

Mak Phœun : Histoire du Cambodge de la fin du XVIe au début du XVIIIe siècle

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Le second aspect, en l'occurrence les formes de résistance, aurait par contre mérité un développement beaucoup plus important pour donner à l'ouvrage une plus grande originalité. En tout et pour tout un peu plus de dix pages seulement sont consacrées à cette question et souvent les formes de résistance sont plus présumées que démontrées, par exemple à propos de la résistance paysanne durant l'époque précoloniale (p. 39-42) ou à propos du banditisme rural (p. 66) pour lequel l'auteur se contente d'émettre l'hypothèse qu'il a probablement existé ailleurs qu'à Kedah où une précédente étude l'a mis en évidence pour le début du XX^e siècle. D'autre part, la vente massive de terres par les Malais à cette époque ne doit-elle pas également être perçue comme une forme de résistance ? En aliénant ses terres, le paysan refuse peut-être une subordination au système foncier colonial pour jouir librement des liquidités dégagées.

Les mouvements, manifestations, incidents liés à cette résistance sont trop brièvement évoqués : révolte de Terengganu (1928) (p. 77), mouvement Sabilillah (p. 106), mouvement Barisan Tani Sa-Malaya (p. 117), protestations à Kedah en 1974 et 1980 (p. 149), protestations dans les FELDA (p. 150).

Alors que sont utilisées uniquement des sources publiées en anglais, l'auteur reconnaît lui-même (p. 41) que les sources coloniales ne peuvent permettre à elles seules une reconstruction systématique des formes de résistance paysanne. On attendait de l'auteur qu'il donne la parole au monde rural malais afin de reconstruire de l'intérieur l'histoire de ces expériences populaires. Il aurait été certainement très instructif de suivre une ou plusieurs lignées de paysans sur plusieurs générations. On aurait aimé aussi voir cette résistance incarnée dans des personnages du monde rural malais connus pour leur activité de leader dans la résistance à l'autorité coloniale, ceci d'autant plus que certains sont peut-être encore vivants.

Comment s'organise cette résistance ? Concertation ou fruit d'initiatives individuelles ? Mobilise-t-elle au niveau d'un *kampong*, d'un groupe de *kampong*, d'un *mukim* ou d'un espace plus important ? Transcende-t-elle les alliances traditionnelles ?

Enfin, il aurait été certainement pertinent de consulter les archives de police et de tribunaux ainsi que la littérature orale et écrite autochtone qui semble encore largement inexploitée.

Daniel PERRET

MAK PHOEUN, *Histoire du Cambodge de la fin du XVI^e siècle au début du XVIII^e*, Paris, Presses de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, Monographies, n° 176, 1995. ix-494 pages, maps.

This detailed study of Cambodia's 17th century is welcome for giving that neglected and crucial period the attention which it has not been able to attract from historians since the old works of the French 19th century writers. It demonstrates that the alleged lack of sources for the 17th century was false, and merely reflected the lack of enterprise of scholars who refused to look for them.

Mak Phoeun's work takes the Cambodian chronicles as a base ¹. His real contribution, however, is his search for and use of an enormous corpus of contemporary European writers, mainly Dutch, but also French writers in Vietnam and Thailand, which illustrate the geopolitical centrality of Cambodia, then as now, in the political-economic struggle for

1. Discussion of his use of the chronicles is below.

Indochina among Thai, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Malays, Cham, and Europeans, in which the economic played, in the last instance, the dominant role.

Valuable as they are, however, the foreign sources are not spread evenly. They are important at the times of the Thai invasion of 1593-94 and the Cambodian recovery, the wars with Ayutthaya in the 1620s, the mid-century years, including the Islamic reign, when the Dutch were particularly active. After 1677 they are very sparse, with a noteworthy effect on the historical narrative.

Several broad periods may be distinguished in the seventeenth century. The first is the recovery from the destructive Ayutthayan invasion of 1594, and reconsolidation of the kingdom. At the time of the invasion one group of the royal family, the reigning king and two or more princes, escaped and eventually found refuge in Laos, while another group, the king's brother and his sons, were taken as hostages to Ayutthaya.

Recovery from this military disaster was begun under a provincial chief, apparently a minor prince, known to historians as Rām (pronounced /ream/) Joen Brai (also Choeung Prei), that is Rām of Joen Brai, a district now in the province of Kompong Cham. This is where Mak Phoeun's story begins with a thorough treatment of the period of Rām Joen Brai, whom he names "King Rām Ist". He expelled the Thai occupying force, reigned briefly as king, was succeeded by a son and three more weak kings until the surviving Cambodian nobility requested the return of the princes held in Ayutthaya. This was granted by the Thai king Naresuan, and in 1602 Prince Suriyobarm returned to rule successfully, reconsolidating the kingdom and making it the military equal of Ayutthaya¹.

