

THAI ATTITUDE TOWARDS VIETNAM AS SHOWN IN  
CONTEMPORARY TRAVEL WRITING

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ดาวิด เฮอร์เกิน มิลเลอร์ : ทศนคติของไทยเกี่ยวกับเวียดนามที่ปรากฏในงานเขียนเชิงท่องเที่ยวร่วมสมัย (THAI ATTITUDE TOWARDS VIETNAM AS SHOWN IN CONTEMPORARY TRAVEL WRITING) อ. ที่ปริกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: ผศ. ดร. มนธิรา ราโท, อ.ที่ปริกษาวิทยานิพนธ์ร่วม: อ. ดร. ไกล่รุ่ง อามระดิษ, 91 หน้า

ประเทศไทยและประเทศเวียดนามมีความสัมพันธ์ที่ไม่สู้ดีนักในเชิงประวัติศาสตร์ ช่วงสงครามเวียดนามเป็นช่วงเวลาหนึ่งในหลายๆ ช่วงที่ความสัมพันธ์ของทั้งสองประเทศเลวร้ายอย่างที่สุด อย่างไรก็ตาม ในค.ศ. 1986 รัฐบาลเวียดนามได้นำนโยบายโดย เหมย (Doi Moi) มาใช้ในการปฏิรูปประเทศ ซึ่งทำให้ความสัมพันธ์อย่างเป็นทางการระหว่างไทยและเวียดนามได้ลงหลักปักฐานและมีทิศทางที่ดีขึ้น ในปีต่อๆ มา นักท่องเที่ยวชาวไทยเดินทางไปเวียดนามได้สะดวกขึ้น จึงส่งผลให้งานเขียนเชิงท่องเที่ยวของไทยเกี่ยวกับประเทศเวียดนามได้มีการพัฒนาและตีพิมพ์ออกมาเป็นจำนวนมาก

วิทยานิพนธ์เรื่องนี้ได้เลือกงานเขียนเชิงท่องเที่ยวจำนวนหนึ่งมาวิเคราะห์ โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์ 2 ประการ คือ เพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติของคนไทยที่มีต่อประเทศและชาวเวียดนาม และเพื่อศึกษาว่าการท่องเที่ยวในเวียดนามของชาวไทยที่เพิ่มมากขึ้น มีคุณูปการอย่างไรต่อการส่งเสริมความสัมพันธ์ไทย-เวียดนาม และทัศนคติเชิงบวกของคนไทยต่อประเทศเวียดนาม

การศึกษาพบว่า ผู้เขียนส่วนใหญ่ไม่ได้เปลี่ยนแปลงทัศนคติต่อประเทศเวียดนามและชาวเวียดนามมากนักในระหว่างการเดินทาง การพรรณนาประสบการณ์เชิงลบเกี่ยวกับเวียดนามเป็นการบ่งชี้ว่า ผู้เขียนบางคนมีทัศนคติด้านลบที่เพิ่มขึ้น สิ่งที่ดำรงอยู่ในทัศนคติของคนไทยที่มีต่อเวียดนาม ได้แก่ การตระหนักว่าเวียดนามมีประวัติศาสตร์ที่ยาวนาน สงครามเวียดนาม และความสัมพันธ์ที่ไม่สู้ดีระหว่างประเทศไทยและประเทศเวียดนาม สำหรับทัศนคติที่มีต่อคนเวียดนาม ผู้เขียนบางคนพยายามหลีกเลี่ยงทัศนคติเชิงลบที่เคยรับรู้ในประเทศไทย แม้ว่าในความเป็นจริงประสบการณ์บางอย่างจะส่งผลกระทบต่อทัศนคติเกี่ยวกับชาวเวียดนาม แต่ก็ยังมีการเขียนถึงชาวเวียดนามในเชิงบวกอยู่ โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง การกล่าวถึงชาวเวียดนามว่าขยันทำงาน อย่างไรก็ตาม ผู้เขียนโดยทั่วไปไม่ได้มีปฏิสัมพันธ์ในเชิงลึกกับชาวเวียดนาม กล่าวได้ว่าผู้เขียนหลายคนไม่มีความสนใจมากนักที่จะทำความรู้จักคนเวียดนามอย่างจริงจัง วิทยานิพนธ์นี้มีข้อสังเกตว่า แม้ในปัจจุบันการท่องเที่ยวประเทศเวียดนามจะเปิดโอกาสให้เกิดการเสริมสร้างทัศนคติที่ดีของคนไทยต่อประเทศเวียดนามอย่างที่ไม่เคยปรากฏมาก่อน แต่ก็มีปัญหาและความเสี่ยงบางประการจากการท่องเที่ยวด้วยเช่นกัน นอกจากนั้น ผลการศึกษายังแสดงว่า โดยตัวของการท่องเที่ยวเองไม่ได้มีผลต่อการเสริมสร้างทัศนคติที่ดีอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ

สาขาวิชา เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา

ลายมือชื่อนิสิต.....

ปีการศึกษา 2554...

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# # 5387649420: MAJOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES KEYWORDS: THAI-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS/ TOURISM/ TRAVEL WRITING/ ATTITUDE

DAVID JUERGEN MOELLER: THAI ATTITUDE TOWARDS VIETNAM AS SHOWN IN CONTEMPORARY TRAVEL WRITING.  
ADVISOR: ASST. PROF. MONTIRA RATO, Ph.D., CO-ADVISOR: KLAIRUNG AMRATISHA, Ph.D., 91 pp.

Historically the relationships between Thailand and Vietnam have often been difficult. The Vietnam War was only one among several periods of time in which those relations were extremely bad. In 1986, however, with the implementation of “Đ?i M?i”, the renovation policy of the Vietnamese government, official relations improved and laid one of the foundations, which years later made it possible for many Thai tourists to visit Vietnam. Thai travel writing on Vietnam has consequently developed and now there is a large amount of such publications available. This thesis analyses a representative number of them in order to find out about the Thai attitude towards Vietnam. This thesis has two objectives, namely firstly to analyze Thai travel writings on Vietnam and to investigate Thai people's attitude towards Vietnam and the Vietnamese and secondly to examine to what extent tourism can contribute to the improvement of Thai-Vietnamese relations and the view of Thai people towards Vietnam.

It appears that most writers' attitudes towards Vietnam or towards the Vietnamese people do not change much during their journeys. Depictions of negative experiences with the Vietnamese even indicate that some authors' attitudes worsen. Coining for the Thai attitude towards Vietnam is an awareness of Vietnam's long history, the Vietnam War and the difficulties in the relationships between Thailand and Vietnam. Regarding the Vietnamese people, some writers distance themselves from negative attitudes against the Vietnamese, which they have come across in Thailand. Despite the fact that some experiences have a negative impact on the attitude towards the Vietnamese, also positive remarks on them are made, most prominently by saying that they work very hard. In general, however, given the lack of in-depth contacts between the Vietnamese and many writers, it can be said that many authors do not have much interest in getting to know the Vietnamese. This thesis therefore argues that though tourism now provides an unprecedented chance to improve the Thai attitude towards Vietnam, there are also certain problems and risks in Thai tourism to Vietnam and consequently suggests that tourism on its own is very unlikely to improve those attitudes significantly.

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies

Student's Signature.....

Academic Year: 2011

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# Chapter I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale

The relationship between Thailand and Vietnam or their respective historically preceding states have been troubled for centuries. As the second chapter of this thesis will explain in more detail, different conflicts including wars have been elements of a chain of hostilities between those two nations. The time of the Vietnam War (how it is normally called outside Vietnam as opposed to the "American War", as it is often called inside Vietnam) formed a fairly recent period in history, in which Thailand and Vietnam opposed each other as enemies. The Vietnam War could thus also be seen as one such element in that lineage of conflicts.

The significant changes after 1986, in which the Vietnamese government started the implementation of “Đổi Mới”, its renovation policy, have led to a lot of impressive improvements. Besides the establishment of many economic, social and cultural ties between Thailand and Vietnam, they have also made it possible for Thai tourists to travel to Vietnam. Vietnam has consequently developed into a popular destination for Thai visitors. Interestingly a large number of Thai travellers have produced travel writings reporting on their trips to Vietnam, which constitute a focus of discussions of this thesis.

Those travel writings are works that allow readers to get very deep insights about how their authors think about Vietnam and the Vietnamese people. In the following pages it will also be explained, why and how travel writings are such useful tools for analysing their authors' attitudes. This will be an innovative approach, as from reviewing existing academic material dealing with Thai-Vietnamese relations,

the following key findings stand out:

It appears that most academic publications concentrate either on official relations, which largely means political or economical relations, or on Vietnamese refugees in Thailand or on historical relations. These three areas thus can be said to constitute the three main categories of academic research up to now. Whilst publications on official relations mostly only concentrate on either key developments in between the governments of Thailand and Vietnam or on economics, historical relations are mostly only concerned with government relations, and works of the third category also talk about refugees mostly from a political studies perspective. This leaves only extremely little space for references about attitudes towards Vietnam held by ordinary Thai people.

Based on its review of academic material, this thesis therefore argues that many of those publications are rather monotone and repetitive in what they investigate and what they state. Most of them cover the same, limited set of topics over and over again and they leave only very little space to “new” or “fresh” research. The fact that only very little attention has been given to people to people contact or to Thai attitudes towards Vietnam and the Vietnamese people in academic researches could, to a large extent, also be seen as a direct result of the focus on the three main categories of research as listed above.

Knowing this, it is fair to say that this thesis will be quite different and do something very new in shifting attention to ordinary Thai people's voices, thoughts and attitudes regarding Vietnam and the Vietnamese. It will do so by carefully paying attention to what Thai authors of travel writings are sharing in their works and by discussing their attitudes in the overall light of the historical background of Thai - Vietnamese relations.

## 1.2 Objectives

The main objectives of this thesis are:

To analyse Thai travel writings on Vietnam and investigate Thai people's attitudes to Vietnam and the Vietnamese people

To examine to what extent tourism can contribute to the improvement of Thai-Vietnamese relations and the view of Thai people towards Vietnam

## 1.3 Hypothesis

Knowing that the period of the Vietnam War was destructive to attitudes towards Vietnam in Thailand and that those attitudes remained at a chronically bad level, the present day situation with large numbers of Thai tourists going to Vietnam means a great chance for improving those attitudes.

However, one should not forget that tourism is not a remedy with a guarantee in such situations and it might also fail in constructing a more positive attitudes. In some cases, tourism can even worsen the attitudes towards the visited country.

Bearing this in mind, it is illuminating that travel writing is an effective tool for getting insights into how Vietnam is seen by its Thai visitors, because it typically contains a lot of reflections about the destinations, which informs about the authors' attitudes towards Vietnam.

Furthermore, it stands out that within Thai travel writing on Vietnam in general the attitudes towards Vietnam stems both from continuations of “old” views on and approaches to Vietnam with many of them being rather negative, whilst

simultaneously there are clearly recognisable signs of change. Those continuities and changes carry both chances and risks for improvements of attitudes.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

Given the nature of its topic, this thesis is based on textual analysis of travel writings. To substantiate its claims further, this thesis will also provide a historical outline in Chapter II. Furthermore, Chapter IV will weave in a range of relevant statistics, reports, ideas and findings from various researchers, writers and institutions. They have to be seen as indispensable information for knowing about the background of this research and they also serve to substantiate the arguments of this thesis.

Among questions related to methodology are also questions about the term “attitudes”, which will be defined in the following chapter. It should, however, already be remarked at this point that this thesis acknowledges that due to the complexity of what “attitudes” are, it can be explored in various ways and the way this thesis aims to follow it is just one of various options, whilst many other approaches would equally have validity.

It is also due to that complexity that this research is opting for a descriptive approach towards attitudes. This thesis understands that one cannot summarise what constitutes the “Thai attitudes towards Vietnam as found in contemporary travel writing” in a sentence or a short paragraph and it will not even attempt to phrase such a short characterisation of attitudes.

This piece of writing will thus explore attitudes in the light of continuities and changes and associated chances and risks. That discussion will link the attitudes that are found in travel writing strongly with past, present and future developments in a number of important spheres, including politics and intercultural understanding. In

addition to that, it will also be indicative for drawing prospects for relations between Thais and Vietnamese people, which will stress the meaning and importance of the findings of this thesis.

### **1.5 Significance of Research**

-The research will help identify the positive and negative contributions of tourism in shaping Thai people's attitudes towards and understanding of Vietnam

-The research can be highly useful in identifying those points that make tourism an effective tool for improving attitudes towards Vietnam and also to identify issues that make tourism less effective or even harmful for an improvement of those attitudes

-In terms of studies of literature, this thesis will point out and partially fill in gaps that arise from the fact that so far only very little research has been done on travel writing that originates from Thailand

### **1.6 Literature Review**

What this thesis is working on, is a completely under researched topic. Neither Thai travel writing nor Thai peoples' attitudes towards Vietnam have attracted much academic interest. Arguably the publication that gets closest to what this thesis is researching on, is the following, which is also a thesis written at Chulalongkorn University:

Chaloemchai Phiurueangnon (1981): Thatsanakhati khon Thai phak tawanookchiangnuea to Vietnam: Sueksa priapthiap rawang jangwat thi mi lae mai mi chao Vietnam ophayop asai yu (Attitudes of Thais from the Northeastern part of the

country towards Vietnam: Comparative studies between provinces with and without Vietnamese refugees living there)

Chaloemchai Phiurueangnon has produced a methodologically greatly done study, which can contribute as well as serve as a substantiation to what the thesis is suggesting. However, much of what is written in his work does not correspond directly of what this thesis is researching on. Anyway, arguably two of the findings of Chaloemchai's study that are most interesting for this thesis are the following:

“In Nakhon Phanom province men and women ... to the largest part believed that Vietnam was an aggressive nation (77.74 % and 76.92 %) ... In Mahasarakham province ... both genders ... also held beliefs that Vietnam was an aggressive nation (41.96 % and 37.05 %)” (Chaloemchai, 1981: 144).

“(In) Nakhon Phanom province men and women have very similar feelings about Vietnamese refugees ... most had negative feelings about the Vietnamese refugees (79.45 % and 79.23 %) ... Those that held good views on the Vietnamese were only few (4.90% and 9.23%). In Mahasarakham province it was similar compared to Nakhon Phanom province ... most men and women had negative feelings against the Vietnamese, there, too (54.57 % and 56.11 %) ... those with positive feelings for the Vietnamese refugees were the smallest group (20.42 % and 14.71 %)” (Ibid: 40-142).

These statements largely speak for themselves, but this thesis would like to draw attention to the fact that that Chaloemchai has written his thesis roughly thirty years before this thesis is written. This fact can be seen as one among many substantiations for the claim that there is a real lack of academic interest in research surrounding this topic.

## 1.7 Remarks on Transliterations and Translations

All Vietnamese terms, in this thesis appear in Vietnamese with their diacritics, except for the word “Vietnam” itself. For example, the name of the city of “Hanoi” is spelled as “Hà Nội”. However, two places in Vietnam that have a well established reputation in the English speaking world, namely Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh (which is often abbreviated as “TPHCM” or still referred to as Sài Gòn) and Vịnh Hạ Long, are written in mixed forms, namely as “Hồ Chí Minh City” and “Hạ Long Bay” not as “Ho Chi Minh City” or “Ha Long Bay”, a solution which recognises their familiar character in the English speaking world, but keeps constant with putting Vietnamese diacritics.

As for Thai terms, this thesis uses the Royal Thai General System of Transcriptions (RTGS). However it will apply some few modifications (For example the Thai designation for “Vietnam” “เวียดนาม” (or "เวียตนาม" as it is less frequently spelled) which normally would have to be Romanised as “Viatnam”, is transcribed as “Vietnam” in this thesis. However, in those parts, in which this thesis cites texts from sources in English or refers to English language sources by Vietnamese or Thai authors that do not have diacritics or use the RTGS system for transliterations of Thai terms, this thesis presents quotes and authors' names just as they appear in those sources.

Regarding translations, the author of this thesis wishes to make the following remarks: This thesis uses a very large number of quotes from works written in Thai and Vietnamese, which the author of this thesis translated before putting them into writing. Phrases like “translated by the author from ...” or “my own translation from ...”, as they often appear in academic writings, would therefore seem highly disruptive. For this reason, the author of this thesis does not use any such phrases, but preliminarily states that every quote from Thai and Vietnamese works (those works



that appear in the bibliography under “In Thai” and “In Vietnamese”) in this thesis are his own translations.

