

The Thai-Cambodian Border Dispute - The Overlapping Area-



*'The struggle (over borders) is complex and
interesting because it is not only about soldiers
and cannons, but also about ideas, about forms,
about images and imaginings'*

~ Edward Said (1993, 7)

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The Thai-Cambodian border dispute about the Preah Vihear Temple
- The overlapping area-

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Preface

This thesis is written as final piece of the Human Geography master 'Conflicts, Territories and Identities' in the period of June 2013 – January 2015. As a central topic in this thesis is the border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia, about a 4.6km² piece of land, chosen. In this topic two of my interests come together: borders and Asia, whereby the conflict is the connecting factor. From June 2013 till October 2013 I was living in Phnom Penh, Cambodia where I did my internship at CICP (Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace). Because of my stay in Phnom Penh I was able to go to the area of conflict to do real research and interview local people: this was one of the most valuable and amazing travels I have made. I met the people who were dealing with the conflict on a daily basis, and talked to them about their experiences. I would like to thank all the people I have interviewed and thank them for their honesty, hospitality and time they made for answering my questions. During these interviews Chhoeng Dimong, a student from Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia (PUC), helped me with translating: many thanks to him, because without his willingness of traveling with me to Preah Vihear this thesis would be much less worth. In Phnom Penh I got the opportunity to do my internship at CICP, whereby the director of this institute H.E. Amb. Pou Sothirak also did research about this topic. He gave me worth full information and connections; I would like to thank him for that. Since the office of CICP was far out of town H.R.H. Samdech Norodom Sirivudh gave me the opportunity to work at his residence: I would like to thank him for his hospitality. I also would like to thank all the other people working at CICP that made my stay in Cambodia more comfortable, and made it feel like home. I would like to thank Haley Swedlund for all her valuable comments on my written pieces and motivational emails she wrote me, to support me and made me continue my writings. Most of all I would like to thank my family. They made it possible to do this master and this travel to Cambodia. Thanks to their support, motivational conversations and wise words I was able to submit this master thesis.

Soam oay sohk sabay,

Aniek Oudshoorn, January 2015

Summary

Borders, fixed lines on maps and atlases, can be in real-life sources of conflicts. Even though they are drawn as fixed lines on our maps, they are not as fixed as we think they are. This thesis is about the border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia, with special attention to the surrounding area as source of conflict. This thesis will examine why the Temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area is a source of conflict and why people engage in this conflict.

The Temple of Preah Vihear is situated on the borderland between Thailand and Cambodia. Since the Temple of Preah Vihear became a World Heritage Site (UNESCO) in 2008, the conflict about the Temple once again flared up. This conflict caused casualties among soldiers and residents near the Temple.

The research objective of this thesis is to find out why the Temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area is a source of conflict. In connection with the current literature about conflicts, the objective of this thesis to find out why people engage in this particular conflict. Besides, this thesis want to find out what influences this conflict has on the daily life of the people living in this conflict area. According to this research objective, the research question in this thesis is: *“Why is the temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area a source of conflict and why do people engage in this conflict? And what influences does this conflict have on the daily life of the people living in this area?”* To find an answer to this complex research question, several sub questions are drawn: *“What is the conflict about?” “Who are the involved parties in this conflict?” “Why do people engage in this particular conflict?” “What are the economic motives for this conflict?”* and *“What influences does the Thai-Cambodian border dispute have on the daily life of the Thai and Cambodian border residents?”*

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1| Introduction

1.1| Project framework

The history of Cambodia is full of cruelties against humanity. Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge is one of the most crude and violent regimes Cambodia, possibly even the world, has ever known. His regime is known because of their inhumane and cruel actions against humanity. The regime was in power from April 1975 to January 1979 and killed over 600.000 people (although the numbers vary widely) and buried them in mass graves (Chandler, 2000; Hinton, p. 93-94, 1998). After the Pol Pot regime, Cambodia had to live under the regime of the Vietnamese.

Thailand is for a long time relatively stable, but also has its own history. Though, it is not marked with such enormous crimes against humanity and massacres. Since 1932 the absolute monarchy was overthrown and brought the king under the law. Afterwards the country has known several coups; for example, the coup in 1976 where the monarchy played a central role (Hewison, p. 930, 2007).

After the cruelties in Cambodia and the coups in Thailand, both countries are now relatively stable. This thesis will zoom deeper into the dispute about the Temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area, situated on the border between Thailand and Cambodia. This temple, and especially the surrounding area, remains a source of conflict between the two countries. In 1962, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) committed the Temple to Cambodia. The voting resulted in nine votes in favor and three votes against (ICJ, n.d.; Singh, 1962; Pakdeekong, 2009). However, even this ruling has not settled the conflict.

Following a request by the Cambodian government, in 2008 the Temple of Preah Vihear was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and this made the border conflict flared up. Thailand claimed the territory surrounding the Temple of Preah Vihear, because the International Court did not specify the border in this area. An exact demarcation was never carried out (Singh, 1962) till

2014. Therefore, Thailand claimed to reign this area, but Cambodia argued it belongs to them.

As a result of this increasing conflict, in 2011, thousands of people left this border area (NOS, 2011) and 12 soldiers have been killed during this dispute (BBC, 2011). The goal of this thesis was not to solve the problem, but to challenge the literature about conflicts, to find out if the literature corresponds with this conflict and contribute to the discussion about the Temple of Preah Vihear focused on the grassroots.

In April 2013, a second deliberation about this conflict started at the International Court of Justice in The Hague (ICJ, 2013). In November 2014 the Court gave his final judgment about the specific and disputed 4.6km². During the start of writing this thesis, and during the fieldwork the topic was quite relevant. Now, since the ICJ gave his final ruling, the thesis is still valuable because by just resolving the issue, the damage has been done already to the local people.

To make clear where to find the disputed area, figure 1 and 2 show the location of the area, the Temple of Preah Vihear. Figure 1 shows the disputed area near the Temple of Preah Vihear. Figure 2 shows the area situated near the border between Cambodia and Thailand and makes clear where to find the conflict on the map.



Figure 1 The disputed area of the Temple of Preah Vihear
Source: www.preah-vihear.com

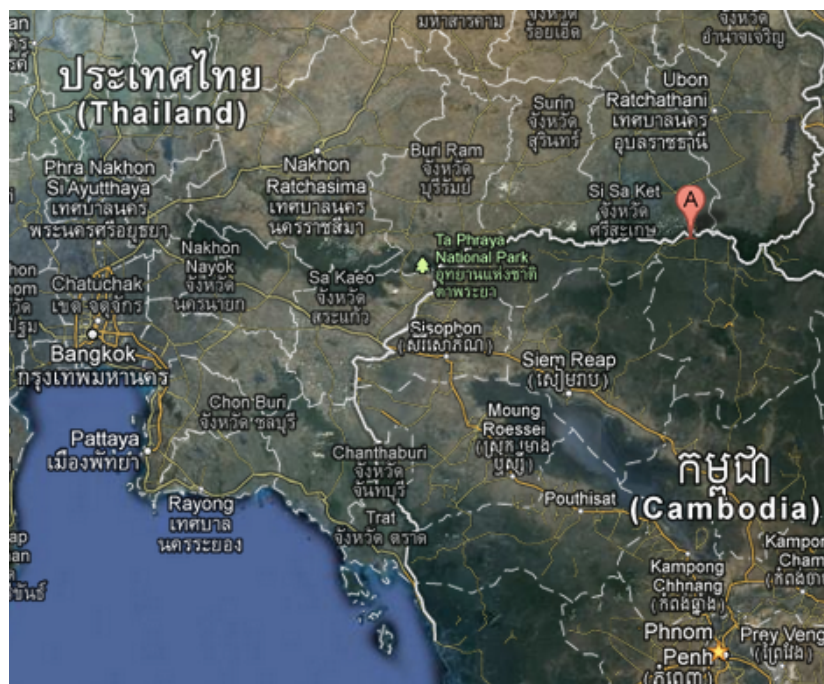


Figure 2 The location near the border between Cambodia and Thailand of the disputed area near the Temple of Preah Vihear
Source: Google Maps (2013)

Personally, I am interested in borders and demarcation of borders, because borders are often fragile and a source of conflict. Borders include and exclude people. Borders make differences between people; they make people Thai or Cambodian. Therefore the conflict or dispute about the Temple of Preah Vihear and its surrounding area has my interest. Although there are more conflicts about borders, for example the border between Mexico and the United States, Southeast Asia has my interest. I chose explicitly to be based in Cambodia because of the violent and turbulent recent history of Cambodia and its people during the Khmer Rouge.

1.2| Societal relevance

The International Court of Justice is thought to have brought the disputed area of Preah Vihear to an end in their judgment of 1962. By making this judgment, the Court supposedly took away all of the uncertainties and ambiguities. Unfortunately, since the allocation of World Heritage in 2008 to the Temple of Preah Vihear, the area became again a source of conflict. Eventually, the dispute led to fights between Thai and Cambodian border soldiers. The insecurity in the area has led to many escapes of local people. Unfortunately, the conflict not only resulted in refugees but also deaths among soldiers and local people. Therefore, many people were, and still are, the victim of this conflict. People do not feel secure in this area anymore, and because of all the negative news, many tourists stay away from this place. Many Ministries of Foreign Affairs all over the world discourage visiting this area if it is a non-essential travel. Also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Netherlands still discourages the visit to this area if it is a non-essential travel. Therefore, since the occurrence of the conflict there is a major economical decline because the tourists stay away. In November 2014 the Court gave his judgment about the 4.6km² and ruled that Cambodia has sovereignty over the whole territory of the Preah Vihear Temple and surrounding area (UN, 2013).

1.3| Scientific relevance

A lot of research regarding this case study has been done already, but this research contributes to the existing literature about the conflict in the border area between Thailand and Cambodia in several ways.

This thesis is of scientific importance because it challenges the literature about conflicts. The literature has several topics, ranging from economic motives in war, greed and grievances of this conflict, to globalization and international relations. Also nationalism in war or conflicts is part of the discussion in this thesis. According to the literature, this thesis also adds the discussion why people involve in conflicts, or why people fight.

Secondly, most research on this topic is based on political points of view according to Preah Vihear. The completed researches on Preah Vihear mostly include research after Thai and Cambodian politics and states. They have shortcomings on research on the grassroots, although the citizen living in the area are the direct victims of this conflict. To fill the gap, this research focused on the people living in the area of Preah Vihear and in what way the conflict influences the daily life of the people.

Thirdly, practical or empirical research is done as well. While visiting the area it gave me other insights from what I read so far. Because of visiting the area personally, and interviewing both sides, it gave me clearer view of the situation. It showed forms of nationality and the unity of the people, which also challenged the literature about conflicts.

All in all, this research fulfills the missing chapter of the local people by approaching it from a grassroots perspective.

1.4| Research objective

This research concerning the dispute about the Temple of Preah Vihear was a case study of practical research. It is a contribution to the knowledge of borders and conflicts. In this particular research a contribution to the knowledge of the dispute about the area of the Temple of Preah Vihear. The dispute exists already for over fifty years, but escalated after the declaration of the area as World Heritage Site. Therefore, the research objective of this thesis was to find out why the Temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area is a source of conflict. In connection with the literature about conflicts the main goal of this thesis was to find out why people engage in this particular conflict. Besides, this thesis wanted to find out what influences this conflict has on the daily life of the people living in this conflict area.

1.5| Research questions

Using the research objective, the main questions of this research was:

Why is the Temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area a source of conflict, and why do people engage in this conflict? And what influences does this conflict have on the daily life of the people living in this area?

