



At the New Year in Luang P'rabang food is offered to the masks of Grandfather and Grandmother Nō before the ancestral spirits dance.
(Photo by Courard)

RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES IN LAOS¹

by

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The research we have pursued in Laos from 1951 to 1956 has permitted us, first to establish a comprehensive body of materials concerning the annual ceremonies of the principal Laotian sub-cultures, namely: Luang P'rabang, S'iang Khwang, Wieng Čăn and Čămpasăk. Each ceremonial complex has been related to its specific cosmogony and to the religious structures which have developed from an original T'ai substratum. Secondly, we have been able to discern behind the variations within the structural ritual and mythical frame, the historic factors (or at least the events attested to in the Annals) which explain these variations.

Proceeding from North to South, that is to say, down from Luang P'rabang we shall here examine rapidly the characteristic traits of each of the sub-cultures mentioned above.

The Laotian cosmogonies in the North⁽²⁾—very close to that of the Black T'ai—depict a paradise of archetype-founders and accord a position of primary importance to the clan of the ruling lineage. Where the ancestor of the princely Black T'ai clan (the name of this ancestor was Lo K'am) was created by an incarnation of the king of the gods, the ancestor of the ruling line in Luang P'rabang is none other than the grandson of the king of the highest divinities. As to the common people, the Black T'ai cosmogony, as well as the Laotian, has them emerge from the heart of one or more pumpkins. But, whereas within the pumpkins, discriminating social distinctions were non-existent once out of the pumpkins, says the Laotian cosmogony, rigid distinctions were established between the Laotians and the aborigines, as well as between the different clans. The Kha, that is, the aborigines, were installed in the mountains where they cultivated dry rice, while the Laotians became the people of the plains cultivating wet rice. This distinction in the way of life and this social statute could not have been established without

violence. Thus when the Laotian chief, according to the divine plan, came to set up the kingdom of Luang P'rabang, he came into conflict with the Kha who already occupied the land. These he had to evict. Recognizing their anterior right to the land — and here is an important fact that the ritual emphasizes — he gave to his oldest son the name of the Kha chieftain whom he had just dispossessed. According to this cosmogony, the foundation of Luang P'rabang was subsequent to that of Muong Then (Dien Bien Phu), where the son of the supreme divinities descending from heaven first touched earth. Now in his descent, this son was preceded by two servants, Grandfather and Grandmother N̄ö, who were charged with the task of clearing the way by driving out ogres and demons. Afterwards these two servants sacrificed themselves for the benefit of the ruling lineage and the community, and became the first guardian spirits of the heartland of the territory. When the eldest son of the divinities founded Luang P'rabang, he modeled it after the original kingdom, the above Muong Then, and accorded a special place to the cult of the two guardian spirits. As the tradition is carried from Muong Then to Luang P'rabang, the personality of the two spirits takes more significance. From servants of the son of the gods, they became parents, took over his descendants — the founder of Luang P'rabang thus became their son — and became creators of the world, a world which, according to the cult legends, they caused to arise from the waters by a dance which then became the dynastic emblem of the ruling line of Luang P'rabang.

Reflecting faithfully this cosmogony, the religious structure of North Laos sets forth beneath the cult of the dancing ancestors — whose masks occupy the most important altar of Luang P'rabang — a cult of divine monarchs descended from the founder of the ruling line. Now, according to the Black T'ai, the descendants of the founding ancestor are immortal, but with the Laotians of Luang P'rabang, the descendants of the ancestor of the line are potential divine rulers, capable, at death, of becoming guardian spirits, and entitled to altars and a custodial personnel (up to a few years ago, the maintenance of the cult was incumbent upon the royal family).



New Year Festival in Luang P'rābang. The "crystal and gold lion" which Grandfather and Grandmother Nō captured in the Himalayan forests dances at the foot of the "Watermelon" T'at.





New Year in Luang P'rabang. Grandfather and Grandmother Nō and the "crystal and gold lion" dancing at night in the Wat Wisun to honour the big bronze Buddha: P'rao Ong Luang.

Below these divine monarchs, we come to spirits belonging to the pre-T'ai substratum: ogres and with whom certain divine monarchs are even linked as kinsmen.

The cosmogony thus not only explains the religious structure, but also accounts for the rituals. The great ceremonies of Luang P'răbang which act out a historico-mythical scenario, permit us to witness the genesis of the world by the dancing ancestors, the organizing of a territory seized from the aborigines, and the installation of the ruling line. The combat between the Laotian conquerors and the aborigines was replaced, according to the texts, by a game of hockey⁽³⁾ which reintroduces the barbarians briefly to the bosom of the community and thus permits the retracing of the evolution of an exclusive land right. The ruling lineage having been reinstalled (this installation takes place twice a year⁽⁴⁾, at the end of the rainy season and at New Year), the king, newly conceded his rights by the aborigines, enters a period of meditation at the foot of the royal reliquary of Luang P'răbang⁽⁵⁾ in order to consolidate his energies and assimilate this reservoir of law, as Paul Mus has phrased it, to regulate the natural, juridical and moral order. These rites having been completed, the monarch reigns serenely over a renewed universe in an eternal present.