The period from 1594 to 1602 was also significant for the role played by a group of Spaniards and Portuguese who had been trying to intervene in Cambodian politics since the reign of the king displaced by the Thai invasion, known in the Cambodian chronicles as "Saṭṭhā" (r. 1576-1594), with whom they had established good relations. They killed Rām Joen Brai in 1596, and helped the sons of the exiled king, who had died, return from Laos. They, however, and the new king they supported, were killed in 1599 in an uprising by Chams and Malays who were very active in Cambodia in this period, no doubt in relation to the developing international commerce within Southeast Asia, a theme which Mak Phoeun does not explore.

Mak Phoeun's discussion of the various sources is thorough, although he occasionally wastes time on what should have been minor, even irrelevant, points, in a general history of the 17th century. An example, on pages 60-61 is a section, "A-t-il existé un frère du roi Rām Ier?" introduced in order to undermine one of the parallels which I drew in my study of the 14th-16th centuries (see below).

The period of Rām Joen Brai and continuing until the return of Prince Suriyobarm from Ayutthaya in 1602, was also a time of revolt of the ethnic minorities of the western provinces. This was led by a man called Kaev Braḥ Bhloen said to have been a Chong, who still live in the western provinces, and supported also by Khmer, Lawa, and Karen. This, according to Mak Phoeun, resulted in "l'idée émise par Michael T. Vickery d'une possible relation de son nom-titre avec le titre du Stec Bhloen 'Roi du Feu' ... Jarai", which Mak Phoeun rejects because the Jarai live in the distant Northeast, not in the West where the story is situated. Here Mak Phoeun has indulged in mis-citation to make a specious debating point, and for obscure reasons, for he gives no indication why he dislikes that interpretation of 'kaev braḥ bhloen'. I did not bring either 'Stec Bhloen' nor the Jarai into my exposition, but suggested that the name 'kaev braḥ bhloen' could be related to the "fire king", who together with the 'water

1. "Suriyobarm" is often written "Suriyopear" in other histories. Here I write all personal names as in Mak Phoeun, although they often differ from earlier histories and reflect Khmer orthography, not pronunciation.

king', is one of the important leaders in some of these tribes [in western Cambodia]", as Mak Phoeun acknowledges in his note 140¹.

Suriyobarm returned in 1602 to a country in disorder, and his first years were occupied in putting down rebels, appointing new officials, and reorganising his state. Mak Phoeun gives full attention to these details, as they are related in the chronicles, but without sufficient critical attention to differences among the chronicles. All details are laid out with equal weight. At least clear notice should have been given of the differences of the F1170 and P57 chronicles, probably the oldest texts, from the VJ groups².

The second period of the seventeenth century is the reign of Suriyobarm's son Jayajetthā II, who returned from Ayutthaya later than his father, whom he succeeded in 1619, reigning until 1627. The first major event of Jayajetthā's reign was a Thai invasion in 1622, mentioned in all the Cambodian chronicles, and recorded also in contemporary European writings, but missing from the Ayutthayan chronicles and expunged by modern Western historians who follow Thai historiography³. The event is important in showing that Cambodia had quickly recovered from the war of 1593-94, and was again militarily equal to its neighbours.

There is some question about the accuracy of Mak Phoeun's favored texts concerning a Thai naval attack at the same time as the invasion by land. Also of dubious credibility is the detail from the same chronicles that Thai forces in 1623 were under command of the Thai *uparāj*, who, according to Thai records would have been only 10 years old (pp. 167, 174). In fact, as Mak Phoeun admits, the story of an attack in 1623 differs from text to text, and seems to be denied by the European reports, but he nevertheless wishes to take it as having "really been organized", even if the campaign was not undertaken. That is how to have it both ways.

This event is also the beginning of a period of detailed European reports on Cambodian affairs, for the Dutch in particular were interested in expanding their trade in Cambodia as well as in Ayutthaya. Mak Phoeun describes letters from the Thai king to Dutch and English representatives and to the Shogun of Japan concerning relations with Cambodia, all complaining about Cambodian disloyalty and some requesting foreign aid against Cambodia.

Jayajetthā's reign was also the beginning of those relations with Vietnam which were eventually to have such serious effects. It was in fact at the end of the reign of Suriyobarm that the first step was taken in the form of a marriage between the crown prince Jayajetthā and a Vietnamese princess at a date between 1616 and 1618. The chronicles differ in describing the nature of this event, as I shall discuss below.

Mak Phoeun follows this with a brief discussion of Jayajetthā's revision of the laws. As we shall see, the VJ chronicle makes this an event in the reign of Jayajetthā III (*r.* 1677-1707, with interruptions) too. As Mak Phoeun notes, however, these statements are not confirmed by the dates of the preambles in extant laws (191). It is of course, possible that the extant texts merely show dates of later revisions, but given the tendency of VJ to insert stories out of their proper temporal setting, it is equally likely that the 19th-century chroniclers took the dates of extant texts as genuine and attributed each date to a separate major revision.