To find an answer on this complicated main question, sub questions were necessary:

Finding answers on this complex research question, it first had to be clear what the conflict in the area was about. Therefore the first sub question: What is the conflict about? When speaking of a conflictive situation there are always more parties involved. Often because these parties have mutually incompatible goals (Jacoby, 2008). Hence, the second sub question was who are the involved parties in this conflict? Involvement in a conflict is often with a reason, and this reason

may be not that obvious as we would think, or there might be more reasons for involving in this conflict. A third sub question was: why do people engage in this particular conflict? This question challenges the literature about conflicts and compared the existing literature with this particular conflict. There are many reasons for people to involve in conflicts, for example economic motives. This sub question, “What are the economic motives for this conflict”, was related to the previous sub question, but still formulated as a separate question. Because one of the major objectives in this research was to find out how the conflict influences the daily life of the local people, the fifth sub question was cited as: What influences does this conflict have on the daily life of the people living in this area? To sum up:

1. What is the conflict of the Temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area about?
2. Who are the involved parties in this conflict?
3. Why do people engage in this particular conflict?
4. What are the economic motives for this conflict?
5. What influences does this conflict have on the daily life of the people living in this area?

1.6| Research model

The following research model shows the structure of this thesis schematically (see figure 3).

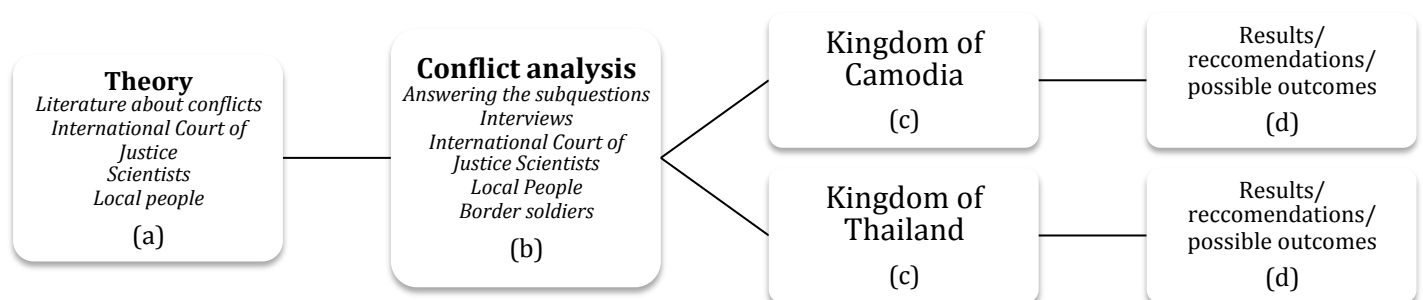


Figure 3 Schematically thesis overview

This thesis starts with a theoretical framework (a) of the conflict concerning the Temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area. This theoretical frame is the basis of the thesis. From here the thesis is further expanded. This theoretical framework is made out of literature from other researchers.

After the theoretical framework, the practical conflict analysis (b) is conducted. It is intended that the conflict analysis find answers to the sub questions. Therefore, interviews were conducted. These interviews were held with different people. The interviews were in-depth; especially during the interviews with local people it was important they felt confident. These in-depth interviews were held at home and therefore the interviews resulted in more spontaneous answers. In-depth interviews lead to more depth whereby I, as the interviewer, could ask more questions about meanings, motivations and thoughts about the specific topic. Therefore more detailed information about the conflict was gained. Disadvantageous to this type of interviews is that the results are less generalizable. However, this was not a main goal of this research project.

The interviews were held with two scientists, one with Cambodian nationality, and one scientist with the Thai nationality. There was also an interview conducted with a Cambodian border soldier. This interview was held on the disputed area. There was almost an interview conducted with a Thai border soldier, but after a couple of questions the soldier didn't want to participate anymore, scared of telling too much secret information. I also conducted interviews with local people near the border. The interviews with the Thai local people were done 50 km away from the specific border area. It was too dangerous and impossible to cross the border at Preah Vihear. In this small border town, with on both sides a market, I was lucky to meet people who lived very close to the Preah Vihear border site. I also did some interviews with people who lived more far away from the disputed area. The interviews were done with mostly people in the age between 30 and 50. I was also able to interview some local people who were a bit older and experienced also other conflicts in the area. To challenge the language barrier, a student from the Pannāāatra University of Cambodia acted as a translator. This student did some research himself about the Temple of Preah Vihear and had knowledge about the conflict. In the end, both of

us benefited from collaborating by sharing our ideas and papers. Also, we went through the process of doing a research, which is beneficial for both of us.

After these interviews with Thai and Cambodian (c), sub questions were answered. Finally, the research question of this thesis was answered and conclusions were made (d).

1.7| Research strategy

According to the previous research questions and the research model, this thesis is more in-depth to create a small-scale approach where the conclusions are less generalizable, but going more in-depth ensures that there is more detail and complexity possible, with strong substantiating and less uncertainty (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 2010). This in-depth research fits the research strategy of a 'case study' the most. Therefore, this thesis is qualitative rather than quantitative. As said, this research is based on a case study, to be more specific a single case study whereby triangulation has a strong accent (Verschuren en Doorewaard, 2010) to eliminate coincidence. Triangulation is based on the data from three different parties who are involved in the conflict: scientists or researchers, the border soldier and the local people living in the area of Preah Vihear, from both sides: Thai and Cambodian.

1.9| Research methods

This thesis is based on one case: the area of the Temple of Preah Vihear that is situated on the border between Cambodia and Thailand. When speaking of the Temple of Preah Vihear, the entire area in which the Temple of Preah Vihear is situated is meant. This area is situated on the border between Cambodia and Thailand. This border dispute takes place in Northern Cambodia and Northern/Eastern Thailand. For the precise location see figure 1 and 2. As said before, the objective and associated main question of this thesis was to find out what the conflict is about and why people engage in this conflict. In addition, this research wanted to find out what influences the conflict has on the daily life of the

people living in the surrounding area of the Temple of Preah Vihear, and the disputed area. In the end, answering the research question is the ultimate goal of this thesis. Before going to the conclusions, theoretical and empirical chapters were needed. These chapters exist out of secondary data, achieved through documents from the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP), other Non-governmental organizations (NGO's), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), etc. To fulfill the empirical part, there were also other sources needed. Therefore the interviews done in the specific area are a solid base. Scientists, border soldiers and local people in the area formed therefore the fundamental source for the empirical chapter. Especially because the interviews were held with people from both sides: Cambodian and Thai, men and women, in the age between 30-50.

1.9.1/ Sources

The secondary data used in this thesis is a collection of different literature and different researches. Most literature is conflict related and compared with the situation at the Temple of Preah Vihear. Hereby is meant to find out in what way the existing literature corresponds to the conflict in the area of the Temple and where the literature does not match the conflict.

The primary data is collected through interviews I conducted during a stay in Cambodia. The interviews took place in Phnom Penh, where the internship was situated, and in the area of the Temple of Preah Vihear, situated in the Northern part of Cambodia and Thailand (see figure 2). To experience the disputed area and to gain interviews, I travelled to the specific disputed area. The interviews were in-depth interviews with different people dealing with the conflict. Two interviews were held with scientists working on this topic, one of the interviewees had Cambodian nationality, and the other scientist working on the topic had the Thai nationality. This was important because I was able to exclude coincidence as much as possible, and in this way I was able to make the research more reliable. To contribute to triangulation in this thesis interviews with other parties were necessary: therefore interviews with border soldiers from both sides (Thai and Cambodian) were tried to be made but didn't work out as planned.

Interviews with local people living in the area, on both sides, were held. Most of the interviews with the local people were held with people of the age between 30-50, and they were both men and woman. An overview of the interviews that have been done:

INTERVIEWS SCIENTISTS/ACADEMICS	
H.E. Amb. Pou Sothirak	Cambodian academic Executive director CICP and advisor of the Royal Government of Cambodia.
Ajarn Charnvit Kasetsiri	Thai academic Professor Emeritus of Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand
RESPONDENTS LOCAL PEOPLE PREAH VIHEAR	
Day 1: Temple and surrounding area	
Respondent 1	Female, drink seller
Respondent 2	Male, temple cleaner
Respondent 3	Male, Cambodian military; border soldier
Respondent 4	Male, motor taxi driver
Respondent 5	Male, motor taxi driver
Day 2: Thai border	
Respondent 6	Female, fruit seller
Respondent 7	Male, fruit seller
Respondent 8	Female, nurse
Respondent 9	Female, Guarantee labour for Cambodian working in Thailand / Multi worker
Day 3: Cambodian refugee camp	
Respondent 10 (2x)	Female, Householder Male, military, motor taxi driver
Respondent 11	Female, Householder
Respondent 12	Male, motor taxi driver, photographer
Respondent 13	Female, military and householder (before souvenir and drink seller)
Respondent 14	Female, householder (before noodles and drink seller)
Respondent 15	Female, noodles seller
Respondent 16	Female, souvenir and drink seller
Respondent 17	Female, woodcrafter

As can be seen in the overview of the different interviews that have been hold during the stay in Cambodia, and were conducted in both the area of Preah Vihear and Phnom Penh, there were many different people interviewed. By having interviews with different kind of people, from all different kind of backgrounds

(i.e. academics, local people running a business at the border site, military, but also ordinary households) it makes the interview data more reliable, because the different people have different needs at the border site.

Besides the interviews, also the challenging of the literature is one of the goals in this thesis. Therefore I wanted to find out to what extent the current literature would fit the conflict of Preah Vihear and where the theory wouldn't match the conflict, and why that is possible. For having an overview of the different sub questions connected to the sources, the table below has been drawn.

The different sub questions are analyzed in the following order and with following data:

First sub question: 'What is the conflict about?'

Sources	Type/amount	Accessibility of sources
Documents	Scientific articles Literature	Content analysis
Media	Newspapers Internet	Content analysis
Situation	Fieldwork	Observation
Persons	Scientists, border soldiers, local people	Face-to-face depth interviews

Table 1 Analyzing the data according to Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010, p. 247)

Second sub question: 'Who are the involved parties in this conflict?'

Sources	Type/amount	Accessibility of sources
Documents	Scientific articles Literature	Content analysis
Media	Newspapers Internet	Content analysis
Situation	Fieldwork	Observation
Persons	Scientists, border soldiers, local people	Face-to-face depth interviews

Table 2 Analyzing the data according to Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010, p. 247)

Third sub question: 'Why do people engage in this particular conflict?'

Sources	Type/amount	Accessibility of sources
Documents	Scientific articles Literature	Content analysis
Media	Newspapers Internet	Content analysis
Persons	Scientists, border soldiers, local people	Face-to-face depth interviews

Table 3 Analyzing the data according to Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010, p. 247)

Fourth sub question: ‘What are the economic motives for this conflict?’

Sources	Type/amount	Accessibility of sources
Documents	Scientific articles Literature	Content analysis
Media	Newspapers Internet	Content analysis
Persons	Scientists, border soldiers, local people	Face-to-face depth interviews

Table 4 Analyzing the data according to Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010, p. 247)

Fifth sub question: ‘What influences does this conflict have on the daily life of the people living in this area?’

Sources	Type/amount	Accessibility of sources
Media	Newspapers Internet	Content analysis
Situation	Fieldwork	Observation
Persons	Local people	Face-to-face depth interviews

Table 5 Analyzing the data according to Verschuren and Doorewaard (2010, p. 247)

1.10| Research design

Research for this thesis was carried out during an internship at the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP), situated in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. During this stay I visited the border area of Preah Vihear in both Cambodia and Thailand. The development of this thesis consisted out of three phases. The first phase was the brainstorm session and the creation of the research goals, research question and all other necessities that form the basis for this thesis. In this brainstorm session also the first drafts of the theoretical framework were conducted. After completing this phase, the second phase occurred. The sub questions and the empirical chapter characterize this second phase. Finding answers to the sub questions was the main task in this second phase. Therefore, the second phase took place during the internship in Cambodia. For completing this second phase a travel to the relevant area was needed. Not only the area and the interviews done at the border site of Preah Vihear was an important source for the completion of the second phase. Also the internship itself, especially the scientists working at CICP, were an important source for finding answers to the

sub questions of this research. Not only the conducted interviews and relevant data available at the institute, contributed to the completion of the thesis, also the connections given by the institute made it possible to find the right people to have interviews with. Writing the findings and answering the sub questions and main question marked the third phase. This phase is in fact the concluding phase. Besides the conclusions made in this phase, it also consisted out of thinking of discussions and recommendations for further research about the temple of Preah Vihear and the surrounding area.

