Institute for Culture and Society
Occasional Paper Series

Heritage and Nationalism:
An Unbreachable Couple?

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December 2012

University of Western Sydney
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INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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Abstract

This paper examines the ties between cultural heritage and nationalism. It offers an historical account of such relationships and presents examples from recent times. Particular attention is paid to the role that antiquity has played and continues to play in the construction of cultural nationalisms, some of which have been far from benign. The recent conflict between Thailand and Cambodia over the Preah Vihear temple is seen to be particularly illustrative in this regard.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, nationalism, Preah Vihear, antiquity, modernity

Introduction

> Heritage is not the same as history. Heritage is highly processed through mythology, ideology, nationalism, local pride, romantic ideas or just plain marketing into a commodity (Schouten, 1995: 21).

In the 1990s much of the academic literature on globalisation heralded the decline of the nation-state and the emergence of a new global order, one supposedly defined by transnational connectivities, 'glocal' intersections and a seamless capitalist economy (Robertson, 1992; Hardt and Negri, 2001; Urry, 2003). More recently, it has been argued that cities are the new nation-states of the twenty-first century, a declaration derived from their role in shaping global thinking in governance and the welfare of today's world economy (Sassen, 2002). Elsewhere, much academic attention has been dedicated to ideas of postnational forms of identity, and to the possibilities of citizenships oriented less by a prototypical nationalism and more by an ethos of cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2006; Delanty, 2009; Meskell, 2009). Others, however, remain less persuaded by such claims and have argued that assertions concerning the death of the nation-state as a key articulator of identity, politics and economic governance are either fallacious, premature or overblown (Bulmer and Solomos, 2012).

Cultural heritage is one arena where such themes and questions remain intriguing, and where evidence can be cited to support or dispute each of the positions held above. From the many aspects of cultural heritage, both intangible and tangible, that could be explored in relation to these questions, this paper focuses its attention on the built environment, and in particular the ways in which 'classical' architecture and the notion of 'antiquity' have figured in the making of nations. Examples are cited to provide an historical perspective, but the paper also

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offers a contemporary case to illustrate how the coupling of a material culture of the deep past with the politics of nationalism and the making of national citizens remains as vibrant and, in some cases, as troubling as ever. A comprehensive account of the ties between architecture and nationalism across different historical and geographical contexts is far beyond the scope of this paper. Constraints of space demand brevity and selectivity within an overarching aim of tracing some continuities between past and present which, once revealed, beg important questions about the ongoing appropriation of cultural heritage within the politics of nationalism.

Antiquity and the nation

A wealth of literature has been published on the influence of classical antiquity on European thinking from the Renaissance onwards. As Morley (2009) notes, classical antiquity was by far the best known premodern society by the eighteenth century, due both to its nature and its familiarity. Accordingly, Roman and Greek civilisations were:

> conceived to be sufficiently similar to the present for the comparison to yield precise and nuanced knowledge; unlike the crude contrast between, say, modern Europe and nineteenth century Africa, comparison of the sophisticated yet clearly different society and economy of classical antiquity with that of modernity would throw the particular characteristics of the latter into sharp relief (Morley, 2009: 17).

Morley thus argues that the very nature of modernity in Europe – whether framed in economic, cultural or governmental terms – continually invoked the texts and ideas of a classical past, and it is inconceivable to think of modernity's ascendance, ambiguous and contested as it was, without acknowledging antiquity as its backdrop. His account traces various aspects of this relationship, notably the emergence of European historiography oriented by concepts of progress and decline. In this vein, Marx and Nietzsche are among those in the mid to late nineteenth century who most poignantly expressed a feeling that European societies were burdened by the weight of their history. By then the architectural ruin had solidified as one of the key forms through which such a narrative was expressed. As art, metaphor, allegory, and virtuous landscape, ruins captured the imagination; a physical embodiment of feelings that tied immutable pasts to tumultuous presents (Schama, 1995; Woodward, 2001). A critical turn came in the nineteenth century with the consolidation of nations into 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991), wherein processes of nationing (for some) involved the careful appropriation of the material legacy of glorious pasts. As Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) influential collection reveals, the decades leading up to the end of the nineteenth century were an instrumental period in 'the invention of tradition'. Many of the examples cited in the book trace the appropriation and symbolic loading of relatively recent pasts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, through practices such as sports activities or songs. Interestingly however, they give less attention to those processes of heritage-making rooted in much older histories, and how these came to prefigure constructions of a national consciousness or collective memory.

