

A GUIDE TO THE ANGKOR MONUMENTS



M a u r i c e G l a z e

A N G K O R



THE MONUMENTS OF THE ANGKOR GROUP

by

Maurice Glaize

A translation from the 4th French edition.

Synthesis should be made from time to time, so that writers may pass on the work of the specialists to a wider public.

A. Maurois

Dedicated to Henri PARMENTIER in admiration of his work.

PREFACE TO THE 4TH FRENCH EDITION

Published in 1944 in Saigon, republished in 1948 and again in Paris in 1963, *"The Monuments of the Angkor Group"* by Maurice Glaize remains the most comprehensive of the guidebooks and the most easily accessible to a wide public, dedicated to one of the most fabled architectural ensembles in the world.

In his preface to the first edition, Georges Coëdes (1886-1969), the unchallenged master of Khmer studies and the then director of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient, wrote:

"Maurice Glaize's guide, more than a quarter of which is devoted to fundamental ideas concerning the history of the country, its religions, the meaning and evolution of the monuments, their architecture and their decoration, the sculpture, and finally to the work of the Conservation d'Angkor, gives an initiation to Angkor that until now has been lacking. The guide recommends itself on these qualities alone. By means of taking apart and rebuilding the monuments during the process of anastylosis Mr. Glaize has learnt to know their secrets and, like a professor of anatomy, reveals to his readers all the details of their structure. But further, in daily contact with the ruins since 1936, he has learnt to love them, and one can easily perceive the emotion of the artist as he faces the corner of a gallery lit by the morning sun, or views the light playing on the waters of an ancient pool at sunset..."

In brief, this volume is a book that is of service not only as a guide for touring the monuments, but also as a presentation of the results of the most recent research to a wider public. With these diverse titles, it deserves the success which I hope for it with all my heart..."

Founded on an exceptional understanding of the monuments and an ability to popularise to a high level, this rightful success was soon gained - the work of Mr. Glaize being no less valuable for students of research than for tourists, or for the most demanding connoisseurs of art. With the exception of Georges Trouvé, whose involvement was sadly too brief, nobody had a better understanding or 'feeling' for the monuments of the Angkor region than Henri Marchal or Maurice Glaize. But if H. Marchal was the first to make use of anastylosis towards the end of 1931 for his exemplary reconstruction of Banteay Srei, it was M. Glaize who generalised its use

for the "Angkor Group" - notably in the "rebirth" of Banteay Samre, for the sanctuary of Neak Pean, and the "resurrection" of the sanctuary of the Bakong.

It would, however, be unsatisfactory to simply republish a work written now some fifty years ago without some form of amendment. All manner of events have in the mean time intervened that impose necessary revision - although, in terms of the Author's thoughts, those responsible have made the request that any alteration should be as discrete as possible. These factors derive as much from the unhappy events resulting from ongoing political changes as from events directly affecting the monuments themselves. On the one hand, there has been the abrupt and rapid decline, since 1945, in the state of some of the better known temples, such as the Baphuon and Angkor Wat - symbolic of the highest achievement of Khmer classicism. On the other, towards 1955, the availability of modern techniques and materials enabled the improved efficiency of the Angkor Conservation Office, which then expanded from a simple workshop to a research office with engineers and technicians. Under the direction of Bernard Phillippe Groslier more ambitious programs were devised, and large, urgent site-works, previously unthinkable, were able to be undertaken. The brutal deterioration of the political situation in 1975 and the resulting insecurity came to ruin these hopes and put an end to the activity that had previously run uninterrupted since the founding of the Conservation Office in 1908. The resumption of work, even with limited objectives, was to take a long time in coming.

These facts cannot be omitted from a Guide whose primary aim is the reader's instruction. Likewise, progress in research has considerably reduced the importance for a long time placed on the notion of the "god-king" and the "royal linga", with more qualified interpretations being proposed by Jean Filliozat and even Georges Coëdes himself during the 'sixties. There has been a similar evolution in terms of the symbolism of the monuments (in particular with respect to Phnom Bakheng and the temples from the period of the Bayon) for which a recourse to texts has allowed the release from mere hypothetical speculation. All of these amendments have been handled unobtrusively, usually with simple notes. It is with the same concern for "revision" that the original, but old, photographs have been substituted with a choice of more recent and more evocative illustrations.

Jean BOISSELIER - 1993



INTRODUCTION

There is only one way to best view Angkor - without unnecessary stress and with some benefit - and that is to allow at least a week, and to visit within reason two or three temples per day maximum. If this period of time is insufficient to penetrate to all the secrets of the very particular architecture and the dense ornamentation - which require a certain adaptation in order to fully appreciate their value - it is instead permitted to at least taste their charms, to assimilate the rudiments of Khmer Art, and to leave with a desire to study them in more depth.

A stay of short duration will, however, give a good idea of the ensemble - on condition that one paces one's programme according to the small amount of time at one's disposal, and has no pretension to 'see everything'. For this reason, we propose several itinerary types to aid the task of the hurried tourist. A minimum of three days would seem to us essential to make contact with the principal monuments of the group.

Angkor may be visited in all seasons. However the most favourable period extends from November to March, during the first months of the dry season, when the temperature is particularly clement. In contrast, April and May are hot and humid, and then come the rains - through to September - which put one at risk of immobilisation for several

hours - though without always lasting an entire day. They are extremely rare in the morning, and the sandy soil quickly dries. This is the time when the forest becomes alive and verdant, when the reservoirs and moats refill, when the stones become covered in creepers and lichens - and it is only important to no longer climb except with extreme caution amongst the boulders and on the sandstone blocks, which the moss renders slippery.

It is preferable, particularly in the hot season, to leave early in the morning and to return before eleven o'clock, and not to revisit in the afternoon until three or four o'clock - the light at the end of the day being generally more favourable. The majority of the monuments - and in particular Angkor Wat - lose much in being viewed against the light.

We would especially recommend the setting of the sun at Angkor Wat, where sometimes the spectacle will include the flight of the bats in the fading light, or from the top of Phnom Bakheng or Phnom Krom, or the terrace of the Srah Srang - or else from the beach of the baray, where the bathing is delightful. Finally, if you have the opportunity, do not miss, by the light of the full moon, the second level courtyard of Angkor Wat at the foot of the central tower, or the upper terrace of the Bayon.

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

FOR ONE MORNING

Angkor Wat, Bayon, the Small Circuit, a traverse of Ta Prohm from the west to the east, the terrace of Srah Srang.

Distance - 27 kilometres.

FOR ONE AFTERNOON

The Bayon, the Small Circuit, a traverse of Ta Prohm from the west to the east, the terrace of Srah Srang, Angkor Wat.

Distance - 30 kilometres.

FOR ONE DAY

morning

The Grand Circuit, with a visit to Pre Rup, Neak Pean, Prah Khan (traverse from east to west), the terrace of the Leper King.

Distance - 37 kilometres.

afternoon

The Bayon, the Small Circuit, a traverse of Ta Prohm from the west to the east, the terrace of Srah Srang, Angkor Wat.

Distance - 30 kilometres.

FOR TWO DAYS

first day

morning

The Bayon, the terrace of the Leper King, Tep Pranam, Prah Palilay, the Royal Palace, the Baphuon.

Distance - 20 kilometres.

afternoon

The small circuit via the Royal Palace, the Victory Gate, Ta Prohm (traverse from west to east), Banteay Kdei (ditto), the terrace of Srah Srang, and possibly Phnom Bakheng.

Distance - 27 and 32 kilometres.

second day

morning

The Grand Circuit, with a visit to Pre Rup, Banteay Samre, Neak Pean, Prah Khan (traversed from east to west)

Distance - 46 kilometres.

afternoon

Angkor Wat

Distance - 12 kilometres.

FOR THREE DAYS

first day

morning

The Bayon, the terrace of the Leper King, Tep Pranam, Prah Palilay, the Royal Palace, the Baphuon

Distance - 20 kilometres.

afternoon

The Kleang and Prah Pithu, the Victory Gate, Thommanon, Chau Say, Takeo, on returning Phnom Bakheng

Distance - 26 kilometres.

second day

morning

The Grand Circuit, with a visit to Pre Rup, Mebon, Ta Som, Neak Pean, Prah Khan (traversing from east to west)

Distance - 37 kilometres.

afternoon

Prasat Kravan, Ta Prohm (traversing from west to east), Banteay Kdei (traversing from west to east), the terrace of Srah Srang.

Distance - 26 kilometres.

third day

morning

Banteay Samre, Banteay Srei

Distance - 70 kilometres.

afternoon

Angkor Wat

Distance - 12 kilometres.

FOR FOUR DAYS

first day

morning

The Bayon, terrace of the Leper King, Tep Pranam, Prah Palilay, the Royal Palace

Distance - 20 kilometres.

afternoon

Baphuon, the Kleang and Prah Pithu, the Victory Gate, Thommanon, Chau Say, on returning Phnom Bakheng

Distance - 24 kilometres.

second day

morning

Takeo, Ta Prohm (crossing from west to east), Banteay Kdei
(crossing from west to east), the terrace or Srah Srang, Prasat Kravan.
Distance - 28 kilometres.

afternoon

Angkor Wat
Distance - 12 kilometres.

third day

morning

The Grand Circuit, with a visit to Pre Rup, Mebon, Ta Som, Neak Pean,
Prah Khan (passing through from east to west)
Distance - 37 kilometres.

afternoon

Siem Reap river and Phnom Krom
Distance - 25 kilometres.

fourth day

morning

Banteay Samre, Banteay Srei
Distance - 70 kilometres.

afternoon

The Roluos group (Bakong, Prah Ko), the western baray (swimming)
Distance - 54 kilometres.

FOR FIVE DAYS

first day

morning

The Bayon, the terrace of the Elephants and of the Leper King,
Tep Pranam, Prah Palilay, the Royal Palace.
Distance - 20 kilometres

afternoon

The Baphuon, the Kleang and Prah Pithu, the Victory Gate, Thommanon,
Chau Say
Distance - 24 kilometres

second day

morning

Takeo, Ta Prohm (crossing from west to east), Banteay Kdei
(crossing from west to east), the terrace of Srah Srang, Prasat Kravan.
Distance - 28 kilometres.

afternoon

The Bayon (to study the bas-reliefs), Phnom Bakheng.

third day

morning

The Grand Circuit, with a visit to Pre Rup, Mebon, Ta Som, Neak Pean,
Prah Khan, (passing from east to west)
Distance - 37 kilometres.

afternoon

Angkor Wat
Distance - 12 kilometres.

fourth day

morning

Banteay Samre, Banteay Srei
Distance - 70 kilometres.

afternoon

Siem Reap river, Phnom Krom
Distance - 25 kilometres.

fifth day

morning

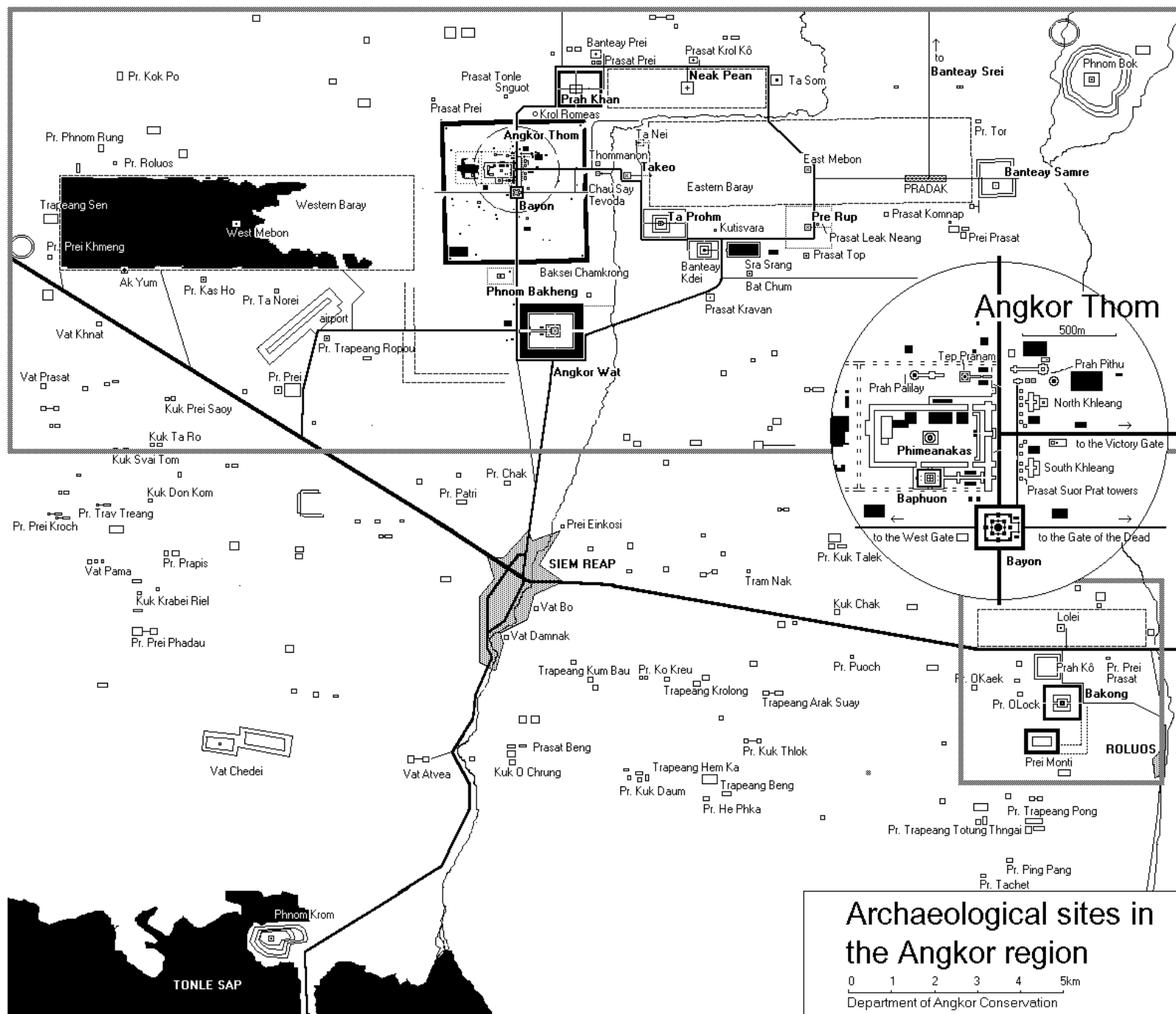
The Roluos group (Bakong, Prah Ko, perhaps also Lolei)
Distance - 28 and 30 kilometres.

afternoon

Angkor Wat (to study the bas-reliefs), western baray (swimming)
Distance - 38 kilometres.

FOR SIX DAYS AND MORE

Ad libitum, including the secondary temples and,
perhaps, with an excursion to Beng Mealea (a day trip)
Distance - 100 kilometres.



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PART ONE - GENERAL PRINCIPLES



If one is to believe the legend, the ancient dynasties of the Khmer empire were derived from the union of a Hindu prince, Preah Thong - who had been banished from Delhi by his father - with a "female serpent-woman", the daughter of the Nagaraja, who was sovereign of the land. She appeared to him in radiant beauty, frolicking on a sand bank where he had come to make camp for the night. He took her as his wife, and the Nagaraja, draining the land by drinking the water that covered it, gave him the new country, called it Kambuja and built him a capital.

A variation, revealed on an inscription at Mison in Champa (mid Vietnam) and reproduced in various descriptions of Cambodia, substitutes for the prince the Brahman Kaundinya, who "married the nagi Soma to accomplish the rites" and, throwing the magic lance with which he was armed, founded at the point of its landing the royal city where Somavamsa, the race of the moon, would rule.

Another popular tradition, though less widespread, gives as the origin the coupling of the maharashi Kambu and the apsara Mera, whose union is symbolic of that between the two great races, solar (Suryavamsa) and lunar (Somavamsa). This survives particularly in the word Kambuja - son of Kambu - from where derives the name "Cambodian" by which we now call the present descendants of the ancient Khmer.

Whichever version one takes, the mythical implication is undeniable and the truth remains - that the Khmer people are born of a joining of two distinct elements; Indian and native. They are not, as some would believe, just people of purely Indian or Hindu origin who had come, following migration, to settle in a region devoid of any inhabitants, or where the indigenous race had been eliminated by mass deportation.

Established since prehistoric times in the lower Mekong valley of the southern Indo-Chinese peninsula that included not only present day Cambodia but also Cochinchina and parts of Siam and Laos, they were in fact a mixture - from an ethnological rather than a linguistic point of view - of people from lower Burma and various barbarous people from the annamitic chain, themselves in turn quite probably deriving from Negroid and Indonesian roots. The Indian contribution apparently resulted from a natural expansion towards the east for commercial, civil and religious reasons rather than for any brutal political motivation.

Moreover, with the fall of the Khmer empire - that so captures the imagination in the extent and apparently abrupt timing of its destruction - came perhaps a total decline and abandonment of the capital,

but, mysteriously, not the entire extinction of the race. With a little help from France and a clear understanding of the glory of their past, these people soon regained an awareness of their value and began to rise again, having never ceased to exist. Having retained their fundamental characteristics - their traditions, their religion and their language - their artistic talents need only the opportunity to revive.

Some physical catastrophe, earthquake, flood, or a drying up of the country's economy has been suggested, and though it is difficult to accept that an earthquake could leave so many stone structures standing, there are however indications, such as the filling of the enormous basins and low areas of Angkor Thom and its suburbs, that render the suggestion of an overflow of the Great Lake or the rupture of some dike plausible - and it is common that such disasters usually result in epidemic and devastation. Likewise, the collapse of a perfected hydraulic system that gave life and fertility to the region could have quickly transformed into inhospitable areas of land that had until then been populated and plentiful.

But human causes suffice. Although only five centuries separate us from the date of Angkor's abandonment as capital, it should not be forgotten that a hard and far less glorious time followed the four century period - from the 9th to the 13th - of her splendour. Already exhausted by builder kings seeking to ensure their posthumous glory, the Khmer people could no longer offer resistance to a series of bloody wars followed no doubt by the systematic transfer of the population to slavery. Ruin came, but not total extinction.

CAMBODIA AND THE CAMBODIANS.

The geographical framework of the ancient Khmer empire is reflected in that of its monuments. Although these are found grouped in a particularly dense manner in the Angkorian region to the north of the Great Lake, one can however include in totality more than a thousand remains scattered over the

whole of the area between the gulf of Siam and Vientiane on the one side and between the Mekong delta and the valley of Menam on the other - that is to say in Cambodia itself, the major part of Cochinchina, lower and middle Laos, eastern Siam and a part of the Menam valley. The changes that occurred over the centuries came not from any lack of unity in the population, but rather from a contrast of a physical nature between the dry regions to the north of the chain of the Dangrek mountains and the fertile plains to the south.

Present day Cambodia is found bordered by the Gulf of Siam to the south-west, Laos to the north and Vietnam to the east and south-east. Its main artery is the Mekong valley, which crosses from north to south. This is joined at Phnom Penh by the Tonle Sap, spreading to the north-west in a large plain of water that extends for some 140 kilometres by 30 and irrigates the surrounding plains.

The Tonle Sap - once a maritime gulf that now forms a lake - has the peculiarity that each rainy season, from May to October, its waters are no longer able to flow into the flooding Mekong and become choked, rising by ten metres and so forming a huge regulatory basin, whose surface area triples that of the dry season. Large water festivals with canoe races during November's full moon mark the end of this period, and the King, in a symbolic ritual, presides over the reversing of the current.

Each annual deluge sees the Tonle Sap rise still further, completely flooding the forested zones that border its banks and ensuring a particularly abundant source of nourishment to its fish - so making it the richest fish pond in the world.

Cambodia lies between 10 and 14 degrees latitude north, and the climate nears the equatorial with an almost constant temperature. The contrast between the dry season and the season of the heavy rains is, however, quite marked, and although the average temperature of the year is

28 degrees, the nights of December and January - that are particularly fresh - see the temperature fall to around 20 degrees, while the months of April and May are distinguished by a torrid heat reaching 35 degrees in an atmosphere charged with storms which never break.

Although affected by the monsoons, the country is protected from the coast by chains of mountains ranging from 1000 to 1500 metres in height - notably the Elephant mountains, where the Bokor altitude station is located - giving it a less humid and unhealthy climate than Cochinchina. Here the skies are often quite fresh and clear - and extremely favourable to moonlit nights.

With its eight million inhabitants for an area of 180,000 square kilometres, Cambodia is an under-developed country with little cultivation. Thin agricultural resources are complemented with fishing, a little rearing of cattle and some forestry, while a large part of its area is mostly covered with unbroken forest and bush, and remains deserted.

Rice and fish are the staple diet, and the harvest is regulated by the rhythm of the rains and floods. Fish are plentiful - even in the paddy fields where they hibernate in the underground mud during the dry months to re-emerge with the first rains. On the Tonle Sap, during the dry season, entire villages are established on the open lake - their belongings suspended from poles with the racks of drying fish.

The rural Cambodian lives a rudimentary existence, by the water if possible, in straw huts or in wooden houses raised from the ground on posts of two metres in height. He is sheltered from the animals and the floods and keeps his meagre livestock under his home. With just enough work to be able to pay his taxes and support his family he lives preferably in the middle of his small-holding, and, without much of a taste for business, is content to let the Chinese or Vietnamese deal with the surplus produce from his paddy or sugar palm, pigs, chickens or the fruits of his garden.

The extensive crossbreeding over the centuries - the happiest of which has resulted, particularly in urban areas, from a mixing with the Chinese - does not appear to have fundamentally changed the nature of the people. Cambodians are broad and muscular (standing on average 1m.65), are brachycephalic and generally dark in colour. The nose is broad, the lips are thick and the eyes straight and narrow. The hair is worn short, even by the women. When they feel that one shows them some interest, they are hospitable and sweet natured.

Sensitive and religious, the family centres its life on the pagoda, where the male youth is obliged to spend some of his time. Generous towards their priests - the innumerable monks whose bright orange robes animate the landscape and to whom subsistence is readily assured - they take every opportunity to venerate the Buddha and gain merit, marking the year with numerous festivals to satisfy a distinct taste for leisure.

The national religion is Buddhism of the Small Vehicle, or *Theravada*, of the Pali language - which is also practised in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Laos. The monastic life here plays the principal role and the popular faith, while rudimentary and sometimes tinted with remains of ancient superstition, is based on the transmigration of the soul and the search for personal salvation through work during the course of an existence in which each action is accounted for in the regulation of the future. After death the body is carried to the pyre, and the cremation ends with either the deposit of the ashes in a small funerary monument (*Cedei*) or their scattering on sacred ground.



Our knowledge of ancient Cambodia derives from three sources; - the interpretation of the bas-reliefs, the writings of Chinese travellers, and the reading of the stone inscriptions. Nothing remains of the tinted parchment manuscripts, written in chalk, or the latania leaves on which the inscribed characters were blackened with a pad. These essentially perishable records were able to resist neither fire, the humidity nor the termites.

A. THE BAS-RELIEFS

The scenes sculpted on the bas-reliefs - in particular at the Bayon - often show almost exactly, if one has the time to study them closely, a picture of daily rural life that has barely since changed. One can see in them the same kinds of dwellings, the same carts or canoes, the same costumes, the same instruments for cultivation, hunting, fishing or for music, the same habits and the same manual trades.

B. THE CHINESE CHRONICLES

The most complete of the Chinese chronicles - and the most descriptive - are those of Tcheou Ta-Kouan who, in 1296, just after the first wars with the Siamese and at the beginning of the period of decadence, accompanied a Sino-Mongole envoy to Angkor. His *"Memoirs on the Customs of Cambodia"*, translated by Paul Pelliot and published in the Bulletin of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient of 1902, give an idea of the conditions of life in Cambodia at the end of the 13th century. He says of the inhabitants:

"The customs common to all the southern barbarians are found throughout Cambodia, whose inhabitants are coarse people, ugly and deeply sunburned. This is true not only of those living in the remote villages of the maritime islands, but of the dwellers in centres of population. Only the ladies of the court and the womenfolk of the noble houses are white like jade, their pallor coming from being shuttered away from the strong sunlight."

"Generally speaking, the women, like the men, wear only a strip of cloth, bound round the waist, showing bare breasts of milky whiteness. They fasten their hair in a knot, and go barefoot - even the wives of the King, who are five in number, one of whom dwells in the central palace and one at each of the four cardinal points. As for the concubines and palace girls, I have heard that there are from three to five thousand of them, separated into various categories, though they are seldom seen beyond the palace gates. When a family has a beautiful daughter, no time is lost in sending her to the palace."

"In a lower category are the women who do errands for the palace, of whom there are at least two thousand. They are all married, and live throughout the city. The hair of their forehead is shaved high in the manner of the northern people and a vermilion mark is made here and on each temple. Only these women are allowed entry to the palace, which is forbidden to all of a lesser rank.

"The women of the people knot their hair, but with no hairpin or comb, nor any other adornment of the head. On their arms they wear gold bracelets and on their fingers, rings of gold - a fashion also observed by the palace women and the court ladies. Men and women alike are anointed with perfumes compounded of sandalwood, musk and other essences.

"Worship of the Buddha is universal..."

C. THE INSCRIPTIONS

The epigraphy is less anecdotal in nature and describes the other Cambodia, particularly its history, offering a more serious documentation. Together with the study of the art, it has enabled the accurate dating of the monuments.