## **Chapter II**

### **Thai-Vietnamese Relations and Thai Travel Writing on Vietnam**

This chapter supplies a lot of information, which forms a solid background for the discussions of Chapter III and Chapter IV. It can be divided into two sub-chapters. The first one of them deals with the history of Thai - Vietnamese relations stretching back over a very long period of time, but focussing on the time of the Vietnam War and the time after 1986. This discussion will lead to the genesis of tourism from Thailand to Vietnam. The second sub-chapter will focus on Thai travel writing on Vietnam, providing definitions, explaining, why this thesis draws from travel writings to investigate attitudes and eventually introducing the travel writings covered in this thesis.

#### **2.1 Thai-Vietnamese Relations**

##### **2.1.1 Thai-Vietnamese Relations Prior to 1986**

Set against the background of the dramatic events that occurred in the periods of time before, during and after the Vietnam War, the relationships between Thailand and Vietnam have undergone significant changes during the last decades. Relations between Thailand and Vietnam (or the respective preceding states) can, however, obviously be traced back much longer and earlier periods have been subject to investigations by a number of scholars (Poole, 1970: 4 - 19; Nguyen Thi Thi, 2003: 193-219).

Going back into earlier history, a dominant theme in historical research would be the “Siamese-Vietnamese rivalry over Cambodia” (Poole, 1970: 11) that “began in the 1600's, when Cambodia found itself directly in the path of Vietnamese expansion”

(Ibid) and it has been asserted that “Cambodia was easily accessible to both Siamese and Vietnamese armies, and it was to serve intermittently as a battleground for the two stronger countries until the middle of the nineteenth century” (Ibid). Anyway one has to be conscious that not all of the historical contacts between Siam/Thailand and Vietnam have been hostile. For example commercial ties have been proofed (Nguyen Thi Thi, 2003: 214). However, it has been noted by researchers like Wheeler that “The antagonism between Thailand and Vietnam during the 1980's reflected historical animosity” (Wheeler, 2001: 6) making references to the “intermittent and inconclusive wars between Siam and Vietnam” (Ibid: 7), which relate earlier historical events to points that are discussed in this thesis, which is why those events form a certain background and are worth being aware of.

Despite all that, this thesis is much more concerned with later periods of history, roughly starting in the second half of the 20th century. That was the timeframe, in which Socialism became popular in Vietnam, in which the division of the Vietnam took place, in which the American involvement grew and in which the Vietnam war took place. When the war shattered Vietnam, political relations between Thailand and Vietnam were especially tense and there was a commonly felt unease and scare about Vietnam within Thailand, where thoughts about a threat from being attacked or even taken over by Vietnam were common, which is evident from a large body of researches (Khajatphai, 1978; Niphat, 1989).

Negative views on a political level were visible through the policies against Vietnamese refugees during the rule of Phibun Songkhram. It is noteworthy that the panic fears about a political threat were tightly interwoven with fears about the ideology of Socialism, fears about Vietnam as a country, fears about the entire population of the nation, which means all Vietnamese people. This meant that there was a commonly felt fear of an entire close by living nation, that had turned into a threat to Thailand and its people, which is illustrated by claims like the following,

which appeared as late as in 1989:

“Nowadays the fact that the Vietnamese have strong nationalistic feelings, which is a specific characteristic of all Vietnamese, combined with a strong loyalty to their native land and respect for Hồ Chí Minh has made the Vietnamese growing firmly together. Beyond this, there is another important characteristic to them, namely the feeling of hatred and distrust. They don't trust or believe foreigners, especially the Americans, which is why the Vietnam war took place” (Niphat, 1989: 53).

Another very negative claim, which appeared already a decade earlier, has been made by Khuekrit Pramot, who suggested:

“North Vietnam has been practicing war for 30 years and now they still are doing so. That is why (their) nature has adapted accordingly. From former times until today, children, who are born in North Vietnam, regardless of whether they are girls or boys, are conceived in order to be born and go to battles ... The war situation has become the natural situation for the people in North Vietnam. They are born for battles, they live for battles and they only die in battles“ (Khuekrit, 1979: 59).

Hostile reactions towards the Vietnamese were also noticeable within Thai academic circles. Works by Khajatphai Burutsaphat, for instance, reveal very negative views against the Vietnamese, as he wrote that “Among all the minorities that live in Thailand, there's probably none that caused as much trouble to the government as the Vietnamese did” (Khajatphai, 1978: No page number), argued that “because of their steady diligence and endurance and the fact that they can do any sort of work without aversion, one can say that in communities where Vietnamese refugees live ... economic influence will largely fall into their hands” (Ibid: 12) and found that “sending the Vietnamese back to Vietnam is the best method for solving problems” (Ibid 96).

Finding out about ordinary Thai people's voices from that period of time is extremely difficult. Besides Chaloechai's study, which this thesis introduced in Chapter I, it is only possible to find some short remarks in other academic works. They also include some very few positive ones like: “Việt Kiều often tell that in that time of hardship, there were several sympathetic Thais, who helped them, especially, when Việt Kiều children were restricted in their right for education” (Thanyathip, 2005: 179). But in summary, judging from the review of an extensive body of publications, it can be said that academic resources draw a very negative picture.

The very same applies to earlier periods of history. Also researches on the time before the rise of Socialism and the Vietnam war have not focussed much on people to people relations or their attitudes. However, some few publications that focus on Thai–Vietnamese relations contain indications that common perceptions were negative, not only because of the wars over Cambodia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Researcher Phonphen Hantrakun, for example, explained that “Vietnam started having close ties with the Thai side . . . , when the Nguyễn lords expanded their power and became the rulers of the South” (Phonphen, 2009: 234) arguing that “the contacts between Siam and Northern Vietnam were rather problematic in terms of distance and cultural differences, which lacked of points to connect” (Ibid), a statement, that could also be applied to large degrees to the Central and Southern parts of Vietnam.

Among Vietnamese communities that moved into Thailand before the rise of Socialism, Christian migrants are worth mentioning. Poole reported that “Until recently, they [Christian immigrants] have not allowed their children to marry non-Vietnamese” (Poole, 1970: 28). This tells more about Vietnamese views towards the Thais than it does about Thai views on Vietnam, but at least has a rather negative impact on the latter ones. Furthermore, one can assume that there is always a certain reciprocity surrounding such “regulations” and that thus Thais did not perceive Vietnamese immigrants very positively at that time, either. This is also substantiated

by another claim that Poole made in the same publication, in which he noted that:

“After 1964, ... the older children of refugees began to choose Thai husbands or wives according to officials and Catholic priests who were interviewed ... Some Thai officials were inclined to believe that many of the Vietnamese girls who married or formed liaisons with Thai men in the 1960's were prostitutes, and it was suggested that the motive of some of them was espionage against the Thai government. But according to many observers, the most common reason why refugees or their children married Thais was simply to escape the stigma and inconvenience of being refugees” (Ibid: 127).

In short, it can be said that within academic publications, negative attitudes regarding the Vietnamese are largely documented in a subtle, but chronically present way with some works also being openly negative. Thus it can be said that negative attitudes towards Vietnam form a certain “tradition” that stretches back further into history and precedes the time of the Vietnam War. Later in this thesis, it will be shown, how some travel writings are more outspoken, which forms a contrast to academic works, but confirms, what many scholars only indicate carefully in their publications.

Returning to more recent times, it is significant that after the end of the Vietnam War, the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Vietnam took place in 1976 (Vụ Thông Tin Báo Chí - Bộ Ngoại Giao, 2011: Online). This meant that a milestone was set at least on a political level. It was also at least a foundation that facilitated following events to happen, though it did not mean the end of problems. Especially the “Cambodia crisis” of 1978, in which Vietnam put an end to the Pol Pot regime of Cambodia, was widely seen as a confirmation of a Vietnamese aggression that was perceived as a harmful to Thailand and it has been argued that

“Thai-Vietnamese relations suffered another setback for 10 years. The Thais regarded the Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia as a threat to Thailand's ... security. The presence of Vietnamese troops along the Thai-Cambodian borders and occasional intrusions into Thailand caused concerns among the Thai People” (Khien, 2003: 7).

On the long run, however, governmental relations in between Thailand and Vietnam grew better after 1976. Analysts like Ma noted “Thailand's shift in its policy” (Ma, 1980: 45) that was circumscribed with phrases like “conducting a policy of reapproachment and peaceful coexistence with Communist nations, in general, and its Communist neighbors in Indochina, in particular” (Ibid). Even more meaningful for the relationship not only between Vietnam and Thailand, but for the relationships between Vietnam and the entire world, however, was the beginning of the renovation policy (Đổi Mới) in Vietnam.

### **2.1.2 1986 and Đổi Mới**

In 1986, when the Vietnamese government started the implementation of its renovation policy, which is often seen as one of the most important dates of modern Vietnamese history, a giant step was taken on an official level. The Vietnamese government started opening up to more outside nations, it reconsidered ties with other nations, revised previous policies on economics and implemented reforms that changed Vietnam's position in the context of the entire world. These official ties also started to be slowly but increasingly reflected in steps that actually also facilitated a growing number of contacts on a wider level, which was not exclusive to government circles, especially in terms of economics.

The renovation also resulted in considerable economic growth, with Vietnam developing rapidly, attracting investors and being able to invest in its infrastructure,

which also was significant to Thailand, as Thanyathip documented, when she wrote that “having normalised relationships with Thailand lead to economic relations in the fields of trade and investment, technical assistance and transfer ... in education and tourism” (Thanyathip, 2007: 111).

In the year of 1995, when Vietnam joined the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), a further important milestone was reached. Thailand was one of the founding members of ASEAN and therefore outstandingly important within that organisation from its very beginning. That is the reason why the joining of Vietnam into ASEAN meant that further official ties could be built from then on. On top of that it was also something extremely significant, because according to one of the previous ambassadors to Thailand “Vietnam greatly appreciated, and still retains a fond memory of, Thailand's active support for its preparations for ASEAN membership” (Do Ngoc Son, 2003: viii).

### **2.1.3 The Growth of Tourism from Thailand to Vietnam**

Unthinkable merely just about three decades ago, tourism from Thailand to Vietnam has developed. Nowadays Thai tourists go to visit Vietnam in impressive numbers. There are plenty of developments in different spheres that have contributed to this growth in numbers of visitors, which shall be outlined below.

In terms of diplomatic achievements, it has been made it possible for Thai tourists to travel to Vietnam without having to apply for visa before subject to certain criteria. This is obviously a very strong stimulus as it means less hassle, less costs and even facilitates relatively spontaneous trips to Vietnam. It has also been asserted that “the numbers of visitors arriving from ASEAN countries that have increased over the years, have created a new possibility in catering to international tourists from the region” (Nguyễn Đăng Tuyền, 2011: Online), a statement which links political



cooperation directly with the development of tourism.

In terms of infrastructure, the building of the Road No. 9, which facilitates travelling in between the North Eastern Thai town of Mukdahan and Central Vietnam is one important factor. It has made it possible for Thai tourists to access Vietnam, especially Central Vietnam relatively quickly. The construction of that road has also promoted short time visits and even visits exclusively for shopping. Whilst in the past trips to Vietnam normally required careful planning well ahead, including applications for visa and normally also reservations for accommodations, and such arrangements, now “spontaneous” forms of visits are possible.

Another infrastructural point to be mentioned here, is the increased competition between a growing number of airlines flying from Thailand to Vietnam. This competition forms another contribution from the infrastructural field. Thai Airways and Vietnam Airlines provide frequent services in between the Thai capital Bangkok and the two most meaningful airports in Vietnam – Nội Bài Airport of Hà Nội and Tân Sơn Nhất Airport of Hồ Chí Minh City (Thai Airways, 2011a: Online, Thai Airways, 2011b: Online, Vietnam Airlines, 2011a: Online, Vietnam Airlines 2011b: Online). In addition to those connections, services on those routes are currently also offered by the low cost carrier Air Asia (Air Asia, 2011: Online) with chances of further connections being very likely given the remarkable fluidity that takes place in the market of low cost carriers.

Furthermore, there are also a number of airlines that connect the hubs in their home countries with both Bangkok the two main airports in Vietnam using Bangkok as a stop en route, which means that further connections to choose from exist for Thai travelers. Currently such types of connections are provided in between Bangkok and Hồ Chí Minh City by Turkish Airlines (Turkish Airlines, 2012: Online), Lufthansa (Lufthansa, 2011: Online) and Qatar Airways (Qatar Airways, 2011: Online) and in

between Bangkok and Hà Nội by Qatar Airways (Ibid). All these developments in aviation have resulted in a lot of competition and relatively cheap ticket fares that Thai travelers to Vietnam can make use of.

Within Vietnam, infrastructure needed for providing more reliable and comfortable possibilities for transportation, accommodation, communication and other such areas have also developed to much better standards due to the general economic developments after 1986. All these developments obviously mean that now Vietnam has become much more approachable to Thai visitors and current figures substantiate an interest of Thai tourists in visiting Vietnam.

Inside Vietnam, however, there seems to be a rather cautious appreciation of the prospects of tourism, as for example the following statement on the first page of the popular “Lao Động” newspaper suggest: “Vietnam's hidden beauty has become increasingly attractive. However, there is still work that needs to be done within the branch of tourism in Vietnam in order to make it more strong and steady” (Lê Quang Vinh, 2010: 1). At a later point this thesis will let more voices from Vietnam have their say. It will then be seen that there are many Vietnamese voices going into the same direction as the one just quoted.

## **2.2 Thai Travel Writing on Vietnam**

### **2.2.1 Defining Travel Writing**

This thesis holds that the genre of travel writing is a highly suitable tool to explore attitudes regarding Vietnam held by Thai visitors. The reason why this thesis argues like this, lies in the very nature of what constitutes travel writing. That is part of the reason, why this part of the thesis now wishes to establish a working definition for "travel writing".

It is interesting that even though a “contemporary resurgence of interest in travel writing” (Campbell, 2002: 261) has been noted and it has been argued that “travel has recently emerged as a key theme for the humanities and social sciences, and the amount of scholarly work on travel writing has reached unprecedented levels.” (Hulme and Youngs, 2002: 1), it is still very difficult to find entries on “Travel Writing” within glossaries of literary terms, books on principles of literary theory and other such works. This may well be due to “the absence within the academy of a tradition of critical attention to travel writing” (Ibid) that Hulme and Youngs noticed, who also found that “the academic disciplines of literature, history, geography, and anthropology have all overcome their previous reluctance to take travel writing seriously and have all begun to produce a body of interdisciplinary criticism” (Ibid).

Anyway, also many relatively new publications on literary terminology do not include entries on “travel writing”. This makes it difficult to present a comparative synopsis of definitions of “travel writing”, as it could be done with other genres. One of the rather exceptional volumes that have an entry not on “travel writing”, but on something related to this, is a work by Cuddon, who presents the following lines:

“Travel book A neglected and much varied genre of great antiquity to which many famous, more or less professional or “full-time” writers have contributed, but which has also been enriched by a number of occasional writers. For the most part these have been diplomats, scholars, missionaries, soldiers of fortune, doctors, explorers and sailors. The genre subsumes works of exploration and adventure as well as guides and accounts of sojourns in foreign lands” (Cuddon, 1998: 937).

Furthermore he mentions that “There are, in addition, numerous books by explorers, navigators, mountaineers, anthropologists, archeologists et.al. Plus an increasing number of books on how to travel, as it were. These are the “survival-kit” books for those venturing into out-of-the way places ... See also Guidebook.” (Ibid:

944). That entry reads:

“Guidebook A book designed to help travelers. Guidebooks range widely from mere hackwork to elegant writing. ... Until travel for diversion and holiday (as opposed to that for exploration, proselytizing and commercial enterprise) became fashionable there was little in the way of organized guidebooks.” (Ibid: 369)

He also mentions that “In fact, the guidebook may be good literature, which, at its best, is distinguished by learning, an elegant style and a high degree of readability.” (Ibid: 370).

One description of characteristics was compiled by Blanton, who found that:

“The modern travel book, I have suggested, features the following: a narrator/traveler who travels for the sake of travel; a narrative organization that owes much to fiction; a commitment to both a literary language and a personal voice; and thematic concerns of great moral and philosophic import” (Blanton, 2002: 30).

