

Krishna and the Plaster Cast – Translating the Cambodian Temple of Angkor Wat in the French Colonial Period

Michael S. Falser, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

The analysis of hidden power constellations existing within the translation process that occurs between cultures – in this case between Asia and Europe – is an emerging feature in (trans)cultural studies. Yet given the prevalent focus on texts and images, techniques of direct material translation – such as plaster casts – are rarely discussed. Although the historico-cultural significance of this form of physical copying and of exhibition in European museum collections has been rediscovered in the last decade, the analysis of their relevance in colonial translation politics remains a desideratum. This paper focuses on the politico-cultural history of French plaster casts in general, and in particular on those made from the Cambodian Temple of Angkor Wat during early French explorative missions, subsequently displayed in museums and at universal and colonial exhibitions from the 1860s to 1930s. It explores the hypothesis that plaster casts were a powerful translation tool used to appropriate the local built heritage of the Indochinese colonies for global representation.¹ This process of architectural translation, however, left unexpected space for artful products per se ranging from French amateurs' fanciful interpretations of Khmer art to ambitious

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reconstitutions inscribed into colonial propaganda and a vernacular, post-colonial afterlife.

Translational Turns, Colonial Politics of Translation, and the Technique of Plaster Casts

In order to approach plaster casts as a powerful tool for the colonial appropriation of built heritage it is useful to conceptualize them within the process of translation. The *translational turn* of the last two decades addresses the shift from a linguistic perspective, focused on the written text, to a broader concept that includes (a) translation's metaphorical character, describing innumerable human interactions and connections inside and between cultures (*culture as translation – culture as text*); and (b) the use of the term translation to describe power relations in any kind of cultural contact situation and process(es) of exchange and transfer (*translation as cultural practice*). I employ this second approach in my focus on the French colonial strategies for the appropriation of Indochinese cultural heritage, and intend to conceptualize colonial history in general as a “politico-cultural translation history in an uneven power relation.”² From this point of view, cultural theory “deals with the relationship between the conditions of knowledge production in one given culture, and the way knowledge from a different cultural setting is relocated and reinterpreted according to the conditions in which knowledge is produced. They are deeply inscribed within the politics, the strategies of power, and the mythology of stereotyping and representation of other cultures.”³ Using *power* as the key term in the colonial context implies the assertion of an asymmetry in translational flows of knowledge accumulation and a partial representation of the colonized source text. The dominant authority, network, or regime tries to control the (often institutionalized) translation process, which is “not simply an act of faithful reproduction, but, rather, a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuration, and fabrication – and even, in some cases, of falsification, refusal

2 Translation by the author, originally: “Die Übersetzungsgeschichte ist damit als Teil der Kolonialgeschichte aufzufassen und die koloniale Kulturgeschichte als eine kulturpolitische Übersetzungsgeschichte in einer ungleichen Machtsituation zu begreifen.” Anil Bhatti, “Zum Verhältnis von Sprache, Übersetzung und Kolonialismus am Beispiel Indiens,” in *Kulturelle Identität. Deutsch-indische Kulturkontakte in Literatur, Religion und Politik*, eds. Horst Turk and Anil Bhatti (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1997), 5, quoted in Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*, 3rd ed. (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2009), 244.

3 Ovidio Carbonell, “The Exotic Space of Cultural Translation,” in *Translation, Power, Subversion*, eds., Román Álvarez and M. Carmen-África Vidal, Topics in Translation 8 (Clevedon: Channel View Publications Ltd/Multilingual Matters, 1996), 79-98, here 79. For theoretical discussions of the representation of the “other” in the context of museums, see also Kate Sturge, *Representing Others: Translation, Ethnography and the Museum* (Manchester: St. Jerome Publ., 2007).

of information, [and] counterfeiting⁷⁴ – taken together it is a manipulation of the parts being (or not being) translated as “orientalized” texts in order to conform to the expectations of the occidental target culture. However, this colonial translation process was never completely controllable and sometimes yielded surprisingly “vernacular” results. In contrast to this postcolonial critique of cultural appropriation through translation, the mere ontological status of translations allows them to stand as new and creative texts for an (in our case, Western) audience and simultaneously as “continuers of the [Eastern] originals.”⁷⁵

How can we conceptualize the translatability of material culture,⁶ in this case the specific power and translation structure within the process of plaster casting (*moulage en plâtre*)? Technically speaking, “the first stage in the production of a cast [*moulage*] is the taking of plaster moulds from the original, using a separating agent to prevent the plaster sticking to the surface. Since all sculpture, other than that executed in very low relief, has projections and undercutting [sic] these moulds were invariably made in many pieces. The piece moulds would then be enclosed in an outer casing, the interior coated with a separating agent and the wet plaster poured in. The divisions between the piece moulds produces [sic] a network of casting lines on the completed plaster cast⁷⁷ to be cut away afterwards from the dried plaster. Using a special technique of plaster or a lightweight fabric and plaster mix (*staff*), the negative form of the mold or cast could generate multiple castings (*moule à bon creux*); a later development introduced gelatin into the process, allowing for up to sixty castings. And a special imprinting technique (*estampe*) that was primarily applied to the casting of large architectural surfaces (in this case bas-reliefs, pediments, pilasters, etc.) was the result of molding with potter’s clay for one or two castings only (Figs. 1-3).⁸

4 Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler, eds., *Translation and Power* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), xxi.

5 Theo Hermans and Werner Koller, “The relation between translations and their sources, and the ontological status of translations,” in *Übersetzung. Ein internationales Handbuch zur Übersetzungsforschung*, eds. Harald Kittel et al. (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 23-30, here 26.

6 With regard to the term *translatability* in and between cultures, see Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, eds., *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996)

7 Malcolm Baker, “The History of the Cast Courts,” 1982, and published in the V&A Masterpiece series. Revised 2007. Victoria and Albert Museum (London), last accessed November 6, 2011, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-cast-courts>

8 For more details on the production process, see “Technique du moulage” (Extrait de l’Inventaire des moulages de sculptures de Moyen-Age, de la Renaissance et des Temps Modernes. Paris, Musée de sculpture comparée, Palais du Trocadéro. Paris 1928), in Florence Rionnet, *L’atelier de moulage du musée du Louvre (1794-1928)*. Notes et documents des musées de France (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1996), 381-382.



Figs. 1-3: The modern production process of plaster casts off for decorative elements (above) and off for architectural surfaces (below) and the storage of lightweight decorative elements (French: staff), photos taken at Maison Auberlet, successor of the original Auberlet et Laurent which executed the decoration of the 1:1-scale model of Angkor Wat at the International Colonial Exhibition in Paris 1931. Source: Michael Falser 5.2010

In order to explore the hypothesis that plaster casts were a powerful tool in the French colonial appropriation of the built heritage of Angkor, Georges Didi-Huberman's reflections on imprints (*empreintes*) in relation to power are especially useful: the process of impression leaves the trace of an original object in a foreign medium. Whereas the original object will naturally alter its physical appearance over time (e.g., aging, patina, and decay), the trace of an object might technically be fixed as a permanent, anachronic marker – an unchangeable imprint represented by a molding as the basis of plaster casting. This moment of direct and intimate contact with the original (in the process of translation) imbues the imprint/molding with authenticity and authority.⁹ Comparable to the process of coinage, the possession of representative moldings (in our case those of the large Khmer Temple of Angkor Wat) acts as a kind of central key or generic code for authentic retranslations. Re-materialization empowers the owner (in our case the colonial agent) to translate and circulate exact, licensed, and valuable copies of the object in any desired place, context, time frame, function, and for an audience and political intention determined by the representatives of power (in our case museums as well as universal and colonial exhibitions in France). In order to place such situations of translation in their proper historico-cultural context, it is necessary to contextualize them with the help of several general questions,¹⁰ which will guide us through our case study of the French plaster casts of Angkor Wat and their intended gaze by a European audience:

1. What was or was not translated
(characteristics of the source, material context)?
2. When or how frequently and under what circumstances did the translation occur (temporal context)?
3. Where and over what distance did the translation occur (spatial context)?
4. Who was/were the translator/s (agency, mediation, institutional context)?
5. How was the translation carried out
(resources, medium, techniques, processes, (un-)translatability)?
6. Why was an object translated
(motives, expectations, context of operation, norms)?
7. For whom was an object translated
(intended audience, target culture, demand, distribution, circulation)?
8. What was the result or the end product of translation
(hybridity in re/presentations, unexpected results, reception)?

9 Georges Didi-Huberman, "Der Abdruck als Paradigma. Eine Archäologie der Ähnlichkeit," in *Ähnlichkeit und Berührung. Archäologie, Anachronismus und Modernität des Abdrucks* (Köln: Dumont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, 1999), 14-69, reprint from the catalogue *L'empreinte* of the Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris, 1997).

10 See Armin Paul Frank, "Translation research from a literary and cultural perspective: Objectives, concepts, scope," in Frank, Kittel, and Greiner, *Übersetzung*, 790-851.

Moulage sur Nature – Moulage sur Culture: A Motivational History of Modern Cast Collections

The history of museums with originals and plaster casts as well as plaster cast museums (*musées de moulage*) carries within it a fundamental contradiction: the general concept of a museum as a protective temple of and site for the cultural education of a larger public through original works of art would not, at first glance, seem to include cast copies. An analysis of the motivational history of cast collections (as opposed to collections of original objects) provides us with greater insight into the evolution and contested discourse of the field of art history, taken within its specific national-political context, than it does into the displayed art pieces themselves. Similarly, a product of translation might tell us more about the background of the translation process and the translator than about the original text. Cast collections, especially in museums, were ideological “combat zones of justification and demonstration”¹¹ where natural and cultural products were systematically selected, organized, hierarchized, and displayed according to a dominant evolutionary theory of the evolution of nature and culture (such as art) in general. A consistent feature of casts as a medium of translation is their “contested status [...] at every stage of their history; [...] the processes of reproduction embodied in casting [were] inevitably disputed, their definition always provisional.”¹²

Since earliest times in modern history, plaster casts have served either as working models (*aide-mémoire*) in an artist’s atelier and visual representatives of the sculptor’s intermediate stages of production. Since Roman (or even earlier) times, copies served as substitutes of venerated originals in private and royal collections. For an early-modern use of *moulage sur culture* in large public presentations, one can look to the important mid-eighteenth-century cast collection of the German painter Anton Raphael Mengs, founded in Rome and later transferred to Dresden. Focusing on Roman casts of ancient Greek sculpture, Mengs’ motivation was based on the ideas of the German art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann, whose *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1764) was the first publication to establish a chronological classification of art, in particular – and the development of civilization in general – as a cycle of organic growth, maturity, and decline.

11 Translation by the author, originally : “[...] le musée de moulages est un musée de combat, de justification, de démonstration”, see Dominique de Font-Réaulx, “L’histoire de l’art en ses musées, les musées de moulage,” in *Histoire de l’art et musées. Actes du colloque, École du Louvre 27- 28.11.2001*, ed. Dominique Viéville (Paris: École du Louvre, 2005), 155-171, here 156.

12 Mary Beard, “Cast: between art and science,” in *Les moulages de sculptures antiques et l’histoire de l’archéologie. Actes du colloques international, Paris, 24 octobre 1997*, eds. Henri Lavagne, François Queyrel (Genève: Droz, 2000), 157-166, here 158.