Among the many examples that might be cited to address such omissions, the story of modern Greece is particularly revealing. In his detailed account of the country – one he describes as "at the same time a country and a *topos* in the western imagination, a reality and a myth, a national property and [a western] international claim" – Hamilakis (2007: 58)

identifies the role of ancient material traces and of archaeological practices in the configuration of Greek national memory and imagination. Together, these formed a "monumental topography of the nation" (ibid.). Classical antiquities, with all their symbolic associations, provided a mythological foundation (to use an apt metaphor) upon which the modern nation could be constructed. He argues that the Acropolis and the Theseion were among those sites put into service as "the material and monumental frame that structured human movement and action, and inspired and elicited awe, piety, and respect" (ibid.: 63). But, as Hamilakis explains, the 'rediscovery' of an Hellenic heritage occurred in part because of encounters between residents of the Hellenic Peninsula and the travelling middle classes of Western and Northern Europe, who increasingly looked to Greek classicism as the cornerstone of the European Enlightenment. It was a process which not only meant that Greeks came to see themselves as the heirs to a classical heritage; it also meant that Greek antiquity came to be folded into a wider narrative of a shared European cultural past. As the new nation (and subsequent state) came into being, the Greek language and a topography of Hellenism provided a sense of territorial and historical continuity with a classical, glorious past. Ancient buildings and material culture would provide the cement for gluing these relationships together:

> Mythology and ancient authors were, of course, very useful in constructing the new topography of the nation, but it was the materiality of ancient sites, buildings, remnants, and artefacts, their physicality, visibility, tangible nature, and embodied presence, that provided the objective (in both senses of the word) reality of the nation. It was their sense of longevity, and their aura of authenticity that endowed them with enormous symbolic power (ibid.: 79).

Yalouri (2001: 55) adds to this picture, explaining how the demolition of monuments of periods later than a classical 'golden age' allowed the Acropolis to be collapsed into a moment of greatness. This construction of an epic time, to use Bakhtin's aphorism, meant that the Acropolis could serve as "a reservoir of meanings" (Connerton, 1989: 56–57) to which multiple values and ideologies could be ascribed in the making of a modern Greek identity. To return briefly to Hamilakis, what becomes clear in his account is the critical role played by archaeology in such processes. In its formative years at the end of the nineteenth century, archaeology needed to do little more than document and record the material remnants of the ancient era with the utmost fidelity; such scholarly practice was understood as a kind of national duty which merely communicated the already self-evident authority of the monuments. In addition, epigraphy, and its pursuit of interpreting inscriptions, ensured that the Greek language acted as the thread of historical continuity, binding modern society with a distant past in a tightly woven ethno-cultural nationalism.

It is a story that has its parallels elsewhere. Indeed there is a long line of excellent studies tracing the entwining of fields like archaeology with emergent nationalisms in the nineteenth century (Kohl and Fawcett, 1995; Díaz-Andreu and Champion, 1996). Reflection on this literature leads Díaz-Andreu to conclude that archaeology needs to be seen as not merely embedded in or contingent upon its wider socio-political environment, but as an *inherently* nationalistic practice, "either operating in the context of nationalism by itself, or of this in combination with imperialism and colonialism" (2007: 11). The path-breaking and ambitious volume by Kohl and Fawcett, published back in 1995, offered a number of country cases which together revealed the various ways in which archaeology has been mobilised for political ends over the course of the twentieth century. In her contribution to the volume, Díaz-Andreu (1995) examines how archaeological discourses in Spain have long been

politically fashioned in line with that country's regional factions. Her account reveals how all the country's nationalist movements – Spanish, Catalan, Basque and Galician – have looked to archaeology to authorise their respective causes. In a contrasting political environment, Tong (1995) paints a very different picture of China in the three decades after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. Not surprisingly, much of the country's archaeology in this period was directed towards bolstering an extreme form of evolutionary Marxism. Tong suggests that, even though no books or papers ever expounded what the theoretical and methodological orientations of a Marxist/Maoist archaeology actually were, debate was not tolerated and publications offering alternative approaches were rarely seen. Finally, perhaps one of the most infamous examples of the appropriation of monumental architecture and antiquity within an extreme nationalist ideology is that of Nazi Germany. Here Arnold and Hassman (1995) argue that research into the country's prehistoric past held little prestige prior to the rise of National Socialism. With the rise of Nazism, though, archaeologists were forced to make a 'Faustian bargain', whereby their acceptance of support and resources was accompanied by an unwillingness to raise questions about their role in the creation and justification of the policies of the Third Reich.

