

MAP OF SOUTHERN KHORAT.

A SIAMESE ACCOUNT OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE  
ON KHAO PHANOM RUNG

*Translated by*

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The following tale was obtained by Dr. A. F. G. Kerr, Acting Director-General of the Department of Agricultural Research in the Ministry of Commerce and Communications, through the intermediary of Luang Sarasin Prasert, Revenue Officer of Changvat Buriram, Circle of Nakhon Rajasima (Khorat), some years ago when the Doctor visited that part of North-Eastern Siam.

The text is given as set down by Luang Narong Raksa Khetr, Nai Amphoe (District Officer) of Nangrong, and is based upon information given by old people living in that district.

Nangrong lies to the south-east of the town of Khorat.

Once upon a time, when the holy religion of the Lord Buddha had not yet come into existence and Nakhon Thom (Angkor Thom) was the mighty capital (of Cambodia), upheld by the strength of an army of brave warriors who protected its rich and opulent inhabitants—at a time moreover when the waves of the sea nearly touched the foot of Khao Banthat (the Dangrek chain)—there reigned a powerful king by name of Phra Chao Hindusthan.

This monarch was of Brahmanic descent, and his kingdom extended widely to all the four corners of the world. To the west it reached to Khao Sadaphan, i. e., the present Phra Phuttha Bat; to the East it bordered on the Khom country (the Kha country is probably meant); while to the north its borders reached Phra Nakhon Champak (Champasak).

The royal dynasty was a strong upholder of the Brahmanic cult. One day His Majesty, meditating on the future state of things, said: "It is well known, that the Buddhist religion is becoming very strong in Majjhima Pradesa (India), and that there are Phra Mahathera (illustrious monks) now wandering (and preaching) along the foot of Khao Banthat, and also in the North-West, in Nakhon Luang Phrabang and in Ramañña Pradesa (the Mon country), where they teach the people to adopt the religion of the Buddha from now onwards. If we allow this to go on, how shall the Brahmanic religion be able to prosper and hold its own in the future? Religion

being the most important thing in a country, we needs must look on religion as a diamond fortress to protect us against the enemy who, coming from the west, threatens to invade and shatter our kingdom to pieces. We must therefore implant more firmly the Brahmanic religion into the hearts of our people."

At that time the territory in which the Brahmanic religion held sway extended from Nakhon Thom to Lopburi in the west, and His Majesty's subjects were divided in two groups: Brahmans and Khmer. The Khmer were numerous, while of the Brahmans there were but few. All the handicrafts were practised by the Khmer; the Brahmans mostly occupying themselves with the religious cult. At that time too the Greeks (*sic*) had introduced the art of building, just as the Cantonese have to-day (in Siam).

At the present time there live only a few people at the foot of the hills, but formerly this was not so. This is proved by the fact that at the foot of these hills are found the traces of old villages and remains of ancient stone temples, as well as images of the gods in great numbers.

Of those known to-day may be mentioned, in the district of Nang-rong, the so-called Prasat Chong Sa Chang, which lies prominently on a hill to the east of the mouth of that pass (Chong Sa Chang).

When His Majesty had spoken as related above, he called a meeting of his ministers and high officials and addressed them as follows:—"The western parts of our realm consist only of forests, jungle and hills, and the few villages found there are small and poor. We ought therefore to move some of our people, who live so clumped together round our capital, and settle them in that part of the country. Furthermore, in connection with this settlement of our subjects we must see to it that, first of all, the holy religion of Brahma be firmly implanted there in a dignified and worthy manner, so that our people may be content and happy to live there (in the new territory).

"We will therefore depart ourselves with an army in order to plan out and arrange for the properties of the church and build temples which shall bear witness to Heaven and Earth."

At the meeting all present agreed with the royal views and, after His Majesty's speech had been concluded, orders were issued to call up and assemble an army of one hundred thousand men, besides ten thousand of those skilled in designing, turning and the melting of metals. There were also selected ten thousand persons of both sexes

belonging to these families which had nowhere to stay or to earn their livelihood.

The royal idea of calling up these three categories of people was that the first one, consisting of battalions of brave warriors, should serve as protection for the future settlers against the enemy; that the second, the artisans, should do the building work; while as regards the third category, the ordinary people, that these should be allowed to build villages and establish their homes wherever they found the land suitable.

Thereafter Chao Mu'ang (governors) and the necessary officials would be appointed to superintend the settlers.

When the expedition had been assembled and was ready for departure, His Majesty set out from his palace and all marched in a north-westerly direction until a certain river, called Lamthan Sæng, was reached. Here His Majesty halted the expeditionary corps and ordered the engineers to build a bridge of concrete (!) across the river.

The bridge having been completed, His Majesty continued the march and led the army up through the pass of Chom (this word should read Chon, i. e., Dacoits' pass, in the hills south of Surin) to the district south of Surin, and when the expedition had arrived at a certain mountain, namely Khao Phanom Rung, camp was pitched. Here an Ammat (official) reported to His Majesty that he had met a Ru'si (hermit) who lived on the top of that hill, and told him that there was a cave underneath the mountain which had connection through an underground passage with Khao Sadaphan Khiri (Phra Phuttha Bat) in such a manner that one might walk from this mountain to the hills of Lopburi. Because of this cave the hill was called Phanom Rung in the Khmer language, Phanom signifying mountain and Rung a hole or cave. By this name the hill has been known since then.

The said cave is still seen to-day at Khao Wat to the north of the temple, but at present it is called Tham Krabut. The name is due to a herd of short-tailed monkeys living there. When the monkeys see a human being, they forthwith run away and disappear inside the cave. According to popular belief these monkeys are the warriors of Hanuman, and they come from Lopburi whence they travel through the above-mentioned underground passage. At the present time the monkeys are only seen at long intervals.

His Majesty, having listened to the officials' report, said that this was evidently a hill of excellent fortune and forthwith issued orders

to construct a temple on its top. The temple was built of concrete and laterite, and the main building was provided with images of the gods, also made of concrete.

There was a court in front (of the temple), on the spot where the path leads up from below, for the worshippers who came to do homage to the gods; ordinary people were not allowed to enter the temple itself. What is now, erroneously, called the stables of the white elephant is really but the carved façade of a door. There was also a stone paved path leading inside the temple. As regards the temple ponds, lying to the north of the temple, these were dug in order to obtain stones and earth for the construction of the temple. There are three ponds called Sa Bon, Sa Sai and Sa Yai respectively.

Laterite was used for making the rims of the 'sa' which served as water reservoirs. Around the temple, on the slopes of the hills, were built houses for the common people, and to facilitate communication roads were laid out.

When the Khao Phanom Rung temple had been finished, His Majesty decided to build a town for the residence of a governor (of the district) and therefore had Mu'ang Tam constructed, to the south of Khao Phanom Rung.

Inside that Nakhon (city) was erected a temple containing images of the gods, in order that the governor might worship them. The city was laid out in front of the temple and earth piled up to form the moats (walls?), while to the north of the town there was dug a 'sa' (water reservoir) lined with laterite borders. This 'sa' was called Thalæ Mu'ang Tam and, there being no water (courses) near the town, it was to serve as a water reservoir.

His Majesty did not provide the town with walls of stone or bricks because he considered the temple, containing the divine images, as the actual town. As regards the town only moats were dug surrounding it, and a public square was laid out to be used in case of war (for assembling the troops).

Nor did His Majesty build a town on the top of that hill (Phanom Rung), because he thought that during the hot weather season with its scorching air there would be much sickness due to the trees being without leaves and no grass or greenery to be found. Only dwellings for the temple servants were, therefore, built on the slopes of the hill.

With regard to Prasat Mu'ang Tam this temple lay, so to say, inside the governor's residence, just like Wat Phra Kæo (in Bangkok),

which is situated inside the enceinte of the Royal Grand Palace.

The temple was therefore not constructed in the grand style of that on the hill of Phanom Rung. Ponds (moats) were dug surrounding it, and their borders were beautifully worked out into the likeness of 'naga' with raised heads. There was no temple court for the common worshippers to perform their devotion in, as was the case at Phanom Rung.

When the building of the Mu'ang Tain and the Phanom Rung temples had been finished, His Majesty departed with the expedition towards a river called Lam Mul (the Mun river). Having arrived there His Majesty remarked that this river was an important waterway which, being in communication with the Mækhong, could be used for transport of troops and the navigation of fleets, and he therefore gave order to construct a temple there (on the banks of the Mun river) with images of the gods made of various materials.

This 'prasat' (temple) was built in the same style as that on Khao Phanom Rung, and a governor was appointed to take care of the temple as in the case of that of Phanom Rung. This was the temple now called Phinnai that lies on the banks of the Mun river. Ramparts of earth were thrown up to a height exceeding that of tree tops, (forming a fortress) to the south-east of the temple, to guard against enemies coming from the four cardinal points.

Furthermore, officials were dispatched to construct the Phanom Wan temple, but this latter had not yet been finished when war broke out. The Buddhists advanced and penetrated victoriously into the land occupied by the worshippers of Brahma, and the great capital, i. e., Angkor Thom, was besieged by the enemy.

His Majesty therefore hurriedly had to return with the army to his capital.

War in those far off times was mainly waged on religious issues, and the religion of the Buddha gained more and more foothold until finally the bulk of the Khmer people went over to that religion.

The people of Brahmanic descent disappeared and when King Hinduſhan, who had been an upholder of the Brahmanic cult, and formerly a powerful ruler, died, Nakhon Thom, the great capital, went into decay.

The succeeding kings (of Cambodia) were Buddhists by religion, and the country was reduced to a small land, because to the west, south and north the kingdoms (of the Thai) waxed stronger and stronger until a mighty king of kings extended his sway over the whole territory of Nakhon Thom.

These wars did not end quickly, but went on for hundreds of years. Whenever those of the Buddhist religion won the day, then the images of the gods lost their names (i. e., their cult ceased), or they were buried in the earth, and Buddhist images took their places. Again, if the Buddhists thought that the temples ought to be altered, they were altered to suit their ideas.

On the other hand, if the Brahmanists afterwards re-conquered a temple, they, in their turn, destroyed the Buddhist images and reinstated those of the Brahmanic cult. Consequently, it is now difficult to decide whether many of the smaller temples (originally) were Brahmanic or Buddhist sanctuaries. Exceptions are the larger temples, as for instance Phanom Rung and the Phimai temples, where it is clear, from their style of architecture and ornaments, that they date back to the period of Nakhon Thom; also the style of the Phutthaisaman temple (it should be Banteai Chhmar) shows that it belongs to that far off period.

I have explored the country lying between Khao Phanom Rung and Phimai and have found everywhere old trenches for use in warfare, so for instance where the Amphoe office of Nangrong is situated.

Other places are Mu'ang Fang, Mu'ang Nong Hong(sa), Mu'ang Ron Thong and Mu'ang Faek, which are all constructed as trenches and not as (fortified) towns, as might be imagined from their present names. This concludes my investigations.

#### TRANSLATOR'S COMMENTS

It is a little difficult to decide how much of the preceding tale is due to Luang Narong Raksa Khet, and how much to his narrators; but at least the name given to the Khmer king, Phra Chao Hindusthan, as well as the mention of the Greeks, must no doubt be due to interpolations by Luang Narong. The tale seems on the whole to be based on some confused and very inaccurate memories of the grand past of Cambodia, and a tradition about an exodus of settlers from the vicinity of Angkor Thom, which evidently has been mixed up with the (much later) wars waged between the Khmer and the Thai from the XIVth to the XVth century A. D.

Though it is more than probable that Thalæ Sap, the inland lake, once formed part of a gulf of the China Sea this can, of course, only have been the case at a period much anterior to the building of Angkor Thom (IXth century A. D.). Next, the enmity described as existing between Brahmanism and Buddhism was, I believe, more or

less non-existent. It is moreover probable that the Mahayanistic form of Buddhism entered Cambodia at a very early period, being perhaps coeval with Brahmanism.

The great mass of the population may even always have been of the Buddhist Religion while Brahmanism was the State religion. It is, however, well known that not a few of the Cambodian kings, such as the great Yaçovarman (889-910 A. D.), who gave his name to Angkor Thom (Yaçodharapura), and Jayavarman VII (1182-1201 A. D.), the great builder of hospitals, both for men and beasts, were fervent Buddhists.

