

Political Persistence and Civil Contestation
Thailand's Xenophobic Official Historiography in an Era of
Regional Integration

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Political Persistence and Civil Contestation: Thailand's Xenophobic Official Historiography in an Era of Regional Integration

Abstract

It is well known that Thailand's official historiography paints Burma as their cruel enemy. Even in this era of ASEAN regional integration, where the Socio-Cultural Community's goal is to create a mutually understanding society conscious of its ties of history, investigation into current history textbooks and recent popular representations reveal little to no change. It is argued in this thesis that the Thai-Burmese war episodes have been embedded with a specific set of desirable Thai values, keeping them politically persistent despite the ASEAN talk. However, a look into online communities and the results from the electronic survey conducted for this research show that the ASEAN discourse, nonetheless, is making a positive impact on the society, prompting, among Thai people, more questioning and increased interests in traveling and learning about Burma. This seems to bring about improved, positive attitudes towards Burma, and an increasing contestation towards the Thai official narration.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The most evil and despised national enemy in Thailand's official historiography is none other than Burma. It would not be an exaggeration to say that every Thai person who has gone through school history classes knows, to varying degrees, about how the 'Burmese' persistently attacked the Siamese Kingdom of Ayutthaya (1350-1767), exercised power over it during some periods, and finally destroyed it permanently in 1767, through means of encircling the city past the flooding season (while the Burmese themselves survived by looting and coercing the locals outside Ayutthaya city into being their labour force)—starving the Siamese within the city walls before launching the final raid. These episodes have helped shape the main story of Thailand's national historiography, fixed in official school textbooks, alongside the Thai heroes and heroines who have fought for, saved and/or reclaimed Thai independence. Outside the classrooms, these selected historical episodes have been reproduced in novels, plays, songs, films and television series, which remain popular until today. The issue of Thailand's hostile national historiography towards Burma (as well as other neighbouring countries including Laos and Cambodia, but with Thailand positioned as the rightful victor instead of the victim) has been hotly discussed by Thai scholars in related fields for over a decade (see for examples, Chutintharanon, 2000; Chachavalpongpun, 2005; Kasetsiri, 2009; Kaewngamprasert, 2012), yet no change ever took place before despite the academic, critical force. While change may not have been urgent before, seeing that relations between governments were not greatly affected by such a historiography, owing to the complex international relations, pressures, and at times 'private' diplomacy between politicians, and seeing that people-to-people contact remained limited, this old official historiography would be a huge irony among today's regional integration and the "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" rhetoric of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Thailand has been a founding member since 1967, and of which Burma was accepted as a new member in 1997.

On March 1, 2009, at the 14th ASEAN summit held in Hua Hin, Thailand, the ten ASEAN Heads of States signed the Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration on the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community, 2009-2015 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2014a). At its core are the blueprints for the three pillars, namely the Political-Security, the Economic and the Socio-Cultural Communities. Intertwined and in order to facilitate the former two, the ASEAN Socio-

Cultural Community (ASCC) “aims to contribute to realising an ASEAN Community that is people-oriented and socially responsible with a view to achieving enduring solidarity and unity among the peoples and Member States of ASEAN. It seeks to forge a common identity and build a caring and sharing society which is inclusive and where the well-being, livelihood, and welfare of the peoples are enhanced” (ASEAN secretariat, 2009: 1). In order to build a sense of ASEAN community, the citizens should be made conscious of their “ties of history”, and “dialogues among civilisations” and “a better understanding” should be fostered. The intended plan of action involves the employment of educational curricula and the mass media in mainstreaming this ASEAN consciousness, and the encouragement of people-to-people contact (ASEAN Secretariat, 2014b).

Thus far, Thailand has appeared rather enthusiastic about realising the ASCC’s main objective, as reflected in the launch of a number of weekly broadcast television programmes, such as *Rop-Roo ASEAN* (‘Well-informed about ASEAN’), from 2012-2015, by the state-owned National Broadcasting Services of Thailand (NBT), and *ASEAN Beyond 2015* by the Thai Public Broadcasting Service (TPBS), covering a wide range of ASEAN topics, from social, political and economic issues to random facts about ASEAN cuisines, cultures, arts and languages, in order to make Thais more prepared for the regional integration. Furthermore, the Thai Ministry of Education has translated the *ASEAN Curriculum Sourcebook*¹ into Thai, and printed 35,000 copies in 2014 to be distributed to its schools nationwide. In the “A Call to Action” section of the book, Surin Pitsuwan, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, indicates clearly that one of the goals of a common sourcebook is to build “a strong foundation for greater understanding, good neighborliness, and shared sense of responsibility” (ASEAN, 2012: 2). The fact that the Thai government has responded eagerly to the ASCC’s Plan of Action reflects that it does intend to build ASEAN-aware Thai citizens. However, it goes without saying that simply mainstreaming an ASEAN regional consciousness and incorporating ASEAN themes into classrooms are not enough. If Thailand was to truly realise the ASCC’s ideals in this era of regional integration, it is clear that its national historiography would also need to be reconsidered and reformed, in order to neutrally replant history in a wider regional context, and discontinue negative feelings towards Thailand’s neighbours,

¹ The *ASEAN Curriculum Sourcebook* was jointly developed and produced by ASEAN and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of State-funded ASEAN-US Technical Assistance and Training Facility (TATF). It was originally produced in English, with the purpose of serving as a source for ASEAN themes and a guideline for teachers and students in the region to incorporate these themes into their national classrooms (ASEAN, 2012).

especially Burma, its top enemy. This possible irony that may remain is what has inspired this research project.

It was expected at the beginning of the research that positive changes, although not radical giving the limited time scope from the day of the Cha-am Hua Hin Declaration (2009), may be found in Thailand's official historiography today in the year 2015. However, after examining five current official high-school history textbooks (grades 7-12), where the latest reprint was in 2014, findings indicate that there has been little to no change in the picture of the historical relations with Burma, Laos and Cambodia. Furthermore, the recently released popular representations of Thai-Burmese wars contain the same, repetitive nationalist, hostile content, where they still portray the Burmese as the cruel attacker determined to erase the name of the Thai, as they are all based on the official historiography. Quite ironically, they have met with as much support and enthusiasm from the Thai government as the ASEAN TV programmes and the curriculum sourcebook have. These representations include two films, *King Naresuan 5: Elephant Battle* (2014) and its ending sequel *King Naresuan 6: The End of Hongsa* (2015), based on the heroic king (who supposedly ruled the Kingdom of Ayutthaya from 1590-1605) and his saving of Thai independence against the Burmese, and another ten-week long TV series, *Bang Rajan* (2015), based on the heroic historical account of patriotic Thai villagers who fought bravely to the death against Burmese soldiers in 1766. However, it should be noted that some of these popular representations, commercially produced, do contain positive, although not substantial, improvements outside of the textbooks.

Whereas the findings from the textbooks reveal that the official activities surrounding ASEAN integration have not been able to penetrate effectively enough into the nationalist historiography to encourage changes there, the slight changes in the popular representations by the private sector reflect a budding consciousness for change, although still restrained by the old nationalist discourse. This has called for further investigation into the public reception, where there is greater freedom to express differing opinions. While there are people who were aroused to anger and hatred towards the Burmese as would be expected, there are also press reviews and online articles by independent groups which criticise these representations as being out of the regional context. Moreover, the author has conducted an electronic questionnaire targeting the general public², and results show that there is a growing civil

² The form was distributed between June 8-12, 2015, to different online communities and social media sites.

society which questions the appropriateness of the content, and even contests the accuracy of the Thai nationalist historiography, after having consulted external sources. Also, results confirm that the proliferating ASEAN discourse has prompted an increased interest in travel to Burma, which in turn has positively changed Thai people's attitudes towards Burmese people.

Followed from the findings, two main points will be demonstrated in this thesis. Firstly, the discourse of ASEAN regional integration has not been enough to make a substantial impact on the persistent and hostile nature of the Thai official historiography and its popular representations, towards neighbouring countries especially Burma, due to specific historical and political reasons. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework and an overview of the existing scholarly literature in understanding why Thailand's official historiography has taken this shape, and with Burma as the most despised national enemy. This helps explain why it remains relevant and highly persistent in today's society, with the hardly-changed historiography, discussed in Chapter 3, especially after the May 2014 coup d'état. The 2015 study by Pavin Chachavalponpun, on the plasticity of Thainess and thus Thai-Burmese relations, has been a great forerunner to this idea, as it suggests the significance of the specific political environment in determining which Thai values will be emphasised nationally and how contemporary Burma would then be perceived. In this case it is those values reflected in the old Thai-Burmese war episodes, which inevitably place Burma as the national enemy even today.

Secondly, on the contrary, the same ASEAN regional integration discourse, with it an increasing people movement within the region and growing interests in neighbouring countries, has actually yielded substantial changes among the public, where an increasing number of Thai people seriously question the appropriateness of such a hostile, nationalist history, and even the accuracy of its content, as reflected in press reviews of the films/series, online forums and the questionnaire responses, to be discussed in Chapter 4. At the very least, more positive feelings are developed after personal contact and interaction, helping shed away old prejudices. This all signals a growing contestation towards the official, nationalist historiography. Lastly, concluding words can be found in Chapter 5, the final chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 2 – The Rise of Xenophobic Official Historiography

The clearly demarcated nation-state is relatively new, yet it has become “a primary category of thought and mode of identity—perhaps the primary mode of political identity for most people around the world” (Thianthai and Thompson, 2007: 41). Louis Althusser, in his 1968 work, argues that the ideological apparatuses of the state, such as legal institutions, schools and its media, “hail” (address) its people and “interpellate” them from individuals into state subjects (Felluga, 2011). Similarly, Benedict Anderson (2006) describes the nation as a new form of an “imagined community”, where people, especially because of the rising mass printing culture of vernacular languages, become conscious of their ties on a wider, horizontal scale, and thus “imagine” themselves as belonging together although they may never meet. Moreover, the nation to which they are subjects is articulated through a shared story—past (history), present and even future—differentiating those people from the ‘others’ outside the borders. Certainly, a nation’s history is a construct, based on carefully selected and omitted events. How history is shaped depends much on the context in which it is produced.

