phnom Penh) took place at the beginning of the 1990s, involving those who were in official positions and who had the opportunity to amass state land very cheaply for private use and sell it off at a high profit. Companies began to buy land with state backing, leaving the land undeveloped until prices began to increase. (Menzies, Ketya,

and Adler, 2008)

During this period, while the land law of 1992 reinstated private property rights, Phnom Penh saw a wave of evictions, many of which were violent, under its newly-appointed Governor Hok Lundy, according to reports of the Urban Sector Group. From this first wave of evictions in the early 1990s, the Dey Krahom community escaped unscathed. However, almost all of the long-term residents failed to gain access to the new land registration procedures set out under the new land law due to the lack of information from the cadastral authorities. Simultaneously in 1992, Cambodia acceded to a number of international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, which required each state party to abide by international standards protecting the rights of its citizens to adequate housing. With that move came international accountability and public scrutiny under the reporting duties to the UN treaty organs. To mitigate growing international criticism concerning the treatment of ordinary urban city dwellers, the government introduced new policies to demonstrate its willingness to deal with the violent evictions of the 1990s. Instead of implementing the 1992 land law in a comprehensive, coordinated and structured fashion with the aim of securing potential ownership rights of “individual” residents of poor urban settlements, the government set out to cooperate with UN agencies, international NGOs and community organizations to implement a broad-based so-called “pro-poor approach to housing,” which focused on communities as a whole. This policy resulted in a number of organized resettlements of entire communities from central Phnom Penh to the outskirts, with the financial and technical support of the international donor community. Prior to these resettlements, the communities were regularly faced with the immediate prospect of eviction, as in the case of the Akphiwat Meanchey community.

In April 1996, 126 families living in downtown Phnom Penh, near the Chinese Embassy, were faced with a bulldozer attempting to clear their houses for a road-upgrading project, without prior notice. Following “negotiations” involving the international community, a compromise for the resettlement to the outskirts of Phnom Penh was reached. In this context, NGOs, such as the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) and the United Nations Center for

Housing (UNCHS, now UN HABITAT) provided technical training to the communities and funded work at the construction sites. After the completion of the construction in April 2000, prime minister Hun Sen inaugurated the resettlement site in person. With that came the proliferation of new urban policies, strategies and legislation on how to effectively respond to this urban modernization paradigm. This included, among others, the City Development Strategy (CDS) 2005–2015 and the Master Plan Phnom Penh 2020.³ Within this context, it is interesting to note that, in July 2005, the Master Plan Phnom Penh 2020 was presented only to Vietnamese and Chinese investors by the Phnom Penh municipal authorities. Civil society organizations, community representatives and the residents at large were entirely excluded. Furthermore, in terms of legislation, the introduction of a new land law in 2001 marked a watershed. This new law provided specific classifications of land, which determined who could own the land and for what purpose the land could be used. As stipulated by the law, the government had the duty to draw up maps in order to classify the different types of land and to inform its citizens about the status of the land on which their plots were located. In the case of the urban areas of Phnom Penh, this mapping did not occur as required. Instead, the government, with the financial and technical support of international donors, immediately engaged in a systematic but sporadic land registration scheme that specifically excluded areas “under dispute,” which virtually became a synonym for all of the poor urban settlements in Phnom Penh, eyed by private land speculators for their promising development concepts.

At the beginning of the 2000s, when the new Land Law and the Master Plan Phnom Penh were introduced and international donors were commissioned to engage in rights-based land registration schemes, the nation’s ruling elite had already decided to completely re-design the city. In doing so, they followed economic paradigms that researchers and academics such as David Harvey called “the urban entrepreneurialism of the neoliberal city.”⁴ Alongside other metropolitan areas in the region, Phnom Penh was ushered into an urban competition to attract investment capital with the ultimate goal of accumulating capital for the nation’s powerful elites. At an international level, this was done by the re-designation of entire urban spaces in line with the needs of an increasingly inter-connected and wealthy

international urban elite, culminating in the construction of entertainment and shopping centers, riverside and waterfront developments and upmarket apartment buildings. David Harvey's short expression to describe this powerful neoliberal trend "accumulation through dispossession" hit the affected communities in Phnom Penh, such as the one in Dey Krahom with full force. The Dey Krahom community lived in the vicinity of the river and in an area designated for an entertainment complex, including one of the largest casinos in the region.

A reinterpretation of a "happy garden"?

In May 2003, during a ceremony celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Urban Poor Development Fund,⁵ Cambodian prime minister, Hun Sen, promised secure land tenure and on-site upgrading for the benefit of 100 inner-city poor settlements each year, over the subsequent five years: "Why stop at 100 settlements? We propose to upgrade a further 100 settlements every year for the next five years, so that in the end, all of Phnom Penh's poor settlements will be improved and have land title." (UN-HABITAT, 2003) In his speech, the prime minister explicitly referred to the inner-city community of Dey Krahom as one of the sites earmarked for land-titling and on-site upgrading.

According to municipal statistics, the Dey Krahom community consisted of 1,465 families with a total of 5,750 people, (Chamkar-morn, 2004) who owned and rented property there at that time. The community was located in a prime real estate area in the vicinity of plots earmarked for the construction of the new Australian Embassy and the new National Assembly. Following the prime minister's speech, the Council of Ministers issued letter No. 875, known as the "development plan," to approve the creation of social land concessions for poor communities in four locations in Phnom Penh, including Dey Krahom. In the case of Dey Krahom, letter No. 875 of the Council of Ministers stated that the community should receive a social land concession for residential development on 3.7 hectares of land. The speech of the prime minister and the letter of the Council of Ministers with the respective development plan for the residents in Dey Krahom occurred shortly before the general election in Cambodia, which was scheduled for July 27, 2003.

A few months after the elections in January 2005, a contract

was signed by 36 individuals claiming to be Dey Krahom community representatives and the private developer, 7NG Construction Company Ltd. In this contract, the self-declared community representatives handed over 3.7 hectares of land to the company in exchange for housing at a relocation site 20 kilometers away from Dey Krahom, at the periphery of Phnom Penh. Residents and community members were totally oblivious of this contract. From that time onwards, pressure on the families grew to vacate their land, culminating in increasing levels of coercion and threats. Many Dey Krahom residents gave up and moved to the relocation site. Those who felt betrayed and decided to stay were cleared out in a violent eviction on January 24, 2009.

Prior to the general election of July 27, 2003, Hun Sen had promised, in May of that year, to upgrade and grant land tenure security for the Dey Krahom community, but he failed to refer to the specific provisions of the 2001 land law that might have allowed individual community members to file a claim for definitive title of ownership under article 30. This article states that: “Any person who enjoys peaceful, uncontested possession of immovable property that can lawfully be privately possessed, has the right to request a definite title of ownership.” This, in turn would have required the state authorities to unequivocally classify, in an expeditious and inclusive public process, the nature of the land (state public or state private land) on which Dey Krahom and other poor urban communities had been residing.

