

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CAMBODIAN-SIAMESE RELATIONS BETWEEN 14th AND 19th CENTURIES

*“History is what happened, more or less. Legend is how men remember it, or try to explain it, or seek to realize in story what is unattainable in life,”*¹.

__Wei Tang 1984, p. 1.

2.1 Introduction

The Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo has its roots in the real history of Cambodia and its theme is also about the Siamese and their relations with the Khmer. It is therefore necessary to take a look at the historical relations between both kingdoms. The knowledge of the past relationship between the two states is an instrumental tool with which one can use to comprehend and interpret the story. As the legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo originally existed in the oral form, the exact time when it first came into existence is unknown. It is also uncertain whether it was first composed mainly to explain the event concerning the capture of Lovek by the Siamese. Some scholars argue that the legend appears to have been linked with the hold of Angkor by the Siamese in the early 15th century², while others claim that it was related to the capture of Lovek in the late 16th century³. Interestingly, another hypothesis suggests that the story has connection with

¹ Wei Tang, Legends and Tales from History (Shang Hai: Greatwall Books, 1984), p.1.

² Santi Phakdeekham, “Lovek: Ratchathani Khamen yuk lang muang phranakhon (Lovek: The Khmer Capital After Angkor),” in Sujit Wongthet (ed.), Phra Naresuan ti muang Lovek tae mai dai kha phraya Lovek (King Naresuan Attacked Lovek But Did Not Kill the King of Lovek) (Bangkok: Matichon Press, 2001), pp. 79-120.

³ Treng Ngea, Pravatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer) (Phnom Penh, 1973), p. 31. ; Khing Hoc Dy, La Legend De Brah Go Brah Kaev (National Institute of Languages and Oriental civilization: Cahiers de l’Asie du Sud-Est, n. 29- 30,pp. 169-190, 1991), p. 169.; Ang Chuléan, Eric Prenowitz & Ashley Thompson, Angkor: Past- Present- Future, (Royal Government of Cambodia: Apsara, 1998), p. 91.

Cambodia's situation in the 18th and 19th century when the kingdom was in the darkest period of its history. Her administration was under significant control and influence of its two neighbors, Siam to the west and Vietnam to the east. During these periods, a number of Cambodia's kings were crowned in Bangkok as the royal regalia were kept there⁴. Due to the variety of arguments concerning the existence of the Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo, there is a vital requisite to include some brief information about Cambodia-Siamese historical relations in this thesis. This chapter will present the brief historical picture of Cambodia's relationship with Thailand before the Lovek period, during the Lovek period, and after the Lovek period. This historical snapshot will enable readers to contextualize and gain some understanding of the time frame that the legend came into being.

The relationship between Cambodia and Siam from the late 13th and 14th century up until the French occupation of Cambodia in the 1860s had been fraught with wars, destruction and the movement of mass populations from each other's territory. Since the early establishment of the first Thai kingdom, Sukhothai, the relationship between both neighbors had already been marked by warfare. However, Sukhothai will not be included in this chapter as the kingdom lasted less than two hundred year and was absorbed into Ayutthaya. Besides, it is the relationship with Ayutthaya that filled a long period of Cambodia's history from the mid 14th century until the 19th century. Given a chapter of this length, it is impossible to describe in detail all the historical events between both countries so only the major ones will be described and analyzed. However, more focus will be on the Lovek period. The main reason is that the majority of Cambodian people believe that the legend took place during the Lovek period. More importantly, whenever they talk about the legend, they remember the events of Lovek and vice versa.

⁴ David Chandler, A History of Cambodia (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), p. 85.

2.2 Cambodia before Lovek

This section will present brief information regarding the emergence of a new Thai kingdom, Ayutthaya, and how Ayutthaya soon challenged the power of the older Angkorean Empire. Brief information about attacks by Ayutthaya on Angkor, which have been considered one of several possible factors making the Khmer decide to change their capital, is also given.

2.2.1 Angkor and the Newly-Emerging Ayutthaya

After the death of King Jayavarman VII of Angkor, several new states emerged in the territories that used to be under Angkor's control. These included Chiang Mai, Lan Na, Lan Chang, Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and some others. Although Chou Ta-Kuan's account, written during his stay at Angkor between 1296 and 1297, described Cambodia as wealthy and territorially extensive controlling more than ninety provinces⁵, the emergence of new states especially those near Angkor such as Sukhothai and Ayutthaya suggested that Cambodia's political power and influence were on the steady decline. The decline resulted from several factors which could be categorized into two main groups—internal and external. Internal factors included the overuse of resource, both manpower and wealth, for wars and the construction of mega projects by previous kings⁶, the change of state religion from Hinduism to Buddhism⁷, the take-over of the throne at Angkor by force among the Angkorean elites⁸, and several others. For the external factors, the migration of Thai and Laos people started several centuries earlier in small numbers down to areas north of Angkor and in the Chao Phraya basin but their population began

⁵ Chou Ta-Kuan, *The Customs of Cambodia* (Bangkok: The Siam Society, 1993), p. 63.

⁶ G. Coedes, *The Making of Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 124.

⁷ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, p. 69.

⁸ D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), p. 125.

to reach large numbers in the 13th century⁹. As soon as they had significant manpower and wealth, they started to bid for power independent from Cambodia by establishing their own respective states. The change in international trade was also one of the factors, as China in the 13th century came to trade on their own in Southeast Asia, especially in the mainland¹⁰. Besides that, the policy of ‘divide and rule’ was a way through which Kublai Khan encouraged the Thai to weaken the Angkorean Empire. This was after King Jayavarman VIII (1243- 1295) ignored Chinese demands that he pay homage and went so far as to imprison Kublai Khan’s envoy¹¹. As it is not possible to elaborate all factors in this short section, only the emergence of Ayutthaya and its relationship with Angkor is the main focus.

Ayutthaya was established in 1351 by King U Thong or Ramadhipati I whose reign was between 1351 and 1369. Prior to its establishment, there were several major towns located on the lower reaches of the rivers in the Chao Phraya basin, and around the upper coasts of the gulf of Siam. These especially included four places Phetchaburi, Suphanburi, Lopburi, and Ayutthaya. After a struggle between the ruling families of these places, Ayutthaya emerged as the dominant centre in the mid-fourteenth century. The Chinese called this region Xian (Hsien), which the Portuguese converted into Siam¹². According to Michael Vickery, Hsien made its first appearance in the Chinese records in the 1280’s and continued to deal with China under that name right up until modern times¹³. Situated on the lower Chao Phraya River and close to the sea, Ayutthaya prospered as a major international trading center where goods were exchanged between China to the east, India and the Arabia to the west, and the Malay Archipelago to the south. Westerners who arrived in Ayutthaya in the early sixteenth century made a

⁹ G. Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1968), pp. 189-191.; Also see Charnvit Kasetsiri, *The Rise of Ayudhya* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 30- 39.

¹⁰ David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, p. 77.

¹¹ D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p. 123.

¹² Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 8.

¹³ Michael Vickery, *Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries* (A Ph.D dissertation, Yale University, 1977), p.516.

remarkable impression that the city was one of the great powers of Asia, along with China and the Indian empire of Vijayanagar¹⁴. Before it fell under Thai control, Ayutthaya had in the thirteenth century been the western provinces of the Angkorean Empire with its important administrative region centered in Lopburi¹⁵. By the end of the thirteenth century, Khmer's control of the region had faded. This was perhaps caused by the dynastic difficulties in Angkor, the separatist ambitions of a ruling line established in Lopburi and the new assertive mood of the growing Thai population of the lower Chaophraya valley, who had recently been inspired by the example of Sukhothai's successful bid for independence¹⁶. As the rulers at Angkor were busy challenging each other for the throne and destroying each other's religious beliefs, this presented an opportunity for the elites in the Chao Phraya basin to build up their power and connections which finally made Ayutthaya a strong and powerful kingdom.

No one knows for certain about the origin of the founder of Ayutthaya. Topics like who King U Thong or Ramadhipati was and where exactly he came from prior to his rule at Ayutthaya remain controversial and debatable among scholars. What historians know about him is his date of birth in 1314, and his marriages to a princess of Suphanburi in 1331 and to a princess of Lopburi in the 1340s. A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara in their study of Sukhothai history also touch on Ayutthaya and suggest that Ramadhipati was a Thai¹⁷. However, G. Coedes thinks that he perhaps belonged to a family of Mon or Khmer origins¹⁸. For David K. Wyatt who agrees with Charnvit Kasetsiri's hypothesis believes that King U Thong came from a powerful Chinese merchant family who may have been located in Phetburi¹⁹. Whether his origin was Thai, Mon, Khmer, Chinese or others is not important here. What is important is that King U Thong must have been a

¹⁴ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, A History of Thailand, p. 10.

¹⁵ Rong Syamananda, A History of Thailand (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1988), p. 32.; David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1984), p. 63.

¹⁶ David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History, p. 63.

¹⁷ A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara cited in Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, p. ii.

¹⁸ G. Coedes, The Making of Southeast Asia, p. 146.

¹⁹ David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History, p. 65. ; For detailed discussion on the origin of King U Thong, see Charnvit Kasetsiri, The Rise of Ayudhya, pp. 12-30.

relatively wealthy and powerful figure in the area. This argument can be supported by the notion that if he had been the opposite, he would not have been able to mobilize mass support, and the powerful Suphanburi and Lopburi families would not have given their respective princesses to him as consorts. His wealth, power and connection through marriages with princesses of powerful families from Suphanburi and Lopburi made U Thong an even more prominent and legitimate ruler. Therefore, his ambition to establish a new kingdom and to proclaim himself king would not upset local people and rulers. Instead, they perhaps gave him enthusiastic support. As it is generally known, Suphanburi was a powerful military city controlling the areas to the west of Ayutthaya, while Lopburi to the north-east was a major administrative and cultural center. Therefore, U Thong would benefit from gaining all the necessary assistance from the two families in term of military, administration and civilization which were fundamental components for state-building in the old days. According to A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, the Suphanburi family was perhaps more Mon or Khmer than Thai²⁰. However, for David Wyatt, Suphanburi was preeminently a Siamese, Theravada Buddhist state²¹. For Lopburi's population, many scholars believe that they may have been predominantly Khmer people especially in the long-established towns dependent on Lopburi including Inburi, Singburi, Chainat, Nakhon Nayok, and Prachinburi²². Nevertheless, Wyatt also acknowledges that in Lopburi a substantial Mon element and a growing number of Thai may also have existed²³. Through connection with both families, U Thong was equipped with special rights and capabilities with which he could draw support from all major ethnic groups in the Chao Phraya basin—Khmer, Mon and Thai—which the Lopburi and Suphanburi families could not.

King Ramadhipati's court was established much on the model of Angkor because the King got married to a princess from Lopburi, which was an important administrative

²⁰ A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara cited in Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, p. ii.

²¹ David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History, p. 64.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

and cultural outpost of the Khmer. Moreover, his new kingdom was founded on the territory previously under Angkor's control. For these reasons, like the king of Angkor, the king of Ayutthaya referred to his subjects by the epithet 'dust on the holy feet', and the whole Khmer vocabulary reserved for the person and actions of the king was taken over *en bloc* for the protocol in the Court of Ayutthaya²⁴. Besides, not only the whole vocabulary for the king, but Khmer words, ideas, arts, royal ceremonies, and 'Indianized' or 'Khmer-ized' institutions were found at the Ayutthayan court as well²⁵. For example, these can be seen through the adaptation of divine kingship to Buddhism, the transformation of the Khmer tower into the Prang, the U Thong School of sculpture etc. Because there were several of Angkor's features at the Ayutthayan court and perhaps Khmer Brahmans, O.W. Wolters make the pertinent suggestion that the Khmer rulers at Angkor may have regarded the struggle with Ayutthaya as a civil war rather than one between two independent kingdoms²⁶. He based his argument on the idea that there was no reference to it in Ming records, no Khmer complaint of Siamese aggression.

2.2.2 Angkor and the Attacks from Ayutthaya

Soon after the establishment of Ayutthaya, there was an almost permanent state of war between Angkor and this new kingdom. According to Thai and Cambodian chronicles and historians, the attacks from Ayutthaya resulted in the capture of Angkor by the Siamese a few times in 1353, 1389, 1394 and 1431. However, whether Angkor was seized by the Siamese one time, two times or three times is still a dubious topic and debates among scholars. Their hypothesis will be discussed in length in the paragraphs below.

²⁴ G. Coedes, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, pp. 146- 147.

²⁵ Charnvit Kasetsiri, *The Rise of Ayudhya*, p. 14. ; G. Coedes, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, p. 164. ; Rong Syamananda, *A History of Thailand*, p. 33.

²⁶ O. W. Wolters cited in D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p. 135.

The real reasons why the first king of Ayutthaya started his war campaign against Cambodia in 1352 soon after he became king remain unknown to historians. However, based on one chronicle about Ayutthaya, King Ramadhipati or King U Thong waged war against the Khmer capital because “khò̃m prae phak”. The exact intended meaning of this sentence also remains doubtful and subject to different interpretations. According to the chronicle, vassal mo' an, circa 1351-1352, there is an entry stating that because the “khò̃m prae phak”-- “the khò̃m turned their faces”-- king Ramadhipati sent an army to subdue them. The first attack was defeated, but the second, led by a prince from Suphanburi, was successful²⁷. According to Charnvit, “Khò̃m” is an old Thai word for Khmer or Cambodian; “prae” means to change or to turn; and “phak” is a Pali word “batra” meaning face²⁸. Regarding this phrase “khò̃m prae phak”, King Mongkut’s writing in the nineteenth century suggested “khò̃m prae phak” means that parts of eastern Siam, which had formerly belonged to Cambodia, had then implicitly “turned their faces” to Siam²⁹. King Mongkut’s hypothesis also sounds logical because in the ancient time ordinary Khmer people perhaps could not distinguish clearly between the rulers at Angkor and Ayutthaya because the elements of kingship in both courts looked similar. Thai scholar, Charnvit Kasetsiri, defined the phrase as ‘the Khmer have turned their faces away in the other direction’ and suggested that because the phrase “khò̃m prae phak” is now accepted by present-day Thais, it implied that the Khmer were ‘no longer faithful’³⁰. However, the interpretations by these modern historians may have been driven by political or national consciousness, since the phrase can also have other meanings. The word “prae” is also used in Khmer language meaning “turn, change, become etc.”³¹, and “phak” which came from Pali, has meaning in Khmer and Thai that is therefore not different than its original meaning of “face”. Therefore, “khò̃m prae phak” can also mean

²⁷ Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, p. 377.