In the context of this thesis, one also has to understand that not all criteria that have been worded in contexts that look at travel writing from Western traditions are met in the context of Thai writers. For example the point that “Most contemporary travel writers share a sense of themselves as exiles ... A search for authenticity, wholeness and meaning often drives their journeys as it did for travel writers in the past.” (Blanton, 2002: xiv), is only met in very few of the works of travel writing covered in this thesis.

By writing “Travel Writing” Thompson devoted a whole book to the exploration of the genre and included a sub section dealing with “Exclusive and Inclusive Definitions of “Travel Writing”” (Thompson, 2011: 12–27), in which he found that “it

is no easy matter to provide a neat and unproblematic definition, or delimitation, of what counts as travel writing. The term is a very loose generic label, and has always embraced a bewilderingly diverse range of material” (Ibid: 11) and the idea of leaving this definition very “open”, has also been recommended by Hulme and Youngs, who argued that “travel writing is best considered as a broad and ever-shifting genre” (Hulme and Youngs, 2002: 10).

However, Thompson's adds to his reflections that “the boundaries of the travel writing genre are fuzzy, and there is little point in policing them too rigidly. But within this larger, looser generic label, one may certainly talk with greater precision of specific modes and sub-genres of travel writing” (Thompson, 2011: 26).

But though initially it seems useful to think about “travel writing” as opposed to terms like “documentary”, “literary journalism”, “guide book”, “report”, “travel memoirs”, or other such categories, in fact such a discrimination is difficult. “Travel writing” is actually not a term like “drama”, ie a term that carries a pre-defined – though possibly frequently contested - meaning, but it is actually a descriptive term. After all “Travel writing” implies nothing else but writing about travelling and to be practical, this thesis sticks to “travel writing” rather than the other terms listed above, as it seems most suitable to cover the works covered in this thesis and a very strict definition might prove to be very hard to be drawn.

What makes travel writing “contemporary”, is a question that this thesis obviously also needs to clarify. It could be replied to with a whole range of different, partially contradicting answers, since the term “contemporary” is obviously already within any of the fields or disciplines of literary studies, cultural studies, history, sociology, tourism studies, which are all related to the discussions of this thesis, a highly contested designation. This thesis does therefore acknowledge that individual scholars for example working on sociology, tourism studies or literary studies, might

not accept the same definition of “contemporary” that this thesis is working with, but at the same time points out the necessity of finding a working definition.

However, in the context of Vietnamese history and the political development of Vietnam, a big shift is noticeable, namely the beginning of Đổi Mới in 1986. This is a watershed date that helps in determining the period of time when “contemporary” Vietnam emerged. Obviously it was the consequent developments that made journeys to Vietnam possible and then lead to the emergence of Thai travel writing on Vietnam, so naturally no work of travel writing (only secondary sources) in this thesis can be dated back as before 1986. This thesis therefore suggests that any Thai travel writing on Vietnam written after 1986 is fairly and appropriately described as “contemporary”.

### **2.2.2 Travel Writing and Attitudes**

"Attitude" is a term that this thesis wishes to clarify before moving on to further discussions. "Attitude" is closely related to a range of other terms like "opinion", "image", "perception" or "understanding" for example. This thesis suggests that a strict discrimination or establishing too strict boundaries between any of these terms is not practicable. This is simply, because many of those terms are not clearly cut themselves and secondly, because they are constantly influencing each other. However, to establish more clarity, some of these terms shall be discussed below starting with "attitudes".

In order to find a working definition for "Attitudes" drawing from psychological definitions is helpful and such an ordinary definition reads: “Attitude. A like or dislike; an affinity for or aversion to objects, persons, groups, situations or other aspect of the environment including abstract ideas and social policies” ( Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith and Bem, 1990: A-3).

The way that this thesis defines “attitude” as shown in the works of travel writing, clearly builds on such a definition. In the context of discussing travel writing, this thesis therefore suggests to think about “attitudes” as very important elements within highly complex psychological process. This psychological process unites an existing mindset about Vietnam that travellers had before going to Vietnam with incentives to visit Vietnam. Once inside Vietnam these incentives influence itineraries and activities. The experiences that are gained from travelling form an overall impression of Vietnam, which is in many ways identical with the overall perception or the overall image of Vietnam that they gain. Within this psychological process, attitudes appear at various parts of this process. They are very important factors within the existing mindset of Vietnam, they are influencing the experiencing of travelling and they strongly determine the overall experience, and perception of Vietnam.

As just suggested, incentives to go to Vietnam stem from an existing mindset. Those incentives to go, consist of two factors, namely interest and practicalities. This interest itself is intertwined with expectations. Again a practical definition of this term can be found in the discipline of psychology. A generally accepted explanation is the following one “Expectation. An anticipation or prediction of future events based on past experience and present stimuli” (Atkinson et. al., 1990: A-9).

Within the experiencing of Vietnam, attitudes are very critical elements. Visitors with very positive attitudes towards Vietnam are likely to approach and also experience Vietnam more positively than those with less positive attitudes. Taking all experiences together, one could say that they form the overall picture of Vietnam or the overall view of Vietnam, which is in many ways synonymous to perception, which shall be defined below:

“Perception. A general term to describe the whole process of how we come to

know what is going on around us; the entire sequence of events from the presentation of a physical stimulus to the phenomenological experiencing of it. Perception is viewed as a set of subprocesses that occur in a multilevel, interactive system. The lower levels in this system, the parts closely associated with the sense organs, are called sensory processes“ (Atkinson et al: 1990: A-17).

The model that this thesis presented up to now, however, a simplified model, that builds upon an isolated view. It is important to know that before going to a place that is “unknown”, such a place is not totally unknown and that there are certain attitudes among visitors. For example knowledge, thinking, ideas, prejudices are all part of why this thesis argues that already when going to Vietnam, no Thai tourist starts at a level of "zero", which would be a level where he or she has absolutely no knowledge, attitudes, thinking, ideas or prejudices related to Vietnam. This means that the process that the overall view of Vietnam is based on, is not only “subjectifying”, but also “subjectified” itself.

For example, when a traveller sees Hồ Chí Minh's mausoleum in Hà Nội, he or she does not approach it with a “zero start”. Such a “zero start” would require that visitors have never heard about Hồ Chí Minh, so that they would have no association whatsoever with him. Furthermore it would require them not to have any association with mausoleums or even anything related to death in general, no knowledge or associations with socialist architecture, Vietnamese history or Vietnamese politics. Obviously this is merely a theoretical and impossible scenario and every visitor to any country, already has certain attitudes.

Taking the above discussions into account, this thesis argues that the the subjectifying process that eventually leads to perception, is already subjectified itself. This is due to previous knowledge and attitudes. For example, a visitor, who feels great admiration for Hồ Chí Minh and what he did will therefore experience that



process very differently compared to the process of visitors, who might not know much about Hồ Chí Minh and his life.

For these reasons, this thesis holds that for analysing attitudes, their entire context needs to be taken into account. This thesis consequently argues that that one needs to know about the existing mindset including previous attitudes and the full sequence of expectations, experiencing and overall impressions and the new attitudes that stem out of the view on Vietnam after going there that in order to profoundly understand that attitudes are both results as well as influential factors that appear at all steps of the psychological process outlined above.

Travel writing is a very practical tool to find out about Thai attitudes regarding Vietnam, but ordinarily reflecting about how to get insights into the Thai perception of Vietnam, one would think of different methods. The above discussions have shown that "attitudes" is a concept that is strongly intertwined with other concepts like "view", "perception" and "understanding". That is why discussions on all of these terms are all relevant to the discussions of this thesis. The following statement is therefore helpful in the discussions of this thesis: "Measurement of perception focuses on the measurement of a respondent's feelings or beliefs about the object, event or person" (Reisinger and Turner 2003: 166), but it appears that ordinary methods like drawing from "Multidimensional scaling" (Ibid) are not as far reaching and promising as analysing travel writings or that such methods would at least never lead to the outcomes that analyses of travel writings could produce.

One of the advantages of analysing travel writing compared to the methods mentioned above is that the reflections as presented in travel writing are very explicit compared to the findings from interviews or questionnaires. This is, for example, due to the fact that people might often be under time pressure or feel reluctant to tell too much. Even though very long interviews or very detailed questionnaires can

theoretically be worked with, they are hard to be carried out in the framework of a study. It can thus be said that what is revealed in travel writing goes deeper than what is normally exposed in interviews or questionnaires.

Also what has been phrased “thematic concerns of great moral and philosophic import” (Blanton, 2002: 30) – a quote that this thesis put down earlier already – does constitute an important aspect, namely that what is reflected on is often something very complex. This highly meaningful quality of reflections, reveals itself in many of the writings that this thesis is covering, through emotional connotations and in-depth descriptions of feelings. They are used by authors to substantiate the importance of what they are reflecting about.

As described above, this thesis understands “attitudes” as both products and factors in a very sophisticated psychological process that consists of a lot of individual elements. Every single one of these elements is reported on in the travel writings that this thesis is working on, which means that descriptions of the entire process that builds perception and perception as the final outcome of that process can be found in those writings and that attitudes as they appear at the different elements of this process can be investigated through reading travel writing.

Giving considerations to the discussions of the question of what “travel writing” actually is and having reflected about what characterises works of that genre in the preceeding chapter, the reasons, why this thesis argues that analysing travel writing is such a useful tool for finding out about Thai attitudes towards Vietnam, are easily understandable. There are, however, obviously shortcomings with using travel writings in order to gain insights into Thai attitudes towards Vietnam and this thesis wishes to adress the most significant ones among them.

To begin with, one could argue that out of all the Thai visitors to Vietnam,

only a very small proportion would publish travel writings. This thesis accepts this observation as correct and valid. A conclusion that is very likely to be drawn from that observation, which is that analysing travel writing merely means analysing an insignificant proportion of attitudes, namely those held by their authors, however, cannot be accepted by this thesis.

This thesis wishes to assert that the way that it chooses works by Thai authors (as described in more detail under 2.2.4) builds on choosing diverse material. This approach allows very divergent sorts of voices to be heard. They include both positive and negative voices coming from a wide spectrum of very different travelers. Therefore the works chosen do constitute a body of works that is representative for Thai travel writings on Vietnam.

This thesis is also aware about the fact that it works on Thai travelers' attitudes towards Vietnam only as found in travel writing. Though this thesis holds that its findings are very meaningful, it is aware that it does not even aim to explore Thai travelers' attitudes towards Vietnam in general, which would require other methods like circulations of questionnaires, in depth interviews and other such methods. This thesis is therefore also clear about the fact that what it states is conclusive for Thai attitudes towards Vietnam as found in contemporary travel writing, not for Thai travelers' attitudes towards Vietnam in general.

Criticism could also come from a different angle: It has been argued against travel writing that there is a problem in that “there are many layers of mediation between the world as it really is, and the world as it is subsequently rendered in travel writing” (Thompson. 2011: 62), a statement that this thesis can accept as valid. Such claims from the field of literary studies are comparable to arguments coming from tourism studies which criticise the way tourists generally perceive destinations and the way in which destinations are presented to tourists. These ways of presenting

destinations automatically always work with processes that focus on what tourists do expect to see.

This thesis also wishes to state that it acknowledges the validity of such philosophical questions on how the fully “real nature” or the completely “authentic character” of Vietnam or any other country are difficult to be grasped on any trip. For example an itinerary to Huế would normally include visits to the imperial district and certain pagodas. At the same time it would exclude a number of other spots in or around the city. It is because of such reasons that critics have argued that most (if not all) forms of travelling lack authenticity and are merely visits to a constructed reality that is sold well to tourists. In fact, this thesis will also concentrate on this point under 3.4.2 and 3.4.3.

Anyway, though knowing about the importance of questions on authenticity regardless of whether they come from the perspective of literary criticism or tourism studies, this thesis is concerned with attitudes as they are found in travel writings. This thesis is clear about the fact that attitudes and perceptions are subjective anyway. This means that this thesis is not so much concerned with the validity of those perceptions and attitudes and that for example questions on the relationship between tourist experiences of a destination and the authenticity of that destination are beyond the scope of this thesis.

### **2.2.3 The Emergence of Thai Travel Writing on Vietnam**

Thai tourism to Vietnam has resulted in an impressive amount of travel writing being composed and a range of publications is now available. Presently there are works in a range of different styles, showing different approaches, different contents and different focusses. This makes the overall body of Thai travel writing on Vietnam extremely diverse. Some publications are written by visitors, who chose to travel

more comfortably, some by authors, who want to be economical in their spendings and very many are written by visitors who approach Vietnam as a cultural destination. Some authors are, for example, looking out for adventures and others for some enjoyable days travelling with friends. Besides books, also articles with travel writings on Vietnam are regularly printed both in Thai magazines and newspapers.

The situation on the Thai market is therefore in line with international tendencies, on which Thompson remarked: “Travel writing is currently a flourishing and highly popular literary genre ... armchair travellers today can indulge in their taste for the exotic, or for adventure, or simply for news of the wider world, by drawing on a vast array of ... travel books” (Thompson, 2011: 1). This diversity does not only show that there is a range of target audiences in Thailand, but first of all it shows that there is a great interest in finding out about travelling to Vietnam in contemporary Thai society.

#### **2.2.4 Introduction to Thai Travel Writings on Vietnam and Criteria for Selection**

The fact that a very large amount of Thai travel writings on Vietnam has been printed so far needs to be replied to with a certain selection strategy by this thesis. The strategy that this thesis opted for, is coined by two major aims: Firstly the aim to be representative and secondly the aim to be explorative.

As just indicated above, the overall body of relevant publications is very diverse. For this reason the thesis cannot exclusively focus on magazines, only on works that deal with cultural tourism, only on works that tell more personal stories about stays in Vietnam or other types of travel writing that would merely represent a rather homogenous sub-group of works.

That is why this thesis considers a wide range of travel writings that form a very diverse amount of writings. They include books, articles, reports on alternative ways of travelling to Vietnam, accounts of trips to historical places, writings from authors who are interested in culture, narrations of travelers, who share their experiences with food. Some are more reflective and descriptive accounts and some of them very personal in their nature, whilst others are rather “official” enumerations of facts. Those and many more types of travel writing are discussed in this thesis in order to reach a representative character.

At the same time, as this thesis is concerned with “attitudes”, it appears that some works are more useful in exploring attitudes than others. For example, a book that describes only a trip to Vietnam as opposed to works which tell about trips to various countries with Vietnam only being one of them, naturally appears to be a more in depth source for finding out about perceptions and attitudes as it would normally provide more opportunities for reflections.

A further problem is that in some travel writings the place of Vietnam itself is hard to locate. Despite the fact that thesis accepts that different readers have different experiences when they read travel writing, but it also wishes to state that some of the works covered in this thesis are more or less clear examples of what has been criticised clearly in the lines saying that “A very common mistake that inexperienced travel writers make is to put too much of themselves into a piece” (George, 2009: 22).

Though it has been argued that “one of the central issues in travel reportage has always been the relationship between self and world” (Blanton, 2002: 29), which might be a direct result of the fact that “travel writing and memoir” (Sims, 1995: 3) are “forms that traditionally allow writers more voice” (Ibid), some of the writings covered in this thesis arguably largely read too much like a personal diary: Enumerations of costs, and descriptions of rather personal problems might be of

practically no interest to readers and they might thus feel like those anecdotes are not relevant at all.

Without making any judgement on the overall quality of the following works, it appears as if there are readers, who sympathise with the statement just quoted from George, they will be likely to also have problems with at least parts of the works for example by Lek Baimiang (Lek Baimiang, 2011), Virasak Thianthanawat (Virasak, 2008), Chathon Sithikhehaphak (Chaton, 2008) and Phi Wut and Phi Kate (Phi Wut and Phi Kate, 2009).

In short it can be said that this thesis needs to find a way to be representative, but also to be selective in order to pick publications that are helpful for learning about their authors' attitudes and perceptions. The solution that this thesis opts for is to consider a very wide and diverse range of writings, to introduce them and the wide spectrum that they cover, but also, when it comes to exploring, analysing, discussing and evaluating attitudes, to work with some publications much more intensively than with others. The selection of works of travel writing that this thesis chose to work with, is presented below:

Chathon Sithikhaphak (2008): *Klai phaen fa thi Sapa (Close to the sky in Sapa)*

This is a nicely narrated account of a trip to Northern Vietnam. The author Chathon Sithikhaphak does not only write about Sapa, but also about places around and about Hanoi. Very good photographs appear throughout his publication. They can contribute well to making the reading experience a pleasant one.