Studying the art of ancient Greece through Roman copies, artists and powerful rulers alike could reimagine both the ideal state of “high” civilization and its developed sense of artistic creativity. Yet in parts of Europe the plasterers’ artistic copying skills as well as their “original” casts received as little official acknowledgment as the originals themselves, which were deserving of individual “copy-rights.” In 1793, the same year that Mengs’ collection was posthumously opened to the public, Parisian plasterers collectively petitioned the National Convention to have their metier incorporated into artistic copyright law. It is interesting to note that they related their profession to sculpture and drew a parallel between their understanding of casting and the typographic work in literary production. Here, at the outset of the age of the “procédés mécaniques à reproduire les empreintes” – and more than a century before Walter Benjamin’s famous essay on art in the age of mechanical reproduction, albeit written in reference to photography and not plaster casts – these copy experts feared a “trafic de piraterie” and “abus” from rivaling “contrefacteurs,” and defended their expertise as an economical but high-quality mass reproduction of art for public instruction.¹³

The idea of large-scale study museums containing plaster casts was born in the academies of fine arts and, in 1834, found its way to Paris with the Musée des études in the École des beaux-arts, where the academic development of architects and artists was combined with stylistic studies using plaster casts from sculptures of classical European antiquity. After the 1840s, when plaster casts gained influence in the natural sciences and for the reproduction of surface-oriented “realism,” their three-dimensional quality challenged the two-dimensional technique of photography. However, from an artistic point of view, the use of plaster casts was accused of faking art and “imprisoning beauty in a straitjacket.”¹⁴ The effects of this “a-chronical and anachronical aspect of plaster casts”¹⁵ were noticeable: first, the age value of an original piece of art was suppressed; second, the casts themselves were not perceived by the spectator as time-specific copies with their own documentary value, but were confused with the original art object(s) that they represented.

13 *Pétition des citoyen-mouleurs tendant à obtenir le bénéfice de la loi du 19 juillet 1793 sur la propriété artistique, an II – Pétition des citoyens mouleurs à la Convention Nationale 1794*, see Rionnet, *L’atelier*, 326-327.

14 Translation by the author, originally: “La beauté emprisonnée comme dans une camisole de force”, see Théophile Gautier in *La Presse* (1847), cited in *À fleur de peau. Le moulage sur nature au XIXe siècle. Paris, Musée d’Orsay, 29 octobre 2001 - 27 janvier 2002*, eds. Marie-Dominique de Teneuille and Quentin Bajac (Paris: Rmn, 2001), 13.

15 Translation by the author, see Dominique de Font-Réaulx, “S’éprendre de passion pour ces charments production naturelles... Les moulages sur nature de végétaux d’Adolphe Victor Geoffroy-Dechaume,” in de Teneuille and Bajac, *À fleur*, 60-71, here 69.

Moulage sur nature became a powerful freezing and fixation tool used to document a natural and even human *hic et nunc* status. In the great nineteenth-century scientific undertaking to compile comprehensive classifications, important collections of plaster casts emerged for use in botanical analysis and clinical realism. This found direct application in the comparative analysis practiced by the French naturalist and zoologist George Cuvier (1769-1832) in the fields of anatomy and paleontology, albeit with a strong focus on the theories about the extinction of species. In this instance, plaster casts touched upon the sciences that bridged the gap between natural and cultural observation: ethnography and anthropology. Plaster casts were used for their supposedly objective accuracy and scientific neutrality to establish comparative repertoires in emerging evolutionary and hereditary theories, and as part of New World exploration and global circumnavigation. They served to document the human skull or a body entire; they helped to develop natural as well as ethnic taxonomies that classified human entities and hierarchies for ethnographic museums, simultaneously emphasizing Eurocentric racial ideologies (Fig. 4, 5).



Fig. 4: A plaster cast of Adolphe Victor Geoffroy-Dechaume (*moulage sur nature*) of parts of an original female body (about 1840-1845), Sources: Photographie du musée de sculpture comparée, Claire Lathuille/CAPa/Fonds Geoffroy-Dechaume, MMF.

Fig. 5: A plaster cast by Alexandre Pierre Marie Dumoutier (*moulage sur nature*) of a head of Matua Tawai, a New Zealander of Ikanamawi (1838), Sources: Musée de l'homme, laboratoire d'anthropologie, Paris

All these historical and methodological positions would gradually be inscribed in a much larger European appropriation of world culture – colonialism –

which provides the broader context for this case study. Apart from the scientific mission to complete museums' existing collections of original artwork with cast pieces, the mass production and nationwide circulation of moulages sur culture facilitated pedagogical instruction and artistic reformation in keeping with the spirit of the newly founded First French Republic (1792). It became necessary to systematically control the quality of casts in order to avoid cheap and supposedly “lying translations”¹⁶ and those made by bad (which meant private) plasterers. Conceived as a commercial monopoly, the *atelier de moulage* was founded in 1794 as a subdivision of the Louvre Museum where originals and moldings were displayed next to each other (Fig. 6). Although this type of hybrid display was gradually abandoned during the second half of the nineteenth century, plaster casts would continue to play an important scientific role in archaeological reconstitutions that simulated the historic environments of newly acquired originals.

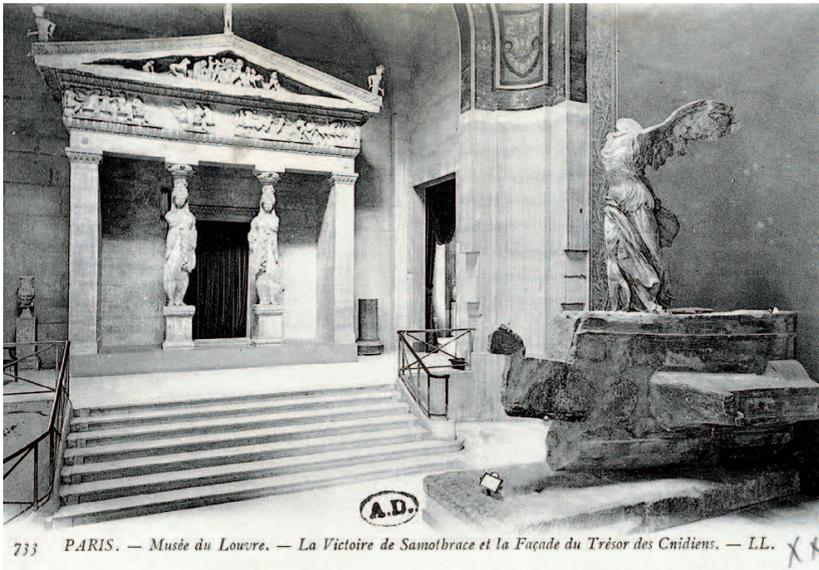


Fig. 6: Musée du Louvre, to the left the plaster cast of the facade of the treasure house of Knidos, to the right the original fragment of the Nike of Samothrake. Source: Paris, Bibliothèque des arts décoratifs, collection Maciet

¹⁶ Translated by the author, originally: “traductions mensongères”, see Rionnet, *L’atelier*, 2.

The Musée de Sculpture Comparée at the Trocadero Palace in Paris

During this nineteenth-century European race to acquire antiquities – either originals from archaeological sites or plaster copies – the Louvre’s atelier de moulage primarily produced casts for the growing market of artists, educational institutions, museums, and industries related to the decorative arts; casts were sold through elaborate catalogues and at shows.¹⁷ The institutional and commercial repertoire of plaster casts gradually expanded from canonical objects of classical antiquity to an encyclopedic pretension that would encompass the French Middle Ages to the Renaissance and incorporate archaeological objects from the Near and Middle East, where colonial France sought to augment its political influence.

In competition with the project for a *Musée des copies*,¹⁸ which would house reproductions of significant works of antique art from across Europe, an 1848 petition sought to establish a *Musée de plâtres* that would contain exclusively national (!) sculptures and have its own *Atelier national de moulage*. Among others, the petition was signed by the historian, architect, and conservator Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879). And in 1866, in volume eight of his *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XIe au XVIe siècle* (chapter on “sculpture”), Viollet-le-Duc formulated his program for the establishment of a *Musée de sculpture comparée*. His anti-academic intent was to confront the established École des beaux-arts canon of Greek statuary with French sculptures in the architectural context of the Middle Ages, thereby drawing formal and technical analogies between the periods. In so doing he put plaster casts at the very center of an ideological debate that existed during the Second Empire: a veritable “querelle des moulage”¹⁹ in which Viollet-le-Duc’s epistemological model showed similarities to Cuvier’s comparative anatomy. But most importantly, his historiographic approach, which compared the classic Greek art of Phidias’ Athens with the medieval cathedrals of Reims and Paris (the latter mainly cast back-ups produced during his architectural restorations throughout France),²⁰

17 More on this topic, see also: Florence Rionnet, „Un instrument de propagande artistique : l’atelier de moulage du Louvre,” *Revue de l’Art*, Année 1994, Volume 104, Numéro 1: 49 – 50.

18 Albert Boime, “Le musée des copies,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, October (1964): 237-247.

19 Willibald Sauerländer, “Gypsa sunt conservanda: l’obsession de la sculpture comparée,” in *Le musée de sculpture comparée. Naissance de l’histoire de l’art moderne*, ed. Barry Bergdoll (Paris: Éditions du patrimoine, 2001), 72-79, here 75.

20 For a larger discussion of the role of plaster casts in nineteenth-century restoration work, especially

was a francocentric interpretation of Winckelmann's evolutionary and cyclic concept of archaism, maturity, and decline. Just months before his death, Viollet-le-Duc reiterated his comparative vision for a *musée de moulage* to the minister of public instruction, Jules Ferry, and the director of fine arts, Antonin Proust, who agreed to incorporate Viollet-le-Duc's collection into the Palais du Trocadéro at the Exposition universelle (Universal Exhibition) of 1878.

Yet not until 1882 was the Musée de sculpture comparée officially inaugurated, with the famous artistic plasterer Adolphe Victor Geoffroy-Dechaume as its first director. The collection was displayed in four halls: The first, archaic-period hall contained Assyrian and Egyptian art with ancient Greek objects placed next to French statuary of the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Figs. 7, 8). The second, period-of-maturity hall positioned hieratic Greek art next to thirteenth-century French pieces from the Reims, Paris, and Amiens cathedrals (in keeping with Viollet-le-Duc's vision of the Île-de-France as a medieval Attica). The third hall identified a period of decadence juxtaposing Greco-Roman art with French objects from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; the fourth contained objects from the Italian and French Renaissance and French regional schools. Contemporary photography provided a decisive aesthetic impulse for Viollet-le-Duc's intended metonymic display of de-contextualized (fragmented) and de-historicized (patina-free) architectural objects, using plaster casts within a neutral black background, but leaving the edges between the casts to indicate the technical character of the copy. This type of display allowed him to present only selected elements of larger architectural ensembles as long as the singular elements (e.g., columns, pilasters, lintels, pediments, portal figures, etc.) could be overlapped aesthetically or connected in an arrangement that would represent the structural whole from which they came. Critical voices called Viollet-le-Duc's comparative, quite "trans-cultural" settings, which included the placement of an Assyrian bas-relief next to a portal figure from the Abbaye de Saint-Pierre de Moissac, "purely accidental" and architectural displays such as the main portal of the Basilique de Vézelay not comparative, but "deformative".²¹

in the oeuvre of Viollet-le-Duc, see Groupe de Recherche sur le Plâtre dans l'Art (GRPA) sous la direction de Georges Barthe, ed., *Le plâtre: l'art et la matière* (Paris: éditions Créaphis, 2001).

21 Originally "comparison" and "écrasement", in Louis Gonse, "Le musée des moulages au Trocadéro," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (1882): 60-72, here 66, 68.