2| Theoretical framework

In the entire area of Southeast Asia, many border conflicts occur: "Countries from East Timor to Japan have experienced boundary conflicts with neighbours, demonstrating the continuing complexity of blurred boundaries in a geographical expanse" (Chambers and Wolf, p. 4, 2010).

In this thesis, I seek to answer the following research question: *Why is the temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area a source of conflict and why do people engage in this conflict? And what influences does this conflict have on the daily life of the people living in this area?* The second half of this question will mainly need to be answered via empirical data collected in the region. However, as there has been a good deal written about conflict, and even about the conflict in Preah Vihear, in this chapter I provide a historical overview of the conflict, discussing the case in relationship to theories of borders and conflict.

The chapter is organized as follows: first there will be a short introduction to the topic followed by discussions focused on borders where by I zoom in to: state building and the mapping of states, the mapping of borders and the current border conflict. In the second part the focus will be on the question why do countries fight over such a small piece of land? In this part will be zoomed in to economic motivations, cultural imagining and nationalism, the current political dynamics whereby both domestic political systems will be evaluated, why do people fight, and the last part of this chapter will declare why this thesis is written; what is missing in the current theories, focused on the citizen displaced by the conflict.

2.1| Introduction

During the colonial epoch mostly sea-oriented countries were in power all over the world; in Latin America, Africa and also in parts of Asia. Mackinder (1904, 1998) explains that these sea-oriented countries ruled over many overseas colonies. France was such a ruler of overseas colonies, one of them being Cambodia; a country of 15,14 million people, situated on the other side of the world in Asia. Said (1984, 1988) describes the area of Asia as the 'Orient', and the orient is: "Feminine: its riches as fertile, its main symbols the sensual woman, the harem and the despotic – but curiously attractive – ruler". Said explains the orient as a difficult to comprehend concept. This colonial period, where the French from 1887 to 1953 ruled Cambodia, plays an important role in the occurrence of the conflict about the temple of Preah Vihear. In that time the French colonizers drew the border between Cambodia and Thailand. This map contained also the border site of Preah Vihear and this map played an important role in the conflict between Thailand and Cambodia. You could say that this map, and this the French colonization was actually the source of the conflict about the temple. While France ruled Cambodia, Thailand was one of the few countries in South-East Asia without a colonizer.

2.2| State building – The mapping of states

Theories about borders tell us many different reasons for the occurrence of a conflict about borders. Before going to the different theories about borders connected with conflicts, it is first important to define the concept of borders. Boundaries, borders, lines, they all implicate a specific area in which certain things happen and in which rulers rule. Borders are in principle nothing more than lines drawn to demarcate the sovereignty of states (Paasi, 1998). In this understanding of borders, borders are nothing more than imaginary lines to demarcate a country and display it on a map. In the end, it is true; all borders are no more than temporary lines. But they are also 'political isobars' that continually undergo changes as a result of conflict, military expansionism and territorial

conquest (Prescott, 1987 in: Newman and Paasi, 1998). The state is never a fixed object. Its boundaries change, as does the internal morphology: the different ways of determining inclusion and exclusion, inside and outside, law and exception (Korf & Raeymaekers, 2013). Borders create political, social and cultural distinctions, but simultaneously imply the existence of (new) networks and systems of interaction across them (Baud & Van Schendel, 1997). Borders are key sites of contestation and negotiation: in many ways central to the state making process (Korf & Raeymaekers, 2013). Accordingly to Baud & Van Schendel (1997) national borders are political constructions, imagined projections of territorial power and reflect merely the mental images of politicians, lawyers and intellectuals. No matter how clearly borders are drawn on official maps, how many customs officials are appointed, or how many watch towers are built, people will ignore borders whenever it suits them. Baud & Van Schendel (1997): "If there is one thing that has been central to all borders, it has been the contest about these rules of inclusion and exclusion and the efforts of people to use, manipulate, or avoid the resulting border restrictions" (p. 214-215).

Kelly (1964) describes the political system in South-East Asia as a relatively closed system, in which boundaries were established and altered by the tern principle of survival of the fittest. Territorial authority, he says, is conformed to the logic of power. The shifting power between Thailand and Cambodia resulted in a history of shifting rulers of the temple of Preah Vihear. The temple, dedicated to Shiva, is build by the Cambodians in the ninth century on a plateau above the plain of Cambodia and includes a series of sanctuaries linked by a system of pavements and staircases (Williams, 2011). The temple became important during the reign of two Cambodian kings from 1010 to 1150. In the fifteenth century the temple was taken over by Thailand, but many Cambodians still see it as their spiritual home (Yinghui, 2011). Over the years, both Cambodians and Thais have enjoyed the Temple for religious purposes. The temple not only fulfilled a religious role, but also a core of the economy. It also served as a place for trade between the high-Khmer and the low-Khmer communities (Pakdeekong, 2009). Since the 15th century the sovereignty over the temple shifted between Thailand and Cambodia, with disputes breaking out from

time to time (Yinghui, 2011), reflecting the constantly changing powers between these two kingdoms and the malleability of borders.

2.3| The mapping of borders

All borders were, are and continue to be formed by people – normally represented by governments, diplomats and politicians – using natural features as convenient point of demarcation where it served their purposes (Newman, 2006). The mapping of borders, according to Jones (1940) tended to proceed in three stages: establishment, demarcation, and control of the border (in: Baud & Van Schendel, 1997). Baud & Van Schendel say: “Borders became markers of the actual power that states wielded over their own societies”. Bustamante (in: Baud & Van Schendel, 1997) argued that from the perspective of national centres of authority, the border between countries is a sharp line, an impenetrable barrier. The determination of the current border between Thailand and Cambodia was already done in the first years of the 20th century, during the French colonization in Cambodia. According to Touch (2009) the Siamese government (in earlier times Thailand was named Siam) requested France to prepare and publish maps of the frontier. Because the Siamese government lacked the technical expertise for that task, they requested the French to take the matter in hand (Kelly, 1964). In autumn 1907, eleven maps were completed and provided to Thailand in 1908. Sir Percy Spender (in: Cuasay, 1998) about how the map series arrived in Bangkok:

“Colonel Bernard, then in France, sought approval of the French Foreign Minister of the colonies [to publish the maps, and] requested provision of funds for that purpose. The decision to publish the maps was made by the Minister; Siam was not consulted about it. The printing and publication of the map did not follow, as a matter of course, from the operations of the Mixed Commission in 1905-1907. Ultimately, funds were authorized for publication of the ‘Bernard Commission map’ to be provided out of the budget of Indo-China (Judgment, 126).”

One of the maps, the Annex I map, contained the Temple of Preah Vihear (Touch, 2009). And, I think we could say this specific map is the cause of so much trouble occurring at the border region near the Temple of Preah Vihear. If this map were drawn as intended, the Temple would have been situated in Siam. However, the border on this Annex I map was not drawn according to the Dangrek watershed line: there occurred a fundamental error in the placement of the nearby river O'Tasem, with the consequence that a false watershed line placed Preah Vihear in Cambodian territory (Sir Percy in: Kelly, 1964). This watershed stream has been surveyed by some witnesses: even one Thai witness surveyed the area on the ground and looked under the trees during the rainy season to see which way the streams in fact ran. Two prominent witnesses from both Cambodian and Thai side explored the area of the watershed, but both did it during the dry season so none of these witnesses could readily have checked the direction of the streams that flow in the rainy season. The size of the explicit area makes it even more difficult: it is not about metres, but of centimetres whether that stream will veer off to the east and thence into Cambodia, or whether it will turn to the northwest (Cuasay, 1998).

But, as Kelly (1964) also explained: "By leaving the drawing of the map to the French, the Siamese accepted the risk that it might prove inaccurate, and it was for them to verify the result" (p. 465). However, while the royal and provincial Siamese officials did have access to the map, they were not able to read western cartography (Strate, 2013). As a result, the mistake went unidentified.

After Cambodia's independence, and the withdrawal of French colonizers Thailand assumed control over the temple (Yinghui, 2011). After World War II, actually already since 1940 when the Thai keepers were stationed at the temple (Kelly, 1964), the Thai army occupied the temple (Strate, 2013). In 1954, after 50 years of silence and inaction, actually of doing absolutely nothing, Thailand claimed Phra Viharn. This was almost 50 years after the maps were published. As a result most of the people involved in the drawings were dead and the Cambodian archives had been lost (Cuasay, 1998) so they couldn't go back to the people involved in the border demarcation. Finally in 1959 Cambodia took the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) (Yinghui, 2011) to declare the temple was officially on Cambodian territory. Moreover, this action was intended

to withdrawal the Thai troops from the temple and its surrounding area (Traviss, 2012).

While the Annex I map was evidence for the ICJ, another piece of evidence was the quasi-official visit of Prince Damrong during the 1930. Kelly (1964): “On arrival at Preah Vihear he was received by the French resident of the adjoining Cambodian province with the French flag flying” (p. 466). Also, according to Cuasay (1998): “When Prince Damrong on his return to Bangkok sent the French resident some photographs of the occasion, he used language which seems to admit that France, through her resident, had acted as the host country” (p. 851).

In the end, the final ruling about the ownership of the Temple of Preah Vihear, says that the Temple is within the borderline of Cambodian territory, and therefore the Temple officially belongs to Cambodia (Pou, 2013; Travvis, 2012). While the Court ruled that the Temple belongs to Cambodia, the Court did not rule on the land surrounding the temple, an area that remains in dispute (Pakdeekong, 2009).

2.4| The current border conflict

The recent border conflict is not anymore about the ownership of the temple, since in 1962 the International Court of Justice in The Hague, The Netherlands, determined the Preah Vihear Temple belonged to Cambodia. The recent border conflict is about the sovereignty over land near the temple, which remains controversial (Yinghui, 2011). This piece of land has a size of 4.6km², meaning we are taking about a very small piece of land. This overlapping territorial claim of 4.6km² surrounds the Temple of Preah Vihear and has caused difficulties over Thailand's sovereignty since this area has not yet been surveyed and demarcated by the Thai-Cambodian Joint Commission on Demarcation for the Land Boundary (JBC) between Thailand and Cambodia. Likewise, the ICJ had never adjudicated over this matter (Pakdeekong, 2009) because of its controversial status. Anyway, since they cannot reach an agreement about the official place of the border the conflict escalated and therefore the temple of Preah Vihear and surrounded area was a place of turmoil.

From knowledge about the case of Preah Vihear and theories about borders and conflicts, we can say that, in this case, borders are more than just temporary lines. Borders can be a source of conflict. This is precisely what is happening in the border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia: for them, and hereby I mean in particular the government and rioting political parties, the border is more than just an imaginary line between these two states. Especially for the local people, the border at Preah Vihear became more than just an imaginary line. It became a zone of combat instead of a peaceful living area. Therefore a modern state requires a certain legal border (Pakdeekong, 2009).

If we take a deeper look into the theories about conflicts such as economic reasons, nationalism and politics, all connected to borders, it seems improbable that the only reason for turmoil and conflicts at the border near Preah Vihear is the border or the land itself, which remember is only 4.6km². Borders are not simply statistic phenomena and temporary lines with little meaning. Instead, they highlight different dimensions that can in practice result in war between countries. In the following section, I examine several possible theoretical explanations for why such a small piece of land in a remote part of the world, can be the cause of such much conflict over several decades.