On the other hand, it is also known that some of the most famous temples, such as Bayon (inside the walls of Angkor Thom) and Phra Khan, were originally Buddhist sanctuaries later transformed into Brahmanic temples by certain kings zealous for the cult of Çiva. Sometimes this zeal went so far as to transform, by help of chisel and hammer, the Buddhist images into Brahmanic ones (Phra Khan), a somewhat similar process to that which sometimes took place in ancient Egypt.

By the Buddhist enemy coming from west and north must be understood the Thai from Sukhothai (and later from Ayudhya) and the Thai (Lao) coming down from the Luang Phrabang-Viengchan kingdom. The wars between the Khmer and the Thai were surely fought on political and not on religious issues. The royal expedition, for colonizing the southern districts of the present circle of Khorat, reminds one much, in its composition, of the famous expedition of Queen Nang Chamathewi, when the Hariphunchai or Lamphum principality was founded by Mon settlers from Lopburi in the VIIIth century A. D. That, too, was composed of warriors, priests, and artisans.

The route followed by the Khmer expedition was the ancient highway that runs in a north-westerly direction from Angkor Thom and connects this old capital with the temple town of Phimai. This highway, which probably was constructed for both military and cultural purposes, is about 225 kilometres long and can still be traced to-day. Both Major Lunet de Lajonquière, in his admirable *Inventaire descriptif des monuments du Cambodge*, vol. III, p. XXVIII, and the former Director of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Professor Louis Finot, in his *Dharmaçalas au Cambodge* (*BEFEO*, vol. XXV, 1925, p. 417), have described this grand old road along which there were built eight *dharmaçala* or rest-houses



(combined with chapels dedicated to the Bodhisattva, *Lokeçvara*, protector of the travellers against sickness, thieves, robbers and ferocious animals) for pilgrims travelling either from Angkor Thom to Phimai or vice versa.

The road must be of considerable age, as the *Dharmaçala* were already built during the reign of *Yaçovarman*, or more than a thousand years ago. Two of these ancient rest-houses with chapels, built of laterite, *Prasat Nong Plong* and *Prasat Sebo*, both of which I visited many years ago, lie in Siamese territory, near the road connecting *Nangrong* with the town of *Khorat*. According to our tale the *Khmer* expedition made a halt at *Stung Sæng* or *Sreng*, a water course which cuts the highway at a distance of about 70 kilometres from *Angkor Thom*.

Here a bridge was built of 'concrete', by which is probably meant laterite, a kind of natural cement, called '*sila læng*' in Siamese. In fact the bridge is still in a good preservation; it is built of laterite, has twenty-five arches and measures 149 metres in length, its parapets being made in the shape of many-headed '*naga*.'

From this point, the tale goes on to say, the expedition marched to the *Dangrek* chain, that forbidding mountainous and forest clad barrier which separates North-Eastern Siam from low-lying Cambodia. The chain was crossed by the *Chon* pass, the expedition thus ascending the north-eastern plateau to the south of *Surin*. Evidently this must be an error of memory on the part of the narrator. First of all, to do so, the expedition should have turned north-east, after having crossed *Stung Sreng*, which must have been contrary to its destination; next, the old road does not follow that direction (N.-E.), but continues north-westwards for another 40 kilometres, until it crosses the hills at *Chong Samet*, where now stand the ruins of a former hospital, called *Ta Mean Toch*, dedicated to *Lokeçvara*. From the *Samet* pass to *Phanom Rung* the distance is 52 kilometres due north-west, the ancient road traversing a now rather desolate forest of the resinous trees so common in this region. From *Phanom Rung* to *Phimai* the distance is 63 kilometres, and there the road ends.

As already stated above, this tale seems to be made up of some rather confused memories about the past of Cambodia. There may, however, be a grain of truth in it, namely, as regards the colonization of that part of Southern and Central *Khorat* which is now contained in the districts of *Nangrong*, *Talung* and *Phimai*. When perusing the history of Cambodia, so admirably told by *M. G. Maspéro* in his

work *L'Empire Khmer* one finds no mention of any such expedition ever having taken place. But this, of course, does not prove that it did *not* take place, as a persistent oral tradition may often have some truth in it.

But let us examine the inscriptions found, so far, in that part of Siam. One of the oldest of these is in Sanscrit and engraved on the wall of a cave, called Tham Pet Thong (cave of the golden duck), which lies about 23 kilometres south of Nangrong. It is attributed by Prof. G. Cœdès to King Çrī Citrasena, a famous conqueror who reigned in the beginning of the viith century A. D., and who has left other inscriptions at Pak Mun, Tham Prasat (near the first named place) as well as in Surin.<sup>(1)</sup> This inscription, together with the Sanscrit and Khmer inscriptions, found at Ban Hin Khon (13 kilometres to the south-east of Amphœ Pakthungehai) and Bo Ika (to the north-west of Amphœ Sung Ncen) also dating back to the viith and viith century A. D. goes to show that Southern and Western Khorat already then, i e., more than 1,200 years ago, had been absorbed into the kingdom of the Khmer, who at that time also conquered Funan (the present Cambodia). Still the conquest of the Khorat region may, at first, have been but a purely military one not yet followed by any real occupation by the Khmer people. With regard to the aboriginal population, this consisted most probably of Nia Kuol or Chao Bon as well as Kui or Sui, who, ethnically speaking, belong to the same stock as the Khmer though they are much inferior to them in culture.

As the *dharmacala* built along the great highway were the work of King Yaçovarman, the oldest parts of Phimai may date from his reign too. Wat Phanom Wan, lying not far from and to the north-east of Khorat town, goes back, according to inscriptions found there, to the xth century (the latest inscription is from 1187 A. D.), while the inscription found at Phanom Rung, now in the Royal Museum, dates back to the xith century (Mahasakarāt) or about 1100 A. D. The pretension that the sanctuaries of Mu'ang Tam, Phanom Rung, Phimai and Phamon Wan were all constructed by one and the same king seems therefore untenable.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) See my *Complément à l'Inventaire descriptif des monuments du Cambodge* (*BEFEO*, vol. XXII, p. 55).

(2) For the confirmation of the dates given above see G. Cœdès et H. Parmentier, *Listes générales des inscriptions et des monuments du Champa et du Cambodge* (new edition published in *BEFEO*, 1923).

For the benefit of those readers of the Journal of the Siam Society who are not conversant with the works of Majors Aymonier<sup>(1)</sup> and Lunet de Lajouquière,<sup>(2)</sup> those hardy pioneers in the exploration and study of the sanctuaries of ancient Cambodia a short description of the temples of Mu'ang Tam, Phanom Rung and Phanom Wan will be attempted in the following.

Any excursion to Mu'ang Tam and Phanom Rung should be made with Buriram as a starting point. Buriram is now a station on the North-Eastern Line and motor cars may be hired there. When in charge of the training and supervision of the Provincial Gendarmerie in N.-E. Siam during the years 1908-1919, I had the good fortune to be able to visit most of the ancient Khmer temple ruins which lie scattered over this immense plateau, and thus I also visited Mu'ang Tam and Phanom Rung twice. At that time the distance (74 kilometres), from Buriram to Phanom Rung was covered in two and a half days march by using ponies, bullock carts or carriers. I suppose that a motor car can easily do the same distance in less than half a day now, though the going may be somewhat heavy on the sandy roads.

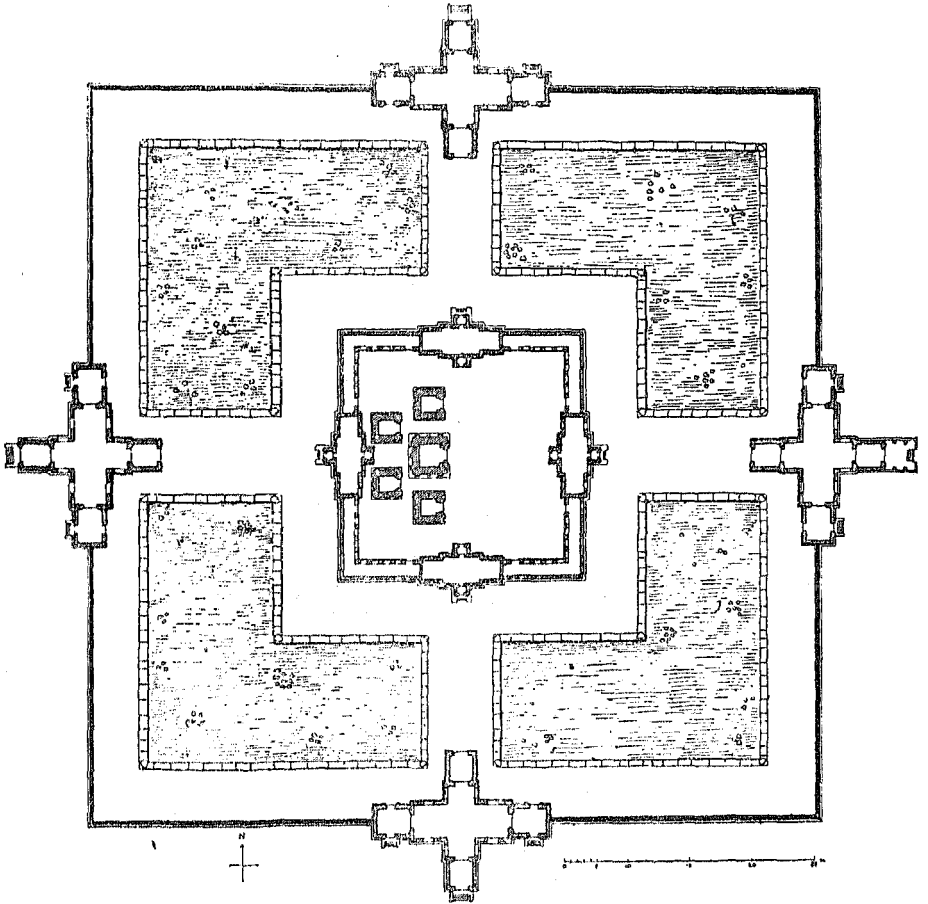
The town of Buriram(ya)—the beautiful city—is called Mu'ang Bae by the Khmer, who are the principal inhabitants of the Amphoes of Buriram, Talung and Nangrong. Though an ancient place, it is quite devoid of any interesting buildings. It is built as a square surrounded by broad moats, water-filled on the western, southern and eastern sides, and has earthen ramparts, now pulled down in part. These ramparts had a circumference of 3.8 kilometres.

The city gates have all been pulled down long ago, but about twenty years ago the western entrance still had a tall wooden gate *in situ*.

To the west of the town, on the highway running to Khorat, lies the former silk farm, where Japanese instructors for some years tried to teach the local population to improve the silk culture, as far as I know, without any lasting results. The first part of our itinerary follows the Khorat road to Ban Boa where it turns south, which direction it keeps for some 42 kilometres until Talung is reached. Leaving Buriram by its western gate, we see on our left hand the low wooded mountain, Khao Kadung. This hill, which is composed of laterite

(1) Etienne Aymonier, *Le Cambodge*, II.

(2) E. Lunet de Lajouquière, *Inventaire descriptif des monuments du Cambodge*, in the following referred to as I. K.



PLAN OF MU'ANG TAM.



and sandstone, attains a height of only 170 metres. Its northern top (it has two) is crowned with the ruins of a Khmer tower (I. K. No. 419, Phu Khao Ru'si) which evidently was never completed. The building materials were laterite and sandstone without any sculptures whatever. Inside the sanctuary is seen a small modern Phra Bat (imprint of the foot of the Buddha). This small temple can be reached by a path leading up from below on the northern slope of the hill. At the foot of this path there is a small man-made pond containing clear and cold water. Débris of several well executed stone statuettes representing female divinities have been found near the sanctuary.

Continuing by the Buriram-Talung road we pass several villages lying in the open forest. We note here, stuck on the top of the fences enclosing many of the houses, a number of monkey skulls which, in this part of the country, are said to be a very effective protection against evil spirits. Soon after we cross the broad Kadung plain where, dotted all over it, may be seen during the dry season a great many flowering 'chan' trees. Viewed from a distance, the profusion of the golden flowers set against the background of the grey brown forest gives one the impression of a sea of flames.