Fig. 7: The plaster cast of the portal of the the 12th-century Madeleine church in Vézelay (in the background) in the Musée de sculpture comparée; to the lower left are pedestals of Egyptian sculptures
 Source: Photographie du musée de sculpture comparée, Paul Robert/CAPa/archives MMF



Fig. 8: Page of the exhibition catalogue of the Musée de sculpture comparée (1894) with plaster casts of Souillac church on the left and a cast statue of Chephren on the right (which is shown at the very left edge in the fig. 7). Sources: Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le Musée de sculpture comparée du Palais du Trocadéro*. Paris 1894, Plate 145.

In 1900, a catalogue of the museum's plaster casts contained 1,300 items (99% were of French medieval art), plus an additional 1,300 plaster casts that were for sale from the museum's atelier du moulage.²² The atelier was organized under the direction of the *mouleur en chef*, Jean Pouzadoux, and coexisted with the Louvre's atelier de moulage and its moldings of classical antiquities (some decades later they merged). But Viollet-le-Duc's vision did not last long: Minister Ferry voted for a more nationalistic and republican orientation and foreign objects that had originally been used for direct comparison were eliminated in favor of a purely encyclopedic, heavily enlarged, and French-nationalistic presentation under the directorship of the archaeologist, historian, collector, and pedagogue Camille Enlart (1904-27).²³ "The metonymic logic of Viollet-le-Duc was abandoned: the fragment did not represent an entity [any more] but merely illustrated it. The precise grammar that had structured the initial collection was slowly replaced by a vast encyclopedia whose reading order remained obscure."²⁴ Thus, the entire concept of cultural translation and specifically that which occurred through the medium of plaster casts was completely reconceptualized. Then, in 1937, the year Paris hosted its last large international exhibition, the side wings of the Trocadéro were incorporated into the Palais de Chaillot, and the Musée de sculpture comparée was renamed the Musée des monuments français. Under its new director, Paul Deschamps, the museum contained French art with copies of sculptures, wall paintings, architecture, and decorative arts. The new name itself was illustrative of the programmatic revision, harkening back to Alexandre Lenoir's museum by the same name, which had opened in 1791 to protect original French art from vandalism and chronologically portray a glorious French history. Viollet-le-Duc's transcultural concept, along with plaster casts of foreign art, had disappeared.

The Musée Indochinois at the Trocadéro Palace in Paris

The representation of colonized culture was one of the central tasks of all universal exhibitions, from London in 1851 to Paris in 1937 until the

22 Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, Direction des Beaux-Arts et Monument Historiques, ed., *Musée de sculpture comparée. Catalogue des moulage de sculptures appartenant aux divers centres et aux diverses époques d'art, exposés dans le galleries du Trocadéro*, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900).

23 For general information on the museum and its plaster cast collection, see Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine (Paris) and Léon Pressouyre, eds., *Le musée des monuments français*, (Paris: Nicolas Chaudin, 2007).

24 Translation by the author, see Dominique de Font-Réaulx, "La découverte des collections de moulages," in Bergdoll, *Le musée*, 26-33, here 28.

official project of colonialism came to an end in the 1950/60s. The Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878 was an early milestone in that history. In 1874, the Commission des voyages et missions scientifiques et littéraires was founded to organize and promote the political importance of the French colonial *mission civilisatrice*. Within this framework—and for a pre-Exhibition trial period – the Palais de l’Industrie, located on the Champs-Élysées, was to temporarily house the Musée ethnographique des missions scientifiques with its ethnographic collections from Latin America, Russia, Central Asia, and last but not least Cambodia, which was represented by a small collection of maps, photographs, original sculptures, and plaster casts.²⁵ For the exhibition itself, the whole collection was moved to the west wing (aile Passy) of the newly erected, hilltop Trocadéro, located above the Champs de Mars, and opened under the temporary name Exposition historique et ethnographique. It was divided into two sections: the Exposition historique de l’art ancien and the Ethnographie des peuples étrangers; in the latter, Cambodia was again featured next to Egypt, India, China, and Japan. According to the *Livret-guide du visiteur*, it was here where “the first samples of the gigantic [...] ruins of the Khmer civilisation”²⁶ were brought to Europe. The visitors of the exhibition could see an original part of the large, snake-headed balustrade from the Preah Khan Temple’s *chaussée des géants*, into which a missing lower part had already been integrated with a plaster cast implant (Figs. 9, 10).²⁷

25 Nelia Dias, *Le musée d’ethnologie du Trocadéro (1878-1908). Anthropologie et muséologie en France* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1991), 163-174.

26 Translation by the author, see Philbert Breban, *Livret-guide du visiteur à l’exposition historique du Trocadéro* (Paris: Dentu, 1878), 109-110.

27 Pierre Baptiste, “La collection de moulage du musée national des Arts asiatiques – Guimet,” in *Du moulage au fac-similé, diffusion du patrimoine et conservation préventive*, ed. Denis Guillemard, Conservation-restauration des biens culturels. Cahier technique no.8, avril 2002: 61-64, here 62. For a general introduction to the Khmer plaster casts in French collections, see Pierre Baptiste and Thierry Zéphir, “L’art khmer dans les collections nationales françaises,” in *L’art khmer dans les collections du musée Guimet*, eds. Pierre Baptiste and Thierry Zéphir (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2008), 11-18. For a further explanation of the plaster cast implant during the exhibition see Pierre Baptiste, “Virtual Visions of Angkor: Plaster Casts and Drawings in the Indochinese Museum of the Trocadero,” in *“Archaeologizing” heritage? Transcultural Entanglements between Local Social Practices and Global Virtual Realities (Proceedings of the 1st International Workshop on Cultural Heritage and the Temples of Angkor, 2-4 May 2010, Heidelberg University)*, eds. Michael S. Falser and Monica Juneja (Heidelberg: Springer, forthcoming 2012).

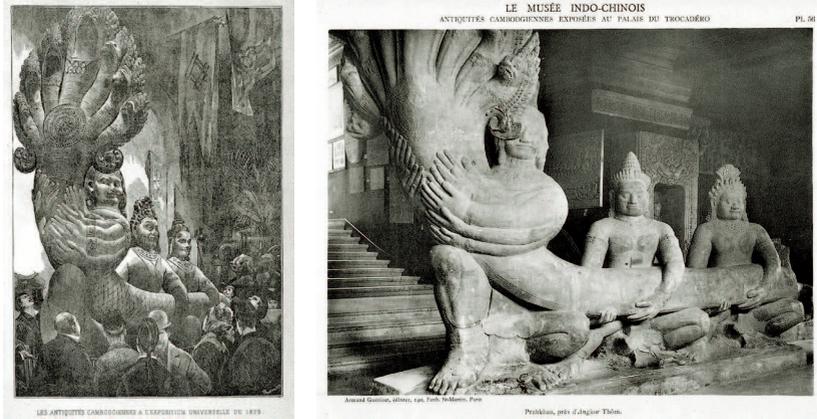


Fig. 9: The railing of the Preah Khan temple during the 1878 Universal Exhibition in Paris. Source: Louis Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge. L'architecture Khmer* (Paris: Delagrave, 1880; reprint Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1999): 245

Fig. 10: The railing of the Preah Khan temple, photographed for the catalogue of the Musée indochinois. Source: Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le Musée Indo-chinois. Antiquités Cambodgiennes exposée au Palais du Trocadéro* (Paris: Éditions Guérinet, no date), plate 56.

In fact, this embellished sculptural ensemble came from the Musée khmer, located northeast of Paris in Compiègne, which had been inaugurated in 1874 under the direction of the naval captain, explorer, and Khmer art amateur Louis Delaporte (1842-1925). However, the first large display of a complete Khmer temple architecture on the European continent was introduced with a 1:10-scale plaster cast model which was based on Delaporte's earliest sketches of one of the five giant entry gates to the Angkorian city of Angkor Thom and executed by the gifted Italian plasterer Ghilardi who also participated in Delaporte's later missions for plaster casts of the Angkorian temples (Fig. 11). The overall coordination of this undertaking had been coordinated by the art connoisseur Emile Soldi, who helped to popularize Khmer art in his 1881-publication *Les arts méconnus – les nouveaux musées du Trocadéro*.²⁸ With an impressive engraving for this book, he re-translated the Parisian plaster cast model of the Angkor Thom gate back to the re-invented original site which he had never visited himself (Fig. 12).

²⁸ Émile Soldi, *Les arts méconnus – les nouveaux musées du Trocadéro* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1881).

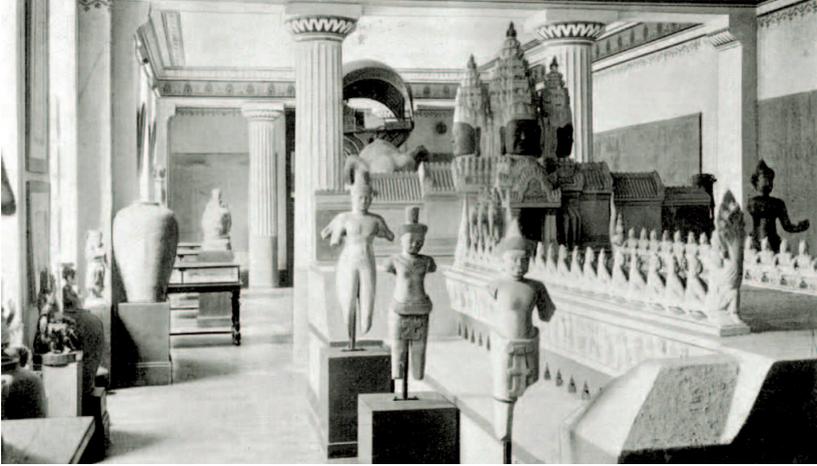
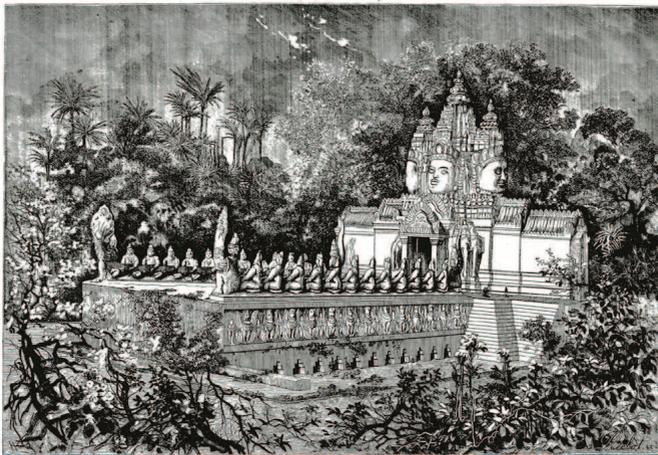


Fig. 11: The gate to Angkor Thom in a 1:10 scale plaster cast model as the first architectural representation of the Angkorian architecture on European soil during the Universal Exhibition in Paris 1878 (here depicted during an exhibition in the Musée Guimet in 1908). Source: *Annales du Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque de vulgarisation: Exposition temporaire au Musée Guimet. Catalogue* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1908), pl. 1.



LA PORTE D'ANGKOR
Modèle en plâtre. Reconstitué par M. Bédarride d'après les croquis des notes prises sur place
(Dessiné par M. Bédarride, gravé par Goussier del.) — Musée ethnographique de Trocadéro.

Fig. 12: An engraving of the 1:10 scale model for the 1878 Paris exhibition, re-translated as model (!) to the imagined original Cambodian site, as depicted in the publication *Les arts méconnus – les nouveaux musées du Trocadéro* by Émile Soldi. Source: Émile Soldi, *Les arts méconnus – les nouveaux musées du Trocadéro* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1881), between pp. 288-89.

