

## **The French Contribution to the Rediscovery of Dvāravatī Archaeology**

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A few generations of French scholars, in close association with their Siamese counterparts who played a leading role, unearthed the civilization of Dvāravatī, by that time all but forgotten. Their first investigations extended from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>, when French explorers from Cambodia started revealing to the world, and interpreting, what the Siamese had discovered in their territory. The second stage, in the 1920s, was personified by George Cœdès, who identified and named the characteristic Dvāravatī style of art, determined its chronological framework and its source of inspiration in Gupta India, and suggested its Mon provenance. The next generation, from the 1930s to the 1950s, was dominated by Pierre Dupont, who methodically studied Dvāravatī achievements in architecture and sculpture. During the 1950s and 1960s, Cœdès again became involved with the reading of inscriptions that confirmed his earlier hypotheses. The last Frenchman considered here is Jean Boisselier, whose investigations beginning in the 1960s led to the discovery of a pre-Dvāravatī civilization and the local origins of a Buddhist tradition that has been perpetuated to the present day in Thailand.

The French contributed significantly, starting from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the rediscovery of Dvāravatī civilization in its various aspects — whether epigraphy, archaeology, iconography, art history, Mon studies or the relevant Chinese texts. The contributions of other nationals cannot be dismissed; but as they are nearly always taken into account in French writings on the subject, the latter provide a sufficient overview and quite a complete introduction.

Whereas elsewhere in Southeast Asia, whether in Cambodia, Myanmar or Indonesia for example, Western explorers found themselves in a pristine context, with ruins overgrown by the jungle and nearly forgotten, in the case of Siam they would report on sites or objects that had already been unearthed, restored, exhibited in temple museums and somewhat interpreted, in the framework of an enterprise

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*N. B.* — Unless otherwise noted, the translations of quotations from the French were made by the present author and are not from the source cited.

mostly religious but not in contradiction with the scientific enterprise of those Westerners; on the contrary, the one could be enriched by the other.

In examining the exploratory record in Siam, it is immediately apparent that the French contribution was never single-handed and was always in tandem with the Siamese, whose contribution cannot be ignored. The Siamese opened the field of Dvāravatī studies and continued to create new developments. The first step of this rediscovery—and it could be said, the beginning of Siamese archaeology on the whole—can be dated to the occasion in 1831 when **Prince Mongkut, the future Rama IV**, then still a monk, went on a pilgrimage to the site of what is now known as Phra Pathom Chedi in Nakhon Pathom. He found the monument in a ruined but still impressive state which he decided to restore, a decision he could fulfill only after he had succeeded to the throne in 1851. The enterprise was fundamentally religious but was accompanied by scientific considerations that were uncommon at the time, involving measurements of the monument, descriptions of its various stages of construction, a survey of the environment, collection of information from the local community and the reading of inscriptions that had been found on location in relation with Singhalese chronicles (Boisselier 1978 and 2000).

The initial effort was followed in subsequent generations by methodical work in excavating sites and unearthing objects of various periods, in particular by **Prince Damrong Rajanubhab** (1862–1943), a son of Rama IV and “father of Siamese history” as he is generally called, whose motives were primarily religious but scientific as well. The French generally followed the progress, reporting on what the Siamese had discovered before them. The French contribution being reviewed here is always, except perhaps at the very beginning, the result of co-operation between the Siamese and the French within an institutional framework more or less precisely defined. The Siamese made discoveries on their own territory, occasionally restored monuments or objects, constituted museums of some sort and made studies about them (although rather rarely). The French kept a record of the discoveries, which was not always done by the local counterparts, reported about them for the international scientific community and analyzed them in the context of Southeast Asian or Eastern civilizations. The French contribution amounted to reports about a reconstructed archaeology that sometimes created difficulties, but also served as raw material for further investigation.

## I. Exploration

Why it befell to the French, at the beginning at least, to follow in the steps of the Siamese in exploring their archaeological domain, is readily apparent on learning who was the first Frenchman to become interested in this field of study. **Étienne Aymonier** (1844–1929) was a colonial soldier in Cambodia turned administrator, who learnt Khmer language in order to study the history of the country through

its chronicles and, mostly, written inscriptions, in relation with the remains of monuments (Aymonier 1900, xvii). On his mission he explored not only Cambodia extensively, but also Siam, where Khmer inscriptions and ruins were found, all the more so since the provinces where the monumental complex of Angkor Wat was situated still belonged to Siam and were not restored to Cambodia until 1907. He thus paid a visit in 1884 to Wat Bowornniwet in Bangkok, which preserved inscriptions in a sort of museum reputed to be from, among other places, Nakhon Pathom, or Phra Pathom in Nakhon Chaisri *monthon* [circle] to use the administrative names and divisions of the time, and consequently paid a visit to the site of Nakhon Pathom. His method consisted, in this case, in following the steps of the Siamese authorities who had started on their own to explore their archaeological heritage. As he found nothing Khmer in the material originating from Nakhon Pathom, he did not report on his visit until his successor Lucien Fournereau's book had been published, when he very briefly discussed some debatable points from the latter's report. His most interesting comments concern the name of Phra Pathom: he states that the word Pathom means primeval (Aymonier 1901, 58), and later that "Phrah Pathom ... might well ... have been one of the most ancient places of introduction of Buddhism in Indochina, not to say the primeval one: this could admittedly be deduced from its name, the Sanskrit form of which means 'primeval', 'first'. Some locals, mostly Cambodians, call the monument 'Preah Bantom', the Sanskrit form of this latter word being 'Padma lotus', which amounts to giving the temple the name of 'Sacred Lotus'." (Aymonier 1901, 88) The place was originally called Phra Bantom at the time of Rama IV (Thiphakon Wong 1961, vol. 2, 114); but the correct translation is rather "Sleeping Buddha" (Boisselier 1978, 12 and 2000, 164). In any case, from the very beginning, it was known in French circles that Nakhon Pathom was reputed to be the place of introduction of Buddhism in Siam; the religious importance of the site for the Siamese was acknowledged, although the various foreign authors gave little credit to what they considered mere legends.

Though Aymonier's testimony is not very instructive for the understanding of Dvāravatī archaeology, it elucidates important characteristics of the rediscovery process. First, like all his successors, Aymonier considered ancient Siamese history from the perspective of Cambodia. That was because he surveyed Khmer material in Siam, of which he did find a lot; but he realized, at least from what can be inferred from his writings since he is never explicit in this matter, that Siam had an archaeological domain that did not belong to the Khmer sphere and that had to be treated independently. The second point is that he did not make discoveries himself, but followed the steps of the Siamese who had already started to investigate their archaeology by setting up museums and restoring (or reconstructing) ruined monuments.

The second Frenchman who contributed to Dvāravatī archaeology was an architect, **Lucien Fournereau** (1846–1906; see Hennequin 2006c; 2009), who

first went to Cambodia to work with Aymonier on Khmer monuments. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Fournereau was entrusted by the French Ministry of Education and Fine Arts with a mission to explore Siam—implicit acknowledgement that the ancient history of Siam was a field of its own, independent of the history of Cambodia. Moreover, the sphere of investigation was limited to southern central Siam, embracing Nakhon Pathom, Ayuthaya and Sukhothai, thus defining the archaeology of the country more or less according to what many colonial agents considered the borders of the country. He surveyed Siam twice, in 1891 and 1892, concentrating mostly on the towns mentioned above. Apart from travel accounts for the general public and articles that blended archaeology with travel accounts, his book *Le Siam ancien* [ancient Siam] was published by Musée Guimet, Paris, in two volumes: the first in 1895, in which all the material of interest here is to be found (Fournereau 1895), and the second in 1908 (Fournereau 1908), after the author's untimely death on 17 December 1906 (Barth 1908, i)<sup>1</sup>, that was edited by Auguste Barth (see page 6ff.) on the basis of Fournereau's notes.

Fournereau saw more or less the same things as Aymonier, but was more precise in his descriptions, and followed the latter's steps in the path already cleared by the Siamese. He thus went first to Wat Bowornniwet; then, among other places, to Nakhon Pathom, where he was most certainly disappointed to see a modern building covering, as he reported, an antique one which could no longer be seen and where he could only record the artifacts kept in the temple museum as well as a couple of inscriptions. Regarding the architecture, he had only legends or chronicles to rely on; and reported, actually rather accurately, that the original monument had been built in ancient times as an act of redemption:

Tradition attributes to *Phaya Bâla*, King of *Râjapurî* and *Kañcanapurî*, the foundation of the temple and the linga it contains as an expiatory offering following the parricide that he committed unknowingly in a single combat. The monarch is said to have reigned from the Year of the Hare until the year 552 of an era that is not specified<sup>2</sup> (Fournereau 1895, 116).

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<sup>1</sup> Curiously, Fournereau's mission in Nakhon Pathom and his contribution to the study of Dvāravatī civilization are generally ignored in the Thai literature on the subject (Fine Arts Department 1999a, 18; Phatharaphong 2002, 2; Sakchai 2004, 15), where the assumption is that the domain was first explored by Lunet de Lajonquière, who visited the region only some 10 years later.

<sup>2</sup> Various and quite contradictory dates are given in the chronicles. (See Boisselier 1978, 16; 2000, 168, who relies on Rama IV's chronicler.) If the date given by Fournereau is interpreted as belonging to the Great Era, the equivalent is 630 CE, which rather agrees with what can be gleaned from other sources. Fournereau refrains from suggesting a precise date for the ruins he was describing, but he probably supposed that they dated approximately to that period.

In the same passage, he also notes that the monument had twice been encased in a larger one, the last one being recent, dating to the 1850s. Fournereau hypothesizes, rather gratuitously and in contradiction to the testimonies he had obtained from the Siamese, that the people who had founded this civilization were Śivaites before professing Buddhism, probably because that was the case in Cambodia and, for him, certainly was so in other Southeast Asian countries (Fournereau 1895, 49).

On this account, Fournereau's testimony may not be very conclusive; but his report is of some interest, although beyond our subject, because it provides descriptions and pictures of the monument as it was in the 1890s, which is not quite the same as it is now. An assessment of the changes that the site has undergone during more than a century is therefore possible. The author published a picture that was probably taken between 1869 and 1870, quite a few years before his own visit and is certainly the oldest known image of the monument (Hennequin 2009, 136, fig. 1; 143, note 5).

Fournereau also devoted a few pages, with pictures and text, to some artifacts that the Siamese had gathered in a sort of museum within the precincts of the temple. By his account, the installation left much to be desired with objects piled one upon another: two Wheels of the Law, a stele showing the Buddha seated with legs pendant, preaching to monks and hermits (see figure 1; although Fournereau did not identify the scene), two carved blocks (that are now identifiable as abacuses for supporting a Wheel of the Law; see figure 20), a *linga* and a *somasutra* (figure 2). His comments on those objects and the collection were rather simple, so different were the remains in general from those known in Cambodia and elsewhere.

His collection of pictures constitutes an important legacy for research. First, it revealed to the general and scientific public a forgotten ancient civilization with some of its icons; namely, the Wheel of the Law, the Buddha seated legs pendant and the carved abacus. It also revealed a civilization professing religions from India: Buddhism as well as Śivaism, which is often discounted, although with a somewhat original iconography.

Last but not least, a point that has so far been rather neglected, the collected pictures help in documenting the history of the individual pieces and—along with other pictures of sites frequently photographed by French visitors—retracing more than 100 years of Siamese museology. For example, according to sources from Phra Pathom Chedi National Museum, the stele representing the Buddha seated with legs pendant (figure 1) was found at Wat Sai in Nakhon Chaisri, some 20 kilometres away from Phra Pathom Chedi, and installed in the collection by order of Rama V (Fine Arts Department 2005, 132–134). According to Pierre Dupont, the *somasutra* was found in Noen Hin, near Wat Phra Prathon, some 10 kilometres distant (Dupont 1939, 358–359). The various artifacts were thus not always found at the very site of Phra Pathom Chedi, as is generally thought, but gathered from

places nearby with the intention of establishing a museum. The Siamese authorities had evidently defined a “Dvāravatī style”, certainly only intuitively but with good judgment, organised in a collection quite homogeneous, contrary to what is often seen in temple museums today which mix periods and types of objects.