The reference of the prime minister to the upgrading of 500 poor urban housing appears to have its origins in estimates of the Solidarity for the Urban Poor Federation (SUPF) in 2003, which asserted that 569 poor urban communities equivalent to 62,249 households were located in the capital at the time, which represented 35 percent of its total population. Later, these estimates were corroborated by municipal statistics, having identified 516 areas of poor urban communities in Phnom Penh in the period 1980–2012. (Phnom Penh Capital, 2012) An initial indication of the flawed nature of the promised upgrading and titling process came with the submission of letter No. 875 of the Council of Ministers, stating that the Dey Krahom community would be provided with a social land concession. Firstly, social land concessions under chapter five of the land law are granted in a detailed and long-term process with explicit community involvement. By law, the Council of Ministers is not the appropriate authority to grant social

land concessions. Secondly, social land concessions by the provisions of the 2001 land law, are an instrument to provide landless people with adequate housing. Letter No. 875 therefore created a legal precept against the Dey Krahom community, classifying them as landless, although the individual legal ownership status of the individual residents had never been established under the applicable land laws (1992 and 2001). Interestingly, by employing the legally questionable concept of a social land concession, the state authorities inadvertently implied the legal status of the Dey Krahom community land area. According to article 58 of the land law, land concessions could only be granted on lands that were a part of the private property of the state (state private land). This would mean that the residents of the Dey Krahom community, with the area they lived on having been identified by the state as state private land, would clearly have an entitlement to claim individual ownership in accordance with articles 30 and 38 of the 2001 land law.

Approximately six years after the eviction, on April 10, 2015, the *Phnom Penh Post* printed an article that took stock of the situation of the former Dey Krahom community members. (Phnom Penh Post, 2015) Many of them reported that through the eviction, this once unique community of musicians, dancers, comedians and martial artists had been scattered and destroyed forever. Only very few of them managed to eke out a meager living at the original relocation site 20 kilometers away from the city center. Others moved on to different places across the nation, cutting all the artistic and personal ties of this once closely-knit community had formed around the Ministry of Culture. While the former residents of Dey Krahom struggle to survive at different levels, their homes that were once cleared in the name of development have been vacant for years. At the time of reporting, the 7NG Company refused to talk to the *Phnom Penh Post* as to why their announcement to build residential properties on the cleared site did not materialize until six years after the violent eviction of the Dey Krahom community.

Conclusion

The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) has argued “at least 60 countries’ governments, many of which have

adopted international human rights covenants that protect the right of housing, used forced evictions as a development tool between 2003 and 2006.” (Afenah, 2006) According to the Cambodian Land and Housing Working Group in April 2009, approximately 133,000 people are believed to have been evicted in Phnom Penh since 1990, representing more than 10 percent of the city’s entire population. (Land and Housing Working Group, 2009) These figures were confirmed by the national NGO Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT), which reported that from 1990 to 2014, 29,715 families were evicted in Phnom Penh. (Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT), 2014) Given that, according to the 2008 General Population Census, the average household size in Cambodia was 4.7 people, the total number of evictees in Phnom Penh according to STT stood at 139,660 in 2014. In corroborating these figures, the UN stated “while there is no official data available, estimates indicate that over 120,000 individuals in Phnom Penh have been evicted since 1990.” (UNOHCHR)

The case of the Dey Krahom community poignantly demonstrates the random use of and blatant disregard for the applicable official state policies and laws protecting the rights of individual residents in poor urban communities. This is obvious when assessing the developments surrounding the removal of the entire Dey Krahom community starting from 2003 until their final eviction on January 24, 2009.

Despite a marked increase in terms of the number and sophistication of foreign aid sponsored urban development strategies and land-related legislation ostensibly aimed at protecting the rights of poor urban settlers, the outcomes appear much different. The livelihood and legal security of the Dey Krahom community members have been continuously deteriorating since its first residents were assigned plots by the government after the fall of the Khmer Rouge. With the beginning of the privatization policies and the related land-titling projects, the striking inequalities between ordinary citizens and the rent-seeking government and business elite has become evident. As a matter of fact, the powers-that-be deliberately obscured the fact that the Dey Krahom community came to settle in this area at the invitation of the then government with the task of reviving cultural life in an exhausted, war-torn and decimated society. To this end, the government elites and their business associates abused the donor-funded land-titling projects as a perfect legal veneer to make the massive expulsion of disenfran-

chised communities appear just and lawful.

As an integral part of this process, affected community members were systematically excluded from seeking legal recourse and were subsequently criminalized for having resisted relocation. In this climate of legal ambiguity and absence of the rule of law, any land-titling regime would have been unable to yield fair and equitable land tenure security for poor urban communities.

In essence, the successful implementation of fair and equitable land rights policies would have depended on the willingness of the government and the business elite to base their decision-making on principles of good governance. These principles needed to include—alongside socio-economic factors—holistic considerations encompassing the settlement history of the area under scrutiny in view of the changing political systems and conditions. Yet, the Cambodian government deliberately failed to modernize and upgrade Dey Krahom to the benefit of its residents in its search for maximum profit aided by the political indifference of the donor community in the land sector. In publicly taking stock and acknowledging the concepts behind the socialist resettlement policies of 1979, the government could have supported all those families who based their claims on the public policies of the time. They should have been afforded the minimum of legal protection, if entitlements to their homes were to be challenged at a later stage under a completely different socio-economic land-ownership regime. It would have been the duty of the state authorities to properly divulge the history of this land allocation process and make those documents available in official procedures over ownership rights.

In 2019, when the resettlement of Phnom Penh after the fall of the Khmer Rouge marked its fortieth anniversary, Pen Sovan's vision of a "happy garden with an ever-bright sun" sounds like a travesty to thousands of former Phnom Penh residents who have been forcibly evicted since the 1990s.

Endnotes

1 Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA AA), Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (MfAA). Political Archives of the Federal Foreign Office (PA AA), Germany, record groups of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the GDR (MfAA). Accessed: September 19–23, 2016, PA AA, MfAA, VS 61, document entitled: “*Vermerk über ein Gespräch des Botschafters, Gen. Dach, mit den Generalsekretär des ZK der KPK, stellv. Vorsitzenden des RVR und Minister für Nationale Verteidigung der VR Kampuchea, Gen. Pen Sovan, am 27.1.1980*,” p. 2, GDR Embassy Phnom Penh, January 29, 1980

2 According to a report of the GDR Ambassador in Phnom Penh, Rolf Dach, on May 3, 1979: the People’s Government of Kampuchea is completely reliant on the holistic support of Vietnamese comrades. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has seconded large numbers of advisors to Kampuchea. The leading Cambodian comrades are continuously accompanied by their Vietnamese advisors. The establishment of the Armed Forces of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea is being pursued with great vigor. As of today, two divisions (approximately 20,000 soldiers) have been set up and they are already fighting at some of the hot-spots of the conflict. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has stationed approximately 150,000 of its Armed Forces in Kampuchea. The Vietnamese comrades believe that this large number of military personnel in the People’s Republic of Kampuchea will be required for a longer period of time (own translation), *ibid.*, p. 3

3 The Phnom Penh Municipality began the preparation of a Master Plan of the City for 2020 in October 2002, following Circular No. 2 of the Council of Ministers, adopted in January 1996. The coordination work was given to the Bureau des Affaires Urbaines of the Municipality with the participation of the Office of the Governor; municipal departments, Khans and Sangkats. NGOs and urban communities were not associated with this work

4 David Harvey quoted in Afia Afenah, “Conceptualizing the Effects of Neoliberal Urban Policies on Housing Rights: An Analysis of the Attempted Unlawful Forced Eviction of an Informal Settlement in Accra, Ghana”, Development Planning Unit Working Paper No. 139, University College London, 2009, p. 4, available at: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/sites/bartlett/files/migrated-files/WP139_Afia_Afenah_Internet_copy_0.pdf [accessed May 18, 2019].