An excellent draftsman, Delaporte participated in the *voyage d'exploration* of Doudart de Lagrée and Francis Garnier (1866-1868), which explored the Mekong River as a potentially navigable trade route into southwest China. Since 1863, lower parts of Cambodia had been part of the French protectorate with the result that the Ministère de la marine, for clearly expansionist reasons, financed this geographical mission. During the voyage, the explorers visited – as a mere side effect of colonial curiosity – the ninth- to thirteenth-century temples of Angkor located in northern Cambodia, which at that time belonged to the territory of Siam. After the first French report on Angkor by the missionary Charles-Emile Bouvillevaux and only five years after the French naturalist Henri Mouhot published his influential *Voyages dans les royaumes de Siam, de Cambodge, de Laos et autres parties de l'Indochine* (1868), which had been funded by the British colonial administration because of its interest in Siam, Delaporte's drawings of the Ankor temples appeared in the 4-volume de Lagrée/Garnier mission publication. These drawings were the impetus for four subsequent explorative, chiefly archaeological and reconnaissance missions to Angkor led by Delaporte. As they relate to the overall approach of this paper, these missions can be conceptualized as massive, appropriative colonial acts of material translation from Angkor to France, undertaken in the form of a theft of original, small, transportable objects and the molding of larger, non-transportable sculptures and architectural fragments.

The first of Delaporte's expeditions (1873) had a dual purpose: (a) to identify and select Angkorian sculptural and architectural pieces of interest for French museums under the patronage of *contre-amiral* Dupré and the Direction des beaux-arts du Ministère de l'instruction publique; and (b) to explore the Tonkin province with the support of Minister Ferry and commissioned by the Société de géographie. Along with other personnel, including a hydrographic engineer, a geologist, doctors, soldiers, and working staff, Delaporte took along the bridge and road builder from Saigon, Faraut, the draftsman Laederich, the French captain and *spécialiste des moulage* Filoz, and, as already mentioned above, the Italian plasterer Ghilardi. In his lengthy 1874 mission report, published in the *Journal officiel de la République Française*, Delaporte gives a detailed account of the on-site production of sixty-six highly fragile moldings and plaster casts and their transportation to France.²⁹ He describes how the team collected (sometimes

29 Louis Delaporte, "Rapport fait au ministère de la marine et des colonies et au ministère de l'instruction publique, des cultes et des beaux-arts, sur la mission scientifique aux ruines des monuments khmers de l'ancien Cambodge," *Journal officiel de la République Française*, (1.4.1874): 2515-2518; (2.4.1874): 2546-2548. See also: Louis Delaporte, "Une mission archéologique aux ruines khmers," *Revue des deux mondes*, XLVIIe année, troisième période, tome 23 (15.9.1877): 421-455, here especially 454, 455. On Delaporte and his missions, see Thierry Zéphir, "Louis Delaporte au coeur de la forêt sacrée," in *Âges et visages de l'Asie. Un siècle d'exploration à travers les collections du musée Guimet*. Catalogue d'exposition, Dijon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, 2 juillet-28 octobre

even using a stone saw) a representative selection of original architecture and molded pieces. And in his book *Voyage au Cambodge: L'architecture khmer* (1880) Delaporte writes about the 1873 mission, its process of trial and error, and the physically exhausting nature of producing moldings and casts in the tropical humidity of Angkor, proudly mentioning the 32-meter long *carton pâte* molds executed by his colleague Filoz in fifty-four separate panels, depicting the bas-reliefs of the *galérie des combats* in the temple of Angkor Wat. The mission was, without a doubt, a colonial example of illicit traffic. Delaporte himself reports that the “local Siamese governor forbade the withdrawal of statues or sculptures from the Angkor monuments,” but was assured that the French “just desired to visit and study the ruins, to collect inscriptions and take moldings of sculptures and bas-reliefs.”³⁰ This was only partly true insofar as the molding procedure (an early technique of material appropriation) could be used to circumscribe original property rights. In fact, the mission had worked together with the inspector, surveyor, and French resident at Phnom Penh, Etienne Aymonier, to develop exact drawings and photographs of the Bayon Temple, which might later facilitate a complete reconstitution. Shortly after gaining admittance to the twelfth-century sanctuary of Angkor Wat, the team had had to return to Saigon due to bad weather and deteriorating health conditions, yet Filoz continued to make on-site moldings and Lieutenant Jean Moura was charged with transporting the original (!) and copied sculptures out of Angkor; in Phnom Penh they were carefully wrapped for shipping to France. Delaporte’s report of 1874 summed up the mission’s achievements as follows: the “acquisition”³¹ of seventy original sculptures and architectural fragments (pilasters, figural pieces of a balustrade, cornices, columns, capitals, sculptured bases, window frames, boundary stones of pagodas, bas-reliefs, a large collection of moldings (e.g., the famous Leper King statue), thirty-four molded panels of bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat, and about fifty

1996, ed. Jean-Paul Desroches (Dijon: Société française de promotion artistique, 1996): 61-68, here 68, note 18.

30 Translation by the author. Because this passage is a crucial statement by Delaporte on the question about the appropriation of originals and plaster cast copies, we cite the entire passage in its original version: “La province d’Angkor fait partie du royaume de Siam; nos rapports avec les mandarins de cette nouvelle contrée devaient être différents de ceux que nous avions entretenus avec les mandarins du Cambodge. Déjà, lors de son passage à Siem Reap, chef-lieu de la province, M. Bouillet avait eu une entrevue avec le gouverneur. Ce mandarin s’était montré très effrayé de notre arrivée et avait déclaré que des ordres permanents du roi de Siam s’opposaient à l’enlèvement de statues ou sculptures des monuments d’Angkor. Ces ordres nous étaient connus d’avance. M. Bouillet avait donc rassuré le mandarin en lui disant que nous désirions *seulement* [accentuation M.F.] visiter et étudier les ruines, recueillir des inscriptions et *prendre des moulages* [accentuation M.F.] de sculptures et de bas-reliefs. Pour applanir les difficultés de ce côté, j’envoyai prendre à bord de la canonnière mouillée à l’embouchure de la rivière des cadeaux que j’offris au gouverneur, et il consentit, en échange, à nous fournir les guides et les hommes dont nous avons besoin.” See Delaporte, *Rapport*, 2546-2547.

31 Delaporte, *Rapport*, 2548.

moldings from other temple structures); the discovery of ten new ruins; plans, drawings, and photographs of twenty remarkable monuments; and a collection of recorded inscriptions.

In comparison to a linguistic translation process that disassembles the syntax of a text in one language in order to recompose its elements in another, Delaporte's plaster cast collection was a systematic appropriation of the generic code of the Khmer temple structures to be transported into a new cultural context and restaged in France as hybrid representations of the original buildings. Called back to France due to ill health, Delaporte sent 120 cases of moldings to the Louvre seeking suitable exhibition space. His offer was rejected (probably due to the fact that the Louvre was gradually removing plaster casts in favor of originals), so Delaporte transferred his collection to the newly established Musée oriental de Compiègne that, renamed Musée khmer, could display its masterpieces regardless of whether they were cast copies or original objects. After their successful but temporary presentation at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878 (located next to Egyptian, Chinese, and Japanese art), Delaporte writes in his *Voyage au Cambodge: L'architecture khmer* about his plan to ultimately make the collection "accessible au public!"³² in Paris (see Fig. 9).

Delaporte was discontent not only with the peripheral location of his museum in Compiègne but also with its incomplete status, and convinced Minister Ferry to finance the second Angkor mission in 1881/82. Under the aegis of the Société académique indochinoise, and with far less financial support than in 1873, he embarked once again with Faraut, Ghilardi, and Laederich on a four-month journey that, for serious health reasons, would be his last. In his 1881 letter from Angkor to Louis de Ronchaud, secretary general of the École des beaux-arts, Delaporte reports on his meticulous studies of Angkor Wat, which included draft plans, photographs, moldings of the masterpieces, and the "acquisition" of original sculptures some of which had already been sent to Saigon.³³ The third mission to Angkor (1886/87) was carried out under Delaporte's proxy supervision by Lucien Fournereau, *inspecteur des bâtiments civils au service des travaux publics* in Cochinchina, Sylvain Raffegaud, *sculpteur attaché aux travaux publiques*, and *inspecteur* Kerautret, along with draftsmen, plasterers, and workers for the on-site wooden scaffoldings. These two missions of 1881/82 and 1886/87 focused on the collection of plaster casts for large architectural temple reconstitutions. In 1888, Fournereau's mission report to the minister

32 Louis Delaporte, *Voyage au Cambodge. L'architecture khmer* (Paris: Delagrave, 1880; reprint Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1999): 247.

33 Cited in Agnes Combe, "Le rôle des collaborateurs de Louis Delaporte au Musée Indochinois du Trocadéro" (unpublished monograph, Paris: Mémoire École du Louvre, 1999/2000), annexe.

of public instruction and fine arts gave a full list of accomplishments: in total they had taken 520 plaster casts (241 alone from Angkor Wat); thirteen original objects, including a wooden ceiling panel from the surrounding galleries and a sleeping Buddha figure from the central cruciform gallery of Angkor Wat; 400 photographs; and finally, a series of floor plans, sections, elevations, and detailed drawings of decorative elements from Angkor Wat, the Baphuon, and several other temples. The last mission conceived by Delaporte was led by the Saigon-based artist and plasterer Urban Basset in 1896/97 with the goal to finally complete the reconstitutions of Angkor Wat's central tower and "tourette de Baion."³⁴

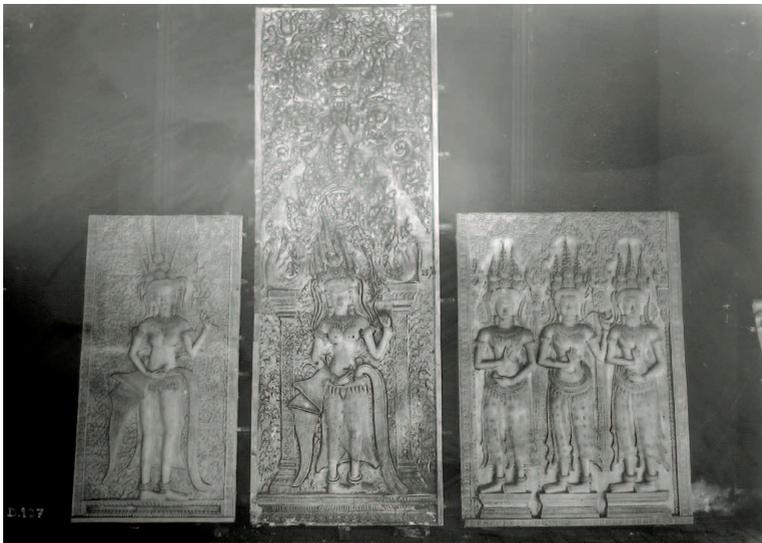
Regarding the circulation and diffusion of these physical products of Khmer temple translations, Fournereau's report mentions the curious fact that although the plaster casts had been conceived as instructional tools for museums and art schools, both in the colonies and the motherland, as a result of diplomatic donations made to supportive local colonial authorities, some ended up "in the verandahs and offices"³⁵ of colonial civil servants and their friends. And when Angkor became part of the French protectorate in 1907, its decorative elements appeared on official French colonial architecture throughout Indochina. Additionally, it is important to mention that Angkorian moldings and plaster casts from these scientific missions (as well as local reproductions) may have made their way to the Musée Sarraut in Phnom Penh, inaugurated in 1920 for the permanent colonial collection of Khmer antiquities. This museum had, as part of an art school led by Georges Groslier, its own *atelier de moulage* (Figs. 13, 14) and *salle de vente*, which supplied both the local as well as the rising international tourist trade with Angkorian plaster casts and the occasional original sculptures, which for this commercial purpose were de-listed by the *Commission de déclassement* and removed from the protected heritage zone of Angkor.³⁶ Lastly, during the

34 Cited in Combe, *Le rôle*, annexe 6.

35 Translation by the author, see Lucien Fournereau, "Rapport d'ensemble sur la mission archéologique accomplie dans le Siam et au Cambodge, adressé au ministre de l'instruction publique et des beaux-arts," *Journal officiel de la République Française* (11.8.1888), cited in Combe, *Le rôle*, annexe 5.