Inseparable are the names of Barth, Bargaigue, Kern and Aymonier, then of Louis Finot and of Georges Cœdes, all of whom dedicated themselves to their task with an impressive methodology and a rigorous discipline. Due to the number of discoveries their science soon became of major importance.

The earliest known inscriptions date from the 7th century and relate to the central Indian "Saka" era. Later than the Christian era by 78 years, this must have been introduced to the Indian Archipelago and Indo-China by Hindu astronomers.

"From the beginning" - we are told by Mr Cœdes - "they simultaneously used two languages - a scholarly language, Sanskrit, reserved for the genealogy of royalty or dignitaries, for the panegyric of the monuments' foundation or for that of the revered donors - and a common language, Khmer or Cambodian, reserved for the disposition of the foundation and the listing of servants or objects donated to the temple. Sanskrit texts are only written in verse: these are the compositions that the Indians call 'Kavya'".

Sanskrit ceased to be the scholarly language used in Indochina when, towards the 14th and 15th centuries, the Brahmanic and Mahayana (or Large Vehicle) Buddhist religions were replaced by Hinayana (or Small Vehicle) Buddhism, and the language used became Pali, also of Hindu origin. As for the old Khmer, Mr Cœdes remarks that *"it differed far less from present day Cambodian than the language of Chanson de Roland differed from French"*.

The inscriptions were engraved with a burin or etcher's chisel in letters of less than a centimetre in height on steles, on tablets and on the door openings of the sanctuaries. The steles, whose location varied between monuments, generally stood in a special shelter, either as rectangular slabs with two inscribed faces or as bornes with four sides, in a hard, polished stone and fixed to the ground or to a base by means of a tenon. Many were found in open countryside.

The text on the jambs of the door openings often covered most of their surface. Towards the end of the classic period it became usual to recount in one or many lines the setting of a statue - a god or a divinity - in the sanctuary, either in reserving a smooth place in the decorative surface of the stone or in scraping a patch clear: this is also true for the identification of certain scenes in the bas-reliefs. Finally, on many of the blocks, roughly inscribed characters can be seen which must have been made by the masons.

NAME OF KING	FILIATION	POSTHUMOUS NAME	DATE OF REIGN	CAPITAL
1 - FOU-NAN DYNASTIES (from ? to around 545)				
2 - BATTLE BETWEEN FOU-NAN AND TCHE-NA (from towards 545 to 627)				
Bhavavarman I Mahendravarman Içanavarman I	<i>brother of preceding son of preceding</i>		598 around 600 - 615 around 615 - 635	Içanapura (Sambor Prei Kuk, near Kompong Thom)
3 - TCHE-NA UNIFIED (627 to the end of the 7 th century)				
Bhavavarman II Jayavarman I			639 before 665 or 7 - after 681	
4 - SPLIT BETWEEN COASTAL TCHE-NA AND INLAND TCHE-NA (8 th century)				
5 - ANGKORIAN PERIOD (9 th - 15 th century)				
Jayavarman II		Parameçvara	802 - towards 850	Indrapura (near Kompong Cham) Hariharalâya (Rolüos) Amarendrapura (Ak Yom?) Mahendraparvata (Phnom Kûlen) Hariharalâya (Rolüos)
Jayavarman III Indravarma I Yaçovarman I	<i>son of preceding nephew of Jayavarman II son of preceding</i>	Vishnouloka Içvaraloka Paramaçivaloka	854 - 877 877 - 889 889 - towards 910	" Yaçodharapura (1st Angkor Phnom Bakheng)
Harshavarman I Içanavarman II Jayavarman IV Harshavarman III Râjendravarman Jayavarman V Udayâdityavarman I Jayavîravarman Sûryavarman I Udayâdityavarman II Harshavarman III Jayavarman VI Dharanîndravarma I Sûryavarman II Dharanîndravarma II	<i>" brother of preceding brother-in-law of Yaçovarman I son of preceding son-in-law of Jayavarman IV son of preceding nephew of preceding</i>	Rudraloka Paramarudraloka Paramaçivapada Brahmaloka Çivaloka Paramavîraloka	before 910 - after 922 925 921 - 940 942 - 944 944 - 968 968 - 1001 1001 - 1002 1002 - 1010 1002 - 1049 1049 - 1066 1066 - 1080 1080 - 1107 1107 - 1112 1113 - 1145 (?) towards 1150	" " Chok Gargyar (Koh Ker) " Yaçodharapura (1st Angkor) " " 2nd Angkor (?) " " " " " " "
Yaçovarman II Tribhuvanâdityavarman Cham occupation Jayavarman VII Indravarma II Jayavarman VIII Çrindravarman Çrindrajayavarman Jayavarmaparamaçvara	<i>usurper younger nephew of preceding brother of preceding usurper brother of preceding younger nephew of preceding younger nephew of Jayavarman VI parent of preceding usurper son of Dharanîndravarma II son of preceding related to preceding</i>	Paramanîrvânâpada Sadaçivapada Paramakaivalyapada Paramanishkalapada Paramavishnouloka Mahâ paramasangata pada Parameçvarapada	towards 1160 1165 - 1177 1177 - 1181 1181 - towards 1210 before 1210 - 1243 1243 - 1295 1295 - 1307 1307 - 1327 1327	" " " 3rd Angkor (Bayon) " " " " "
ANGKOR ABANDONED IN 1431				



Chinese texts first referred to *Fou-Nan*, in the first denomination of what was later to become the kingdom of Cambodia, at the beginning of the Christian era - then little advanced since, in the 3rd century, *"the people of the country were still naked"*. In its geographical location, however, it was the natural stop-over between India and China, and this contact with the two large Asiatic civilisations was to assure its rapid transformation with the impression of their double influence.

From the 3rd to the 5th century the clearly Hindu kingdom of Fou-Nan acquired a large territorial boundary - whose dynastic traditions Mr Coëdes attributes to the court of the Pallavas - establishing the capital in the region of Ba Phnom in the south-eastern part of present day Cambodia. Rich and powerful, it maintained steady relations with the Chinese - a fact proven by numerous ambassadorial missions.

Towards the middle of the 6th century, however, the feudal states became unsettled, and the most powerful of them, the Tchen-La or Kambuja (Cambodia as such), proclaimed its independence and gradually enlarged - to Fou-Nan's disadvantage - to eventually take her capital after three quarters of a century of battle during the life of Isanavarman. Gaining the throne around 615, he reigned until 644 and founded the new capital of Isanapura - probably at Sambor-Prei Kuk near Kompong Thom.

A little afterwards, and for the whole of the 8th century, the kingdom divided into two rival states; - the coastal or lower Tchen-La, comprising Cochinchina and the lower Mekong basin to the south of the chain of the Dangrek mountains, - and the inland or upper Tchen-La corresponding to the territories situated to the north of these as far as upper Laos. During this period the lower Tchen-La suffered invasion from Java and Sumatra, where the Malayan empire of Shrivijaya had become powerful. Indeed from Java, at the beginning of the 9th century, came the king - evidently there in exile - who was to re-establish the unity of the kingdom and initiate the so called *"angkorian"* period.

Appealing to the ancient dynasties he ruled under the name of Jayavarman II, and, proclaiming Cambodia's independence from Java, began to investigate a site for his capital - no longer in the lower Mekong basin, but in the region to the north of the Great Lake or Tonle Sap. After a trial period on the plain he cast his interest to the chain of the Mahendra (Phnom Kulen) which, with its vast eastern plateau of 10,000 hectares, offered remarkable conditions for defence against invasion. It was therefore here that, in the year 802, he established the siege of his State and laid the foundations for a new cult - that of the god king or Devaraja - by establishing, on his pyramid of Rong Chen, the first Royal Linga.

After fifty years of reign that had allowed him to unify the country, Jayavarman II, perhaps discouraged by the difficulties of access and the poor potential for the cultural development of the settlement he had chosen - and its distance from the Great Lake - descended once again to its northern shores. He died around 850 at Hariharalaya, the region of Roluos also adopted by first his son and then his nephew, Indravarman I. It was this king who built the artificial pyramid of Bakong - the first sandstone monument - and founded there in 881 the linga Shri Indresvara.

In the last few years of the 9th century, his son Yasovarman, judging his power to be sufficiently stable and seeking to create something of more permanence, finally abandoned the temporary nature of the nomadic settlement to create a veritable "*puri*", with defined limits and endowed with all the prestige of a capital worthy of its name. This was Yasodharapura, the first Angkor, where the "*Vnam Kantal*" or "*Central Mount*" of the inscriptions - identified after fervent research by Mr Goloubew with the hill of Phnom Bakheng - served as a base for the linga Shri Yasodharsvara, the master idol of the kingdom.

Angkor was to remain the capital during the following centuries of battle and glory, except for a period of 23 years from 921 to 944, when the king moved to Chok Gargyar (Koh Ker), a hundred kilometres to the north-east. His nephew Rajendravarman returned to Angkor and "*restored the holy city that had long remained empty*", building the temples of the eastern Mebon and of Pre Rup, and leaving for war with Champa where he sacked the temple of Po Nagar.

Around the 11th century, at the time when the temples of Ta Keo, Phimeanakas and the Baphuon were being built, it seems that the limits of the city were modified and that, by shifting slightly to the north, it no longer had Phnom Bakheng as its centre, but corresponded noticeably from thenceforth to the layout of the future Angkor Thom. During this period a foreign dynasty

took the throne. Perhaps of Malayan origin, the usurper - Suryavarman I - soon enlarged the kingdom to encompass the whole southern part of Siam or *Dvaravati*.

The first half of the 12th century was dominated by the reign of one of the principal kings of Cambodia - Suryavarman II - whose immense architectural realisation of Angkor Wat was to mark the apogee of classical Khmer art. After having being allied with the Chams against the Annamites (Vietnamese) he then turned against them, winning a brilliant victory and gaining part of Champa.

Revenge was not long in coming, and a period of troubled times followed the death of the king, some time after 1145. Power was again seized by an usurper, and in 1177 a surprise attack by the Chams ended in the fall and the sacking of Angkor, followed by general devastation.

The invader, however, subject in his turn to a complete defeat, was expelled by Jayavarman VII who was crowned king in 1181 at the age of about 55. Champa was put under the control of the Khmer and governed by the brother-in-law of the victor who, following his conquests, then extended his power as far north as Vientiane on the Mekong and west to the basin of the Menam.

At the same time and with prodigious activity, Jayavarman VII raised Cambodia from its ruins and reconstructed its capital Angkor Thom, surrounding it with a high wall breached by five monumental gates - he rebuilt the central temple of the Bayon, built or restored to completion the monuments of Prah Khan, Ta Prohm and Banteay Kdei, as well as others of less importance, and furnished the country with numerous hospitals.

Such effort, coming after so many bloody battles, could not but drain the facilities and energy of the nation - so that from the beginning of the 13th

century, after the death of this last great king, the Khmer people fell to inertia. Gradually its princes were stripped first of their ancient conquests by their Thai neighbours, and then of their heritage. Already in 1296 the Chinese envoy Tcheou Ta-Kouan gave some indication of this growing pressure, which must have resulted in the 15th century abandonment of Angkor and the establishment of the Cambodian kings on the banks of the lower Mekong.

To continue with the history of Cambodia from this time would be to leave the bounds of this study, since the period from the 15th century to modern times has little to offer the history of archaeology. The regions of Siem Reap and of Battambang, annexed with no right by the Siamese, were restored to Cambodia in 1907. The year 1907 is not only a date of political importance - it is also since this restitution that the French scholars and architects, encouraged by the sovereign who succeeded to the throne, have been able, by methodical research and the precise technique of anastylosis, to revive the ancient relics of a glorious civilisation.





The religious history of ancient Cambodia is founded on syncretism. From the time of Fou-Nan until the 14th century, Brahmanism and Buddhism - the two great Indian religions - co-existed. Imported to Indochina at the latest towards the beginning of the Christian era, their dual influence is evident time and again in angkorian architecture and epigraphy.

The Khmer kings, while not seeking to impose their personal beliefs, generally seemed to have shown great religious tolerance. Sylvain Levi moreover makes the observation that the two religions, originally foreign to the country, must rather have seduced the middle aristocracy as the manifestation of an elegant and refined culture than to have penetrated to the depth of the masses. Even now there remains a caste of priests - the "*Bakou*" - who carry the Brahmanic cord. Practising the official religion they play an important role, guard the sacred sword and preside at certain traditional festivals.

This fusion of the two religions did not however preclude occasional acts of fanaticism, manifest in the systematic mutilation of the stone idols that were butchered with the carvers tool or re-cut to suit the form of the opposing faith - the stele of Sdok Kak Thom describes for instance how "*king Suryavarman Ist had to raise troops against those who tore down the holy images*", while in the 13th century there was a relentless and violent Shivaite reaction against the works of Jayavarman VII.

The oldest known known archaeological remains in Fou-Nan are Buddhist, suggesting that Buddhism probably preceded Brahmanism. If so, then this would have been in the form of Hinayana or the Small Vehicle (though in Sanskrit) rather than Mahayana or the Large Vehicle. Not appearing in any certain manner until the end of the 7th century, this latter must have gained favour during the angkorian period in parallel with the official Brahmanism, which usually predominated.

At the dawn of the 9th century, the accession to the throne of Jayavarman II - from Java - and the establishment of his capital in the region to the north of the Tonle Sap was to mark the establishment of a new cult that was to continue until the decline of the Khmer empire - that of the Devaraja or the god-king, symbolised in the linga that was considered as an incarnation of Shiva.¹

Set on a "*temple-mountain*" or a tiered pyramid raised at the centre of the capital, this image must have been revered in the residence itself of the living king. The inscription of Sdok Kak Thom again gives

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us the filiation of a whole family of priests who, for more than two centuries, were responsible for maintaining the observation of the newly established ritual.

In Cambodia there was also the privilege of apotheosis, which could benefit not only the king but also certain figures of high delineage - sometimes even during their lifetime - from where came the use of the *"posthumous names"* indicating the celestial abode of the deceased monarch, each one being assimilated to his chosen god.

Towards the end of the 12th century, the Buddhist king Jayavarman VII, in order to assure perpetuity to the symbolic cult of the *Devaraja*, instituted the similar cult of the *Buddha-king* at the Bayon - the central temple of Angkor Thom - manifest in the portrait statue that was found broken at the bottom of the well (and which has now been restored). This form of adaptation, however, was not to last, and from the 13th century, following a return to Shivaïsism, the Buddhism of the Large Vehicle - of the Sanskrit language - was replaced by that of the Small Vehicle - of the Pali language - to which Cambodia has remained faithful.

HINDU BELIEFS

"While for other human beings" - we are told by Sylvain Levi - "senses are witnesses that provide unquestionable assurance, for the Hindu they are but the masters of error and illusion.... The vain and despicable world of phenomena is ruled by a fatal and implacable law - each act is the moral result of a series of immeasurable earlier acts, and the point of departure for another series of immeasurable acts which will be indefinitely transformed by it... Life, when so considered, appears as the most fearful drudgery - like an eternal perpetuity of false personalities, to come and to go without ever knowing rest. So the sovereign perhaps then became none other than the Deliverance, the sublime act by which all causative forces became

eliminated, and which ceased once and for all for a system given the creative power of the illusion."

Such is the framework in which the two main Indian religions were to develop. Introduced to Cambodia it would seem evident that in their transcendent form they could only touch an elite, and were never to penetrate to the masses. The crowds, when admitted to enter the temples, came not in order to worship some or other god of the Hindu pantheon, but rather to prostrate themselves before their duly deified prince or king.

BRAHMANISM

Brahmanism appeared in India several centuries before Christ and was itself derived from Vedism, based on the adoration of the forces and phenomena of nature. Determined by the *"Brahmana"*, its ritual is strongly coloured with symbolism and associated with a particularly crowded polytheism.

At its summit is the *"Trimurti"*, the supreme trinity that synthesises *"the three active states of the universal soul and the three eternal forces of nature. Brahma, as activity, is the creator, - Vishnou, as goodness, is the preserver, - and Shiva, as obscurity, is the destroyer"* (Madrolle).

BRAHMA

In India, as in Cambodia, Brahma has never been a primary divinity despite his apparent supremacy as creator of the world. He is represented with four arms and four opposing faces, two by two, symbolic of his omnipresence. Sometimes he is seated on a lotus whose stem grows from the navel of Vishnou, reclining on the waves. His wife or feminine energy

("sakti") is *Sarasvati*, and his mount is the sacred goose or "*Hamsa*" - "*whose powerful flight symbolises the ascension of the soul to liberation*" (Paul Mus).

Vishnou and Shiva, on the other hand, predominate. After having been associated with Vishnou in the same image during the pre-angkorian period - split by half vertically in the form of Harihara - Shiva initially clearly prevailed. Towards the end of the 11th century until the time of Angkor Wat, however, it would seem that he was ousted by Vishnou.

VISHNOU

Vishnou, the protector of the universe and of the gods, generally stands with a single face and four arms, carrying as attributes the disc, the conch, the ball and the club. His wife is Lakshmi, the goddess of beauty. One can often see her between two elephants who, with raised trunks, spray her with lustral water. The mount of the god is the sun bird, Garuda, who has the body of a man and the talons and beak of an eagle and is, as genie of the Air against the genies of the Waters, enemy since birth of nagas or serpents.

In the form of the Brahman dwarf *Vamana*, Vishnou crosses Heaven, the Earth and the intermediate atmosphere in three steps to assure possession of the world to the gods. Between each cosmic period (Kalpa), while the world sleeps, the god slumbers on the serpent Ananta, carried by the ocean waves. On awakening he is reincarnated, as man or beast, to triumph over the forces of evil, each time starting a new era. These are the "*avatars*", or the descents of the god to earth, the principal of which number a dozen.

THE AVATARS OF VISHNOU

In the form of the *tortoise*, Vishnou participates in the popular "*Churning of the Ocean*", taken from the Bhagavata Pourana and common in iconography - the gods and the demons dispute the possession of the amrita,

the elixir of immortality, and the tortoise serves as a base for the mountain forming a pivot.

As the man lion, *Narasimha*, Vishnou claws the king of the Asuras, Hiranya-Kasipu, who dared to challenge his supremacy.

But in particular it was *Rama* and *Krishna*, the two human incarnations of whom the Indian poets wrote, that provided the sculptors of the walls and frontons of the temples with an endless supply of subject matter. The two main epics of the Ramayana and of the Mahabharata, we are told by Keyserling, "*are to the Hindus what the Book of Kings was to the exiled Jews - the chronicle of a time when they were a force to be reckoned with on earth while also in closer contact with the celestial powers.*" They were devoted to the legends because "*they had no sentiment about historical truth - for them the myth and the reality were but one and the same. Soon the legend is judged as reality and the reality condensed in the legend. The facts by themselves are irrelevant*".

Krishna remains quite human. Exchanged as a child he escaped death at birth to lead a bucolic existence in the forest. Of Herculean strength, he drags a heavy mortar stone to which he has been attached by his step mother, felling two trees along the way. As an adolescent of great beauty he charms the shepherds and shepherdesses and protects them and their flocks from a storm by raising mount Govardhana with one arm. Mounted on Garuda he triumphs in his battle against the asura Bana, but generously spares the asura his life at Shiva's will.

It is at the request of the gods, who urge him to rid the world of the demon Ravana, that Vishnou manifests himself as Rama, son of the king of Ayodhya. Winning a contest in which he has to shoot a bird behind a moving wheel with an arrow, he gains the hand of the beautiful Sita, the adopted daughter of the king of Mithila. Then sadly exiled by her father he goes, with

his brother Lakshmana, to live as an ascetic in the forest, accompanied by his wife. There they are subject to attack by the rakshasas. Sita, first saved from the hands of one of them, Viradha, is then taken by their king Ravana - particularly menacing with his multiple arms and heads - who carries her to the island of Lanka (Ceylon) while the two brothers are lured by an enchanted gazelle with a golden coat. Alerted by the vulture Jatayus, who tries in vain to prevent the kidnapping, they set off to recover Sita, meeting with the white monkey Hanuman who takes them to his king *Sugriva* - whom they find grieving in the forest, having been ousted from his throne by his brother *Valin*. They form an alliance with him. *Valin* is killed by an arrow from *Rama* during a struggle, and *Sugriva*, heading his army, leaves for the attack of Lanka.

Hanuman, who is sent ahead to investigate, finds the despondent *Sita* in the grove of asoka trees where she is guarded by the *rakshasis* (female demons) and exchanges a ring with her to prove the success of his mission to *Rama*. He leaves, but not before torching the palace of *Ravana*, and the monkeys, having first constructed a dike to cross the channel of water separating them from their enemies, begin the multiple episode struggle - with the furious scrum dominated by the duel between *Ravana* on his chariot drawn by horses with human heads and *Rama*, also mounted on a chariot or on the shoulders of *Garuda*. A son of *Ravana*, the magician *Indrajit*, restrains *Rama* and *Lakshmana* with arrows which transform into serpents and encoil them - but *Garuda*, swooping from the sky, saves them. Victory finally goes to *Rama*, who rescues the unhappy *Sita*. However, suspected of being corrupted, she is put to the test of fire. Proven innocent by this ordeal she is solemnly returned by the god of fire, *Agni*, to her husband - who is finally restored to the throne of his fathers.

SHIVA

In the Trimurti it is *Shiva* who, with *Brahma* at his right and *Vishnou* at his left, has to be considered as the supreme god, of whom the others are but the emanation and reflection.

Sometimes he is the great destroyer, the genie of the tempest and of destructive forces - though more so in India than in Cambodia, where he is rarely presented in a bad light - while elsewhere as the protector he is benevolent, the god who conceives and creates. He is also the first of the ascetics, going naked to rub himself in the cinders of a dung fire, living on charity and practising meditation - the source of perfection.

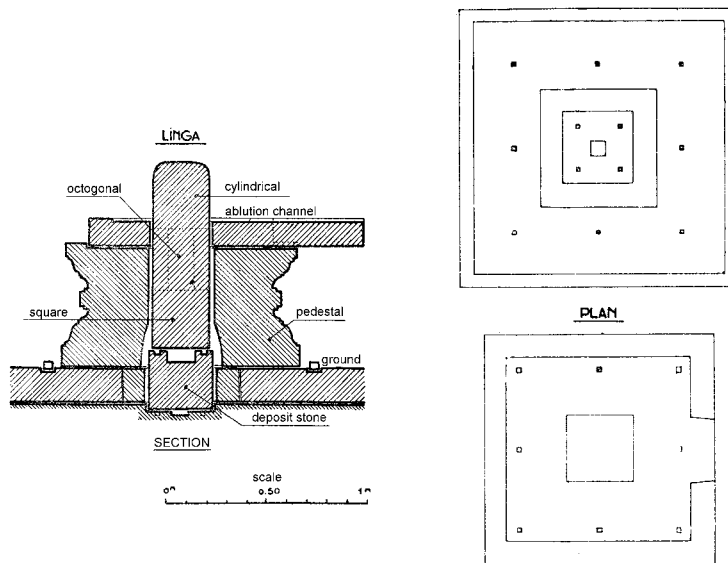
In his human form he usually has a single face with a third eye placed vertically in the middle of the forehead and his hair raised in a chignon, showing a crescent - but he sometimes also has multiple heads. His arms likewise vary in number, his principal attribute is the trident and his torso is crossed with the Brahmanic cord. He determines destiny with his dance - the frenetic rhythm of the "*tandava*". His *sakti* or feminine energy can also herself be sweet or ferocious - sweet she is *Parvati*, the goddess of the Earth, or *Uma*, the Gracious, whom one can often see sitting on Shiva's knee when he is throned on mount Kailasa or riding his usual mount, *Nandin* the sacred bull - ferocious, she is *Durga* the Aggressor who, with her lion, overcomes the demon buffalo.

The cult of *Shiva* is no less reserved - particularly in its symbolic representation, the creative power expressed by the "*linga*" - though there is no particular reason to dwell upon the phallic nature of this image which, for the oriental spirit, goes far beyond questions of human sexuality.

The *linga* is formed in a cylinder of carefully polished stone, with rounded corners at its top, rising from a base that is first octagonal in section and then square. It represents, according to the legend, the sheath of *Vishnou* (octagonal), and then of *Brahma* (square), protecting the earth from contact with the sacred pillar which, descending from the sky as a column of flame, would drive itself into the soil. Only the cylindrical section projects from the pedestal. This is covered with a channelled stone (*snanadroni*) that has a projecting beak forming a gully that is always orientated to the north. The

priest anoints it with lustral water which flows over it in a symbolic ritual destined to bring rain and fertility to the lands.

From the union of *Shiva* and *Parvati* are born two sons - *Skanda*, the god of war whose mount is the peacock or the rhinoceros - and *Ganesha*, the god of initiative, intelligence and wisdom. Popular in Cambodia, he has the head of an elephant and the body of a man - usually plump and coiled with the Brahmanic cord. Normally seated, he dips his trunk into a bowl resting in one hand, while with the other he holds the tip of one of his broken tusks. His mount is the rat. Legend has it that, originally a handsome young man, he was one day standing guard at his mother's door and prevented his father from entering who, enraged, decapitated him. At the insistence of *Parvati*, *Shiva* consented to give him the head of the first living being that presented itself - which was an elephant.



INDRA AND SOME SECONDARY DIVINITIES.

