

## HARRY LEONARD SHORTO: A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Professor Harry Shorto is one of the founding scholars of Mon-Khmer studies, the field which his knowledge and insight helped to make the active and expanding area of scholarship that it is today.

It is now some forty five years since Harry Shorto completed his MA in Modern and Mediaeval Languages at Cambridge before moving to SOAS to take up a training appointment as Lecturer in Linguistics in 1948. From that point he was to pursue the study of the Austroasiatic and Austronesian language families of his choice: in 1952 he was appointed Lecturer in Mon; in 1964 Reader in the Languages and Literatures of South-East Asia; in 1971 to the Chair of Mon-Khmer Studies in the University of London. During this period he produced his two magisterial dictionaries, *A dictionary of Modern Spoken Mon* (1962) and *A dictionary of the Mon inscriptions from the sixth to the sixteenth centuries* (1971), to which he added numerous other stimulating publications listed in the bibliography of this volume.

Harry Shorto is a private man, given to weighing his words carefully between frequent re-lightings of his ever-present pipe. His Common Room colleagues may often have found awesome the ease with which he negotiated the depths and further reaches of his unfamiliar linguistic territory, but the learning was always leavened with humour, the delight in language for its own sake infectious.

The lightness of touch and passion for detail which Harry brought to the investigation of languages, their histories, constructions, and interconnections, are in complete harmony with his other absorbing interest: early musical instruments, in particular the flute, gamba, cornet and virginal. This interest extends to performance and he was for a time a member of a consort of viols. Today he continues to perfect his technique on his 1960 Morley virginal.

To Harry Shorto's many colleagues and former students it must be a source of great satisfaction that retirement has not put an end to his encyclopaedic researches, notably his project for a comparative phonology of the Mon-Khmer languages. We wish him well and offer this volume in appreciation of his contribution to scholarship over the years.

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