The third significant period of the seventeenth century began following the death of Jayajetthā in 1627. It was a period of instability within the royal family. The most powerful prince was King Jayajetthā's brother Udāy, who refused the throne and became *ubhayorāj*,

1. See Mak Phoeun, p. 75, and Michael Vickery, "Cambodia After Angkor, the Chronicular Evidence for the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries", Yale University, Ph.D., December 1977, p. 212, n. 130. In the local Same/Pear languages the term is *khvay*, translated as 'sorcerer'. I did not think of it at the time, but perhaps in this case 'kaev' in Khmer 'crystal', was a distortion of 'khvay' not understood by Khmer writers.

2. See below for discussion of the chronicles.

3. In particular David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, New Haven, London, Yale University Press, 1984.

while Jayajetṭhā's son Cau Bañā Tū was named king. During his short reign there was another fight with the Thai, this time a Cambodian attack into Korat, again not mentioned in the Thai chronicles, but noted in records of the Dutch, whose aid against Cambodia was requested by the Thai during the following two years.

The Cambodian king Cau Bañā Tū is considered in Cambodian tradition to have been the author of several works of literature, and this aspect of his reign is given attention in the VJ chronicle, although, as Mak Phoeun notes, the leading specialists in early Khmer literature doubt the tradition, which casts doubt on the value of VJ and related chronicles (215-6).

Tū's reign ended in a struggle with his uncle Udāy in which Tū was killed. Again Udāy refused the throne, which was given to a half-brother of Tū, Cau Bañā Nūr, who reigned until 1640. For this period there is one of the rare Modern Inscriptions of Angkor Wat which name rulers, dated 1635. That inscription says the king bore the title *Anak Braḥ Paramarājādhirāj*. Mak Phoeun says that cannot be the king, because the king's titles were *Ang Dan Rajādhirāj*, while the *ubhayorāj*, Udāy, had the title 'Paramarāja'. Implicitly the contemporary authors of the inscription did not know what they were doing, and the inscription must be forced into agreement with the chronicle. It is necessary to emphasize that 'Paramarāja' is not diagnostic, but simply means "His Majesty", and could be applied to any king¹.

If, to take the inscription literally, the *Paramarāja* of IMA 20 was Udāy, and was king, then the inscription agrees with the reports of contemporary Dutch envoys to the Cambodian court, who were convinced that Cambodia was ruled by an 'old king', the more powerful, and a 'young king'. Of course it is possible, as Mak Phoeun argues, that the Dutch did not understand the Cambodian rank structure, and did not realize that Udāy, who in fact was more powerful, was not king, but *ubhayorāj*, a sort of regent.

The institution of *ubhayorāj*, which was of particular importance in the seventeenth century, is something of a mystery and deserves more investigation. The title may be construed literally as "double du roi", and in this context Mak Phoeun says it was "réservée à tout roi abdicataire". It is unknown in pre-Angkor and Angkor inscriptions, and appears as a new institution after Angkor. Its first recorded instance in the chronicles is the assumption of that title by the 15th-century Cau Bañā Yāt after he abdicated for his son, and it is this incident which has provided the canonical definition. That period, however, is precisely the period in which the chronicles are least trustworthy, and subsequent records of *ubhayorāj* appointments do not support it. My own view is that this is a detail backdated from the reign of Suriyobarm which some details of Yāt's reign mirror². It was next given by King Saṭṭhā to his younger brother Suriyobarm in the 1580s, and then the most famous *ubhayorāj* was the mid-17th-century Udāy who never reigned as king. Two more 17th-century *ubhayorāj*, in 1664-1674 and 1674-1691 were never kings, but succeeded one another in that rank during the reigns of other kings, in fact as heads of a contending royal faction. Only Suriyobarm's assumption of the rank of *ubhayorāj* following abdication for his son Jayajetṭhā in 1619 fits the canonical definition³.

It is probable that the institution of *ubhayorāj* was borrowed from Ayutthaya where there was an office of *Mahā uparāj*, distinct from the heir to the throne, and which could be occupied by a son or brother of the king⁴. Historians should also not discount a possible influence from Vietnam, where in certain periods kings habitually abdicated for a son while remaining as regent, in order to secure smooth succession.

1. Mak Phoeun, p. 225. The inscription is IMA, *Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor*, n° 20.

2. Vickery, "Cambodia After Angkor", pp. 189-197; Mak Phoeun, p. 23, where he is correct about my error of one year in calculating Suriyobarm's reign. There are still enough parallels, however, to maintain the comparison between Yāt and Suriyobarm.

3. Mak Phoeun, p. 104, 226, and "Tableau généalogique", p. 429.

4. See Michael Vickery, "The Constitution of Ayutthaya: An Investigation into the Three Seals Code", *New Light on Thai Legal History*, edited by Andrew Huxley, forthcoming..