Imperialism, nationalism and classical glory

In his 1984 essay 'Alternative Archaeologies: Colonialist, Nationalist, Imperialist', Bruce Trigger explored the links between archaeology and European imperialism and the role that they played in the production of non-European nationalisms. Since then such themes have been explored in greater detail by other scholars working within a framework of post-colonial theory. From the many examples that could be cited here, India and Cambodia are particularly revealing. In the case of India, for example, Cohn describes how objects were put to work – and 'transformed' – over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century as part of an evolving Indian historiography:

> India was to be provided with a linear history following a nineteenth century positivist historiography. Ruins could be dated, inscriptions made to reveal king lists, texts could be converted into sources for the study of the past. Each phase of the European effort to unlock the secret of the Indian past called for more and more collecting, more and more systems of classification, more and more building of repositories for the study of the past (1996: 80).

More recently, Tapita Guha-Thakurta (2004) has added considerable detail to this picture through an account that traces the parallel emergence of archaeology and architectural history. In inaugurating domains of scholarship on art, classical architecture and archaeological remains, pioneering British scholars such as James Fergusson and Alexander Cunningham were instrumental in fashioning a history conceived in terms of antiquarianism, featuring ruins, monuments and the recovery of 'lost' cultural pasts. As with the monuments of Greece, rigorous description and documentation became a process of "extracting history from [the] ruins" (ibid.: 4). For Fergusson, India's long cultural past could be traced through shifting architectural styles, and the new technology of photography enabled the 'objective' documentation of both changes and continuities across time and space. Such efforts contributed to a spatial articulation of India's historiography; a knowledge that would subsequently become critical to assertions of an Indian nationalist rhetoric. But, as Guha-Thakurta elaborates, Fergusson's reading of India's architectural past was heavily mediated by an aesthetic imported from Britain: that of the Picturesque.

The development of the Picturesque movement in England in the 1800s ensured vernacular architecture, gnarled trees and ivy-covered ruins were brought into the fold of a European visual culture. As Woodward identifies, it was an aesthetic whereby "nature could be improved by the eye of the artist, who adds living trees and rocks, sunlight, water and old ruins to the palette" (2001: 119). In large part, the Picturesque was defined by the attempts of philosophers, visual artists and poets to represent the subjective and layered nature of memory. In the literary hands of Byron, Ruskin, Diderot and Shelley, the ruin became further mythologised as an icon of both lament and optimism. As romanticism spread across Europe, the movement also took on political motivations, most notably within post-revolutionary France. For public intellectuals bolstered by the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, decaying, tree-covered classical structures became a powerful motif of "human pride, greed and stupidity" (Woodward, 2001: 157). In his examination of nineteenth century France, Green (1990) argues that a shift in perception towards nature occurred on the back of an increasingly pervasive metropolitan culture. Modernity had prescribed a new aesthetic structure for nature. In the context of rapid urbanism and industrialisation, encounters with ruins and other landscapes offered the possibility of 'another modernity'. The endurance of earlier romanticist ideals ensured that notions of the sublime and myth superseded the voracity for an objective, empirical-based rationality that stemmed from the Renaissance. Not surprisingly, it was a nineteenth-century vision of landscape that neatly dovetailed with contemporary territorial aspirations of Empire held within Britain, France and the Netherlands. As Clarke reminds us, the romantics were in search of a "vision of wholeness…a oneness with nature, and for a reunification of religion, philosophy and art which had been sundered in the modern Western world" (1997: 55–56). In relation to France in particular, Said has suggested that "theirs was the orient of memories, suggestive ruins, forgotten ruins" (1995: 169), as we shall see soon.

