



Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation*

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“Nationhood” is premised on the idea of an area delineated by borders, i.e., a state. A map presents such demarcated areas in a clear way. We unquestioningly accept what is shown on maps as information provided from an objective and neutral stand. At times we even project what we see on maps onto the distant past. However, *Siam Mapped*, which illustrates the Bangkok Dynasty between the late 19th century and early 20th century, and the border demarcation process by the British and the French during this time, exemplifies how maps, as well as the stories of nation-states based on the idea of maps, are politically-fabricated structures of the modern age. The book also suggests that the Bangkok Dynasty, which extended its control over regional, nearly-sovereign authorities by incorporating the Western-derived understanding of territory and modern geography, was in fact on par with colonialists and colonialist thinking. This perspective contrasts completely with the traditional historical view of Thailand, which hails the King of the Bangkok Dynasty as a national hero who protected the independence of the nation from the threat of colonization. The book in its entirety seems to reflect the rage of the author, who once took a leading role in the anti-military student protests during the 1970s, but subsequently suffered the loss of many of his comrades through the violence exerted by the conservatives. This is a sensational piece of writing, reaching into unprecedented territories in both the theory of nation-states and the research of Thai history.



Source:

- Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994)