2.5| What fight over this little piece of land?

In this section, I consider possible reasons why Thailand and Cambodia would be so interested in such a small piece of land. In particular, I consider three explanations: economic motivations, nationalism, and domestic politics in the two countries.

2.5.1./ Economic motivations

One hypothesized explanation for conflict is economy (see, for example, Collier 2000 or Justino, 2009). For example, in the case of a rebellion, such theories would emphasize greed: the rebels aspire to wealth by capturing resources extra legally. Collier (2000), for example, says that conflicts are far more likely to occur because of economic opportunities. If people can benefit from a conflict, they are

more willing to fight. If primary commodities are present, conflicts are more likely to occur. Also the amount of young men and low education contributes to the occurrence of a conflict. Young and low- or uneducated men are more willing to fight because they do not have anything to lose. Justino (2009) makes a comparison between households and their poverty rate. She declares the poorer the household, the higher the probability of the household to participate and support an armed group. Actually both these explanations go back to the core of reasons why ordinary people would involve in conflicts: low per capita income is one of the most robust explanations for the outbreak and duration of violent internal conflict (Collier et al, 2003 in: Justino, 2009). If we zoom in to some economic facts about Cambodia we find a GDP per Capita of \$950 in 2013 (Worldbank, 2014): people living from less than \$1 a day. This confirms the low-income level in Cambodia. But actually in the case of the conflict in Preah Vihear, such explanations have little relevance because the conflict is not instigated by rebel groups but rather by states. In fact, as I will show in more detail in chapter 7, it affects many local people; they mainly suffer rather than profit from the conflict. This is because they are not able to do any more trade with the other side, which was the main income of many border residents. Furthermore the people had to move from their habitat. The border used to be a resource of income and now changed into an obstacle (Korf & Raeymaekers, 2013). Since the occurrence of the conflict the border is closed and people are not able anymore to enjoy the cooperation from the other side of the border.

Collier (2000) also had another explanation for the occurrence of a conflict: the presence of commodities. If there is a presence of commodities it increases the risk of a conflict, especially for the individual to fight warfare. If an individual get access to valuable resources they can start their own warfare. LeBillion (2001) explains this: "There is growing concern that whereas resources were once a means of funding and waging armed conflict for states to a political end, armed conflict is increasingly becoming the means to individual commercial ends: gaining access to valuable resources" (p. 562).

In the case of Preah Vihear, there are few primary commodities. Even crops, mainly rice, are used for own consumption (Food Security Atlas, 2013). Actually all over Cambodia mostly just mines can be found in the soil (a left over

from i.a. the Khmer Rouge). Therefore the soil surrounding Preah Vihear cannot be labelled as fertile, even though the people are growing crops in the area. So what Collier is explaining about the rise of conflicts connected to economy and the presence of commodities is not surely true at Preah Vihear.

On the other hand, Humphreys (in: Brunnschweiler and Bulte, 2005) suggests that dependence on agricultural production matters, implying that social relations co-shaped by economic structure are a driver of conflict. Also, the scarcity of resources can be a main driver for conflict (Homer-Dixon, 2009 in: Brunnschweiler and Bulte, 2005). In the case of Cambodia, and in particular in Preah Vihear province, it can be said there is a scarcity of food. Forests mostly surround the area; there are not many places for growing crops. These agricultural areas used to be up hill, but the people were expelled from this place. If we look it at this way, scarcity of food in the area and most agricultural areas up the hill, it might give us an explanation or reason for the fights.

Another factor influencing the economic dimension can be the fact if the participant in the conflict could gain something while fighting. It often depends on the economic position of the participant. If there is something to benefit for the participant, and he can only get it while fighting, a reason to fight is born. When a participant (of the army) has a weak economic position, is forced or feels social pressure from others, and the benefits of joining are higher than the costs of joining there is a high possibility of rebellion (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008). Here we can go back to the phenomenon of “they have nothing to loose”.

For many households a reason for supporting the army and maybe even cooperate with them is because this gives them a sort of guarantee to survive, and what is even more important: the fulfilment of basic economic needs. (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008; Richards, 1996, in: Justino, 2009). It could even be possible individuals are driven into conflict because of their poverty and they could gain more from being a fighter than from being a peacetime activist (Justino, 2009).

If we take a deeper look into these involved people in the border conflict, it is surely true all participants are from the army. Even walking around in the area of Preah Vihear makes sure the Cambodian army now rules this town up hill. This is in contrast to Kalyvas' (2003) statement: he argues that (civil) wars encourage the privatization of violence. This is not happening at Preah Vihear because the

local people are not allowed to live up the hill, the area where it is all about. He is also arguing that the “new wars” that occur are mostly motivated by greed or loot.

Although officially there are no local people anymore living up the mountain, some non-military men were tricked into conflict by being promised the ownership of specific land areas but only if he would join the army. In Cambodia not many people own their own land: according to Hughes (2009) one-fifth of rural families are landless and one-quarter lack sufficient land for substitutes, and this rate is rising. One in four Cambodian families are believed to have been involved in a land dispute at some time. She also says that one-quarter of landowners own 70% of Cambodian land, while the poorest 40% of landowners crowd onto just 10%. Seven percent of the land area of Cambodia is in the hands of a single company, Pheapimex. In fact, the land the local is promised is actually used as a negotiation to involve, become a military and fight for their homeland.

2.5.2/ Cultural imagining and nationalism

If there seems to be no obvious ‘winner’ economically from the conflict, what other reasons can be found to legitimize the conflict occurring in the area? One proposed explications are identity-based: i.e., ethnicity and/or nationalism.

As we know now, the decision to start a violent conflict depends on several factors including external military and financial intervention, the level of technology and resources available to each armed group, but also their ideological beliefs and relative strength of state presence in key areas in the country (Justino, 2009). Armed conflict may well result in the exclusion of certain groups from social, economic and political opportunities (Justino, 2009). This exclusion of certain groups can lead to specific ‘us’ and ‘them’ feelings, and in the end even to nationalistic feelings. According to Vasquez (1995) nowadays the greatest threats to peace can be found in the nationalist claims for new states. He says: “nationalism maintains that any nation has a right to its own state and territory” (p. 290). He is also saying that nationalism is so integrated in the global modernist culture that they are taken as principles that are right and natural, but that we forget that they are a product of history.

According to Huntington (1993) clashes will occur between different civilizations. He is arguing the most important conflicts will occur along cultural fault lines separating different cultural entities. Hereby we could ask ourselves the question, are Cambodia and Thailand really different civilizations? In my opinion these two civilizations living along the border are highly intertwined with each other, so we cannot say there is a cultural fault line along this border. Thailand and Cambodia experience a cultural overlap, characterized by a mixing of cultural styles.

However, even though a cultural fault line doesn't fit the situation at Preah Vihear, it is a fault line because the frontier has become a contested zone; a zone of conflict and competition (Korf & Raeymaekers, 2013). The border between Thailand and Cambodia became an expression of power relations (Paasi, 1998). Both Cambodia and Thailand are extremely military oriented and the Thai-Cambodian border dispute showing the military force plays a large role (Paasi, 1998). Both countries challenge each other and express their power. As an example a Cambodian soldier told me: "During the first fight the Thai came up the mountain with about 350-380 soldiers" (personal interview, 2013). Before this Thai militaristic expression also the Cambodian soldiers showed their power of military by catching three people from Thai side to, as they said, negotiate. Paasi (1998) explains this as how states show their (personal) territory: manifestations in national armies, military ceremonies and days on which the flags are flown. Also having an own language and rituals show territorial distinction. At Preah Vihear these forms of identity and territorial power are also shown, Yinghui (2011) explains: "Thailand found Cambodia's flag at the pagoda in the Preah Vihear temple and a stone tablet saying that was the place where Thai troops invaded Cambodian territory. Faced with fierce Thai protests, Cambodia got rid of the stone tablet but refused to remove the flag. Instead, it placed another stone tablet at the pagoda reading: 'Here is Cambodia'". Claiming of territory can be compared with showing your identity. For example painting your face during a football match to show your identity (Van Houtum, 2011), in fact is this painting of the face and placing the Cambodian flag a way of showing your nationalism. Being proud of your roots and share this with the world, with your friend and enemy.

Both claiming your territory and showing your identity give a sense of belonging, a sense of rootedness (Van Houtum, 2011). It is a form of inclusion and exclusion. Saying the border is over here, this area does not belong to you, you are excluded or “I don’t like anything which is different, I am comfortable with my own type, I may be prepared to interact with you but I feel threatened by your presence” (Newman, 2006, p. 177). Having these forms inclusion and exclusion make the existence of borders, especially in our minds, even stronger. But the question remains if the conflict is about nationalism. In an interview with Mr. Pou he claims that: “Some Thai extremist parties do protest about the border and the ruling of the Temple of Preah Vihear, and therefore it is said the dispute is more about pride rather than owning the 4,6 km²” (personal communication, June 25, 2013). Therefore, it can be said nationalism plays a large role in the dispute about the area surrounding the Temple of Preah Vihear.

2.6| Current political dynamics

Because borders and politics are inseparable, we now zoom in to both domestic politics and try to find the roles of this politics in the Preah Vihear-case. And even though it is said by Schmitt (in: Kalyvas, 2003) that political violence is not always necessarily political, because identities and actions cannot be reduced to decisions taken by the belligerent organizations, it does play a role in this dispute and therefore it is important to find out the roles of both domestic politics connected to the dispute about the 4.6km² at Preah Vihear. As we will see, often the political leaders are the most vulnerable when it comes to blaming the other. And in politics, a ruined reputation may quickly lead to the end of one’s political life (Hinton, 1998).

2.6.1/ Thai politics

A possible key factor in the border conflict is Thai domestic politics. Since Thailand faced a military coup in 2006, the country is intensely polarized. "The coup makers wanted to get rid of Thaksin because he posed a threat to the power position of the old establishment" (Kasetsiti, et al., 2013, p. 26). One of the reasons for Thaksin's resignation was the signing of the document to support Cambodia's listing of the temple. After the military managed to remove Thaksin from power he stayed popular among the majority of the population. What happened after Thaksin's resignation is that Thailand (arguably) has been without a foreign policy (Chachavalpongpan, 2009). Chachavalpongpan (2009) cited some reasons for the situation: the Thai politicians were too preoccupied with fighting for their own political survival and the Thai Foreign Ministry has been tasked with the urgent mission of reconstructing the good image of the country. In 2008, when this big turmoil appeared, there were two different groups active in the Thai politics: the 'Yellow Shirts' and the 'Red Shirts'. Pou (2013): "On the Thai side, the dispute was ignited by a charge of treason by the Democratic Party and the royalist People Alliance for Democracy (PAD), also known as the 'Yellow Shirts', against successive pro-Thaksin government for losing Thai territory to Cambodia" (p. 87). Thaksin was not only forced out of office because of his acts connected to the Preah Vihear Temple, also due his corruption and autocratic rule (Silverman, 2011). According to Chachavalpongpan (2009) share the Thai political players one common practice and goal: exploiting foreign relations to fulfil their political purposes, which are not necessarily in the interest of the nation. He describes Thaksin's ruling period as a period where he personalized and centralized foreign policy to match the needs of his domestic constituencies. Thaksin's main objective was to utilize foreign policy to shore up his populist programmes, burnish his international credentials and expand his business empire.

