

Preah Khan Reach and The Genealogy of Khmer Kings



**Khmer Royal Sacred Sword
vs.
Thai Royal Sword of Victory**

**By
Kenneth T. So**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kenneth T. So was born in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He is a Rocket Scientist/Senior Engineer with 29 years of experience with Rockwell International/Boeing/ULA in the fields of manned and unmanned launch vehicles. He graduated with a B.S. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Tennessee (1978), an M.S. in Systems Management from the University of Southern California (1995), and a Certificate Degree in Systems Engineering from the California Institute of Technology (2006).

However, Kenneth T. So's main interest and passion are researching on Khmer history. He has dedicated the last 17 years writing about events related to Cambodia.

He has written the following papers:

- The Road to Khmer Independence (2003)
- A Brief History of Buddhism, Including That of Cambodia (1997)
- Puddh Tomneay (1996)

The following are some of the articles that Kenneth T. So had written:

- Prince Sisowath Youtevong (Contribution to Wikipedia, 2008)
- Without Economic Freedom, There is No Freedom (2006)
- Is Using the Word “Yuon” Justified and Beneficial to Khmer? (2006)
- The First Cambodian New Year Parade in Long Beach (2005)
- A Time to Heal and Unite (2005)
- The Khmers (2002)
- The Calm Before the Storm (2000)
- Are We Solely to Blame for All of our Problems? (1999)
- Quo Non Ascendet (1999)
- The Khmer Home in Southeast Asia: A Wider View (Phnom Penh Post, 1999)
- Nationalism and the Genesis of the Khmer Language (1998)
- Is Karma Moving Like a Straight Arrow or Like a Heat Seeking Missile? (1998)
- Rubicon: Khmer Style (1998)
- Democracy and Consensus (1998)
- The Convenient Death of Pol Pot (1998)
- Khmer Conscience (1991-1993, during UNTAC)

Kenneth T. So has been actively involved in the Cambodian communities for the last 28 years. His proudest achievement was the completion of the proposal for Cambodia Town that he submitted to the Long Beach City Council in January 15, 2002. Cambodia Town started with a vision by the following ten founding members in 2001: Kenneth T. So (Proposal, Lead), Pasin Chanou (Proposal), Harrison T. Lee (Administration, Lead), Rosana Chanou (Administration), Solange Kea, Esq. (Legal), David Kar (Public Relations, Lead), Morakod Lim, M.D. (Public Relations), Annie H. Lee (Public Relation), Philip T. Thong (Finance, Lead), and Sovuthy Tith (Finance). With the largest Cambodian community outside Cambodia, the vision of the ten founding members was to see Cambodians carry on their tradition and culture and impart their knowledge to the younger generation. This philosophy is attuned with the tradition of passing on the *Preah Khan Reach* from one Khmer monarch to another, a symbolism of the continuity of Khmer culture and tradition.

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After our first trip as a family to Cambodia in December 2007, my wife, who had not been back to Cambodia since 1975, had renewed her attachment and rediscovered her love for her native country. My daughters had never been to Cambodia and the trip had made them aware of the richness of our Khmer culture and tradition that they could have never felt by just reading books. They are so proud of their heritage. They feel that they need to share of what they have discovered about Cambodia with their friends. Their support has given me strength.

This paper would have never been written if it were not for the correspondence I had with Bora Touch, Esq., a Khmer Australian Attorney, and Julio A. Jeldres, the Official Biographer to H.M. the King Father, Samdech Preah Upayuvareach Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia. These two persons who have dedicated a lot of their own time for Khmer causes have a great impact on my pursuit to research for the truth and whereabouts of *Preah Khan Reach*.

I am also indebted to my two brothers, Hann So and Kelvin So, who had made a lot of suggestions during my early draft of this paper. I have incorporated their recommendations into this final format.

My thanks also go to Jim Gerrand, an Australian film director, who had made a few documentary films about Cambodia. He had seen my earlier draft, made some suggestions, and asked some relevant questions that I incorporated into this final format. He is a special friend of mine who baby-sat my daughters while I attended to the birth of my third daughter at the local hospital. Jim Gerrand is also the person who asked me to translate Puddh Tomney from the Khmer version to the English version in 1996.

My special thanks go to all the authors who had written books or published works on Khmer history. I am especially indebted to Lawrence Palmer Briggs¹, Georges Maspero², Oknha Veang Thiounn³, Adhémard Leclère⁴, Adhir Chakravarti^{5,6}, Hann So⁷, M. Giteau⁸, Vansok⁹, John F. Cady¹⁰, Robert Casey¹¹, Chou Ta-Kuan¹², G. E. Gerini¹³, Khin Sok^{14,15}, Henry Soszynski¹⁶, Justin J. Corfield¹⁷, Julio A. Jeldres^{18,19}, Norodom Sihanouk^{20,21}, Richard Over²², and George Coedès²³, whom I used as references to write this paper and develop my genealogy of Khmer kings from the foundation of Funan through Chenla to the present Cambodia.

Most of all I would like to dedicate this paper to all Khmer people and to all the great Khmer kings and heroes. The history of Cambodia and the history of Khmer kings are inseparable. Without the legacies of Khmer kings who had left great temples, monuments, and inscriptions as testimonies of Khmer greatness, previous and current Khmer generations would not have been able to learn of their origins, which enable them to understand Khmer history in its full context. However, this paper is not intended as a history lesson but rather as a document tracing the genealogy of all Khmer kings dating from the Funan period to the present Cambodia, and as a discussion on the whereabouts of *Preah Khan Reach* that are intricately linked to the Khmer monarchy.

Kenneth T. So
June 18, 2008

FOREWORD

The genesis of this project got started with a casual e-mail I received from Bora Touch about *Preah Khan Reach*. He pointed out to me that there is a statement in the Chronicle of Annals of Ayudhya, Vol. II, p. 669 mentioning that the Khmer Royal Sword, *Preah Khandga Jaya*, was taken from the Khmer throne by Phraya Aphai Phubet, the Thai Governor-General of Cambodia, on 25 April 1783, and presented to Rama I a year after the latter became king of Bangkok.

I knew about this episode of our history when I read Dr. Khin Sok's thesis, "*Le Cambodge entre le Siam et le Vietnam*,"¹⁴ about ten years ago. I did not think anything about it at the time because I just finished translating and interpreting "*Puddh Tomneay*" and I did not want to tackle another project. The e-mail I received from Bora Touch had renewed my curiosity and made me restless. After I had written the proposal for Cambodia Town and submitted it to the Long Beach City Council in 2002, I felt that now was a perfect time for me to embark on a new project again.

When I decided to start this project I had no idea of how it was going to end up. The information concerning the *Preah Khan Reach* is rare and sparse. I first thought this project was beyond my capability to handle it; because of my limited resources and time constraint. Always an optimist, I did not allow anything to handicap me or get in my way to complete this project.

During my research I discovered many stories and anecdotes that perked my curiosity even more. The more I dug into the story of *Preah Khan Reach*, the more I wanted to bring this story to life and share with people.

After I completed writing about the *Preah Khan Reach* and sent my earlier draft to a few friends to read it, I felt that there was still a piece missing in this project. I had had another project in mind for a long time that I wanted to write but never had the time or the right condition to do it. I always wanted to write about the genealogy of Khmer kings and again I felt that the project was too big for an amateur like me to handle. After reviewing my writing on *Preah Khan Reach*, I decided that I needed to incorporate the genealogy of Khmer kings to complement the story.

Throughout my research I have not found any authors or scholars that have a comprehensive genealogy of Khmer kings that starts from Funan - the origin of Cambodia – through Chenla, to the present day Cambodia. This genealogy is as comprehensive as it can be. I had to piece many documents together to come up with the final results that I presented herein as Figures I to XIV, in Appendix 1, and Figures A to K, in Appendix 2, for the territorial maps of Cambodia during various periods.

There were many obstacles and difficulties in completing these genealogical figures because some sources gave conflicting dates for the reigns of the kings. The conflicting dates were due to many reasons but a few of those were as follows:

- The dates used in ancient period up to around the 19th century were mostly recorded in the Saka era. When modern chroniclers under the reign of Ang Chan II were asked to reconstruct events of the past, they sometimes forgot to convert the dates to the Christian era or got the dates easily mixed up because the Saka era and the Christian era are only off by 78 years (Christian Year = Saka Year + 78). These errors have been perpetuated in many of the accounts and have not been corrected. As an example, the dates shown by Adhémard Leclère in his book "*Histoire du Cambodge*" are off by many years for the reigns of certain kings.

- The genealogy that is most uncertain and confusing occurred during the 14th and 15th centuries. Records during this period were destroyed due to many wars. To reestablish the records, King Poñea Yat (1432-1463) convened his ministers and tried to reconstruct past historical events by memories, but they could only go back twenty seven years. Therefore, the events prior to 1405 were very uncertain.
- Most of the records were again lost during the wars in the 18th century. King Ang Chan II (1806-1834) put one of his ministers in charge of reconstructing the royal chronicles. The minister and his assistants depended mostly on the Annals of Ayuthia to rebuild the Khmer royal chronicles.

According to Briggs¹, there were four kings reigning between 1405 and the start of the reign of king Poñea Yat. However, Moura¹ accounted for six kings in this twenty-seven-year span. I decided to use Moura's chronology of the reigns.

Records under the Ming dynasty¹ mentioned that between 1371 and 1403 a Chenla (the Chinese still called Cambodia by the name of Chenla) king by the name of Hou-eul-na (translated by Rémusat or Woub-kien-no, translated by Leon de Rosny) sent embassies to China ten times. Other records under a new Ming Emperor, Ching Sung¹, mentioned that a Khmer king named Samdach Preah Phaya sent a tribute to China in 1404 and passed away one year later. The Chinese emperor sent a delegation to attend the king's funeral in 1405 and at the same time witnessed the coronation of the king's eldest son named Phing-ya, who historians identified as Nippean Bat. According to the same Chinese source, he carried the title of Samdach Chao Phaya (Chieu Binh-na).

My research did not come up with any historical documents or evidence supporting the story of Ta Chey's (Ta Trasak Paêm) ascendancy to the throne after the reign of Jayavarman IX. However, I found out that the story of Ta Chey is not uniquely Khmer. There is a story very similar to Ta Chey that is told in Burma, which formed the foundation of the Pagan kingdom in 1044. The two stories are too similar to be a coincidence. Therefore, it seems that the story of Ta Chey may have originated from Burma. Because of the confusing and troublesome events during this period and the unreliable documentation that produced the Khmer royal chronicles, the story of Ta Chey cannot be classified as a historical event. The chroniclers may have mixed up the story of Ta Chey with another historical event that happened during the reign of Indravarman III (Srinravarman) from 1295 and 1303. The event was reported by Chou Ta-Kuan during his visit to Angkor.

Indravarman III was entrusted with the command of king Jayavarman VIII's army. He was purported to be of Samrè's origin like Ta Chey. The Samrè people were the inhabitants of the southern and eastern regions of Angkor. They were fierce and able warriors from where most of the kings' armies were recruited. Indravarman III was the lover of Princess Srinrabhupesvera – the daughter of King Jayavarman VIII. As he was in command of the king's army, he also had big ambitions. He had the princess steal the *Preah Khan Reach* from her father and bring it to him. Upon learning that his sister had stolen the *Preah Khan Reach*, the crown prince prepared a counter-offensive to resist the take over by the usurper. However, Indravarman III made the first move and had the crown prince arrested, his toes cut off, and then incarcerated him. In the old tradition, when a prince had his toes cut off, this would prevent him from qualifying for the throne. Historical documents seem to suggest that Indravarman III forced the old and feeble king to abdicate. Having everything under his control, Indravarman III married the princess to legitimize his reign. He was crowned by the Chief Brahman Vidyesavid. Later on he married Suryalakshmi, the Chief brahman's niece. The event seems to suggest there was a conspiracy and agreement between Indravarman III

and Vidyasavid. This historical event was so similar to the story of Ta Chey that the chroniclers may have mixed them up. Ta Chey's ascendancy to the throne, as reported in the royal chronicles, did not coincide with the historical events mentioned in Chinese records during this period. However, the tale seems to fit better with the historical event of Indravarman III taking over the throne. The royal chronicles indicated that Ta Chey became king right after Jayavarman IX. Again, this is not supported by the Chinese records. Furthermore, the chronicles say that Nippean Bat was the son of Ta Chey, which again is not supported by any historical documents. The Chinese records clearly state that Nippean Bat (the Chinese called Samdach Chao Phaya or Phing-ya) was the son who reigned after the death of his father, who the Chinese called Samdach Preah Phaya.

Based on historical documents, coupled with the story of Ta Chey, a conjecture can be made that Ta Chey may possibly be the historical King Indravarman III. Additionally, there was an obscure story claiming that Ta Suos reigned after his brother Ta Chey ahead of Nippean Bat. Intriguingly, the inscription of Angkor Wat dated 1327 did not mention the reign of Indrajayavarman (Srinrajayavarman). It mentioned the reign of Indravarman III and then bypassed Indrajayavarman by going directly to Jayavarman IX. Historical records indicated that Indrajayavarman was a relative of Indravarman III. This raised a suspicion that Indrajayavarman may possibly be the mysterious Ta Suos, the so-called brother of Ta Chey.

There were many usurpers in the history of Khmer monarchy, but none were as well-known as Sdach Kân (Sdach means monarch in Khmer). However, the story of how he came to power and the origin of his background were very obscure and well guarded. The details of the story had been clamped down for many generations because it was one of the darkest moments in the history of Khmer monarchy. This story is told so that lessons can be learned from it. An attempt is made here to report this story within the context of this paper.

I am working on this project as a labor of love. I do not have a background as a historical researcher or a trained historian or a genealogist. I am pursuing on the whereabouts of *Preah Khan Reach* because the story intrigues me. I have my own suspicion on who would steal the *Preah Khan Reach* but it is not my place to speculate on this subject. I leave it for future scholars to pursue this matter. I am also presenting here a comprehensive genealogy of all Khmer kings and I hope this project is beneficial to Khmer people and any scholars who want to expand on my study.

My purpose is to shed some light on obscure events. I apologize if I err in my conjecture or make mistakes in my study. I encourage everybody to learn Khmer history because it would enrich one's knowledge and help the person to view and understand the history of Cambodia in a better context.

I wrote this paper as a first person instead of a third person, the criteria to meet publication in a journal. I tried to use the third person but it did not flow as well, and I decided to abandon the idea. My intention is for people to enjoy reading the story and learn about it. People have heard about Preah Khan Reach and its importance, but most of them have not heard of the account that I described in this paper. If I can shed some light on this subject, I feel I have done my job.

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Aryasatya (Sanskrit)

Chattaru Ariyasachchani (Pali)

Chatuk Arey Sachak (Khmer)

The Four Noble Truths (English)

June 18, 2008

INTRODUCTION

Historically, *Preah Khan Reach* – The Khmer Royal Sacred Sword – was considered the symbol of Khmer sovereignty and legitimacy to the throne for whoever possessed it. However, in modern time this symbolism has lost some of its luster because the foundation of the country is governed by its Constitution. In the case of Cambodia, the requirements to be King are governed by Articles 13 and 14 of the Constitution.

Article 13 states that “the King of Cambodia shall be chosen by the Royal Council of the Throne.”

Article 14 states that “the King of Cambodia shall be a member of the Royal family, of at least 30 years, descending from the blood line of King Ang Duong, King Norodom or King Sisowath.”

In the case of King Norodom Sihamoni, he fulfilled both cases stated in Articles 13 and 14 of the Cambodian Constitution.

Because of its importance and symbolism in ancient Cambodia, *Preah Khan Reach* was always well guarded to prevent it from being stolen. The guardian of *Preah Khan Reach* was entrusted to the Chief Brahman, which was also known under the name of Preah Esey-Phat. It was the job of the Chief Brahman to keep *Preah Khan Reach* safe and also to examine its blade from time to time. If the blade gave out a rusting color, then it would foretell a bad omen.

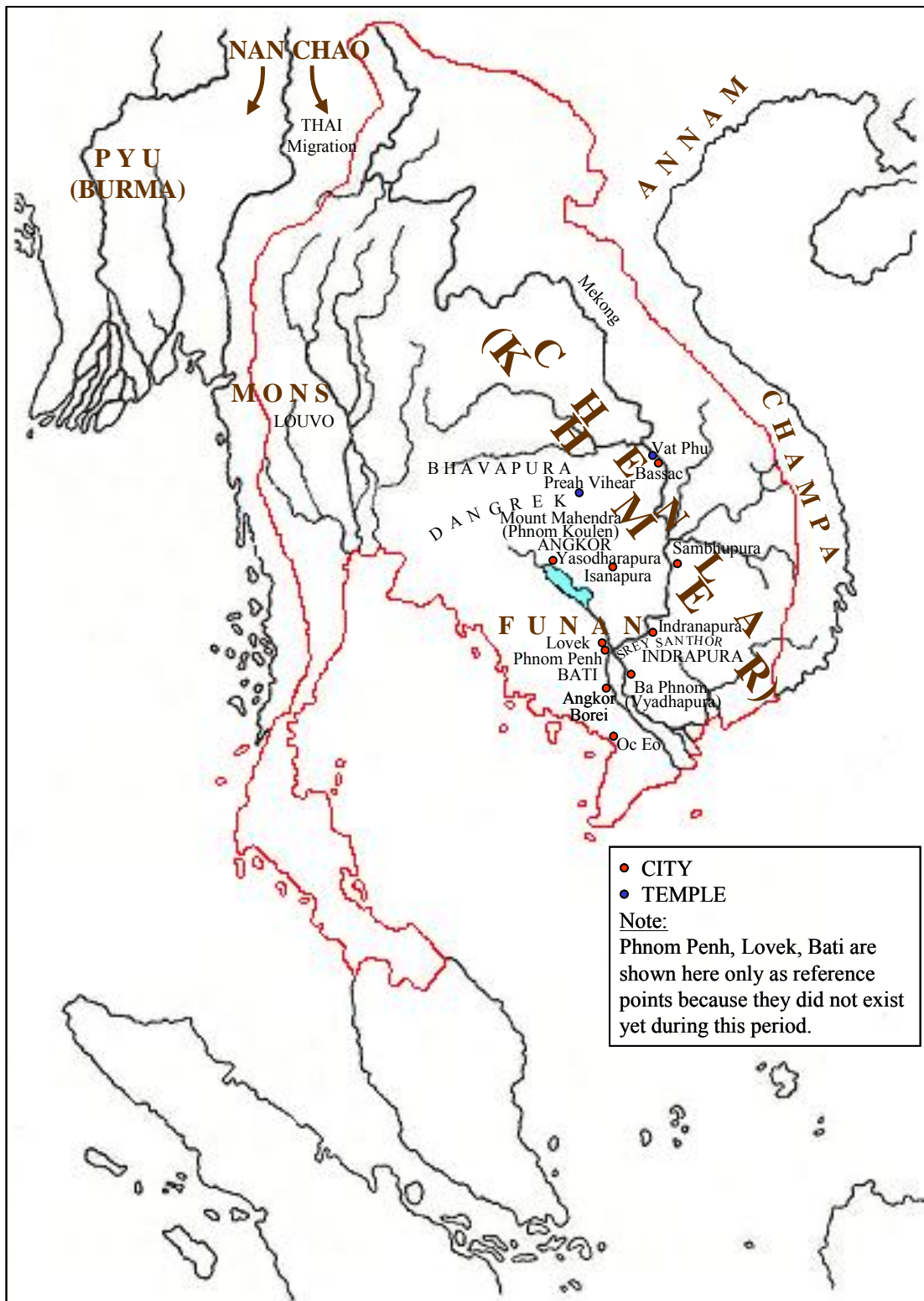
The farthest historical reference that one can find about *Preah Khan Reach* dates back to the reign of Jayavarman II (~802-850 A.D.). According to the historical documents of Lawrence Palmer Briggs¹, Georges Maspero², and Oknha Veang Thiounn³, Jayavarman II left a Royal Sacred Sword – *Preah Khan Reach* – and a palladium to his son Jayavardhana who reigned from 850 to 877 A.D. under the name Jayavarman III.

Jayavarman II was called the “guardian of the honor of the solar race of Sri Kambu.” The foundation of Cambodia (Kambuja) started during the Lunar Dynasty under the Funan period and the Solar Dynasty under the Chenla period. The Lunar Dynasty started in the first century between the unions of a Funan naga princess named Soma (Liu-Yeh, Willow Leaf) and Kaundinya (Hun-T’ieu). Kaundinya was reported to be the son of King Adityavamsa “Intapah” who was purportedly banished from Indraprashta, a town located about 20 miles south of Dehli, India.

The Solar Dynasty was founded by a Brahman named Kambu Svayambhuva (Self-creating great hermit) and a Chenla princess named Mera, who was believed to be an Apsara of great beauty and elegance.

Jayavarman II descended from another Solar Dynasty that was founded by Sambhuvarman in the 7th century during the reign of Jayavarman I (a direct descendant from the Lunar Dynasty). During this period Funan had disappeared and was completely annexed by Chenla. The newly formed Solar Dynasty of Sambhupura broke away from the original Solar Dynasty and settled around Sambor and Kratié. Jayavarman II married a princess named Dharanindradevi Kambujalakshmi, a descendant from the Lunar Dynasty of Baladityapura (or Aninditapura) that broke away from the original Lunar Dynasty. This new Lunar Dynasty was formed during the reign of Isanavarman I in the 7th century^[1]. A map showing the Khmer Empire at the height of its civilization is depicted in Figure 1.

