



Japanese Hidden Heritage in Thailand มรดกญี่ปุ่นที่ซ่อนเร้นอยู่ในประเทศไทย

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Abstract

This study is of Japanese hidden Heritage in Thailand. The purpose of the project can be expressed as two related objectives. The first is to investigate and comment on the presence of the Japanese in Thailand in the three broadly defined periods : Ages of Participation, of Imperialism, of Globalization and on the heritage that the Japanese presence has left and continues to bequeath in modern Thailand. The second objective can prove more problematic. It is to ask how diverse and sometimes opposed memories - ideas of heritage-intersect. This can be expressed in another way: whose heritage is it ?

The approach to be taken is a combination of fieldwork and documentary research. A range of relevant sites were visited and observed: in Ayutthaya, Kanchanaburi province, Siracha in Chonburi province and various districts in Bangkok. Documentary research mostly covered secondary material. The methodological issue was to bring these two sets of information together.

The study concludes that Japanese heritage in Thailand from the Age of Participation is indeed little more than memories and stories. That from the Age of Imperialism (World War II) is mostly suppressed - to be forgotten, even denied. The heritage of the present era or the Age of Globalization might challenge clear definition: it is the living heritage of the city's life and diversity.

The story of the Japanese in Thailand raises the question of the 'forms of heritage' of one nation (Japan) in the territory of another (Thailand), variously 'museum' heritage, 'denied' heritage, 'negative' heritage and 'living' heritage.

Keywords

Japanese Heritage, Hidden Heritage

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาเรื่องมรดกญี่ปุ่นที่ซ่อนเร้นอยู่ในประเทศไทยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ สองประการ ประการแรก คือ สืบค้นหาข้อมูลและนำเสนอทัศนะเกี่ยวกับการเข้ามา มีบทบาทในประเทศไทยของญี่ปุ่นในสามยุค ได้แก่ ยุคแห่งการเข้ามาพำนัก ยุคการค้าอาณานิคม และยุคโลกาภิวัตน์ และยังรวมถึงการพิจารณาความเป็นญี่ปุ่นไว้ในประเทศไทย วัตถุประสงค์ประการที่สอง คือ การพิสูจน์ข้อสงสัยต่างๆ ที่มีความหลากหลายหรือบางครั้งอาจจะขัดแย้งกับความทรงจำเดิม โดยเฉพาะการพิสูจน์ว่าเป็น “มรดกของใคร”

การศึกษานี้ได้ลงพื้นที่ศึกษาในจังหวัดพระนครศรีอยุธยา กาญจนบุรี อำเภอสรีราชา จังหวัดชลบุรี และกรุงเทพมหานคร ประกอบกับการศึกษาข้อมูลจากเอกสารเพิ่มเติม แล้วนำสิ่งที่ได้จากการศึกษาทั้งสองส่วนมาวิเคราะห์ร่วมกัน

จากการศึกษาพบว่า ยุคการเข้ามาพำนักหรือการเข้ามา ในช่วงแรกของญี่ปุ่นนั้นแทบจะไม่เหลือร่องรอยความเป็นญี่ปุ่นให้เห็น ในขณะที่ยุคอาณานิคมซึ่งหมายถึงในช่วงสงครามโลกครั้งที่ 2 นั้นกลับเป็นช่วงที่ไม่อาจลืมเลือนไปจากความทรงจำได้ ยุคสุดท้าย ยุคแห่งโลกาภิวัตน์เป็นช่วงที่สามารถให้คำนิยามได้ชัดเจนว่าเป็นยุคมรดกที่มีชีวิต กล่าวคือเป็นผลพวงของญี่ปุ่นที่ยังปรากฏให้เห็นอยู่ในสังคมเมืองปัจจุบัน

เรื่องราวเกี่ยวกับญี่ปุ่นในประเทศไทยนั้นยังถูกนำขึ้นมากำหนดเป็น “รูปแบบของมรดกความทรงจำ” ของประเทศญี่ปุ่นที่เกิดขึ้นในประเทศไทย ได้แก่ “มรดกที่หลงเหลือให้เห็นเป็นแหล่งเรียนรู้” “มรดกที่ไม่อาจจะยอมรับ” “มรดกในเชิงลบ” และ “มรดกที่มีชีวิต”

คำสำคัญ

มรดกของญี่ปุ่น มรดกที่ซ่อนเร้น

Introduction

Nowhere does the ambiguity of heritage arise more powerfully than in any consideration of the presence of the Japanese in East and Southeast Asia - the erstwhile colonies (Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria) and the sites of wartime ‘liberation’ (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia). While Thailand fits into neither of these categories, it raises complexities that are quite unique to its own situation (King and Sakesit, forthcoming).

