

NOTES

THE AGE OF KING RAMA I OF THE CHAKRI DYNASTY.

In my article entitled, *The Reconstruction of Rama I of the Chakri dynasty*, in JSS. XLIII, 1, 1955, it was stated that that King died at the age of 74. My statement was based on the *History of the First Reign* by, Chaophyā Dibākaravons, published in R.S. 120 (1901) and again by the Fine Arts Department in 1935 (p. 312).

Prince Prididebyabongs has now drawn my attention to the fact that this was a miscalculation, for the King was born on the 20th March 1737, and died on the 7th September 1809, thus leaving his span of life only 72 years, 5 months and 17 days, or, roughly speaking, 72 years and 6 months.

The miscalculation apparently arose from the prevalent method of reckoning age at that time when the King, having been born towards the end of the lunar year, would be considered as being 2 years old with the dawn of the new year. He was then regarded as being 2 years old when he was really only 11 days old.

In thanking Prince Prididebyabongs for the information, I naturally accept his correction,

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THE ORIGINS OF THE VIETNAMESE.

This problem has been subjected to various opinions. Some research workers believe that the Vietnamese people were a Mongoloid tribe that emigrated from Southeastern China to North Vietnam (Tongking); others, such as Colonel Henri Roux, thought that they were originally Siamese. The noted philologist, Professor A.G. Haudricourt, thinks, however, that the Vietnamese should be placed in the Austro-asiatic family, between the Wa-Palaung and the Môn-Khmer

group, because many of the basic roots of the Vietnamese language are Môn-Khmer.<sup>1</sup> It has also been thought that the tones in the Vietnamese language are due to a former Thai influence. To this, Prof. Haudricourt says that the introduction of tones in the Vietnamese language is not due to Thai influence. He states that it is probable that at the beginning of our era neither the ancestor of the Siamese language, nor of the archaic Chinese, nor of the common Miao-Yao language had any tones; that the appearance of tones was begotten by the modification of the final and initial consonants, and that this took place in a parallel manner in all four languages because of Chinese influence. This Chinese influence is testified by the existence of many Chinese loan words<sup>2</sup> (in the three other languages). In this matter of tones, Prof. Haudricourt agrees with Dr. Paul Benedict.<sup>3</sup>

It seems that Prof. Haudricourt's placing of the Vietnamese language and the Vietnamese people in the Austro-asiatic family is based solely on linguistic grounds. Ethnology and the study of blood groups do not, however, agree with this view. Some fifteen years ago Dr. Maneffe and M. Bézacier carried out a series of blood group studies of the Vietnamese and other ethnic groups in North Vietnam, such as the Müông (rustic cousins of the Vietnamese), the Thó who are Thai, the Nung, also Thai, and the Man (Yao). The result of this investigation was that all these ethnic groups come nearer (biologically) to the Indonesian element than to the Mongol. In stating that the Thai are more closely related to the Indonesian (than to the Chinese), Dr. Maneffe and M. Bézacier are in agreement with Dr. Benedict (and also the noted German anthropologist, Prof. Egon Baron von Eickstedt). The first two

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1. George Condominas, *Panorama de la culture Vietnamiene*. p. 22.

2. *Idem*.

3. Paul Benedict, "Thai, Kadai and Indonesian, A New Alignment in Southeastern Asia," *The American Anthropologist*, 1942.

authors say that the Indonesians are members of "the great Euro-poid family." 4,5

It seems that the Indonesian, like the other groups of the Thai, Kadai and Indonesian alignment, originated somewhere in Yunnan, and when the Môn-Khmer wave, coming from the south (southwest?), and intruding like a wedge,<sup>6</sup> separated the Thai and the Kadai from the Indonesian group; the Thai were pushed northwards and the Kadai eastwards. The Indonesians were driven southwards, invading the whole of the farther Indian peninsula. A wave of these Indonesians, who were people of a highly developed neolithic culture, invaded and conquered the lands of what was until recently French Indochina (and the remainder of farther India) where they met a primitive population of Papua-Melanesian and Negrito stock which they conquered, drove away, or absorbed. Next, a wave of Môn-Khmer, following in the steps of the Indonesian, overran and conquered Tongking (but not Champa or certain territories in the Indochinese backlands, and Chieng Khwang). The result of the last invasion was that the Vietnamese (Indonesian) of that day adopted more or less the language of their conquerers, a process in which history shows many similar examples. In spite of all this, we think we are justified in maintaining that the Vietnamese are *au fond* Indonesians. That this assertion is correct is borne out by Dr. Maneffe's and M. Bézacier's investigations of the blood groups of the people of North Vietnam as well as by several cultural traits which link up the Vietnamese with the Indonesian of Insulinde. As regards the culture and language of the present-day Vietnamese, they were heavily influenced at first by the Chinese conquest during the Han period (cir. 200 B.C. to cir. 200 A.D.), and afterwards during the long Chinese occupation that lasted for many

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4. *Bulletin de l'Institut pour l'étude de l'homme*, vol. IV, pt. 2.

5. See the author's "Notes on the B.I.E.H.," *JSS*, vol. XXXVI, Pt.I.

6. George Coedes, "Les langues de l'Indochine," *Conférences de l'Institut de Linguistique de l'Université de Paris*, 1949.

hundreds of years. It is well known that the population of Central Vietnam (Annam) consists mainly of former Cham people from the once flourishing hinduized and highly civilized Kingdom of Champa, which was utterly destroyed by the ruthless and iconoclastic Vietnamese to such a degree that only a few tens of thousand very poor descendants of this formerly proud people are now left. The Cham are of course Indonesians, both by blood and language.

*Sorgenfri per Virum, Denmark*  
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