However, this peaceful conscience, this serenity, can only be explained by exceptional historical circumstances. Luang P'răbang was actually the cradle of Loatian unity, a unity set up by F'ă Ngum in the 14th century.⁽⁶⁾ As a result of the choice of Wieng Čăn as capital, Luang P'răbang was later spared from the Burmese invasions. When, in the 18th century, the Lăn S'ăng area was split into two kingdoms, Luang P'răbang turned back to itself, almost lived in a vacuum. Vassalage to Siam at the end of the 18th century was not much more than token submission. When it was about to be implemented, the intervention of France ended it. Protected from then on by a regime which recognized his rights and privileges, the king of Luang P'răbang continued to administer his state under French control. With independence, it was on the house of Luang P'răbang that Laos in its constitution centered its unity. The king, descendant of the founder of Luang P'răbang, was considered supreme ruler of the country.

S'IENTG KHWANG

Founded by a brother of the founder of Luang P'rabang, then reorganized in the 15th century by an "ačan" (teacher) from Luang P'rabang, the kingdom of S'ientg Khwang manifested, probably until the 19th century, a religious structure very close to that of Luang P'rabang. Possibly centered formerly in the cult of the dancing ancestors, this structure accords an important place to the deified monarchs. More than thirty sovereigns actually occupy the altar at S'ientg Khwang. This considerable number and the collective term of "Lo K'ăm" (name of the founder of the Black T'ai clan) given them suffices to indicate the undeniable influence of the Black T'ai. This structure was shaken in the 19th century by the opposition of the great vassal-princes against Čao Noi, by the Vietnamese occupation, by the massive deportation carried on by the Siamese—which explains the disappearance of village cults—and finally by the Ho invasions. The latter, in burning the masks of the dancing ancestors, severed the ritual forms from the cosmogony that supported them. Myth having been replaced by history, the rites no longer had as purpose the re-enactment of the age of the archetype-founders nor of the founding of a domain seized from the aborigines. Instead, the rites merely kept alive an historically validated event, namely: the struggle that King Čao Noi carried on against his vassals who were in revolt, a struggle which preceded the collapse of the ruling lineage. For this reason, the hockey game⁽⁷⁾ which portrayed in Luang P'rabang the reintegration of the aborigines into the community became in S'ientg Khwang a competition of clans which opposed each other in violent aggressiveness. In place of the serene frame of mind of the monarchs of the North, we find an uneasy conscience which is, as a matter of fact, an expression of guilt, for the rites that emphasize the betrayal of the vassals serve only to mask better that betrayal of which Čao Noi himself was guilty (or rather accused of being guilty) when he turned over the king of Wieng Čăn—his suzerain—to the Siamese enemy. Thus, it is history⁽⁸⁾ that accounts for the modifications in the religious structure and the ritual of S'ientg Khwang. History reveals even in the reinterpretation of the ritual the unconscious motives that have inspired them.

WIENG ČĀN

Capital of Làn S'àng in 1564, then seat of an independent kingdom in the 18th century, Wieng ČĀn has not retained at all the cosmogony of the North. The two ancestors who put the ogres (yaksa) to the sword have been attached to another cycle of legends which makes them into agrarian divinities⁽⁹⁾. Nevertheless, the religious structure and the ritual organization have retained a trace of those of the North. Thus we find again the king of the great divinities but now a modest spirit in one of the quarters of the town⁽¹⁰⁾, yet one deified monarch, in this case King Settāt'irat, still possesses an altar not far from the sacred reliquary of the T'at Luang (Royal T'at)⁽¹¹⁾. It is on the esplanade of this reliquary that every year is staged a controlled competition⁽¹²⁾, between the slaves of the T'at—here a substitute for the aborigines—and the clan of the royal functionaries. But a historico-mythical scenario no longer guides this ritual play.

The disorganization of the religious structure and of the ritual is due to the numerous wars which Wieng ČĀn carried on against the Burmese in the 16th century and against the Siamese in the 18th century before being obliterated by the latter at the beginning of the 19th century.

BASĀK or ČAMPASĀK (13)

This sketch which emphasizes the disintegration of the original cosmogony as well as the modifications undergone by the religious structures and the ritual in Central Laos permits us to locate Basāk among the Laotian sub-cultures.

The cosmogony of Southern Laos, like that of the North, views human beings as born from the heart of the cucurbitaceans but with an essential difference: the appearance of these beings does not take place in a plan conceived and carried out by the divinities. It is the tribulations of a divine unmarried mother impregnated by a servant in the celestial palace, which underlie the birth of human beings. The messenger of the gods sent in hasty pursuit

of the guilty couple accidentally let fall the gourds which contained his water supply; they broke, and out spilled mankind in escape. Creation thus appears as an accident: human beings fell into the world. Moreover, when they came out of the gourds, human beings were not divided up as in the North into patronymic families, or into races by a son of the gods. Without any surveillance they paired off or killed each other. Disorder was such that the king of the divinities sent agents to earth to put an end to this state of things. These agents chose from among the most virtuous the founders of the hundred and one kingdoms, one of which is Čāmpasāk. However, in contrast to the monarchs of the North, these founder-kings arose from the gourds along with their subjects. If their virtue languishes, they are immediately replaced by the gods, who, as soon as their work of reorganizing is complete, remain on earth to watch over the conduct of princes and common men. This cosmogony explains the religious structure of Čāmpasāk which establishes a hiatus between the divinities charged with observing the conduct of princes and the defunct monarchs. Being no longer son of gods, nor vessel of the divine word, the kings of Čāmpasāk at their death, fouled by the exercise of power, like their subjects must submit to their karma, and cannot even on this stage take their place on the level of the lower gods where certain of their great vassals to the South, in particular those in Khong, have the right of entry.⁽¹⁴⁾ Not being guardian spirits at all, they cannot then reside in the altars consecrated exclusively to the divinities, and they may, in principle, only be the object of a private cult.

