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Introduction

Jirayudh Sinthuphan

The growing influence of People's Republic of China is complex and multifaceted. It can be discussed in various contexts, including geopolitics, economics, technology, and culture. For some countries, it poses a threat to the existing world order. For other countries, it provides an alternative solution for their political and economic problems. Three articles in this issue of the Asian Review discusses different contexts of Chinese influence in Southeast Asia.

Exploring the Expansion of Chinese Students in Thailand: Situations and Motivations by Kulnaree NUKITRANGSAN focuses on the phenomenon of Chinese students increasingly choosing to study in Thailand. Her article tries to understand the demographic makeup of the Chinese student community and their motivations to study in Thailand. With the proximity between Thailand and the southern part of China, it does not come as a surprise to find out that most Chinese students have come from that area. Apart from an affordable tuition fee and a lower cost of living, studying in Thailand also paves ways for their work prospects and for new opportunities to start a business, as well as offering an escape from the social pressure in China.

The expansion of influence of China into Southeast Asian can be seen as a form of neo-colonialism as **Sigit and Elizabeth** indicates in ***The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and China's New Colonialism in Cambodia.*** According to the authors, through the mechanism of its foreign policy such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and a regional institution like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), China has asserted itself as a regional superpower and lured many Southeast Asian countries into its colonialism trap.

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One of these examples is Cambodia, whose economy heavily relies on Chinese contribution to avoid a bankruptcy. Using an argument that it will help to increase the volume of trade and investment between the two countries, the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) endorsed the internationalization of the Chinese Renminbi (RMB) by encouraging its use by businesses and individuals within the country. The paper suggests that such a decision is a double-edged sword for the country. Although the use of RMB can bring some advantages to Cambodia's economy, it can also pose hidden threats to its sovereignty.

Although migration is usually perceived as a threat, it can also contribute to the socio-economic development of a city. In ***Chinese Diaspora and Cultural Heritage in Mueang Ubon, 1780 to 1918,*** Sutida TONLERD, Nattapat TAECHARUNGPAISAN, and Praphaphon SASIPRAPHA trace the history of Chinese diaspora in Ubon Ratchathani province (Mueang Ubon) in the northeastern region of Thailand. The paper emphases the importance of Chinese diaspora in the development of Mueang Ubon. The community of Chinese diaspora does not only play an important role in the city's economy, but it also leaves a cultural legacy in its cultural life and public sphere.

Lastly, Geoffrey C. GUNN invites us to revisit a publication published by the Institute of Asian Studies thirty years ago. ***Cambodia Watching Down Under: A Thirty-Year Retrospective*** looks back at the reception and impact of *Cambodia Watching Down Under*, a book by Dr. Khien Theeravit at a time when the push for conflict resolution to the "Cambodia problem" reached a critical mass. This article arrives at the right time when the culture of academic publishing is being questioned of it relevance, and at the time when the Institute of Asian Studies will be celebrating its 39th anniversary. Its conclusion gives some hope to us that academic publication can influence policy, and perhaps that it can also provide some truth to the world, flooded by ideological polarization and disinformation.

Exploring the Expansion of Chinese Students in Thailand: Situations and Motivations[1]

Kulnaree Nukitrangsan[2]

Abstract—: This research had the following objectives: 1) To explore the situation of Chinese students in Thailand; and 2) To study the motivations of Chinese students to study in Thailand. This research was a qualitative study. Data was collected through a document review, focus group discussions, and interviews. The study found that, in 2020, there were 14,423 Chinese students studying in higher education in Thailand. Most were from southern China, but students from other parts of China were also appearing in greater numbers. There are many reasons why Chinese students choose to study abroad. For example, there is the lack of opportunities to continue study in their country, to avoid social pressure, to benefit from better economic conditions, parental support to study abroad, support of the Chinese government to study abroad, etc. The most important reasons why Chinese students chose to study in Thailand include lower costs, variety of courses that meet the needs of Chinese students, good atmosphere and suitable environment for studying. Most Chinese students also preferred to concentrate in the majors of management, business administration, international trade, and Thai language. Other majors are also becoming more popular, such as communication arts, fine arts, and music, among many others. Overall, the COVID-19 situation did not seem to affect the growth in the number of Chinese students coming to Thailand.

1This research article is part of a research project entitled "A preliminary study on the expansion of Chinese students in Thailand" under the Spearhead Strategic Plan on Social Aspects: Khon Thai 4.0, funded by the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) for the fiscal year 2020.

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Keywords : Chinese student, new Chinese immigrant, China-Thailand relations, overseas Chinese, international student, motivation

1.Introduction and Importance of the Topic

Since China's reforms and opening up to the world, China's economy has grown rapidly. As a result, the lives of Chinese people have improved significantly in the past 50 years. Besides their concern with quality of life, Chinese parents also pay particular attention to promoting the education of their children, especially in single-child families. Thus, for those who can afford it, sending children to study abroad has become a common phenomenon among families in China's major cities. Accordingly, the rate of overseas study among Chinese students has been increasing steadily. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, Chinese students are the most numerous among nationalities of students studying abroad around the world. (CRI 2020)

If considering the pre-COVID period, the number of Chinese students studying abroad in 2018 was 662,100. Most preferred to study in Europe or North America, while a minority continued their education in countries participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). That number was an increase of 15.7 percent over 2017, bringing the total of Chinese students in BRI countries to 66,000 (MGR Online 2018). In addition, in recent years, there has been an increasing trend of Chinese students going to study in ASEAN-member countries. The top three countries in ASEAN that are most popular destinations for Chinese students are Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Indeed, the number of Chinese students in Thailand is increasing at astonishing speed. Only a decade ago, Chinese students in Thailand numbered in the hundreds. At present, however, the number has increased to tens of thousands, and is likely to increase further as China relaxes travel restrictions for its citizens. Thai education data for foreign students indicate that

the Chinese outnumber those of any other foreign nationality. Also, the most popular degree program among these students is the bachelor's degree, followed by master's and doctoral degrees, and across a wide variety of disciplines and faculties.

The increase in Chinese students in Thailand can be attributed to several reasons. Firstly, the post-secondary level education system in China is highly competitive, and a significant number of Chinese students who take the college entrance exam each year do not qualify for acceptance. Secondly, Thai universities are increasing their curricula for international students, and tuition is relatively inexpensive, especially compared to counterparts in North America and Europe. Thirdly, the environment of Thai society (especially in Bangkok) is, on the surface, quite compatible with that of urban China and, thus, it is possible for the Chinese student to acculturate rapidly. In addition, there is a good political and economic relationship between Thailand and China, and that probably facilitates the visa application and approval process. The researcher was interested in investigating the following: 1) The situation of Chinese students in Thailand, including the number, development, and various characteristics; and 2) The factors behind the choice of Thailand to continue their post-secondary education.

2. Methodology and limitations of the study

2.1 Methodology

This research is a qualitative study. Data was collected by document research, coupled with focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, which were conducted between July and October 2020. The three components of the data collection are as follows:

· Documentary research: This included a review of related research and other sources of secondary data, e.g., research papers, theses, academic articles, journals, news articles, datasets, and other print and electronic media.

· The focus group discussions covered concepts, behaviors, attitudes, and feelings toward studying in Thailand. The partici-

pants included 25 Chinese students in Thailand (18 currently enrolled, and seven who have graduated but stayed on in-country). The participants were limited to those from mainland China (i.e., excluding Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao). The participants included those who were enrolled in full degree programs (i.e., excluding those in short-term study, language or vocational education programs). The method for selecting data providers involved the use of the snowball sampling technique, aiming to reach at least 25 Chinese students as the criterion. The author accessed data providers through recommendations passed on from one Chinese student to another.

· The in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the situation of Chinese students from the point of view of school administrators. There were a total of three key informants in this component: One administrator from a public institution, and two from private institutions. The educational institutions were purposively selected given their large number of Chinese students.

2.2 Limitations of the study

This research was conducted to collect data during the period from July to October 2021, which was a time when COVID-19 was still spreading. Consequently, the author was unable to conduct fieldwork to survey the actual situation. Therefore, all research activities had to be carried out online instead. As a result, the outcomes may differ from data collected through conventional methods.

3. Conceptual Framework and hypothesis of the Research

This research article uses the migration framework of Everette S. Lee to study the factors behind Chinese students' decision to study in Thailand. Lee explained that migration is a change in residence, either permanent or semi-permanent, with related elements in the place of origin, destination, and intervening obstacles (Siampakdee 2019). There are 'push' and 'pull' factors in both the place of origin and destination which influence the

decision to migrate.

The influx of Chinese students to Thailand is a form of semi-permanent migration if those Chinese students leave upon graduation, or it could turn into a more permanent migration if those Chinese students settle in Thailand and do not migrate to other countries or return to China. The push factors are the limited number of universities in China which the average student can be admitted to, the difficulty of passing the university entrance exam, domestic unrest, etc. The pull factors include the low tuition fees of universities in Thailand, the affordable cost of living there, the ease of acculturation, and demand for Chinese students to enroll. Intervening factors are obstacles that discourage migration, such as travel costs, cultural/language differences, and the difficulty of adapting, among other factors. Finally, there are personal factors, which vary according to each individual, such as life experience, social network, family economic status, etc. In the case of this research, the net effect of the push, pull, and intervening factors define the current dynamic of Chinese migration to study in Thailand.

4. Related Literature

China has experienced significant economic growth over the past few decades, leading to an improved standard of living and higher income levels for the Chinese population. However, during this period of development, a considerable number of Chinese people have chosen to emigrate from China to other countries for various reasons. This trend of continuous emigration remains prevalent. One notable aspect of this migration is the significant number of Chinese students traveling abroad for higher education. This phenomenon has caught the attention of policymakers, educational institutions, and the Chinese government itself. As a result, the economic status of the Chinese people has significantly improved, and the pursuit of overseas education has become a crucial source of income for destination countries' educational institutions. Policymakers and academics

are interested in studying the behavioral patterns of these Chinese students to better understand their motivations and driving forces behind their decision to travel abroad. It seems that these students' journey for higher education has become a significant economic factor for the destination countries.

The literature of interest focuses on the objectives and motivations behind Chinese students' decision to study abroad, both in various countries and in Thailand. It aims to find similar results by examining the behavioral patterns of Chinese students when choosing to pursue higher education abroad. The study takes into account multiple dimensions, such as the socio-cultural dimension, political dimension, educational dimension, and economic dimension of both the home country (China) and the destination country. All of these dimensions play a role in influencing the decisions of Chinese students before they decide to study abroad.

Lo et al. (2019) studied Chinese students who traveled to Japan for higher education and identified significant factors influencing their decision-making process. These factors include family-related factors, cultural aspects, future career opportunities, and personal development opportunities. Chinese students often rely on advice from family members, friends, or acquaintances as references to help them make their decisions. Additionally, they consider factors such as work opportunities under student visas and the cost of education and living expenses. The research sheds light on the complexities involved in Chinese students' decision-making processes when choosing to study abroad and highlights the importance of various influencing factors in their choices.

In contrast, Chao et al. (2017) highlighted that the significant factors influencing the decision-making of Chinese students traveling to the United States are the desire for a broader worldview through international education and the perception that the education system in the U.S. is superior to that of China. Both Chinese students and their parents believe that the Chinese education system emphasizes exam results more than the learning process. In contrast, the U.S. system offers opportunities for students with diverse strengths and talents. The issue of broadening horizons

and the higher quality of education in the U.S., as pointed out by Chao is consistent with various other research studies such as Li (2007) and Qiang (2017) who studied the motivations of Chinese students studying in Hong Kong's Special Administrative Region, Lu (2006) who researched motivations of Chinese students studying in Canada, Wu (2014) who examined motivations of Chinese students studying in the United Kingdom. Similarly, the motivations for Chinese students to study in Thailand do not differ significantly from the findings of research conducted in other countries. In Thailand, Chinese students are motivated to study by various factors, including economic, political, and social aspects.

Yang (2020) conducted a survey to explore the factors influencing the decision-making of Chinese students to study at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University. The survey involved 100 Chinese students currently enrolled. The study identified two main types of attracting factors for these Chinese students to study in Thailand. The first type is personal factors, including the desire for self-development, stability, progress, social interaction, and learning about foreign cultures. The second type is market-related factors, which include university management, personnel management, and teaching quality. These findings align with previous research studies such as Li and Thaima (2021), which discussed the motivations of Chinese students studying abroad, and the motivations of Chinese students studying in Thailand. The push factors that stimulate Chinese students to study abroad include internal situations in China, such as education-related issues and the relatively high stress and pressure in Chinese society. The highly competitive entrance exams for Chinese universities, where prestigious universities have limited places, also contribute to the decision to study abroad. Although the Chinese government has been trying to increase the number of domestic higher education institutions in recent years, it still may not meet the demands of Chinese students. Additionally, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has further motivated Chinese students to seek knowledge abroad and bring back new knowledge and technology to apply in their home country. On the other hand, the pull factors that attract Chinese students to study in Thailand include the country's

location, opportunities for entering the job market and business ventures, which are considered important motivations for Chinese students to choose Thailand as their study destination. (Li and Thaima 2021, 335)

5. Results of the Research

5.1 Development of Chinese students in Thailand

For Thailand, the arrival of Chinese students has been increasingly apparent in recent years, though the initial influx started nearly a half century ago. After China opened up in 1978, the Chinese government encouraged Chinese students to study abroad by relaxing their emigration policy. Chinese families who had enough money began to send their children to study abroad. Most chose to send their child to prestigious institutions in North America and Europe. Thus, in the beginning, the number of Chinese students coming to Thailand was still small. Chinese immigrants to Thailand at that time relied on a network of relatives to help them adjust, and the principal pull factor from Thailand was the opportunity to meet members of the family clan. (Ping 2020) This pattern continued until the year 2000 when China announced the policy of "going out" (i.e., stepping out into the world). This policy included financial support to Chinese investors who wanted to invest abroad. In 2001, a major development was China's acceptance into the World Trade Organization (WTO), which vastly expanded China's reach for exchange of goods and services around the world. This also had the effect of accelerating the movement of the Chinese diaspora which followed the trade routes. Ever since, the Chinese government has continued to encourage its citizens to study abroad in order to expand their knowledge in a wide variety of fields, and to connect with multi-national businesses. Thus, the profile of the Chinese emigrant became younger, heralding an era of "Chinese youth mobility" to seek educational and business opportunities abroad simultaneously. (Ping 2020) Thailand's higher educational institutions were one of the beneficiaries of this outward move-

ment of Chinese students.

With its more open country policy combined with membership in the WTO, the Chinese economy began to grow rapidly, especially in the eastern and southeastern regions of China, which are the production and distribution centers of China. Simultaneously, China opened its country to Southeast Asia via Yunnan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region to support the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area. Over the subsequent decades, Yunnan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region have played an increasingly important role as China's gateway to ASEAN. In addition, the Chinese government has pursued a policy to build good relations between Yunnan Province, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam by promoting cooperation in various fields, including economic, social, and cultural spheres. To prepare its citizens, educational institutions in Yunnan began to teach the language of its Southeast Asian neighbors, climbing to as many as 56 Southeast Asian language programs, attended by 7,300 Chinese students. (Ping 2020) Now, China has hundreds of partnerships with universities in Southeast Asia. Interestingly, Thai is the most popular language among Southeast Asian tongues studied by aspiring Chinese students. Part of the reason may be Thailand's historical connection with Yunnan Province, and the trade routes via the Golden Triangle. The increased volume of trade and investment between Thailand and China plays a more prominent role than other countries of the sub-region. Therefore, the number of Chinese students in Thailand continues to increase. Most of these young Chinese are from Yunnan Province and Guangxi Autonomous Region. Traditionally, Chinese students preferred to study in the field of commerce, business administration, and Thai language. However, more recently, Chinese students in Thailand have more diverse interests. In fact, the hometowns of Chinese students have broadened beyond Yunnan Province or Guangxi Autonomous Region; more students are coming to Thailand from the northeast and southwest of China. Their academic pursuits have also broadened as more Chinese students are majoring in subjects as fine arts, hotel and hospitality management, communication arts, and music, among many others.

5.2 Number of Chinese students in Thailand

Over the past 10 years, the number of Chinese students in Thailand has increased significantly. According to the data from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation of Thailand (MHESI), Chinese students are largest group by country of all international students in Thailand. Over the past ten years, the number of Chinese students has grown over six-fold. In 2010, there were 2,315 Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions. By 2020, the number increased to 14,423, with Chinese students accounting for nearly half of the total number of international students in each year.

By geographic distribution, Chinese students are mostly concentrated in Bangkok and its vicinity, followed by the north, northeast, east, central and south regions in rank order. However, there are discrepancies between the MHESI data and the information obtained by the researcher through interviews with school administrators. It can be assumed that such discrepancies may arise from the fact that the information from MHESI has not been updated regularly, or that the figures may not include Chinese exchange students, students who come for short-term study, or students in non-degree programs. The MHESI data suggests that Chinese students in Thailand are mostly concentrated in Bangkok and the north region. The following considers the regional pull factors for Chinese students.