Thus, understanding the nature of Thailand’s official historiography is not possible without understanding its birth context—the early 20th century official nationalism. Therefore, this chapter will first briefly discuss the rise of Thai official nationalism, before moving on to illustrate how the development of the historiography was closely linked to it, as a nationalist project of its own kind. Implicated in the project were two phenomena—the selection of and emphasis on certain events to fit the nationalist purpose of defining desirable Thai values, and the framing of the pre-nation past using the modern concept of the nation, in order to move the people into being worthy ‘descendants’ of their national ‘ancestors.’ By the end of this chapter, it should become clear why the attention was focused mostly on Thai-Burmese wars, rendering Burma the number-one enemy of the Thai nation.

With the arrivals of the colonial powers, namely France and Britain, during the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV, reigned: 1851-1868), the idea of a nation-state as a unified political entity and an expression of a ‘race’ began to be introduced to Siam, how Thailand was known then. With the increasing losses of ‘territory’ (tributary states which now make up parts of Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia), and the fear of Siam not being a legitimate ‘nation’ in the Western sense, this idea would debut seriously into Thai political consciousness under the

reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, reigned: 1868-1910). A study by Scot Barmé (1993: 16), which looks at documents written by Siamese elite before and at the time, suggests that the word *chat*³ only came to be used with the extended sense of being an encompassing political community during the late 19th century, with the heightened, perceived colonial threat. However, the Thai nation as a tangible reality only truly began to materialise from the reign of Chulalongkorn's English-educated son, King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, reigned 1910-1925), onwards.

As implied above, Vajiravudh's official nationalism emerged from a socio-political context where the face of the threatened Siam had been quickly changing. With the French, from the 1880s, proclaiming the Lao and Khmer as distinct races who could claim French protection, and the Siamese being deemed an 'improper' race for having become too intermixed with the Chinese (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2009: 63), 'intrinsically' Thai values that would create and legitimise a strong nation and commonly address the people within its borders had to be defined. Moreover, resulting from the reforms initiated by Chulalongkorn, the expanding bureaucracy consisting of princes and aristocrats, the abolition of slavery that was completed in 1905, and the growing, educated 'middle class' unavoidably gave rise to new voices which challenged the traditional practices of birth right, superiority/inferiority and favouritism in government career advancement, and of course the absolute monarchy. Vajiravudh's official nationalist discourse of "Nation, Religion and King" can be seen as a response to both the change in the international trend and the growing domestic discontentment towards him, who was said to object to the idea of a constitution, to be extravagant in useless expenditure and only promote those he favoured (Barmé 1993:26; Baker and Phongpaichit, 2009:106). As a result, the King propagated both the values that would act as a unifying force in Siam, while at the same time secure the significance of the absolute monarch. He defined the Thai nation as belonging to the 'Thai race', including whoever was born on the Thai soil no matter the parentage, where the people were 'free' as one, brave, self-sacrificial and united against national foes, as exemplified in Vajiravudh's 1911 speech to the Wild Tigers Corp, a militaristic organisation which he had established:

[W]e have been born Thai, we must die as Thais. If we have to be servants, it is the same as dying because we can no longer call ourselves free. Therefore, if and when danger threatens our country, if anyone is unwilling

³ *Chat* is a Thai word with a number of original meanings, including "birth", "race" and "origin." Today it is also used to denote "nation", as a political entity.

to sacrifice their lives for the protection of the nation, then that person is no longer Thai.⁴ (Cited in Barmé, 1993: 29)

Although free, the people still had to be under one strong, traditional king who possessed Buddhist kingly virtues, entitling him to rule absolutely with the people's best interests in mind, in order to maintain peace and order. This idea is reflected through several of Vajiravudh's speeches, for an example:

Apart from protecting the group from outside danger, there is also the need for preserving peace within one's group... Thus, it is necessary to agree to designate one person within the group to be the arbitrator... At first the person who held this power... did not do so on a permanent basis... However, later there arose the feeling that changing this person often was likely to be a hindrance... As a consequence, a tradition was established by which an individual was elected to hold this position of arbitrator on a permanent basis... This individual was the king.⁴ (cited in Barmé, 1993: 28)

With such arousing royal-nationalist speeches, a common history was what was needed in confirming these Thai values as having existed all along. Subsequently, this moment was where the Thai official historiography took its shape, in order to give the people a shared, glorious past and memory that would confirm the timeless existence of the Thai nation as was known, that they could be proud of and where the desirable values of their 'ancestors' would continue into the present to be praised and emulated. However, being a nationalist project instead of a neutral, scholarly endeavour, Thai history, like histories elsewhere entrenched by race-based nationalisms, began as a selective and distortingly continuous one.

Walter Vella (1978: 203) argues that the "sketchy" Siamese historical records that survived from the old times, in the forms of stone inscriptions and palm-leaf chronicles⁵, combined with the fact that the people knew little about the past, served well the nationalist purposes. This is because only certain accounts could be worked upon to shape the past, which would serve to legitimize the present (Barmé 1993: 27; Kasetsiri, 2009). King Vajiravudh, well-read in both original and revised chronicles, embarked on journeys to the countryside in order to discover more ancient ruins and historical finds that would empirically

⁴ Translations by Brown, A.J. (1983) "Awakening the Wild Tigers (An Annotated Translation with Introduction)". B.A. honours thesis. Canberra: Australian National University.

⁵ Most of the original historical records were destroyed in the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. Out of the eight main chronicles consulted today, only one has been dated 1680, one 1779 (twelve years after the fall, during the Thonburi period), while five of the remaining were written and revised between 1795-1855 under the orders of the early Bangkok kings of the Chakri dynasty. The most authoritative chronicle today is the Royal Autograph version, compiled in 1855 under King Mongkut, which has been edited and given a foreword for publication by Prince Damrong. (Wilson, 2001: 127)

represent the nation's past. As Charnvit Kasetsiri (2003) acknowledges that there has to be “projects” to bring national heroes/heroines into existence, Vajiravudh paid attention to a number of ancient figures, among whom are King Naresuan, King Taksin and Phra Ruang, and spoke or wrote elaborately about them. Unsurprisingly, these figures were royal warriors who led their armies to fight against foreign enemies, who had previously conquered them. Other royal figures who did not fight as a defensive response, for example, Ayutthaya's King Borommachathirat II (King Chao Sam Phraya) who launched attacks on the Khmer kingdom and conquered Angkor Thom in 1431, were interestingly not made into national heroes, and subsequently were barely mentioned in school textbooks (Kasetsiri, 2009: 23). This reflects the selective nature of the royal-nationalist history, which sought to portray the Thai nation as a unified one, where kings have fought mainly to defend the nation's independence from foreigners all along—an image that was much needed during the time of the colonial threats.

Implicit in the above is the fact that the King employed the contemporary concept of the nation to discuss these heroes, enabling the people to identify closely with them as the Thai ‘ancestors’ to whom they should be grateful for their (newly-mapped) nation and independence. This is reflected in Vajiravudh's patriotic speech, published by *Bangkok Times* on February 14, 1914, given at the newly-discovered King Naresuan's stupa to commemorate 321 years after Naresuan's victory, which called upon the Thais to be united and loyal to their leader, for it was “upon this very spot [that King Naresuan] secured our national freedom...” (cited in Vella, 1978: 208). The fact that wars in the ancient Southeast Asian region were between kings who battled for their *barami* (moral power) and the supreme right to rule as a Universal Monarch or *Cakravatin* (Winichakul, 2011: 37), and that dynasties operated by spheres of influence over other different dynasties and peoples, whose statuses shifted numerously (as independent city-states and empires or tributary states under different empires at different times), became overshadowed. Consequently, the history attempted to instil gratefulness into Thai ‘descendants’ and cultivate great values of the rather fixed ‘ancestors’ who fought bravely, sacrificing their flesh and blood, for the (modern) nation. This is how the foundation of the Thai official historiography, xenophobic in nature, has been laid, where the long-lived, unified nation belonging to the ‘Thai’ race, led by glorious kings, has always had clear foreign enemies to defend itself from—obscuring the fact that the ‘Thai’ people in Siam themselves, now with the clearly-drawn lines, were ethnically diverse and not always loyal subjects to the past Thai kings.

Although the nationalist project of giving the nation a history was intensified under Vajiravudh's reign, it has to be noted that since the early Bangkok period, the Siamese court had already begun paying attention to the kingdoms that preceded it. Both Mongkut and Chulalongkorn also visited ancient sites as recorded in surviving chronicles and stressed the importance of compiling history such as was done in the West. Therefore the chronicles were elaborated upon, and the rather short stories about the "virtues, accomplishments and failures of kings" were twisted into detailed wars of independence between nations (Winichakul, 2011: 31). The difference was that the stories stayed more or less within the elite circle. On the contrary, Vajiravudh was reaching a wider audience by means of culture, such as through written plays and musicals. Nevertheless, he was not alone in this endeavour. The influential role, perhaps even more so than Vajiravudh's, of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab (1862-1943) in helping to solidify the official historiography cannot be overlooked.

