

“LES PEUPLES DE LA PÉNINSULE INDOCHINOISE”
BY G. COEDÈS

M.C. SUBHADRADIS DISKUL

The name of George Coedès is well known as the great historian and epigraphist of South-East Asia. It is therefore a great contribution when the eminent professor has written a new book entitled *Les Peuples de la Péninsule Indochinoise*, published by Dunod, Paris, in 1962 as the second volume of the Collection Sigma.

In his introduction the professor comments that in the past 10 years historical books on South-East Asia and especially on Indochina have been mostly devoted to the events after the 15th century A.D. Nearly all of them have only a brief resumé of the events of the earlier 1,500 years. He therefore wrote this book to balance the two periods but deals only with Indochina, excluding the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia. The professor also excuses himself because research on the history and culture of South-East Asia is just only in the beginning stage and documents are still scarce he has to deal mainly with the events of the great kings in many periods; he adds, however, that he has commented on the institutions, the religions, arts and other cultural manifestations of the people whenever possible.

In the first part of the book, which is called “the people of Indochina”, the first chapter deals with the geographical framework. The professor states that Indochina is in the tropical zone and that her soil is proper for agriculture only in the deltas, the large river plains and in few other privileged places. This is the reason why the formation of civilized states took place in these deltas and in a few other regions only. But before these plains and deltas were formed and could be used, men had lived in caves, and their professions were hunting and fishing in both the fresh and sea water. For her climate Indochina is influenced by the monsoon seasons, and also by the difference between the high north and the low south. The mountains and the plateaux are the sites for men who do not want to or cannot descend to the plains, or the refuge of those who have been driven up

by agricultural people. On the contrary the low plains or the deltas have become the places of settlement for rural people who perform drainage and irrigation.

As for the exterior communications of Indochina the professor explains that both her eastern and western coasts have been used since ancient times. For her land frontiers, though there is a mountain range on the west, many rivers in the north and the west form the natural ways of access between China and Indochina.

For her interior communications some difficulties arise. Two mountain ranges stretch southward in the east and west but there are still some passes that can be crossed. The eastern coast of Indochina is favourable for the development of some human groups but at the same time makes it difficult for them to be united. Both the Chao Phya and Mekong rivers are natural waterways for interior communication. This type of land was probably already in existence at the time from which the first evidences of human occupation in Indochina date.

In Chapter II, on prehistory, the professor explains that he will discuss respectively the prehistoric evidences left by men, the migrations, the languages and the actual social state of some backward tribes.

For the first subject he explains that palaeolithic tools have been discovered in Burma, Thailand and Laos. At the latter site some fragments of human skeletons have been found which show some relationship with the *Sinanthropus* around Peking and might belong to the Proto-Australian aborigine race. This type probably formed the earliest population of South-East Asia. Then came the late palaeolithic period found in Vietnam, Thailand and Laos. This culture has been called "Hoabinhian" after the name of a site in Vietnam. Many human skulls have also been discovered with the Haobinhian culture, and they show some affinities to the Melanesian people as well as to the Indonesian ones. Next came the protoneolithic period which was probably introduced from outside. It is called "Bacsonian" culture and is represented by short axes and some primitive pottery. Belonging to this period beginning about 4,000 B.C. are the skulls of

Proto-Melanesian and Proto-Australian types as well as those of the Indonesians who probably came later from southern China between the provinces of Kwangsi and Assam. In the Bacsonian culture of Da-but in the Thanh-hoa province of Vietnam some tombs of Melanesian type have also been discovered.

About 2,000 B.C. appeared the neolithic culture represented by the axe of oval section with a round point handle in Burma and northern Cambodia, the shouldered axe which might have been made in Indochina but was probably introduced from southern China or northeastern India, pottery of various types as well as the axe of quadrangular section which spread from Japan, Korea and the Yellow River valley in China down to Indonesia. The skulls discovered in this period belong to many races: Indonesian type in Tong-king, Pygmy race along the coast of the China Sea and those mixed with some bronze objects in Cambodia.

The neolithic people in Indochina might have lived alongside with some advanced human groups of bronze culture, and with the bronze age Indochina entered into proto-history. The most numerous and most interesting Indochinese bronzes came from Dongson in north Vietnam, and the most remarkable object is probably the kettle drum, the oldest type of which spread from China down to Indonesia. All the motifs represented on these Dongson drums had existed in China between the 4th–3rd century B.C., therefore it was probably the Chinese who taught the Dongson people, presumably of Indonesian race, the technique of bronze casting.

