



## A SIAM SOCIETY LECTURE

## André Malraux: The looter of Banteay Srei who rose to high political office

### A talk by *Lia Genovese*



In the annals of archaeology, Heinrich Schliemann, Katherine Routledge, Madeleine Colani and Howard Carter, to name a few, will be forever associated with pioneering work respectively in Troy, the Easter Island, the Plain of Jars and Egypt. Other would-be archaeologists have become household names for the wrong reasons. One of the best-known cases concerns André Malraux, a young French intellectual arrested in Phnom Penh on 24 December 1923 as he attempted to smuggle out of Cambodia several tons of bas-reliefs looted from Khmer temples and destined to collectors in Europe and America. Archival data recorded by George Groslier, the director of the National Museum responsible for the arrest, reveal that the looting involved not just Banteay Srei but also another temple never mentioned in relation to this case. Malraux was tried in Indochina but did not serve a single day of his three-year sentence and was free to return to France at the end of 1924. But why was Malraux arrested in 1923, the same year that the French colonial authorities authorised the sale of Khmer artefacts, under certain conditions? What lines of defence did Malraux use against the colonial powers he accused of neglecting Cambodia's heritage? How did Malraux

morph from youthful looter to Minister for Cultural Affairs under the presidency of Charles de Gaulle in France? In my talk I will discuss the facts of the case in light of previously unknown archival data and photographic evidence.

**Lia Genovese** holds a PhD from SOAS-University of London for a Dissertation titled 'The Plain of Jars of North Laos - Beyond Madeleine Colani'. She lectures at Thammasat and Silpakorn Universities (Bangkok) and is a Member of the Lecture Committee at the Siam Society. Her current research interests include: the Plain of Jars of Laos; colonial archaeology; the megaliths of South and Southeast Asia; Iron Age mortuary practices; the life and work of French archaeologist Madeleine Colani; cultural heritage. Her journal articles and book reviews can be accessed at [academia.edu](http://academia.edu)

**DATE:** Thursday, 25 May 2017

**TIME:** 7:30 p.m.

**PLACE:** The Siam Society, 131 Asoke Montri Rd, Sukhumvit 21

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**Office Hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

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