The situation of weak kings under a powerful *ubhayorāj* came to an end in 1642 when *the ubhayorāj* Udāy and his son the new king were killed by Chau Bañā Cand, also named Saṭṭhā, a son of King Jayajetṭhā. Curiously Mak Phoeun says that this act was the “origin of dissension among the different members of the royal family”, as though such dissension had not been evident for years. But, in the view of Mak Phoeun it was this act of dissension which was particularly significant because it led to the first Vietnamese military intervention in Cambodia (251).

The enthronement of the assassin, who became king with the title of Rāmādhīpati I, marks the fourth major period of the century. Cand/Saṭṭhā is famous for conversion to Islam marking the high point of the expansion of Islam on the Southeast Asian mainland. Fortunately, for this interesting period, there is a wealth of information from European sources, mainly Dutch, and Mak Phoeun’s history of the period is in fact based on them. The Cambodian chronicles, and Mak Phoeun, hardly go beyond personal idiosyncrasies in discussing reasons for the conversion. The chronicles make much of his love for a young Malay or Cham girl. It is probable that it was a question of political economy, as other such conversions in Southeast Asia had been. International trade was dominated by Muslims-Malays, Javanese, and Cham, who had been active, sometimes violently, in Cambodian politics since at least the 1590s, and there was fear of the rapidly encroaching Europeans. Indeed it was in this reign, in 1644, that there was a massacre of the Dutch in Cambodia, which led to a rupture of relations until 1652. Mak Phoeun presents much evidence on the commercial interest of the Dutch and English in Cambodia, which was a competitor with Ayutthaya in its foreign trade, but he does not integrate this information into the history of Cambodian development in the seventeenth century.

This period ended in 1658 with a revolt of members of the royal family against Cand/Saṭṭhā, in which the rebels requested aid from Vietnam. This was the first Vietnamese military intervention in Cambodia. The result was the capture of Cand by the Vietnamese who took him to Vietnam from where he did not return¹.

The sources furnish varying explanations for the revolt against Cand. Of course, the religious question may have been important. Another element was dynastic rivalry, by the descendants of the old *ubhayorāj* Udāy who had been killed by Cand and it was that branch of the family which ruled after 1658. Mak Phoeun gives far too much attention to the assertion of some Vietnamese sources that the Vietnamese invasion of 1658 was defensive, in response to Cambodian violation of the border, noting pertinently that in 1658 the two countries did not have a common border, being separated by Champa. This claim, however, cannot, *pace* Mak Phoeun, be construed as “un simple ‘prétexte’ invoqué pour cacher les visées impérialistes de la cour vietnamienne” (296-7). The principal Vietnamese history of the area, which begins its story in 1658, gives the impression that very little documentary information was available to its author, who knew that there had been a war in that year and probably assumed that the Cambodians had started it. He was also in error in believing that the Cambodian King Cand had returned to rule, and his book has no further information about Cambodia until the 1670s². One possible element, which none of the sources mentions, at least as seen through Mak Phoeun, is commercial rivalry between a Muslim group (Malays and Cham) supported by Cand/Saṭṭhā, and non-Muslim Cambodians who preferred closer relations with Thais, Vietnamese and Europeans.

1. The chronicles differ as to whether he died in Vietnam, or in Champa during an attempted return after release by the Vietnamese.

2. Trinh-Hoai-Duc, *Gia-Dinh-Thung-Chi*, translated by Gabriel Aubaret as *Histoire et description de la Basse Cochinchine*.

The next reigns constitute a new period, in which the first event in Mak Phoeun's treatment seems to support the hypothesis of economic rivalry between Muslims and non-Muslims. This was a revolt by the Cham and Malays, and the flight of large numbers of them as well as Cambodians related to Cand/Saṭṭhā, to Ayutthaya. More instability was caused by continued splits within the royal family, in particular between the new king Aṅg Sūr and his brother who was appointed *ubhayorāj*, and who was described as favorable to Vietnam.

In 1672 Aṅg Sūr was assassinated by his son-in-law, who reigned for only one year until he himself was assassinated, while the *ubhayorāj* fled to Vietnam. Then a son of Aṅg Sūr became king for three years, a period of more murders and family conflicts, which facilitated the second Vietnamese intervention in 1673-1679. Thereafter Mak Phoeun's story, now mainly dependent on the chronicles without the voluminous external sources of the previous period, is little more than a listing of reigns interspersed with royal family conflicts. The period, and Mak Phoeun's story, ends with the first official Vietnamese conquest of part of the Saigon region, followed by a fifth Vietnamese invasion, like the preceding ones provoked by dissension among the Cambodian elite, in the very last year of the century.

The weakness of Mak Phoeun's treatment is that he has not achieved an integrated history, even in the form of the *histoire événementielle* which he intended (vii). Instead, he has supplied the reader with extracts from the important sources for the 17th century, arranged by date and subject. The problem seems to be that he wishes to use the foreign sources as corroborative evidence for the chronicles, especially for his preferred version of the chronicles.