5 The Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF) was created in 1998, as collaboration between the Squatter and Urban Poor Federation (SUPF), the municipality and national NGOs

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A short history of the transformation of ethnic Chinese organizations in Thailand: From seditious secret societies to patriotic cultural NGOs

Zhang Ying and Wasana Wongsurawat

ABSTRACT—Ethnic Chinese organizations in Thailand were transformed and developed through the past century and a half of the modern era in three major phases. In the early-19th century, an influx of Chinese labor migrants followed the tradition of establishing fictive kinship networks in their host country through sworn brotherhoods and secret societies. Towards the end of the 19th century, however, the modernization and nation-building processes of the Thai state came into conflict with the culture and lifestyle of Chinese secret societies and they became criminalized. Consequently, the ethnic Chinese community in Thailand entered the second phase of registering their ethnic organizations as legitimate trade and philanthropic associations according to the Thai law in the early-20th century. These trade and philanthropic associations also played an important political role as representatives and organizers of the ethnic Chinese community through the period leading up to and during the Second World War. After the conclusion of the War, Chinese associations came under serious scrutiny from the Thai state that had become increasingly paranoid of Chinese communist threats from the People's Republic of China. Ethnic Chinese organizations in Thailand, thus, transformed into the third phase by registering as NGOs according to the government's National Economic and Social Development Plans in the 1960s, and proliferated as clan associations from the 1970s onwards. The main purpose of Chinese clan associations from this late Cold War period to the present day remains largely the same. That is, to encourage networking within each organization, networking among fellow Chinese organizations

and to act as a bridge to better the ethnic Chinese community's relationship with the Thai general public, the Thai government, and the rising influence of the People's Republic of China in the post-Cold War period.

Keywords: Ethnic Chinese organizations, NGO, secret society, trade association, philanthropic association, modernization, nationalism

Introduction

The Thai state and Thai society have had a complex relationship with the ethnic Chinese community in the Kingdom throughout the modern era. This complexity is due, partly, to the numerous dimensions involved in this relationship, both in terms of development and transformation within the two parties involved and major changes in the regional and global historical context. If we consider the beginning of the modern era to be—according to the traditional historiographical practice in Asian studies—events that represent concrete imperialist threats to both China and Siam (as it was known to the world prior to 1939), either with the conclusion of the First Opium War in 1842 (Teng and Fairbank 1979) or the signing of the Bowring Treaty in Siam in 1855, the history of this relationship of the Thai state and Thai society with the ethnic Chinese community in the modern era is already more than one and a half centuries in duration, taking up the greater part of the lifespan of the current ruling dynasty in Thailand.

Through this extensive period, China has gone from an empire under dynastic rule, through the chaos of warlordism, to becoming the People's Republic under Mao, and reforming to become a socialist market economic system close to the turn of the 21st century. Siam, on the other hand, started out as an absolute monarchy—the only one in Southeast Asia to remain marginally independent throughout the height of imperialist threats—was transformed into a constitutional monarchy following the Revolution of 1932, changed the nation's name to Thailand in 1939, survived the Second World War and several more decades of military dictatorship during the Cold War, democratized briefly in the 1990s and returned to a quasi-military government again in the 21st century. Within this tumultuous historical

framework, the ethnic Chinese community in the kingdom has not only survived but has also been transformed and developed in a most intriguing fashion. What is arguably one among the most important aspects of this community—in terms of maintaining relations within the community itself, sustaining links with the ancestral homeland and cultivating positive relations with the Thai ruling class and Thai society as a whole—is the numerous ethnic Chinese organizations that have existed in different forms and incarnations since before the dawn of the modern era in Siam, and that have continued to play a vital role up to the present day.

Ethnic Chinese organizations were founded upon a fundamental aspect of Chinese culture—the enormous dependence upon the family as the most important socio-economic and political foundation of human life. These organizations—in various forms, such as hometown associations, dialect associations or clan associations—provide a semblance of the family structure for overseas Chinese when they must leave the land of their ancestors and sojourn in foreign lands far away from their biological family. Essentially, ethnic Chinese organizations helped create a community of people who share either the same ancestral hometown, the same spoken dialect or even the same clan name, implying that their biological families might have originated from a similar place or be related at some point in the long history of Chinese civilization. This make-believe familial community will then exercise similar functions and provide similar support to that of a large extended family organization—especially in welfare matters, such as basic healthcare, housing, ritualistic support for important life events like weddings and funerals and, at times, even employment (Kuhn 2008).

Ethnic Chinese organizations also represent their members in the host community. They often act as the medium in contacting and negotiating with the host state—the ruling class, the government, law enforcement—and the newly arrived overseas Chinese who have not yet managed to blend into the surroundings of their new country. Thailand first established formal diplomatic relations with the Republic of China soon after the conclusion of the Second World War and only switched to recognizing the People's Republic of China in 1975 (Chinwanno 2010). That is, through the first half of the 20th century, the Chinese in Thailand did not have any representation from

the Chinese nation-state in any formal manner. It, therefore, fell upon leading ethnic Chinese organizations, such as the Chinese Chamber of Commerce or even major dialect, hometown or clan associations to represent their members in relation with the Thai state (Skinner 1957). Some maintained cordial relations with the ruling class, resulting in the heightened prestige and influence of members both in the local economy and within the politics of the ethnic Chinese community of Siam. Others, however, found themselves on the wrong side of the law and came to be perceived by the authorities as criminal gangs.

From the late-19th century, at the height of imperialist aggression in Southeast Asia, the complex relationship between ethnic Chinese organizations and the Thai state went from being synonymous with criminal activities and having an anti-organized crime and racketeering law named after the generalized Thai pronunciation of Chinese secret societies at the end of King Chulalongkorn Rama V's reign, to becoming legalized as nongovernmental organizations in the form of philanthropic foundations towards the end of the Cold War period. The position of ethnic Chinese organizations vis-à-vis the Thai state has been transformed throughout this long and tumultuous period largely due to the dramatic change in the Thai state's relations with and policies towards China. In the last three reigns of Siam's absolutist regime, any form of representation of the ethnic Chinese community in the kingdom was under great pressure and scrutiny as being possibly sympathetic towards revolutionary and republican causes that had brought the Qing Dynasty to its demise in the Chinese Revolution of 1911. The Thai state's republican fears turned into a communist scare at the conclusion of the Second World War and through much of the Cold War era. With the normalization of diplomatic relations between Thailand and the People's Republic of China and with the meteoric rise of the latter's economic and political might in the global arena following reform policies, however, ethnic Chinese organizations in Thailand have risen to the forefront of connecting the ethnic Chinese community in Thailand with new Chinese migrants—both investors and tourists—and thereby, have brought the Thai economy in sync with the expansionist economic policies of the Chinese Communist government in the era of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Finally, with the Thai government relying increasingly on the PRC for support in both economic and national security, it appears

that some ethnic Chinese organizations have even managed to integrate into Thailand's nationalist narrative of what some perceive as the "Chinese Century." In this case, the organization has developed from being an organization to maintain and represent Chinese-ness among members of Chinese descent from the late-19th century and throughout the 20th century, to become part of the Thai nationalist narrative under Chinese influence in the 21st century. Case-studies of the development of ethnic Chinese organizations in Thailand are a most intriguing narrative of transformations of ethnic, cultural and national identity of the Chinese, host community in Thailand as well as the Thai state government. These transformations will significantly change our understanding of diaspora history from both the perspective of the ancestral homeland and the host country—in this case, Thailand (Wongsurawat 2017).

