

## REVIEW.

### *Les Civilisations de l'Indochine et l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient.*

On the occasion of the exhibition held in December last year in Hanoi, a pamphlet with the above heading was issued. This pamphlet runs to but 32 pages, but it gives a useful resumé of what is to-day known of the ancient civilizations of French Indochina, both those of Chinese and of Indian origin. The name Indochina, in preference to that of Further India, is, as a matter of fact, very apt, as it was here that the two great civilizations met and, to a certain extent, blended.

As pre-historic populations are mentioned the Australians, Melanesians and Indonesians who are to-day represented by the hill peoples of Annam, and Laos. The influence of the Chinese and Indian civilizations began about the opening of the Christian era, or some 2,000 years ago. The pamphlet says that the delta land of Tongking was the cradle of the Annamites but not to what race they belonged. Are we to accept the newest theories according to which the "Ur" Annamites were Indonesians too, and not Thai, as formerly opined by H. Maspéro? The splendid cultures, made manifest in art and architecture, of the Châm and Khmer, is briefly treated, and here one is warned not to consider the first period of the Khmer art, from the middle of the VI to the end of the VII century C. E. as pre-Khmer. The many brick towers, reminding one of the Châm towers, belong to this period. It was after this period that the Khmer began exclusively to use stone for their temples. When the Khmer had reached the zenith of their power and began to decline under the blows of the young and virile Thai power on the Menam plain, "they passed the torch of the Hindu culture to the Lāo of the Mekhong valley", the pamphlet says. We should say that this torch had then already been passed to the Thai of Sukhothai. It is, of course, true that the Lāo of the Mekhong valley, face to face with the sinicized Annamites, do represent the outpost of Indian civilization in this part of the world.

The meritorious work carried out by the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, now for more than 43 years, and which must represent a record

in similar work carried out by any scientific institution in this world, has been enlarged upon in the writer's recently published appreciation of *Cahiers de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (1). It may here be added that during the above period 41 annual Bulletins have been published which are a true mirror of this school's wonderful activities in the sphere of archaeological, philological, linguistic, historical and ethnological research. 35 *Publications*, 8 archaeological memoirs, and 5 volumes of *Textes et Documents*, and, not to forget, the *Cahiers* have also been published. The E. F. E. O. is in charge of 6 museums, in Hanoi, Tourane, Saigon, Pnompenh, Hué and Thanh-hoa, and its library counts 27,500 books or manuscripts in 75,500 volumes. They are in various European languages besides in Thai, Chinese, Annamite, Japanese, and Cambodian. The museums contain some of the choicest pieces of ancient Khmer, Chām and Chinese art.

The school is in charge of the protection and upkeep of more than 1,200 ancient monuments, a number of which, inside the border of the Angkor Parc, are being restored by the method called *Anastylosis*.

It should also be noted that pre-historians now agree that the province of Thanh-hoa, the land of the Mu'ong, is the cradle of the famous metal drums, in Thailand called Karen drums, from where they spread to the west, south and north, even to Mongolia.

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Bangkok, 20th March 1942.

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(1) *JTRS*, Vol. XXXIII, P. 1. March 1941.

## PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST.

BULLETIN DE L'ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D'EXTRÊME-ORIENT.

*Tome XLI, fasc. 1, 1941.*Baradat, R.: *Les Samrê ou Péar*. 20 pl. pp. 1-150.

An exhaustive ethnological study of a primitive people, dwelling in the regions west of Cambodia. These are identical with our Chêng of Trat and Chandaburi.

*fasc. 2*Ner, M.: *Les Musulmans de l'Indochine française*, 6 pl., pp. 151-202.

Also an exhaustive study of a section of the populations of each of the states comprising French Indochina with an appendix, a bibliography, 6 plates and a table of contents.

Dupont, P.: *Vérités archéologiques: I. Visnu mitrés de l'Indochine occidentale*, pp. 233-254.

This is the first of a series of archaeological miscellanies that promises to be very interesting and instructive. The present note deals with standing effigies of Visnu wearing the mitre found in Thailand, Cambodia and Cochinchina which present certain analogies and may therefore be classed together. The principal points of resemblance are: four arms holding respectively the disc, the conch, the lotus and the club; a coiffure in the form of a cylindrical mitre; and a long vestment falling down from the hip to the feet. Their date is suggested somewhere between the middle of the VIIIth and the middle of the IXth centuries, their Indian prototypes belonging to Pallava art of the VIIth century. The note is illustrated by 11 plates.

Coedès, G.: *La stèle du Prah Khan d'Ankor*, 4 pl., pp. 255-301.

The recent discovery at Ankor of a new inscription containing very valuable historical data has already been mentioned in our Journal, Thai number 2, pp. 102-111, in connection with the name of Nagara Jayasri. In the article under review, there is the full original text in Sanskrit reproduced on plates, as well as its transcription into Roman characters, followed by a French translation with criti-

cal notes. It is highly interesting and should be most useful to Thai students of history, archeology and philology, tasming as it does with numerous references to ancient sites of civilisation in the Menam valley, and to customs and ceremonials surviving in our midst to the present day, the meaning of which has been but imperfectly realised.

Paris, P.: *L'importance rituelle du Nord-Est et ses applications en Indochine*, pp. 303-333.

The ritual importance of the North-East point of the compass is a study of a belief which can be traced back to prehistoric times spreading over Europe and Asia. Special consideration is given to its application in Indoehina. It is accompanied by drawings and a map.

Paris, P.: *Les bateaux des bas-reliefs khmèrs*, pp. 335-364.

Another study of ancient Khmer boats, comparing Khmer inclination in the use of the boat as being akin to the Thai and modern Cambodian, thus indicating its affinity with the Indonesian rather than the Chinese type of culture. M. Paris also contributes a note on the ancient Khmer canal system as identified from aerial observation.

Speaking generally of this number of the BEFEO, it seems hardly fair not to mention here that every article and note in this number is particularly interesting in its way and has been lavishly presented. The ones mentioned above have been chosen for comment on account of their direct bearing on local matters and not necessary of their greater merit.