Another interesting chapter in Fournereau’s text is devoted to two inscriptions found at the time of Rama IV and installed in a small building of Chinese style in the precinct of Phra Pathom Chedi, where they remain today<sup>3</sup>. Fournereau made a rubbing of them<sup>4</sup> (figure 3) that he sent to **Auguste Barth** (1834–1916), a reputed specialist of old Indian scripts in France, who read them and made a comment that was included in Fournereau’s book<sup>5</sup>. Barth transcribed and translated the text, identifying it as the *Ye dhammā* formula: “the two inscriptions contain, under different forms, the same formula, called ‘profession of faith’, a kind of Buddhist credo equally spread in Sanskrit and in Pāli.” (Barth *in* Fournereau 1895, 84) This was enough to confirm that the civilization under consideration professed, among other religions as shown by the artifacts, a Buddhist faith that used Pāli language and an Indian script, thus clearly characterizing this civilization as historical or at least proto-historic. Neither Barth nor Fournereau ventured to date these inscriptions; however, their study of the characters indicated a dating of before the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Fournereau 1895, 85) and probably contemporary with a Sanskrit inscription, which was also reproduced by Fournereau and more precisely dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> century (Barth *in* Fournereau 1895, 125). Whatever the case, the approximation was sufficient to exclude many hypotheses, in particular the possibility that they dated to the time of King Aśoka, 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, as suggested by the Siamese (Fournereau 1895, 84).

Fournereau also comments on the history of the Chao Phraya Valley and the supposed process of Indianization. Although they have become obsolete, two

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<sup>3</sup> Actually, only one is still visible; the other is hidden by a statue in a case, but is reputed to be still in place.

<sup>4</sup> Fournereau (1895, x–xi) entrusted the documents he had gathered to Musée Guimet, but nothing could be found there. Aymonier (1900, p. xvii), who made a rubbing of the same inscriptions, sent copies of his rubbings to Société asiatique, Bibliothèque nationale de France, L’Institut, École des hautes études and École des langues orientales (now Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales).

<sup>5</sup> Barth read other inscriptions collected by Fournereau, in particular some which were preserved in Wat Bowornniwet in Bangkok. One that supposedly came from a temple called Wat Maheyong (Mayem) in Nakhon Chaisri actually comes from Nakhon Sri Thammarat; the origin of the others is dubious as well (Aymonier 1901, 77; Cœdès 1961, 34).

Barth’s reading of the inscriptions from Nakhon Pathom was reproduced in Cœdès’s second volume of inscriptions with no further comment (Cœdès 1929, 11–12; 1961, 1) and the authorship of the reading is often attributed to Cœdès in Thai literature (Fine Arts Department 1999b, 111). Moreover, a new reading of the inscriptions by the Fine Arts Department shows that its authors did not take into account the Fournereau–Barth testimony (National Library 1996, 83 and 92).

points may be noted. The first is that Fournereau mentioned the link in ancient times between the Chao Phraya Valley and Haripuñjaya (now Lamphun) farther north, probably on the basis of some chronicles that he does not quote (Fournereau 1895, 51), a connection that was substantiated on firmer grounds a few decades later by Cœdès with the translation of chronicles.

The second is of greater consequence: Fournereau suggested that the “Kingdom of Dvāravatī” could have been located in Siam. Specialists of ancient Chinese texts had already surmised that the name of the entity called by the Buddhist pilgrims “To lo po ti” (sometimes rendered “Duoluobodi”) probably derived from the Sanskrit word Dvāravatī (“with doors”), a name used for a town in Indian mythology. The same texts stated that this Southeast Asian “kingdom” was located between present-day Cambodia and Myanmar, but no connection had so far been made between the name and contemporary archaeological material. (On the story, see Cœdès 1963, 285-287; Jacques 2009.) In his book, Fournereau<sup>6</sup> (1895, 53) suggested that Dvāravatī referred to Ayuthaya, giving no justification for this, but certainly because the full name of the ancient capital city of Siam contained the word Dvāravatī. In another passage he remarks: “The conquest [of present day Thailand by the Thai] was completed in 1350 with the fall of the town of Dvāravatī, which became, under the name of Ayuthia, the great capital of the Thai southern empire.” (Fournereau 1895, 57)

In reaction to such statements, **Paul Pelliot** (1878–1945), a specialist of Chinese chronicles, commented a few years later that:

There is no trace [...] of an ancient town established at Ayuthia prior to the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century; it is thus probable that we have to locate tentatively Dvāravatī in the area of Lopburī, the ancient Lvo or Lavo, which seems to have been the most important centre in the Menam [Chao Phraya] lower valley before Ayuthia (Pelliot 1904, 223, note 5).

Developing the idea that the territory of present-day Thailand could not have been populated by the Thai around the 7<sup>th</sup> century, he suggested (1904, 230–231) that “The country of Dvāravatī was certainly either Mon or Khmer”, noting that the languages of those two peoples were quite similar and that the claimed extension of Funan at the time of its apogee, from the mouth of Mekhong to the Gulf of Bengal, could be explained by the community held between those peoples now distinct and separated (Pelliot 1904, 230-231). In these few lines, ideas were sounded that were

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<sup>6</sup> Chavannes, a specialist in Chinese ancient texts, suggested the same idea at about the same time (Chavannes 1894).

to be developed later by other authors, although there was no positive evidence at the time<sup>7</sup>.

Next among French explorers to pursue Dvāravatī studies was **Étienne Edmond Lunet de Lajonquière** (1861–1933), another military officer turned archaeologist (Hennequin 2006a). Like his predecessors, he surveyed, after Annam, the archaeology of Cambodia, followed by a first survey in Siam from October 1904 to May 1905 on a mission from the newly founded *École française d'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO; Lunet 1986, 1). An important change came about in the terms of his mission: whereas his two predecessors, as well as himself initially, had been sent by French institutions, Lunet was hired by the Siamese government to explore the archaeological domain of the country. When exploring Siam for the first time in 1904 and 1905, he accompanied Louis Finot, then director of EFEO, for part of his travels, and the two men were invited by Prince Damrong Rajanubhab to meet him as he was interested in their investigations (*BEFEO* 1904, 1142; Lunet 1986, 84). It was certainly on this occasion that Prince Damrong and Lunet agreed that the latter should investigate and document, under the supervision of Siamese authorities, the archaeological sites of Siam as he had done in other countries. Not only did the French consistently follow the steps of the Siamese in exploring the archaeology of the country, but also, starting from this time, they did so as employees of the Siamese Government and under its supervision. The situation was to remain basically the same for the following generations of French scholars, with some variations in status.

Lunet thus received a grant from the Siamese government in 1907 to perform his work for them (*BEFEO* 1908, 629; Hennequin 2006b, 154–155) and launched his multi-stage mission in 1908. The first part consisted in the exploration of Angkor Wat (which had been returned to Cambodia the year before) with funding from EFEO. The second part was the exploration of Siam with the financial help and supervision of the Siamese authorities. A third part was a visit to southern India on his return journey to France. The fourth part was a leave in France for the author to put his notes in order and write his inventories (*BEFEO* 1907, 407; *BEFEO* 1908,

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<sup>7</sup> Contrary to what is often said in Thai literature (Fine Arts Department 1999a, 18; Phatarapong 2002, 2; Sakchai 2004, 15; Usa 2009a, 93), it was not because many inscriptions in Mon had been found in Thailand that Pelliot conceived this hypothesis. No such inscriptions had been found or read by then. The confusion probably comes from the translation into Thai of a text by Cœdès in which he stated that he supposed that the population of the lower Chao Phraya valley was Mon, because inscriptions in that language had been found there—as Pelliot had supposed before him for other reasons. Cœdès had never implied that Pelliot had read these inscriptions (Cœdès 1952, 30). The translation of this text, published in the second edition of the second volume of inscriptions, encourages the attribution of the idea of a link between the inscriptions and the population to Pelliot (Cœdès 1961, 55); and all the more so the quotation of this passage out of context in the same book (Cœdès 1961, 3–4).

588 and 629). For the Siamese project, Lunet regularly met with and was advised by Prince Damrong (Lunet 1909a, 165; 1909c, 353–354). After one of their meetings, Lunet suggested that the director of EFEO should bestow on the Prince the title of corresponding member of the institution, which was quickly granted (Hennequin 2006, 43; *BEFEO* 1908, 285 and 331).

The original objective of the mission in Siam, from April to October 1908, is not clear. According to mission documents, the explorer was to concentrate on the southern peninsular regions, where recent discoveries had been made, thus taking into account a part of the Siamese territory that the other archaeologists had tended to neglect. Heavy rains however prevented him from accomplishing that goal; in the end he made a general survey of Siamese archaeology, mostly in the central regions of the country (*BEFEO* 1908, 629).

From his notes taken during his two Siamese missions, first between 1904 and 1905 (the less important one) and again in 1908, Lunet produced several manuscripts, three of which are of special interest. The first is a diary of his travels with remarks on the preservation of the archaeology of Siam with many illustrations, which was published in the *Bulletin de la Commission archéologique de l'Indochine* (Lunet 1909a) and again that same year in the *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient (BEFEO)*, but without illustrations (Lunet 1909c). The second work is a description of what he calls the archaeological domain of Siam that he organized into different periods, published in the same issue of the *Bulletin de la Commission archéologique de l'Indochine* (Lunet 1909b). The last article reproduces the detailed notes taken on the various sites, monuments and artifacts that the author saw during, mostly, his 1908 mission (Lunet 1912). He did in Siam what he could not do when establishing the inventory of Khmer monuments; namely, to organize the field in periods and civilizations, mostly on religious criteria, probably thanks to the investigative work that the Siamese had already accomplished. In any case, it was Prince Damrong who had recommended itineraries to him and thus delimited the extent of his investigation (Lunet 1909a, 165).

Lunet's contribution consisted in enlarging the geographical extension of the civilization, as yet unnamed, without restricting it to the site of Nakhon Pathom. He identified an area belonging to the same culture at a contemporary period, covering the regions of Nakhon Pathom, Ratchaburi (Khao Ngu), Suphanburi, Prachinburi and Petchabun (Sri Thep), all places that he had visited (with the exception of the last one) and reported on.

Before his second visit, Lunet considered that the archaeology of Siam prior to the arrival of the Thai was tributary to Khmer culture (Lunet 1907, 320), contrary to his predecessors who implicitly recognized its originality. In 1908, he readily recanted his first impression and admitted the originality of Siamese archaeological remains. He described the characteristics of this civilization as follows, in comparison with Cambodia (Lunet 1909a, 179):

1. “Town precincts with, usually, an irregular design, whereas the same constructions in Cambodia are rigorously rectangular;
2. “Sculptures in the round or in low relief, with a highly superior craftsmanship; the folds of the dress, the features of the faces and the hair dress of the various people represented are quite different and clearly recall similar works in the Dravidian school of art;
3. “Monuments nearly always built in bricks with a design unknown among the Kambujas;
4. “Fragments of inscriptions on stone or terracotta, the writing characters of which are related to the alphabets of Southern India.”

In conclusion he remarks: “The people who left ... these vestiges seem to have professed Buddhism. They built huge *stūpa*, adorned caves with images of the Master carved in the live rock or modelled with stucco and erected in the holy places a number of wheels (probably the *semas* of modern pagodas<sup>8</sup>) ...” (Lunet 1909a, 180).

Lunet also described artifacts and published illustrations of some of them, mostly in the form of drawings of a rather poor quality. He reported on the same objects as Fournereau, usually with different specimens; namely, Wheels of the Law, Buddha images seated with legs pendant (including the great specimen carved in the rock at Khao Ngu Cave, Ratchaburi province) and abacuses. He added new subject material characteristic of this school of art: a crouching deer (figure 4), the Buddha standing between two acolytes on the head of a beaked monster now called *panasbodi* (figure 5), grinding stones and ablution pedestals or bases (Lunet 1909b, 218–224; 1912, 110–113).

Like his predecessors, Lunet made rubbings of a couple of inscriptions that he published and sent to **Louis Finot** (1864–1935) for reading. The latter identified fragments of *Ye dhammā* formulas, which provided no new material of interest; he suggested, however, a palaeographic dating of the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Finot 1910, 148, 154), formally confirming for the first time what had been presumed.

