to the quality of the translation of Olivier Cunin's text. Another problem concerning the book is the inclusion of photographs of the face towers of Preah Khan of Kompong Svay without the provision of a separate text and explanation about this monument. The explanatory text written by Olivier Cunin only covers Banteay Chmar. While Preah Kahn is mentioned in passing in Cunin's text, the book would be more balanced if a short separate section about this monument had also been included.

Despite the problems mentioned above, anyone wishing to visit Banteay Chmar would find in this volume extremely useful introduction to this little-known site. The many diagrams and drawings which accompany Cunin's text help to make sense of a complex archeological site. Baku Saito's attempt to document the challenging archaeological sites of both Banteay Chmar and Preah Khan of Kompong Svay is admirable, and is well complemented by Olivier Cunin's precise text. Any visit to these two remote Khmer sites would be enhanced by a thorough study of this book.

Jane Purananda

Zhou Daguan, *A Record of Cambodia, the Land and its People*, translated with an introduction and notes by Peter Harris, foreword by David Chandler. Chiang Mai, Silkworm Books, 2007, xv + 150 pp.

For anyone with more than a passing interest in the great Cambodian empire centred on Angkor, the name of Zhou Daguan is immediately familiar, though for some of a certain age, including the present reviewer, there is still a tendency to think of this obscure but immensely important observer of Angkor in the thirteenth century by the pre-*pinyin* rendering of his name as Chou Ta-kuan. His importance stems, of course, through the fact of his being the only eyewitness chronicler of the city of Angkor and its inhabitants while it was still a major, if fading, power in mainland Southeast Asia.

Until quite recently, it is a fair assumption that most Anglophone readers will have encountered Zhou Daguan in the translation from French of Paul Pelliot by J. Gilman d'Arcy Paul, first published by the Siam Society in 1967. And, since 2001, these same Anglophone readers have had the opportunity to consult a more up-to-date and elegant rendering of the French by this journal's editor, Michael Smithies, published again by the Siam Society. Few readers, whether Anglophone or Francophone, will have gained access to Zhou Daguan by returning to the French translation of this work by Paul Pelliot, published in 1902, let alone the first translation from

Chinese into French accomplished by Jean-Pierre-Abel Rémusat in 1819.

Now, for the first time in over fifty years, Peter Harris has provided us with a translation of Zhou's text, working directly from Chinese into English. And he has done so with a very detailed accompanying scholarly apparatus that places Zhou Daguan in his place and time, while explaining his reasons for varying his translation from those offered by his predecessors working from French into English. One point to which the translator gives particular emphasis is the fact that Zhou Daguan's 'record', as we have it, is only part of the document he prepared after spending a little less than a year in Cambodia in 1296–97.

For those not schooled in a deep knowledge of Chinese history, what Harris has to say about Zhou's background makes for fascinating reading. As Harris says in his introduction, after establishing that Zhou was born near the Chinese port city of Wenzhou in south-eastern China, this 'is not a place many people outside China have heard of', but its character as a dynamic and open location, peopled by individuals with a 'strong sense of identity . . . pleasure seekers and bon vivants', gives clues to the sort of person Zhou would have been. And it is indeed possible to see in reading Zhou's account of Angkor that he was, as Harris suggests, a man appreciative of good living and able to enjoy what he sees. Yet this *débrouillard* view of the world went hand in hand with a degree of prudishness which sometimes intrudes on his account of sexual practices, most of which he reports on hearsay rather than through personal observation.

To what extent does this new translation overtake those previously available? I would suggest that this is a question that can be answered in two ways. At one level the existence of Harris's version certainly does not mean we should cast previous French into English versions into the outer darkness. A non-specialist reading Paul or Smithies will still come away with a broadly satisfactory understanding of what Zhou Daguan had to say, with the essentials of his account well and truly available. Indeed, at first glance, this new translation appears like a paraphrase of earlier versions of Zhou's text. Take, for instance, the 'chapter' headed 'Agriculture' in the Paul translation and 'Cultivating the Land' in Harris. The first sentence of this section in Paul reads:

> Generally speaking, three or four crops a year can be counted, for the entire Cambodian year resembles the fifth and sixth moons of China, and frost and snow are unknown.

Whereas in Harris it is:

> In general crops can be harvested three or four times a year, the reason being that all four seasons are like our fifth and sixth months, with days that know no frost or snow.

On other occasions there are rather more than minor differences in the

rendering provided by Harris. Consider as an example the section dealing with 'Villages'. In Paul's version it reads:

> Each village has its temple, or at least a pagoda. No matter how small the village may be, it has a local mandarin, called the *mai-chieh*. Along the highways there are resting places like our post halts; these are called *sen-mu (Khmer, samnak)*. Only recently, during the war with Siam, whole villages have been laid waste.

The Harris rendering of this passage is:

> In every village there is a Buddhist temple or pagoda. Where the population is quite dense there is normally an official called *maijie* who is responsible for the security of the village. Resting places called *senmu*, like our posting-houses, are normally found along the main roads
>
> As the result of repeated wars with the Siamese the land has been completely laid to waste.

In the lengthy footnote (99) that relates to this passage Harris explains his reasons for doubting that it can be read to suggest Buddhism was by this time 'paramount in villages'; he expands the role assigned to the *maijie*, pointing out that it may be a Chinese rendering of the Khmer for a village headman, *mai s'rok*; and his translation, with 'wars' in the plural contrasts with the singular reference to conflict in Paul. This, as another reviewer, Chris Baker, has suggested, raises unanswerable questions about the extent to which conflict between Angkor and the rising Siamese states to the west was already a feature in the fourteenth century.

So, and at a second level, for anyone concerned with the minutiae of translation, the detail of flora and fauna, and the contested nuances in undertaking a translation from the original Chinese text, Harris deserves high praise. His explanations are admirably detailed and informed by references to Chinese historical texts, the abundant French literature on Angkor, and the linguistic work of Michael Vickery and the late Judith Jacobs.

The book is helpfully illustrated with twenty-six photographs chosen to focus on issues raised in the text.

The author and Silkworm Books are to be congratulated for making this important new contribution to Angkorian scholarship available to a wide audience.

Milton Osborne