²⁸ Charnvit Kasetsiri, The Rise of Ayudhya, p. 123.

²⁹ King Mongkut’s writing cited in Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence for the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, p. 377.

³⁰ Charnvit Kasetsiri, The Rise of Ayudhya, p. 123.

³¹ Chuon Nath, Vachana nu krom Khmer (Khmer Dictionary) (Phnom Penh: Buddhist Institute, 1967), p. 684.

“khò̃m has changed their face or facial expression” implying that their facial expression or they themselves became unhappy or angry. This notion I have put forward here can also be logical as it is generally known that Ayutthaya was founded on a site which was previously under Khmer control. Moreover, Ayutthaya grew so increasingly wealthy, powerful and influential that its sphere of influence came into conflict with that of Angkor. Consequently, this made the Khmer rulers at Angkor become uneasy and irritated. Perhaps afraid of being attacked by Angkor, King U Thong of Ayutthaya took precaution by attacking Cambodia first. Nevertheless, whether the word “khò̃m” which the Thai at present think refers to the Khmer was really in use in the early Ayutthaya period or not and whether it was really the term used to address the Khmer is controversial. According to Michael Vickery’s observation, “...before the eighteenth or nineteenth century “khò̃m” did not refer to Cambodia, and the Burmese and Mon use of krom, which is acceptable as a form of khò̃m, refers to Ayutthaya.”³² Vickery went further to suggest that:

Assuming that khò̃m refers to the Cambodians, the phrase prae bāktr, in the sense commonly given it, implies a condition of previous subjection or vassalage, which at the date 1350- 51 seems anachronistic³³.

If the khò̃m was used to refer to Ayutthaya as Michael Vickery’s suggestion, then it could mean that it was the Ayutthayan rulers that “prae phak”. It meant they did not want to be under Khmer’s control. Nevertheless, whatever the real intended meaning of the phrase was or whose interpretation is the most accurate does not matter. Common knowledge tells us it was normal in the past within mainland Southeast Asia or perhaps also in other regions of the world for states to wage war against each other as the victory over the enemy would bring to the winner prestige, power, wealth, manpower and other rewards.

³² Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence for the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, pp. 409- 410.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

After several wars with Cambodia, Ayutthaya managed to capture Angkor. However, how many times exactly and what years Angkor fell into the Siamese's hands is still an argument among scholars. Some like D. G. E. Hall argued that the Siamese managed to occupy Angkor twice³⁴. Yet, Hall failed to give the years when the events occurred. A Cambodian scholar, Michel Tranet, pointed out that the Cambodian capital of Angkor Thom was successfully captured by the Siamese in 1389. They moved 90,000 people to Ayutthaya³⁵. Nonetheless, Tranet fails to give the sources he used. Besides, the year 1389, that he claimed as the fall of Angkor to the Thai, is strange because many well-known historians like Coédes, Vickery, Briggs, Leclère, O.W Wolters and some others did not mention about this year at all. Based on Coédes's study of the chronicles, the Siamese succeeded at least twice in taking Angkor, the first time in 1353, the second in 1394. However, Coédes warned that these sources are of dubious reliability³⁶. Coédes was certain that Angkor was held by the Siamese during the reign of the Siamese King Boromraja II whose reign started in 1424. The chief event of his reign was the siege and capture of Angkor in 1431, which finally put an end to the Angkor period of Cambodia's history³⁷. However, Coédes was not certain whether the Siamese managed to capture the capital of Angkor during their wars with Cambodia prior to 1431. A group of historians including Leclère, Rong of Chulalongkorn University, and W. A. R. Wood who wrote "A History of Siam" believe that the Khmer city of Angkor fell to the Siamese a few times. These were in 1353, 1394 and 1431³⁸. According to these scholars, who appeared to have relied mainly on chronicles about Ayutthaya, in 1352, King Ramatibodi I nominated his son, Prince Ramesuan, as the head of the army for the invasion of Cambodia. However, the Thai army was defeated and the King had to dispatch Prince Boromraja, the king's brother in law, with another army to save his nephew. Boromaraja made a forced march

³⁴ D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p. 135.

³⁵ Michel Tranet, *Pravatasas nai prah reachea nachak Kampuchea: Sampornapheap roveang prochea chun Khmer-Thai chab tang pi so. vo. ti 13 nai ko. so. (A History of the Kingdom of Cambodia: Relationship between Khmer-Thai since the 13th Century)* (Phnom Penh, 2005), p. 35.

³⁶ G. Coedes, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, p. 196.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

³⁸ Adhènard Leclère, *Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère* (Translated version from French into Khmer. Phnom Penh: Angkor Bookshop, 2005), p. 179. ; Rong Syamananda, *A History of Thailand*, p. 34.

to Cambodia, where he inflicted a severe defeat on the enemy and captured its capital, Angkor Thom the following year³⁹. The main reason that the Siamese were able to capture the city was because the Khmer King, Prah Srei Lampong Reacheadhiraj, fell ill and died during the Siamese siege of the capital⁴⁰. Coédes, based on the Annals of Ayutthaya, mentioned that the King of Siam had placed one of his sons on the throne at the Khmer capital. This prince died immediately. Two other Siamese princes, one succeeding the other, reigned until 1357, when a Khmer prince, brother of Lampongraja, who had taken refuge in Laos, liberated the city and was crowned there under the name Suryavansa Rājādhirāja⁴¹. The second capture of Angkor by the Siamese took place in 1394. In 1393, the king of Siam, Ramesuan, invaded Cambodia and besieged its capital⁴². According to Leclère, who relied on Cambodian chronicles, the capital was surrounded for several months and finally fell to the Siamese. The main reason of the fall was because of the betrayal of two high Cambodian officials, Ponhea Keo and Ponhea Tai, who opened one of the gates of the city for the Siamese soldiers⁴³. This time the Ayutthayan King placed his son, Indaraja, in charge of Angkor, but he was soon assassinated and Angkor was liberated and ruled by the Cambodian again⁴⁴. The last capture of the Cambodian capital by the Siamese took place in 1431 when King Boromaraja II of Ayutthaya whose reign was between 1424-1448 managed to hold Angkor Thom after surrounding it for a long time. Rong described the situation after the capture as the following:

With an intention to turn Cambodia into a vassal state of Ayutthaya, Boromaraja II set up his own son, Pra Intaraja, on the throne at Angkor, before the army started its return journey, bringing back to Siam a vast number of prisoners and a large quantity of valuable objects of art including bronze images of animals. But Pra Intaraja occupied the Cambodian throne only for a short time. He was ill and died. Thus, it resulted in the failure of Siam in subjugating Cambodia⁴⁵.

³⁹ Rong Syamananda, A History of Thailand, p. 34. ; W. A. R. Wood cited in G. Coedes, The Indianized States of Southeast Asia, pp. 235- 237.

⁴⁰ Adhènard Leclère, Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère, p. 179.

⁴¹ G. Coedes, The Indianized States of Southeast Asia, p. 236.

⁴² Rong Syamananda, A History of Thailand, p. 35. ; Adhènard Leclère, Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère, p. 187.

⁴³ Adhènard Leclère, Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère, 187.

⁴⁴ G. Coedes, The Indianized States of Southeast Asia, p. 237.

⁴⁵ Rong Syamananda, A History of Thailand, p. 36.

However, the theories that the Cambodian capital, Angkor, fell under the Siamese occupation a few times have been challenged by Lawrence P. Briggs in his article *The Siamese Invasion of Angkor*. In this article, Briggs's argument, with which Michael Vickery and Thai historian Charnvit and many other scholars agreed, suggested that the capital of Angkor was captured by the Siamese only one time, and that was in 1431. This argument is based on the Chronicle of Ayutthaya by Luang Prasert, and Ming records listing of Cambodia's missions to China between 1368 and 1424⁴⁶. The Chronicle of Ayutthaya by Luang Prasert, considered to be the most reliable chronicle of all chronicles about Ayutthaya while also being written during the Ayutthaya period, did not mention anything about the capture of Angkor by the Siamese prior to 1431⁴⁷. According to Vickery, historians thought it was two times or three times because of the confusion or mistake in the translation and interpretation of the chronicles and the inaccuracy of the chronicles themselves. Vickery's study and analysis of the Ayutthayan and Cambodian chronicles came to his finding that:

What the Ayutthayan and Cambodian chronicles say about the latter country before A.D. 1500 is fiction. In the chronicles of both countries, much of the fiction seems to have resulted from honest mistakes over records which were not clear, and which in the absence of any tradition of critical analysis of sources could not be clarified⁴⁸.

Vickery raised the examples of controversy in the Ayutthayan and Cambodian chronicles as followed:

...the name found in Luong Prasert, brah nagar indr, would seem to be the more appropriate, for it fits titles which have been used for Angkor in later centuries and which included the terms nagar indapattha or indraprastha. I suggest that there has been confusion both among the Thai chronicles themselves and among the Thai and Cambodian texts concerning the conquest of Angkor and the conquest of Ayutthaya by a prince from Suphanburi. The confusion was probably due to the fact that the situations,

⁴⁶ Lawrence P. Briggs cited in Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, pp. 302- 307. ; Charnvit Kasetsiri, The Rise of Ayudhya, p. 122. ; John F. Cady, Southeast Asia: Its Historical Development (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 110.

⁴⁷ Charnvit Kasetsiri, The Rise of Ayudhya, p. 122.

⁴⁸ Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, p. 490.

conquest of Angkor by Ayutthaya, conquest of Ayutthaya by Suphanburi, conquest of Ayutthaya from Chainat were all structurally similar situations, each involving a brah mahā nagar or nagar hluon, “capital,” the differences between which may not always have been clearly understood, and princes Nagar Indr or Indarājā who were both related to king Paramarājādhirāj⁴⁹.

In his article *The Siamese Invasion of Angkor*, Briggs was impressed by the Thai Phongsawadan versions because they speak of an attack on Cambodia in the 1350s, but not an attack on, or conquest of, Angkor. Briggs pointed out that, in fact, the Thai-language versions all say the attack was against “krun kambujādhpati”, which may mean the Cambodia kingdom, or Cambodian capital, or even, in Cambodian usage, the Cambodian ruler. Therefore, it is simply the matter of loose translations in European languages which did not convey the full meaning of the original⁵⁰. In my opinion, the argument by Briggs and Michael Vickery of the fall of Angkor to the Siamese in 1431 seems to be logical. It is less possible that Ayutthaya only two years after its foundation managed to defeat the rulers at Angkor, which was an old empire. It would be more convincing if the phrase “against krun kambujādhpati” is interpreted as the attack against the Cambodia’s towns or provincial cities. The Ayutthayan kings perhaps waged wars against the Cambodian provinces near Ayutthaya taking their population and subjugating the territory first. These can be compared to cutting the limb of the Angkorean kings. Once Ayutthaya became stronger, while Angkor became weaker, Ayutthaya finally advanced to the Khmer capital.

2.2.3 Changing of Cambodian Capitals

After the occupation of Angkor for a while, a prince known as Chao Ponhea Yat together with his loyalists managed to force the Ayutthayan prince and his troops out of Angkor. Despite the success, Chao Ponhea Yat did not attempt to re-establish Angkor as his capital. A decision was made to move the capital down to Srei Santhor, a site near the Mekong River. Because the new city was flooded during rainy season, Chao Ponhea Yat

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 394- 395.

⁵⁰ Lawrence P. Briggs cited in *ibid.*, pp. 302- 307.

moved his court to Chaktomok (four faces), a place where the present-day Phnom Penh is situated. According to Leclère, the decision to abandon Angkor occurred in 1388⁵¹. For Coédes, this took place in 1431⁵². Briggs thinks that the decision to move the city was made in 1432⁵³. However, O. W. Wolters suggested that Angkor was abandoned not in 1432 as Briggs supposed, but sometime after 1444⁵⁴. It is hard to say which scholar's notion is the right one, as their suggestion is simply their hypothesis which each of them made based on what sources they had. However, we can say for certain that the abandonment of Angkor did not take place before 1431.

No one knows for certain about the real reasons behind the transfer of the city from Angkor to new places because these have not been found in inscriptions. Instead, they were found in the chronicles. However, the chronicles were not written by people at that time. They were written much latter, approximately 300 or 400 hundred years later. Therefore, they cannot be totally reliable. There have been a number of historians who attempted to make the hypotheses. Coédes and Leclère came up with the notion that the city was abandoned because it is near Ayutthaya. Therefore, it was too vulnerable and too difficult to defend⁵⁵. For O. W. Wolters, he suggested that the decision to abandon the capital was made due to feuds within the Khmer royal family stimulated by Siam, which caused a civil war involving regional divisions, rival capitals, and a wasteful consumption of manpower in the fighting⁵⁶. Some historians even went further to suggest that Angkor was abandoned because of such reasons as the failure of the irrigation system at Angkor, the shortage of water⁵⁷, the epidemic, natural disaster etc. However, David Chandler and Michael Vickery have a viewpoint different from those of the above scholars. Based on their theories, the city was transferred from Angkor to a new location in the south

⁵¹ Adhèmard Leclère, Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère, p. 192.

⁵² G. Coedes, The Indianized States of Southeast Asia, p. 237.

⁵³ Lawrence P. Briggs cited in Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, pp. 302- 307.

⁵⁴ O.W. Wolters cited in D. G. E. Hall, A History of Southeast Asia, p. 132.

⁵⁵ G. Coedes, The Making of Southeast Asia, p. 196. ; Adhèmard Leclère, Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère, p. 192.

⁵⁶ O.W. Wolters cited in D. G. E. Hall, A History of Southeast Asia, p. 132.