Secret societies: The original diaspora family and forefathers of clan associations

Ideologically, secret societies first emerged in China as an anti-Manchu Han loyalist movement driven largely by the working class of southern China shortly after the Qing Dynasty consolidated its rule through much of the Chinese Mainland in the early-18th century. With population increasing and open arable land becoming scarce, there was a sharp rise in the number of landless laborers roaming restlessly for work across the southern extremes of the Great Qing Empire. These destitute people could not be won over by the Manchu courts to conform to the tradition of the civil service examination and, at the same time, the early-Qing economy was not nearly robust enough to provide them with sufficient employment to feed their families. A large number of these landless laborers had to sojourn further and further away from their ancestral hometowns to find employment in the far corners of the empire or across the seas in Southeast Asia. As they traveled, they blamed their plight on the failings of the new dynasty and vowed to return to overthrow the Manchus and restore the Ming once they had made their fortunes in faraway lands (Wang 2002).

In practical terms, Chinese secret societies were a form of fictive kinship. In a culture so dependent on the institution of the family, it is almost predictable that organizations like secret societies would emerge

in the late-18th century when a large number of the male working-age population, due to economic pressures, had to reside faraway for employment. As women and children were almost always kept at home, the men found themselves alone in a foreign land without any kind of support network. Consequently, they establish bonds with fellow sojourning men from the same home country through one of the most primitive forms of spiritual bonding—the oath of brotherhood. This had been a popular practice among lone Chinese men away from home since as far back as the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The three heroes—Lui Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei—took the Oath of the Peach Garden and became sworn brothers with the same purpose in life—to protect the Han empire from all barbaric enemies and external dangers. Perhaps it was this literary allusion that encouraged the anti-Manchu proto-Han nationalism among the Chinese migrant laborers of the 18th century. While the practice of sworn brotherhood had the practical function of creating a make-believe family network to support each other away from home, the fact that the men already blamed their economic plight on the political upheaval caused by the Manchu overthrow of the Ming allowed them to identify with the three heroes of the Han in the Three Kingdoms even more. As the number of laborers from south China continued to expand through the 19th century, sworn brotherhood networks across the South China Sea became more complex and eventually came to be established as secret societies in the early-19th century (Davis 1971).

The earliest records of the emergence of Chinese secret societies in Siam suggest that this organizational form was imported from Chinese communities in Malaya in 1810 (Huang 2010). This was at the very end of the first reign of the ruling Chakri Dynasty, which was established after the downfall of the Teochew Chinese King Taksin's reign that witnessed a sizable influx of working class Chinese relocating to Siam. The late King Taksin had intended that they would help rebuild the Siamese economy following the long period of warfare with the neighboring Burmese kingdom that had resulted in the destruction of the old capital in Ayutthaya. The majority of them were, therefore, concentrated in port cities, especially in the newly established capital of Thonburi (Chartsiri 2009). When the Chakri Dynasty was established, however, the new rulers were wary of the close connection between the Teochew Chinese community and the late king and were,

therefore, not supportive of this particular group. The early Chakri kings opted instead to support the older Hokkien migrants who had relocated to Siam long before the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. The capital city was relocated across the Chao Phraya River to Bangkok, the Teochew community was banished downstream to Sampheng, and Chakri Grand Palace was built on the site of their original settlement (Van Roy 2017).

Considering the circumstances, the emergence of Chinese secret societies in Thailand in the early-19th century was an opportune time for the masses of newly arrived but already unpopular Teochew migrants to take full advantage of this novel social form in their new home. During this foundational period, secret societies in Siam functioned largely as mutual support organizations and gradually developed into the lead philanthropic associations of the local Chinese community. They worked closely with Chinese temples, holding their charitable activities on temple grounds or connected with temple schools (Baffie 2007). As time passed, due to the sheer number of the Teochew Chinese in the capital, they began to gain influence both in the local economy and in the inner political sphere among various dialect groups of ethnic Chinese in Siam. Sampheng rose to be a bustling business area and Bangkok's center of shady entertainment establishments—opium and gambling dens, brothel—that had become known both as “Chinese vices” and secret society trades (Skinner 1957).

By the fourth reign of the Chakri Dynasty, Siamese state officials had already learnt to take advantage of this special form of ethnic Chinese community network. Law enforcement officers were known to employ Chinese secret society bosses as peace keepers within their own ethnic communities. Moreover, it had become common practice very early on for shady establishments operated by secret societies to provide related officials with regular monetary gifts in return for allowing their entertainment businesses to carry on unimpeded. Bosses of the leading secret societies also came to be involved in the more legitimate side of these entertainment business—winning contracts and coming to serve the Chakri court in some of the most lucrative tax farms, especially liquor and the lottery (Baffie 2007).

The mid-19th century brought about a period of transformation in the status, role and relationship between the Siamese state and the ethnic Chinese community in Siam. This had a direct effect

on the Siamese ruling class and the Chinese secret societies. Over a decade after the conclusion of the First Opium War and on the eve of the outbreak of the Second Opium War, King Mongkut (Rama IV) of Siam was offered the first of the so-called “unfair” treaties by the British Governor of Hong Kong, Sir John Bowring, in April of 1855. In reality, there was not a lot of room for negotiation. Since the First Opium War had opened up treaty ports along the southeastern coast of China, British imperial standards of trade had taken over the Chinese tribute trade system as the new world order of international trade throughout the East, Southeast and South Asian regions. The Siamese court took the only sensible option—to adjust itself to fit in with the new order of so-called British “free trade” and to get used to the British Empire being the new hegemon of the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. These adjustments were listed as terms of the Bowring Treaty, which included: the end of court monopoly of international trade; a flat tariff rate of 3% for all import goods except for opium; and extraterritorial rights for British subjects.

The Siamese government and the Chinese community in Siam each adjusted to this major change in world affairs in their own way. The Siamese government decided to accommodate the British in every way, making Siam a partner in the expansion of the British trade empire in Southeast Asia and allowing the Siamese economy to prosper with the flourishing British free trade across the South China Sea. The ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs, on the other hand, took advantage of the extraterritorial conditions of the Bowring Treaty and found ways to register themselves and their families as colonial subjects so as to enjoy extraterritorial privileges in Siam. Having extraterritorial rights meant being free from the hassle of the Siamese judicial system and free from all sorts of extortion by corrupt state officials in all branches of the Siamese government. This made it even easier to do business in Siam and, in turn, allowed them to contribute even more to the growing Siamese economy as well as improve their already cordial relationship with the court even further (Wongsurawat 2019). The working class ethnic Chinese, however, could not all benefit from this lucrative business of extraterritoriality.