Although he managed to identify a verisimilar dating after his 1908 survey, Lunet refrained from going beyond a simple description of his findings. He did not try to draw comparisons with the Cham or Khmer achievements that he had seen, except negatively as shown above, or the Indian art that he was acquainted with. Neither did he try to find a name for the civilization he was considering; he used

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<sup>8</sup> Fournereau had identified the objects seen in Nakhon Pathom as Wheels of the Law, but as he doubted the antiquity of Buddhism on the site, he also suggested that they could be the wheels of the carriage of some Brahmanical divinity (1895, 121–122). Although Lunet de Lajonquière identifies them here as *sema* (sacred border demarcation stones), they had been correctly identified from the very beginning and the uncertainty among the foreigners did not remain as long as is sometimes said (Boisselier 1987, 89).

the purely negative label of “Indian non-Cambodian” subgroup within the larger “non-Thai” group (Lunet 1909b, 188).

## II. Classification

After publication of Lunet de Lajonquière’s last article on the subject in 1912, another major figure in Dvāravatī studies appeared: **George Cœdès** (1886–1969), who in that same year wrote a very brief review of the article giving the complete transcriptions of the inscriptions it published, a feature lacking in Finot’s note, with a brief comment. Cœdès certainly did not then suspect that he would himself be generating significant contributions in the same vein some 10 years hence.

Like his predecessors, Cœdès studied Cambodia, in his case through the reading of Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions, before turning to Siam. Like Lunet, he was hired by the Siamese government, but on a permanent basis from 1918 to 1929, as a full-time employee of the National Library (Baffie 1999). Unlike his predecessors, he was a scholar and his most important task was twofold: to publicize recent discoveries by the Siamese, which were quite significant, and to organize the rather abundant material found to date, consider it in context and associate with it some basic concepts. This task was performed when Cœdès was in permanent contact with Prince Damrong at the National Library, where the two men worked so closely that it is difficult, and often pointless, to determine who originated such-and-such an idea.

Cœdès began his work of communicating the archaeological discoveries to the public with a conference given, apparently in French, at the Siam Society in Bangkok on 2 October 1922 concerning a collection of Siamese votive tablets gathered by Prince Damrong, the text of which was later published in France (Cœdès 1925a; 1926a; 1954, 240). In the article, he attempted to classify the various schools and periods of Thai art, starting from the so-called Dvāravatī/Nakhon Pathom “group” (or period) to the Ratanakosin period, including Sukhothai and Ayuthaya. Cœdès had not originally intended to define a classification system, but simply to organize a time frame for the various artefacts so far collected in the different rooms of the new museum in Bangkok, which was to open a few years later (Cœdès 1939, 193). Nonetheless, his informal frame of reference has come to be regarded as the official classification system for Thai art history and is still provided in most schoolbooks.

Cœdès’s classification for the later periods did not represent new thinking, since Prince Damrong’s research in that area was already available; but it was innovative for the more ancient periods, for which the author could, in some cases, apply his knowledge in epigraphy. Cœdès posits a few basic concepts, some of which may not be completely new but are fundamental for Dvāravatī studies, and which he could elucidate with his scholarly expertise (figure 6). His approach consisted in:

1. Establishing a specific group, suggesting that it could be associated with the “Dvāravatī Kingdom” mentioned in the Chinese chronicles;
2. Identifying the scene on some tablets as representing the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī, with the Buddha seated legs pendant, as in other statues or reliefs in Nakhon Pathom, Ratchaburi, Lopburi, Suphanburi and Ayuthaya;
3. Making a comparison with the Gupta style of art in India;
4. Noting the *Ye dhammā* inscriptions on some of the tablets;
5. Concluding, from this deductive process, that the votive tablets under consideration may be dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE and that a Buddhist population, culturally “Indianized”, occupied the given territory at that time.

By putting his facts together, he could identify the main features of the recently discovered civilization and assign it a geographical extension, as well as identify precisely its source of inspiration and social-cultural context (Cœdès 1925a, 152–154).

Retrospectively, at least, that is how he appeared to have proceeded. The fundamental assertions were not yet so clear and became clarified bit by bit over time. Cœdès first identified a Nakhon Pathom group (called Phra Pathom) with two sub-groups: one had no specific name but soon became known as the “Dvāravatī group”, while the other, with Khmer influences, later became the “Lopburi group”. The association of the first sub-group with the label Dvāravatī was only suggested in a footnote (Cœdès, 1925a, 152–153) and had not been formally adopted. An English translation was published soon after the French version, in 1926, in which the reference to Dvāravatī was omitted (Cœdès 1926a, 7; 1954, 156). A Thai version was also published, probably written by Cœdès himself<sup>9</sup>, wherein the author took the opportunity to update his material. The results were confusing, as the introduction retained the first version of the classification of a Phra Pathom group with two sub-groups, while the captions of the pictures bore the labels of Dvāravatī and Lopburi groups, or “periods”, as has come to be the term (Cœdès 1926b).

Review of his writings reveals that Cœdès did not initially express his ideas so precisely as they were eventually to become; nonetheless, he laid the foundations of his views. More significantly, an anomaly arose that is not uncommon in such

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<sup>9</sup> The introduction by Prince Damrong to Cœdès’s subsequent publication in Thai that presented the collection of the National Museum Bangkok in 1928 states that this Thai version had been written by Cœdès himself (Damrong 1928, a). It was probably the same for this translation of the text on the votive tablets. Additionally, the French and Thai versions are different in concept and content: the French text is a scientific study whereas the Thai version, very often reprinted, is rather a pious book for the edification of the reader.

situations: French, English and Thai versions were published that were not entirely equivalent, producing quite a few misunderstandings among the various readers and some misunderstanding of the various issues. Cœdès's subsequent publications were sufficient to dispel the confusion, in any case.

A passage in one of the author's numerous contributions of the time reveals how he conceived another key hypothesis. In 1925, Cœdès published a French translation of Pāli chronicles concerning, among other things, the ancient history of Haripuñjaya (Lamphun). These chronicles indicated that the population was Mon, as was confirmed by inscriptions in Mon language found in situ; and, in brief, that the city of Haripuñjaya had been founded by colonists from Lopburi, where a pillar inscribed with a text in Mon had been found (figure 7). Cœdès also established the connection between the non-Khmer artifacts found in Lopburi and those from Nakhon Pathom, in particular the pillars and Buddha images. From this evidence, he began to suspect—after Pelliot—that the Chao Phraya valley had been populated in ancient times by a Mon-speaking Buddhist people, including the lower part of the basin where no conclusive traces of a Mon-speaking population had yet been found (Cœdès 1925b, 16–18).

Developing the idea was beyond the scope of the translation of the chronicles; that was accomplished in Cœdès's second volume of inscriptions published in 1929<sup>10</sup>, where he organized various elements that so far had been scattered and left to the reader to piece together rather than consolidated and affirmed (figure 8). The second volume begins with an introduction containing a chapter entitled “The Kingdom of Dvāravatī”, marking the adoption of that label from then on. It starts with the assertion that the Khmer polity of Lopburi was not the most ancient in the territory of present-day Thailand, as had previously been thought (Damrong 1919), but had probably been built on a more ancient site that dated to Dvāravatī times. The text describes the statues found in Lopburi, Ayuthaya, Nakhon Pathom and Ratchaburi that he provisionally called “pre-Khmer”, defining their iconographic and stylistic characteristics, and leading to comparison with Gupta art. Cœdès dates this material to the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century on stylistic and epigraphic grounds<sup>11</sup>, remarking that the Chinese chronicles mention a To-lo-po-ti Kingdom at about the same time, in a

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<sup>10</sup> This collection of inscriptions was published after the catalogue of the National Museum, dated 1928, that is discussed below. However quite a few details indicate that it was written before then: it was announced as under printing in 1926 (Cœdès 1926, 7; 1954, 156); the latest reference in the bibliography dates to 1925, whereas more recent works are mentioned in an addendum; some objects said to be in provincial museums in the 1929 text (e. g., the Statue of Wat Ro at the Ayuthaya Museum [Cœdès 1929, 1, note 3]) are said to have been transferred to the National Museum, Bangkok in the 1928 publication (Statue of Wat Ro, Cœdès 1928, pl. II).

<sup>11</sup> Cœdès later conceded that the period should be extended from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Cœdès 1939, 194).

region corresponding to where these objects were found. He notes, too, that the name of this supposed capital-kingdom was incorporated in the name of the later capital of Ayuthaya. He estimates the degree to which Dvāravatī art might have influenced Southeast Asian art and adds that the population was probably Mon, as traces of the language were evident in Lopburi, Haripuñjaya and perhaps even on an inscription from Ratchaburi. His text ends by evoking the decline of the “Kingdom” under pressure of both the Khmer and the Thai. Finally, he reproduces Barth’s reading of the Nakhon Pathom inscriptions as a reminder, as published in Fournereau (Cœdès 1929, 1–4, 11–12).

This methodical description of the “Kingdom of Dvāravatī” was the first of its kind, with quite a few bibliographical references. It relied mostly on Cœdès’s other works, not only for the interpretation of some inscriptions, the comparison with Gupta art and the hypothesis of a Mon population at the time, but also for the historical account of the Khmer and Thai advances as seen in the northern Pāli chronicles that he had translated and another study on Khmer sculpture not mentioned earlier in the present article. The collection of inscriptions also contained several photographs of artifacts, other than of the inscriptions, mostly from the collection of Nakhon Pathom Museum. The photographs complemented the survey that was presented to the public; quite a few had never been published before, in particular those of Buddha images and the inscribed pillar from Lopburi.

A second edition of the second volume of the compendium of inscriptions was published some 30 years afterward, with updated information but without the introduction and the photographs; the reason being given in the new introduction that numerous publications on the subject had appeared since the first edition and had made those elements obsolete. Such an abridgement could have been another cause for misunderstanding, since quite a few of Cœdès’s main ideas had first been presented or at least had germinated in a text that is no longer available, although the title under which it had originally been published is still extant.

Another notable text by Cœdès is the catalogue of the collection of the National Museum at Bangkok, which had recently been established (Cœdès 1928a). While the introductions to the collection of inscriptions are primarily focused on the most ancient periods of Siamese history, the catalogue of the Museum presents a general survey of all the art-historical periods and styles of the country. Consequently this book is generally referred to in considering either Cœdès’s works or the classification of Thai arts. Because it was to be a general guide to a collection, however, it was not written with the same scientific rigour as the later one discussed above. The same ideas about the art of Dvāravatī are argued less forcefully and with greater emphasis on their aesthetic aspects. Nonetheless, the influence that it may have had in the diffusion of knowledge about Dvāravatī art and interest in Thai art in general must not be underestimated; especially since Dvāravatī art had by then become considered a distinct entity in its cultural context.

This catalogue marks the first time in his iconographical descriptions that Cœdès mentions the position of the Buddha with the two hands in the same teaching gesture (figure 9)—the *vitarka-mudrā* (Cœdès 1928a, 20)<sup>12</sup>. In spite of the comparative abundance of specimens found so far and of the attention paid to them, a characteristic feature of Dvāravatī art had remained unidentified. Similarly, images of Buddha seated on the beaked monster *panasbodi* are never mentioned in any of Cœdès's texts, probably because their iconography could not yet be understood, although Lunet's accounts reveal that they had already entered the collections of Dvāravatī art, at least in Nakhon Pathom (Lunet 1909b, fig. 15, p. 220).

Another text by Cœdès of this period is devoted to the site of Pong Tuk in present-day Kanchanaburi province, where the Fine Arts Department had recently unearthed remains dating to Dvāravatī times (Cœdès 1928b). While the discoveries did not add anything new to knowledge about this style, the following three items of the subject matter deserve attention for different reasons.

The first concerns a bronze Mediterranean lamp (Cœdès 1928b, 236). Its origin and date remain uncertain (Picard 1955; Cœdès 1964a, 60–61; Brown and MacDonnell 1989; and Borrell 2008). Nonetheless, the evidence of contacts, one way or another, between the Dvāravatī civilization and the Mediterranean world in ancient times is irrefutable. The finding was too isolated, however, to permit larger conclusions before further discoveries could take place, so nothing could be made of the finding at that time.