As said, Thai politics are divided in two groups whereby the Yellow Shirts are part of the political act who wanted to bring down the Thaksin government: the event that the Yellow Shirts, which is a non-state actor, and supports the democratic political party of Thailand used the temple of Preah Vihear had the land surrounding it, to bring down Thaksin (Pou, interview, 2013). Pou

(interview, 2013) mentions that it is basically a political divide between the democrats and the Thai party in Thailand: between the Abhisit camp and the Thaksin camp, whereby the Yellow Shirts are used as a non-state actor to instigate street protests and mobilizing nationalism in Thailand. Even Chachavalpongpun (2009) dares to say that the Yellow Shirts, manipulated the Preah Vihear issue to its advantage, using it to contest the legitimacy of the Thaksin-backed governments. He also says that the PAD proclaimed itself to be the defender of the nation and monarchy in contrast to Thaksin and his cronies who were labelled as corrupt, immoral and disloyal.

In 2011 Thailand's political landscape changed. After these elections Thailand had a new premier: Yingluck Shinawatra, a female Prime Minister and Thaksin's youngest sister (Kasetsiti et al., 2013). According to Kansetsiri (interview, 2013) the current Yingluck government is doing better than the previous governments. While she is also facing a lot of problems, he argues that Yingluck seems to be more in control of the situation. Her strength is likely to be in the fact that she can make some kind of friends with the military heads of now. But on the other hand, as Kansetsiri also suggests, the Yellow Shirts are weak now, while the supporters of the Yingluck government, the Red Shirts are getting stronger. Because of all this unrest in Thai domestic politics it is often said by some researchers that the border conflict about the Temple of Preah Vihear is a conflict between Thai and Thai, instead of Thai and Cambodian (Pou, interview, 2013). Hereby is meant a conflict between the Yellow Shirts and the government whereby the Yellow Shirts use the temple, the 4.6km² and all its related actions as a weapon against the government.

2.6.2/ Cambodian politics

Another party in this bilateral conflict is the Cambodian government. This government haven't seen many changes since 1985. Since that time the current Prime Minister, Hun Sen, is in power. Before Hun Sen became Prime Minister of Cambodia he joined Pol Pot's regime: the Khmer Rouge. During the elections in 2008 the CPP (Cambodian People's Party), Hun Sen's political party, won 58% of the votes. This resulted in 90 out of 123 National Assembly seats, an increase of

73 in the last parliamentary term, but also meaning they could form a government alone, without the need to form a coalition (Hughes, 2009). Another welcoming fact was the granting in early July, during this election period, of the Temple of Preah Vihear as being Cambodian heritage.

In July 2013, new elections were held in Cambodia, resulting in another positive result for Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP). During these last election the party lost 22 seats, which means they currently control 68 of the National Assembly's 123 seats (Cambodia Daily, 2013) and thus remain a majority in the government. In Phnom Penh 58,25% voted for the opposite party of Hun Sen, but a larger majority living the rural areas voted for Hun Sen's CPP and made him win. Hun Sen is a supporter of the rural areas and also financed the refugee camp filled with people from the border site of Preah Vihear.

Map of Cambodia's 2013 election results

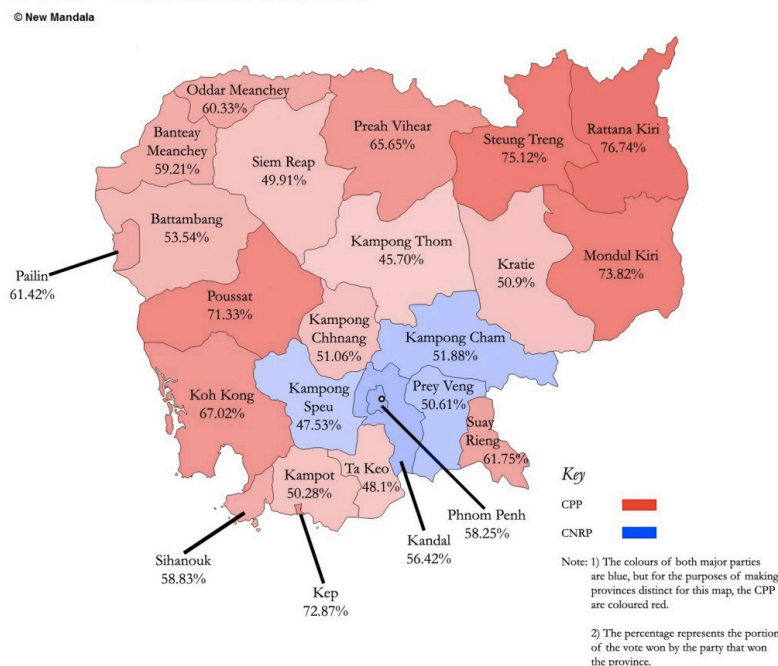


Figure 4 Cambodia's 2013 election results (Political Atheist, 2013)

2.7| Why do people fight?

Now we've framed the border situation in three different topics: borders, nationalism and domestic politics I would like to zoom in to the theories of fighting between neighbours; interstate wars.

Democracies are selective about the wars they initiate, whereby democracies won about 93% of the wars in the last two centuries, autocrats won only about 60% of the wars they started (Reiter & Stam, 2002 in: Bueno de Mesquita, 2006). Also, when democracies are not sure about a nearly certain victory, they will choose negotiations over fighting. Actually, two rival democracies are unlikely to fight rather than negotiate. Autocracies, on the other hand, are prepared to fight even when chances of victory are modest (Bueno de Mesquita, 2006). Even though it is hard to label Thailand and Cambodia in one of these two state formations, I wouldn't label them as extremely democratic looking at their political history, but they are also not extreme autocratic countries, fact is they are in a conflict with each other. Why do these neighbours fight? A basic fact in peace research, as Vasquez (1995) names it, is the fact that most wars occur between states that are neighbours. Of the 200 wars that are found from 1480 to 1941, over the half (117) were dyadic, 28 involved more than three parties. The empirical evidence shows that most wars between states are states that are territorial contiguous by land or within 150 miles by sea. Contiguity is an important source of conflict that leads to militarized confrontations and to war (Vasquez, 1995). Vasquez (1995) says 93% of the contiguous pairs have at least one militarized confrontation. Singer (1990, in: Vasquez, 1995) shows that over 80% of interstate wars are among neighbours, like Thailand and Cambodia. Starr (2005) explains, because boundaries are often established or challenged through force, and therefore it is not an accident that most wars are between neighbours. This is what we see in Preah Vihear as well: the border in that area is being challenged through force. Another explanation given by Vasquez (1995) for this fact is the relationship between contiguity and war was due to proximity: "Wars can only occur between states that can reach each other" (p. 279). Or, as Most & Starr (1989, in: Vasquez, 1995) explain it:

“Distance effect both the opportunity for war and the willingness (motivation) to engage in it” (p. 279). But hereby it is important to note that proximity is not the cause of war, but proximity provides the opportunity for war; it is a necessary condition. Starr (2005) concludes that proximity makes states that are close to one another “relevant” to one another through some combination of both opportunity and willingness to fight because: “Proximity creates the possibility for conflict through increased possibilities for interaction (both positive and negative); thus, it raises the probability of interactions, both positive and negative” (p. 396). Diehl (Goertz & Diehl, 1992 in: Starr, 2005) divides the theories about geography, war and conflict into two different groups: ‘geography as a facilitating condition for conflict’, and ‘geography as a source of conflict’, whereby the border dispute of Preah Vihear can be placed in the last group: in the conflict of Preah Vihear the geography is a source of the conflict and it’s territory highlights the importance of geography (Starr, 2005). Starr (2005) also notes that if we take space and spatiality, proximity and distance (as described by Vasquez, 1995), and territory together, we identify the need that social relations have to be studies within a geographic or spatial context as well as a temporal context. But, there is some hope for Thailand and Cambodia to become peaceful neighbours. According to Vasquez (1995): “Once boundaries are established, peaceful relations between neighbours become common place” (p. 287).

2.8| What is missing? The story of citizens displaced by the conflict

In this story of interstate conflict, we are missing an understanding of how the conflict affects local people, who are primarily victims in this conflict. It is important for us to know about this because they are the grassroots and they are the ones that should keep up the economy in the area, but are now economically broke. Since the conflict has caused deaths many tourists stay away from the place, which leads to even more economical deprivation in the area.

Many border conflicts around the world are about gaining economic progress, as Collier (2000) already noticed. In contrast to what the literature says about the

occurrence of conflicts, which are mostly connected to greed and grievances, this border dispute shows us something else. That is what I want to find out in this thesis: because this case about the border dispute at Preah Vihear shows us it is not about economic progress. Especially for the local inhabitants of the area it actually means economic decline. As Pou (2013) already claims: this dispute is more about pride rather than owning the 4.6km².

There is already some research done about this topic, but it is all focused on politics. Most theories say this border dispute is a battle between two states, but it is lacking data about the grassroots. This is also important to know because the grassroots are normally the ones that have to keep the economy running. This case should be a contribution to the all ready existing theories and can tell us about the missing theory, focused on the grassroots: the locals living near, or driven away from their used-to-be home. I also would like to make clear in this specific case it is not about what is more important when talking about the economic or cultural dimensions in this conflict, it is about two politics that are fighting resulting in local victims. And therefore it is also important this case is written now. I remember doing my interviews and afterwards people were asking me what I would do with my research and if I could send it to people with political influence, so they could finally live in peace.

3| What is the conflict of Preah Vihear and surrounding area about?

As mentioned the conflict in the area of Preah Vihear is caused by several factors, but what is the conflict exactly about? Why and what are they fighting for?

The border near the Dangrek Mountain chain has shifted over the past 800 years: the people along the border were both neighbors and relatives; they spoke a common language and shared a common culture (French, 2002). Preah Vihear, situated on this Dangrek Mountain chain, fluctuated between Cambodia and Thailand for more than 100 years, located on this intensely disputed border between these two countries. As a result the Thai and Cambodian people are deeply intertwined in this part of the world (Silverman, 2011). Even before the 1970s most of the people living in the border area did not think of themselves as being 'Thai' or 'Cambodian': the people said they were culturally similar and they understood each other. In the 1960s, the situation changed tremendously because the Thai military started to punish people with Cambodian, Lao or Vietnamese connections. Accordingly, nationality became more important.

Also because of the Khmer Rouge period the people started to realize they were Cambodian or Thai, and not both. A visit to Cambodia makes it noticeable that people nowadays still have to deal with the cruelties from the past. Every family has a member or friend who has been killed during Pol Pot's regime. Every original Cambodian you meet knows someone.

A travel from Phnom Penh to Sra Em, which is the nearest city to the temple, takes about 12 hours, for a distance of 400km. During this travel you have to change busses and take motor taxis. Therefore an occasional visit to Preah Vihear temple is very inconvenient. Though, a travel to this temple will absolutely be memorable. The temple itself is a beautiful appearance on the mountain chain of the Dangrek Mountains. Standing at one of the five temples (Preah Vihear consists of five different buildings) you have a majestically view over the Kingdom of Cambodia. Unfortunately many travellers do not take the travel all the way up north to visit this temple. Before entering the area of the Temple you have to take

an organized taxi ride, which you have to arrange in the valley. Once you are all the way on top of the mountain, or as far as the motor taxi driver is able to bring you, you have to walk further up hill whereby even a glimpse of the border between Thailand and Cambodia can be captured. This border crossing is what the conflict between Thailand and Cambodia is about. The conflict between these countries is directly connected to the temple, but not about the temple. This temple is in 1962 already ruled to Cambodia, and therefore nowadays situated within 700 meters of Cambodian territory.

Many border residents, from both Thai and Cambodian side, describe 2008 as the start of many fights along the border, which culminated in a serious conflict between Thailand and Cambodia. A cause for this conflict is the subscription of the Cambodian government for the temple to be listed on UNESCO's World Heritage. In a response to this subscription many Thai people started to demonstrate, especially against their own government and his mismanagement. The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) was at that time a political group who wanted to destabilize the government. Not only destabilization of their own government was important for these Thai to fight against this listing of Preah Vihear as World Heritage, also the recognition of Preah Vihear as Cambodian played a large role in these demonstrations. The Thai could still not bear the fact that the ICJ ruled the Temple to Cambodia. If the temple would become World Heritage it would mean recognition of the temple as Cambodian. Besides these facts, also buildings and areas with the World Heritage status are much more attractive for tourists to visit.