Also belonging to the bronze age and the beginning of the iron age are the various megalithic cultures we have found in Indochina: menhirs in Laos, stone jars in North Vietnam and Laos and a large dolmen in Cambodia.

One may here add that many excavations on prehistory recently have been carried on in Thailand and the accumulated knowledge will probably be soon published to the public.

For migrations of various races into South-East Asia, the professor expounds that it is generally accepted that the Australian aborigines (palaeolithic culture) came first and then the Melanesians

(for Bacsonian culture) and the Indonesians and Polynesians (for neolithic culture). These people moved down from China and Tibet to the south and south-east and were probably attracted by the sea. Even in this pre-historic time, there was already a maritime relationship between South-East Asia and India. This resulted in a common culture that developed in pre-Aryan India as well as in prehistoric Indochina and Indonesia.

As for languages the professor discusses the present languages in Indochina as well as those known to be used in the area about 1,000 years ago, including their various language family groups. It is noteworthy that the professor has also mentioned that the Thai language might have already been spoken about that period in the high valleys of the Chao Phya and Mekong rivers. It forms the same family with the Laotian language, the Shan, the Ahom and many dialects that are still spoken in the immense territory covering the high region of Tong-king and Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Kwangsi and Kweichow. As for the Vietnamese language, he indicates that it probably belongs to a Mon-Khmer family but has adopted the tonal system of the Thai.

As for the social state of people in Indochina before the contact with India and China, the professor suggests that one might perhaps get knowledge from those backward groups which are now still living in mountains in Indochina, which one can divide into two groups. This first one comprises the Chams and those who speak the related Indonesian family languages, and who live in a matriarchal system, as well as those who speak the Mon-Khmer languages and generally have a patriarchal system. To the second group belong those who speak tonal languages and are more civilized such as the Muong, Tai, Lolo and Man. When the Chinese and Indians came in about the 2nd century A.D. they probably met this type of culture which was not very different from that of their ancestors.

The second part of the book deals with the formation of the Indochinese states and the first chapter is on the Chinese conquest of the Red River delta and the formation of the Vietnamese nation. In this chapter the professor states that China had begun to extend her power down south in the time of the Ts'in dynasty, about 200 B.C. The

peoples that were to become the ancestors of the present Vietnamese people were the Yue, who lived along the coast of Chekiang, Fukien and Kwangtung in southern China and the Lo who lived in the delta of the Red River in the present day province of Tong-king. One of them probably belonged to the Mon-Khmer speaking group and the other to the Thai. They formed the country of Nan-yue which was soon incorporated into the Chinese empire under the Han dynasty. About the 1st century A.D. Chinese governors tried to bring the province under strict Chinese control, and there were many revolts that were crushed down by the Chinese army, which brought an influx of Chinese culture. From this time on the Chinese language became the only scholarly and official language of Vietnam for almost 2,000 years. In the 6th century Mahayana Buddhism came to Vietnam, and it flourished brilliantly between the 11th and 14th centuries. The subsequent period of domination by the Chinese in Vietnam for nearly 1,000 years was spent in resisting the inner rebellions and fighting against the exterior invasion of the Cham people into the north. During the T'ang dynasty this protectorate was called Ngan-nan (Annam) and occupied the whole of Tong-king as well as the coastal plain down to the town of Hoanh-sön in present-day North Vietnam. Thus one can realize, the professor explains, that the propagation of Chinese culture was done through military occupation in contrast to the peaceful cultural expansion of India.

In Chapter II the professor deals with the implantation of the Indian civilisation in Indochina. He states that concrete evidences of Indian cultural expansion in South-East Asia do not antedate the 2nd century A.D. and that this cultural expansion probably had many causes. The Indians probably came from every part of their country, but the south presumably played the greatest role. The most important states in South-East Asia created by this Indian cultural expansion were Champa, Funan which was later on succeeded by Kambuja, Dvaravati and Srikshetra.

These states probably began when the indigenous society accepted the Indian civilisation and created the government of Indian type. An Indian might become the chief of the population and then

marry a native girl, or an indigenous chief might set himself up as a monarch in Indian style with the help of a Brahman. At the same time most of them would set up a cult of Indian divinity on the top of a natural or artificial mountain, closely associated with the royal personage and at the same time symbolising the unity of the new kingdom. This tradition very well illustrates the assimilation of the Indian culture by the native one. The professor however, admits at the end of this chapter that so far the Indian culture belonged only to the ruling class in South-East Asia and that further researches in epigraphy especially that of native tongues might yield more on the knowledge of the common population during that time.

