

## CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE FALL OF LONGVEK

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This paper seeks to investigate the factors surrounding the fall of Longvek in 1594, on the basis of local sources such as the Cambodian Royal Chronicles, as well as external sources, namely Thai, European and Japanese. It has been hypothesized that the fall of Longvek was triggered by a complex of internal problems, but the author desires to view the issue through a wider lens, that is to say, in the regional context of Southeast Asia during the Age of Commerce. This is done with a special focus on Siamese (Ayutthaya) trade activities with Europe and Japan, around the close of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### INTRODUCTION

Following the invasion of Siam's army into Angkor sometimes in the 15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>1</sup> the capital city was first shifted to Srei Santhor,<sup>2</sup> and then moved over for a brief period to Chatumukh (Phnom Penh). For about a hundred years, owing to the critical situation following the shifting capital from Angkor, the Longvek capital was established by king Ang Chan around 1526, and he assembled there in 1529.<sup>3</sup> During his reign, Cambodia experienced peace, prosperity, and justice, until his demise in 1566. Until the Siamese sacked the capital in 1594 during the reign of King Sathā (1576-1594), who was a grandson of king Ang Chan, Cambodia prospered for more than 60 years, and was politically the equal of Ayutthaya (Siam). Longvek was a stronghold capital that

<sup>1</sup> Cœdès, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, 236; See also Groslier, *Angkor and Cambodia in the Sixteenth Century*, 3-19.

<sup>2</sup> Srei Santhor area was geographically located along the shore of the Mekong River (which is referred to by the local inhabitants as Tonle Thom, the grand river) and Tonle Toch (small river). The area is located in present-day Kompong Cham, Kandal, Tbong Khmum and Prei Veng provinces.

<sup>3</sup> There are a couple of Cambodian chronicle texts that mention different dates in this critical period. For the date of establishment of Longvek capital, I refer to the chronicle of Vāṃṃ Juon (in short VJ) (VJ, *Preah Reach Pongsanadar Maha Khsat Khmer Krong Kampuchea Thipadei*, 190. See also Khin, *Le Cambodge entre le Siam et le Vietnam*, 29).

served as a safeguard against the threats of the Siamese, and Professor Ang Choulean has described this era of prosperity as the “Cambodian revival of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>4</sup>

There are for instance many deeds related to the activities of king Ang Chan and his successors, with reference to the rehabilitation of the country. King Ang Chan was the first monarch who reoccupied the ancient city of Angkor in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, since Angkor had been abandoned as the capital city in 1431. As evidence of this we have two inscriptions among the reliefs of Angkor Wat, where mention is made of his work with regard to the restoration of the northeast gallery of Angkor Wat, that was begun in 1546 and completed in 1564, and also with reference to certain other areas of Angkor.<sup>5</sup> The registered inscription IMA 2 of the queen mother Mahākalyānavattī Śrīsubhā, written in the year śaka 1499 (1577 CE), describes the honor given to her king’s son who had a great devotion towards restoring the ancient temple of *Brah Bisnulok*<sup>6</sup> (Angkor Wat).<sup>7</sup> As recorded in the inscription of IMA 3, king Satthā intended to restore the wall enclosure of *Brah Bisnulok* (pronounced *Preah Pisonulok*) by keeping to the traditional way as followed from the ancient periods.

However, at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and especially at the beginning of the 1590s, Cambodia had begun to have trouble owing to the frequent attacks by the Siamese (Ayutthaya). Finally, Longvek was controlled by the Siamese in 1594. The fall of Longvek has been marked as a catastrophic event in Cambodian history. The Khmer mind has never forgotten this event, for it remains alive for them until the present day. Many stories and oral traditions were created, that were related to this painful episode.

What were the issues behind the fall of Longvek? Researchers are yet unsure with regard to this question. According to the VJ, the fall of Longvek was caused due to the royal family members having become embroiled in agitations linked to the sharing of power, during the reign of king Satthā. Factions accordingly began to be formed among the royal family members and mandarins, as a result of which they could not fulfill their duties with regard to the country. Cambodia at that time was in a state of turmoil, and the situation was overpowering. This caused the Khmer to begin losing power, and consequently, the need to protect the kingdom and resist the Siamese, received less consideration.<sup>8</sup>

According to Grégory Mikaelian,<sup>9</sup> it is difficult to interpret the Cambodian Chronicle texts with regard to this historical fact. Beyond what is officially stated, this author seems to opt for the thesis of soft assignment of power in Siam from king Naresūr.<sup>10</sup> King Satthā had left Longvek

<sup>4</sup> Ang, “ខ្មែរប្រឹងដើមឡើងវិញនៅសតវត្សទី១៦.”

<sup>5</sup> Cœdès, “La date d’exécution des deux bas-reliefs tardifs d’Angkor Vat.”

<sup>6</sup> Related to the ancient name of Angkor Wat “Bisnulok,” see Ang, “Est-ce si surnaturel?;” See also Nhim, “A Study of the Names of Monuments in Angkor.”

<sup>7</sup> Pou, “Texte en Khmer Moyen: Inscriptions Modernes d’Angkor 2 & 3.”

<sup>8</sup> The details of the events that are mentioned in the chronicles are described below.

<sup>9</sup> Mikaelian, *La royauté d’Oudong*, 113-14.