Since the temple is already cited as Cambodian, the Thai took the opportunity to fight over another piece of land which is just 4,6km² and surrounds the temple. This piece of land is along the border and can be described as a border conflict because it is about the unclear boundary dividing Thai and Cambodian territory whereby both countries claim this 4,6km² as their.

Pou (2013) describes both claims: Cambodia's claim is based on the Annex I map, drawn during the French colonization and the claim of Thailand is based on a unilaterally produced map, which shows the area of land claimed by Thailand. Strate (2013) describes the situation at the border as:

The Border Commission's maps depicted a border that ran east-west along the Dangrek divide until it reached the Preah Vihear Temple site, where it turned north into Thailand, arched around the temple complex and returned to the watershed. This almost imperceptible revision placed the ruins completely within the boundaries of French Indochina, despite being located on the Siamese side of the watershed (p.48).

3.1| French colonialism

As said before the French colonization which took place until 1953 plays an enormous role in the border conflict. In the field near the temple the French presence is not very recognizable, but the people and documents are highly influenced by the French. Especially older people and people who are part of the richer families still have connections with France: they speak the language fluently, visit France often, or even have a relationship with a French. Some of them used to live in France: for example His Royal Highness prince Norodom Sirivudh used to live in France because he was sent into exile by Prime Minister Hun Sen. Because France plays such an enormous role in the current Cambodian life, it cannot be omitted. The border conflict is remarked by several factors: for the Cambodian it is the Annex I map, drawn by the French in 1904, whereby the map shows Preah Vihear is inside Cambodian territory. In contrast to the Thai who kept arguing the border was on the Siamese side of the watershed (Kasetsiri et al., 2013). The border demarcation between Thailand and Cambodia should have been based on the watershed of the Dangrek Mountains. However, the French colonizers drew a different map whereby the Temple of Preah Vihear was situated as Cambodian heritage. According to Kasetsiri et al. (2013), Siam did not protest the map and even during King Vajiravudh's reign (1910-1925) a French map was reproduced as the official map of Siam (p. 24). One of the reasons for the acceptance of the map is that the royal and provincial officials, who had access to the map, didn't know how to read western cartography (Strate, 2013). Unfortunately for Thailand, the ICJ stuck to the Annex I map, because the "Siamese

authorities had failed to take any corrective action to protest the boundary demarcations set by the Mixed Commission (Mixed Franco-Siamese commission) despite having many opportunities” (Pou, 2013, p. 89). Therefore the ICJ determined that the Siamese authorities had received and accepted the Annex I map instead of rejecting this map. In the end, the ICJ gave the sovereignty of the Temple to Cambodia, but made no ruling about the precise location of the border around it. Thailand argued that the temple structure might belong to Cambodia, but the surrounding land remained part of Thailand (Strate, 2013, p. 67).

3.2| Thailand's lost territories

Besides the history of French colonialism influencing the dispute, also Thailand's historical legacy of 'Thailand's lost territories' plays a role in the border conflict. These previous lost territories are based on the 1930s creations of narratives based on these 'lost territories'.

According to Pou (speech, 2013) the root of the dispute concerning the Temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area could be found in the historical legacy and forms of nationalism in the present. With this 'historical legacy' Pou is referring to Thailand's previous 'lost territories'. The recent border tensions starting in 2008, have their roots in the 1930s by the creation of narratives based on Thailand's 'lost territory' (Strate, 2013). Throughout the 18th century and the first six decades of the 19th century, Siam was in possession of several Cambodian provinces, which included Siem Reap (Silverman, 2011). Eventually in 1907 the provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap were returned to Cambodia (French, 2002) and therefore Strate (2013) argues that the claim of Preah Vihear had less to do with the architectural or religious significance. It is more connected to their 'lost territories' and the legacy based on western imperialism because Thailand gave up their claims of Angkor Wat, but did not want to give up Preah Vihear.

According to the interviews done in the field at Preah Vihear, it can be said that a large part, 71% of the respondents gave an answer that suggested Thailand's 'lost territory' played a role in the border dispute. The asked question was: “To what extent do you think Thailand's 'lost territories' plays a role in the

border dispute? (The fact that Angkor Wat used to be part of Thailand, but lost it to Cambodia)”. This question was asked to 18 different people in the area of Preah Vihear and to the two academics (n=20).

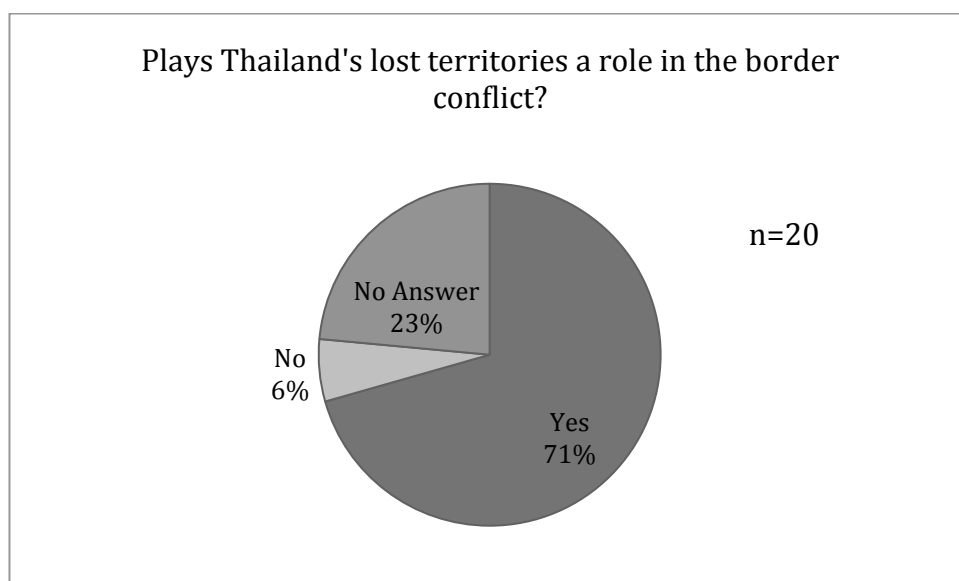


Figure 5 Result of an interview question about Thailand's lost territories (n=20)

One of the respondents stated that Thailand's lost territories played an important role in the border conflict. An other respondent was sure that Thailand's lost territories play a role because, as she said: "The house was burned because of the ideology of 'lost territories'. They are greedy for Cambodian land. The Thai lost face in 1962 already, therefore they claim the 4.6km²". This respondent sees Thailand's lost territories as a certain ideology whereby Thailand fights for not losing his face again.

Pou (interview, 2013) mentioned besides the Thai loss of territory to Cambodia also the Thai loss of territory to Laos and Burma. He argues that this is the reason why the Thai, occupied the Temple of Preah Vihear, even during the French colonial time, during the existence of Indochina. During this time the Thai have stationed themselves there to occupy the Temple. Kasetsiri (interview, 2013) cite the fact that Thailand used to control the territorial areas [including Preah Vihear] and then the French came:

I think in the beginning it was a fight between Siam and France a hundred years ago. But once Cambodia became independent, so Cambodia inherited territory from France, and the Thai government didn't want to accept it. They're thinking of reclaiming something of that they believe belongs to [Thailand], but actually it belongs to Cambodia.

As said and according to Strate (2013) and many other researchers focused on this border conflict, the Thai created a historical narrative of 'lost territory' after the ICJ ruled the temple to Cambodia. For the Thai it felt like "We were robbed of Preah Vihear" (Strate, 2013, p. 64) and therefore the Thai flag will be brought back: "One day we will bring back this flag to fly over Preah Vihear" (p.64). It could be said that waving waiving the flag, is similar to painting your face orange during a football match (Van Houtum, 2011). Therefore it is a form of showing your personal identity and maybe even your national identity. In this sense the question could be to what extent, or in what way do the Thai and Cambodian border residents show their nationalistic ideas?

3.3| Nationalism

About nationalism Pou (interview, 2013) is very cautious because nationalism can be interpreted in the wrong way. He argues that nationalism is a kind of living ideology that every country has. When time comes this ideology can be used to protect the national interests.

Besides the fact that nationalism is in protecting your own national interest it can also be a dangerous factor in conflicts, Pou (interview, 2013) gives an example where extreme forms of nationalism can lead to:

When you wrap yourself around your own national flag and see only your own interest, without taking into consideration of what is around you and what happens, if you all use your own premature it can get dangerous and that's why you see the nationalistic is more dangerous in Thailand. There were a lot of street protests, and I think the Thai military also is taking the view that it has to defend whatever the public opinion is holding at the time.

As a conclusion Pou (interview, 2013) argues that both countries should go beyond their nationalism and look objectively to the problem and try to solve it by using everything they can count on. In particular, he is suggesting diplomacy

rather than the use of force. However, in both countries nationalism is still very lively. In Thailand, for example, the nationalistic view that the Temple of Preah Vihear still belongs to Thailand still exists. Also the Cambodian feel very nationalistic about the temple. There is even a sign near the temple that says: “Preah Vihear is our temple” in both Khmer and English language.

Although there were, especially during the dispute, huge tensions between both countries that changed the situation at the border a lot, it was not always tense. Nationalism has played not always a role between border residents. Kasetsiri (interview, 2013) argues that before the conflict, even though the boundary was not drawn up, both sides seemed a kind of cooperative with each other: they lived together and shared the area. In the border area there was a kind of natural cooperation between the two nations. This was the situation until one of Thaksin’s former personal lawyers, in the role of foreign minister, signed a joint communiqué with Cambodia’s Deputy Prime Minister Sok An whereby the Thai support the request of Cambodia to have the temple listed as World Heritage Site (Kasetsiri, et al., 2013). This is suggesting that the Thai government voted in favor of Cambodia and thus was supporting the Cambodian government in his question to make Preah Vihear part of the World Heritage list. Eventually, the conflict escalated in 2008. The complex situation regarding the border has a lot to do with many different parties. Therefore it can be asked: which parties are involved in the conflict?

3.4 Who are the involved parties in this conflict?

As a result of all the struggles at the border, the border residents, were, although they probably didn’t want it to be, one of the involved parties. The role these border residents had (and probably still have), and especially the results on their daily life, will be highlighted later on in this thesis. Except the border residents there are also many other parties involved in the conflict.

3.4.1/ Thai and Cambodian domestic politics

One of the main roles in the border conflict is played by the Thai domestic politics. Since Thailand faced a military coup in 2006, the country is intensely polarized. “The coup makers wanted to get rid of Thaksin because he posed a threat to the power position of the old establishment” (Kasetsiti, et al., p. 26, 2013). Unfortunately for these coup makers, Thaksin stayed popular among the majority of the population. In 2008, when this big turmoil appeared, there were two different groups active in the Thai politics: the ‘Yellow Shirts’ and the ‘Red Shirts’. Pou (2013): “On the Thai side, the dispute was ignited by a charge of treason by the Democratic Party and the royalist People Alliance for Democracy (PAD), also known as the ‘Yellow Shirts’, against successive pro-Thaksin government for losing Thai territory to Cambodia” (p. 87). The attempt to the resignation of the Prime Minister was a result of signing the documents to support Cambodia’s request of listing the temple. But, Thaksin was not only forced out of office because of this act, also due his corruption and autocratic rule (Silverman, 2011). It should be said that the Yellow Shirts, who are a non-state actor, are part of the political act that wanted to bring down the Thaksin government, and therefore supported the democratic political party of Thailand. They used the Temple of Preah Vihear and its surrounding area to achieve this goal (Pou, interview, 2013). Pou (interview, 2013) mentions that it is basically a political divide between the democrats and the Thai party in Thailand: between the Abhisit camp and the Thaksin camp, whereby the Yellow Shirts are used to instigate street protests and mobilizing nationalism in Thailand.