The north is popular with Chinese students due to its proximity to China. Travel from China to Thailand's north is becoming increasingly easy and affordable, either by air or land (via Laos). There is also good weather, a cool environment, and peaceful atmosphere in the north. The cost of living is not very high, and the local cuisine is world famous. There are attractive tourist attractions, and there are various communities of ethnic Chinese scattered around the cities and towns of this region. What is more, many educational institutions in north Thailand have partnerships with Chinese universities. Shenyang Talent Innovation Institute Federation and the Faculty of Architecture at Chiang Mai University signed an MOU for student exchange.

(Chiangmai University 2022) Chiang Rai Rajabhat University Signed MOUs with eight well-known universities in Yunnan Province to exchange students. (Thairath online 2017) University of Phayao signed an MOU with Tianjin Normal University on academic cooperation. (University of Phayao 2020)

The eastern region is popular with Chinese students because it is not far from Bangkok, and has direct access to the Gulf of Thailand. It is also surrounded by attractions that are perennial favorites of Chinese tourists.

Northeast Thailand has grown in popularity as the "Isaan" region is scheduled to play an increasingly important role as a gateway to ASEAN. There are plans for a high-speed rail connection linking China to Thailand via the northeast and points beyond in the ASEAN Zone. Although the northeast does not have environmental attractiveness and tourism resources like other regions, the Isaan culture is known for its laid-back style, safety, and warmth of its people. The cost of living is the lowest among regions. Thus, more Chinese students are considering this under-subscribed region, and there is growing cooperation between northeast academic institutions and universities in China.

The south region has outstanding environmental and tourism resources. There are also many overseas Chinese settlements in the cities and towns of southern provinces. However, the south is not very popular with Chinese students, partly because the region has only a few reputable higher education institutions. It is also the farthest from China among Thai regions, and is not easy to travel through. The culture and diet are very different from those of China. Also, the southernmost border provinces still have problems of separatist violence. These factors have discouraged more Chinese parents and their children from studying there.

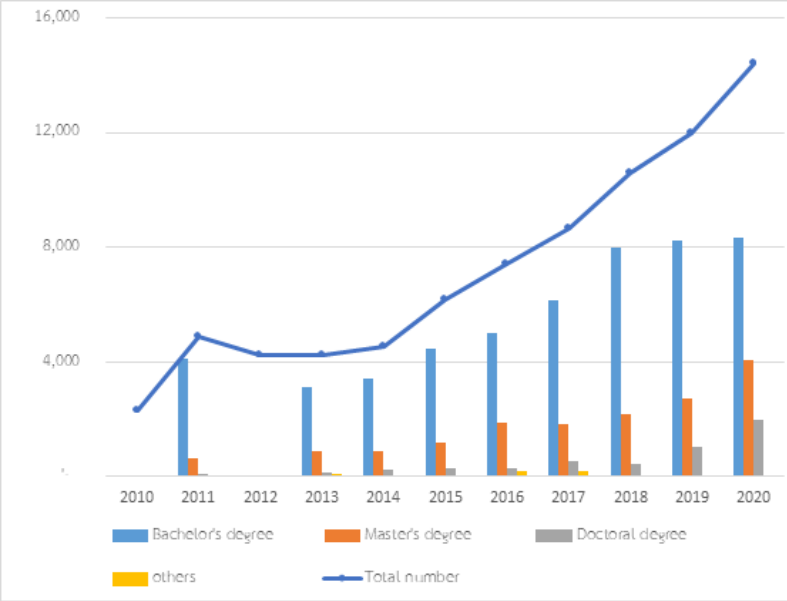
Bangkok and its vicinity are obviously the most popular destinations for Chinese students, given the fact that it is the cultural, economic, and educational center for the country, and offers a multitude of attractions unlike any other city in Thailand. There is increasing convenience getting around greater Bangkok

now that more of the Skytrain and subway lines are being completed. In addition, important parts of the central business district of Bangkok were originally settled by Chinese traders, who helped build Bangkok into the metropolis it is today. Most importantly, Bangkok has the widest selection of state and private colleges and universities, with many offering an international curriculum to meet the needs of all groups of students. Finally, there are career opportunities during and after graduation for foreign students.

5.3 Situation of Chinese students in Thailand after the COVID-19 era

In 2019, just before the sudden emergence of COVID-19, there were nearly 12,000 Chinese students enrolled in post-secondary degree programs in Thailand, divided into 8,219 undergraduate students, 2,744 master's degree students, and 1,020 doctoral students. Later, in 2020, with borders closing around the world and societies hunkering down, the number of Chinese students in Thailand actually increased to 14,423, divided into 8,352 undergraduate students, 4,056 master's degree students, and 2,000 doctoral students. The increases were mostly in the master's and doctoral level candidates, while the number of bachelor's degree students were roughly constant. One important push-pull factor is that doing a master's degree in China takes more time than a comparable program in Thailand. Still, it is hard to explain the increase in the Chinese student body in Thailand at the height of the COVID pandemic, and during a time when vaccines were not yet available. It is possible that Chinese who were already living/working in Thailand decided to enroll in online degree programs with Thai universities in order to make good use of their time while stranded. (Note: Thailand closed its international borders to all non-essential travel, starting in March 2020.)

Figure 1: Number of Chinese students in Thai higher education institutions, academic year 2010-2020



Source: Collected from statistical data of the Higher Education Information Dissemination System, Higher Education Information Center.

Note: For the 2010 and 2012 academic years, discriminatory data on the number of Chinese students is not shown in the database; only the total number of students is available.

5.4 Specific characteristics of Chinese students in Thailand

(1) Residence

As noted above, most Chinese students in Thailand come from southern China, especially Yunnan province and Guangxi Autonomous Region. Part of the reason is probably geographic affinity because Yunnan Province and Guangxi Autonomous

Region share a border with ASEAN. In addition, Yunnan is the closest Chinese Province to Thailand, and there are historical links between the Tai tribe (or Dai tribe) in Yunnan and the original settlers of northern Thailand. The distance from the Yunnan border to Chiang Rai (Thailand's northernmost province) is only 247 kilometers, which makes that part of Thailand seem almost like an extension of Yunnan. Indeed, the two cultures have traded and inter-married for generations. In some areas of Yunnan, such as Xishuangbanna, there is widespread teaching in/of the Thai language. While Guangxi Autonomous Region is positioned as the 'gateway to ASEAN' because it has the potential to be a land, sea, and air transit hub between China and Southeast Asia. Although the Guangxi Autonomous Region does not share a land border with Thailand, there is cultural affinity between Thailand and Guangxi. There is the Zhuang ethnic minority in that region of China whose language is similar to Thai, and the national Thai language is popular and widely taught in Guangxi, as in Yunnan.

However, in recent years, Chinese students in Thailand who hail from other provinces such as Jiangsu, Guizhou, Jiangxi, Henan, Sichuan, etc., have started to increase. That said, Chinese students from mega-cities like Shanghai and Beijing are still few and far between in Thai universities and colleges, perhaps because students who can afford to go abroad from those cities come from wealthier families and have better options. By contrast, the family background of most Chinese students in Thailand is predominately middle class.

(2) Personality and behavior of Chinese students in Thailand

From the document review, focus group discussions with Chinese students in Thailand, and in-depth interviews with representatives of institutions accepting Chinese students, it can be generalized that Chinese students in Thailand share some unique attributes and behaviors that distinguish them from Thai students and students of other nationalities. The following are some examples:

1) Assertiveness: Most Chinese students in Thailand are assertive. In the classroom, Chinese students are confident in making presentations in front of their peers and instructors. They are not shy about expressing contrary opinions or offering critiques, and that is quite different from mainstream Thai students who are conditioned to remain fairly taciturn in front of their teacher, and generally will only speak up when prompted or prodded to do so.

"In an academic context, the presentations between Thai and Chinese students differ significantly. Thai students tend to present their work in a casual manner with not much enthusiasm, while Chinese students are more articulate, confident in their speech, have better research, and deliver more impressive presentations."

(Interview, a private education institution administrator, October 2021)

2) Diligence, earnestness: China's social system and education hierarchy is highly competitive, and that creates considerable academic pressure on Chinese students to excel and produce more than the minimum. Therefore, some Chinese students who come to study in Thailand are seen as harder-working than their Thai classmates, who may take a more casual attitude toward studies and achieving an academic degree. One indicator of how driven Chinese students are is the speed with which they become conversant and literate in Thai, even after only 1-2 years in-country. This diligence may be more that the result of academic training. Indeed, Chinese immigrants around the world are noteworthy for their industriousness in all aspects of daily life, and rarely letting idle moments go to waste.

"Chinese students are more diligent and proactive. If there's any topic they don't understand in class, they will keep asking until they grasp it."

(Interview, a state education institution administrator, September 2021)

3) Having a commercial mind: While there is no scientific proof, it has long been observed that ethnic Chinese have a gift

for commerce. Indeed, around the world Chinese are known for opening shops and engaging in trade as their first activities when achieving a certain level of financial stability in the destination country. That ability in commerce seems to be innate. For example, soon after arriving in Thailand and getting settled, Chinese start looking for ways to earn pocket money or extra income. Some might operate a small business, like online sales and accepting pre-orders for Thai products, which they send back to be sold in China. Others might work as a part-time tutor teaching Chinese language to local residents. Some who have developed Thai or English language fluency will be able to obtain lucrative freelance work as an interpreter or a recruiter to reach out to students who wish to study in Thailand. After graduation, Chinese students can parlay their natural mercantile ability to launch an enterprise or full-time business. Alternatively, with family financing, they might acquire Thai businesses, and grow their interests where they find a market niche. Indeed, some Chinese may have seen studying in Thailand as a stepping stone to business opportunities in Thailand. Thai Immigration has a number of pathways to long-term visas, residency permits, and incentives to enterprising foreigners with funds to invest. A focus group participant was a Chinese student in Khon Kaen Province in the northeast who said that she used her spare time from her degree program to sell products online. She has posted various brands of cosmetics, latex pillows, inhalers, etc. on the Wechat Moment platform. Her customers are friends and acquaintances back in China. The earnings from sales allow her to support tuition costs and daily living expenses without bothering her parents or taking out student loans.

4) Adaptability: Chinese students in Thailand are quite resourceful in integrating with the local Thai community they find themselves in. Of course, during the initial months, there will be some awkward moments and stumbles until they become more familiar with cultural norms, language, and other aspects of daily interaction. The Chinese students approach this challenge with diligence, just as in their study habits and business-mindedness.

"Initially, Chinese students need to adjust to the new environ-

ment, new friends, and a new way of life. The university needs to support them and encourage them to be themselves, experience local food, and learn about local customs and traditions. Once they get used to it, they start to interact more with Thais. Some Chinese students become very close friends with Thai students and even invite Thai friends to visit their hometown in China."

(Interview, a state education institution administrator, September 2021)

5) Like to gather in groups: Although Chinese students in Thailand have shown that they can adapt well to Thai society, many Chinese students prefer to congregate with their peers. Indeed, only a small percentage of the Chinese students become intimate with Thai classmates or acquaintances. This is partly because these Chinese students still adhere to the concept of "Guanxi culture", which holds that kinship relationships take precedence since those types of relationships can be a source of mutual assistance in the future. Therefore, Chinese students can become somewhat of a clique in the Thai university setting whenever there is a large enough group of peers to engage with on a daily basis. Especially, during important festivals, such as Chinese New Year, the Chinese students will give priority to joining their compatriots in group merit-making and ancestor worship.

5.5 Motivation to study in Thailand

The number of Chinese students in Thailand has grown considerably in recent years. The decision to study in Thailand of Chinese students is influenced by both push factors in the country of origin and the pull factors in the destination country, as discussed next.

5.5.1 Push factors to leave China

(1) Inequality and pressure from social and academic conditions in China: Today, Chinese society can be very stressful, especially in terms of education. Although all Chinese citizens are guaranteed nine years of free (compulsory) education, children from affluent families have more options, and a quality education

reflects well on the parents (Gold 2011). For this reason, Chinese people are pressured from a young age to excel in school and be competitive across all sectors. Most parents want their child(ren) to have a good life, and they will sacrifice a great deal for their child to get ahead in life. Indeed, this pressure starts not long after they learn to walk and talk. There are pre-school classes, after hours tutoring, exam preparation, and other mechanisms to get a head start, which begin even at the primary grade levels. Perhaps the most competitive and stressful event in an aspiring Chinese student's young life is the national university entrance exam. Even if they pass the exam and graduate from one of the coveted universities, they still have to compete with peers for the plum jobs and lucrative career opportunities. Those who do not meet the passing threshold in the university entrance exam are relegated to, perhaps, vocational education and a more labor-intensive occupation. While the cost of living in China has continued to rise generally, such inequalities and pressures are the key factors driving young Chinese people to seek a better life. An increasingly attractive option is to study abroad, especially in Thailand, a country where the cost of living is not that high, the people are friendly, and the universities are of international standard quality.

(2) Failure to pass the university entrance exam: As noted above, the nationwide Chinese university entrance examination, commonly known as the "Gaokao", is a critical hurdle for the Chinese student who aspires to achieve higher education. At the time of this study, China had a total of 2,740 institutions of higher learning (University Students Essential Network 2020). However, as in most countries, the quality and competitiveness of the different institutions can vary widely, and getting into the right university can be almost a pre-requisite to pursuing one's desired career path. The Gaokao Exam is, therefore, the most important gateway in the Chinese education system that not only measures academic ability, but also can determine one's destiny. Passing the exam is almost a guaranteed ticket to success in Chinese society. It is an opportunity to move up to a higher social status and to lead a better life. Perhaps even more so in China than other countries, the revolution, reforms, and other upheavals of the past century

have made education one of the ways to achieve some stability and honor in life. Also, due to the one-child policy, the majority of families in middle-class China have only one child. This places even more importance on the educational success of the child, not just for the child, but also for the reputation and future assistance a successful child can provide for parents and grandparents. Indeed, the parents may plan the future of their only child many years in advance, and this usually translates into exceptional pressure to excel in school and pass the Gaokao Exam.

From 2012 to 2018, the number of students who sat for the Gaokao Exam was about nine million per year. That number is actually increasing, and 2019 was the first year that the number of students who registered for the exam exceeded ten million. In 2020, 10.71 million students sat for the exam, and in 2021, 10.78 million students took the exam. (Jia Jia 2021)

The data show that, in recent years, about 80 percent of Chinese students pass the Gaokao exam and, in 2019, 8.2 million passed out of the total of about 10.31 million who sat for the exam . (Jia Jia 2019) Still, that leaves several million Chinese high school graduates who have to look elsewhere if they want to continue their formal education. One increasingly attractive option (for families who can afford it) is to seek post-secondary education abroad. At the very least, attaining a university degree in another country would broaden one's horizons and be an opportunity to learn about different cultures. More importantly, any university degree from a foreign country will appear more respectable than settling for a vocational education, or going to work in a blue-collar job right after high school.

"When I was in high school, I didn't study well. Thus, my mother asked me to study Thai language. To learn the Thai language, it's better to study in Thailand. For me, taking the entrance examination to a famous university in China would be impossible. I chose to study Thai because my English is poor. I chose to come to Thailand because it is close to China. As

for other countries like Malaysia or Singapore, they have to study in English, Therefore, I don't want to go there."

(Focus group, July 2021)

(3) The increased wealth of the middle class in China makes study abroad feasible: At the time of this study, China had the world's second largest economy (Chinese government website n.d.). With the growth of the Chinese economy, many Chinese families have emerged from relative poverty to join the middle class, and have considerable disposable income. At least numerically, it can be said that China has the highest number of middle-class citizens of any country in the world. Moreover, the emerging middle class in China has high consumption and material needs in almost every aspect (Attakaweesunthorn 2020).

According to the 7th National Census in November 2020, China had a total population of 1.411 billion persons (Nation Bureau of Statistics 2021). In that year, the median annual income of all Chinese was 32,189 yuan; 43,834 yuan for urban and 17,131 yuan for rural residents. The middle class in China had an annual income ranging from 70,000-200,000 yuan a year, which reflects the growing prosperity of the population in the first two decades of the new millennium (Aec10news 2019).

The middle class in almost every country around the world has similar aspirations, and they have an understanding of the difficulties of life's struggle for well-being. Most members of the middle class are confident that higher education will create more opportunities in life. Indeed, a college education is seen as a stepping stone to wealth, power, and prestige. It is no wonder then that so many middle-class families will make major sacrifices to give their child(ren) an opportunity to study to the highest level possible (Chiang Mai News 2018). It is noteworthy that most Chinese students in Thailand come from middle-class families. Thus, even though those families may not easily afford it, they will gladly sacrifice to send their child abroad for a college education if they do not pass the Gaokao Exam. Indeed, the Chinese Confucian heritage attached great importance to education as a

good in its own right, and Chinese parents are willing to invest more in higher education for their children than most other countries around the world (CRI 2018). Some parents are willing to pay more than 100,000 yuan (about $16,000) a year just for individual tutoring for the various entrance exams at leading schools in China (Royal Thai Army 2018). In recent years, more and more middle-class Chinese have sent their children to study abroad, especially in Thailand, which has affordable tuitions and cost of living.

The data above is consistent with the focus group discussion. Chinese students have diverse backgrounds; some come from well-off families, while others come from humble backgrounds. Most of them are from middle-class families.