An ancient superior god of vedism, *Indra* remained the principal of the secondary divinities. He is sieged in paradise on the summit of *Mount Meru* and, armed with a thunderbolt or "*vajra*", he rouses the storms that generate the life-giving rains. His mount is *Airavana*, the white elephant born of the churning of the Sea of Milk, who generally has three heads.

Kama.

The god of love, he is a handsome adolescent with a sugar cane bow and lotus stem arrows. His spouse is *Rati* and his mount is the parrot.

Yama.

The Law Lord or supreme judge, who presides over the underworld. He is mounted on a buffalo or rides an oxen drawn chariot.

Kubera.

The god of riches, he is dwarfed and deformed. He is commander of the "*Yaksha*" or *Yeaks*, the grimacing giants with bulging eyes and prominent fangs that one finds particularly as *dvarapalas* or guardians, armed with clubs at the sanctuary doors.

Finally are the countless demigods, found in profusion in the decoration of the temples. Amongst others are the benevolent *deva*, eternally in battle with the *asura*, ogres and demons - the *apsaras*, flying celestial nymphs, born of the Churning of the Sea of Milk, they animate *Indra's* sky with their dancing - there are also the *devata* of the bas-reliefs who stand, richly adorned and motionless, holding flowers - and the *nagas*, the stylisation of a multi-headed cobra, descendants of *Nagaraja*, the mythical ancestor of the Khmer kings, and genies of the water.

BUDDHISM OF MAHAYANA OR THE LARGE VEHICLE

It would be wrong to believe that the first Buddhism eliminated the preceding divinities of the Brahmanic pantheon - quite the contrary - for the most part it assimilated them, though giving them a role that was secondary to that of the Buddha. The conquest however was more apparent than real, and in India soon became a cause of weakness.

"The Large Vehicle" - we are told by Madame de Coral-Remusat - "develops the supernatural aspect of the Buddha - it involves a whole pantheon of bodhisattvas or future Buddhas, then the Dhyani-Bouddhas or Buddhas in Contemplation. To the belief in Nirvana, advocated by the Hinayana, the Mahayanists add an infinite Paradise - the "Pure Earth" where the soul is reborn according to its merit".

The *"Lotus of the Good Law"*, the canonical reference, describes the genesis of the formation of these bodhisattvas who are the saints of the new religion. Arriving at the very threshold of Nirvana through meditation and understanding, they defer their own deliverance in order to dedicate themselves to the salvation of others through teaching.

In Cambodia, Avalokitesvara or Lokeshvara is the spiritual son of the transcending Dhyani-Buddha *Amitabha* - the image of whom he carries on his chignon. He personifies, as Paul Mus has explained *"the notion of providence, unknown to primitive Buddhism"*. He is the *"Lord of the World"* from whom all gods emanate, himself the god of morality and graciousness - a masculine replica of *Kouan-Yin*, the other dominant figure in far eastern Buddhism. His attributes are often comparable to those of Shiva. Sitting or standing on a lotus blossom that elevates him above the world, he generally has four arms. His attributes are the flask, the book, the lotus and the rosary - but the number can vary from two to six or twelve and more. The face often has a third eye on the forehead and the heads can be multiple and in tiers.

In the living architecture of the towers of the Bayon, by the turning of his four faces to the four cardinal points, he is omnipresent.

Lokeshvara is also represented bedecked with jewels, or *"irradiant"* - where a multitude of small beings emanate from his body - Buddhas, divinities or demigods - in such a way that Louis Finot has compared their likeness to a chain-mail coat made of a pattern of figurines.

In the Buddhist Trinity, the *Buddha* sits in the centre between *Lokeshvara* and his feminine form, the *Prajnaparamita* or *Tara* - both of whom stand. She is the *"Perfection of Wisdom"* and also has four arms, with an *Amitabha* on the front of her chignon.

THE BUDDHA

All figurative representations of the Buddhist religion are characterised by an attitude of meditation - the face is graced with a smiling serenity and the eyes remain either half or entirely closed.

The Buddha is not often portrayed standing or reclining, but usually sits with his hands in one of the ritual gestures or *"mudra"*. Standing, his posture is known as *"the absence of fear"* - the arms beside the body and bent at the elbow, the hands raised with the palms to the front. Sitting *"in the lotus position"* with the legs crossed parallel and the feet extending, he is in *"meditation"* with the hands flat in the lap, or in *"charity"* with the right hand stretched before the thigh, palm uppermost - or else similarly but with the palm downwards, *"calling the earth to witness"*. Otherwise he is as *"teacher"* with the hands returning against the chest, a finger of one between the thumb and index finger of the other.

The Buddha is sometimes seated on a base representing a lotus blossom and sometimes on the coils of the body of the naga, *Mucilinda*, who shelters his meditation under the fan of his multiple heads which spread from

the nape of his neck. He is clad in the monastic robe covering the right shoulder - sometimes indicated with a simple line on the stone. The top of the head is marked by a protrusion covered in ringlets of hair and often treated like a chignon. This is the "*ushnisha*" which, at the time of Siamese influence, finished in a flame while the face became disproportionately elongated to an oval. The ear lobes are lengthened and pierced, but are without jewellery.

One finds, however, some examples of the "*adorned Buddha*" wearing the diadem and royal insignia - in which manner he is considered as the "sovereign of the world". This conception responds to the legend of Jambupati, a proud king who refused to pay homage to the Buddha - who then appeared before him in all his resplendence.

Normally the Buddhas only appear on earth after long intervals. The historic Buddha, Sakyamuni, the founder of this religion, lived from the 6th to the 5th century before Christ and was of noble blood. The son of the king of Sakya and of the queen Maya-Devi, his name was Siddhartha.

His parents, to whom a prediction had been made of his future, tried to dissuade him from his destiny by sheltering him from all harsh realities and forcing him to lead a life of leisure within the palace.

Already married and the father of a child, he became exposed to conditions of decay, suffering and death while out walking through an encounter with an old man, a sick man, and a corpse. A meeting with an ascetic then convinced him to forsake the ways of the world.

Fleeing the palace one night and abandoning his family and possessions, he determined to lead from thenceforth the life of a wandering hermit, becoming a disciple of the Brahmins. Soon disillusioned with the vanity of their teaching, however, he sought a more severe form of

asceticism, but weakened by his ordeals and feeling no closer to his objective he abandoned extreme measures, committing himself instead to the "*middle way*". Through only meditation he freed himself from all temptation and evil, finally attaining enlightenment and the quality of the Buddha.

Foregoing immediate entrance to Nirvana but having found the path to enlightenment, he decided to "*turn the Wheel of the Law*" and to preach his doctrine - which he was to practice for 44 years until his death.

The principal episodes represented in Khmer art are; - "*The Great Departure*", where, accompanied by his faithful servant Chandaka, the future Buddha leaves his palace on the horse Kanthaka, whose clattering hooves are cushioned by the hands of the four Lokapalas or "*guardians of the world*", - the "*Cutting of the Hair*", where with one stroke of his sword he renounces his worldly life, - the "*Offering of the animals in the forest*", - the "*Offering of Sujata*", the young girl who gives the sage a bowl of rice, - the "*Offering of the Lokapalas*", whose four bowl he mixes into one to show there is no difference between their gifts, - the "*Submission of the Elephant Nalagiri*", drugged and enraged by the enemies of Happiness, - the "*Meditation under the Bodhi tree*", a species of Banyan or "*Ficus Religiosa*", - the "*Assault of Mara*" and of his demons whom the goddess of the Earth, called upon to attest the merits acquired by the holy ascetic, drowned in the water that gushed when she wrung her hair, symbolic of the abundance of the sage's previous libations - and the "*carnal Temptation*" by the seductive daughters of Mara.

Death and the entrance to Nirvana are portrayed with the representation of the Buddha lying on his right side, with one arm along his body and the other folded under his head.

Finally, the faithful still now pay homage to the Buddhas footprints, on which the crossing lines, engraved with various symbols, surround the central emblem of the wheel or "*sakra*".



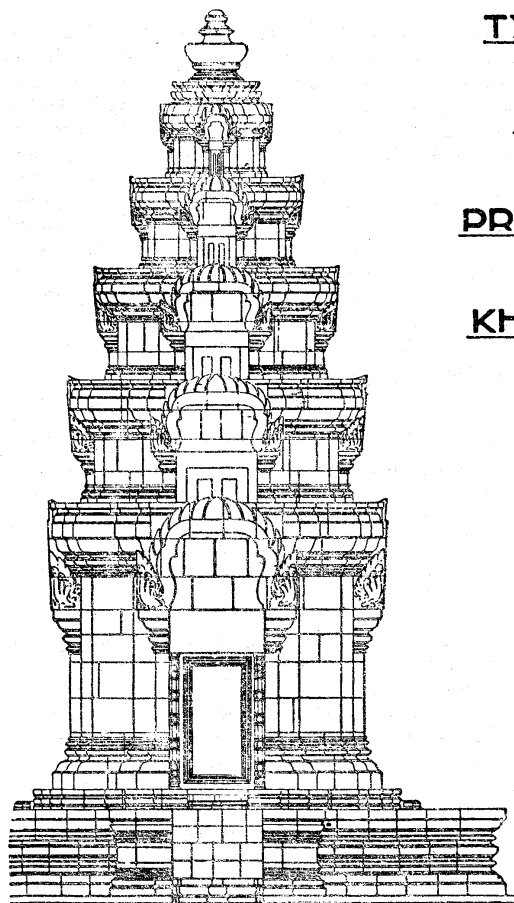
A. MEANING AND PURPOSE.

The clearing of the Angkor monuments, in revealing their planning and structure, ended the misinformed speculation by some authors that some at least of the stone structures had been palaces for the king or other high dignitaries. The quincunx of towers, while sometimes joined by dark narrow galleries and littered with undoubtedly cultural remains, do not however constitute a palace. At most, the long rooms sometimes surrounding the core of the buildings - also built of hard but less noble materials and broader since they were roofed with timber and tiles and not with stone - could perhaps be considered as having been places of rest.

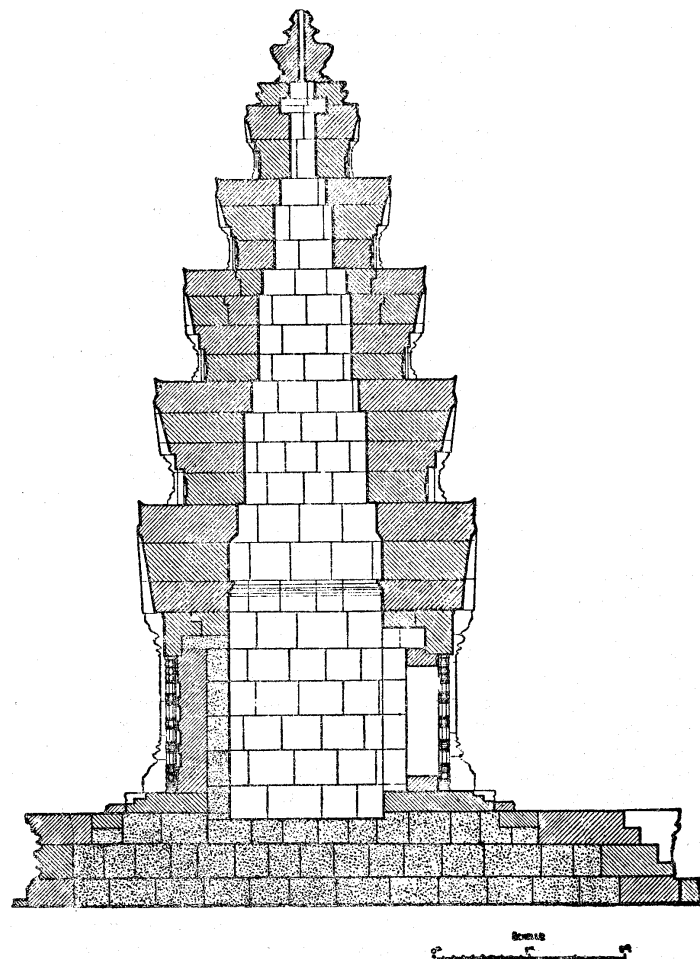
The fact that, in the account of his voyage, Tcheou Ta-Kouan did not describe the royal palace as being built of stone - that he indicates for the other monuments - suggests that it was rather constructed in light-weight materials like all other dwelling structures. *"The tiles of the king's private dwellings", he wrote, "are in lead, while other parts of the palace are covered with pottery tiles, yellow in colour... Long colonnades and open corridors stretch away, without grand symmetry... The dwellings of the princes and of the important officers are quite different in size and design from those of the people. The family temple and the main hall are covered with tiles... Straw thatch covers the dwellings of the commoners - they would not dare to use tiles..."*

It is certain that the stone buildings we see at Angkor, with an architecture that obeys rigorous and constant rules of order and symmetry, served purely monumental ends. Satisfying only requirements of longevity and steeped with symbolism, they merely indicate the framework of the capital and suburban settlements that were otherwise built from perishable materials - and an undoubtedly religious framework, since each element represents but a blossoming of sanctuaries responding to the multiplicity of gods and divinities. Other than these saintly dwellings were not considered worthy to survive.

The stone monuments are temples in so far as they are monuments raised in honour of the divinities. Their number and size may perhaps surprise, seeming disproportionate to the area occupied by the city and its suburbs and to the density of the population - whatever the religious fervour of the Khmer. With our western mentality we are naturally inclined to see in all religious buildings the equivalent of our churches and cathedrals that respond to a need of general faith - to the pious sentiments of the masses - that were the work of a population who met there in order to pray and to practise the rituals of their religion.



TYPE
DE
PRASAT
KHMER



The Khmer temples, however, were not places of public religion, but religious foundations - the personal work of a king or an aristocrat, destined to accumulate spiritual “merits” for their authors - that could then reflect on other participants.

These grandiose schemes, realised by a labour-force whose service was perhaps not always given voluntarily, absorbed much of the populations’ energy and, in addition to the various military exploits, virtually exhausted them - precluding any other activity in order to endow each monarch with a new jewel. And yet, although it was due to this colossal effort that the cult of the god-king - and of all others who merited such deification - could continue in a setting that was worthy of it, the masses were not admitted to honour their gods, sieged as they were in the very midst of their settlement. Such honour was reserved only for the officiants. With the usual appetite for the traditional ceremonies described by the inscriptions, the faithful, crowded into the external enclosures, would prostrate themselves at the passing of idols and relics summarily offered by the priests for their adoration, or otherwise walk in procession in the ritual direction of “*pradakshina*”, that always keeps the sacred site to the right, or in the opposite direction of “*prasavya*” reserved for funeral processions.

In present day Cambodia, the Buddhist monasteries or “*pagodas*” consist, apart from the “*vihara*” or temple surrounded by “*sema*” (sacred marker stones), of a public meeting room - which is comparatively far less monumental - and lodgings for the monks. It can be assumed that, around the stone temples in angkorian times, there were the same modest dwellings and places where monks and laymen could meet for the everyday practising of their religion. Tchcou Ta-Kouan, when describing the monks who “*shave their heads, wear yellow robes and bare their right shoulder*” just as today, explained that “*their temples are often roofed with tiles and contain only one statue, closely resembling the Buddha Sakyamuni. Moulded from clay, it is painted in various colours and draped with red. Buddhas on the towers,*

however, are bronze...”. This text confirms the esoteric nature of some of the stone monuments and of their religious destination.

Mr Coedes, based on certain epigraphic evidence, stated “*that the principal temples, those that were of royal origin, are funerary temples or mausolea and, in some respects, tombs, if one is to assume that the ashes were placed there under the statue representing the deceased in his divine aspect. These were not public temples or places of pilgrimage, but rather the final resting place for the Cambodian sovereign, throned in his divine aspect, as in a palace*”. The discovery of numerous stone tanks, similar to sarcophagi, ultimately led him to the conclusion that the Angkor monuments were at the same time both temples and mausolea - “*the last resting place of a being who, during his life, enjoyed certain divine rights, and for whom death consummated his assimilation to a god - a funerary palace in which his mortal remains were laid to rest, but where his statue also stood representing him in the form of a god*”.²

In the present state of our knowledge, it seems reasonable to hold with this double function, although clearly the notion of the pantheon dominates that of the necropolis.

B. SITING, STRUCTURE AND SYMBOLISM.

In each of the Angkor monuments a preoccupation with symbolic order seeks to create a representation of the universe in reduction - the tiered bases representing the *Meru*, the abode of the gods - the chains of mountains as their enclosure walls and the oceans as their moats - realising a kind of correctly ordered model.

Astrology determined siting which responded to magical ends. At the chosen location, the architect with the help of the high priest - or the high priest himself - would make an extensive “*interpretation of space*”, and so construct his building with four doors facing the four cardinal points - the east

remaining, and only rarely approximately, the main orientation with the diagonals of the square joining the intermediate points.

The predominance of this eastern orientation, a sort of glorification of the rising sun, could be considered as a manifestation of the sun cult so favoured in ancient civilisations - and taken when rising with its most strength at the summer solstice and following the course of its light, the ambulation ritual of *pradakshina* around the temple in fact becomes none other than the living translation of this trajectory. According to some archaeologists, the siting of most of the Angkor monuments corresponded to a sort of marking out of the solar path according to the solstitial alignments.

The temple type of Khmer architecture is the “*temple-mountain*”, with terraces tiered in varying numbers following a law of constant proportional reduction that would have enclosed a pyramid. This is the Celestial Mountain or *Meru*, erected on the axis of the world (often marked by a deep well) serving as a pedestal for the god-king - symbolic in elevation from the base, where the faithful prostrate themselves and pray, to the summit, where the officiant addresses the gods and where the very spirit of the divine king resides.

Sometimes the pyramid is crowned with a single sanctuary, others with a quincunx of towers in evocation of the five summits of *Meru*. Occasionally other buildings also adorn the tiers. In every case, the square or rectangular surrounding walls enclose secondary buildings at the base - the chains of mountains surrounding the cosmic mountain and separated by the seas, represented here by moats. For the Khmer, this double principle of tiering and of successive enclosure forms the origin of all architectural realisation.

Occasionally, however, - particularly in the less important monuments of the pre-angkorian period or at the beginning of the classic art - the notion

of elevation was expressed by the simple raising of the buildings on a terrace, where they were presented as if on a plateau - sometimes as an isolated sanctuary, sometimes as one or two rows of towers.

Towards the beginning of the 11th century came the appearance of covered galleries linking the corner sanctuaries or surrounding the central group - with entrance pavilions or “*gopura*” on the four axes - forming interior courtyards that emphasised the private nature of the religious buildings. These were often themselves complemented with other galleries on pillars, perhaps with half-vaulted side-aisles, dividing the courtyard into four sections - or else, serving to accentuate the eastern orientation, expanding into long rooms adjoining the principal building, flanked on either side by the so called “*libraries*” that opened to the west.

Gradually, and particularly when Buddhism became more widespread and so promoted the conventual life, the temple became a monastery - with the same system of cloisters closed by the galleries repeating in each concentric enclosure. Usually the arrangement of tiers gave way to a ground-level composition where the idea of elevation was only expressed in the succession of separating galleries and the predominance of the central sanctuary. The east-west axis became increasingly accentuated, forming a corridor virtually uninterrupted by rooms or vestibules - a sacred vista to the heart of the monument. In the last great ensembles such as Prah Khan and Ta Prohm, a profusion of annexe buildings further complicated the plan that so retained nothing of its original beautiful simplicity. Motivated by an apparent “*dread of emptiness*”, the Khmer continued to make alterations and additions to the detriment of the grand vision.

While in Cambodia the direct descendants of the builders of Angkor, dumbfounded by the colossal effort accomplished by their ancestors, assumed the origin of the monuments to be divine and so attributed their construction to *Indra* and his son, the celestial architect *Vishvakarman*, it was customary in the West, however, following the revelations made by Mouhot on discovering Angkor Wat in 1860, to have a certain contempt for this strange art, for which the main appreciation was found in the romantic charm of the ruins being engulfed by the jungle.

For a long time the tomes of art history passed them over in silence, so that even in the second half of the nineteenth century the period was still described as one of the weakest in terms of the realisation of any architectural quality. In cultural circles it was the level of ornament and the faultless execution of the detail that were admired rather than the value of the whole. Khmer art was taken as a minor art, trailing behind that of India - and even the well known poet Paul Claudel, on viewing the towers of Angkor Wat, saw only *"five stone pineapples fringed with flames"*.

This lack of understanding came at a time when little was known of the large Angkor monuments, and from the particularly Western desire to compare things to one's own experience. The French spirit enjoys reason, logic and truth, and is preoccupied with technique and the intrinsic value of each form - which so tends to establish a kind of hierarchy in the appreciation of art. In the East, by contrast, such perfection matters less. The architecture is the basis for a spiritual expression, and the angkorian temple, formed of conventions and symbols, is but the translation of an idea, of a force that is superior to mere aesthetic considerations.

Architecturally, supported by the test of time, we can be justified in recognising that the Khmer, in composing Angkor Wat, in arranging the royal esplanade of Angkor Thom or the admirable perspective of Prah Khan with its avenue of bornes and the lake of Neak Pean - or in digging the two barays and the Srah Srang - showed a strong understanding for the concept of the grand scheme, so realising an ensemble that stands unique. As a progression of *"events"* these are a prelude to the conceptions of Le Notre³ and of the grand urban designers of modern times. Angkor Wat, comparable to the most impressive of history's architectural compositions, in responding to all the requirements of a *"component"* within an already established plan, attains a classic perfection by the restrained monumentality of its finely balanced elements and the precise arrangement of its proportions. It is a work of power, unity and style.

The conformity of Khmer art is undeniable - and though India may be at its source, she is so as stimulator rather than creator. She perhaps imposed ideas of direction, framework, tradition and constraint, but in following these "*formulae*" the Khmer put them to their own particular use and, in the execution, took control. While the builder of the Hindu temples has no respect for any architectural concept and, carried away in a frenzy of modelling, encumbers the composition which so becomes confused with the extravagance of the decoration, the Khmer sculptor on the other hand maintains a feeling for the dimension of the mass, and, working always directly on the surface of the pre-formed panels of wall, submits to the discipline imposed by the architect to enhance the main idea, to emphasise the form by the organisation of his mouldings and ornamentation rather than to detract from its purity - he never allows free rein to his fantasy and spirit except in the detail, which is usually minute.

Through India also came themes from Greece, Rome, from Egypt and from Syria, with some reminiscence of Arab or French art of the middle ages - there are also influences from China, and, by a sort of anticipation, certain elements that can be found in the Renaissance, baroque or rococo styles.

Despite being subject to such influences, Khmer art nonetheless maintained, as said, a strong individuality - which also appears in its shortcomings, failings and faults - or at least those characteristics which we so judge through our Western eyes. Yet if it would be unjust to lament the lack of any interior spaciousness, which may be upsetting but which remains nonetheless inherent in the very nature of the buildings, then perhaps we cannot help but be dismayed by the absence of any "*real*" buildings that - in responding to purely spiritual ideals - rarely go beyond the state of the appearance or the perceived impression.

Usually the exterior only gives but an imperfect - if not misleading - idea of the internal structure; - illusory storeys - truncated proportions - the

perception of the necessity of the arch but dressed as a wall and defying the laws of gravity - flying ribs barred by wooden ceilings at the height of the cornice - lubricious stairs so steep that they have to be climbed on all fours and with the feet turned sideways - conflicts between the plan and the façade - half vaults, false doors and walled-in windows - cuts and assemblies of stone that are only relevant to the carpenter... This lack of sincerity in the means of expression - yet the Asian cares not nor suffers for it. And we would be wrong to assume ourselves to be more demanding than he, or to let these shortcomings detract from our true appreciation of the outcome.

THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS

All Khmer architecture relies on notions of axis and symmetry, necessarily implying the repetition of its elements.

THE PRASAT

The fundamental element is the sanctuary tower, or "*prasat*", that sheltered the idol within its square chamber. Orientated accordingly, it opens to the exterior sometimes with two or four doors, but usually with a single opening to the east - the closed sides being walled with false doors. The plan can become cruciform by the adjoining of *avant-corps* forming vestibules that appear towards the end of the tenth century.

The axial stairways, generally preceded by a decorative base step in "*accolade*" form, lead to the *prasat*, built on a base which can itself be raised on a terrace.

The principal level, crowned with a cornice, can have its corner piers formed with a simple or double redent, perhaps with divinities sculpted in the niches. Each door is framed by colonnettes carrying lintels, themselves bordered by pilasters supporting a fronton. Above, the false storeys - almost always numbering four - follow the principle of proportional reduction of the tiered temples, with a repetition of the same elements that are found at the

base, while internally the stone courses are corbelled like a sort of stepped chimney that sometimes contained a hanging velum or wooden ceiling. A crowning motif with lotus petals closes the top, into which was set a metal pole - perhaps a trident.

On each upper tier the external silhouette was animated with antefixes, often as models of the prasat, set at the corners. Thus the sanctuary tower itself becomes its own decoration, so affirming its character as a temple in reduction.

The towers with four faces of the Bayon period (late 12th century) are a simple variation of the prasat.

THE GALLERIES

The galleries surrounding the prasats constitute the successive enclosures, which it is customary to number from the centre of the monument. In simple form they are bordered by two walls, one of which may be plain, and lit by openings that can be clear or decorated with an always uneven number of turned balusters. Above the cornice they are covered with a corbelled vault, sometimes shallow, and masked internally by a wooden ceiling. The exterior can have a ridge crested with a line of turned stone finials or small decorative crenellations, and often imitates the parallel undulations of a channel-tiled roof, terminating in a line of lotus petals.