Cosmogony and structure account for ritual. The rites of the South reactualize the original fault—the accidental cause of the creation of the kingdom of Čāmpasāk—and open out into a time not of purity but of defilement. Ceremonies in the South as in the North reintroduce into the community the aborigines who, according to cosmogony came out of pumpkins as did the Laotians, but with this difference: where the Northern rites are charged with ratifying the right of the aborigines to the soil, as they were the first occupants, the Southern rites recreate the sexual liberty which reigned

between the races at the dawn of history. The integration of the aborigines thus operates on the level of the socialized sexuality (15).

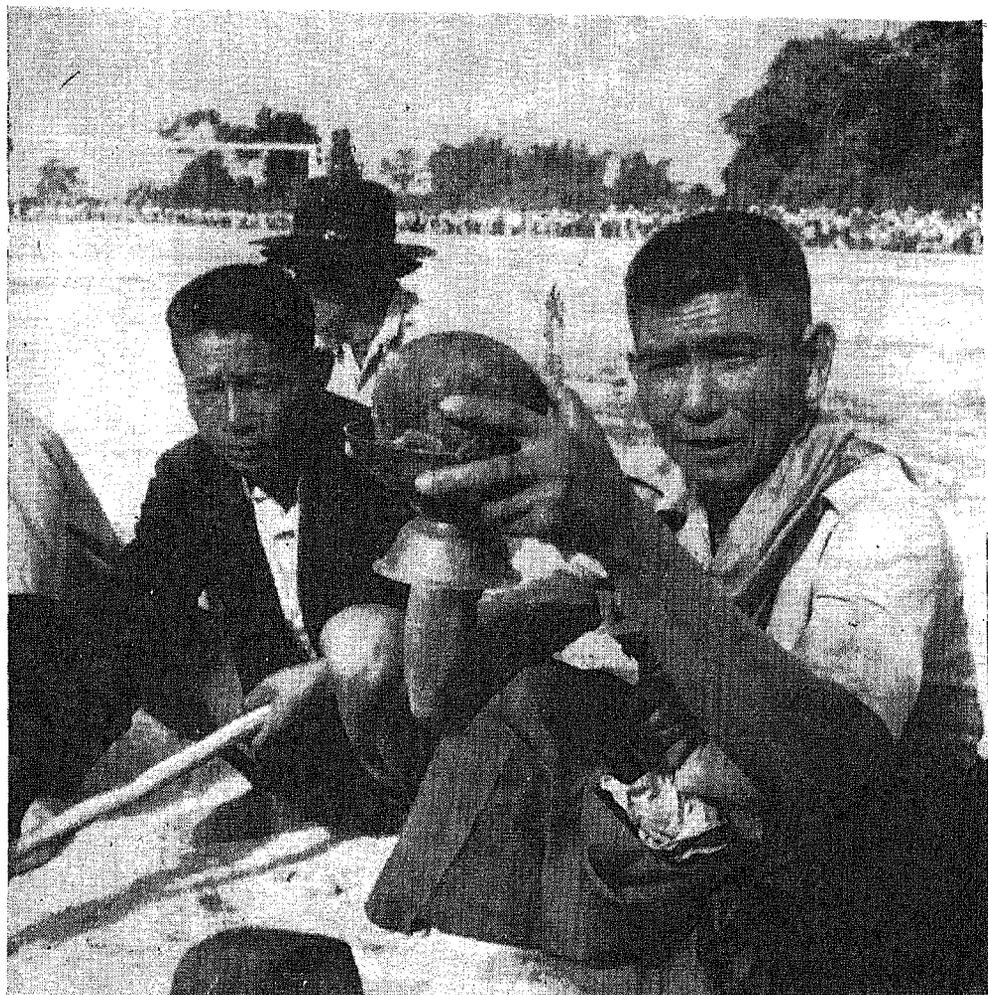
Moreover, the divine guardians of the principality having been instructed by the head of the divinities to watch over the princes, each of these guardian spirits returns annually to heaven to report on the mandate with which he has been entrusted (16).

Already suspect because of their common origin, the princes appear on this occasion like potentially guilty ones at the tribunal of the gods. One can well understand how such a structure, such a ritual organization can foster in the heart of the ruling lineage the formation of a guilt complex. A political collapse suffices to reinforce the memory of an original fault out of which emerges, for the princes of the South, the notion of an ineluctable destiny (17).

However, only the history of Čāmpasāk can account for the deformations that the cosmogony and the ritual have undergone. Whereas the Laotians of the North settled on a site where they met no significant trace of a former civilization which might have impelled them to feelings of modesty, the Laotians who came into the South discovered to their astonishment the vestiges of a grandiose past. As if to throw into even greater relief the strange character of these abandoned monuments, at the foot of the Khmer temple of Wat Phu and of Tomo, there vegetated a motley population. These populations had retained some memory of the former brilliant dynasties which had suddenly collapsed. But one of the first Laotian ruling line which took possession of this historic site also fell, and the power came into the hands of a princess who, to the dishonor of the kingdom, gave birth to an illegitimate child. The coming together of the mythical fault and the historic fact or the historicized legend reveals that the cosmogony of the South is only an effort by the Laotian conquerors to interpret, or account for, the disappearance of former civilizations the cause of which they must have seen in transgressions, in the mixing of races as exemplified by the tribes clustering round the ruined monuments. A fault was thus postulated at the very origin of the Southern lineages, a fault which let loose the misfortunes of their history (18). Purified by a head priest of a monastery, then reorganized in the 18th century by a