⁵⁷ See Heng Thung, "Revising the Collapse of Angkor," SPAFA, Vo. 9, no 1, 1999, pp. 1- 20.

because the new place is near the Mekong River and is closer to the South China Sea. Therefore, it is easy to trade with foreigners especially with the Chinese⁵⁸. Noticeably, in the 13th and 14th centuries there was a rapid expansion of Chinese maritime trade with Southeast Asia, and particularly with the mainland. Both Chandler and Vickery regard a dozen tributary missions sent from Cambodia to China between 1371 and 1419, nearly equal to a handful sent throughout the previous 500 years of Angkor history, as attempts to trade or set up trade arrangements, not as a sign of trouble with the Siamese as believed by other historians⁵⁹. Therefore, they see the Cambodian's relocation of their capital not as a result of fear of the Thai or Thai military superiority, but as a result of a desire to trade⁶⁰. Chandler and Vickery argue that the struggle between Ayutthaya and Cambodia was a depiction of two states nearly equal militarily, with Cambodia most of the time, well into the seventeenth century, able to defend the Thai attacks⁶¹. The Cambodians even carried warfare into the 1570s and 80s right up to the Chao Phraya river basin. These attacks all came during the reign of Mahā Dharmarājā, at a time when Siam was recovering from a Burmese invasion and destruction of the old Ayutthayan dynasty. Even when the Thai had recovered under Nareuan and were able to mount a devastating invasion of Cambodia, the effects were short-lived and Cambodia quickly recovered its independence⁶². Though each intellectual came up with different theories concerning the relocation of the Cambodian capital, there is no single theory that can claim absolute rightness. The actual causes behind the move of the city were perhaps not isolated, but the combination of several determinants.

Although the Khmer king moved the capital from Angkor to new locations far south, Angkor has never been abandoned as several scholars thought. There have been

⁵⁸ David P. Chandler, A History of Cambodia, pp. 77- 78. ; Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence for the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, p. 515.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 78. ; *Ibid.*, p. 515.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 77- 78. ; *Ibid.*, p. 515.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 78. ; *Ibid.*, p. 502.

⁶² Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, p. 502.

people living in the area until the present day⁶³. A Christian missionary, Father Gabriel de San Antonio, who traveled around the region in the late 1500s, wrote records that also mentioned the name Angkor. His record was written and sent to King Philippe III of Spain in 1603. His report titled: “A Brief and Truthful Relation of Events in the Kingdom of Cambodia,” was published in 1604. Below is the quotation from it:

The main cities are Anchor (Angkor), Churdumuco (Chaktumuk Phnom Penh) and Sistor (Srei Santhor), which means “big villages”. This last city is so named because it is very important and has more than fifty thousand inhabitants. There are the king’s court, the kingdom’s councils, the audience and the chancellery through which it is governed. It is on the river Mekhong’s shore (Mekong), fifty leagues inland⁶⁴

If his comments are true, it means that Angkor was not abandoned. It happened to be that some locations along the rivers also became cities and received more focus, perhaps due to trade as suggested by Chandler and Vickery. Nevertheless, it could also mean that Angkor was abandoned for a short time before it was rediscovered by King Ang Chan in the 1530s. There is also evidence that the king and his successor attempted to stay there for a while. Therefore, when father Gabriel de San Antonio arrived in Cambodia in late 1500s, Angkor had already been known and gained some attention from settlers. However, Chuléan, Prenowitz & Thompson believe that there have been always people settled in the area of Angkor. They base their argument on the notion that there is a stone inscription in the 16th century at Phnom Bakhéng. The owner of the inscription is a faithful Buddhist. To the west of Angkor Thom there also remain Buddha statues of that period⁶⁵. Furthermore, at Chon Prah Pon and Chon Ba Kan, were found 40 inscriptions from the 16th to the 18th centuries⁶⁶. Nonetheless, people who had settled there between the change of the capital and the rediscovery by King Ang Chan may have been relatively small in number. This resulted from the large movement of people to Siam, and death as a result of war, poverty and disease. Some had escaped to the forest or settled down in

⁶³ Ang Chuléan, Eric Prenowitz & Ashley Thompson, *Angkor: Past- Present- Future*, p. 83.

⁶⁴ Gabriel de San Antonio, *A Brief and Truthful Relations of Events in the Kingdom of Cambodia* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1998), p.7.

⁶⁵ Ang Chuléan, Eric Prenowitz & Ashley Thompson, *Angkor: Past- Present- Future*, p. 85.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

other areas, while others went along with the king to the new capital. The argument above can be supported by the evidence that before King Ang Chan discovered Angkor and settled there for a while, very few people or perhaps none in the new city had heard of or known the old city. This can be exemplified by what Father Gabriel de San Antonio wrote in his record:

In the year 1570⁶⁷, a city in the kingdom was discovered that the natives had not yet seen nor heard of ... it is magnificently built, has a well fortified stonewall. There are many coats and letters that nobody understands⁶⁸.

2.3 Lovek Period

As stated above, the majority of Cambodian people believe that the legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo was composed with the chief aim to explain the historical events during the Lovek period when the Siamese sacked the capital. Therefore, this section contains longer and more detailed information than the other two. Despite the length, it is not possible to cover everything. “Lovek period” in this usage is used to refer to the period when Cambodia’s capital was in Lovek area.

2.3.1 Overall Characteristics of Lovek: Name, Meaning, Location & Its Construction as the Capital

No one knows for certain when and why the area was named “Lovek”, and who named it. In the old Khmer inscriptions, they used lvek (inscriptions K 850 and K 144), but its modern usage is Lovek⁶⁹. However, the meaning of the name is controversial. The name “Lovek” may be a possible derivative of one of the following Khmer words—Vaek, Lovaeng, or Lovaek. The meaning of these three Khmer words should be

⁶⁷ 1570 was not the correct year that Angkor was discovered. The old temple was discovered by King Ang Chan in the 1530s.

⁶⁸ Gabriel de San Antonio, *A Brief and Truthful Relations of Events in the Kingdom of Cambodia*, p. 7.

⁶⁹ Santi Phakdeekham, “Lovek: Ratchathani Khamen yuk lang muang phranakhon (Lovek: The Khmer Capital After Angkor),” pp. 79- 120.

explained here so that we can get a picture of the possible meaning of the name of the area. In explaining the meanings, the Khmer Dictionary written by the Supreme Patriarch Chuon Nath and published by the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh has been referenced. The word “Vaek” in Khmer as a verb means *to open, to make space* etc. As a noun, “Vaek” has two meanings. The first one is *ladle*. Another one is *kinds of poisonous snake*; for example, Vaek Roneam (Cobra), Vaek Sro’ngae, Vaek Dambok etc⁷⁰. For “Lovaeng”, used as an adjective, means *spacious, large, open-spaced* etc⁷¹. The word “Lovaek” in Khmer as a noun means *a period between two events* (transitional period), or *a location between two places* (transit place)⁷². It is hard to say from which one of the three words the term “Lovek” had derived. Regarding the definitions, each of the three words can claim to be the origin of “Lovek” since each of them makes sense of the area. Based on the interviews with some old Buddhist laymen at Wat Trolengkeng, an important monastery in Lovek, there are two oral traditions concerning why the area was called so⁷³. The first oral story is that long time ago there was a king who came with his officials by boats along Tonlé Sap. Their boats stopped over in the area. The king, then went onshore by *Vaek* (using his hands to open up the way to pass through) the mangrove. Up there he found a good open space. The King felt satisfied with the area, and thought that his palace should be built there. From that time on, the area was called *Vaek*. Later on, it was transformed into “Lovek”. Another oral tradition is that long time ago there was a king who was accompanied by many of his officials and servants came by boats along Tonlé Sap. Their boats stopped over at the river bank in the area of Lovek. When cooking a meal on the boat for the monarch, the king’s chef accidentally *Lung* (dropped, fell) the *Vaek* (ladle) into the river. As a result, the chef could not prepare the meal in time for the king. From that time on, people called the area *Lung Vaek* (dropping the ladle). As time passed, *Lung Vaek* developed to Lovek⁷⁴. However, the old men

⁷⁰ Chuon Nath, *Vachana nu krom Khmer (Khmer Dictionary)* (Phnom Penh: Buddhist Institute, 1967), p. 1219.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1142

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 1091

⁷³ Interviews with old Buddhist laymen at Wat Trolengkeng, a monastery in Lovek area, 19 November 2006.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

interviewed did not know the period and the name of the king who came to the area. The two stories are different—one involving opening the mangrove area for walking, and the other dropping the ladle into the river. Nevertheless, they share one thing in common, and that is that the king and his officials came by boats along Tonlé Sap, and they stopped over in the area before they went on their journey. This means that the area of Lovek served as a transit point for people who traveled up and down Tonlé Sap. If this hypothesis is correct, it means that the term “Lovek” was derived from “Lovaek,” which means *a location between two places* (transit place). Noticeably, Lovek is located near Tonlé Sap en route between Angkor to the northwest and Phnom Penh to the southeast. Another hypothesis is that the area was named so because there were a lot of *Vaek* (poisonous snakes) living in the mangrove forest, but it is groundless due to the unavailability of oral tradition and sources.

Lovek in ancient times was one of the provinces of Cambodia. Then, its status was reduced as a district in the province of Kampong Chhnang province. Later on, it was changed to Kampong Tralach district also in Kampong Chhnang province⁷⁵. Lovek also used to be the name of a military base in the old Cambodia’s capital of Lovek.

Lovek became Cambodia’s capital during the 16th century. It is located approximately 60 km to northwest of Phnom Penh. Lovek is situated close to Ton Lé Sap (Sap River), one of the major rivers which converges with the Mekong River at the junction in Phnom Penh and flows down to the South China Sea via the present-day Southern Vietnam. Lovek was built as Cambodia’s capital during the reign of King Ang Chan or Chan Reachea (1516- 1566). The king, after he had defeated his rival Sdach Korn also known as Srei Chetha in 1525, ordered the move of the capital from Pursat to Lovek. It took three years from 1527 to 1529 for the construction of the new city. It was at Lovek that King Ang Chan received his coronation. According to Treng Ngea, the

⁷⁵ Chuon Nath, *Vachana nu krom Khmer (Khmer Dictionary)*, p. 1091.

selection of the site as a new city came mainly because of security reasons⁷⁶. He based his argument on the fact that the city was situated at the best geo-strategic location for self-defense against the invasion of the enemy with a river, lake, and thick forest surrounding it. This military city was built in rectangular shape with a width of 2 km and length of 3 km. The city was enclosed by high earthen fortification. Besides, there were moats and thick bamboo forest acting as a hedge with its dimension of 160 meters on all sides. Moreover, the citadel of Lovek was so large that no horse could gallop around it⁷⁷. Another important reason for the selection of Lovek as the capital may have been associated with trade, which contributed to the flourishing economy of the country. Noticeably, Lovek is close to the river. This provided the capital with opportunity and easy access to international trade in the South China Sea via the Mekong River.

After the construction was complete, King Ang Chan moved to the new capital in 1529, and had reigned there until he died in 1566. After his death, Lovek had served as the Khmer capital for the next three Cambodian kings before it was finally destroyed by Ayutthaya's army.

2.3.2 Lovek before the Status as the Capital

Although Lovek gained its status as Cambodia's capital in the 16th century, evidences show that the area had long been inhabited. As the name "Lovek" perhaps derived from the Khmer word "Lovaek," which means *a location between two places* (transit point), it gives us an idea that Lovek may have been an important port that people called on when they traveled along Tonlé Sap between Angkor and other provinces to the south and the east.

⁷⁶ Treng Ngea, Provatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer), p. 18. This book is in Khmer language. It is usually referred to by Cambodian historians.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

According to a Thai historian, the area of Lovek was known to the Siamese at least since the early Ayutthaya period⁷⁸. Santi Phakdeekham found the name Lovek appeared in one of the old Ayutthaya chronicles, which the Thai historians think was written in the early Ayutthaya period⁷⁹. According to a Cambodian historian, Dr. Ros Chantrabot, who is now working on a book about strategic military bases in the ancient Khmer Empire, the city or the military camp at Lovek was not new. It had been there since the Angkorean time. Chantrabot added that during Angkor period, there were several military bases around the capital of Angkor, all of which Lovek was one⁸⁰. His comment is interesting and logical. Geographically speaking, Lovek is situated near the river on the way to Angkor. This means that if the enemy from the South China Sea; for example, Champa, came by the river to attack the capital of Angkor, they had to clash with the Cambodian troops at Lovek first before they reached Angkor. In addition to the opinions by Santi and Ros Chantrabot, another concrete evidence proving the long-existing importance of Lovek is the finding of stone inscriptions in the area. Interestingly, the inscriptions, K136, K137, and K432, all dated back to the Angkorean period. The inscriptions were written in Sanskrit and old Khmer. Inscription K 136 in old Khmer and Sanskrit is believed to have been written in the 10th century. Inscription K432 in Sanskrit found at Wat Tralengkeng in Lovek should have been written in the 9th century⁸¹.

The idea that Lovek was one of Angkor's military strategic bases, and the fact that old inscriptions dated back to the Angkorean period were found there, suggests that the area of Lovek had been an important place since the Angkorean period or even earlier than that. More importantly, Lovek was known and recorded by foreigners, the Siamese, since the early Ayutthaya period shows that the area had settlements there and was perhaps an important city of the Angkorean Empire.

⁷⁸ Santi Phakdeekham, "Lovek: Ratchathani Khamen yuk lang muang phranakhon (Lovek: The Khmer Capital After Angkor)," pp. 79- 120.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 79- 120.

⁸⁰ A talk with Dr. Ros Chantrabot, a historian and the dean of the Faculty of Sociology and Humanity of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, 28 November 2006.

⁸¹ Santi Phakdeekham, "Lovek: Ratchathani Khamen yuk lang muang phranakhon (Lovek: The Khmer Capital After Angkor)," pp. 79- 120.