Khamsing Sinok, 2002: *Vietnam: Khwam Hang hoen thi yu tit rua ban, (The estranged at the fence of home)*

Khamsing Sinok introduces Vietnam in a style that differs from the other books looked at in this project: Being a well known Thai writer, he visits a number of famous Vietnamese authors on his trip to Hanoi. Khamsing thus introduces the country through a mix of reflections on observations made in Vietnam and an introduction to various Vietnamese writers and their works. He thus also approaches Vietnam through writing about Vietnamese literature and authors. Another aspect that makes Khamsing's book special, is the date, when it was written, namely 2002, which makes it one of the oldest works covered within this thesis.

Lek Baimiang (2011): Hoi An Wan Yen (Sweet and cool Hôi An)

Vietnam only has a marginal position in this work and its storyline. This is why, for finding out about perceptions of and attitudes towards Vietnam, Lek Baimiang's work is not very helpful. In accordance with its criteria for selection, this thesis will therefore treat this work as a representative for fairly “unusual” travel writing and it will make references to it only scarcely.

Niphatphon Phengkaeo, 2003: Lao rueang mueang Viet (Telling about Vietnam)

In 23 chapters, Niphatphon Phengkaeo tells about her short journey to Vietnam, though the first few chapters are devoted to narrating about the first part of the trip which takes the author and her friends to Mukdahan and Laos. The following chapters contain both reflections on Vietnam as a country and a travel destination as well as plenty of entertaining anecdotes about what she and her friends did during their trip. Overall Niphatphon approaches Vietnam mostly as a destination that is fun to travel to.

Phenlak Phakdijaroen, 2010: Kwa ja thueng “Thang Long” - Nakhon sap sun



(About to arrive in "Thăng Long" - The lost city)

Phenlak Phakdijaroen's article has an unmistakable focus on ancient history. The places visited by the author are almost all historical sites, though a number of non-historical places and topics or activities like going for coffee are mentioned alongside. This can be understood, as the article suggests that “If you would like to join one of the upcoming history study trips, you can follow news on ...” (Phenlak, 2010: 2), which means that it also works as a means for group specific advertising, but still - bearing in mind that this article appeared in a newspaper - the extreme focus on history including a lot of dates and names from the history of Vietnam is somewhat unusual to be printed in a fairly general daily.

Phi Wut, Phi Kate, 2009, Vietnam: Pai eng dai jai noi kwa thiao mak kwa stai Phi Wut Phi Kate (Vietnam: You can go on your own - spend less, travel more in the style of (lit.) elder brother Wut and (lit.) elder sister Kate)

Though this thesis does not analyse Phi Wut and Phi Kate's book in as much depth as others, and just refers to it very few times, it should be mentioned in this list and also be taken into consideration within this thesis. The reason why this thesis does so is that Phi Wut and Phi Kate's publication represents an important sort of travel writing, namely a “narrative” guidebook on Vietnam written in Thai and by Thai authors. The existence of such books which are practically oriented, demonstrates that there is a demand of such books on the Thai market. This in return tells that altogether there is not only a wide spread interest in travelling to Vietnam, but also that such works obviously a very profitable sort of publication to write and thus constitute a highly commercially oriented sort of travel writing.

Phitsanu Janvithan (2011): Yon Yuan – Dôn Nhuôn (A glance at the Yuan [the ethnic Vietnamese])

This publication is not only special, because it has been written by the previous ambassador to Vietnam, but also because of the background knowledge that it supplies and its in-depth research. Phitsanu Janvithan did not only obviously spend much more time in Vietnam than most of the other authors, but he also put a lot of visible effort into producing a high quality piece of writing.

Phitsanu Suphanimit, 2000, Chaliang Tawan ook - Plai thang mai lek kao Lao - Vietnam (The eastern corridor - The end of road number nine - Laos and Vietnam)

The main focus of Phitsanu Suphanimit's trip and thus also of his publication, is on historically significant places. The book altogether has nine chapters, though the beginning does not discuss about Vietnam, but about Laos, from where Vietnam is entered on the author's journey. It is worth noting that this publication is the second oldest one covered within this thesis.

Sawang Thongdi: (2009): Lonely Bike (N/A Title provided in English already)

Only extremely few pages in Sawang Thondi's publication deal with Vietnam, because the author mainly describes his bike trip through China. That is why the stay in Vietnam is just an extremely minor element of his entire journey. What makes this work special and different to others, is obviously the very “alternative” style of travelling that the author has chosen.

Sutthida Malikaeo, Suphalak Kanchonkhundi, 2006: Màu Sắc Việt Nam (Colours of Vietnam)

This work is a lively account of experiences collected all over Vietnam. Sutthida Malikaeo and Suphalak Kanchonkhundi do not only include chapters on specific places that the authors visited on their trip, but also theme based chapters. The authors

are in constant and friendly touch with Vietnamese people, which means that their journey is not only a journey to Vietnam but also a journey to the Vietnamese people. From the descriptions one can really feel that the authors enjoy Vietnam as a destination to travel to.

Surasavat Suksavat, 2004: Vietnam song rot (Vietnam - Two tastes)

Surasavat Suksavat's book is written from an art historian's perspective, but it is not a pure academic description of artefacts found in Vietnam, at all. It is still a work of travel writing that talks about different sorts of experiences encountered while travelling through Vietnam. The publication also contains a lot of very good photographs mainly of historical sites and depictions of different forms of traditional and contemporary art. This publication is well comparable with and in many ways similar to the article by Phenlak (Phenlak, 2010) and the writing by Yuphin Sibutrakham (Yuphin, 2011).

Surat Varangrat, Mansatharon Phrueksavan, Prasit Khaleram, Juthai Chalamat, 2000: Sen thang mai lek 9 su Vietnam ton klang: The Highway No. 9 to Central Vietnam (N/A - Title provided in English already)

This work by Surat Varangrat and his colleagues is different from all the other works covered in this study in that it is not very narrative in its tone. This publication is more a certain mixture between an academic introduction to Vietnam as a country, and Vietnam as a destination for travelling. Similar to surprisingly many other publications covered in this thesis, the main focus of this work lies on historically important places.

Thiraphap Lohitakun, 1997: Xin Chào Việt Nam (Hello Vietnam)

Thiraphap Lohitakun's publication is interestingly structured not only by the locations visited, but at the same time also by topics. Furthermore, this work contains a large number of images and could also very well be seen as an intellectual discussion of Vietnam and its history, especially its modern history. On top of that, this book is special, because it is the earliest piece of travel writing covered in this thesis.

Thitiya Phojanaphithak (2007): See you again (N/A Title provided in English already)

Thitiya Phojanaphithak's publication about her journey to Vietnam is extremely entertaining to read, especially because of her style of narrating. In many ways, especially in its tone, this publication is very similar to the works by Nipathphon (Nipathphon 2003) as well as the writings by Vanravi Rungsaeng (Vanravi, 2010) and Suphalak Kanchonkhundi and Sutthida Malikaeo (Suphalak and Sutthida, 2006). Such similarities suggest that writings of this kind are relatively popular among not only among Thai readers, but also among publishers.

Vanravi Rungsaeng, 2010: Vietnam klang phayu fon (Vietnam in a rainstorm)

In her work "Vietnam klang phayu fon", Vanravi Rungsaeng introduces various places in Vietnam and also devotes various chapters to a topic based introduction of Vietnam. Those chapters include issues that one would not normally expect within a book like that. Vanravi's view on Vietnam is very interested and positive and she openly approaches Vietnam in an outstandingly embracing way which shows her understanding and deep interest in various aspects related to Vietnam and especially related to its people. Vanravi's work can contribute very well to many of the discussions of this thesis and it will therefore be quoted from frequently in the following chapters.

Virasak Thianthanavat, 2008: Boeng Lao – Xin Chào Việt Nam (Hello Laos - Hello Vietnam)

In the book "Boeng Lao - Xin Chào Việt Nam", Virasak Thianthanavat shares his memoirs of travelling through Laos and Vietnam with around 120 pages devoted to Vietnam. The places that the author is visiting are all either in Central or Northern Vietnam and he does not visit any places in Southern Vietnam. One interesting aspect about this work is that the the author apparently has a somewhat timid feeling during his journey, which explains the cautious and skeptical approach that the author is taking. This does not only apply to Vietnam, but also to Laos and he even draws a somewhat astonishing image of the Thai town of Mukdahan, from where he will cross into Laos.

Yuphin Sibutrakham, 2011: Fly to Vietnam by Qatar Airways (NA/Title supplied in English already)

In just about 9 pages (including many very good photographs), Yuphin gives an account of a short visit to Vietnam. From the text it seems as if the airline Qatar Airways wanted the report to serve as a way of advertising its Bangkok – Hà Nội route. Bearing that in mind, it is clear that the article cannot be “neutral” and that it would mostly talk about positive aspects of travelling to Vietnam which will make readers want to go there.

With Hà Nội and Hạ Long Bay, Yuphin's trip only covers two of the “must see” places of Vietnam. Also the spots visited inside Hà Nội are only the most popular visiting spots of the city. Within the description of Hà Nội, almost only historically significant places or traditional sites are reported about and only very few spots visited are not historical buildings, namely two lakes and the Water Puppet performance, and even those are looked at as places that are associated with the

history of Hà Nội and Vietnamese traditions.

## **Chapter III**

### **Vietnam as Reflected in Thai Travel Writing**

This chapter approaches Thai attitudes towards Vietnam as found in travel writing by building on the previously suggested model of how attitudes work out in the process in which the overall view on Vietnam is constructed. Thus it will start by outlining and discussing the existing mindset of authors before going to Vietnam and then classify and describe their experiences in Vietnam. Thereafter this chapter will give a lot of attention to comparisons that authors make between Thailand and Vietnam and discuss key aspects and problems of comparison making. It will then conclude by describing Thai attitudes regarding Vietnam as a country and of the Vietnamese people.

#### **3.1 Existing Mindset and Reasons to Go**

##### **3.1.1 Existing Mindset about Vietnam**

Most authors share insights into their existing mindset with readers by explaining what they knew or thought about Vietnam before their journeys. Among everything known to them before going to Vietnam, three themes are especially prominent, namely knowledge about the Vietnam War, knowledge about ancient history of Vietnam and a feeling of proximity between Thailand and Vietnam.

The most persistent theme out of those three is related to the war and the political events that it is associated with. In many works the war is seen as the reason why there is a relative lack of knowledge about other aspects of Vietnam. Phitsanu, for example, states that “we Thais know very little about Vietnam” (Phitsanu, 2000: 9) and Thiraphap shares that:

“Films about the Indochina War played a role in that those who watched those films all over the world including Thais, who are living nearby got to know the Vietnamese ... But in fact the world and the Thais know those close people only very little, because the truth is that we know Vietnam from the war and we never perceived anything about their real character, their life and their soul” (Thiraphap, 1997: 21).

This situation, in which authors do not know their “neighbor” gives strange feelings to authors. Knowledge about the war and the lack of knowledge that the war caused are thus key reasons for some authors to go to Vietnam. This is evident for example from statements like the following:

“All of us felt excited that we would go to visit our neighbors on shores of the South China sea, because though we have lived together in the area of South East Asia since ancient times, due to the problems of interference from the West, Thailand and Vietnam seemed as if they were people from different hemispheres” (Surasavat, 2004: 11).

Indeed almost all of them think of Vietnam as a “neighbor” and also call it with the Thai equivalent “phuean ban” (เพื่อนบ้าน), which literally means “friends of the house”. This term therefore has an undertone of affection, suggesting a certain degree of cordiality. A well worded illustration of this situation is given by Khamsing, who writes that "The cultural relation between Thailand and Vietnam is a closeness that's shifted apart" (Khamsing, 2002: 64).

This thesis has already earlier announced that despite the fact that people to people relations are largely ignored in academic writing, they are to be found in travel writing. It is now obviously the point to take those voices in, because it is so fundamental to to the mindset of many authors. Niphatphon, who is among the authors, who were already born, when the Vietnam war took place, writes that



“Among what I perceived about the Annamites besides food, there was nearly nothing good ... ” (Niphatphon, 2003: 15). She also talks about "posters of the ghost of communism of the Annamites that would come to eat children ... seeing pictures of battles in Vietnam, pictures of mothers hugging their children being blown up by bombs” (Ibid: 14-15). Readers can also come across other such documentations like:

“In the time of the cold war, in which Thais hated and feared communism severely, the propaganda war of that period made a number of Thais, that was not small, see the Vietnamese ... with distrust ... I can still well remember the dreadful scene of a Vietnamese family on the day when they had to close down their noodle shop ... after government propagandists had stated that the Vietnamese put poison into their food” (Sutthida and Suphalak, 2006: 13-14).

Though less prominent than knowledge related to war, knowledge related to traditional Vietnam and an interest in traditional Vietnam is to be found in many writings. A wish to find out about the history of Vietnam is therefore a key incentive for Thai travellers to visit Vietnam. This is evident, for example, from the surprisingly large proportion of travel writings that are very much concentrated on visiting spots of significance within ancient history (Phenlak, 2010; Surasavat, 2004; Yuphin, 2011). Furthermore it can be seen in individual parts of other writings for example "an important thing happened during the first reign, in which Thai history proudly recorded they could give assistance to Vietnam" (Sutthida and Suphalak, 2006: 12) and "Huế and the Nguyễn dynasty have had an incredible relation with Siam" (Phitsanu, 2000: 75). It is arguably also due to the fact that Vietnamese and Thai history are so much intertwined with each other that historical aspects of Vietnam seem to be much more interesting to many Thai visitors than to many other international tourists.

### **3.1.2 Practical reasons for Travelling to Vietnam**

Besides those reasons that illustrate specific motivations or interests to go to Vietnam, there are also practicalities mentioned in some writings. A couple of authors mention that certain practical reasons make journeys to Vietnam easy. Such practicalities demonstrate authors' awareness of political changes, which means they do affect perception to a considerable extent. For many authors the key word in this respect, is not only “easy” but also “eased”, which means that they are aware that the hassle free entry into Vietnam is the result of new developments. This is visible from phrases like “The first time that I went to Vietnam about 10 years ago, entering and leaving the country was not very easy ... But nowadays it is very easy for us Thais to travel to Vietnam, because we just need a passport and an air ticket so that we can go to Vietnam” (Sutthida and Suphalak, 2006: 17). Another point related to practicalities, the construction of Road No. 9, is found in some writings. Phitsanu, for example, writes:

“When I was posted in Laos around 10 years ago ... the Road No. 9, which leads from Mukdahan province through the area of Savannakhet into Central Vietnam, was not completely built, yet. The Vietnamese were not very close with the Thais at that time ... Nowadays, when there are some days of holidays in a line, there is a row of cars of Thai people travelling into Laos and Vietnam on that road” (Phitsanu, 2011: 215).

### **3.1.3 Itineraries as Documentations of an Exiting Mindset and Incentives to Visit Vietnam**

Itineraries are highly indicative for visitors existing mindsets and expectations. Knowing which places in Vietnam are interesting to Thai visitors is therefore very helpful to find out about Thai attitudes towards and perceptions of Vietnam.

As the question of what is interesting particularly to Thai visitors to Vietnam is important, there is one work that seems to be helpful in finding answers, one by the Department of Economics of Chulalongkorn University, as it does something that none of the other works that this thesis is taking into account is doing: Individual spots are graded. For example the authors find that Hạ Long Bay is “Very interesting” (Chulalongkorn Mahavithayalai, Khana Sethasat, 1993: 2-44), which also goes for Chùa Một Cột (Ibid: 2-39), whilst Văn Miếu is only “Rather interesting” (Ibid) and Đền Ngọc Sơn “Not that interesting” (Ibid).

It is, however, clear that in general such classifications are questionable and in the case of that publication they seem unsystematic, as for similar places are given very discrepant gradings. For example the authors find that the market of Bến Thành (Chợ Bến Thành) is “interesting” (Ibid: 2-33), whilst the market of Đông Xuân (Chợ Đông Xuân) is “not that interesting” (Ibid: 2-43), which is why the thesis will not rely on examining those classifications. The maximum benefit that the thesis will draw from this publication is to acknowledge that its authors give high grades to some of the “must-see” places, as arguably several travel writers would do.