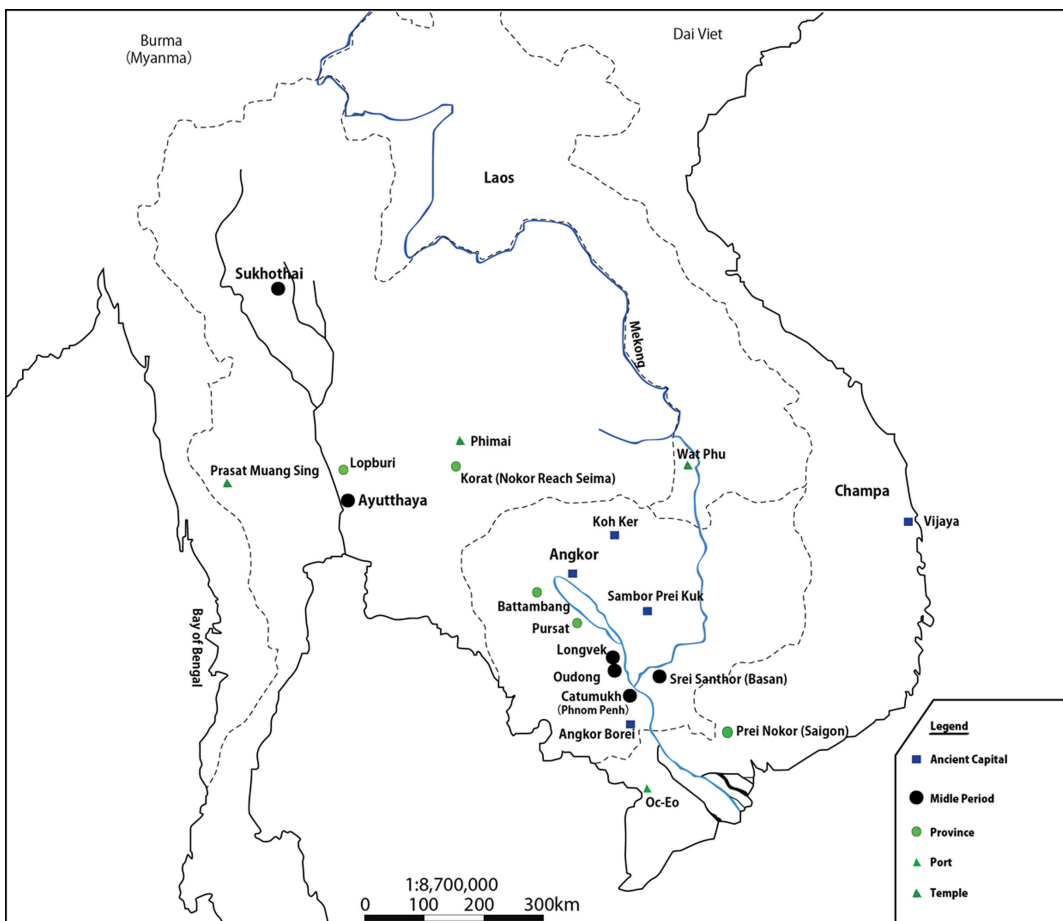
<sup>10</sup> Naresūr is also known as Preah Naret or the ‘black king’ in foreign records. The name Naresūr derives from the Sanskrit term “*nara + īśvara*”, meaning “master of humans.” The Siamese call him “Naresuan or Naresuon,” in Khmer “Noreso (translit. Naresūr).”

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for Laos, leaving his brother the viceroy Srī Suriyobarm (Srei Suriyopor) to protect the capital. However, Srī Suriyobarm did not do any fighting, but rather offered himself as a hostage to the Siamese. Nevertheless, he was indeed taken as a hostage to the court of Ayutthaya.

Was the fall of Longvek a human disaster, an absolute tragedy, or a prepared debacle? In other words, was the capital Longvek taken or sacked by the powerful Siamese army? To respond to this question, we cannot rely entirely on an internal source like the Cambodian chronicle texts, but rather, external sources also need to be carefully considered and employed.

This paper attempts to explore certain factors that led to the fall of Longvek, by extracting certain events that are described in the chronicles, and making a comparison of them with external sources. The central point dealt with in this study is the highlighting of the regional economic and political situation in general, and in particular, the expansion of the trade activities of Ayutthaya (Siam) with Europe and Japan at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The presence of Europeans and Japanese in Southeast Asia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, could hypothetically serve as a factor in changing and influencing the political atmosphere of the region.



## 1. HISTORICAL SETTING BEFORE THE FALL OF LONGVEK

In order to understand what emerged from the fall of Longvek at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is useful to stipulate a background of events that, according to the chronicles, may have occurred during the preceding era of Cambodia's revival. It is very difficult to reconstruct the historical fact in the period before the event of the fall of Longvek, since the local sources prove inadequate and references from foreign sources are of little use. Besides the Cambodian chronicles with a little information from the Siamese chronicles, we have no other sources to set this critical period. This study attempts to use the chronicle of Vāṃṃ Juon (in short VJ) as a basic primary source to set a history before the fall of Longvek by comparing with other chronicle texts.<sup>11</sup>

According to the VJ's chronicle, king Ang Chan returned to Cambodia in 1516 after he had fled to Siam for years, since his brother king Srei Sokunthabat had been assassinated by Sdec Kan. Sdec Kan was considered a local hero in the area of Srei Santhor, and even now his name is very well known among the local inhabitants.<sup>12</sup> However, Sdec Kan, who was a son of a pagoda servant, had no blood links to the royal family, and hence he became a ruler without the law on his side. The revolt of Sdec Kan was not viewed as justified when one considered the best interests of the kingdom, on the account of which the chronicles describe him as a usurper. Since Sdec Kan was not a legitimate king or ruler, king Ang Chan had a right to get throne back, and hence king Ang Chan prepared to attack Sdec Kan in order to recover the throne.