If it is the case that the area of Lovek had been an important place since the Angkor period, new light is illuminated on the existence of the legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo, which the majority of Cambodian people believed to have linked with Lovek. If the hypothesis above is true, the legend can also be considered to have existed in Lovek, but it is a problem of timing-- when? Did it take place when Lovek was a city or military base of Angkor, or when Lovek was the capital city in the 16th century? After all the story had been passed on for several generations orally before it was written down. Therefore, the story probably emerged a long time ago, but people have adapted it and linked it with new events to make the story alive. However, this is simply one of the theories. The accurate answer cannot be given. It opens to readers the opportunity to analyze the concepts and make sense on their own.

2.3.3 Lovek and Its Significance

Lovek prior to its capture by the Siamese was a strong and prosperous city. There were trade activities taking place between the city and South China Sea. That the size of the city was large is the evidence of the richness of the kingdom. If Cambodia had not been so rich, it would not have had the resources to build a capital of that size⁸². The record of the Spanish priest of the Dominican Order Father Friar Gabriel de San Antonio, about Cambodia, gave very descriptive information about the wealth and prosperity of the country. Below is a quotation from it:

In Cambodia, there are gold, silver, precious stones, lead, tin, brass, silk, cotton, incense, gum, benzoin, lacquer, ivory, rice, elephants, buffaloes, horses, cattle, goats, deer, chickens and fruit as plentiful as it is savory. Besides, that country holds the trade for the whole of Asia and it is a necessary door which will open to the priceless wealth of the kingdom of Laos. Cambodia has so many of those precious things that, when king Apram Langara fled to Laos, he scattered gold and silver coins on his way so that the Siamese were so busy picking them up that they did not catch him up⁸³.

⁸² Santi Phakdeekham, "Lovek: Ratchathani Khamen yuk lang muang phranakhon (Lovek: The Khmer Capital After Angkor)," pp. 79- 120.

⁸³ Gabriel de San Antonio, A Brief and Truthful Relations of Events in the Kingdom of Cambodia, pp. 87-88.

Father Friar Gabriel de San Antonio's report went further to say:

And even if that proof were lacking, one thing only would suffice to demonstrate the said truth, and that is the great and continuous affluence of the Japanese and of the Chinese in the kingdom. Those foreigners are like the Jews; they never go to barren or poor lands but always live and trade in countries where milk and honey flow, where they can reap a profit. It is an established fact that the reason why they trade with the kingdom of Cambodia is because that kingdom is very rich and procures great profits. The Spanish who live in that archipelago do not need anything else to rely on to see the difference between rich and poor countries, than the presence or the absence of the Japanese and the Chinese⁸⁴.

Although some of his description may be an exaggeration, it at least gives us a picture that Cambodia in the 16th century depended on trade. That there was the presence of Chinese and Japanese in Lovek shows that the capital was one of the major international trading centers in Southeast Asia. Beside the Chinese and the Japanese, various sources also mention that there were the Arabs, Spanish, and Portuguese as well as traders from the Indonesian archipelago who were trading and residing there too. According to David Chandler, Cambodia in the 15th and 16th centuries, was a powerful trading center and was also just as attractive to foreign traders as was Ayutthaya⁸⁵.

In addition to its status as the trading center, Lovek was an important arts and religious center of Cambodia at that time as well. Based on the Cambodian legend, inside Lovek were two statues, Preah Ko (sacred bull) and Preah Keo (sacred precious stone). Both of them were worshipped by local people. Because Cambodian people considered Preah Ko as sacred, they placed precious texts and formula inside his belly⁸⁶. Treng Ngea suggested that even though the belief is legendary or mythical in nature, it gives us an idea that Lovek was a considerably strong-hold city built for the purposes of not only defending against foreign invasions, but also as a *Klang* (storehouse/ warehouse) for the storing or housing of the national cultural heritage after Angkor⁸⁷. Besides, sources from

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 88.

⁸⁵ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, p. 78.

⁸⁶ Treng Ngea, *Provatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer)*, p. 18.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 19

old people in the area related that there were about 120 Buddhist monasteries in Lovek at the time it was the capital⁸⁸. Though the number of the monasteries was reduced after the fall of the city, at present, there are still a considerable number of pagodas located near each other in the area. The great number of Buddhist monasteries in the city means that Lovek at that time was a chief concentration center of religion. The big number of the monasteries can also be interpreted to mean that Lovek had a huge and prosperous community, which could afford to serve the functioning of the approximately 120 pagodas.

2.3.4 Cambodian- Siamese Relations before the Attack on Lovek

According to Cambodian chronicles, the early 16th century marked the internal conflict in Cambodia developed between new rulers (officials or chieftains) against the power of the king. It also showed increasingly intensifying wars between Cambodia and her neighbor, Ayutthaya. Cambodian King Srei Sokunboth, whose reign was between 1504 and 1512, had his power challenged by one of his brothers-in-law known as Sdach Korn. As a brother-in-law of the king, Korn became so powerful and influential that he finally attempted to confront the king. Chronicles mentioned that King Srei Sokunboth arranged a plot to assassinate Korn since he felt afraid that Sdach Korn would take over his throne. Fortunately, Korn managed to escape from the assassination. He gathered men in distant districts and provinces to wage war against King Sokunboth⁸⁹. After several wars, Korn managed to kill King Sokunboth in 1512 and declared himself to be the new king of Cambodia with the royal name as Srei Chethathireach Reameathipdei. King Sokunboth's younger brother, Prince Ang Chan or Chan Reachea, who was responsible for supervising Phnom Penh and provinces in the west fled with some of his royal family to take refuge in Siam⁹⁰. Four years later in 1516, Prince Ang Chan returned back from

⁸⁸ Interviews with old Buddhist laymen at Wat Trolengkaeng, and old people in Lovek, 19- 20 November 2006.

⁸⁹ Eng Soth, *Prahreach pong savada Khmer: Mohaboros Khmer (Khmer Chronicles: The Khmer Heroes)* (Phnom Penh: Buddhist Institute, 1969), Part III.

⁹⁰ Treng Ngea, *Provatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer)*, p. 13.

Ayutthaya with an army, elephants and weapons. According to Cambodian chronicles, Prince Ang Chan when taking refuge in Ayutthaya was responsible for capturing elephants for the Siamese king. One day because of the desire to return back to Cambodia, he made a request to the King of Siam. However, his request was turned down. Prince Chan Reachea, therefore, came up with a plan to create false information that there was a large white elephant living in the forest to the east of Ayutthaya. Hearing the news, the King of Siam desperately wanted to have this elephant. Therefore, he ordered Prince Chan Reachea to take the responsibility of capturing the elephant. Prince Chan Reachea made a request to the King of Siam that in order to seize the elephant, he needed 5000 soldiers, 100 elephants, weaponry, food and the royal sword with him⁹¹. But another source says Prince Ang Chan requested only 500 men from the King of Ayutthaya⁹². With the military resources in hand, Ang Chan marched into Cambodia and mobilized additional tens of thousands of Cambodian people from provinces along his way. After nine years of war, he managed to kill Sdach Korn and received the coronation as the new king of Cambodia at Lovek in 1529. Chandler suggested that King Chan Reachea's temporary refuge in Ayutthaya and his restoration to power under Thai patronage set a precedent that many Cambodian kings were to follow⁹³. However, according to Cambodian chronicle, Chan Reachea was a very strong and powerful king. Western scholars like Coédès and D. G. E Hall think that Ang Chan was the most powerful monarch Cambodia was to produce after the fall of Angkor. During his long reign of fifty years he was able to turn the tables on Siam and regained for his country at least some of its former prestige⁹⁴. After Ang Chan became king, the Siamese king sent his diplomats to Lovek asking him to send tribute to Ayutthaya as dictated by traditional practices. However, this order was rejected by Lovek. As a result, the Siamese king sent ten of thousands of his soldiers to wage war against Cambodia. However, King Ang Chan was able to defeat the Siamese force and even able to wage counter attacks against Siam

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹² Adhèmard Leclère, *Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère*, p. 221.

⁹³ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, p. 81.

⁹⁴ G. Coedes, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, p. 197. ; D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p. 135.

in an attempt to get back the population and provinces that the Khmer had lost earlier to Ayutthaya⁹⁵. The Siamese chronicles mention a Cambodian raid on the Prachin province in 1531. However, W. A. R. Wood in his *History of Siam* placed the Cambodian raid on Prachin in 1549 during the Burmese siege of Ayutthaya⁹⁶. From 1559 onwards Ang Chan unceasingly raided Siamese territory. In 1564 his armies advanced to the wall of Ayutthaya, but returned empty-handed, for the city had fallen into the Burmese hands in February of that year⁹⁷. Ang Chan's greatness brought about Cambodia's independence, peace and prosperity during his reign which lasted until thirty years after his death in 1566. After his death, he was succeeded by his son with the reign title of Preah Samdach Boromreacheathreach reameathipdei or Borom Reachea I, whose reign was from 1566 to 1576. Like his father, Borom Reachea I was also a very strong king. He carried on the task his father had been doing. He also led the soldiers to attack Ayutthaya at the time the city was surrounded by the Burmese led by the great Burmese king known by the name Bayinnaung. Under Borom Reachea I's reign, provinces in Korat fell once again under Cambodia's occupation⁹⁸. According to David Wyatt, the Cambodia's raids on Siam took place frequently in the next two decades (1570, 1575, 1578, 1582 twice, and 1587), each time moving war captives from the prosperous eastern and gulf provinces from Chantaburi to Phetburi⁹⁹.

While Cambodia's frequent attacks presented additional nightmares for Ayutthaya when the kingdom had already suffered from the Burmese assaults, they also provided King Maha Tammaraja of Ayutthaya with a good excuse to propose to the Burmese the permission to improve Ayutthaya's army and fortification¹⁰⁰. During that time, Ayutthaya became Burma's vassal state after the capital was captured by Burmese King

⁹⁵ Treng Ngea, *Provatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer)*, pp. 19-20.

⁹⁶ W. A. R. Wood cited in D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p. 136.

⁹⁷ D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p. 136.

⁹⁸ Treng Ngea, *Provatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer)*, p. 24.; D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p. 136.

⁹⁹ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, p. 100.

¹⁰⁰ Rong Syamananda, *A History of Thailand*, p. 54. ; David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, p. 100.

Bayinnaung. Maha Tammaraja was crowned king of Ayutthaya with the support of Bayinnaung. The improvement of the army and the city's military bases earlier was one of the reasons that Maha Tammaraja's son, Prah Naresuan, managed to restore his country's independence from Burma and his successful wars against other states including Lovek of Cambodia.

2.3.5 Siamese Attack on Lovek

Following Borom Reachea I's death in 1576, his son, Preahbath Satha I (1576-1595), succeeded as the new Cambodian king. At the end of King Satha's reign, bad fortune took place in Cambodia as the Siamese led by Prah Naresuan began war campaigns against the kingdom. Prah Naresuan or Naret was born in 1555. He is the son of King Maha Thammaracha who was enthroned in Ayutthaya by the Burmese after they had sacked the capital. Naresuan had spent most of his childhood in Burma before he was permitted to return back to Siam in 1571 when his sister was presented to King Bayinnaung. The death of the great Burmese King Bayinnaung in 1581 weakened Burma's hold on Siam. This opportunity allowed Prince Naresuan to rapidly begin building up his country's power of resistance against Burma's suzerainty. After several wars, Prince Naret managed to bring back full independence for Siam. According to various sources in Thai and foreign languages, Prah Naresuan was a leader of magnetic personality, a born soldier with great intelligence, resourcefulness and courage. He is the greatest Siamese in 1,000 years¹⁰¹. David Wyatt commented in his book, "It is difficult to imagine that the history of Ayutthaya would have been the same without King Naresuan, for he is one of those rare figures in Siamese history."¹⁰² Naresuan became King of Ayutthaya in 1590 following the death of his father, Maha Thammaracha. Soon he got rid

¹⁰¹ "The greatest Thai hero comes to life," The Nation 18 January 2007. It is available at http://nationalmultimedia.com/2007/01/18/headlines_30024447.php. The Nation comments King Naresuan as the greatest Siamese in 1000 years. However, the Nation fails to identify what 1000 years means, considering from what year or period or dynasty. Noticeably, the date of the foundation of the Sokhuthai Kingdom until now is less than 800 years.

¹⁰² David K. Wyatt, Thailand: A Short History, p. 100.

of the Burmese, Prah Naresuan started to turn his forces against the Cambodians. The reasons of his war campaigns against Cambodia are presented in the paragraphs below.

According to Coédes, Ayutthaya and Lovek agreed to reconcile by signing a treaty in 1584¹⁰³. But, for Wood, the treaty was concluded in 1585 between King Satha of Cambodia and Prah Naresuan¹⁰⁴. But in Cambodia's chronicle, this took place between King Satha and Prah Naresuan's father, King Maha Thammaracha¹⁰⁵. The signing of the agreement between King Satha and King Maha Thammaracha would sound more logical than between King Satha and Prah Naresuan since the year 1584 or 1585 Naresuan had not become king yet. Nonetheless, whoever signed the agreement with who is not important here. The importance is that there was some form of agreement at that time. Based on Vickery's opinion, the treaty at that time perhaps was proposed by Ayutthaya because the kingdom was going through hard times as a result of the Burmese attacks¹⁰⁶. Under the term of the agreement, King Satha of Cambodia decided to help Siam against the Burmese. He sent an army under the command of his brother Prince Srisup'anma (Suriyopora) to assist the Siamese in defeating a Laotian invasion led by the Burmese governor of Chiang Mai¹⁰⁷. However, after the victory in the battle, Pra Naret and the Cambodian prince had quarreled with each other. The argument, thus, broke up the alliance, and led to the renewal of Cambodia's raid on Siam in 1587 at the time when Ayutthaya was besieged by the Burmese. After the Burmese abandoned the siege through shortage of supplies, Pra Naret turned to deal with Cambodia¹⁰⁸. Another reason for Siam's decision to attack Cambodia found in Father Gabriel de San Antonio's report was

¹⁰³ G. Coedes, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁴ Wood cited in D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p. 132.

¹⁰⁵ Eng Soth, *Prahreach pong savada Khmer: Mohaboros Khmer (Khmer Chronicles: The Khmer Heroes)*, Part III.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Vickery, *Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, p. 426.