^[1] Genealogies of Jayavarman II and all Khmer kings up to the end of the Angkor period are shown in Figures I to III in Appendix 1.



**Figure 1. Khmer Empire during the Height of its Civilization,
Before the Appearance of Siam
(From Jayavarman II to Jayavarman VII)**

CHAPTER I

SDACH KÂN, THE USURPER

1. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PREAH KHAN REACH

The Brahman Chief, Preah Esey-Phat, and his Brahman helpers, Bakous, came to Cambodia during the Funan period and were the guardians of Khmer royal tradition and the Royal Sacred Sword.

For a period of time the royal regalia that included the Sacred Sword, Sacred Bow, Arrows, and Spear of Victory disappeared during the reign of the usurper Kân in 1498. After Kân assassinated his king, Srey Sokonthor Bat, the Brahman Chief (Preah Esey-Phat Suous) realized that he needed to secure the royal regalia from falling into the wrong hands. With his Bakou named Sūr, he fled the royal palace and put as much distance as he could from Kân and the Siam army that was invading Cambodia. They arrived in Bati and secretly hid the royal regalia in the trunk of a *châmbâck* tree growing near a pond in the Bati province^{1,4}.

Realizing that he did not have possession of the Royal Sacred Sword, Kân in his false glory had a fake sword made so that he could claim the throne^{1,4}. In the meantime he issued a reward of 500 damloeung gold (approximately 18.5 kg) and a high position in his government to the person who would find the Royal Sacred Sword⁴.

2. THE ORIGIN OF SDACH KÂN

This troubled period of the usurper Kân merits to be discussed more thoroughly since it was a very important part of Khmer history. Kân came from a pol (slave) family. He had a beautiful sister that his father (named Pichey Neak) and his mother (named Mé-Ban) had offered to King Srey Sokonthor Bat (brother of Prince Ang Chan) as snâm-êk (mistress of the first order). The king loved her so much that he rewarded her brother with a position and title of Khun Luong Preah Sdach Sammaha Sena Thipadey. After his sister bore the king a son (Poñea Yos Reachea), Kân with his newfound status of nobility started to feel more and more arrogant toward high dignitaries. His arrogance did not sit well with other people of nobilities and high positions within the government.

3. THE MEANING OF KING SREY SOKONTHOR BAT'S DREAM

The night after the first day of Khmer New Year in 1508, the king dreamt that his kingdom was in trouble. He was running away from a big dragon spitting venom and flames that destroyed his capital. The dragon seized the royal parasol with his mouth and fled east. The king was very troubled by this dream. He gathered his royal families and high dignitaries in the deliberation room. As they were proceeding with the ceremony, the king saw two dragons, one male and one female, hovering above Kân's head. At that moment the governor of Battambang informed the king that the water from the cave of Phnom Banônt, reserved for bath for the king, had become like a red lacquer. The king was very worried as he returned to his room. He called on Preah Esey-Phat Moha Reachea Krou (the Chief Brahman) and Preah Hora Thipadey (the great foreseer for the kingdom) to come to his room to interpret the meaning of his dream and of what he had seen in the deliberation room. At that moment the Chief Brahman told the king that he had found a stain of rust in the sheath, which was a sign of bad things to come. The foreseer interpreted the dream to mean that a person born in the year of the dragon would dispute his throne and would reign in the east.

All of this would seem to fit Kân since he was born in the year of the dragon. After a consultation with high dignitaries, the king had decided to have Kân drowned the next day during a fishing expedition. However, Kân was warned ahead by his sister and was able to escape the drowning by swimming under water to avoid the fishnet. After the escape he took refuge in the pagoda where he was raised and taught by the monks.

4. KÂN'S REVENGE

Kân was a very cunning and clever man. He was able to raise an army by being audacious and fooling people into believing in him. One day he killed the governor of Ba-Phnom in front of all the officials. He declared that he did it in the name of Poñea Chan Reachea, who asked him to be the governor of the western part of Cambodia. The next day he said that he killed the governor by order of the king, who asked him to raise an army within the province. A few days later he said that the army was not raised for the king but for himself in order to place his nephew Poñea Yos at the throne. He then declared that those who sided with him would be well rewarded and placed in high positions in his government and all the pols would be set free and no longer be slaves. Very soon people started to join Kân, lured by his promise of high positions in his government.

As Kân's popularity started to spread, his sister (the king's favorite mistress) and his parents wrote to him to stop his rebellion against the king. They begged him to return to the capital. Kân responded with a deception by saying that he would return to the capital as soon as he had finished disbanding his army and seen everybody returned home. In the meantime, the king decided not to attack Kân and waited for him to finish disbanding his army. Kân seized this opportunity to reinforce his army and told people that he did so under the king's order to fight the rebel prince Chan Reachea, who was residing at Chatumuk (Phnom Penh). Words spread out and people started to talk about it and very soon Poñea Chan Reachea himself thought that the king was concocting a plan with Kân to get rid of him. Knowing that Kân and his sister were very close and that she was the king's favorite mistress, the prince got scared and decided to leave Phnom Penh for Bangkok in 1508 and ask for Siam's protection.

After learning of the prince taking refuge in Siam, Kân said: "In the past I was afraid of only one person, Chau Poñea Chan Reachea. Now that he has fled to Siam, I am no longer scared and if we want it, the kingdom is ours."

When the king was told of his brother fleeing to Siam, he lamented: "Ah! My brother, you should not run away like this and abandon me in a time of need like now."

Pichey Neak, who was still loyal to the king volunteered to fight his own son, Kân. He promised and swore his loyalty to the king. Upon much consideration, the king agreed to Pichey Neak's request and gave him a small army of 1,000 men to command. However, his small army was no match to his son's big army of 50,000 men strong. At the end he was captured and made prisoner by his son. Finally, Kân was able to convince his father to switch his allegiance to him.

Pichey Neak had betrayed his oath that he gave to the king. In an ironic twist of fate, he was killed as a result of an accident. It was reported that he fell on a sword with his throat badly injured. However, rumors spread that Kân had slashed the throat of his own father as the latter was trying to convince his son to have a change of heart and stop fighting the king.

Kân was able to raise a large enough army to be equal to or even surpass that of the king. Even with his big army, he was not able to defeat that of the king until he resorted to treachery by luring Neak Moeun Seraun into his camp by promising him a position of Yumareach (Chief of Justice). Moeun Seraun was the son of Chau Poñea Yuthea Sangkream (Minister of War). He blamed the king for the death of his father by sending the latter with a

small army to battle the big army of Kân. He deceived the king by feigning his alliance and entering the royal palace with his army of 200 men. He succeeded by assassinating the king on March 15, 1512.

Upon hearing of King Srey Sokhontor Bat's death, Ang Chan (Poñea Chan Reachea), asked permission from the king of Siam to allow him to return to Cambodia. The king refused to grant the prince's request. Finally, Ang Chan was able to trick Siam's king into giving him 500 men under his command for the purpose of capturing the white elephant that was seen in Cambodia. Upon hearing that prince Ang Chan was returning from Siam, people started to follow and enlist into his army. Very soon he was able to build a strong army to fight the reigning usurper, Kân.

CHAPTER II

THE RISE OF KING ANG CHAN AND THE DEFEAT OF SDACH KÂN

1. THE REAPPEARANCE OF PREAH KHAN REACH

In 1516, Prince Ang Chan was invited by his officers and members of his royal family to accept the title of King. The prince accepted the title but would not go through the ceremony until he had defeated Kân. Finally, after many battles, King Ang Chan conquered Kân's army and had him killed. After the war, the king of Siam wanted the Khmer monarch to pay tribute to the Siam kingdom. He demanded that King Ang Chan send the magnificent white elephant that he possessed as a tribute to Siam. King Ang Chan refused to obey because to do so would put Cambodia into a vassal state of Siam. Upon hearing King Ang Chan's refusal, the Siam king decided to teach the new Khmer king a lesson. Sensing that Cambodia was weakened after the exhausting civil war against Kân, the Siam king sent his fresh army to invade Angkor. King Ang Chan hastily recruited Khmer volunteers, who were very enthusiastic to fight the invading Siam army. At Angkor, the Khmer army thoroughly defeated the Siam army and took 10,000 prisoners. From that time on, the village at Angkor was called Siem Reap⁴.

The Sacred Sword did not resurface until 1539 under the reign of King Ang Chan, who was also known as Chan Reachea^[2]. A boy named Suos (no relation to Preah Esey-Phat Suous) found the royal regalia that were hidden by Preah Esey-Phat Suous during the reign of the usurper Kân. The Brahman Chief had died of old age, and his helper Sūr had died while trying to retrieve the Sword to give to Kân in exchange for a reward. He was bitten by a cobra that lived inside the trunk of the *châmbâck tree*. After seeing the royal regalia, the boy alerted the Bati governor, who in turn reported the finding to King Ang Chan. A big ceremony ensued to retrieve the *Preah Khan Reach*^{1,4}.

Ang Chan was a great king. He restored Cambodia and the monarchy to its former dignity by vanquishing the usurper Kân, standing tall and not bowing to the threat from the Siam king, defeating the invading Siam army, and recuperating the lost *Preah Khan Reach*. He was 79 years old when he died. He was a well-loved, just, pious, and charitable king.

2. THE REMOVAL OF PREAH KHAN REACH FROM CAMBODIA

While doing some research into Khmer history during the period of Lok Mchas of Battambang (Abhai Thibès Bèn), an interesting story emerged.

Khin Sok mentioned that in 1783, Chaovéa Tolha Bèn (he did not receive the title of Abhai Thibès or Chao Phraya Aphai Pubet from Siam King Chakrei - Rama I - until he returned to Cambodia) decided to send the Royal Sacred Sword (*Preah Khan Reach*) to the Siam King by his own decision without even consulting Okgna Veang Pok¹⁴. He further said that the Siam king returned the *Preah Khan Reach* to Cambodia for the coronation of King Ang Eng in 1794^{14, [3]}. The current Khmer royal descendants are mainly from the bloodline of King Ang Eng. National Geographic took a picture of the Khmer Royal Regalia (Figure 2) in 1920¹¹.

^[2] Genealogies of King Ang Chan and his ancestors after the Angkor period are shown in Figures IV and V in Appendix 1.

^[3] The genealogy of King Ang Eng is shown in Figure VI in Appendix 1.

This is the best color picture of the *Preah Khan Reach* that is archived. Clearly one can see that the scabbard is made of gold, as had been described by Chou Ta-Kuan when he mentioned that the king appeared at the window with his golden sword in his hand⁴.

The following was an account described by Chou Ta-Kuan¹² as a chronicler traveling with envoys from the Chinese embassy to Angkor in 1296-1297 (The English account was translated by J. Gilam d’Arcy Paul from the French version by Paul Pelliot of Chou Ta-Kuan’s original text):

“I have heard it said that in previous reigns the marks of the King’s chariot wheels were never seen outside the palace gates – a precaution against unforeseen violence. The present ruler is the son-in-law of his predecessor, who, devoted as he was to his daughter, gave her the chance to steal the golden sword (of office) and give it to her husband, thus depriving her brother of the succession.”

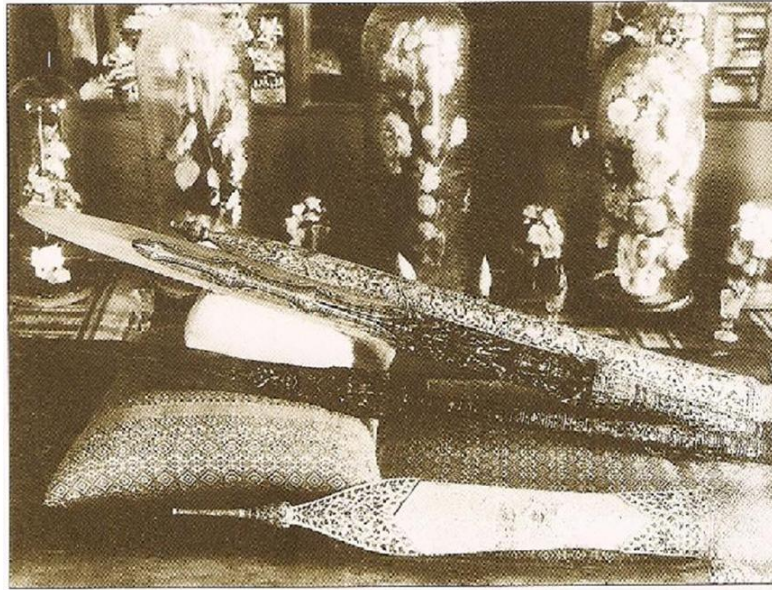


Figure 2. Khmer Royal Regalia Showing the Preah Khan Reach with its Golden Scabbard (National Geographic, 1920)

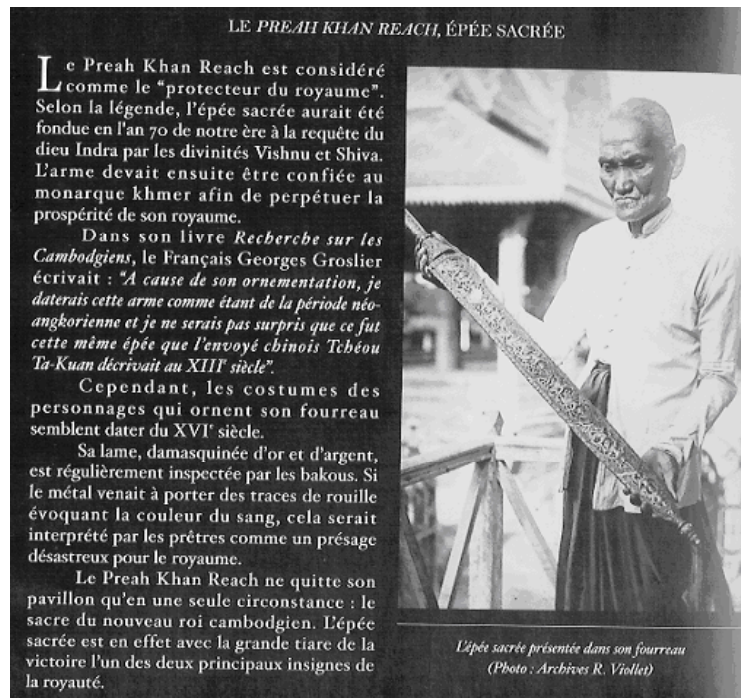
3. THE MYSTERY OF THE SECOND DISAPPEARANCE OF PREAH KHAN REACH

According to King Father Norodom Sihanouk’s official biographer, Julio A. Jeldres, the *Preah Khan Reach* (Royal Sacred Sword) and *Preah Lompèng Chey* (August Spear of Victory) that were preserved at the Ho Samrech Pavilion in the Royal Palace (Figure 3) disappeared after the 1970 coup d’état¹⁸. Another picture (Figure 4), taken before the coup d’état, shows a Bakou holding the *Preah Khan Reach* in his hands¹⁹. A picture of King Norodom Sihamoni standing with the Royal Regalia is shown in Figure 5.

The genealogies of Khmer kings from Ang Duong to Norodom Sihanouk and Norodom Sihamoni are shown in Figures VII to XII in Appendix 1. A summary of all Khmer kings' reigning chronology from the foundation of Cambodia - back from the Funan time - to present Cambodia are shown in Figures XIII and XIV in Appendix 1. Photographs of Khmer kings, princes, and princesses are shown in Appendix 2.



**Figure 3. Preah Khan Reach (The Royal House of Cambodia by Julio A. Jedres)
Photo from Musée Albert Kahn, Boulogne, France (Léon Busy)**



**Figure 4. Preah Khan Reach (Le Palais du Roi du Cambodge by Julio A. Jeldres)
Photo from Archives R. Viollet**



Figure 5. King Norodom Sihamoni with Royal Regalia (Photo from RFP)

The second disappearance of *Preah Khan Reach* from the Royal Palace, after the coup d'état of March 18, 1970, was very intriguing. What is unclear is when the Royal Regalia disappeared. Did they disappear right after the coup d'état under the Lon Nol regime, or five years later when the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975? Or did they disappear after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia on January 7, 1979? I tried to find the answer to this mystery through many inquiries but was unsuccessful in my quest.

CHAPTER III

THE THAI ROYAL SWORD OF VICTORY

1. PHRA SAENG KHAN CHAI SI

As I was researching on the disappearance of *Preah Khan Reach*, a friend of mine pointed out that a Thai website (http://www.chiangmai-chiangrai.com/royal-regalia_utensils.html) showed the picture of the *Phra Saeng Khan Chai Si*, the Thai Royal Sword of Victory (Figure 6). It then stated:

"The Sword of Victory is considered a foremost emblem of sovereignty, symbolizing the king as a warrior with the duty of protecting his people. The blade of the sword comes from Cambodia; its neck, between handle and blade, is adorned with a gold inlaid miniature image of Vishnu mounting his Garuda. King Rama I ordered a hilt and scabbard made in gold and encrusted with jewels."



Figure 6. Phra Saeng Khan Chai Si – The Thai Royal Sword of Victory
(http://www.chiangmai-chiangrai.com/royal-regalia_utensils.html)

I wrote a letter to the author of the website, asking for the reference on the information described above. The author stated that it would take a long time to find the reference but promised to let me know when it is available.

I wanted to dig deeper into this story because it intrigued me even more. After a few e-mail exchanges, I was told of an article written by Colonel Gerolamo Emilio Gerini (1860-1913), a well-known Italian writer on Siam and Eastern Asia, on the subject of the Thai

Royal Sword of Victory. He was the founder of the Siam Society Journal, a director of the Thai Army Academy, and worked for King Chulalongkorn of Siam. In addition to Italian, he was fluent in Thai, English, French, Chinese, Sanskrit, and Pali.

I was made aware that Col. Gerini had stated that the Khmer Royal Sword, *Preah Khandga Jaya*, was taken from the Khmer throne by Chao Phraya Aphai Phubet (aka Abhai Thibès Bèn, aka Lok Mchas) and presented to Rama I (aka King Chakrei, aka Preah Put Yatfa Chulalohk) on April 25, 1783¹³. It has since formed part of the regalia of Thai Kings.

Based on Col. Gerini's article and the Thai website indicated above, one can almost conclude that the *Preah Khan Reach* that King Rama I returned to Cambodia for the coronation of King Ang Eng - as stated by Dr. Khin Sok's book "*Le Cambodge entre le Siam et le Vietnam*" - was a replica of the original Khmer Royal Sacred Sword.

The more I look into this story the more I am curious about the origin of the Thai Royal Sword of Victory. I found a photograph of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V: 1868-1910) sitting on a royal chair with the Thai Royal Regalia displayed by his sides (Figure 7). In the photo one can clearly see the Thai Royal Sword of Victory laying on a table on the king's right side. The Sword looks almost identical to the Khmer *Preah Khan Reach* shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4 above.



Figure 7. King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) of Thailand

(<http://www.theroyalforums.com/forums/f88/king-bhumibol-adulyadej-s-diamond-jubilee-june-2006-a-8814-20.html>)

As I dug further, I found a photo of King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX: 1946-Present) standing up and slightly pulling the Thai Royal Sword of Victory out of its sheath as shown in Figure 8 below.



Figure 8. King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX: 1946-Present)

<http://www.theroyalforums.com/forums/f88/king-bhumibol-adulyadej-s-diamond-jubilee-june-2006-a-8814-3.html>

CHAPTER IV

THE COMPARISONS

1. COMPARISONS BETWEEN PREAH KHAN REACH AND PHRA SAENG KHAN CHAI SI

The information concerning *Phra Saeng Khan Chai Si* (Thai Royal Sword of Victory) is rare and hard to obtain. Photographs of the Sword are not readily available. Due to my limited resources and time constraint, I can only come up with mediocre photos of the Sword.

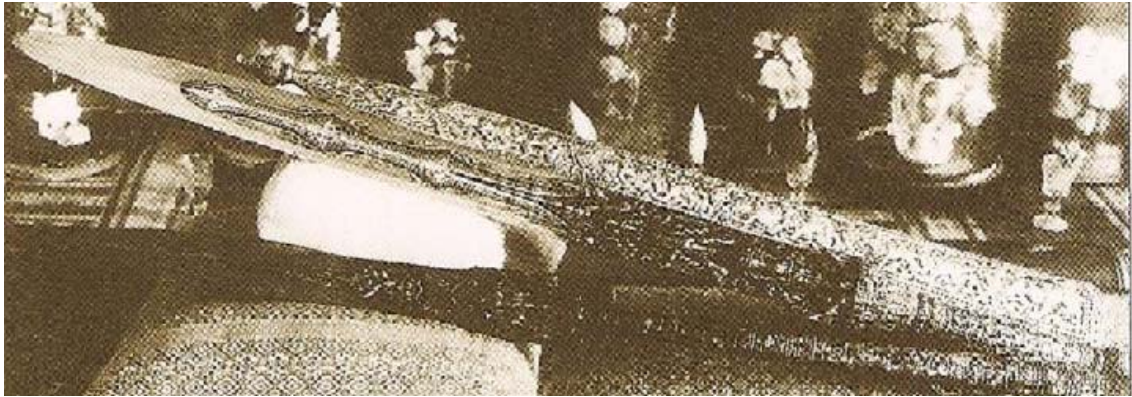
As a compromise, enlarged photos of the *Preah Khan Reach* and the *Phra Saeng Khan Chai Si* are displayed next to each other for comparison and discussion purposes. They are shown in Figures 9a and 9b for *Preah Khan Reach* and in Figures 10a and 10b for *Phra Saeng Khan Chai Si*.

