

NOTES AND QUERIES.

I

KRALAHOM.

The question of the derivation of the word Kralahom as the name of the office of a Minister of State is not even now settled. Here is yet another clue :

An inscription has been found at Sdok Kak Thom near Aranya on the Franco-Thai border, which has been studied by M. Finot in his 16th *note d'épigraphie* (BEFEO XV, 2). This inscription is undated, but contains several dates, the latest of which is 974 Çaka, which is A. D. 1052. In it occurs the phrase *vrah kralā-homa*, on face D, line 28, thus :

Jā ācāryya-homa siñ nā *vrah kralā-homa* uk. . .

This passage was translated by Finot :

Il y en eut qui furent premiers ācāryyas ou ācāryahoma, officiant dans la sainte aire du sacrifice.

In other words the term *vrah kralā-homa* referred, according to the learned author, to a holy area where sacrifices were performed.

It seems to me that *vrah kralā homa* here is just the identical name which was later given by King Boroma Trailok to the office of the Military Prime Minister of XV century Thailand. The Prime Minister himself being the *Samuha* or chief of the department. Now if we look up the old Thai treatise on military science we would find that tactics consisted in a large measure of magical practice. Here one could give free rein to superstition, since no Buddhist precepts could find a place in the art of war in any case and hence could not be in the way. It would take but little imagination therefore to see the area of Brahmin sacrifices being developed into an area of war preparations along magical lines. Thence the superintendent of

the area would naturally be the Military Prime Minister. In this country the office of Kralāhom (or Kalāhom as it is now spelt) has, after many vicissitudes, been finally identified with the ministry in charge of War or Defence. In Cambodia the office has charge of water transportation, while the office of Chakri, the original Civil Prime Minister has a similar charge on land. This is easily recognisable as but one of the phases of its development, for in this country too there were occasions when both Prime Ministers were leaders of the fighting forces, and the chief of the Kralāhom was usually given charge of naval warfare. From warfare the change to civil transportation in Cambodia was only natural in modern circumstances. There is therefore no reason for an argument to the contrary on account of the modern Cambodian usage of the term.

In this connection it may be of interest to examine the uses of the word *Kralā* by itself. In the inscription of Prāsāt Kōmphu's (Coedès: *Inscriptions du Cambodge, Vol. I, 1937, p. 185*) there is a list setting forth objects which belonged to the temple and among the objects is mentioned a *kralā vrah kāla*, which M. Coedès has not, however, explained. One cannot but be tempted to see in this term some connection with the time-piece in use in olden times in this country made out of a coconut shell. It seems possible too that such a connection might have been the cause by which *kralā* has come to mean a coconut shell. It is moreover worth noting that, while *kralā* (an area) has become a coconut shell, the word for a timepiece in the Thai language was *nālikā*, obviously from the Pali *nalikera* a coconut tree. Even the modern mechanical time-piece is a *nalikā*.

Another use of the word *kralā* is to be found in the *Thammasāt* where it has the sense, this time, of an area. The passage is: เข้าสู่พระกรลาบันทมบรมสุขไสยาสน์ which may be translated: *enters the area of the royal Bedchamber.*

D.

Bangkok, August 12th, 1939.

II

MEGALITHS IN THAILAND.

The following information and permission to publish it has been given this month to the writer by H. S. H. Mom Chao Sanit P. Rangsit on his return from an ethnological expedition to Umphai in the Me Sarieng district of Chiangmai, on the way to which he took the photograph of the Megalith here reproduced.

The Megalith stands about 1.m 20cm high, and is one of a group of four or five similar stones lying near the site of a deserted Lawā village and about 2. km. distant from the famous iron-mine at Me Tho, on the way from Bô Luang (Amphoe Me Hôt) to Umphai.

The group of stones is disposed in the same circular formation as the posts or stakes which the Lawā erect near their burial grounds, not to mark the site of a grave, but rather in honour of the dead persons buried some little distance from the posts.

The Lawā call these burial posts *Nām*, and say that in the past their aristocracy, *Khun*, were honoured by the erection of *Nām* in stone to distinguish them from the common people for whom wooden posts sufficed, as is now the case for the whole population. The group of *Nām* in stone near Ban Me Tho, to which the megalith of our illustration belongs, therefore marks the site of a burial ground of highly placed Lawā of earlier days.

The megaliths appear to have been roughly hewn by hand, and the reason given to account for the fact that many are either recumbent or out of the perpendicular is as follows.—The Karen neighbours of the Lawā, who know the Lawā custom of burying a dead person's personal possessions with him, such as spear, etc., often explore the neighbourhood of these Megaliths in the hope of finding hidden treasure, and thus cause the surrounding soil to subside, and the Megaliths to lean or fall. Since however the graves are invariably

some distance from the stones, the labour of the Karen desecrators is in vain.

This information throws an interesting light upon the groups of stones at Me Saleeum described by Messrs Ennals and Miles, and leaves little doubt but that they are *Nām* posts erected in days gone by to the memory of the more important inhabitants of the former Lawā settlement said to have existed in their neighbourhood.

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Chiengmai, 10th March, 1939.



Megalith near the Me Tõ iron mines, N. Siam.

Photo by M. C. Smit Rangsit.