Damrong, Chulalongkorn's half-brother, as the first interior minister in 1894 played a significant part in the country's administrative reforms, consolidating absolute power to the King. After Chulalongkorn's death in 1910 and a squabble with Vajiravudh in 1915, he quit the ministry and devoted the rest of his energy to historical studies. Damrong produced over 50 studies, and his most famous history book, *Thai rop phama* ('Thai fought Burma'), was published in 1920. Like Vajiravudh, Damrong gave a common past to the new Thai nation, emerging at a time where the power of the court was threatened. The 1893 Paknam Incident, whereby the French won the Franco-Siamese War and sailed three gunboats up the Chao Phraya River pointing at the Royal Palace, forced King Chulalongkorn to capitulate and cede the tributaries to the east of the Mekhong River to the French. This incident violently shook the royal court's power, which had previously been expanded beyond central Siam. However, because Siam, although deeply affected, was never directly colonised, a chance for the elite to write a history with royalties as the central figures was still there. As Winichakul (1994) states: "[t]his rupture in the life of the nation needed to be sewn together...in order to reassure everyone that the life of the country was a continuous stream of time" (p.142). He argues that the 1893 crisis was pivotal to such a royal-nationalist official historiography, where the elite sought to make amends with themselves and regain confidence, through knowing that past leaders had also experienced turbulences yet always re-emerged stronger than before (Winichakul, 1994; 2003; 2011). The nature of Damrong's *Thai rop phama* reflects exactly this goal of securing the continuous power of great leaders, who have saved the country's independence throughout history, backed by his courageous people, as reflected in Damrong's

introduction to the book: “When Siam had been pillaged by the Burmese, within a short time there arose a man of outstanding ability among the Siamese who with a small gathering of men was able to overcome a large body of enemy by means of his courage and wisdom, and thus to establish the independence of Siam again” (Rajanubhab, 2001: 6). It will now be explained why a common national enemy was found among events that happened centuries ago, instead of among the immediate threats.

Although an anti-colonial theme can be found in the history, the West, the most immediate threat then, could not be Siam’s perpetual enemy. Making the West a common enemy would have undermined the power of the state and the King, because Westerners and their associates were permitted even greater rights, under extra-territoriality, than the Siamese themselves within the borders of Siam, and the Siamese elite were adopting many Western traditions. Instead, the West became just another foreign threat that a strong leader—the King—could overcome, while being wise enough to adapt some of its good concepts and technologies for the sake of ‘progress’ and ‘civilisation’. Subsequently, the past foreign threats that the leaders had supposedly also overcome fitted the purpose perfectly. The other kingdoms that Ayutthaya went to war with already became colonies. It can be said that they no longer posed any threat or significance to Siam (Kasetsiri, 2009: 9). This argument of ‘safe distance’ also finds proof in the way the Chinese was treated in the nationalist discourse. The Chinese flooded into Siam as immigrants and caused much trouble for the royal court, demanding changes in tax policy and at times propagating socialist ideals—so much so that a book titled *The Jews of the Orient* was published by Vajiravudh, comparing the Chinese as a problem to how the Jews were seen as a problem in Europe (Barmé, 1993: 25). However, because the Chinese were the driving force of the economy—and an abundant source of personal gains for the elite—a mixed discourse was carefully constructed about the Chinese as an ‘other’, who could in the end be settled and assimilated into the nation if they possessed desirable Thai values (see Tejapira, 2003; Siripaisan, 2010). Simply put, both the West and the Chinese had ongoing, ambiguous relationships with Siam. They were certainly ‘others’ that posed varying degrees of threats, but they could not be painted as the perpetual, common enemy that Thai people could strongly despise. The spotlight was now on the past threats, and although Burmese kingdoms were not the only ones Ayutthaya battled with, they were focused on until Burma emerged as the most malicious enemy, because they were a true rival of Ayutthaya in expanding power over some territories including Lan Na, and succeeded in destroying Ayutthaya’s capital twice (in 1569 and 1767). Wars with ‘Burma’ expressed

exactly the image of good-hearted, virtuous Thai kings who were only interested in maintaining independence. Conversely, when it came to the episodes where Ayutthaya conquered other kingdoms such as Lan Xang (Laos) and Khmer (Cambodia) and making them into its tributaries, those kingdoms were portrayed as weak and often surrendering themselves to Ayutthaya, its powerful and rightful sovereign who deserved the territories as part of the independent kingdom. This historiography has been no less hostile towards Laos and Cambodia in this respect, although Burma remained the enemy that caused great wounds for the Thais.

Moreover, just like Vajiravudh's works, Damrong connected the past closely with the present. In the book, he relates all the forty-four times that "the Siamese", whom he calls "we", fought with "the Burmese", of which twenty-four times took place when "Ayutthaya was the capital of Siam" and twenty times when "Krung Thonburi and Krung Rattanakosin (Bangkok) were the capitals of Siam" (Rajanubhab, 2001: 3). This fixes the past, unfixed kingdoms within the bordered modern nations, making it a hard-to-erase bitter memory between the two. This memory has become deeply implanted in the Thai official historiography, as Damrong's book has served as one of the main sources for Thai official history textbooks in the episodes concerning Thai-Burmese historical relations up until today.

Lastly, although the nationalist works of Vajiravudh and Damrong contain royalist overtones, they would still be reproduced and built on even in the period after the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932, where the tide was no longer in the royalists' favour. This is because being grateful, sacrificial, united and nation-loving still remained as highly-desirable values in the period of hyper-nationalism, especially the one led by Field Marshal Phibunsongkram (military prime minister, 1938-1944). The works of Luang Wichit Wathakan (1898-1962), another highly influential figure from a commoner background, in the building of the Thai nation and identity illustrate so. Wichit, through his talent and access to education, became a bureaucrat, nationalist writer, history lecturer, and a radio personality who eventually worked for Phibun. While Wichit did write plays about King Naresuan and King Taksin, praising them as great kings, he even more extensively wrote about Thai commoner ancestors, both men and women, who also helped save the nation especially against the Burmese, such as exemplified in his novel *Lued Suphan* and his song "Ton Trakool Thai" ('Thai Ancestors'), which lists the names of Thai soldiers as well as peasants who fought against the Burmese. Although employing the same official historiography that Vajiravudh and Damrong laid out, the focus was now not on the roles of kings, but heavily on the ability

of commoners to stay united and work for the greater good of the nation. This is not to say, however, that Wichit was the first one to introduce commoners into the official historiography. Damrong's *Thai rop phama* (1920) already devotes one whole chapter to Bang Rajan, the Thai village where outnumbered peasants fought to their deaths against overwhelming Burmese armies. But Wichit's efforts in addressing the common people were more substantial. Aside from the ancestor praises above, he also wrote nationalist speeches for Phibun, and various popular songs that would call on contemporary Thais and arouse strong nationalistic sentiments, where the peace-, nation- and freedom-loving Thais would kill and exchange their flesh and blood for the nation, and remain united so that Thailand would prosper.

In conclusion, this chapter has demonstrated that the rise of the modern nation and the colonial threats have determined the rise of Thai xenophobic official historiography, where the nation's history extends back in time before itself, painting patriotic Thai people laden with intrinsic Thai values, led by strong, royal rulers in defending and reclaiming the nation's independence from enemies who encroached on their land. Burma has become the most despised common enemy because Ayutthaya's relations with Burmese kingdoms helped carve the desirable Thai image of good-hearted, patriotic people who would only defend themselves, while Burma at the time the history was produced was already distant from Siam/Thailand. The works of all the influential figures mentioned in this chapter have been repeatedly built on, reproducing countless other historical novels, songs, films and TV series. These have continued to burn the images of the terrible wars with the Burmese in Thai people's minds, although the wars are long-gone and those people were not "Thai" or "Burmese" as we understand today.

Chapter 3 – Nationalist History in an Era of Regional Integration

As the previous chapter has illustrated, the context in which Thailand's official historiography emerged called for such a nationalist content that would confirm the existence of the Thai nation and unite the people under the leaders, against foreign threats, with Burma as the convenient foreign enemy that would deliver this message. It called for Thais to sacrifice and unite as one, and put the nation before themselves and their own needs, just like their ancestors had done. More than half a century later, this same history is still in place, taught in schools and reproduced popularly, even after the colonial threats have long passed. Thailand's nationalist history was written at the expense of good relationships with neighbouring countries, but it did not matter then. However, the context has changed. Thailand has moved into the new context of ASEAN regional integration, where mutually understanding relationships with its neighbours matter. Therefore, the official historiography needs to be revised, in order to carve out responsible citizens who are aware of the ASEAN members' "ties of history" and are friendly towards each other. This chapter thus looks at whatever impact the integration discourse has made towards Thailand's national history curriculum and classes, and what remains.

In carrying out the research, the "history" section of *The Basic Education Core Curriculum A.D. 2008* was compared to that of the 2001 version, to see first what changes have been made in the curriculum itself, which is what school history classes have to be based on. The detailed, official *Description of the History Core Course Grades 7-9* and *Description of the History Core Course Grades 10-12* (both published in 2010) were then analysed, followed by five current official history textbooks⁶ of the corresponding grade levels. What have been changed and what remains will be discussed accordingly, which will indicate that there has been little to no official change in the depiction of the Thai nationhood, its heroes/heroines and thus its historical relations with neighbouring countries and portrayals. Thereafter, the political context of present-day Thailand will be used in explaining why the official nationalist historiography is still extremely persistent in the Thai society, as will also be illustrated by the fact that the two historical films and one other TV series based on the official historiography which were released between the years 2014 and 2015 met with

⁶ All the textbooks as well as the official descriptions are published in Thai. Direct quotations used in this thesis are the author's own translations.

incredible support from the government. It will become apparent that the internal political context is stronger than the ASEAN regional integration context. However, analyses of the three popular representations revealed that although they were produced under the same nationalist framework, some conscious efforts by the private producers to make them less unfriendly towards Burma have been made. In the end, nonetheless, these changes are still not substantial enough for the era of regional integration.