As one can see, the two Swords look very similar. The Khmer Sword in Figure 9a shows the blade slightly pulled out of its sheath like Figure 10b of the Thai Sword. Figure 9b shows the Khmer Sword with the blade completely out of its sheath. The Thai Sword in Figure 10a shows the blade resting completely inside its sheath. It seems that the sheaths for both Swords are similar but not alike. The handle of the Khmer Sword looks almost identical to that of the Thai Sword. The top portions of the Khmer blade (Figures 9a and 9b) and the Thai blade (Figure 10b) are again almost identical. Observe the part of the handle where it meets the blade. Both parts look identical. Both Swords have intricate carving on the handles and sheaths.

It seems that the statements made on the website saying that the blade of the Sword of Victory came from Cambodia is consistent with the observation made in Figures 9a, 9b, 10a, and 10b. According to the same statement, the Thai scabbard is made of gold like that of the Khmer scabbard. It would be too obvious for the Thai to keep the Khmer Sword and give a copy to Cambodia. Since most people only paid attention to the outer form of the Sword, which was the scabbard, it was therefore very logical that the Thai kept the blade of the *Preah Khan Reach* but gave the original scabbard to Cambodia. The only person who would know the differences between the original blade and a copied blade may be the Chief Brahman, Preah Esey-Phat, since it was his job to safeguard and take care of the *Preah Khan Reach*. It is very doubtful that anybody else besides the Chief Brahman would notice the differences between the original blade and the copied blade.



Figure 9a. Preah Khan Reach - Khmer Royal Sword (National Geographic)



**Figure 9b. Preah Khan Reach – Khmer Royal Sacred Sword
(Royal House of Cambodia)**



**Figure 10a. Phra Saeng Khan Chai Si - Thai Royal Sword of Victory
(Under King Rama V)**



**Figure 10b. Phra Saeng Khan Chai Si - Thai Royal Sword of Victory
(Under King Rama IX)**

CHAPTER V

HISTORICAL DISCUSSIONS OF THE SWORDS

1. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

During the First International Tamil Conference that took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 18 to 23 April 1966, S. Singaravelu presented his paper titled “*Some Aspects of South Indian Cultural Contacts with Thailand: Historical Background*” that discussed the coronation of Thai Kings. He mentioned that the coronation of the present Thai monarch dated back to the Chakri dynasty during the reign of King Rama I. He described how the ceremony took place. He further stated that the High Priest of Siva handed to the King the Royal Regalia that consisted of the Golden Sandals, Fan, Scepter, Great Crown of Victory, and Sword of Victory. In his seminar, S. Singaravelu said that the Sword dated back to the time of Khmer King Suryavarman I (1010-1050 A.D.). As pointed out earlier, the Sword dated back further, all the way to the Funan period during the reign of King Jayavarman II. S. Singaravelu erroneously stated that the Sword was presented by a later Khmer monarch to King Rama I. He confused Chaovéa Tolha Bèn for a Khmer monarch. Chaovéa Tolha Bèn essentially ruled Cambodia in the absence of a king during the turmoil period.

It is remarkable that the traditional coronations of Thai kings, which were borrowed from the Khmer, coincidentally did not start until Chaovéa Tolha Bèn gave the stolen Preah Khan Reach to King Rama I.

2. PREAH KHAN REACH STARTED WITH JAYAVARMAN II

Throughout history, *Preah Khan Reach* was the centerpiece of dispute for the throne. Jayavarman II left the Sacred Sword to his son Jayavarman III as legitimacy to his reign. When King Srey Reachea (Reamea Thipadey) was leading his army to fight the Thai and left his brother Thommo Reachea in charge of the country in Phnom Penh, the latter started to behave like a king while he was residing in the capital city with the *Preah Khan Reach* by his side. As Prince Noreay Reachea (Noreay Reamea Thipadey) started to rebel against his uncle, the king, Thommo Reachea felt that he was also entitled to be king. There were essentially three kings reigning in Cambodia during that period. As a sign of breaking up from his brother, Thommo Reachea sent King Srey Reachea’s wives, who had resided in Phnom Penh, to join the king in the battlefield. Thommo Reachea kept the *Preah Khan Reach* close to him.

Kân, who usurped the throne by killing his own king, promised a big reward for the person who could bring him the missing *Preah Khan Reach*. He died without having touched or seen the Sacred Sword.

3. STOLEN PREAH KHAN REACH BY VIETNAM RETURNED TO CAMBODIA

The reign during King Ang Duong was a troubling period. Cambodia was under Thailand domination. Ang Duong was crowned king under the consent of both Thailand and Vietnam. Cambodian royal families retained by Vietnam were exchanged for Vietnamese prisoners captured by Cambodia. The treaty for the exchanged of prisoners between Cambodia and Vietnam was ratified in June 1846 under Thailand’s consent. The *Preah Khan Reach* that was stolen by Vietnam was returned to King Ang Duong. He had the Sacred Sword safely secured at Oudong under a special pavilion⁴.

4. PREAH KHAN REACH TAKEN BY SIAM AND KEPT AT BANGKOK

As Cambodia was a vassal state under Thailand, King Ang Duong had his children raised in Bangkok in order to keep them safe from the war that Cambodia was waging against Vietnam. Ten months after the death of King Ang Duong, Thailand seized on the youthfulness and inexperienced of the new king, Norodom, and took the *Preah Khan Reach* from Oudong and brought it to Thailand for safekeeping either to prevent it from falling into Vietnam's hand again or as a security deposit to control the king's reign. During the reign of King Ang Duong, Cambodia was totally under the Thai's control. Cambodia had lost Battambang, Sisophon, and Siem Reap to Thailand. Thailand had placed spies everywhere at the court of Oudong. To get out of the Thai's manacles, King Norodom (who had not been properly consecrated yet) sought out help from France. The Thai king declared that he would come to Cambodia himself to crown Norodom, but French Admiral La Grandière refused to allow it. Without the *Preah Khan Reach* that was still in Bangkok, the crowning ceremony of Norodom could not be completed. Finally under French pressure, the Thai king agreed to return the *Preah Khan Reach* that Thailand had taken from Cambodia in August 1861. Norodom was officially crowned king of Cambodia on June 3, 1864, with all the royal regalia present.

5. THE FRENCH ROLE

After many negotiations and pressure from the French government, Thailand relinquished her suzerainty over Battambang, Sisophon, and Siem Reap.

The population of Cambodia during the reign of King Norodom was less than a million. With such a small population, Cambodia could have been easily absorbed by Siam or Vietnam. If it were not for France, Cambodia would not have survived and may have lost half her territory to Siam and the other half to Vietnam. Angkor would have no longer been part of Cambodia. Figure 11 shows the population of Cambodia from 1874 to 2008. Figure 12 shows the Cambodia territory that Siam ceded to France in 1909 that she had captured from Cambodia in 1893.

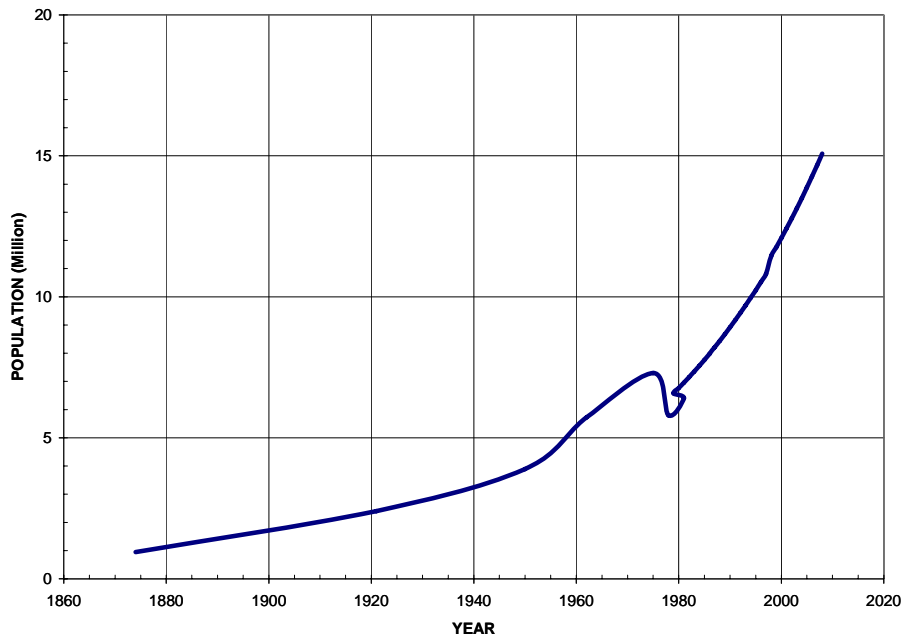


Figure 11. The Population of Cambodia Between 1874 and 2008

(Sources: <http://countrystudies.us/cambodia/40.htm>, <http://www.nis.gov.kh>, First census in 1962 by the Cambodia (The Kingdom of Cambodia))

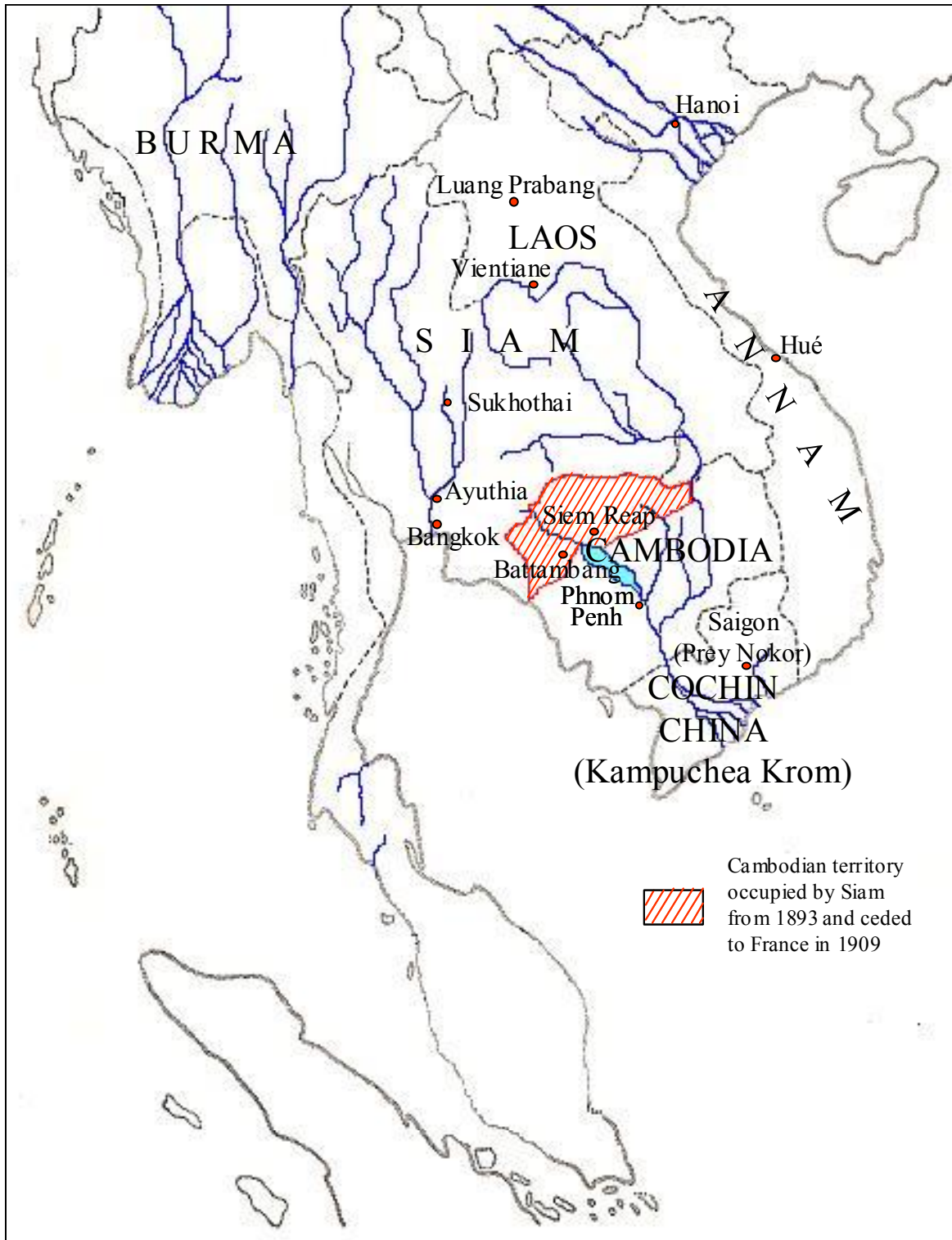


Figure 12. Map of Cambodia in the Late 19th Century and Early 20th Century

In 1907 France and Siam agreed to the frontier dividing Cambodia and Siam in the Preah Vihear region. It was known as the Line of French-Siamese Commission 1907. In spite of this agreement, Thailand contested that the Temple of Preah Vihear belonged to her. The issue was brought to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in Hague, Netherlands. On June 15, 1962, the ICJ made a judgment recognizing that the Temple of Preah Vihear belonged to Cambodia based on the Line of French-Siamese Commission 1907. Thailand accepted the verdict. However, over the years Thailand has unilaterally redrawn the map that contradicts the ICJ judgment. The demarcations of the frontier surrounding the Temple of Preah Vihear are shown in Figures 13 to 17.

The French saved Cambodia from Thailand but not from Vietnam. The Vietnamese, under the court of Huê, occupied Cambodia from 1835 to 1847 after the death of King Ang Chan.

After the death of King Ang Chan in 1835, Cambodia was in great turmoil because the king did not have any male heir to the throne. He had only four daughters, namely Princesses Ang Pen, Ang Mei, Ang Peou, and Ang Snguon. During the reign of King Ang Chan, the Vietnamese had already occupied Cambodia and the two princes, Ang Em and Ang Duong were retained by Siam. The Vietnamese emperor, Minh Mang, wanted one of the Vietnamese princes to marry one of Ang Chan's daughters. Princess Ang Pen, being the eldest, vehemently refused to allow any of her sisters (including herself) to marry any Vietnamese prince. Because of Princess Ang Pen's refusal, Emperor Minh Mang decided to put Princess Ang Mei on the throne and called her Ngoc-van. She was the first female (with the exception of the mother of Chey Chesda, who was queen for seven days while her son spent his monskhood in the pagoda of Sokun Mean Bon at Oudong) to ever become queen. He gave her the title of *Ba Quan Chua* (Master of all mandarins) and prevented her from having any contacts with the court of Siam. To add insult to injury, Emperor Minh Mang made Princess Ang Peou an Obareach (a title normally reserved for a crown prince) and called her Ngoc-tu. He assigned new names to Princesses Ang Pen and Ang Snguon as Ngoc-bien and Ngoc-nguyen, respectively.

Not only did the Vietnamese emperor Minh Mang give Vietnamese names to the Khmer princesses, but he asked his administration to combine the 56 Khmer provinces into 33's and rename them to Vietnamese names. The new names that Emperor Minh Mang gave to the Khmer provinces are presented in Figure 18^{4,14}. During the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia from 1835 to 1847, Khmer mandarins and intellectuals were systematically killed. Khmer people, who were already very poor, were ordered to pay with all kinds of goods to the court of Huê. Cambodia was essentially annexed by Vietnam.

Before the French granted independence to Indochina in 1954, she ceded without Cambodia's consent the Kampuchea Krom territory (which occupied most of Cochinchina) to Vietnam. The names of Cambodia provinces in Kampuchea Krom were changed to Vietnamese names (Figure 19).

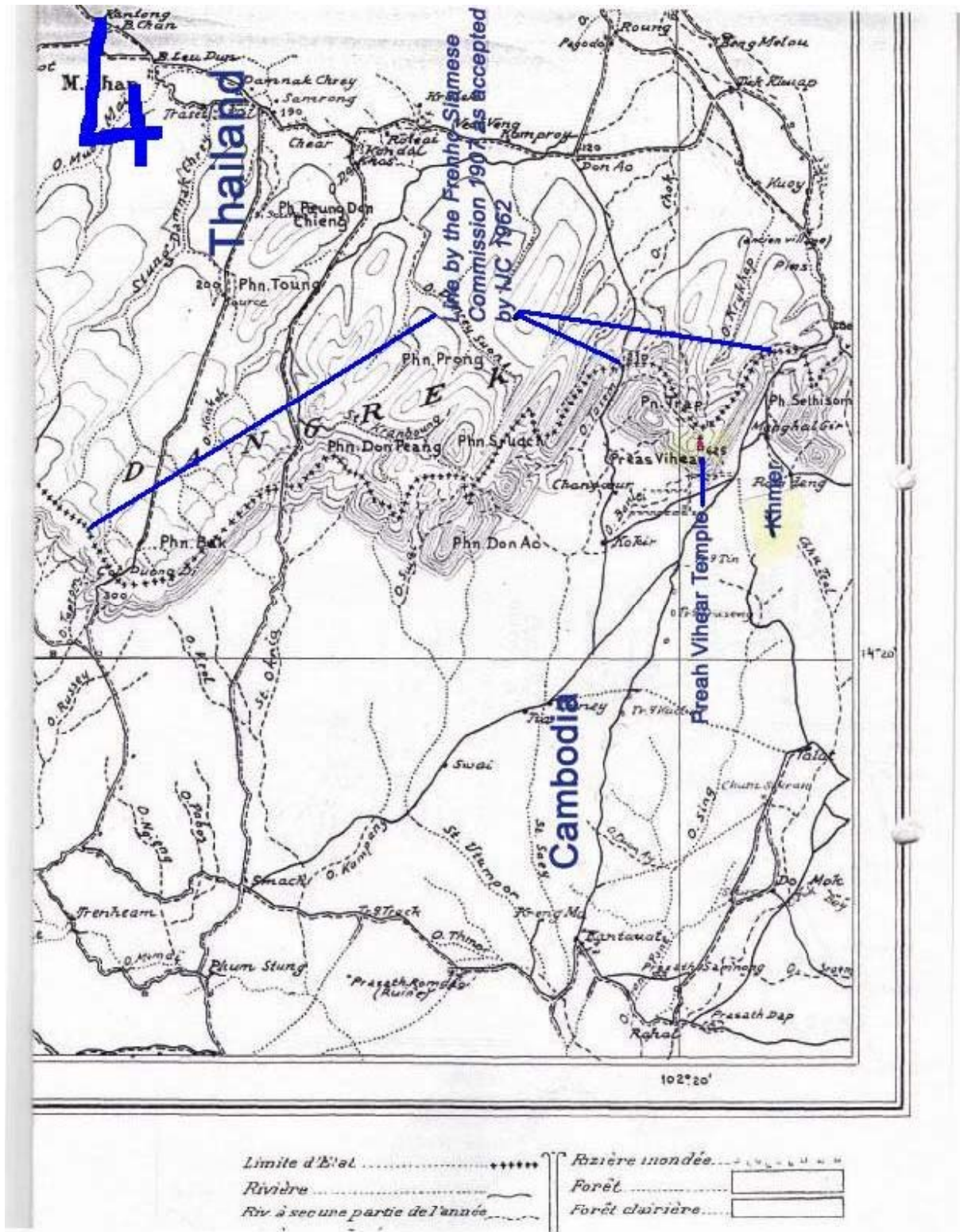


Figure 13. Extract from the International Court of Justice Report 1962 – The French-Siamese Commission 1907 (Scale 1:200,000) (Courtesy Bora Touch. Note in blue added by Bora Touch for clarity)

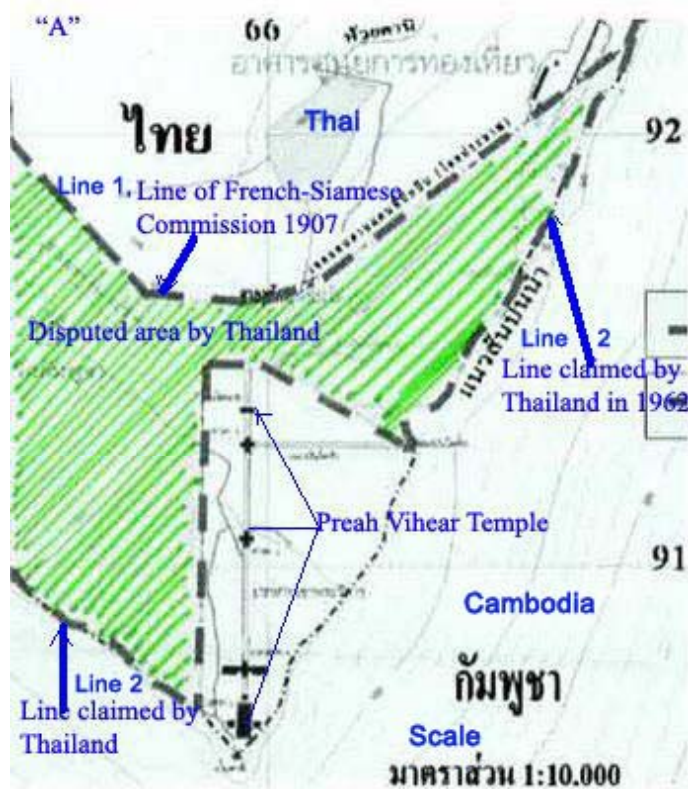


Figure 14. Thai Internal Working Document - The Official Thai Map (Scale 1:10,000) (Courtesy Bora Touch. Note in blue and green color added by Bora Touch for clarity)