Forming a cloister, the galleries can also open broadly on one side with the replacement of the wall by a line of pillars. Rarely appearing before the beginning of the 12th century, this arrangement was soon joined by a second row of pillars forming a side-aisle covered with a half vault, with beams or struts connecting the points of support. In the axial galleries all walls disappeared, and the central passage has a side-aisle to either side.

THE ENCLOSURES AND THE GOPURA

When they are not defined by galleries, the different enclosures are bounded by simple walls with a coping. There is usually an entrance pavilion or "*gopura*" on each axis, with a central core that is generally cruciform in plan and frequently complemented with vestibules, porticoes and lateral wings with secondary entrances. Sometimes, particularly on the side of the main entrance, the gopuras become quite developed, with the external silhouette taking the form of one or three towers - similar to those of the sanctuaries - or a crossing of naves with four gable ends treated with frontons.

ANNEXE BUILDINGS

Some temples have, linked to the central sanctuary by an adjoining vestibule, a vaulted long room with an avant-corps to the east and the side walls pierced with a door framed by windows - an arrangement also found in the monuments of India.

In the eastern part of the first enclosure, on either side of the main axis, two similar buildings open only to the west in inverse to the sanctuaries and are poorly lit by long, narrow, horizontal windows. These are usually referred to as "*libraries*". While an inscription found at Prasat Khna seems to justify this name, these buildings, while certainly ritual in siting, must rather in our view have contained - apart from the sacred books - various religious artefacts. When there is only one library it is found to the south.

While the internal plan forms a simple rectangle, the external gives the impression of a nave with a side-aisle to either side - since a false half-vault covers most of the depth of the wall - and a false upper storey. The barrel of the vault ends in frontons.

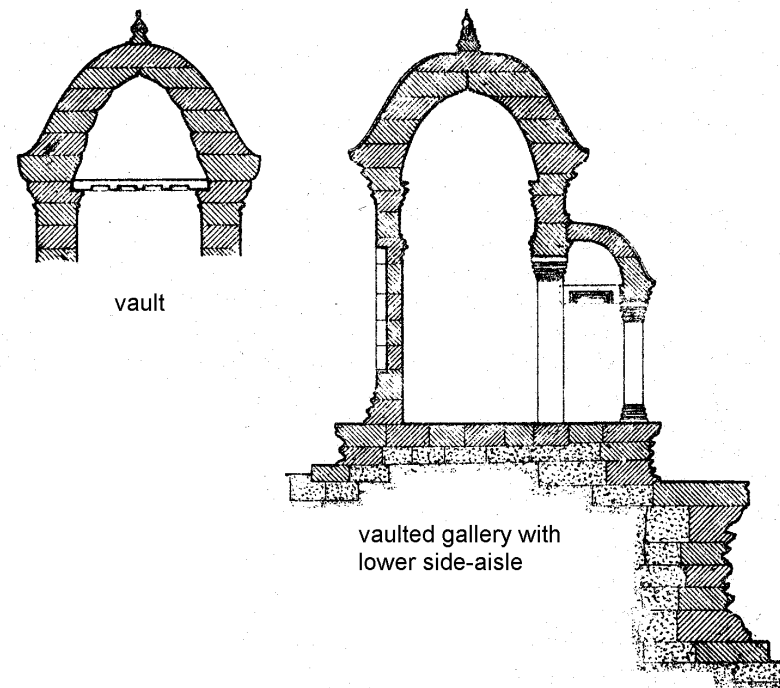
Within the last enclosure of the principal temples towards the end of the 12th century, on the east side (there is one to the north of the main axis at Prah Khan and at Ta Prohm) are buildings - wider than normal due to an

audacious system of double curving vaults - that served as a “rest house with fire”. For a long time called “*dharmasala*”, they are mentioned by Tcheou Ta-Kouan; - “on the main roads there are places of rest similar to our stage posts”. The inscription of Prah Khan tells of 121 rest houses lining the ancient roads of the kingdom. From Angkor to the capital of Champa (along the eastern road through Beng Mealea and Prah Khan of Kompong Svay) there were 57, corresponding to an average relay distance of 12.5 km.

Apart from these three particular types of building, one finds various other buildings within the successive enclosure walls whose utilitarian nature is confirmed by their course masonry and particularly by their tiled timber roofs - of which numerous remains have been found. These mainly surrounded the temple in the form of a line of long rooms or galleries, and were used either as places of habitation or retreat for the priests - with the throng of lay people attached to the service of the temple no doubt being lodged in wooden huts in the surrounding area - or else as warehouses, stores and shelters for the faithful.

AROUND THE MONUMENTS

In principle, each temple was surrounded by a moat. Representing, as described, the ocean in this microcosm, this could also have provided a means of defence. Ahead of the main axis - or even on a number of axes - the lions or “*dvarapalas*” armed with clubs stand as guardians. Across the moat extends a wide paved causeway, sometimes for hundreds of metres, bordered by naga-balustrades set on stone blocks - an essentially Khmer motif - punctuated by lateral stairways and sometimes terminating in a vast cruciform terrace, used for ceremonies and ritual dance, or framed by pools. Otherwise a line of decorative bornes may lead to a “*baray*”.



"In Cambodia" - Henri Parmentier tells us - "it would seem the construction was but a tedious necessity that was skimped in order to realise as quickly as possible the form which was more or less determined by tradition".

It is a fact that the Khmer, who had specialised for so long in timber architecture - in which they are considerably skilled - showed some delightfully incompetent technique in the art of building in durable materials, ignorant even of the rudiments of stereotomy. Too often the stone blocks were neither squared nor arranged in coursing by the natural lie of the stone. Vertical joints running from bottom to top without any horizontal overlapping, as in the towers of the Bayon, created veritable fault planes. The mass of the large walls was rarely homogenous, the main structure being surfaced in a simply adhered covering that was often relatively thin and of a different material. The porticoes or galleries with wide opening bays see the whole weight of the fronton or vaults distributed on long monolithic architraves resting on pillars, which in turn almost invariably fractured under the excessive load.

Everywhere the mistakes and errors are flagrant, with nothing to correct them other than, in certain critical cases, double T form iron straps set into and linking adjacent stones. The excessive corbelling and the mixed use of materials in the construction of the vaults - such as in the 10th/11th century practice of strengthening the sandstone lintels by doubling them with timber beams - also caused extensive structural failure. The stone is constantly used in the manner of timber with the same means of assembly, taking no account of the fact that the material is not able to act effectively in tension.

And yet the ensemble remains, despite the ravages of time and climate. All of these faults that trouble us or provoke our reproach are happily tolerated by the Khmer - as Orientals less concerned with shortcomings in detail - with neither eye nor spirit offended, and their general appreciation for the quality of the work certainly unchanged.

BUILDING MATERIALS

The temples of ancient Cambodia are constructed either in sandstone or in brick, often combined in a greater or lesser proportion with laterite.

Sandstone.

The Cambodian "*thma puok*" - literally 'mud stone' - is variable in colour and is, with the exception of the particularly durable rose coloured sandstone used notably at Banteay Srei, a soft stone with little strength. The predominant grey sandstone decomposes and becomes friable under the action of the elements, cracking with the growth of roots and, often laid against the grain, defoliating - it rarely maintains the clear surface and keen line of its decoration and profiles. It weighs from two to two and a half tonnes per cubic metre.

Some large open quarries have been found on the hillside between the temple of Beng Mealea and the south-east extremity of the chain of the Phnom Kulen, at about forty kilometres from Angkor. Transport must have been in part by water, in part by carrying on shoulders or pulling on rollers. The regularly placed round holes of a few centimetres circumference and depth, apparent in most of the stone blocks of the monuments, probably took either wooden pegs tied by vines or metal lugs for a kind of hoist arranged to allow the stone to be manoeuvred during the course of construction - these holes, which legend has it are the impressions of the fingers of Indra, were then filled either with cut stone inserts or with mortar plugs.

Sandstone was initially used sparingly, and almost exclusively for the surrounding elements of openings and false doors, but gradually became used for all the elements of construction - though with the exception of thick internal block walls, utility buildings and certain areas of paving.

Brick

Brick was used in all the early structures and then in numerous temples of the first half of the classical period (9th-10th centuries). It was manufactured on site and well baked in order to enable sculpting and to be used in the forming of corbelled vaults. Their size could vary from 22 x 12 x 4 to 30 x 16 x 8.5 centimetres and more. Generally a pale pink in colour they

were apparently rarely seen in elevation, having been preferably covered in a sculpted coating of decorative lime based mortar - the brick backing having been previously rough-hewn for the thicker layers.

Laterite

Laterite or "*baï kriem*" - literally 'grilled rice' - is a porous, reddish brown stone that has certain analogies with our mudstone. Abundant in the subsoil of the southern part of the Indo-Chinese peninsula, it is easily cut when it comes out of the ground but then hardens in the open air. Unfortunately some blocks undergo a decomposition, rendering them friable and leading to inevitable collapse.

As a material used for in-fill that can be cut and shaped, laterite was also used in the construction of retaining walls in the tiered temples, for utility buildings, the piers of bridges, enclosure walls and for the paving of courtyards.

Timber.

From some of the most durable of species, timber served even in the monumental architecture of the classic period for the building of certain external light-weight elements in combination with the stone.

Internally, timber was used in beams either for supporting or reinforcing, for the roof carpentry, for the double-leafed pivoting doors - whose pivot socket-holes can often still be seen in the door cills - for the dais sheltering the idols, or for the richly decorated panelling of the walls and ceilings - some remnants of which, decorated with flowers and lotus blossoms (though deteriorated by the humidity and the termites) were still in place in Angkor Wat at the time of its clearing. Fragments of beams also remained, as they do in many of the other monuments.

Tiles.

The roof tiles of the annexe buildings are excellent in quality, and numerous specimens have been found during excavation. In baked clay and either plain or glazed and with a fixing nib, they are of two types; - the first with a flat edge to form channels, the second curved to form joints enabling a roof covering of so-called "*Roman tiles*". The ridge can be marked with a line of turned stone finials and, at the base of each slope, the stop tiles can also curl in the form of lotus petals or some other decorative motif.

THE BUILDING PROCESS

Foundations.

The Angkor monuments were generally constructed on a firm ground of clay-bound sand, so reducing the foundations to their simplest expression - one or two courses of laterite laid sometimes on a bed of consolidated gravel. There was little settlement, except where there was banking.

Substructure.

The base platforms are a common feature. Often formed in combination, they can be crowned by a simple band when built as retaining walls for the tiers of a pyramid, or abundantly moulded and ornate as the base platform for terraces that may carry some other structure. They can be one of the most remarkable elements of the architecture.

The Khmer substructure has the peculiarity that it remains independent of the movement in vertical expansion of the building it supports. It is a base, a plateau emerging like the very mound of the celestial Meru - it is the horizontal component in the composition. This is reinforced by the moulding with its horizontal axis of symmetry, expressed as a central band between two opposing ogees. The symmetry is reflected in the smallest detail of the ornamentation, where only the lines of lotus petals invariably turn upwards.

Walls.

Whether in sandstone, brick or laterite, the walls have dry joints without mortar. For the brickwork, only a kind of vegetal adhesive, of unknown composition, serves to reinforce the bonding.

In an architecture where the sequences of moulding and sculpture are carried out on an in-situ masonry structure, it is important to obtain as near as possible a monolith by the perfect adherence of the beds and vertical joints, rigorously dressed and made filiform. This was achieved through polishing each block by rubbing it against the surrounding stones in its immediate contact - a bas-relief at the Bayon (the internal gallery, west side, southern part) gives a precious indication of this operation.

The wall thickness is essentially variable but always far in excess of the limits imposed by the strength of the material - depths of one metre to a metre and a half are not uncommon, and it is not unusual for enclosure walls to be built with the length of the block laid perpendicular to the face of the wall.

And while it is true that the same wall, plumb from top to bottom on its internal side, can correspond externally to steps corresponding to various false elements, this feature can also simply relate to a juxtaposition of cladding on course blockwork that has lost cohesion.

It is interesting to note that the door frames, set in main or internal walls and treated with an assembly of mitred or straight joints - as in timber - always have their bottom member set above the level of the paving. The existence of these high cills, which can make a visit to the temple quite tiring, must be intended to accentuate the cellular character of the space so enclosed in order to increase the number of sanctuaries by compartmenting the galleries to the extreme, rather than for any technical necessity.

Stairs.

The tiered temple is like a “*stairway to heaven*” - which is perhaps sufficient to justify the steep incline that can be set from an angle of 45° to 70° - unless otherwise the stone steps are simply a replica of the wooden stairs that give access to the timber houses, where the absence of a riser allows the foot to be placed despite the gradient.

Whatever the reason, the respective dimensions of the steps and the risers are the inverse of those to which we are accustomed, and the arrangement - where the stairway is presented from the front and generally set into the substructure without intermediate landings - transforms the ascension into a veritable climb, confirming that it was not intended for the advance of a crowd but rather only for use by certain officiants. From the monumental point of view the advantage is clear - the square of the base not having to spread in surface area, the entire building rises to its zenith with a particular thrust.

Vaults.

The problem of the vault conditions a characteristic of the Khmer temple - and indeed of all religious architecture of Hindu inspiration - which is the absence of any large internal space - a disadvantage since there is no place to shelter any assembly of the religious faithful.

Only a keyed arch will enable large openings. Known since antiquity in the West, it was used as far as China, so seeming strange that the Khmer of the 9th to the 13th centuries were ignorant of it - despite their use of radial joints in the lining of circular wells, as, for example, at the western Mebon. Perhaps it is necessary to see some ritual reasoning for this abstention, or a respect for the Hindu saying in which we are told by Henri Parmentier that - “*the dressed arch has no rest, only the corbelled arch sleeps...*”

The Khmer vault does not transfer its thrust to the points of its support, so that no reaction is provided by its elements - it is formed by a continuation of the walls which overhang until they meet on the axis of the covered space. The beds are therefore horizontal and the elements successively corbelled and finally topped with a bridging stone, so linking the two walls.

The sloping inner face, usually following the line of a slender cone, is left rough when masked by a timber ceiling at the height of its springing. However, when remaining in view, it is carefully finished and can be decorated, particularly on the half vaults of the gallery side-aisles. The outer face is much smoother and almost semicircular in profile, with its curve serving as a template for the mass of the fronton.

In the cruciform-planned buildings the intersection of the two barrels is normally formed as a groined vault, while for the square-planned “*prasat*” the principle of the cloistered or coved vault applies, though often interrupted by some vertical elements corresponding to the projections of the illusory external storeys.

CONSTRUCTION PERIOD

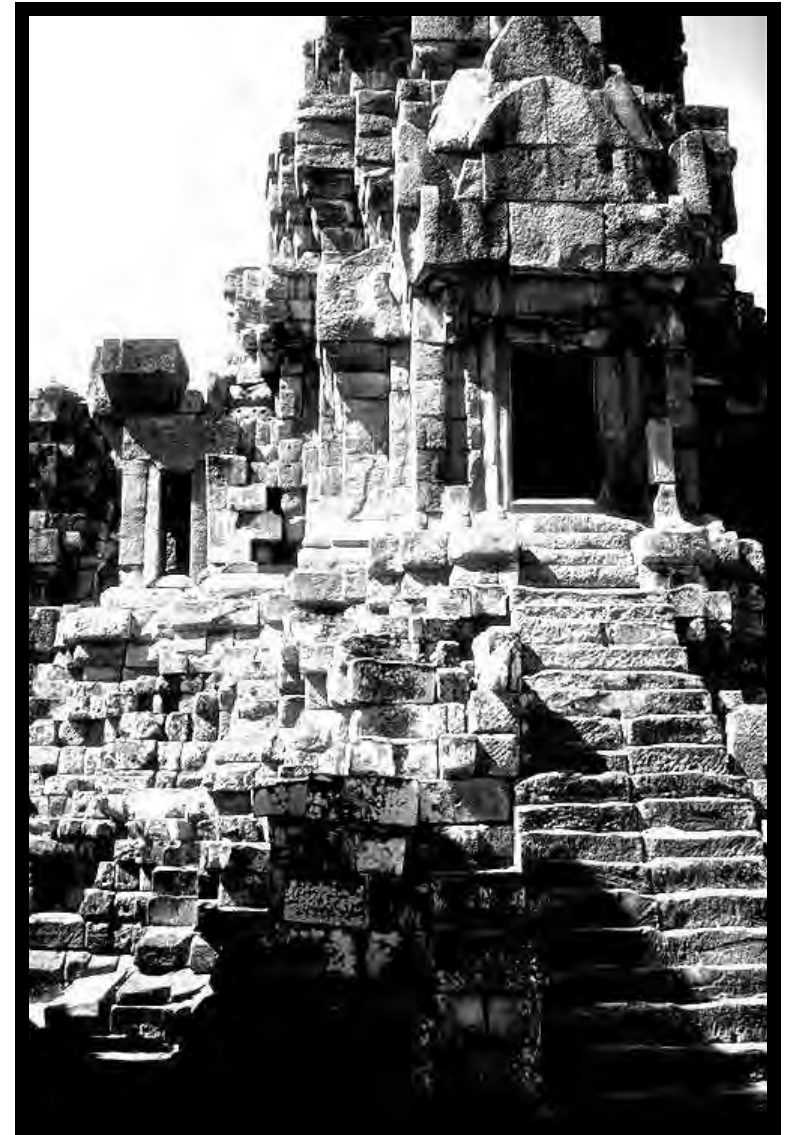
We do not know what means the Khmer had at their disposal for the construction of their temples. The bas-reliefs give only some cursory indication of the methods used for polishing the stone blocks, but show no lifting apparatus. We are therefore reduced to hypotheses.

Present day Cambodian labourers still rely on the building methods of their ancestors. Highly skilled at erecting a sturdy scaffolding with a few simple timbers cut from the forest and tied with lengths of vine, they can lift the heaviest of loads. Using their climbing ability to good advantage, they carry them on their shoulders suspended from two sticks or bamboo poles, or haul them to great heights on rails of logs. One can therefore suppose that

similar methods of lifting were previously used, with ladders or inclined planes perhaps aided by winches or capstans.

George Groslier undertook some interesting research into the time required for the construction of a large temple in the north-west of Cambodia - Banteay Chmar. His calculations, based on reasoning and logic rather than on actual fact, led him to conclude a construction period of 32 to 35 years. We would tend towards this latter figure, which noticeably corresponds to the duration of the reign of Suryavarman II, the builder of Angkor Wat. The uniform style of this monument enabled the assumption that it was built without interruption under a single direction.

On the other hand, Groslier's thesis provides a strong argument against the attribution to the single king Jayavarman VII, who reigned for some 20 years, for the totality of the temples in the so called "*style of the Bayon*", where there is abundant proof of alterations and which particularly lack any unity.





The ornamentation is the triumph of Khmer art, where the architecture, as we have seen, is but the realisation of a ritual. Far from distracting the attention from the collective composition or from the geometry of the lines and volumes, the ornamentation emphasises and enhances each form, though without domination. Through the ornamentation, the rigid framework of the profiles and masses becomes animated with the shimmering of light and shade - all are in living communion. Unified in their setting, the scenes with figures and the decoration achieve perfect harmony.

Not one of the Khmer monuments has any technical sterility, and it is to the ornamental sculpture, the plastic expression of the creator's vitality, that this is due. Even used in profusion, as in some temples, so that no surface of wall is left bare, the ornamentation is neither distracting nor without style, never performing the function of mere in-fill.

Like the priests themselves, the architects and sculptors were but servants responsible for the same cultural tradition - creating with equal self denial, their achievement remaining anonymous and impersonal. Working to an abstract concept, the artist's accomplishment was subject to constant repetition - with the art being conditional on this process engendering not monotony but rhythm.

In practical terms, such self denial was the only possible solution - since it would have taken more than a royal decree to have sculpted the square kilometres of wall by the thousands of sculptors - and the artist an exceptional being whose work was selflessly grafted on to that of the master craftsman. He was free within certain limits, but from the first mark engraved on the stone to the last cut of the chisel it was necessary for him to answer to a team of craftsmen, of specialist labourers working to a pattern who could not give course to their creative fancy except in the minutest detail.

Each with his defined task, and, if one can call it such, his "*vision*", could attain a sufficient level of manual skill without supervision - indeed the Khmer were too idealistic to stop at some imperfection, taken for secondary, as long as the value of the intention remained intact. Sometimes real artists revealed themselves, so producing the extraordinary achievement of a Banteay Srei - yet everywhere one can perceive a unity, enhanced by flashes of brilliance created by the most skilful of hands. So it was, in fact, that the very restricted number of the fundamental elements of the architecture and the eternal repetition of the motifs favoured the task of unification - the evolution of the decor related only to the character of each

period, depending upon whether one finds oneself in a time of incubation, blossoming, crystallisation or decline.

THE BAS-RELIEFS

If the Khmer artist managed occasionally to free himself from the constraints that controlled him to give expression to his personality, then it would evidently be in the narrative form of the bas-reliefs. Escaping from the strictly ornamental intricacy of the arabesque he could - on subjects drawn from history or mythology, from epic legends or ethnography - if not let go his emotion, then at least tend towards movement, nature and life. It is also probable, although nothing remains of them today, that besides these stone pages - recalling in some ways the tapestries of our own middle ages such as those of Reine Mathilde at Bayeux - there were frescos painted in the same spirit serving to animate the cold, bare interior of the sanctuary walls.

Except at Bakong, where we can see, on the upper tier of the pyramid, some rare remains of bas-reliefs displayed to the open air, it seems that until the 11th century the Khmer were content with the representation of but a few scenes on the limited areas of the lintels or frontons - the most remarkable of which are to be found on the tympanums of Banteay Srei. Thereafter the practice is reserved for the frontons, sometimes in a single composition, sometimes in superposed registers. Ignorant of the laws of perspective, the Khmer used this last means of expression to indicate successive planes, with the lower register representing the foreground.

At the *Baphuon* the bas-reliefs appear in registers on narrow areas of wall, forming a succession of small scenes which, although of legendary inspiration, tend towards naturalism and are simplistic in expression.

At *Angkor Wat* on the other hand there are, on the twelve or thirteen hundred square metres of the large external gallery wall, vast compositions harmonising with the fine order of the monument - the walls are entirely

covered, without a space, without a break, forming a whole or divided into registers according to the nature of the subject matter - either of pages overflowing with life, or of harsh, highly stylised images - all cut into the surface of the stone.

At the *Bayon*, finally - at least in the external gallery - we leave the legendary subjects for accounts drawn from the history of the ruler and scenes from everyday life. These reliefs, treated in more volume and less formal in style, provide extensive information about the customs of the ancient Khmer - often differing little from those of present day Cambodia. They are situated, as at Angkor Wat, in that part of the temple accessible to the public, for whom they are intended. It is here that the artist, inspired by a higher force, endeavours to identify with the people, to inform them, to raise them to his level. It was the "*propaganda*" of the time.

One cannot leave the series of bas-reliefs without mentioning the impressive treatment of the *Terrace of the Elephants* of Angkor Thom. In a single development of nearly 400 metres these animals, almost full size, are represented in profile, participating in hunting scenes and treated more realistically than was normal. Some panels are sculpted with fine garudas, standing "*as atlantes*". Immediately to the north is the redented double wall of the terrace known as the "*Terrace of the Leper King*" showing the many registered rows of straight-faced women who formed the courts of the kings of the fabulous beings who haunt the flanks of Mount Meru. These various bas-reliefs are in the style of the Bayon.

DEVATAS, APSARAS, DVARAPALAS

These are the low reliefs of isolated figures or groups, sculpted sometimes on a plain wall or on a background of decoration, but usually sheltered within niches.

As celestial nymphs - whose hieratic nature is accommodated so well in their frontal presentation - the devatas generally decorate the redents of the sanctuary and, in the 12th century, the walls of the halls and galleries. Angkor Wat is lavished with hundreds, engaging the visitor with the charm of their ever-serene smile. The fresh vitality of their youthful figures with their bare torsos - the grace of their supple gestures and of their slender fingers, holding a lotus or playing with a string of flowers - distracts one from the weight of their legs, that invariably suffer - and their awkward feet presented always in profile due to an inability to express their foreshortening.

Portrayed in at least half scale and adorned with jewellery, the *devatas* differ, depending upon the period, by the hang of their long dress or “*sarong*”, and the prodigious variety of their hair styles and tiaras or diadems (“*mukuta*”).

The liturgical dance, which held such an important place in the ritual - the Ta Prohm stele tells of 615 dancers living within the temple enclosure - should have provided the sculptor with an opportunity to depart from the representation of the usual rigid postures and to express some movement. But although Cambodian dance is capable of expressing the whole range of human sentiments, the *apsaras* always appear on the stone in the same pose derived from that of a flying figure, though hard to believe, with only some variation in the gesture of the arms. The stylisation is taken to the extreme and the use of a pattern doubtless.

Generally at a reduced scale and assembled in lines as at *Prah Khan*, or in the remarkably composed motifs of twos and threes as on the pillars of the *Bayon*, the thousands of *apsaras*, clad only in a light cloth that hugs the thighs with its ends flying behind, are bedecked in jewels and glittering head dresses. Standing isolated from the world on a lotus blossom or flying in the open air, they are the divine symbols of joy.

