ABSTRACTS

Lakhon ("Muang Kao"): A Forgotten City in Central-Laos

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The oblivion into which the ancient city of Lakhon – now merely an ensemble of ruins of religious monuments known under the name "Muang Kao" (old town) – has fallen, is inversely proportional to its importance during the period of the great Lān Xāng kingdom, especially during the reign of Suriyavongsa in the seventeenth century. Besides Vientiane, it emerged as the second major economic and political centre of the Lao realm. We are still poorly informed about the events that led to the destruction and abandonment of this city at the turn of the nineteenth century. However, a comparative analysis of the numerous archaeological remains, cross-referenced with textual data from epigraphy and historiography, provides significant insights into the local historical context. It thus allows reconsidering the role of central Laos in the geopolitical balance that the Lao were able to establish in the Middle Mekong Valley, showing many similarities with the other major historical cultures that had previously evolved in the same area.

The Study of the* Poem of Separation of the Monk Nak from Tha Say Monastery *(*นิราศพระนาควัดท่าทราย */níʔrâ:t phráʔ nâ:k wát thâ: sa:j/)

Gilles Delouche, Emeritus Professor of Siamese Literature, INALCO-CERLOM.

Among the fragments of works which disappeared following the destruction of Ayudhya by the Burmese in 1767 and were later collected by Phraya Trang in his *Works of Ancient Poets*, a set of 22 quatrains can be identified as belonging to the genre *Nirat*, a separation poem. We hypothesize here that the author to whom Phraya Trang attributes these stanzas, Phra Nak of the Tha Say Monastery, is the same than Phraya Nak of the Monastery of Tha Say, who composed the *Bunnowat in verse Chan* in the middle of the 18th century. The latter describes the inauguration ceremonies of the buildings erected by King Baromkot (1732-1758) at the Buddha's footprint in Saraburi. The study of the place names mentioned in this Nirat leads us to think that the two works represent two relations of the same journey to the Buddha's footprint, one religious and the other profane.

The* grū *from the Parnasse: Au Chhieng facing the Titans

Grégory Mikaelian, researcher at Centre Asie du Sud-Est (UMR 8170, CNRS/EHESS /INALCO)

This essay gathers the sum of biographical information available on Au Chhieng (1908-1992). A figure of Khmer studies trained at the school of Sylvain Lévi (professor at Collège de France), he remained in the shadow by the combined effect of a natural inclination for discretion, an ethos of knowledge associated with the traditional figure of the Cambodian *grū*, and a colonial rule that placed Cambodian scholars into a subordinate position. His work, however, testifies to a metapolitical dimension that he did not bent to his destiny. Not only does he appear, in his scarce writings and communications, pugnacious and strongly determined, but he intervenes in a relevant manner on the major issues that affected Khmer studies, starting with their very definition. His position, not so much in the margins of the Khmer studies of the post-war period, dominated by the figure of George Coedès, as in their foundations, is to be considered for what it meant to Au Chhieng himself: contributing to the recovery of the Khmer knowledge from scientific, moral and aesthetic points of view

Japan and the France-Thailand War: the Story of a True-False Conspiracy

Franck Michelin, Professor of History, Faculty of Economics, Teikyo University (Tokyo); Associate member, Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer.

A few weeks after the invasion of French Indochina by the Japanese army, the 23 September 1940, a low-intensity conflict broke out between Thailand and France on the western fringes of Cambodia and Laos. France, occupied then by Nazi Germany, under the threat of Japan in Indochina, has kept so far the memory of a naval battle won by France — Koh Chang —, and especially of collusion between Thailand and Japan. However, the various works made by the specialist of Thai history, as well as our research undertaken in Japanese archives deny this theory. Bangkok provoked this war because it was afraid of a possible annexation of French Indochina by Japan. The later forced Thailand and France to accept its mediation to make them collaborate with its plan of expansion towards British and Dutch colonies. This is the history of true-false conspiracy.

Some aspects of Contemporary Buddhism

Paul Mus, Professor at Collège de France (unpublished text edited by Grégory Mikaelian)

Apart his two weekly courses at the Collège de France, delivered on Monday and Tuesday, Paul Mus generously gave lectures at the request of institutions or associations whose names are not always known today. During the year 1964-1965 when the present conference took place in Champrosay, his lectures at the College de France were dedicated to two topics essential to his scientific approach: the sociology of Asia and the history of Buddhism. The *verbatim* of the Champrosay conference, published here for the first time, is part of an exercise that P. Mus practiced at regular intervals: explaining to an educated European assistance the essence of Buddhism, its history, and the way it could bridge with Western thinking, to foster dialogue between East and West.

A Critical review. Looking back at the 17th century Khmer cosmogony treaty

Grégory Mikaelian, researcher, Centre Asie du Sud-Est (UMR 8170, CNRS/EHESS/INALCO)

Michel Tranet recently published the *princeps* edition of a part of the *Traibhed,* offering thus an opportunity of rediscovering this key text of the middle period. Dating from the 17th century, the *Traibhed* relates the genesis of the earth, deities, planets, zodiac, and the protagonists of *Rāmāyaṇa*. A review of the different gloss from various authors precedes a critical analysis of the edition. The latter seems defective in many respects. The simplifications made by Tranet confirm that the meaning of certain passages, already obscure for the readers at the time of Adhémard Leclère, requires going through an archaeology of texts.