Firstly, *The Basic Education Core Curriculum A.D. 2008*, in effect a year before the ASEAN's Declaration on the Roadmap for an ASEAN Community was signed, indicates that at least some official ASEAN-conscious change had been underway. To compare, "history" is placed as one of the subjects under the area of "Social Studies, Religion and Culture" in both the 2001 and 2008 curricula. The 2001 version's "history" section comprises of three sub-strands which state the objectives that students should understand 1) the importance of historical era and evidence, 2) the historical evolution and development of mankind/civilisation and 3) the development of the Thai nation, and learn to be proud of and upkeep the Thai identity (MOE, 2001: 22). However, it makes no mention of the understanding of the Southeast Asian region in particular. On the other hand, in the 2008 version, all the three sub-strands are still there, but the short descriptions have been greatly elaborated upon. Under the second sub-strand which is about the development of mankind/civilisation, sixth grade students should be able to "explain the present social, economic and political situations of Thailand[']s neighbouring countries... [and] tell in brief the relationship of the ASEAN Group", and by the seventh grade they should be able to explain the development of the countries in the Southeast Asian region and know the origins of their civilisations (MOE, 2008: 190-191). In line with the core curriculum, the *Description of the History Core Course Grades 7-9* (2010), which is a detailed description of the content that should be taught at each grade level and why, states clearly that students should be taught about ancient Southeast Asian civilisations and their development and relations, so that they understand the impact these all have on the modern Thai society, in order for Thai children to learn to live efficiently among diversity. A change—a national effort which was influenced by the increasingly influential ASEAN regional effort—can clearly be seen here.

Nevertheless, the 2008 curriculum's knowledge objectives under the third sub-strand, on Thai nationhood, signal clearly that Thai historiography is still a nationalist project, not an academic endeavour. This is what has not been changed. From grade level 1 through to level 12, there is only one primary focus, which is for Thai students to be able to tell of the

development and achievements of Thai kingdoms/historical periods, past and present, and to relate stories about “Thai wisdom”, culture and the “important people” of each period who have defended the nation or made it progress (MOE, 2008: 191-192). Accordingly, both the *Description of the History Core Course Grades 7-9* (2010a) and *Grades 10-12* (2010b) also state that students should learn about the past kingdoms that existed on the area which is now Thailand, so that they “understand the origins of the Thai nation and see the good examples of the Thai ancestors who have sacrificially defended the nation, in order to induce love and pride in the Thai nation, culture and wisdom” (OBEC, 2010b). In the words of the description for *Grades 10-12*, students should “understand the historical evolution of the Thai nation from the past to the present...so that they see the determination and effort of kings and ancestors in defending independence and the culture of the nation” (OBEC, 2010c). What this means is that the 2008 curriculum still fails to place Thailand’s historiography in the wider, Southeast Asian context. As Winichakul (2013) asserts during his speech given at the opening ceremony of the Southeast Asian Studies Institute at Thammasat University-Rangsit, the history of Thailand cannot be separated out as one single, exceptional “diamond” of the region, because what is now Thailand was shaped by many influences and factors, just like other Southeast Asian countries. Thailand is not isolated and exceptional, as “the only one that has never been colonised because of great leaders”, and history classes should teach students objectively. As long as this is not the case, Thailand’s historiography will continue being about wars of independence led by glorious kings, and the past warfare with neighbouring kingdoms, framed in the context of the modern nation-states, cannot escape from the spotlight.

Next, the research looked at five official history textbooks licensed by the Ministry of Education, including one each for grades seven, nine and ten-twelve, printed recently by the Office of the Welfare Promotion Commission for Teachers and Education (OTEP), and two for grade eight, one printed by OTEP and the other by a private company Aksorn Charoen Tat. The textbooks illustrate how the Thai nation has been singled out and taught outside the Southeast Asian context. The textbooks follow each other in a linear manner in accordance with the Thai nationalist historiography, with some overlapping content because some episodes are given more emphasis and thus repeated. The seventh-grade textbook is the only one which discusses the Southeast Asian region at length, with the whole second unit comprising five chapters devoted to it. It discusses ancient kingdoms in the region and their developments and relations, including “kingdoms belonging to the Thai race” (OBEC, 2014a: 63). It goes on to discuss the arrivals of colonial powers, and the native peoples’ struggles for

independence and thus the emergence of the modern Southeast Asian nation-states. Interestingly, Thailand is not discussed in the same manner. It is stated shortly that Siamese kings had to sign treaties that would put Siam at a disadvantage and gave up some territories, “in order to *maintain* [emphasis added] the nation’s independence” (pp. 61-62). The rest of the textbook then moves back to the founding of the Kingdom of Sukhothai (1238-1438) as the birth of the Thai nation, and discusses how the kings expelled the Khmers (who had power over Sukhothai then) from the “land of the Thais” (p.100), and established the first independent Thai kingdom. The content that follows from this is all about wars for independence, including how King Naresuan of Ayutthaya (1351-1767) declared independence from the Burmese in 1584 (15 years after being under the Burmese rule), how Ayutthaya fell under the Burmese rule again in 1767 due to disunity in the royal court, and how yet another nobleman, King Taksin, emerged and “successfully reclaimed the independence of *chat Thai*” (p. 147). The textbooks for higher grades follow from this storyline. The eighth-grade textbooks (OBEC, 2011; Puangpit and Moonsilp, n.d.) discuss the rise and fall of the Ayutthaya and Thonburi kingdoms, and their political, cultural and economic developments. The ninth-grade textbook (OBEC, 2014b) follows the same pattern, discussing the Rattanakosin/Bangkok period. Lastly, the textbook for grades ten-twelve (2010a) combines all the contents of the preceding grade-levels, and concludes at length (in the last two unites comprising three chapters) the role of the royal institution since the Sukhothai period, in leading Thai people to expel foreigners out of their land (p. 224).

Although other past non-Thai Southeast Asian kingdoms, including Burmese kingdoms simply referred to as “Burma” throughout the textbooks, are acknowledged as having commonly fought for independence against the colonial powers, the Thai nation remains singled out as the only one that has always succeeded in maintaining and gloriously reclaiming independence mainly because of great kings. While other prominent civilisations which existed on what is now Thailand, including Lavo and Dvaravati, are discussed alongside other past kingdoms of the Southeast Asian region, a few powerful ones, which are Sukhothai and Ayutthaya, have been selected to represent the very birth of the Thai nation⁷, in order to express the central themes focusing on great people, independence and unity (or disunity which has caused downfall) of the Thai people. Wars with neighbouring kingdoms

⁷ It should be noted that although it is acknowledged in Thai official historiography that Sukhothai and Ayutthaya were two separate kingdoms whose timespans overlapped and were involved in a power struggle themselves, the official historiography tends to portray the two as both belonging to the “Thai race” and having mostly friendly relations through royal marriages (see OBEC, 2011: 73-74).

are thus discussed in detail throughout the curriculum. As to be expected, Burma is still the number-one enemy of the Thai nation and discussed in the ethnic and modern sense of “Thai” and “Burmese.” In both textbooks for the eighth grade, “Burmese-Ayutthaya relations” are described in terms of wars, where Burma was the one who always “provoked and attacked Ayutthaya first, whenever Burma was strong” (OBEC, 2011: 76-77), and in some periods, Ayutthaya tried to deal with Burma in a “compromising manner, in order to maintain stability and to spare the lives and possessions of the Thai people” (Puangpit and Moonsilp, n.d.: 38). Both textbooks also relate detailed accounts of “Thai heroes/heroines” who fought against Burmese armies, including Queen Suriyothai, who went with her husband to the battlefield to “expel the Burmese” (OBEC, 2011: 90), King Naresuan, as well as Bang Rajan villagers, who “displayed their love for the nation by uniting as one against the enemy” (p. 97) and “fought bravely, sacrificing even their lives for the nation...[whose] story should serve to remind Thai descendants to love the Thai nation” (Puangpit and Moonsilp, n.d.: 52). Moreover, in the textbook by Puangpit and Moonsilp (n.d.), all the “major 24 wars with Burma” (p. 39) are outlined and explained. Furthermore, the ninth-grade textbook relates the “various wars where the Burmese attacked [us] Thai during the early Rattanakosin period...until the Fifth Reign, [Chulalongkorn], when Burma fell colony to the British, and Thai-Burmese wars ended” (OBEC, 2014b: 91). It can be concluded that Thailand’s official historiography today still relies on the Burmese as the common enemy in constructing a desirable image of themselves. Conversely, the fact that Ayutthaya attacked the Khmer is described in the following terms: “whenever Ayutthaya was stronger, the Khmer would surrender and succumb to Ayutthaya’s power” (OBEC, 2011: 78), instead of saying that Ayutthaya conquered the Khmer. Although these results were more or less expected, it was still hoped that in discussing wars with Burma who “attacked first”, the descriptive portrayal of the Burmese as completely evil would at least be toned down, since the books were printed quite recently. Yet this is not the case. In order to praise the Bang Rajan villagers who fought instead of fleeing, the text describes how “wherever the Burmese armies went, they would plunder the villages, abuse and oppress the locals” (OBEC, 2011: 98). This section is quite descriptive in telling how the Burmese, outraged from losing as many as seven battles to the villagers, arranged a large army “in hope of completely wiping out the villagers,” and “heavily bombarded Bang Rajan village with cannons, putting it on fire, with a great number injured and dead...until they saw that the villagers could not forcefully fight anymore that the Burmese sent troops to attack the village from every direction” (p. 99).

Up until this point, it has been illustrated that there has been no change in Thailand's official historiography. At the same time that it is aiming to create ASEAN-aware citizens, Thailand still has not moved on to find new, more harmless tools in creating nation-loving citizens, for other reasons aside from because it was saved by ancestors against evil foreigners. Thailand's official historiography in this era of regional integration is still one about wars of independence and unity, which asks every Thai person to sacrifice themselves and think as one against its external enemies. It is acknowledged that it may be naïve to expect such a radical change as the change in the very image of the nation, which has been with Thailand for so long, in such a short period of time. It is impossible to tell if a more substantial change was underway, which would have led to a new curriculum. Nonetheless, even if such change was underway, it would not be possible to be carried out in this period where those same old values of 'unity' and 'sacrifice' are given the utmost emphasis by the government in the current political context.