When king Ang Chan escaped to Siam owing to the threats of Sdec Kan, he requested the king of Siam to assist him in his battle with Sdec Kan. However, it took too long a time for him to wait, in order to receive the assistance. According to the VJ and the Ayutthaya chronicle of Hluang Prasöt,<sup>13</sup> at that time Siam was also busy fighting the Mon (the Mon were controlled by Burma at that time, and the city's name was Lampang).<sup>14</sup> King Ang Chan wanted to return to Cambodia, but it was not easy for him to ask permission for this from the king of Siam. At that time, in Siam, to hunt a white elephant was very popular, since it was believed that a white elephant was strong and powerful for use in times of war.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The chronicle of VJ was published in 1934, and it is available in the library of Sophia University, Tokyo. The reason to use the chronicle of VJ is that this chronicle details events related to the discussion of our topic. For discussion and study of other chronicle texts in this period, see Vickery, *Cambodia after Angkor*. See also Khin, *Chroniques Royales du Cambodge*.

<sup>12</sup> Regarding the Sdec Kan tradition, see Nhim, "Factors that Led to the Change of the Khmer Capitals from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century," 66-70; See also Forest, "Autour d'une visite aux sites de Srei Santhor."

<sup>13</sup> The chronicle of Hluang Prasöt was originally written in 1780 AD, in the reign of king Narayana. It was translated into English and studied by Frankfurter, and published in the *Journal of the Siam Society* in 1909. This chronicle was also translated into Khmer language by the Thai-Khmer Cultural Association Committee (hereafter Hluang Prasöt) in 2009.

<sup>14</sup> VJ, *Preab Reach Pongsavadar*, 154; See also Frankfurter, "Events in Ayuddhya from Chulasakaraj 686-966," 15; and See also Hluang Prasöt, *Preab Reach Pongsavadar Ti Krong Chas*, 93.

<sup>15</sup> There is a well-known folktale related to a white elephant, called "Sdec Damrei Sa" in Cambodia, Thailand and Laos. This folktale is always narrated with reference to an ancient temple in Cambodia, as well as in Thailand and Laos, and at the present time too, the white elephant has become a local spirit in the community, living around the temples. For the narrated folktale, see Nhim, "A Study of the Names," 57-58.

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King Ang Chan thereupon resorted to a trick. He promised the Siamese king that he would hunt a big white elephant, and when the Siamese king permitted him to hunt the elephant in the forest, he escaped to Cambodia. At first he came to Batdambang, and then established his residence at Pursat. Many mandarins and people returned to join him in attacking Sdec Kan. According to the VJ chronicle, the war between king Ang Chan and Sdec Kan continued until 1525, in which year Sdec Kan was arrested and killed. After the death of Sdec Kan, king Ang Chan ordered his ministers to build a new city at Longvek. In 1529, he left Pursat and came to be crowned at Longvek, under the name Paramarājā II (Borom Reachea).

During the reign of king Ang Chan, there was not much trouble with Siam. Once though according to the Garnier version and Hluang Prasöt chronicle, during the period spanning 1555-56, the Siamese king ordered Siddhien Rājā to lead his army in attacking Cambodia. However, the plan of invasion failed, and Siddhien Rājā died at Pursat.<sup>16</sup> At that time, the Siamese were also having trouble due to their war with the Burmese, and this enabled Cambodia to have an advantage over Siam.<sup>17</sup> As mentioned earlier, during the reign of king Ang Chan, Cambodia experienced a period of stability and peace, which continued until his death in 1566.

After the death of king Ang Chan, his son, king Paramarājā III succeeded to the throne at Longvek. According to the VJ chronicle, in 1569, (or 1570 according to the Hluang Prasöt chronicle), he arranged for his army to proceed to Ayutthaya by way of both water and land. In the same year, it is stated in the Hluang Prasöt chronicle that Ayutthaya fell into the hands of the king of Pegu (the Burmese king). Just a year after the king of Pegu had returned to his kingdom, the king of Longvek raised an army in order to proceed against Ayutthaya.<sup>18</sup>

The Khmer army once again controlled the western area provinces of Chanborei (in Thai Chantabun), Royang, Sasieng, and Pachim but nonetheless the Khmer soldiers returned to Cambodia, due to the heavy floods and because they were unable to withstand the fighting. In 1572, king Paramarājā III installed his son Sathhā at Longvek, and proceeded to establish a place at Kompong Krasang (which was probably located somewhere in the present-day Siem Reap province). The king raised soldiers in order to proceed to Nokor Reach Seima, and brought back many prisoners.<sup>19</sup>

In the same year, the king of Lao (Laos) sent two ministers and 1000 soldiers to Cambodia, the reason being to compel Cambodia to accept Lao's suzerainty. With that act, the Lao king challenged the Khmer king to a combat using an elephant, because it was believed that if one could attain victory by using an elephant, one would have to be recognized as a suzerain.<sup>20</sup> The combat

<sup>16</sup> Garnier, "Chronique Royal du Cambodge," 350; Frankfurter, *op. cit.*, 12; and See also Hluang Prasöt, *op. cit.*, 115.

<sup>17</sup> For the details of the war between Siam and Burma, see Frankfurter, *op. cit.*, 8-12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 14; See also Hluang Prasöt, *op. cit.*, 129.

<sup>19</sup> VJ, *op. cit.*, 208-209; P/48 (II) and Garnier version placed the event in 1570, See P/48 (II), 58; Garnier, *op. cit.*, 352.