In 2011 Thailand’s political landscape changed: after these elections Thailand had a new premier: Yingluck Shinawatra, a female Prime Minister and Thaksin’s youngest sister (Kasetsiti et al., 2013). According to Kansetsiri (interview, 2013) the Yingluck government did better during that time than a few governments before. He argues that Yingluck seemed to be more in control of the situation, while she also faced a lot of problems. Her strength is likely to be in the fact that she could make some kind of friends with the military heads. But on the other hand, as Kansetsiri suggests, also the Yellow Shirts were weak in 2013,

while the supporters of the Yingluck government, the Red Shirts got stronger. Because of all this unrest in Thai domestic politics, it is often said by some researchers that the border conflict about the Temple of Preah Vihear is a conflict between Thai and Thai, instead of Thai and Cambodian (Pou, interview, 2013). Hereby is meant a conflict between the Yellow Shirts and the government whereby the Yellow Shirts use the temple, the 4.6km² and all its related actions as a weapon against the government.

Another party in this bilateral conflict is the Cambodian government. In July 2013, elections were held in Cambodia, resulting in another positive result for Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP), who is in power since 1985. During the last election the party lost 22 seats, which means they currently control 68 of the National Assembly's 123 seats (Cambodia Daily, 2013) and thus remain a majority in the government. Before Hun Sen became Prime Minister of Cambodia, he joined Pol Pot's regime: the Khmer Rouge. Since 1985 he is in power and therefore he is the person that had to deal with the escalating border conflict of which there has been since 2008.

3.4.2/ International Court of Justice (ICJ)

Since Cambodia took the dispute to the International Court of Justice in 1962, this Court is involved in the conflict. The ICJ is the United Nation's principal juridical organ. "After violent border clashes reoccurred in 2011, Cambodia sent a letter to the president of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in New York, requesting an urgent meeting to stop Thai aggression" (Pou, 2013). This fight, from February the 4th until the 7th of February, was already the third fight that took place in the area (border soldier Preah Vihear, interview, 2013) since the listing of Preah Vihear as World Heritage Site. These armed clashes, which included gunfire and artillery duels, resulted in at least two Thai deaths and eight Cambodian deaths. Also more than three thousand Thai were evacuated (Kasetsiri, et al. 2013). Eventually on 28 April Cambodia filled in an application requesting a reinterpretation of the judgment rendered on 15 June 1962 by the ICJ (Pou, 2013). Although Cambodia wanted the conflict to be resolved by the involvement of other organs, Thailand wanted the border conflict to be resolved

bilateral, and not with the involvement of the ICJ. Thailand already lost control of Preah Vihear in 1962 because of the involvement of the ICJ (Silverman, 2011). Because of the ICJ's judgment, also the Thai press was really critical on the ICJ, particularly of the acceptance of the Annex I map as proof the temple belonged to Cambodia (Strate, 2013). After the request from Cambodia to give a reinterpretation of the 'Judgment of 15 June 1962' the ICJ announced: "Both parties must immediately withdraw their military personnel currently present in the provisional demilitarized zone defined by it, and refrain from any military presence with that zone and from any armed activity directed at that zone" (ICJ, 2011).

In the start of November 2013, right after my internship, the ICJ handed down its verdict deciding in favor of Cambodia. In this judgment the ICJ unanimously decided "Cambodia had sovereignty over the entire disputed promontory bearing the Preah Vihear temple on the Thai-Cambodia border" (Bangkok Post, 2013). The judgment is not seen as a complete win, because the ICJ rejected the question to define the official borderline (Cambodia Daily, 2013).

3.4.3/ ASEAN

Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the largest cooperative organization between countries in Southeast Asia, also played an unexpected role in the conflict. Peace and stability are important pillars in the ASEAN community. Their motto is "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" (ASEAN, 2012), a place where violence or conflicts are unwelcome. Therefore you would expect involvement in conflictive situations. Despite seeking cooperation, Kasetsiri (interview, 2013) finds that ASEAN is rather weak: it doesn't seem to function well. Unfortunately, the Former Secretary general Dr. Surin couldn't do much about the situation at the border, likewise the foreign minister of Indonesia, Mr. Marty. The main reason for the weakness of this international organization is because it needs unanimity to resolve. This unanimity was impossible to achieve between both Thailand and Cambodia: both members of ASEAN. Kasetsiri (interview, 2013) argues that ASEAN used to stick to the policy of non-interference. And because of this, he thinks this is the reason why Cambodia went

to the ICJ: they knew the ASEAN wouldn't work. On the other hand it is said by Pou (interview, 2013) that ASEAN wanted to involve, but because Thailand said no to a package solution proposed by ASEAN to welcome ASEAN as military observers at the border, they couldn't do anything, also because ASEAN is based on a non-interference principal and consensus. He said ASEAN wanted Cambodia and Thailand to have peacefully talks, but all of this was rejected by Thailand. It can be said the ASEAN had to deal with limitations of what the organization can do, whereby the ASEAN principles played an enormous role.

3.5 Why do people engage in this particular conflict?

Most of the people living close to the temple and thus the sensitive border area are military. On the Cambodian side there used to be a vibrant community, but after all the fights, burning houses and deaths, all of them left the affected area. These people now live in the refugee camps supported and build by CPP away from the dangerous situation, although they still live within the reach of bombs. The government supports their food supply because many of these people do not have jobs anymore, which means no income and thus no money to buy food. People not living in this refugee camp moved even further away from the place what used to be their home. For example the two motor taxi drivers who drove us around in the area: they left the area near the source of the conflict and live 68 km away from the temple. Especially the local people who used to do a lot of trade with their Thai neighbor are victims instead of participants of this conflict. One of the respondents was Mr. Mock, a Cambodian border soldier living at the mountain itself just a few hundred meters from the Temple and within the attacked village. He already lives at this place for 12 years. He joined the military because the government (CPP) promised he would get land to live on if he would join the military, fight against the Thai and protect his homeland. The guy already has an area of land, but is still waiting for the papers of ownership. But I wonder if he will ever receive these papers and would become an official the owner of a piece of land.

Unfortunately there was no possibility to interview a border soldier, or controller from the Thai side. While trying to start an interview with the leader of the border controls on the Thai side, his colleagues picked him up. Probably because they were afraid he would tell too much about the situation on the Thai side of the border. My translator did not recommend an interview with someone else from the border police.

3.6 What are the economic motives for this conflict?

According to Collier (2000) conflicts are more likely to occur by economic opportunities than by grievances. Extreme rebellion, as he names it, might arise because the rebels aspire to wealth by capturing resources extra legally. During the visit to Preah Vihear I personally didn't recognize any forms of rebellion. The local people acted as being a victim: their lives were destroyed during the fights and most were bankrupt and dependent on gifts. Most of the local people were being victimized, they made clear there was no economic reason for them to involve in the fights. Except for the border soldier, who was promised a piece of land if the conflict would be over, but for most of the locals this conflict made them lose their job and their money. These people are no longer self-sufficient. Nowadays they are dependent on the gifts they get from the government. One of the respondents said about it: "The gifts we get from the government are necessary for our living". Another respondent: "The presents from the government are food, money, our house and rice. This government helped us to rebuild our house". Not just the government, also NGO's and organizations like the Red Cross were praised for their generosity.

Another economic advantage in this situation is the investments made by China. Several years ago it would be a long trip from Sra Em (the nearest city to the temple) to the temple itself. Since a few years the Chinese government made an investment on the Cambodian side and build a road to get an easy access to the temple. Therefore nowadays it takes about 1-1,5 hours to get to the temple.

While Collier (2000) suggests that the amount of young men does have an influence on the occurrence of conflicts, especially in combination with large

exports of primary commodities, low education and economic decline, Brunnschweiler and Bulte (2009) reject this statement. The situation at the border near Preah Vihear, on both Cambodian and Thai side, supports Brunnschweiler and Bulte's statement of no correlation between the percentage of young men and, in this case, a civil war. The reason therefore is that there are almost no young men living in the rural border area: most of them left to the larger cities like Phnom Penh and Bangkok to go to school, or to join a university. This is what also came out of the interviews: the respondents interviewed who had children, told that most of their own children moved to the big cities. The men living in the area are mostly sent soldiers for protection, and not the local youth Collier (2000) is suggesting as having an influence on conflicts.

Another point I would like to highlight is the fact that Humphreys (2005 in: Brunnschweiler and Bulte, 2009) implies that dependence on agricultural production matters, he thinks social relations being co-shaped by economic structures are a driver of conflicts. Remarkable is that most of the local people at Preah Vihear are not depending on agriculture, but on trade with the nearest neighbor: the trade between Thai and Cambodian. So in the end, the conflict has mostly economic disadvantages for the local people, influencing their daily life.

4| What influences does this conflict have on the daily life of the local people?

This part is separated in three different main influences on the daily life of the local people living in Preah Vihear. Whereby the economy is a strong influential part of the lives of the people. On the other hand the social and emotional influences are highlighted. Actually these two influences on their daily life are more intertwined.

4.1| Local people and their economic situation

The conflict up the mountain of Preah Vihear changed the economic situation of most locals. It starts with the fact that when the Thai and Cambodian soldiers are fighting with each other, the area of Preah Vihear, which includes the border site, is completely closed. During this situation the people cannot have trade with each other. The Cambodian people are not able to go to Thailand, and the Thai people cannot go to Cambodia while most of the border residents at Preah Vihear are dependent on trade. There is not a major agrarian culture. For example the border crossing and village I visited at the border, approximately 50km away from the disputed area and a 2 hours drive. This border crossing was mainly used for Thai and Cambodian people to go to the market on the other side of the border. A couple of times a week there is a market organized on the Thai side, where Cambodian do their grocery shopping: fruits, vegetables, etc. On the Cambodian side there is a daily market, selling mainly endangered animals. The border crossing is easily to cross and for the first couple of hundred meters Cambodian people do not need a passport to visit the Thai market. This is a good agreement because Cambodian passports are almost unaffordable for the ordinary Cambodian. Many respondents from the interviews, especially the ones living in the town of Preah Vihear itself, experience the closed border at Preah Vihear as a negative result out of the conflict. The experiences go from not earning that much money like before, to not making money at all. One of the respondents living in

the refugee camp explained: “It really affects my economic situation during that time [of the fights]. In that time my house at the market was burned. I was not able to earn money during that time. The money I earned for 4 years I spend completely when the conflict flared up and the fighting started, just for living” (respondent at refugee camp, personal interview, 2013). Now, if one of his family members gets ill, he cannot afford a visit to the hospital because there is no money left.

Not only the trade between Thailand and Cambodia got highly influenced by the conflict, it also affected the touristic sector from where many locals used to be dependent on. They used to have small businesses for selling drinks or food to the visitors, or souvenirs. But because of the fights and the sensitive environment many people stay away from the area as a touristic attraction. Furthermore here should be marked also the elections in June 2013 in Cambodia. This happening influenced the flow of tourists, also Cambodian tourists, and so the economic situation of the people living in the area of Preah Vihear: “It is because of all the demonstrations after the elections. The people in Phnom Penh don’t want to move to other places or do not want to have a tour to other places” (respondent at refugee camp, personal interview, 2013).

Another argument that was given by some of the respondents is that everything became really expensive after the occurrence of the conflict. For example the food: rice in this area became very expensive, resulting in people who cannot afford rice anymore while rice is one of the main dishes in the Cambodian kitchen, often combined with meat or fish.