Not far from, and a little to the east of, where the road re-enters the forest lie the tumbled down remains of a small sanctuary built of laterite and sandstone; its name is Yeui Prasat<sup>(1)</sup> and it is surrounded by a square-formed moat.

Before arriving at Ban Talung, where the Amphoe office and Gendarmerie station of the district of the same name are installed, we pass Ban Slaengthon, which is surrounded by tall earthen ramparts and waterfilled moats, and Ban Sai,<sup>(2)</sup> in whose spirit-house are seen two mutilated but still fine stone torsos of what probably represented a Vishnu and a Lakshmi.

The real name of the village, where the Amphoe office lies, is Prakhonchai, which formerly also gave its name to the surrounding district since changed to Talung, the name of an old fortified but now deserted place, called Dlon or Thalung, lying about four kilometres to the north-west of the amphoe office. Ban Talung is a large pleasant village counting over four hundred houses built under the shade of tall graceful palms and big tamarind trees. The Talung Khmer talk a somewhat purer dialect than their kin in Buriram and Surin

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(1) See my *Complement*, page 37.

(2) See my *Complement*, *ibid.*

and are known as good cart builders. The women carry their burdens on the head, while their Thai sisters carry them on their shoulders. At the rural festivals the young men and the girls are accustomed to sing together.

Though officially of the Buddhist religion the population is strongly superstitious; and the use of "smoke baths" for expelling the evil spirits of the "possessed" is very common.

There is often a lively traffic of large caravans of bullock carts passing through Ban Talung, en route for the Tako pass and the Circle of Prachin, with loads of 'sisiat'<sup>(1)</sup> and rattan. From Talung the road turns south-west and 17 kilometres more bring us to the ruins of Mu'ang Tam (I. K No. 403).

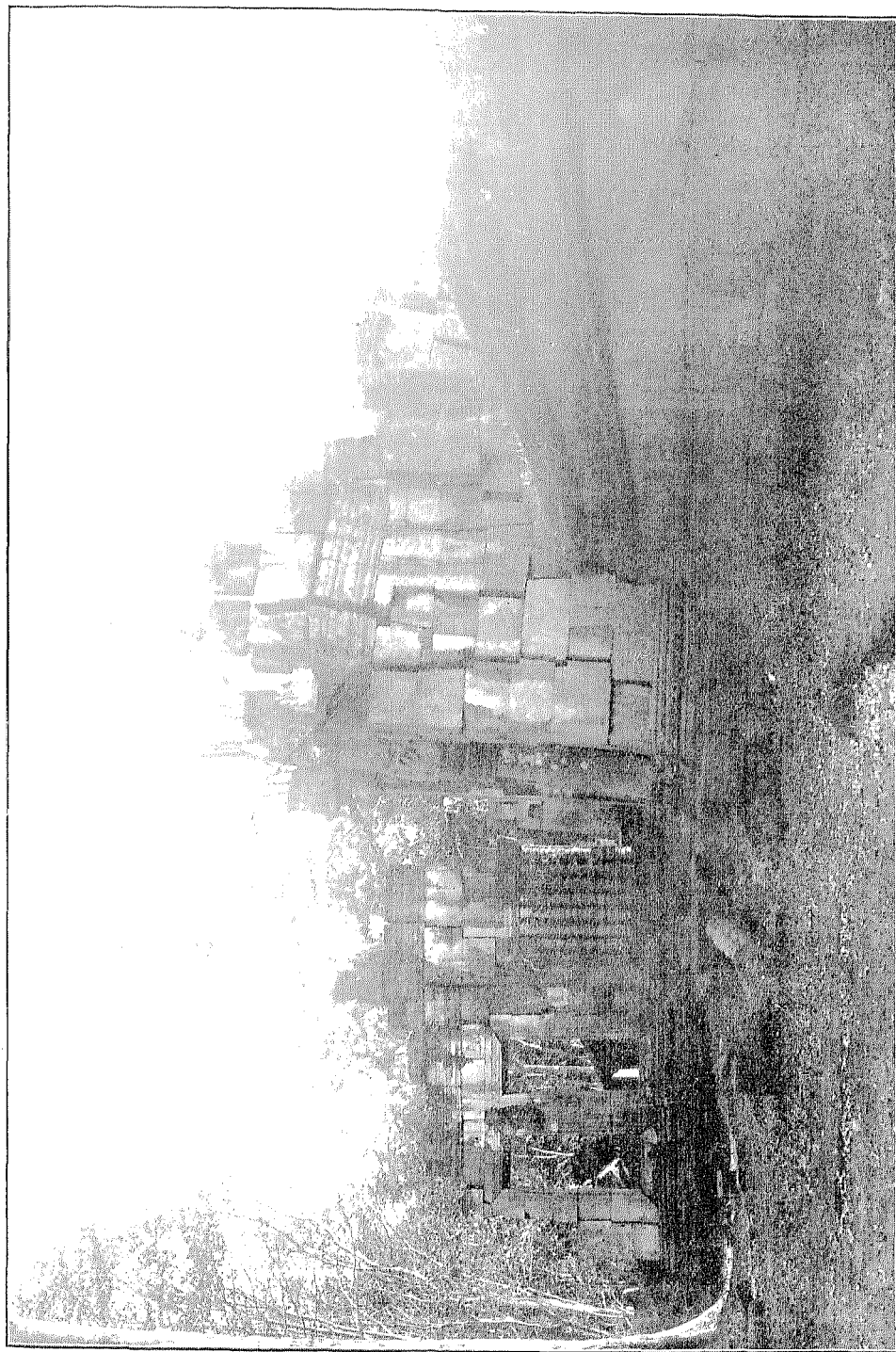
Being in the real Khmer country here we now often meet, especially if the time is just after harvest, small caravans of light and elegantly built carts in which sit parties of gay and gaudily clothed young people on their way to a 'thambun' somewhere in one of the neighbouring villages. These carts, which are provided with long tapering yokes whose tips are often carved in the likeness of a 'naga', are drawn by so-called 'wua wing', a small but extremely hardy and quick-trotting race of Cambodian bullocks that easily cover 8 kilometres an hour for quite considerable distances. The large sanctuary, called Mu'ang Tam, consists of five brick towers enclosed by galleries lying inside a moat which again is enclosed by a tall stone wall. The name, which is Siamese, means the low lying town, in contrast to the high-lying Phanom Rung, the blue veiled masses of which and the near-lying Phu Khao Angkhan are seen looming up to the west. The original name of the temple is, so far, unknown.

The temple lies to the south of an immense water reservoir, now dry, called Thake (the sea), which measures 1,200 metres east to west and 500 metres north to south. It is enclosed by dykes, 40 metres broad and 4 metres high, which were originally stone-covered on their interior faces. The Nai Amphœ (the district officer) has several times tried to close a gap in the dyke, in order to create a constant supply of water during the dry season. But so far his work has been in vain and the old reservoir remains dry.

In the middle of both the northern and the southern dykes broad steps lead down to the bottom of the reservoir.

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(1) A kind of bark much used for betel-chewing up-country. It yields a red colour.



*Photo E. Groff.*

Muang Tam temple.  
Gopura and temple wall.









Muung Tam temple.

Gallery with gopuras on temple island. Note in foreground the mags lining the edges of the moats.

*Photo E. Groot.*

As mentioned above, the temple is enclosed by an outer enceinte, consisting of an imposing wall of sandstone, which is 2.75 metres in height and has a thickness of 1.20 metres. It measures 460 metres in circumference.

The northern, eastern and southern faces of this enceinte are well preserved, with the exception of a few small gaps here and there; in the western wall there is, however, a wide gap where the wall has tumbled down.

Entrance to the interior of the temple is by four cruciformed gopuras or gate buildings, each provided with three doors, which are placed exactly in the middle of all four walls. It seems that neither the roofs nor the decoration of the lintels of the gopuras were ever completed. We enter through the eastern gopura and now see, in front of us, the sanctuary proper lying in a kind of square island separated from a narrow outer courtyard, which runs along the inner side of the walls, by moats 15 metres broad whose sides are faced with stone coverings. Four broad causeways connect the temple island with the gopuras. The rims of these causeways and of the moats are fashioned in the likeness of nagas which raise their heads menacingly at the twenty-four inner and outer corners of the moat. Crossing the moat by the eastern causeway we next find ourselves in front of the temple itself. This is enclosed by narrow galleries, built of sandstone and raised on a low platform of laterite.

The walls of the galleries are closed on the exterior side while to the interior, towards the inner court, they are broken by rows of windows provided with the turned grilles so characteristic of Khmer architecture. On the exterior side are rows of the so-called "false windows." These galleries too do not seem to have been finished. The same is the case with the gopuras, of which only the eastern, northern and southern have been completed, while the construction of the western has hardly been commenced. The decoration of the lintels of the gopuras is also unfinished. One notes, however, on the inner lintel of the eastern gopura a scene with a monkey playing with a naga.

In the inner court-yard stand the ruins of the five brick towers already mentioned, arranged in two rows from north to south, with three towers in the front and two in the back row. Of the three foremost the central tower is utterly ruined; it seems to have been erected on a low basis of laterite and to have been provided with a porch.

On the sandstone lintels of the remaining four towers are seen the following motives:—northern, in the first row: Śiva and Parvat seated on the bull Nandin; southern tower, in the first row: some indistinct person; third tower (second row): Brahma riding on the goose Hamsa; and finally fourth tower (second row): another indistinct person. It is to be noted that in two of the towers the altars, now empty, still remain.

Close to the south-eastern corner of the temple wall lies the Khmer village, called Ban Boa, in whose spirit house is seen a fine sitting stone image crowned with a mukuta (diadem), its height being 50 cm. This image is said to hail from the central tower of the sanctuary where it has been replaced by the present stone image of the Buddha enthroned on the naga.

To judge from the sculptures found in the Mu'ang Tam temple it must, at any rate originally, have been dedicated to the Brahmanic cult. Though much ruined and partially unfinished, it may formerly have been quite an imposing sanctuary, and as such is even to-day well worth a lengthy visit.

Due to the entire lack of inscriptions (which, however, may be found later during restoration work) nothing is known for certain of the age of this temple. It may be pre-Angkorean.

Adjoining the north-western corner of the Thalae or Rahal (a wide expanse of water, in this case the reservoir) is another, but smaller, basin measuring 120 metres east to west, and 60 north to south, which still contains water.

Close to the western border of this second reservoir and connected with it by a short causeway lies a small sanctuary which takes the form of a single tower constructed of laterite and sandstone, its height being about 12.5 metres. The tower stands inside a court-yard measuring 36 by 24 metres, which is enclosed by a wall of laterite. The only entrance to the temple is through a now completely ruined cross-shaped gopura placed in the middle of the eastern wall.