<sup>20</sup> The VJ chronicle mentions the fact that the Lao king's name was Sisatt Nakhun Hut, but there was no king by that name in the history of Lao of that period. During that period, Lao was under the control of general Ponhea Saen, who recaptured Vientiane after Lao's king Settathireach disappeared mysteriously during his campaign in the southern state. Ponhea Saen proclaimed himself Regent (he reigned from 1571 to 1575). The Lao king who invaded Cambodia was probably Settathireach (Mathieu, "Chronological Table of the History of Laos," 37).

took place in the south of Phnom Santuk, which now lies in Kompong Thom province. In the combat, the Khmer elephant defeated the Lao elephant, and the king did not allow the soldiers and elephant to return to Lao. Accordingly, the king of Lao, who was furious over the fact that he could not bring Cambodia under his control, prepared to invade Cambodia in 1573. The war between Cambodia and Lao extended for two years, but eventually his army was decisively defeated, and the Lao king himself mysteriously disappeared during the war.

According to the Garnier version, Paramarājā III died in 1576 (or in 1579 according to the VJ chronicle), and his son Sathhā ascended the throne at Longvek.<sup>21</sup> When king Sathhā attained the throne, there existed a peace treaty between Cambodia and Siam.<sup>22</sup> At that time, Ayutthaya was under the reign of Dhamma, who ruled from 1568 to 1590. During the reign of Mahādhammarājā, Ayutthaya was attacked several times by the Burmese, who had joined forces with the prince of Chiangmai.<sup>23</sup> After concluding a treaty, king Sathhā sent an army under the command of Mahā Uparāja Sṛī Suriyobarm (Moha Uparach Srei Suriyopor) to assist in the attack on the Burmese,<sup>24</sup> while the Siamese army was led by Uparāja Naresūr (Uparach Noreso), the eldest son of king Mahādhammarājā.

With the cooperation of the Khmer army the Siamese defeated the Burmese, but the result was adverse. The VJ chronicle states that there arose a dispute between Naresūr and Sṛī Suriyobarm on their way back to Ayutthaya. Sṛī Suriyobarm was very upset at the impertinence of Naresūr in cutting off the heads of Lao prisoners in front of him. Sṛī Suriyobarm returned to Longvek and informed king Sathhā regarding the bad manners of Naresūr, and consequently the quarrel between the Siamese prince and the Cambodian prince worsened, and eventually king Sathhā decided to forsake his alliance with Siam. Naresūr who felt greatly insulted by this treatment, began to prepare an army in order to fight with Cambodia.

## 2. REFLECTION ON THE EVENTS

The event concerning the Siamese army sacking the capital of Longvek at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is mentioned in certain sources, such as the Cambodian Chronicles, the Siamese Chronicle,<sup>25</sup> and some European sources.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Garnier, *op. cit.*, 353. For a detailed discussion on the date when king Sathhā succeeded to the throne, see Groslier, *op. cit.*, 14; Mak, *Histoire du Cambodge de la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle au début du XVIII<sup>e</sup>*, 34; see also Mak, “Essai de Tableau Chronologique des Rois du Cambodge de la Période post-Angkorien,” 119.

<sup>22</sup> The alliance between Cambodia and Siam during this period was mentioned in both Cambodian and Siamese chronicles (VJ, *op. cit.*, 220. See also Wyatt, *The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya*, 101).

<sup>23</sup> Cœdès, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, 154.

<sup>24</sup> Mahā Uparāja is a Sanskrit word, which means “the grand vice-king” or the term can be translated into English as viceroy.

<sup>25</sup> Frankfurter, *op. cit.*; Hluang Prasöt, *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Antonio de Morga, *The Philippine Islands*, 32-55; Blair & Robertson, *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898*, 161-180; see also Groslier, *Angkor and Cambodia in the Sixteenth Century*.



## 2.1. EVENTS EXTRACTED FROM THE CHRONICLES

Among the sources, the Cambodian chronicles describe in detail the starting point with regard to the causes of the fall, such as religious faith, internal problems, Siamese attacks, and so on. Although, certain events mentioned in the chronicles are fictitious or legendary, yet regardless of whether they are related to the actual history or not, we need to consider them all in order to arrive at a critical conclusion, and compare them with other sources.

One of the factors described in the chronicle concerns the four-faced Buddha image installed in the temple of Tralaeng Kaeng (which means “crossing”), located in the center of the Longvek capital. This image was strongly believed to be something sacred, and it was believed to possess a powerful spirit with regard to protecting the kingdom from the threats of Siam.<sup>27</sup> The VJ chronicle declares that the reason why the Siamese army could not overcome the Longvek capital, was because of the powerful spirit of the four-faced Buddha. Accordingly, the Siamese king Naresūr ordered two Siamese monks to act as healers, and sent them to Longvek. They healed many people in Longvek, and finally when they met king Satthā, they secretly placed a black magic incantation upon the body of king Satthā. King Satthā became tainted and absentminded, and he could not be cured of this problem. The two monks then said to the king, “this problem was caused by the strong spirit of the four-faced Buddha. You have to destroy it, as otherwise you cannot be cured.” Since the king was polluted by the black magic, he ordered the statue to be destroyed. Since then, many unfortunate occurrences came to pass in the kingdom, such as droughts, scarcity, cholera, and so on. Under these circumstances, the Siamese took a chance and invaded Longvek, around the end of 1593. The Khmer people thought this catastrophe was caused due to the destruction of the four-faced Buddha image, which had served as the symbolic center of the kingdom.