It is hard to lose your job, the trade you used to have with other people or losing your income, but it was not just economical setbacks the people had to survive: many people also lost their house because of the fights. A respondent told me: “When the conflict started, it all burned, we’ve lost everything” (respondent refugee camp, personal interview, 2013), “Everything is burned down, I could only bring a rice pot and some forks and spoons” (respondent refugee camp, personal interview, 2013), “A negative result out of the conflict is that I could only bring my clothes and my motorbike. All the souvenirs were burned” (respondent refugee camp, personal interview, 2013). Also some farming land got destroyed: “I used to live near the temple and was a sugar palm farmer. When we came back

after the fights in the area, all the sugar trees were destroyed” (respondent refugee camp, personal interview, 2013). The people who used to be farmers, for example in the sugar tree sector, used to earn more money because up the hill their land was much larger. Now they have to share the land with much more people, resulting in smaller areas of farming land, if they already have the privilege to own some land to cultivate crop. In the area of Preah Vihear there were not only crop farmers, also animal farms, and as a result of the conflict they lost their animals.

Another result is the cooled-down relationship between the Cambodian and Thai: before the border residents used to know each other well, they were friends. The border crossing at the market 50 km away from Preah Vihear might describe the former situation at Preah Vihear as well: in this area the Thai and Cambodian people still get along with each other and one of the respondents at the border even told that he feels both Thai and Cambodian.

4.2|Social and emotional damage

During the visit to Preah Vihear it was clear that all the locals moved out of the village up the hill. Walking around made clear the village was dominated by Cambodian military: “In 2008 no one was living in the village, everyone moved far away from the village. Only my husband was living in the village. My children and me moved away from the village. The men live up the mountain in the village and the woman moved” (respondent refugee camp, personal interview, 2013). People moved out because they lost their homes and because they were not allowed to live there anymore: “The government doesn’t permit moving back because now it is a tourism site” (respondent refugee camp, personal interview, 2013). The main reason for not moving back anymore is because most people became scared of the dangerous situation near the temple. It is dangerous to live close to the temple because of all the bombs. Most people stay in preparation of leaving, because even the refugee camp is in the reachability of the bombs. Also people living in Sra Em, the small town about one hour drive from Preah Vihear temple, moved away from that place because of the bombs. The reason why the government choose this area

to build up a refugee camp was because this area wouldn't affect the local people that much: there were no farmers yet and it was an easy site to build a house (respondent, personal interview, 2013). An elderly woman answered the question if it was dangerous for her to live here as following: "It is very difficult, while we sleep we are worried that the bombs will destroy our house but I had to go through many regimes: Pol Pot, the Vietnamese invasion. It is not very different. I get used to wars. While the Cambodian and Thai are fighting I am still selling [my noodles], because I already survived many regimes. While the soldiers were fighting I saw a military dying next to me. I experienced the Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese fighting in my house" (respondent refugee camp, personal interview, 2013). Although this woman was getting used to the situation, many people were nervous about the new ruling, which was expected in November: expecting new fights and danger. Although at the moment of visit, august 2013, it seems to be quiet safe but people were still afraid to talk.

4.3| The main source of the conflict according to local people

Every respondent talked to gave the temple and his ownership as the main source of the conflict at Preah Vihear, some of them specified about the 4.6km² disputed area. Before the temple became UNESCO World Heritage under the supervision of Cambodia, also Thailand used to profit from the temple: there was a Thai border control and the Thai sold tickets to the tourists from Thai side. Ever since it was Cambodian heritage this business was over.

Before the UNESCO World Heritage accepted Cambodia's request most Thai people believed Preah Vihear was part of Thailand. On TV it was broadcasted as Thai territory and Thai guides at the temple told the tourists the temple belonged to Thailand (respondent refugee camp, personal interview, 2013). Cambodian television was not focussing at all at the conflict. Thailand was spending much money on it and made people alert of the situation. Hence many people got incorrectly informed about the ownership resulting in surprised reactions when Preah Vihear was listed at the UNESCO World Heritage list as

Cambodian property. Therefore: who are the involved parties in the conflict according to the local people?

4.4| The involved parties according to local people

At the root of the conflict are the local people that got surprised because of Cambodia's listing: "The first cause of the conflict is because of the local people against the local people. After the rulings of Preah Vihear Temple as UNESCO, the Thai people were really amazed because the Thai people thought Preah Vihear belonged to Thailand. When they heard about the UNESCO and that the temple belonged to Cambodia they did not agree with the UNESCO and the local people had a huge demonstration at the border between Cambodia and Thailand. In that time Thai local people and Cambodian local people blamed each other. And then the Thai local people wanted the Cambodian people to move away from the surrounding land. The Thai people thought that the land belonged to Thailand. Before the Thai military and Cambodian military fought with each other the people started blaming each other" (respondent refugee camp, personal interview, 2013). Hereby plays nationalism also a big role: Cambodian people told the Thai did carry out their nationalistic ideas by having huge demonstrations. The Cambodian people told me they did not do anything



Figure 6 "Preah Vihear is our Temple", Preah Vihear, Cambodia

about nationalism, but while walking around the area there were Cambodian flags and even a sign that said: "Preah Vihear is our Temple" in Khmer language.

Afterwards the territory became completely occupied by military and the conflict (the fights), as visible for the naked eye, is mostly between military and military. The relationships between the military and local people were different in

both countries. According to answers from respondents it became clear that the Cambodian soldiers had a good relationship with the local people: they had contact with each other. If there was any danger they called the local people and told them to move away. On the Thai side the relationship was the complete opposite: the Thai soldiers didn't tell the local people what was going on, they kept it secret: "But sometimes the Thai soldiers call me to ask where I am, to alert me if I am near the Thai border to go away form the border: to take care of me" (respondent Thai border, personal communication, 2013).

5| Conclusion

“Why is the temple of Preah Vihear and surrounding area a source of conflict and why do people engage in this conflict? And what influences does this conflict have on the daily life of the local people living in this area?”

It all started hundreds and hundreds of years ago when the temple was switching between Cambodian and Siam as their property. During the French colonial rule (1889-1953) a map was drawn whereby the French didn't follow up the Dangrek watershed, which was normally used as the border. After the French colonial rule the Thai occupied the temple and wanted it to be Thai property. Cambodia didn't agree with the Thai invasion at the temple, so Cambodia took the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to give a clear ruling about the temple. In 1962 the ruling came and made clear Cambodia was the owner of the temple, despite Thailand's unilaterally produced map whereby the temple was within Thailand. The ICJ stuck to the Annex I map produced by the French during the colonial era. A piece of land, 4.6km² in total, was after this ruling about the temple still not clear. In 2007 Cambodia did a request to UNESCO for Preah Vihear to become World Heritage. When Preah Vihear would receive this status, Phnom Penh would receive money. This specific act from Cambodia made Thailand frustrated because if Preah Vihear would become World Heritage it was not only the money that Bangkok would not receive, it would also mean even more recognition of Cambodia's ownership of the temple. In 2008 UNESCO approved Cambodia's request and Preah Vihear was listed as World Heritage. After this registration in 2008 the conflict started to flair up because also the 4.6km² disputed area was included in this application. On 15 July 2008 the first armed clashes took place. The clash at the border has many different reasons: for example nationalism played an important role in the conflict. It was a clash between different nationalities, between Cambodia and Thailand, but it was also a clash within Thailand. It became a response from the Yellow Shirts (a non-state actor against Thaksin) to the political subordination, cultural humiliation, the blocked economy and development created by Thaksin's government. The Yellow Shirts wanted to

get rid of Thaksin. Thailand's politics was highly polarized and therefore the Thai domestic politics played a large role in the border conflict. The temple became object of protest and political contention leading to fatalities, injuries and evacuation of local inhabitants. In the period of 4 till 7 February 2011 the conflict escalated and led to deaths, injuries, displacements of military and local people and also caused damages to the temple. It was surely a dispute produced by the leaders of the countries, or at least not by the local people. It is known that people themselves have no interest in war or conflicts; it is often their leader that brings the local people in such a situation.

In Cambodia the CPP (Cambodia's People's Party), led by Hun Sen, is in power since 1985 and also the political landscape of Cambodia started to show some cracks since the last elections in June 2013: the CPP lost many chairs in politics, but is still the ruling party. Remarkable is that in the area of Preah Vihear many people voted CPP: is it maybe because so many people got support from CPP during their lives in the refugee camps?

After these reoccurring clashes in beginning 2011 Cambodia asked ICJ to reinterpret the ruling of 1962, while Thailand wanted to solve the dispute bilateral. The interference of ICJ was needed because ASEAN had to deal with his non-interference policy and was seen as a weak organ that couldn't give a ruling about the disputed 4.6km².

Also identity and nationalism influenced the border conflict. Since Thailand lost his face in 1962 by hearing the temple is Cambodian property it didn't want to lose his face again and therefore they claimed the 4.6km². A lot of Thai people was told Preah Vihear was Thai property, but after UNESCO's listing it was clear to many people Preah Vihear was owned by Cambodia. Leading to a lot of frustration and in the end to the clashes.

This claim of 4.6km² had many influences on the local people. Because of the fights and eventually the deaths, many people got scared and had to move away from their village up the mountain. They ended up in a refugee camp, still in the reach of bombs, and not allowed to go back anymore. The clash had enormous economic influences: because of the clash the border was closed. People couldn't do any trade anymore, they used to trade with their neighbour: the Thai who also became their friends. Unfortunately this relationship between Thai and

Cambodian cooled down. There were no more tourists visiting the beautiful temple area, also a deprivation of income. And on the other hand became groceries extremely expensive, unaffordable for many Cambodian people. In the end, the used-to-be lively border village ended up as a village owned by military protecting their homeland.

5.1| Discussion and recommendations for further research

In November 2013 ICJ gave his ruling about the 4.6km² in The Hague, The Netherlands. In this ruling it referred back to the ruling of 1962 and made clear the surrounding 4.6km² was also Cambodian property. Therefore Thailand had to withdraw all his military forces from Cambodian land.

Since there is this new ruling about the, used to be, disputed area, it might be better liveable for the inhabitants of Preah Vihear. A new research therefore could be focussed on the people's life after the ruling of 2013. Do the people experience many changes? Are there some improvements?

Another research can be done on the Thai domestic politics. This was also one of the main reasons for the occurrence of the conflict about the temple. The goal of the Yellow Shirts was to bring down Thaksin's government: his younger sister Yingluck Shinawatra was seen as one of his puppets and ruled over Thailand during the conflict. On 22 May 2014 the Thai army took over control and a coup d'état was a fact, Yingluck Shinawatra was arrested and the Thai government was down. This coup influenced, and still does, the daily lives of the people in Thailand. The people are under pressure of the Thai Royal Army led by General Prayuth. Academics, former government officials and all other people who are critical about the current junta get caught, go into prison and lose their official documents. As said, the Thai government also played an important role on the border conflict about Preah Vihear. Since there is a new ruling government, interesting research could be about the influence on conflicts, especially the one at Preah Vihear, of governments.

5.2| Shortcomings

One of the main shortcomings in this thesis is triangulation in interviews. Unfortunately it was impossible to have an interview with one of the border soldiers on Thai side, because of our own safety. Also interviewing local people directly living on the other side of the border at Preah Vihear, I mean the Thai side, was not possible because the border site was still closed. Luckily we met a woman at the Thai market who lived really close to Preah Vihear and could tell some of her experiences from Thai side. This woman asked us to join her to her house so we could see the Thai view. Unfortunately we were unable to go with her because we did not have the needed documents. Therefore also finding respondents from Thai nationality was difficult. Unfortunately finding elderly people to interview didn't worked out as planned, many people didn't experience the conflict and tension about the conflict in the '60s because they were not born yet, or were really young. This made it difficult to ask the respondents about the ruling in 1962.

6| References

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