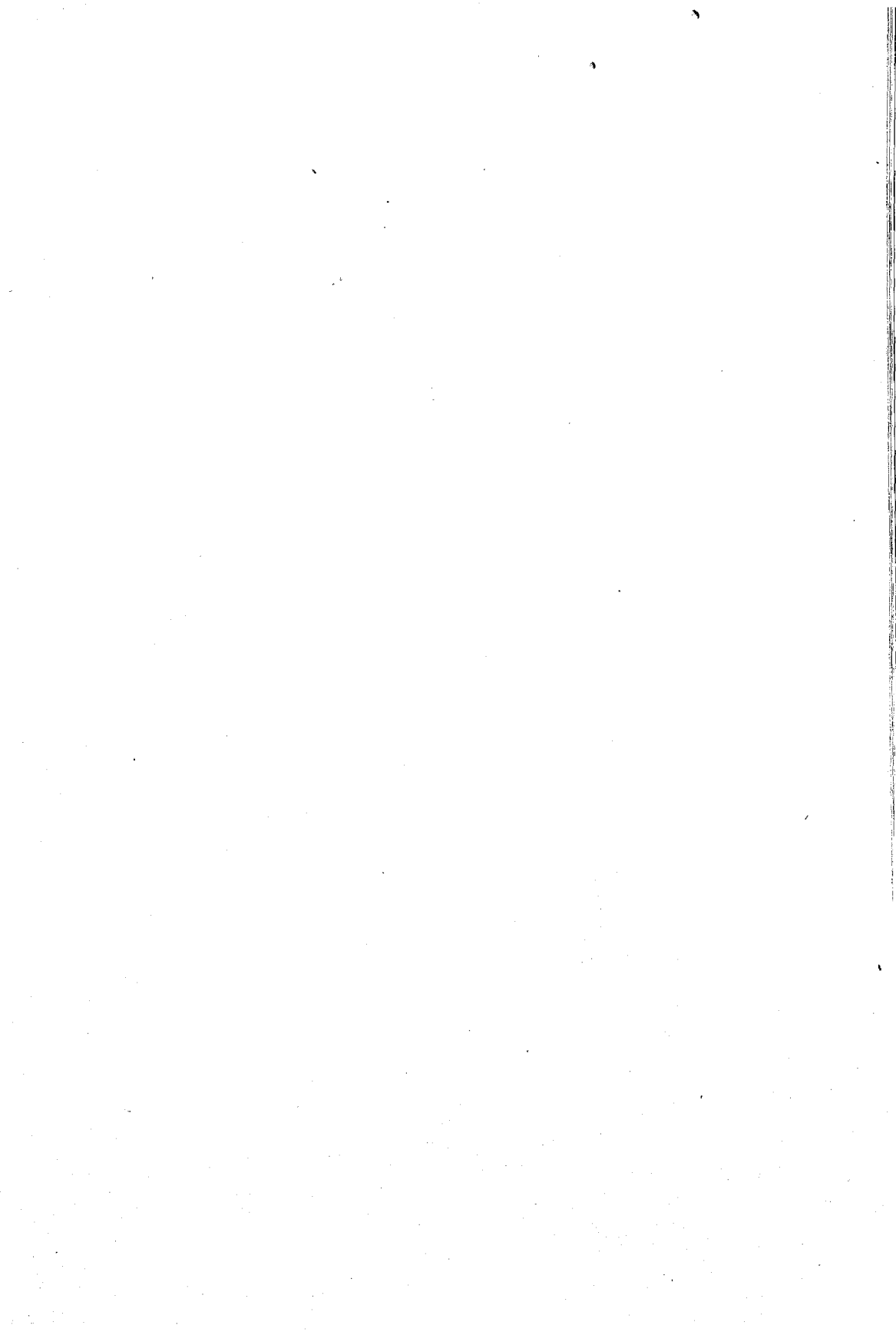
In the south-eastern corner of the temple court are the tumbled down remains of a small building, probably a former library or treasury of the temple. The tower is regularly orientated with a single door opening to the east. Of ornamentation one notes, placed above the door, a sculpture representing the god Indra riding the three-headed elephant Airavata. The superstructure of the tower was formerly ornamented with acroteres or carved corner stones, of which some are lying on the ground; on two of these acroteres are seen the



*Photo E. Groot.*

Mu'ang Tam temple.  
Curved lintel over door in the northern tower in first line.





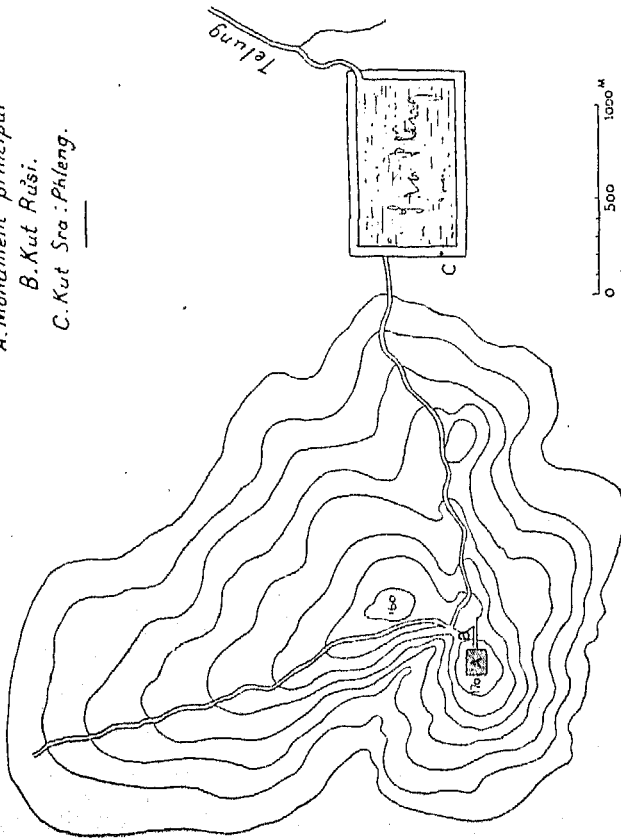


**PHNOM RUNG.**

A. Monument principal

B. Kut Ruksi.

C. Kut Sra : Phleng.



carved figures of a god riding on the shoulders of a man.

From this small sanctuary, described by Lunet de Lajonquière, I. K. under No. 404, as Kuk Ru'si (though not visited by him; see my *Complément*) we follow a path, running N. W. for about three kilometres through the forest, until we arrive at a large water reservoir, called Sa Phlæng.

This reservoir, which lies right at the foot of the Phanom Rung hill, is enclosed by tall dykes measuring 1,000 by 600 metres with a thickness of 20 metres. It contains a liberal supply of fresh and clear water during all seasons and, with the surrounding shady trees, offers therefore a welcome place of rest for the weary and hot traveller. There used formerly to be a rest-house standing near the eastern side of the 'sa', where one could stay at night. This may, however, not exist any longer.

At sunset wild ducks, teal and other aquatic birds would be seen coming out from their shelters among the rushes to play on the open water while during night time would be heard the weird cries of the peacocks or the shrill trumpeting noises of the great cranes, sometimes answered from far away by the hoarse call of the barking deer echoing through the deep forest. Tigers used, at least formerly, to visit the forest at Khao Phanom Rung, and to protect the ponies, I used, when camping at Sa Phlæng, to have big fires burning during the night.

To the south-east, and not far from the reservoir, are seen the double ramparts of what resembles a small fort, measuring about 400 metres square. The origin of this place is unknown; it may be an old elephant's kraal for all I know.

In the north-eastern corner of the reservoir there is a kind of sluice which lets out the water that goes to form Huci Talung, a small affluent to Lam. Plaimat, which running N. N. E. falls into the Mun river east of Phimai. Phu Khao or Khao Phanom Rung lies about 17 kilometres to the south-west of Nangrong and attains a height of 170 metres over the surrounding plain (270 metres above sea level). The hill is composed of a mixture of sandstone and laterite with a strong outcrop of black basalt which may show a volcanic origin. The tops and slopes of the hill are clothed with a thin growth of the resinous trees so common to this region.

The hill has two tops, called Phanom Ru'si and Phanom Bai, respectively. Phanom Ru'si is the northern peak, on which the temple is built, while Phanom Bai represents the southern and lower peak.

The temple may be reached either by the path climbing the hill from the east or by that from the north. Both paths run along ridges of the hill and, as they are not very steep, ponies, elephants and even not too heavily loaded bullock carts may be used as means of transport.

From the sala at Sa Phkeng we follow the southern dyke, walking or riding on its top, and soon after begin the climb of the hill. The path winds upwards between menacingly protruding black rocks for about 2 kilometres, when we encounter an old chaussée bordered on either side by a rim of laterite on which are placed, at intervals of four metres, low carved sandstone pillars.

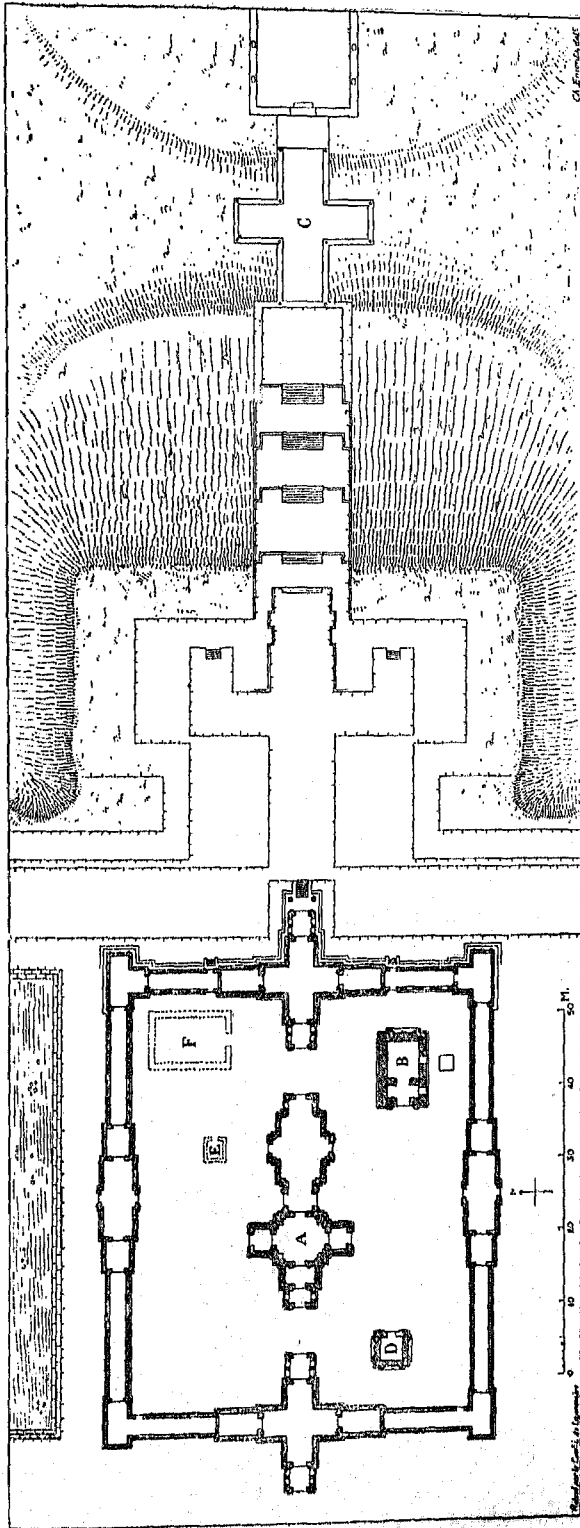
We follow this slightly rising chaussée for about 200 metres next to arrive at a cruciformed terrace provided with balusters made in the shape of the long sinuous bodies of 'nagas.' From the terrace one ascends to the broad outer temple court, lying in front of the sanctuary, by a long flight of steps rising in five successive terraces. This monumental staircase is of a very elegant design and of equally good execution; indeed the whole structure is not without a certain majesty in appearance.

Rising from the floor of the outer court-yard is a kind of cross-shaped terrace which perhaps was originally provided with low staircases giving access to the three branches of the cross, the fourth and western one leading to the main entrance of the sanctuary proper.