We can look at the intersections of Japan and Siam-Thailand as distinguished by three ages. There was first an “Age of Participation”, when advances in maritime technology and the evolution of political events, independently in opposite ends of the world, enabled a new age of trade and commerce in which Siam and Japan sought modes of trade and cooperation that could benefit each other. Ayutthaya and Nagasaki constituted an axis of trade that swept other polities into its orbit, most notably China and the Netherlands. Any memory of that time is likely to dwell on a tension between tolerant cosmopolitanism and dark violence.



Second came the “Age of Imperialism”. Both Siam and Japan avoided external colonization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; partnership, however, subsequently gave way to aggression. In the maelstrom of World War II, Siam-Thailand fell to Japanese invasion and then found itself the theatre of Japanese atrocities while itself becoming compromised through its own duplicity. Memories of this time, in both Thailand and Japan, are mostly to be expunged - events are not to be mentioned.

The third age might variously be called that of “globalization”, “modernity”, “capital” or perhaps the “consumer age”. The Japanese are now in Thailand as investors - the commanders of capital, both benefiting the Thai and simultaneously feeding off their cheap labor. They are also here, in very large and sometimes raucous numbers, as tourists. The mind’s eye might now turn to a more modern dialectic, between beneficent investment and intrusive presence - the latter dramatically displayed in the proliferating “entertainment” venues.

The focus of the present project is not so much on the history of Thai-Japanese contact as on what it has left - that is, on its heritage.

Heritage

Heritage is about memory. There is an ‘official’ heritage, of the nation or group - things that we are obliged to remember. Then there is personal heritage - what we each remember. There is always a dark side to memory, comprising the things that we are not to remember, perhaps because they go against some officially decreed prohibition or because they are so painful that they have been blocked from what we wish to think about or bring into discussion. This raises the problematic question of heritage interpretation. Because there will be hidden aspects to a nation’s or the individual’s past that is thus blocked from memory or screened by ‘happier’ realities, is there a function in interpretation to bring certain suppressed memories to consciousness and discourse in the interest of a fuller, more honest and authentic understanding of the past - to bring the nation, for example - face-to-face with its own reality? It is not too hard to argue that such a confrontation with the past can yield a gateway to reconciliation and moral growth.

To understand what such reconciliation might comprise, one can observe the different trajectories of national memory and its re-awakening in the cases of post-World War II Germany and Japan. German culture has compelled a confrontation with its past; Japanese culture has mostly blocked out its own past of war and aggression. There are other cases: South Korea brings the atrocities of the Japanese to the fore but not their own in support of the Japanese in World War II. So, what of Thailand ? More to the point, how do Thai memory and Japanese memory and their various suppressions intersect; then, how do these memories in turn intersect with other memories of others - Australian, British or Indonesian tourists to sites of Japanese atrocities against such foreign nationals on Thai territory ?

Memory is never innocent. It is socially constructed; many things are to be remembered and many forgotten. Memory, Maurice Halbwachs (1992) argues, is socially produced: social institutions and contexts make possible certain memories, encouraging (or actively constructing) certain recollections while discouraging (suppressing) others. Benedict Anderson (1991, 199-201) draws attention to Ernest Renan's aphoristic observation on compelled forgetting in the 'necessary' construction of the Nation.

Nora's magisterial seven-volume collaborative project, *Les Lieux de memoire*, endeavoured to define, variously, the French Republic, the French nation and, finally, France as an idea. Significantly, its third part (comprising volumes 5 to 7) was titled Les France - plural; France is not singular (for the present instance, Thailand is not singular, Japan is not singular). The project assembled 132 articles to explore the construction of the French past. The concern was to conceptualize the relationship between history and memory (Nora, 1996, 3).

It is that difference between history (the 'scientific' search for an understanding of the past) and memory (heritage, tradition^o the desire to return, vicariously, to a selected past). So, to return to the question of interpretation, to interpret would seem to involve the dilemma of reconciling heritage and history.