Let me describe briefly what is at issue. In 1981 Mak Phoeun published his *Chroniques royales du Cambodge (de 1594 à 1677)*¹. There, after describing the known Cambodian chronicle manuscripts, he decided to accept the latest official version, known as that of Vāmñ Juon (VJ), after Minister of the Palace Thiounn, head of the commission set up to prepare it in 1903, as the basic text. He did not provide a detailed comparison of texts as a tool to determine the best readings. In CRC he translated VJ from 1594 to 1677, with notes on some of the different readings in other chronicles. His choice of 1677 as terminal date, rather than include the entire 17th century, was because 1677 marked the end of real Cambodian capability to resist encroaching Vietnamese and Thai (CRC, 3-4).

Somewhat earlier, in 1977, unknown to Mak Phoeun, I had completed a thesis on the chronicles, both Cambodian and Ayutthayan, for the 14th-16th centuries in Cambodia, not as a history of that period, but as an investigation into the value of the chronicles for the history of Cambodia and Cambodian-Ayutthayan relations during that time. There is no comment on my work in CRC, but in the book under review he has taken issue with me on several points which involve the chronicles of the 17th century².

My conclusions were that the Cambodian chronicles from the first so-called non-legendary reign of Nibbānapad in mid-14th century to the reign of Aṅg (Cau Bañā) Cand I in mid-16th century, with the exception of the story of Bañā Yāt, which, however, had usually been misplaced temporally, were fictitious. This was because they had been composed no earlier than the last years of the eighteenth century under the influence of the new chronicles of Ayutthaya composed after 1795, and had to begin their stories at a date close to the founding of Ayutthaya in 1350-51. At that time, the end of the eighteenth century, there were

1. École française d'Extrême-Orient, Collection de textes et documents sur l'Indochine, XIII, Paris, 1981. This work is further cited as CRC.

2. Vickery, "Cambodia After Angkor". For a summarised treatment of my methods and conclusions see Michael Vickery, "The Composition and Transmission of the Ayudhya and Cambodian Chronicles", in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, edited by Anthony Reid and David Marr, ASAA Southeast Asia Publications Series, Singapore, Heinemann Educational Books (Asia) Ltd., 1979, p. 130-154.

no complete Cambodian records for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and they had to be invented. The inventions were taken from genuine reign periods of the 16th to 18th centuries, the first, for example, being a copy of certain details of the reign of Aṅg Cand I (1516-1566) to make the fourteenth-century reign of Nippean Bat (*nibbānapad*), which was also a genuine title of Aṅg Cand in the sixteenth century.

What was involved was a demonstration of the relationships among several versions of the Cambodian and Ayutthaya chronicles as total structures, in the time period I studied, with those structural relationships leading to my conclusions. A critique of those conclusions must show that those structures may be better related to one another in some other way, leading objectively to a different conclusion.

I concluded further that the best full Cambodian chronicle, with respect both to chronology and text, was that of Nong/Nañ, first written in 1818, and that the least accurate was that of Vāmñ Juon (VJ). For writers intent on filling out *histoire événementielle* however, VJ, and other chronicles of its type, are more interesting because they include long narrative passages about wars, rebellions, royal consultations, and other matters which are mentioned in only a few words in Nong. The problem, however, is, to what extent are these long narratives genuine old records, or ad hoc creations by the early 20th century writers of VJ? In some cases it is easy to show that VJ, even when closely following Nong, is less accurate, even for late events, the historicity of which cannot be doubted, and for which there should have been good records at the times when the chronicles were composed.

I illustrated one of these passages both in my dissertation and in an article on the identity of 'Nong', the chronicler of 1818¹. The evidence of the Nong chronicles was that there had been at least two men, perhaps three, named 'Nong', who had been merged into a single person in later biographical treatments. The VJ chronicle, however, while in general following Nong word-for-word, omitted an entire passage about one person named 'Nong', found in three other texts, *Kok Kak*, *Nupparot* and at least one copy of *Nañ*, permitting the conclusions that only one such person had existed. In my studies of that section, I had taken this to be scribal carelessness. Now, however, I believe it was probably deliberate obfuscation by writers of VJ, who had grown up believing that a single Nong had been responsible for important work in three different domains, and who rejected the evidence of the earlier Nong chronicles because it contradicted conceptions about the individual 'Nong' which had become rooted by the early 20th century.

Two similar errors are noted by Mak Phoeun in the chronicles P57 and DV, which are important sources for parts of his treatment. He accepts that they are wrong in their identifications of a certain chief as son of Saṅṅhā rather than of Rām Joeñ Brai. He attributes the errors, however, to "le but d'accroître son prestige auprès de la population et sa légitimité face à son futur rival revenu du Laos" (72), and "données ... introduites ... dans un but de propagande, afin d'accroître le prestige ... aux yeux de la population" (119). This will just not do. It is impossible to suppose that these chronicles were read by or communicated to the contemporary population. Indeed, all evidence is that they were not yet written, and such errors must be attributed either to careless composition or to ignorance of the facts at the later dates when they were written.