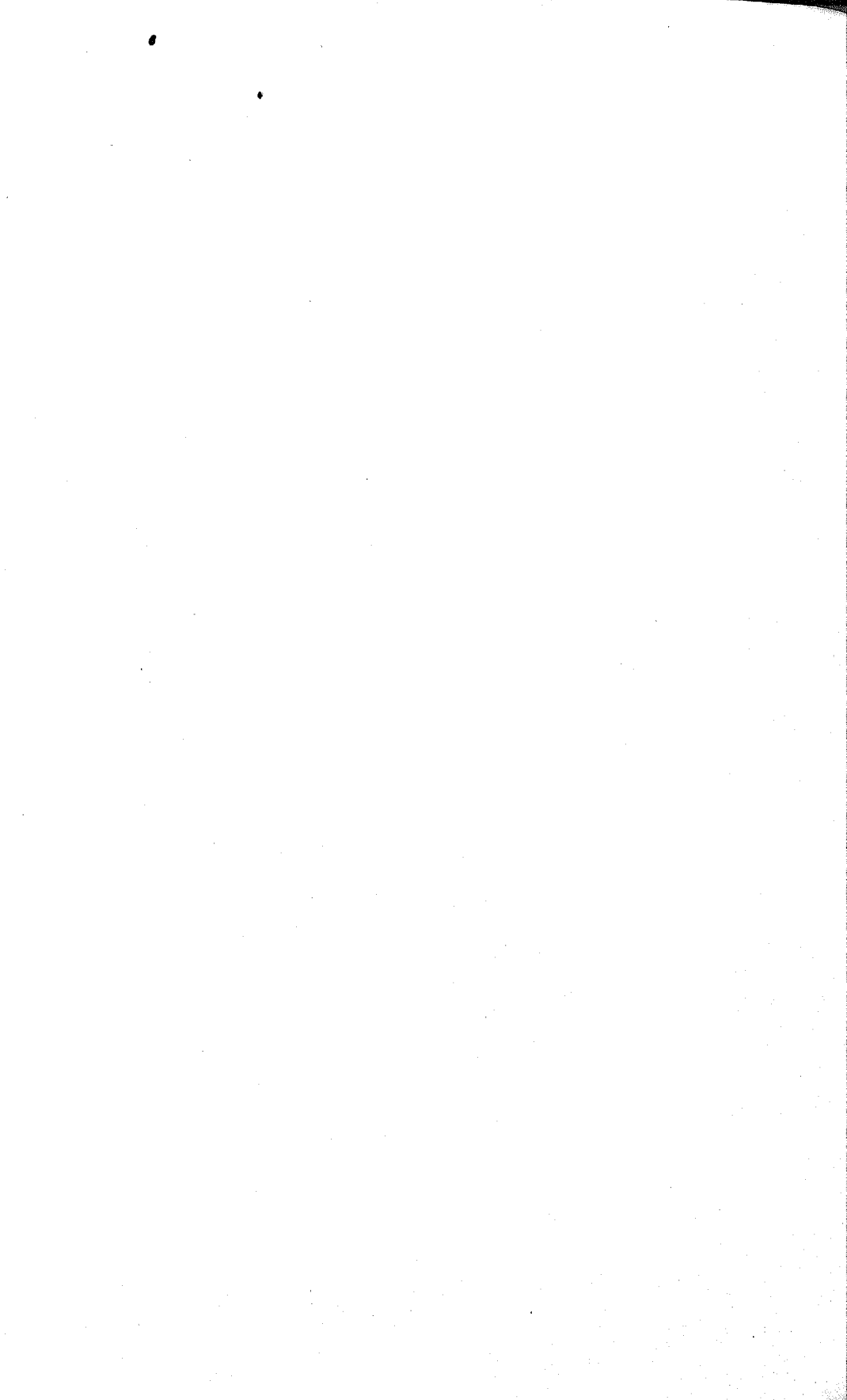
This comprises a central tower connected with a hall (for cultural purposes), another tower and the remains of several other buildings all enclosed by a gallery in the form of a square. The main tower, now unfortunately much ruined and with its interior filled with the debris of the tumbled down arched superstructure, is of grand dimensions and must in its heyday have been a most wonderful and splendid edifice. As Lunet de Lajonquière says, it is one of the most perfect examples of this kind of architecture.

The tower, which is built of sandstone, is square in form and has four doors opening to the four cardinal points. These doors are preceded by porches, the western one being provided with double porches. The eastern entrance forms part of a corridor which connects the tower with the above-mentioned hall; the latter, which is covered with an ogival arched roof, has three entrances to the north, east and south, respectively.

The execution of this twin building is excellent in all its details, and one has moreover the opportunity here to admire the intricate



PLAN OF PANOM RUNG TEMPLE.







*Photo E. Groot.*

**Panom Rung temple.**  
Monumental staircase leading up to the temple from the east.

and delicately wrought patterns and peculiar features so characteristic of the ancient Cambodian art, such as ornamented plinths, cornices, frames of windows and doors, decorated pilasters, octagonal columns, carved lintels and frontals where the bodies of nagas form an undulated ogive, framing scenes borrowed from the Hindu pantheon, which are treated in bas reliefs or friezes, and so on, in rich variety.

Many of the carved lintels have been broken into pieces, but there are still a few left intact that are of great beauty. For instance, in the double porches which precede the doors of the tower to the west, are seen, on the lintel of the outer door, a battle between monkeys (probably a scene inspired by the Ramayana), and on that of the middle door, a scene representing the churning of the milky ocean, while above the inner door is seen a row of standing figures with a god in the middle—who is in the act of throwing two persons with his right and left hands. The lintel of the northern entrance to the hall shows a scene representing the god Çiva standing upright, grasping with his right hand an elephant by one of its hind legs and with his left a lion in the same manner. From the mouths of the animals issue those wonderfully carved garlands of flowers that are so often and so artistically used in the decorative art of the Khmer.

On the frontal is seen a prince walking under some palm trees and shooting birds with his bow; a group of court attendants is seen to the left of the princely hunter. Above this hunting scene one sees the sun god Suriya rushing across the heavens in his horse-drawn chariot.

This frontal is, as usual in Khmer art, framed by the sinuous bodies of two nagas which raise their fivefold heads at the lower corners of it—on some of the carved stones placed on the upper cornice (of the tower) are representations of Brahma riding on his goose, of women, and so on. Even the rim of this cornice is carved, as for instance on its western corner, where there is a scene with a monkey kneeling in front of a woman (Hanuman before Sita?).

Among the confused mass of débris are seen many well executed pieces of sculpture, representing scenes from the daily life of the people, such as marching soldiers armed with spear and shield and, curiously enough, in this Brahmanically decorated sanctuary, a very well preserved sculpture of what no doubt represents Queen Maya giving birth to the future Buddha under the Palsa tree in the park of



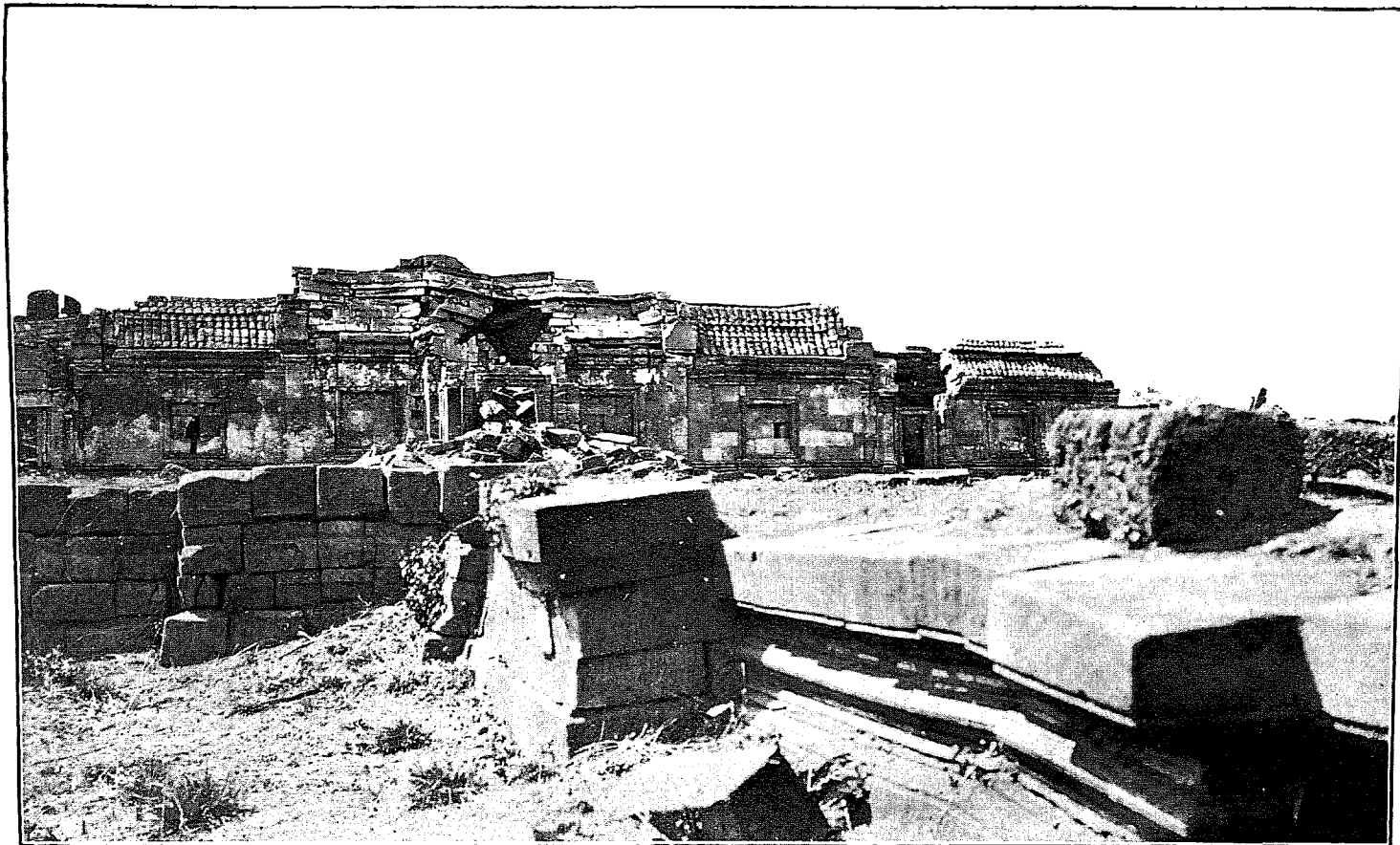
Lumphini. This may indicate that the Phanom Rung temple was dedicated to one of the Bodhisattvas of the Mahayanistic cult. On a broken lintel is seen the well-known scene of Vishnu resting on the serpent Ananta; from the gods navel issues a lotus flower among whose petals is seen the new born four-faced Brahma. A minute examination of the sanctuary would no doubt reveal many more art treasures than the few enumerated here, and it would certainly be well worth the trouble and the expense to restore this splendid sanctuary, as that would give us back one of the finest examples of this kind of building. It would, moreover, be not very difficult—especially for an architect trained under such past masters in the art of temple restoration as M. Parmentier or M. Marchal of the French Indo-Chinese Archaeological Service—to rebuild this old superb fane, as all the necessary materials are still there. To the south-east of the central tower stands another tower which is built of laterite. It is provided with three ‘false doors’, while the fourth and real one opens to the west and is preceded by a porch.

Work has hardly been begun on the decorative portions of this tower; one notes, however, the naga motive at the lower corners of the frontons.

The top of the tower was either never finished or has been ruined in some way or other, and has now been replaced by an ugly cover of corrugated iron, that eyesore of the Far East. In the middle of the single room of the tower one sees a modern impression of the foot of the Buddha. Remains of three other buildings inside the temple court are also seen, such as that of a small tower in the south-western corner, a still smaller one lying to the north of the hall, and finally traces of a larger building (a treasury or library) in the north-eastern corner of the temple court.

A rectangular enceinte composed of four galleries encloses the above-described temples. The galleries seem never to have been finished, nor to have been so well planned as the other parts of this otherwise magnificent group of buildings. The eastern and western galleries are broken in the middle by cruciformed gopuras and seem to have been nearly completed; not so the northern and southern galleries, which are even without their roofs, while their gopuras lack the porches. The galleries form one long uninterrupted corridor which allows one passage right through their whole length.