prince from Wieng Čăn⁽¹⁹⁾ who, respectful of tradition maintained the ritual of purification elaborated by the unmarried princess-mother, the kingdom of Čämpasăk actually enjoyed but a few years of apogee. From the end of the 18th century, the great vassals of Khong began to rise. Then Čämpasăk fell under the yoke of Siam. The capital which up to then spread out from the revered monuments, source of prestige for the ruling lines who could not set themselves up as descendants of a divine ancestor, was transferred, and the throne came into the hands of usurpers. At the beginning of the 19th century, the fall of Čao Anu, king of Wieng Čăn, precipitated that of his son who was governor of Čämpasăk, and the power returned to the legitimate line. We witness then a veritable revival of the monarchic idea, but being controlled by the Siamese, this restoration could only be elaborated slowly. However, at the moment when the king of Čämpasak was about to achieve his goal in 1893, the French occupation upset it all. The descendants of the rulers could only try to erase a decline adumbrated by the collapse of the economic and social structures. To do this, they modified from the beginning of the 20th century the ritual organization of the principality in such a way as to gather around the ruling house the Southern communities. Disguising the split between the guardian divinities of the principality and the deceased monarchs, they grafted on to the cult of the highest divinities that of the direct ancestors. Moreover, substituting themselves for the mediums, they attempted during the New Year rites to go back to the magical sources of power, but taking on themselves all the misfortunes of the community they bound themselves ever more closely to the original fault, and so succumbed under the weight of a guilt from which no rite could ever completely free them⁽²⁰⁾.

Thus are the diverse fortunes which history accords the different princely houses of the North, Central and Southern regions, fortunes which account for the modifications which the myths, religious structures, and ritual organizations have undergone in the principal Laotian sub-cultures and which reveal behind the institutions the unconscious configurations which give to each ruling lineage its particular aspect.

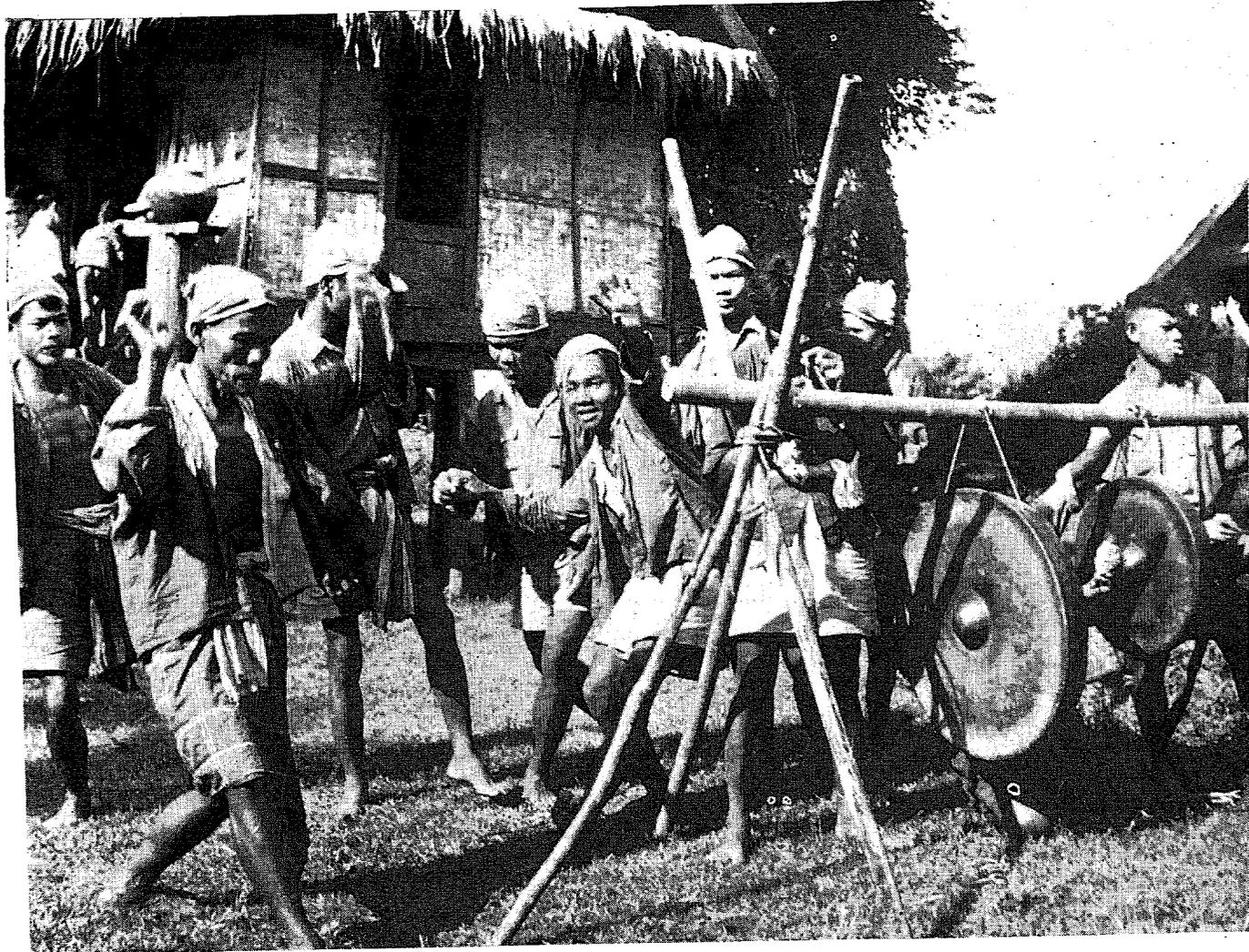


For the T'at Festival in Wieng Čăn, a game of Ti Khi is played between the T'at slave clan and the royal officials. The master of ceremonies raises the Ti Khi ball with an invocation before the game starts.