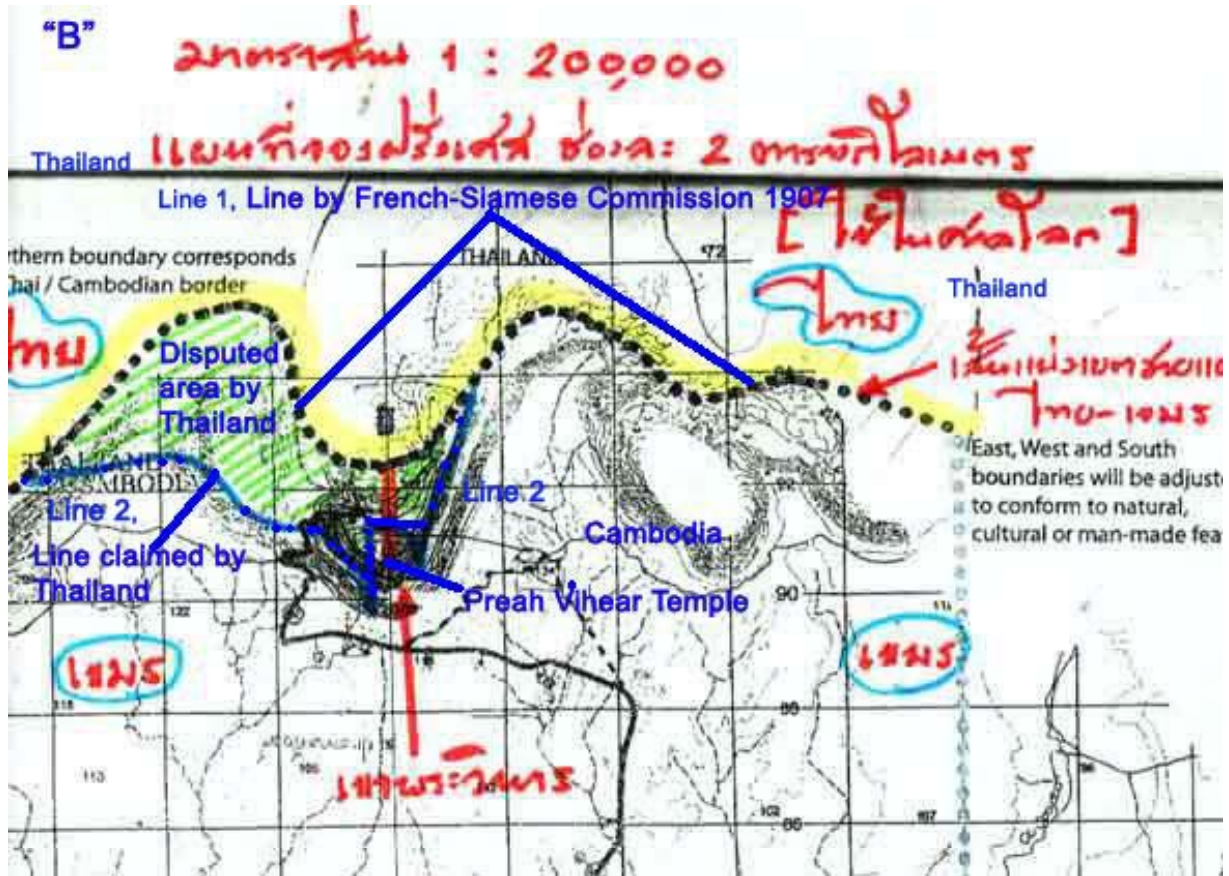


Figure 15. Thai Internal Working Document - The French-Siamese Commission Map Made in 1907 (Scale 1:200,000) (Courtesy Bora Touch. Note in blue added by Bora Touch for Clarity)

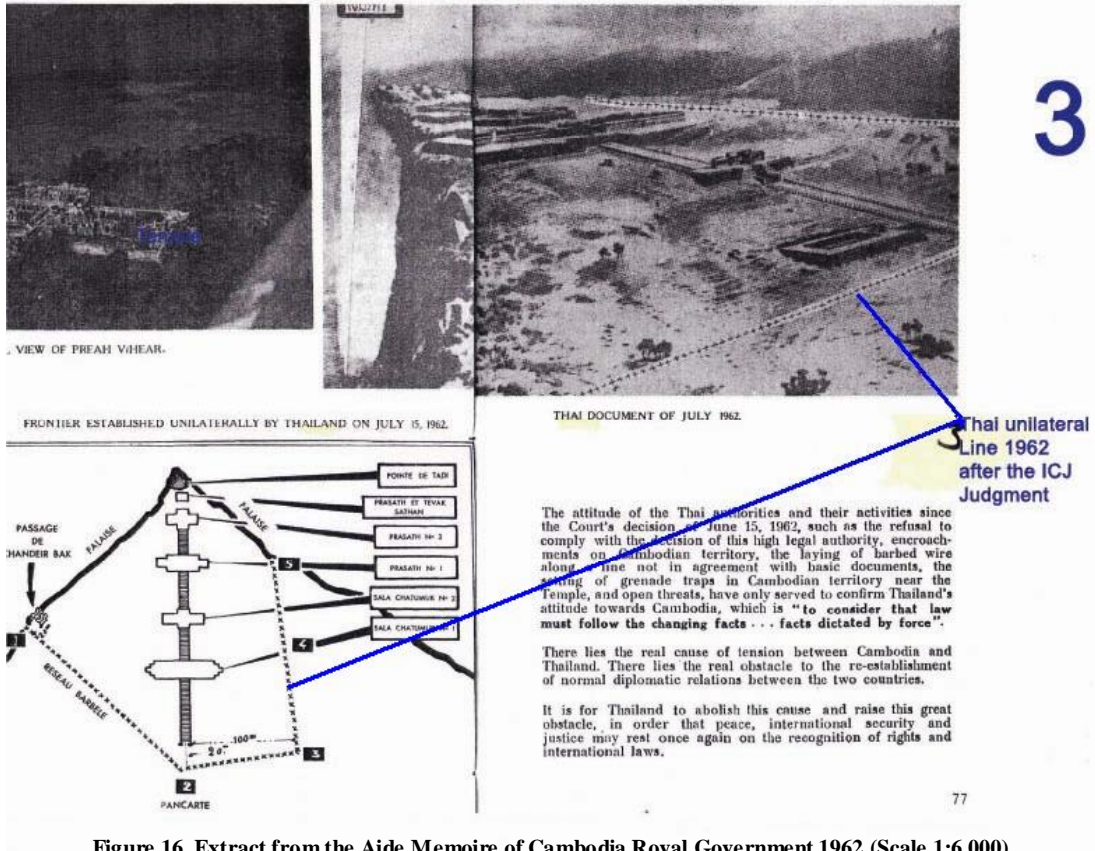


Figure 16. Extract from the Aide Memoire of Cambodia Royal Government 1962 (Scale 1:6,000)
(Courtesy Bora Touch. Note in blue added by Bora Touch for clarity)

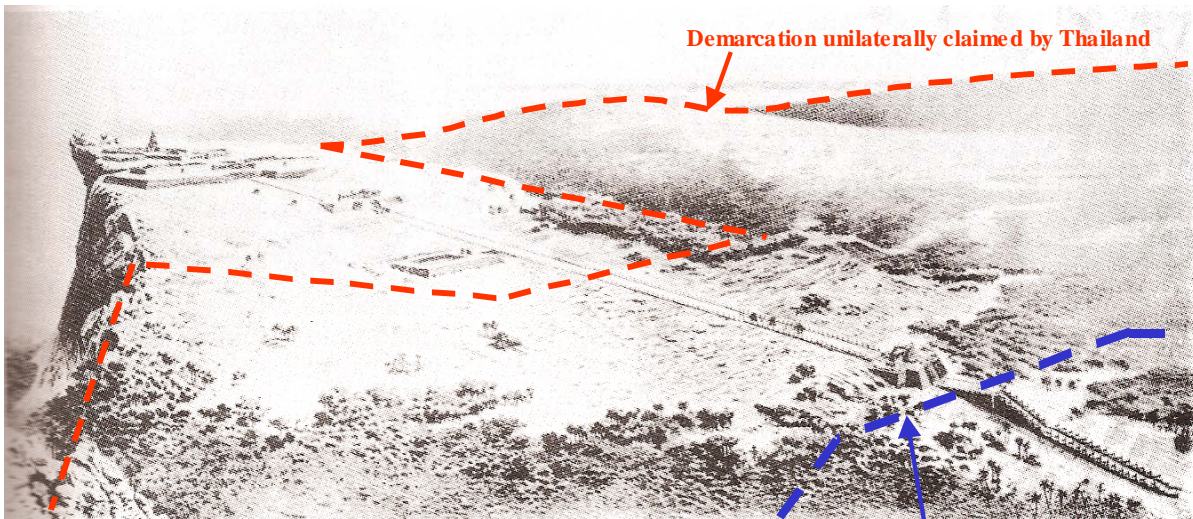


Figure 17. Lines of Demarcation Based on the French-Siamese Commission 1907 and on Unilateral Claim by Thailand

Note: Red and blue notes added by Kenneth T. So to differentiate between the two claims. Lines shown are approximate and not to scale

Cambodian Name	Vietnamese Name
Phnom Penh	Nam-biang or Trân-tay
?	Than-thu
?	Tam-dôn
?	Tuy-lap
Peam Mean Chey	Banam
Koh Anchien	Bunh-tiên
?	Kha-bat
Prey Veng	La-vên
Envichey	Hai-dông
?	Kim-tuong
?	Chau-trung
?	Caâu
?	Vang-van
?	Ha-binh
?	Trung-loi
Sambaur	Sanphu
Sambok	Sanb-bôc
?	Tâm-vu
?	Khai-biên
?	Hai-tay
Koh Sutin	Kha-sum
?	Thé-lap
?	Tâm-Cai
Lovêk	Lô-viêt
Samrong Tong	Long-tôn
?	Quang-biên
?	Hoa-gi (?)
?	Chan-tai
?	Y-gi (?)
?	Chan-thanh
?	Mât-Luât
?	Om-ân
Kratié	Canché
Kanhchor	Cân-gio

Figure 18. The 33 Cambodia Provinces Renamed during the Vietnamese Occupation of the Country Between 1835 and 1847

Cambodian Name	Vietnamese Name
Prey Nokor (Forest City)	Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City
Prey Kor	Gia Dinh
Kampeap Sroka Trey (Fish Scale)	Bien Hoa
Bariya or Bari Phsar Dek (Iron Market)	Sadet
Po Loeuh	Bac Lieu
Tuk Khmau (Black Water)	Camau
Bay Chhau (Raw Rice)	Bay Xau
Peam Mean Chey (Confluence of Victory)	My Thang
Srok Trang	Soctrang
Peam Me Sen (River of Sacrifice)	Donnayngai
Kramoun Sar (White Wax)	Rach Gia
Prek Roessey (Bamboo River)	Can Thoeu
Au Mor (Underground Brook)	O Mon
Kampoul Meas (Golden Summit)	Binh Thuy
Moat Chrouk (Pig Mouth)	Chaudoc
Barach (Excommunicated)	Long Xuyen
Muonh Kham	Hatien
Peam (River Mouth)	Hatien
Preah Trapeang (Sacred Pond)	Tra Vinh
Kompong Roessey (Shore of Bamboo)	Bentre
Long Hor	Vinh Lomg
Koh Kong	Go Cong
Kompong Ko (Shore of Cow)	Truong An (Tan An)
Ban Lech	Ben Luc

Figure 19. Cambodia Provinces in Kampuchea Krom (Cochinchina) Given to Vietnam After France Granted Independence to Indochina in 1954

CHAPTER VI

LEGITIMACY

1. INDRAVARMAN III AND PREAH KHAN REACH

Indravarman III (1295-1307 A.D.), who succeeded Jayavarman VIII (1243-1295 A.D.), was not of royal blood. He was the lover of the king's daughter. He was in charge of the army. He was believed to be of Samrè origin, the tribe that produced the best warriors. The Samrè people, often found in the mountain region of the southern and eastern parts of Angkor were recruited to fill the king's army. They were in charge of capturing elephants and training them for battles. As Cambodia's territory diminished, so did her ability to capture more elephants. Elephants were the equivalent of modern tanks in battles. With the king old and infirm, his daughter stole the *Preah Khan Reach* and gave it to her lover. Now possessing the Sacred Sword, Indravarman III forced the king to abdicate, cut off the toes of the crowned prince, and then had him imprisoned. After putting down the revolt, he was crowned king under the name of Indravarman III^{1,4,12}. He thus legitimized his ascension to the throne by possessing the Royal Sacred Sword and marrying the king's daughter.

2. THE CHAKRI DYNASTY

There is a parallel in Siam history also. General Chakri, who was given command of the Siam army, turned against his own king. According to the account in Khin Sok's book¹⁵, Gen. Chakri accused King Thaksin of madness and despotism. The General sent his army commander, Soriya Abhai, to arrest the king and neutralize his army that was under the command of Poñea Sakborei. Finally, Gen. Chakri gave the order to execute King Thaksin, his entire family, and relatives. Gen. Chakri took power in 1782 and proclaimed himself king under the name of Somdet Phra Phutta Yod Fah Chulalohk Maha Raj, also known as King Rama I. He was the founder of the current Chakri dynasty.

Was Gen. Chakri imitating the success of Kân, who killed his own king, seized power, and reigned for ten years from 1512 to 1522? Unlike Gen. Chakri who founded the Chakri dynasty, Sdach Kân's reign was relatively short. Finally he was killed by Ang Chan, the prince he feared the most.

3. THE SYMBOLISM OF PREAH KHAN REACH

In ancient times, even up to the reign of King Norodom, the crowning ceremony would not be complete without including the *Preah Khan Reach* and all the royal regalia. The symbolism of holding the Sacred Sword in a hand was very powerful. When Chou Ta-Kuan was sent to Angkor, by Timur Khan one year after the reign of Indravaraman III, he made an observation about the king holding a golden sword (presumably it was *Preah Khan Reach*) when he appeared at the window to greet people. Since Indravarman III gained the throne by force and by stealing the *Preah Khan Reach* from the king, he wanted to show people his legitimacy to the throne by holding the Sacred Sword in his hand to signify that he was in control and also that the Sword was now in his possession. That was a powerful symbol.

Now, the symbol of holding the *Preah Khan Reach* is no longer relevant because the country is governed by the Constitution. Legitimacy is based wholly on the Constitution.

CHAPTER VII

THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE PREAH KHAN REACH

1. DID THE PREAH KHAN REACH DISAPPEAR AFTER THE COUP D'ETAT?

According to Khmer tradition, the person who both owned the Royal Sacred Sword (*Preah Khan Reach*) and the August Spear of Victory (*Preah Lompèng Chey*) is the true heir of the Khmer Kingdom. This belief was only partially true because, according to Jean Moura and Etienne Aymonier as described by Lawrence Palmer Briggs¹, the crowned king must also be a descendant of a king not going beyond the fifth generation.

As mentioned earlier, the Royal Sacred Sword and the August Spear of Victory disappeared after the 1970 coup d'état. What is not certain was the time and date of the Royal Regalia's disappearance. After fruitless inquiries, I decided to analyze the situation and circumstances under which they disappeared. And, I hope there must be someone still alive who can answer this intriguing question.

Let's first assume that the Royal Regalia disappeared under the Lon Nol regime. If that is the case, then who would be bold or foolish enough to steal the *Preah Khan Reach*? What were their intentions of stealing the Sacred Sword? Where was the Brahman Chief, Preah Esey-Phat, at this time? What was his role whenever an overthrow of a monarch took place? Is the Sacred Sword still buried somewhere in Cambodia or is it in private collection somewhere? Due to the events of the coup d'état escalating rapidly into a dangerous situation, the country was in such turmoil that anybody could have taken advantage of the chaos to steal the Sacred Sword. Concerning the role of the Brahman Chief, he may have been caught by surprise in the fast turning of event. He may not have thought that the coup d'état would have led to the abolition of the monarchy. He, like everyone else, may have thought that the problem would quickly resolve with Prince Norodom Sihanouk returning to Cambodia to reestablish peace and harmony.

2. DID THE PREAH KHAN REACH DISAPPEAR UNDER THE KHMER ROUGE?

On the other hand, let's assume that the Royal Regalia disappeared under the Khmer Rouge regime. Who would be the person, or persons, who stole the *Preah Khan Reach* and the *Preah Lompèng Chey*? Would the first Khmer Rouge unit that entered Phnom Penh have decided on its own to ransack the Royal Palace and steal the Royal Regalia without realizing its historical importance to the country? If they were to steal the Royal Regalia, would they have reported it to their superior (*Angkar Leu*)? From my understanding of how the Khmer Rouge system worked, it is unfathomable to believe that they would have dared to hide their findings from their superior and keep it for themselves. In addition, where would they have hidden it without raising suspicions from their superiors? Therefore, if one were to believe that the Royal Regalia was stolen from the Royal Palace during the Khmer Rouge regime, it had to have been by instructions from the highest *Angkar* chain of commands. The persons that may be able to answer these questions are the current Khmer Rouge high-ranking survivors. As to the Brahman Chief, he may not have been able to secure the *Preah Khan Reach* and hide it because he may have been away from the Royal Palace when the Khmer Rouge invaded Phnom Penh. The command from the Khmer Rouge that ordered everyone to leave Phnom Penh at once may have caught the Brahman Chief by surprise and did not give him enough time to hide the *Preah Khan Reach* in a safe place.

3. DID THE PREAH KHAN REACH DISAPPEAR UNDER THE VIETNAMESE OCCUPATION OF CAMBODIA?

If the *Preah Khan Reach* was still preserved in the Royal Palace under the Lon Nol and Khmer Rouge regime, then it must have disappeared under the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in January 7, 1979. If this is the case, then Vietnam must return the *Preah Khan Reach* to Cambodia like she did it in 1846.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION AND EPILOGUE

There are two mysteries to be solved. The first one concerns the authenticity of the *Preah Khan Reach*. Was the Khmer Royal Sacred Sword that Thai King Rama I returned to Cambodia and used during King Ang Eng's coronation the original Sword, or just a replica? The second one concerns the whereabouts of the *Preah Khan Reach* that disappeared from the Ho Samrech Pavilion at the Royal Palace after the March 18, 1970 coup d'état.

If one could have access to, or get better photographs of the Thai Royal Sword of Victory, one could compare it to the Khmer Royal Sacred Sword and come up with a better assessment of the two Swords. Was the blade of *Phra Saeng Khan Chai Si* the original blade that belonged to the *Preah Khan Reach*?

Where did the Thai Sword of Victory come from? Why does it resemble so closely with the *Preah Khan Reach*?

The living Khmer Rouge high-ranking officials such as Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan may be able to shed some light on whether the *Preah Khan Reach* was still in the Royal Palace when they entered Phnom Penh in April 17, 1975. If they can positively tell us that it was not there, then we can almost conclude that it disappeared under the Lon Nol regime. On the other hand, if they can confirm that it was still there before the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, then it is very likely that it is now in the Vietnamese possession.

In addition to its importance as a symbol of Khmer sovereignty, the *Preah Khan Reach* is a piece of history that defined our Khmer nation. The whereabouts of the *Preah Khan Reach* must be pursued by all Khmers and scholars to reach a final conclusion.

Will the mysteries of the *Preah Khan Reach* ever be solved? The real answer probably rests with the Thai Royal Court. If the Thai Royal Court can answer once and for all that the Thai Royal Sword of Victory is actually the original Khmer Royal Sacred Sword, then the mystery of *Preah Khan Reach* will be solved. In the meantime, we have to wait and be faced with this unresolved mystery.

As a final thought, I would like to conclude with the discussion on the meaning of Devaraja. According to the inscription of Tuol Kuk Prasat at Sambor, the worship of Devaraja on Mount Mahendra (Phnom Koulen) was introduced by Jayavarman II at the beginning of his reign. I have never been satisfied with the translation of Devaraja as God-King in all the test books without given further explanations to its true meaning.

I am not a linguist expert, but my understanding of Khmer history unable me to provide my personal opinion on this matter. As we all know, raja means king. We can all agree on that. However, it is the interpretation of the word deva that is in question. There are different variations for the meaning of this word. One meaning attributes deva as a divinity who exists in a realm higher than the normal human being, but yet he is mortal. The second meaning indicates a Brahman in the form of a personal god. The third meaning is a celestial being or god who inhabits in the realm of the heavens and is immortal. In my humble opinion, I believe the first definition would fit the meaning of Devaraja that was attributed to Khmer kings of the Angkor period.

Most Khmer kings regarded Shiva (the god of destruction) as their principal deity. However, Suryavarman II (the builder of Angkor Wat, 1113-1150) preferred Vishnu (the god of sustainer) instead. Why was this the case? In my understanding, perhaps one can attribute the influence of Mahayana Buddhism during that period. Buddhism is a pacifism/non-

violent religion. Therefore, worshipping Shiva along with Buddha may be a conflict of the soul. On the other hand, worshipping Vishnu with Buddha may be more acceptable. Suryavarman II installed a statue of Vishnu right at the base of the central tower in Angkor Wat. He thus identified himself as Devaraja. I think the ambiguity of the meaning of Devaraja as God-King may be intentional in the sense that he was a king serving his god Vishnu, or he was a god-king-like, or he was a mortal god-king. By choosing to call himself Devaraja, Suryavarman II^[4] honored his god Vishnu and himself at the same time.

^[4] Devaraja started with Jayavarman II, 802-850, who chose Shiva as his worshipping god. Under a Brahman priest, he was sanctified as Devaraja. Therefore, with this new embodiment he could not pay allegiance to Java and essentially declared his independence from that country. Corresponding names of Khmer cities, locations, and kings as well as descriptions of relevant events are shown in Figures A and B in Appendix 3.