Research Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of this project can be expressed as two related objectives. The first is simply expressed: to interrogate and comment on the presence of the Japanese in Thailand in the three broadly defined periods listed above - the Ages of Participation, of Imperialism, of Globalization - and on the heritage that the Japanese presence has left and continues to bequeath in modern Thailand.

The second objective can prove more problematic. It is to ask how diverse and sometimes opposed memories - ideas of heritage - intersect. This can be expressed in another way: whose heritage is it ?. To what extent is the site of the ancient Japanese village in Ayutthaya to be considered Thai and to what extent is it a part of the heritage of Japan? More problematically, to what extent are the wartime sites in Kanchanaburi to be seen as part of Thailand's heritage, part of Japan's heritage, or part of the heritage and memory of Australia, Britain or Indonesia?

The approach to be taken is a combination of fieldwork and documentary research. A range of relevant sites were visited and observed: in Ayutthaya, Kanchanaburi province, Siracha in Chonburi province and various districts in Bangkok. The methods employed were those of participant observation. Documentary research mostly covered secondary material. The methodological issue was to bring these two sets of information together. In this exercise, the idea of 'dialectical images' was useful, wherein seemingly discordant images, both pictorial and textual, are brought together to throw each into a sense of deconstructive doubt. This idea derives from Walter Benjamin's never consummated project in the 1920s

and 30s to write a grand analysis of 19th century Paris and, by implication, of modernity itself composed solely of aphorisms (Benjamin, 1978, 1982). Images, both visual and textual, would be set against each other dialectically - one image against another, each defining the other yet simultaneously calling into question the message or meaning that each would convey (Buck-Morss, 1991).

This approach can be put in another way: what do the texts tell us about the sites that are not obvious from the site itself, whether because it is purposely masked at the site or more simply and innocently forgotten? And, in turn, what do the sites suggest that is not explicit in the texts? Then, consequently, what does this process tell us about the nature of heritage? Ultimately it is the question of interpretation and authenticity.

Results and Discussions

Objective 1: The first objective is to investigate and comment on the presence of the Japanese in Thailand in the three broadly defined periods: Ages of Participation, of Imperialism, of Globalization.

Japanese in Thailand in the Age of Participation

Siam-Japan Relationship from the Ayutthaya era

Korean history has recorded a Siam Mission to visit Japan for about a year while traveling to Korea in 1388. In the year 1404 ships from Siam, which would travel to the kingdom of Ryukyu, drifted to the Hokkien province of China. There is additional evidence from 1425 critical to understanding the country-to-country role of Siam, in the Ryukyu Rekidai Hoan. From Ryukyu a boat was sent to Siam every year until 1570 in the Ayutthaya period. (Ishii & Yoshikawa, 1987, 7)

The relationship between the Siam and Ryukyu was essentially tied to trade. That trade with Siam during the Ryukyu age can be divided into two types: first were types of goods manufactured in China, including high-quality white silk cloth, also porcelain china plates, etc. The second category comprised products from other countries including Japan. Japanese swords and fans were very much favoured. Especially, swords made in Japan were important to the Thai royal family.

Formal relations were established relatively late with Japan, in comparison with the rest of East Asia, and did not begin for more than three decades after the last-recorded mission from Ryukyu. The expected period when the Japanese first began trading with Ayutthaya and settling there is still a matter of speculation. In 1570, when the Spanish took possession of Manila, twenty Japanese were living there. And the Japanese were trading at Melaka at least by the first half of the 1580s. Given these Japanese activities, it seems probable that Japanese traders were already investigating the Thai market and that they became established in Ayutthaya by the 1580s. They would have been especially welcome at that time, given the partial depopulation of the Thai kingdom and the shortage of manpower after the 1569

Burmese conquest. Moreover, Japanese fighting men may have been recruited by the young warrior-prince, Naresuan, who was seeking every possible means of strengthening the defense of the kingdom against repeated Burmese invasions during the mid-1580s and early 1590s.

The number of overseas Japanese living and travelling through East and Southeast Asia increased after the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Some travelled in the official Go Shuin Sen (vermillion seal ships), while others were pirates and adventurers escaping from the victors of the battle or else from the newly-enforced persecution of Christianity. This gave rise to the various Japanese communities in Namban (Southeast Asia), which had their own different classes and forms of economic activity.

