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The Lost Territories: Thailand’s History of National Humiliation. By Shane Strate. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2015. xi+245 pp.

Thailand’s history during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is often taught by way of a story centred on a few heroic, benevolent and gifted rulers who steered the ship of state through dangerous waters. This nationalistic blend of myth and history is so often repeated along the same lines that for many it has become a truism.

Shane Strate begins by taking up two strands from this story. One strand has it that the country escaped being colonized through the clever “bamboo diplomacy” of these Thai monarchs, who cunningly stymied greedy European nations. The second strand is that, in the process of dealing with the threat of colonial intervention, these kings were forced to make sacrifices. Siam handed vast portions of territory towards the east and the south over to the French and the British, respectively. In this book, the latter strand appears under the label of “national humiliation”, and several moments are chosen when the theme of “national humiliation” became prominent in the history of the modern Thai state.

The most traumatic national humiliation in Thailand’s history occurred in 1893, as Strate recounts in his introduction, when the French blockaded the Chao Phraya River and the Siamese king not only had to pay a huge indemnity but was also forced to cede all territories east of the Mekong River to France.

In the first chapter, the author ably identifies the topic of the unequal treaties as a major problem, which resulted in a massive loss of sovereignty. Territory was exchanged in return for a greater degree of autonomy. In the following chapter, the focus moves to the lead-up to the Second World War, when an ultra-nationalist government gained broad support with its irredentist propaganda and, in the years following, eventually succeeded in extending the country's borders in three directions. The author, employing a broad selection of contemporary newspaper reports, succeeds in illuminating the war years and in bringing out fascinating details.

Chapter Three is devoted to the persecution of Catholics during the Second World War. The topic is interesting, but its relation to the discourse on "national humiliation" is unclear. In addition, the author already published this material more than four years ago in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (2011).

The fourth chapter takes up another theme from the Second World War, pan-Asianism, which the Thai nationalist government of the time readily took over from Japan. This involved a revision of the role of the British, who had hitherto played a central role in guiding Thailand on the road to "civilization". In the following chapter, Thailand's post-war trauma of losing recently regained territories is very ably told, replete with citations from contemporary documents.

Most of the focus on the theme of "national humiliation" in the remaining chapters centres upon the intricate story of the long-standing conflict between Cambodia and Thailand regarding the ancient temple complex of Preah Vihear. We learn why a judgement from the International Court of Justice was requested in 1959. We learn why, when their country lost, Thais felt that injustice was done. The recent political ramifications of the case are also ably described.

The book suffers a little from an overemphasis on the Second World War, introducing several topics that are only marginally related to "national humiliation". The author seems to have missed a set of incidents that would have served eminently to illustrate the theme of "national humiliation" — namely, the border disputes

with Laos that took place in the 1980s, when Thai troops occupied villages in Sayaboury Province of the Lao People's Democratic Republic several times but were forced to retreat. Nevertheless, the book's chief strength lies in its unusual perspective of failure and impotence in the turbulent twentieth century and its lavish use of contemporary sources.

In a book covering so much ground, some inaccuracies seem inevitable. Thus Consul "Schomburgh" should be "Schomburgk", and "Kawilirot" "Kawilorot". Further, the title of the novel *Thawiphop* is correctly translated as *Parallel Worlds*, not *Between Worlds*. On the map of "lost territories" (p. 47), the Malay states that were "lost" are not indicated as such. Or, when mentioning the notorious Thailand–Burma Railway, the author writes of the "death of thousands of Malay and Burmese corvée labourers" (p. 117). This is misleading. In actuality, the death toll among Asian impressed labourers was at least 73,000 men, most of them Javanese, while more than 12,000 Western prisoners of war also lost their lives (Kratoska 2006, p. 11).

Also, a note to the series editors: whenever a journal article or chapter in a book is listed in the bibliography, it is standard practice to indicate the first and last pages of the article or chapter.

Apart from these minor irritants, the book provides a refreshing new perspective on twentieth-century Thai history, particularly on Thailand's role in and around the Second World War.

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