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Appendix 1

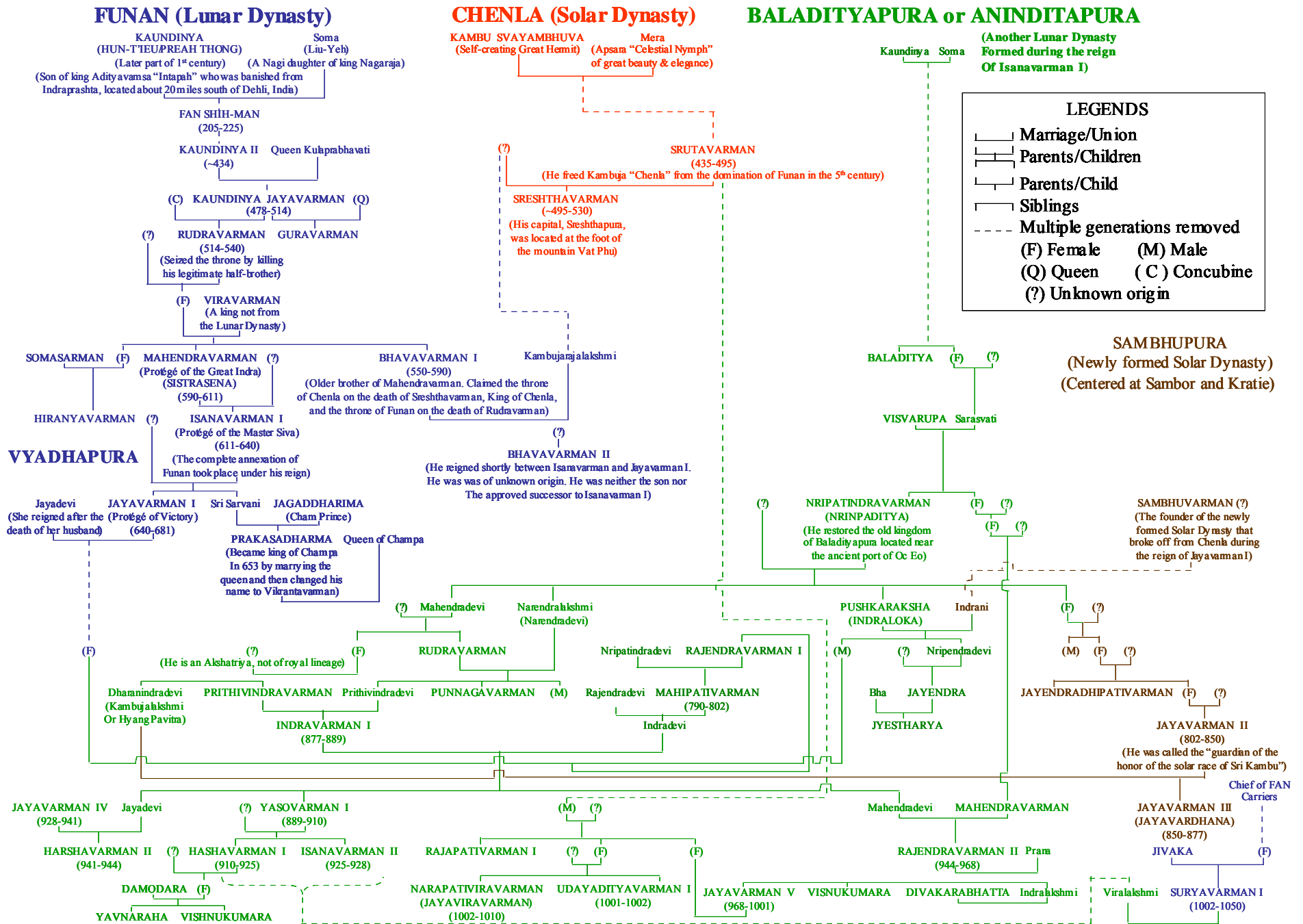


Figure I. Genealogy of Kaundinya/Soma (Lunar Dynasty) and Kambu/Mera (Solar Dynasty)
 (Chart developed and modified by Kenneth T. So, based on References 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 23) ©

[34]

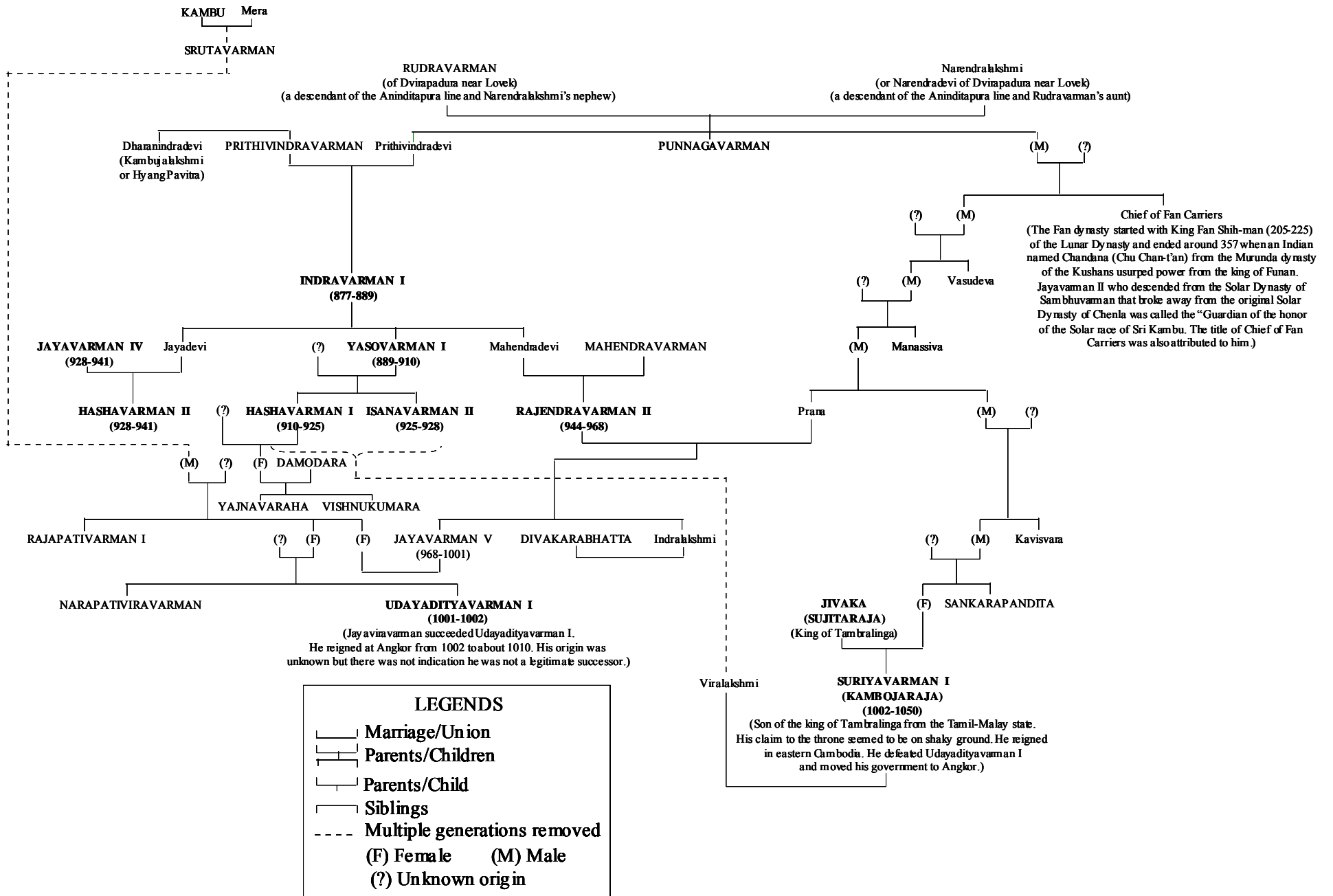
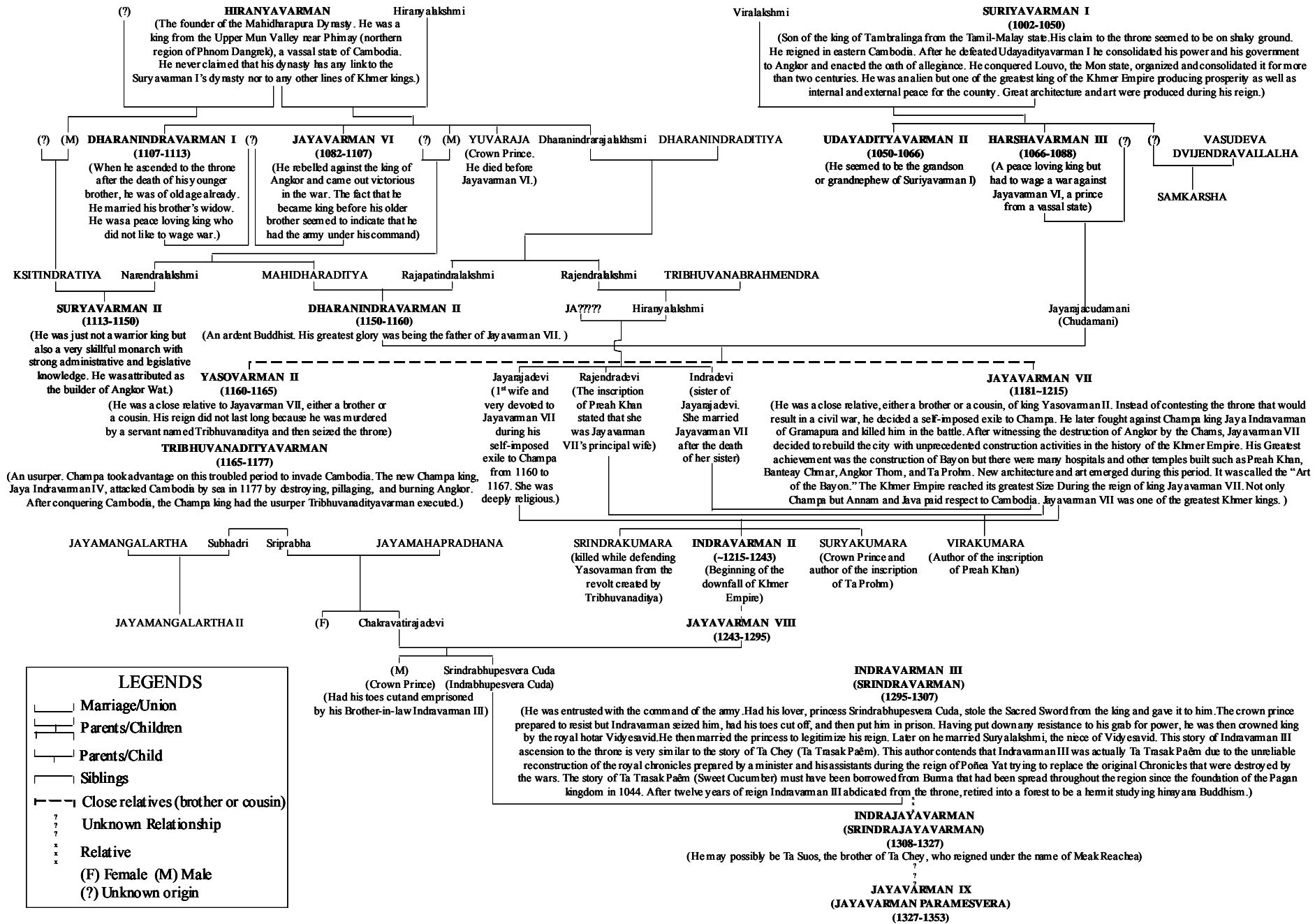


Figure II. Genealogy from Indravarman I to Suryavarman I
 (Chart developed and modified by Kenneth T. So, based on References 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 23) ©



[35]

Figure III. Genealogy from Suryavarman I to Jayavarman IX – End Period of Angkor Kings
(Chart developed and modified by Kenneth T. So, based on References 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 23) ©

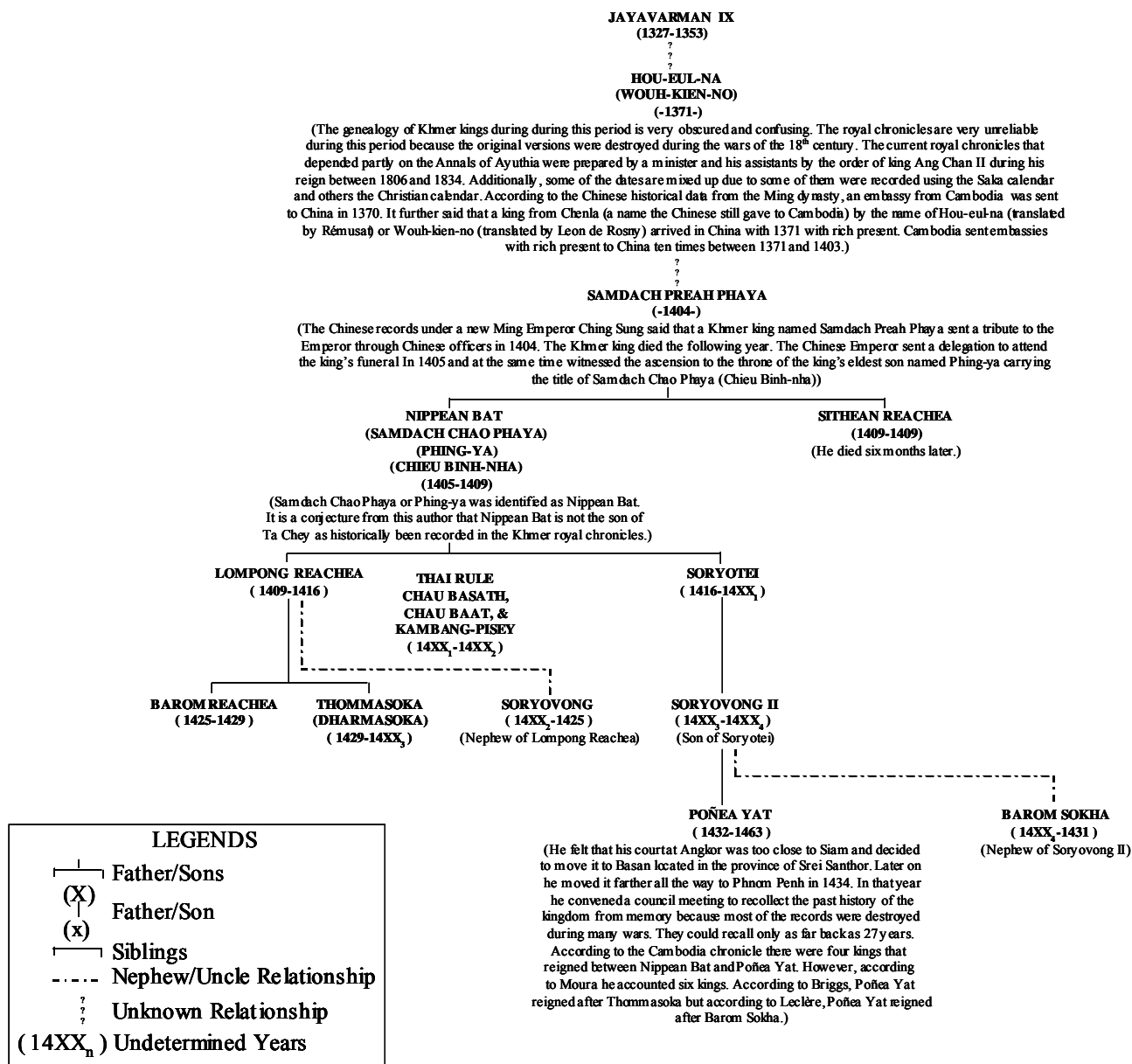


Figure IV. Genealogy from Jayavarman IX to Poñea Yat
(Chart developed and modified by Kenneth T. So, based on References 1, 4, 7, 8, 9) ©

[37]

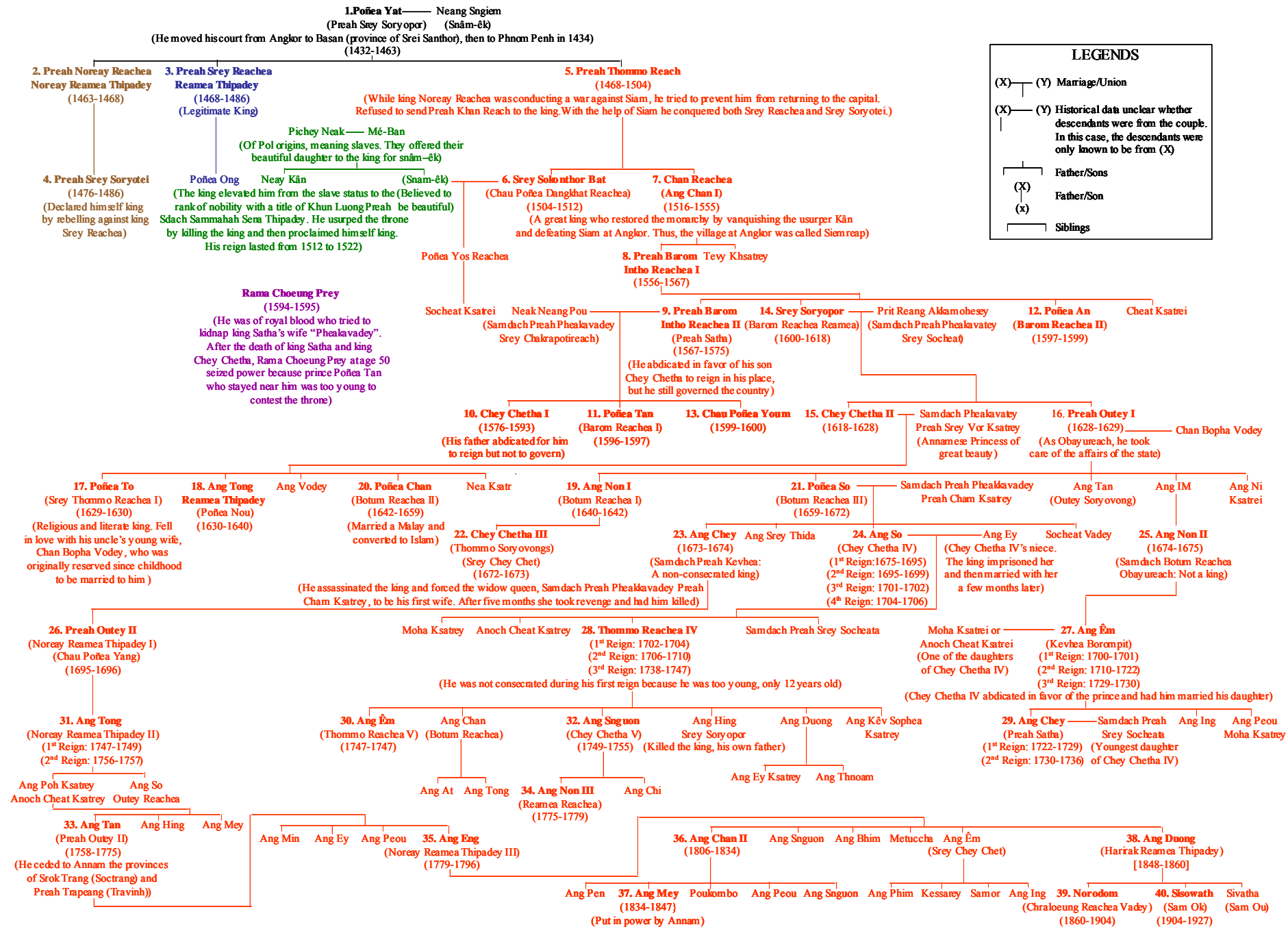
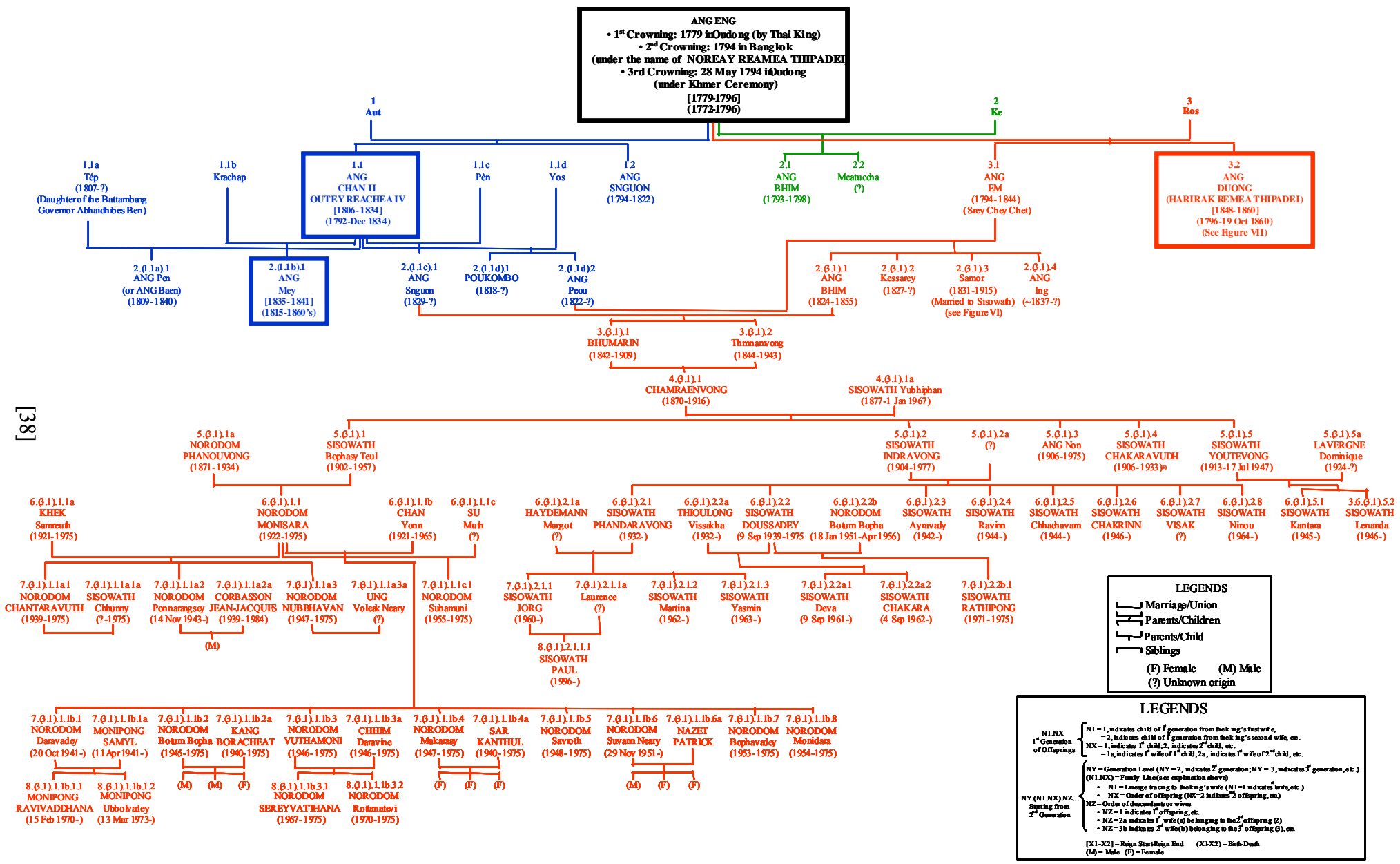


Figure V. Genealogy from Poñea Yat to Sisoath
(Chart developed and modified by Kenneth T. So, based on References 4, 5, 7, 8, & 9) ©



[38]

LEGENDS

- Marriage/Union
- Parents/Children
- Parents/Child
- Siblings
- (F) Female (M) Male
- (?) Unknown origin

LEGENDS

N1/NX
 1st Generation of Offspring
 N1 = 1, indicates child of 1st generation from the king's first wife, = 2, indicates child of 1st generation from the king's second wife, etc.
 NX = 1, indicates 1st child; 2, indicates 2nd child, etc.
 = 1a, indicates 1st wife of 1st child; 2a, indicates 1st wife of 2nd child, etc.