Ceremony of the Ho Cảo Bân at Wieng Cẩn



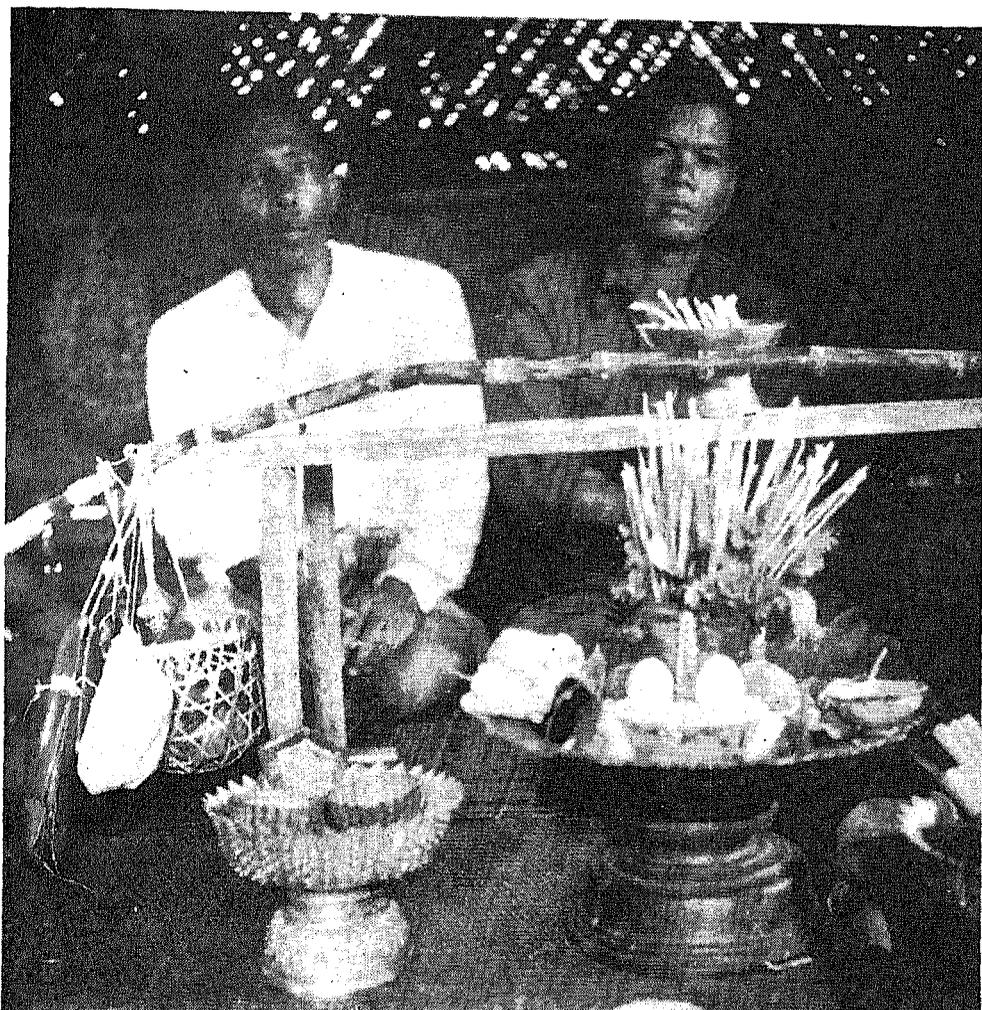


Dance of the aborigines in the precinct of the shrines of the principality of Čampasāk during the boat race.
(Photo by Manikus)



At the time of the boat race, the fourth day of the ceremony, the aborigines by offering a jar of alcoholic liquor, renew the ancient contract with the descendant of those who were charged with the maintenance of order in the country.

(Photo by Manikus)



Ceremony of the first month in Basak. The long sugar cane with offerings of food for the journey to the great divinities, before being placed under the shrine. Behind it are the medium and master of ceremonies.



NOTES

1) A paper presented at the field Seminar sponsored jointly by the School of Economics and Political Science, the School of Oriental and African Studies of London University, and the South East Asia Program of Cornell University, at the Siam Society in Bangkok, October I, 1963. We are indebted to Mrs J. Hanks of Cornell University who has kindly agreed to undertake the exacting task of translating this article from the French original.

2) For a detailed presentation of Laotian cosmogonies, cf. C. Archaimbault "La naissance du monde selon les traditions lao", pp. 385-414, in "Sources Orientales", éditions du Seuil (1959), Paris.

3) This game is mentioned in the Laotian work, "The Twelve Rites and the Fourteen Traditions", (Mss. EFEO, Book I p. 91) and in the abstract in Siamese of this work which appeared under the title of "The Royal Laotian Traditions of the Làn S'àng" by K'ričak, Bangkok, 1936, p. 90.

On the meaning of this game in Luang P'rabang, cf. the hypothesis we formulated in BEFEO, vol. XLVIII, 1956, pp. 221-231.

4) The game of hockey is mentioned only for the festival of the T'at at the end of the rainy season. But at the New Year ceremonies the aborigines, led by the P'ia Kāsāk, ten years ago still had to offer to the sovereign of Laos every three years, after the "Basi" rite of homage, cucurbitaceans called "fruits of strength, fruits of longevity" (cf. "The Twelve Rites and the Fourteen Traditions", op. cit., pp. 29-32, and "The Royal Laotian Traditions of the Làn S'àng" op. cit., pp. 52 and following). This offering emphasized that the aborigines were in fact the support of the prosperity of the kingdom and the longevity of the monarch.