Another story that has been narrated and passed on as oral tradition from generation to generation, and also written in the chronicles, is linked to the Khmer people as greedy. The story narrates that the capital Longvek was naturally surrounded by a plentiful thickness of bamboo trees, and that is the reason why the Siamese army could not advance into the capital city of Longvek. The Siamese army then hit upon a tactic of using cannons to shoot money in the form of coins, into the thickness of the bamboo trees. The local Khmer inhabitants thereupon blindly cut off the bamboo trees in order to collect the coins, totally unaware of the trick played by the Siamese. The result after cutting off the bamboo trees was predictable, and the Siamese army was able to effortlessly march into the capital.<sup>28</sup> It is rumored that this was also a reason why the Siamese sacked the capital of Longvek.

Another issue most scholars had an interest in and hypothesized about, was the fact that the Siamese army was able to invade and control the capital of Longvek as described in the chronicles, was due to an internal problem that existed among members of the royal family.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> VJ, *op. cit.*, 247-249; P/48 (II), 60. For the explanation related to the four-faced Buddha, see Thompson, “Lost and Found: The Stupa, the Four-Faced Buddha, and the Seat of Royal Power in Middle Cambodia.”

<sup>28</sup> VJ, *op. cit.*, 246.

<sup>29</sup> Khin, *Le Cambodge entre le Siam et le Vietnam*, 30; Mikaelian, *La royauté d'Oudong*, 113-114.

The VJ chronicle mentions the fact that king Satthā had decided to transfer his power to his two sons, the elder of whom was 11 years of age and the other 6, and appoint them as his successors to the throne.<sup>30</sup> Issues related to the sons of king Satthā are also mentioned in the Middle Period inscriptions at Angkor Wat, and in European records. The registered inscription IMA 3 describes the fact that in 1501 śaka (1579), king Jayajettthā (or Chey Cheytha I), alias Satthā in the chronicle, took his sons to Braḥ Bisṇulok (Angkor Wat) for a religious ceremony, in order to dedicate them to the Buddha and all the gods,<sup>31</sup> and the European source remarks that when the Siamese attacked Longvek in late 1593, king Satthā escaped with his two sons and other royal families to take refuge in Laos.<sup>32</sup>

Among the sources, only the VJ chronicle describes every detail of the related event. Since the two sons of king Satthā were too young to succeed to the throne, the Uparāja Srī Suriyobarm and mandarins were greatly disappointed at the decision of king Satthā. The king's decision discouraged and demoralized the mandarins with regard to their tackling the war with Siamese, and consequently they allowed the Siamese army to enter the capital easily, without any strong resistance. Finally, the capital city of Longvek was seized by the Siamese army in 1594.<sup>33</sup> King Satthā left Longvek quietly for Srei Santhor, and he then went on to take refuge in Laos (where the king died), leaving the viceroy Srī Suriyobarm in control, to ensure the physical preservation of the capital. Nevertheless however, Srī Suriyobarm and other members of the royal family were indeed taken as hostages to the court of Ayutthaya.

There is no detailed information in the Siamese chronicles concerning the reason why king Naresūr ordered his army to attack Longvek, and even researchers of Thai history provide very few descriptions of the event. Sources merely note that in 1593 the Siamese army marched to Longvek, and at that time Cambodia was in turmoil.<sup>34</sup> In contrast to the Siamese sources, as mentioned above, the Cambodian chronicles recount the controversy between Naresūr and Srī Suriyobarm, when the Khmer army went to assist the Siamese soldiers in their war with the Burmese, and when Naresūr occupied the throne, he sought to take vengeance on Srī Suriyobarm, by assaulting Longvek.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The chronicle texts dated slightly differently the event, which in the VJ chronicle was in 1586, while P/48 (II) and Garnier version placed it in 1584. See VJ, *op. cit.*, 240-243; P/48 (II), *op. cit.*, 59; Garnier, *op. cit.*, 354.

<sup>31</sup> Pou, "Texte en Khmer moyen: Inscriptions Modernes d'Angkor 2 & 3."

<sup>32</sup> Antonio de Morga, *op. cit.*, 43-45.

<sup>33</sup> The date the Siamese sacked the capital of Longvek is explained differently in chronicles as well as in the Siamese chronicles. In this case, P/48 (II) gives the date very close to the European sources, which was in the month of *Pusy*, the year of *Msāñ* (serpent) 1515 śaka, which means it was in December 1593 or January 1594. The date of the fall of Longvek in January 1594 was also strongly affirmed by B. P. Groslier, through his study of the European sources (Groslier, *op. cit.*, 15).

<sup>34</sup> Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 100-105.

<sup>35</sup> VJ, *op. cit.*; P/48 (II); Garnier, *op. cit.*



**2.2. FOREIGN CONTACTS WITH AYUTTHAYA AND CAMBODIA IN THE 16<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, China changed its dynasty from Mongol to Ming. In the beginning of the Ming dynasty, some systems underwent change, as for instance Chinese traders who used to be prohibited from trading in a foreign country, were now allowed to do so. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century many Chinese traders came to Southeast Asia, and in the later centuries, especially from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, European and Japanese traders became very active in Southeast Asia. In this context, it has been suggested that from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Southeast Asian countries experienced great changes in their political and economic situations. Anthony Reid, a scholar of Southeast Asian History, has designated this period as “the age of commerce.”<sup>36</sup>

In the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, European missionaries and traders, especially Portuguese, anchored in Southeast Asia. In 1511 the Portuguese successfully controlled Malacca and then colonized other areas, particularly in the Philippines, where there existed lots of precious stones, gold, silver, wild animals, and various varieties of spices.<sup>37</sup> In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the 1580s, the Portuguese army had come to govern Aceh, Sumatra, and Malaysia, and then came to Ayutthaya, Cochin-china and Cambodia.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, before the Tokugawa Shogunate (or Tokugawa Bakufu) came to rule Japan, and closed the nation’s doors to the world from the 1630s to 1853,<sup>39</sup> Japan used to be linked by the maritime trade network with the Southeast Asian countries, from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the year 1630. The expansion of the maritime trade network in the Southeast Asian countries was due to the fact that: 1) China, which used to have trade connectivity with Japan for years, was now prohibited from doing so by the Ming government, 2) There was a great increase in local products, which were hence used for overseas export, 3) The influence of the European traders who were present in Asia.<sup>40</sup>