"There are some who come from rich families, and a lot of them study in Bangkok. But the majority of Chinese students are from middle-class families. Just a few students are in poverty."

(Focus group, July 2021)

(4) Parental encouragement: As noted, China had a strict population control policy, allowing only one child per family for many decades in the late 20th century and early 21st century. This policy was so successful that it changed the age-sex population structure of the country, and China now has negative population growth. China ended the one-child policy in 2018, and has been trying to persuade couples to have more children. However, the new generation of Chinese are not eager to have children, and are marrying at an older age. It is also possible that the younger generation of Chinese resent the pressure that was imposed on them to succeed as youth, and do not want to repeat that experience with a child of their own. This is resulting in an emerging labor shortage, especially in the younger cohorts of the working-age population. Due to delayed marriage and lack of interest in childbearing, the new cohort of high school graduates is receiving an extra level of parental encouragement to at least gain an advanced degree so that, if they do decide to marry and have children one day, they will be in a better socio-economic

position to do so. Studying abroad is one way to advance their career and honor their parents.

Regarding the Chinese students abroad, most parents probably felt comfortable supporting their child to seek post-secondary education in Thailand since it has a familiar culture, it is relatively safe, it is not too far from China, and it is more affordable than the more advanced economies in the region (e.g., Japan, Korea, Singapore). Also, Thai universities with international degree programs are probably more tolerant of those with limited English-language skills than institutions in North America or Europe. Ultimately, a degree from abroad is preferable to a degree from a lower-tier college in China.

(5) Support from the Chinese government: President Xi Jinping supports China's policy to build the quality of the new generation of working-age citizens, and the government clearly hopes that Chinese students who study abroad will bring their knowledge back to help boost country's development. There is also the concept that sending Chinese students out into the world is an form of exporting 'soft power,' and a way of expanding the new generation of overseas Chinese networks. These educated and sophisticated Chinese have the potential to expand Chinese influence globally, and in a more culturally-acceptable way. Accordingly, this group of Chinese students who go to study abroad are classified as China's "people-to-people ambassadors" (Bislev 2017, 82).

In addition, at the 22nd China International Education Conference held on October 21st-24th , 2021, in Beijing, Huai Jinpeng, the minister of China's Ministry of Education, asserted the following:

"China recognizes that education must keep pace with the rapidly-advancing global economies and societies. Thus, international cooperation must be strengthened in many ways, but especially through the Belt and Road Initiative in education, support for studying abroad, improving the quality of higher education in China, improving services and policies for overseas Chinese students, and enhancing

educational resources."

(Foreign Daily, 2021)

That message reflects China's approach and clarity in openness to education and support for overseas study, which China is trying to facilitate in various ways. For example, the government monitors the relevant information, compiles statistics, provides assistance in job placement after graduation, etc. In addition to the above. In the Q&A Item#5337 at the 13th National People's Congress" (Ministry of Education of the PRC 2020) China's Ministry of Education announced the principle of "Support study abroad -- promote the return to China to come and go freely for maximum benefit." China also keeps track of people who go to study abroad, and tries to help their transition into the workplace through the "Blue book on finding employment for foreign graduates". (UFEIC, 2016)

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and international travel restrictions, China's Ministry of Education still adheres to the human resource development guidelines by encouraging Chinese students to study abroad, as strongly as before. China's Ministry of Education views that the COVID-19 pandemic is a temporary crisis, and the Ministry is increasing cooperation channels in educational resources and expanding opportunities for study abroad of its citizens. (Ministry of Education of the PRC 2020)

5.5.2 Pull factors to study in Thailand

The previous discussion hinted at some of the features which make Thailand an attractive destination for higher education by Chinese students and their families. The following considers these "pull factors" in greater depth.

(1) Affordable tuition and living expenses: Aside from the international travel cost, studying in Thailand probably costs no more than studying in China, and is certainly cheaper than studying in Western countries. If Chinese students have to travel to study in other cities or provinces, there will be many expenses such as travel, accommodation, personal expenses, etc.,

which may be similar to studying abroad in some countries. If Chinese students go to study in Europe or North America, the cost could easily exceed 300,000 yuan per year (about 1.5 million baht). Even if the destination is Singapore, the average cost for the Chinese student would be at least 50,000 yuan or more per year (about 250,000 baht), which could be prohibitive for the average middle-class Chinese family. By contrast, a Chinese student in Thailand would incur expenses of 30,000 to 50,000 yuan a year (about 150,000 to 250,000 baht), and this amount is more affordable for the average Chinese family. What is more, the Chinese probably consider the cost-effectiveness of different higher education options, and Thailand must be near the top of the list. In addition, obtaining an education visa in Thailand is not complicated and the requirements are not as onerous as in Western countries.

"Tuition fees are a significant factor in the decision-making process. Studying in Thailand is more affordable. It costs around 500,000 Baht for the whole course, considering all expenses like food, accommodation, etc."

(Interview, a state education institution administrator, September 2021)

"In Thailand, tuition fees and cost of living are not too expensive, and it is easier for my parents to support my education here."

(Focus group, July 2021)

(2) Attractive course options: The growing interest of Chinese students to continue their higher education in Thailand has resulted in many educational institutions, both public and private, adding to their international curriculum offerings and opening up new curricula tailored to the interests of Chinese students. Thus, today more than ever before, there is a wide variety and number of courses and fields of study for Chinese students to choose from. There are curricula in English, Thai, and even Chinese. While the admission criteria are not onerous to begin with, many educational institutions, especially in the private sector, do not even require a

language proficiency test as part of its acceptance criteria. In this sense, acceptance to many Thai institutions of higher learning is nearly guaranteed for Chinese applicants.

"I chose to study here because of the major I want to study, which is teaching Thai as a foreign language. It is a program specifically designed for international students. I want to teach Thai to Chinese people, so I chose to study here."

(Focus group, July 2021)

(3) Appropriate location: The fact that Thailand is not so far from China is an advantage and a pull factor because travel expenses are not high, the student can travel back home often, and parents can easily visit their child in Thailand, combining the trip with some tourism as well.

"Comparatively, the geographical location of Yunnan Province is much closer to Thailand. The time and cost of travel are acceptable and more convenient."

(Focus group, July 2021)

(4) Good Thai-Sino relations: From the past to the present, Thailand and China have enjoyed a long and friendly relationship. Thailand has never had any state-level feuds or grievances with China. For centuries, Thai-Sino relations have been mutually supportive. In fact, the Chinese have a saying "China and Thailand are one family". This bi-lateral amity extends over the economic, political, government, education, society, and technology spheres. There are countless ties in commerce between Chinese and Thai entrepreneurs, and the extent of intermarriage between ethnic Thai and Chinese immigrants makes it hard to distinguish between them at times. This makes it that much easier for Chinese students to see that studying in Thailand will increase job opportunities and business connections after graduation. This is especially true if the student aspires to work in an international organization or multinational business that requires bi-lingual Thai-Chinese skill and cross-cultural adeptness. Ever since China's opening up in the latter part of the 20th century, many Chinese businesses have

invested in Thailand (and vice versa), and they need personnel who can speak Chinese and Thai well. These bi-lateral opportunities will only increase over the coming years and decades (Wealth Me Up, 2020).

"Moreover, if the COVID-19 pandemic ends and the high-speed railway project is completed, it will create more economic opportunities for China-ASEAN cooperation. I think if Chinese students understand Thai language and Thai people's ideas, they will benefit a lot."

(Focus group, July 2021)

(5) Conducive atmosphere and environment to study: In addition to the affordable cost of living, Thailand is still a country with a good image in the eyes of the Chinese. It is safe from terrorist threats, there is hardly any anti-Sino racism, and there is openness to ideas and gender diversity. In addition, there is a better medical care system in Thailand compared to China.

5.5.3 Other factors influencing the decision

(1) Individual factors: Many Chinese students decide to study in Thailand because they are impressed by certain attributes, such as the following:

• Impressive attractions: Many Chinese students may have traveled to Thailand at a younger age and were impressed by the tourist attractions, food, culture, hand-made products, or the Thai people's serene and gentile way of life. Therefore, when they finish high school or some college education in China, it is logical that they might seek to continue their higher education in Thailand. That way, they can advance their career potential while enjoying the sights and sounds of Thailand as any tourist might.

"I've visited many places in Thailand, including Chiang Mai, Phuket, Bangkok, and Pattaya. I like Thailand a lot; the food is delicious, and Thai people smile and are friendly even to strangers. It's a new experience for me. So, I chose to study here. My parents also support my decision because they also like Thailand."

(Focus group, July 2021)

• Impressed with the socio-cultural conditions: Some Chinese students are impressed with the easy pace of life Thai society compared to urban China. There is low stress, even in a mega-city like Bangkok, and people are very gracious to each other, even if they are strangers or a different nationality. This makes Chinese students feel welcome and appreciated, so it is natural that they would try living in Thailand while pursuing their higher education.

"During my fourth year of study, I came to Thailand and traveled to various provinces, including Chiang Mai and Koh Samet. I felt that Thai people are friendly, and comfortable to be around. It was an experience that I couldn't find in China. So, I decided to pursue my 2nd bachelor's degree in Thailand. My parents supported my decision, reasoning that even if I'm unsure of my future plans, continuing my studies is a good choice."

(Focus group, July 2021)

• Impressive actors, singers, movies or Thai dramas: The Thai entertainment industry is quite popular in China, especially in the southern part of China. Some Chinese students choose to study in Thailand because they are fascinated by Thai celebrities, pop singers, and film actors/actresses. This is another pull factor of Thailand, in that the Chinese students want to follow the performances of their favorite Thai stars more closely.

"I came to study in Thailand because I like Thai actors, especially Prachaya (Singto). I came to study here and follow my stars."

(Focus group, July 2021)

(2) Confidence in adapting to life in Thailand: The Chinese have a favorable image of Thailand, even if they have never been there before. They trust in hearing about the experience of their friends and relatives who have been to Thailand, and they have also thoroughly researched life and studying in Thailand on social media and various Internet resources. Chinese social media is replete with first-hand stories by Chinese students in Thailand.

In recent years, video clips with vignettes about Thailand have become very popular and influential. There are clips about travel, food recommendations, university tours, and daily life of Chinese people in Thailand, among countless other topics.

Another pull of Thailand, and especially Bangkok, is the cosmopolitan nature of the country in which no ethnicity should feel unwelcome. Ever since the founding of Siam, the country has been known as a cultural crossroads where traders and migrants from all parts of the world can come to visit, stay for a while, or even settle down and become part of the Thai community (Mahathanobol 2019).

(3) Services of agents: Brokers or agents play an important role in bringing Chinese students to Thailand. Many of the Chinese who are studying in Thailand (or other countries around the world) have arranged their application, travel, and visas through a specialized agency which can provide clear information and cut through any red tape. This helps facilitate the process and saves the applicant considerable time, though at some cost. The recruiters who serve as a bridge to higher education in Thailand range from private brokers to representatives of Thai and Chinese educational institutions themselves. For example, Chinese students can apply to Thai colleges and universities through Chinese universities. The university will process the necessary documentation through a direct connection with their counterparts in Thailand. This broker system is another important factor that facilitates and encourages Chinese students to study in Thailand.

6. Discussion and Recommendations

From the statistical data, it is evident that the number of Chinese students in Thailand has been consistently increasing, especially in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic. Chinese students in Thailand mainly come from southern China, such as Yunnan and Guangxi, and they are inclined to study fields related to international trade, cross-border business, and the Thai language. The key motivating factors for their decision to study in Thailand include career opportunities and China's active foreign

policy, particularly in strengthening relationships with various countries, making ASEAN more prominent, and elevating Thailand's role in the region. This has led to increased Thai-Chinese cooperation in various dimensions, including education, economy, and socio-cultural aspects. The interest of Chinese students to study in Thailand has continued to grow, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, as it did not negatively impact the number of Chinese students going to study there. Currently, Chinese students come from various regions of China to study in Thailand, and they opt for a diverse range of academic disciplines. This includes business administration, Thai language, international trade, hotel management, music and performance arts, communication arts, among others. Educational institutions have adapted to this trend by introducing new courses or expanding their curriculum to accommodate these Chinese students.

Regarding the study's findings on the motivations of Chinese students to study in Thailand, the findings align with Everette S. Lee's concept of migration theory, which explains migration as a result of push factors, pull factors, and intervening factors, as summarized below:

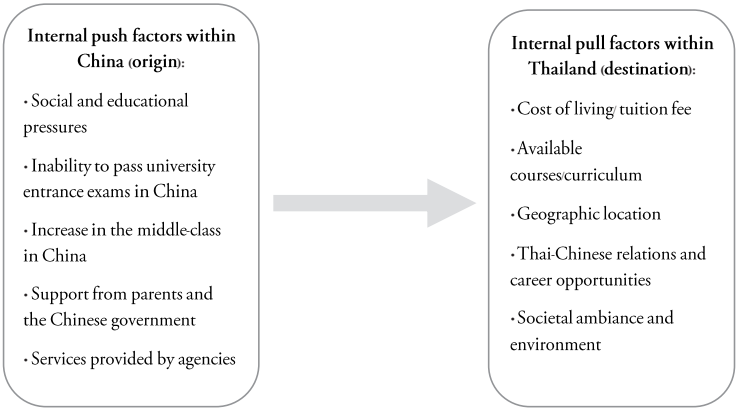
1. Push factors are the drivers in the home country that compels or motivates Chinese students to seek education abroad. They can be divided into social factors, such as pressure within China's education system and intense competition in Chinese society, leading Chinese students to experience stress and seek relief by studying abroad. Economic factors also play a role, especially with the growth of the Chinese economy, particularly before the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased the middle-class population in China. Consequently, middle-class parents have the idea of promoting their children to study abroad for better opportunities. Personal factors include the inability to pass the entrance exams for top Chinese universities.

2. Pull factors are the magnets in the destination country that attract or motivate Chinese students to choose to study in Thailand. They can be divided into social factors, such as a peaceful learning and living environment that is favorable for Chinese

students. Economic factors include the reasonable costs of studying and living in Thailand, which are within the reach of the middle-class in China. Political and stability factors, particularly in the dimension of Thailand-China relations, are positive and exhibit cooperation in various aspects. This offers the prospect of career opportunities in the future. Geographical factors are the proximity of Thailand to China, making travel convenient, and expenses reasonable. The variety of educational opportunities, both in terms of curriculum and language of instruction, is also an important pull factor. Personal factors include the positive perception of Thailand by Chinese students.

However, the obstructing factors, which are negative forces that have an impact on studying in Thailand, have not been clearly evident in this study.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework of the study and results



The results of the study on the number and motivating factors of Chinese students in Thailand reflect that Thailand is a significant choice for Chinese students seeking further education. The expansion of Chinese students in Thailand continues to exhibit similar patterns and motivating factors as in the past. The most notable change is the increasing number of Chinese students

and their interest in diverse academic programs. This represents a crucial opportunity for Thailand to enhance and expand its role in international education. The study also reveals that Thailand possesses strengths in education that align with the demands of the Chinese student market and surpasses many other countries in the region.

Therefore, Thailand should promote the influx of Chinese students, as well as students from other countries, to elevate itself as an education hub in the region. Relevant organizations can achieve this through policies that promote international cooperation in education and by providing convenience for the entry of foreign students, such as from Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Bhutan and India, to create a balanced and diversified student population. To ensure stability and avoid over reliance on Chinese students, related Thai agencies should be cognizant of, and manage various factors affecting this influx, including educational institutions, educational agents, and businesses involved in the process. This will mitigate potential risks that could turn the expansion of Chinese students into a threat or excessive dependence. In doing so, the growth of Chinese students in Thailand will bring multifaceted benefits to the country.

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The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and China's New Colonialism in Cambodia

Sigit[1] and Elizabeth[2]

Abstract—: This paper aims to analyse Cambodia's response to China's new colonialism through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) using qualitative methods and hegemony as the conceptual framework. As the second-largest economy, China has ambitions to surpass other countries, such as the United States. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is the first project, launched in 2013, to gain worldwide penetration of China under the mask of investment and trade. To finance BRI, China inaugurated AIIB in 2015 as its second project. AIIB invites dynamic Asian countries to invest in technology-enabled green infrastructure. After gaining the trust of Asian countries, China began to offer the internationalization of its currency, the Renminbi (RMB), as an alternative to the inability of a nation to pay its debts. This scheme succeeded in coaxing Southeast Asian countries into the Chinese colonialism trap, such as Cambodia. Phnom Penh, relying on Chinese generosity to prevent national bankruptcy, immediately agreed to the internationalization of the RMB in its country. This paper suggests that every phenomenon in the world has two opposite sides, just like two sides of a coin. Although Cambodia views RMB usage as advantageous, there are some hidden threats to its sovereignty.