Indeed, for Fergusson, India's mountain ranges, craggy rocks, sun-baked plains, torrential waterfalls and haunting wilderness offered an altogether more 'exotic' aesthetic than the domesticated order of the English landscape. Interestingly, such features of nature provided the evocations of a cultural past characterised by decay and degeneration. Soon after his return to London, Fergusson published *Picturesque Illustrations of Ancient Architecture in Hindostan* in 1848. His depictions of the subcontinent's monumental past combined the romantic, evocative aesthetic of the Picturesque with an attempt to convey an authenticity through order and meticulous detail. This sense of order extended outwards from a depiction of architectural features towards a chronological history. Guha-Thakurta suggests that the choice of twenty-four images for the publication reflected a particular strategy:

> The selection of monuments had to do as much with their 'picturesque' potentials as with their historical legibility; the order of their presentation was meant to trace both the route of Fergusson's discoveries and the unfolding of India's architectural history. We are taken on a spectacular tour from the gateway of the Buddhist *stupa* at Sanchi; to the temples of Bhuvaneswar, Puri, and Konaraka; to the ruined *chaori* at Mokundara Pass and the temples of Chandravati and Barolli in the Chambal region; to the Victory Tower of Chitore, the Jain temple at Mount Abu, and the palaces and tombs at Udaipur and Bundi; and then southward, to the Shore Temple at Mahabalipuram and the *mandapas* and *gopuras* of the temples of Chidambaram, Kumbhakonam, and Srirangam. The selection was meant to provide a chronological run from ancient to medieval history, to cover northern and southern styles, and to introduce the wealth of 'the civil architecture of Northern Hindostan…quite equal to anything

found in what may be called the ecclesiastical architecture of the country' (2004: 16).

As she explains, by proclaiming certain structures as exemplars of classical Buddhist art or as high points of a Tamil Hindu culture, a general history was outlined, one oriented by racial and religious categorisations. In this vein, Buddhist art, elevated for its age and stylistic integrity, was contrasted with the less refined hybridity of Jainism. To these categories certain values were attributed, most notably the idea that Indian civilisation had been in long-term decline. Over the following years Fergusson formulated a North/South, Aryan/Dravidian divide, with Buddhism associated with the purity of the former and Tamil races in the south cited as evidence of civilisational decay. As Guha-Thakurta (ibid.: 18) notes, stone was not so much the material from which the past was pieced together, but instead merely acted as the evidence supporting a preconceived formulation of a narrative of national history.

Further east, Southeast Asia presents us with a similar story. In 1860 the French botanist Henri Mouhot visited the temples of Angkor, located in what is today northern Cambodia. The serialisation of his diaries in *Le Tour du Monde* three years later portrayed a landscape of abandoned architectural wonders and mysterious lost civilisations. For Europeans it confirmed a sense of Indochina as an enigma of history that demanded further investigation and research. Some decades later, with much of the region now under French control, the Mission Archéologique Permanente was established in Saigon; a moment that Penny Edwards (2007) has argued institutionalised French control over indigenous histories and experiences, working to incorporate these pasts within national histories, and consolidate them as national symbols. The formation of the Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient (EFEO) three years later cemented this new phase of French intervention. EFEO's first director, Louis Finot, outlined three key aims for the school: to provide France with clear ideas of the people that it ruled, including their language, traditions and sense of morality; to reinforce a sense of French responsibility towards the ancient monuments located within its territories; and to broaden French scholarship on the Orient (ibid.: 184–85). Negotiations with Siam in 1907 gave full administrative control over Angkor to the French, and paved the way for the incorporation of the monuments into a cartographic representation of an emergent Cambodian national territory. With dozens of large structures all located within a single region, albeit one spanning several hundred square kilometres, Angkor represented an immense and highly prestigious challenge for French scholars and bureaucrats. Intrigued by the sheer scale and density of construction, EFEO would pursue three broad, interrelated lines of enquiry, all of which would evolve over the coming decades.