According to our informant, Čao K'ăm Man, when a sovereign was installed in a new palace, the aborigines attached to the "P'ia Kāsāk" had to shoot arrows against its facade to drive out evil. The king then rubbed a small ball of rice over his body, and, turning

towards the aborigines, cried out, "May the aborigines living in the mountains perish before I do! May the aborigines living on the mountain-crests perish before I do!" In chorus, the aborigines shouted, "Yes!" The king then threw the ball in their direction, and the aborigines fled in fright back to their village, which, however, they could only enter after having been purified. If one of them were touched by the royal ball, he would die, they said, within the year.

5) This rite takes place only at the end of the rainy season at the time of the ceremonies of the royal reliquary. Formerly, they said the king had to remain seven days and seven nights beside the T'at. Later, he stayed but three days, and finally, one day only.

This meditation of the sovereign on the esplanade of the T'at took place after the dance of the ancestors. At the New Year there are substituted for this meditation at the foot of the T'at rites in order to enhance the sanctity of the different sacred places of the territory.

6) Behind this unity—apparently more nominal than real—could be discerned the ideal image that the ruling line of Luang P'rabang—like all the other ruling lines—had created of itself.

The theme of unity (the germ of which is already found in certain versions from the "Territorial Limits of Muong Làn S'àng" which give the waterfalls of Khong as southern limit of the kingdom ever since the founding of the kingdom of Luang P'rabang), permitted a ruling lineage, which myth attested was of divine origin, to satisfy with a minimum of effort its desires for hegemony, and in practice must have played the role of a "tranquilizer". (One notes that the recent efforts of Laotian historians to historicize myth by pushing back the foundation of the ruling line into the distant past betrays, in fact, the very permanence of myth).

Let us note that it is under F'à Ngum that there appeared for the first time in the annals of the North the mention of a certain Muong Cămpa (which later became Cămpasăk) which must have

been forced to accept the sovereignty of the ruling line of Luang P'rabang.

7) As to this game at S'ieng Khwang, cf. "La fête du T'at à S'ieng Khwang". *Artibus Asiae*, vol. XXIV 3/4, pp. 187-199.

8) Cf. "Les annales de l'ancien royaume de S'ieng Khwang", thesis, 177 pages, archives of the Sorbonne, May, 1959.

9) Cf. "Les rites agraires dans le Moyen Laos", *France Asie*, n° 160-161, pp. 1185-1194 and n° 162-163, pp. 1274-1283.

10) One of the minor altars of Wieng Čăn is actually consecrated to the Lord-Father of the Then, Čao P'o Then, who has the title of Čao Bân, lord of the village, and to his brother Cao F'a the celestial spirit. (The Then are the great divinities who in the traditions of the North reside in the heavens and presided over the arranging of the world). These names probably conceal the personality of the superior divinities of Luang P'rabang's cosmogony who, as a result of the obliteration of a tradition clearly separating the two worlds, were installed in a terrestrial kingdom. If it is thus, the genealogy of these Then has been somewhat disturbed. Actually, the ceremony of the Ho Čao Bân at Wieng Čăn ends with a rite of "maintaining the souls (su khwan)" in honor of Čant'a Buròm (contraction of Čant'a Burisi' one of the ancient names of Wieng Čăn, and of Khun Bulom), considered as the father of P'o Then (according to the cosmogony of the North, Khun Bulom, the father of the founder of the ruling line of Luang P'rabang, is the son of P'o Then).

11) As to the other monarchic spirits: F'à Ngum and Čao Anu had to seek shelter in the actual house of their mediums where they only have a modest shrine. Certain spirits have even lost their mediums. When it happens that they are reincarnated in some occasional medium, they are for the audience not much more than vague spirits whose names retain little definite personality (such as Čao Nan and Čao Int'awong, the sons of Čao Ong Bun, king of Wieng Čăn).

Only the water spirits or the guardian spirits, rooted in the soil and linked to some sand-bank or spot of water — spirits which go back to some pre-T'ai substratum — these have not been touched by the vicissitudes of a history which did not respect ruling lineages.

12) Cf. P. Levy, "Ti Khi, un jeu de mail rituel au Laos", *Annuaire EPHE*, 1952-1953, pp. 3-15. Also C. Archaimbault, "Contribution à l'étude du Ti Khi", *BEFEO* tome XLVIII, pp. 221-231.

13) "L'histoire et l'organisation rituelle de Basäk-Čämpasäk", thesis, 703 pp., Archives Sorbonne, May, 1959. This work, concerned only with the periodic and annual ceremonies stops with the rites of the 6th month. An appendix including exceptional rites and triennial ceremonies, as well as those ceremonies of the North and of Central Laos which have no parallel in the South has since been prepared (*Archives EFEO*, 300 pp.)

14) Two of the great spirits of Khong who possess an altar bear the names respectively of Čao P'o Sara (or P'răpot'isarat) and Čao Akara (or P'ră Sik' arat). These "Sammuti Devata", that is to say beings who owe their divine character to public opinion are none other than the sons of the pious layman, Čan Huat, to whom a priest of great prestige from Wieng Can in 1708, entrusted the governing of the island. After 1713, the king of Čämpasäk raised this island to the rank of "muong" (city), and ratified the nomination of Čan Huat as ruler of this territory.