Keywords : China, Cambodia, AIIB, New Colonialism, BRI, Renminbi

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Introduction

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank whose mission is to finance future infrastructure. AIIB noted that they started operations in Beijing in January 2016 with 57 founding members, 37 regional and 20 non-regional. By the end of 2020, AIIB had approved 103 members representing approximately 79 percent of the global population. AIIB enables members to unlock new capital and invest in new technology-enabled green infrastructure while promoting regional connectivity. AIIB explained that their development-focused investments in Asia drive sustainable economic development, amass wealth, and enhance foundational connectivity. In addition, AIIB adapts and innovates by providing suitable investment solutions to address members' problems, even in difficult times, because welfare and economic development are the main goals of AIIB (AIIB, n.d.). Since 2017, AIIB has received the highest credit rating ranked by Standard & Poor's, Moody's, and Fitch as the three major rating agencies. Industry recognition of AIIB's sound financial position helps expand its influence in international capital markets. Not only that, in the following year, AIIB also confirmed that they received Permanent Observer status with the consideration of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the Economic and Social Council involved in development.

The success of AIIB in opening new financing channels for Asian infrastructure development signifies that China is responsible for playing a leading role in world finance. The AIIB has helped the economic development of relatively underdeveloped Asian countries. Currently, those nations have a great demand for energy, communication, and transportation infrastructure due to a lack of construction funds, supply, experience, and technology. AIIB estimates that the financing gap for Asia's infrastructure development from 2010 to 2020 is $800 billion USD. In this case, AIIB can support infrastructure development and boost the Asian economy. AIIB also benefits developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, and France by expanding trade and investment routes abroad (AIIB, n.d.).

As the most dynamic and high-potential region, Asia is a crucial engine of world economic growth and has great demand for infrastructure investment. However, international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) cannot invest heavily in Asian infrastructure development (Zhang, 2016). Therefore, through AIIB membership, developed countries will benefit from their investment in dynamic Asia and build closer economic relations with Asia. In addition to developed countries, AIIB is also important for China. The establishment of the AIIB initiated plenty of Asian infrastructures development programs so that Chinese companies that have a leading position in infrastructure development will have significant opportunities. Zhang (2016) also described that AIIB investments that promote the development of interconnection and intercommunication would create a large Asian market and stimulate the economic development potential of countries in the region. In return, China's foreign commodity demand and economic trade relations with Asian countries will increase.

According to Zhang (2016), AIIB working as an international institution can protect China's local investment and reduce investment risk. He also explained that for good measure, the AIIB would also spur the internationalization of the Chinese currency, the Renminbi (RMB). Currently, the level of internationalization of the RMB is insufficient, but the AIIB can provide a useful international platform for the RMB. AIIB is opening up the market through financing, so companies from all countries, including China, will follow up. In the process, other countries will receive RMB to facilitate Chinese investment because Chinese companies can invest directly in RMB. Currently, the internationalization of the RMB has received some achievements, but the US dollar will still be the main currency for a long time. The road to RMB internationalization is still long, so China and the AIIB worked closely with the Southeast Asian countries, such as Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, and the Philippines, to promote the RMB. Despite the label of cooperation, the idea of China's colonialism of its partner is unavoidable. Cambodia is one of the countries

that fell into the colonialism trap. While Cambodia views the internationalization of the RMB as profitable, there are hidden sovereignty threats to watch out for because the dominance of China is not purely financial. Based on the background, this paper will analyse Cambodia's response to China's new colonialism through the AIIB.

The rest of the chapter proceeds as follows. This paper briefly examines how the theory of hegemony is used in the paper to answer the research question. Before delving deeper into the discussion, it is crucial to understand Sino-Cambodian relations. Their history will also reveal the reasons for Hun Sen's dependence on the Chinese Regime. Then, China's ambition in the international arena, which led to the internationalization of the Chinese Renminbi, will be the core of the discussion. However, Cambodia's response to China's new colonialism will show how the internationalization was going. The last section will conclude all the existing discussions.

Conceptual Framework

In order to understand Cambodia's response to China's new colonialism through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), this paper will use the theory of hegemony. Oxford Bibliographies explains that hegemony comes from a Greek word, hēgemonía, which means leadership and rule. In international relations, hegemony refers to actors who shape the global system through coercive and non-coercive means (Schmidt, 2018). Moreover, the Cambridge Dictionary defines hegemony as the position of power to control other people. It shows that the idea of hegemony includes extraordinary powers that automatically require the hegemon's ability to exert influence or control over others. Thus, hegemony involves the relationship between actors, whether individual or state. International relations have different theoretical approaches to hegemony in the field. In this case, this paper will focus on the hegemony provided by realism.

Schmidt (2018) mentioned that there are various realist theories. Generally, realists define hegemony as overwhelming power and the ability to use that power to dominate others. However, the prime

tendency among realists is to equate hegemony with overwhelming material power. Equating hegemony with the domination of power is not appropriate because power is a contested term. In the end, realists label the most powerful state in the international system as hegemons. In this case, the hegemon is a country with far superior material capabilities, such as economic, military, even diplomatic or soft power. Waltz (1979) reveals that power is synonymous with capability. However, a country's capacity is no more than the total of identified national attributes that include economic and military ability, political competence, stability, and population and territory size. Realists believe that violent conflict always occurs in an anarchic international system and that military power is the most crucial foundation of hegemony. In connection with the idea that hegemony requires the concentration of a state's material capabilities, Levy and Thompson (2005) convey the concept that the more dominant nation can dominate all subordinate states. John Mearsheimer (2001) even describes a hegemon as a state that is so potent: it dominates all other states in the system. For Mearsheimer, hegemony is system domination that covers the whole world.

Based on these definitions, hegemony is less of an attribute of a state and more of a property of the international system. Meanwhile, Robert Gilpin (1981) views hegemony as a structure that periodically characterizes the global system. He also said that a hegemonic structure exists when one strong state dominates the lower states in the system. Christopher Layne (2006) also has the same opinion, where hegemony is a structural change because when a country achieves hegemony, the system is no longer anarchic but hierarchical. Then, Layne (2006) continues to explain four main characteristics of hegemony conveyed by the neoclassical realists. Hegemons have the strongest military, and economic supremacy to support that military capability. Hegemony talks about the ambition of the dominant power, where the hegemon acts in its interests to create a stable international order and safeguard its ideology, security, and economic interests. Hegemony is also about polarity because when the hegemon has more power than anyone else, the system will be unipolar. Lastly, hegemony is about will, where the hegemon must deliberately use their exceptional strength to impose order on the international system. Now, if it is associated with China's

new colonialism in Cambodia through AIIB, it is clear that China is trying to become a hegemon in the international arena. Through significant projects such as the Belt and Roads Initiative (BRI), AIIB, and the internationalization of the RMB, China subtly smuggles its influence into other regions. In this case, China's chose Southeast Asian neighbors, which is dynamic and has great potential in the future. China then, started its stride in Cambodia, its close friend for centuries. The result of China's efforts to defeat the United States and become a hegemon in the international arena depends on its big projects, especially the internationalization of the RMB. However, for one reason or another, China has a long way to go to realize the internationalization of its currency. As a close friend of China, Cambodia certainly has a significant role in this plan.

Sino-Cambodian Relations

Technically, Cambodia was one of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) first stops. It is known to have close and mutually supportive bilateral relations with China. There are various factors behind the friendship between these two countries. First of all, the strong connections between China and Cambodia are certainly not the result of their engagement for several years. It builds on centuries of historical, cultural, and commercial links. Sixteen years ago, in 2006, a group of Vietnamese fishermen discovered the wreckage of a 15th-century Chinese trading ship full of ancient pottery and other artifacts near Koh Sdach. This discovery is just one of many artifact discoveries in Cambodia that prove the commercial relationship between the two countries (Rinith, 2020). Cambodia's leading historian, Michel Tranet (2006), described the discovery as commonplace, given a sizeable number of ships from all over the world came to trade. In addition, there is a museum that immortalizes works of art from the Ming Dynasty in Nanjing, China, to commemorate the close relations between the countries. Rinith (2020) said that some of them are evidence of the long diplomatic relations between China and the Khmer Empire 700 years ago. They have a replica of a painting by order of the emperor of the Ming Dynasty, which contains historical texts in ancient Chinese characters describing diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries. Also, reliefs at Angkor Wat show the economic activities

of the Chinese and Cambodians. Rinith (2020) noted that someone from China even wrote down accounts of Cambodia in the late 13th century when Yuan Zhou Daguan's envoy visited in 1926. Historians suspect that contacts between China and Cambodia continued uninterrupted to modern times. After the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644, Mac Cu'u and Duong Ngan Dich brought refugees from the Fujian and Guangdong provinces to Indochina (Rinith, 2020). Eventually, the mostly male immigrants married local Khmer women. Their descendants were assimilated smoothly through socio-economic processes and identified themselves as Cambodians. Rinith (2020) summarizes that the great relationship and understanding between their people over the centuries underlies the close relationship between the two countries today.

Aside from that, bilateral relations between China and Cambodia can also be traced back to the early 12th century when the Chinese Emperor Temur sent envoys to the Khmer Empire (Po, 2020). However, the actual diplomatic relations began in 1955 when King Sihanouk, the president of Cambodia, met the Chinese Prime Minister, Zhou Enlai, at the Bandung Conference. During the Cold War, Cambodia had two competing groups: one supported King Sihanouk and allied with China, but the other group was led by Lieutenant General Lon Nol and allied with the United States. Lon Nol managed to stage a coup to overthrow Sihanouk in 1970. Faced with such difficulties, Sihanouk left Cambodia and lived in exile in China with all the support provided by the Chinese leader. In his bid to fight back, Sihanouk announced that all Cambodians should unite with the Khmer Rouge, known as the Pol Pot regime.

Po (2020) revealed that Sihanouk and Mao Zedong's relationship was crucial to Pol Pot's initial support with various strategic commodities, such as military equipment and governmental technical advisers. But then, the Pol Pot regime was defeated in 1979 when a group of liberators, including Hun Sen, launched an offensive with Vietnamese support. Vietnam then installed a new government. However, given the close ties between Pol Pot and China, this invasion prompted China to attack Vietnam, both as revenge, and as countermeasure to prevent Vietnam from expanding its influence in the re-

gion. Yet, China did not support Hun Sen's new government because Hun Sen had the support of Vietnam. Instead, Beijing continued to support and assist Pol Pot and his allies. Because of the strained ties that his government had with China, Hun Sen described China as the root of all evil in Cambodia in 1988 (Po, 2020). Although Vietnam withdrew its troops from Cambodia in 1989, the internal civil war continued until 1993. In the same year, the first general election under the auspices of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia resolved the internal conflict. The first election ended with two prime ministers: Norodom Ranariddh as the first prime minister and Hun Sen as the second prime minister. Due to his discontent and thirst for power, Hun Sen staged a bloody coup against Ranariddh in 1997. Subsequently, the increasing pressure Hun Sen faced from the West made him change his perception of China. The relations between China and Cambodia finally increased in 2000. The Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, visited Cambodia and provided a large quantity of aid. In the following years, several top leaders in China followed the president's step. Since then, Cambodia under Hun Sen has maintained good relations with China.

Hun Sen's Dependence on Chinese Regime

Hun Sen ascended to power after defeating the Pol Pot regime with support from Vietnam in the late 1970s. During his tenure, Hun Sen faced extraordinary domestic political challenges. One of the most notable challenges was his removal from office due to public discontent. The public expressed this sentiment in the 2013 elections, where the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) only won 68 of 123 seats. In contrast, the CPP won 90 seats in 2008 (Po, 2020). Therefore, Hun Sen used various strategies to stay in power. One of his tactics to gain support was bandwagoning with China. With China's aid, the Cambodian economy continues to grow, and the Cambodian people can enjoy the fruits of that growth. Those who benefit from China's support will back up Hun Sen to extend his regime. However, China remains a target for Hun Sen's financial aid as he comes under pressure from the international community to implement political reforms. In 1997, Hun Sen led a military coup against

Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who served as deputy prime minister. In response to the coup, Western countries stopped aid to Cambodia, and ASEAN terminated Cambodia's membership. Hun Sen faced a dilemma because foreign aid funded two-thirds of the country's annual budget (Human Rights Watch, 1997). However, in contrast to Western countries, China recognizes the legitimacy of Hun Sen's new regime, advising the West not to interfere in Cambodia's domestic politics. It is a clean opportunity for China because Cambodia can be a stepping stone to increase its influence (Storey, 2006).

As the government for more than three decades, Hun Sen's regime, has had the experience to know that the roads he is taking are vulnerable to criticism and even sanctions from the West. The United States issued visa bans for certain high-ranking government officials and their family members, cut aid to the National Electoral Committee (NEC), and drafted further sanctions. At the same time, however, China has consistently supported its actions. China vowed to offer more assistance to the National Electoral Committee (NEC) to ensure fair, smooth, and transparent elections. China donated cameras, computers, photocopiers, printers, voice boxes, even voting booths (RFA Khmer Service, 2017). Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhon that China supports Cambodia's efforts to protect political stability and achieve economic development. They believe that the Cambodian government can lead its people to meet domestic and foreign challenges.

So far, China is still Cambodia's biggest investor and creditor (Rainsy, 2019). Therefore, when China and the AIIB invited Cambodia into the economic cooperation framework, Cambodia accepted the helping hand without hesitation. However, behind this helping hand, China has the vision to overhaul social relations, the political system, and the Cambodian state itself. For a developing country like Cambodia, taking on excessive foreign debt and relying on Chinese cash can be extremely dangerous. It could be worse if a dictator, who had easy access to borrow money, led the developing country. Corruption is endemic

among the leaders. The corruption arising from these Chinese loans undermines Cambodia's institutions, politics, and society. Even so, Beijing continues to show unconditional support for Cambodia's dictators, from Pol Pot to Hun Sen (Rainsy, 2019). It is a form of China's cynicism in bilateral relations to advance its global dominance. The aggressive and expansionist relationship of Sino-Cambodian dealings certainly jeopardizes regional peace and security. Even as Cambodia's economy plummeted due to corruption and irrational policies, Hun Sen increasingly relied on China's generosity to prevent national bankruptcy (Rainsy, 2019). He quickly complied with China's demands for military facilities to control the South China Sea. This over-reliance Cambodia has on China is simply inappropriate. The leader should not depend on other countries, but Cambodia has always supported China's policies as if they were their own.

The Nikkei, a Japanese News Agency, (2021) quoted Hun Sen, the prime minister, who has served for more than 30 years, that he defended his close ties with China when he spoke about the size of China's financial injections for his tiny nation. China has always been Cambodia's main political patron and source of development aid. It has funneled billions of dollars into infrastructure projects. As might be expected, this sparked international criticism that Cambodia had become too dependent on China. However, Hun Sen called the criticism unfair. He calmly asked who he should depend on if not China and whom he should ask if not China (Nikkei, 2021). Cambodia has never closed the door for any country to receive aid to help its country. However, China is always ready to help every time they need it. While in stark contrast to the way he described the Chinese government in 1988, Hun Sen described China as a tough friend in 2019. It also confirmed the truth of the saying that there are no permanent enemies and no permanent friends in international relations. There are only the interests of each actor.

China's Ambition in the Global Arena

China's ambition to surpass the United States and dominate the world is nothing new to the international community. In 2013, Presi-

dent Xi Jinping took his first step by launching his grand project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), to gain Chinese conquest or penetration worldwide under the mask of trade, investment, and economic cooperation (Rainsy, 2019). The BRI was one of the driving factors behind the Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank (AIIB) establishment. This foreign and monetary policy is specifically structured to strengthen Chinese economic influence through comprehensive infrastructure development programs in all the countries it passes through. BRI has two big projects, the land-based economy silk route, and the sea-based maritime silk route. Thus, BRI connects Africa, Asia, Europe, and Oceania through various infrastructures (Rainsy, 2019). Of course, it took an enormous cost to realize this project. That being the case, China inaugurated the AIIB, a multilateral development bank whose mission is to finance future infrastructure. However, not many realize this, but the truth is, China is in an awkward position. China is the second-largest economy and the largest trading nation in the world. Rainsy (2019) predicted that if the RMB internationalization goes well, China could become the largest economy. However, on the other hand, China is still a developing country, where financial and legal institutions are still immature if compared to Western countries (Rainsy, 2019). China does not want to integrate with the Western financial system, so the internationalization of the RMB is going its own way. Unfortunately, as a country without a mature legal system and a system of checks and balances, China struggles to secure global trust in its currency. Due to this reason, there is still a long way to go for the internationalization of the RMB (Rainsy, 2019).

However, the BRI is one way to encourage RMB internationalization. To achieve the success of the BRI, AIIB invites the dynamic and high-potential Asian countries to open up new capital and invest in technology-enabled green infrastructure while promoting regional connectivity. After gaining the trust of Asian countries, China began to offer the internationalization of the RMB. They called it an alternative to avoid conflict due to the inability of a nation to repay its debt. That way, China managed to hold onto Asia, especially Southeast Asia, with a hidden debt scheme through BRI. Currently, Southeast Asia has a massive percentage of hidden debt to China. Cambodia is one of the Southeast Asian countries that fell into the trap of colonialism.

China and AIIB invited Cambodia into the economic cooperation framework. However, the intention behind the invitation to cooperate is not as pure as it seems. Through the internationalization of the RMB, China wants to grasp the economy, social relations, political system, and Cambodia itself. According to pre-Qin Chinese thought, China's hegemony proposes to show its responsibility as a great power that can help, protect, and protect the surrounding countries. However, they still want hegemon status (Bell, n.d).