Ayutthaya derived its position and status from trade. Located part of the way between India and China,

Ayutthaya was an important trading post for both east and west and contingents of merchants established their own villages within or just outside the city walls: Indians, Persians, Arabs, Chinese, Malays, even Europeans had their own areas and were granted limited rights to administer their areas according to their own laws and customs. The Japanese village was located west of the Portuguese and south of the Dutch villages and Japanese Christians were prominent within it - Siam has a long and distinguished tradition of religious tolerance that more or less has remained until the present day. The famous Constantine Phaulkon, who rose from being a cabin boy with the (English) East India Company to the rank equivalent to prime minister of Siam under King Narai the Great, was a resident of the village and, by tradition, married one of the young ladies there. His wife, Doya Mary Dae Pina was of mixed Portuguese and Japanese parentage and she went on to open a school for more than one hundred local children, offering religious and general education. The school was symbolic of the cosmopolitanism of the city of Ayutthaya. Japanese men worked as soldiers and craftsmen when they had economically valuable skills.

More embassies would be sent by Thailand to Japan, in 1656 during the reign of King Chaiyaracha and in 1687 during the reign of King Narai. Although Japan was closing itself to trade (especially with Western countries, except for the Dutch Republic), many Siamese junks continued to visit Japan between 1647 to 1700 the arrival of around 130 Siamese ships was recorded in Nagasaki. During the reign of Petracha as many as 30 junks are recorded to have left Ayutthaya for Nagasaki, Japan. From 1715, only one Siamese junk per year was allowed, but this was not insignificant compared to the extent to which other countries could trade with Japan.

Japanese communities however remained in Siam, and numerous refugees from the persecutions of Christians in Japan also arrived in the country as a result of the promulgation of Ieyasu's interdiction of Christianity in Japan in 1614. The famous Maria Guyomar de Pinha, wife of the Greek adventurer Constantine Phaulkon, who became one of the most influential men in Siam in the end of the 17th century, was half-Japanese. In the second half of the 17th century, the French catholic missionaries in Siam cared



for Annamite Christians (from what is now Vietnam) and Japanese Christian communities in Siam.

Since the Tokugawa Shogunate prohibited Japanese people established abroad to return to Japan, essentially as a protective measure against Christianity, the Japanese communities in Siam were gradually absorbed locally.

The Rattanakosin Era

The depth of the Siam-Japan rift becomes clear from the fact that relations were not resumed until the 19th century, with the establishment of the Declaration of Amity and Commerce between Japan and Siam in 1887, during the reigns of two icons of modernization, King Chulalongkorn in Siam and Emperor Meiji in Japan.

The Tokugawa Shogunate collapsed in 1868. Relations between Siam and Japan, though carried on between the two nations of the Far East that had maintained their independence, were fundamentally different for both partners. Japan was the active side of the relationship. Like the West, Japan reached out to Siam to get the commodities it needed, and sent to Siam its own products that the Siamese purchased. The difference between the two partners was not evident in the first decades after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The movement of trade between them was totally in the hands of third country merchants, primarily British and Chinese. But by the 1890s Japanese traders and merchants were beginning to arrive in Bangkok.

In early 1897, Siam and Japan opened formal diplomatic relations. The first Japanese minister plenipotentiary to Bangkok, Inagaki Manjiro. His thinking for a nation's foreign policy was the interrelationship between a state's foreign trade and investment and the political policies it pursued.

Japanese in Thailand in the Age of Imperialism

In the World War II Era

Japanese-Thai relations and heritage of the World War II period are inextricably entwined in the divisions over Thai royal absolutism and the fraught politics of the People's Party. The 1940 occupation of much of France by Nazi Germany presented Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram with the temptation to reverse the 1893 and 1904 annexations of erstwhile Siamese territories to French-colonised Laos and Cambodia, thereby also to avenge Siam's humiliation and to highlight the alleged disaster of King Chulalongkorn's role in that debacle. Wichit Wathakan, head of the Fine Arts Department, wrote a number of popular dramas extolling the idea of many ethnic groups coming happily together to form a unified, greater "Thai" empire; European colonial rule was demonised and there were continuing anti-French demonstrations in Bangkok and border skirmishes along the Mekong frontier in late 1940. Having secured a treaty between Thailand and Japan in June 1940, "Concerning the Continuance of Friendly Relations

and the Mutual Respect of Each Other's Territorial Integrity”, Phibun attacked southern Vietnam on 9 January 1941. Tokyo used the occasion to advance on Saigon; the Thais fared well on the ground and in the air but were crushingly defeated at the battle of Koh Chang and, accordingly, had to be extricated by the Japanese from the ensuing impasse. In the subsequent settlement, the disputed areas in Laos and Cambodia were given to Thailand.