The *dvarapalas* are the standing figures, armed with a lance or a club, represented on the pilasters that flank the entrance to the sanctuaries of certain temples such as *Prah Khan* - a god on one side with a benevolent smile and an asura on the other, his menacing character represented in puerile fashion by a sinister grin and stern features. Their purpose is to ward off harm. At other times, sheltered in the niches on the corner piers of the *prasats*, they are powerful warriors and more human in aspect - perhaps assertive as at *Prah Ko*, or elegant as the ephebes of *Banteay Srei*.

MURAL ORNAMENTATION

Of all activity in Khmer art, the mural ornamentation, more than any other, gives proof of the adaptability of the sculptor and of his extraordinary prolixity. He resents leaving any surface untouched, literally devouring the wall - yet from the very excess of this profusion is born an impression of greyness that enhances the centres of interest - where the complication only appears in the study of the detail - though which detracts nothing from the clarity of the line or form.

When a panel of wall is completely covered it can be either with a regular coating of geometric motifs or with pure ornamentation as at *Banteay Srei*. Otherwise there is the combination of some areas of decoration with an organic background treated almost naturalistically, as in certain parts of *Prah Khan*. Typically there are only a few constituent motifs, used to form the basis of a repetition - though never merely a copy. The evolution is continuous and the incidentals multiply over the course of the centuries.

Organic inspiration draws on the lotus, with the buds, petals or blossoming flowers giving birth to a whole variety of rosettes. Occasionally - particularly in the early period - there is also the delicate umbel of the blue lotus, recalling the lotus of Egypt. A whole range of coiling vegetation is then derived from the acanthus leaf, stretching in flames and rolling in volutes,

forming vertical bands or a succession of foliated scrolls - so close to our Renaissance - scattered with figurines or animals.

Finally, stifling all fantasy with the use of a few simple geometric forms, the artist exhausts all possibilities offered by the circle, the lozenge and the square, combined in bands or in panels.

On the walls or internal pillars and the reveals of openings, mainly during the 12th century, a fine sculpting in the surface of the stone came to animate the severity of the galleries - with figures in prayer set in niches, delicate leaves and an assortment of braids and pendant friezes - in a veritable work of tapestry.

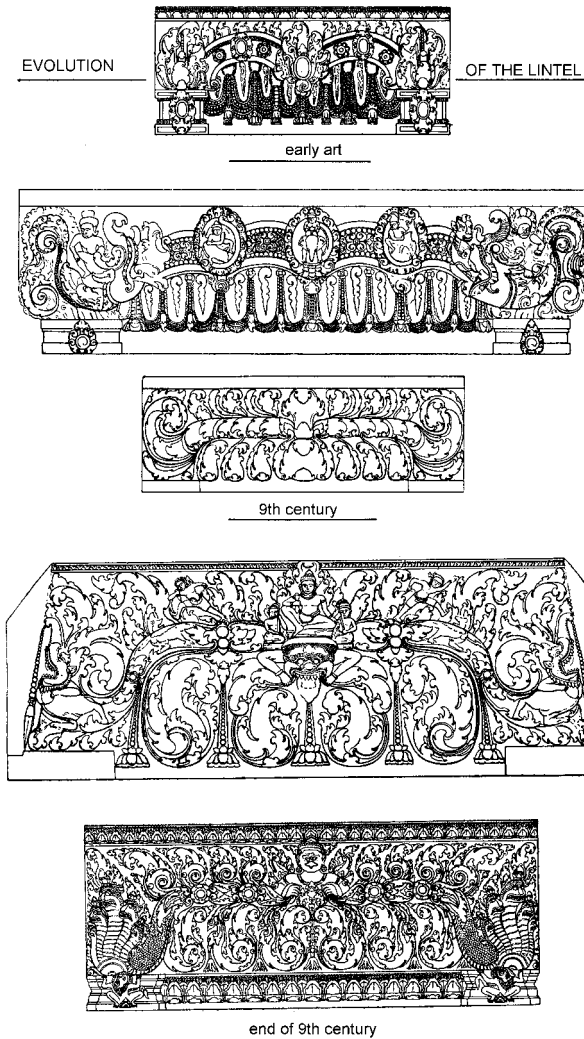
COLONNETTES

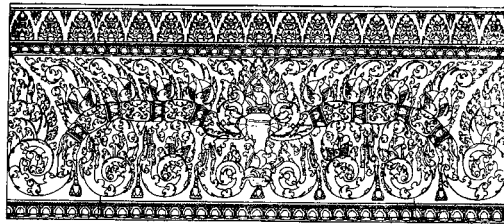
Destined to carry the lintel, the colonnettes are generally round in section in the primitive art (7th-8th centuries), rectangular in the style of the Kulen (first half of the 9th century), and then octagonal from the beginning of the period of classic art.

From the base - sculpted with a small figure set in a niche - to their capital, the shaft is circled with a variable number of moulded rings, separated by clear bands and fringed with decorative leaves. The number and size of the rings increases from the end of the 9th century - when the finest examples are found - until the 13th century, when the clear bands shrink and the leaves multiply and shrivel until they disappear altogether.

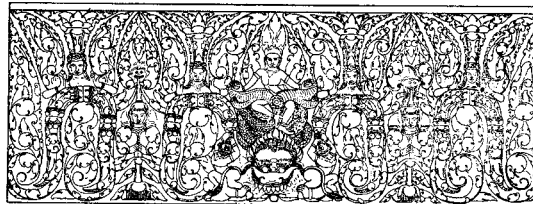
LINTELS

These were, with the colonnettes, the only sculpted sandstone elements in the early brick prasats. The decoration, straight from India and deriving from architecture in wood, was composed essentially of a sort of shallow arch enhanced with medallions, disgorged at the extremities by "makaras" - sea monsters with trunks - that turn to the centre to let fall a series

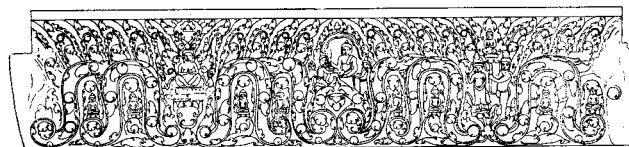




10th century



first half of 12th century



second half of 12th century



end of 12th century

of pendants. With time the makaras gave way to a motif of vegetal scrolls, the foliage increasing to turn the arch into a veritable branch and providing, in the Kulen style with the occasional reappearance of the makaras, some pieces of the highest order. It was during this period that the Javanese motif of the *head of Kala* appeared, placed high in the centre on the lintel. The ferocious two-armed monster, thought to represent an aspect of Shiva as Time who destroys all things, thereafter became ubiquitous.⁴

In the classic art the branch of foliage is developed to the extreme, becoming horizontal or sinuous and sometimes divided into four by an ornamental motif, perhaps with a central figure generally mounted on the head of Kala. It stands out on a background of flaming leaves and scrolling vegetation, often disgorged by lions and ending in multiple-headed nagas. Lintels of the Prah Ko style (late 9th century), where the decoration is enhanced with a multitude of small figures, are some of the most interesting. They are particularly high and crowned in addition with a small frieze.

In the 12th century one finds some lintels where the branch has multiple breaks. It then disappeared completely, the vertical axis becoming an axis of symmetry for the ornamentation formed of long flaming leaves unfurling from broad coils, while the head of Kala moves progressively lower.

PILASTERS

Initially executed on a brick background in a lime based plaster, of which a few rare elements still remain, the decoration of the pilasters did not fully develop until the more general use of sandstone.

Flanking each door in order to support the fronton, the pilasters formed long vertical bands, designed in all evidence for the vertical repetition of identical motifs. From their base to their cornice, both of which were moulded, they could be covered in foliated scrolls unfolding from a series of vegetal coils, often ringed and extending for the width of the panel until the

middle of the classic period. Then they became bordered laterally with small leaves, the artist's fantasy only expressed in the addition of small figures and animals participating in the rolling of the scrolls.

Simultaneously, and whatever the period, was found the “chevron”, where each element was composed of a central motif surmounted by a fleuron forming a point and from which fell two symmetrical leaves. The central motif was frequently accompanied by a small tri-lobed niche sheltering a small figure or rather, towards the end of the 11th century, by a shaft of foliage. In the twelfth century, the period that established the taste for bas-reliefs, small scenes with figures decorate the lower part of the pilaster above the base moulding.

In some periods, and particularly that of the *Baphuon* (11th century), the shaft of foliage became the principal motif, dominating the surface of the panel to give an entirely upward thrusting movement in a “herringbone” pattern. Occasionally there also appeared the ascension of motifs in the form of a lyre (*Bakheng* and *Angkor Wat* styles) or lozenges (end of the 9th century).

FALSE DOORS

The three false doors of a prasat were the replica in stone of the wooden door of the eastern entrance - formed in two leaves separated by a square-blocked closing bar - with each panel treated in the same spirit as the pilasters but framed with a rich moulding that became increasingly invasive. In the 9th century, kinds of mascarons (the heads of lions or similar) mark the middle of each door leaf, corresponding perhaps to real door handles.

FRONTONS

To the mediterranean spirit, the idea of the pediment implies the geometric form of the triangle that closes and affirms, - it is the rigid and steadfast crown of the Greek temple.

The classic Khmer pediment (or fronton), however, formed in single or superimposed frames, abuts the arching line of the gallery vaults and participates in the upward movement of the prasat. Far from being inert, it takes in that which is found below and carries it skywards, serving as a base for other diminishing frontons that are set at the projection of the upper tiers. With no sterility of line, it is enveloped by the supple, undulating poly-lobed arch of the stylised naga, whose body is indented with flaming leaves and whose heads themselves curve round to stand erect at either extremity. The composition of the tympanum scenes further enhances the impression of uplift.

Initially the brick frontons - covered in stucco and poorly ornate with a few isolated motifs (reductions of buildings and figures) - were somewhat sacrificed to the sandstone lintels, and so were quite different in form. Derived from the horse-shoe arch of the Indian monuments they consisted of a large, usually shallow, rectangular panel. From the end of the 9th century they were often realised in sandstone, the tympanum becoming covered in a vegetal decoration with large volutes forming a single composition, while the frame, treated as a flat section, terminated with the heads of diverging makaras.

At the end of the 10th century the makara gave way to the multi-headed naga, disgorged by the head of Kala, which itself disappeared with the period of the *Baphuon* in the middle of the 11th century. The arch then became more rounded, showing a certain tendency to realism. Finally, in the 12th century, the naga is once again disgorged by the head of a monster, reminiscent this time of a dragon's head. With the appearance of the vaulted gallery the general outline becomes raised, taking the form of a slender poly-lobed arch.

Simultaneously one can see the appearance, from the 10th century, of tympanums with scenes beside those with a vegetal decoration, which only

last until the beginning of the 12th century. Like the bas-reliefs on the walls, the episodes are sometimes represented in a single panel and sometimes set in superposed registers - a formula that prevails in the style of the *Bayon*.

One must not forget to mention, from the 10th - 11th centuries, (Koh Ker, Banteay Srei, Prah Vihear) some remarkable triangular frontons. These recall wooden architecture, conditioned by the double slope of the tiled roofs that preceded the appearance of the vault - the two diverging lines scroll at the extremities into large volutes.





ANIMALS

The Naga.

The naga - a stylised cobra - is endowed with multiple heads, always uneven in number from three to nine, arranged in a fan. Deriving from India, it figures in the original legend of the Khmer people and is the symbol of water.

Common in the art he is, in the entirely original motif of the naga-balustrade, of fundamental importance. Initially - notably at *Bakong* (end of the 9th century) - the body lies directly on the ground and the massive heads are particularly imposing. Thereafter the body is raised on stone blocks and the heads, where at first simply crowned with a diadem, become more broadly crested - either with flaming tresses as at *Angkor Wat* or *Prah Palilay*, or with a purely ornamental continuous halo as at *Beng Mealea*. In this period (first half of the 12th century) the neck is bare and perfectly curved.

A little afterwards - for example at *Banteay Srei* - the naga is disgorged, as on the borders of the frontons, by a kind of dragon. A head of Kala appears on the nape and a small garuda on the axial crest. In the style of the *Bayon*, this last element became “devouring”, and the naga little more than an accessory, straddled by an enormous garuda. Although of superb execution like those on the terrace of *Srah Srang*, the motif loses all simplicity of line to become heavy and confused.

At the entrances to *Angkor Thom* and *Prah Khan*, the naga carried by the devas and the asuras offers no particular novelty, but on some ancient Khmer bridges - probably of a later period - the heads of naga protect an image of the Buddha.

The two nagas with entwined tails of Neak Pean, devoid of any ornamentation, appear in their nudity the same as the naga *Mucilinda*, sheltering the meditation of the Buddha with their fanned heads.

The lion.

The lions are guardians of the temples, adorning the entrance on either side of the steps. They can be, it must be said, quite mediocre. Unknown in the fauna of Indochina, they imposed an obligation on the sculptor to look for inspiration only in themes from India, from Java or from China, with no reference to natural reality.

Philippe Stern has shown that their evolution, from the 9th to the 13th century, was restricted to the progressive raising of the hindquarters and to the increasing stylisation of the mane.

In the style of *Prah Ko* (late 9th century) the lion, sitting resolutely and particularly squat, is not without some character. At *Phnom Bakheng*, shortly afterwards, while the head remains caricatural with its enormous muzzle and bulging eyes, the proportion improves due to the elongation of the body. Simply crouching towards the end of the 10th century, they stand increasingly firmly on their four paws with an excessively arched back, while their form becomes more lank. In the *Bayon* style, the countenance becomes grimacing and the head sometimes three quarters turned. The tail, generally remaining part of the mass, follows the length of the spine - or else, where it was perhaps formed in metal, it has disappeared altogether.

The “*gajasimha*” or “*elephant-lion*” is an uncommon variety of lion with an extended turned-up snout.

The elephant

One rarely finds the elephant sculpted in the round except standing at the corners of the tiered platforms of pyramids dating from the first half of the classic period - *Bakong*, *eastern Mebon*, *Phimeanakas* - its stature decreasing at each level with the architectural elements. Facing outwards, it marks therefore the four intermediate cardinal points. Sculpted realistically from a single block of stone, it wears a harness complete with bells.

One should also mention, as sculptures in the round, the three-grouped heads that embellish the inward corners of the monumental gates of Angkor Thom - their trunks descending vertically to tug at bunches of lotuses in a delightful decorative motif.

The bull

As the mount of Shiva, *Nandin* the sacred bull lies facing the entrance to some of the temples dedicated to this god. When the prasat is open to the four cardinal points, as at *Phnom Bakheng* and *Bakong* - where there must originally have existed a previous sanctuary in light-weight materials - a *Nandin* is placed on each of the four sides, symbolic of the universal power of its master. At *Prah Ko* there is one facing the single entrance to the three primary sanctuaries. One can also find him, though in various stages of deterioration, at *Banteay Srei*, *Ta Keo* and *Chau Say Tevoda*.

Nandin has a hump like a zebu - quite realistically portrayed in the 9th century in a natural pose in which the rear legs fold under the body. From then he increasingly raises himself on one of his limbs, while his proportions become lank and his lines less pleasing. He generally wears a collar with small bells or metal jewellery.

STATUARY

Many visitors are surprised to see so few statues around the monuments - but it is unfortunately not possible to leave them for fear of theft and deterioration. Many of the finer pieces found during the excavations are therefore either in the National Museum in Phnom Penh or in the Angkor Conservation Office store rooms.

Khmer statuary has often been denigrated, since, amongst the thousands of respectable pieces, it has furnished only a few that are truly outstanding, capable of entirely satisfying our western taste and endowed, like the ancient Greek masterpieces, with a sense of perfection.

It is not just a talent to sculpt that we assume as a requirement in the artist, but also an inspiration, an aesthetic intellect, a superior technique and the assertion of a personality. Characteristics that for the Khmer gave force

to the ornamental sculpting and assured its mastery would, in our view, necessarily detract from the quality of the work.

Khmer art is a concept in search for a form. The artist does not inspire himself from nature, does not compel himself to represent movement and life in order to create a “work of art”. Without abstraction he seeks real expression, but through the eyes of a visionary in accordance with the principle of static form so endeared by his race. His work is an act of faith - more collective than individual - where each can find his own emotion, and the masterpiece born from the intensity of the internal flame that inspires him, from his spiritual communion with the divinity. This can result in the weakness - quite irrelevant to him - of certain details, and the adaptation of forms that to us may seem startling - fantastic figures and composite beings, gods with multiple arms and tiered heads. But from here also derives a powerful facial expression and a calm beauty, radiant with a spirit aspiring to Buddhist serenity.

It is understandable that many of the pieces judged by us to be the most remarkable date from the early period of Khmer art up to the 9th century, where the sculptor attempted to render an exact anatomical likeness. These include, for example, the admirable statue of Shiva with eight arms set in a supporting arch from *Phnom Da* (Takeo Province) that is in the National Museum of Phnom Penh, standing between two acolytes, - and also the Harihara of the *Asram Maha Rosei* (Musée Guimet), - the Harihara of *Prasat Andet*, of an elegant purity of line (National Museum, Phnom Penh) - and the numerous Vishnous of *Phnom Kulen*. Characteristic of this period is the hair style set in a cylindrical mitre, and the fact that nowhere does one encounter, in this essentially restrained art, anything frenetic, wild or erotic as in some Indian sculpture.

From the end of the 9th century when one finds - notably at *Bakong* and *Phnom Bakheng* - some superb female figures with an imposing

solemnity of expression, the sculptor tends towards stylisation and a form of increasingly rigid and conventional hieratism, though which is not without some strength. Then, from the end of the 10th century (*Banteay Srei*) to the time of *Angkor Wat* (first half of the 12th century), preference sways to the statuette, where the figure is more supple and the countenance softer.

Finally in the 12th century the concept of the spiritual triumphs, and while the body - simply modelled and fashioned on massive legs - can often be clumsy, the energy is concentrated rather in the portrayal of an intense vitality deriving from the meditation of the being.

Besides the delightful and richly ornate feminine divinities is the endless repetition of the image of the Buddha, sitting on the coiled body of naga who shelters him with the fan of its multiple heads. One finds, particularly at the *Bayon*, several examples imbued with a profound mysticism which are truly inspiring. Certain representations of bodhisattvas, apparently portrait statues of deified dignitaries, present themselves for universal admiration, while works like the Prajnaparamita of *Prah Khan* (Musée Guimet) or the irradiant Lokeshvara of the central sanctuary of the same temple, truly touch a high art.

Bronze was rarely used except for the statuettes, formed with the “lost wax” process and offering the same characteristics as the statuary. It is quite probable that there existed many more important pieces which have since been re-melted due to the scarcity of the material. A large fragment (the head and part of the shoulders) of a colossal reclining Vishnou, more than twice natural size and evidently from the 11th century, was found down the well at the western *Mebon*. A work of real quality, it shows that the Khmer, with the mediocre means at their disposal, were not averse to the ambitious use of metal.

It only remains to say a few words about the pedestals of the statues. Moulded and decorated like the base platforms of the terraces or sanctuaries and with an axis of horizontal symmetry, they supported, like the plinth of the linga, an ablution platform or "*snanadroni*", allowing the lustral water to flow along a beak invariably turned to the north. Under the statue in the pedestal a cubic block of stone with generally 16 or 32 alveoles aligned around its perimeter held the sacred deposit, consisting of some gems or precious materials. It is not impossible that they also sometimes contained the ashes of the deified dignitaries.

On top of the towers, within the crowning lotus, was placed another sort of deposit stone - a stone slab placed flat and sculpted with a variable number of holes laid out in ritual alignment - though not one managed to escape the attention of the looters.



A. BY EPIGRAPHY

It is now known that the oldest remains of Khmer architecture so far discovered date from the 6th century AD, and that the constituent monuments of the Angkor group followed one another without interruption from the end of the 9th century to the beginning of the 13th. Epigraphic evidence has enabled Cœdes to accurately order this short period of less than four centuries as follows:

Roluos Group	879-881-893
Phnom Bakheng	towards 900
Koh Ker Group	931 ± 950
eastern Mebon	952
Pre Rup	961
Banteay Srei	967
Ta Keo	+ 1000
Baphuon.	± 1060
Angkor Wat.	first half of the 12th century
Ta Prohm.	1186
Prah Khan.	1191
Bayon and the walls of Angkor Thom	the last years of the 12th century.

These dates, which are those of the foundation or inauguration, do not, however, imply that each of these temples was built in a single procedure. Monuments such as Ta Prohm, Prah Khan or the Bayon, for example, show unmistakable signs of alterations or additions which deny them any quality of absolute unity.

It remains nonetheless that we have a solid chronological foundation which, by analogy, provides the framework for a general classification based on the natural evolution of architectural motifs and decoration.

Until 1923 the Bayon was considered as a Shivaïte temple and amongst the oldest, following an erroneous interpretation of the inscription of Sdok Kak Thom - which names the monument raised by king Yasovarman, at the end of the 9th century in the middle of his capital Yasodharapura, as the "*Central Mountain*". This was mistakenly thought to be the Bayon centred within Angkor Thom.

The theory, for a long time held as fact, was to be contested by Louis Finot, supported by the discovery that the monument was in fact Buddhist. Some controversy followed, successively leading Mr Philippe Stern - associate conservator of the Musée Guimet - to place the Bayon, based mainly on a study of the different styles, in the first half of the 11th century - and then Georges Cœdes, through epigraphic research, to attribute the foundation to king Jayavarman VII at the end of the 12th century. This revelation in 1928 rejuvenated the Bayon by three centuries, revolutionised the understanding of its chronology - attributing its faults no longer to the explorative beginnings of Khmer art but rather to the flagging discipline of the decadent period - and also shattered a number of architectural, decorative and religious anomalies. Today the new theory can be considered as generally accepted and apparently definitive.

It was Mr Victor Goloubew who brought the discussion to a decisive conclusion with his meticulous research into the succession of the capitals. By keen intuition he ceased looking for the *“Central Mountain”* of the inscription inside Angkor Thom and instead focused his attention on the Shivaïte *“temple-mountain”* of Phnom Bakheng, constructed just to the south on a natural hill. Excavations from 1931 to 1934 revealed the remains of enclosure walls, of gopuras, of grand axial roads and of symmetrically arranged pools - all framed within a double levee of earth forming a quadrilateral that is still quite visible in the landscape. The location of the first Angkor was therefore determined to be quite independent of Angkor Thom and the Bayon of Jayavarman VII.

Other excavations, undertaken in 1936, have enabled Mr Goloubew to suggest the existence of another intermediate capital, dating perhaps from the 11th century and centred on Phimeanakas or the Baphuon - or else on the first site of the Bayon. It would have had moats at its limits, lined with laterite steps, between two levees of earth formed at a hundred metres within the line of the future ramparts of Angkor Thom. Other canals have been found on

either side of the principal axial roads as well as the remains of gates and drainage channels, confirming again the particular importance that hydraulic works had for the ancient Khmer, for whom water constituted such a vital element.

B. CHRONOLOGY BY STYLE

The work of Philippe Stern and Mme de Coral-Remusat gives us a method of classification for the monuments based on their grouping by styles, resulting from the analytical study of their decorative themes.

Although necessary to exercise caution, since changes in the natural evolution of any art can be induced by external influences, reversion to archaism or perhaps the sculptor tempted by innovation - it would seem that in this instance, however, such methodology carries the maximum guarantee of accuracy, since the Khmer artist was not able to, as it were, give free rein to his imagination or fantasy.

Conducting their research in close relationship with the dates determined by epigraphy, our art historians applied their methods to monuments that are in fact already fixed with some precision in time - these markers serving as a control, within a kind of framework, for the careful study of the various elements of the ornamentation; - colonnettes and lintels, pilasters and frontons, the bas-reliefs and sculpture in the round. *“When the decoration of one or more of the monuments”* - we are told by Mme. de Coral-Remusat - *“shows characteristics identical to those in the decoration of a structure that is placed in time, one has the right to conclude that the monument or monuments in question are approximately contemporaneous with this structure - they are clearly earlier if their decoration is less evolved, and later if it is more so”*.

The filiation of the monuments so established by Mr Philippe Stern and Mme. de Coral-Remusat is described in the following table:

PERIOD	MONUMENT	INSCRIPTION DATES
7 th century	Sambor Prei Kuk (Kompong Thom)	
8 th century (2nd half)	Ak Yom (the earliest parts)	
9 th century (1st half) (2nd half)	Phnom Kùlen Rolüos Group Prah Bakong Lolei	879 881 893
	Phnom Bakheng Phnom Krom Phnom Bok	towards 900
10 th century (1st half) (2nd half)	Prasat Kravan Baksei Chamkrong Koh Ker Group eastern Mébôn Pré Rup Bantéay Srei Small monument behind the north Kléang	921 931±950 952 961 967
11 th century (1st half) (2nd half)	Ta Kèo north and south Kléang Phiméanakas Gopura of Royal palace Baphûon western Mébôn	±1000 ±1060
end of 11 th or 12 th century (1st half)	Béng Méaléa Prah Palilay (sanctuary) central Sanctuary of Bakong (?) Prah Pithu (main elements) Chau Say Tevoda Thommanon Bantéay Samrè Prah Khan of Kompong Svay (central part) Angkor Vat	1st half of 12 th century
end of 12 th century or 13 th century (1st half)	Ta Prohm Bantéay Kdei Terrace of Srah Srang Prah Khan of Angkor Néak Péan Ta Som Ta Nei Bayon and ramparts of Angkor Thom, gates with faces and Prasat Chung Terraces of the Royal Forecourt Prasat Suor Prat Bantéay Prei Prasat Prei Gopura of Prah Palilay	1186 1191

THE ANGKOR MONUMENTS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER



The first known documentation relating to the Khmer monuments came, as we have seen, from descriptions given by Chinese envoys, and notably by Tcheou Ta-Kouan at the end of the 13th century - that is to say before their abandonment. Thereafter, from the 16th century onwards, the Angkor ruins frequently drew the attention of missionaries and merchants from the west, but it was only in the second half of the 19th century that they began to interest the archaeologists and scholars. The account of the voyage by P. Bouillevaux in 1856 and the enthusiastic descriptions by the naturalist Henri Mouhot, discovering Angkor Wat in 1860, opened the way for several foreign explorers, such as the German Bastian and the British Thomson and Kennedy, and then for the official missions by Doudart de Lagrée, Francis Garnier and Delaporte - the latter returning to France with some sculptures and moulds, presenting them to the public at the Paris Exhibition of 1878. At the same time the Dutchman Kern, followed by Barth and Bergaigne, deciphered the first of the stone inscriptions, while Moura, Aymonier, Pavie, Fournereau and General de Beylié, amongst others, considerably increased the bounds of acquired knowledge.