Eswar Prasad, Professor of international trade, (2016), revealed that the internationalization of the RMB is a natural act of China as a country that has a strong influence on global investment and trade. Despite the strong economy, the Chinese currency still lags behind other international currencies such as the United States dollar (USD), Euro (EUR), and British pound sterling (GBP). According to Prasad (2016), this is a result of the repeated devaluation of the Chinese currency. At that time, China increases exports while reducing the trade deficit, and the national bank with a low currency value. On the flip side, this is a problem for other countries because the devaluation of the Chinese economy can damage the foundations of global economic activity. Big economies need to have strong currencies to create fair competition. With the continuous depreciation, cheap Chinese products could hurt many small and medium-sized economies that depend on exports for international economic activity. If these countries are deeply in debt and heavily dependent on their exports, it can be a total mess. This economic stagnation ended up increasing scepticism to the RMB. China took its first step by incorporating RMB into the Special Drawing Right (SDR) in 2015. The IMF designated SDR as a complementary foreign currency reserve asset in 1969. SDR serves to supplement the currency reserves of IMF member countries based on USD, EUR, RMB, GBP, and Japan Yen (JPY). The inclusion of the RMB into the SDR is a crucial point of China's economic integration into global finance and a tribute to China's relatively successful financial and monetary system reforms. Furthermore, Beijing began to approach the Limited Concession Scheme (LCS) with countries that are considered strategic and require sizeable funds as an alternative step to RMB internationalization (Prasad, 2016). The countries in question are African and ASEAN countries through which the BRI project passes.

The Internationalization of Chinese's Renminbi

As one might expect, the efforts to internationalize the Renminbi (RMB) quickly raise questions from the international community, such as the rationale behind the plan or its implications for the international community itself. Lai (2021) explained that the internationalization of the RMB is essentially a process of converting the RMB into an internationally used currency with seven main reasons for China to do so. First, the Chinese government believes that the internationalization of the RMB can minimize the exchange rate risk in Chinese trade, investment, and financial transactions. Second, China can reduce dependence on foreign currencies such as the United States Dollar (USD) and related institutions, especially in the payment system. China holds to the principle that the more trade settlements in RMB, the fewer trade sufferings from a lack of USD or other foreign currencies. It will also be easier for Chinese jurisdictions to intervene directly in international payments with RMB, unlike international settlements with USD, which require the United States jurisdictional intervention. One thing for sure is that China does not want the presence of a foreign authority that has too much information or controls the flow of payments into and out of China. The case of Meng Wanzhou, Chief Financial Officer of Huawei, is a slap in the face for China that used to run its business with a dollar payment system.

Third, international loans in RMB bring benefits to China. Chinese companies should have easy access to foreign loans to finance long-term development. Security will be more assured if China makes a loan in RMB rather than foreign currency. That way, China can avoid the risk of currency incompatibility of debt that may lead to bankruptcy. Fourth, when the RMB becomes more internationally accepted, governments and citizens can make large foreign loans at low-interest rates in that currency. Fifth, the Chinese financial and banking sectors will have more business through the widespread use of RMB. International requests for RMB will grant work to domestic financial institutions as payments in RMB must be handled by Chinese jurisdictions. Sixth,

China has the opportunity to get seigniorage from abroad. In other words, China can issue RMB to foreigners in exchange for actual goods. When foreigners trust the RMB, they are willing to hold it as a medium of exchange and store of value. Therefore, they are ready to sell goods in exchange for RMB. Seventh, increasing political influence. When the RMB becomes the main reserve currency for other countries, China can use it as leverage to exchange aid from foreign countries.

Currently, China's economic activity in ASEAN is quite heavy. Hasegawa Masanori (2018) noted the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) as the starting point for RMB's influence in ASEAN. CMI is a multilateral agreement between China, Japan, and South Korea with ten ASEAN countries. Masanori's research concluded that after the ASEAN China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA) establishment, RMB had become a crucial factor influencing the dynamics and exchange rates of ASEAN currencies. Masanori (2018) also commented on the internationalization of the RMB phenomenon in his book, "The Geography and Geopolitics of the Renminbi: A Regional Key Currency in Asia" stating that the internationalization of the RMB is part of a series of China's geopolitical approaches to strengthen its bargaining position in the economic field. If the RMB makes it to the currency traffic in Southeast Asia, China will have significant global implications. Furthermore, he also predicted that the internationalization of the RMB would limit the use of the US dollar as an economic weapon for the United States to maintain its military deployments in Southeast Asia. With the spread of the RMB, countries that rely on China's economic activities no longer need US dollars, potentially weakening the United States' ability to impose economic sanctions on countries in the region that have accepted the internationalization of the RMB.

Despite all that, it must be highlighted that China's approach to ASEAN is only a minor part of a larger plan. Apart from Southeast Asia, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project also reaches Africa and Latin America. Therefore, there is a presumption that China is planning a gradual RMB internationalization,

with Southeast Asia as their first stop. John Mearsheimer wrote the book "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics," (2001) claims that if a country wants to have massive influence in the world (in other words, to become hegemons), they must first become hegemons in their region and environment. Countries with ambitions to become hegemons must also maintain a balance between powers at the regional level and ensure that other actors do not develop into competitors. In the context of the internationalization of the RMB, it is clear that Xi Jinping is trying to make ASEAN a strategic and high potential as the first step to defeat the United States' global economic domination. China may not want to go head-to-head with the biggest economy in an economic war. However, whether they realize it or not, there are gradual efforts to internationalize the RMB that they are making. For now, it cannot see their big plan as a whole, but it can start to observe it through ASEAN, which is the first stop of the plan.

Cambodia's Response to China's New Colonialism

The National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) responded to the internationalization of the Renminbi (RMB) by encouraging its use by businesses and individuals to increase the volume of trade and investment between the two countries. At the moment, 17 out of 54 banks in Cambodia have transacted with RMB. Four of them even received RMB deposits, namely the Bank of China Phnom Penh Branch, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), Canadia Bank, and First Commercial Bank (Yan, 2017). Simply put, the use of RMB is considered beneficial. It provides many advantages for the country, especially attracting Chinese investors and tourists. At a BRI conference on the use of RMB and Cambodia Riel (KHR) in cross-border trade and investment, Cambodia brought together about 200 representatives of banks, financial institutions, and companies. During the conference, several banks were willing to accept the currency as a cross-border settlement. It is a coincidence that the RMB and KHR promotion is in line with the Cambodian policy to support the BRI. Therefore, the government allowed the use of RMB by Chinese tourists.

Chea Serey, the Director-General of NBC, explained that

the conference wants to encourage companies to complete their business transactions with RMB (Yan, 2017). Thus, it will reduce the exchange rate risk. In simple terms, the Deputy Secretary-General of the People's Bank of China Monetary Policy Committee, Pan Hongseng, explained that China and BRI would open up a broad space for RMB internationalization. The settlement with RMB eliminates exchange rate risk while promoting trade and investment relations with China. Yan (2017) also noted that China had initiated RMB pilot settlements in cross-border trade and investment since 2009. ASEAN was the first region to use RMB for cross-border accommodation. For example, Cambodia has used RMB in trade settlements, clearing, remittances, and deposits. The convertibility between RMB and KHR protects against foreign exchange rate risk and lowers transaction costs. In the end, Lim Heng, the Vice President of the Cambodian Chamber of Commerce, concluded that the development of Sino-Cambodian trade and investment relations made the RMB and KHR promotion very important. He wanted more options for completing cross-border business transactions (Yan, 2017).

On October 2018 ,30, the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) representatives clarified the Central Bank›s policy towards the RMB and explained that its use is recommended only for cross-border transactions (Chan, 2018). Chea Serey previously encouraged RMB usage for everyday exchange in Cambodia, but she spoke up to straighten out the problem (Chan, 2018). Cambodia does not ask Chinese citizens or investors to use RMB in Cambodia. They want them to use RMB in the banking system and cross-border transactions and urge Chinese and Cambodian companies to trade in RMB and KHR to avoid the risks associated with currency exchange. Cambodian businesses importing Chinese products must pay in RMB and vice versa. This policy will settle trade between the two countries while increasing the use of KHR abroad. Chea Serey continued her explanation by saying that other ASEAN countries like Thailand and Vietnam pursued similar arrangements (Chan, 2018). Later, a week after the RMB internationalization forum, the Deputy Governor of NBC, Sum Sannisith, said that there had been a 10 percent jump

in the use of RMB on the Sino-Cambodian trade exchange. Sum Sannisith also praised the RMB that plays a crucial role in cross-border investment and trade, in line with the ASEAN-China cooperation enhancement (Chan, 2018).

As an ASEAN country with close ties to China, Cambodia has benefited from the internationalization of the Chinese currency, but it does not stop there. According to Chan (2018), NBC allows certain banks and financial institutions to operate in RMB. The Bank of China (BOC) and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) are examples of banks that can transact in RMB and act as clearing facilities. They also allow 13 other banks to help importers of Chinese products to get more loans and customers who make payments in RMB to open bank accounts with local institutions. On the other side, Chinese technology businesses have contributed to the increasing use of RMB (Chan, 2018). Cambodians have been using payment tools, such as Alipay and WeChat Pay. The largest payment card supplier, UnionPay, is also used in the Kingdom. During the China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning in September 2017, they launched the RMB-KHR exchange rate. According to the NBC report, Cambodia imported 5.2$ billion USD and exported 753$ million USD to China last year (Chan, 2018). The Cambodian company made a settlement of 135$ million USD in RMB, and the Chinese company paid Cambodia at least 79$ million USD in RMB. Cambodia has benefited from the internationalization of the RMB. Many development opportunities opened up when Cambodia decided to join the BRI, the AIIB, and accept the internationalization of the Chinese currency in its country. Cambodia can increase the opportunities to use the KHR abroad with relatively fast economic growth, trade liberalization, and sustainable investment. Cambodia can also use RMB, which requires the sophistication, depth, and liquidity of financial markets with ease. It also needs an independent legal system with political reforms since the RMB requires a transparent monetary policy. While the internationalization of the RMB in Cambodia can be said to be profitable, there are hidden sovereignty threats. However, a sovereign nation is an independent country that is not under another country›s rule. That being the case,

Cambodia should not be under Chinese regulation, even though they have close ties.

Conclusion

China's ambition to surpass the United States at the top of the world economy is nothing new to the international community. President Xi Jinping took his first steps by launching the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 to gain worldwide penetration under the mask of investment and trade. This policy was structured to strengthen China's economic influence through a comprehensive infrastructure development program in all the countries it passes through. Of course, it took an enormous cost to realize this project. Therefore, China inaugurated the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2015 to finance BRI. AIIB invites dynamic Asian countries to invest in technology-enabled green infrastructure. After gaining the trust of Asian countries, China offered the internationalization of the Renminbi (RMB) as an alternative to the country›s inability to pay its debts. This scheme succeeded in dragging Southeast Asian countries into the trap of Chinese colonialism. Cambodia, relying on China›s "generosity" to prevent national bankruptcy, immediately agreed to the internationalization of the RMB in its country.

Every phenomenon in the world has two opposite sides, just like two sides of a coin. If there is a positive side, there must be a negative side behind it. It is the same with the phenomenon of RMB internationalization in Cambodia. On the bright side, Cambodia has benefited from the internationalization of the RMB. Many development opportunities opened up when Cambodia decided to join the BRI, the AIIB, and accept the internationalization of the Chinese currency in its country. Phnom Penh can increase the opportunities to use the Cambodia Riel (KHR) abroad with relatively fast economic growth, trade liberalization, and sustainable investment. Cambodia can also use RMB, which requires the sophistication, depth, and liquidity of financial markets with ease. It also needs an independent legal system with political reforms since the RMB requires a transparent monetary policy. Although it will take a relatively long time before it can

play the role of a global reserve currency, it can expect that the RMB›s international role will increase in the coming years. While the internationalization of the RMB in Cambodia can be said to be profitable, the intentions behind China›s call for cooperation are not as pure as they seem. There are hidden sovereignty threats to watch out for because China›s dominance is not purely financial. Beijing intends to overhaul social relations, the political system, and even Cambodia itself. A dictator will generally use the theory of state sovereignty to control the government system. In this case, Hun Sen›s dependence on China could jeopardize Cambodia›s authority. A sovereign nation is an independent country that is not under another country›s rule. That being the case, Cambodia should not be under Chinese rule, even though the two have close ties. The magnitude of China›s influence will make the country slowly lose its identity. As a close friend, Beijing should provide more development assistance to Phnom Penh. That way, they can build greater synergy rather than greater dependency.

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Chinese Diaspora and Cultural Heritage in Mueang Ubon, 1780 to 1918[1]

Sutida Tonlerd[2], Nattapat Taecharungpaisan[3] and Praphaphon Sasiprapha[4]

Abstract—This study has combined historical and anthropological methodologies. Historical process analysis has incorporated and analyzed historical documents, both primary and secondary sources. Anthropological study has been employed in field work, through observation, survey and interview. The study classifies the migration wave of Chinese to Mueang Ubon, into two periods as related to their cultural heritage. The first period was between 1780 and 1868 A.D. and the second between 1868 and 1918 A.D., both of which underlined the importance of the Chinese diaspora in bringing their various ways of life to the town. The article also emphasizes how the legacy of Chinese diaspora and cultural heritage in Mueang Ubon manifest themselves in oral history, architecture, the graveyard and the charity team, each of which represents cultural heritage identities based upon their historical background.

Keywords: Chinese, diaspora, cultural heritage, Mueang Ubon

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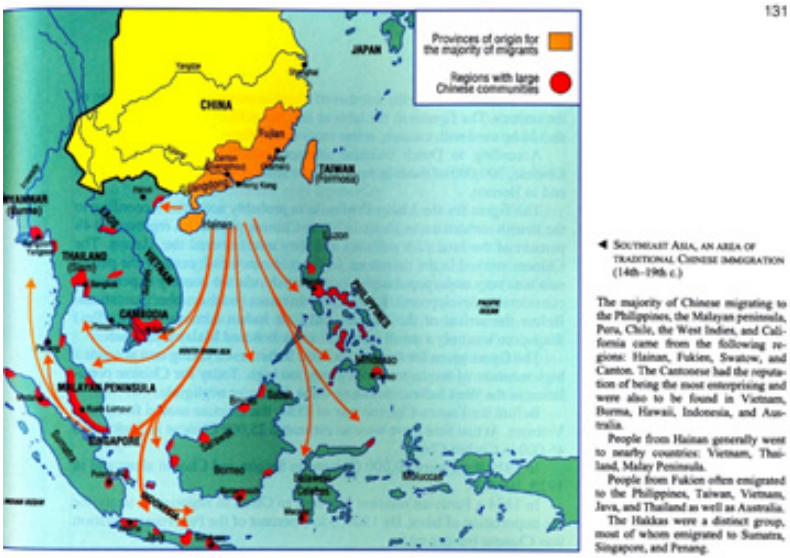
Introduction

Mueang Ubon is the former name of Ubon Ratchathani province, which is in the Northeastern part of Thailand. This city was the Chenla Kingdom before the introduction of the Tai-Lao speakers into the area. In 1780 A.D., Chao Khampong, a Tai-Lao speaker, established Dong Uo Peng as the capital center along the Mun river. This town was a vassal state of Siam (Wipakpotjanakit, 2013). In 1792 A.D., Dong Uo Peng changed its name to Ubon. (Wipakpotjanakit, 2013). At present, Mueang Ubon is multi-ethnic, consisting of Austroasiatic speakers, Austronesian speakers, Sino-Tibetan speakers and Thai-Lao speakers. Their ancestors are Khmer, Lao, Siamese, Siamese-Lao, Chinese, Black Karen (Kula caravan traders), Mon and Vietnamese, etc. The research will show the effect of Chinese diaspora during two separate time periods upon life in Muaeng Ubon during those periods and will touch on their continuing influence today.

This research has combined historical and anthropological methodologies into the study. Historical process analysis has been adopted to analyze and arrange historical documents: primary and secondary sources. Primary resources are official reports from the province and travelers' memoirs (Aymonier,1885). The secondary resources include books (Wipakpotjanakit, 2013) and research studies (Skinner,1986). Skinner stated that the Chinese immigrants went to the Northeast of Thailand passing the Korat plateau by railway. Anthropological study was employed in field work: observation, survey and interview. Per oral history in the fieldwork, this article discovered that the immigration of Chinese to Mueang Ubon differed from what was proposed by Skinner, who discussed the wave of Chinese immigrants to the Northeastern part of Siam during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). From here, this research endeavored to narrate the story of the Chinese in the periphery of Siam, who rarely shared their family histories with outsiders. Researchers considered the descendants of the second and the third generation immigrants or diasporas in Mueang Ubon as the holders of Chinese cultural heritage. This research declined to use theory to lead the context, instead, researchers attempted to invoke the mainstream of national history in the rare discussion of Chinese of Mueang Ubon in the early Rattanakosin or early Bangkok era.

Figure 1: Map of Southeast Asia: An Area of Traditional Chinese Migration (14th-19th c.)