15) This integration takes place at the end of the rainy season, at the time of the ceremony of the boat-race, which, associated with the change of season, is fused with a period when it is necessary to regenerate the corroded and worn out times. In this festival of renewal, the boat-race starts with a return to chaos, manifested by a temporary overturn of the social order. Up until the third day of the ceremony, (and breaches of customary injunctions are no less regulated than the injunctions themselves) the aborigines, considered as older brothers of the Laotians, are the masters of the village. Formerly their rights, they say, were more extensive, but the coup-

lets that they still chant today ("The eyes of an aborigine who makes love to a Laotian girl become pure white! A Laotian who makes love to an aborigine goes mad for three years!") clearly show that the sexual regulations normally observed are transgressed. The brakes are off every sexual prohibition — at least so the words indicate. The obscene songs and erotic mimicry, beyond the sexual liberty which reigned at the dawn of history reenact this slipping back to the mythical times marked by the excesses of the daughter of the king of the high divinities and of her servant-lover of the palace. Those were the times of the great license which prevailed when the city (muong) was founded and which was the accidental consequence of the original fault.

But the third day, when, according to the annals, there formerly took place the annual oath of fidelity, the license gives way to law, and towards dawn, the end of the night dissipating chaos, some Mon-Khmer aborigines proceed to the sacrifice of buffaloes provided by the unmarried mothers of the principality. Thus is erased all defilement, while at the same time the process of recreation is prepared by means of this last rite which releases a vitalizing force. The fourth day of the ceremony, the buffaloes having been sacrificed, and order succeeding confusion, the aborigines by offering a jar of alcoholic liquor, renew the ancient contract with the descendant of those who were charged with the maintenance of order in the country, and thus recognize implicitly the new law which was imposed on them by the Laotian rulers.

16) The fourth day of the waxing moon of the first month, towards midnight, the sacred guardians, of the great altars of the principality of Čămpasăk affix under the shrine of the great divinities a great stalk of sugar cane, to the ends of which are attached little baskets containing white rice, and bags filled with cigarettes, betel-chews and bottles of perfume. These presents make up the travel provisions for the great divinities who are about to ascend to the heavens to report on their mandate. These provisions will be carried by subaltern spirits, servants of the great spirits. For seven days and seven nights the sacred custodians have to guard the altars deserted

by the spirits. The eleventh day of the waxing moon, at dawn, the high spirits descend to this world, and enter the medium to report to the rulers and to the population the advice and admonitions they have received from the celestial palace on high.

17) By the Franco-Siamese treaties, in 1893, Čao K'ăm Suk remained under the suzerainty of Siam, and had to stand aside powerless and witness the dismembering of his lands: all the vassal muong on the left bank of the Mekhong river now were taken over by the French! The long-cherished dream of Čao K'ăm Suk to restore some day his ancestral patrimony was terminated. He died in 1900.

When France in the agreement of February 13, 1904, obtained the province of Čämpasăk, she appointed Čao Ras'adanai, the son of K'ăm Suk, as a mere governor. Hence the view expressed by the people of the South: "While the kingdom of Luang P'răbang had a king who symbolized in the eyes of the Laotians of the North the ancient splendors of Làn S'àng, Southern Laos only had a governor, who, in the eyes of the Southern Laotians, continued to be the descendant and direct heir of the kings of Champaçak", (Thao Nhouy Abhay, "Le Royaume de Champaçak", Sili, Saigon, (no date), p. 18). Moreover, the 21st of December, 1934, Čao Ras'adanai was to be retired like a simple functionary. In 1941, Čämpasăk fell again to Siam. On August 27, 1946, Laos having been reoccupied by the French, Čao Bun Um, the son of Ras'adanai, who had fought on the side of the French and who had fallen seriously ill, signed the secret Protocol of Séno, renouncing his rights over Čämpasăk in the interests of Laotian unity. At the time of the National Congress of August, 1948, which ratified the Protocol of Séno, he made the point in his discourse that "once more *fate* has contravened the House of Čämpasăk".

18) At Čämpasăk, the theme of the sin exists:

- a) On the level of myth;
- b) On the level of legend: Nang Malong, daughter of a dignitary of Čämpasăk loved a prince who was Kha or Laotian

(depending on the version). Pregnant by her lover and cursed by her father, she died by drowning (cf. "Le cycle de Nang Oua-Nang Malong" France Asie, 1961, n° 170, pp. 2581-2604);

c) On the level of "history": at the beginning of the 17th century, according to the Annals, Queen Nang Pao, seduced by a princely elephant-hunter, gave birth to a bastard. At the moment of delivery, she declared that henceforth all unmarried mothers of the kingdom would have to offer a buffalo to the guardian spirit, and she charged the aborigines of the territory to see to the fulfilment of this prescription.

19) The existence of this prince, and by extension of the lineage that he founded has been for long a bone of contention among historians. It is known that Le Boulanger who "hardly dared depend on the rambling and improbable manuscripts which constitute what has been termed the Annals of Bassac" (Histoire du Laos, p. 146) made of Čămpasăk a fief which only became hereditary after the destruction of Wieng Čăn in the 19th century, and that only thanks to the Siamese. In his work on "Le Royaume de Champaçak", Thao Nhoy Abhay has rightly protested against this judgment and declared that one day he would write the history of this lineage and include the "pages omitted by Le Boulanger".