NY (N1.NX)
 Starting from 2nd Generation
 NY = Generation Level (NY = 2, indicates 2nd generation; NY = 3, indicates 3rd generation, etc.) (N1.NX) = Family Line (see explanation above)
 N1 = Lineage tracing to the king's wife (N1 = 1 indicates 1st wife, etc.)
 NX = Order of offspring (NX = 2 indicates 2nd offspring, etc.)
 NZ = Order of descendants or wives
 NZ = 1 indicates 1st offspring, etc.
 NZ = 2a indicates 1st wife (a) belonging to the 2nd offspring (2)
 NZ = 3b indicates 2nd wife (b) belonging to the 3rd offspring (3), etc.

[X1-X2] = Reign Start/Reign End (X1X2) = Birth-Death
 (M) = Male (F) = Female

Figure VI. Genealogy of King Ang Eng
 (Chart developed by Kenneth T. So, based on References 4, 7, 9, 15, 16) ©

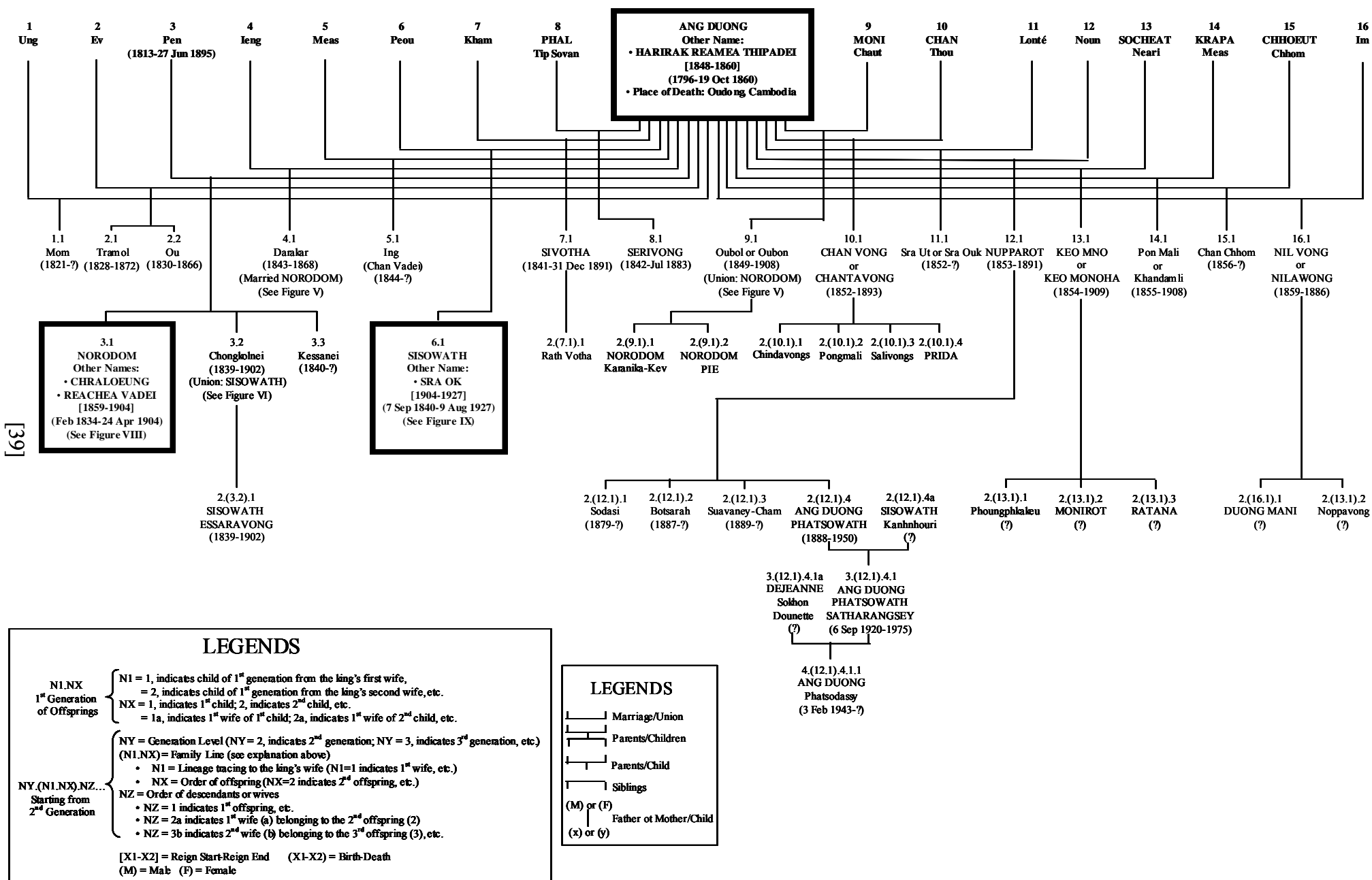
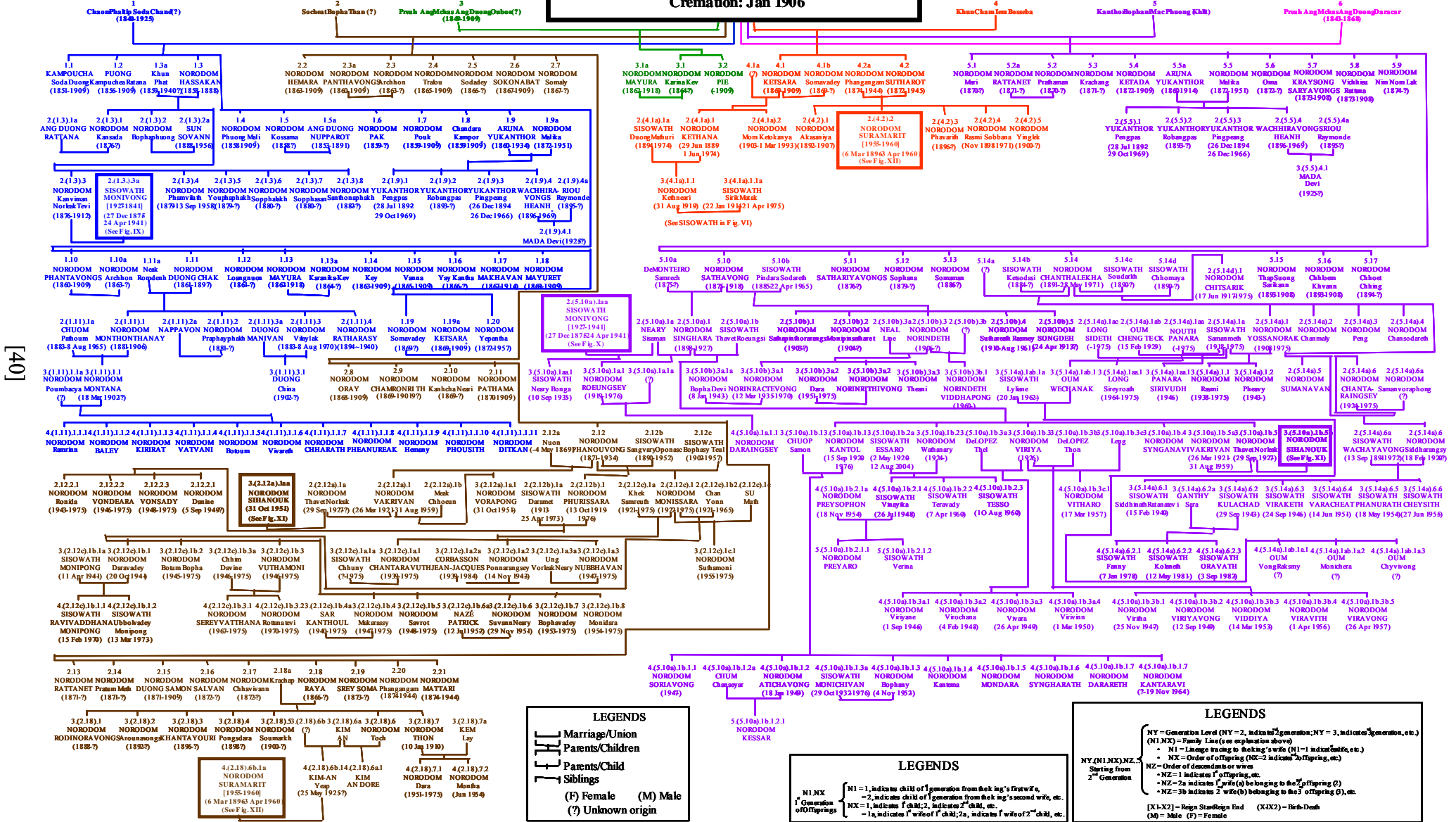


Figure VII. Genealogy of King Ang Duong
(Chart developed by Kenneth T. So, based on References 7, 9, 16, 17) ©

NORODOM
 Other Names: **REACHEA VADEI & CHRALOEUNG**
[3 Jun 1864 – 28 Apr 1904]
(Feb 1834 – 28 Apr 1904)
 Place of Birth: Angkor Borei, Cambodia
 Cremation: Jan 1906



[40]

LEGENDS

- Marriage/Union
- Parents/Children
- Parents/Child
- Siblings
- (F) Female (M) Male
- (?) Unknown origin

LEGENDS

N1, NX
 1 Generation of Offspring

N1 = 1, indicates child of 1 generation from the king's first wife,
 N2 = 2, indicates child of 1 generation from the king's second wife, etc.
 NX = 1, indicates 1 child, 2, indicates 2 children, etc.
 N1, NX = 1, indicates 1 wife of 1 child, 2, indicates 1 wife of 2 children, etc.

LEGENDS

NY (N1, NX), NZ
 2nd Generation

NY = Generation Level (NY = 2, indicates 2nd generation; NY = 3, indicates 3rd generation, etc.)
 (N1, NX) = Family Line (as an explanation above)
 • N1 = 1, lineage tracing to the king's wife (N1 = 1 indicates 1 wife, etc.)
 • NX = Order of Offspring (NX = 2 indicates 2nd offspring, etc.)
 NZ = Order of descendants or wives
 • NZ = 1 indicates 1st offspring, etc.
 • NZ = 2a indicates 1st wife (a) belonging to the 2nd offspring (C)
 • NZ = 3b indicates 2nd wife (b) belonging to the 3rd offspring (C), etc.

[X1-X2] = Reign Start/Reign End (M) = Male (F) = Female

Figure VIII. Genealogy of King Norodom
 (Chart developed by Kenneth T. So, based on References 4, 8, & 9) ©

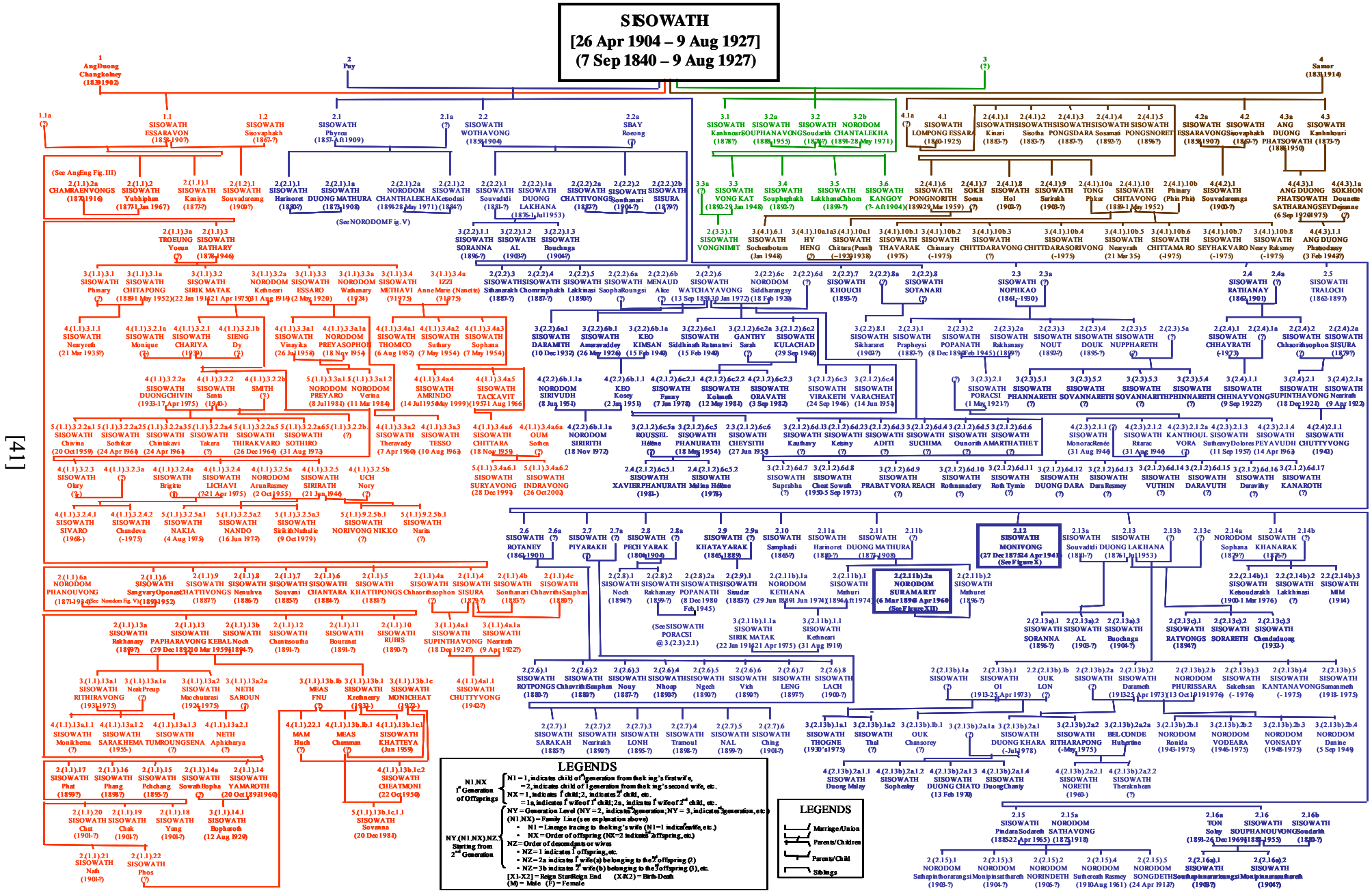


Figure IX. Genealogy of King Sisowath
(Chart developed by Kenneth T. So, based on References 4, 7, 16, 17) ©

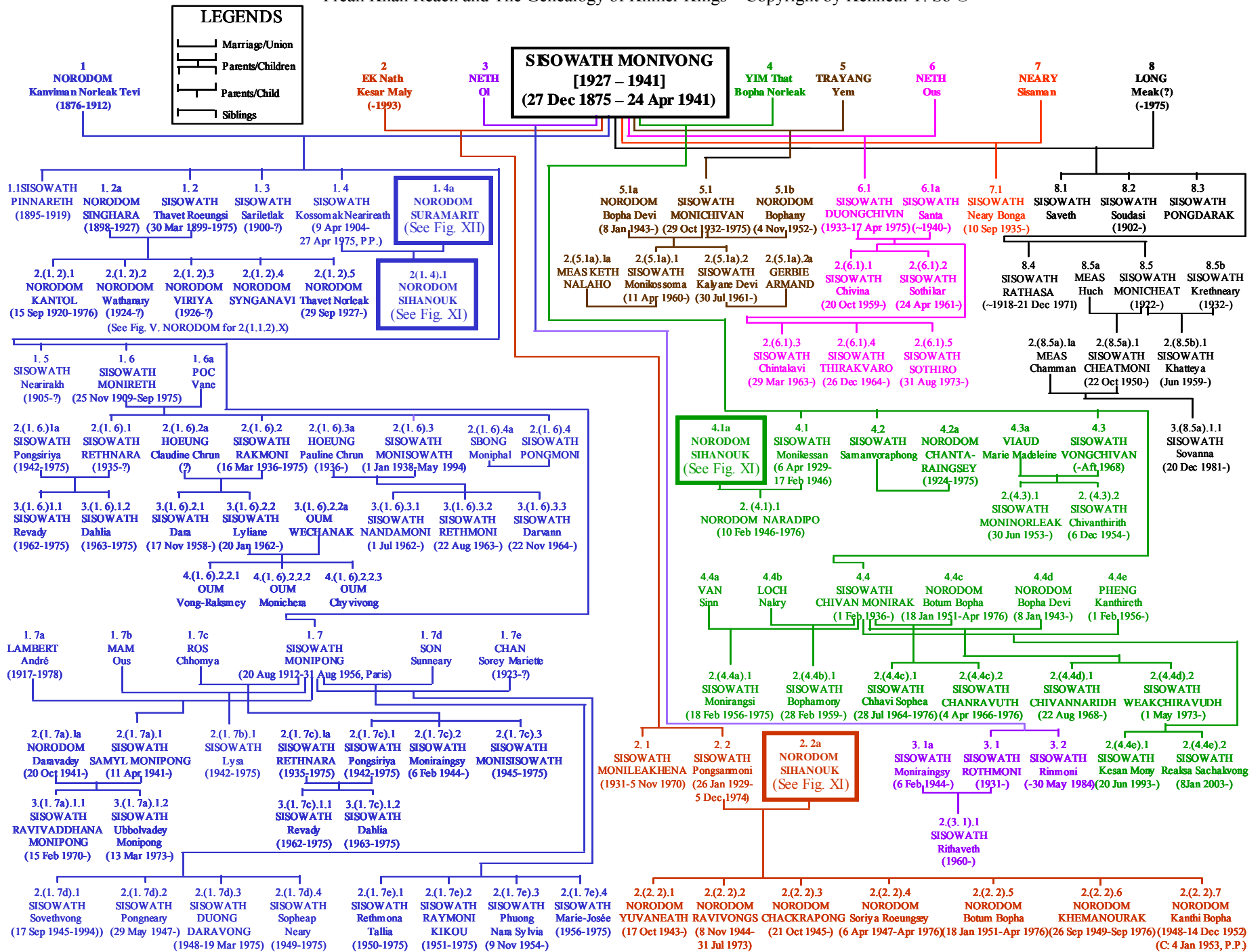


Figure X. Genealogy of King Sisowath Monivong
(Chart developed by Kenneth T. So, based on References 7, 9, 16, 17) ©

[43]

NORODOMSIHANOUK
1ST Reign: Chosen as King on 23 April 1941
And Crowned on 28 October 1941
2ND Reign: Crowned on 24 September 1993
[1941-1955 & 1993-7 October 2004]
(31 October 1922-)