Source: Princeton University and University of Washington. (1995). The Mapping Globalization Project. Map of Southeast Asia: An Area of Traditional Chinese Migration (14th-19th c.). Retrieved on March 26, 2023, from https://commons.princeton.edu/ mg/southeast-asia- an-area-of-traditional-chinese-immigration-14th-19th-centuries/

Chinese diaspora means the Chinese immigrants who left their motherland in the mainland of China. As an example, the first diaspora in ancient world civilization was the Judaic people or the Jews, who left Canaan to live in the areas of Mesopotamia and Egypt as slaves. Moses took them back to Canaan (Britanica,2023).

The focus of this article is the Chinese diaspora migrating to Mueang Ubon during the period from 1780 to the end of World War I and the wave of Chinese immigrants migrating to Siam during 18th and 19th centuries. Figure 1 states that the Chinese diaspora originated in Southeastern and Southern Mainland China. This Chinese diaspora

can be further classified into 6 family languages (Songprasert,2004). [5]

They came to Siam because of poverty at home and the opportunity for trade. Figure 1 highlights that most of the Chinese diaspora in Siam lived by the sea. They usually entered Siam from ships.

During the Rattanakosin or Bangkok era, if the Chinese diaspora reached Siam, they preferred to stay in the main commercial centers. But if the hub of business had too many Chinese immigrant laborers, Chinese gangsters would disturb or reject the newcomers. As a result, the new Chinese diasporas would travel inland far away from the sea. They left the hub of Bangkok to move further inland in Siam: to Northern or Northeastern provinces. (Trirotjapon,2013: interview cited in Methanont and Taecharungpaisan, 2013; Taecharungpaisan,2013: interview cited in Sasiprapha and Tonlerd,2013)

This research employs the study of diaspora to explain the lifestyle of the first and the second groups of Chinese immigrants at Mueang Ubon. Their ways of life can be expressed into tangible[6] and intangible cultural heritages[7] (UNESCO: 1992-2023). Moreover, since 1970 the World Heritage Council has been attempting to ease poverty by promoting cultural heritage for tourism, which links to sustainable

5 The first group is Teochew (Chaozhou)（潮州）Chinese speakers, who live in Shantou（汕头）of Canton province. This is located on the bank of the Han River（汉江）in the northeast of Canton province. The Chaozhou （潮州）is the majority of Chinese diaspora in Siam, at 56%.The second Chinese diaspora in Siam is Hakka speakers, who are 16%. Hakkas（客家）are a subgroup of Han people and live in the central plain of the Chinese mainland. In addition, Hainan（海南） speakers is the third Chinese population to migrate to Siam, and reached 12%. Figure1 tells that they came from Hainan Island. Next, figure1 illustrates that the fourth group of Chinese diasporas in Siam is Cantonese（广东人）speakers, who originated in the Canton or Guangzhou area. Next, Fujian（福建）speakers is a subgroup of Han people, who live in Fujian（福建）province. The Fujian speakers is the fifth Chinese diaspora in Siam at 7%. Lastly, Chinese diaspora from other places, such as Formosa（台湾）,Shanghai（上海）and Ning Bo（宁波）, which were 2% of the Chinese migration to Siam during 18th and 19th centuries.

6 Tangible cultural heritage classifies into moveable: paintings, sculpture, wall painting and furniture and immovable: monuments, historical building and archeology sites.

7 Intangible cultural heritage are oral tradition and expressions, performing arts and social practices, ritual, festive events, beliefs concerning nature and the universe.

development stemming from preservation of the environment.

In the case of Ubon Ratchathani province, the descendants of the first and the second Chinese diasporas assimilated into Thai society. They are not involved in promoting their legacies as tourism. But they employ their cultural heritages in their private lives, examples being oral history and celebration of the Chinese New Year.

This paper presents the legacy of Chinese diaspora within a historical timeline. There are two topics: Chinese diaspora and cultural heritage in Mueang Ubon from 1780 to 1868 A.D. and Chinese diaspora and cultural heritage in Mueang Ubon during 1868 to 1918 A.D.

The First Chinese diaspora and cultural heritage in Mueang Ubon from 1780-1868 A.D.

The first migration wave of Chinese to this town occurred from 1780-1868 A.D. Chinese migrations to Mueang Ubon were linked to the overall migration of Chinese to Southeast Asia during 1700-1945. The first Chinese diaspora group in Mueang Ubon were males and they married native women: Lao people. According to oral history, this paper notes Chinese presence in Mueang Ubon in 1780 A.D. during the late Thonburi dynasty of King Taksin. This article ends the story of the first Chinese diaspora and their cultural heritage in 1868 A.D. the last year of King Mongkut (Rama IV).

The research identified the first Chinese diaspora cultural heritage in Mueang Ubon in intangible cultural heritage (oral history) and tangible cultural heritage, namely, *the Bhuddhakong Shrine* and graveyards.

Intangible Cultural Heritage: Oral Histories

In terms of intangible cultural heritage, this article obtained the stories of the first Chinese diaspora from their descendants through oral history while we did field work and survey. There are three key informants— the Na Ubon, the Satrakom and the Thani, who told of their forefathers within the first Chinese diaspora group in Mueang Ubon.

Pala Na Ubon (interview,2012) mentioned that King Taksin of the Thonburi dynasty ordered her Chinese ancestors to look after the

town. They might have arrived in this area during the expansion of Thonburi into the Champasak Kingdom.

Suthee Satrakom (interview,2012) briefed us on his family background that

> *my ancestor is a Chinese of Vientiane in Lanxang Kingdom. King Taksin of Thonburi ordered his general "Praya Mahakasatseuk" to invade Lanxang Kingdom. The best general attacked Champasak, Nakhonpanom, Nongkai and Vientiane. As you knew, the fall of Vientiane influenced three Lanxang Kingdoms to be governed by the Siamese from 1780-1893 A.D. After the war, Praya Mahakasatseuk took my forefather to Thonburi. Praya Mahakasatseuk did usurp the throne from King Taksin. He declared himself as King Rama I or Prabhudhayodphachulalok". The Majesty ordered my ancestor to guard Mueang Ubon. Did you see the Satrakom hall in the royal palace or Wat Prakeow? During the first year at university, I did not want to share this story to anyone because my family background was an alliance of Thonburi armed force to destroy Vientiane.*

Another tale concerns a Chinese from Champasak *(Cek Naga)* who migrated to Mueang Ubon via the Mekong River and Champasak around 1833 A.D. *Cek Naga* lived in a hub of Kula caravan village or Nonyai village or Ban Non-Kula. He was a goldsmith. Later on, he moved to the *Shetuan* village along the She River. (Siriwarin, 1996 cited from Tonlerd, Methanont and Taecharungpaisan,2016:169). His neighboring village was Paaoa, known for producing a brass instrument. Patcharee Thani (interview,2012) stated that *"my great great grandfather on my paternal side is Chinese, who lived in Ban Shetuan or Shetuan village."*

Tangible cultural heritage: the *Bhuddhakong Shrine* and graveyards.

The Bhuddhakong Shrine

For the period, the second Chinese diaspora in Mueang Ubon restored the Chinese shrine, formally named the *Bhuddhakong* Shrine of Mueang Ubon. This shrine is situated on the bank of the Mun river.

According to *Bhuddhakong* Shrine history, as soon as the first and second Chinese diaspora arrived in Mueang Ubon, they saw this tiny Chinese shrine. (Tonlerd, Methanont and Taecharungpaisan,2016: 169) They raised funds to restore it and brought some Buddha and Chinese god images into the place. Today, this is a Chinese hub ritual location for the new year and festivals. For instance, the Ubonians come to this place to watch the Chinese opera. Next to this sacred place is the Chinese Trader Association of Mueang Ubon.

Graveyards

During this period, these Chinese diasporas did not have a specific Chinese cemetery. Some of the first and second Chinese diaspora laid their corpses in Buddhist temples. There are Luang (grand), Suphatthanaram, Mahawanaram (Payai or big forest), Klang (center), Liab (rim), Tung Sri Mueang (city mall) and Manee Wanaram (Pa Noy or small forest) temples.

Figure 2: Cemetery of Luang Srisopha or Juy Saetae (Srithanyarat) at Suphattanaram Temple. Tambon Naimueang, Amphor Mueangubonratchathani, Ubon Ratchathani Province.

Source: Sutida Tonlerd. July 10,2023.

Most of the Chinese tax collectors and the Chiefs of Chinese association preserved their corpses and ashes at the Suphatthanaram temple, which is the first Dhammyuttika in Northeast of Siam. It is the first Buddhist temple to serve as the hub of Thai culture, exercising its power on the Siamese territory. Figure 2 portrays the cemetery of Luang Srisopha or Juy Saetae (Srithanyarat). (Methanont and Taecharungpaisan, 2013)

The Second Chinese diaspora and cultural heritage in Mueang Ubon during 1868- 1918A.D.

The second migration wave of Chinese to this town emerged during 1868- 1918 A.D. The second Chinese diaspora group in Mueang Ubon were males who married local ladies (Lao people) and Chinese

first-generation mixed race. Some descendants of Chinese immigrants worked as Siamese bureaucrats and traders. The Chinese diaspora worked as farmers, laborers, traders, and Siamese agents (Methanont and Taecharungpaisan,2013). They built their legacy in Mueang Ubon, examples being Chinese architecture and Chinese social work teams.

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), the Siamese government reformed the political system by eliminating the vassal state system and annexing Mueang Ubon to be a part of the modern nation state. Siamese authorities sent their staff to establish a modern bureaucracy system. Some of local elite class of Mueang Ubon resisted this policy. They did not pay tax or revenue and insulted the Siamese staff. A treaty was established for the Chinese diaspora to maintain political neutrality between them and the Siamese (Methanont and Taecharungpaisan,2013).

Thereafter, Ubonians recognized a well-known member of the Chinese diaspora, who worked for the Siamese authority as tax collector— Juy Saetae（sumame 郑）fluent in Chinese, Arabic, Thai and Lao. He was an important liaison among the traders, Siamese authorities, and locals making up the new order. The Siamese positioned him as the Siamese tax collector with the title "Lung Srisopha". His descendants use the last name "Srithanyarat" (Methanont and Taecharungpaisan,2013).

Moreover, the cultural heritage of the second Chinese diaspora in Mueang Ubon between 1868 and 1918 A.D. has appeared in Mueang Ubon in architecture, Chinese restaurants and stalls, and Chinese social work teams.

Chinese Architecture

The first and the second Chinese diaspora built their homes in Chinese architectural styles on Kuenthani (city dam) and Yuthaphan (weapon) roads. In the present day, there are a few examples of Chinese architecture standing in Chinatown. For instance, the Kosallawat house on the Yuthaphan road; the ancestral origin was in the first Chinese diaspora. This place contains objects of old Chinese porcelain and has Chinese architecture features, such as a well in the middle of the house.

Chinese restaurant and stalls

When the Siamese Prince and bureaucrat staff were stationed in Mueang Ubon the Hakka Chef from Klong Saei Kai (the Chicken intestine canal) traveled with them as the prince's chef. He opened the restaurant and inn called "Chio Kee"（超记）. The Chio Kee（超记）was in front of the Siamese administrative quarters, now the National Museum of Ubon Ratchathani. The restaurant continues to serve breakfast, lunch and brunch for sit in, take home and delivery.

Chinese social work team

In the reign of King Vajiravudh (Rama VI), the socialist movement was active around the world. Some mainland Chinese were interested in socialist ideology.

In addition, some political activists in China attacked the emperor's role. The last Emperor of China was eliminated from power in 1912. The Russians toppled the Tsar system and established the first socialist country in 1917 A.D., which became known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR.)

By this point, King Rama VI was worried about the Chinese Political Associations. He passed a law to ban them. Most Chinese who migrated to Mueang Ubon did not follow the socialist ideology. But they were aware of the politics in their motherland. The Chinese in Mueang Ubon stopped gathering to discuss politics. They made a new plan by creating the Chinese social work team.

This team donated rice to the poor during a natural disaster or economic crisis. Today, the descendants of Chinese diaspora of Mueng Ubon operate five Chinese social work teams, such as the *Cheetumkhor*（紫聃阁）and Sawangbhuchadham foundations.

The Chee Tum Khor Foundation（慈善机构紫聃阁）is a rescue team, originating from a charitable social work team established prior to 1918. Their work involves multi tasks: ambulance, accident rescue, snake hunting and other requests. Ubonians are familiar with this rescue team, especially their ambulance service. When Ubonians are sick and need help, they dial 1669. The rescue

team will reach them within five minutes. The foundation has a paramedical staff. If Ubonians display serious symptoms, they will be driven to the main hospital. Most modern-day local administrative offices in Thailand have imitated this program. The rescue team in each local administrative zone is reached by dialing 1669 to take care of the clients (*Chee Tum Khor* Foundation,2023).

As Siamese nation building proceeded, the second Chinese diaspora who came to Mueang Ubon during 1868- 1918 A.D. chose to be Thai citizens. During 1874 – 1893 A.D., the Siamese advanced political administrative reform in Mueang Ubon, which benefited the second Chinese diaspora. These people worked as tax collectors, traders, farmers, etc. This research noted that they helped the Siamese stimulate the trade network of the lower Mun and middle Mekong rivers. On 10 December 1893 – 1910 A.D., Samprasitthiprasong, a Siamese prince governing Mueang Ubon, supported the extension of the urban plan in the town. There were Chinese architectural styles and Chinese restaurants. The prince allowed the Chinese to take care of tax revenues. During the rule of King Vajiravudh or King Rama VI, the Chinese diaspora in Mueang Ubon organized the Chinese social work team. The Chinese duties in Ubon town for this period were fundamental occupations for the Chinese in the next generations. Their projects represent the Chinese cultural heritages in Mueang Ubon today.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this paper presents the Chinese Diaspora and Cultural Heritage in Mueang Ubon from 1780 to the end of World War I, spanning 138 years. The article points out that the Chinese diasporas can be classified into two groups according to history and contribution of their cultural heritages in Mueang Ubon. The first Chinese diaspora arrived at the town from 1780-1868 A.D. Some of them received orders from King Taksin and King Rama I to guard the frontier, as revealed in oral history. This research has been made aware of their intangible cultural heritage on family history through interviews. They restored the Chinese shrine and laid their corpses at the Buddhist temples. At present,

the public can visit these: the Bhuddhakong Shrine and several Buddhist temples.

Moreover, the second Chinese diaspora reached this town from 1868- 1918 A.D. They contributed precious cultural heritages: Chinese architecture, Chinese restaurants and Chinese Social Work Teams. The efforts of the Chinese Social Work Team influenced the *Chee Tum Khor* foundation（慈善机构紫聃阁）to be the role model for rescue teams of Thai local administrations, known for "dial 1669" for emergency needs. In October and November 2022 A.D., some Ubonians faced flooding. The politicians could not help them because of preparation for elections. Thai law does not allow the politicians to give goods or services to the communities during election times.

These activities are considered a political trick because the politicians bribe the voters using goods in exchange for their votes. Fortunately, the *Chee Tum Khor* Foundation（慈善机构紫聃阁） requested help from other Thai rescue teams. The rescue teams visited the flooded communities and donated cash and basic services to them. This phenomenon also explains how civil movements exercise their powers in Thailand and Mueang Ubon. These Chinese diaspora claim great influence in the new patron and clients system in the everyday life of Mueang Ubon.

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Cambodia Watching Down Under: A Thirty-Year Retrospective

Geoffrey C. Gunn[1]

Abstract—: With *Cambodia Watching Down Under* published by the Institute of Asian Studies then under the direction of Dr. Khien Theeravit at a time when the push for conflict resolution to the "Cambodia problem" reached a critical mass, three decades later this article looks back at the reception and impact of the book in a double sense. First, the question is posed as to the relevance of the book already made partly redundant by the signing of the landmark Paris Peace Agreements on Cambodia of October 23, 1991, several months after publication. Second, the article reflects upon the major thesis of the book around ideological distortions carried in the western (Australian) media in reporting on such conflict situations as Cambodia and, with reference to book reviews, commentaries, etc., leading into an attempt to gauge how this thesis has been received practically down to the present (inter alia, offering didactic lessons for a younger generation of scholars, news gatherers, and media practitioners seeking to enter this field wherever they are).

Keywords : Cambodia, Australia, media, scholarship, promotion-reception-impact

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Introduction

In October 2021, the 30th anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreements on Cambodia was celebrated at various sites or fora, deservedly, as it brought into being the process leading to a United Nations intervention in Cambodia, refugee resettlement, the creation of a relatively peaceful atmosphere and the conduct of elections, albeit flawed, down to the present political outcome around the authoritarian Hun Sen regime but with the monarchy restored. While the Vietnamese-installed People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) setup could take credit for rolling back the rump Democratic Kampuchea (DK) regime to the jungle and liberating the country from one kind of tyranny, it still was not at peace. Notably, DK still held a seat in the United Nations and with its army by far the strongest component in the so-called Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) conjoining, respectively, the Khmer Rouge (KR) faction, a Sihanoukist faction, and forces loyal to the elder Cambodian statesman, Son Sann coming under the banner of the **Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF)** (and with each faction supporting armed forces and camp followers residing along the Thai border, of which the DK or Khmer Rouge faction was militarily dominant).