Firstly, much like in India, painstaking studies were made of the monuments as architectural forms. As temples were cleared, numbered and mapped, a picture of a stylistic and technical evolution steadily appeared. Although the greatest attention was paid to the buildings within the Angkor region, studies were also conducted on structures lying further afield in order to trace transitions in style, construction techniques and the materials used. In his account of this process Dagens (1995) indicates that, within a broader program of 'scientific' clearing, research and restoration, several of the temples were left untouched, offering European visitors the romance of picturesque, jungle-covered ruins. A second thread of research, pursued concurrently with a programme of restoration, involved the study of the stone sculptures found in and around the temple sites. A seemingly endless wealth of free-standing statues, wall-carved figurines and other ornamental features was categorised into phases, or 'styles', within an overall chronology of Khmer art (Giteau, Guéret and Renaut, 1997;

Stierlin, 1997). Within the architectural symbolism of Angkor, wood was associated with vernacular, living culture; whereas, in representing permanence, stone spoke of another world, one of celestial beauties and divine guardians. In other words, sculptures carved in stone embodied the connections between former rulers, worshipped as ancestral deities, and a pantheon of Buddhist or Hindu gods.

In her essay 'Taj Angkor: Enshrining l'*Inde* in *le Cambodge*', Edwards (2005) illustrates how this field of research firmly prioritised and reified the cultural and religious influence of India; a process she describes as the 're-Indianization' of Cambodian history. This reification of an Indian influence also defined EFEO's third line of enquiry—that of epigraphy. The meticulous translation of Sanskrit inscriptions found on numerous stelae or doorways revealed elaborate stories of kingship and devoted populations, of battles and conquests, and of deities and religious cults. Inscriptions provided a unique key for unlocking the mysteries of why kingdoms were settled and resettled in different areas, and why powers waxed and waned as territories and armies were won and lost.

Evolving in tandem over the course of the twentieth century, these three areas of research created an ever more detailed corpus of knowledge. Decades of study built around reading shifting architectural/artistic styles or the interpretation of bas-relief carvings and inscriptions meant that archaeologists, architectural historians and epigraphers provided the chronological blueprint for segmenting and categorising Cambodia's history into a linear narrative, wherein the idea of a glorious 'Angkorean Period' was set against less illustrious 'pre-' and 'post-' Angkorean eras. France's admiration for an idealised Angkor meant that its ruins became the material legacy of a once glorious, but now lost – even dead – civilisation. According to Wright, by suggesting that the natives had allowed the temples to decay, the French inscribed Angkor with a new artistic, aesthetic terminology to secure their role as the site's rightful custodians. As she states:

> All historic architecture was aestheticized, then classified according to Western criteria. Archaeologists and government functionaries lauded the Ecole's formal classification system and its exacting reconstruction effort as the only legitimate way to honour the great art of the past (1991: 199).

In this respect, we can once again see the notion of history as decline transposed onto a space that is very culturally and geographically distant from Europe. As Cooper has noted, a narration of Cambodia's history around classical antiquities was crucial to France's political project of maintaining its protectorate (2001: 74). In securing the authority and right to restore Angkor, EFEO's expertise provided the French with a discourse of nation-building centred upon ideas of reconstruction and resuscitation. Foregrounding ideas of decline and an impending loss of sovereignty at the hands of more powerful neighbours ensured Cambodia's dependency upon France. Edwards (2007) thus accounts for Angkor's 'restoration' as a process of secularisation, monumentalisation and symbolic mobilisation. In addition to the scholarly pursuits of EFEO noted above, she traces developments in civic architecture, urban planning, print media and museumology during the early decades of the twentieth century in order to document the complex ways in which the temples of Angkor, and in particular Angkor Wat, were installed as a unifying icon within the emerging imagined community of the Cambodian nation. Critically here, though, and in keeping with post-colonial scholarship on India, it is suggested that a Cambodian nationalism was not so much a colonial ideology imposed upon a passive population, but – as Edwards (2007) points out – a political and cultural fusion between Europeans and the local population. With notions of a noble Khmer

citizen, a Khmer cultural heritage and a Cambodian national history all forged around a totemic Angkor, monumental architecture and sculptural art were frequently cited as evidence of racial and cultural supremacy, the implications of which we will see below.