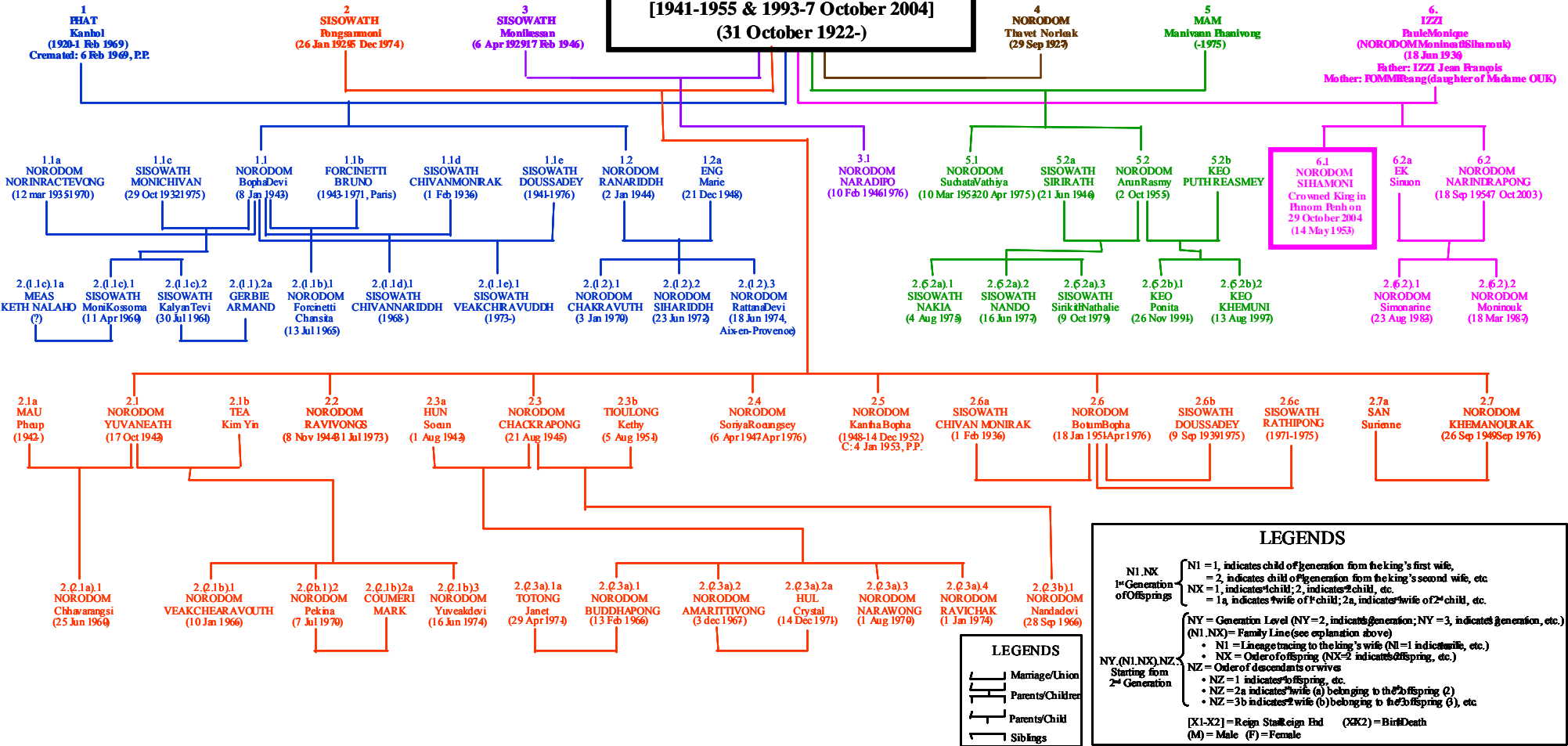
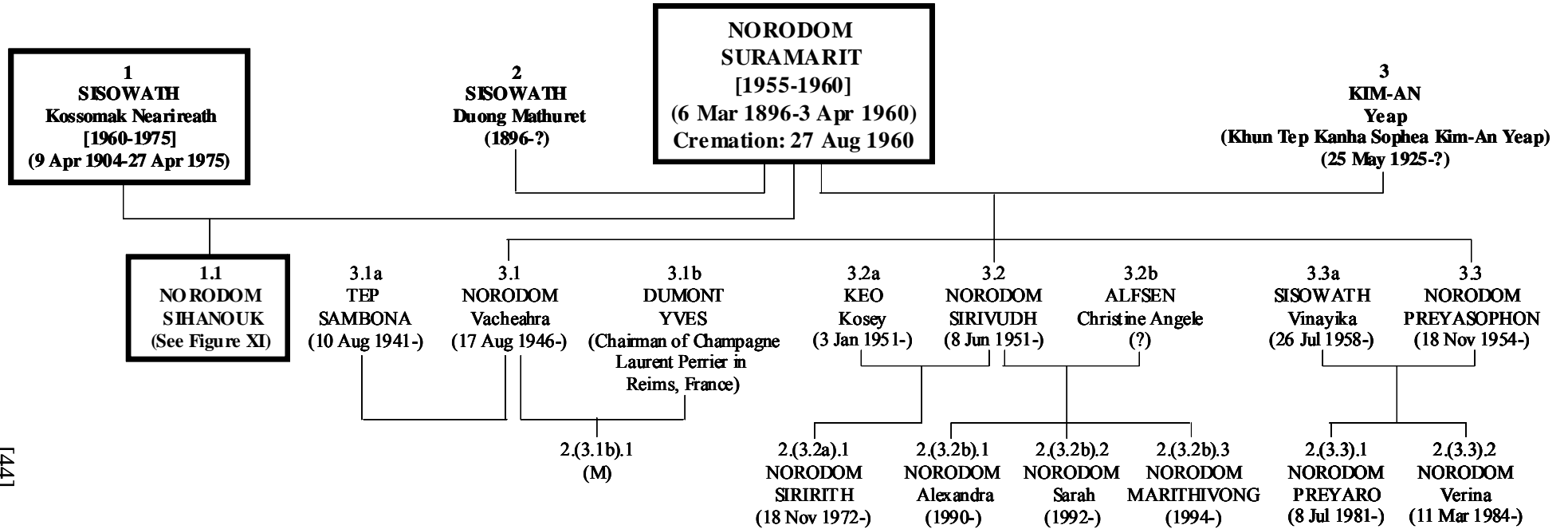


Figure XI. Genealogy of King Norodom Sihanouk
 (Chart developed by Kenneth T. So, based on References 7, 9, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21) ©



[44]

LEGENDS

N1.NX
1st Generation of Offsprings

- N1 = 1, indicates child of 1st generation from the king's first wife,
- = 2, indicates child of 1st generation from the king's second wife, etc.
- NX = 1, indicates 1st child; 2, indicates 2nd child, etc.
- = 1a, indicates 1st wife of 1st child; 2a, indicates 1st wife of 2nd child, etc.

NY.(N1.NX).NZ...
Starting from 2nd Generation

- NY = Generation Level (NY = 2, indicates 2nd generation; NY = 3, indicates 3rd generation, etc.)
- (N1.NX) = Family Line (see explanation above)
 - N1 = Lineage tracing to the king's wife (N1=1 indicates 1st wife, etc.)
 - NX = Order of offspring (NX=2 indicates 2nd offspring, etc.)
- NZ = Order of descendants or wives
 - NZ = 1 indicates 1st offspring, etc.
 - NZ = 2a indicates 1st wife (a) belonging to the 2nd offspring (2)
 - NZ = 3b indicates 2nd wife (b) belonging to the 3rd offspring (3), etc.

[X1-X2] = Reign Start-Reign End (X1-X2) = Birth-Death
(M) = Male (F) = Female

LEGENDS

- Marriage/Union
- Parents/Children
- Parents/Child
- Siblings

Figure XII. Genealogy of King Norodom Suramarit
(Chart developed by Kenneth T. So, based on References 7, 9, 16, 17) ©

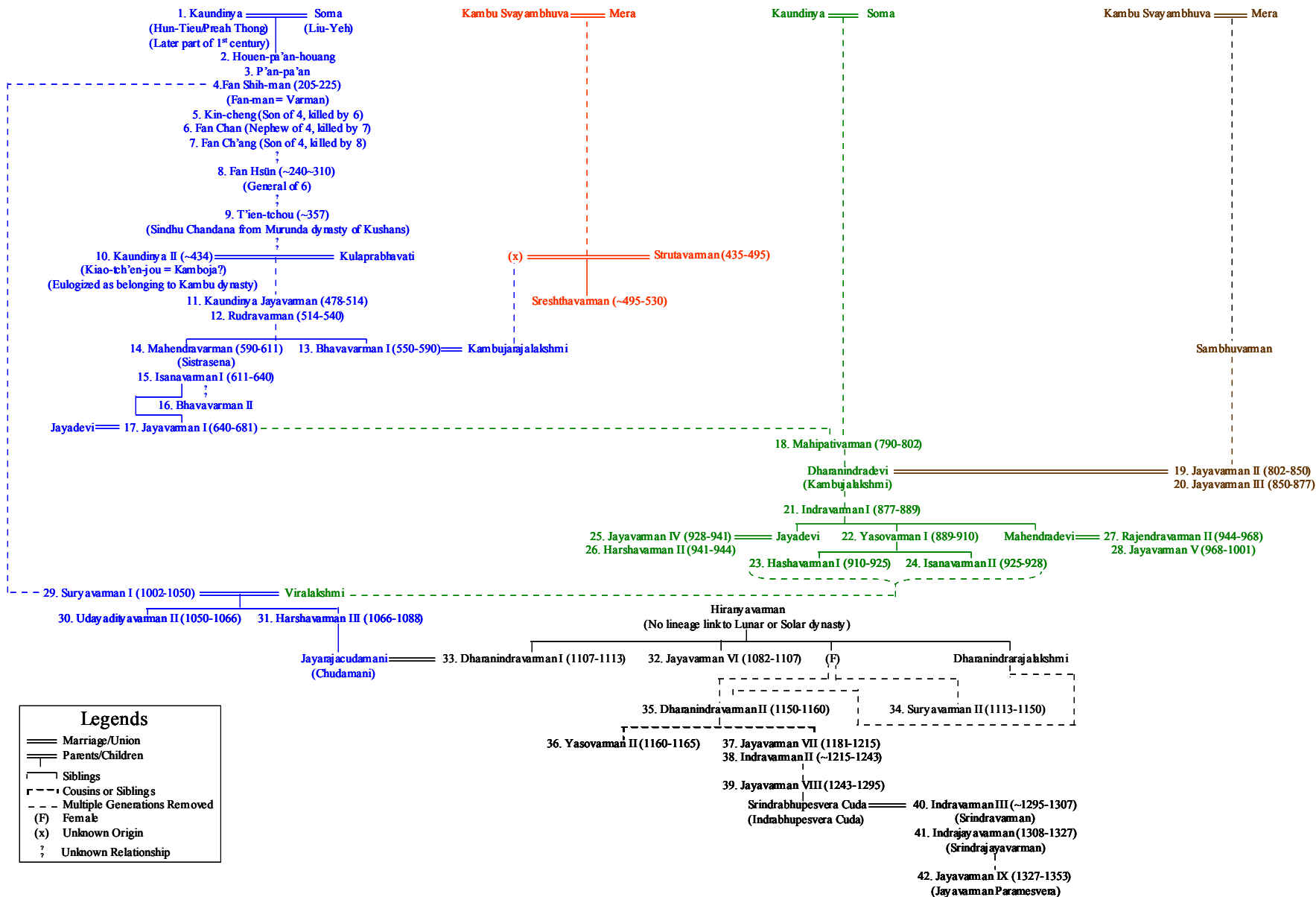
FUNAN (Lunar Dynasty)

CHENLA (Solar Dynasty)

**ANINDITAPURA
(Another Lunar Dynasty formed during The reign of Isanavarman I)**

**SAMBHUPURA
(Newly formed Solar Dynasty)
(Centered at Sambor and Kratie)**

[45]



**Figure XIII. Genealogy of Khmer Kings Through the End of the Angkor Period
(Chart developed by Kenneth T. So, based on References 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9) ©**

[46]

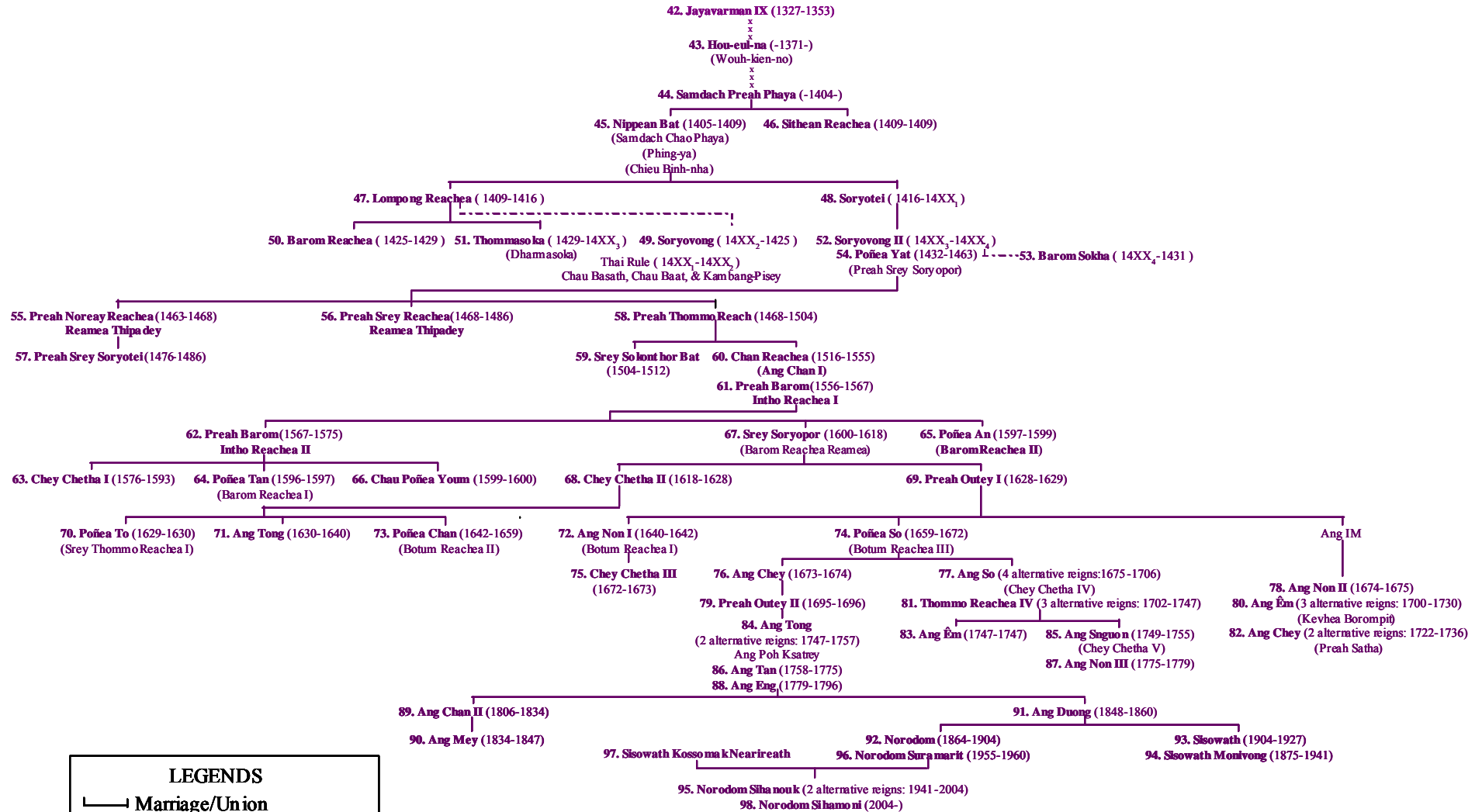


Figure XIV. Genealogy of Khmer Kings Post Angkorian Period
 (Chart developed and modified by Kenneth T. So, based on References 1, 7, 9, 15, 16, 17, 21) ©

Appendix 2



King Ang Duong



King Norodom



King Sisowath



**King Sisowath
Monivong**



**King Norodom
Sihanouk**



**King Norodom
Suramarit**



**Queen Sisowath
Kossamak Nearireath**



**King Norodom
Sihamoni**

[48]

Figure 2-1. Khmer Kings in the Modern Era (from King Ang Duong to King Norodom Sihamoni)



Figure 2-2. The Monkhood and Coronation of Norodom Sihanouk



[50]



Figure 2-3. Post Abdication of Norodom Sihanouk

[51]



Figure 2-4. The Coronation of Norodom Suramarit and the Second Reign of King Norodom Sihanouk