Another publication, namely “Sen Thang Mai Lek 9 Su Vietnam Ton Klang – The Highway No. 9 To Central Vietnam” seems to take a more promising approach, however, it obviously only looks at Central Vietnam. However, saying that “Assessing the potential of visiting spots in that area, you can probably divide them into four sorts of spots, namely ... natural travelling sights ... sights related to the American War ... sights like temples and palaces (city tour) ... museums and ancient towns” (Surat et. al. 2000: 95–96), is a statement that is indicative for all of Vietnam. This thesis also finds that the flexible and general approach by Surat and his colleagues helps much more to find out, which places rank prominently in making travel plans among Thai visitors. This is why this thesis adopts an approach similar to what Surat and his colleagues have done. This is why will list and introduce the spots that Thai travel

writers visited most frequently in Vietnam. Thereafter, certain conclusions can be drawn from reviewing this list.

Hà Nội, the capital city of Vietnam has its international airport (Nội Bài) and is therefore a practical point to enter the country. Being the capital city, Hà Nội offers a diverse range of attractions to travelers. Hà Nội can thus not only be seen as a cultural destination, a shopping destination, a destination for going out, etc., but one can see travelers preferences from individual spots visited or individual activities done, while they spend time in the city.

However, it is fair to say that what is mentioned most in all of the writings, are the historical sites of the city. This is revealed for example when reading through many of the writings (Phenlak, 2010; Yuphin, 2011), in the lines saying “Hà Nội, the city of museums and art showrooms” (Surasavat, 2004: 71). All this is in line with how many Vietnamese think about their capital, too, as visible in claims like “When you take Hà Nội as a centre and go up North along the National Road 1A with a radius of about 50 to 60 km, there are visiting spots both of historical and cultural nature” (Nguyễn Vinh Phúc, 2009: 9).

Hồ Chí Minh City has another international airport and can thus be used as an entry gate to the country. Similar to Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh City has something to offer to visitors with very diverse interests, including buildings from the French colonial time, the War Museum and markets. This is why it is difficult to learn about the interest of visitors judging just from the fact that they went to Hồ Chí Minh City. So, again, the spots that are visited inside the city are more conclusive in telling about visitors interest.

Đà Nẵng is actually a city that many visitors plan to visit without actually being interested in it. For many it is practical to stop over there, either coming into Vietnam

on the Road No. 9, or simply because it is a large city about half way in between TPHCM and Hà Nội. “Having come to stop over in Đà Nẵng in a profound way this time after travelling forth and back for a long time, taught me that Đà Nẵng is not only a city located in Central Vietnam and that it is in the middle in between Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City ... This time Đà Nẵng has become another city located “in the center of my heart”, too” (Sutthida and Suphalak, 2006: 60) illustrates that oftentimes it is merely practical to go there. Another significance of Đà Nẵng is its proximity to the demilitarized zone. It thus also attracts visitors interested in the events of the Vietnam War.

Huế is mostly planned to visit by those travelers with an interest in Vietnamese culture and history. Though the city is also known for its charm, normally it is associated with the sites that were built during the Nguyễn dynasty, their palace and graves. Huế is also a place that is visited with relatively fixed expectations, which makes it a spot that can be seen as one that is visited to see a confirmation of how it is thought about, which means that it is visited to substantiate perceptions. This constitutes a way of seeking legitimation for a continuation of continuity, as supported by the following lines: “Vietnamese history of that period is familiar to most Thais, because it's the same period of time as the Bangkok period. When we were children, we learned about the Tây Sơn rebellion and the emperor Gia Long” (Sutthida and Suphalak, 2006: 116). It may well be due to what Sutthida and Suphalak suggest, that to some Thai travellers Huế is almost another “must” on their Vietnam itinerary, which is indicated by Thiraphap, as he feels that “If one has a chance to go to Vietnam and does not go to Huế, it is just as if he has not seen the real life and soul of the Vietnamese” (Thiraphap, 1997: 167).

The tunnel system of Củ Chi is not far from Hồ Chí Minh City and trips from Hồ Chí Minh City to Củ Chi are very easy to be done. Củ Chi is a firm element on many visitors itineraries through Vietnam. The tunnels obviously played a very

important role during the time of the Vietnam War. They thus tend to be visited by those travellers, who are interested in the history of the war. .

Hạ Long Bay, the famous bay in Northern Vietnam with its dramatic landscape of limestone islands in the sea could simply be assumed to be visited just because of its beauty. This is true for many visitors, but there might be another reason that is certainly true for other places, as well, but applies to Hạ Long bay more than to any other place in Vietnam. Because it is so famous, it has almost developed into something obligatory, a “must do” of Vietnam. That is why even if visitors have no passion for beautiful landscapes in general whatsoever, might still feel like they “have” to visit the bay, to make their trip to Vietnam complete.

Hôi An is another place that attracts not only Thai tourists, but also plays a very important role within tourism to Vietnam in general. The following statement from Vanravi does not only introduce Hôi An well, but it also speaks for itself in terms of attractions:

“I have had a dream, wishing that our home [Thailand] would take measures through with world heritage or ancient sites would be of benefit to communities and with which the public would have a share like here. But that is only a dream, because the government largely only thinks about making travel spots look beautiful ... and tries to get people out of them. That is why places that once were full of live, have died in a sad way. That dream that I have had, is true here in Hôi An, where the public really owns world heritage” (Vanravi, 2010: 122).

Sapa and Đà Lạt, though one being located in the mountains of Northern Vietnam and one in the mountains of the center, are both planned to be visited for similar reasons, namely because of their location. The towns itself are somewhat included in writing (Vanravi, 2010: 38 - 61), but most visitors only focus on the

landscape surrounding those towns. Some of them are looking out for doing sports or adventures and to go trekking. Well received by many Thai travelers is also the cool climate of the area around both Sapa and Đà Lạt, which is also in line with what seems attractive to Vietnamese visitors as the suggested in the lines “Meteorologists call Đà Lạt the “City of Spring”, because the average maximum temperature during daytime is 24 degrees Celsius and the average minimum temperature during daytime is 15 degrees Celsius” (Phạm Côn Sơn, 2010: 30), an “advertisement” which is unlikely to attract mainstream travellers from non-tropical countries. Remarks on the weather are thus frequently made in reports about those places and this is often done with nicely phrased words like “The clear and fresh air of the morning hours” (Thitiya, 2007: 113), which supports the idea that the climate of those places is very much welcomed by Thai visitors.

This list of places shows that the authors of travel writing largely liked visiting Vietnam for two reasons: Firstly to see historically significant places and secondly sites related to the war. This fact shows that in the perception that Thai visitors to Vietnam have, ancient history and the war are two very big issues. The areas around Sapa and Đà Lạt and the internationally well advertised and marketed Hạ Long Bay are the only places that are visited for their natural beauty, which suggests that Vietnam as a travelling destination is to a large degree seen as a destination for historically oriented travelling and for finding out about the war.

While statements like “The values of culture and history are essential features in creating interest and contribute something “authentic” to tourism ... Vietnam is a country of ancient cultural and historical sights, which have a great significance for tourism activities” (Nguyễn Minh Tuệ et. al., 2011: 142), seem like fairly obvious claims, which could easily also be applied to almost every area of the world, it seems as if this claim is very significant in how Thai travellers approach Vietnam. This fact constitutes a difference to tourists from many other countries, who pick Vietnam as a

destination not primarily for visiting historical sites, but also focus for example on beach tourism, shopping trips or adventurous tourism.

### **3.2 Experiences in Vietnam**

Once inside Vietnam, the experiencing of Vietnam obviously takes up a large percentage of the travel writings covered in this thesis. More insights into the experiencing of the authors will be given by topics corresponding to what travellers ordinarily do when they visit foreign countries. In Thai travel writings three main themes are the experiencing of historical sites (both from ancient times and those associated with the war), the experiencing of food and the experiencing of the Vietnamese people.

#### **3.2.1 Experiencing of Places of Interest**

The experiencing of visiting related to the war is reported in a way that might come as a surprise to readers. This thesis has already explained that the war is a very dominant theme in Thais' perception of Vietnam before going there. One could therefore expect that standing in front of Thích Quân Đức's car or visiting the tunnels of Củ Chi would leave visitors in agitation, discomposure or grief, but in fact this is not normally to be found in the writings. Only some writers talk about the war more generally and with a sympathetic tone, for example Phitsanu in the chapter that he devoted to Hồ Chí Minh City (Phitsanu, 2000: 153–173) but overall there is almost no depiction of how reflections on the war affect visiting authors.

A place to be mentioned is the War Remnants Museum in Hồ Chí Minh City, which in different ways documents the cruelty of the Vietnam War. Exhibits in the museum include objects that have been used for different purposes in the war and texts that describe various sorts of cruelties that happened in the war time. Much



space in the museum is also allocated to show how the infamous chemical “agent orange” has been causing children to be born with very severe disabilities since the war time and a lot of moving and shattering photographs that portray death, torture and other horrors of the war are on display. A writer who is very much affected by what she comes across in there, is Thitiya, as demonstrated in the following quote:

“I called a motorbike to the War Museum. The entry fee is 15.000 Dong, which is not expensive at all. Looking at the tragedies of the war feeling tired ... and hungry really made me feel nauseous. Foreigners walked through there with the same colour in their faces (utterly grieving). Good that there is one room in there that displays pictures of peace done by children. Having seen them, I felt a bit better. It was better to go” (Thitiya, 2007: 186).

Interestingly this is obviously a very short coverage of the visit to the museum. But Thitiya is emotionally moved, which makes her different from many other writers, whose reactions to places with a close association with the war, could be described as unemotional. This unemotional approach, is, for example, to be found in the two references describing visits to the tunnels of Củ Chi: “I personally am claustrophobic, so I preferred walking around watching birds and shady trees in the wide forest. I saw people who just went down for a few minutes” (Vanravi, 2010: 37) and Phitsanu, who very similarly writes that “I am someone, who does not like climbing down into holes” (Phitsanu, 2000: 149). These statements are obviously quite unemotional given the fact that the tunnels are a symbol of the war and that many families had to live there in constant fear and extreme hardship.

Sites related to ancient history obviously differ from spots related to the war in their nature and one could expect that those sites are approached with a different attitude. Many of the authors, though, seemingly approach both of them in a very similar style. Interestingly, even though visits to ancient sites like temples take up a

lot of space in the plans that are sketched out before going to Vietnam and they are valued as impressive spots, the actual experience in many of the books is rather unemotional. In some cases it reads like working off a tick list of duties that travelers have to fulfill when they are in Vietnam. Many authors just leave it to descriptions of the sites or supply some information about when they were built or what their architectural features are, which takes up a very large percentage of the text body of many of the travel writings covered in this thesis.

### **3.2.2 Experiencing of Vietnamese Food**

Authors report about Vietnamese food in very much detail. Typically they describe not only the sorts of food that they find, but also the places, where they eat it. It stands out that especially very simple street stalls, where they can eat among the Vietnamese people and somehow “become one” with them, are very appealing to most authors. In many works it is in food stalls and small restaurants, where they are arguably the more integrated into Vietnamese society than anywhere else on their trips. Though they do not necessarily communicate verbally with everyone around them, they do not stand out much from people around visibly and thus “become one” with everyone around them. This strong feeling of being integrated is evident from many publications, for example from quotes like “for getting the best mood when drinking Bia Hơi (a popular sort of beer), you have to sit down and drink it along the sidewalks. This way of eating and drinking can be called a form of culture. Though it might look rough – I like it.” (Sutthida and Suphalak, 2006: 50).

This means that there is a great potential of simple food stalls to be very much welcomed by international travelers to Vietnam. Though in Vietnam there is an awareness about the potential and importance of Vietnamese cuisine, as visible from statements like “It has been a long time already that international travellers have admired Vietnamese dishes” (Trần Diễm Thúy, 2010: 252), the suggestion that the

most simple places are often appreciated the most adds something new to this awareness.

### **3.2.3 Experiencing of the Vietnamese**

Many of those who hope that Thai attitudes towards Vietnam will improve, are likely to assert that contacts with the Vietnamese people is a very important issue, if not the most crucial one. For them, it would therefore be very worrying that only few Thai visitors are in very much contact with local people. While some are open to get to know Vietnamese people, especially in cheap food places, others seem to pass through the country without much interaction with them.

It may theoretically be the case that some writers actually had several in depth experiences with Vietnamese people but simply did not allocate space in their writings to share with their readers, but then it would mean that they would not have considered those contacts worth mentioning, which, however, would be just as questionable as avoiding contacts with the Vietnamese, if not even worse. It is especially those writers who are on short trips, who tend to include no or virtually no information whatsoever about any sort of interaction (for example Surat et al., 2000; Virasak, 2008; Yuphin, 2011).

It is only a minority of writers, who include in depth references to the Vietnamese people in their writings. For example Khamsing (Khamsing, 2002) and Phitsanu (Phitsanu, 2011) make references to Vietnamese people by sharing with their readers, what those Vietnamese people told them while they were in Vietnam. Other writers, who do so, are Niphatphon (Niphatphon, 2003: 95 - 98) and Vanravi, who stands out as one of the authors, who is in constant touch with the Vietnamese throughout her trip and quotes a lot of Vietnamese peoples' voices in her chapter "Learning from Vietnam" (Vanravi, 2010: 245 - 247).

The picture that emerges is that those writers, who approach the Vietnamese, do not describe any characteristics, differences or peculiarities. What describes the attitude of all of the four authors that this thesis just listed, are the lines by Vanravi saying "These statements given by the Vietnamese are clear and I don't need to explain them further" (Ibid: 257). These words indicate that the Vietnamese people do not need to be patronised, but can be consulted as fully equal human beings and thus be taken seriously.

### **3.3 Vietnam in Comparison to Thailand**

Thompson suggested that "all travel requires us to negotiate a complex and sometimes unsettling interplay between alterity and [*Italics in the original*] identity, difference and [*in Italics in the original*] similarity" (Thompson, 2011: 9). Wearing also noted that

"tourists are not passive consumers of either destinations or their interpretation, but are instead actively engaged in a multi-sensory, embodied experience. While this experience may be individual, it is also cultural and occurs within, and with reference to, the tourist's own culture and meaning systems" (Wearing et.al., 2010: 132).

That is why comparisons between Thailand and Vietnam are also very prominent elements in travel writings and those comparisons play out in different ways. When Thai visitors make comparisons about Vietnam, it is obvious that they will mostly compare Vietnam to Thailand. "Travelling as a Thai" is therefore a theme frequently encountered in travel writings on Vietnam. Writers normally compare Vietnam to Thailand in areas that specifically correspond to travellers' interests like Vietnamese culture or in areas that are either easy to be encountered or experienced like economics. This is simply because travellers necessarily need to, for example, use infrastructure like roads or airports, which can be seen as manifestations of the

economic situation of the country.

Besides economics and culture, this thesis also chooses to focus on religions, because religion is a further typical area that Thai visitors to Vietnam like to encounter. These three areas are also well connected with the discussions of experiencing and are linked with other important areas like history, politics and everyday lifestyle and thus are of interest to all of the authors.

### **3.3.1 Comparisons Relating to Economy**

Many things that Thai authors come across in Vietnam seem to indicate to them that Vietnam has so far not managed to catch up with Thailand economically. For example, Khamsing writes: “Looking through the windows when the airplane is sliding on the runway of our Don Mueang Airport, you can see a small golf court, but at the international airport of Hanoi (in the year of 2000) you can see green, nice vegetable plantations along the runway” (Khamsing, 2002: 23).

Based on seeing things that they consider as being not on the same level with Thailand, writers often understand them as a result of the historical development. Some authors get reflective and sympathetic. For example Vanravi finds that “The lives of the Vietnamese are as if they had always been in the middle of a rainstorm, not only a natural rainstorm ... but they encountered the storm of the war, the struggle for independence and in the end attacking each other” (Vanravi, 2010: 241), considerations that she concludes by saying: “In the perspective of outsiders like me or Westerners, who look inside Vietnam, it might feel as if they are living in hardship and that they have to work hard ... but I think that within their hardship they are happy” (Ibid: 244).

Talking about economics, another point should also be made: Very many writers

are highly positive about how the Vietnamese work. Niphatphon, for example, tells:

“The Vietnamese work really hard ... a 24 year old man, who had finished his studies in business administration at university and who works as the head of the “Mekong Delta Tour” company in Saigon, made a strange face, when I told him about my observation and asked him, why different offices in Vietnam had “opening times” and if people would not sleep at all” (Niphatphon, 2003: 94 - 95).