¹⁰⁷ Wood cited in D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p. 132.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

involved with the desire to have a rare white elephant. The Spanish missionary described what he had heard as the following:

... King Apram (the name of the Khmer king called by Westerner) obtained the kingdom of Cambodia and began to reign from 1570. Shortly before his birth, a white elephant was born in that kingdom, a rare and very much wished for event that had never happened before in those provinces. The king of Siam wanted to force Apram Langara, the king of Cambodia, to hand over the animal to him. For that purpose, he gathered together an army of thirty thousand men along with three thousand war elephants to attack Cambodia and took away the animal¹⁰⁹.

Though his report here cannot be totally reliable, it gives us the new angle that further reason for the assault against Cambodia, besides taking revenge, probably involved King Naresuan's intention to impose suzerainty over Cambodia. This since the white elephant in those times was the symbol of superiority or suzerainty in Southeast Asia's concept of kingship. However, if we have a look at what Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit describe about the intention of the Burmese when they sacked Ayutthaya, it gives us an idea that Ayutthaya's attack on Lovek seemed to come from the desire to prevent Cambodia from becoming a rival state of Ayutthaya in terms of military and trade rather than just an attempt to reduce Cambodia to a tributary state. Baker and Pasuk's description of the Burmese intention is as follows:

The Burmese aim was not to force Ayutthaya into a tributary status, but to obliterate it as a rival capital by destroying not only the physical resources of the city, but also its human resources, ideological resources, and intellectual resources. Any of these which were movable were carted away to Ava, including nobles, skilled people, Buddha images, books, weapons and members of the royal family. Resources that were immovable were destroyed¹¹⁰.

This hypothesis also appears to be logical, because when King Naresuan captured Lovek, he was said to have destroyed the city and moved thousands of Cambodian people including some royal families, skilled people and intellectuals. Besides, Cambodia's

¹⁰⁹ Gabriel de San Antonio, A Brief and Truthful Relations of Events in the Kingdom of Cambodia, p. 10.

¹¹⁰ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, A History of Thailand, p. 23.

legend mentioned that he also brought statues of Preah Ko and Preah Keo to Siam. Yet, a question may be posed: if King Naresuan had had no intention of making Cambodia a vassal state of Siam, why did he leave one of his commanders in charge of Lovek when he returned back to Ayutthaya? Though taking revenge, imposing suzerainty or simply destroying Cambodia's potentials appears to be the major reason of the war against Lovek, several other reasons should also be considered. These include such matters as manpower, wealth and rivalry in trade. The victory over the Cambodians brought more population and wealth to Ayutthaya to supplement what it had lost earlier during the wars with Burma, and could also be used in preparation for further campaigns against Burma. Besides, the rivalry in trade was also likely one of the motives for the war. In the 16th century, trade provoked east-west rivalries with Ayutthaya in the middle. To the west of Ayutthaya is the Irawadi basin, where Pegu became dominant over the other Burmese states. To the east is the Khmer capital of Lovek¹¹¹. To Siam, destroying Lovek; therefore, meant reducing one of her trade rivals.

How many times Prah Naresuan had attacked Cambodia before he managed to capture Lovek in 1594 remains a bit uncertain among historians since there were some different sources regarding the years of war campaigns. According to some Cambodian chronicles, King Noreasuan began his first war against Cambodia in 1584 when he led 100,000 soldiers, 800 war elephants and 1850 war horses to attack Cambodia¹¹². However, some historians suggested that the first war campaign led by Prah Naresuan to raid Cambodia occurred in 1587¹¹³. Vickery, based on the Anlok inscription, agreed that a Thai invasion in 1587 is probably true¹¹⁴. However, Naresuan's attack on Cambodia at that time failed to capture the city due to the lack of supplies. He ordered his men to

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹² Treng Ngea, *Provatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer)* (Phnom Penh, 1973), p. 29.

¹¹³ Wood cited in D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p. 132. ; Rong Syamananda, *A History of Thailand*, p. 58.

¹¹⁴ Michael Vickery, *Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, p. 451.

withdraw back to Ayutthaya¹¹⁵. Cambodia's chronicles mentioned that before his army retreated, Prah Naresuan ordered his soldiers to fire silver coins from cannons into the thick bamboo forest, which was a source of strong protection for the capital of Lovek. Once they withdrew, Cambodian people and soldiers started to clear the forest in a search for the silver coins¹¹⁶. The part which scholars all agreed to be true was the expedition in 1593 after King Naresuan managed to defeat another attempt by the Burmese to restore their hold over Siam¹¹⁷. This time the Siamese were able to approach the capital of Lovek and capture it in January 1594¹¹⁸. However, according both Spaniard Antonio de Morga's account and Wood, the city was taken in July 1594¹¹⁹.

According to Leclère whose opinion is based on chronicles, King Naresuan's army in 1593 went to attack Cambodia from different directions. One group went to Korat down to Siem Reap then took the boats down to Kampong Svay province. The naval force came by sea to Bassac province (in present-day southern Vietnam). Another naval force attacked Banteay Meas (in present-day Kampot province)¹²⁰. Based on Thai Chronicles, the routes are different from Leclère's description. The forces were divided into three main groups. One group recruited in Nakhon Ratchasima moved down to Siem Reap and Kampong Svay on the eastern side of the Tonle Sap, while a fleet from the Southern provinces was to attack Buddhaimās (in Khmer: Banteay Meas). Nareasuan himself would lead another army overland via Battambang¹²¹. However, concerning the attack of Banteay Meas, Michael Vickery suggested that it was untrue and a fiction of the

¹¹⁵ Wood cited in D. G. E. Hall, A History of Southeast Asia, p. 132.; Rong Syamananda, A History of Thailand, p. 58.

¹¹⁶ Eng Soth, Prahreach pong savada Khmer: Mohaboros Khmer (Khmer Chronicles: The Khmer Heroes), Part III, p. 58.

¹¹⁷ G. Coedes, The Making of Southeast Asia, p. 155.; Adhèmard Leclère, Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère, p. 247.; D. G. E. Hall, A History of Southeast Asia, pp. 137-138.; Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, p. 447.

¹¹⁸ G. Coedes, The Making of Southeast Asia, p. 155.; Groslier cited D. G. E. Hall, A History of Southeast Asia, pp. 137-138.

¹¹⁹ Antonio de Morga's account cited in Rong Syamananda, A History of Thailand, p. 58.

¹²⁰ Adhèmard Leclère, Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère, p. 247.

¹²¹ Thai Chronicles cited in Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, pp. 448- 449.

chronicles. The event of attacking Banteay Meas was perhaps lifted by chroniclers from the eighteenth century account when the route was well-known to the Siamese troops¹²². Vickery's argument came from his study of the name of the places and their history. He claims that records from Europeans found no evidence of an important port at Banteay Meas (Thai call: Buddhaimās) and no evidence that the canal there linked with the Mekong was in use in the sixteenth century¹²³. Besides, both the Cambodian and Vietnamese chronicles mentioned that the canal was first built around 1820 and connected Chaudoc and Hatien¹²⁴. Based on all these evidences, Vickery came to the conclusion that the Siamese fleet when raiding Cambodia in the 16th century came up the Mekong¹²⁵. Michael Vickery's argument sounds logical concerning military strategy. Supposing the canal that the Thai chronicles mentioned had existed in the sixteenth century, the Siamese fleet must have gone with a large number of boats. Therefore, going through a small canal would not be a good choice. Besides, using the Mekong up to the Cambodian capital would be much less time-consuming. If they had used the canal, it was perhaps only a smaller portion of their troops, while a bigger one would have used the Mekong. Strategically speaking, it would be unwise to place all the troops traveling along a small canal while ignoring the big Mekong.

Before the capital fell to the Siamese, King Satha had asked for help from the Spanish governor in the Philippines promising in return commercial concessions as well as the promise to treat well the Christian missionaries who preached in the country. However, the Siamese managed to capture the capital and left before the arrival of the Spanish fleet of about a hundred men. According to the Royal History of Siam, King Satha of Cambodia after the city fell was captured and executed in a ceremony called *Pathomkam*. His blood was brought to clean King Naresuan's feet¹²⁶. However,

¹²² Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence for the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, pp. 400-406.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 400-406.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 400-406.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 400-406.

¹²⁶ Thai Chronicles cited in Rong Syamananda, A History of Thailand, p. 60.

Ayutthaya Chronicle by Luong Prasert did not mention this ceremony at all. But many of the chronicles written during the Rattanakosin Period say the same thing or even have the same wordings¹²⁷. Chanchai Phak-athikhom who read many old legal documents in the Ayutthaya period explained that the meaning of the ceremony *Pathomkam* in the Ayutthaya period was not associated with beheading. Based on her opinion, *Pathomkam* referred to the ceremony of catching and taming the elephant. There were three ceremonies for the king—Pra Ratchapithi Pathomkam, Mathayomkam, and Odomkam¹²⁸. Therefore, what was mentioned in most Ratanakosin period about the beheading ceremony is not true. The idea was probably to overawe the Cambodians, deterring them from rising again¹²⁹. For Vickery, he thinks that what stated in the Thai chronicles about the execution of King Satha by King Naresuan was the conflation of several “Sathas”. Noticeably, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were also two other Cambodian kings named Satha. The first was born in 1620, became king in 1641, and died in approximately 1658. The second was born in 1703, became king in 1722, abdicated seven years later, became king again in the same year, lost the throne in 1737, and died in approximately 1748. Both of them were in conflict with older relatives who were pro-Thai and both of them were involved in actions leading to Vietnamese intervention. The last Satha died after the Thai intervention¹³⁰. Whatever the reasons were regarding the intentions in the chronicles are not important now. The fact, as supported by Cambodian chronicles and Western sources, is that King Satha of Lovek was not killed by the Siamese. He together with his son had escaped to Laos before the city fell leaving behind his brother, Prince Suriyoppor, in charge of Lovek¹³¹.

¹²⁷ Chanchai Phak-athikhom, “Praratchaphithi pathommakam nai po. so. 2127: khotoyaeng nai prawattisat thai (The Ceremony of Pathommakam in 2127 Buddhist era: Controversy in Thai History),” in Sujit Wongthet (ed.), Pra Naresuan ti mueang Lovek tae mai dai kha phraya Lovek (King Naresuan Attacked Lovek But Did Not Kill the King of Lovek) (Bangkok: Matichon Press, 2001), pp. 3- 64.

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp. 3- 64

¹²⁹ Rong Syamananda, A History of Thailand, p. 60.

¹³⁰ Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, pp. 400-406.

¹³¹ Antonio de Morga’s account cited in Rong Syamananda, A History of Thailand, p. 60. ; G. Coedes, The Making of Southeast Asia, pp. 197- 198.; David P. Chandler, The Land and People of Cambodia (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), p. 89.

2.3.6 The Fall of Lovek and Its Effect

The collapse of Lovek, based on Cambodian chronicles, came from several causes. These included the strong and larger number of the Siamese forces, the loss of the thick bamboo forest that protected the city, and the anger and disappointment among local people and the King's officials at King Satha's inappropriate acts. At the end of his reign, King Satha had crowned two of his young sons as kings while he himself was only in his late thirties. This caused disappointment among some of his officials and ordinary people¹³². The King's admission of two male Thai spies disguised as Buddhist monks known by the names Tepanhao and Sophanhao into his palace in Lovek, and his destruction of *Teverak* statues (the local, magical god who protects the districts or kingdom) at the suggestion from the two fake monks, angered the people and his officials even more¹³³. In addition, the loss of the thick and strong bamboo forest that had acted as the promising shield for the capital made the situation in the country even more chaotic.

When occupying Lovek, the Siamese sacked and burnt the city. They destroyed everything that was immovable including various cult objects and statues which were worshipped by the Khmer¹³⁴. Tranet, a Cambodian scholar, made a remark that very often when the Siamese attacked or captured the Cambodian capitals, they destroyed statues or brought them to Siam. According to him, the main reason was that the Siamese believed that the sculptures and statues always helped unify the Khmer communities. The destruction of these sacred objects would totally destroy the national spirit and unity of the Cambodians¹³⁵. Tranet added that as long as the sculptures, cult objects and sacred statues, which were symbols of national happiness and prosperity, stayed inside Cambodia regardless of their locations, Cambodia remained stable and prosperous. On

¹³² Treng Ngea, *Provatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer)*, p. 29.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹³⁴ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, p. 84.

¹³⁵ Michel Tranet, *Pravatasas nai prah reachea nachak Kampuchea: Sampornpheap roveang prochea chun Khmer-Thai chab tang pi so. vo. ti 13 nai ko. so. (A History of the Kingdom of the Cambodia: Relationship between Khmer-Thai since the 13th Century)* (Phnom Penh, 2005), p. 63.

the contrary, the loss of those sacred objects and statues meant the Khmer lost something on which they could depend, and thus made them become weak and hopeless¹³⁶. It may be true about what Tranet suggested concerning the destruction and removal of various statues to Siam. However, bringing statues to one's own kingdom was also a symbolic gesture of superiority or suzerainty of the winner over the loser. This is important since sacred statues in Southeast Asia of the past were considered a symbol of superiority and suzerainty associated with kingship or the universal monarch either *deva-raja* or *Buddha-raja*. For example, when the Khmer king of Angkor attacked Champa, he also brought and collected a lot of statues and Lingas back to Angkor. Likewise, when the kings of Siam seized the Cambodian capitals of Angkor and Lovek, they brought along with them a lot of sacred statues*. Similarly, when the kings of Burma sacked Ayutthaya, they also destroyed and brought a lot of cult objects and statues to Burma¹³⁷. When the Arakanese king captured Pegu, they brought sacred objects to their state¹³⁸. When the Siamese king seized the Laotian capital of Vientiane, they also brought the famous sacred Buddha statue, the Emerald Buddha, to Bangkok¹³⁹. These examples show that the destruction and removal of statues are not only unique in the case of Siam towards Cambodia. In contrast, it was a common past practice in Southeast Asia.