It is important to consider the Japanese heritage from WWII in a number of national contexts. This is a period that neither the Thais nor the Japanese like to talk about. From Thailand's point of view, there is the ambivalent position of the Phibun government - initially pro-Japanese, but later, as the War turned against the Japanese, attempting to distance themselves from their erstwhile allies. Much of the earlier Phibun policy has to be seen in relationship to his efforts to discredit the absolutist monarchy by re-claiming the provinces that Rama V allegedly 'lost' to France and Britain. Interestingly, the Victory Monument is part of the tangible heritage of the Thailand-Japan collaboration; however, in a negative sense so is the third of the monuments in the Thammasat Memorial Sculpture Garden, honouring the anti-Japanese Seri Thai movement (King, 2011, 201). There are further questions to be asked about this heritage: where were the Japanese based during their occupation of Bangkok? Where was their military camp, where were their high-ranked officers accommodated? At the northeast corner of the sacred Sanam Luang, at its junction with King Chulalongkorn's Ratchadamnoen Avenue, is the old, Art Deco Royal Hotel from the Phibun era and, in the early 1940s, the peak of luxury. The Royal (Rattanakosin) Hotel was part of the identically styled, Art Deco buildings lining Ratchadamnoen Klang Avenue installed by Phibun to replace any memory of royal grandeur with the new modernity of a government precinct; they were designed by architect Mew (Chit-sen) Aphaiwong and completed in 1943. The hotel was opened by Phibun on 24 June of that year - 24 June was the National Day in the Revolutionary period. Old Bangkokians will allude darkly to un-named, dreadful acts involving senior Japanese officers billeted there during the occupation. This is a heritage that is not to be mentioned.

The most famous element of the Thai-Burma railway is Bridge 277, “The Bridge on the River Kwai”, over a stretch of river known as the Mae Klong; however, as the Thai section mostly followed the valley of the Khwae Noi river and was known by that name, the bridge became similarly known. In 1960, myth won over history and that stretch of the river was renamed Khwae Yai.

The Japanese chose to cross the very wide Mae Klong River at a point just above its convergence with the Kwae Noi, then follow the Kwae Noi westward. The wooden bridge across the Mae Klong was completed in February of 1943 and a steel and concrete bridge, brought in piecemeal from Java by the Japanese, was completed some three months later.



The most mythologically charged section of the railway, however, is Konyu Cutting, “Hellfire Pass”, the largest rock cutting on the railway. The original crew of 400 Australian prisoners commenced work on the cutting on 25 April 1943 - 25 April is especially significant in any Australian collective memory, as it is Anzac Day commemorating the Gallipoli disaster of World War I and arguably the nation’s most powerful lieu de mmoire (Nora, 1986).

Thousands upon thousands died in its construction and thousands more in its maintenance against floods and the ever-encroaching jungle: of some 180,000 Asian labourers, around 90,000 died, mostly romusha, forced labourers from Java. Of 60,000 Allied prisoners of war, 16,000 died. In Hellfire Pass, many were beaten to death by Japanese and Korean guards. There is an Australian built museum at the pass, co-sponsored by the Royal Thai Armed Forces Development Command and the Australian government; it was dedicated, again auspiciously, on 25 April 1987 and opened on 24 April 1996, in time for Anzac Day in that year.²

The Thai-Burma Railway has left a pervading surviving heritage, both tangible and in an immense literature - examples are Gordon (1962), Dunlop (1986), Reminick (2002), MacArthur (2005). The question here is: whose heritage is this now to be seen as? It seems that Japanese tourists would never go there (too embarrassing, the memories are too dark); Thai people seem mostly to ignore it (is it too embarrassing for them also, reminding them of Thai complicity in WWII ?). Indeed, it is mostly Australian and British tourists who will visit the Kwai bridge and Hellfire Pass. So is it to be seen as a form of 'denied' Japanese heritage?