Chapter III, on the Indian expansion in Indochina, the professor divides into three sections.

Section I concerns the Funanese empire in the delta of the Mekong river, which he describes from her first appearance in the 1st century A.D. down to the reign of King Jayavarman in the early 6th century. It is noteworthy that the professor remarks that the Funanese people were probably of Mon-Khmer origin. The Chinese chronicle says that they were ugly, black and frizzy-haired. They also did not dig wells for water but used a common pond.

Section II deals with the kingdom of Champa on the eastern coast of Indochina. According to the Chinese Chronicle which names it Lin-yi, this kingdom was founded in 192 A.D. in the region of the actual town of Hué by a group of people who probably came from the west around the Mekong valley. The Cham kings tried to expand their territory up north where they had to fight against the Chinese army. Sanskrit inscriptions of King Bhadravarman in the 4th century A.D. have been found in the south of the Tourane Bay at Quang-nam and Phu-yen and another has been found in the ancient Cham language. The Chinese chronicle also describes the Cham people as having deep eyes, a straight and pointed nose, and dark and curly hair.

In Section III the professor discusses the kingdoms of Srikshe-tra in the lower valley of the Irrawaddy and Dvaravati in the southern part of the Chao Phya valley. For the former site he states that there existed a Mon kingdom in the south and the Pyu in the north. The

latter lived around the actual town of Prome where fragments of Buddhist Pali canon of the 5th century have been discovered. As for the Dvaravati kingdom, he explains that it existed in the 7th century as attested by the Chinese pilgrim, Hsuan-Tsang. It formerly might have been a vassal state of Funan. Two inscriptions in ancient Mon language of about the 6th and 7th century A.D. have been found respectively at Nakhon Pathom and Lopburi, proving that the Dvaravati population were Mon. The professor also expresses his surprise that traditional Mon history places the centre of Mon culture at Sudhamavati (Thaton) at the mouth of the Sittang river where there have been no important archaeological traces whereas in the Chao Phya valley such evidence is numerous. He also explains about Dvaravati art and states that Chaiya in the south of Thailand was included in the Dvaravati territory.

For this last section one might insert the footnote of the professor published later in his “ Les Etats Hindouisés d’Indochine et d’Indonésie ”, 1964, p. 145 footnote 5 that two silver coins bearing the title of the king of Dvaravati were discovered at Nakhon Pathom, thus supporting the old theory that the toponym “ T’o-lo-po-ti ” of Hsuan-tsang corresponds to the Sanskrit name “ Dvaravati ”.

The third part of the book, which he divides into three chapters, concerns the Indochinese states from the 6th to the 13th centuries.

The first one concerns Champa and Vietnam. The professor relates that there were continuous wars in the 6th and 7th centuries between the Chinese and the Cham who tried to expand their country up north, and in the 8th century Champa was raided by the Indonesians. The Cham then moved from their former capitals around the region Hué and Quang-nam to Ph^{an}rang and Nhatrang in the south. In 875 however, one dynasty was still ruling at Indrapura in Quang-nam and built a great Mahayana Buddhist temple at Dong-duong. This type of Cham art was strangely inspired by indigenous elements but the following one that flourished at Mis^{on} in the 10th century, on the contrary, was a reaction against it and revealed some Khmer and Javanese influences. In 972 Champa entered into conflict with the newly independent country of Vietnam named Dai Co Viet, which

destroyed the Cham capital of Indrapura in 982. The Cham nominated their new king at Vijaya (Binh-Dinh), which became the new capital in 1,000, and they had again to continue fighting against the Vietnamese army. Nevertheless they still succeeded in 1177 in sending their fleet up to Angkor, the capital of the Khmer which they conquered and sacked. During this period the Khmer also occupied Champa twice, in the middle of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th centuries, and the decadent Cham art between the 11th and 13th centuries displays influences from the Khmer and Vietnamese as well as revived indigenous elements.