Enduring narratives

Edwards' recognition of the formation of cultural nationalism in Cambodia as an ongoing dialogue helps us anticipate the dynamics of post-colonial identity constructions for such countries. Before moving onto the case of Cambodia, which raises difficult questions about the role of monumental antiquities today, it is worth contrasting the above accounts with the story of Egypt, where the historical pathways through which antiquarian, monumental structures came to be tied to a modern nationalism were somewhat different. Surprisingly, the seeds of an Egyptian nationalism grounded in a Pharaonic past were only sown in the final decade of the nineteenth century, an idea that would gradually take hold as the quest for independence from British rule gathered momentum from the 1910s onwards. As Hassan explains, on the back of subsequent revolutions and violence in the early 1920s poets "invoked the pyramids in a genre of nationalistic poetry comparing Egypt's past glory with its impoverished present and extolling the Egyptians to restore and revive Egypt's ancient splendour and hegemony" (1998: 205). By this time, the idea that modern Egyptians were the 'sons of the Pharaohs' and that their 'ancestors built the pyramids' was advanced by those behind the revolution. Although independence was declared in 1922, the British were not expelled until 1954, the year after the Egyptian Republic came into being. However, as the leaders attempted to align themselves with a wider Arab nationalism, Pharaonic Egypt was abandoned in the political discourse of the country (ibid.: 208). Since then it has intermittently reappeared within cultural and political assertions of national identity, strength and character. Over the second half of the twentieth century Pharaonic heritage has been but one part of a plurality of Egyptian pasts; a historical pastiche that has straddled, and moved back and forth between, Islamic and Christian, European and Arab cultures. Having said that, and as Mitchell (2001) points out, the growth of large-scale tourism did play a pivotal, albeit highly complex role in recentring pyramids, pharaohs and sphinxes in the everyday life of Egyptians in the latter decades of the century.

Not surprisingly, cultural tourism and the economic potential that it promises, means that the situation in Egypt is a highly familiar one. Around the world, countries like Mexico, Greece, Peru, Thailand and Zimbabwe all aggressively push their monumental pasts to attract the tourist dollar, a process that actively enhances the profile of these archaeological and architectural sites in the national imaginary. In a number of cases tourism makes a significant contribution to a country's gross domestic product but, as Mitchell (2001) indicates regarding Egypt, inbound tourism often also leads to increased inequality and a distortion of localised economies, as the price of items like food, transport and land increase dramatically relative to incomes. As a result, heritage tourism around sites like the Acropolis, Angkor, Machu Picchu, Borobobur or Tikal has become a source of much tension and political struggle (Timothy and Nyaupane, 2008). In some cases however, tourism can contribute to forms of contestation that are played out on a much larger scale, and advance less than benign forms of nationalism. Among the various examples that could be cited here, the battle between Thailand and Cambodia over the border temple complex of Preah Vihear reveals some of the ways in which monumental architecture continues to be associated with, and legitimises, aggressive, even xenophobic nationalist movements.