The destruction of Lovek and the removal of thousands of people including some royal family, intellectuals, skilled and religious men, precious texts, valuable things and statues to Siam were likely to have made Cambodia lose the necessary resources and manpower for rebuilding the country. The event of the capture of the capital is still in the memory of Cambodian people until the present day. Cambodia's chronicles and its legend describe the capture of Lovek as a catastrophe from which the nation never fully

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 63- 64.

* See the information in the above sections about Ayutthaya's attacks on Angkor and Lovek.

¹³⁷ Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, p. 23.

¹³⁸ The information from one of the lectures by Dr. Sunait Chutintaranond, Chulalongkorn University, Southeast Asian Studies Center, Southeast Asian Civilization Course, semester 1, 2006.

¹³⁹ G. Coedes, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, p. 166.

recovered. They interpreted the event as a turning point in the history which marks centuries of Cambodian weakness and Thai superiority¹⁴⁰.

2.4 Post Lovek Period

This section contains much less information than the above two. There are two main reasons regarding this. The first is that the historical relations between Cambodia and Siam in the later periods appeared to be less relevant with the origin of the birth of the legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo. Second, after Lovek, it was not the Siamese alone who played the game with the Khmer; the Vietnamese also joined in. Wars in Cambodia commonly took place between Cambodian factions with Siam supporting one side, while Vietnam backed the other. These wars which filled the history of 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries were too numerous to describe and analyze here. Therefore, this section simply contains information which is more descriptive than analytical.

After Lovek fell under the control of a Siamese commander, Preah Reamea Cherng Prey, from a distant royal family, he managed to push the Siamese out of Cambodia. However, he had no intention to restore Lovek as the capital. Reamea Cherng Prey did not reign long as he was soon assassinated under the hand of the Portuguese Diogo Veloso and his Spanish friend Blaz Ruiz de Harnan Gonzales, both of whom were proponents of former King Satha. Because King Satha had died when taking refuge in Laos, his son Ponhea Tan (reigning title: Paramaraja II) was crowned king under the support of the two Europeans. Yet, Ponhea Tan was soon murdered by some Malays in 1599. He was succeeded by his uncle, Ponhea An, brother of former King Satha. But he in turn was assassinated, after reigning as Paramaraja III for a year. As the country faced problems in selecting their new king, Cambodian officials and royal families proposed to Siam the release of Prince Suryavarman or Soriyopor, who had been kept in captivity

¹⁴⁰ See Eng Soth, *Prahreach pong savada Khmer: Mohaboros Khmer (Khmer Chronicles: The Khmer Heroes)*, Part III, and *The Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo* (Phnom Penh: Kem Ky Bookshop, 1952).

since the capture of Lovek. According to Coédes, he was proclaimed king sometime around 1603¹⁴¹. The fact that each king reigned shortly and was assassinated one after another suggests that Cambodia at that time was in a turbulent and unstable situation.

In 1618 Suryavarman abdicated in favor of his son Jayajetha (Chei Chettha). King Chei Chettha during his reign moved his court to Udong, which is situated between Lovek and Phnom Penh. It was during his reign that Cambodia started to engage the Vietnamese in order to counter Thai aggression and alleviate Their distress. In 1620, King Chettha married a Vietnamese princess, the daughter of King Sai Vuong of Nguyen dynasty. He married the princess perhaps in hope that the tie between him and the Vietnamese royal family would help Cambodia to counter Siam. However, his prediction was wrong since his choice placed Cambodia in a more difficult position as the kingdom had to deal with two mighty states now. Coédes commented that the marriage had far-reaching consequences for Cambodia in the years later¹⁴². King Chettha's marriage with the Vietnamese Princess allowed not only the existence of some Vietnamese standing within the Khmer royal court, but also the increasing movement southward of Vietnamese settlers into Cambodia's territory. After King Chettha's death, there were several factions within the Cambodian royal families battling against each other for the control of the throne. This led to a series of civil wars which involved Vietnamese intervention supporting one side and the Siamese supporting the other. These countless wars are impossible to describe here. The intervention of the Vietnamese and the Siamese in Cambodia's civil wars became tradition in the history of Cambodia throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. However, what Coédes, termed 'add supply' usually meaning support for internal wars between factions, was not provided for free by Cambodia's Thai and Vietnamese neighbors. The Thais and Vietnamese usually expected something in return for their military backing¹⁴³.

¹⁴¹ G. Coedes, *The Making of Southeast Asia*, pp. 197- 198.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 198.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Historians commented that Cambodia in the 18th and 19th centuries was in the darkest period one that never before had existed in her history. The kingdom became the helpless pawn of her two powerful neighbors, and found no way to escape. One of her neighbors even remarked that Cambodia was like a kid, and Siam was like a mother, while Vietnam was like a father. When the kid was angry with the mother, he approached the father. When he felt upset with the father, he ran to the mother. However, the remark was simply a word of political rhetoric to legitimize their influence and control over this weak state.

In addition, the 18th and 19th centuries also saw the loss of Cambodia's status as an independent state¹⁴⁴. The royal regalia were kept in Bangkok. Some of Cambodia's kings like Ang Eng (1794- 1797) and his son, Ang Chan, were crowned in Bangkok by the Siamese king. His son, King Ang Duang (1848- 1859), was crowned in Udong of Cambodia, but the coronation ceremonies took place under the patronage of the Thai court. Besides, Cambodia lost not only their sovereignty, but also their territory during this period. To the east, Vietnam gradually eclipsed its provinces one by one, while to the west Siam started to impose her authority over the Khmer provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap. In theory, Battambang and Siem Reap provinces remained Cambodia's soil. However, their governors received the orders not from Oudong but from Bangkok¹⁴⁵.

However, the agreement in 1863 to place Cambodia under the French protectorate changed the whole landscape of earlier politics of Cambodia. The places previously occupied by the Siamese and the Vietnamese now were replaced by the French. To get rid of Siamese and Vietnamese influence, in 1854 King Ang Duong of Cambodia decided to send an emissary to the French consul in Singapore to ask for French aid. France sent a mission in 1855, but it failed due to the mismanagement of its leader¹⁴⁶. The following year Ang Duong, who felt that his health was getting weak, asked the court at Bangkok to

¹⁴⁴ David P. Chandler, Cambodia Before the French: Politics in a Tributary Kingdom, 1794- 1848 (A Ph.D dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1973), p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ G. Coedes, The Making of Southeast Asia, p. 199.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

send his eldest son to him, who succeeded him in 1859 under the name of Norodom¹⁴⁷. In March 1861 Admiral Charner, who was in command of the French forces occupying Saigon, sent King Norodom a message of friendship. In September 1862, the new Cambodian king received a visit from Admiral Bonard. Negotiations carried out by Captain Doudart de Lagrée enabled Admiral La Grandière, the governor of Cochin-china, to sign a treaty at Oudong in July 1863 establishing a French protectorate over Cambodia¹⁴⁸. But before France could ratify the treaty, Siamese officials had forced Norodom to sign another treaty accepting Siamese suzerainty. However, Doudart de Lagrée having the Siamese plot in mind prevented Norodom from going to Bangkok for coronation as the royal regalia were kept there. After the ratification for the protectorate was made with France, the coronation ceremony of Norodom took place at Oudong on 3 July 1864. The crown had been brought from Bangkok back to Cambodia and was received from the hands of the French representative¹⁴⁹.

The treaty with the French allowed Cambodia to escape from the authority and influence of Siam and Vietnam. Had there been no French intervention, the interference of these two neighbors would have had persisted, and Cambodia would have faced the same destiny as the Mon and the Cham kingdoms.

2.5 Viewpoints on the Legend: Period of Existence and Metaphorical Representations of Preah Ko and Preah Keo

In this section, there are two main parts. The first one is the *Period of Existence*, which presents various theories and hypothesis regarding the time the story came into existence. The second part is the *Metaphorical Representations of Preah Ko and Preah Keo*. This part provides arguments by various scholars on the metaphor of the bull, Preah Ko and his brother, Preah Keo.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 200.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 201.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 201.

2.5.1 Period of Existence

There are two most likely periods in the history of Cambodia that the legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo seemed to have existed from, that was during the capture of Angkor or the hold of Lovek by the Siamese. The reason is that although there had been several wars between Cambodia and Siam, only two important events, the capture of Angkor in 1431 and of Lovek in 1594, which were considered disastrous and had terrible long-term effect on Cambodia. Besides, the two events involved the destruction and move of statues, precious texts, royal family, learned men and a mass population to Ayutthaya. Moreover, they also caused the Khmer to change their capitals. For these reasons, hypotheses and beliefs concerning the legend's existence mostly center on these two periods with some historians suggesting that the story took place during Angkor, while others argue that it was during Lovek. Below are these hypotheses.

The majority of Cambodian people until present still firmly believe that the legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo took place when the Siamese sacked the capital of Lovek. They believe that there were Preah Ko and Preah Keo in Lovek*. This can be supported by what an old Buddhist layman of Tralengkeng monastery said, "In the old days, there were the statues of Preah Ko Preah Keo in Lovek. I don't know whether it's true or not. I heard this from old people when I was young." Not only ordinary Cambodian people, but also journalists believe the story took place at Lovek. This can be proved by the quotation from an article written in one of the most popular local Khmer-language newspapers.

The Siamese used both force and psychological warfare against Cambodia at the time the Khmer faced hardship. Finally in 1593, Lovek was totally under the Siamese occupation. The Siamese brought a lot of precious objects which also included Preah Ko Preah Keo to their kingdom. The capture of Lovek and the loss of many precious things led Khmer people, writers and historians to compose the legend with the aim of educating all

* All the young educated Cambodian informants interviewed believe that the Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo took place at Lovek. The interviews were conducted from 04 November to 09 December 2006.

Cambodian children of later generations to feel sad about the loss of their ancestral heritage¹⁵⁰.

Apart from the ordinary people and the media, Cambodian scholars and historians like Treng Ngea, Khing Hoc Dy, Ang Chuléan and others also suggest that the legend came into existence to explain the event of the fall of the Khmer capital of Lovek caused by the Siamese¹⁵¹. Ang Chuléan makes this remark in his book:

The event of the capture of Lovek is still remembered and told for many generations until the present day. The catastrophe was so enormous in the history of Cambodia that a legend “Preah Ko Preah Keo” was made to explain the reasons behind the fall of Lovek. The legend has not only been told throughout the country, but also was written on palm leaves¹⁵².

For Treng Ngea, he even went further to link the bull, Preah Ko, and the Buddha image Preah Keo that Cambodia had lost, with statues of a bull and the Emerald Buddha (Prah Keo) at the Grand Palace in Bangkok. According to him, when King Naresuan captured Lovek, he brought Prince Suriyoppor together with the Khmer royal family, precious texts, scholars, artisans, statues of Preah Ko Preah Keo and many Cambodian people to Siam¹⁵³. Additionally, Treng Ngea made a remark that:

After all, in front of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Phra Keo) in Bangkok at present, there is a statue of a bull as big as a real bull with a hole beneath at its belly. Is this the statue of Preah Ko Preah Keo that the Siamese had brought to Siam after they took Lovek?¹⁵⁴

According to a Thai scholar, the statue of the bull in front of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Prah Keo) in Bangkok is not the same statue of Preah Ko (bull) that

¹⁵⁰ “Preah Ko Preah Keo khnong sandan chet robos Khmer: chea klang kumpi khboun khnat del bat bong nov Lovek (Preah Ko Preah Keo in Khmer’s Perspective: the Storehouse of Texts Lost at Lovek),” Kosantepheapdaily 5th February 2007. Available at http://www.kosantepheapdaily.com.kh/khmer/cow05_02.html.

¹⁵¹ Treng Ngea, Pravatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer), p. 31. ; Khing Hoc Dy, La Legend De Brah Go Brah Kaev, p. 169.; Ang Chuléan, Eric Prenowitz & Ashley Thompson, Angkor: Past- Present- Future, p. 91.

¹⁵² Ang Chuléan, Eric Prenowitz & Ashley Thompson, Angkor: Past- Present- Future, p. 91.

¹⁵³ Treng Ngea, Pravatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer), p. 31.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Cambodia had lost. The statue of the bull in front of Wat Prah Keo in Bangkok is Western art¹⁵⁵. Santi Phakdeekham points out that the statue of the bull in Bangkok was used as a decoration during the reign of King Mongkut. Later on, King Chulalongkorn ordered the statue to be moved to place in front of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha¹⁵⁶. However, Santi fails to give any information concerning the origin of the statue, and the reasons behind the move of the statue to a place in front of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. It is a coincidence with Cambodia's statues of Preah Ko (a bull) and Preah Keo that always stayed together. However, whether that statue of a bull in the Grand Palace in Bangkok is Cambodia's Preah Ko or not is not my subject here.

However, other sources claimed that it was during the capture of Angkor by the Siamese that the statues of Preah Ko and Preah Keo were brought to Ayutthaya. According to the Royal Chronicle of Cambodia, the Siamese king went to observe the city of Angkor after he held it. While he was walking, he saw the statue of Preah Ko (a bull). The Siamese king then asked an old Cambodian official, "What is this?" The old man replied: "It's the statue of Preah Ko which had been built long time ago when Cambodia was the empire to store the Tripitaka. People worshipped the statue very much and considered him the pillar of the kingdom." The Siamese king was very pleased with the answer. Therefore, when he returned to Siam, he brought along with him the statue of Preah Ko and many Buddha statues made from gold and silver. The king also brought with him religious men, traitors--Ponhea Keo and Tai, and 70000 prisoners of wars¹⁵⁷. Nevertheless, the information in the chronicle cannot be totally reliable as it was written much later. A Thai historian who studies the historical relationship between Cambodia and Thailand also thinks that Cambodia's legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo is the story during the period that Cambodia lost Angkor to Ayutthaya, more likely than the Lovek period. According to Santi, many statues, which may have included Preah Ko, were taken from Angkor to Ayutthaya when King Boromraja II of Siam attacked the Khmer capital

¹⁵⁵ Santi Phakdeekham, "Lovek: Ratchathani Khamen yuk lang muang phranakhon (Lovek: The Khmer Capital After Angkor)," pp. 79- 120.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 79- 120.