36 The monthly reports of the Angkor conservators at the EFEO archive in Paris mention the Commission de déclassement's clearance of original Angkorian sculptures for sale to tourists ("to prevent the originals being stolen without control" as it was argued). There are also documents that prove the worldwide distribution of plaster casts from Angkor mostly to educational institutions, such as the Cité Universitaire in Paris in 1934, and politically important people in French Indochina and France, e.g. the director of political affairs in Hanoi in 1942, the chef of a battalion in Hanoi in 1942, a commander of the Indochinese airforce in 1931, the director of public instruction in Hanoi 1941, the French consulate in Singapore in 1937, representatives of Air France or the Messageries maritimes in Sydney. For the Maison du Cambodge, built in 1954 at the Cité Universitaire, this tradition continued when cast bas-reliefs from Angkor Wat and whole lion statues from Bantay Srei were used at the central entrance.

early twentieth century, plaster cast series and Angkorian originals alike were sold out of Paris to locations across Europe.



Figs. 13, 14: The atelier de moulage in the Musée Sarraut (today National Museum) in Phnom Penh/Cambodia in the 1920s with a large panel from the galleries of Angkor Wat (left) and plaster casts of apsara reliefs of Angkor Wat. Source: National Museum of Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Four years after its temporary display at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878, the Musée khmer permanently moved from Compiègne to the Trocadéro in Paris, and opened under the new name Musée indo-chinois des antiquités cambodgiennes (Fig. 15); some years later its collection was photographed for a superb publication by Armand Guérinet (Figs. 16, 17).³⁷ With Viollet-le-Duc as a member of the committee, the post-Exhibition at the Trocadéro was divided into space for three permanent museums: the Musée d'ethnographie, the Musée de sculpture comparée, and Delaporte's collection. All three museums functioned within the time-tested system of methodological classification of objects, and their comparative and intrinsic display followed an evolutionary approach. With the Angkorian plaster casts produced during four missions spanning the years 1873-1897,³⁸ Delaporte could finally stage his cast collages as masterpieces in their own right.³⁹



Fig. 15: The Angkorian heritage in the Musée Indo-chinois at the Palais Trocadéro in Paris, in front the naga (snake-headed) balustrade from Angkor Wat, above the whole display one can see the iron roof structure of the Trocadéro palace. Source: École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, ENSBA Paris.

37 Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le Musée Indo-chinois. Antiquités Cambodgiennes exposée au Palais du Trocadéro*, (Paris: Éditions Guérinet, n.d.).

38 The missions of Delaporte, Faraut, Fournereau, Raffegaud, and Basset are also documented in the Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence, southern France. These details will be published in the author's forthcoming publication on the transcultural history of Angkor Wat.

39 For the larger context see the excellent work by Agnès Legueul, *Les moulages de Musée Indo-chinois du Trocadéro: histoire et devenir* (unpublished monograph, Paris: Mémoire École du Louvre, 2004-2005).



*Figs. 16, 17: Angkor in the Musée Indo-chinois at the Palais Trocadéro in Paris: the Bayon-like interpretation (left) and a 'section' of Angkor Wats' central tower of the lower east side (right). Source: Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le Musée Indo-chinois. Antiquités Cambodgiennes exposées au Palais du Trocadéro* (Paris: Éditions Guérinet, no date), plates 36, 2.*

Ascertaining the exact positioning of Delaporte's museum was difficult until today. On a general plan of the Trocadéro palace of around 1903, the director of the Musée de sculpture comparée, Camille Enlart (1903-1927), included a self-made legend that placed the Indochinese museum at the south-western edge of the building (Fig. 18). Delaporte himself sketched two different versions of his museum's floor-plan in a 1886-letter to the Director of Fine Arts, Kaempfer.⁴⁰ One free-standing reconstitution was moved because another one was completed with new plaster casts from a later mission to Angkor (Figs. 19a, b). On a more detailed level, only a sketch of the floor on the museum's first level was available for our research (Fig. 20). It was prepared for an inventory by the art historian and curator of the Musée Guimet, Philippe Stern,⁴¹ who acted

40 'Musée Khmer au Palais du Trocadéro – Rapport à M. le Directeur des Beaux Arts par M. L. Delaporte, 26. Juillet 1886' (Archive des musées nationaux, cote 5HH1). This letter mentions a long list of new objects for Delaporte's collection. I would like to thank Mrs. Polack at the Musée des monuments français, Paris, for this information. An entire correspondence on this issue is preserved in the Archives Nationales in Paris.

41 Philippe Stern, *Inventaire des moulage du Musée Indochinois* (untitled, undated manuscript, ca. 1925, Archive Musée Guimet, Paris).

as temporary director of the Musée indochinois for a short time after Delaporte had died.

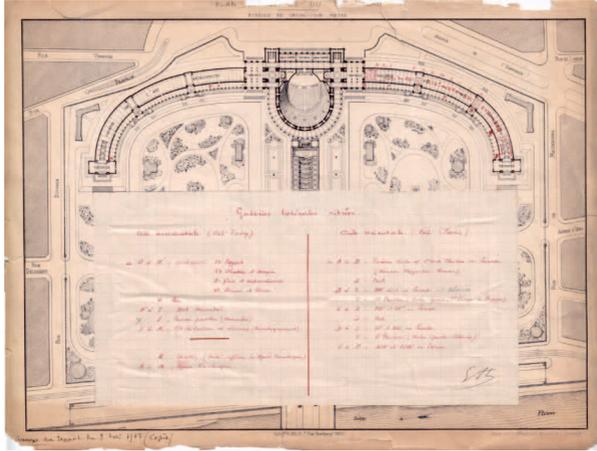
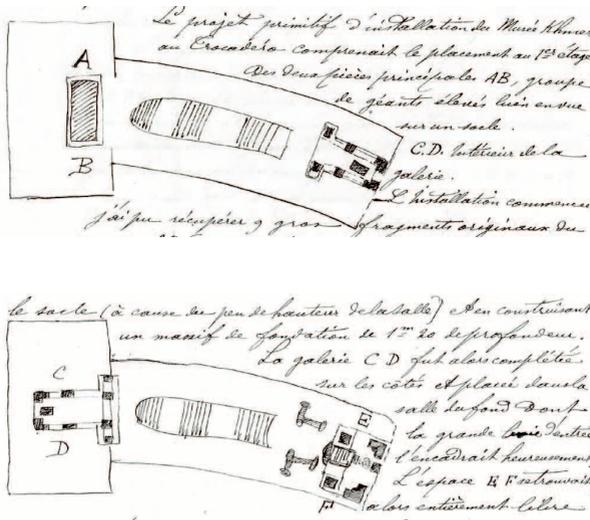


Fig. 18: Floor plan of the Trocadéro Palace with a legend by the director Camille Enlart (after 1903). Source: CAPA/archives MMF



Figs. 19a, b: Two sketchy floor plan variations for the Indochinese Museum, by Louis Delaporte in a letter of 1886. Source: Archive des musées nationaux, Paris.

With the help of *mouleur en chef* Pouzadoux, Delaporte followed the display mode of his neighbor, the Musée des sculpture comparée: a wide range of decorative panels and sculptures were positioned in the fragmentary aesthetics of *pas-partout* photographs to create stylistically comparative groups hung on the walls; the walls, as well as large parts of the open iron-and-glass roof, were covered with black velum. In this sober and mystic atmosphere with its spotlight staging, the freestanding architectural reconstitutions from Vietnam (Cham), Burma, and especially Angkor were without a doubt the most spectacular features. They can be characterized either as (a) surface-oriented 1:1 scale façade or building sections with a high degree of accuracy in relation to the original composition (e.g., Angkor Wat); or (b) hybrid, scale-reduced collages of individual 1:1 scale panels that reacted to the spatial limitations of the museum (e.g., the Bayon Temple interpretative model). Concerning the plaster cast reconstitutions of Angkor Wat, Delaporte focused on two specific locations: the west entry gate of the outer enclosure and the east section of the main central tower massive. Compared with the west entry gate as it stands today, Delaporte's reconstituted Parisian interpretation was quite accurate and only altered small details, such as gestures of lateral figures; the actual lintel is broken today and the lateral columns are missing (Figs. 21 a-d).

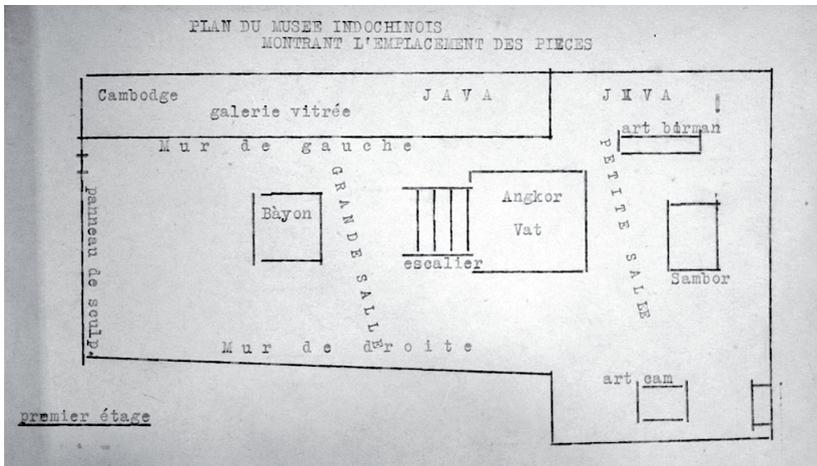
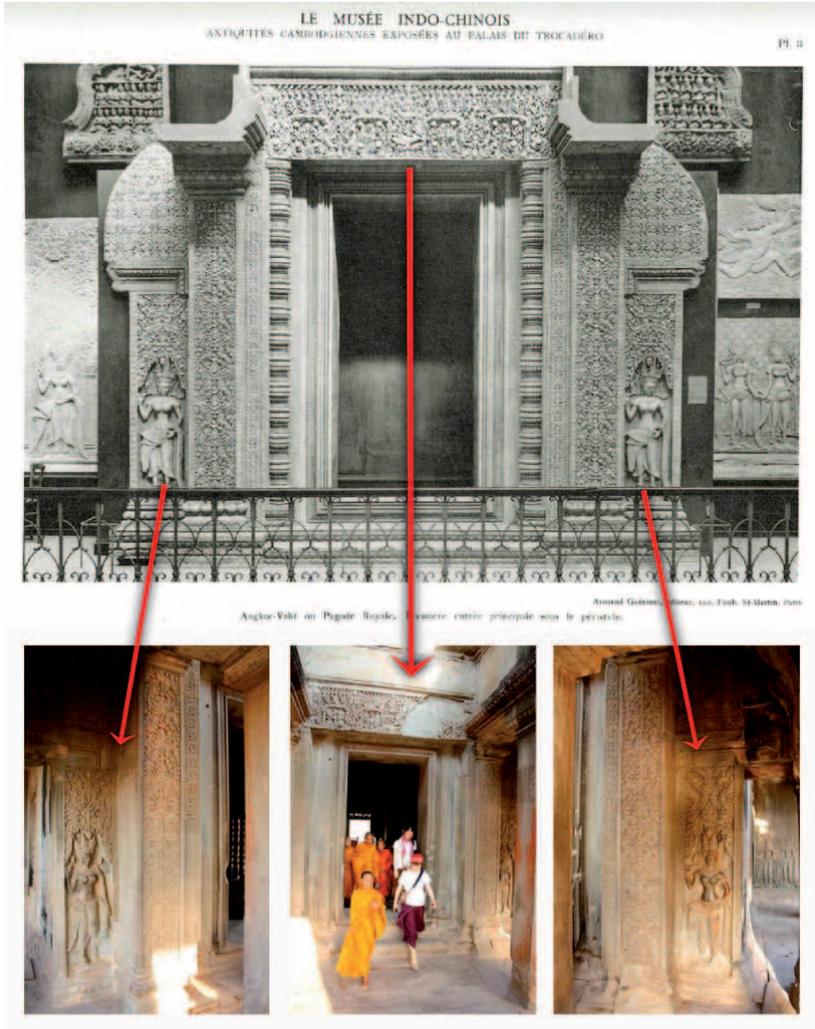