Located 48 kilometers inside eastern Thailand, Sa Kaeo refugee camp was set up in October 1979 with Thai authorization and United Nations support, accommodating a large proportion of Khmer Rouge and dependents. Later that year Khao-I-Dang, located 20 kilometers north of Aranyaprathet was opened but still under Khmer Rouge domination and with a camp population rising to over 180,000 in March 1980. Such camps included Nong Chan set up in 1983 just inside the northwestern Cambodian border and a staging ground for the KPNLF. Established in January 1985, Site II, 70 kilometers northeast of Aranyaprathet and 4 kilometers from the Cambodian border was then the largest refugee camp in Southeast Asia, with a camp population rising to over 198,000 between 1989 and 1991, pending repatriation of remaining refugees to Cambodia in mid-1993 and with many having departed for new homes in the United States, Australia

and elsewhere.

In July 1991 or three months prior to the Paris Agreements, *Cambodia Watching Down Under* (CWDU) was published by the Institute of Asian Studies (IAS), then under the direction of Dr. Khien Theeravit.[2] With a focus on Australia and Australian politicians and media reporting on Cambodia, the authors sought to explain how the Australian domestic debate on Cambodia was conditioned by domestic politics although at the same time not ignoring the international setting. Arguably, CWDU was the first and only book published during this crucial period to endorse an internationally brokered solution. Press reporting aside, it would only be years later that dedicated book on the Paris Peace Conference and process appeared (Lizée 1999).

To present the chapter rollout in CWDU and with the titles eloquent of the general content, Chapter 1 [Gunn] was titled, "The Anglo-Saxon Democracy and the Southeast Asian Neutral: Australia and Cambodia (1950-1975)." Chapter 2 (Lee and Gunn] was titled, "The Making of a 'New Standard Consensus;' The Vietnam War's Cambodia Legacy and Australian Media Politics [Part One]." This chapter was matched by Chapter 3 [Lee], "The Sideshow that won't go away: The Vietnam War's Cambodia Legacy and Australian Media Politics" [Part Two]. Then followed Chapter 4 [Lee], "The Politics of Aid to Indochina;" Chapter 5 [Gunn], "Australia and the Cambodian Genocide Question;" and Chapter 6 [Lee]; "Reflections on Changes in the Kampuchean Stalemate (1986-1989]: A Return to the 'Killing Fields' or "Marketplace' Solution? The book concluded with an Epilogue [Lee and Gunn], "The Evans Plan on Cambodia (1990): An Australian Solution?"

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2 Gunn, Geoffrey C. and Jefferson Lee, *Cambodia Watching Down Under: A Critical View of Western Scholarship on Cambodia since 1975* (IAS monograph No. 047, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1991). In writing this article I acknowledge receipt of documents from Mr. Jefferson Lee (Order of Timor), some of them reaching back 30 years. I also welcome his more recent comments upon Michael Vickery's writings which I have partly taken on board.

The geopolitical context was the push back with Western and ASEAN endorsement of the CGDK against the PRK at a time when tens of thousands of Vietnamese occupation forces still remained inside Cambodia. With Thailand hosting hundreds of thousands of Cambodian refugees and with the component armies of the CGDK engaged in armed resistance against Vietnamese occupation forces, the "Cambodia question" had long been stalemated in the UN especially as the positions of CGDK and its backers, notably the Western countries alongside the Association of Southeast Asian Nations versus that of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam supported by the Soviet Union were widely divergent. Various peace initiatives had been hosted by, variously, Japan, Indonesia, and the US (especially initiatives taken by Congressman Stephen Solarz around demilitarization and neutralization). Notably the second Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM) held on 19-21 February 1989 was attended by representatives of the four Cambodia factions along with Vietnam which – importantly - accepted the notion of an "international control mechanism" for Cambodia. One of the more studied plans coming to the fore was the "Evans Plan" named after the Australian Labor Foreign Minister, Gareth Evans, itself drawing upon the Solarz initiative. With the question of Khmer Rouge disarmament as demanded by Hanoi a major sticking point on one side, and the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces a crucial demand on the part of the CGDK, it was obvious that the matter could only be solved by a major international conference. Initially, a Conference on Cambodia was convened in Paris at the invitation of the French government and held in two sessions, the first from 30 July to 30 August 1989, and the second from 21 to 23 October 1991. At the first session of the Conference, Cambodia was represented by the four Cambodian Parties and with Prince Norodom Sihanouk, representing Cambodia at the second session of the Conference.

With Cambodia notorious as an arena where engaged "experts" first committed themselves to a position, say in endorsing the Khmer Rouge-led guerrilla struggle against the Western-backed Khmer Republic (the "Lon Nol regime"), endorsing DK once installed, embracing the liberators, only to change

their minds, can it be said that the authors of CWDU fell into the pattern? Or contrariwise. could the broader debate such as engaged nation-state actors be framed around competing political ideologies, namely communist totalitarianism versus rules-based order or even liberal democracy matched by electoral politics? Although Gunn and Lee were never "canonized" (or damned) as part of the Standard Total Academic View (STAV) of Cambodia as pronounced in the widely circulated University of California, Berkeley dissertation written by Sophal Ear (1995), still this essay seeks to refute any such inuendo or association such as appear in some reviews and discussion.[3] Moreover, as this essay will demonstrate, contrary to some loose writing and "hearsay," CWDU never saluted a Khmer Rouge (KR) victory in April 1975 nor offered a defense of the DK regime as did some of the STAV scholars (and they are named below). With one chapter (Gunn) canvassing an independent genocide tribunal, CWDU hardly touted a KR revival and return to power outside of the CGDK, as some sources mischievously alleged. With CWDU getting behind an internationally guaranteed peace process as with an epilogue on an "Australian solution," a reference to the timely "Evans Plan" calling for a UN-backed interim government in Cambodia, the book hardly endorsed a made-in-Hanoi solution (or a KR restoration).

Thirty years on, this article seeks to analyze how CWDU was received at the time of its publication, namely in the months

3 In March 1978, writing on Cambodia under the auspices of the Department of Government, University of Queensland, the author produced an essay titled, "The Vietnam-Kampuchea Conflict: An Autopsy." Although unpublished, would it have merited "canonization" under Sophal Ear's criteria? As a classroom exercise, I doubt it. With its testing of five propositions, variously history, preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty, historical ideological competition, intra-Party conflict in DK, and war of proxy, concluding with the statement "with each having relative value in understanding the conflict," this was not a polemic nor was it semiotics. Sources range from Burchett and Caldwell mostly on history, to Rousset, Leifer, Lacouture, T.M. Carney, R.M. Smith, to the journalist Nayan Chanda, and with at least ten journal cites including Vietnamese and Chinese. As my essay noted, I was then unable to procure a copy of Ponchaud (1976) or Porter and Hildebrand (1976). I was then ignorant of the Sydney-based News *from Kampuchea* which first surfaced in April 1977.

prior to the Peace Agreements and, latterly, in the wake of the Agreements and through the years of UN intervention and even down unto the present. This is not just a narcissistic exercise, but it also seeks to set the record straight against misrepresentations of the truth entering some reviews and commentaries. At a minimum, a 30-year take should offer some detachment, just as the article acknowledges a shift over time from attention upon the "covert" political agenda of CWDU to the "overt" thesis embodied in the book around the ideological distortions created by media reporting in a conflict situation. This can be seen with the very first reviews of CWDU canvassing geopolitical issues, as with Vickery (1992) and Rowley (1992), pending a revival of interest in the media framing of events and ideological distortions as with Clarke (1999) and, as with Wijers (2018), engaging the question of "how geopolitics helped frame media reporting." First the article discusses the reception and impact of the book, especially with reference to Australia. Second, the academic reception of CWDU is canvassed finding some less than academic and misleading commentary in an ideologically charged environment, whereas a final section seeks to track over a longer time frame – practically down until the present - a revived interest in the media theme consonant with the subtitle to CWDU, namely "A Critical View of Western Scholarship and Media on Cambodia."

I/ Reception and Impact

One thing is for sure, after a certain burst of attention one or two years after publication, normal practice for an academic monograph, CWDU, began to fade as measured by reviews, citations, mentions, or commentaries. In any case, its shelf life practically expired within months as diplomatic and media attention switched to major issues attending the Paris Agreements and, in later years, as even Cambodia dropped off world media attention. Nevertheless, I would contend that the impact of the book was greater than the number of citations especially as it fell into the hands of policymakers, aid workers, academics, and diplomats at the right time.

Bangkok was strategic as a place of publication of works on Indochina and with IAS well known to the author as an academic center of excellence and with a vigorous publication program that would come to include monographs on Indochina.[4] In fact, returning to Bangkok from a visit to Vientiane in February 1981 at a time when I was researching my doctoral dissertation around the broad themes of "Vietnamese communism and Lao nationalism" submitted to Monash University, Australia - and at a juncture when Laos was no less isolated to the outside world than Cambodia - I was invited by Prof. Khien Theeravit to present a seminar at IAS, duly attended by senior students, faculty, and local Thai media.[5]

In retrospect, it is credible that in the period even prior to the first academic review, every foreign embassy in Bangkok with a watching brief on Indochina would or should have had a copy. The diplomatic corps during that period was the prime audience, not academics, and not journalists. Likely as well, arriving UN personnel and aid workers sought to acquire a copy (just as arriving UN staff in East Timor ten years later sought to acquire books on that nation) (e.g., Gunn and Lee 1994; Gunn 1997). According to the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Special Collections record, the Australian Force Commander of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) from 1992 to 1993, General John Sanderson, held a copy of CWDU as well and it resides in his archive.[6]

The Australian Promotion of CWDU

As announced in the official UNSW bulletin, UNIKEN (27 September 1991), on 17 October 1991 a staff-student seminar

4 Such works would include Phuwadol Songprasert and Noppawan Chongwatana, *Thailand: A First Asylum Country for Indochinese Refugees* (IAS Monograph No.038, 1988).

5 I then published the general arguments presented at this seminar in the local English language media. See author, "Laos: More negative than positive perspective abound," *The Nation* (11 February, 1981, p.16).

6 Guide to the Papers of John Murray Sanderson [MSS 359], University of New South Wales, Special Collections. Box 26, Item 143. https://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/special-collections/guide-papers-john-murray-sanderson-mss-359

was scheduled by the UNSW Law School to debate the book bringing together representatives of the Student Representative Council (SRC), along with legal experts, historians, and political scientists. Still, it would appear that book launches in Melbourne and elsewhere, such as discussed below, would have more impact in promoting CWDU in Australia to a general public, not excluding public figures. Meantime the SRC issued a statement deploring the move in Australia to privatize education and to sideline Asian studies simultaneous with a push to develop business links with Asia. The statement also commented upon the irony that, in the absence of press interest in Australia, the authors of CWDU were obliged to look offshore Australia to Asia to actually publish a book exposing the "dirty laundry" of Australia's educational, political and media links with Asia. The statement also introduced one of the CWDU authors (Lee) as the editor of the UNSW student newspaper, Tharunka (1974), and with 20 years support of the UNSW student union and with himself a student union councilor from 1972-76 (UNSW (SRC) Report, 1991).

Outside of UNSW, the book was launched on 27 October in Sydney, on 23 November in Melbourne, with the Canberra launch slated for 5 December. As Noël St. Clair Deschamps (1908-2005), former Australian ambassador to Cambodia (1962-69) commented at the Melbourne launch (23 November 1991):

> As the authors of this book show, Australia has become a major centre of Cambodian studies and 'Cambodia Watching' at many levels – academic, political and journalistic, and more recently among the aid organisations and the churches…This book deals with the blossoming of interest and study of Cambodia, its welfare, its personality, its history... and shows the roles these various strands have played, and on occasion, the reversal of opinion on significant elements of the Cambodian tragedy and Australian-Cambodian relations...This is a valuable book, covering the past 30 years...to clarify complex events, explain the origin and development of specific Australian opinion, and the formation and discarding of orthodoxy and consensus

> – particularly in the media... In building up their analysis the authors are scrupulously fair to alternative opinions… and present...remarkable in-depth analysis of the media and ongoing events... (Lee, Brochure: Press release, undated).

As Richard Browinoski, former ambassador to Vietnam between 1983-85 and head of Radio Australia (1990-91) (and later in his career a professor in media and communications, in Canberra and, then at Sydney University), stated during the Melbourne launch of 23 November 1991.

> What this book is about is media interpretations and events in Cambodia...The authors have a fascinating theme through this book. But where do they stand on the issues? … Cambodia Watching helps me to understand the media debate/... My impression is, it's not about the issues, but about the media, how they represent the issues and the effect they had... For any scholar of press relations it's an important book (Lee, Brochure: Press release, undated).

At the Sydney launch, as one of the authors (Lee 1991) stated, "We reflect with some acidity on the whole gamut of Australian journalism, aid workers, refugee community leaders, academic, diplomats and assorted trouble shooters who have sought to enter the political stage of Australia's contribution to the Cambodian peace dilemma. We expect some flak in return." As Lee recalls, his major publicity coup was to sell a copy of CWDU to Senator Evans at the October 1991 dinner at UNSW to launch the locally hosted and newly created Asia-Australia Institute, a "think tank" and forum which, until closing its doors in 2004, sought to advance Australia's image in Asia. He also sold copies to such other politicians engaging the Cambodia question (Senators Schacht and Valentine). Moving on to mid-1994, and with the stock of CWDU running out in Australia, Lee produced a pamphlet hailing the book as "too hot for some Australian 'academic' publishing houses to handle," a "collector's item" and "backgrounder to the current peacekeeping operations by Australia" (Lee, 1994). It is true that, for whatever reason UNSW Press declined to publish or co-sponsor the work – notwithstanding

my former status at this institution as lecturer in Australian-Asian relations (1985-87) - leaving to IAS the complex task of editing an English language text.

II/ Academic Reception of CWDU

Chronologically, the first scholarly comment upon CWDU appeared in the US publication, *Indochina Chronology* (July-September 1991) describing the work as "serious and well done," notably in seeking to sort out the "Watchers" or the "walking wounded" academics, journalists and think tankers who endorsed Pol Pot, and now troubled from living with the fact. As the review continued, "It makes embarrassing reading for most of the Watchers, dismaying reading for the rest of us..." Linked with the late Douglas Pike, bane of the anti-war movement in the United States, *Indochina Chronology* was fast off the mark, and every subsequent commentary, review, or citation follows on from and does not precede the Paris Peace Agreements. The first academic book review of CWDU to appear in Australia was that by Derek Burke writing in the *South Australia Institute of Teachers Journal* in December 1991. Besides lauding the book's usefulness to students as with its "interdisciplinary" character and range of source material, it laments only the small coverage given to the demise of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and its impact on Cambodia and Vietnam, and I concede that this was true (Burke 1991).

The Michael Vickery Worldview

With Michael Vickery (d. 2017), a seasoned Cambodia expert known for his linguistic skills and deep knowledge of the country, spanning prehistory and modern politics, his corpus of studies has, undeniably, deeply enriched my own understandings of modern and classical Cambodia. With his commentary appearing in June 1992, in a newsletter issued by the Anthropology Department of the Australian National University, titled "Cambodia After the 'Peace'," it is clear that he was writing after the Paris

Peace Conference. As indicated, the article originally appeared as a "samizdat" dated December 1991 and was reprinted with permission. In an age prior to web blogs, Vickery was hyperactive in circulating his views in multiple forms and fora. As he wrote, "Read carefully, the new peace agreements seem designed to ensure further destabilization, rather than lasting peace." Going on to denigrate the Australian "Redbook" (or Evans Plan) of February 1990, "whose authors thanked U.S. Congressman Stephen Solarz and Prince Norodom Sihanouk." In a singular turn of phrase, as Vickery remarked, "No more ardent enemies of Phnom Penh, outside of the Khmer Rouge leadership, could be imagined." Concluding this section, he wrote that the argument presented by Gunn and Lee in CWDU, namely, that all moves by Australian politicians regarding Cambodia have been conditioned by domestic politics" should be heeded. While Vickery adroitly summed up one of the core arguments of CWDU, and the authors should be grateful, he also demonstrated that he could twist words.