Japanese in Thailand in the Age of Globalization

In the Post-War Era

There would seem to be at least two aspects to Japan’s role in the modern transformation of Thailand. The first is the growth of Japanese investment in Thailand post-WWII. Japan has again become a key trading partner and foreign investor in Thailand, while Japan is Thailand’s largest supplier. Since 2005, a rapid escalation in exports from Thailand of Japanese automobile makes (especially Toyota, Nissan and Isuzu) has lifted Thailand into the ranks of the world’s top ten automobile exporting nations. Although this has brought industrial plants (car making, electronics, etc.), this is hardly of great interest to the present project with its focus on questions of heritage - there is nothing distinctively Japanese in such plants and little impact on the culture and the heritage of either Japan or Thailand.

²On the Hellfire Pass Memorial, http://www.dva.gov.au/commems_oawg/OAWG/about_OAWG/Documents/P01237%20Hellfire%20Pass%20A5%20booklet.pdf, accessed 19 Nov 2011.

The heritage of Japan in the Age of Participation is indeed little more than memories and stories. There are no traces in present-day Ayutthaya of the village that used to be there; one can only assume that its structures were of wood and other impermanent materials, as of course were most buildings in Japan itself in that era. Hence nothing has survived.

The present site is a garden. It is designed on the principles of Japanese gardens though the plant materials are necessarily those of the wet tropics rather than of temperate Japan. It raises the problematic question of authenticity: its appearance would inevitably be alien to a Japanese visitor yet it is to be seen as authentic to Japanese principles.



Figure 1: The Japanese Garden at Ayutthaya, on the site of the Japanese Community of the 17th century, by King & Sakesit Paksee, 2014

The garden becomes a setting for a small interpretation centre which, perhaps surprisingly, removes the veils from a difficult era in Japanese history: it was a glory moment, as the Tokugawa shogunate unified Japan from its previous era of disintegrated, disordered tribalism, yet it was also an age of increasing religious intolerance and isolationism. The interpretation centre thereby also interprets Ayutthaya which emerges as an opposite to shogunate Japan: Ayutthaya was tolerant, open and cosmopolitan.

The heritage from the Age of Imperialism is unrelievedly dark, yet it raises the curiosity of the romantic or melodramatic imagination. Following Peter Brooks (1976), this would be an imagination that would seek hidden moral values in a world in which values are being destroyed. By contrast, an ironic imagination and view of history builds on ambiguity of meaning - rather than look for hidden meaning in history, irony would point to the uncertainty of history by showing that positive truth is not possible. The ironic imagination is anti-nostalgic; it forces the mind's eye to the 'dialectic image'



The heritage of the present era, the Age of Globalization, might challenge clear definition. It is the living heritage of the city's life and diversity; it clearly stands high in the imaginations and affections of the city's present denizens. The present 'Japanese village' of the Sukhumvit 31/1 and 33 area - in some of its dimensions it extends to Sukhumvit 39 - is clearly part of this richness that defines Bangkok itself, no less than does the 'Portuguese village' of Thonburi. At the risk of romantic comparisons, that modern Japanese village might strike the imagination as dialectic opposite to the Ayutthaya village of some four previous centuries. More problematic is the 'negative' heritage of Thaniya or Ratchadapisek. Many Bangkokians would wish these to go away, yet others would concede that places like these are essential to the type of global, cosmopolitan, '24-hour' city that they would wish Bangkok to be.

The lesson to be derived from all three eras is that there is no clear definition of a fixed, agreed, unchanging heritage. Memories shift, therefore the heritage shifts.

Objective 2 : The second objective was to ask how diverse and what can seem to be contradictory memories - ideas of heritage - intersect. It is, in part, the question of whose heritage it is.

The story of the Japanese in Thailand raises the question of the 'forms of heritage' of one nation (Japan) in the territory of another (Thailand) - 'museum' heritage, 'denied' heritage, 'negative' heritage, 'living' heritage. A deceptively simple case is that relating to the Japanese in Ayutthaya: the small Japanese museum, of modern Japanese provision, displays a picture of Japanese paranoia and persecution which stands in dramatic contrast with the extraordinary tolerance of Ayutthayan Siam. The 1630s outraged reaction of the shogunate to the brutality of King Prasart Thong's attack on the Japanese colony must seem, in any rigorous analysis, as an instance of Japanese nationalistic hypocrisy.