The second point, related to the first, is the discovery of communication routes within Dvāravatī territory that connected Nakhon Pathom and the hinterland, and most probably other lands beyond the Peninsula through the Three Pagodas Pass (Cœdès 1928b, Pl. 20). Cœdès, like all the French scholars before and after him, took for granted that the different Dvāravatī sites had been located in the uplands; whereas the Siamese generally considered that they had been seaports in ancient times—as early as 1919, from a suggestion by Prince Damrong (1919, 65). The hypothesis, like any, could have been discussed; but instead it was ignored on the French side.

The third point was the uncovering of architectural remains. So far, no evidence of construction in durable material had emerged. Apart from that, the findings were too meager and isolated for any conclusion to be drawn: Cœdès was certain only that there was no parallel anywhere in Dvāravatī country with what could be found in Cambodia. Though remnants of buildings showed some of the distinctive characteristics of Dvāravatī architecture, academically it was still

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<sup>12</sup> In the passage devoted to iconography in the collection of inscriptions, the specific *mudrā* is not mentioned (Cœdès 1929, 1). The statues with missing hands most certainly originally had a symmetric gesture, but are interpreted as being asymmetric (e. g., Statue of Wat Khoy, Cœdès 1929, 15).

too early for attempts to elaborate on the findings. Something else remains to be mentioned on this question: Cœdès made the only report on the Pong Tuk site and apparently no other objects than those he illustrated had been found there at the time. A new round of excavation was undertaken just after his visit (Cœdès 1928a, pl. V); however, neither reports nor other discoveries have been heard of from that time. The present-day ruins have become too dilapidated and have been too much restored to be investigated yet again, so the testimony of Cœdès is all that remains to be considered. In the archaeological sphere, such a state of affairs applies in many other cases with other authors.

Cœdès left Siam for Viet Nam in 1929 to become director of EFEO and did not produce studies on Dvāravatī subjects for a while. However, he remained involved in Siamese archaeology to the end of his life, administratively and later scientifically as well. By the time he left Siam, he had established basic concepts, two of which remained purely hypothetical for some time afterward: (a) the name Dvāravatī, which had become widely accepted; and (b) the Mon ethnicity of the population of the supposed Dvāravatī kingdom. Cœdès's presence looms large in the remainder of the present account.

In the very year that he left Siam, Cœdès became involved in organizing a mission for himself and **Jean-Yves Claeys** (1896–1979), an architect of the EFEO archaeology service. The latter's role in the mission was to survey the archaeological remains of the whole country in terms of the classification system established by the National Museum at Bangkok (Cœdès 1951, 460). It was organized jointly by Cœdès and Prince Damrong and performed between October and December 1929 by Claeys, who was accompanied by **Luang Boribal Buribhand** (1897–1986; see Pichard 2006, 75<sup>13</sup>) and occasionally by Cœdès (*BEFEO* 1930, 468–469). Although replete with many interesting points, the article that Claeys wrote after his mission is not very instructive concerning the archaeology of Dvāravatī in general, as most of the extant material had been thoroughly examined by Cœdès only recently and, like his predecessors, Claeys had gone to Phra Pathom Chedi and visited the museum that others had already reported on, and had nothing new to add. The one item of note here is that Claeys determined that a carved stone representing a *makara*, already published by Lunet de Lajonquière and preserved at the time in Phra Pathom Chedi (and now in Phra Pathom Chedi National Museum), belonged to the throne of the Buddha seated with legs pendant that was enshrined in Wat Na Phra Men in Ayuthaya—it must have been transferred there from Nakhon Pathom at an unknown date, but certainly during the Ayuthaya period (Claeys 1931, 396–397). The circumstance had already been surmised (Cœdès 1929, 3; Damrong 1969, 163), but only on stylistic grounds. Nobody before Claeys had checked whether

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<sup>13</sup> Contrary to what Pichard says, the text by Claeys is from 1931 and not 1929, which is the date of the mission.

the pieces fitted together; his enterprise was probably the result of another case of fruitful co-operation between the French and the Siamese, the latter giving leads that the former would follow up.

### III. Excavation

After a period of intense activity during the 1920s, some 10 years would pass before another Frenchman emerged to explore the archaeology of Dvāravatī: **Pierre Dupont** (1908–1955; see Hennequin 2008a and 2008b). Dupont began his career as an orientalist at Musée Guimet in Paris, where he studied archaeology under Philippe Stern. He had already produced two articles on the art of Dvāravatī before even visiting Siam (Dupont 1934 and 1935). Though he first worked on a limited corpus (in good part, the illustrations published by Cœdès), the reader notes a consistent change in perspective, going beyond what Cœdès, an epigraphist, and Claeys, an architect, could produce: the vocabulary becomes much more precise while what had been discussion of descriptive features becomes characterization, fostering greater descriptive power in developing the subject.

Dupont went to Viet Nam as a member of EFEO in 1936; not long thereafter, Cœdès negotiated a general agreement between EFEO and the Siamese Fine Arts Department (*BEFEO* 1937, 684–685), thanks to which missions could be organized for Dupont in 1939 and 1940. He made two prospective visits to Siam, one in 1936, when he mostly visited the National Museum, Bangkok (Dupont 1936), and another the following year, when he surveyed the sites of Nakhon Pathom, Prachinburi and, briefly, Lopburi (Dupont 1937). He organized an excavation in Nakhon Pathom in 1939<sup>14</sup>, during which he investigated an important monument, Wat Phra Men, and made a detailed survey of the archaeological sites in the town and environs (Dupont 1939). His second such expedition, in 1940, was devoted to completing the excavation at Wat Phra Men and the excavation at Chedi Chula Prathon (figure 10; Dupont's P'ra Pat'on<sup>15</sup>); it concluded with the return of the team to French territory (Cambodia) on June 22<sup>nd</sup> (Dupont 1940, 503), the very day that France surrendered to the Germans<sup>16</sup>. Throughout, he worked in tandem

<sup>14</sup> The Thai texts on the question often say 1938–1939, or something equivalent (Fine Arts Department 2005, 42). Actually, the mission took place between January and May 1939, which corresponded in the Siamese calendar to January 2481 to May 2482, since, at that time, the year still changed on 1 April.

<sup>15</sup> Although Dupont mentions the name Chula Pat'on by which the local people called the ruin (Dupont 1959, 65, note 2), he calls it by the name of the nearby temple. This is all the more confusing and it is all the more necessary to distinguish the two sites because an ancient chedi has recently been discovered under a modern one at Phra Prathon Chedi (Usa 2009a; Hennequin, forthcoming).

<sup>16</sup> In fact, only Dupont's assistants went back to Cambodia. As for Dupont, he was supposed to stay in Bangkok to work with Jean Burnay on a philological dictionary, but he left soon after for reasons which are not specified but which are easy to guess, considering the context (Hennequin 2008, 19).

with officials of the Fine Arts Department, in particular Luang Boribal Buribhand and **Tri Amatyakul** (1908–1992).

Dupont became an expert in the art and archaeology of Dvāravatī, not to say of Nakhon Pathom, by default. His original and more ambitious plan had been to survey the archaeology of all Thailand, as the country came to be called in 1939 by the government of Luang Phibunsongkhram. The survey was to have started with remains from the oldest known period and proceed incrementally through more recent ones. The results of his first efforts, however, showed that a single visit would not be enough for even one monument at one site (Dupont 1939, 351), putting a brutal end to his illusions. Apart from his two preliminary reports written after each campaign, he penned two articles—one in 1948, which can be regarded as the draft version of the second one published in 1949. The publication dates are long after the fact, indicating that the reports probably were conceived rather belatedly, certainly owing again to circumstances. In 1953, he submitted a doctoral dissertation on the question, which was published in 1959, under a different title<sup>17</sup>, after his premature death in 1955.

Dupont's contributions to the evolving state of knowledge in the field are quite impossible to summarize in the space of the present article, especially since he made no great conceptual innovations and his conclusions were generally the same as Cœdès's own on the main points. It is easier to give an assessment, albeit subjective, by saying that he left a legacy for future generations to consider, a task that remains unfinished.

First of all, Dupont left detailed, not to say exhaustive, descriptions of two monuments which are quite important for the corpus of Dvāravatī architecture as a whole; one of them, Chedi Chula Prathon, had the best preserved decoration still in situ, as well as other pieces discovered scattered around (figure 11). Also, both that and the other, Wat Phra Men, had been constructed in three stages. A chronology could thus be devised, enabling a more informed and realistic investigation of Dvāravatī remains. Dupont suggested taking into account the other two known sites, Pong Tuk—as described by Cœdès—and Wat Yai in Nakhon Pathom (Dupont 1939, 362–364; and 1959, 99–103), but refrained as usual from venturing any absolute chronology in his final conclusions and made no comparisons except with much later monuments that are far from convincing (Boisselier 1968, 51; Piriya 1975, 84–85; Pichard 1999, 166). Dupont's description can, however, be used as a basis for conceptualizing both typology and chronology in Dvāravatī architecture, as

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<sup>17</sup> That particular version of the thesis was consulted. A crosscheck of the chapter concerning Wat Phra Men shows that the text was indeed changed in the publication, but not significantly. Recently, an English translation of the printed version was published (Dupont 2006). While some passages are accurately translated, most of the translation is problematical. The reader is thus forced to refer to the original text, rendering the enterprise rather futile.

regards the more recent discoveries of contemporary monuments—something that Dupont only partially did himself and which has been only partially done since<sup>18</sup>.

Dupont's descriptions have become all the more essential in Dvāravatī studies, because all the monuments he studied have since fallen into ruin and/or been irremediably repaired, yet remain paramount in the establishment of a chronology. A general problem with Dvāravatī architecture is important to note here: the monuments need to be described immediately after being uncovered because they either deteriorate very quickly and become heaps of bricks, or they need to be restored and the visitor is left to wonder how much remains of the original state.

Second among Dupont's contributions of note here are his numerous discoveries of artifacts and decorative items, some still at their original location, in particular at Chedi Chula Prathon where a substantial quantity is involved (figure 12). Dupont chose to study a selection of them, not the most original findings but those already fairly well known, which he integrated into his general corpus; he preferred to study objects outside their context.

Hence, with the twofold legacy of Dupont's descriptions of monuments and collections of artifacts, emerge possibilities of relating the one with the other: the findings of his time and more recent discoveries, on the one hand, with the chronological stages of the monuments, on the other.

Thirdly, Dupont undertook another task not so well known as his architectural work, although one that he was even better prepared for: a classification of Dvāravatī images, limited to the main positions of the Buddha and not taking into account other objects such as the Wheels of the Law. Despite the limited corpus, he dealt with nearly 200 published images, not counting those he discovered during his excavations, which he described very precisely and classified according to a typology and a relative chronology. That legacy is priceless, because some of the images have disappeared or become disfigured, although they have been much better preserved than the architectural remains. Also, with the examination of this corpus he identified three distinctive characteristics of Dvāravatī Buddhist sculpture more precisely than Cœdès could have done: (a) joined arches of the eyebrows, (b) appearance of sexless nudity under the robe and (c) tendency to symmetry which is complete in quite a few of the standing images. In particular, Dupont identified a rather large group of images of the Buddha with the hands in the same teaching position (*vitarka-mudrā*), a distinctive feature of Dvāravatī art which was noted by Cœdès only belatedly and not precisely distinguished among other positions, as remarked earlier in the present article. On this basis, Dupont could make comparisons with prototypes from the Indian subcontinent or other Southeast Asian sites and go beyond the basic association with Gupta art.

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<sup>18</sup> For discussion on the topic, see Piriya 1977, 35–37 (a summary of the author's ideas); and Hennequin 2006, 158–163 and 2008, 205–216.

This classification system of Dupont is usually ignored, with the occasional exception of Boisselier (1965a, 142) or more recently a Thai publication, where it is mostly used in assigning objects to a group with little or no description (Fine Arts Department 2009, 145). It can now be enriched with newly discovered material, providing an opportunity for putting it to the test. The system could be faulted for being too restrictive; but its scope could be enlarged as well to put the basic approach to the test. It could be faulted for using too simplistic criteria, such as whether the Buddha is seated or standing, which might not be relevant in determining the style or period and which could devolve into a simplistic taxonomy; but it provides a good basis for organizing abundant material and determining further relevant criteria. The obstacles in this case might simply be that the texts are in French and that no one has seemed willing to experiment with the tools Dupont has provided.