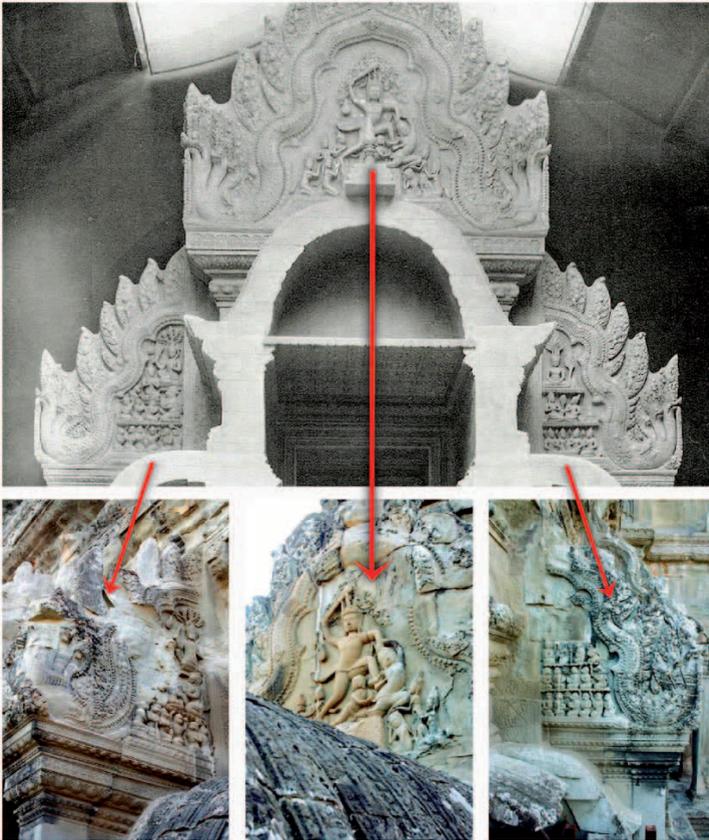
Fig. 20: A sketchy floor plan of the Musée Indo-chinois by the curator of the nearby Musée Guimet, Philippe Stern in ca. 1925 with the indication of the staging of the free-standing temple reconstitutions of Bayon and Angkor Wat. Source: Philippe Stern, *Inventaire des moulage du Musée Indochinois* (untitled, undated manuscript, c. 1925, Archive du musée Guimet Paris).



Figs. 21 a-d: Angkor in the Musée Indo-chinois: Angkor Wat's western inner facade of the western entry gate (above) and in comparison with the original site today (below). Source: Armand Guérinet, ed., *Le Musée Indo-chinois. Antiquités Cambodgiennes exposée au Palais du Trocadéro* (Paris: Éditions Guérinet, no date), plate 3 (above), Falser 2010 (below).

The same is true for the architectural ensemble of the lower east side of the main central tower (compare Fig. 17) (Figs. 22 a-d). The central image depicted on the

pediment is Krishna killing Kamsa with his sword. In its original location at Angkor Wat, *both* lower half-pediments depict scenes from the Ramayana epos. Interestingly, Delaporte copied only the lower left half-pediment for his reconstitution, which depicted the alliance of Rama and Lakshmana in the presence of the monkey-king Sugriva. The original lower right half-pediment was replaced with a scene from another half-pediment located on the northern part of the central tower, probably due to the already decayed state of the original or the aesthetic desire to create a supposedly more balanced composition for the Parisian museum.



Figs. 22 a-d: Angkor in the Musée Indo-chinois: the 'section' of Angkor Wats' central tower of the lower east side (above) and in comparison with the original site today (below). Source: Armand Guérinet, ed., Le Musée Indo-chinois. Antiquités Cambodgiennes exposée au Palais du Trocadéro (Paris: Éditions Guérinet, no date), plate 2 (above), Falser 2010 (below).

It is interesting to note that in *Voyage au Cambodge: L'architecture khmer* Delaporte cites London's South Kensington Museum with its two (Oriental and European) Architectural or Cast Courts – the Courts were opened in 1873⁴² and the museum was later named the Victoria & Albert Museum. It is quite clear that this museum's more encyclopedic display of entire architectural reconstitutions was a major source of inspiration for the physical presentation of his own Khmer casts (Fig. 23).

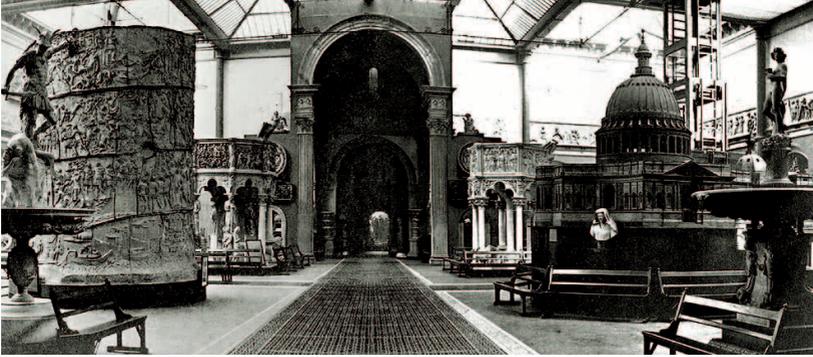


Fig. 23: The 'Cast Courts' in the South Kensington Museum (now Victoria & Albert Museum) as an international reference for Delaporte's museum in Paris. Source: Copyright Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Nonetheless, Delaporte's concept of a museum that classifies objects and depicts the evolution of style was more likely a reflection of Viollet-le-Duc's original metonymic and comparative idea for the *Musée de sculpture comparée*: Delaporte's attaché, Henri la Nave, even defined the *Musée indochinois* as its logical extension when he referred to the Assyrian, Egyptian, and Greek exhibits as being surpassed by the quality of its Khmer bas-reliefs.⁴³ The rather curious illustration below (Fig. 24) shows how complicated the exhibition spaces for French national and colonial heritage were in regard to the visitor's course and his visual perspectives inside the museum: standing in the show room with the impressive head of the very French sculpture of the *Marseillaise* (a sculpture by François Rude of

42 See Baker, *History of the Cast Courts*; and Tanya Harrod, "The cast courts at the V&A, London," *The Burlington Magazine*, 127, no. 983 (Feb.1985): 110-111.

43 Henri la Nave, "Monuments khmers au Trocadéro (Restitutions)," *Revue universelle*, 1.4.1903/ no.83 (1903): 161-164.

1792 used for the Arc de Triomphe) he could already see, through an open door, Angkorian-style columns in the next room, which also housed another giant head – this time in the Angkorian style (Fig. 25). With its tour leading from European to Asian plaster casts, the Trocadero exhibition scenario turned into a veritable transcultural *parcours*.



Fig. 24: The head of the Marseillaise for the Arc de Triomphe (with a young visitor's hand in its mouth) at the Trocadero palace and Musée indo-chinois in the next room. Source: Fonds Henri Olivier, Médiathèque du Patrimoine, French Ministry of Culture

Fig. 25: The giant plaster cast of a crowning head in the Bayon-style. Source: Fonds Durand, Médiathèque du Patrimoine, French Ministry of Culture

During its forty-seven years of existence (1878-1925), Delaporte's museum did not, generally speaking, achieve its intended goal: the pedagogical proliferation of Khmer art into the French artistic scene. Despite the fact that in 1899 Delaporte was himself honored with the title *conservateur des collections khmères*, the museum lacked serious institutional recognition. It also lacked the consistent financial support usually afforded a permanent collection. And yet it had been integrated into the *parcours* for visitors of the Paris Universal Exhibitions of 1878, 1889, and 1900, and this despite the fact that it lacked professional management and played no important role in the systematic scientific research of Asian art. However, for the history of the various reconstitutions of Khmer temple architectures in French exhibitions Delaporte's plaster cast museum played a crucial role. As a *musée imaginaire* (a dictum of André Malraux) of the nineteenth-

century French colonial world, its plaster casts⁴⁴ stood in competition with the Musée Guimet: founded in Lyon (1879) and transferred to Paris in 1882, its collection of original Asian (also Cambodian) art was located just a few hundred meters away. The Musée indochinois closed in 1927, just two years after the death of its passionate *spiritus rector*. The original artwork went to the Musée Guimet and in 1937 (when the Trocadéro was demolished to make room for the new Palais de Chaillot for the 1937 International Exhibition) Delaporte's plaster casts disappeared from public view. At this time, the French colonial project as a whole had lost much of its popularity and political attraction. As a consequence, the scheduled display of the Indochinese collection at the new Palais Chaillot was eliminated from the floor plans.⁴⁵ The same was true for the pavillion-like reconstitutions of colonial heritage: they were limited and minimized as much as possible, as we shall see late in this paper. A small collection of plaster casts from 'Far-East'-Angkor were, along with a longer list of 'antiquités orientales', still available in the 'provisional catalogue' of the plaster cast ateliers of the French national museums in 1928.⁴⁶

Krishna on the Move: Plaster Casts from Angkor in Universal and Colonial Exhibitions in France

It is beyond the scope of this article to reconstruct the detailed use of plaster casts for Angkorian reconstitutions at all universal and colonial exhibitions. As a consequence, I have decided to focus on the previously mentioned Krishna pediment from Angkor Wat as it migrated from its original Cambodian setting to the Paris Universal Exhibitions (1878, 1889), the National Colonial Exhibitions in Marseille (1906, 1922), and finally the great International Colonial Exhibition in Paris in 1931. According to Stern's circa 1925 inventory of the Musée indochinois, the Krishna cast reached France after Delaporte's 1896/97 mission. However, a closer look at one of the pediments in the first large-scale attempt at an "Angkor"-style

44 These casts' molding traces were—unlike in the neighboring Musée de sculpture comparée (!)—flattened to simulate authentic objects original sculptures standing next to them.

45 On a floor plan which is today in the archive of the Musée des monuments français (Palais Chaillot) one can see the Indochinese display conceived for the upper central risalith of the new Palais Chaillot by the architexts Boileau, Azème and Carlu. As a matter of fact, besides other parts of South-East Asia, a special Cambodian section was not planned. For this information, I am very grateful to Mrs Polack at the Musée des monuments français, Paris.

46 *Ateliers de moulage des musées nationaux, Catalogue des moulages de sculptures de l'antiquités, de l'orient et de l'extrême-orient* (Édition provisoire). Paris: Services commerciaux et techniques de la réunion des musées nationaux, Palais du Louvre, 1928.

reconstitution in France proves that it had already appeared on the European stage during Paris Universal Exhibition of 1889 (Figs. 26a, b). Therefore, it might be necessary to backdate the casts' arrival to the Fournereau/Raffegaud mission of 1887/88.