She also presents his viewpoint, which is that “the lives of young people working in offices in Thailand ... seems luxurious and relaxed, which is very different from Vietnam. Thais do not have to work from morning till evening and they can still have a life that is not full of hardship” (Ibid: 97). This point will be covered in more details under 4.1.1 in this thesis, when it will be handled as a positive stereotype.

### **3.3.2 Comparisons Relating to Culture**

Writers find quite a lot of cultural similarities and differences when they compare Thailand to Vietnam. Some of the authors assert that Vietnam and Thailand share a long common history of traditions. This is, for example, well illustrated through the lines reading that "during the Nguyễn reign, which was at the same time as the Ayutthaya period and the early Rattanakosin period, there have been contacts between the court of Annam and the Siamese kingdom" (Thiraphap, 1997: 128).

Others, however, are more focussed on differences. Talking about “culture”, they are very much inspired in their thinking by the fact that Chinese culture has played a significant role in Vietnam's cultural development, which obviously does not apply that much to Thailand. Some authors go very far by saying that “Speaking frankly, the Vietnamese are one of the Chinese ethnic groups. Their lifestyle and religion do not differ from the one of the Chinese” (Virasak, 2008: 122), or also one

that reads

“Culturally, Vietnam and China are one, whilst all Tai people to the West of the Mekong never opposed the political power of China at all, which means that if they didn't flee, they accepted it. But all Tais could preserve their own culture profoundly, though they might have been under Chinese rule” (Sutthida and Supphalak, 2006: 117).

These two quotes are statements that many researchers obviously would contradict with strongly. However, regardless of their validity, these quotes tell something about the way that those authors experience Vietnam and indicate that Vietnam somehow does not seem that much Southeast Asian to them. By them Vietnam is actually not only perceived as being more similar to China, but as actually being part of China, though not all authors go that far and leave it to mentioning that the Chinese cultural imprint is one of the features that make Vietnam culturally different from Thailand.

It is also important to mention that the Chinese imprint on Vietnam in terms of culture and in terms of ethnic Chinese living in Vietnam can also serve as a bridge to Thailand. This is simply, because Thailand has also had its fair share of Chinese cultural influence and is home to a lot of ethnic Chinese. This can be understood, for example, from the following lines by Thiraphap, which read:

“Culture and traditions largely come from China, especially from Confucianism, which stresses gratefulness towards one's ancestors. It is thus not surprising that Tết ... thus falls on the same day as Chinese new year [which is well known and popular in Thailand, too]” (Thiraphap, 1997: 167).

To some few authors also another minority living in Vietnam serves as a

bridge, namely the different groups of ethnic Tais. Phitsanu, for example, includes the following lines: “In Vietnam there are Tai ethnic minorities living in the North, especially in Son La and Điện Biên Phủ. Those groups of ethnic Tais have a lot of words that are used within Thailand as local vocabulary” (Phitsanu, 2011: 179), which support that idea.

Also cuisine, an important aspect of everyday culture, is subject to comparisons. Though attracted by the “otherness” of Vietnamese cuisine, several types of food work as a “bridge” to many writers. In fact, sometimes there are descriptions of a kind of identification through eating similar food found in travel writings, for instance as shown in the lines saying: “Vietnam is the first country, in which I thought that it has something similar compared to Thailand when it comes to food” (Vanravi, 2010: 233).

### **3.3.3 Comparisons Relating to Religion**

On a large scale, no purely or (at least) mainly religious motivated travelling or pilgrimage travelling has developed from Thailand to Vietnam, even though it has been suggested that “For tourism to Vietnam, Buddhism plays an especially important role” (Trần Diễm Thúy, 2010: 193). This may be because Thailand is obviously a home to Theravada Buddhism, while the most popular school of Buddhism in Vietnam is the one of Mahayana tradition.

It is still fair to say that there are chances for pilgrimage traveling to rise. Buddhism (or some other religions) could be seen as a unifying feature between Thailand and Vietnam. This idea is supported, for example, by the following quote from “Màu Sắc Việt Nam”, in which a pilgrimage spot is introduced by saying that “there is something, of which I think that it should make Thais, especially those that have a Chinese background or believe in Quan Am, quite happy when they go to visit it” (Suphalak and Sutthida, 2006: 56). These lines are related and comparable to the



following ones by Phitsanu, who writes that “the Vietnamese have some beliefs that are similar to those of the ancient Chinese and others similar to those of the Thais” (Phitsanu, 2011: 194).

The idea that religion could become more important within tourism from Thailand to Vietnam would also be substantiated by what Vanravi reports about, when she writes: “I liked reading the works of Thích Nhất Hạnh, a Vietnamese monk so much that I have already gone to practice Dharma with him” (Vanravi, 2010: 20). References to him are also made in other writings (for example Phi Wut and Phi Kate, 2009: 239 – 240), which further nurtures such hopes.

#### **3.3.4 Aspects of Comparisons and their Relation to Thainess**

The act of comparing deserves some closer attention. When Thai travellers do go to Vietnam with a high awareness of themselves being Thai, this can work out positively or negatively. In a positive scenario an awareness of a Thai identity, can give travellers a feeling of being a cultural ambassador who lays foundations for the future, with the feeling of being a welcome guest, or with a feeling of representing Thailand both to Vietnam and to other international visitors to Vietnam.

Apart from Khamsing (Khamsing, 2002), whom this study acknowledges as a cultural ambassador and Phitsanu, who was the Thai ambassador in Vietnam (Phitsanu, 2011), it is worth knowing that some other authors go to Vietnam with the awareness that they represent Thailand to the Vietnamese, too, for example Vanravi, who writes that “I decided to get out of my bed, intending to look at Hôi An in the early morning to see the lifestyle of people, which is new to me. Moreover I wanted to show to the Vietnamese that Thais get up early, too” (Vanravi, 2010: 137).

In a negative scenario, however, there is a danger related to such approaches in

that there is a certain line between travelling with a feeling of being Thai and a feeling of being superior. This line is very thin and easily transgressed and it has been suggested that “narratives of encounter are undeniably dominated by the viewpoint of the mobile culture, yet it is possible to exaggerate the degree of superiority implied” (Clark, 1999: 5). Researcher Reisinger suggested that “people are ethnocentric because they feel good about themselves when they know that others' behavior can be evaluated according to their own values” (Reisinger, 2009: 192).

None of the authors covered in this writing can be said to travel to Vietnam with clearly visible feelings of disliking the country or the people. However the extreme lack of contacts between some of the authors and the Vietnamese people could well be due to a higher than normal awareness of the authors' national origin. A feeling of full equality would be best proofed by a loss of distance and by descriptions of proximity to the Vietnamese people. As stated earlier, however, only very few authors report on in-depth contacts with mutual and equal respect.

Beyond representing Thailand to the Vietnamese, which corresponds to the cultural ambassador concept suggested above, representing Thailand to non-Vietnamese people in Vietnam is another way in which authors' identifications as Thais can be seen in different works. It gets evident, for example, in the quote by Chathon, who writes: “I ... bought four bottles of water and shared them with our English friends. As a representative of Thailand I was hoping to leave a good impression on the farangs” (Chathon, 2008: 44). Another situation, which is well comparable to what Chathon writes, can, for example, be found in Vanravi's work, in which she tells that:

“I waiied while going through the van, in which there were about four or five foreigners. I didn't know their nationalities, I only knew that they were Western. But I knew for sure that I had to wai excusing myself to everybody ... Because I got up

late!!! In fact I was not even 10 minutes late, but I felt as sorry as if the world had come to an end. Besides feeling sorry for the foreigners, I also felt sorry for all Thais, as I had spoiled their reputation ... All of them knew that I was Thai from the moment I waied asking for pardon to everyone ... That's really not worth to wai, but we Thais tend to wai when we don't know what to do or when we do something wrong” (Vanravi, 2010: 123-124).

Another manifestation of "Thainess" is a strong feeling of a “nostalgia” for Vietnam. Some writers clearly have such nostalgic feelings and they reflect about bygone times in rather poetic phrases like "people of both countries have been in contact as friends, as enemies, helping each other and fighting against each other" (Sutthida and Supphalak, 2006: 12). It is remarkable that obviously none of the authors, who went to travel to Vietnam could experience those relations over a period of more than a few decades to the maximum of his or her own lifespan themselves. Those nostalgic feelings thus can neither originate from personal experience nor be bound to a personal memory. Thus they can only be an expression of what is thought to be a national memory of Thailand about Vietnam. That is why it is fair to say that many authors almost seem to feel obliged to bring their Thai nationality into their writings, which, of course, can be seen as a further indication that many writers do not approach Vietnam as individuals, but that they are Thai and that their nationality somehow dictates them, how they should feel about Vietnam.

What underlies all the findings presented in the last pages is that when going to Vietnam, many authors actually in addition to being themselves, they also become representatives of Thailand and it is fair to say that the identification as a Thai abroad seems to be different and more intense compared to being a Thai person inside Thailand. Whilst there is a negative potential associated with ethnocentric feelings that makes it very difficult for some visitors to open up to Vietnam and especially the Vietnamese people, there is also a positive potential which mainly works out in the

publications of those writers, who see themselves as representatives for Thailand, who try to establish more links between their own country and Vietnam.

### **3.4 Thai attitudes towards Vietnam**

#### **3.4.1 The Country**

From the discussions of chapter three, it can be concluded that within the current Thai understanding of Vietnam, the war is still an important factor. The war is thus a central and influential theme in Thai attitudes regarding Vietnam. As discussed under 3.2.1, however, to the majority of authors, going to Vietnam does not cause considerably more sympathy for the suffering that Vietnam has gone through. It is merely through comparisons related to economy that pity is revealed to varying degrees.

Furthermore, Vietnam is admired for its ancient history and culture. As Vietnam is seen as a neighbor, there is a feeling that Vietnam and Thailand share the same history. Nostalgic feelings for Vietnam stemming from authors' self identification as Thai nationals are related to this admiration for history. Visits to ancient sites, however normally do not impress visitors deeply, make them reflective or touch them emotionally. It is only some icons (see 4.1.2) associated with traditional Vietnam that create some more excitement.

As already discussed in this chapter, the war, the history and the feeling of closeness, are however the three most striking associations with Vietnam. When talking about Vietnam as a country (as opposed to the Vietnamese people), it is thus fair to say that attitudes of authors do not change during their trip with the only exception being the emergence of new icons. Travelling to Vietnam does thus not cause considerable differences in how Vietnam is thought about before travelling

there compared to after travelling there.

### 3.4.2 The People

The discussions of this chapter have shown that given the lack of contact between most Thai authors and the Vietnamese people, attitudes towards the Vietnamese remain almost completely unchanged for most authors. There are, however, extremely rhetoric statements in some writings that try to convey the opposite, for example: “I don’t have a Vietnamese origin and I personally did not love Vietnam way that was not ordinary, but having studied the history of the different ethnic groups of Vietnam ... I strongly believe that we can understand each other” (Phitsanu, 2000: 12) or “What I have seen ... corrected the gloominess ... that came from the viewpoint that I have been induced with for a long time. The Vietnamese are normal human beings” (Niphatphon, 2003: 222).

However, looking in between the lines of these poetic and rhetoric statements, their credibility is rather questionable. The first one is little concrete and reading the latter one, readers seriously have to ask themselves, if a person, who really has very negative feelings against the Vietnamese would actually ever go to Vietnam. Another similarly questionable phrase is the following:

“The Vietnamese have always been misunderstood as being scary, as they fought with us in the past and as it is a war torn country. When it got known that in reality Vietnam is a modern country, that its art and culture are worth learning about ... and that its people are charming ... people talked about that so that nowadays, no matter where in Vietnam you are, you will always find Thai travelers in Vietnam” (Phi Wut and Phi Kate, 2009: 3).

This statement by Phi Wut and Phi Kate is obviously also little concrete. On top

of that this thesis seriously questions Phi Wut and Phi Kate, who did not substantiate their claim with any proof and were thus not convincing in their claim. One really has to be clear at this point that the position of the Vietnamese in most writings is extremely marginal as shown under 3.2.3.

Those discussions have shown that only very few Thai authors have actually reported about in depth contacts with the Vietnamese people. As for the majority of other authors, the characterisation of Vietnamese people as hardworking, but also as not being trustworthy in money related contexts become two main themes. Money related issues are to be explored in more detail under 4.3.1.

## **Chapter IV**

### **THE PRESENT DAY SITUATION - CONTINUITIES, CHANGES, CHANCES AND RISKS**

This chapter discusses the present day condition of Thai attitudes regarding Vietnam from a viewpoint which acknowledges that within travel writings one can see that some attitudes stem from old, historically grown thinking patterns, but that one can also see certain changes. Consequently it will be discussed, how those continuities and changes carry both chances and risks for the construction of better attitudes towards Vietnam and the Vietnamese people. Thereafter the chapter offers remarks on some crucial factors that strongly determine, if positive or negative changes of attitudes happen and concludes by explaining to what extent tourism actually helps to produce better attitudes.

#### **4.1 Continuities**

Continuities of old Thai thinking patterns of Vietnam can be both positive and negative. Being aware of the troubled past, in which the relationship between Thailand and Vietnam was an extremely troubled one as suggested in chapter II, one might assume that continuity would automatically be unfavorable and that every change would constitute a positive development. Such a way of thinking, however, is far too generalising and needs to be looked at more carefully. Even though this thesis asserts that negative features have historically been very determining for the overall Thai perception of Vietnam, there are some positive aspects within old Thai perceptions of Vietnam, which have been appreciated for a long time, for example positive stereotypes of the Vietnamese. Those positive aspects were powerful enough to withstand the mainstream flow of deterioration. That is why a continuity of appreciating those aspects constitutes something very positive.

#### **4.1.1 Continuities of Positive Stereotypes**

A number of personal qualities of the Vietnamese that they have often been described with, form a positive stereotype. Arguably more than any other personal quality, the hardworking character of the Vietnamese has left foreign visitors to Vietnam, including Thai nationals, deeply impressed and with a feeling of admiration. Appraisals of the industrious character of the Vietnamese do appear in many of the writings, for example as “Around 4 or 5 AM Thais are still asleep, while at the same time the Vietnamese get up and work. The whole country has a degree of ... industriousness, patience and motivation that is several times higher compared to the Thais” (Vanravi, 2010: 136).

Similar to that quote are also the lines saying that “watching Vietnamese farmers working energetically in the paddy fields, we could see a method of draining water into the fields by human force how we never saw it back home” (Ibid: 144). Also they can be understood as an expression of admiration for how the Vietnamese put up with very hard work and their living conditions in general.

The fact that this hard working character is frequently covered in Thai travel writings shows that many of the authors that their trip proved that they were right in admiring the Vietnamese for being very industrious. This is why in with regards to this particular positive stereotype, travelling to Vietnam does not add anything new and travellers' attitudes towards Vietnam are not changed, but an old and positive way of thinking about the Vietnamese is confirmed during travelling.

#### **4.1.2 Old Icons of Vietnam**

Besides characteristics of the Vietnamese, also experiencing anything that is “material” in the broadest sense of the term and that has been known and admired for



a long time before going to Vietnam means a positive continuity. Such “material” elements include famous places in Vietnam like Hạ Long Bay or the palace in Huế, to raise just two examples. If those places are positively experienced during a trip, then such a trip works like a confirmation of positive old thinking patterns, which means a continuity of positive thinking.

Also “material” in its nature, but not manifested in cities or buildings, are icons of Vietnam. Personally experiencing some of the iconic elements of Vietnam like nón lá, the traditional hats that many Vietnamese people like wearing and áo dài, which has become the national costume for Vietnamese women, is very much appreciated in writing. The áo dài and the nón lá are objects that have normally been known and positively impressed foreign visitors to Vietnam before going to the country themselves. This is why encountering those icons means a continuity of positive thinking patterns about Vietnam, which influences the construction of attitudes positively. Thiraphap remarked that “the Nguyễn emperors ... were those, who laid the foundation for arts and culture, which are characteristics of the present day Vietnamese people. The most outstanding ones are ... áo dài and ... nón lá” (Thiraphap, 1997: 28), which indicates that possibility of objects becoming “iconic”.