Fourthly, as alluded to earlier, Dupont's excavations enriched museum collections with many discoveries, of which he kept a detailed account (figure 13). He also examined the collection of Phra Pathom Chedi Museum, among others, which was at that time installed in the circular gallery of the temple, and left numerous photographs, many of which remain unpublished<sup>19</sup>. All that provides substantial material for the study of some 70 years of Thai museology—even more if the legacy of Dupont's French and other predecessors is taken into account. It is possible to determine, for example, where the objects of the temple museum have been sent, between the National Museum of Bangkok and Phra Pathom Chedi National Museum; whether they have been restored and how; where the various pieces discovered during the excavations were dispatched; how they were considered and whether they generated any further literature. Beyond the simple history of individual pieces, the whole provides material for the history of the practice and policy of heritage conservation in Nakhon Pathom and Thailand over a rather long span of time.

Fifthly, Dupont (1954) studied Mon literature from Burma, probably with the objective of establishing a historical link with Dvāravatī architecture and explaining why archaeological remains are so rare while literature so abundant there; whereas the situation is the opposite in Thailand. Apart from the intrinsic value of such a study, the conclusion would implicitly be negative: the examination of literature of one place could not be related to the archaeology of the other. Nonetheless, the idea should not be totally abandoned; a link could be established between the subject matter and compositions in Dvāravatī art and later Mon literature within a similar Buddhist culture.

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<sup>19</sup> An important collection of unpublished photographs is kept at the picture library of EFEO in Paris.

#### IV. Confirmation

Not long before Dupont's sudden death, Cœdès again became involved in Dvāravatī studies with the reading of a few inscriptions. Like *dei ex machina*, three documents were discovered in the 1950s that Cœdès had the honour of interpreting. By then he had retired and was working in a small Asian museum in Paris, Musée d'Ennery, and had been silent in this field of expertise for a while. He had apparently lost touch with his circle of Thai counterparts, but was again contacted, perhaps by the Fine Arts Department.

The first document was a reproduction of an ancient inscription found at Wat Pho Rang in Nakhon Pathom, not far from Wat Phra Men (figure 14). In content it was rather uninformative, being the list of, probably, donations to a monastery; its main interest was that it was written in Mon with very ancient characters datable to the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the oldest known in that language. Thus the population of the Chao Phraya Valley was confirmed to have used Mon, at least as an inscripational language, as might have been presumed, considering what had been found farther north, but never proven (Cœdès 1952).

The second inscription was written on a Wheel of the Law, again found in Nakhon Pathom, with verses in Pāli. The content is similarly uninformative, consisting of extracts from a text on the teaching of the doctrine so general that no precise source could be identified; but it confirmed the religious symbolism of the Wheel of the Law — although doubt regarding its validity had been hardly credible. In his analysis, Cœdès (1956) reminds the reader that the sect of Buddhism that originated the text could not be the same as that which modern Thais adhere to, as the latter is an offshoot of a much more recently reformed sect from Sri Lanka, contrary to what some might think, presumably due to confusion in vocabulary.

The third one was an inscribed medallion found, once more, in Nakhon Pathom, in 1943, which was incompletely read in the 1960s by Ajahn Maha Saeng (Boeles 1964). A photographic reproduction was sent to Cœdès (Boisselier 1978, 5)<sup>20</sup>. The inscription read, according to Cœdès: "The pious act of the King of Dvāravatī" in Sanskrit characters dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> century, or possibly the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> (1963, 290–291), providing formal confirmation that there had indeed been an entity called "Dvāravatī" in the area at the given period.

Cœdès's chief ideas were confirmed in popular opinion by the discoveries and his readings of them. A thorough review of the literature before those revelations would show, nonetheless, that the ideas propagated by both Cœdès and Prince Damrong had already generally been accepted.

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<sup>20</sup> The inscription was not read in 1928, as is averred in some Thai texts (Fine Arts Department 1999a, 18; Phatharaphong 2002, 3).

Following these discoveries, Cœdès wrote two articles for a general readership in which he presented the main features of Dvāravatī civilization (1964b) and of the Mon, who had gone forgotten not so many years before, and on the history of their rediscovery (1966). In the same vein of extending public knowledge on the subject, Cœdès helped organize an exhibition on Thai art held at Musée Cernuschi in Paris in 1964. A large section was devoted to Dvāravatī art, with specimens from the site of Khu Bua recently excavated by the Thai Fine Arts Department (figure 15; Cœdès and Boisselier 1964c). The event contributed to further popularization of the Dvāravatī concept and art style among the French public; but, more importantly, cited among the contributors to the catalogue, apart from Cœdès, were the names of Prince Subhadradis Diskul, Prince Damrong's son, and Jean Boisselier, the occasion coming at the cusp of a new wave of co-operation.

### V. Synthesis

Like the explorers of the first generation, **Jean Boisselier** (1912–1996), originally a specialist in Khmer art, first came to Thailand to survey the Khmer monuments in the eastern part of the country in 1955 (1965a, 125). Thereafter, by invitation of the Fine Arts Department and with grants from the French National Research Centre (CNRS), he made regular visits: from July to October 1964 (Boisselier 1965a; 1965b), July to November 1965 (Boisselier 1969), July to November 1966 (Boisselier 1972), 1968 (Boisselier 1970), yet again in 1970 (Boisselier 1978, 14) and at least another in 1989 (Boisselier 1993a, 15). Those who knew him said that he made other visits that were not reported, as he sometimes came without any institutional mission. He was regularly accompanied during his travels by Prince Subhadradis, who was one of the authorities in Thai art and archaeology at the time, continuing his father Prince Damrong's work (figure 16).

Boisselier published numerous reports and articles after his missions. Other than Nakhon Pathom, Boisselier visited and reported on Khu Bua in Ratchaburi province, U-Thong in Suphanburi and Sri Thep in Petchabun, where the Fine Arts Department and the Faculty of Archaeology of Silpakorn University were already working. At first his publications embraced all periods of Thai art, but by the end he focused nearly exclusively on Dvāravatī art. His published output was actually far less than what he had planned to write (Boisselier 1965a, 155–157). As a general rule he was late in submitting his preliminary reports; he did not seem to produce them in tandem with his discoveries and conclusions. Hence, the transcriptions of the conferences that he gave, his teachings and the informal diffusion of his views are important components of his legacy.

As with Dupont, it is quite difficult to sum up the content of Boisselier's published legacy, for the same reason that so many of his observations came from his field visits and were disseminated as described above. The value of his work,

apart from new information on the extent of Dvāravatī civilization, lay in its nature of his ideas that stimulated new thinking.

Thanks mostly to his visits at U-Thong, Boisselier discovered evidence, in the form of beads, seals and sculptural fragments, of the existence of a civilization prior to Dvāravatī culture properly speaking that linked pre- with proto-history. Dvāravatī civilization could thus be understood not simplistically as the result of a sudden process of Indianization, as had generally been thought or implied by Boisselier's predecessors; but, on the contrary, as the result of a gradual, local evolution during which Indian and other elements were borrowed. Apart from the Indian world, the finds also showed influence from the Mediterranean world and some affinity with Funan culture in the Mekong Delta, which had previously been thought to be confined to the latter. In any case, the evidence showed that the pre-Dvāravatī peoples of the area and afterwards had been part of important trading networks, and also possibly confirmed Pelliot's earlier hypothesis (1904, 230–231) of cultural continuity between the deltas of the Mekong and the Chao Phraya. If the evidence showed trade with the rest of the world, it also showed proof of original production, such as the figurines of a naked boy with a monkey, to cite one example (figure 17; Boisselier 1965a; 1965b, 141–153; 1968, 36–41).

Regarding religion, since Fournereau's time Hinduism and not just Buddhism had been acknowledged to exist in Dvāravatī territory, Nonetheless the experts had reported mostly on Buddhism, implicitly its Hīnayāna form in practice. The exception was Dupont, who occasionally wondered if there could have been some Mahāyāna leanings, noting that the latter sect was not represented in the corpus he could study, being mostly from Nakhon Pathom (Dupont 1939, 360). Boisselier himself could detect in the various sites that he visited the presence of Hinduism and two branches of Buddhism, although without traces of Tantric Buddhism. Objects reflecting the Hīnayāna sect appeared to be far more abundant and original, the rest "showing foreign influences much more perceptible than the commissions inspired by Theravāda which constitute the dominant and stable element of the production" (Boisselier 1968, 36).

Concerning territorial extent, Boisselier's work led him to conclude that Dvāravatī country extended from Lamphun in the north to Chaya in the south, and between Tak to the west and Battambang, now in Cambodia, to the east (Boisselier 1972, 53).

Boisselier added a new chapter to the field of Dvāravatī studies that had earlier been alluded to by Lunet de Lajonquière: urbanism. The very existence of cities attested to an advanced state of organization; moreover, their lineaments revealed that no foreign influence was likely to have been at work there. Contrary to what was known in the Khmer world, Dvāravatī town plans were irregular, often consisting in a moat reinforced by one or two embankments, responding to practical exigencies, perhaps reflecting existing local tradition (figure 21; Boisselier 1968, 41–47).

Boisselier's main interest in Dvāravatī architecture, unlike that of his predecessors, was to investigate the building materials and techniques. Apart from occasional use of laterite, the preferred material of Dvāravatī monuments was a specific type of brick of large dimensions, used rather consistently over time, with a recognizable colour and texture showing that it had been baked at a low temperature and with a high amount of rice husk. The brick was a distinctive feature of Dvāravatī architecture, in contrast with the equivalent in neighbouring civilizations and in those that followed in the same territory; demonstrating again that if the prototypes had originated outside the country, they were adapted with different physical specifications and certainly followed an original, local tradition. By defining the standard of the brick construction material, Boisselier initiated a method that is still used by many field archaeologists, consisting in examining the material in situ and determining whether it is a Dvāravatī product—even from recycled brick material, as very often researchers have had to make do with pieces scattered on the ground or incorporated into newer monuments.

Dvāravatī builders used little or no binding material or an equivalent; when they did use an interfacing material between bricks, they simply piled on layers of various materials such as sand that, for example, could fill in the interstices. As a result, their structures were unstable and limited to massive buildings such as *stūpa*, excluding of course their wooden buildings. The technology also necessitated the use of stucco, which apart from being suitable for moulding decoration, protected the brick structure that it covered. Succeeding generations living in formerly Dvāravatī territory professed the same religion and also built *stūpa*, but did not use the same material and techniques. While Dvāravatī construction techniques might have been discontinued or forgotten, quite a few features of Dvāravatī iconography of Buddha images, for example, have been transmitted to the present day (Boisselier 1968, 47–49).

Boisselier opened yet another chapter on a question that had so far been only alluded to: parietal art. With the discovery and investigation of several caves scattered in the country, two new and hitherto unknown types of iconography were identified. Two caves in Ratchaburi province, Tham Cham and Tham Fa Tho, contained a monumental reclining Buddha carved in the live rock in low relief (figure 18; Boisselier 1972, 41; 1993a, 15). Another in Saraburi province, Tham Phra Pothisat, contained an engraved scene that represented the Buddha preaching to various deities, in particular—in Boisselier's view—Śiva and Visnu (Boisselier 1993a, 15; 1993b). The very use of caves by Dvāravatī people as Buddhist shrines seems to have come from a tradition well established in India; the difference being that in India the caves were generally man-made—not natural, as was always the case on Thai soil. Whatever the origin of the tradition, it was discontinued after Dvāravatī times; strangely enough, the existing caves were quite often, in the Ratchaburi region at least, restored during the Ayuthaya period and later (Boisselier 1972, 40–41; 1993a, 14–15).