As previously introduced, Chachavalpongpun (2005)'s study suggests that Thainess, what it means to be a good Thai citizen, and consequently Thai-Burmese relations, are extremely mouldable depending on the political environment. He argues that different governments will promote certain Thai (and international) values/norms for political and personal ends. He illustrates that Burma once became less of an enemy in the Thai society's discourse, under the government of Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh (1996-1997), because the government was interested in investing in Burma and had a personal connection with the Burmese military leader. As a result, they promoted the Thai norms of 'generosity' (*khwammi nam chai*) in supporting Burma's entry into ASEAN, and Thai 'economic progress' in supporting investment in Burma, even at a time when the international community was boycotting against Burma's authoritarian regime. On the other hand, Chuan Leekpai's government (1992-1995 and 1997-2001), in order to overthrow Chavalit, promoted the Thai norm of Buddhist 'moral consciousness' and international norm of 'democracy' in exposing the corruption of Chavalit's government and its private relations to the Burmese leader. Now let us turn briefly to look at the current political environment which is keeping the same, old nationalist historiography, against Burma, alive in Thailand today.

Against the backdrop of escalating political turmoil and dividedness among Thai citizens into two distinct camps—the red shirts and the yellow shirts—the Martial Law Act of 1914, giving superior power to the military in times of national instability, was declared by General Prayuth Chan-Ocha, the head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO)

who staged a coup two days later on May 22, 2014, and is now the appointed prime minister of Thailand. The Thai political scene and the reasons leading to the coup are beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss. However, no matter the real intention of the military or whomever it works for, it takes no effort to see, through the numerous detentions of people who have spoken out against the NCPO, that the authoritarian regime seeks to suppress all diversified, individual voices, seen as a threat to the stability of the nation. This has culminated into the “twelve core values” announced by Prayuth, “so that [Thailand] can build a strong nation” (Chan-ocha, 2014). Three of the core values include: “1. Upholding the nation, the religion and the Monarchy, which is the key institution, 2. Being honest, sacrificial and patient with positive attitude for the common good of the public... [and] 12. Putting the public and national interest before personal interest” (Chan-ocha, 2014). Essentially, these values call for ‘obedience’ in the traditional sense, where good Thai citizens should conform and uphold the three traditional institutions, and of course ‘unity’ as in being able to sacrifice a degree of individual freedom (of opinion and expression) for the good of the public. With such same, old values being propagated, Thai-Burmese wars remain the go-to lessons to learn from, as stated by Bunyanuwat (2014), the dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, published on the Ministry of Education (MOE)’s website: “Just as Ayutthaya never ran out of good people, there is hope today for Bangkok under the NCPO” (own translation). It is this political persistence which retains the official historiography today, and if there should be any change soon, it would likely be towards a more, not less, nationalistic historiography, as reflected in how the MOE has already decided on strategies to incorporate the twelve core values into the curriculum as well as the society in general, and proceeded to produce short films and books for schools (Ishaya, 2014). This revived nationalism is reflected also in how the popular representations⁸, based on the official historical accounts, which were released shortly after the coup—including the legend of King Naresuan, namely *King Naresuan 5: Elephant Battle* (2014) and *King Naresuan 6: End of Hongsa* (2015), and one TV series, *Bang Rajan* (2015)—received much support from the government, as shown in how Prayuth’s government funded nationwide free-viewings of

⁸ Although they were produced commercially by the private sector, as parts of an existing series in the cases of the two *Naresuan* films, and as a new adaptation of Mai Muangderm’s classic novel in the case of *Bang Rajan*, these representations are in accordance with the same, old official nationalist sources including the royal chronicles and Damrong’s *thai rop phama*. They are treated as both entertainment and educational texts, as reflected in the *Bang Rajan*-maker Arunosha Bhanupan’s statement: “Bang Rajan was much more than an engaging drama. It had children asking their parents, ‘Where is Bang Rachan?’, and stimulated their interest in Thai history. Viewers even went to Sing Buri to show reverence at the Bang Rachan Heroes Monument” (Chanasonkram, 2015).

King Naresuan 5, and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Apinan Poshyananda, attended the press release of *Bang Rajan*.

Needless to say, these representations are saturated with the themes of loyalty to the leader/nation (*khwam jongrak pakdi*), unity (*khwam samakkhi*) and sacrifice (*kwam sia-sala*) for the good of the nation. *King Naresuan 5* (2014) covers the episode where Naresuan, after declaring independence for Ayutthaya from Burma in 1584 and succeeding his father as the King, wins the ultimate elephant battle with the Burmese crown prince, killing him on his elephant's back. Fighting alongside King Naresuan are extremely loyal warriors who do not fear for their lives, as exemplified in the character of Phra Rachamanu, Naresuan's closest soldier. *King Naresuan 6* (2015), the final sequel, narrates the story of Naresuan's revenge for his sister, Princess Suphankalaya, a captive and queen consort to the late Burmese king Bayinnaung (reigned: 1550-1581). This is because she has supposedly stayed behind to keep Ayutthaya safe instead of leaving Hongsawadee (Hanthawaddy) with Naresuan in 1584, and fell victim to sexual and physical abuse by Bayinnaung's son, King Nanda Bayin, who brutally murdered her after his son was killed by Naresuan. The Burmese king is of course seen as cruel and demonic, the enemy of the Thai nation. Likewise, *Bang Rajan* (2015), from the very first episode, portrays innocent Thai villagers, working on rice fields and living peacefully and happily in their close-knit community, being attacked suddenly by Burmese soldiers who rape women, kill all, no matter the elderly or children, and burn their homes and temples. Those who survive are forced to flee their homes and eventually come to unite in a small village called Bang Rajan, northwest of Ayutthaya, where they stand up against Burmese armies with nothing but warrior hearts, and one united goal which is to drive out the Burmese. These are terrible, patriotic images which represent the Burmese as the cold-blooded enemy who has brought much misery to the Thais, who have never surrendered but fought to the death, "in order for later generations to ponder upon this brave heroic act, and the love, unity and sacrifice of the our Thai ancestors for this land," as stated in the opening credits of the series (2015).

However, although produced under the same nationalist framework, these representations are not entirely without some efforts in portraying the Burmese with more human depth, which indicate changes not seen in the textbooks. In *Naresuan 5*, King Nanda Bayin appears frustrated and cruel because he feels that he is not as great as his father, the "Conqueror of the Ten Directions." Moreover, the crown prince is given some sympathy for being rejected by his father, who says he is a coward and not as great as Naresuan, and for

being slain because of doomed fate and not mere lack of skills. In the end, however, Naresuan is still the obvious hero, for being the savior of the Thai nation. Similarly, in *Bang Rajan*, a change can be noticed in how the Burmese armies are referred to by their city “Anva”, instead of simply “Burmese” as done in other previous versions of *Bang Rajan* and the textbooks. Moreover, there is an addition of a new character, a good-hearted Anva soldier, Jai/Aung-nai, who falls in love with a Thai woman and at times helps the villagers. This is an effort to show that there are also good men among the enemy. Interesting to note is also how Jai/Aung-nai enters monkhood at the end of the series, after his Thai lover and all the other *Bang Rajan* villagers have been slaughtered, partly because of him. This seems to make use of Buddhism as a common religion among the two kingdoms, where all faithful followers, no matter from which side, could take refuge in. Nonetheless, the character of Jai/Aung-nai is eventually categorized as non-Anva, as deemed a “rebel” by his peers and teacher, who repeatedly state that, “to feel sympathy for our enemy [Thai people] is not in the nature of Anva.” This implies that ‘true’ Anva, the enemy of “Thai people” during the Ayutthaya period, are evil, and fixes their nature, as well as the position of the Thais as invariably the victim, which is not objective history. Therefore, these changes cannot be considered substantial enough, although the labelling of the armies as “Anva”, to distinguish those past armies from present-day Burmese people, certainly is an improvement.

In conclusion, this chapter has illustrated that there has been a small change in Thailand’s history curriculum, reflected through the added emphasis on the Southeast Asian region. The nationalist historiography, however, remains unchanged, displaying a discrepancy in the curriculum itself. While the ‘Southeast Asian chapters’ indicate that past civilisations should be taught in the regional context, where they had flowing and shifting economic, political and cultural relationships, the ‘Thai chapters’ attempt to fix certain kingdoms which existed on the area within Thailand’s modern borders and add them to the linear chain of events of the Thai nation. The fact that the very people in those past kingdoms did not perceive themselves in terms of the modern nation with such clear borders is obscured. Hence the constructed image of the Thai nation is still of the long-standing unified nation and how it has survived because of a number of great kings and ancestors who have defended it, while the nation has been progressing forward in a linear manner, when the actual Thai nation only emerged in the 19th century within the current borders due to specific circumstances (mainly as the buffer area between French and British territories). This means that Thailand’s official historiography, as approved by the MOE since 2008, is still out of sync with the regional

context. Subsequently, the wars with neighbouring kingdoms are given much attention, with Burma still painted as the evil enemy of Thailand. Moreover, it has been put forward that Thailand's official historiography is likely to remain unchanged as long as the political environment calls for the Thai norms of absolute, conforming 'unity' and 'sacrifice' to be promoted. However, a few minor changes which arguably display efforts in making the nationalist history slightly less one-sided and shallow in portraying Burma can be observed in the recent popular representations, which could indicate the impact of the ASEAN integration. Yet in the end, substantial changes remain difficult as long as representations are repeatedly based on the official historiography, which sides only with the Thai nation—who cannot be anything but the peace- and freedom-loving, brave victim of foreign invasions.

Chapter 4 – Views from Civil Society: Beyond the Official Narration

While the ASEAN regional integration discourse has not substantially affected the official historiography for its political significance, research into the public opinion on such historical representations and the impact of ASEAN integration shows that the ASEAN talk is at least making a positive impact on civil society. The findings from online newspaper articles/reviews, topics on Pantip forum⁹, and the electronic questionnaire responses¹⁰ targeted at the general public (see Appendices) will now be analysed.