As for Vietnam, in the 8th century Tong-king was also invaded by the Indonesians, who were driven back by the Chinese governor. The professor states that Nanchao, the kingdom of Thai population but perhaps ruled by the leading class of another ethnic group was set up in the west and north-west of Yunnan in the first half of the 8th century. In about the middle of the 9th century it conquered Tong-king but was later on pushed back by the Chinese army. After the Tang period the Chinese control over Vietnam weakened and the country resumed the name of Nam Viet. In 968 Vietnam became more or less independent under the name of Dai Co Viet and in 970 the emperor of Vietnam received an investiture from the Sung emperor. In 980 it was ruled by the dynasty of Early Le which defeated the Chinese army as well as the Cham. In 1010 the Ly dynasty took over, changed the name of the country into Dai Viet and in 1078 a peace treaty was made with China on equal terms. The Ly dynasty, the first great royal family of Vietnam, ended in the year 1225 without a male descendant. During this period the study of Chinese culture was encouraged and though most of the Vietnamese literature of this time was written in Chinese, it still shows certain characteristics of its own.

For this first chapter of the third part of the book one might insert that the characteristic features of the indigenous Dong-duong art of Champa resemble very much those of Dvaravati in Thailand, and one cannot help wondering whether there might be any connection between the peoples of the two countries.

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Chapter II concerns Cambodia, which the professor describes from the reign of the last king of Funan in the 6th century down to the death of King Jayavarman VII of Cambodia in 1218, and in each period he also tries to explain about its art, religions and administration. The professor calls the kingdom of Cambodia or the Khmer empire the successor and continuation of Funan in Indochina, but the Funanese kings might have continued to rule for a short while in the 7th century on their former vassal states in the Malay peninsula.

As for the parts concerning the actual territory of Thailand one can mention that Bhavavarman of Chenla and Chitrasena, his cousin (not brother as originally thought), expanded their power up to Si Tep (known from a stone inscription recently there found) in the 6th century; Indravarman I of Cambodia (877-889) also expanded his territory to the north-west of Ubon on the Korat plateau and Suryavarman I (1010-1050) to the central part of Thailand, especially the town of Lopburi. Suryavarman II (1113-1150?) tried to attack the Mon Haripunjaya (Lampun) kingdom but without success. The Chinese chronicle says that the former's kingdom extended from Champa to Burma and down to Grahi (Chaiya) in the south, therefore comprising most of the territory of actual Thailand. The professor then continues to describe the Thai race who, according to him, entered the Indochinese scene in the 11th century. He explains about the bas-relief at Angkor Vat, built by Suryavarman II, representing a group of soldiers which are complemented by two short inscriptions calling them "Syam". This name also appears in a Cham inscription from the 11th century denoting prisoners of war along with the Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer and Burmese. The Thai probably lived around the middle Chao Phya valley and were during that time under Khmer authority. They might have come into Indochina from the north since ancient times by long infiltration and, according to him, have been great assimilators of ancient cultures before them. The professor also explains that the kingdom of Lvo (Lopburi) or Lo-hou as termed by the Chinese was probably independent during the early reign of Suryavarman II as it sent an embassy to China in 1115 and after the former's death it became again independent as shown by its resumed mission to China in 1155. The inscription of 1167 found in

the province of Nakhon Savan mentions a king named Dharmasoka, who might during that time have ruled this newly independent kingdom. It the reign of King Jayavarman VII (1181-1218?) the Khmer kingdom again extended to a large part of the Chao Phya valley and down to the north of the Malay peninsula.

Chapter III concerns Burma and the professor at first describes the Pyu and Mon civilisations which received influences from north-east India and Orissa. Then he discusses the gradual development of Burmese culture at Pagan which in turn was stimulated by Mon, Pyu, Singhalese and sporadic Indian influences. The history of Burma from the reign of Aniruddha (1044-1077) is then briefly traced down to that of Narasimhapati, the last king of Pagan in the 13th century. At the end of the chapter the professor describes the architectural monuments of Pagan, which can be divided into two periods and six successive styles.

It is noteworthy in this chapter that the professor states that Buddhism in the Mon town of Hamsavati (Pegu) in Lower Burma might have been strengthened by Mon emigrants who came from the kingdom of Haripunjaya (Lampun) in the first half of the 11th century. They probably fled from a cholera epidemic and the Khmer army of Suryavarman I. It is also interesting to note that the professor does not mention the theory put forward a long time past by H.R.H. Prince Damrong that King Aniruddha of Burma might have attacked Nakhon Pathom, a Hinayana Buddhist town in central Thailand with numerous remains, rather than Thaton in lower Burma nor that the ruins of Wat Pra Men at Nakhon Pathom, which has the same plan as that of the Ananda Temple in Pagan might have been the latter's prototype.