I am aware of two very short published answers against my treatment, both of which are really appeals to faith rather than careful attempts to falsify my methods and conclusions. The first was by Mme. Eveline Porée-Maspero whose "Remise en question de l'histoire du

1. Vickery, "Cambodia After Angkor", Vol. II, Annexes, p. 106-110. and Michael Vickery, "Qui était Nañ/Nong, savant(s) cambodgien(s) des XVIII/XIX siècles ?", *ASEMI (Asie du Sud-Est et monde insulindien), Cambodge I*, Vol. XIII, 1-4, Paris, 1982, 81-86.

Cambodge à partir du XIV^e siècle” was inspired by my dissertation, even though she did not refer to it ¹.

Although she was pleading against my type of radical rejection of the Cambodian chronicles, Mme Porée-Maspero showed much agreement with me on method. Historians “ont utilisées [les chroniques] avec des méthodes pour le moins paradoxales ... Ils n’ont procédé ni à la critique interne des textes, ni à la comparaison de leurs différentes versions” and “à cause de cela, toute l’histoire du Cambodge et du Siam durant ces trois siècles décisifs est entachée d’erreurs”. As I had, she emphasized the problem of several different chronicles showing the same event at the same animal year, but at quite different numerical year dates, the necessity to study the chronologies from the aspect of traditional arithmetic, and the evidence that errors introduced into the calculations as chronicles were recopied had “snowballed”. In a rudimentary way she tried to push the structural analysis I had undertaken in a different direction.

Nevertheless, in proposing a couple of examples, she forgot her methodological principles. Instead of insisting on internal text criticism and comparison of versions, she asserted that a king whose funeral, and succession by his son, was the occasion for sending a Chinese embassy in 1405, according to Chinese records, could only have been Bana Yat, because he was the only king in a relevant time period who had been succeeded by a son ². This presumes the accuracy of the chronicles as a starting point. Moreover, the Chinese record that the king in question was succeeded by a son is worthless, for the Chinese were often ill-informed about royal family relationships in Southeast Asia, even into modern times, when they recorded that Rama I of Bangkok (1781-1809) was the son of his predecessor Taksin ³. Mme. Porée-Maspero also rejected the Ayutthayan chronicles, which I considered to be the keys to understanding parts of the structures of the Cambodian chronicles.

The second rejection of my conclusions was a short article by Khin Sok ⁴. His method was to analyze four passages to show that the chronicles were indeed true, and my rejection unacceptable. Three of his examples, however, were from the 16th century for which I also accepted the chronicles as historical if not always exact in their details. All of his examples were passages which I had treated, but curiously Khin Sok made no reference to my treatment in his discussion, as though he had not read my dissertation with sufficient care to understand my arguments.

Now Mak Phoeun has also taken issue with my findings, and on the basis of a careful reading of what I wrote. Since his subject is the seventeenth century, however, while mine was the fourteenth-sixteenth centuries, he does not deal with my main arguments concerning the artificial character of the latter. Instead he denies the validity of several of the parallels I found as evidence that events of the seventeenth century had been transposed to provide the stories of the fourteenth-sixteenth centuries. Two of these contexts have been noted above. Even if my proposals for the way stories were displaced should be proven wrong, and I do not think Mak Phoeun has succeeded in that enterprise, it would not affect the conclusions about the fictional character of the chronicles in the 14th-16th centuries. That was proven by comparison of the text structures and chronologies for that time.

For the seventeenth century the textual structures do not diverge as they do in the earlier period, and distinguishing different traditions is not so easy, but a line-by-line comparison shows that VJ derives, indeed was initially copied, from the Nong tradition. Then several long

1. Published in C.R.A.S.O.M., XXXVIII/2 (3 mars 1978), pp. 263-271. Mme Porée-Maspero also sent me a longer critique than the one published.

2. My study resulted in the conclusion that Yāt could not have been born before 1414, and his famous deeds occurred in the 1440’s.

3. G.W. Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand*, p. 24 ; B. J. Terwiel, *A History of Modern Thailand*, p. 85.

4. “Quelques réflexions sur la valeur historique des chroniques royales du Cambodge”, *BEFEO*, Tome LXXV (1986), p. 197-214.

stories were added, and somehow dates were skewed. Mak Phoeun has recognized this, and in taking the text of VJ as his base, he accepts my conclusions that the chronology, at least, of Nong is superior, and he thus makes a traditional type of synthesis, such as may be demonstrated in comparisons of the chronicles, of taking one text and fitting it to the chronology of another. From this point of view Mak Phoeun's work is a new generation of chronicle¹.