The story of Yamada Nagamasa is more straightforward: to the modern Japanese imagination this is a tale of adventure and Japanese entrepreneurial zest - albeit told (in the 1700s) in a period where such outward - looking enterprise would be rigorously suppressed. Then, in modern times, Thailand takes up the story, specifically to commemorate the goodness of Thai-Japanese diplomatic relations. Heritage is always political.

World War II presents as denied heritage - the Bridge on the River Kwai is absent from Japanese memory. Yet it is one of the most visited sites in Thailand, albeit by the nationals of those nations whose young men were once the victims of Hellfire Pass and the Burma Railway. Thai travel companies and tourist guides will assist Australians, British and others to journey to Kanchanaburi; the local economy is significantly dependent on the heritage and marketing of the Death Railway; yet, on the Thai part, there is a palpable detachment. The national economy is dependent on both tourism income (hence Australian and British remembering) and Japanese foreign direct investment (hence Japanese forgetting). Both must be accommodated in modern Thailand.

Even when Thai imagining stretches, albeit rarely, to the early 1940s -for instance in that story of Khu Kham - it is both romanticized and newly politically inscribed. How different it is from the story portrayed in the River Kwai museum or the Young Soldier Monument in Chumphon. The new inscription at the Young Soldier Monument, from the dark 1970s, sees the war as tragic at a personal level but also as a reflection of the virtue of nationalistic commitment and the purity and goodness of military might. A Thai epistemology - way of constructing knowledg - would seem to reflect more a melodramatic than an ironic imagination (Brooks, 1976) - more an imagination that would seek hidden moral values in a world in which values are being destroyed, rather than an ironic imagination that would point to the uncertainty of history by showing that positive truth is not possible.

At risk of gross generalization, it may be that the uncertainty of history is yet to be embraced in both Thai and Japanese historiography.

Further research

Where should research into Thai-Japanese heritage now be directed? Again attention can focus on the three ages of Japan's presence in Siam-Thailand. The absence of Ayutthayan archives robs us of any clear and comprehensive picture of that age, its society and trade from a Siamese perspective; the main source, on the contrary, is from multiple Dutch (VOC) accounts which have scarcely been mined at this time - Dutch scholarship has focused far more on the Indies, while Thai scholarship is restricted by the rarity of scholars with competence in Dutch. One wonders about the extent and availability of the Japanese records? One might reasonably expect to find some accounts in old records of Nagasaki; however, Nagasaki like Ayutthaya was also consumed in fire, in this case in August 1945.

In the World War II period, the Japanese were in Thailand for only around three years. Nothing was built, except that notorious railway and its infrastructure; places, however, were occupied - the Thonburi railway station, some other places around it, the old Rattanakosin (Royal) Hotel ? There are no information boards on these various sites to inform the passing visitor of their onetime roles. For this era, the city is simply not interpreted. There is a real need for a documented account of the city - perhaps of Thailand more widely - that can convey its history in that brief time. Such an account might stand as a counter-story to that of Khu Kham, the ironic imagination as counter to the melodramatic. Where were the Japanese billeted, what was life like at that time?

The third age, that of globalization, presents different opportunities for future research. The mind must especially turn to the Sukhumvit 31/1 and 33 village as an opportune case study of a multiplicity of uncoordinated, random decisions 'assembling' to constitute a distinctive 'place'. Assemblage theory might be invoked for such an enterprise. What are the processes of such a place's 'becoming' ?



Assemblage theory, principally attributable to Gilles Deleuze, would account for the coming - together of elements, both material and expressive, where relations of exteriority predominate over those of interiority (that is of difference and dispersal rather than of stable identity). An assemblage is marked by immanence, instability, by 'becoming' rather than 'being'. There is Deleuze's very open description of what is meant by an assemblage:

What is an assemblage? It is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them. Thus the assemblage's only unity is that of co-function: it is symbiosis, a 'sympathy'. It is never filiations which are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind. (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987, 69, cited in De Landa, 2006, 121).

While this way of thinking can fruitfully be brought to focus on a place (the Sukhumvit Japanese village), in the attempt to come to some understanding of its becoming, immanence and instability, assemblage thinking can also be brought to bear on heritage more widely. Heritage as assemblage is constituted of always unstable, always ambiguous lieux de mémoire (Nora, 1996,3), always characterized by relations of exteriority. Lieux de mémoire quintessentially refers to other things, other places and other ideas. Assemblage theory is concerned with multiplicities.

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