This paper intends dealing with the commercial and political movements of Ayutthaya and Cambodia, that is, to consider and compare them. In fact, since the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, Ayutthaya had a number of diplomatic and trade linkages with China, even more than the linkages that Cambodia had. From the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, during the period spanning 1400 to 1499, Ayutthaya had diplomatic linkages with China at least 47 times, while Cambodia in contrast had these linkages only 7 times.<sup>41</sup> When due to certain reasons Cambodia’s economic and political power had begun to decline from the 14<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>42</sup> Ayutthaya took the opportunity to expand its territory and power. For example, during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century, Ayutthaya frequently attacked

<sup>36</sup> Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680*: Volume one & two.

<sup>37</sup> Antonio de Morga, *op. cit.*, 11-12.

<sup>38</sup> Boxer, “Portuguese and Spanish Projects for the Conquest of Southeast Asia (1580-1600),” 123.

<sup>39</sup> The reason why Japan closed its doors to the world was because the Tokugawa Bakufu was afraid and did not want Christianity to penetrate Japanese society through the European traders.

<sup>40</sup> Iwao, “Japanese Foreign Trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries,” 1-5.

<sup>41</sup> Reid, *op. cit.*, volume two, 16.

<sup>42</sup> Nhim, “Factors that Led to the Change,” 46-54.

Angkor, and finally captured it in 1431. Since then, the economic and political situation of Ayutthaya seemed to have stabilized. Geographically, the capital of Ayutthaya was constructed and suited both for agricultural and commercial route networks, and this attracted many Chinese merchants.<sup>43</sup>

Although, during the history of Thailand, especially before the reign of king Naresūr, Siam had endured struggles owing to frequent attacks by the Burmese army, the economic and political situation during the reign of king Naresūr rapidly burgeoned. Siam began to strengthen its power by expanding its territory, particularly in order to control certain important ports such as Tavoy or Dawei (currently located in southeastern Myanmar) and Tenasserim. In the accounts of Portuguese who came to Ayutthaya in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, mention is made of certain aspects of the capital of Ayutthaya, as well as the fact that the aggressive Siamese army attacked their neighboring countries, namely Burma and Cambodia. The account states, “The capital of Ayutthaya was very large and protected by a wall measuring over eight leagues in circuit (about 44km), so that a man would have his work cut out to walk around it in two days...” and regarding military techniques in which the Siamese were formidable, it is stated, “...Burma and Cambodia, both of which had suffered severely at the hand of the Black King (king Naresūr).”<sup>44</sup>

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, due to the penetration of the maritime trade network into the region, use of army techniques and weapons from Europe had rapidly changed the mode of warfare in Asia. The fact that Europe was able to control some important ports in Southeast Asia from 1511 onwards, was due to their advanced technology, and their utilization of various types of arms and cannons.<sup>45</sup> If we were to scrutinize the arrival of European traders into the Southeast Asian countries, we would notice that Cambodia was their last. Geographically, Cambodia was not convenient for anchoring their junks, and compared to other countries in the region, it did not possess many varieties of spice products that could attract traders. B. P. Groslier emphasized the fact that the most of the Europeans who came to Cambodia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were missionaries, and they did not come for trading purposes.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, as mentioned above, Ayutthaya had the potential to attract many foreign traders such as the Chinese, Portuguese, Spaniards, and Japanese, as well as people of certain other countries in the area.

In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, many Japanese merchants had secure trade relations with Siam, more than what they had with other countries in the region. Japan’s links with Siam were not limited merely to trade. Some Japanese mercenaries and some Japanese merchants who were involved in that affair, when king Naresūr led his soldiers in fighting the Burmese during the 1580s. Moreover, Japanese merchants seem to have realized the necessity of the Siamese market, due to its exporting diverse types of weapons, such as modernized arms and various types of swords, and even sending some samurai. As evidence for this, we see that in 1589, the Spanish who administered the Philippines at Manila, stopped a Japanese ship loaded with a cargo of arms, and

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<sup>43</sup> Yoshikazu, “An Ecological Interpretation of Thai History.”

<sup>44</sup> Boxer, *op. cit.*, 128-129.

<sup>45</sup> Reid, *op. cit.*, volume one, 122 & 1993, volume two, 219-233.

<sup>46</sup> Groslier, *op. cit.*, 20.

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grabbed about 500 arquebuses (the most modern firearms available at that time), 500 swords, and other bladed weapons, meant for Ayutthaya.<sup>47</sup> The fact that the Siamese army was able to defeat the Burmese during the beginning of the 1590s was due to those modernized arms, and later they prepared to invade Longvek in 1593.

In contrast, Cambodia at that time had as yet no commerce with the Japanese. Until the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Cambodia began to have some communication with the Japanese, by the exchange of letters. From 1602, that is, during the reign of Srī Suriyobarm, there were some letters that were exchanged between the Khmer king and the Shogun, and most of those letters concern the strengthening of mutual friendship and trade relations.<sup>48</sup> However, the presence of Japanese merchants in Cambodia did not occur until the 1620s.