The ethnic Chinese who were not colonial subjects were regarded by the Siamese state in the late-19th century as something in between a native Siamese and a foreign national. This is because Siam did not,

at that time, have diplomatic relations with China. Hence, while they were allowed to reside and travel freely throughout the kingdom, the ethnic Chinese were not subject to *corvée* labor nor were they levied with the same head tax as native Thais. This had to change with the new tariff regulations put in place, in part, by the Bowring Treaty. Having surrendered part of its full powers to levy taxes from international trade, the Siamese government was forced to reform its domestic revenue system so as to enable a more efficient and sustainable financial policy through the modern era. One among the most crucial parts of this reform plan was to have the non-colonial subject ethnic Chinese pay the same taxes as native Thai subjects (Skinner 1957). This may sound perfectly reasonable from the Siamese administrative point of view. From the point of view of the working class Chinese, this was a significant increase and it was a major blow to the financial advantage, however small it might have been, they once enjoyed within the Thai economy.

Consequently, the Chinese secret societies, which were probably also the closest thing to a Chinese labor union in those days, were pushed further into criminal activities. Many of them, especially ones that had not established strong alliances with high-ranking officials or assimilated into government organizations, openly opposed the government's tax reform policies. This anti-establishment sentiment was demonstrated through the operations of numerous ethnic Chinese criminal gangs—from racketeering, robbing, to outright rioting. The most well-known and probably best organized among these secret society-sponsored activities was the Chinese Strike of 1910, which brought Bangkok to a standstill for three days with an absence of dock workers, food peddlers and the majority of the city's retail businesses that were almost all of Chinese descent. Ultimately, the reform policies were carried out to completion but the resistance from the working class Chinese through the organization of secret societies had put them on the wrong side of Siam's law and order in the modern era. The Angye Act was promulgated in 1898 to criminalize membership of Chinese secret societies in the attempt to curb their rising tendency towards anti-establishment, anti-social and criminal activities (Baffie 2007).

Culture, commerce and philanthropy: The legalization of ethnic Chinese associations

By the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, r. 1910–1925), Chinese secret societies had not only become completely criminalized, the common term for Chinese secret societies in Thai, *ang-yee*, had also become synonymous with criminal gangs, racketeering and many other sorts of organized crime. King Vajiravudh himself was a vocal critic of the *ang-yee*. Having ascended the throne only months after the Chinese Strike of 1910, the king cited that incident as a prime example of the unpatriotic nature of the ethnic Chinese in a few of his nationalist propaganda writings, including the most infamous newspaper article, “The Jews of the Orient,” which was published in the royally sponsored *Nangsuephim Thai* daily newspaper in 1914. Later, Vajiravudh took to declaring all sorts of activities of the ethnic Chinese community that he deemed to be unpatriotic as being inspired by or being a front for secret societies. This was evident in his comments on the Chinese students’ strike in support of the May Fourth Movement of 1919, where it was suggested that these political activities of the overseas Chinese, regardless of how lofty were the declared aspirations, always ended up being a front for secret societies with the simple intention of extorting money from their compatriots (Wongsurawat 2019). Eventually, the secret society trope came to be used even to discredit the Chinese nationalist movement, especially when it concerned their anti-monarchist and republican tendencies.

Consequently, it was necessary for civil society groups within the ethnic Chinese communities of Siam not only to distance themselves from the identity and activities of secret societies but also to establish themselves as legal organizations with legitimate objectives that supported government policies and bettered the conditions of life and business within the Chinese communities of Siam. The two foundational organizations of the ethnic Chinese community in Siam were both established in 1910. One was the largest and most influential philanthropic organization of Bangkok Chinatown, the Poh Teck Tung Foundation (Poh Teck Tung Foundation 2010). The other was the most influential trade association in Siam through the early half of the 20th century, the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce (Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce 2019). The membership of these two

organizations largely overlapped and, to a certain extent, also included some well-known names from secret society circles. Yet these were legitimate organizations according to Thai law and they attempted, at least in form and on record, to steer clear of politics and the political ideologies that had made secret societies such a troublesome movement from the point of view of the Siamese state in the late-19th to early-20th centuries.

The Poh Teck Tung Foundation whose original purpose was to provide funerary services for unclaimed corpses in Chinatown, expanded to become the main fundraising organization for a wide variety of philanthropic activities. The foundation came to be the most important donor in the establishment of Chinese schools, hospitals and, eventually, the first overseas Chinese university in Thailand towards the end of the Cold War. The Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce was the gathering place for the most influential among upstanding ethnic Chinese businessmen in the kingdom. The chamber's committee included leading names in the rice and finance industries. During the period when Siam had not yet established official diplomatic relations with China—from the chamber's establishment up to the conclusion of the Second World War—the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce acted as the *de facto* Chinese consulate, coordinating matters concerning trade and commerce between the Siamese government and the various bodies governing China throughout that period.

One interesting aspect of the earliest establishment of legalized Chinese associations in the form of the Poh Teck Tung Foundation and the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce is the fact that both of them could be considered “pan-Chinese” organizations that cut across dialect, hometown, clan name and various other major divides within the ethnic Chinese community in Siam. Despite the fact that secret societies came to be criminalized towards the end of King Chulalongkorn's reign and further demonized during King Vajiravudh's reign, due to the Thai ruling class' fear of the rise of Chinese nationalism through the movements of revolutionaries like Sun Yat-sen and the Chinese Revolution that eventually came into being in 1911, the first two legalized ethnic Chinese organizations in Siam actually gathered the various groups of ethnic Chinese together according to the one-China aspiration of the Chinese nationalists. It was not until the late-1920s and 1930s, after the idea of legalized ethnic organizations had

become the norm in Siam, that dialect and hometown associations started to be registered as legalized and officially recognized Chinese associations in Siam. The first dialect association to register was the smallest group present within the ethnic Chinese population of Siam at the time. The Hakka Association was registered in 1927 (Hakka Association of Thailand 2019), followed by the Kwong Siew Association, representing the Cantonese, in 1936 (Kwong Siew Association of Thailand 2010). The last dialect association to be registered before the conclusion of the Second World War was the largest among the ethnic Chinese population, the Teochew Association, which was registered in 1938 (Teochew Association of Thailand 2012).

In a way, the establishment of the various dialect and hometown associations in the 1920s and 1930s reflected not only a more relaxed attitude towards the activities of the ethnic Chinese business community on the part of the Thai state but also the splintering of the nationalized Chinese identity and the increasing frictions within the leadership of the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce. As the fear of persecution by the Siamese state subsided, the ethnic Chinese community began to diversify, only to be unified once again by the greater threat of Japanese invasion that came with the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. In the years leading up to the Japanese invasion of Thailand in 1941, although most Chinese associations supported the Chinese war effort, there was a clear divide along the lines of the different factions of the Chinese Nationalist government—basically, the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce under the leadership of Chen Shouming supported Chiang Kai-shek's government while the Teochew Association under the leadership of Yi Guangyan supported the Guangxi Clique (Murashima 1996). Nonetheless, once the war broke out in Southeast Asia and Japan occupied Thailand in 1941, the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce came to be the main organization in charge of coordinating between the ethnic Chinese community, the Thai state, the Japanese occupiers and Chiang Kai-shek's government in Chongqing.