In 1898 the Governor General Paul Doumer resolved to co-ordinate all effort and to give the monuments the scientific directive that they lacked. He therefore founded the École Française d'Extrême Orient, placed under the control of the "*Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*", with a mission to study from a historic, monumental and linguistic point of view the various countries of the Indo-Chinese Union, to assure protection to the archaeological sites and to prepare an inventory of the temples. It was under the enlightened direction of Louis Finot and Alfred Foucher that Lunet de Lajonquiere, Henri Parmentier, Dufour and Carpeaux thus began the methodical exploration of the Cambodian monuments.

The treaty of 1907, in assuring the return by Siam of the original provinces that she had taken, finally allowed a resolute and fruitful devotion to the task at hand - the research and the safeguarding of the monuments of the Angkor region. The first "*Conservator*", Jean Commaille, was murdered by robbers in 1916 after eight years of good work undertaken in extremely difficult conditions. Henri Marchal replaced him, followed in 1932 by Georges Trouvé - who also died tragically in 1935 - then Jacques Lagisquet (1935-1936) and Maurice Glaize (1936-1946).⁵ Profiting the world simultaneously with their scholarly research were Maître, Aurousseau and Georges Cœdes, succeeded by Finot and Foucher, with Parmentier, Marchal and Claeys as heads of the Service Archéologique, while also working closely with the École were Mssrs Georges Groslier (the director of Cambodian Arts), Philippe Stern (the associate Conservator of the Musée Guimet) and Mme. de Coral-Remusat - along with Victor Goloubew, Paul Mus, Henri Mauger and Pierre Dupont.

WORKING METHODS

The archaeological domain of Angkor provided the École Française d'Extrême Orient with an endless field of research.

Since its inauguration the EFEO has endeavoured to keep the sites clear with the removal of vegetation and the freeing of the temple bases from the accumulated piles of earth and rubble, raising and classifying the fallen stones while attending to immediate dangers with provisional measures - already a colossal task since it is a question no less of preventing the devouring forces of nature from destroying the work of man.

The ruin in fact - except with some rare exceptions - can not be attributed to the brutal action of conquerors or of vandals. The Khmer monuments survived their own civilisation, only suffering a slow death after abandonment *"to the ravages of time"* and the relentless growth of vegetation that was no longer controlled, together with the humidity of a tropical climate and undermining by termites.

To maintain each monument just in the state in which it was revealed by clearing, to refrain from major work and consolidation other than to what is visible, to stabilise sinking or leaning elements which may cause collapse using only simple supports or straps that can be as ugly as they can unreliable - these for a long time were the limited objectives of the directors of Indo-Chinese archaeology, alarmed as they were by some audacious monumental restoration undertaken in France during the 19th century.

Such measures, in creating new possibilities for the study of the ruins, allowed them - due to the discovery of the inscriptions, the bas-reliefs and the statues - to reveal some of their secrets and to reawaken. But how to see in these precarious and crumbling ruins, even after their clearing and the basic classification of their rubble, more than just mere evidence - and not to sense a calling for their reconstruction?

The complete interpretation, which by means of patient research and the analysis of all the constituent elements leads to an architectural synthesis, is the only one that allows one to deepen and exhaust the subject - and it is incompatible with chaos. The confusion and the dilapidation of the ruins too often prevent the researcher from going beyond the emotions felt by his artistic or poetic heart - yet by reconstituting the whole from its scattered parts strictly in its ancient form and by the same technical means previously used, he can bring it once again to life.

For some time now, both in Greece and Java, the method known as *anastylosis* has made it possible to regenerate the monuments and to re-establish their integrity. *"Anastylosis"* - Balanos, the conservator of the Monuments of the Athens Acropolis tells us - *"consists of the re-establishment or rebuilding of a monument with its own materials and according to its own methods of construction. Anastylosis allows the discreet and justified use of new materials in replacement of missing stones without which the original elements could not be repositioned"*.

As such, in a veritable 'jigsaw puzzle', the pieces of the game can weigh many hundreds of kilograms, sometimes tonnes, and the player is forbidden to remake any sculpture, moulding or decoration, with complete disregard for his own personality.

Having first cleared the surroundings and removed all vegetation, the sections of walling that still remain standing are taken down course by course, with each block being numbered, and then reconstructed, after cleaning the beds and joints, with the help of numerous drawings and photographs. At the same time the stones found in the rubble which have tumbled from the crumbling upper walls are re-assembled according to the location of their natural fall, sorted by categories and divided by vertical location. These are then progressively reconstructed on the ground with their fundamental elements - doors and false doors, pilasters and corner piers, lintels, frontons,

bases and cornices - with rough blocks cut as necessary to fill the voids. It then only remains to proceed with the reconstruction and to complement the original methods of securing with the aid of hidden cement grouting in the blockwork and iron cramps to assure proper bonding.

Anastylosis, so admirably suited to the art of the Khmer that is so exceptionally traditionalist and unchanging in the relationship between its principal elements and so lacking in any individualistic tendencies on the part of the builder, was introduced to Cambodia by Henri Marchal on his return from a study trip to Java where he saw and was convinced by the excellence of its methodology. Employed by him at Banteay Srei towards the end of 1931 and advocated by Mr Coëdes, it has already enabled the reconstruction in the Angkor group of the gopura of *Prah Palilay*, of *Neak Pean* and its pools - previously barely known - of *Banteay Samre* and of *Bakong*, the Victory gate and the north and south gates of *Angkor Thom* - the first two preceded by their line of giants holding the naga - many of the sanctuaries of *Prah Khan* and the crumbling towers and the central core of the *Bayon*. All these saved from near ruin.

We appreciate that some - with an appetite for the picturesque and for whom nothing matters but the dramatic romanticism symbolised by the vision of some piece of wall crumbling under a weight of roots - may bemoan the former condition of the monuments, but we believe nonetheless that there is more to be gained from the French tradition of rediscovering the 'truth' of a monument by means of its anastylosis. It becomes a work of clarity, though never clinical, that above all respects the forest setting by making of each temple site a glade within it. By way of an example we have left some compositions, such as *Ta Prohm*, "in a natural state" - but for the rest, the spectacular could not take precedence over archaeological preoccupation. The reconstructed but deserted sanctuaries inspire - according to the imagination of each - as much lyricism as melancholy, and the accomplished

work, of a scientific precision that perfectly conforms to current thinking, assures the improvement of the building without harm to its character.

NOTE ON THE COLLABORATION OF THE AÉRONAUTIQUE INDOCHINOISE WITH THE WORK OF THE E.F.E.O. AT ANGKOR

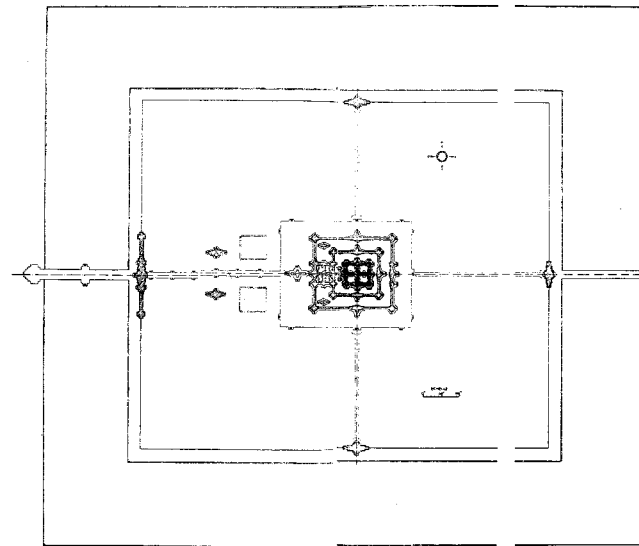
Since 1921, the 'Aéronautique Indochinoise' has been organised by Ct. Glaize, and aerial photographs by Ct. Borzecki and Ct. Cassé have given the archaeologists a new understanding of the region. The chief of the archaeological service, Mr Claeys, benefited, even before the war, from the same statute as R.P. Poidebard in Syria. Certain pilots, such as Ct Terrassu, bring the results of their own observations.

At Angkor, revelations from aerial photographs were particularly fruitful. The identification of superimposed enclosure walls, successive alterations and the trace of abandoned sites allowed V. Goloubew to place the location of the first capital of the 9th century.

At Prah Khan of Kompong Thom, near Sambor, the aeroplane enabled the discovery of enclosure walls, of various alignments and of the barays that give Khmer archaeology the quality of its composition, urbanism and of the grand axial compositions following astrological principles. These were quite unsuspected before aerial observation.



PART TWO - THE MONUMENTS



From the terrace itself of the Grand Hotel in Siem Reap, the southern elevation of the central group of Angkor Wat, formed of a quincunx of towers, can be seen in silhouette at the far end of a long cutting through the forest. Whether one gets there by the straight main road (six kilometres from Siem Reap) or by the original winding and shaded back road (*route Commaille*), one finally skirts the south-west corner of the water filled moat to gain the monument by its principal entrance - the western causeway - the end of which is shaded by a magnificent Banyan tree. A road that eventually leads to the airport continues from the causeway to the left.

This orientation to the west, in contrast to the other Angkor monuments which face the rising sun, initially gave cause for much confusion - some seeing a simple topographic necessity where others saw ritual organisation.

Angkor Wat, forming a rectangle of about 1,500 by 1,300 metres, covers an area - including its 190 metre wide moats - of nearly 200 hectares. The external enclosure wall defines an expanse of 1,025 metres by 800, or 82 hectares. It is the largest monument of the Angkor group.

Constructed to the south of the capital (Angkor Thom), Angkor Wat is sited in the south-east corner of the ancient city of Angkor - Yasodharapura - built by Yasovarman I, centred on Phnom Bakheng and which stretched between the Siem Reap river to the east and the dike of the baray to the west. The temple could therefore have been placed on either side of the main access road to Angkor Thom. In terms of topography, only the ease of transporting the stones from the quarries of Phnom Kulen by river pleads in favour of an orientation to the west. This argument seems insufficient, and so one is drawn inevitably to reasons of tradition.

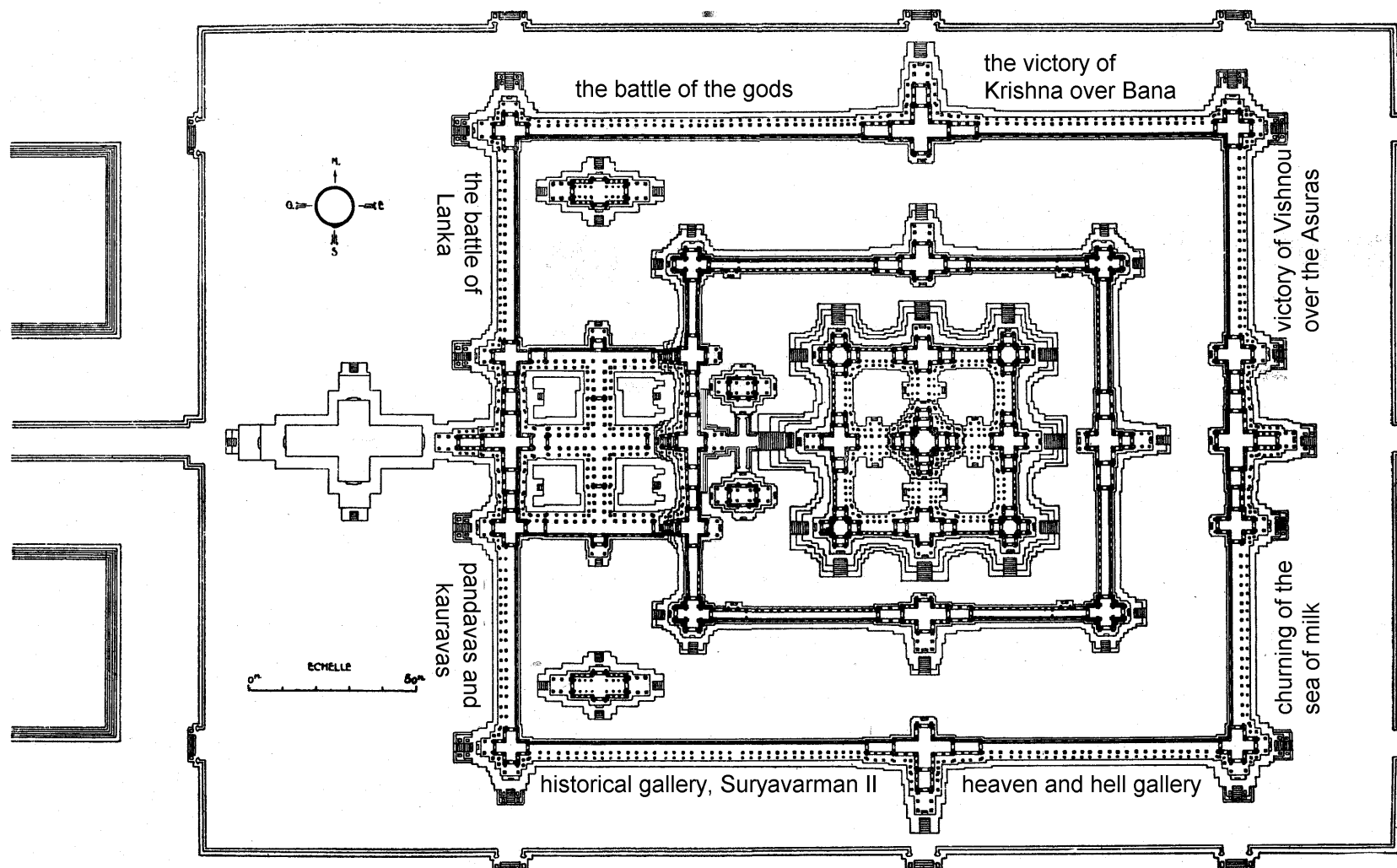
It is therefore likely that it was the destination itself of the monument that determined its unusual orientation, in order to observe some particular rite. Due to research by Mssrs Finot, Coedes, Przyluski and Dr Bosch, the Head of the *Service Archéologique des Indes Néerlandaises*, it seems proven that Angkor Wat is in fact a funerary temple, and the only one built during the life of the founding king - Suryavarman II - for his consecration, and probably also as a depository for his ashes.

This westward orientation is, according to Dr Bosch, typical of the Indo-Javanese funerary monuments and opposite to the orientation of sanctuaries dedicated to divinities. Furthermore, in the

Angkor Wat

"The temple city"

Date	first half of the 12th century
King	Suryavarman II (posthumous name: Paramavishnouloka)
Cult	Brahmanic (Vishnouïte)
Clearing	by Commaille from 1908 - 1911



Brahmanic ritual, the funerary rite is performed in reverse of the normal order, just as in fact at Angkor Wat, in the gallery of the bas-reliefs depicting the parades, the ritual procession is not made according to the usual custom that follows the sun ("*pradakshina*") whilst keeping the monument to one's right, but in the opposite direction, the "*prasavya*". Finally, in making Angkor Wat a Vishnouïte foundation, and in no longer identifying with Shiva in the form of a royal linga as his predecessors, but with Vishnou - whose usual association with the west has been explained by Mr Coëdes - it was quite natural that Suryavarman II should have adopted this new orientation.

The "*tomb of Lu Pan*", placed by the Chinese diplomat Tcheou Ta-Kouan in the late 13th century to the south of the capital and said to have measured 10 "*li*" in circumference, could also perhaps be identified with Angkor Wat, so indicating its funerary character since that time. Moreover, according to the Cambodian legend of Prah Ket, Angkor Wat was an identical palace to "*the sky of the Thirty Three*", built by the celestial architect Vishvakarman by order of Indra for a prince whom the god had summoned to be sent back to earth to live for a second time - this would mean, according to the interpretation of Mr Coëdes, that Angkor Wat was constructed in order to serve as a residence to a deceased prince who was posthumously deified.

DESCRIPTION

Isolated from the forest by its moats, Angkor Wat was, of all the monuments of the group, the best placed to escape the invasion of the jungle and hence ruin. Moreover, following the establishment of Buddhism of the small vehicle, it has always sheltered pagodas, as a place of pilgrimage for the Khmer, within its enclosure - though at one time partially masking the main façade these had to be re-sited in order not to detract from the overall perspective. It was also necessary to undertake some important clearing work, remove large amounts of accumulated earth and, even though the buildings were in relatively good repair, effect considerable consolidation work. The main axial causeway also required restoration.

If Angkor Wat is the largest and the best preserved of the monuments, it is also the most impressive in the character of its grand architectural composition, being comparable to the finest of architectural achievements anywhere. By means of its perfectly ordered and balanced plan, by the harmony of its proportions and the purity of its lines - of a solemnity that one rarely encounters in the Khmer themselves - and by the very particular care taken in its construction, it merits being placed at the apogee of an art that can occasionally surprise in its complexity and poor craftsmanship. This temple is the one that comes closest to our latin ideas of unity and classic order, born of a symmetry responding to the emphatic axes. Angkor Wat is a work of power and reason.

In 1866 the Scottish photographer John Thomson already saw in Angkor Wat the symbol of Mount Meru, the centre of the Universe. According to him, we are told by Madame de Coral-Remusat, the seven circles of the central tower corresponded to the seven chains of the mountains of Mount Meru, the three terraces of the temple to the three platforms of earth, water and wind on which the cosmic mountain rests, and the water filled moat to the Ocean.

The plan is also the only one which, in adopting a combined solution, has managed to reconcile the two elements of the tiered pyramid and the temple at ground level forming cloisters, elongated in relation to the east-west axis. Angkor Wat is in effect a three tiered pyramid, with each level bounded by galleries incorporating four gopuras and corner towers - the upper terrace is square, forming a quincunx of towers, and the lower two, though concentric on three of their sides, have become rectangular by their elongation towards the west. The two esplanades so created have allowed the placing on the second level of two "*library*" type buildings, and of two others on the first - which are more monumental in character - in a cloister that is divided by crossing galleries.



THE MOATS

The moats surrounding the external enclosure of the monument (the fourth from the centre) are bordered by steps ornate with a moulded sandstone perimeter, and are five and a half kilometres in their overall length. They are crossed only on two axes - to the east by a simple levee of earth that could formerly have served to bring materials to site from the river, and to the west by a 200 metre long and 12 metre wide sandstone-paved causeway, lined with columns along its sides that support its corbelled edge. A few remain visible, notably those to the right of the two lateral stairways that give access to the water level. Beside the road a cruciform terrace, raised by a few steps and embellished with lions, precedes the causeway. Both are bordered with naga-balustrades.

THE EXTERNAL ENCLOSURE

The temple enclosure, formed in a high laterite wall and separated from the moat by a thirty metre wide apron, is divided on the axis by a long colonnade of 235 metres in length composed of a three part gopura - the towers of which are cruciform in plan - and galleries that link with the two pavilions at either extremity which served as ground-level passageways for elephants.

While the extreme passageways are closed towards the galleries with richly ornate false doors and have crossing naves with gable ends, the three elements of the gopura, with open circulation, are crowned with three towers that are unfortunately truncated - most of their upper tiers having crumbled. The galleries are obscured from the monument by a plain wall simply decorated with a cornice and a low frieze of apsaras in a "*tapestry*" motif. Quite narrow (2m.20), they are bounded on their external side by a line of square pillars bordered with a half-vaulted side-aisle, also supported on pillars, but of which only some parts remain - its absence, depriving the composition of a strong horizontal element, considerably detracts from the proportion of the whole.

Viewed from the front, the ensemble serves as a kind of screen that masks the pilgrims' view of the monument itself - which it reproduces in the geometry of its silhouette - until the very last moment. It is an example of a theme that is developed hereafter in all of its variations - from minor to major and with no trace of discord - seeking to create a state of mind and to control the drama, which it does with complete success.

The axial western vestibule, flanked on its northern side by a superb naga, shows at once some of the exceptional ornamental sculpture to be found at Angkor Wat - the capitals of the pillars and the architrave have a precision of profile comparable to Grecian art. The pilasters and lintels - the best preserved of which can be seen above the eastern door - are also remarkably fine.

The galleries' eastern façade confirms the near perfection - false windows with turned balustrades are surmounted with a frieze of figurines mounted on a variety of animals and framed by a background decor of superbly preserved devatas, either individually or in groups of two or three, which can be counted amongst the finest in the monument.

We will but mention the gopuras of the fourth enclosure on the three secondary axes, generally little visited but nonetheless commendable; - of excellent proportion but remaining unfinished, particularly internally, they are rectangular in form with a crossing of naves with side-aisles, and are far less developed than the western. One gains access along a path cut through the undergrowth in line with the central sanctuary. The view from the north gopura across the moat towards the mound of Phnom Bakheng is particularly delightful.

THE MONUMENT

Plunging into the semi-darkness of the western gopura, the visitor is presented with the incomparable looming perspective of Angkor Wat and its causeway - now universally celebrated - framed in the full light of the door ahead. Three hundred and fifty metres long and 9m.40 in overall width, the causeway is established on earth fill and forms an eight metre wide processional way that is raised above ground level by one and a half metres. Paved and faced in sandstone it is bordered by naga-balustrades on blocks which, in the sunlight, fringe it with a play of light and shadow. On either side along its length, six perrons with naga heads punctuate the monotony.

Towards the middle and on either side are two elegant buildings, elevated and lying lengthways, generally known as "*libraries*". Their situation in this part of the temple that is accessible to the faithful, their low proportion and the presence of their four monumental porticoes giving access to their large nave with pillars - extensively lit by windows with balusters - clearly distinguishes them from the usual style of this type of building. We can perhaps see here public reunion halls similar to those in modern pagodas. The causeway then passes between two square pools - the northern of these has retained its surrounding stone steps and is always full of water. From its north western corner is a picturesque view of the monument reflected in its entirety.

The temple itself is presented raised on a vast surrounding terrace that is graced with sugar palms and overshadowed by mango trees. Preceding the main entrance is a high, cruciform terrace, on two levels - the so-called "*Grand Terrace*" - where ritual dance was probably performed and which, during processions and displays, served as a tribune for the sovereign. Its overhanging cornice, carried on columns, supports a naga-balustrade.

The first level of the three tiered pyramid appears as a broad horizontal element surrounded by galleries. Stretching for 1,400 metres in

total length, these form a tight succession of rigid frames for the central sanctuary - where the chamber of the deity is in fact no more than five metres in width.

The absence in a composition of this size of any dominating building is one of the characteristics of the architecture - and while the perspectives created may appear at times a little artificial, the effect remains nonetheless impressive due to a principle of unity.

The lower gallery, the celebrated gallery of the bas-reliefs, accessible to the mass of the faithful and of 187 metres by 215, is presented on its shorter side, with a three-part gopura linked to the corner pavilions - with their crossing naves and stairways - by means of a 2m.45 wide vaulted passageway. This has a plain inner wall and columns to the outside, doubled by a side-aisle with a half-vault, also carried on columns. The grey of the superposed stone roofs, channelled in imitation of tiles and floating above the play of light between the pillars, caps the string of open bays with two delicate, shimmering lines.

In silhouette above are the corner towers, though unfortunately truncated, of the second enclosure, and then those of the central group. These towers, so particular to Angkor Wat, appear like coned tiaras due to their multiple redents, and are more elongated than elsewhere due to the extreme development of their crowning motif - they have three rows of lotus petals in addition to the four reducing upper tiers of the normal prasats, with each projecting cornice lined finally with steles and antefixes.

The gallery of the second enclosure, of 100 metres by 115, adjoins the one preceding it to the west by the particularly pleasing arrangement of a crossing cloister - similar to that at Beng Mealea, a temple in the same style, - formed by covered passageways that link the two three-core gopuras with a secondary transversal passageway. The ensemble is found placed here at

an intermediate height between the first and the second levels of the pyramid, and the necessity to gain the upper level under shelter has inspired the architect to raise his galleries three times just before the steps, with an accompaniment of gable ends treated with frontons. It is masterful architectural dynamism, with a lightness of touch that gives the construction an ethereal quality.