About 200 metres to the east of the principal entrance to the



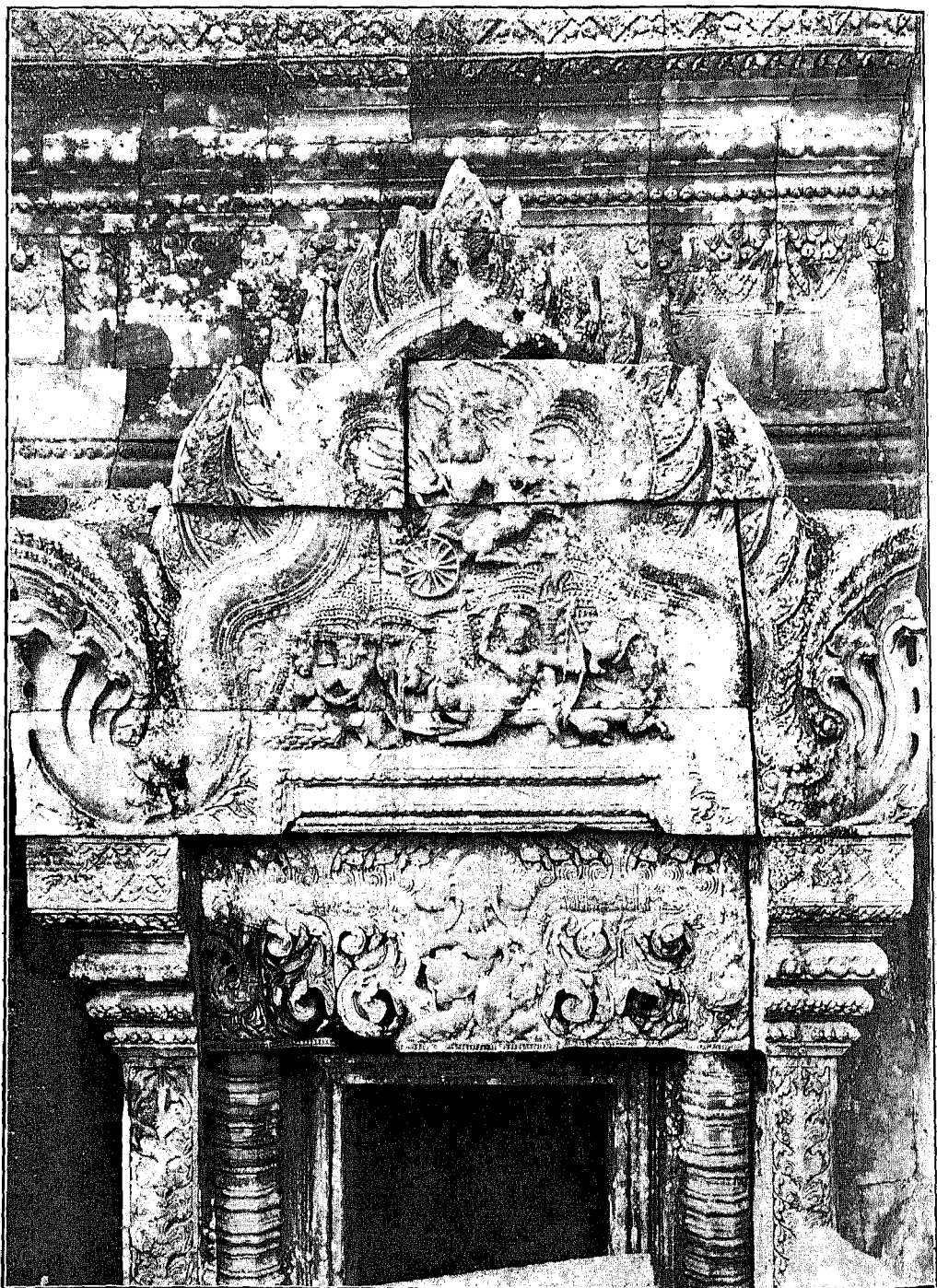
Panom Rung temple.

*Photo E. Groot.*

Outer temple court-yard with cross-shaped terraces; in background are seen the galleries with the eastern gopura.







Panom Rung temple.

Sculpture representing Suriya, the sun god etc.

*Photo E. Groot.*

sanctuary lie two small edifices, called Kuk Ru'si (the hermits' cells). One of these is built in the form of a square pavilion, with two smaller rooms, adjoining to the right and left. Access to these is by two parvises whose roofs are supported by pillars. The plan of this building, which is orientated east to west, much resembles that of certain large salas in Siam. This sala is surrounded on three sides i. e., west, north and east, by a rectangular continuous gallery which is provided with flights of steps at their two southern ends. The gallery had probably wooden roofs.

The purpose of both these buildings, now very much in ruins but originally of quite elegant proportions, most probably was that of a temporary residence for kings or high nobles who came to worship at the temple.

From the top of the ruined central tower one enjoys a wide view over the surrounding country. To the south-east is plainly seen the square of Mu'ang Tam and its large Thalaë; to the south and south-west the eye sweeps over the near-lying Khao Angkhan down to the imposing masses of the Dangrek hills veiled in mysterious blue mists; while to the west and north the horizon is closed by the brown and grey coloured forests interspersed, here and there, by yellow patches of the harvested paddy fields.

Such is the scene during the dry deason. If we visit Khao Phanom Rung during the rainy season (which is not to be recommended), the panorama is quite different, and much more alluring, with the trees clad in all their green finery and the babbling waters rushing down the hill side.

From the temple another path or narrow road leads down in a north north-westerly direction to the foot of the hill where lies a village, called Ban Tabæk. This path passes the three ponds mentioned in our tale.

From Ban Tabæk to Nangrong the distance is about 17 kilometres, the cart road passing through forest and over paddy fields with several large villages. Among the latter is the large Ban Thanon Hak, from which a long wooden bridge leads over a swamp to the eastern gate or entrance to the old town. Nangrong, the origin of which no doubt goes back to the Khmer period, is surrounded by large double ramparts and broad moats filled with a profusion of scarlet, blue and white lotus flowers. It is quite a large and prosperous town, and its inhabitants, Thai-ized Khmer, are known as capable weavers of silk and also as great lovers of music. Many of the young girls used,

at least formerly, to be clever lakhon players, very conversant with the famous Indian epic Ramayana (in Siamese called Ramakien). The times one has listened on a moonlit night to the melodious music of the 'phinphat' and the song of the Nangrong girls belong to those memories which do not fade so easily away.

The ancient chaussée (which does not touch Nangrong) continues from Khao Phanom Rung in a north-westerly direction where it crosses a large plain, called Thung Badaen, to re-enter the great forest at the ruins of the *dharmagala* at Nong Plong. The Badaen plain used formerly to be frequented by herds of 'Nu'a Sai' (*Cervus Porcinus* or Hog deer) and wild cattle of a whitish colour. But, due to reckless hunting, only very few of these kinds of game were left, even seventeen years ago.

In the very centre of this vast plain, stretching on both sides of the Plaimat river, and constituting one of the biggest plains in N. E. Siam, excepting the large Mun river plain, lies a swampish lake, called Rahal (a wide stretch of water), near which, it is said, are found several interesting ruins of Khmer temples.

As already stated in the beginning of this commentary, the ancient highway terminates at Phimai. I am, however, not going to describe the temple of Phimai, but will refer to Major Lunet de Lajonquière's description, I. K. under No. 447, and my paper in *JSS*. Vol. XVII, Part I.

Here I should, however, like to add a few supplementary remarks.

It has always been surmised so far that the present town of Phimai was a kind of vice-regal capital of that part of ancient Cambodia which lay to the north of the Dangrek chain. My friend, His Excellency Phya Phetcharada, Lord Lieutenant of the Circle of Nakhon Rachasima, informs me, however, that to the south of the town of Phimai near the village of Wang Hin (the stone castle), and situated just on the outskirts of the great forest—Kok Luang—are remains of extensive earthworks that are considerably larger in circumference than the town of Phimai. His Excellency is of the opinion that the present so-called town of Phimai was only a combined temple and fortress which was connected then, as now, with the capital at Wang Hin by a series of bridges spanning the many water-logged places between the two.

In my description of the central temple tower in this Journal, I omitted to mention the lintel of the interior northern door. The scene depicted on this lintel shows, sitting in the centre, a four-faced



Panom Rung temple.

*Photo E. Groot.*

Central sanctuary consisting of, to the right, the tower, to the left, the hall.









Panom Rung temple.

Sculpture representing Queen Maya giving birth to the Buddha.

*Photo E. Groot.*

and six-armed god; his two normal hands rest in his lap, while the lower of his two extra left hands holds the ghanta or bell. The three remaining hands are lifted upwards but, as far as can be seen, these do not grasp symbols of any kind. This god most probably represents Vajrasattva (from Sanscrit: *Vajra*, a thunderbolt and *Sattva*, essence), i. e., the Buddha of supreme intelligence or *Adhi buddha*, though the image depicted here lacks the thunderbolt.

The sculpture is divided into two segments. In the upper is to be seen, on either side of the god, a row of niches containing smaller images of Vajrasattva, besides dancing apsaras. In the lower segment are seen eight dancing apsaras in groups of four on either side of the throne of the god; below which are kneeling five crowned persons holding clubs in their hands. These persons may represent the five Dhyani-buddhas over whom, according to the Mahayanistic belief, Vajrasattva presides.<sup>(1)</sup>

The statues of Thao Phromat and Nang Orapin have now been deposited in the Royal Museum in Bangkok. On the other hand, of the beautiful image of the so-called Nang Lavo, also mentioned in my paper on the Phimai temple, nothing is left, the image having been broken to pieces by the local school children. (This happened, however, before the Archaeological Service was created).

We now come to the last of the great temples mentioned in our tale, namely, Wat Phanom Wan (I. K., No. 437).

This temple ruin lies about 10 kilometres N. N. E. of the town of Khorat. It consists of a sanctuary enclosed by square galleries which lie inside an exterior enceinte surrounded by very broad moats, except on the eastern side, where a causeway leads out to a large water reservoir.

Of the sanctuary the tower has not been completed and lacks its superstructure. It is provided with four doors preceded by porches, the eastern one being connected with a corridor which leads to a rectangular hall with three entrances. The corridor and the hall have still their roofs in place. The material used for these buildings is a grey sandstone. The work on the ornamentation of the lintels seems hardly to have been commenced. Some unforeseen event must have stopped the work in one way or other. Maybe it was a war or a rebellion.

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(1) See Alice Getty, *The gods of the Northern Buddhism*.

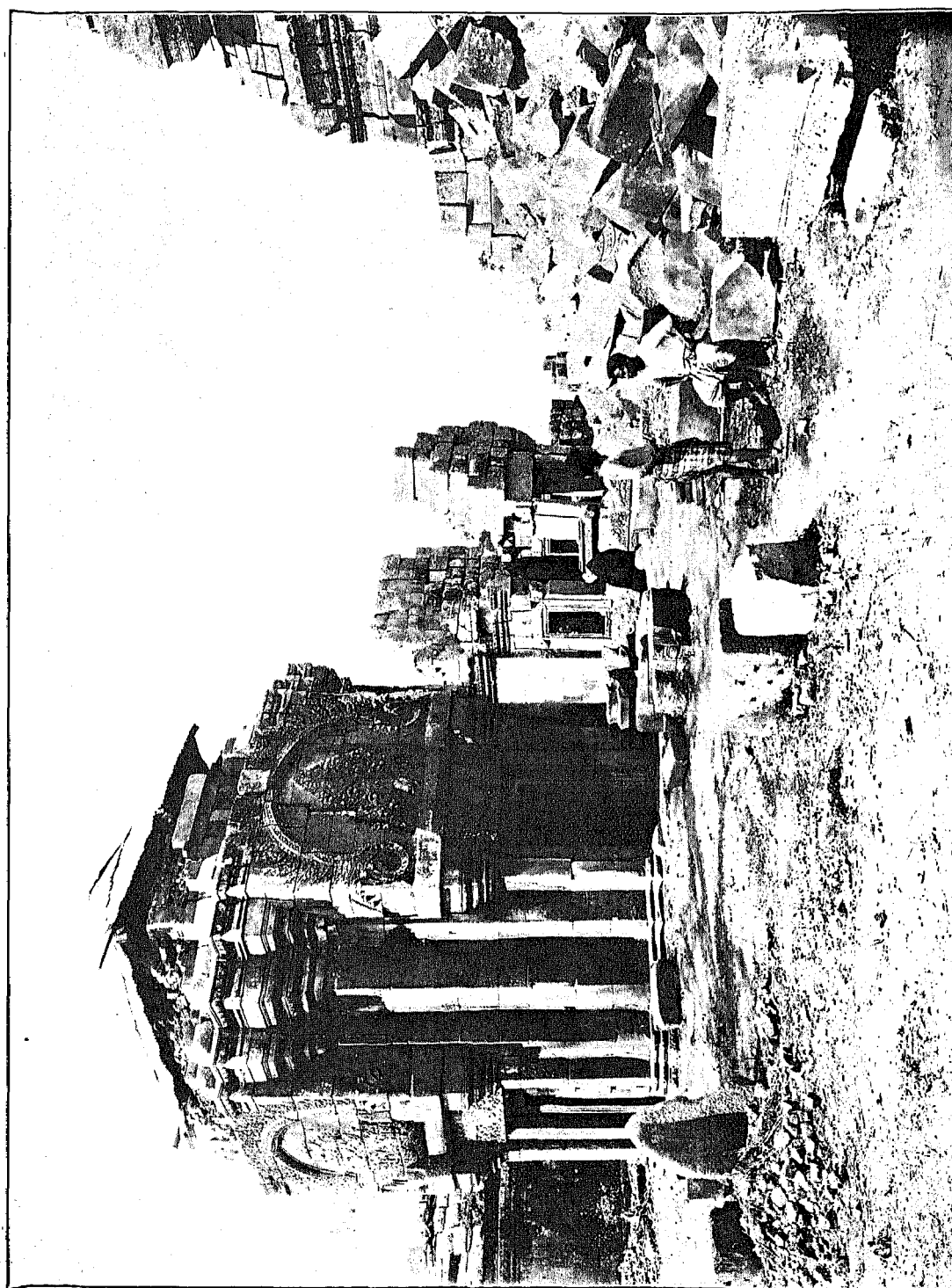
Only the lintel over the northern door of the tower is nearly finished and shows a scene representing a Brahmanic god sitting on the head of a monster (Rahu), from whose mouth there issue garlands of flowers to either side. The galleries measure 52 metres on each side and seem also to have been left unfinished. They are provided with gopuras preceded by porches, each gopura being divided into five chambers. The galleries are open to the interior temple court, their roofs here being supported by rows of pillars. The galleries present a peculiarity in that their corners are transformed into small pavilions, each with an entrance from the outside. Of decorations only one is seen on the eastern gopura, consisting of an empty frontal encased by nagas and a lintel with the same motive as described above.