There seem to be at least two more chronicle versions whose texts are not copied from Nong, and which are separate histories from the Nong-VJ tradition. The most interesting is that known as P57, from the catalogue number of its manuscript. This may be the oldest, for it seems to be a more complete version of the F1170 Fragment which is now extant only in a Thai translation of a text sent to Bangkok in 1808. In many respects this may also be the most accurate record, as I showed in my use of F1170².

A third chronicle tradition seems to be that designated DV, a very late and often careless composition, as Mak Phoeun recognizes. It contains "des renseignements nouveaux relatifs à presque tous les faits racontés dans les autres chroniques royales, et fournissant encore elles-mêmes d'autres informations jusqu'ici ignorées"³. In spite of its "lacunes" and "répétitions", and "dans ses dates, de nombreuses discordances et incohérences", Mak Phoeun has not hesitated to accept some of its exotic stories when they served his purpose.

Mak Phoeun's study thus lacks critical evaluation of the variant traditions which should have led to the rejection of at least some details of some versions. He seems to have been extremely reluctant to admit that any of the Cambodian chronicles might have been fictions. He has not undertaken any systematic critical evaluation of the chronicles, but has accepted VJ as a basis, making *ad hoc* adjustments in dates or events when it seems necessary. This allows him to retain stories from the various traditions which are favorable to the story he wishes to present, even when those traditions show serious inaccuracies in other respects.

The Vietnamese problem

Perhaps one reason for the persistence in respecting all of the most problematic chronicles, is that they provide the most evidence for a popular interpretation of Cambodian-Vietnamese relations.

The seventeenth century was the beginning of direct relations between post-Angkor Cambodia and Vietnam, that is the Nguyen state in what is now central Vietnam which was at war with the original Vietnamese state in the north. The first incident according to all sources, both Cambodian chronicles and European accounts by French and Dutch who arrived on the scene slightly later, was the marriage of Prince Jayajetthā to a Vietnamese princess between 1616 and 1618 near the end of the reign of his father King Suriyobarm. Interestingly this event, the occurrence of which cannot be doubted, is not mentioned in the Vietnamese histories.

Most of the Cambodian chronicles, including Mak Phoeun's favored VJ, explain this marriage as occurring at the request of the Cambodians who sought an alliance with the Nguyễn as a counterweight to Ayutthayan political and military pressure. Mak Phoeun has emphasized and translated into French the best description, from the oldest chronicle, F1170, which I quoted in "Cambodia After Angkor"⁴. Unlike the VJ chronicle, F1170 shows the Nguyễn king offering his daughter to obtain needed supplies from Cambodia for his war

1. Mak Phoeun, p. 30, n. 11 5; 220, no 147.

2. Vickery, "Cambodia After Angkor", p. 200-218.

3. Mak Phoeun, p. 16-17.

4. Mak Phoeun, p. 149 ; Vickery, "Cambodia After Angkor", p. 215.

against the Trinh, rulers of northern Vietnam. In contrast to later Cambodian accounts, F1170 does not show the Cambodians in any kind of inferiority *vis-à-vis* Vietnam.

In this connection I do not know what can have induced Mak Phoeun to write that I was mistaken in translating a passage from F1170 to say the Vietnamese king wished to buy elephants from Cambodia, when the text says “horses”. Mak Phoeun translated “Le roi vietnamien [faisait savoir qu’il] avait besoin de chevaux ainsi que de résine de laque”. The Thai original text, very clearly has “elephant(s)” (*jān*), and there is no mention of horses.¹

According to Cambodian oral tradition, the marriage was because a weak Cambodian king fell in love with a Vietnamese princess, who requested and obtained the first parts of Kampuchea Krom (Basse Cochinchine, southern Vietnam) which Cambodia gave up to Vietnam. In this tradition even the name ‘Cochinchina’ is explained by ‘cô’ (‘girl’) *xin* (‘asked for’). Quite rightly Mak Phoeun ignores this, as did the chronicle writers, but there may be a relic of this tradition in the claims of the chronicles he prefers that a few years later, in 1623, the Vietnamese king asked for a five-year loan of the customs posts of Prei Nokor and Kampong Krâbei, within the area of the modern city of Saigon. Mak Phoeun devotes over five pages to this, for the chronicles which mention it differ on the details, some of which, as Mak Phoeun notes, are difficult to accept². In spite of the weakness of the sources, Mak Phoeun accepts the Cambodian tradition that this loan of the customs posts, connected with the marriage to a Vietnamese princess, marked the beginning of Vietnamese encroachment on Cambodian territory.

There are reasons to doubt this story. First, the locations Prei Nokor and Kampong Krâbei are not where one would have expected customs posts for trade with the interior of Cambodia at that time (see Mak Phoeun, map facing p. 494). Better locations would have been along the branches of the rivers which connected Phnom Penh with the coast. Prei Nokor/Saigon, would only become important much later when it had been developed as an administrative center.