¹⁵⁷ Adhènard Leclère, *Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère*, p. 188.

of Angkor¹⁵⁸. Later on, when the Burmese sacked the capital of Ayutthaya, the Burmese took those statues to Hongsavadei, and the statues were moved many times. At this time, they were in the temple named Wat Prah Mohamaimony in Mandalay and presently there are still only five statues left¹⁵⁹.

David Chandler's hypothesis is a compromise of the arguments about the events at Angkor and at Lovek with an extension into the 19th century events. Chandler made a brief note that:

Although keyed to the capture of Lovek, the legend may in fact be related to the long-term collapse of Angkor and perhaps to the relationships that had developed between Siam and Cambodia by the nineteenth century, when the legend emerged in the historical record¹⁶⁰.

Detailed explanation cannot be expected from Chandler as it is not his main task. It is simply a small part in his book that he appears to touch on.

The various hypotheses by the above scholars and historians are not enough yet to draw the conclusion at this moment as whether the legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo was from the Angkor or Lovek period. The answer can be better given after the analysis of the metaphorical representations of Preah Ko and Preah Keo in the part below.

2.5.2 Metaphorical Representations of Preah Ko and Preah Keo

Despite some differences, the interpretation of the metaphors of Preah Ko seems to share common ground. However, the real metaphor of Preah Ko's younger brother

¹⁵⁸ Santi Phakdeekham, "Lovek: Ratchathani Khamen yuk lang muang phranakhon (Lovek: The Khmer Capital After Angkor)," pp. 79-120. ; Santi Phakdeekham, Preah Keo nai tam nan Preah Ko Preah Keo Khamen: Preah Keo morokot ching re? (Preah Keo in the Khmer Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo: Is Preah Keo the Emerald Buddha or not?) (Bangkok: Silapakorn University, 2002), p. 420.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 79- 120; Ibid., p. 420.

¹⁶⁰ David P. Chandler, A History of Cambodia, p. 85.

remains problematic and vague. Below are the discussion and debate about the possible abstract meanings of Preah Ko and Preah Keo.

From the Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo both oral and old written versions, the magical Preah Ko is a black ox. It is relevant that a black statue of a bull made from bronze was known to have been worshipped in Cambodia in the past. According to Treng Ngea, Preah Ko in the legend's context is possible to be interpreted as a *Klang* (store house/ warehouse) containing precious texts, study materials, and formula that one can study about religion, architecture, culture, arts, crafts, ceremony etc. The special part of Preah Ko is his belly in which all the things one needed were stored¹⁶¹. This interpretation was made perhaps based mainly on Cambodian chronicles and oral tradition that inside the belly of the statue of Preah Ko in Lovek had precious texts about various formula and knowledge that one could study about anything. However, the belief that people had placed all precious texts inside the belly of the sacred statue has been challenged by Keng Vansak, a Cambodian linguist and historian. He challenged the theory by asking the question below,

How come that the belly of the statue of the bull was big enough to store all the texts? The belly of the statue was small. Some people argued that the precious texts placed in the belly of the statue had been made tiny before they put inside it¹⁶².

In Keng Vansak's opinion, the firm belief by many Cambodian people and historians that Cambodia declined and became inferior to Thailand because it had lost Preah Ko is not logical. For him, Cambodia became weak and inferior to Siam not because of the loss of Preah Ko Preah Keo but because of the flow of foreign influence and culture into the country. The foreign culture then dominated and eclipsed the local culture and knowledge. Finally, local texts and culture disappeared and were replaced by those of

¹⁶¹ Treng Ngea, *Pravatasas Khmer (A History of Khmer)*, p. 18.

¹⁶² A talk on Radio Free Asia by Keng Vansak, a Cambodian linguist and historian, April 10, 2005. His talk was related with the topic of Preah Ko Preah Keo. His talk is available at <http://www.rfa.org/Khmer/kammakvithi/neatisasnaningsangkum/2005/04/10khmer-soul-as-demonstrated-by-keng-vansak/>

foreign countries¹⁶³. Nonetheless, Keng Vansak's argument is not strong enough as he failed to explain the reasons why foreign influence and culture could dominate its Cambodian counterpart. The possible domination of foreign influence and culture on those of local culture reflected that the country was weak during that time. And why did Cambodia become weak? The answer then would go back to the explanation that Cambodia was weak because it had lost precious texts and skilled people to Siam. This simply is to point out the problem within the argument. It is not my task here to challenge or analyze his theory in detail.

Regarding Preah Ko in the legend, David Chandler suggested that the bull was a metaphor for Cambodian's Indian heritage¹⁶⁴. However, he fails to specify or clarify as to what Indian heritage it took into account. Later on, the notion was brought into deeper and more critical analysis by a Cambodian scholar, Ang Chouléan in his article "Nandin and His Avatars." Chouléan went deeper than David Chandler by pointing out that the sacred Preah Ko in the legend symbolized Nandin, the sacred bull used as vehicle by the Lord Siva of Brahmanism¹⁶⁵. He further added that since ancient times in Cambodia, the power of association has been so strong that the bull could be considered to command as much magic as the supreme god who rode him or alternatively sometimes he is also represented as a god in his own right¹⁶⁶. Ang Chouléan argued that:

Considering that the official Chronicles, those of Chiang Mai and others, link the Emerald Buddha with the Tripitaka, one can affirm that the Khmer tradition has replaced this Buddha with Nandin the Bull. The bull, an important figure in Brahmanism, appears as a sort of guardian of Buddhism in the Middle Period and today¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, p. 86.

¹⁶⁵ Ang Chouléan, "Nandin and His Avatars," in Helen I. Jessup & Thierry Zephir (eds.), *Sculpture of Angkor and Ancient Cambodia: Millennium of Glory* (Washington: Thames and Hudson, 1997), p. 62.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 69.

From these, Chouléan came to his conclusion that the decline of Cambodia was caused by the capture of the statue which was associated with Nandin by Cambodia's neighbor and the abandonment of Brahmanism especially the Brahmanic nature of the palladium (Nandin)¹⁶⁸.

Preah Ko in the legend may embody Brahmanism or perhaps specifically Nandin as suggested by the scholars above. However, talking from a scientific and logical point of view, losing a statue of a bull or a statue of Nandin used simply for worship would not cause Cambodia to face hardship, since a new statue could be made to replace the absent one. In contrast, it was likely the loss, destruction and moving of texts, materials and mass populations including intellectuals, artisans, craftsmen, religious teachers during wartimes that had a tremendous effect on the country. The loss of all these resources—manpower, knowledgeable people and precious texts—was one of the main factors that put Cambodia into a backward position. To recover from this, it took several generations to re-establish.

Concerning Preah Ko's younger brother Preah Keo of the legend, his symbolic meanings are considered as vague and controversial among historians. Based on some opinions, Preah Keo may represent a Cambodian king, prince or royal family member who was captured and brought to Ayutthaya when the Siamese invaded Angkor and Lovek. According to a Thai historian, Preah Keo in the legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo is a metaphor for an important Khmer prince or Khmer royal family's member who was brought to Ayutthaya after the Siamese sacked the capital of Angkor¹⁶⁹. Santi Phakdeekhum, whose argument is based on the Ayutthaya Chronicles of Loung Prasert and other Chronicles written in the Ratanakosin period, claims that Preah Keo in Cambodia's legend referred to Phraya Keo. He added that Phraya Keo was an important person in the Khmer royal family, who was brought to Ayutthaya with many animal

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁶⁹ Santi Phakdeekham, "Lovek: Ratchathani Khamen yuk lang muang phranakhon (Lovek: The Khmer Capital After Angkor)," pp. 79-120.

statues which may have included Preah Ko in this group, all this took place after King Boromraja II captured Angkor¹⁷⁰. Santi quoted the chronicle of Ayutthaya discovered by Loung Prasert as saying that Chao Phraya Keo and Phraya Tai were brought from the Khmer court to Ayutthaya during the reign of King Sampraya (Boromraja II) with many magical images and statues¹⁷¹. Additional evidence to prove his hypothesis, Santi refers to an Ayutthaya chronicle numbered 2/k 104, of which, the original document is stored in the Watchirayan royal library and is believed to have been written in the middle period of Ayutthaya. The chronicle mentions about Phraya Keo and Phraya Tai. After they had spent time in Ayutthaya, they both intended to launch a rebellion and wanted to assassinate King Boromraja II. They intended to bring the royal symbols that King Sampraya had brought from Cambodia back to Cambodia again, but they were captured and executed¹⁷². From what was written in the chronicles, Santi came to the conclusion that Preah Keo in the Khmer legend referred to Phraya Keo, the symbol of Khmer royal and political legitimacy, not Preah Keo Morokot or the Emerald Buddha or the symbol of Buddhist legitimacy¹⁷³. However, Franfurter, in his translation of the chronicle by Luong Prasert, treated Keo and Tai as two Cambodian officials, not prince or members of royal family¹⁷⁴. Michael Vickery also thinks that they were officials or monks¹⁷⁵. Cambodian Chronicles also agree with Luong Prasert's Chronicle of Ayutthaya that Keo and Tai were brought to Ayutthaya together with many statues when the Ayutthayan king captured Angkor. In addition, Cambodia's Chronicles mention that both Ponhea Keo and Ponhea Tai were officials who betrayed the king of Angkor by opening one of the gates of the capital for Siam's army when the Siamese were besieging the city¹⁷⁶. From the preceding interpretations of Ponhea Keo as a possibly treasonous monk or official, it is

¹⁷⁰ Santi Phakdeekham, Preah Keo nai tam nan Preah Ko Preah Keo Khamen: Preah Keo morokot ching re? (Preah Keo in the Khmer Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo: Is Preah Keo the Emerald Buddha or not?), p. 420.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 419.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 419.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 420.

¹⁷⁴ Michael Vickery, Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries, p 396.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p 398.

¹⁷⁶ Adhènard Leclère, Histoire du Cambodge: Depuis Le 1^{er} Siècle De Notre Ère, p. 187.

clear that Preah Keo in the Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo did not refer to Ponhea Keo, the traitor, as thought by Santi Phakdeekham. As for the information in the Ayutthaya chronicle numbered 2/k 104, it mentions that Keo and Tai were later killed in Ayutthaya by the Siamese king for their rebellious attempts. However, its assertions are unclear, since some Thai chronicles also mentioned that the king of Ayutthaya had built gigantic *Chedi* (stupa) for them when they died. The theory that Preah Keo in the legend is a metaphor for a Cambodian king or Prince is less supported by historians and seems unlikely compared with the overwhelming belief that Preah Keo is a representation of a Buddha statue or Tripitaka or Buddhism, since the former fails to specify who that prince or king was. It was not possible to be Ponhea Keo because he was not a prince; he was simply an official, and also a traitor to Angkor's King and Cambodia. There were a few prominent Cambodian princes who were held in Ayutthaya in the later periods like Ang Chan and Suriyopon. However, they had been there for only a few years, and later on returned to become kings of Cambodia.

The majority of historians believe that Preah Keo in Cambodia's Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo may refer to a Buddha statue, a Tripitaka or a symbol of Buddhist legitimacy. Michael Vickery, a Western scholar on Cambodian history, who compared and analyzed the terms *banā* and *brah/ vrah* put forward his hypothesis that Brah Kèv (Preah Keo) may be a sacred crystal, a Buddha image, or some other unidentified cult object¹⁷⁷. Another Western scholar on Cambodian history, David Chandler, also proposes that Preah Keo may be a metaphor for Buddhist legitimacy, embodied by a Buddha image like the one (the Emerald Buddha) taken from Vientiane by the Thai¹⁷⁸. Whether Preah Keo in the Khmer legend and Prah Keo (the Emerald Buddha) installed at Wat Prah Keo (the temple of the Emerald Buddha) in Bangkok is the same statue or not is unknown. However, information about the history of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok should be briefly studied and analyzed here to draw the conclusion whether it has any

¹⁷⁷ Michael Vickery, *Cambodia After Angkor, The Chronicular Evidence from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries*, p 398.

¹⁷⁸ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, p. 86.

connection with Preah Keo in Cambodia's legend. The Emerald Buddha, of all the images of the Buddha, is the most famous. According to Notton, the Emerald Buddha acquired its long enduring renown due to the fact that it had undergone all sorts of catastrophes—wars, fires in different locations—and had emerged safe from these¹⁷⁹. He further commented, “For these reasons, it is not too much to say the Emerald Buddha, the possession of which was so much coveted, came to symbolize all aspirations for happiness and prosperity, and still does so.”¹⁸⁰ The famous image of the Buddha was brought to Bangkok from Vieng Chan in 1778, and now is in Wat Prah Keo or the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in the Grand Palace in Bangkok. The origin of the Emerald Buddha is a bit doubtful to modern historians. What they know about its history is through the work of a young Chiang Mai monk named Brahmaharajapañña. The date of his work is unknown. It is only known that he based it upon an already-existing version in Thai, and only that his Pali version existed by the reign of Rama I (1782-1809), founder of the present-day dynasty¹⁸¹. In line with the Chiang Mai monk's manuscript, several historians are in agreement with the particular point that Prah Keo (the Emerald Buddha) had made its route through several kingdoms in mainland Southeast Asia including Cambodia, Siam and Laos before its installation in Bangkok¹⁸². What was written by the Chiang Mai monk about the history of the Emerald Buddha shares a lot of similarities with that written in the Royal Chronicle of Cambodia¹⁸³.

According to the Chronicles, the Emerald Buddha was built with the initiative and great merit of a priest named Nāgasena. After Mahā Dhamma Rakkhitta died, Nāgasena said to himself:

¹⁷⁹ Camille Notton, *The Chronicle of the Emerald Buddha* (An English translated version from the original text in Pali. Consul of France: Second Impression, 1933), p. vi.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

¹⁸¹ David K. Wyatt, *Studies in Thai History* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994), p. 15.