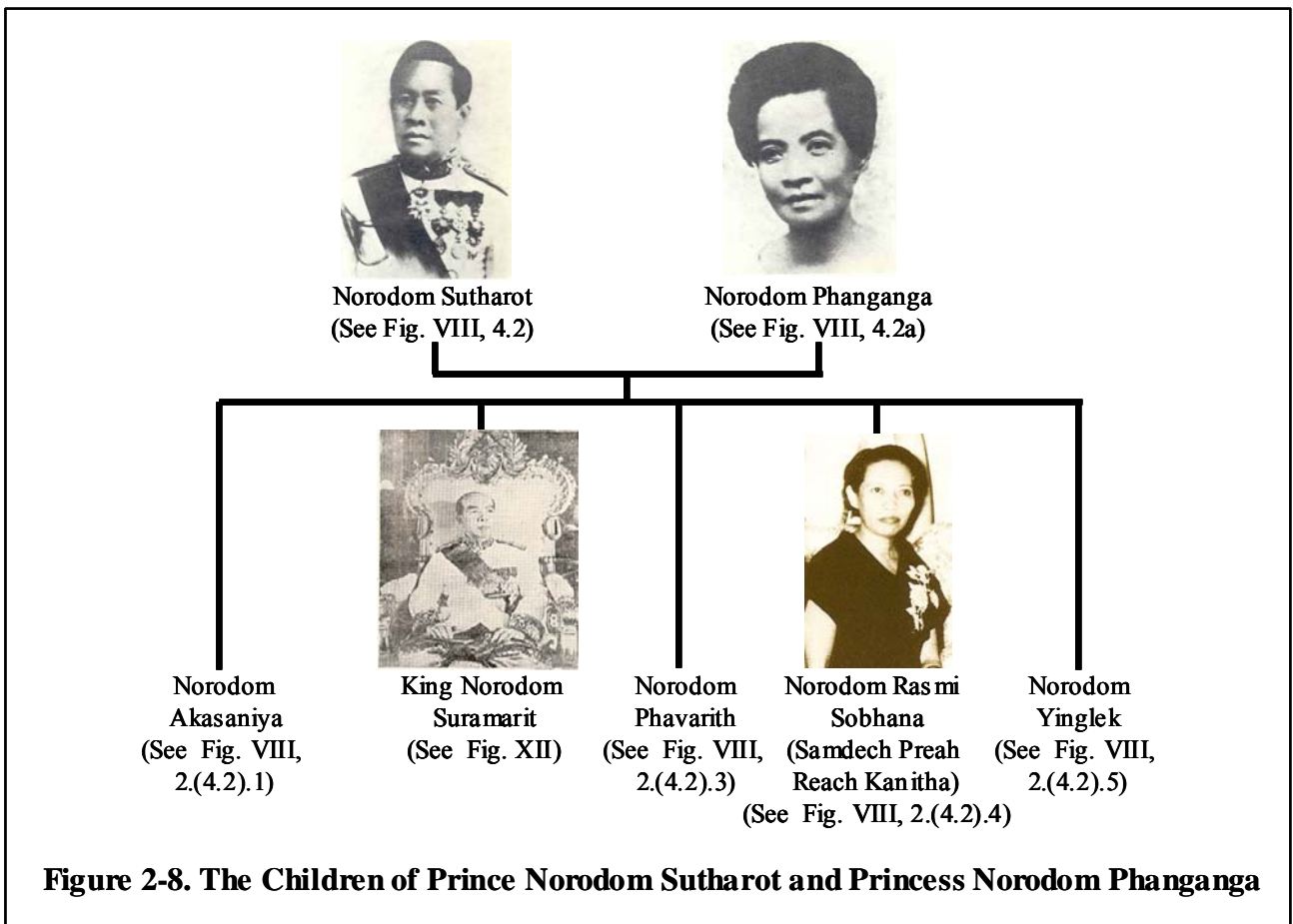
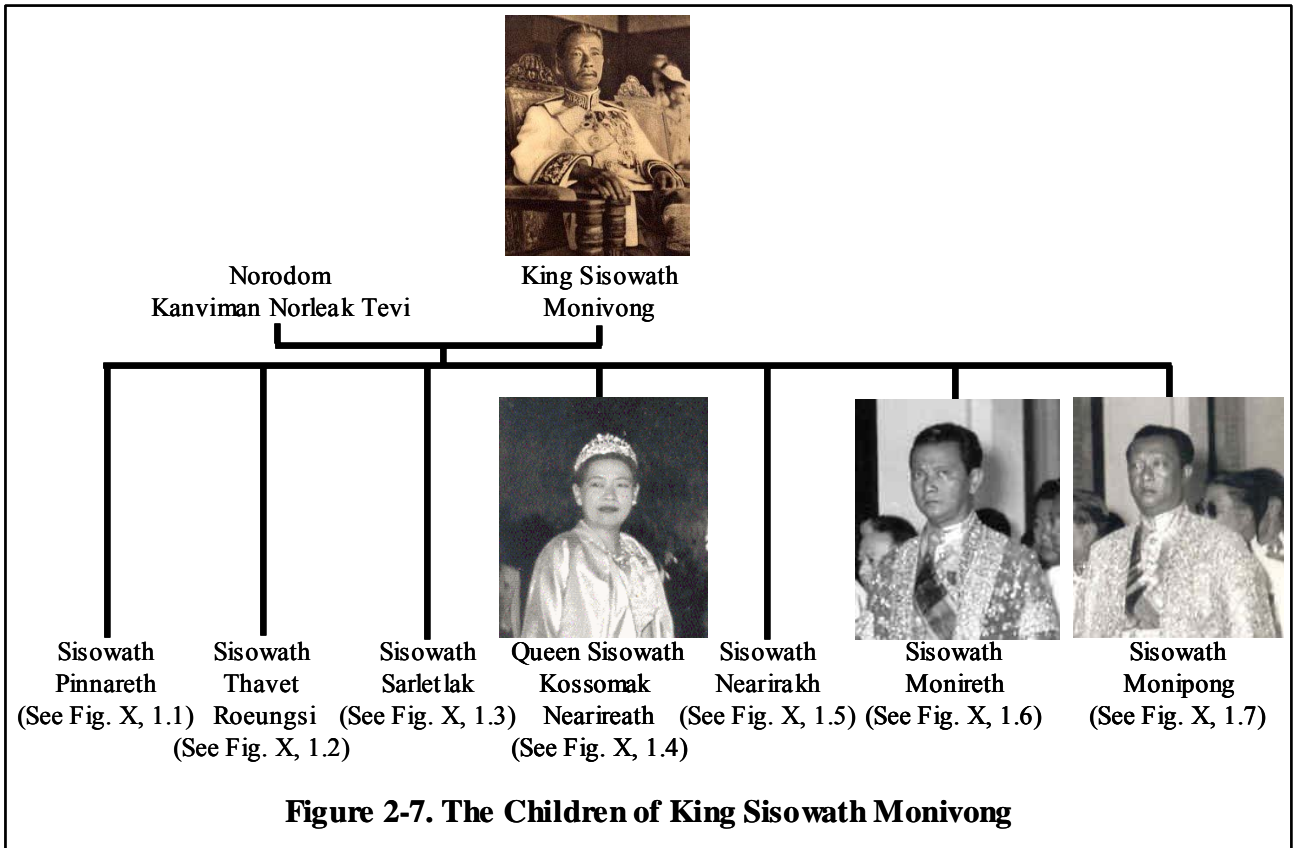
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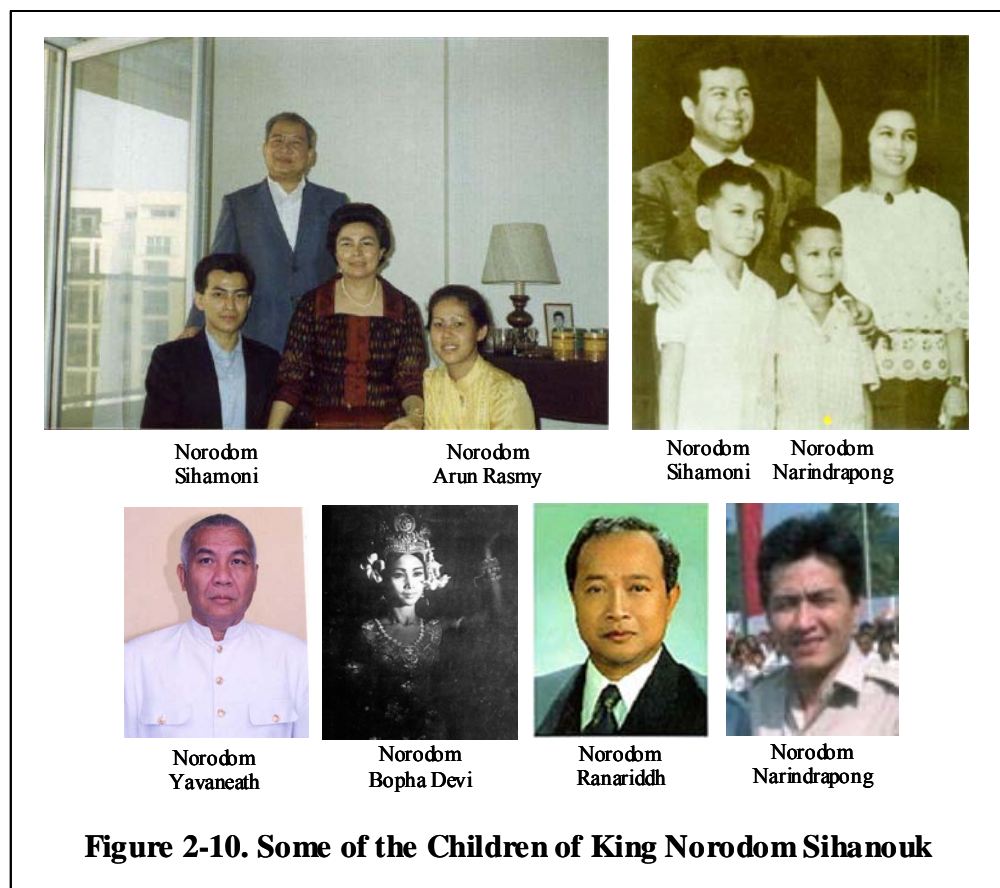
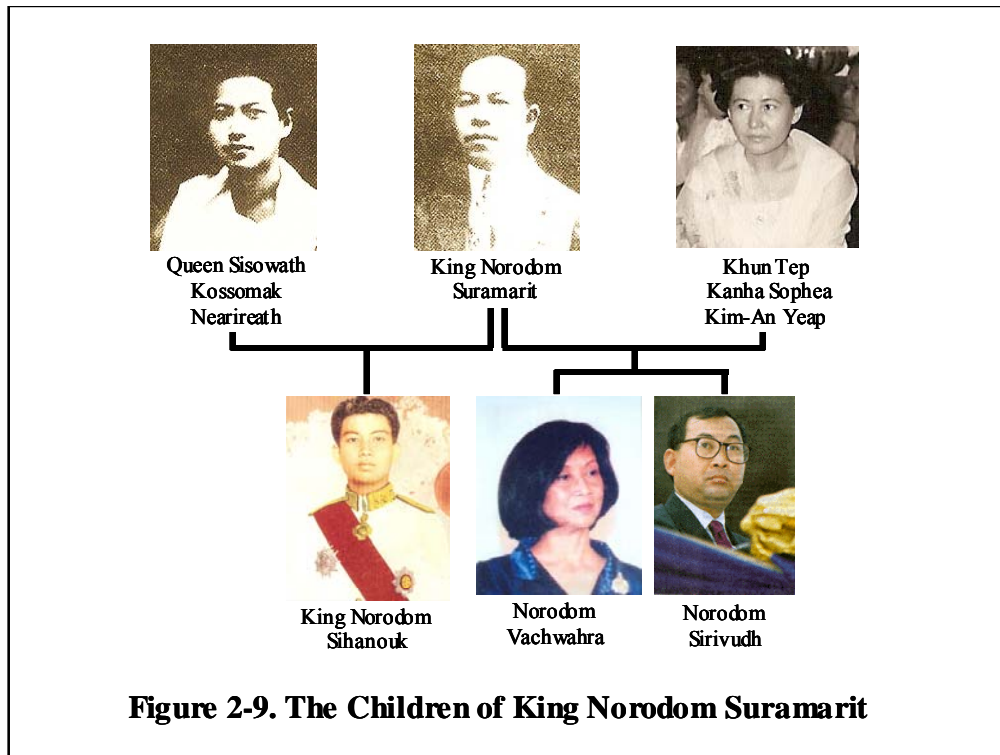


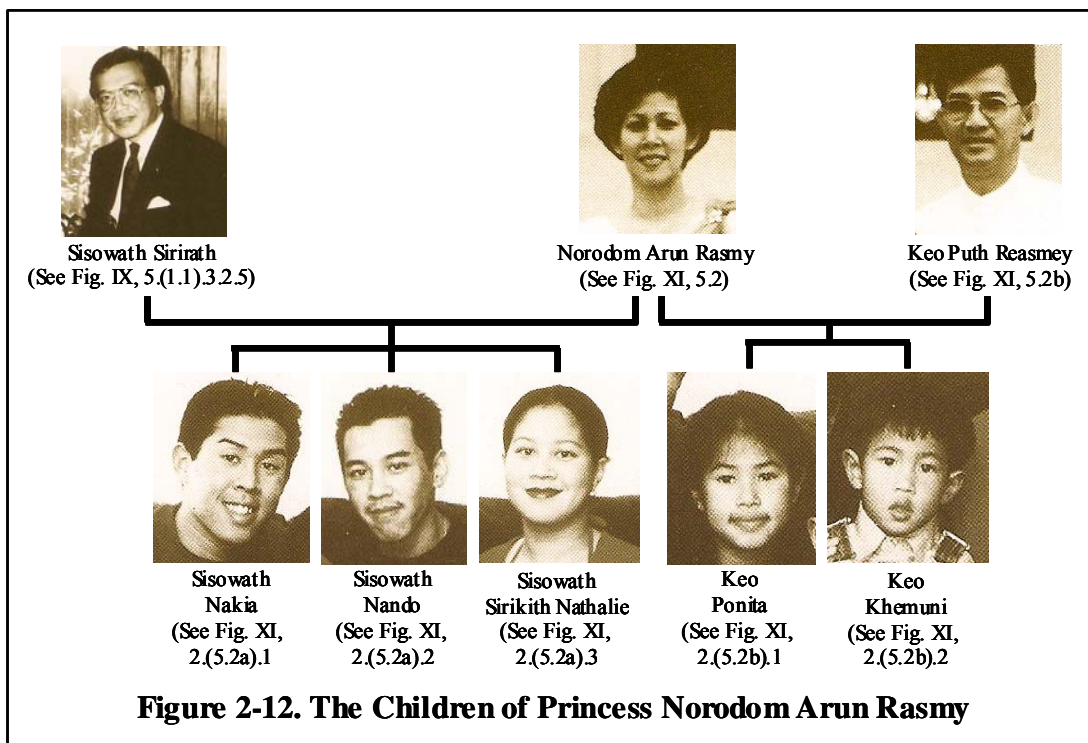
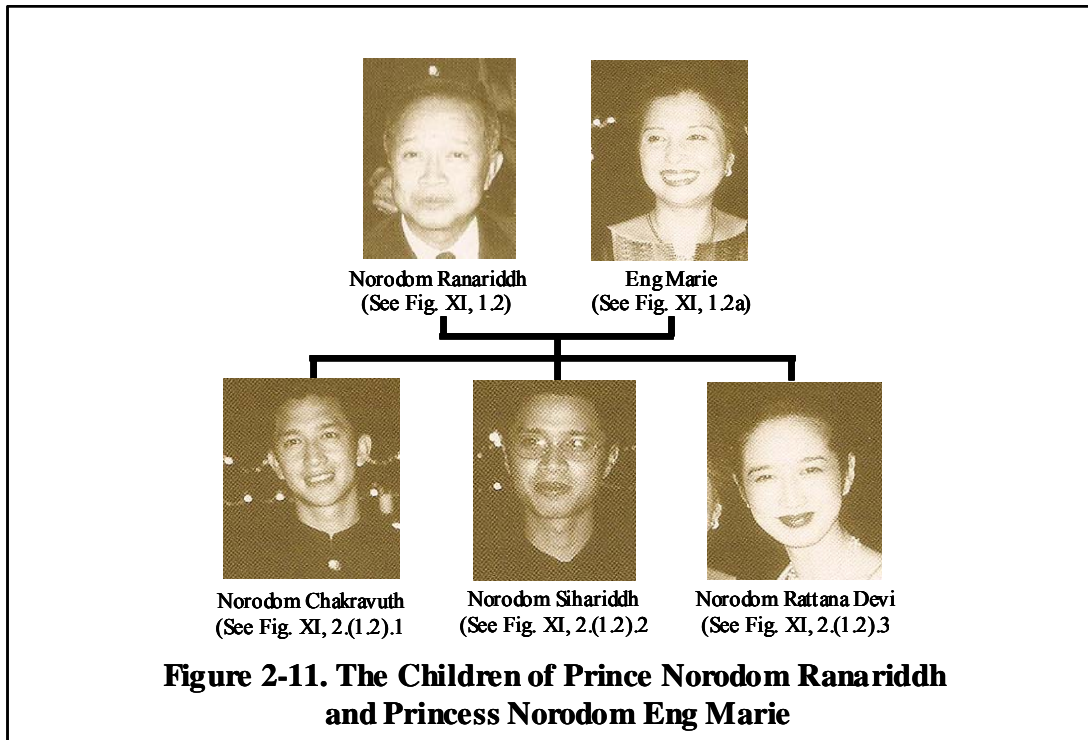
Figure 2-5. The Coronation of King Norodom Sihamoni



Figure 2-6. Young Prince Norodom Sihamoni (Top, second from left) at “Le Petit Lycée Descartes”, Phnom Penh – Circa 1960







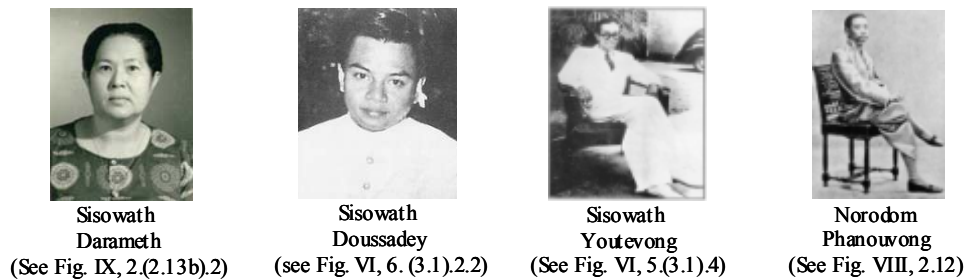
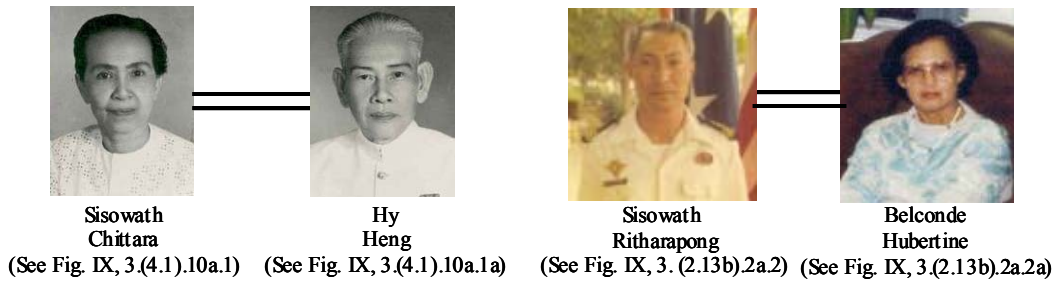
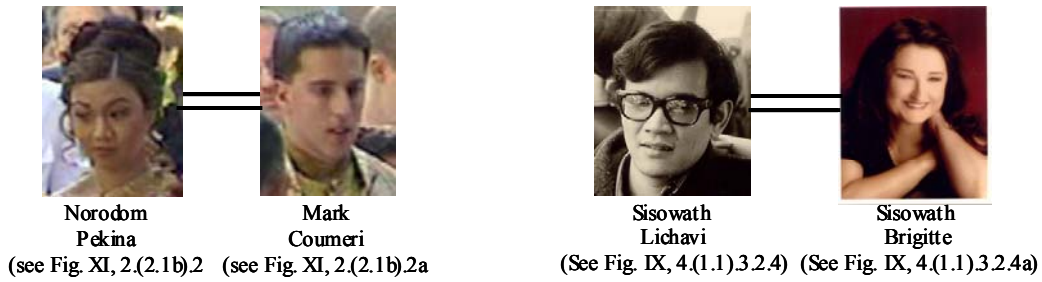


Figure 2-13. The Princes and Princesses of Cambodia (Part 1)



Norodom
Monisara
(See Fig. VI, 6.(3.1).1.1)



Norodom
Savroth
(See Fig. VI, 7.(3.1).1.1b.5)



Norodom
Bophavadeiy
(See Fig. VI, 7.(3.1).1.1b.7)



Norodom
Monidara
(See Fig. VI, 7.(3.1).1.1b.8)



Norodom
Rattana Devi
(See Fig. XI, 2.(1.2).3)



Norodom
Veakhearavouth
(See Fig. XI, 2.(2.1b).1)



Norodom
Daravadey
(See Fig. VIII, 3.(2.12c).1b.1)



Sisowath
Rethnara
(See Fig. X, 2.(1.6).1)



Sisowath
Samyl Monipong
(See Fig. X, 2.(1.7a).1)



Sisowath
Ravivaddhana
Monipong
(See Fig. X, 3.(1.7a).1.1)



Sisowath
Ubboldvadey
Monipong
(See Fig. X, 3.(1.7a).1.2)



Sisowath
Pongsiriya
(See Fig. X, 2.(1.7c).1)



Sisowath
Monisowath
(See Fig. X, 2.(1.7c).3)



Sisowath
Sovethvong
(see Fig. X, 2.(1.7d).1)



Sisowath
Pongneary
(See Fig. X, 2.(1.7d).2)



Sisowath
Phuong Nara Sylvia
(See Fig. X, 2.(1.7e).3)



Sisowath
Marie Josée
(See Fig. X, 2.(1.7e).4)



Ang Duong Salivongs
(See Fig. VII, 2.(10.1).3)



Norodom Duong Chak
(See Fig. VIII, 1.11)

Figure 2-14. The Princes and Princesses of Cambodia (Part 2)

Appendix 3

SANSKRIT NAME	KHMER NAME	CHINESE NAME	OTHER NAME	PERIOD	COMMENT
Vyādhapura	Ba Phnom, Angkor Borei	Tō-mu	Mount Motan		Also according to George Coedès, Vyādhapura was the ancient capital of Funan located at the foot of Ba Phnom. It was called the Holy Mountain in inscriptions of the 10th Century. The name Funan may have been derived from the word Ba Phnom. According to Coèdes, " <i>Histoire ancienne des états hindouisés d'Extrême-Orient</i> ," he mentioned that the Chinese pronunciation of two characters, <i>b'ui-nam</i> , came from the transcription of the old Khmer word <i>bnam</i> , which is now <i>phnom</i> .
Sreshthapura	Vat Phnom		Vat Phu	Chenla	Capital of Chenla
Dvāravati		T'o-ho-lo or Tou-ho-lo			
Sambhupura	Sambor				
	Champa	Lin-yi			
		T'o-yüan			Mon settlement north of Khmer settlement of Chantabun
		Ch'ih-t'u			Means Red Earth, located in Menam Valley (Present Thailand: Srideb? Patani-Kedah region?)
Bālādityapura	Angkor Borei	Po-liti-pa			
Varman		Fan Shih-man (Fan-man)			
Bhadravarman		Fan-Fo		349-380 AD	Champa's King, reigned from 349-380 A.D.
Sri Indravarman, Sreshthavarman		Che-li-pa-mo (Che-li-t'o-pa-mo)		Chenla ~ 438 AD	According to Coedès
Kambujadesa, Kambuja	Kok Thlok, Srok Khmer, Kampuchea	Chenla	Kvir, Kamār, Kimēr, Komār, Kumār		Kambuja was first called in the Cham inscriptions. Kvir was also called by the Chams. In the 9th and 10th Century, Arab travellers called Kamār, Kimēr, Komār, & Kumār
Mahendrapavarta	Phnom Koulen		Mount Mahendra	802	Jayavarman II founded the Khmer kingdom on Mount Mahendra. The inscriptions used the terms Kambuja or Kambujadesa. Therefore, 802 was considered the end of Chenla period.
				802-1432	Angkor Period. This is considered to be the Classical Period.

Figure A. Corresponding Names and Descriptions of Events (Part 1)

SANSKRIT NAME	KHMER NAME	CHINESE NAME	OTHER NAME	PERIOD	COMMENT
Kambuja			Camboxa, Camboja, Camboya, Camboie, Kamboie (Portuguese, & Spanish), Cambodge (French), & Cambodia (English)		Europeans visiting Cambodia
				1864-	French Protectorate Period.
				Early 3rd Century	An official envoy from China was sent to spread its civilization in the region. The court of China registered the existence of an embassy from Funan.
				Early 7th Century	China mentioned that Funan was conquered by its formal vassal state Chenla. Funan ceased to exist around 627 AD during the reign of Isanavarman, King of Chenla.
Funan	Banam, Phnom	Poh-nan			Chinese Buddhist pilgrim I-Tsing (671-695 AD) spoke of Poh-nan. The Italian scholar, Col. G. E. Gerini said that Poh-nan was a Chinese translation of the Khmer word Banam (Phnom).
			Paul Pelliot		French sinologist. In 1903, he was the first person to correctly locate Funan from Chinese historical documents. He pinpointed Funan to be in the delta of the Mekong.
				628-629	The oldest inscriptions of Khmer language found in Funan during Coèdes writing in 1944. However, as of 1950 another Khmer inscription dated to 611 was found at Angkor Borei and another one dated to around 609 was found at Ak Yom (note 18). Those two Khmer inscriptions have been assigned to the end of Mahendrarvarman's reign. The Ak Yom inscription showed that the temple was dedicated to Gambiresvara.
	Prey Lovéa-êm		Loïm		King Srey Soryopor (Sauriopéar) moved his royal palace from Kôh Sla-kêt to Prey Lovéa-êm. The word Loïm was a deformation word of Lovéa-êm by the Portuguese and Spanish.

Figure B. Corresponding Names and Descriptions of Events (Part 2)