Before Boisselier's time, the Dvāravatī period had been considered a monolithic block with varying dates for the end<sup>21</sup>. Boisselier proposed a more refined chronology. For the Dvāravatī period properly defined, he identified first a subperiod from the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when post-Gupta traditions were adopted. His second subperiod runs through the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, when post-Gupta influences were assimilated and the essential characteristics of Dvāravatī technique and iconography were in place. His third subperiod, from the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup> century, marks a renewal of the style with influences from other places (Indonesia, Pāla and southern India) that are superimposed on the original base. The last subperiod, from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century, reflects stylistic decline, incorporating Khmer influences, as a result of Khmer expansion in the Chao Phraya Valley (Boisselier 1968, 36).

Not long afterward, Boisselier refined his chronology with regard to a specific monument, Chedi Chula Prathon, where decorated panels had just been found. The *stūpa* had been excavated some 30 years before by Pierre Dupont with a team from the Fine Arts Department, but they had seen just a few panels (Dupont 1940), the rest being hidden by a layer of plain stucco. In 1968, after an accident uncovered some others, the Fine Arts Department decided to re-excavate the monument and invited Boisselier to take part in the project. Following this investigation, he gave a conference (Piriya 1975, 34), a record of which was published in this journal (Boisselier 1970). This text does not follow the usual academic conventions, containing neither bibliography nor iconographical references, making it sometimes difficult to understand; thereafter, the author would frequently rely on the ideas contained therein, so it evidently expressed his main opinions<sup>22</sup>. The discovery revealed, in Boisselier's view, three successive stages superposed on each other, which were organized in the following sequence: (a) a first stage with terracotta figurines of Hīnayāna inspiration (Boisselier actually says Theravāda, following the Thai custom) dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> to mid-8<sup>th</sup> century; (b) a second stage with stucco decoration of Mahāyāna inspiration with influences from Śrīvijaya, dated to the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century (figure 19); and (c) a third stage, inspired once more by Hīnayāna Buddhism, showing a decline with plainer decoration estimated to the 10<sup>th</sup> or perhaps the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, but not showing Khmer influence (1970, 64).

<sup>21</sup> On the basis of the Northern Chronicles mentioned above, Cœdès hypothesized for a while that the Khmer army, under the command of Suryavarman I, had conquered the lower Chao Phraya valley for a short period during the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, putting an end to the Dvāravatī civilization (Cœdès 1925b, 24 and 30). He later expressed doubts about this hypothesis (Cœdès 1964a, 247–248 and 251–252). The assertion is nevertheless often repeated (Dupont 1948, 238) and that seems to be the case in Boisselier's chronology.

<sup>22</sup> This is not case with the short-lived hypothesis, expressed and later abandoned (Boisselier 1965c, 1965d, 1965e), that U-Thong may have been an important centre of a "Funan kingdom", if not its capital for a while, as well as of the polity of Dvāravatī.

Criticism of Boisselier's chronologies has reverberated among scholars and they have not been universally adopted<sup>23</sup>; in his last work on the question, available only in an Italian translation, Boisselier was not so assertive as before. He submits an idea he had never before mentioned: that the decorative material resembles pre-Angkorian art, which shifts the frame of reference to the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, presumably for the whole scheme. Concerning the decorated panels, he renounces his earlier chronological order of the various styles, noting that they would probably differ according to local traditions (Boisselier 1986, 82–83).

Concluding the chronological issues, in this last text, Boisselier identified three periods in the Dvāravatī epoch as a whole: the first, dating to the 7<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, documented by the Chinese travellers; the second with influences from Śrīvijaya in the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and with no reference to any shift in religious orientation; and a later period, with Khmer influences following their political domination at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century or beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> that brought about the decline of Dvāravatī civilization (Boisselier 1986, 79).

Regarding issues of urbanism, architecture and chronology, Boisselier recorded his views in a synthesis published in Thailand (Boisselier 1968), but not in France, and in a few additional documents (Boisselier 1969, 1970, 1972). The 1968 article ended with the equivalent of “to be continued”; but no continuation was forthcoming. The art form omitted from this article is sculpture; for that, his monograph on Thai sculpture provides a summary of his views that are otherwise scattered across his publication legacy.

As with architecture, Boisselier's approach to sculpture consists in first considering the material used and the constraints that it entailed, as well as the techniques. Concerning stone sculpture in the round, he notes the technique of tenons and mortises, among Buddha statues or Wheels of the Law with their pillar, that are akin to carpentry; thus implying again an antecedent tradition of wooden sculpture that enhanced the original character of Dvāravatī achievements. On the same order, quite a few of the standing Buddhas typical of the genre are made of a kind of limestone<sup>24</sup>, which was suitable for polishing but easily chipped. As a result,

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<sup>23</sup> For a criticism of the chronology of Chedi Chula Pathon, see Piriya (1975, 35–37). For the general chronology, Prince Subhadradis identifies only three periods and says that Boisselier exaggerates the influence of Śrīvijaya (Subhadradis 1978, 12). Another chronology, slightly different, was recently proposed (Sakchai 2552, 97). The present author has noted that Boisselier leaves an important time gap before the last period and that there are no convincing arguments of a period of Khmer influence before the supposed Khmer occupation (Hennequin 2008b, 148).

<sup>24</sup> For a while some confusion existed regarding the material, whether it was limestone or schist; Boisselier sometimes speaks of schistous limestone (Boisselier 1987, 41 and 56). A scientific analysis performed on the occasion of the Dvāravatī exhibition at Musée Guimet in 2009 showed that it is limestone (Pierre Baptiste, personal communication). However, the result came too late to be taken into account in the catalogue and the captions of the exhibited objects.

the sculptors made compact, rigid images, departing from the animated statues of contemporary Indian models, thereby creating a new aesthetic that was largely followed by subsequent sculptors. The Buddha's hands, protruding, constituted a problem, which sculptors solved by designing them with mortises, a technique reminiscent of wood sculpture. As for the monumental stone Buddhas seated with legs pendant, limestone was an unsuitable medium, so sculptors used quartzite<sup>25</sup>, which presented other problems but called for the same solution of blocks assembled with mortises (Boisselier 1974, 41, 56–58).

Regarding other media, bronze was comparatively rare. Boisselier notes too that terracotta was not so abundant as stucco and was generally of finer quality. He believed that terracotta had been used during more ancient times and was later abandoned because of the difficulties it presented in producing decorative objects. Apart from technical issues, the range of iconography in terracotta and stucco was not limited to sacred images, thus offering insights into the daily lives of the inhabitants of the Dvāravatī world, their animals, the foreigners they had contact with and their aesthetic sensibilities (Boisselier 1974, 85–88).

The present author, if asked to pinpoint his favourite ideas from Boisselier's study on sculpture—akin to the question “What would you take with you if you were to go live on a desert island?”—would select two.

The first is the Pāla influence on the Dvāravatī style. Dupont regularly stated that there were Gupta or post-Gupta as well as Pāla influences, occasionally along with others (for example, Dupont 1937, 688); but paradoxically, he never mentions a specific feature that could be attributed to the Pāla school. Boisselier considers that artistic production that follows Gupta or post-Gupta stylistic models was comparatively rare and did not constitute a Dvāravatī tradition. Nonetheless, the main features of the standing Buddha that are typical of Dvāravatī sculpture are also found in the Pāla school. Yet, since it is impossible to consider Dvāravatī sculpture a continuation of the Pāla tradition both chronologically and aesthetically, Boisselier supposes a transitory school for which there is little evidence. He also considers that the appearance of true Dvāravatī images with their essential characteristics dates to a period later than that generally thought: the 7<sup>th</sup> century instead of the 6<sup>th</sup> or even 5<sup>th</sup> century (Boisselier 1974, 76). He concludes that one possible source of inspiration would lie in the northeast of India (Bengal) and not predominantly southern India or Ceylon, as was generally held (Boisselier 1986, 83).

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<sup>25</sup> Apparently, the material was first identified as quartzite by Reginald Le May (Le May 1938 [2004, 26]), and re-examined, or confirmed, by Dupont the following year (Dupont 1939, 354). It is difficult to judge as the statues are largely covered by a patina. It is possible that they are made of limestone too, like the specimen preserved in Wat Na Phra Men in Ayuthaya, indicated by Boisselier (Boisselier 1974, 58). The question should be reconsidered after new scientific examination.

The second is the means of installing the Wheels of the Law. Dupont had already thought of associating such Wheels with the octagonal pillars that had also been discovered; however, as both pieces were equipped with a tenon, he had to discard the idea (Dupont 1939, 362). Boisselier discovered a three-piece columnar unit at U-Thong, where it is currently preserved in the museum, properly set up although it had fallen down: consisting of a pillar, an abacus and a Wheel that fit together exactly.<sup>26</sup> This type of assembly reflects a tradition of carpentry as well as the carving of wheels in stone. Additionally, Boisselier observed that the upper table of some of the abacuses had small mortises at the corners that had been intended for models of deer, which would have been equipped with a small tenon (figure 20). He also notes similarities of the U-Thong unit with a Wheel found in southern India that is possibly contemporary<sup>27</sup>; that remark was generally ignored (Boisselier 1974, 89–90, 206). To quote Boisselier:

Dvāravatī sculpture is dominated by a particular type of Buddha image; lacking any direct influence of Indian models, it may be regarded as a truly original creation of the workshops of the Menam [Chao Phraya] Plain—the first such original form of Buddhist art to appear in the whole of Southeast Asia. This image enjoyed great success and its influence extended well beyond the presumed limits of the Dvāravatī realm. Its iconography gained such wide and lasting acceptance that it remained unaltered either by political vicissitudes or by the subsequent evolution of art. That an iconography already possessing something of a national character should make its appearance by about the seventh century, while political unity was not achieved until many centuries later, is a noteworthy historical fact. Indeed, in any discussion of Buddhist art, the school of Dvāravatī may stand alongside the great Buddhist artistic traditions of India, so enduring were its innovations and so pervasive its influence on most of the art of Southeast Asia (Boisselier [in English translation] 1975, 73).

Boisselier comments on the “reconstruction” of Phra Pathom Chedi by King Rama IV (Boisselier 1978), examining the extant chronicles regarding the reconstruction process that yield insight into the state of the area more than a century ago, before it had become built up. He pays special attention to the methodical

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<sup>26</sup> The report of the 1964 mission shows that Boisselier had made the link between the pieces at an early time, although he does not say how he imagined they were assembled (Boisselier 1965, 143). The publication of the discovery was thus rather belated.

<sup>27</sup> See Zéphir 2009, 77 for an illustration.

approach of the King, whom he regarded as the founder of Thai archaeology. He also considers what had been discovered on the site since the time of Rama IV, appraising the first findings in the light of a much better documented context one century or so later. Probably the most important new finding was the discovery of the town limits, which revealed that the ancient city was bigger than all its known counterparts; e. g., Khu Bua or U-Thong. The plan also revealed that the town was centred not around Phra Pathom Chedi, as might have been supposed, but on Phra Prathon Chedi, at a time when no one suspected that its modern chedi hid an ancient one (figure 21). The chronicles of the 1850s also reported that a site outside the ancient town limits, Sanam Chan, was densely built over with ancient monuments, now totally gone, where not long before Dupont's visits Dvāravatī remnants had been found, that were said to have included a royal palace. Noting the location of the town of Nakhon Pathom at a nexus of communication routes, the size of the site, its sophisticated level of urbanization, the length of occupation unusual in the historical context and, last but not least, its selection by the heir to the Siamese throne, led Boisselier to conclude that Nakhon Pathom had been prominent among Dvāravatī sites. He refrains from asking if the city could have been the capital of a kingdom, but presents some evidence that reflects a high level of political and social organization. A few years later he is more assertive, saying that Nakhon Pathom was likely to have been the capital of a structured political entity (Boisselier 1986, 79).

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In concluding the present review of French participation in Dvāravatī archaeology, the rediscovery of Dvāravatī can be said to have evolved as the outcome of collaboration between the French and the Siamese. Detailed examination has revealed a remarkable, and rather unusual, continuity. If King Rama IV is considered the initiator of Dvāravatī studies, as Boisselier says must be the case, he transmitted the charge of the enterprise to his own son, Prince Damrong, who in turn transmitted it to his son, Prince Subhadradis. On the French side, Aymonier initiated a comparable enterprise from Cambodia and the two movements quickly converged at the time of Lunet de Lajonquière, most probably under the initiative of Prince Damrong, or at least under his supervision. In the French case the charge was transmitted by Prince Damrong to George Cœdès, who not only made important discoveries concerning the subject, but also supervised the research in one way or another on the French side for more than a quarter of a century by contributing first to Claeys's and then Dupont's missions. He probably also played a part in the apparent first collaboration between Prince Subhadradis and Jean Boisselier who jointly continued the enterprise for many years.