Before proceeding further, it should be noted first and foremost that an inquiring civil society which discusses issues of Thailand's historiography is not a product of the regional discourse. The works of academics and higher education have, for a longer time, produced critical citizens. For example, the online non-profit newspaper *Prachatai*, contributed to by educated, independent writers, have often released critical reviews of popular historical representations even before ASEAN became the talk of the town, such as the review on *King Naresuan 1: Hongsawadee's Hostage* (2007), which criticises it for glossing over historical facts, simply making King Naresuan the hero by reclaiming Thai independence, and for misleading people into thinking of the people on the screen in terms of "Thai" and "Burmese" ethnicities (Kanparit, 2007). Another example of a critical review of official historical representations is the *Bangkok Post* review of *King Naresuan 6: The End of Hongsa* (2015) by Rithee (2015), which describes the film and the whole series as being "textbook-like...with an absence of emotional particulars" and "a clumsy shot at militaristic patriotism." This already shows a civil contestation towards the official historiography unrelated to the ASEAN talk.

Furthermore, the survey data, where most of the 258 participants (91.08%) hold at least an undergraduate degree (36.82% of whom holding graduate degrees and higher), indicate that there are more people (46.51%) who feel that such representations would have a negative impact on the ASEAN integration than those who do not (32.95%). When it comes

⁹ Pantip.com is among the most popular websites in Thailand. It provides a free, regulated forum for registered members (in most cases with verified national IDs) to discuss a wide range of topics of interests, and is viewable by anyone.

¹⁰ The written comments/responses both on Pantip and the survey are originally in Thai. Those cited in this thesis are the author's own translations.

to whether they think representations of Thai-Burmese wars are still appropriate in Thai society in the ASEAN integration context, 38.76% answered “inappropriate”, 37.98% “neutral”, and only 22.87% “appropriate”. Looking at the group that answered “inappropriate”, quite a few people reason that these representations are tainted with nationalist purposes and are “altered history”, as described by respondent 87, as well as respondents 59, 67 and 254 who say that “Thai history classes teach history incorrectly,” instead of aiming to teach proper history. These views are nicely summed up in respondent 108’s comment: “because these representations are mostly based on nationalist writings, in order to instil nationalist sentiments...historical accuracy is often compromised because it is a one-sided view...using the present context to frame the past.” Such comments reflect the views of educated groups who are aware that the concept of the nation is relatively new, and that history is constructed to fit nationalist purposes, showing knowledge that goes deeper than simply wondering if the official historiography is still fitting under the ASEAN context. As for those who feel neutrally about this topic, many tend to reason that these films/TV series are “only entertainment”, that the impact is “up to each specific audience, their education level and ability to distinguish the past from the present”, and that “some negative feelings that may be caused among some uneducated groups are not likely to affect ASEAN integration as a whole.” On the contrary, many people who are not at all driven to question the appropriateness seem to reason that it is “the nation’s history”, which is “based on historical facts” and “should be taught to later generations”—which seems to reflect the firm grip of the official historiography on some people. Still, what can be concluded from these findings is that there are already, to quite an extent, critical, educated civil society groups where definitely not everyone is consumed by the official narration. Out of the 98.06% of the respondents who have watched films/TV series with Thai-Burmese wars content, only 36.76% of whom have felt negatively towards present-day Burmese because of them. Yet, it cannot be concluded that this is due to the ASEAN context. The fact that 48.84% of the whole sample have studied histories beyond the official version, of whom the majority (79.37%) answered either “inappropriate” or “neutral”, does not necessarily pinpoint to the impact of the ASEAN talk, as reflected in respondent 31’s comment that although she studied extensively outside the classroom about neighbouring countries’ histories, it was “because [she] was just interested, and it had nothing to do with ASEAN.” Therefore, the existence of inquiring, educated civil society which contests the official narration should first be acknowledged, regardless of the ASEAN discourse.

Nonetheless, beside the already existing, inquiring civil society, what this chapter attempts to prove is that the ASEAN talk/discourse is at least influential in the drive for a faster change in three other ways: (1) it does propel a number of people to question the appropriateness of such hostile, nationalist content (without them necessarily possessing deeper knowledge of history), 2) increases interests in neighbouring countries' histories, and (3) triggers more Thai people to want to visit neighbouring countries including Burma, which, when coupled with the physical, regional openness which is inevitable under the ASEAN context, would significantly increase personal contact and first-hand experiences and help replace distantly-formed attitudes/prejudices. These all in turn could potentially contribute to an ever-growing civil society and further questioning and contestation towards the Thai official narration.

Firstly, there are a number of online topics on Pantip which express concern, clearly as a direct side effect of the ASEAN talk, for such nationalist historical representations. A verified user, doomun (2013), starts a topic: "because we are entering the ASEAN community, [I feel that] remaking Thai-Burmese/Burmese-Thai wars is repetitive with nothing new...there should be something that encourages a good understanding between [Thailand and Burma]...learning about [our] neighbour's culture would be more interesting than wars and killing." Commenter 3 also brings up the hostile episodes for Cambodia and Laos, and states that it would not be "nice" for Thailand's neighbours to see. Commenters 6 and 8 express a similar concern, that it would be like "emphasising the wound" and "may offend the Burmese' feelings" respectively. Another user, chumpla (2014), has started a topic sarcastically mocking Channel 3 for remaking *Bang Rajan* "to support better understanding with [our] neighbour...to welcome AEC." There are two commenters, 11 and 15, who feel that the tale is wrongly used for extreme nationalist purposes, even question the concept of the "nation" in the minds of Bang Rajan villagers, and express that it may negatively impact personal relationships between Thai and Burmese people with the coming of AEC, where some Thai may "hold a grudge against the Burmese for having plundered Thai villages." Among the survey responses, there are also those who answered "inappropriate" to the question mentioned previously, who simply state their reasoning that it is inappropriate because these are biased representations that always paint the Burmese as "the bad guy", and it would cause bad feelings between Thai and Burmese who must now live closer together under the new context of ASEAN integration, such as reflected in respondent 28's comment that "ASEAN will cause more Burmese to live among [us] Thais and they may think that

[Thais] hate them, which would cause a problem for the integration,” respondent 186’s comment that “it creates hatred by heavily stressing the evilness of only the Burmese”, or respondent 204’s comment that “the ASEAN context is about ordinary people who share ethnic and cultural ties...not about the power contests between leaders”, and similarly respondent 235’s comment that “the current context has changed...and these representations only aim to remind of the past.” These responses show simple reasoning, referring to the present ASEAN context where showing “the past which cannot be changed” (respondent 190) “only serves to cause hatred towards Burmese, as seen for example on the internet where people say they want to revenge the Burmese or do other violent things to them” (respondent 57). This all signals that the ASEAN talk does have an impact on the way Thai people view the nationalist representations, as being hostile to Burmese people under the present regional context, while those people may or may not have deeper knowledge of history. This is a positive change as it shows that the talk invites more people to question at least the appropriateness of such content.

Secondly, the survey figures indicate that the ASEAN discourse increases the interests of half of the Thai general public in the histories of both Thailand and neighbouring countries, with 54.65% of the respondents answering “yes” when asked if the ASEAN talk has influenced them to be more interested. While this is still a limited amount, it is nevertheless a positive change. Although it is acknowledged that an increased interest does not necessarily lead to further studies, the fact that there are more curious and interested people shows that the regional discourse raises an awareness that Thais should know more about its neighbouring countries including Burma, which is a good start, as opposed to no interest at all. Moreover, this signals is a potential of growth for educated civil society, which could lead to further contestation towards the official narration in the long run. This is because the responses also show that out of the 126 respondents who have learned more about histories from sources other than official school textbooks and nationalist historical films/TV series, the majority (77.78%) find that their thoughts on Thai history which they have originally been taught have changed after additional studies, from sources such as academic articles on Thai historiography and Thai-Burmese wars (with one respondent specifying Sunait Chuthinthanon’s works, and another respondent citing an English book called *A Short History of Thailand*, author unspecified), internet sources written by non-Thai authors, as well as translated Burmese chronicles, books and historical sites. As to be expected, those who read academic sources have learned that “the concept of the ‘nation’ is a new invention”

(respondent 72), that “Thai official historiography is made with the purpose of inducing pride in the nation...by compromising a comprehensive, rational history” (respondent 62).

Moreover, those who have been exposed to Burmese sources tend to realise simply that the Thai official historiography is “one-sided” or “just Thailand’s perspective, placing Thai people in the centre” (respondent 29). While the Burmese sources are also just Burmese perspective as well, being exposed to different perspectives encourages people to question the bias, and the accuracy of the official historiography. This in turn makes them cautious of what they are normally told. Therefore, the fact that there are more interested people because of the ASEAN talk can be promising, as more people may potentially be prompted to learn more and have their views towards the one-sided, official historiography changed in a positive way.