Fig. 26: *The Pagode d'Angkor for the Universal Exhibition in Paris 1889 – overall view (a) and detail with Krishna pediment (b).* Source: Ministère de la Culture (France) - Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine - diffusion RMN.

The architect who was commissioned to construct the 1889 *Pagode d'Angkor* was Daniel Fabre, *chef du service des travaux publics* in Phnom Penh. The structure itself was a fantastical interpretation comprised of little turrets and an exaggeratedly pointed tower. Delaporte was dissatisfied with the overall result; the same would be true of the representation of Cambodia eleven years later at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1900. This time it was the *École des beaux-arts*-trained architect Alexandre Marcel who was charged with the representation of Cambodia and who oversaw the reconstitution of the complete temple hill of Wat Phnom, located in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh and having little apparent relation to Angkorian temple structures.⁴⁷ Then followed the *Exposition coloniale de Marseille* (the Marseille Colonial Exhibition) of 1906 – the first national colonial exhibition to take place in France – with the architect Henri Vildieu,

47 Henri la Nave, "L'art khmer et les restitutions du Trocadéro," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 32 (1904): 326-340, here 326.

architecte de la 1^e classe des travaux publics in the Indochinese province of Tonkin, responsible not only for the coordination of the *section Indo-chinoise* but also, together with the architect François Lagisquet (*inspecteur principal des bâtiments civils*), for the *Pavillon du Cambodge*, which attempted to include both Angkor Wat and the Bayon Temple styles (Fig. 27). Faraut, a participant on two Delaporte missions, contributed drawings for the interior showrooms and Delaporte helped with plaster casts for a translational “*idée exacte.*”⁴⁸ In Marseille, the Cambodian pavillon seemed to have been stretched laterally from its reconstituted form in Delaporte’s Musée indochinois, but the Krishna pediment of Angkor Wat was still reused on almost every pediment (Fig. 28).



Fig. 27: The Pavillon du Cambodge for the National Colonial Exposition in Marseille in 1906 after the architects Vildieu/Lagisquet. Source: Archives Départementales Bouches du Rhone, Marseille

48 Frédéric Baille, *L'Indo-Chine à l'exposition coloniale de Marseille. Rapport à Monsieur le Gouverneur général de l'Indo-Chine* (Marseille: Imprimerie Samat et Cie, 1907), 22.



Cliché Baudouin, Marseille

Dôme du Palais du Cambodge

Fig. 28: The Pavillon du Cambodge for the National Colonial Exposition in Marseille in 1906, detail. Source: M. Beau, L'Indo-Chine à l'exposition coloniale de Marseille (Marseille: Imprimerie Marseillaise, 1906), 129 (Cliché Baudouin, Marseille)

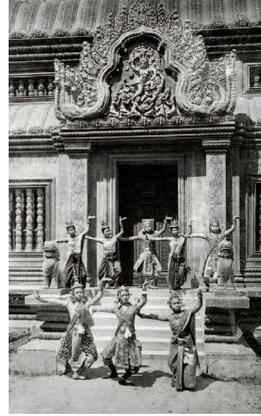
The (national) Colonial Exhibition of 1906 brought to a close the first phase in the reception, translation, and therefore appropriation of ancient Angkorian culture at universal and colonial exhibitions. The more imaginative, fantastical, and less “authentic” architectural reconstitutions that dominated this phase had one simple explanation: until the Franco-Siamese Treaty of 1907, the region of Angkor was not part of the French protectorate; therefore, opportunities for the expansion of archaeological, art historical, and photographic resources required for an exact translation of the Angkorian temples into the French hemisphere were limited. This situation completely changed once the northwestern provinces of Cambodia became part of the French protectorate. As a consequence, the material translation and representation of the temples of Angkor evidenced a

new quality and quantity at the *Exposition nationale coloniale de Marseille* (National Colonial Exhibition) of 1922 (Fig. 29). As never before, the picturesque reconstitution of Angkor, now representing whole Indochina, was staged as a symbol “of the existing Indochinese unity and proof of the most vital and materialized power of France in Asia.”⁴⁹ In relation to the theoretical concept of translation as a powerful tool of colonial appropriation, I will use the French term *impression* – translated here as “proof” (related to *épreuve*) designating both a reprint of moldings as well as photographic negatives – to refer literally to (a) the direct imprint of the surface of the local Angkor temple structure into the French moldings in situ; and (b) the *impressive visual effect* that their translated *representation* implanted in the hybrid temple reconstitutions made in France – as symbols of French colonial potency – and had upon the stunned visitor in the globalizing exhibition environment. Never before had the contested status of the mere technical, supposedly innocent procedure of plaster casting been more evident in French colonial history. Situated within a large Indochinese complex, the *Palais de l’Indochine* was intended to duplicate the central massive of Angkor Wat, with a square base of 70 meters side length, four 40-meter high corner towers, and a 57-meter central tower. Its chief architect was Auguste Émile Joseph Delaval, *chef du service des travaux de l’Indochine*. He supervised the production of 50,000 m² of internal and external lightweight plaster cladding (*staff*), carried out by the firm Auberlet et Laurent. An astounding 35,000 plaster casts were made of the various decorative elements and bas-relief needed for the 300-meter long interior galleries. Most of the documents, decorative motifs, sculptures, moldings, and bas-reliefs had been provided by originals or moldings from Delaporte’s Musée indochinois and the Musée Guimet.⁵⁰ Due to either missing documentation on further detail or to modern requirements imposed at Marseille (e.g., the whole temple structure was elevated in order to create a vast space for modern architectural display in the model’s basement), Auberlet et Laurent also invented new or added “inedited motifs”⁵¹ to their enormous surface translation. The Krishna motif, for example, was duplicated on several pediments on both the main structure and subsidiary buildings (Fig. 30).

49 Translation by the author, originally: “A ce système incontestablement pittoresque, on substitua en 1922, la conception d’un palais unique, synthétisant par sa grandeur prestigieuse et la splendeur de son style millénaire, l’entité réelle de l’unité indochinoise et donnant l’impression plus vivante, plus matérialisée de la puissance de la France d’Asie”, see Adrien Artaud, *Exposition nationale coloniale de Marseille 1922. Rapport general*. (Marseille: Imprimerie de Sémaphore, 1923), 171-72.

50 Artaud, *Exposition*, 93-94.

51 Translation by the author, see Commissariat général de l’exposition, ed., *Exposition Nationale Coloniale de Marseille, décrite par ses auteurs*, (Marseille: Imprimerie de Vaugirard, 1922), 81.



Figs. 29, 30: *The Palais d'Indochine for the Exposition Nationale Coloniale in Marseille 1922 by architect Auguste Émile Joseph Delaval – a giant model and as a picturesque background for the staged Cambodian dance troupe* (Source: *Commissariat général de l'exposition, Exposition nationale coloniale de Marseille décrite par ses auteurs* (Marseille: Imprimerie de Vaugirard 1922, 10 and 15, Photos Detaille).

Without a doubt, the apex of the colonial display of French possessions in America, Africa, and Asia took place in the Parc de Vincennes at the *Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris*. (International Colonial Exhibition of Paris) in 1931. Here Cambodia was represented by the Temple of Angkor Wat, considered to be “the highlight of the exposition”⁵² (Fig. 31). Under the supervision of Charles and Gabriel Blanche (father and son), both *architectes D.P.L.G. (diplômés par le gouvernement)*, it was staged as a 1:1 scale “reproduction plus fidèle”⁵³ with its central massive and a 200-meter reinterpretation of the elevated *chaussée centrale* on an area of 6,000 m² (Fig. 32). Once again, this powerful representation of colonial *patrimoine* was used as a symbol of the French *mission civilisatrice* under the *Gouvernement général de l'Indo-Chine*: “Nothing other than Angkor Wat could better symbolize with majesty and harmony the prestige of our domain in Asia, the gloriousness of its past and the devotional care with which the French paid their respect in front of its masterpieces.”⁵⁴

52 Translation by the author, originally “clou de l'exposition”, see Marcel Olivier, ed., *Exposition coloniale internationale de Paris 1931. Rapport general, tome VII: Les sections coloniales françaises* (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1933), 658.

53 Anthony Goissaud, “Le temple d'Angkor Vat et les Pavillons de la section de l'Indochine,” *Construction moderne*, 34 (25.5.1930): 518-529, here 518.

54 Translation by the author, see Charles et Gabriel Blanche, “A l'Exposition Coloniale. Le temple d'Angkor reconstitué,” *La construction moderne*, 46 (16.8.1931): 723-735, and 47 (23.8.1931): 743-750, here 735.

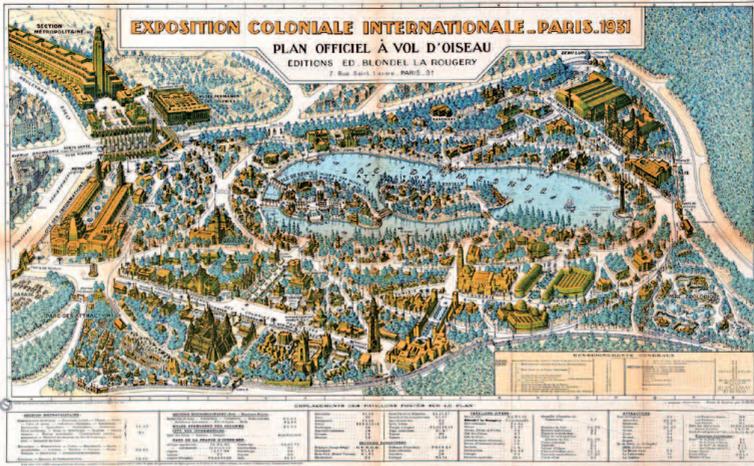


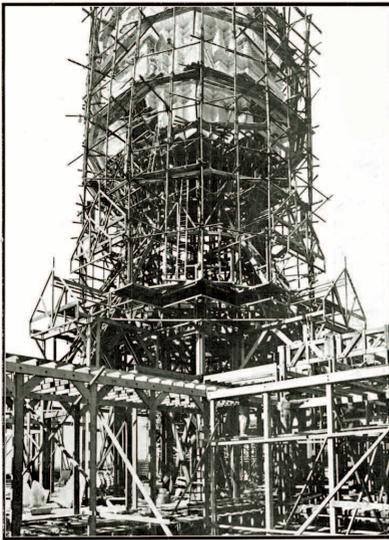
Fig. 31: Official plan of the Exposition Coloniale Internationale in Paris 1931 in the bird's eye view with the reconstitution of Angkor Wat in the lower left side. Source: Archives nationales d'outre-mer ANOM, Aix-en-Provence.



Fig. 32: The central pathway to the 1:1 scale model of Angkor Wat at the 1931 exhibition, in a postcard. Source: Postcard, private collection Michael Falser

In juxtaposition to this ageless and spotless Parisian reconstitution of Angkor Wat, the French mission simultaneously included the on-site restoration and

preservation of the original temple with its centuries-old traces of decay, imperfection, alteration, and patina, under the authority of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO). It is possible that Gabriel Blanche visited Angkor himself, in order to study the original site and the decorations carefully. How and if moldings, originals, and plaster casts from Delaporte's museum were used remains unclear, since it had been closed in 1925 and emptied by 1927. And as had been the case with all previous reconstitutions, the ephemeral temple structure of 1931 was not built of massive stone (like the original Cambodian) but with the use of an enormous wooden scaffolding (erected by the *Entreprise Lajoinie*) onto which thousands of patinated plaster casts were attached by 400 workers from the nearby Montrouge factory of Auberlet et Laurent. Not surprisingly, the Krishna pediment was present in various forms, either as original 1:1 scale motifs or in a newly arranged composition (Figs. 33, 34).