The long chronicle which most resembles the old F1170 fragment, and which is therefore probably the oldest, P57, does not contain this story, and the chronicle which gives it the most attention, DV, is peculiar in many respects, and relates a version that the Nguyễn king wanted to borrow those provinces (not customs posts) to train his troops to fight against China, which Mak Phoeun himself finds bizarre (177, 180).

As Mak Phoeun notes, there was no common Cambodian-Vietnamese border at the time, because Champa still existed between them. It would be better to reject this story entirely, in particular the strictly speculative remarks about infiltration of Vietnamese settlers, and the final conclusion that if it was not customs posts which were desired, perhaps the Vietnamese court wanted intelligence posts because (183) “celle-ci regardait déjà vers les vastes plaines alluviales et fertiles du delta du Mékong qu’elle convoitait”. This is then supported, not by any local or contemporary sources, but by reference to Cotter’s and Pouvatichy’s modern studies of Vietnamese population movements (n. 145).

This question comes up again (227) when Mak Phoeun cites the exotic DV chronicle’s story that Cau Bañā Nūr (r. 1632-1640) requested the return of those provinces, but was blocked by the influence of the Vietnamese princess who had by then acquired the status of Queen Mother. Mak Phoeun says “on ignore la date” when this occurred, which is devious, because DV says very clearly that it occurred in 1645, but places it in the reign of Nūr, already in fact five years dead. Here again the story, not found at all in the best versions, should be dropped from the history of the period.

DV, and Mak Phoeun, continue this theme in the reign of the Muslim king, Cau Bañā Cand/Rāmādhīpati. They say he also wanted restitution of the provinces, and felt the time was right because the Vietnamese war with the Chinese (sic!) had ended. He, according to that

1. *Baṅśāvatār la:vaek* (Lovek chronicle), *Pra:jum Baṅśāvatār* (Collected Chronicles) Vol 45, p. 56, line 1.
2. For the locations see Mak Phoeun, p. 179 ; and p. 180 for problems with the chronicles.

chronicle, was also dissuaded by the Vietnamese princess. Mak Phoeun again says this was “à une date que DV ne précise pas”, although that text places in 1653.

Peculiarly, there is no further allusion to the customs posts, or districts allegedly loaned to the Nguyễn, but not returned, in any chronicles, and until the very end of the 17th century Mak Phoeun emphasizes the evidence that there was no common Cambodian-Vietnamese border, and that Cambodian territory extended as far as Baria and Daung Nay, well north of Saigon.

Even in the first Vietnamese military intervention, in 1658-59, at the request of rebel Cambodian princes against the Muslim king, the Vietnamese troops had to march through Champa, and no territory was lost. For Mak Phoeun, however, even though the Vietnamese invasion was clearly brought on by the civil war within Cambodia, the Vietnamese were following their “politique d’expansion vers le Sud menée depuis plusieurs siècles”, and their intervention “visait à régler le problème des territoires de Prei Nokor, de Kampong Krâbei...” (297), although careful examination of the texts suggests there was no such problem. Mak Phoeun also offers a contradictory, but not unreasonable explanation, that the Vietnamese wanted to secure supplies, i.e. elephants, for their war against the North. It would seem, however, that that goal could have been secured through friendly trading, as had been the case 30 years earlier. Still further inconsistency is the statement that the Vietnamese attack came as a total surprise to King Cand/Rāmādhīpatī, who like previous Cambodian kings, had considered Ayutthaya as his main enemy, and the Nguyễn as allies. If, however, there had really been a controversy over customs posts or districts borrowed and never returned by the Vietnamese, in spite of a protest by King Cand, as well as infiltration by Vietnamese settlers, as Mak Phoeun argues elsewhere, surely the Cambodian court would have been worried by further Vietnamese aggression. This is further reason to drop the stories about the customs posts, as no more historical than *cô xin*.

From this time on there were certainly continuing threats from Vietnam, usually, however, brought on by splits in the Cambodian royalty. Vietnamese and European sources allege a real division of the country between two princes, one based in the Saigon area, but this is not confirmed in the Cambodian chronicles, which may in this respect be exhibiting their poor value. Aggression, however, was not uniquely Vietnamese. French missionary reports speak of massacres of Vietnamese civilians in 1667-1672, and a total break in trading relations ordered by the Cambodian king, who was still ruler of the areas of Khmer settlement in Cochinchina (324-26).

The events surrounding what Mak Phoeun calls the “La troisième intervention militaire vietnamienne (1682-1688)” provide a perfect example of the need for critical line-by-line comparison and critique of the chronicles before synthesising them into ‘history’. As it is the reader remains in uncertainty whether there was really a Vietnamese invasion, or intra-Cambodian conflict with one side receiving some Vietnamese aid, or whether the foreign aid was mainly Chinese. The next stage in studying the history of seventeenth-century Cambodia, and also the sixteenth, via the chronicles should be a comparison, particularly between the Nong-VJ tradition and that of the P57 chronicle. This might result in a synthesis of real value and a rejection of much of the fictitious detail.

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