Although the legal ethnic Chinese organizations during this period came into being with the very distinct objective of steering clear of problematic political ideologies so as to distance themselves from the seditious image of Chinese secret societies of the earlier period, the atmosphere of highly polarized regional and global politics due to the

outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War and later the Pacific War inevitably forced all existing ethnic Chinese organizations towards supporting the war effort of the Allied Powers under the leadership of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China government in Chongqing. This caused the leading personalities in these organizations to be at odds with both the Japanese forces that were occupying Thailand through the course of the Pacific War and the Thai government under the leadership of the pro-Axis Prime Minister Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram. Consequently, the war became a period of tremendous pressure for the entire ethnic Chinese community in Thailand, with thousands of its members being imprisoned or deported, and two presidents of the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce being assassinated—Yi Guangyan at the outbreak of the war in 1939 and Chen Shouming after the conclusion of the war in 1946 (Wongsurawat 2019).

The proliferation of Chinese clan associations as NGOs: The Cold War and beyond

The ethnic Chinese community in Thailand would continue to be under pressure and great scrutiny from the Thai government for much of the early half of the Cold War period. As China descended, once again, into civil war, ethnic Chinese organizations in Thailand were forced to side with the anti-Communist Republic of China—the one China recognized by the Thai government from the conclusion of the war up to 1975. Yet, once the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, all familial and cultural roots from the Mainland came to be a focus of suspicion for the fiercely anti-communist Thai military governments of the 1950s. It was not until the dictatorship of Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat that the Thai government started to implement the “National Economic and Social Development Plan.” This bizarrely socialist culture of planning the economy was recommended to the Thai government by their American advisors, hoping to put an end to communist insurgency through development, which might be more successful in the context of a planned economy. Part of this first plan in 1961 was to encourage the emergence and proliferation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) so as to foster a civil society that could cooperate with and support the government's

economic and development policies from the bottom up (Tejapira 2004). It was during this period that the ethnic Chinese community found a new way to reorganize and proliferate through this new incarnation known as the NGO.

According to the records of the United Chinese Clans Association of Thailand (UCCAT), which is the largest and most comprehensive union of Chinese clan associations in the kingdom, up to the present there are altogether 64 single clan associations and 6 multiple-clan associations registered with the UCCAT. Of this number, all are registered as NGOs and up to 80 percent were established in the 1960s and 1970s (UCCAT 2013). From the mission statements and activities lists of these clan associations, it would appear that the main purpose of these ethnic Chinese organizations changed quite significantly from their earlier incarnation in the prewar and wartime period. Although almost all of them continue to engage in some form of philanthropic activity, it was no longer their most important *raison d'être*. Moreover, since the Thai government had long since established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China and had very clear policies on trade and commerce with the Republic of China, these new forms of association did not need to serve in place of official linkages between Thailand and the two China(s) anymore. Perhaps the most important difference is that these ethnic Chinese NGOs of the Cold War period appear to have succeeded much better than their wartime predecessors in steering clear from politics or becoming entangled in state political disputes. The main purpose of establishing these Chinese clan associations as NGOs was exclusively for networking. This main purpose of networking was, however, multi-dimensional and rather complex. Altogether, there were four levels of networking involved in the activities of these clan association NGOs: networking among members of the same association; networking among different clan associations; networking between the clan associations and the ethnic Chinese community; and networking between the clan associations and the Thai general public.

Clan associations in Thailand were organized according to a form similar to lineage associations in China. However, since the founders and most members of clan associations in Thailand were either migrants or descendants of migrants from the Mainland, most of them were not in possession of the full family records from their ancestral hometown

in China. Moreover, as many of the earlier networks were established as fictive kinships through sworn brotherhoods, members of the same clan association, even though they had the same clan name, might not be connected biologically with the same family. Yet, once they became fellow members of the same clan association, they took part in the same important life ceremonies—worshipped the same mythical ancestors, contributed to each other's children's weddings and parents' funerals. This very loose definition of clan membership has allowed for the emergence of what has become known as multiple-clan associations. This could be due to the history of sworn brotherhood or close working relations among colleagues of two or more clans and eventually results in the establishment of a multiple-clan association that will allow all members to participate in activities together as if they were members of the same lineage.

Networking among members of the same association

The primary purpose of clan associations in Thailand is to reach out and establish a new community of people with the same clan name and allow members to engage with each other in various activities, both life rituals, community service and philanthropy. Most clan associations were first established in Bangkok but the more successful ones will try to reach out beyond the capital and establish branch offices in provinces across the country. The following table shows the number of branch offices of the seven largest clan associations in Thailand at the present day.

Each association, with all of its branch offices across the country, organizes annual ancestral worship ceremonies and contributes to weddings and funerals of members. Some, such as the Lim Clansmen Association, have provided scholarships to support the education of people in their community from bachelors to doctoral level to over 20,000 students since the founding of the organization. These clan associations also reach out to clan associations of the same lineage in China and involve them in activities, such as organizing study trips for young members or cooperation in building additional ancestral halls for worshipping rituals and other clan activities. These activities allow members of each clan association not only to meet and connect with fellow clan members across the country but also to make contact with future associates in China as well. This is an interesting case of using

one's Chinese clan name, which is not even recognized by the Thai legal system, as social capital in networking with fellow clan members across Thailand and also in parts of South China.

Table 1: Clan associations

Name of Clan Association	Branch offices in Thailand
Tachasumphon Association of Thailand (Zheng 鄭 clan)	31
Lim Clansmen Association of Thailand (Lin 林 clan)	66
Xu Clan Association of Thailand (Xu 徐 clan)	17
Chen Clan General Association of Thailand (Chen 陳 clan)	26
Hwang Association of Thailand (Huang 黃 clan)	20
Lee Clan Association (Thailand) (Li 李 clan)	21
Khoo Clan Association of Thailand (Qiu 邱 clan)	12

Sources: TAT 2013; LCAT 2017; XCAT 2014; CCGAT 1993; HAT 2013; LCA 2013; KCAT 2010.

Networking among different clan associations

The United Chinese Clans Association of Thailand (UCCAT) is the main organization that provides the networking platform among different Chinese clan associations in Thailand. To the present day there are 64 single clan association members of the UCCAT. Members of these clan associations contribute to UCCAT activities and maintain networks among other member clan associations through yearly meetings organized around important Chinese festivals such as the Spring Festival Party. Each member association also takes turn organizing monthly fellowship parties on the first Saturday of each month. The UCCAT also supports the establishment of new clan associations, especially in cases where members of a certain clan may claim common ancestry with other clans and, therefore, desire to establish a multi-clan name association to enhance relations among member clans and contribute to the existing network of clan associations. At present six multi-clan name associations have been established and registered as member associations of the UCCAT.

The UCCAT secretariat is also responsible for compiling and editing the annual address book for the general-secretaries of the Thai-Chinese clan association fellowship.

Table 2: Multi-clan associations

Name of Multi-Clan Association	Member Clans
Shun Offspring Clan Association of Thailand	Chen (陳), Hu (胡), Yuan (袁), Wang (王), Yao (姚), Sun (孫), Tian (田), and Lu (陸) Clan Associations of Thailand
Long Gang Qin Yi Association of Thailand	Liu (劉), Guan (關), Zhang (張), and Zhao (趙) Clan Associations of Thailand
Xiao Ye Zhong Clan Association of Thailand	Xiao (蕭), Ye (葉), and Zhong (鐘) Clan Associations of Thailand
Five Surnames of Lieshan Association of Thailand	Lu (呂), Lu (盧), Gao (高), Xu (許), and Ji (紀) Clan Associations of Thailand
Xu Yu Tu She Same Ancestor Association of Thailand	Xu (徐), Yu (餘), Tu (塗) and She (佘) Clan Associations of Thailand
Luck Gui Tueng Foundation of Thailand	Hong (洪), Jiang (江), Weng (翁), Fang (方), Gong (龔) and Wang (汪) Clan Associations of Thailand

Source: UCCAT 2013.