Let us then examine briefly the different traditions:

The Traditions of the North

At his death in 1694 (or 1695), Suriyawongsa, who reigned at Wieng Čăn, left as his heirs only two grandsons: Kingkisarāt and Int'asom. A minister, the P'ăña Čăn, seized the throne before being himself dethroned by Nant'arat; a nephew of Suriyawongsa born in Annam and named Ong Lo (or S'ai Ong We or Ong Wiet) finally grasped the power. Threatened by Luang P'ăbang, he appealed to the king of Ayuthia. As a result of the manoeuvres of the king of Siam, the two sides agreed to proceed, in 1707, to the dividing of the territory of the kingdoms, the Làn S'àng Luang P'ăbang and the Làn S'àng Wieng Čăn, whose frontier extended as far as Li Phi. This tradition is therefore mute on the subject of the rulers of Čămpasăk.

The Traditions of the South (A)

At the death in 1688 of Suriyawongsa, his wife who was pregnant, repulsing the advances of the usurper, the P'āña Muong Sên, succeeded in fleeing, thanks to the head-priest of Wieng Čan, to the South, where she gave birth to a son, Čao Nokasat. Her oldest son, Cao Ong Lo, succeeded in getting to Annam. Later he returned to Laos and dethroned the usurper. From 1713 on, his brother Nokasat held the throne as king of Čämpasăk with the name of S'oi Sisamut, under the protection of the head priest of Wieng Čăn.

This tradition, the sources for which we have given in our article in the *Journal Asiatique*, "Histoire de Čämpasăk" (t CCX-LIX fáse 4 (1961) p 519-595), belies the Northern tradition on two points:

a) The existence of two sons of Suriyawongsa;

b) The relationship between Čao Nokasat and Ong Lo (Ong We). The first difficulty might be resolved if one supposes that the texts of the North deny only the survival of a male line from the first queen. Whence the hypothesis formulated by Maha Sila in his article on the history of Čämpasăk (in the Laotian review, *Wanna K'adisan*, 1954, n° 8, pp. 40-43): Nokasat was the son of the "left queen" of Suriyawongsa.

Traditions of the South (B)

First formulated by Thao Nhouy Abhay, this tradition has been taken up and developed in 1957 by Maha Sila in his *P'ongsawadan Lao* (History of Laos, Wieng Čăn, first edition 1957, second edition 1962: pp. 159-163). According to Maha Sila, who would be well advised to indicate in any subsequent edition on which annals of Čämpasăk he based his account, Nokasat and Ong Lo were the sons of Princess Sumangkhalā, one of the daughters of Suriyawongsa. At the death of her father, in 1690, widowed (her husband, it is thought, had been killed at the time of the troubles which followed on the death of the sovereign) and pregnant, she rejected the advances of

the usurper, the P'ãña Muong Čan. While her eldest son, Ong Lo, fled, not to Annam, but into the region of Udorn, she, thanks to the help of the head priest succeeded in making her way to the South, where she gave birth to Nokasat. Six months later, the usurper was killed by the faithful followers of Ong Lo, who then ascended the throne. But four years later he in turn fell under the assault of Nant'arat who himself was then to be executed by the nephew of Suriyawongsa, S'ai Ong We (whom one must not henceforth confound with Ong Lo!). In 1707, Lan S'ang was divided in two and in 1713, a third kingdom, that of Čãmpasăk was reorganized in the South under the leadership of Nokasat who took for his reign the name of S'oi Sisamut.

This tradition which happily resolves all the difficulties (and which is perhaps not unrelated to that of the P'rac'um P'ongçawadan, part I, p. 432, second edition, Bangkok, 1956, which makes Nang Sumang out to be the usurper's wife; see also Pavie who makes Nang Kiaman (?) the second daughter of Suriyawongsa out to be the usurper's wife, *Etudes diverses*, tome II, p. 90, (see also Le Boulanger, *op. cit.*, p. 130) has been taken up since by T'ao U K'am P'om Wongsa, in his "Evolution of the Lao" (in *Laotian*, Bangkok, first edition 1957, second edition 1963: pp. 196-201).

From the "Histoire du Laos" of Le Boulanger in 1931 to the work of Maha Sila in 1957 a great step has been taken. Let us make it clear that the "History of Laos" of Maha Sila, published with the approval of the Ministry of Education is used in schools in Laos. As to the work of T'ao U K'am, he had the benefit of a laudatory preface by Thao Petsarat, well known for his perfect knowledge of Laotian history. This official recognition of S'oi Si-Samut, reorganizer of the independent kingdom of Čãmpasăk, can only spur researchers to deepen their studies of this principality.

20) According to the Annals of Čãmpasăk (P'ia Muang Khwa Som Bun's version, copy EFEO, pp. 13-14) under King S'oi Sisamut, "the fifth day of the waxing moon of the 6th month, a proclamation enjoined the people to form a procession of elephants, to make rafts

out of banana trunks, and to place thereon offerings destined for the spirits (phi). Mediums charged with the duty of expelling spirits and mounted on caparisoned elephants circled the city, then drove out the spirits whom they dispatched by land (using small vessels containing offerings), and by water (by means of small rafts with offerings). Then, in the afternoon, at five o'clock, the mediums came to offer their good wishes to the king. This ceremony has lasted down to the present day". This last phrase appears to indicate that these rites of expulsion were being carried on such as they were described under Cao K'ăm Suk who had this version edited. It was after the death of K'ăm Suk, it appears, that the representative of the ruling Southern line had the rites of expulsion carried over into the intercalary day of the New Year period. Riding through the city on the back of an elephant from North to South, the prince took upon himself all the pestilences before purifying himself with a small ball of rice deposited thereafter on a raft to drift with the river's current.

Addendum

Page 58 line 15: son of the divinities read: son of the son of the
divinities

Page 59 line 2: ogres and with whom read: ogres and water-spirits
with whom

