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THE RAM KHAMHAENG CONTROVERSY

Collected Papers

Edited By James R. Chamberlain



THE RAM KHAMHAENG CONTROVERSY COLLECTED PAPERS

The Siam Society's latest publication brings together a unique collection of papers on a subject of great topical interest. The history of Thailand as a nation relies principally upon evidence from its first capital at Sukhothai where, in the golden age of the late 13th century, King Ram Khamhaeng devised the writing system he handed down to posterity on the stone now known as **Inscription No. 1**. The stone was discovered by King Mongkut (Rama IV) during a visit he made Sukhothai in 1833 before his ascent to the throne. He had the stone brought to Bangkok where it remains to this day in the National Museum.

In recent years serious doubt has been cast upon the authenticity of Inscription No. 1, some eminent authorities not hesitating to brand it outright as a fake. One distinguished art historian is categorical in presenting evidence that it was the work of King Mongkut himself, performed between the years 1851 and 1855.

If this premise is correct much of the history of the Thai nation would be open to reinterpretation. Perhaps for that reason, and certainly because Ram Khamhaeng is seen as a father figure to the nation he welded into the first Thai kingdom, the idea that the inscription is not genuine has been hotly disputed by more conservative voices.

The arguments and counter-arguments put forward by experts from various disciplines at conferences and seminars, and in papers and articles, have been skilfully assembled by the editor, Dr. James R. Chamberlain, in this illustrated volume of 592 pages. They make a fascinating and intriguing detective story, offering many clues to an historical puzzle yet to be solved definitively.

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The Siam Society was founded in 1904, under royal patronage, as an organization for those interested in the artistic, scientific and other cultural affairs of Thailand and neighbouring countries. The Society maintains an excellent Library which is at the disposal of Members. The Society publishes *The Journal of the Siam Society* and *The Siam Society Newsletter* in addition to occasional works of topical interest and scholarly merit. The Society sponsors a programme of lectures and artistic performances, and regularly conducts study trips to places of archaeological and cultural interest in Thailand and abroad. Activities and events of the Society are reported in the *Newsletter* and special circulars of the Society. The Kamthieng House, an ethnological museum on the grounds of the Society's home, provides an example of a traditional northern Thai house with artefacts of rural life and superb collections of woven materials and wood carvings. The Saengaroon House is a new addition to the Society's compound. A typical house of central Thailand, it too is open to the public.

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The Journal of the Siam Society, 500 baht (US\$ 25) per year

The Natural History Bulletin, 300 baht (US\$ 15) per year

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Applications for membership, subscriptions or further information on the Society are welcome. Please contact Mr. Euayporn Kerdchouay, Administrative Secretary, The Siam Society, 131 Soi Asoke, Sukhumvit 21, Bangkok 10110, Thailand.

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