Networking between the clan associations and the ethnic Chinese community

There is also a significant crossover between personnel and activities of clan associations and that of dialect or hometown associations as well as larger umbrella organizations—such as the Poh Teck Tung Foundation—and the ethnic Chinese community in general. This is because Chinese clan association membership in Thailand cuts across the dialect and hometown categories. Nonetheless, the dialect or hometown identity continues to be expressed and, at times, dominates the identity politics within certain clan associations. A prime example is the Xu Clan Association of Thailand which is the clan association with

the largest Hakka base. Its board members and activities, therefore, frequently overlap with that of the Hakka Association of Thailand. Similarly, the majority of the members of both the Tachasumphon Association of Thailand and the Lim Clan Association of Thailand are Teochew and leading members in these two clan associations are, therefore, often active in the Teochew Association of Thailand as well as in the Poh Teck Tung Foundation, which is also heavily dominated by the Teochew Chinese.

Since the boom of the Chinese economy and the large influx of Mainland Chinese tourists and investments into Southeast Asia, many of the Chinese clan associations in Thailand have also been actively seeking out their counterparts in the People's Republic of China. There has been a flurry of information exchanges between the lineage associations that are believed to be the ancestral hometowns in China and the clan associations of the overseas Chinese in Thailand. Many ancestral shrines have been built both in China and in Thailand since the Chinese reform period began in the 1980s. Mainland Chinese clan members are allowed and encouraged to join in clan association activities, especially in ancestral worship rituals, in Thailand. As China endured a full decade of destruction of the Confucian values of ancestral worship during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–76), many Mainlanders have come to Southeast Asia to relearn the rituals of ancestral worship. Some have worshiped their ancestors for the first time in Bangkok in the 21st century. Interestingly, the ancestral worship function of clan associations has great potential to contribute to the development of cultural tourism in Thailand in this age where Mainland Chinese tourists dominate the tourism industry in most Southeast Asian countries.

Networking between the clan associations and the Thai general public

The last and perhaps most intriguing aspect of clan association networking of the 21st century is how these organizations have come to relate to the general public and assimilate their ethnic identity into some of the state's mainstream nationalist narratives. Aside from running schools and hospitals that serve the Thai general public as well as the Chinese community and supporting Chinese temples, which have become increasingly popular among Thai and foreign worshipers over the years, some clan associations also present their history as

an integral part of the national history of the kingdom. This allows them to relinquish their marginalized position at the periphery and claim center stage in the military government's increasingly nationalist narrative. The most outstanding example of this is the Tachasumphon Association's support for the celebration of the 248th anniversary of King Taksin's expelling of Burmese conquerors from Ayutthaya.

It is widely accepted that King Taksin (r. 1767–1782) was of Teochew Chinese descent. More importantly, he was a member of the Zheng (鄭) clan and this is why the Tachasumphon Association, which is essentially the Zheng clan association, has claimed this national hero of Thailand as one of their most distinguished ancestors (TAT 2013). According to the mainstream narrative of King Taksin's regaining independence for Siam after the second fall of Ayutthaya to Burmese troops, he first went to the Chinese-majority port city of Chanthaburi on the eastern coast to recruit more supporters for his liberation of Ayutthaya. Hence, a large portion of his volunteer army were ethnic Chinese recruits from Chanthaburi. After his success in regaining control over the old capital city and the central plains of the Chao Phraya river valley, Taksin established himself as king and moved the capital to another Chinese-majority port in Thonburi, which is at present part of metropolitan Bangkok on the west bank of the Chao Phraya river. The Tachasumphon Association of Chanthaburi together with the association's headquarters in Bangkok co-sponsored a march of over a hundred members in traditional war gear, complete with flags and horses, from Ayutthaya on 15 March 2015 to commemorate the 218th anniversary of King Taksin's liberation of the Thai people from Burmese suzerainty. The spectacular marching troops arrived in Chanthaburi two days later to celebrate Taksin's legendary birthday on 17 March (Thairath 2015).

Such a spectacular activity as the Taksin march of the Tachasumphon Association not only shows the strong and capable networking between branches of the association across the country but also gained much interest and amazement from the Thai general public through the long journey of the troops and through media coverage of the event. King Taksin the national hero was not only made into a folk hero who could be celebrated by the general public but the Chinese clan association also managed to claim him as an outstanding ethnic Chinese personality and to position the ethnic Chinese communities

of Thonburi and Chanthaburi at the center of the Thai nationalist historical narrative.

Conclusion

Ethnic Chinese organizations in Thailand have developed and transformed over the past two centuries to survive major changes in regional and global politics, the Thai legal system and the Thai government's economic development and foreign policies from the late-19th century to the early-21st century. Starting out as unofficial, unrecognized and self-sufficient secret societies in the 19th century, they served as a network of fictive kinships, providing mutual support for single male migrants far away from their ancestral homeland. As the community grew and became more influential both in local politics and in the economy, secret societies came to interact closely and directly with important political and economic players at the state level. Some managed to establish alliances with the Siamese ruling classes while gaining patronage from Western colonial powers that came to impose extraterritoriality upon the Siamese Kingdom according to the conditions of the Bowring Treaty of 1855. Other secret societies—especially ones dominated by the working classes—were less versatile and were forced to confront the state as the reform policies of the modern era increased financial pressures upon their already difficult existence at the bottom of the economic pyramid in late-19th century Siam. Strikes, riots and outlawed businesses came to be identified with this latter group of working class secret societies. Their common name in Thai, *ang-ye*, came to be the title of the state's first anti-criminal organization law in 1898 and these unfortunate problematic ethnic Chinese organizations were brutally oppressed, nearly to oblivion, through much of the first half of the 20th century.

Ethnic Chinese organizations that survived the Angye Act and King Vajiravudh's anti-secret society rhetoric, reformed and registered legally as strictly non-political philanthropic foundations and trade associations. Nonetheless, despite their best attempts to accommodate the policies of the Siamese state and influential colonial powers in early 20th-century Southeast Asia, they were forced to take sides in politics again when the Thai revolutionary government entered into an alliance with Japan during the Second World War. They joined forces

in their underground efforts to support the Allied Powers and defeat the Japanese invaders of both their ancestral homeland, China, and their host country, Thailand. Many of these organizations managed to survive the Second World War only to endure another long decade of oppression from the postwar Thai government that viewed all connections with the Chinese Mainland as a possible communist threat.

It was not until the early-1960s that ethnic Chinese organizations found a new channel to proliferate through the Thai government's National Economic and Social Development Plan that encouraged the establishment of non-governmental organizations as driving forces of civil society and economic development. A large number of Chinese clan associations then came into official existence by registering as NGOs. Clan associations of this later period followed closely the original intention of the government's policy to enhance civil society. Their main purpose was completely transformed from that of the prewar and Second World War period. Chinese clan associations in Thailand from the 1960s to the present day have become important platforms for networking within the Chinese community, to encourage integration with the Thai general public and to enhance people to people linkage with the thriving economy of southern China. These organizations, which are intrinsically Chinese in their cultural roots, have not only managed to claim an important position in the Thai nationalist narrative, they have also become a highly influential supporter of the Thai government's efforts to become involved with and benefit from the growing trade and investment powers of the People's Republic of China in the era of the Belt and Road Initiative.