The fourth part of the book concerns the crises in the 13th century and the decline of Indian civilisation. The professor relates the history of the continuous wars between Champa and the new dynasty of Vietnam in the first half of the 13th century, the weakening of the Khmer power after the death of King Jayavarman VII about 1218, and the setting up of the newly independent Thai kingdom of Sukhothai, as well as the threatening of the Mon state of Haripunjaya by a Thai prince, Mengrai. These events were intensified by the

Mongol conquest in China. In the second half of the 13th century there were unsuccessful but destructive wars between the Mongols on one side against Vietnam and Champa on the other. In 1287 the Mongol army destroyed Pagan and this event incited the liberation of many small Thai kingdoms which meant, according to the professor, the assumption of power by the Thai ruling class which had been in the area for a long time, rather than the massive descent of the Thai population. Some of them shared the territory of the lost kingdom of Pagan. The professor then tells about the significant friendship pact concluded between three Thai princes: Ram Khamhaeng of Sukhothai, Mengrai of Chiangrai and Ngam Muong of Payao in 1287, the same year as the fall of Pagan. Mengrai then conquered the Haripunjaya kingdom between 1291-1292 and founded the new capital of Chiangmai in 1296. Ram Khamhaeng also extended his territory into the Malay peninsula about 1294 and attacked the already decadent Khmer empire. In the 14th century another Thai prince founded the Laotian kingdom of Lan Chang.

Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism, which were not created for the masses, were then replaced by Singhalese Hinayana Buddhism and the Sanskrit culture disappeared in front of the Pali one. Indigenous elements reappeared in art, for instance in Champa and Java in the 14th century. In other countries such as Cambodia and Burma the art began to decline, leaving blooming the new aesthetics of Sukhothai. The professor at the end explains that this decadence of the Indian civilisation, though precipitated by the Mongol invasion, mainly occurred because it was adopted more and more by the indigenous people who at the same time impregnated it with their own original tendencies, as well as because of the gradual disappearance of the refined aristocracy.

In this chapter, the eminent professor refers to Wat Kukut, which, according to him, was constructed in the reign of Adityaraja, a contemporary of Suryavarman II, and to the inscription of King Lithai in 1357 complaining about the decadence of the Indian cultured aristocrats since 1218. These two subjects, according to some sources which rely on certain Thai chronicles and tradition, might be

interpreted otherwise and we humbly hope to be able to express a different point of view in the near future.

The fifth part of the book concerns the Indochinese states after the 13th century and is divided into five chapters. In the first one on Siam or Thailand the professor describes briefly the history of Thailand from the Sukhothai kingdom down to that of Bangkok in 1932 with information on the art, religions, forms of administration and famous literature of every epoch. He admirably divides Ayudhya history into 4 periods : from 1350 to 1550 for the Thai expansion to the east and north; 1550 to 1600 as the warring period with Burma; the 17th century as the development of foreign relations especially with Europe and the 18th century for the decline and fall of Ayudhya in 1767 after a short brilliant period.

It is rather surprising to notice that the professor mentions the acknowledgement of Ayudhya suzerainty by Sukhothai in the reign of King Lithai when it is well known in Thai chronicles that during this period the two states coexisted in equal status and this acknowledgement occurred only in the time of Lithai's son. The professor in a scholarly way states the contrast between the Khmer and Sukhothai forms of administration and at the same time adds that the social structure of Sukhothai probably adopted some of the Mongol elements. He also mentions that King U-thong of Ayudhya might have been of Mon or Khmer origin but married to a Thai princess. It is again very surprising to note that the professor calls one of the first poems composed at Ayudhya "the curse against the flood (l'imprécation contre l'eau des inondations)" when it is well known that this poem concerns only the ceremony of taking oath of allegiance to the King. Again he mentions that King Indaraja was a younger brother of King Paramaraja I when he is spoken of in Thai chronicles as only a cousin or nephew. As for the construction of Wat Chet Yot near Chiangmai in 1455, this theory is still now disputed.

In Chapter II, concerning Laos, the professor describes the establishment of the Thai kingdom of Lan Chang on the Mekong by Prince Fa Ngum through the support of the Khmer king in 1340-1350

while the Sukhothai kingdom was declining in power. The history of Laos is then summarily traced down to 1893, when Thailand had to accept the French protectorate over that country. The professor divides Laotian history into 3 periods; the first one concerning the installation and organisation of the kingdom from about 1350 to 1550; the second characterized by Burmese wars from 1550 to 1650 and the third period on the partition of the country into the two states of Viang Chan (Vientiane) and Luang Prabang from the 18th to the 19th centuries.

