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State and Uncivil Society in Thailand at the Temple of Preah Vihear. Singapore: ISEAS, 2013, 124 pp. ISBN 9789814459907. Price: USD 19.90 (paperback).

A number of publications have appeared on this issue since 2008, when the temple ruins of Preah Vihear were listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site of Cambodia which caused conflict on the border between Thailand and Cambodia. Many have tried to illuminate this conflict from different perspectives by focusing on the relationship between the two nation states. Pawakapan's book is among them, though she approaches from a different angle. Instead of entering the 100-year-old history of the contested temple ruins between the two states that started with the French colonial power's endeavour to restore or recapture territories according what they perceived as 'old Cambodia' or the ancient Khmer empire, Pawakapan approaches the topic from a domestic political perspective. It needs to be mentioned that a similar perspective has been applied, yet in a less politicized way than the publication under review by Kasetiri and others in a small book that also appeared in 2013.

The overall conclusion of the book is that the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), often characterized as 'Yellow Shirts', and their allies in state agencies, the military and academics supporting PAD are responsible for the conflict and, consequently, for the deterioration of the relationship between Thailand and Cambodia since 2008. Previously, the relationship between the two countries had increasingly improved and benefitted from economic development over decades; the author elaborates on this topic in a special chapter, 'The post-cold war regional integration'. Thailand's support of Cambodia's efforts to have the temple ruins of Preah Vihear listed as UNESCO World Heritage is, according to the author, a logical consequence of this expanding relationship of economic interdependence.

The author calls the PAD an 'uncivil society', understood as a subset of civil society. 'Uncivil society' is defined as a group involved in violence and aggression, such as nationalism, racism, and the like (p. 9). The PAD, supported by other groups, by exploiting nationalism and the nationalistic history of territories, the author argues (especially in the last chapter, 'Uncivil society in polarized politics'), used the temple of Preah Vihear (Pawakapan never uses the Thai name, Phra Viharn) to achieve its own domestic agenda, namely the disempowerment and the denigration of pro-Thaksin governments, even at the risk of ruining the relations, based on economic interlinkages, with the neighbouring state.

Unfortunately, the reader gets trapped in a dichotomy between the 'good guys', the 'red shirts', or rather the pro-Thaksin governments, who apparently

represent 'civil society', and the 'bad guys', the 'yellow shirts', labelled as the uncivil society. The book is so interesting and illuminating with regard to domestic politics that the author eclipses a number of issues that also need to be mentioned in order to do justice to the whole Preah Vihear debacle. First of all, the history of the conflict between the two countries over the temple did not only start in 1959, as the author suggests. The provocative statement of the Thai actress in 2003 that Angkor should ultimately belong to Thailand refers to the fact that France had already convinced Siam to cede Angkor (and other territory) to Cambodia in 1907. The judgement of the International Court of Justice in 1962, which attributed the temple of Preah Vihear to Cambodia (confirmed by a further decree in 2013) has to be considered in the setting of the time (the aftermath of colonialism).

The author's description of the period beginning in 2003 when Thailand and Cambodia co-operated and jointly pushed forward the nomination process is very important since it illuminates the core of the issue which later inflamed the conflict: the debates about the map prepared for the nomination which included the disputed area around the temple, on the one hand, and Cambodia's refusal of a joint nomination, on the other hand, as she feared losing sovereignty over the temple (pp. 47–50). Here a weakness of governance becomes visible, which seems significant but has hardly been mentioned in other publications so far. Namely, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and its Center, by failing to insist on a joint nomination before accepting the proposal for further processing, missed an opportunity to govern for the sake of peace.

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Reference

Kasetsiri, Charnvit, Sothirak, Pou and Pavin Chachavalpongpun (2013). *Preah Vihear: A Guide to the Thai-Cambodian Conflict and its Solution*. Bangkok: White Lotus.