In fact, references to the áo dài are to be found in virtually any of the writings (Chathon, 2008: 35; Lek Baimiang, 2011: 64; Phitsanu, 2000: 131 – 133; Thiraphap, 1997: 131–133; Vanravi, 2010: 227 – 228) and the nón lá seems to be equally popular a topic to address (Phitsanu, 2000: 72; Sutthida and Supphalak, 2007: 179).

Besides these positively welcomed icons, however, there is one issue that has almost never been perceived positively by Thais, that is namely is the consumption of dog meat. References to slaughtering dogs and eating them appear in very many of the writings (Sutthida and Supphalak, 2006: 173 – 172; Vanravi, 2010: 212; Phitsanu, 2011: 166 - 170). Though overall the tone is very negative, there are some variations

in reactions from the authors. The following one is a comparatively positive one:

“there are cages with kittens and puppies with dark eyes ... People who love animals will probably feel shocked when hearing that! But you should not be angry about that. It's a culture of cuisine that has been passed on for hundreds of years ... If you see it and do not like it, you should better go somewhere else! When you go abroad, we have to practice to open up. This is cultural diversity, that we need to learn about” (Chathon, 2008: 61).

What is very interesting, however, is that it seems as if reporting on dog meat almost develops into a sort of “must” or an obsession. Therefore it seems as if some authors feel that a work on Vietnam could not be complete without making at least some remarks on dog meat. Judging from the frequency in which readers of Thai travel writing on Vietnam come across the issue of consumption of dog meat, it really seems to be one of the most wide spread negative issues associated with the Vietnamese people.

#### **4.2 Changes and Hopes for Improving Attitudes Tied to Tourism**

Generally speaking, in the context of Vietnamese history “change” has been a key theme very many times. 1986 was a year, in which once more, great changes have appeared. As discussed in Chapter II, such great changes are also to be found in Thai-Vietnamese official relations, which is illustrated in a number of forms, including the following example: The hostile relations between Siam and Annam have been documented in "Annam and Siam at war" (Jaophraya Badindecha Sing, 2007). The fact that the book reporting about the trip of Her Royal Highness Princess Sirinthon to Vietnam has been given the title “Annam and Siam as friends” (Somdetphra Theparachasuda Sayam Boromarachakumari, 1994) illustrates not only that “change” is one of the big key words when talking about Thai – Vietnamese relations, but also

how writing in many ways conveys such ideas.

Based on the discussions of all the preceding chapters, it is evident, that traveling to Vietnam carries chances for improving perceptions of Thai visitors, but that there are also clear limitations. It is evident that travelling helps in some ways, but it fails in some other ways to improve attitudes. It is, however, important to firstly acknowledge the positive changes that have already happened and secondly to highlight that though traveling offers chances to improve attitudes regarding Vietnam, tourism cannot do the whole job on its own and that without taking a set of problems serious, tourism will not construct new and splendid attitudes towards Vietnam.

Out of all the changes, a change that ranks among the greatest changes generally, is paradoxically likely to be overseen: The pure fact that Thai people go visit to Vietnam. This is an unprecedented situation in history and technological progress, political developments, the reforms of 1986, changes in both Thailand and Vietnam and many more factors were necessary for this situation to arise. Some authors directly address chances of tourism and are to varying degrees considering the past of Thai-Vietnamese relations, too. For example it is suggested that “I strongly believe that a policy of connectivity and different modes of communications of the region will bring many results in economics and tourism ... Thai tourists are very much welcomed by the Vietnamese” (Phitsanu, 2011: 216).

The clearest proof that demonstrates that Thai visitors have positive attitudes regarding Vietnam, is obviously shown, when they decide to return to Vietnam after a first journey. However, only few of the authors wrote their works having been to Vietnam more than once, for example Sawang, who writes: “Staying there for half a month was a time of revision of an earlier time for me - the time when I visited Vietnam the year before. And it was also a time of learning more about the Vietnamese people” (Sawang, 2009: 164).

However, some few travel writings are also rather cautious about such hopes. They see chances rather carefully. This can, for example be seen in the lines saying: "So far, there is nobody who can predict, how the future will be. The friendship between Thailand and Vietnam might further develop and grow, which would be a good thing, or there might be controversies, which will make people cry and let blood flow again. Nothing is for sure." (Sutthida and Supphalak, 2006: 15).

#### **4.2.1 Travel Writing as a Manifestation of Changing Attitudes**

Given the historical context, it is fair to say that the existence of Thai travel writing on Vietnam is a proof of changing attitudes. All authors travelled to Vietnam as visitors coming from a certain background, namely a background in which – though they themselves might not have had a negative attitudes towards Vietnam – negative perceptions of Vietnam were present and thus known to them. It is thus logical that they – being a sort of “new generation” - are aware that they have a chance to get a more accurate picture of Vietnam themselves and also to contribute to a modification of overall Thai attitudes regarding Vietnam through their writings and sort of "new generation spirit" is fundamental to not only travelling to Vietnam but also to write about it.

However, one must be clear that In the context of the entire body of Thai society, Thais who go to Vietnam form a more “open” fraction of society and that those Thais with most negative attitudes towards Vietnam are unlikely to travel to Vietnam and let alone then even write on their journeys. Therefore, authors of travel writing are more likely to break with old negative stereotypes and are characterised in that they did not have any extremely negative attitudes regarding Vietnam before going there. Therefore, as already stated earlier, though weaving in general Thai perceptions of Vietnam, this thesis focuses on Thai travel writing and that authors who travel to Vietnam are generally not representative for Thai society in general as

they stand out by having a higher than average interest in Vietnam and openness for Vietnam.

#### **4.2.2 Learning about New Things and the Genesis of New Icons**

From travelling to Vietnam, some new knowledge about the country is growing. Interestingly this knowledge is mainly manifested in new icons. Just like things like “nón lá” and “áo dài”, the traditional hat and the national costume for Vietnamese women have been icons of what constitutes Vietnam in the thinking of Thais and other nations in the past, new such icons emerge now and grow visible in many writings with the most popular of these new icons arguably being motorbikes, coffee as the most established ones and fruits and seafood currently developing into new icons at a fast pace.

The extreme amount of motorbikes, though scaring pretty much everyone among the authors, whose writings are analysed in this thesis, is seen as a peculiar trait of contemporary Vietnam and on the long run leaves authors fascinated rather than scared. Generally traffic in Vietnam is described by using vigorous terms, but given the ratio of motorbikes to other vehicles in Vietnam, motorbikes do stand out to many writers and are thus likely to become a real icon of Vietnam. Hanoi is, for example, called “the capital city of motorbikes” (Sutthida and Supphalak, 2006: 17) and statements like “it seemed as if a wave of cars and motorbikes was around us” (Chathon, 2008: 18) or

“besides cars there are also very many motorbikes in Hanoi. You can see them everywhere. If you cannot imagine, how streets in Hanoi look during rush hour in the morning, please think of streets in China, which are full of bicycles. Streets in Hanoi look the same, except for that there, it is not bicycles, but motorbikes” (Phitsanu, 2011: 40 – 41) are typically found in the writings covered.

Another point to be mentioned here, is Vietnamese coffee. Coffee is extremely widespread and easy to be found all over Vietnam. Many of the authors of Thai travel writing make references to it (Vanravi, 2010: 30; Sutthida and Supphalak, 2006: 161–165). Also Phitsanu quotes someone he met in Vietnam, who told that “Vietnamese coffee is delicious. In Jatujak it's sold much more expensive” (Phitsanu, 2011: 217). Thus, it is fair to say that coffee is very likely to develop into an further icon that represents Vietnam positively in Thai travel writings.

Fruits and seafood are further candidates that are very likely to become new icons as they are reported about very often in the travel writings covered. Interestingly to outsiders, there is a rather unusual competition surrounding fruits and seafood from Vietnam versus fruits and seafood from Thailand and that those comparisons seemingly develop into a slightly bizarr contest, as the following lines substantiate:

“A senior Thai politician came to visit Vietnam ... He said loudly so that you could hear all over: “I know well that Longans are also widely planted in Vietnam, but I know that they are not as good as those from Thailand, which is why I brought some as presents.”” (Phitsanu, 2011: 189).

In contrast to that, Khamsing talks about “Big and appealing lychees“ (Khamsing, 2003: 33) and by writing about “all the types of fruits that we have at home and about which we think about that ours are the best” (Ibid) and by noting down that “every sort of plant that can grow well at home, can also be grown well in other countries” (Ibid), he even uses food to illustrate how a feeling of a Thai superiority over Vietnam is not sustainable.

Similar “defeat” is also admitted in the excerpt from Sutthida and Supphalaka's work, who state that “We are probably proud about Thai seafood. But one can insist that here the seafood is bigger and really fresh – lobsters, fish, shrimps and oysters”

(Sutthida and Supphalak, 2006: 61). This is also comparable to the following lines:

“I asked Thai people, who were shopping, what there was for buying ... “Don't you know, ambassador ... Seafood here is worth buying. Large dried shrimps costing only half as much as back home, this is dried squid – at home they are very hard to find” said a ... lady smiling” (Phitsanu, 2011: 217).

Besides those icons, there are other peculiarities that are reported about frequently, which, however, seem less likely to become icons like coffee or motorbikes, but are still worth mentioning, simply because they are found frequently in the writings covered. The most important one among them is the contemporary way of building houses in Vietnam, which are very narrow, but very high. Authors that do give such statements include Phitsanu saying that “one thing in Vietnam, which is different compared to Thailand is that almost all houses in Vietnam are very tall” (Phitsanu, 2011: 25) or Yuphin writing that “Contemporary buildings that we came across, were buildings in rows, high and slim in their form, like young Vietnamese women” (Yuphin, 2011: 139).

#### **4.3 Risks of Attitudes to Worsen because of Travelling**

There are certain risks associated with tourism, when one hopes that attitudes towards the visited country should improve. It has been found that:

“Optimists argue that if culturally diverse people could only be brought into contact with one another, they would develop mutual understanding, tolerance and respect ... pessimists, on the other hand, point to the frequent instances where contact between different cultures leads to increased suspicion, hostility and often war” (Bochner, 1982: 159).

Whilst this statement arguably covers the entire spectrum of what could theoretically happen in between Thailand and Vietnam, realistically speaking, the possible scenarios of how tourism could affect Thai peoples' attitudes regarding Vietnam can be limited to three options, namely either a clear improvement or a fairly stable continuity of what constitutes old attitudes or a deterioration of attitudes.

#### **4.3.1 Risks Relating to Money and their Significance**

In terms of different positive and negative elements, one observation stands out clearly: To many authors, the issue that tears down the overall experience of Vietnam the most, is the problem of sometimes being cheated for money. A very drastic illustration is the part of the book by Virasak, where he writes:

“I was not in the mood for talking ... In that moment all Vietnamese people were all bad in my view. That bad experience had damaged all my good memories of my trip and of the nice places in Vietnam that I had visited in the past few days. I wanted to leave this country as soon as possible. I did not want to see the faces of the people of this country, I did not want to talk ... I hated this country. I hated the Vietnamese.” (Virasak, 2008: 211), which illustrates how – to some people – money related problems actually have a potential to ruin perceptions.

Other writers are far less dramatic, for example Vanravi, who writes that “Thais are largely likely to make experiences that are not very good with the Vietnamese when it comes to the issue of being cheated ... while others – not few in their number - will meet kind and trustworthy Vietnamese people” (Vanravi, 2010: 13). Also Niphatphon is pragmatic in saying that:

“from Hué to Saigon, we had to face the trickiness of Vietnamese men ... Going to stay in any hotel, we had to repeat asking over and over again, if the price that we



agreed on surely included costs for hot water and the costs for airconditioning. If we did not do that, it was switched off from outside the room ... Going shopping, buying food, taking a motorbike taxi, we always had to check what we paid and what we got as change” (Niphatphon, 2003: 79).

It is worth quoting Vanravi at this point, who reported that:

“International tourists have encountered unbelievably many fairly bad things. A common and simple issue is to be cheated with food prices ... The reputation of Vietnam is therefore not very good among travellers.” (Vanravi, 2010: 131) is a statement that highlights the important position of this problem in the process of perception formation.

What this thesis argues at this point, is also in line with studies done by Vietnamese researchers. It appears that the seriousness of money related problems is not only well known, but it is also discussed very openly. Academic voices, for instance, include Trần Diễm Thúy, who wrote that:

“Being asked “Having come to Vietnam, do you like it and would you like to return?”, a large part of foreign travellers praise Vietnam saying that the sea is very beautiful, the scenery is nice, food is tasty and rich, but they do not intend to return. Being asked why, they are not hesitant to reply that they “have been cheated” ... “the nature is not clean”, they “have been pushed to take photographs and buy souvenirs”” (Trần Diễm Thúy, 2010: 22).

The same point is also discussed by Anh Việt in a very harsh style in his article “Don't see you again” (Anh Việt, 2012: Online), which he interestingly concludes by saying that “it is not unreasonable when travellers say that they buy a ticket to go to Thailand rather than doing a domestic journey” (Ibid).

#### **4.4 Determining Factors for the Development of Better Attitudes**

There are several factors that determine if visitors' attitudes will change, and if they change, if they will change for the worse or for the better. Knowing about the content of the travel writings covered, this thesis suggests among those factors there are three, which are especially important: Firstly the attitudes of visitors, secondly itineraries and thirdly different modes of travelling.

##### **4.4.1 Attitudes of Visitors**

The spectrum of attitudes of the authors is very broad. Under 2.2.4, this thesis has already given indications about which authors approach Vietnam with which attitudes. It has done so by suggesting that, for example, some authors are very open, some are very embracing and others are rather cautious.

As explained under 3.3.4, the role of Thainess, is obviously a further factor that shapes attitudes of visitors significantly. Similarly problems related to the unemotional way in which sites related to the war are visited, as described under 3.2.1 are other key factors that influences attitudes. This thesis does not want to repeat, what it has already argued earlier about Thainess and unemotional experiencing of sites related to the war. However, it stresses that is important to recognise the important function of both Thainess and unemotional approaches within visitors' attitudes. This thesis further stresses that especially being unemotional can be seen as one of the clearest proofs for a lack of openness for Vietnam, its past and its people.

##### **4.4.2 Itineraries**

Naturally the itinerary of a journey is central to the experience of the visited

country and thus of fundamental importance for perceptions and attitudes that develop out of those experiences. This thesis has already provided a list of popular destinations in Vietnam under 3.1. In this thesis that list has so far been treated as a documentation of existing mindsets and reasons to travel to Vietnam.

As this part of the thesis is, however, concerned with factors that determine attitudes, it wishes to present the following remark: Among the places mostly visited in Vietnam, there is rarely anything "innovative". Almost all authors focus on places that attract a lot of visitors every year. "Unusual" places like cities less frequently visited or relatively untouched rural areas are almost never taken into itineraries of authors.

This is why this thesis suggests that most Thai travel writers to Vietnam only focussed on "highlight tourism", which means that they visited only the most famous places in Vietnam. In itself, this is not too peculiar and many visitors to Vietnam, especially those, who just have a limited amount of time, just pick a few "highlights". However, questions arise about if visiting those few most famous places in Vietnam "qualify" visitors as travel writers. Anyone, who believes that to be a travel writer, you have to be able to present fresh material, would probably argue that such quick trips to a few top-spots do not constitute a qualifying basis for travel writings. This point is also related what is going to be discussed under 4.4.3 now.

#### **4.4.3 Travel Styles**

It is important to acknowledge that certain forms of travelling make a continuity of old attitudes and a continuity of old perceptions more likely than other forms of touring. Having provided a list of "hot spots" for visiting in Vietnam under 3.1 already, it should be mentioned at this point that those "hot spots" that Thai travel writers go to are basically the same list of spots that most international travellers to

Vietnam visit.

This fact itself does not seem to be surprising at all, but it should be made very clear that although interest is a very dominant factor in the process, in which destinations in Vietnam are selected for visiting, another part of the reason, why many Thai authors go to precisely those places, has a very simple background: A lot of international travellers to Vietnam decide to join so called “open tour” buses, a system that has been flourishing over the years in Vietnam, as it allows travellers to travel through very distant parts of the country, to interrupt their journey at certain places and to continue their trip from there at a day that is suitable for them and a lot of the Thai authors, whose works this thesis analyses, do precisely the same.