The professor mentions that the early Lan Chang kingdom was influenced by the Khmer civilisation as well as by Singhalese Hinayana Buddhism. He also admits that the Emerald Buddha was taken from the town of Chiangmai into Laos in the middle of the 16th century and was brought back by the Thai in 1778. He cites three artistic centres of Laos, Chiang Khuang, Luang Prabang and Viang Chan, and says that the Laotian “Pra That” might have been derived from Sukhothai art as well as the prototype of her Buddha images. Laotian literature also shows itself to be a somewhat dialectal branch of the Thai one.

Chapter III concerns Burma from the fall of Pagan in 1287 and the temporary occupation of the three Thai brothers in the north down to 1886 when Burma became included in the British empire.

It is noteworthy that the professor states that Wareru or Chao Fa Rua was Thai and not Mon. He also mentions the contrast between the far sighted Thai kings of the Bangkok dynasty and the monarchs of Burma in the 19th century. After referring to unimportant Burmese artistic expression during the period of this chapter the professor informs us that from 1752 many of the Burmese literary works show an influence from or imitation of Thai literature.

Chapter IV is on Cambodia from the reign of Jayavarman VIII in 1283, the Thai conquest of Angkor in 1431 down to the French protectorate in Cambodia in 1863.

In this chapter the professor explains how the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap were annexed to Thailand at the end of the 18th century and states that at the late period

Cambodian civilisation was strongly influenced by Thai culture especially in the domains of religion, literature and art.

Chapter V concerns Vietnam from the Tran dynasty in 1314. There were still continuous wars between the Vietnamese and the Cham who had been pushed down to the south, and in 1326 Champa succeeded in becoming independent of Vietnam under which she had been a vassal state since 1313. In 1400 the Tran dynasty was supplanted by the short lived Ho who changed the name of the country into Fa Yu. Vietnam was conquered by the Ming dynasty of China in 1407 but in 1428 the country again resumed its independence under the Late Le dynasty, In 1471 northern Champa was again occupied by the Vietnamese and the Laotian kingdom of Lan Chang also had to acknowledge its suzerainty. But from 1516 onwards the three Vietnamese families of Mac, Trinh and Nguyen became so powerful that they divided the country in 1660 into two parts. The Trinh ruled Tong-king in the north and the Nguyen Cochin China in the south, both for the powerless Le dynasty. The Nguyen then expanded their power into the Cambodian delta of the Mekong and pushed much further in the 18th century. They also destroyed in the region of Pham^{wr} the last Cham kinglets who still produced their arts of the most degenerate type in the 17th century. But in 1775 the Trinh managed to destroy Hué, the capital of the Nguyen, and both of them were defeated by the Fay-son rebels in the south. During this Le dynasty period, Vietnam tried to reassert her own culture in every domain, though still retaining Chinese influence.

Nguyen Anh, however, succeeded with the help of some Frenchmen, to recuperate his right and after three years of fighting was crowned emperor of the whole country of Vietnam in 1802 under the regnal name of Gia-long. His successors led an unwise policy towards foreigners, especially missionaries and in 1867 the French colony of Cochin China was created. Under the Nguyen dynasty, Vietnamese literature flourished and later on the "quôc-ngũ" characters, the romanisation of Vietnamese alphabets invented by Catholic missionaries, were adopted.

It is noteworthy in this chapter that the professor does not mention that Nguyen Anh or Ong Chiangsue, as the Thai know him,

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came to Bangkok and received some support from King Rama I for his assumption of power.

In his last chapter or conclusion, the eminent professor demonstrates how profoundly Indian civilisation exercised its power on the indigenous cultures of various countries in South-East Asia, with the only exception of Vietnam, which was an object of Chinese cultural and military expansion from the beginning. Here one can put in a doubting question on his comparison of Phu Khao Tong in Bangkok to an ancient mountain-temple marking the centre of the royal town, for one knows that this Buddhist monument was constructed in the second quarter of the 19th century outside the town of Bangkok in imitation of another Buddhist stupa which was originally constructed as a victory monument by a Burmese king and also outside the town of Ayudhya.

This valuable book, which we have dealt with in detail for the benefit of those who cannot read French, should be consulted by everybody who is interested in South-East Asian history and culture.