The saga of collaborative investigations appears less a series of chance discoveries than a methodical enterprise, up to the point that the discoveries could be anticipated, as was the case with the Mon-speaking population in the Chao Phraya Valley, or the name *Dvāravatī* itself. Within this collaboration existed a de-facto division of labour: the Thai took charge of investigating their own archaeological patrimony and treating it rather intuitively, while the French took charge of interpreting the findings and reporting on progress in their writings, always in total independence.

Most of the Frenchmen noted in the present article started their career in Cambodia. At first they brought to Siam simply their technical expertise and experience in Cambodia with the recognition that *Dvāravatī* was not an offspring of Khmer civilization and that a totally new field of study must be generated. Consequently, they first tended to look nearly exclusively westward, considering mostly the Indian influences and failing to note, at the beginning at least, that comparisons with the Southeast Asian sphere could be more instructive. There was indeed a change when the French started using their expertise in their colonial or formerly colonial domain. The perception of an Indian form of influence changed to one of Southeast Asian peoples within their own cultural dynamic. Regarding the western borders of *Dvāravatī* territory, few affinities with the Burmese area have been identified so far, fewer than might be expected to obtain.

The concluding, and unanswerable, question is, how would the rediscovery process have fared, had not so many French collaborators appeared on the scene?

The theoretical part of the enterprise was, at the least, expressed by and, at the most, propagated by French authors. The core concepts were defined in the 1920s by Cœdès, are still current and are still sometimes criticized. They inescapably suffer from some Western or even Gallic intellectual prejudices or biases, such as the ascription of Indianization, or the hypothetical centralized state that is not elaborated in these pages. If some prejudices may now be blatantly apparent with distance in time, some others certainly linger which cannot yet be detected, since they are part of our current frame of thought.

With the exception of some of Boisselier's later texts, this discussion stops with the literature produced by the end of the 1970s. Since that time, French research on the subject has continued, albeit without the earlier level of co-operation at the top between French and Thai participants. In general, *Dvāravatī* studies have become the subject of university dissertations and project reports, rather than news-breaking conferences followed by a paper destined for history. Additionally, the Thai have become the undisputed leaders in the field, a development that no one would regret. Beyond the present focus of concern, there is the teaching role of the French in Thai universities and their contribution in transmitting their expertise to their local counterparts, as well as the value of their research outcomes.

Last, if French documents have (a) shed light in the genesis of a new field of study, now well established and flourishing, they have also (b) preserved testimony concerning quite a few archaeological remains that have disappeared or become irremediably dilapidated; and (c) fostered the gestation of a new science and the preservation in the Thai patrimony. As such, they provide source material for further investigations that have yet to begin.

### Abbreviations

*BEFEO*: *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*

EFO: École française d'Extrême-Orient

*JSS*: *Journal of the Siam Society*

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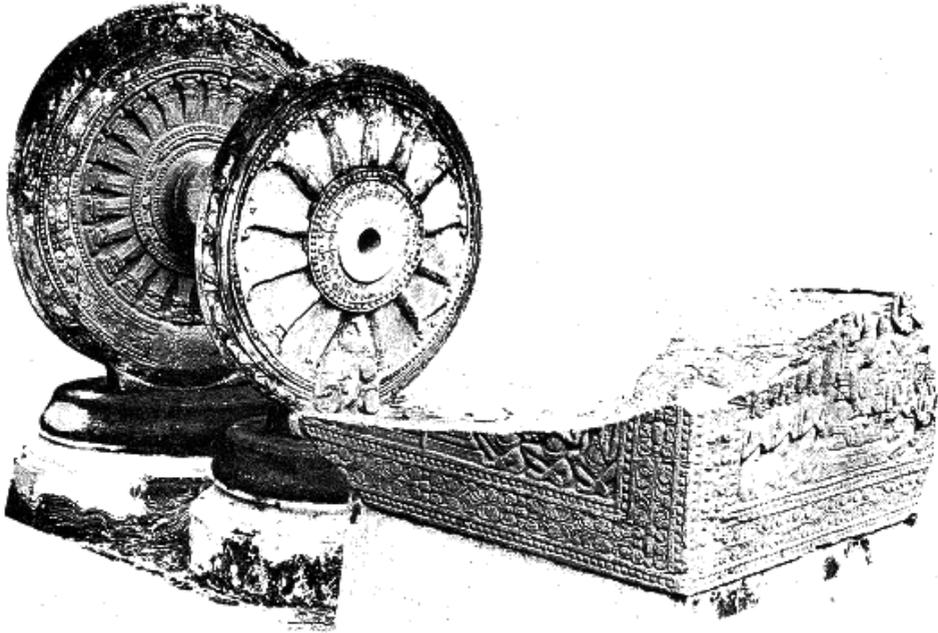


Figure 1: Wheels of the Law and a stele representing the Buddha preaching  
Source: Fournereau 1895, 120

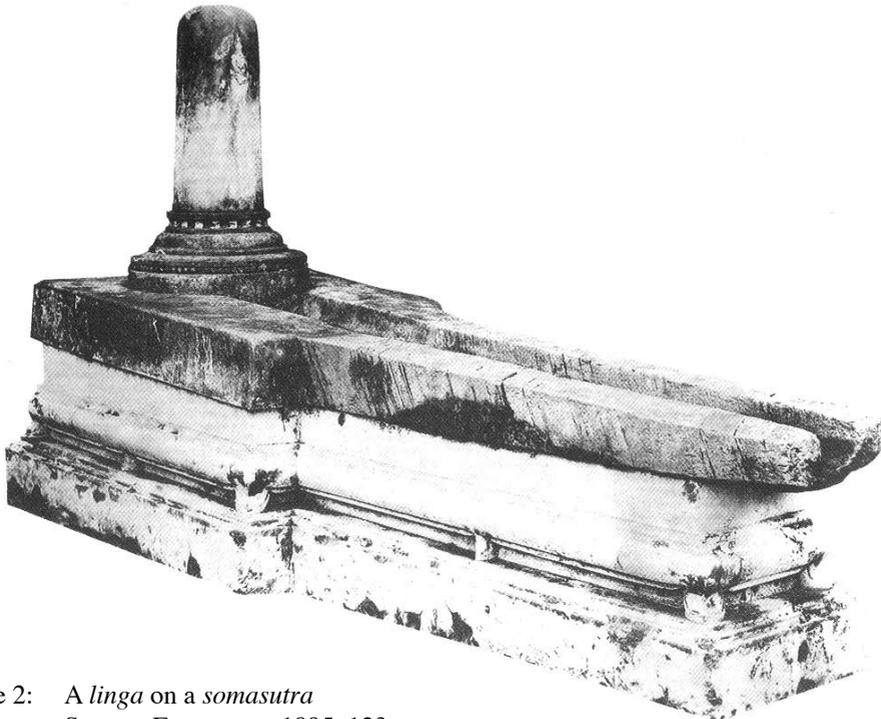


Figure 2: A *linga* on a *somasutra*  
Source: Fournereau 1895, 123

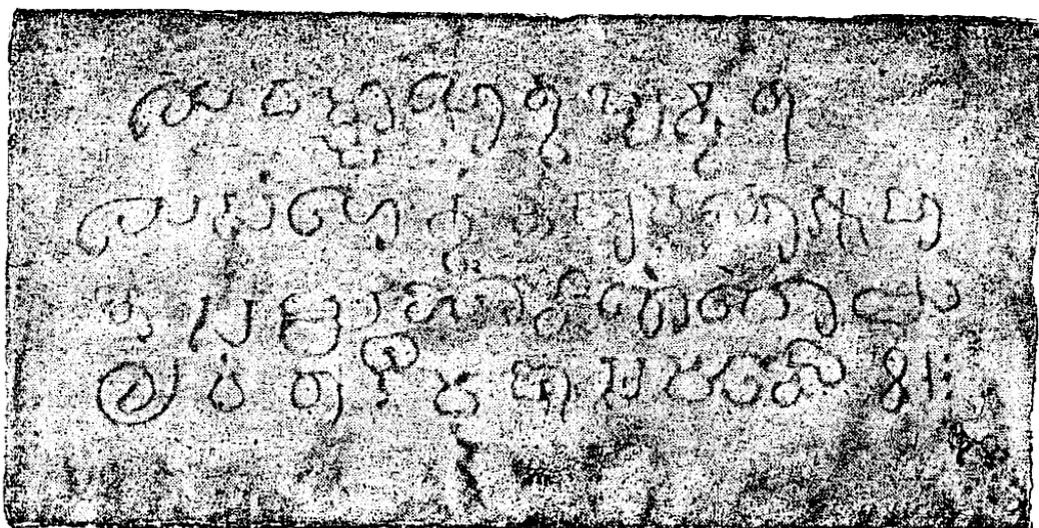


Figure 3: *Ye dhammā* inscription as read and translated by Barth  
Source: Fournereau 1895, 86

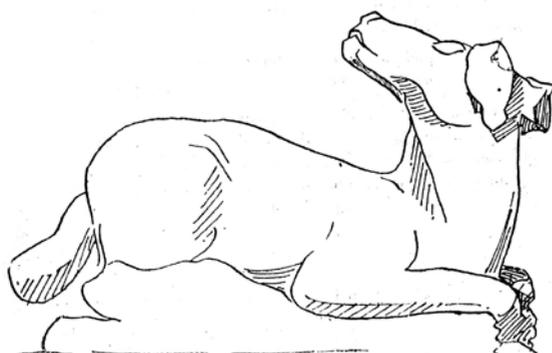


Figure 4: “Phra Pathom Cheidi (Statuette of a crouching deer)”  
Source: Lunet de Lajonquière 1909b, 221, fig. 16

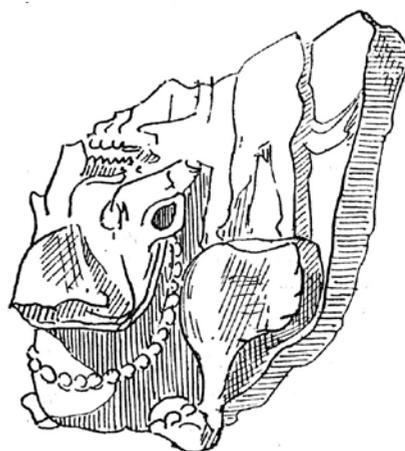


Figure 5: “Phra Pathom Cheidi (Fragment of a stele)”  
Source: Lunet de Lajonquière 1909b, 221, fig. 15



Figure 6: Phra Pathom votive tablets  
Source: Cœdès 1925, pl. III

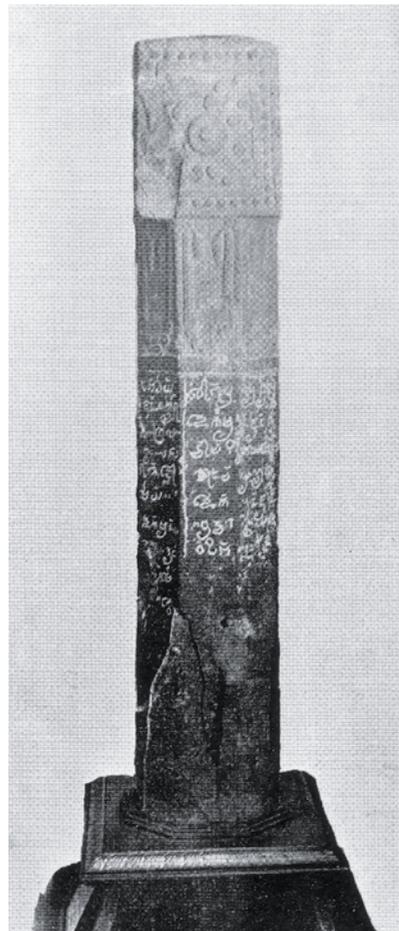


Figure 7: “Octagonal pillar from  
Lapaburi (Inscription  
XVIII)”  
Source: Cœdès 1961,  
pl. III