While the two galleries to the north and south - of 2m.90 in width - are closed to their exterior but have a double row of pillars towards the courtyard, the two main arms of the cross have a central 3m.15 wide nave with double side-aisles forming 7m.70 overall. The remaining area has four tanks each with richly ornamented sides and a single central stair, which could either have been pools or lower level courtyards. Given the absence of steps forming the usual pool surround and the presence of sculptures, it would seem that, if ever there was water, its level could not have been any higher than the top step corresponding to the base course, which, like the stone facing, has been left crudely finished.

The main vaults of the crossing cloister were, as elsewhere, masked by a timber panelled ceiling sculpted with rosettes in the form of lotus blossoms, some remnants of which have been found in places. This ornamentation continues on the half vaults, which have no false ceiling but instead were enhanced with colourful painting and some gilding, also applied to the overall decoration; - the entablature with a frieze of apsaras under the cornice, the horizontal braces, the tympanums with scenes on the frontons - where one can recognise amongst others the Vishnouïte legends of the *"churning of the ocean"* and of the *"god sleeping on the serpent Ananta"* - and the pillar-base motifs of ascetics in prayer. Here the visitor can appreciate something of the style of ornamentation from the classic period of Khmer art, with its smiling devatas, the window balusters worked like timber and the delicate ornamentation cut into the surface of the stone with a discretion which, while not casting any harsh shadow, subtly animates the walls.

Proceeding through the axial passageway of the crossing cloister - while glancing south to the *"Prah Pean"* (the thousand Buddhas) where most of the statues have been re-established - though without much interest being not uncommon and rather later than the monument⁶ - we recommend taking the north branch of the transversal gallery to exit at its extreme doorway - though not without first observing the good tourist's time-honoured rite of standing against the wall in its vestibule and beating the chest to experience the unusual resonance. One can then pay a visit to the high *"library"*, which is more easily accessible than its symmetrical image on the southern side; - from here is a fine view to the upper tiers of the pyramid.

The large surrounding courtyard between the second and the third enclosure is quite plain, the only decoration along the length of its long façades being the false window openings and the eleven stairways of its gopuras and corner towers. Here the two *"libraries"* are extended. Like those in the external enclosure they have four door openings, but only two porticoes - though in contrast they are extensively lit by the balustered windows along the side-aisle of the large nave.

Returning to the north gallery of the crossing cloister, where an inscribed stele dating from later than the foundation of the temple, discovered in the undergrowth, has been set in the western part, one can, turning immediately to the left, gain the second level by a stairway with steps that are less slippery than those of the central stairway.⁷ The gallery of the second enclosure is 2m.45 in width, with a plain wall towards its exterior and balustered windows to the courtyard. The poor treatment of its façades due to the lack of any lower side-aisle is relieved by the countless devatas, sculpted in bas-relief with an extraordinary variety of intricate hair styles and costumes.



From the foot of the north-west corner tower, while the sun is going down, or from the north-east corner during the morning - or by the moon-lit night - the view of the central group is unforgettable.

The enormous two-storey thirty metre high substructure - breached by the cascading stairs of which the some 70° slope ascends in a single flight to follow the rising line of the base - is square in plan, as is the 60 metre wide quincunx of towers, and ringed with galleries whose axial gopuras are preceded by porticoes. Of all the galleries in the temple, only these open to both sides, with balustered windows on one and the double row of columns of a side-aisle on the other. In the middle, the 42 metre high central tower, reinforcing the four points of its crossed plan with a double vestibule, reaches to a height of 62 metres above the main causeway in a dramatic skyward thrust.

Around the courtyard of the second level one can appreciate several well preserved frontons on the surrounding gallery, particularly those above the eastern door of the northern gallery, the central door of the southern gallery, and then - unfortunately at some distance - those on the corner towers of the central group, the best preserved of which are to the north-east, representing scenes of battle. On the west side, two small "*libraries*", again with four doors but with walled-in windows, flank the axis and adjoin one another on the same level by means of a raised crossed walkway supported on small pillars. Here, the access stairway to the third level is less steep than the eleven others (about 50°), though anyone suffering from vertigo might prefer to use the southern axial stairway, where additional concrete steps and a handrail make the ascent - and particularly the descent - less dangerous.

The surrounding gallery on the upper level is only 2 metres wide and divided, like the crossing cloister, into four smaller quadrants by axial galleries, with 2m.40 wide naves and side-aisles. We recommend the entire trip around, as much for the view over the rooftops below - unfortunately

missing their ridge-line finials, none of which has been found intact - which plunges down to the grand entrance causeway and the surrounding countryside, as for the view up to the central tower.

The necessity to make the central tower dominate, despite its restricted plan, has inspired the architect to complement it on each of its axes with doubled porticoes. Their superstructures project like those over the stairways of the crossing cloister, while their cornices and half-vaulted side-aisles correspond to as many horizontal incisions on the corner piers of the main tower, without which the extension in height would seem quite disproportionate.

Some fine sculpture, quite large in scale, remains on the frontons, while traces of plaster in some areas suggest that the whole of the central tower was once painted or gilded.

The sanctuary was open originally to its four sides - the Buddhist monks, in taking possession of the temple, walled in the openings, having first expelled the Brahmanic idol, and sculpted the false doors with standing Buddhas. The southern entrance, re-opened by Commaille in 1908, stayed clear, so allowing George Trouvé to gain access to the central well in 1934. Plain sand was excavated to a depth of 25 metres - the level corresponding to the external ground level of the monument - but unfortunately did not yield the treasure placed under the pedestal, no doubt long since stolen. It did however enable the discovery, at a depth of 23 metres, of the sacred foundation deposit, composed of two circular gold leaves of 0m.18 in diameter and 65 grammes in weight, set in a block of laterite.

It can be seen, to finish with the upper level, that the monks have in places undertaken some regrettable repair work, in particular replacing some pillars or missing lintels with columns originating from other parts of the monument.

THE BAS-RELIEFS

The bas-reliefs cover the back wall of the gallery of the third enclosure for two metres in height and a total area of more than 1,000 square metres - excluding the two corner pavilions. Limited to the zone that would have been accessible to the public, they represented legendary and historic scenes for the enlightenment of the faithful. Cut directly into the surface of the wall and having suffered minimal decay, they are more graphic than sculptural. Their inconsistent workmanship - excellent while the artist proceeds to clearly define without tending towards sculpture in the round, but only mediocre when the exaggerated contours result in a style described by Paul Claudel as *"loose and flabby"* - is due no doubt to the hands of differing craftsmen.

The hurried visitor will be content with a tour of the galleries to the south of the central axis, together with its western gallery up to the north-west pavilion - which are particularly remarkable. The north-east quarter, on the other hand, though showing no particular shortcoming in composition, has been hurried in execution. Mr Goloubew, by the nature of certain motifs, suspects the late intervention of Chinese artisans charged with finishing a work that had previously only been outlined.

The order of the panels reveals, apart from anything else, two different conceptions; - the first, in a single composition, represents a veritable profusion of figures in the various stages of frenzied combat - the others, perhaps slightly later in execution and more restrained in style, are arranged in registers according to the formula which was to prevail during the second half of the 12th century. Almost all have been identified by Mr Coëdes, and we follow them according to the direction imposed by the funerary rites of *"prasavya"* - but leaving from close to the west entrance and heading south, rather than from the east and heading north - in accordance with the learned reasoning of Dr Bosch and based on the running of events which marked the reign of the deified sovereign. All the subjects relate to the legend of Vishnou.

WEST GALLERY, SOUTHERN PART.

The battle of Kuruksetra between the Kauravas (advancing from the left) and the Pandavas (from the right), depicting four divisions of the Mahabharata, one of the major Hindu epics.

The composition is in a single panel and lined along its base with a procession in which one can distinguish some musicians, some foot-soldiers leading warriors marching to combat and their chiefs carried by elephants or horse drawn chariots. It is only in the centre that the struggle turns into a furious scrum where certain details - such as the wounded horse collapsing lanced with arrows - are treated with a striking realism.

One can identify with some certainty; - to the left, Bhishma, the chief of the army of the Kauravas, dying pierced with arrows, - and Drona, no longer wearing the conical head-dress of the devas and other heroes, but with the classical chignon of the Brahmins; - to the right is Arjuna, whose four armed driver is none other than Krishna.

One will notice that in places the rubbing of the reliefs by visitors' hands or the remains of some ancient lacquer has given the stone the appearance of bronze or of polished granite, clarifying them distinctly.

SOUTH WEST CORNER PAVILION.

The four branches of the cross-planned pavilion are decorated with sculpted scenes, unfortunately decayed in places by water infiltration through the loose-jointed vaults.

1. *above the north door.*

A scene from the Ramayana, where Rama kills the enchanted gazelle Marica, so enabling the abduction of Sita by Ravana.

2. *north branch, east wall.*
Krishna, accompanied by Balarama, raising mount Govardhana (conventionally represented by a pattern of small diamonds) with his right arm in order to shelter the shepherds and their flocks from the storms unleashed by the fury of Indra.
3. *north branch, west wall (above the opening)*
A scene from the legend of Vishnou - the churning of the Sea of Milk that extracts the elixir of immortality over which the gods and the demons dispute. On the upper part are two discs, each containing a figure, representing the sun and the moon.
4. *west branch, north wall (above the opening).*
Ravana, taking the form of a chameleon, enters the women's chamber in the palace of Indra.
5. *above the west door.*
The child Krishna dragging the large stone mortar to which he had been tied by his adoptive mother, Yasoda, felling two arjuna trees in passing.
6. *west branch, south wall (above the opening).*
Ravana with multiple heads and arms tries to shake the mountain on which Shiva and his wife Uma are throned.
7. *south branch, west wall (above the opening).*
Shiva meditating on a mountain top with Uma at his side is sighted by Kama, the god of love, who shoots him with his sugar-cane arrow. The god, furious at being troubled, strikes the fool who dies in the arms of his wife Rati.
8. *above the south door.*
The murder of Pralamba (?) and the extinction of a fire by Krishna.

9. *south branch, east wall (above the opening).*
A scene from the Ramayana. Above is a duel between the two enemy brothers, Valin and Sugriva, the king of the monkeys. Rama, intervening in the struggle assures the victory of his ally by killing Valin with an arrow. Below, Valin dies in the arms of his wife, Tara, who wears a three pointed mukuta. The panel, which adjoins the window and shows on several registers the monkeys mourning Valin, is remarkable in the variety of their attitudes and expressions.
10. *east branch, south wall (above the opening)*
A badly ruined and unidentified panel. One can distinguish a seated figure in the centre, conversing with many others, above figures of ascetics.
11. *above the east door.*
Krishna receiving offerings destined for Indra (?).
12. *east branch, north wall.*
The Dvaravati nautical festival where one can see two superposed junks mounted with apsaras. The vessel above carries some chess players while the lower one has some figures playing with children. To the right is a cock fight.

SOUTH GALLERY, WESTERN PART.

This is the "*historical gallery*", where a single panel of 90 metres in length is dedicated to king Suryavarman II, the builder of Angkor Wat, consecrated under the name of Paramavishnouloka.

The section to the left starts on two tiers; - above is the royal audience, just to the throne of the sovereign, installed on the mount Shivapada and recognisable by his large size and the gilding - although of a later date - which covers him. Below are women of the palace in procession.

From here is the rallying of the army; - the chiefs, descending from the upper register, rejoin their troops who pass a crowd of infantry-men at the base with the riders represented abreast in a sort of rudimentary perspective. The chiefs, whose rank is marked by the number of parasols that surround them, are all set against a verdant background and can be identified by the 28 small inscriptions engraved beside them. Standing on elephants with their trunks coiled or dressed, they encircle the king, Paramavishnouloka - the twelfth from the left - who is superior in stature, wears a conical mukuta with a diadem, and reaches the upper edge of the panel with his 15 parasols. He is armed with a sort of long-handled knife which is similar to the "*coupe-coupe*" still used by the Cambodians today.

A little further on, the parade loses its military character to give way to a religious pageant of Brahmins with chignons who ring small bells. This is the procession of the *rajahotar* or royal sacrificial priest, whom one can see carried in a palanquin behind the ark containing the sacred flame, itself preceded by musicians, standard bearers and jesters.

The parade continues, finishing at the extreme right with the Siamese - then allies of the Khmer - with their strange bell-shaped dresses and hair styles decorated with feathers, giving them the air of Oceanian warriors and for a long time mistaken for "*barbarians*".

SOUTH GALLERY, EASTERN PART ⁸

For this panel of 60 metres in length - dedicated on three registers to the judgement of the dead by Yama and then on two registers to the representation of heaven and hell - one is further guided by 36 short inscriptions which reveal that there are 32 hells and 37 heavens - these last remaining without much appeal and of a dull monotony. They are but sky borne palaces in which the elected, surrounded by their servants, lead a life of leisure, the joys of which remain singularly earthbound.

The tortures are far more varied and are but transitory - the Hindu religions knowing nothing of eternal damnation - and it is worth noting that the executioners, generally large in stature and aided by ferocious beasts, are themselves also damned.

From the left lead the two paths, one to the heavens (above), and the other to hell (below). Yama, the supreme judge with multiple arms, mounted on a buffalo, indicates to his two assessors - the registrars Dharma and Sitragupta - those unfortunate souls who are to be thrown down to hell to suffer a refined cruelty which, at times, seems to be a little disproportionate to the severity of the crimes committed. So it is that people who have damaged others' property have their bones broken, that the glutton is cleaved in two, that rice thieves are afflicted with enormous bellies of hot iron, that those who picked the flowers in the garden of Shiva have their heads pierced with nails, and thieves are exposed to cold discomfort.

Running along the length of the composition and separating hell from the rich palaces of the elected above, with their lavish draperies and sumptuous flying apsaras, is a frieze of garudas standing "*as atlantes*".

EAST GALLERY, SOUTHERN PART

Taken from the Bhagavata-Pourana this shows the grand scene, known universally and often represented in Khmer art, of the churning of the Sea of Milk. The registered panel extends for nearly 50 metres and has an axial symmetry. Consequently it is far more stylised than the others - the figures all having the same attitude of concentrated exertion in their rhythmical hauling.

The churning produces an elixir of immortality, over which the gods (devas) and the demons (the asuras) are in dispute. Resting on a tortoise - one of the forms of Vishnou - the mount Mandara serves as a pivot while the cord is represented by the serpent Vasuki. The asuras hold the head and the

devas the tail. On the bas-relief, the asuras, to the left, number 92 and wear a sort of helmet, while the 88 devas on the right wear the diadem with mukuta. Each are directed by three larger figures, fortunately breaking the monotony, and, to the extreme right, by the monkey Hanuman, ally of the gods.

Vishnou, represented again but this time in human form as Caturbhuja, presides over the operation which, according to the legend, lasted for more than a thousand years. Hundreds of various beings appear successively, including the white elephant Airavana, the mount of Indra, - the horse Uccaihsravas, - countless hordes of delectable apsaras (running here as a frieze along the length of the panel) - and Lakshmi, the goddess of beauty. The serpent then spits the halahala, the deadly venom which covers the waves, risking the annihilation of the gods and demons - particularly those near the head. At the demand of Brahma, Shiva sacrifices himself and drinks the scalding poison, that scars his throat.

Finally the elixir which flows is seized by the asuras - but Vishnou appears before them in bewitching beauty as Maya (the illusion), to regain the coveted cup.

On the bas-relief, where this part of the story is not in fact related, one can also see again at the base - framed by two registers of guards and servants waiting near some chariots, elephants and the horses of the drama's players - an image of the serpent Vasuki, slithering in an aquatic background before participating in the churning. Close to the pivot, various fish and maritime monsters writhe in the turbulent current.

EAST GALLERY, NORTHERN PART

One will notice on the wall, while traversing the east gopura, a large inscription - although of a later date (beginning of the 18th century) - which relates to the placing of the funerary monument or "cedei" that one can still see, half ruined, to the exterior of the gallery.

The panel of the bas-reliefs is here quite mediocre in execution and, with an axis of symmetry, represents the victory of Vishnou over the asuras. From the two sides, on two barely distinguishable registers, the army of the asuras moves towards the centre, where mounted on the shoulders of Garuda, the four-armed god - whose face is turned to the south - sends his enemies running after having wreaked carnage. All the warriors have the characteristic mask of the demons, and the same crested head-dress. One will notice, slightly to the right of the central motif, a group curiously mounted on gigantic birds.

NORTH GALLERY, EASTERN PART

Here, in a terrific scrum framed by parades of armies, is the victory of Krishna over the asura Bana. The workmanship is at its worst. One can identify, successively from left to right; - mounted on Garuda, Krishna with eight arms and tiered heads framed by two heroes, - Garuda extinguishing the defensive wall of flames which protects the enemy city and behind whom stands Agni, the god of fire, on a rhinoceros, - four replicas of the initial motif where, on the second, the god has only four arms, - the meeting with the god Bana, with multiple arms, coming from the opposite direction and mounted on a chariot pulled by grimacing lions, - once again on Garuda, Krishna and his two victorious companions, - and finally, to the extreme right, Krishna kneeling in front of Shiva who, throned on the mount Kailasa with Parvati and Ganesha, asks him to spare Bana his life.

NORTH GALLERY, WESTERN PART

Another combat scene - devas against asuras - in a single panel and with no division of registers. Here the workmanship improves.

Cœdes sees in this panel "*a precious iconographic document, in which all the main gods of the Brahmanic Pantheon parade, carrying their classic attributes and riding their traditional mounts*". It portrays a series of duels where each of the 21 gods is represented struggling with an asura, from

whom he differs only in the style of the hair - all set on a background of fighting warriors.

One can recognise, from left to right - after the seven first groups of adversaries; - Kubera, the god of wealth, on the shoulders of a Yaksha, then, two groups further on, Skanda the god of war with multiple heads and arms mounted on his peacock, - Indra standing on the elephant Airavana with four tusks, - Vishnou with four arms on Garuda, who separates with each of his limbs the four rearing horses of two enemy chariots, - the asura Kalanemi, with four tiered heads, whirling his sword-wielding arms, - Yama, the god of the dead and supreme judge on a chariot drawn by oxen, - Shiva drawing a bow, - Brahma on the sacred goose Hamsa, - Surya, the god of the sun, standing out on his disc, - and finally Varuna, the god of the waters, standing on a five headed naga harnessed like a beast of burden.

NORTH WEST CORNER PAVILION.

Entirely ornate like its symmetrical image on the south west, this pavilion has some remarkably well preserved scenes of the highest order.

1. above the eastern door.

A scene from the Ramayana shows mount Malaya and the meeting between Rama, his brother Lakshmana and Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, in order to settle a pact of alliance.

2. eastern branch, north wall (above the opening).

Vishnou sleeps, reclining on the serpent Ananta, his feet held by his wife, under a flight of apsaras. Above are some fine examples of sculpture showing the procession of the nine gods coming to request incarnation on earth; - Surya on his horse drawn chariot, set on his disc, - Kubera on the shoulders of a Yaksha, - Brahma on the Hamsa, - Skanda on the peacock, - an unidentified god on a horse, - Indra on an elephant, - Yama on the buffalo, - Shiva on the bull Nandin - and another unidentified god on a lion.

3. eastern branch, south wall.

Krishna regains mount Maniparvata. Mounted on Garuda with his wife Satyabhama, the god is accompanied by his army and servants carrying the spoils of the vanquished asura Naraka. The mountain, the cause of the struggle, is shown behind Krishna.

4. north branch, eastern wall (above the opening)

A conversation in a palace, where one can see, under the two talking figures, the bodies of two men lying on their bellies, and then, on a number of registers, some charming scenes from the ladies chambers.

5. above the north door.

A scene from the Ramayana - the attempted abduction of Sita by the giant Viradha, at whom Rama and Lakshmana shoot arrows, in a forest setting.

6. north branch, western wall (above the opening).

A scene from the Ramayana, badly deteriorated by water infiltration, showing the ordeal of Sita who is put to the test of fire after her deliverance in order to prove her innocence and purity. Only the stake and the silhouette of some figures - probably Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva and Hanuman - remain, above numerous registers of monkeys treated with particular vitality. The princess has completely disappeared.

7. western branch, north wall (above the opening).

A scene from the Ramayana. Rama returns on the chariot Pushpaka that served as his transport in Ayodhya after his victory. This chariot, magnificently decorated and pulled by Hamsas (sacred geese) belonged to Kubera and was stolen by Ravana. Here again some deteriorated figures end a long vertical panel of jubilant monkeys, represented with some humour.

8. *above the western door.*

A scene from the Ramayana. In the middle of a group of monkeys, Rama, accompanied by Lakshmana, forms an alliance with the rakshasa Vibhisana, who betrays his brother Ravana.

9. *eastern branch, south wall (above the opening)*

A scene from the Ramayana. The discussion between Sita, captive of Ravana, and Hanuman in the asoka grove. The princess, with the tender hearted rakshasi Trijata at her side, gives Hanuman the ring that is to prove the success of the mission to Rama. Below are tiers of rakshasis.

10. *south branch, eastern wall (above the opening).*

An unidentified scene where, on the upper part, one can see Vishnou sitting with four arms receiving homage from some gracious apsaras who crowd up to him.

11. *above the south door.*

A scene from the Ramayana. Rama and Lakshmana fighting with Kabandha, "a rakshasa with an enormous body, a large chest and no head but with a face on his belly".

12. *south branch, eastern wall.*

A scene from the Ramayana. The archery contest which Rama, in the centre, wins. In the court of King Janaka, beside a richly clothed Sita, Rama, in a powerful draw, shoots his arrow at the target (represented here by a bird perched on a wheel) while below are aligned the defeated pretenders.

WEST GALLERY, NORTHERN PART

"An inextricable entanglement of monkeys and rakshasas" - Mr Coedes tells us - "hitting and tearing at one another with tree trunks or lumps of rock. On this busy and confused background - some details of which are not without humour - a series of duels show the main chiefs of the two parties.

In the centre of the panel, a large rakshasa with ten heads and ten pairs of arms is attacked by a god mounted on a large monkey - one need look no further to recognise the battle of Lanka, whose story occupies, almost entirely, the penultimate division of the Ramayana".

The battle of Lanka (Ceylon) that enables Rama, with help from his allies the monkeys, to recapture the lovely Sita, constitutes an outstanding piece of narrative sculpture which, besides some superb modelling, merits a detailed examination by the extraordinary vitality of the figures, represented in full action.

The principal adversaries can be seen towards the middle of the panel; - to one side, Rama standing on the shoulders of Hanuman surrounded by a hail of arrows, with, behind him, his brother Lakshmana and the renegade rakshasa Vibhisana. Both stand, their calm attitude in contrast to the chaos around them. On the other side is the giant Ravana with multiple arms and tiered heads, on his war chariot pulled by curiously stylised lions.

Between the two, Nila, the furious monkey, straddles two strange lions pulling chariots, presented head-on. He carries the body of his recently vanquished enemy on his shoulders. Another, Angada - the son of Valin - pulls the tusk from an elephant who is coiffed with a three pointed mukuta, somersaulting both it and the rakshasa it carries. Further to the right is a lively group with another monkey brandishing, by holding their rear legs, two enormous monsters that he has just unharnessed - as well as many other duels too numerous to mention...

An American visitor, in her enthusiasm for Angkor, made the request that her ashes be scattered on the causeway of Angkor Wat - a satisfaction granted to her at the beginning of 1936. Such a gesture symbolises the extraordinary power which these ancient ruins have on peoples' imagination.

Whatever one may think, Angkor Wat merits a number of visits - and at least two - one for the monument and another dedicated to the bas-reliefs. If these can be seen in the morning, when the light is clear, then the rest should best be seen at the end of the day as the towers become increasingly golden with the sun sinking to the horizon. Sometimes, in the twilight, the bats - the curse of the ruins which reek with their droppings - leave in their thousands, and it is a curious spectacle to see them rise like columns of smoke to be dispersed with the winds to the atmosphere. One should also not miss the nights of the full moon, nor the displays of traditional Cambodian dancing on the western esplanade, which bring the ancient legends to life by the glow of torch-light. These extraordinary dances, so discreet and controlled - where every sentiment and passion can be expressed in the merest quiver, resonating through the dancer to burst from the finger tips - they illustrate the architecture with living bas-reliefs.



Three hundred metres from the western axial entrance to Angkor Wat, level with the first kilometre marker stone, one can see a small ruined sandstone tower to the left. Following the discovery in 1928 of a stele inscribed with the edict of Jayavarman VII relating to hospitals, this small monument could perhaps be identified as the chapel belonging to one of these 102 establishments, founded by the socially conscious king and mentioned in the inscription of Ta Prohm. Mr Cœdes tells us, on the other hand, that *"Ta-Prohm Kel is associated with the legend of Pona Krek, the paralysed beggar whose stiff joints were freed here by the horse of Indra. He then mounted the steed which carried him skyward"*.

Passing between some sculpted stones, where one can see in particular several representations of the bodhisattva Lokeshvara, one crosses the remains of a small sandstone gopura before reaching the prasat, of which only the main lower section and the first three upper tiers of the northern and eastern sides remain standing - though themselves badly deteriorated. The sanctuary opens to the east, has false doors on the three other sides and is set on a moulded and decorated base. An evacuation channel for lustral water - or *"somasutra"* - passes through its northern wall.

The decoration is abundant and reasonable in execution - in the style of the Bayon, on a background of foliated scrolls with devatas on the corner piers. On the jambs of the main door are some curious circular medallions, delicately sculpted in *"tapestry"*. Each is embellished with a roughly sketched figure which, with lively inspiration, is almost caricatural in nature.