An outstanding example of Khmer architecture dating from the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Preah Vihear temple complex has been a highly contentious marker of the boundary between Thailand and Cambodia for the past hundred years. The monument was the most important sanctuary of King Sûryavarman I, who seized power around 1006 CE, and was built during the early stages of what would become Southeast Asia's largest premodern polity, the Angkorean kingdom. While the capital of this once mighty kingdom, Angkor, is now firmly ensconced in a modern Cambodia both territorially and culturally, the 'outlying' temple of Preah Vihear occupies a more ambiguous space. It came under the jurisdiction of the Tai (modern day Thais) after the fall of Angkor in the mid fifteenth century, and the subsequent ascendency of the Ayutthaya Kingdom. As Chandler (2008) highlights, for the centuries prior to the designation of formal national boundaries Tai-Khmer culture took on a form of hybridity, whereby the polities of Phnom Penh and Ayutthaya were more integrated than separate. Affinity and ties stemmed from shared language (Khmer) and religion (Buddhism). But, as the relative strength of the two continued to change, the Tais increasingly looked down upon their easterly neighbours. Chandler (2008: 297) neatly captures this complex situation in stating that "despite, or perhaps because of, cultural affinities, relations have never been marked by a sincere effort on the part of Bangkok to treat Cambodia as a sovereign nation".
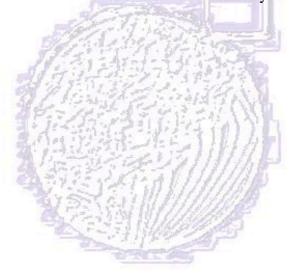
In her recent account of the dispute over the site, Helaine Silverman (2011) highlights the various historical reasons why Thailand today continues to lay claim not just to the Preah Vihear site, but much of Cambodia, its land and its culture. For instance, major temple sites like Angkor, Banteay Chmaar and Preah Vihear, all of which are found in modern-day northwest Cambodia, remained in Thai possession right through to the late nineteenth century. In 1904 a joint commission of Thai and French administrators, established for mapping the region, proposed a treaty that created a border largely following the watershed line of the Dangrek mountains (Cuasay, 1998; Thongchai Winichakul, 1994). Given that the temple surmounted a 525-metre-high spur, the treaty placed the temple within Thai territory. However, when French cartographers submitted maps to Bangkok in 1908, demarcating the new boundaries between the two countries, the border line was modified to give sovereignty over the temple to the French. In the wake of France's diminishing control over the region during World War II, Thailand moved to regain control of territories that it had previously ceded, including the Preah Vihear site and surrounding areas. Armed troops were sent to the area to occupy the temple in 1940 and the Thai government "registered the site as a national monument, calling it Khao Phra Viharn or Prasat Phra Wihan" (Silverman, 2011: 3). Attempts to resolve the issue led to a hearing at the International Court of Justice in The Hague in 1962. As Cuasay (1998) documents in wonderful detail, the court upheld the 1908 boundary line, awarding ownership of the disputed site to Cambodia; a decision based in large part on assertions that Bangkok passed over several opportunities to contest the boundary designation. As the Vietnam–America war and totalitarianism overtook Cambodia in the 1970s, the issue disappeared from view, much like the site itself. Indeed, the region surrounding the temple would be one of the final strongholds of the Khmer Rouge regime up until the late 1990s. In December 1998, the temple was the scene of negotiations, with several hundred Khmer Rouge soldiers surrendering to the government in Phnom Penh.

To the surprise of many of those involved, tensions dramatically returned in the 2000s with a proposal for Preah Vihear to be added to the World Heritage List. On 7 July 2008 Cambodia was awarded its second World Heritage Site, with the temple being listed in controversial circumstances. While Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, erupted into celebrations, Thailand's foreign minister resigned over the issue just three days later. The site's listing came at a

particularly difficult moment, with each country heading towards national elections. Inflammatory language by politicians turned the issue into a critical aspect of elections on both sides of the border. Over the following weeks tensions escalated and the two countries moved hundreds of troops and heavy military equipment into the area. The stand-off lasted several months, and in October the two sides opened fire on each other again, resulting in the death of three Cambodians and the wounding of seven Thai soldiers. Over the following months and years sporadic fighting continued, with flash-points and more deaths occurring at different points in 2009 and 2010. The following year the fighting intensified and spread further along the border, with reports of civilian and military deaths on both sides reaching into the hundreds. Tanks, rocket launchers and even cluster munitions were among the weapons deployed during the fighting. A page titled the 'Cambodian–Thai border dispute' on Wikipedia (2012) provides a day-by-day account of the conflict, including the multiple cease-fires and reconciliation attempts over the 2009–2011 period. With the election of a new government in Thailand in August 2011, tensions began to subside and, with a significant drop in violence since then, it appears as though relations between the two countries are in a state of (albeit fragile) repair. Explaining the causal factors of the conflict requires considerably more space than is available here, and a number of recent studies have begun to piece together its various political and economic dimensions, both historic and contemporary (Silverman, 2011; Croissant and Chambers, 2011; Winter, 2010).

Conclusion

This brief examination of the case of Preah Vihear reveals the deep political associations and feelings that continue to converge upon, and coalesce around, monumental architecture. It suggests that the ties that bind archaeology and architectural conservation to formations of nationalism and nation-making that emerged in different parts of the world from the late nineteenth century onwards remain as vibrant as ever. Antiquity, and its forms of 'classical era' architecture, continues to serve as a key anchor point for many cultural nationalisms around the globe. In the cases of the Acropolis, Machu Picchu or the Pyramids, this relationship may have been rendered largely benign. But I have focused on the more charged, fraught case of Preah Vihear as an example from the contemporary period that illustrates why these ties between stone, identity politics and nationalism still demand our critical scrutiny.

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