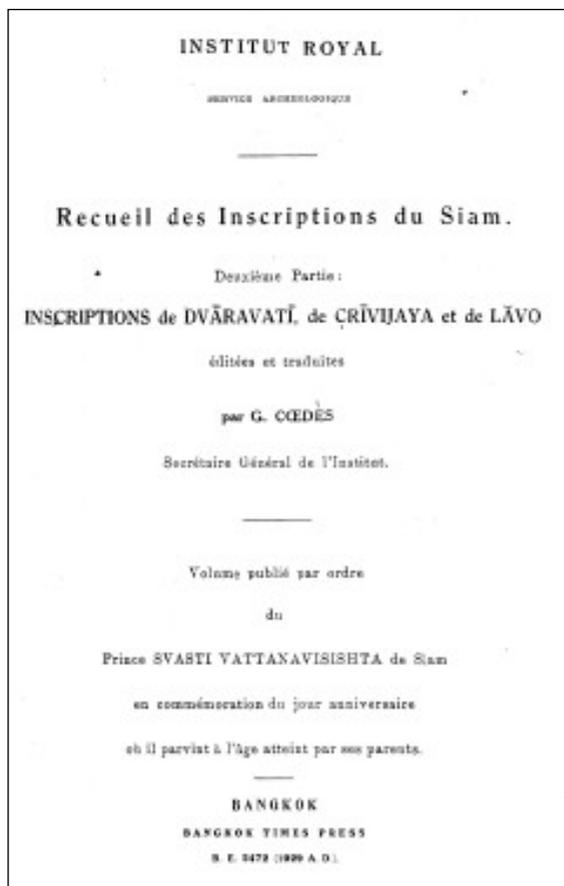


Figure 8: Frontispiece of the first edition of the second volume of inscriptions, Cœdès 1929



Figure 9: “Statue of standing Buddha, Dvāravatī art, Ayudhyā, Vat Nā Braú Meru. Blueish limestone. H. 1.75. Probably 6th century.”  
Source: Cœdès 1928, pl. III



Figure 10: “Visitors: the Governor and representatives of Nakhon Pathom population. Project EFEO, excavation 1940”. Pierre Dupont is standing at centre. The picture was taken in front of Chula Prathon.

Source: EFEO archives, fonds Thaïlande, 7866



Figure 11: Items of sculptural decoration from Chedi Chula Prathon

Source: Dupont 1959, figs. 108 and 110

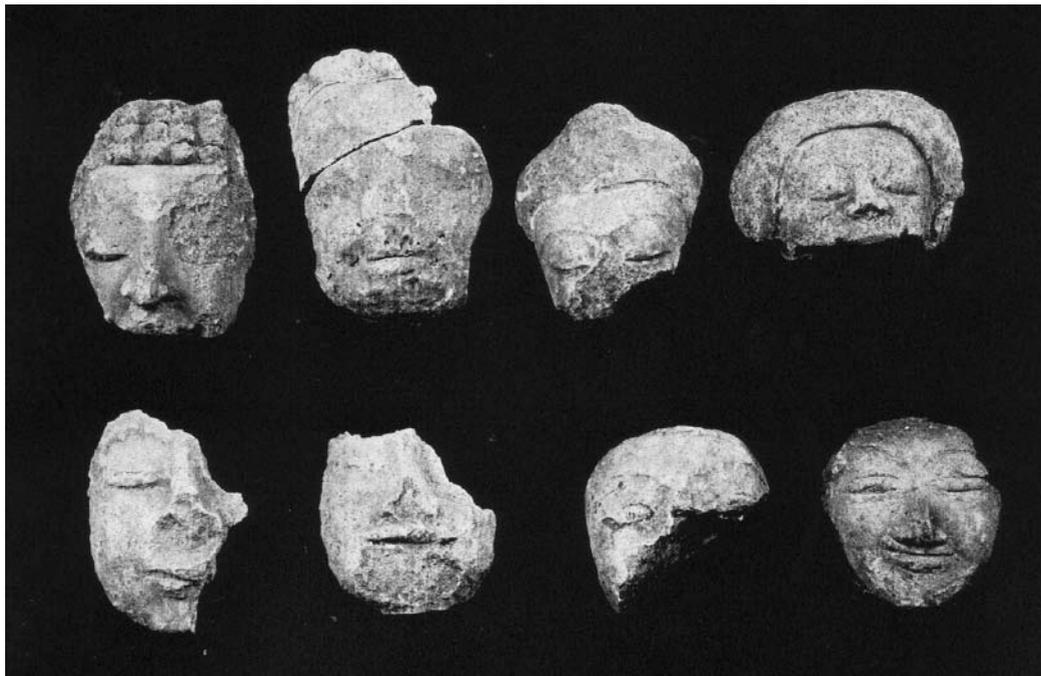


Figure 12: “Vat Prah Pathon, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. Various heads from the central tower. Stucco. EFEO project, April–June 1940”  
Source: EFEO archives, fonds Thaïlande 7805



Figure 13: Head of a *yakṣa* (giant) excavated at Wat Phra Men in 1939  
Present location: National Museum, Bangkok  
Source: National Archives of Thailand, CD 0038



Figure 14: The two sides of an inscribed stone found at Wat Pho (Nakhon Pathom)  
Source: Cœdès 1952, 29

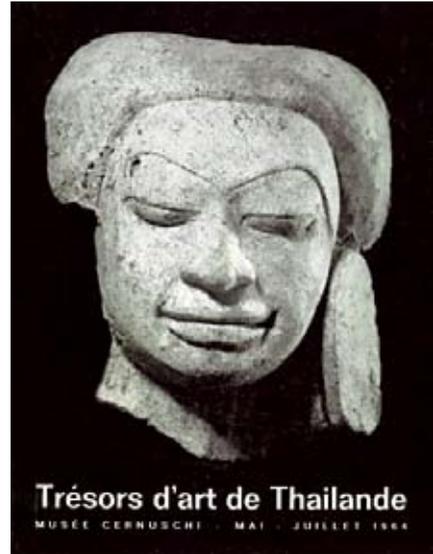


Figure 15: Cover of the catalogue to the exhibition on Thai art at Musée Cernuschi in 1964



Figure 16: H. R. H. Prince Subhadradis Diskul (right) on a field trip at Prasat Muang Singha with Jean Boisselier (left)  
Source: Université Silpakorn : *Jean Boisselier. Dernier hommage*. Université Silpakorn, Bangkok, 1996, p. 8



Figure 17: Young boy with a monkey, U-Thong National Museum  
Source: Boisselier 1987, 65, fig. 36



Figure 18: Head and torso of the reclining Buddha at Tham Fa Tho, Ratchaburi  
Photo: Laurent Hennequin, 21 December 2008



Figure 19: Panel from Chula Prathon showing the first two stages of decoration: ancient smaller terracota figures (on the right) and a more recent larger stucco figure (on the left)  
Present location: Phra Pathom Chedi National Museum  
Photo: Laurent Hennequin, 9 July 2005

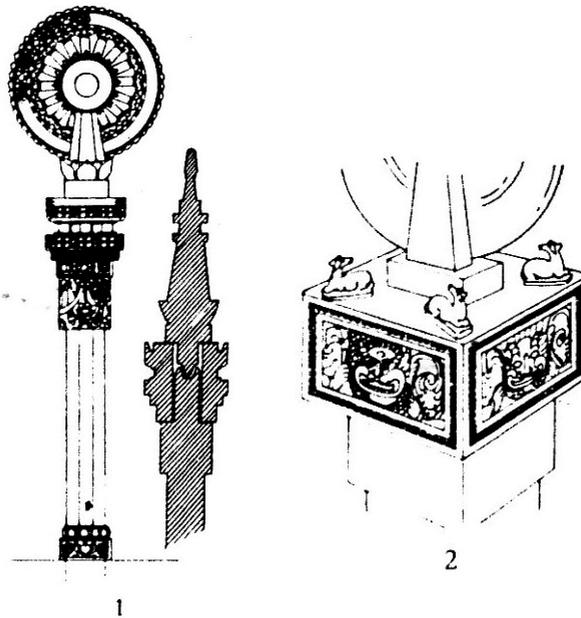


Figure 20: Drawings showing the installation of wheels with an abacus, a pillar and deer  
Source: Boisselier 1987, 206

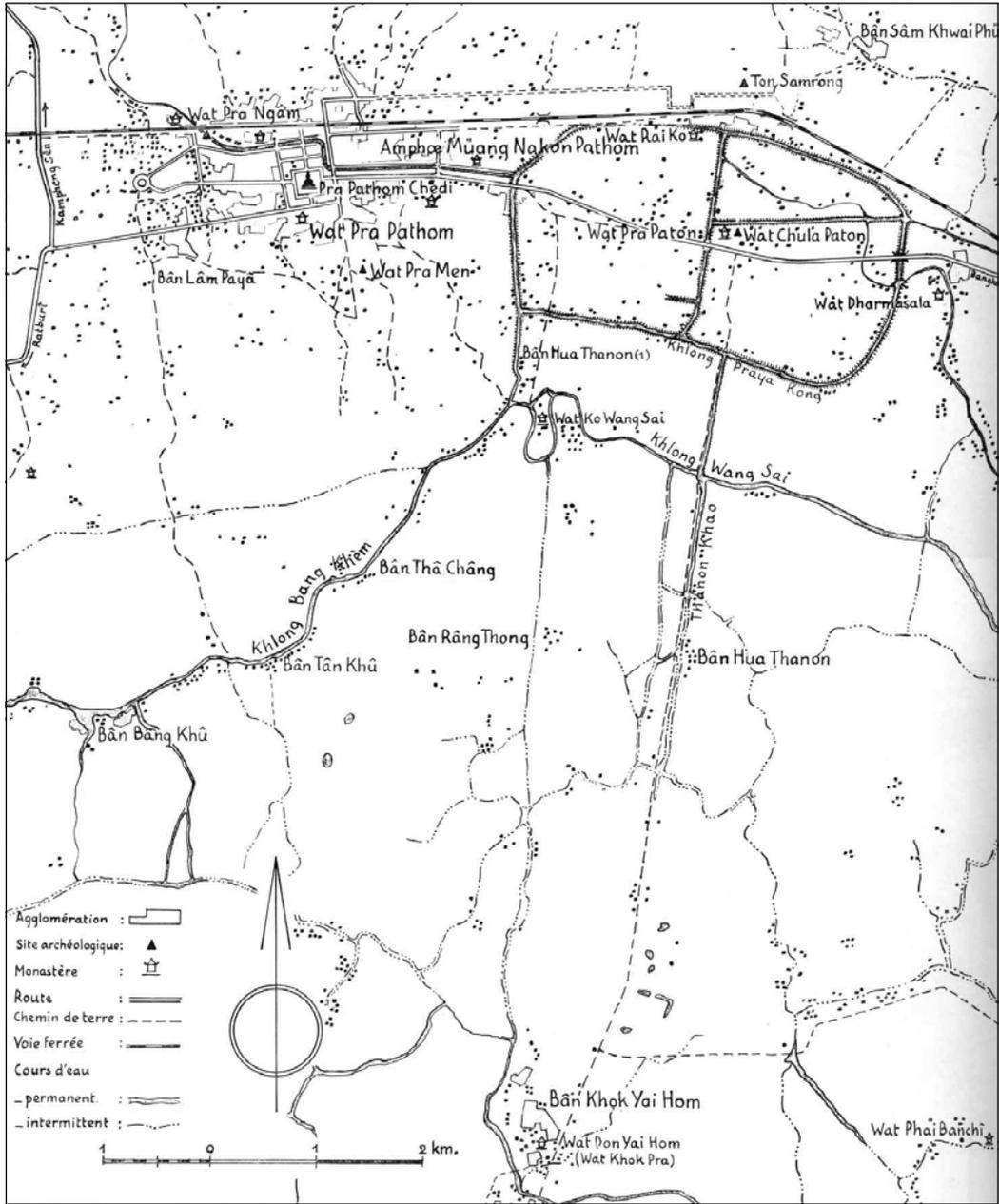


Figure 21: Plan of the ancient city of Nakhon Pathom and of the surroundings, showing the important historical sites  
 Source: Boisselier 1969, fig. 7