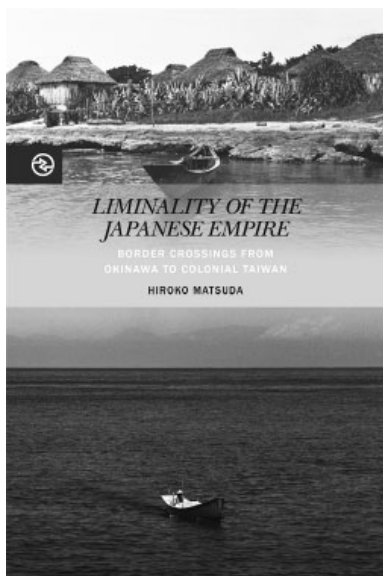
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Book review: *Liminality of the Japanese Empire: Border Crossing from Okinawa to Colonial Taiwan*, by Hiroko Matsuda (University of Hawai'i Press, 2019).



Liminality of the Japanese Empire should be considered one of the most exciting new books on transnational history this year. Matsuda's thorough historical investigation and her meticulous ethnographic work has yielded a powerful narrative that significantly contributes to the broadening of quite a few horizons within several academic fields of study. First and foremost, Matsuda has succeeded, beautifully, in situating the transnational history of the Japanese Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries into the broader context of global history. This is the way transnational history should be done.

Liminality of the Japanese Empire demonstrates how the transnational history of the Japanese Empire is not simply about Japanese imperialist expansion from the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) to the conclusion of the Second World War. Because history is not just about war and the decisions of great men and the nation is involved much more than its government, the transnational history of the Japanese Empire has a significant portion that is about overseas migration of subjects of the Japanese Empire, the rise of overseas Japanese communities across the Pacific and in both North and South America, as well as how the Japanese diaspora contributed to the development of the host countries and influenced relations between the Japanese Empire and those countries.

Secondly, *Liminality of the Japanese Empire* manages to construct a transnational narrative of the history of the overseas Japanese by questioning the readers' basic assumptions about the definition of basic political terms, such as, the empire, the nation-state and citizenship. Why and since when was Okinawa considered a part of the Japanese nation? If, indeed, it was an integral part of the Japanese nation, why has its native population been discriminated against as not truly Japanese or been called the "other Japanese" through much of the modern era? Furthermore, if Okinawa should be considered to be a marginalized remote corner of the empire/nation-state of Japan—as has been considered by many historians of the Japanese nation in earlier periods—how do we start to understand the relationship between migrants from Okinawa to Taiwan during the colonial period (from 1895 to the conclusion of the Second World War)? What kind of a relationship did the Japanese Empire have with each of its different colonies and what kind of relationship did colonies like Taiwan have with people, officials and military officers from different parts of the Japanese Empire? In searching for the answers to all these questions, Matsuda has managed to give us an interesting new perspective on the identity politics of what it really means to be Japanese, from the perception of the marginalized Okinawan migrant acting out as a second-class colonizer in a first-class colony such as Taiwan in the late-1930s.

Thirdly, *Liminality of the Japanese Empire* problematizes the status of Okinawa within the Japanese Empire and later within the postwar Japanese nation-state as much as it problematizes the status of Taiwan, both as a colony and a nation-state. This book is a must-read for Taiwan studies just as much as it is for scholars of the transnational history of the Japanese Empire. For how long and just how intensely was Formosa Island under the suzerainty of the Great Qing Empire before it was forced to relinquish the island to Japan following the conclusion of the First Sino-Japanese War? How much did Taiwan residents feel that they were a part of the Japanese Empire in the 50 years when they were technically under Japanese rule? Finally, if Okinawan migrants to Taiwan felt that they learned to become more Japanese in Taiwan, could we conclude that Taiwan was more a part of the Japanese Empire than Okinawa during the colonial period? The answers to all these questions, which readers can find in *Liminality of the Japanese*

Empire, allows us to contemplate more profoundly and question more intensely our preexisting perceptions of the Japanese national identity, the Okinawan identity and the Taiwanese identity from the colonial period up to the present in the post-Cold War period.

There is nothing really lacking from Matsuda's comprehensive narrative of *Liminality of the Japanese Empire*, however, one area that seems to receive less attention and would tend to pique the readers' curiosity and, hopefully, lead to further research, is the US role in all of this. It is clear that the main focus of *Liminality of the Japanese Empire* is on the relationship between the so-called mainland Japanese islands and Okinawa, the relationship between Okinawa and Taiwan under Japanese rule and the challenges to the definition of empire, nation-state, citizenship and the sense of belonging. However, it is also quite obvious that the US was fundamentally involved in transforming Japan from an early-20th century empire to a post-Second World War nation-state deprived of the right to have a military and the right to declare war. The US military presence in Okinawa since the conclusion of the War has also been an important obstacle in the way of fully assimilating these islands into the rest of the Japanese nation-state. Also, the most glaring presence of the US in this area of the world is the continued existence of Taiwan as an entity outside of the People's Republic of China throughout the Cold War and up to the present day. *Liminality of the Japanese Empire* does discuss US involvement quite a bit, especially in the parts relating to Okinawa, but there is much more that could be done from the perspective of the external superpower influence on the other two nation-state players in this narrative, Japan and Taiwan, in the postwar years. Perhaps this is for a different book altogether but this small gap in the narrative of *Liminality of the Japanese Empire*, at least, allows us to become aware of how so much more could and needs to be done in terms of taking the transnational history of this part of the world out of the rigid confines of nationalist history or area studies and into the more inclusive and aware realm of global history.

Finally, as someone who has been working mostly on the Chinese diaspora, I celebrate the emergence of such a work by a Japanese scholar like Matsuda. This is because most of the scholarship on the overseas Chinese that has been done in the past decades has tended to project the Chinese diaspora simply as an extension of the Chinese

nation-state. Consequently, conferences and publications on the history of the overseas Chinese have often been limited to internal dialogues only among historians of the Chinese nation or specifically among researchers or overseas Chinese history, and therefore, have not resulted in any form of transnational narrative at all. *Liminality of the Japanese Empire* tackles the subject of the overseas Japanese from a perspective that allows it to be discussed as a truly transnational narrative. Matsuda does this by challenging the traditional understanding of the limits of the empire, various forms of national boundaries and the wide array of possible definitions of citizenship. This allows *Liminality of the Japanese Empire* to be in conversation with all sorts of works on transnational history. The same questions on limits, boundaries and national belongings that Matsuda raises with the overseas Japanese in her own work could be posed to many other modern nation-states with a sizable diaspora/overseas community in the 19th and 20th centuries. It is field shaping works like *Liminality of the Japanese Empire* that encourage historians of the transnational—the histories of the overseas Chinese, Non-Residential Indians, Okinawan Japanese migrants, and so on—to engage and learn more from each other. This book is an inspiration for transnational and global historians of our day. It is a good reminder that there is so much more that could be done to broaden our perspective and deepen our understanding of history in the globalized age. There is still much more that needs to be done before we can truly liberate our histories—especially Asian histories—from the rigid confines of national and regional histories and area studies.

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