Figs. 33, 34: The Angkor Wat model for the 1931 exhibition in construction process. Source: Construction moderne, 34/25. Mai 1930, 525, Photos P. Cadé.

Pierre Courthion's classification of staged structures at the Paris International Colonial Exhibition of 1931 provides a useful summary of the material translation process of colonized culture in the museum and exhibition displays, here discussed. He divides the "re-presented" (trans-lated) buildings in relation to their intended audience(s) into three categories: (1) "new creations in a more or less independent environment" that were appreciated by artists; (2) "stylized interpretations of certain groups of inhabitants and buildings to create a characteristic ensemble"

in the style of an open air museum, to address the dilettante; and (3) “copies and exact reconstitutions of buildings and indigenous palaces” for the pleasure of ethnographers and scholars to “contemplate a picturesque folklore.”⁵⁵ This type of classification can apply to various kinds of *translations*. All versions of Angkor, from the Musée indochinois to the Paris International Colonial Exhibition of 1931, participated to some extent in all three categories. As hybrid translations, they created and incorporated interpretative and reconstituting elements into a final and unique product, whose singular elements could not be distinguished by the visitor. Delaporte’s Musée indochinois version of Angkor Wat was intended as an exact copy, whereas the Bayon-like tower reconstitution in the same museum was clearly a highly creative interpretation that incorporated singular plaster casts as exact copies within a new collage. For the exhibition of 1931, the Bayon-style tower was degraded to housing the power-generator for the giant Angkor Wat model (Fig. 35).



Fig. 35: This tower, which mixed the style of the Bayon temple and the gates to Angkor Thom, housed the power-generator for the illumination of the giant Angkor Wat model of the 1931 exhibition. Source: *Illustration*, 23.5.1931, 12.

⁵⁵ Translation by the author, see Pierre Courthion, “L’architecture à l’exposition coloniale,” *Art et décoration* 60 (Juli 1931): 37-54, here 37.

Similarly, in 1931, the gigantic 1:1 scale model attached “authentic” elements, which had been multiplied ad infinitum, to a wooden scaffold-structure that housed a series of interior exhibition halls within this now fundamentally remodeled (new) architectural entity. In so doing, the plaster casts fostered the visual order of a perfect colonial world, one that did not exist except within the French museum or exhibition context.⁵⁶

As “ornamental exaggerations” and “hallucinating marvels,”⁵⁷ these untranslatable stylistic pictograms and recurring, recognizable icons (e.g., the Krishna pediment) guaranteed the powerful colonial claim of an authentic translation of appropriated, exotic Indochinese culture. The highly contested status of this colonial translation practice, in which plaster casts played such a decisive role, became apparent in 1931 when Parisian anti-colonial, leftist intellectuals joined forces with Surrealist artists (such as André Breton, Paul Eluard, Louis Aragon, and George Malkine) to criticize the colonial power demonstration in the Parc de Vincennes. The exhibition itself stood in clear contrast to the political reality of a fading French colonial influence in Indochina. “Ne visitez pas l’Exposition coloniale!”⁵⁸ was the protestors’ collective declaration; thus giving voice to the crucial fact that the heyday of colonial exhibitions was over, and, in fact, no colonial exhibition followed. The last great exhibition on Parisian and French soil was the *Exposition internationale des arts et techniques dans la vie moderne* (Paris International Exhibition of the arts and techniques in modern life) of 1937, which drastically reduced the number of colonial architectural representations. They were removed in favor of a more nationalistic and regionalist display of modern and traditional French architecture, displaced from their previously central position to the peripheral Île des Cygnes on the river Seine. Ten years after the final removal of plaster casts from Delaporte’s Musée indochinois, the small-scale *Pavillon de l’Indo-Chine*, executed by Paul Sabrié, *architecte des batiments civils indo-chinoises*, in a verticalized Bayon-style (compare the horizontalized version of 1906), marked the silent and unspectacular end in the career of colonial plaster cast translations of Angkor (Fig. 36).

56 After Patricia L. Morton, *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Presentation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 206.

57 Translation by the author, see Émile Bayard, *L’art de reconnaître les styles coloniaux de la France* (Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères, 1931), 220.

58 André Breton, et al., “Ne visitez pas l’exposition coloniale” (May 1931); and “Premier bilan de l’exposition coloniale” (July 1931), reprinted in *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives 1922-1939*, ed. Eric Losfeld (Paris: La terrain vague, 1980), vol. 1, 194-5 and 198-200.



Fig. 36: The Pavillon de l'Indo-Chine by architect Paul Sabrié for the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris. Sources: CARAN, Archives Nationales Paris

Lost in Translation, or the Survival and Revival of the Plaster Casts of Angkor

By the time of the Paris International Exhibition of 1937, Delaporte's plaster casts had disappeared into Parisian factory storage in Clichy. In 1945, they

were transferred to a storage room in the Musée d'art moderne, where they suffered from inadequate storage conditions. In 1973, the Musée Guimet had them moved to the abbey of Saint-Riquier in the northern province of Picardy.⁵⁹

Generally speaking, the colonial history of plaster casts went full circle from valuation to devaluation, from being works of art to being mere *fixation tools* in the various natural sciences, to a reevaluation within their own right as well as within their retrospective use as a colonial “copying technique” for appropriation and popularization of exotic heritage. After the 1930s, when colonialism was in sharp decline, original objects in museum collections aesthetically (and “morally”) ruled out their copied (“faked”) counterparts. Plaster cast collections were demolished because their artistic and scientific worth was no longer appreciated – even less so if they were associated with a controversial colonial past.

In France, renewed interest in the artistic and documentary value of plaster casts may have been due to a self-reflexive moment toward colonial history: a postcolonial shift that may owe its existence to the generation gap between those with direct colonial memory – a gap of perhaps forty to fifty years if one takes Cambodian independence in 1953 as a marker – and a new generation of researchers. The *reflexive turn* brought with it the reevaluation of plaster cast collections. In the early 1990s, with the fall of the Iron Curtain, the end of Vietnamese occupation in Cambodia, and Angkor Wat's nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1992, global interest and international efforts to restore the temples on-site returned to Angkor. In 1998, a small exhibition was prepared in Saint-Riquier/Somme under the patronage of UNESCO in order to present the international community's conservation efforts: in addition to old plaster casts, giant photographs of the bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat were presented by the University of Applied Sciences in Cologne, Germany, which is responsible for the on-site stone conservation at Angkor Wat today. Then in 2002, under the supervision of the conservator Pierre Baptiste, the Musée Guimet surveyed the plaster casts that had remained stored “without care and order”⁶⁰ in the humid barns and caves of Saint-Riquier. Surprisingly, the original Krishna cast pediment reappeared in acceptably good condition. (Fig. 37) More than a hundred years after its molding on the roofs near the central tower of Angkor Wat, (Fig. 38) the cast was recovered and moved once again, this time to a storage facility in Bourgogne with adequate climate conditions, for restoration. An exhibition of

59 For probably one of the first general articles on the Angkor moldings in France, see René Dumont, “Angkor Vat à l'exposition coloniale internationale de 1931,” in *Le moulage. Actes du colloque international*, 10-12.4.1987, ed. Association pour le Colloque international sur le moulage (Paris: La documentation française, 1988), 121-125.

60 Translation by the author, see Baptiste, *La collection*, 64.

the Angkorian plaster casts around the person of Louis Delaporte is currently in preparation at the Musée Guimet for the years to come.



*Figs. 37, 38: The original plaster cast of the Angkor Wat-pediment as it was found in the storage of the monastery of St. Riquier/Somme in 2002 (Fig. 37) and the original pediment at Angkor Wat in a historic photo, most probably taken on the same day of the making of the molding, before 1900 (Fig. 38). Sources: Pierre Baptiste, *Asie du Sud-Est, musée Guimet 2002*, (Fig. 37), *Archives photographiques du musée Guimet, Paris* (Fig. 38)*

Within the post-colonial context of recent reevaluations of plaster casts, in particular of Angkor, other European museums have rediscovered their holdings. For example, the Ethnographic Museum (Völkerkundemuseum) in Berlin-Dahlem, Germany (today a part of the Museum of Asian Art) has Angkorian casts that were created during turn-of-the-century expeditions which were independent from Delaporte's initiatives. As matter of fact, it was this museum that owned the most complete collection of Angkorian plaster casts (mostly the bas-reliefs from Angkor Wat) around 1900 – when Angkor was not yet under direct French control (Fig. 39).



Fig. 39: The display of the bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat on the upper left wall (according to the reports about 600 m²!) along with other Indian and South-East Asian plaster casts in a photograph of the Völkerkundemuseum Berlin (Stresemannstraße), around 1926. Source: Copyright National Museums Berlin, Prussian Cultural Foundation, Asian Art Museum, Art Collection South-, Southeast- and Central Asian Art.

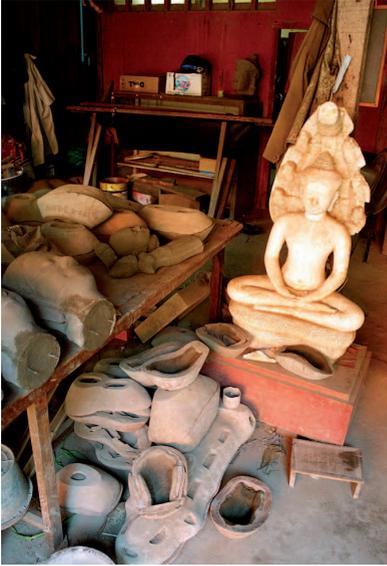
Nonetheless, the European or even global history of the material translation of Angkor, particularly in the form of plaster casts, remains to be written.⁶¹

⁶¹ The author carried out further research on the Khmer plaster cast collection in Berlin and will publish the results of this research in the near future. Early catalogues from the Völkerkundemuseum mention these plaster casts from Angkor, see Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, ed., *Führer durch das Museum für Völkerkunde I, Schausammlung* (Berlin; Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1929).

Another important documentary aspect of Angkorian plaster casts becomes particularly significant when comparing the Krishna cast from circa 1890 with the original pediment on-site in 2010: the old cast retains a three-dimensional auratic memory of the old surface (cf. Didi-Huberman's *ressemblage par contact*) that has, in large part, been lost due to decay or frequently due to excessive or poor restoration. In a postcolonial and even global age, the old plaster casts from Angkor might be used as a conservator's tool for a contemporary material retranslation from Paris back to the original site. And lastly, from an architectural-historical point of view it is interesting to note that the Angkorian plaster casts were used in Cambodia not only on the outside and inside of public buildings during the French colonial period and during Cambodian independence, but reappeared in Cambodian postmodern architecture after 1990. As an ironic and vernacular after-effect of the once colonial translation (and appropriation) process of exotic, cultural, built heritage through the technique of plaster casts, they became a common feature on Cambodian streets from Phnom Penh to Battambang. A fixed set of recurring plaster cast images and 1:1 scale models from Angkor's French colonial history, can now be found retranslated into a self-stereotyping Khmer culture (Figs. 40-43).



Figs. 40, 41: Left: Bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat above the entry of a National Bank of Cambodia in Phnom Penh that was built in the French-colonial period, partly destroyed by the Khmer Rouge in 1975 and rebuilt in a postmodern version in the 1990s; right: Angkorian decor at the entry to the Hotel Cambodiana in Phnom Penh. Source: Falser 2010/2011.



Figs. 42 a, b, 43: Above: Concrete casts of Angkorian heritage at the Atelier de moulage of the National Museum and in front of the School of Fine Arts, both in Phnom Penh. Below: A new gateway to Angkor Thom in Battambang city. Source: Falser 2010/2011.