Hence, considering the economic and political situation around the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we see that Ayutthaya was more advanced and powerful than its neighboring countries. Besides, Ayutthaya had a chance to reinforce its military power. At that time, the Khmer king Sathā seems to have realized that the Khmer army could not resist the aggressive attacks of the Siamese soldiers. According to a European source, in 1590 king Sathā sent an envoy with two elephants as a gift to a Spaniard, who was governor of Manila. King Sathā asked Diego Beloso, a Portuguese, to take his envoy to Manila in order to establish a relationship of friendship and military assistance, so that he may be protected from the threats of Siam.<sup>49</sup>

At the same time however, the Manila administration too unfortunately was faced with certain problems with the Japanese, and hence they delayed in replying to the request of the Khmer king. In the year 1594, when Diego Beloso returned to Cambodia after the Manila administration had agreed to assist king Sathā, he found that Longvek was already occupied by Siamese soldiers. Diego Beloso himself was captured by the Siamese army, and king Naresūr took him as hostage to Ayutthaya with many Khmer prisoners. However, the Siamese king then released him and sent him back to the Manila, after asking him to persuade the Spanish administration in Manila to accept a relationship of friendship with Ayutthaya.

The same European source also mentions the fact that after the Siamese army had come to control Longvek, king Sathā escaped with his two sons and wife to Laos, and the king eventually died in Laos. However, Diego Beloso and the Spaniard Blas Ruiz de Herman Gonzales accompanied the two sons of king Sathā when they returned from Laos to Cambodia, and assisted them in gaining the throne. This same event is also described in the chronicles, especially in P/48 (II).

<sup>47</sup> Breazeale, "Thai Maritime Trade and the Ministry Responsible," 28.

<sup>48</sup> Kitagawa & Okamoto, "Correspondence between Cambodia and Japan in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." See also Péri, "Essai sur le Relation du Japon et de l'Indochine au XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles," especially 127-133.

<sup>49</sup> Antonio de Morga, *op. cit.*, 32-55.

### 3. THE PERCEPTION OF THE KHMER PEOPLE AFTER THE FALL OF LONGVEK

Since scholars on Cambodian history have generally conceptualized the ancient period of Angkor as epitomizing some of the most significant milestones and highpoints of Khmer civilization, the period after Angkor consequentially, has come to be seen as a minor period in Cambodian history. Grégory Mikaelian, a scholar of Cambodian history of the Middle Period, emphasized the fact that for the Khmer themselves, the ancient one (civilization) was perceived as greater than the newer one, which meant Longvek was perceived as a prosperous time, and the time after the fall of Longvek was perceived as a degenerated time.<sup>50</sup> He also stressed that colonial historiography described the post-Angkorian period as a time of decline, and in the history of collective representations of the Khmers during the Middle Period Khmer aristocracy living during the Middle Period began to think of Longvek as a period of splendor and after Longvek as a period of decline around the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

After Longvek's fall, everything appears to have become far departed or distanced, from the great period of the Angkor civilization. To gain an insight into the Khmer perception concerning the complex situation that arose after the fall of Longvek, I wish to take into consideration the economic and political context, and memories in the life and psychology of the Khmers.

In the Khmer people's perception, the fall of Longvek at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a catastrophic and painful event in Cambodian history, and it is viewed as the destruction of the last grand city after Angkor.<sup>51</sup> The event was not just the end of a period, but it is a fact too that Cambodia in the following periods came to continuously confront many problems, both economically and politically.

Although in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Khmer kings had reformed and promulgated the kingdom's laws<sup>52</sup> in order to facilitate management of the country and enable it to develop, it appears as though Cambodia had freely contacted and traded with foreign countries. From the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Cambodia experienced the pressure and intrusion of Siam and the Nguyễn (Việt Nam). In the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, after king Srī Suriyobarm was allowed to return to Cambodia and rule from 1601 to 1619, Cambodia was peaceful and secure, and had no trouble with Siam. This was probably the situation in Ayutthaya when it had changed, after the Siamese king Naresūr who used to lead the armies to attack Longvek had died in 1605. However, during the reign of king Jayajetthā II (Chey Chettha), Cambodia began to be attacked frequently by the Siamese, especially during the reign of the Siamese king Song Tham, who probably reigned from 1611-1628.<sup>53</sup> These new repeated invasions by the Siamese into Cambodian territory, were probably concerned with trade interests.

<sup>50</sup> Mikaelian, “គំនិតថាខ្មែរចុះស្រុតឱនថយនិងប្រឹងងើបឡើងវិញនៅសម័យកណ្តាល,” 35-45.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> The laws were promulgated especially during the reigns of king Srī Suriyobarm (1601-1619), Jayajetthā II (1619-1627) and at the end of the reign of king Jayajetthā III (1677-1707). For a detailed study of the promulgation of the laws in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, see Mikaelian, *La royauté d'Oudong*.

<sup>53</sup> Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 106; See also Mak Phœun, *Histoire du Cambodge*, 164.

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While struggling to protect himself from the threats of the Siamese soldiers, king Jayajetthā II decided to ask the Vietnamese king Nguyễn Sãi Vương for military assistance. However, in the course of negotiations, Nguyễn requested temporary cession of the customs posts of Koh Krâbei and Prei Nokor (present day Saigon),<sup>54</sup> and since then Cambodia had begun to gradually lose its land in the Mekong delta. In Vietnamese history, the aggressive expansion of its territory and political power towards the south through military might and commerce, began forcefully at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, especially in Cochin-china.<sup>55</sup> From the 1620s until the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Vietnamese had aggressively extended their territory southwards of the Mekong Delta region.<sup>56</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Nguyễn army invaded and subjugated Khmer territory at least twice. The first was in 1658 for about a year, and the second occurred in 1673, where the occupation continued for 7 years.<sup>57</sup> Since from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Nguyễn controlled Prei Nokor, Cambodia had no commercial contact with countries from the west, because the Nguyễn had governed the trade related seaports for at least 200 years, and a considerable amount of Khmer land was lost.<sup>58</sup> From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards until the French Protectorate in 1863, Cambodia was on one side under the sovereignty of Siam/Ayutthaya (and then Bangkok), and on the other side under pressure of Vietnam.