The second or exterior enceinte consists of a laterite wall which, however, is in *situ* only on the northern and southern faces.

The causeway, or *chaussée*, has a length of 330 metres and leads from the supposed eastern entrance of the exterior temple court out to a large water reservoir which measures 600 by 300 metres and is surrounded by dykes still in good repair. Several ponds lie to the north and south of that part of the causeway which is nearest to the reservoir. Furthermore, at a distance of about 200 metres from the exterior enceinte and close to the causeway are the débris of a small rectangular building of laterite that probably served as a rest-house for important people visiting the temple.

In the interior court-yard are seen, lying to the north and south of the present sanctuary, the remains of what originally were two sanctuaries with doors opening to the east. Lunet de Lajonquière thinks that they are remnants of a former temple comprising three buildings and are anterior to the present one. Finally, there stands in the south-western corner of the court-yard a roughly built tower of red sandstone and bricks; it is provided with a door opening to the east and "false" doors on the three other sides. This latter building, which shelters a Phrabat or imprint of the Buddha's foot, is evidently not of Khmer handiwork but was probably raised by the Thai conquerors of the Khorat district.

There used formerly to be a whole collection of stone images of the Buddha stored inside the sanctuary; some of these were in the sitting, others in the standing posture, most of them headless. There was also a fine statuette of a four-armed Çiva which, I believe, is now kept in the Royal Museum. Not less than six inscriptions have been found in Wat Phanom Wan (often shortly called Nom Wan).



*Photo L. Greote.*

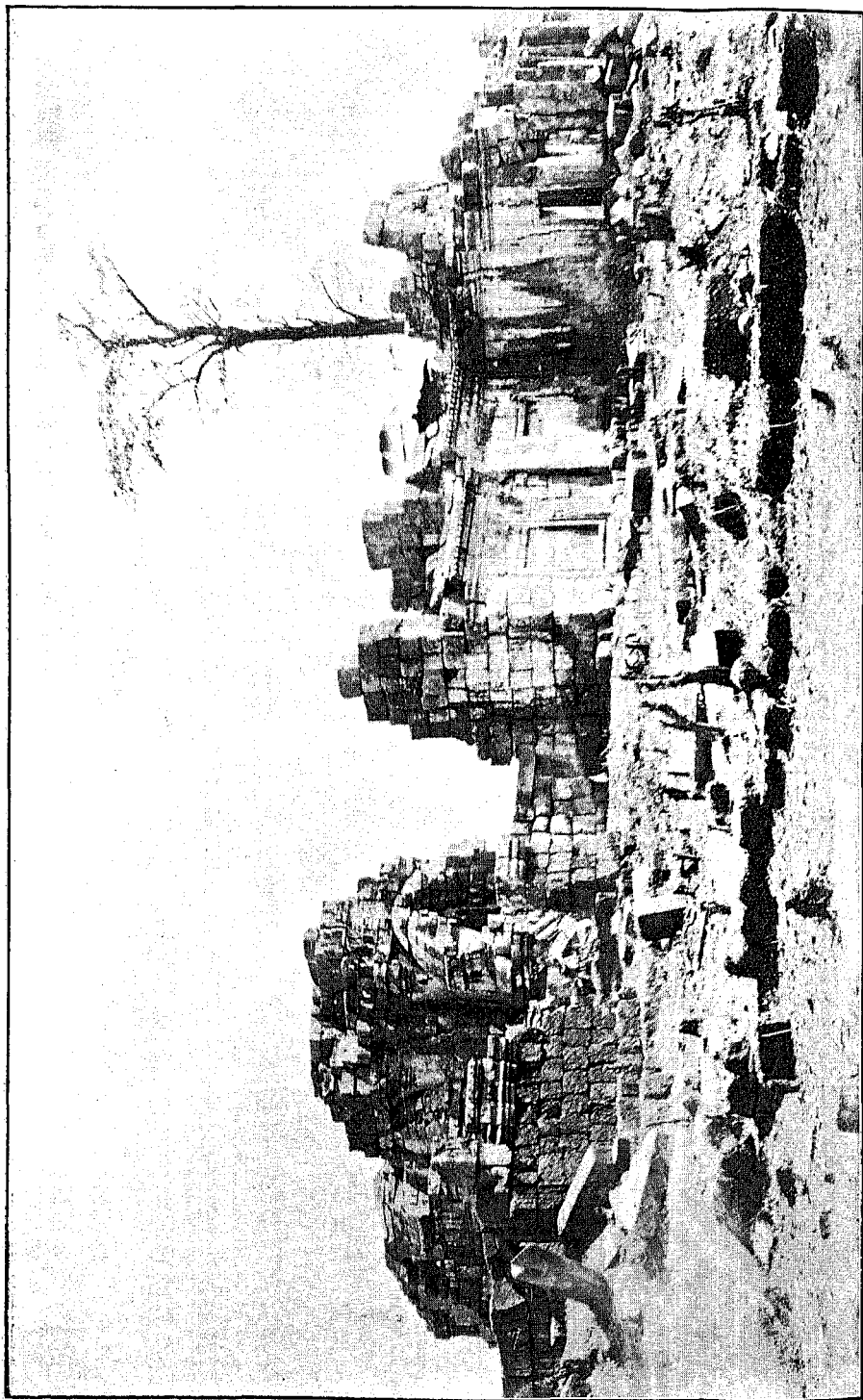
**Panam Rung temple.**

Tower in south-eastern corner of temple court. To the right is seen part of the central sanctuatory; in the background,









Panom Rung temple.  
A portion of the gallery.

*Photo E. Groot.*

The most important of these consists of 42 lines in Khmer, engraved on the frame of the southern interior door of the tower of the sanctuary. It is an edict of King Jayavarman VII, dated 1171 A. D., of Çivaitic contents, the king charging Vrah Kamrateñ Añ Rajendrarvarman, general commanding the central army, besides other high dignitaries, to take good care of the temple.

Another inscription of 45 lines, partly in Sanscrit partly in Khmer, is engraved on the frame of the outer door of the eastern porch of the tower. This inscription is only legible in part but the names of the two kings: Suriyavarman (1002-1049 A. D.) and Udayadityavarman (1049-1065 A. D.) can be deciphered. There are three other shorter inscriptions in Khmer and one in Sanscrit, the latter dated 1186 A. D. (reign of the zealous Buddhist King Jayavarman VII, great builder of hospitals—altogether 108 in number, if one is to believe the inscriptions).

According to our tale, the legendary King Hindusthan had images of the gods made of concrete! It is quite a common belief among the peasants of this country that sculptures and the images from the Khmer period were formed of crushed sandstone and water, whereafter they were burnt like bricks in a fire. That this idea is entirely wrong can be easily proved, but it is a belief which is shared even by educated people. It probably originated among the Thai who never attained a high standard as sculptors in stone but on the other hand developed into some of the world's finest workers in bronze.<sup>(1)</sup>

Of the town built according to our tale close to the east of Mu'ang Tam, I have not been able to find any traces. It may not have existed at all, or it may be identical with the old fortified place, called Talung or Dlon.

Nor have I been able to identify the temple called Prasat Chong Sa Chaeng, but suppose that it must be the same as described in I. K. under No. 407 as Prasat Nong Hong,

The writer of the Phanom Rung tale mentions several fortified places lying in the great Khok Luang, but I regret to say that I do not recognize them under the names given by him. Furthermore, that they should only be trenches (or light field works) sounds rather improbable, as I personally have inspected about a hundred old

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(1) I do not refer here to the Khmer-Thai school of stone sculpture in Lopburi which flourished in the XIIIth and part of the XIVth century A. D., as this art soon deteriorated and died out.

fortifications spread over the whole territory of the present circle of Khorat, which are all of a considerable size. They are either rectangular or square in shape, many of them measuring several kilometres in circumference, and among the latter not a few are found in the above mentioned Khok Luang.

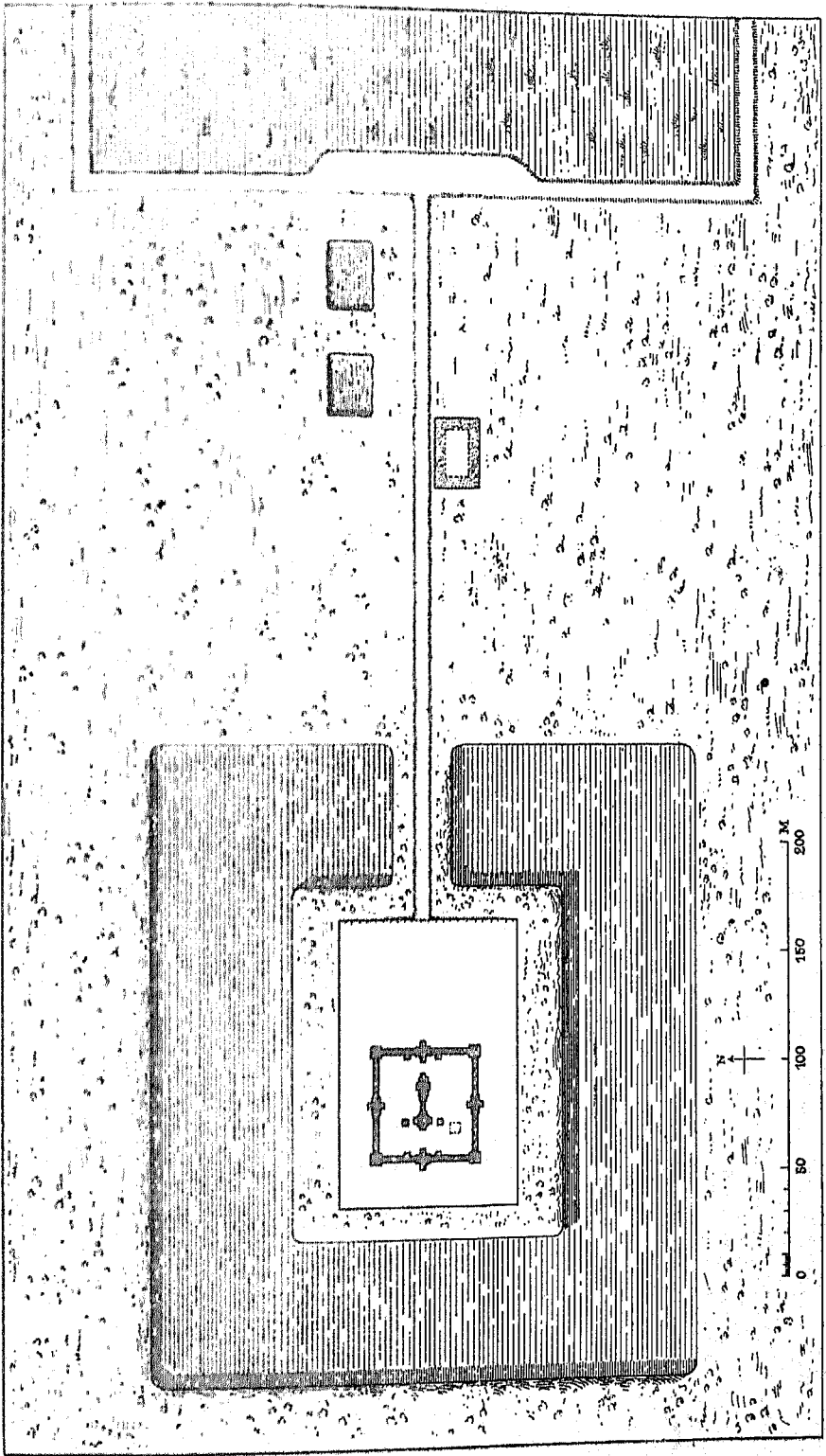
Not many years ago the Survey Department of the Army discovered several old deserted fortifications in the great forest between Khorat town and Nangrong, which were round or oblong in shape. This was a rather interesting find, which may point to affinities between the builders of these places and the Lawa of Northern Siam whose old, now deserted, fortified villages built in the shape of a ring are well known in the Mæ Hongson and Mu'ang Yuam districts.