¹⁸² See Camille Notton, *The Chronicle of the Emerald Buddha* ; Mak Phoeun, *Chroniques royales du Cambodge (des origines legendaires Jusqu'ā Paramarājā 1^{er})* (Paris: EFEO, 1984) ; David K. Wyatt, *Studies in Thai History*, p. 15. ; Ang Chouléan, “Nandin and His Avatars,” p. 62.

¹⁸³ See Camille Notton, *The Chronicle of the Emerald Buddha* ; Mak Phoeun, *Chroniques royales du Cambodge (des origines legendaires Jusqu'ā Paramarājā 1^{er})*.

The Omniscient Lord, who had all the Doctrine in him, created the Tipitaka What can be done by me to make the religion of the Omniscient Lord extremely flourishing. But if gold and silver are used in its making, it would certainly put the statue in jeopardy, as there will be wicked people in future times. The Buddha, the Doctrine and the Church, each represents a gem, so I have to get a precious stone with a very great power in it to make the statue of the Lord¹⁸⁴.

The chronicle continues that the Lord Indra seeing the good faith of the priest came to help find the precious stone to be used as material to make the statue for him. Lord Indra went to mount Vipulla to get the precious stone. He wanted to get Manījōti (resplendent jewel) but could get only Keo Amarakata (crystal- smaraged). After the statue was made, a big ceremony was held to honor the holy image as it was to be placed at the monastery of Asōka¹⁸⁵. Then, the Chronicle goes on to say that Nāgasena, through his supernatural knowledge, had a prescience of future events and made this prediction: “this image of the Buddha is assuredly going to give to religion the most brilliant importance in five lands (1), that is Lanka Dvipa (Ceylon), Rāmalakla, Dvāravati, Chieng Mai & Lan Chang (Laos)¹⁸⁶. Rāmalakla referred to 3 states Deya (Tai), Ramakira (Khmer), and Ramasira which is Mara (Burma)¹⁸⁷. This part of the chronicle means a lot to historians. Then, the 2nd epoch of the Chronicle of the Emerald Buddha continues to talk about how the Emerald Buddha came from Lanka to Southeast Asia¹⁸⁸. It mentions that King Anuruddha of Malla country (Pagan) sent two boats while he himself flew on a horse to Lanka so he could copy the Tripitaka and bring the Emerald Buddha to his kingdom. He ordered a copy of the Tripitaka be placed on one boat and another copy together with the Emerald Buddha on another boat. King Anuruddha flew on his horse back to his country when the two boats also left Lanka. Far offshore in the sea, there was heavy storm. The storm blew both junks apart. The one with the Tripitaka managed to reach Malla, while the other with the Emerald Buddha and the Tripitaka went to the town

¹⁸⁴ Camille Notton, *The Chronicle of the Emerald Buddha*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17- 18.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁸⁸ From this part, Camille Notton, *The Chronicle of the Emerald Buddha* is very similar to Mak Phoeun, *Chroniques royales du Cambodge (des origines legendaires Jusqu'ā Paramarājā I^{er})*.

of Indapatha Nagara (Angkor Thom)¹⁸⁹. The Khmer king at Angkor was very happy to have the Tripitaka and the Emerald Buddha in his kingdom. Later on, King Anuruddha of Malla country came to Angkor to get back his property. However, he decided to bring back only the Tripitaka, while leaving the Emerald Buddha there. With the Emerald Buddha in the kingdom, Angkor's kings and their people had enjoyed prosperity and peace for some periods of time. In the reign of the next Khmer king, an unpleasant event began at Angkor as the monarch ordered the drowning of the son of the Purohit (Brahmin) after the boy's fly had eaten that of the king's son. The Brahmins and all their families were displeased with the king's decision. For this reason, they decided to leave the capital. Seeing that the king was cruel and did not practice the ten royal virtues, the Dragon King got angry and brought flooding to the city. The Khmer king, all his officials and families escaped by boats. Hearing that the Khmer king came to stay near his city, the king of Ayutthaya came to get the Emerald Buddha from the Cambodian king. Then, the chronicle goes on to say that the Lord of Kampeng Bheja (Kampengphet) came to get the statue from the King of Ayutthaya. However, the image did not stay long in Kampengphet as the king of Chiang Rai Maha Brahmadata took it to his state. Later on, the Prince of Chiang Mai begged for the statue from Chiang Rai, and the holy statue had remained from that time in Chiang Mai until 1506 A.D. when it was brought to Lan Chang (Laos)¹⁹⁰. The Emerald Buddha had resided for quite a long time in Vieng Chan before it was brought to Bangkok by Phraya Chakri (King Rama I)¹⁹¹.

If the Chronicle of the Emerald Buddha and the Royal Chronicle of Cambodia are believable, it means that Prah Keo or the Emerald Buddha were once at Angkor.

¹⁸⁹ See Camille Notton, The Chronicle of the Emerald Buddha and Mak Phoeun, Chroniques royales du Cambodge (des origines légendaires Jusqu'à Paramarājā 1^{er}).

¹⁹⁰ Camille Notton, The Chronicle of the Emerald Buddha, pp. 21- 28. G. Coedès says the Emerald Buddha was brought from Chiang Mai to Vieng Chan in 1548. See G. Coedès, "An Introduction to the History of Laos," in René de Berval (ed.), Kingdom of Laos: The Land of the Million Elephants and of the White Parasol (France: A. Bontemps Co.,Ltd., Limoges, 1959), p. 22.

¹⁹¹ Also see Camille Notton, Legende D'Angkor Et Chronique Du Buddha De Cristal (Rougerie, 1960), pp. 37-42. This one seems confused about another Buddha statue which was also brought to Bangkok under the reign of King Taksin by Phraya Chakri.

However, the story in both chronicles seems to represent the arrival of Singhalese Buddhism to Thailand and Laos via Cambodia. But usually when religion came to a land, it also brought along with it its missionaries, texts, statues and other religious-related objects. Therefore, it is possible that the Emerald Buddha had arrived in Angkor. To determine whether the sacred image of the Buddha used to be in Angkor or not, it is necessary to know how popular Singhalese Buddhism was in the late part of Angkor history and how rich the capital was in Buddha statues. According to what was written about the history of Cambodia, the new form of Buddhism became very popular among the mass population of Cambodia. Some historians even compare the spread of Theravada Buddhism to that of forest fire. From history, we also know that Angkor was like a Buddhist hub that sent its top monks and famous Buddha statue to spread Buddhism in other foreign states. A Laotian Prince, Fa Ngum, came to take refuge in the court at Angkor. The young prince was brought up there by a Buddhist monk and scholar from the capital, and when he reached the age of sixteen the Khmer king gave him one of his daughters in marriage¹⁹². Later on, he asked his father-in-law for an army to accompany him back to Laos to claim the throne. Fa Ngum was a great warrior. After several wars, he managed to unify all Laotian states into one single big polity under the name Lan Chang or the “Million Elephants”. After he was crowned king of Lan Chang in 1353, his Khmer consort, a devout Buddhist, proposed to her father King Jayavarman Paramesvara of Angkor to send top Buddhist monks to spread Buddhism in Laos. At Princess Keo Keng Ya’s request, her father sent a group of Buddhist monks, the Tritipitaka, one of his most famous Buddha statues called *Prabang** and a sacred young Bodhi tree to Lan Chang¹⁹³. *Prabang* was so much welcomed by the people of Laos that they named their city Luang Prabang after this holy statue. This evidence shows that

¹⁹² G. Coedès, “An Introduction to the History of Laos,” pp. 20-23.; M. L. Manich Jumsai, History of Laos (Bangkok: Chalermit 1-2 Erawan Arcade, 1971), pp. 48- 51. ; Peter and Sanda Simms, The Kingdom of Laos: Six Hundred Years of History (Curzon Press, 1999), pp. 23- 41.

* *Prabang* was cast in 874 in Ceylon by a Buddhist priest called Chulanagathera. King Srichularaj of Intapat sent an embassy to Ceylon in 1056 to ask for the statue from the king of Ceylon. Prabang was supposed to contain five relics of Buddha: one in the forehead, one at the chin, one in the chest, one in the left arm and one inside the right arm, M. L. Manich Jumsai, History of Laos, pp. 50- 51.

¹⁹³ G. Coedès, “An Introduction to the History of Laos,” pp. 20-23.

Angkor before the capture by the Siamese in 1431 was rich in statues not only of Brahmanism but also those of Buddhism. Based on the Chronicle of the Emerald Buddha and the Royal Chronicle of Cambodia together with evidences from the history, a conclusion can be drawn that Prah Keo (the Emerald Buddha) may have resided in Cambodia before the sack of the capital by Siam's King Boromraja II. After the capture, King Boromaraja II brought a lot of people and statues that perhaps included the statue of the bull (Preah Ko) and the Emerald Buddha (Preah Keo) to Ayutthaya*. The idea that the Khmer king gave one of his famous sacred Buddha statues, *Prabang* to his son-in-law, Fa Ngum, the king of Lan Chang was a reflection that he possessed several sacred Buddha statues. The sacred *Prabang* was simply one among his favorites. The Khmer king was a devout Buddhist; therefore, it was necessary for him to keep sacred statues for worshipping and making merit. Therefore, the Buddha statue that he kept at Angkor was perhaps considered more famous and sacred than *Prabang* or at least of similar status. The statue was perhaps Prah Keo or the Emerald Buddha or a statue of a similar type. Although there are no sources or evidences mentioning he had kept the Emerald Buddha, it is a logical interpretation that stems from the analysis of the Chronicles and the history. As for the argument put forward by a Thai historian, Santi Phakdeekham, that Prah Keo or the Emerald Buddha was cast and originated from Chiang Rai because it is in the art style of Chiang Sen,¹⁹⁴ it is not convincing since he failed to explain and showed the evidences and sources that mentioned about this. He needs to show that Chiang Sen's art style was older than the Emerald Buddha, not the copy of the Emerald Buddha's art style. The Chiang Mai and Cambodian chronicles mentioned that the Emerald Buddha came to mainland Southeast Asia by sea from Ceylon. Though we cannot totally believe in the legend of the Emerald Buddha due to its miracle and supernatural power, it at least gives us an idea that the sacred image perhaps came by boat from sea. From the sea here means that the statue probably came from a distant land. Moreover, the arrival of the Emerald

* See Chapter 2 for more detailed information about King Boromraja II's attack on Angkor.

¹⁹⁴ Santi Phakdeekham, Preah Keo nai tam nan Preah Ko Preah Keo Khamen: Preah Keo morokot ching re? (Preah Keo in the Khmer Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo: Is Preah Keo the Emerald Buddha or not?), p. 412.

Buddha had a connection with the Tripitaka and the arrival of Singhalese Buddhism to mainland Southeast Asia and to Cambodia before spreading to Ayutthaya. If the scholar wanted to have his argument strong, he also has to find evidences to show that the Tripitaka that came to mainland Southeast Asia first originated from Chiang Rai, not from Ceylon. Nevertheless, evidences show that the Tai of Siam and Laos have received some influence of Buddhism a long time ago via China when they were there. However, the Singhalese form of Buddhism that they had received when they migrated to the territories of present-day Thailand and Laos came from Angkoreans and the Mons. For this reason, Prah Keo did not originate from Chiang Rai, but from Ceylon and perhaps via Cambodia before the statue was brought to Siam. From all these arguments, a conclusion can be made that the Khmer lost Preah Ko Preah Keo when Ayutthayan soldiers took their capital of Angkor in 1431, not when they captured Lovek in 1594 as most people believe. Due to the fact that Cambodia had been influenced by Brahmanism long before Singhalese Buddhism, and that Brahmanism was rooted more deeply in society at that time than Buddhism, the Khmer gave more importance to Preah Ko the bull than Preah Keo as reflected in the order of words in the legend's title *Preah Ko Preah Keo** and the relative significance of Preah Ko and Preah Keo in legend's stories*.

In conclusion, Preah Ko in Cambodia's legend is the statue of a bull. Preah Ko is the symbol of Brahmanism—institutions, texts, and learnt men. Preah Ko's younger brother, Preah Keo, is a metaphor of a sacred Buddha image and is likely Prah Keo or the Emerald Buddha or a statue of similar type. The capture of Angkor by the Siamese and the destruction and move of statues, texts, scholars, priests, artisans and population was a big loss of the administrative and religious base for the kingdom. It was the loss of fundamental religious bases of Brahmanism and Buddhism including texts, cult objects, religious teachers and scholars that can be in short represented by Preah Ko

* Usually Khmer people like putting something more important in the front.

* Preah Keo in the legend is not associated with any magical power or importance. For this reason, Ang Chuléan remarked that Preah Keo could be removed from the story without making a difference. See Ang Chouléan, "Nandin and His Avatars," p. 65.

(Brahmanism) and Preah Keo (Buddhism). For this reason, the Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo was first composed to explain the fall of Angkor. Its popularity may not have been high at the beginning. It perhaps achieved greater attention only when it was linked with the subsequent major event, the sack of the capital of Lovek. Two major historical events, the fall of Angkor and Lovek, were mixed into one story. At the time of its original composition, the legend perhaps told only about the capture of Preah Ko Preah Keo to Siam. Part of the story that mentioned Preah Ko and Preah Keo going into hiding in the bamboo forest at Lovek was probably added in later periods. Since the story had existed in oral form, it was therefore easy to delete, add or change parts of it. People who told the story in the later periods not only linked the legend with the event at Lovek but also extended to include events at Oudong, another of Cambodia's capital after Lovek, in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Kem Ky written version of the story told that Preah Ko and Preah Keo, after escaping from Lovek, were captured by the Siamese at Oudong¹⁹⁵. From these evidences, it shows that the Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo was composed to explain not solely the events of the fall of Angkor or Lovek or Oudong as many Cambodian people and scholars believe. The story covered or had links with the three periods—Angkor, Lovek and Oudong. Due to the flexibility and adaptation of the story and the nature of Cambodian- Siamese historical relations, the Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo has remained existent and occupied a place in Cambodia's society until the present-day. The myth in the future may undergo further changes and link to more new events if relations between Cambodia and Siam become shaky and fragile.

¹⁹⁵ The Legend of Preah Ko Preah Keo (Phnom Penh: Kem Ky Bookshop, 1952), p. 180.