In a review published in September 1992 in *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (JSEAS), Vickery made the most of friendship with the then journal editor to double or even triple the standard word count for a review allowing him to extend to colorful language, trivia, and extended detours sufficient to announce his publications and letters-to-editors. Yet, as a review it skips entire chapters as, for example, Chapter 5 on "Australia and the Genocide Question" (Gunn), and the Epilogue on the Evans Plan (Gunn and Lee). As Lee pointed out in a communication to the author, the problem with the Vickery review is that he ignored the existence of the CGDK entirely. Yet, matching the salience of CGDK to the Paris Peace Agreements, CWDU includes 69 mentions, ASEAN (86 mentions), and Evans and his peace plan (200 mentions). Vickery is so fixated upon defense of the PRK that he ignored Prince Sihanouk (yet we have 202 mentions). As Vickery concedes, CWDU "is not entirely unhelpful," although not especially to those unfamiliar with Australian media and Labor Party politics. This is true. CWDU is an Australian book published in Asia. As Vickery then declaims, "There are really two themes in the book, one overt, one covert." As he continued,

"The more important covert theme is not 'Cambodia Watching', nor analysis of the media, but the illegitimacy of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), since 1989 State of Cambodia (SOC), and Vietnam's overthrow of its predecessor Democratic Kampuchea (DK)." This is not surprising because Vickery himself had emerged as the leading Western defender of the Vietnamese-backed regime in Phnom Penh and he defended this vigorously. As he adverted, "For Gunn and Lee the legitimate government of Cambodia is still DK, that is the 'Khmer Rouge'" though "The point is never argued but assumed as self-evident." Yes, it was evident that, however controversial or even immoral, DK held the UN seat and without it there would never have been an international settlement. The second theme, Vickery adverted, was "the overt one," namely that the Australian media, and scholarship was dominated by a pro-PRK tendency, "to the extent that DK could not get a fair hearing in Australia, nor be restored to its legitimate place as government of Cambodia." It is true that in some circles, a pro-PRK voice found its way into newspapers etc., but it is preposterous to make claims that CWDU "barracked" for DK or China. What CWDU does show is that pro-Australia Labor Party scholars, aid workers and journalists were somewhat successful as a "lobby" in tilting the Canberra government towards the PRK, albeit without falling out with the US-ASEAN consensus. (p.39). As some have described, this was a middle-of-the road position. Vickery is annoyed that he could not place pro-PRK articles in the Australian press because "right-wing extremists, had regular columnists in the major newspapers." Looking back after the Paris Peace Agreements, as Vickery crowed, the authors of CWDU should be "embarrassed" since the Vietnamese have withdrawn, and the DK has gotten the best possible deal out of the peace agreements "and the goal of the Australian, and other, leftist supporters of the PRK, straightforward recognition of that government, has been defeated." As he continued, "The peace agreement which was signed in October 1991, to the extent it was influenced by Australia, represents a victory for Gunn's and Lee's friends; and the Australian influence is real." Backhandedly then, CWDU is awarded honors for pushing ahead the Peace Proposal. The authors of CWDU could not better wish for a better accolade.

Condemnation by Hearsay: Dan Duffy writing in Vietnam Generation

Chronologically, the next quasi review of CWDU appeared in April 1992. Written and published by Dan Duffy in his Irving Stone-style broadsheet, Vietnam Generation (bearing the names of many prominent American academicians on its masthead), it mixes fact with fiction, especially as he never saw a copy of the book, although likely receiving a few faxed pages from an Australian contact red-ringed for his reference, leading him to pronounce, "My SEASS contacts all tell me that they hear that the book is a Maoist Pol Pot tract. None of my contacts had actually seen the book." Clearly such an admission would invalidate any attempt to review a book. As he continues in search of evidence of a Maoist tract, "But I can see that the authors rail against 'the anti-Maoist left in the U.S.' and what they call "the left-liberal Washington Post." As Duffy continues in an attempt to marginalize our authorial integrity or credentials, "It's interesting here that neither author claims to have ever visited Cambodia, or to speak or read any of the languages of Indochina." [7] But if he didn't read the book, how did he know, and did it matter anyway for a book on Australian politics and media? As he carries on, "[Laura] Summers and Khien don't speak Khmer either. I'm told." Some hearsay! Some malicious innuendo! Describing Khien Theeravit as "Thailand's leading Khmer Rouge supporter" and a misnamed Summers, the then leading UK expert on Cambodia going on to produce a prodigious corpus of writing and analysis on Cambodia, "a Democratic Kampuchea supporter from the United Kingdom,"

7 My own understanding of events playing out on the Vietnam-Cambodia border following on the installation of the DK regime, namely deadly cross-border incursions by KR forces drew upon my interviews in mid-1976 with Vietnamese refugees recently arrived in Songkhla having departed Phú Quốc Island by boat. Related to me in French, their reports were particularly graphic of destructive impacts upon local communities – events only unraveled by journalists years later. In their own words, the Phú Quốc refugees fled Cambodian communism not Vietnamese. But, unlike any of the STAV group and perhaps an experience only shared by several journalists, in mid-1974 I witnessed close hand a devastating KR raid on a village in Seam Reap province, an attack that left no structure intact with the effect of driving surviving villagers out of the district (see Gunn and Lee 1991: 35; Gunn 2018: 7-8).

Duffy turns ignorant and slanderous. As he carries on, "DK is the team with the piles of little skulls on their jerseys. To reply in kind – and apologies if there are good Americans - many Khmer would probably retort that the US is the team which wears bomb insignia on their lapels (and they would not have to read William Shawcross (1979), Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia to find out why).

Rowley's Lobby Analysis in the Australian Journal of International Affairs

The Melbourne-based academic Kelvin Rowley, co-author with the late Grant Evans of the pro-Hanoi work, Red Brotherhood at War (1987), was the next to enter this space with his review of CWDU in the Australian Journal of International Affairs (May, 1992). As he interpreted, Gunn and Lee claimed to conduct an exercise in "deconstructing and de-mythologising" the Cambodia problem as it is presented in the mass media, asserting as well that their study provides evidence for "a theory of dominant ideological framework in capitalist democracies linking media and state." In fact, as Rowley asserts, "the book is an attempt to rationalise the failure of the Khmer Rouge to fight their way back to power in Cambodia." [This is a mischievous assertion and can nowhere be demonstrated from inside the text or any other of our writings.] More generally, he asserted, "Gunn and Lee use the idea of 'media analysis' as a way of carrying out a political polemic while desperately avoiding dealing with what actually happened in Cambodia. Misinterpreting media analysis/knowledge production, he declared, "Semiotics replace empirics." As he carried on, "Their fantasy about the Australian Cambodia-watching Lobby is an attempt to conserve the deeper fantasy-world of academic Maoism." Rowley's "Lobby" written with a capital L is a fiction, however, especially as we range widely over a diverse group of "Cambodia Watchers" including such non-Australians as Vickery, Chomsky, and Shawcross. To be sure, as Rowley explains, the sub-groupings of journalists, academics and aid workers are "not mutually exclusive" and include the Canberra intelligence community and even right-wing newspaper columnists and

other opinion-makers, just as there are many crossovers among them. But, pace Rowley, this circle cannot be described as a single monolithic "Lobby" targeting Canberra. In fact, we would be hard put to describe members of the pro-DK News from Kampuchea group as a "lobby." CWDU does mention an "aid lobby" but that is perennial, all NGOs lobby for cash or influence (p.186). In fact, the "Cambodia Watchers" pushed all ways. On another tack, Rowley claims that Gunn and Lee lamented Pol Pot's overthrow as "Under his rule Cambodia was breaking out of the capitalist world-system. When the Vietnamese invaded in 1979, it was to re-impose the imperatives of the world system on Cambodia." This argument comes close to the views expressed by some of the STAV scholars, as named below. CWDU set down no such interpretations of DK rule, much less economic blueprint (although such as analysis does point a spotlight at some of the sweatshops feeding global supply chains in Phnom Penh today). As Rowley also acknowledges, Gunn and Lee "modestly" leave their ideological framework, "largely unstated." Well, that is good political science but the subtext chapter by chapter reveals a concern for a peaceful outcome via international intervention, an outcome that sees the rebirth of an autonomous Cambodia, justice via an international tribunal, and nowhere was CWDU averse to the restoration of the monarchy. As Rowley noted, CWDU carried a preface by Khien Theeravit, misleadingly - and maliciously - described as "an academic defender of Thai foreign policy when Thailand was championing the Khmer Rouge cause." Such a description comes close to personal denigration, an ad hominem attack. All we can say is that Thailand in concert with the CGDK defended its sovereignty. Finally, as Rowley declaims, "Gunn and Lee express a mystical faith in the 'unstoppable' power of revolutionary nationalism in Asia." Yes, one or other of the two authors is a scholar of revolutionary nationalism in Asia, but that is all.

Sophal Ear and the Khmer Rouge Canon 1975-1979

Writing in an unpublished University of California honors dissertation (albeit given an extra half-life with the advent of digitization), as Sophal Ear (1996) explains, having first read

Malcolm Caldwell, the British academic murdered in Phnom Penh on December 23, 1978, soon after meeting Pol Pot, he realized that an entire "community" of Cambodian scholars served as the Khmer Rouge's "most effective apologists in the West." True, but however misguided or misled in their understanding of KR behavior leading into the evocation of "killing fields" as was already being exposed by some media, they were also critical of US policy reaching back through the "Vietnam War" and so they should have been. These he labels STAV scholars, and he names them; Summers, Caldwell, Hildebrand and Porter, Chomsky and Herman, Chandler ("briefly"), and Kiernan ("deservedly").

As Ear (1996) declaimed, three works reveal how different facets of the STAV have previously been explored, namely, the first, an essay by William Shawcross (1983); the second, an essay by Stephen J. Morris published in the *National Interest* (Summer 1989); and the third, Gunn and Lee's CWDU. As explained, Shawcross focused on the Chomsky-Herman thesis, Morris tackled Cornell University's ties to the Khmer Rouge, and Gunn and Lee offered an "exhaustive though curiously insensitive view of the Australian connection to Democratic Kampuchea." Whatever that comment means, Ear also cited CWDU to explain how, following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1979, many of these activists, scholars, and academics were forced to choose between supporting the Vietnamese communists or DK, or what Gunn and Lee termed the "two-sided switch," including the split within the left-liberal camp in the US at an even earlier date. In particular, Ear cites CWDU on the Sydney-based News from Kampuchea, noting as well the Gunn and Lee proposition that News was published "as a catalyst to the Barron-Paul book *Murder of a Gentle Land* (1977)," described as "the first English-language book to lambaste the Khmer revolution for its brutal excesses." As Ear fills in, with News endeavoring "to deconstruct distortions and bias in western press coverage" on DK, it was joined by Chomsky and Herman in letters-to-the-editor, etc. In the Conclusion to Chapter 5, as Ear writes, the early works of the STAV scholars are today "remembered only in a footnote." Though "the standard total academic view they shared cannot be

forgotten," their mistake was to romanticize peasant revolution without asking the peasants themselves. Ear is setting a high moral tone, but in chiding Gunn and/or Lee for describing the *"Killing Fields"* movie produced in 1984 as "banal" or "lacking originality, freshness" [Websters] as opposed to what was already universally known among Cambodia Watchers almost ten years after the events it invokes, he cannot have read chapter 5 of CWDU (Australian and the Genocide Question) at all where I assert that "auto-genocide became a characteristic of the regime especially after 1977" (p.196). To parody Rowley, in this discussion, "Semiotics replace empirics." Unabashed, in a prefatory note Ear offers thanks for assistance to, inter alia, Kiernan, Summers, and especially, Chandler, or precisely the STAV scholars he takes down. Still, it is a good read.

III/ The Turn to Media Analysis/Knowledge Production Analysis

With Lee (1995) going on to publish *Reporting Cambodia in the Australian Media: 'Heroic' Journalism or 'Neo-Colonial' Distortions?,* he also helped to redirect interest back to CWDU's subtitle, namely media analysis/knowledge production. Such is evident in the Hong Kong University dissertation on the Cambodia conflict of 1979-91 produced by Judith Clarke (1999), an Australian journalist who covered the resistance from Bangkok and the border for *Asiaweek.* Going on establish an academic career in Hong Kong, Clarke (1995: 321-24) found that "news tends to follow and reinforce the views of those in those in power until those views change." News accounts may distort events. Nevertheless, she argues, news and interviews with journalists can be a valuable source for historians just as books written by journalists have a special place as "first drafts of history." In her dissertation, Clarke (1999: 38) is also concerned with the reporter-source relationship and, crucial to establishing the truth, how facts become news and so setting a (hegemonic) frame a la Gramsci. Specific to Cambodia, Clarke (1999: 15) cites Lee (1995: 48n) on the ideological split besetting journalists covering the conflict and "the study

which follows is to see how they coped." With clarity, Clarke (1995: 331-32) summed up a major thread in CWDU, namely the way that Australia stood apart from other countries engaging Cambodia insofar as the concerned debate on the issue between left and right reached into the corridors of power. In Australia a left view had primed a number of scholars and journalists as with Wilfred Burchett along with news media to support a PRK-Hanoi view and with the incoming Labor government in 1983 moving Australian policy to the left on Cambodia under foreign minister Bill Hayden (until replaced in this position by Gareth Evans). By the mid-1980s, opposition Liberal Party foreign affairs spokesperson Andrew Peacock had taken up the attack on Hayden. In parallel fashion, the two big newspaper groups in Australia, Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. and the Fairfax press, had taken opposite sides. From the Australian example, she concludes that, "The 'hegemonic' frames imposed by governments can thus be seen to work in the international news that concerns them."

Having completed a PhD dissertation around refugee studies with reference to Cambodia, D.M. Gea Wijers (2015) went on to produce a book chapter, "Framing Cambodian Affairs: French and American Scholarship, Media and Geopolitics," published in the edited collection by Albert Tzeng (2018). With Tzeng a theorist of "sociology of knowledge," overall the book is concerned with social processes of knowledge production in Asian studies as in journals, conferences, and press, back to Orientalism, through the Cold War, and post 9-11. In her chapter, Wijers explains how geopolitics helped frame media reporting on Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese intervention periods. Turning to media portrayals of Cambodia, Wijers (2018: 121) asserts that, "Next to Gunn and Lee's, *Cambodia Watching Down Under,* that directly addresses the subject, most academic publications only bear indirect reference to the ideological convictions that influenced reporting on Cambodian affairs." With the obvious exception of Clarke (1999), objectively this is correct. As she asserts, it was the *Killing Fields* movie which provided the definitive evidence of "genocide" [or better, public acceptance of this fact]. Wijers (2018: 122) then goes on to say that, over the years, "fact-

based" reporting as with Kiernan, created a picture of violence orchestrated by "madman" Pol Pot, an "evil leader" and a "unique phenomenon." Even so, as Wijers (2018: 122-23) declares, it still remains to explain the "uniqueness" of genocide in Cambodia. Striking a critical note, she believes that "auto-genocide" would be a more appropriate description, although also problematic given its criminal associations. In a section titled, "After the Khmer Rouge," Wijers (2018: 127) approves the Gunn and Lee (actually Chomsky and Herman) contention that by filtering the news, the media were setting the agenda. Again, following the Gunn and Lee analysis, Wijers (2018: 131) declares that, after the [partial] opening of Cambodia to foreign access in 1979, disagreements arose on all sides of the press as to the intentions and "success" of the Khmer Rouge regime and the "true" nature of the genocide and devastation on the ground. Under a section entitled Third Wave Cambodia Reporting (1981-89), Gunn and Lee are again cited to make the point that, "talking about the 'Cambodia problem' evolved from the Vietnamese intervention of 1979," leading into discussion as to which party could best bring post-conflict stability to Cambodia (Wijers 2018: 133). Here she changes pitch to acknowledge that filmmaker-journalist John Pilger was indeed sympathetic to the Vietnamese regime or otherwise he could not have gained access to produce his movie, *Year Zero*. Pace Vickery and especially Rowley, Wijers takes CWDU as a serious text with an important subtext around ideological distortions in media reporting on Cambodia, yet we wonder whether Wijers' chapter will generate further discussion.

Conclusion

Reading between the lines on the promotion of CWDU in Melbourne, Sydney, and Canberra, then we may say with confidence that the book did give some pause to Australian policymakers on Cambodia in the lead up to the historic Paris Peace Agreements and, as this article has surmised, it may have connected with diplomats in Bangkok and arriving UN workers in Cambodia. In reality, the Canberra government could not ignore the messages conveyed in the book just as they struggled to keep

up with the flow of intelligence and the welter of potted diplomatic summaries alongside news flow. As CWDU also reveals, they wrestled with the moral dilemmas of acting or doing nothing. Yet Australia acted because, to repeat a leitmotiv in CWDU, domestic politics and media push demanded that the government of the day strike a position, however "middle-of-the road" (in the estimation of Judith Clarke). To add a general note, in reviews and commentaries, "Gunn and Lee" are invariably conflated as if the book had one author even though chapter authors are clearly identified as are the two jointly authored chapters. This lapse especially holds for Vickery and Rowley who, contrary to review protocol, evidently found it convenient to extract a single worldview from two authors with different backgrounds and careers with respect to researching and writing on Southeast Asia and Australia. The single exception that comes to light is Tosa Hiroyuki (1993) who, in his Japanese language publication with a focus upon "strategic triangles" as a frame of reference on Cambodian geopolitics, singles out chapter 5 (Gunn) as a source. For that matter, no review or citation looked back on chapter 5 (Gunn) in the first discussion on an extended definition of genocide to include crimes against humanity with reference to Cambodia and the modality of a future UN-backed genocide tribunal such as subsequently transpired in Phnom Penh with the setting up of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. On a separate tack, with the possible exception of Lizée (1999), no future book or dissertation connected with or looked back upon our first-in-print discussion of the "Evans Plan." Finally, in a digital age where disinformation competes with the truth, younger media practitioners entering this field may read salutatory lessons out of this retrospective on CWDU especially the importance, as stressed by Clarke, of the reporter-source relationship and, more so than ever, the imperative to verify news, sources, and information.

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