Third and lastly, the survey reveals that the ASEAN discourse sparks more interest in travel to Burma, with more than half of all the participants (63.18%) answering “yes” when asked if the ASEAN talk has increased their desire to travel to Burma. 50.39% of all respondents have actually travelled to Burma and/or had personal contact with Burmese people. Of the people that have travelled to Burma and/or had personal contact with Burmese people, the majority (76.92%) say that their personal experiences have contributed to an improved, positive attitude towards Burma and Burmese people. This result also finds written evidence on Pantip. One example is commenter 14 from the same Pantip topic about *Bang Rajan*’s ‘remake for AEC’, where the commenter recalls his work experience in Burma, how, prior to departure, he was warned by the people at home that “the Burmese [have hated] Thais since wartime”, and how his actual experience surprised him, because he only met with extremely hospitable Burmese people who went out of their way to help and welcome him, which made him realise that “the belief that Thai and Burmese are enemies is only in Thai people’s imagination, due to ignorance” (Chumpla, 2014). Another similar example found on Pantip is the thread titled “is it dangerous to travel by ourselves to Burma with only two people?” (Member 1083494, 2014), because the topic starter had a negative view of Burma in his mind. Most of the responses to this topic by those who have been to Burma state that there is nothing to worry and that they had surprisingly good experiences. One commenter (number 6) says that she went by herself and found the trip to be safe and “very memorable”, as “the Burmese were always helpful, full of smiles...that it was hard to find a frowning person.” Commenters 8, 9, 10 and 11 made similar comments about the surprisingly and memorably friendly and helpful nature of the “smiley” and “lovely” Burmese. One other commenter (number 14) actually says that before his own travel for work to Burma, he also thought that

“Burmese were scary...[but] in reality, [they are] very good people, and very faithful Buddhist followers, therefore there are very few immoral and deceitful people...those probably exist but not very many.” This comment reflects the commenter’s changed attitude and highly positive personal experience. All this evidence shows that negative prejudices against Burma and Burmese people are not uncommon, where it can be said that the popular representations of the official historiography have played a part (with 68.22% of the survey respondents who have watched them saying that the representations have helped shape their attitudes towards Burmese people, albeit to varying degrees), but the impact of travel and personal contact does help shed away those prejudices, and positively improve Thai people’s attitudes towards Burmese people. Therefore, the ASEAN discourse can be said to play an indirect role in driving for change, as it increases Thai people’s interest in travel to Burma, which could in turn help contest the official historiography and the prejudices it propagates. Additionally, not only is the discourse influential towards travel for leisure, but the fact that the physical openness of the regional community itself will bring about more professional collaborations and population movement for both work and leisure and other purposes, will also likely bring about more personal contact and therefore positive changes where the old prejudices of the scary, cruel and cold-hearted Burmese—the enemy of the Thai nation—may be forced to fade.

In conclusion, whereas the ASEAN context has not made much impact on Thailand’s official historiography due to political factors, it is making quite a substantial impact on civil society, which in turn could cause the official narration to lose ground. Although the ASEAN discourse itself does not create an inquiring civil society, which is a product of education, it is contributing to an ever growing one in three main ways. One, it pushes some people to wonder and question the appropriateness of such a hostile, national history among the regional integration, as they are concerned for both the Thai people that may passively consume these products without distinguishing the past from the present, and the Burmese who may see them and get offended, while these same people do not necessarily need to possess deep knowledge of history or the concept of the nation. Two, it increases interests in neighbouring countries’ histories, the studying of which renders fresh perspectives which tend to contest the authority of Thailand’s official historiography. Lastly, the ASEAN talk also makes more people interested in traveling to Burma, and ASEAN itself also brings a rising population movement as people are free to move and work, signalling that personal contact will be on a rise, where there is promising evidence that personal interaction tends to bring

about better understanding and improved, positive attitudes towards each other, where old prejudices can be erased and the official historiography may simply get old.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

This thesis has employed the works of several prominent scholars in providing the background to the rise of Thailand's nationalist, xenophobic historiography. With the growing concept of the 'ethnic-based', clearly-drawn nation in the West that spread to Southeast Asia through colonialism, Siam turned to history for nationalist projects, in order to maintain that the kingdom had always existed as a unified body extending back in time, where rulers had endlessly fought to defend its independence and where the people had always been aware that they were Thai and belonged together under the kings. Original chronicles that were simply stories of kingly virtues and contests were expanded upon in the Rattanakosin (Bangkok) period, and the ideas of fighting for the nation and the 'Thai race' were introduced. Many nationalist works by influential figures were elaborately and dramatically written, mostly based on these chronicles, in order to define desirable, unifying Thai values—which include being united, loyal to the strong rulers, loving of the nation, freedom and the Thai race, brave and defensive, yet never aggressive. The face of a common enemy was selected in the process to suit this need. It has been asserted that Burma fitted this position the most because, for one thing, Thailand has no common anti-Western history, since Siam was not officially colonised and the colonial episode became one where the kings at that time were the sole saviours of the nation's independence by virtue of their ingenuity, and all the changes to accord the West were made in the name of 'progress' and 'civilisation.' Consequently, older war accounts that would be in line with this theme of kingly merits were required—which were the wars with neighbouring countries. For another thing, it had to be Burma instead of Laotian or Khmer kingdoms because the last two would have placed the Thais in the aggressor's position. The many wars with the Burmese kingdoms thus were focused on, and since then Burma has remained the most abhorred and malicious national enemy in the Thai official historiography. While this may not have been a real issue when Burma, under the British rule, was distant from Thailand, and when it was relatively isolated after gaining independence, the admission of Burma into ASEAN in 1997, the increasing people-to-people contact that has come with it, and the ASEAN's socio-cultural aspirations demand that this type of official historiography be altered.

The last two chapters have demonstrated that although the Thai government and the society appear enthusiastic about the ASEAN regional integration, including the socio-

cultural aspects, the official historiography and its representations have undergone little to no change. This clashes strongly with the ASCC's ideals, where the Member Countries should try to promote a common regional consciousness and solidarity through education and mainstream media, by fostering dialogues and better understanding of their ties of history. Not only has there been no change in the portrayals of Thailand's neighbours in the history textbooks presently employed in Thai schools (as of 2015), the recent Thai political turmoil has prompted the military-led government to push for an even more nationalistic history curriculum, prescribing the twelve core values, many of which centre on obedience towards the leader and the royal institution, and the sacrifice of personal interests for the common good of the public, and with a greater emphasis on national heroes/heroines. Because no other episodes of Thai history reflect and reinforce these values better than the episodes of wars with the Burmese do, major nationalistic films/TV series, based on the few well-known Thai-Burmese wars and Thai heroes, which were released shortly after the 2014 military coup, have met with much support from the government. Even though some changes can be seen in these representations produced commercially by the private sector, where the main Burmese characters are treated with more depth, and with the special addition of a 'good-hearted' Burmese romantically linked with a main Thai female character in the case of *Bang Rajan* (2015), the general portrayal is still one sided and depicts the 'nature' of the Burmese as the cruel and demonic attacker who would do anything immoral to destroy the innocent, defensive Thai kingdom and people. Moreover, the problems of employing the modern concept of the nation to relate the past, and identifying present-day Thais closely with the past heroes and heroines, as all belonging to the 'Thai nation', which can arouse strong negative feelings, are still there.

Although it is admissible that the actual impact of this official historiography and its representations on the Thai-Burmese relations at the government level is limited, the negative impact on the common people cannot be overlooked. The research shows that such nationalist representations do influence, to varying degrees, the way Thai people perceive the Burmese, and can induce negative feelings in some cases. This serves as proof of how influential the official historiography can be when it comes to public feelings towards Thailand's neighbours. This is obviously not in line with the ASCC's goals of harmony and mutual understanding which have also been circulating in the Thai media. Furthermore, there are people who state that this type of nationalist history should be preserved because it is the Thai nation's history and helps induce love for the nation and teach Thais good values. These cases only reflect

further that there is a general lack of understanding of ancient warfare, where there were no clearly defined race-based 'nations', where wars were a natural part in extending a kingdom/empire's sphere of power for both labour and kingly prestige, and where there was no one permanent evil invader. This indeed poses a challenge to the Thai government to better educate the public, if Thailand truly wished to realise the ideal ASEAN socio-cultural community.

However, the positive side is not all lost when it comes to the ASEAN integration discourse. The ASEAN talk has stimulated more people to respond critically to historical representations based on the official historiography, whether or not these people possess specialised knowledge in history. Referring to the AEC and ASEAN integration in their discussions, people have questioned the validity of this 'history', and whether or not it is still appropriate to keep reminding Thai people of these wars, where the Burmese are always the evil invader, or where Thais are always better than Laotians and Cambodians. The increasing number of Thais traveling to Burma and their positive experiences also play a role in helping shed away the negative prejudices towards the Burmese. Furthermore, with the increasing population and product movement, some people have expressed concern for how their Burmese friends, colleagues and people in general would feel hearing and seeing these accounts of wars representing them as always the 'bad guy'. Also, as one consequence of ASEAN, a number of people have been prompted to learn more about Thai history, as well as neighbouring countries' histories, from external sources, where the research shows that they tend to perceive the Thai official historiography differently afterwards, seeing it as completely one-sided. The fact that the Kingdom of Ayutthaya also attacked other lands, and that wrong deeds towards the raided locals were likely committed by Siamese soldiers as well, has been brought up. All this indeed contests the Thai official historiography, which has become a nationalist tool, and gives rise to a lively public discussion about history. Therefore, it is interesting to see whether or not more effort will be put in the future into teaching schoolchildren more neutrally about the nature of ancient warfare and the impacts they had on all sides. The people involved in making influential, nationalistic films may also need to find new ways of moulding grateful, 'desirable' Thai citizens, without misusing history and totally painting a neighbouring country such as Burma as the one-dimensional evil enemy. At the very least, they may need to do more comprehensive research before their new productions, even if they are only 'entertainment', in order to reconcile with the growing, but still limited, public awareness. The lack of such greater improvement in the future may reflect the deeper

issue that nationalist projects will always win over a proper teaching of history, and that the ASCC's discussion in Thailand of "caring and sharing societies", harmony, ties of history and ASEAN social cohesion may be but a far-fetched dream. In order to avoid being naïve, it should also be stated that it may not be Thailand alone that displays this irony, and such a huge project of weaving a new history needs cooperation from all countries involved, which is what academics have been saying. However, still, the fact that there is a growing public awareness, at least in Thailand, may provide hope that it may serve as a driving force in the future, hand in hand with academics, in pushing for a faster change. Even without any official change, at least the increasing personal contact and interests to learn more about each other may by themselves be able to help people rise above hostile, official historiographies.