The modern Khmer people generally thought that the reason why Cambodia had become weakened and had grown unable to restore the country after the fall of Longvek, was because the Siamese had taken away many important documents and many educated people to Ayutthaya. People narrated this story to one to another and created an oral tradition, and it was even included in the Cambodian chronicles. For example, the legend of Preah Ko and Preah Keo was created to link up the historical events that were occurring at that time.<sup>59</sup>

It is believed the Siamese took away to Ayutthaya a statue of Preah Ko (in Sanskrit Nandin or a sacred bull), which had treatises, formulas, and other important documents hidden inside it, and so for the Khmer, nothing remained now to restore the country. In actual fact however this historical account was probably created at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the Siamese army had attacked Vientiane, a city of Laos in 1778, and transported a statue of Preah Keo, an emerald-crystal statue, to be installed in Bangkok. The Khmer made use of this event to explain the fall of Longvek, and also to recall the Siamese invasion of Cambodia.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, it must be stated here that in the “collective memory” of the Khmer, or

<sup>54</sup> Mak, *op. cit.*, 175; See also Vickery, “1620: A Cautionary Tale.”

<sup>55</sup> Wheeler, “Re-thinking the Sea in Vietnamese History.”

<sup>56</sup> For a detailed discussion in this period, see Vickery, *op. cit.*; Yang, *Contribution à l'histoire des Nguyễn au Vietnam méridional (1600-1778)*; See also Mikaelian, “Eléments pour une relecture de la marche vers le Sud ou Nam Tiên.”

<sup>57</sup> Mak & Po, “La Première Intervention Militaire Vietnamienne au Cambodge (1658-1659).” and “La Deuxième Intervention Militaire Vietnamienne au Cambodge (1673-1679).”

<sup>58</sup> Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 94-95.

<sup>59</sup> Ang, “Nandin et ses avatars.”

<sup>60</sup> Mikaelian, *op. cit.*, 39.



more precisely, not only among the Khmer but also among minorities such as the Pear, it has been reported over these many generations that the fall of Longvek was an absolute tragedy. Hence, there is a phrase every Khmer (or at least, members of minorities like the Pear) would know, namely *siem kier*, or “deported by the Siamese.”<sup>61</sup> Many associate this expression with the fall of Longvek. The anthropologist Jean Ellul, who among other areas conducted research in the Cardamom Mountain region, recorded in 1968 at an annual ceremony in the village of Peam Prus the words of an invocation to the Neak Ta (protective spirit) of the place. It contains a passage that states, “if we come to live in this region of forests and mountains, it is following a raid in which the Siamese have deported our brothers...”<sup>62</sup> Even today, a few illiterate Suoys<sup>63</sup> who are ignorant regarding “history” associate their poverty and isolation specifically to the “fall of Longvek,” without their knowing of course as to when this occurrence took place.

This deportation conducted by the Siamese with forcefulness and cruelty, is also mentioned in European records. Khmer prisoners suffered greatly at the hands of king Naresūr (whom the Europeans called the “Black King”). The records describe as follows the sadistic tortures the king inflicted, while executing several Khmer prisoners as well as Europeans: “The tortures included boiling them alive in oil, tearing out their flesh with pincers, and trampling them to death under the feet of elephants.”<sup>64</sup> Also, the people who were deported by Siamese were forced to work for canal projects in Siam.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The descriptions concerning the fall of Longvek in the Cambodian chronicles are not all accurate with regard to this vital historical event, and hence they need to be compared with external sources. The descriptions mentioned above, as to the Siamese army using cannons to shoot coins into the thickness of the bamboo trees, the fact that king Naresūr of Siam attacked Longvek because of his rancor and so on, appear rather fictitious. For the controversies among members of royal families, these did occur during several reigns. For instance, the disputes that arose in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, are mentioned in both the chronicles and in the records of the Chinese merchants, who stopped by in Cambodia before arriving in the city of Nagasaki in Japan, during the Edo period (1603-1868).<sup>65</sup>

The purpose behind the Siamese attack of Longvek at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was to expand their territory and political power in the region. It is suggested that the purpose was also

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<sup>61</sup> The expression of *siem kier* seems to reflect a recurring event. The expression has been used by Cambodians to indicate many painful events when the country was attacked by the Siamese army.

<sup>62</sup> Information communicated by Prof. Ang Choulean.

<sup>63</sup> A sub-ethnic group of the Pears who are living in the region of Oral Mountain.

<sup>64</sup> Boxer, *op. cit.*, 129.

<sup>65</sup> Ishii, *The Junk Trade from Southeast Asia*.



to control the port city for the sake of commercial interests.<sup>66</sup> The Siamese expansion occurred after their economic and political situation had become stabilized, and their military power was dominant. The fall of Longvek was hypothetically caused by the powerful Siamese, who had rapidly developed the potential for using modern military technology, owing to their developed trade activities with Europe and Japan. Internal affairs among members of the royal family were also probably a contributing factor that led to the fall of Longvek.

Hence, the fall of Longvek was not without drama in the life and psychology of the Khmer people. Regardless of precise historical accuracy, the Khmers and others either directly speak of the “fall of Longvek” or they speak of the incident indirectly, by using expressions like “deported by the Siamese.”

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<sup>66</sup> Vickery, *Cambodia after Angkor*.

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