The great number of old fortified towns, many of which have long ago been deserted, together with the wealth of ruins of stone temples, reservoirs and old highways spread over this part of the Khorat plateau, point certainly to the existence formerly of a much more dense population than now is the case. The reason for the population having left their towns may either be explained by the many and bitter wars waged between Ayudhya and Cambodia, which went on from the XIIIth to the XVth century and were coupled with ruthless deportations of the population from their homesteads, or it may be explained by the fact that the ground water is constantly sinking in these regions, thereby reducing the output of the paddy fields more and more, finally forcing the population to shift to more fertile tracts lying nearer the larger water courses. However, the whole question of the old fortified places, their history, *raison d'être* and distribution over the North-Eastern plateau is a study apart, which I hope one day to be able to take up.

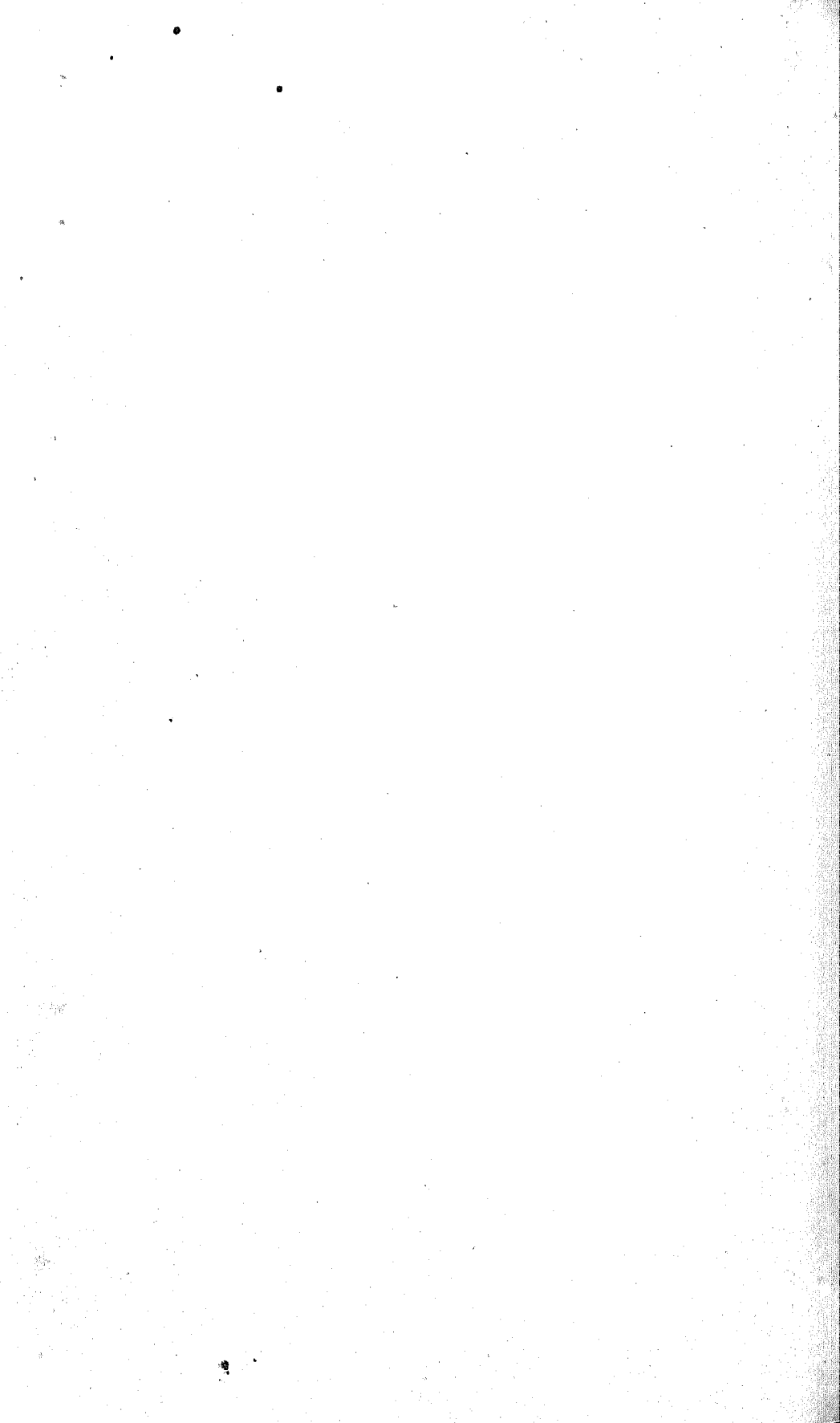
In conclusion, I beg to tender my sincerest thanks to my learned friend, Professor George Cœdès, Director of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient in Hanoi, who kindly allowed me to use the plans of the temples of Mu'ang Tam, Phanom Rung and Phanom Wan as published in Major Lunet de Lajonquière's *Inventaire descriptif*, as well as to Messrs. E. Groote and A. H. Hale for their kindness in placing some of their beautiful photographs at my disposal.

Erik Seidenfaden.

Bangkok, 22nd March, 1931.



PLAN OF WAT PANOM WAN.





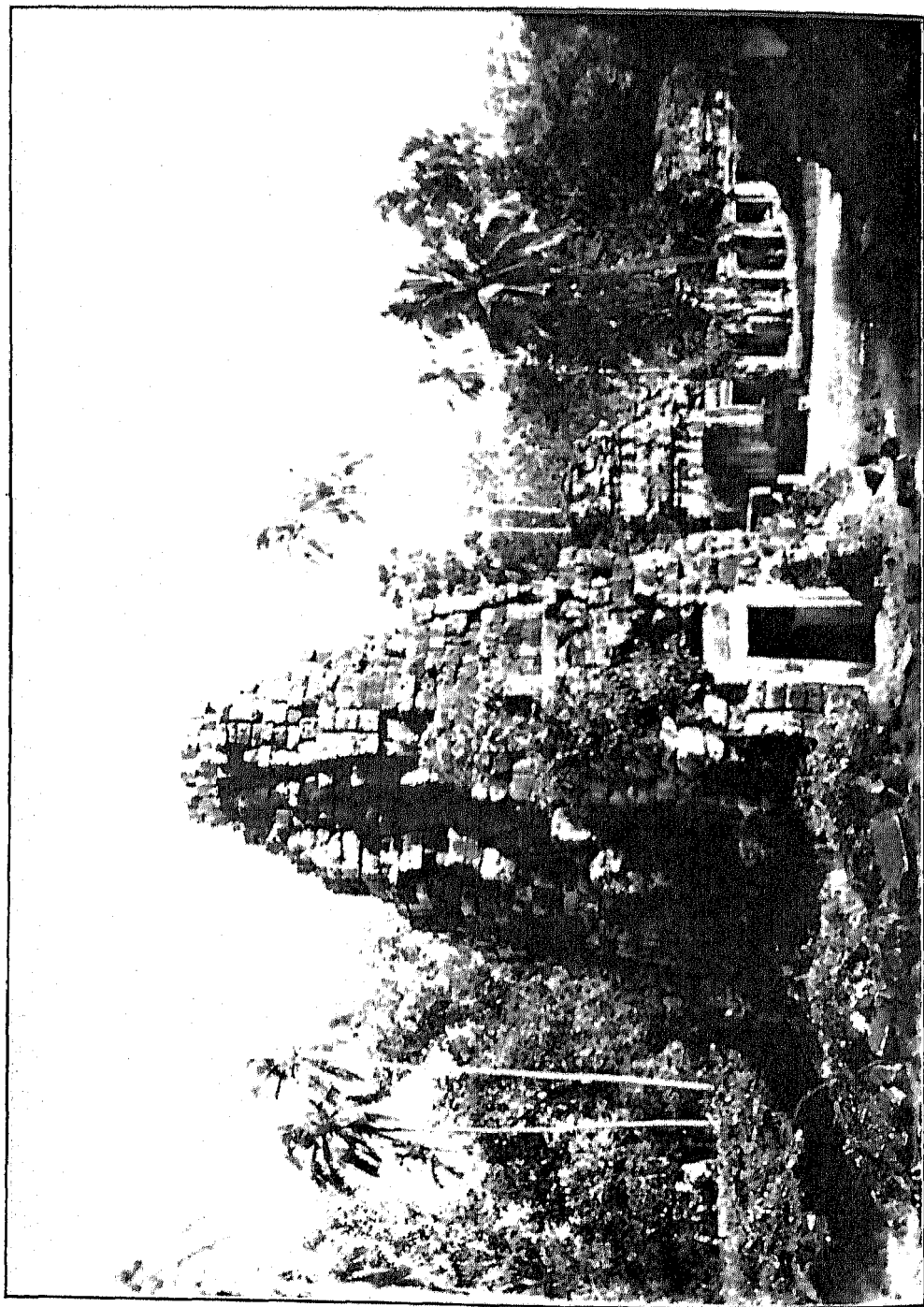
*Photo. E. Grond.*

*Phimai temple.*









Phimai temple.

Latavite tower (western, in first line). Note the lotus flower shaped terminal.

Photo J. H. Holt.

University College,  
Colombo, 15th September, 1931.

Sir,

The Government of Ceylon has recently appointed a Commission for the purpose of inquiring into the existence of hitherto unknown documents relating to the history of the island, which are extant in the hands of private individuals and of institutions. Many important documents have been removed from the island, and have found their way into private collections; there are others among the private papers of those who have had official or semi-official connection with the affairs of Ceylon, or who have at various times had occasion to visit its shores. To illustrate this point, the most important original authority for the period of the Portuguese occupation came to light in Rio de Janeiro, and of recent years much light has been thrown on the taking over of Ceylon by the British, by papers in private hands in Scotland.

The majority of such papers will be concerned with the history of the island during the last four centuries, but it is possible that there may be also some "sannases" (engraved copper plates) and "olas" (inscribed palm leaves) dating perhaps from pre-European times, preserved as curiosities in private or even public collections. We are anxious to ascertain the whereabouts of such documents, and therefore ask you to allow this letter to appear in your valuable columns. If any of your readers are in a position to afford us any information, we shall be most grateful if they will put it at our disposal by writing to the Secretary of the Ceylon Historical Manuscripts Commission, Government Archives, Colombo, or to me.

Thanking you for your courtesy in inserting this letter.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

S. A. PAKEMAN.

Chairman,

Ceylon Historical Manuscripts Commission.

The Editor,

The Journal, of the Siam Society,

46, Great Russell Street,

London, W.C. 1

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