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Abbreviations used: 1. ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

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3. OBEC – Office of the Basic Education Commission of Thailand

4. OTEP – Office of the Welfare Promotion Commission for Teachers and Education Personnel, Thailand

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Appendix A

The Electronic Questionnaire Form (Original - Thai)

แบบสอบถามความคิดเห็นที่มีต่อสื่อภาพยนตร์/ละครที่มีเนื้อหาเกี่ยวกับสงครามไทย-พม่า และการรวมกลุ่มอาเซียน
เพื่อประกอบการทำวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาโท สาขาเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา

อายุ

ต่ำกว่า 18 19-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 55 ขึ้นไป

ระดับการศึกษาสูงสุด (รวมที่ศึกษาอยู่ในปัจจุบัน)

ต่ำกว่าปริญญาตรี ปริญญาตรี ปริญญาโท ปริญญาเอกหรือสูงกว่า

คุณมีทัศนคติโดยทั่วไปอย่างไรต่อประเทศพม่าและชาวพม่า

มีทัศนคติด้านบวก มีทัศนคติเป็นกลาง/เฉยๆ มีทัศนคติด้านลบ

คุณเคยดูภาพยนตร์หรือละครไทย ที่มีเนื้อหาเกี่ยวกับสงครามไทย-พม่าหรือไม่

เคย ไม่เคย

คุณคิดว่าภาพยนตร์หรือละครไทยดังกล่าว ส่งผลต่อการสร้างทัศนคติของคุณที่มีต่อชาวพม่าหรือไม่

ส่งผลอย่างมาก ส่งผลปานกลาง ส่งผลเล็กน้อย ไม่ส่งผลต่อทัศนคติ

โดยส่วนตัวแล้ว ภาพยนตร์หรือละครไทยดังกล่าว เคยก่อให้เกิดความรู้สึกทางด้านลบต่อชาวพม่าในปัจจุบันหรือไม่

ใช่ ไม่ใช่

คุณคิดว่าภาพยนตร์หรือละครไทยดังกล่าว จะมีผลกระทบต่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างชาวไทยและชาวพม่าหรือไม่ ในบริบทของการรวมกลุ่มอาเซียน

มี ไม่มี ไม่แน่ใจ

คุณคิดว่าภาพยนตร์หรือละครไทยดังกล่าว ยังคงมีความเหมาะสมต่อสังคมไทยในบริบทของการรวมกลุ่มอาเซียนหรือไม่

เหมาะสม ไม่เหมาะสม เฉยๆ

โปรดระบุเหตุผล (เหมาะสม ไม่เหมาะสม เฉยๆ เพราะเหตุใด)

.....

การณรงค์เกี่ยวกับการรวมกลุ่มอาเซียน ส่งผลให้คุณรู้สึกอยากเดินทางไปท่องเที่ยวประเทศเพื่อนบ้านรวมทั้งประเทศพม่ามากขึ้นหรือไม่

ใช่ ไม่ใช่

คุณเคยมีโอกาสเดินทางไปประเทศพม่า (เช่น ท่องเที่ยว เรียน ทำงาน ฯลฯ) และ/หรือรู้จักชาวพม่าเป็นการส่วนตัวหรือไม่ (เช่น เพื่อน เพื่อนร่วมงาน ครอบครัว ฯลฯ)

ใช่ ไม่ใช่

ถ้าใช่ ประสบการณ์การเดินทางหรือการได้รู้จักพูดคุยกับชาวพม่า ส่งผลให้คุณมีทัศนคติที่ดีขึ้นต่อประเทศและชาวพม่าหรือไม่

ใช่ ไม่ใช่ ไม่เคยเดินทางหรือรู้จักชาวพม่าเป็นการส่วนตัว

การณรงค์เกี่ยวกับการรวมกลุ่มอาเซียน ส่งผลให้คุณมีความสนใจในประวัติศาสตร์ของประเทศเพื่อนบ้านรวมทั้งประเทศพม่าและ/หรือไทย มากขึ้นหรือไม่

ใช่ ไม่ใช่

คุณได้มีโอกาสศึกษาประวัติศาสตร์ประเทศเพื่อนบ้าน รวมทั้งพม่าและ/หรือ ไทยเพิ่มเติม (นอกเหนือจากความรู้เดิมที่เคยเรียนมาจากตำราเรียนของรัฐ หรือ สื่อภาพยนตร์และละครไทย) หรือไม่

ใช่ ไม่ใช่

ถ้าใช่ โปรดระบุสื่อที่ใช้ศึกษาเพิ่มเติม

.....

ถ้าใช่ การศึกษาเพิ่มเติมจากสื่อภายนอก ทำให้ความคิดและทัศนคติของคุณที่มีต่อประวัติศาสตร์ไทยที่ได้รับการปลูกฝังมาก่อนหน้า (เช่น ผ่านตำราเรียนของรัฐ สื่อภาพยนตร์ละครไทย ฯลฯ) เปลี่ยนไปหรือไม่ (เช่น เกิดการตั้งคำถาม มุมมองที่เปลี่ยนไป อื่นๆ ฯลฯ)

ใช่ ไม่ใช่ ไม่เคยศึกษาเพิ่มเติม

โปรดระบุหากมีความเปลี่ยนแปลง

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Appendix B

The Electronic Questionnaire Form (English Translation)

Questionnaire on films/TV series with Thai-Burmese wars content and ASEAN integration

Conducted as part of a master's thesis research process in the field of Southeast Asian Studies

Age

Below 18 19-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 55 and above

Highest education level (including current studies)

Below bachelor's Bachelor's degree Master's degree PhD and above

What is your general attitude towards Burma and Burmese people?

Positive Neutral Negative

Have you ever watched Thai films/TV series with Thai-Burmese wars content?

Yes No

Do you think that such films/TV series have influenced your attitude towards Burmese people?

High influence Moderate influence Low influence No influence

Have such films/TV series personally caused you to have negative feelings towards present-day Burmese people?

Yes No

Do you think that such films/TV series will negatively impact relationships between Thai and Burmese people, within the context of ASEAN integration?

Yes No Not sure

Do you think that such films/TV series are still appropriate in Thai society, within the context of ASEAN integration?

Appropriate Inappropriate Neutral

Please specify your reasons (why appropriate, inappropriate, or neutral):

.....

Has the talk of ASEAN integration increased your desire in travelling to neighbouring countries, including Burma?

Yes No

Have you ever travelled to Burma (such as for leisure, study, work, etc.) and/or personally known any Burmese (such as friends, colleagues, family, etc.)?

Yes No

If yes, have your travel experience and/or personal contact with Burmese people positively influenced your attitude towards Burma and Burmese people?

Yes No N/A

Has the talk of ASEAN integration increased your interest in neighbouring countries' histories, including Burmese, as well as Thai?

Yes No

Have you ever undertaken additional studies of neighbouring countries' histories, including Burmese, as well as Thai (aside from official sources such as official textbooks or historical films/TV series)?

Yes No

If yes, please specify your additional sources:

.....

If yes, have additional studies changed the way you think about the Thai history which you have been previously taught (such as through official textbooks, films/TV series)?

Yes No N/A

If there have been changes, please specify:

.....

Appendix C

Survey's Raw Data (figures only)

Total number of respondents: 258

1. Age

	Count	Percentage
Below 18	4	1.55%
19-25	115	44.57%
26-35	71	27.52%
36-45	18	6.59%
46-55	11	4.26%
55 and above	40	15.50%
	258	100.00%

2. Highest education level (including current studies)

	Count	Percentage
Below bachelor's	22	8.53%
Bachelor's degree	140	54.26%
Master's degree	75	29.07%
PhD and above	20	7.75%
(blank)	1	0.39%
	258	100.00%

3. What is your general attitude towards Burma and Burmese people?

	Count	Percentage
Positive	38	14.73%
Neutral	198	76.74%
Negative	22	8.53%
	258	100.00%

4. Have you ever watched Thai films/TV series with Thai-Burmese wars content?

	Count	Percentage
Yes	253	98.06%
No	5	1.94%
	258	100.00%

5. Do you think that such films/TV series have influenced your attitude towards Burmese people?

	Count	Percentage
High influence	52	20.16%
Moderate influence	59	22.87%
Low influence	70	27.13%
No influence	77	29.84%
	258	100.00%

6. Have such films/TV series personally caused you to have negative feelings towards present-day Burmese people?

	Count	Percentage
Yes	93	36.05%
No	162	62.79%
(blank)	3	1.16%
	258	100.00%

7. Do you think that such films/TV series will negatively impact relationships between Thai and Burmese people, within the context of ASEAN integration?

	Count	Percentage
Yes	120	46.51%
No	85	32.95%
Not sure	52	20.16%
(blank)	1	0.39%
	258	100.00%

8. Do you think that such films/TV series are still appropriate in Thai society, within the context of ASEAN integration?

	Count	Percentage
Appropriate	59	22.87%
Inappropriate	100	38.76%
Neutral	98	37.98%
(blank)	1	0.39%
	258	100.00%

9. Has the talk of ASEAN integration increased your desire in travelling to neighbouring countries, including Burma?

	Count	Percentage
Yes	163	63.18%
No	95	36.82%
	258	100.00%

10. Have you ever travelled to Burma (such as for leisure, study, work, etc.) and/or personally known any Burmese (such as friends, colleagues, family, etc.)?

	Count	Percentage
Yes	130	50.39%
No	128	49.61%
	258	100.00%

11. If yes, have your travel experience and/or personal contact with Burmese people positively influenced your attitude towards Burma and Burmese people?

	Count	Percentage
Yes	100	38.76%
No	30	11.63%
N/A	102	39.53%
(blank)	26	10.08%
	258	100.00%

12. Has the talk of ASEAN integration increased your interest in neighbouring countries' histories, including Burmese, as well as Thai?

	Count	Percentage
Yes	141	54.65%
No	115	44.57%
(blank)	2	0.78%
	258	100.00%

13. Have you ever undertaken additional studies of neighbouring countries' histories, including Burmese, as well as Thai (aside from official sources such as official textbooks or historical films/TV series)?

	Count	Percentage
Yes	126	48.84%
No	132	51.16%
	258	100.00%

14. If yes, have additional studies changed the way you think about the Thai history which you have been previously taught (such as through official textbooks, films/TV series)?

	Count	Percentage
Yes	98	37.98%
No	26	10.08%
N/A	59	22.87%
(blank)	75	29.07%
	258	100.00%