This implies many of the writers actually left it to those tour organisers and their suggested itineraries, where they would go, which means that they actually followed a very frequently chosen way of visiting Vietnam and that in fact their journeys to Vietnam in terms of the itinerary and mode of travelling were identical to what many others have been doing. Well known open tour operator “Sinh Café” tailored trips for Chathon (Chathon, 2008: 25 – 27), Niphatphon (Niphatphon, 2003: 101) and open tour programs or other pre-organised programs for travelling were also for example chosen by Virasak (Virasak, 2008: 144), Thitiya (Thitiya, 2007: 91 - 96) and Vanravi (Vanravi, 2010: 33 - 37) and Lek Baimiang (Lek Baimiang, 2011: 62–64).

This is a also point that illustrates what has been argued by Clark, who suggested that “Anyone can have a go, and usually does. The travel book is unabashedly commercial” (Clark, 1999: 1) and what has also been criticised by professionals. Rolf Potts, for example, who has been asked “What constitutes “bad” travel writing?” (George, 2009: 151) and who replied by saying “Bad writing often comes from bad travelling – and bad travel is unimaginative, uninformed and unoriginal. Thus, to write well, you have to get into adventures and meet people. You

have to try new things, or experience old things in new ways” (Ibid).

Whilst this thesis is not concerned with questions of which types of journeying are estimable and which are not that great and stays neutral in this respect, it insists that since so many authors follow similar pathways and do similar things, travel writing that stems from experiences gathered during open tour trips to Vietnam, works like a tool that reinforces the creation of similar views on Vietnam as they are presented to a Thai audience at a very high pace.

The depiction of Vietnam that is currently constructed and spread in a large number of publications in the Thai book market therefore rests hyperproportionally upon experiences gained from doing those open tours. This means that the programs of such open tours are thus overrepresented in the total amount of Thai travel writing on Vietnam. There is obviously a problem in that there is arguably far too much power resting in the hands of a few tour organisers in Vietnam within the process of shaping the view on Vietnam in Thailand as 4.4.4 will explain in more detail.

Besides the actual mode of transport, it is also worth mentioning that the length of authors' stays in Vietnam seems to be extremely influential on how Vietnam and especially its people are perceived. It is logical that generally speaking the more time authors spend in Vietnam, the more they open up and the chances they have to get to know the Vietnamese. Being on a tour program, which enables travellers to "rush" through Vietnam, like open tour trips, however, means that their chances to get in touch with people, are extremely reduced. It has already been found that there are problems in that many visitors just “rush” through Vietnam and for example it has been claimed that “Hạ Long Bay is very beautiful, but visitors go there just ... for 4 to 5 hours” (Chung Linh, 2011: Online). This statement underlines that travelling at a very high pace, is rather worrisome.

Not much “alternative tourism” is covered in Thai travel writings and no conclusive remarks can be made on such alternative travelling. However, this thesis has already suggested that visiting mostly “must see” places, which were already somewhat to authors before going there often leads to a “predictable” outcome. That is why it is fair to suggest analogously that all sorts of alternative tourism would constitute ways of approaching Vietnam with only vaguely predictable outcomes. Anyway, there is only one work which reports about something very alternative, namely “Lonely Bike”. Even though that publication does not have descriptions of the author riding his bicycle in Vietnam as he did in China, the sheer fact that he has been away from Thailand feeling that

“I started my trip in mid-August and ended it in November ... New stories occurred in my life, full of many impressive experiences. Details of the trip widened my perspective. I understand the world outside and inside myself more because I did that trip” (Sawang, 2009: 12-13), suggests that individually made trips are more promising for authors to change their perceptions and attitudes of Vietnam.

#### **4.4.4 Travel Writing as an “Active Ingredient” in the Process of Constructing Attitudes**

Having gone through much of the above discussions, one aspect that must be mentioned at this point, is the one of the “responsibility” of authors of travel writing. It has been suggested by Robinson that

“Tourist literature, travel guides and travel writings all have a role in shaping images of, and attitudes to, the places we visit and the communities we encounter. So, too, does creative writing. The slow and cumulative process of absorbing certain literary works can shape our worldviews as readers and tourists. We reach destinations forearmed with images and ideologies cultivated from the pages of the novels and

poems we have read over the course of our lives.” (Robinson, 2002: .60).

The statement by Robinson just quoted, implies that writers have the power to modify the ways in how mainly those who have not been to Vietnam before might easily be misinformed or be preoccupied in their thinking about Vietnam and the Vietnamese people. Based on reading works of travel writing, some readers might develop negative perceptions of Vietnam or also decide against ever visiting the country.

At this point it is also important to remind oneself that this thesis issued very concerned views on a number of facts. One such fact is that so many of the writings are created by travellers, who followed the same stiffly organised open tours and that the perception that a large percentage of the works convey are thus heavily influenced by only a handful of tour operators. Another fact would be that as written under 4.3.1 some writers clearly exaggerate money related problems and thus draw very negative pictures of the Vietnamese people. A third important fact would be that as explained under 3.2.3 many authors go through Vietnam without getting to know the Vietnamese people well and introduce ways of travelling (especially open tour bus trips) to their readership that cut down options for getting to know local people.

It is difficult to find out, if all of the authors covered in this writing are conscious about this fact. All this thesis can do at this point, is to assert that the power that creators of travel writing have, is very big and influential. This thesis therefore argues that it would be very desirable, if all authors of travel writing were aware about the power lying in their hands.

## Chapter V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This last chapter aims to provide short summaries of the main findings of this thesis. Furthermore it also highlights the need for further academic research related to its discussions to be carried out in the future.

Taking the historical outline as provided in Chapter II into account, one cannot deny that the present day situation is unprecedented and thus unique and valuable. Nowadays travelling from Thailand to Vietnam is possible without any problems and comparatively practical and easy because of a range of dramatic shifts in politics, economics, strategic cooperation, security issues and also fundamental ideological concerns. The present day situation is thus highly estimable and could constitute the beginning of better relations and better attitudes.

However, believing that tourism on its own will heal the wounds that the past has done to how Vietnam is perceived in Thailand, means to overestimate the potential of tourism. Despite the fact that tourism has a unique potential and can contribute to how new and better attitudes towards Vietnam is constructed among the Thai public, reading a lot of travel writings indicates that often this is not the case.

This thesis asserts that travelling on its own already constitutes a fundamental change, but it is very careful about giving out optimistic prognoses. This thesis insists that, as already summarised under 3.4.1, Thai views on Vietnam as a country are largely influenced by thinking about the war, Vietnam's ancient history and a feeling of proximity. These three aspects, however, remain almost completely unchanged during journeys to Vietnam. There are generally speaking almost no signs in travel writings that would indicate Thai views on Vietnam as a country to change



significantly.

As for the Vietnamese people, as concluded in 3.4.2, despite idealistic feelings of some writers about chances to improve attitudes towards the Vietnamese people, those chances do not look bright at all. This is largely due to the sheer lack of contacts between many authors of travel writing and Vietnamese people. Ways of travelling through Vietnam without considerable contact with the Vietnamese is further promoted by the style of travelling that many of the authors chose, namely open tour trips. This thesis also has to attest that negative experiences with money seem to hit most travellers unexpectedly. These negative experiences therefore tear down many authors' attitudes towards the Vietnamese people tremendously.

This thesis has been pioneering in taking Thai travel writing to Vietnam seriously and in viewing it as a valid source to find out about Thai peoples' attitudes regarding Vietnam. The discussions of Chapter III have demonstrated how suitable travel writings are for this purpose by drawing from the psychological dimensions that travel writings can reveal. Chapter IV has taken the viewpoint that due to the relatively recent emergence of Thai tourism to Vietnam and the consequent genesis of Thai travel writing on Vietnam, one can currently see how some old thinking patterns are still visible and also how some new thinking patterns emerge and change aspects of how Vietnam is seen. These findings further substantiate the claim that the present day situation is a "critical point" in the sense of a period, which has a potential to change attitudes towards Vietnam with the outcome that still cannot be guaranteed to be a positive one.

The thesis therefore highlighted the importance of some determining factors that shape visitors' views on Vietnam. As for more psychological factors lying with the authors, this thesis emphasised the importance and implications of "travelling as a Thai person" and varying degrees of openness for the Vietnamese as being extremely

important attitudes. Regarding factors that relate more to the activity of travelling inside Vietnam, this thesis discussed the meaning of itineraries and the role of different travel styles. Based on its discussions, this piece of research concluded that all of them are of extreme relevance and can influence attitudes both positively and negatively.

Besides reaching these findings, this thesis has also detected some under researched areas by reviewing an extensive amount of academic publications. These areas include research on Thai travel writing. Thai travel writing is, as remarked in chapter II, distinct compared to other nations' travel writings. It would therefore be highly interesting to be explored in much more depth. Besides this gap, this thesis also identified the area of Thai peoples' attitudes towards Vietnam to be almost entirely undiscovered area of studies.

Research on Thai attitudes regarding Vietnam could be carried out by employing many different methods from various academic disciplines. This thesis has demonstrated that drawing from travel writing is an approach that works extremely well for researching about those attitudes. This is why this thesis asserts that it would be highly promising and fruitful to carry out more research based on travel writing in the future. Even more important than the approach, however, would simply be that many more researchers working in different fields would understand that the present day situation is unprecedented in history and thus extremely valuable. This thesis therefore strongly recommends to recognise the immense importance of taking Thai attitudes towards Vietnam seriously and to carry out much more academic research on them.

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# # 5387649420: MAJOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

KEYWORDS: THAI-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS/ TOURISM/ TRAVEL  
WRITING/ ATTITUDE

DAVID JUERGEN MOELLER: THAI ATTITUDE TOWARDS VIETNAM AS  
SHOWN IN CONTEMPORARY TRAVEL WRITING. ADVISOR: ASST.  
PROF. MONTIRA RATO, Ph.D., CO-ADVISOR: KLAIRUNG  
AMRATISHA, Ph.D., 91 pp.

Historically the relationships between Thailand and Vietnam have often been difficult. The Vietnam War was only one among several periods of time in which those relations were extremely bad. In 1986, however, with the implementation of “Đổi Mới”, the renovation policy of the Vietnamese government, official relations improved and laid one of the foundations, which years later made it possible for many Thai tourists to visit Vietnam. Thai travel writing on Vietnam has consequently developed and now there is a large amount of such publications available. This thesis analyses a representative number of them in order to find out about the Thai attitude towards Vietnam. This thesis has two objectives, namely firstly to analyze Thai travel writings on Vietnam and to investigate Thai people's attitude towards Vietnam and the Vietnamese and secondly to examine to what extent tourism can contribute to the improvement of Thai-Vietnamese relations and the view of Thai people towards Vietnam.

It appears that most writers' attitudes towards Vietnam or towards the Vietnamese people do not change much during their journeys. Depictions of negative experiences with the Vietnamese even indicate that some authors' attitudes worsen. Coining for the Thai attitude towards Vietnam is an awareness of Vietnam's long history, the Vietnam War and the difficulties in the relationships between Thailand and Vietnam. Regarding the Vietnamese people, some writers distance themselves from negative attitudes against the Vietnamese, which they have come across in Thailand. Despite the fact that some experiences have a negative impact on the attitude towards the Vietnamese, also positive remarks on them are made, most prominently by saying that they work very hard. In general, however, given the lack of in-depth contacts between the Vietnamese and many writers, it can be said that many authors do not have much interest in getting to know the Vietnamese. This thesis therefore argues that though tourism now provides an unprecedented chance to improve the Thai attitude towards Vietnam, there are also certain problems and risks in Thai tourism to Vietnam and consequently suggests that tourism on its own is very unlikely to improve those attitudes significantly.

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies

Student's Signature.....

Academic Year: 2011

Advisor's Signature.....

Co-advisor's Signature.....

ดาวิด เยอร์เก็น เมิลเลอร์: ทศนคติของไทยเกี่ยวกับเวียดนามที่ปรากฏในงานเขียนเชิงท่องเที่ยวร่วมสมัย. (THAI ATTITUDE TOWARDS VIETNAM AS SHOWN IN CONTEMPORARY TRAVEL WRITING), อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: รศ.ดร.มนธิรา ราโท, อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์ร่วม: อ.ดร.โกสักรัง อามระดิษ, 91 หน้า

ประเทศไทยและประเทศเวียดนามมีความสัมพันธ์ที่ไม่สู้ดีนักในเชิงประวัติศาสตร์ ช่วงสงครามเวียดนามเป็นช่วงเวลาหนึ่งในหลายๆ ช่วงที่ความสัมพันธ์ของทั้งสองประเทศเลวร้ายอย่างที่สุด อย่างไรก็ตามในค.ศ. 1986 รัฐบาลเวียดนามได้อนุญาตให้คนไทย (Doi Moi) มาใช้ในการปฏิรูปประเทศ ซึ่งทำให้ความสัมพันธ์อย่างเป็นทางการระหว่างไทยและเวียดนามได้ลงหลักปักฐานและมีทิศทางที่ดีขึ้น ในปีต่อๆ มานักท่องเที่ยวไทยเดินทางไปเวียดนามได้สะดวกขึ้นจึงส่งผลให้งานเขียนเชิงท่องเที่ยวของไทยเกี่ยวกับประเทศเวียดนามมีการพัฒนาและตีพิมพ์ออกมาเป็นจำนวนมาก

วิทยานิพนธ์เรื่องนี้ได้เลือกงานเขียนเชิงท่องเที่ยวจำนวนหนึ่งมาวิเคราะห์โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์ 2 ประการ คือเพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติของคนไทยที่มีต่อประเทศเวียดนามและชาวเวียดนามและเพื่อศึกษาว่าการท่องเที่ยวในประเทศเวียดนามของชาวไทยที่เพิ่มมากขึ้นมีคุณูปการอย่างไรต่อการส่งเสริมความสัมพันธ์ไทย-เวียดนาม และทัศนคติเชิงบวกของชาวไทยต่อประเทศเวียดนาม

การศึกษาพบว่า ผู้เขียนส่วนใหญ่ไม่ได้เปลี่ยนทัศนคติต่อประเทศเวียดนามและชาวเวียดนามมากนักในระหว่างการเดินทางการพรรณนาประสบการณ์เชิงลบเกี่ยวกับเวียดนามเป็นการบ่งชี้ว่าผู้เขียนบางคนมีทัศนคติที่ด้านลบเพิ่มขึ้น สิ่งที่ตั้งอยู่ในทัศนคติของคนไทยที่มีต่อเวียดนาม ได้แก่การตระหนักว่าเวียดนามมีประวัติศาสตร์ที่ยาวนาน สงครามเวียดนามและความสัมพันธ์ที่ไม่สู้ดีระหว่างประเทศไทยและประเทศเวียดนาม สำหรับทัศนคติที่มีต่อชาวเวียดนามผู้เขียนบางคนพยายามหลีกเลี่ยงทัศนคติเชิงลบที่เคยรับรู้ในประเทศไทย แม้ว่าในความเป็นจริง ประสบการณ์บางอย่างจะส่งผลกระทบต่อทัศนคติเกี่ยวกับชาวเวียดนามแต่ก็ยังมีการเขียนถึงชาวเวียดนามในเชิงบวกอยู่ โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งการกล่าวถึงชาวเวียดนามว่าขยันทำงาน อย่างไรก็ตามผู้เขียนโดยทั่วไปไม่ได้มีปฏิสัมพันธ์ในเชิงลึกกับชาวเวียดนาม กล่าวได้ว่าผู้เขียนหลายคนไม่มีความสนใจมากนักที่จะทำความรู้จักชาวเวียดนามอย่างจริงจัง วิทยานิพนธ์นี้มีข้อสังเกตว่าแม้ในปัจจุบัน การท่องเที่ยวประเทศเวียดนามจะเปิดโอกาสให้เกิดการเสริมสร้างทัศนคติที่ดีของคนไทยต่อประเทศเวียดนามอย่างไม่เคยปรากฏมาก่อนแต่ก็มีปัญหาและความเสี่ยงบางประการจากการท่องเที่ยวนอกจากนั้น ผลการศึกษายังแสดงว่าโดยตัวของการท่องเที่ยวเองไม่ได้มีผลต่อการเสริมสร้างทัศนคติที่ดีอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ

สาขาวิชา เอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ศึกษา ลายมือชื่อนิสิต.....

ปีการศึกษา 2554

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## **Biography**

David Juergen Moeller was born in Regensburg, Germany on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1984. He obtained his BA (Hons.) in South East Asian Studies from SOAS / University of London in 2010 and then decided to pursue an MA in Southeast Asian Studies at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.