Ta Prohm-Kel

Date	late 12th century
King	Jayavarman VII (posthumous name: Maha paramasangata pada)
Cult	Buddhist
Clearing	by H. Marchal in 1919



Thirteen hundred metres north of the western axial entrance to Angkor Wat and 400 metres south of the southern gate of Angkor Thom, to the west of the road, one can see a wide track in the forest ascending a natural hill of 60 metres in height. This is Phnom Bakheng, the centre of the first kingdom of Angkor, or Yasodharapura, which formed a square of about 4 kilometres on each side and of which, travelling on the main road from Siem Reap, one crosses the double levee of earth forming its southern boundary - 600 metres before arriving at the moat of Angkor Wat.

On his accession in 889, Yasovarman abandoned Hariharalaya (Roluos), the rudimentary capital of his predecessors situated on the plain, and became the first, seduced by the mysticism of the hills, to find his “Meru” (the seat of the gods) and his “Ganga” (the river Ganges) symbolised here in the hill of Phnom Bakheng and the river of Stung Siem Reap - the latter probably being diverted to follow the eastern boundary of the new city.

As an imposing replica of the Bakong at Roluos, the temple of Phnom Bakheng, glorified by its choice position and prominence over the surrounding landscape, had yet further to assert its monumental character in order to justify its role as the base and shelter of the Devaraja - the linga Shri Yasodhariesvara of the inscriptions - the master-idol of the kingdom. So came the first realisation of a quincunx of sandstone towers crowning the upper level of the pyramid and the multiplication of secondary towers on the lower tiers.

Phnom Bakheng is best climbed at the end of the day or early in the morning, either by its immediate steep slope or by the gently winding path bearing to the left, formerly taken by tourist elephants - which is a classic and very pleasant walk. From the summit one can enjoy a view stretching across the plain - dominated by the two other peaks that are also each crowned with a temple by Yasovarman; - Phnom Krom to the south, close to the Tonle Sap lake, and Phnom Bok to the north-east, standing out from the distant dark line of the Phnom Kulen - and then the plain of water of the western baray, the forest of Angkor Thom and the majestic composition of Angkor Wat, lying golden in the setting sun.

In previous chapters we described how Mr Goloubew identified the “Central Mountain” of the inscriptions - the centre of the capital from the end of the 9th century - with Phnom Bakheng. In particular, his excavations revealed the existence at the foot of the hill of a buried rectangular enclosure of 650 metres east-west by 440 metres north-south, intersected by gopuras of which some remnants are still visible at the

Phnom Bakheng

Date	towards 900
King	Yasovarman I (posthumous name: Paramashivaloka)
Cult	Brahmanic (Civaïte)
Clearing	clearing work at different times by Henri Marchal from 1919 to 1930 research by Mr Goloubew from 1931 to 1934

base of the hill at the eastern entrance. Similar traces have appeared on the other axes where the stairways, unlike those of the eastern flight, have retained a few of their treads.

The art of Yasovarman shows a constant preoccupation with the quest for the monumental and the improvement of construction techniques in the use of scarce but durable materials. However, one can observe that in the detail, except for some powerful elements - such as the base platforms and the cornices, the devatas of the corner piers and the colonnettes - it failed to transcend a certain banality in the decoration and a disparity in the respective scales and arrangement of the motifs - one bemoans, for example, the lintels of preceding styles - those more broad and vigorous in manufacture of the Kulen, or more magnificent and dense but yet solid of Bakong and Prah Ko. This tendency towards finesse and detail derived perhaps from habits learned while sculpting in the decorative mortar of the brick monuments and the timber of the palaces - techniques which here restricted the craftsman's necessity to work in volume to the call of the architect.

DESCRIPTION

The two lions framing the bottom of the path which leads to the upper plateau are amongst the finest and the best proportioned to be found in Khmer art. At the top of the hill, where once some Vietnamese monks were established and who made various inevitably regrettable alterations, one leaves to the right a building of which only some sandstone pillars remain, to pass two lingas set as bornes and a light-weight structure sheltering a Buddha's footprint of a more recent date - to then cross the remains of a gopura that originally intersected the laterite enclosure wall. On either side of the axis are two "library" type buildings in sandstone, ventilated by lines of lozenge shaped holes. Initially opening to the west, they have later each been pierced with another opening in their eastern sides.

The temple appears from here as a stack of five bare-faced tiers, becoming progressively smaller from 76m.00 at the base to 47m.00 at the summit, with an overall height of 13 metres. The severity of the lines is fortunately broken by the cut of a steep axial stair inclined at 70%, flanked by lions at each rise and framed by the cascades of small sanctuary towers that are repeated at the corners. The upper platform, with the quincunx of towers that are either truncated or have disappeared altogether, is no longer imposing, while the brick towers encircling the base of the pyramid are for the most part ruined and barely worth mentioning.

Thirty six of these towers, opening to the east and sometimes pierced subsequently with another door opening to the west, stood aligned in a single rank - except on either side of the axial pathways where they are found coupled on a common base, making a total of forty four. Many of them are missing or remain incomplete. Just before their remains, on the left, are two large pedestals. Found during the clearing work, these are remarkable in detail and quite pure in style.

The Bakheng pyramid is unique in not having its interior formed by in-fill - the bedrock has simply been hewn away as necessary and a sandstone cladding applied, as one can see in the north-east and south-east corners where land-slides reveal the substructure. No doubt the form of this natural frame has forced the narrow width of the tiers - less than 4 metres and obstructed by the small pyramid towers - which barely allow any circulation. These 60 prasats are constructed in sandstone and open to the east - those to the west side being practically inaccessible. They remain in rough form and are composed, as usual, of a principal core with four upper tiers and a decorative crown.

The north-south axis of the monument is slightly offset to the west, leaving borders on the fifth level differing in width from 5 to 12 metres - room enough to accommodate pageants.

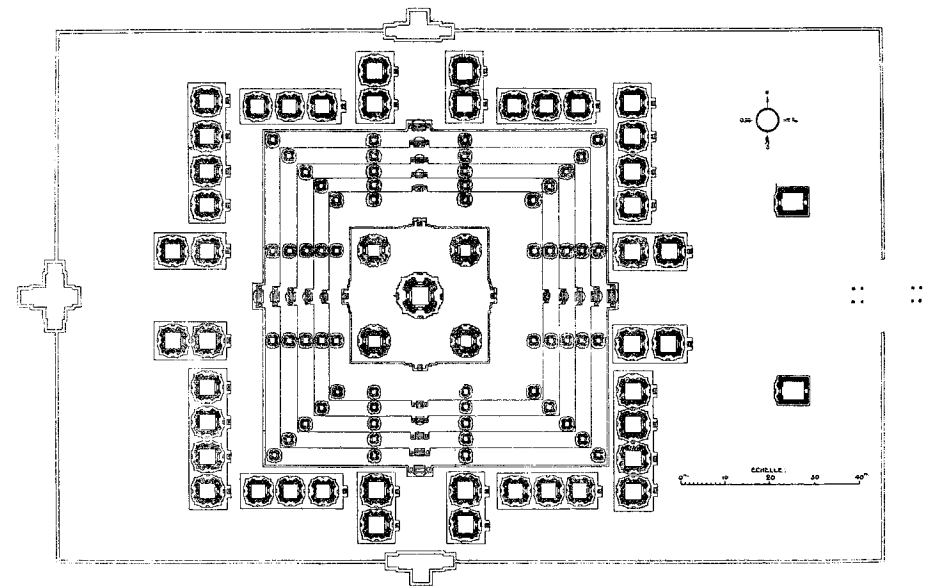
A sculpted retaining wall of 1m.60 in height serves as a base for the 31m.00 wide upper platform, which, until the clearing work, was encumbered with a mound of re-used blocks, amassed by the monks to form the base of a huge sitting Buddha whose torso remained incomplete. There was some surprise, on starting to dismantle the blocks, to find a quincunx of towers - though unfortunately only the principal level of the central sanctuary remained, measuring 8 metres on each side. The four corner towers, of 6 metres, were reduced to a few bases of wall, leaving the silhouette of this 109 towered temple particularly deformed.

The central tower was constructed with particular care and opens to the four cardinal points. At the foot of the pyramid it was possible to find three of the four "*Nandin*", or sacred bulls (the mount of Shiva), which assured the omnipresent power of the god. A rectangular stone tank of 1m.40 by 0m.80 in width and 0m.72 in depth, with a drainage hole in the bottom, was extracted from the internal well - which stops at bedrock at a depth of 2 metres. This must have had, according to Mr Coëdes, some funerary purpose - it was perhaps a sort of sarcophagus once containing the mortal remains of the deified king. In front of the eastern side of the tower one can see a regular arrangement of holes formed in the pavement - most likely for the placing of masts or wooden poles. The other four sanctuaries sheltered a linga which was perhaps set on a pedestal. Each has two opposing doors.

In terms of decoration, the remains show evidence of all the qualities and faults indicated above. Besides the imposing devatas on the corner piers surmounted by apsaras, one can appreciate the delicately sculpted bands of foliated scrolls and the pilasters with chevrons or trellis-work enhanced with figurines that are characteristic of the style. Also noteworthy are the lightly relieved tympanums of the frontons, almost square in proportion and quite confusing in composition, but which are solidly contained by the diverging makaras terminating their framing arch. They have a central base with

figures flanked by large scrolls fringed with a series of small heads of divinities - a formula that one finds only during this period of Khmer art.

An inscription is still visible on the western jamb of the north door dating from king Jayavarman V (968 - 1001) - and therefore later than the monument - but recalling the foundation of Yasovarman.



Baksei Chamkrong

"The bird that shelters under its wing"

Situated 150 metres north of the main axial stairway to Phnom Bakheng, this small temple appears in a frame of beautiful trees to the left of the road as a stepped pyramid, fine in proportion and warm in hue - since it is built in laterite and brick as the construction materials typical of the 10th century. The surrounding brick enclosure wall has almost entirely disappeared, though to the east, the remains of an axial gopura with sandstone steps are still visible.

The pyramid measures 27 metres across at the base and 15 at the summit for an overall height of 13 metres. In laterite with four tiers it follows the usual laws of proportional reduction - the first three are simply treated with a plain cladding while the last forms a moulded plinth for the sanctuary tower. Four steep stairs rising in a single flight mark the axes, framed at each change in height with side walls that restrict access to the various levels - which remain quite narrow. The visitor wishing to ascend to the upper platform should climb these stairs with extreme caution, since some of their treads are badly eroded.

The sanctuary tower is in brick - as usual with no use of mortar in the joints, which remain filiform. Measuring 8 metres each side, it stands on a moulded sandstone base leaving a narrow surround. Its mass is considerable with respect to the proportion of the pyramid and continues the ascending lines - though it is rounded at the summit since the upper tiers have lost their sharp profiles to the action of the vegetation.

The sanctuary opens to the east. False doors on the other sides are, with the colonnettes and lintels, the only sandstone elements, which are carefully ornate with an intricate decoration. On the false doors one should note the vertical bands of foliated scrolls, while on the branch end of the eastern lintel, a Ganesha sits astride his trunk in a motif one also finds at the Mebon Oriental. Its centre is marked by the image of Indra on a three headed elephant, while above the whole composition is a frieze of small figures.

The external decoration in lime based mortar has virtually disappeared - though one can still see on the facing brick of the corner piers the outline of the devatas, destined for a coating of plaster and given form to avoid an excess of its thickness. The interior of the tower has its floor level set a metre lower, is well preserved and shows the regular brick corbelling of the vault and the diminishing bands corresponding to the reducing sections of the upper tiers. A more recent reclining Buddha lies against the back wall.

Door jamb inscriptions date from the reign of Rajendravarman and mention the setting in the temple, in the year 947, of a golden statue of Shiva, implying that the building dates from this time.

Date 947
King Rajendravarman
Cult Brahmanic
Clearing by H. Marchal in 1919

These are the remains situated between the south moat of Angkor Thom and Baksei Chamkrong, to the north of this last monument and 125 metres west of the road. One reaches the temple along a cart track that turns to the left just before the causeway of giants preceding the south gate of Angkor Thom. It stands as a ruined square brick tower with a single sandstone door frame that has a lintel with a central garuda and branches of purely ornamental decoration. Originally it was preceded to the east by a tiered laterite terrace that was probably once covered with thin sandstone paving, corresponding no doubt to the name given to the prasat by the locals.

The main interest in the excavation was the discovery, under the paving of the sanctuary chamber, of an intact sacred deposit composed of a quincunx of five gold leaves. The larger central leaf was engraved with the outline of a standing bull - the mount of Shiva.

On the same track as the preceding monument but 175 metres further on, and so 300 metres west of the road, these three brick towers are aligned north-south and open to the east. They stand on a common laterite platform of 24 metres by 9m.60. The northern tower is incomplete and, like the southern, its height is truncated just above the doors. The middle tower, where one can see Indra on a three headed elephant in the centre of the lintel, contains a pedestal with its linga. The lintel of the southern tower, resting on the ground, also represents Indra, but his mount has a single head.⁹ The lintel of the northern tower remains only in rough outline.

Thma Bay Kaek

"The crow's rice stone"

Date 10th century
Cult Brahmanic (Shiva)
Clearing by M. Glaize in 1945

Prasat Bei

"The three towers"

Date 10th century
Cult Brahmanic (Shiva)
Clearing by H. Marchal in 1919



Of all the Angkor temples, it was the Bayon, at the centre of Angkor Thom, which most confounded the archaeologists. In earlier chapters, when discussing the chronology of the monuments, we touched briefly on the debate that ran with respect to the dating of its construction, based, until 1923, on the false identification of the “*Central Mountain*” mentioned in the inscription of Sdok Kak Thom - which referred in fact to Phnom Bakheng and not to the Bayon. This latter was therefore no longer assumed to be the “*temple-mountain*” of Yasodharapura, the capital of king Yasovarman dating from the end of the 9th century, and was instead recognised as the official sanctuary of the last city of Angkor Thom, reconstructed by Jayavarman VII towards the end of the 12th century following its sacking by the Chams.

It may seem surprising that, contrary to its function, a temple of this size was built without any external enclosure wall or moat - until one appreciates that these were in effect formed by the ramparts of the city of Angkor Thom itself and by its moats, with the gates taking the place of gopuras.

THE EXTERNAL ENCLOSURE

The walls of Angkor Thom, the southern of which lies 1,700 metres north of the axial entrance to Angkor Wat, form a square of 3 kilometres each side enclosing an area of 900 hectares. Nearly 8 metres high and topped with a parapet that has no battlements, they are constructed in laterite and buttressed on their inner side by an earth embankment - the top of which forms a surrounding road. Externally they are surrounded by a one hundred metre wide moat, which is crossed at each of the city gates by a causeway. The general flow of water within the square city was apparently established from the north-east to the south-west, in which corner it discharges into a kind of reservoir - the “*Beng Thom*” - itself draining to the external moat through a row of five tunnels cut through the embankment and the wall.

THE PRASAT CHRUNG

At the corners stand four small temples - “*the Prasat Chrung*” - each containing an inscribed stele mentioning the foundation by Jayavarman VII of a “*Jayagiri scraping the brilliant sky at its top and of a Jayasindhu touching at its impenetrable depth the world of the serpents*”. Mr Coëdes has shown that these referred, in the emphatic manner that was usual for the Khmer, to none other than the walls and the moats of Angkor Thom in comparison to the mountains and the ocean surrounding the earth.

Angkor Thom

“*The Large City*”

Each of the Prasat Chrung is in the style of the Bayon and was dedicated - as was the city itself - to the bodhisattva Lokeshvara. In the form of a sanctuary tower in sandstone opening to the east, they are cruciform in plan with four vestibules and have two upper tiers crowned with a lotus. The walls are decorated with devatas set in niches and with balustered false windows partially masked by blinds. To the east is a square planned shelter for the stele, open to four sides and vaulted with a cloistered arch. The whole arrangement is enclosed by a wall in which is a single opening.

A visit to one of the Prasat Chrung - perhaps to the one in the south-west corner - can be made on horse-back or by foot in the dry season along the wall-top track - if it has been cleared. It is a very pleasant walk (3 kilometres) under the shade of the trees where, having first climbed the embankment at the foot itself of the south gate, one then descends at the west gate after having skirted a quarter of the city limits. One can see in places the remains of laterite steps discovered by Mr Goloubew, corresponding to the moats of the 11th century enclosure of Angkor Thom.

THE GATES OF ANGKOR THOM

Very little is known about organisation of the city, with its light-weight dwellings. Centred on the Bayon, it was divided into four quarters by four axial roads that were probably bordered by moats. A fifth similar road was set on the axis of the Royal Palace, leading to the east.

Corresponding to these avenues are five monumental gates. From the exterior, the crossing of the moat is made, as previously described, on a causeway. At the northern entrance this now forms a bridge for part of its length, following hydrological works in 1940.

"Lining either side of the causeway" - we are told by Tcheou Ta-Kouan - "are 54 gigantic divinities, like fearsome war-lords. The parapets of the causeway are in solid stone, sculpted to represent nine-headed serpents,

with the 54 divinities holding the serpents as if to prevent them from escaping".

To consider the suggestion made by Mr Coedes and Paul Mus, this double railing in the form of a naga was perhaps *"one way of symbolising a rainbow which, in the Indian tradition, is the expression of the union of man with the world of the gods - materialised here on earth by the royal city. In adding the two lines of giants - devas on the one side and asuras on the other - the architect aimed to suggest the myth of the churning of the ocean in unison by the gods and demons in order to extract the elixir of life. The representation of the churning, with the moats for the ocean and the enclosure wall - and specifically the mass of its gate - for the mountain, is a kind of magic device destined to assure victory and prosperity to the country".*

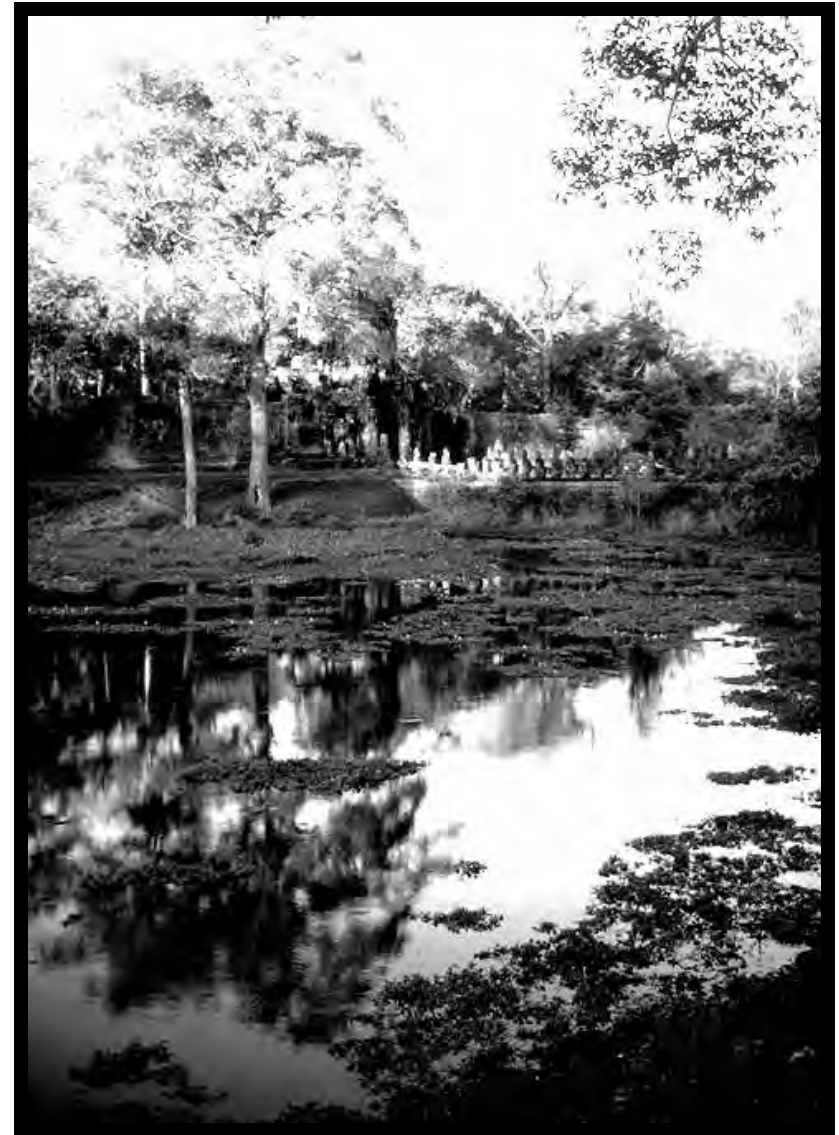
Until now it has only been possible to reconstruct the lines of devas and asuras of the Victory gate (the gate to the east centred on the Royal Palace) and the north gate, where the grimacing faces of the demons are particularly expressive, in sharp contrast to the serene faces of the gods.

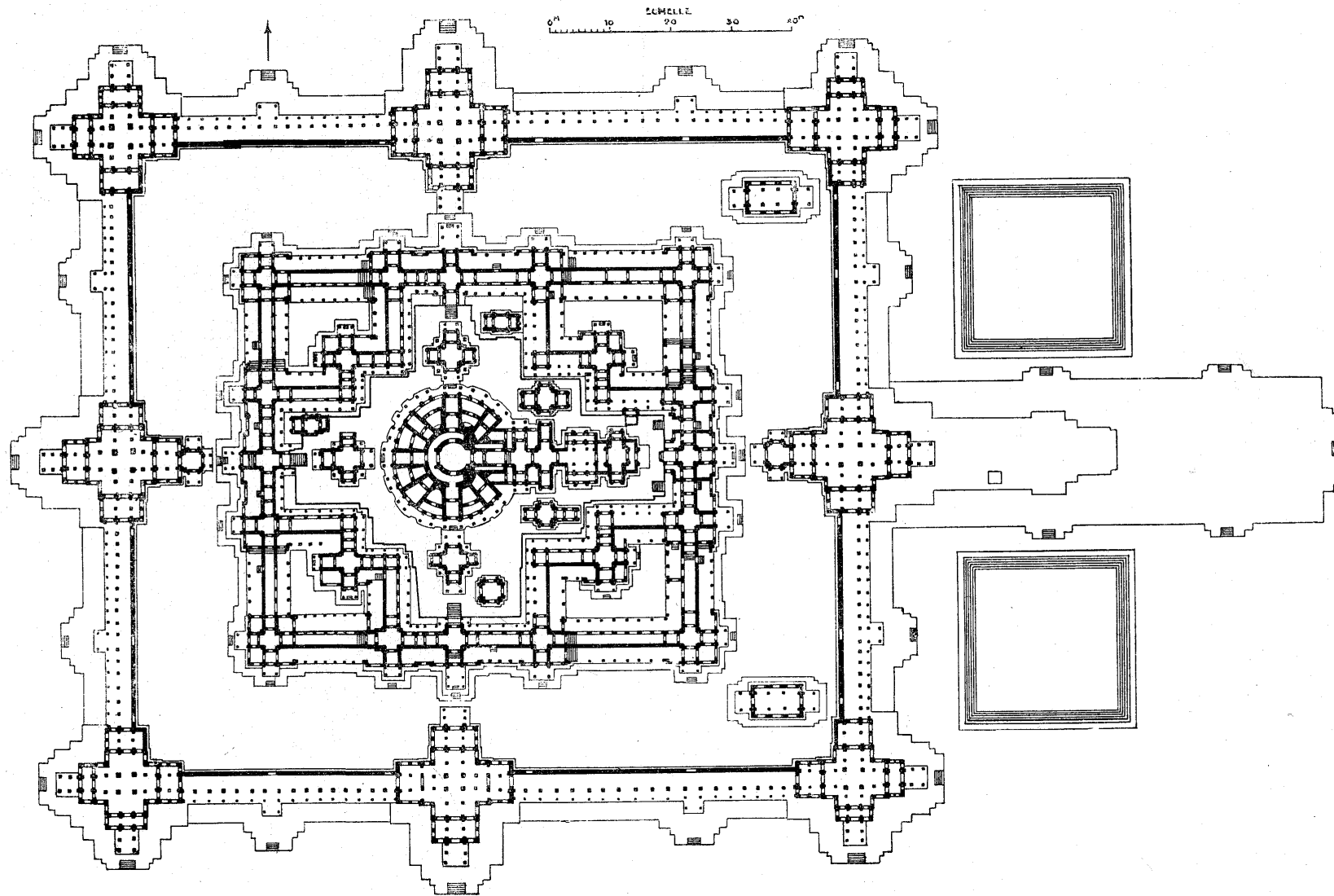
The five gates are all similar and were found reasonably well preserved. Two of them, the north and the south, were restored by M. Glaize from 1944 to 1946 and can now be seen with their crowning motifs - though incomplete in terms of sculpture - in their original form. The most pleasing in composition are the northern gate and the western side of the Gate of the Dead (to the east, centred on the Bayon, at the end of the *route Dufour*), while the best faces are to be seen at the west gate (*route Carpeaux*).

The proportion of their openings (3m.50 wide by 7 metres high) is distorted by the absence of lintels or frontons. Originally they would also have been furnished with double wooden doors, mounted on pivots, which were apparently fitted with a horizontal closing bar, the holes for which still remain visible in the walls.

Forming a group of three aligned towers, they stand over 23 metres in overall height. The main tower, with its two opposing faces, is flanked by two other smaller towers - each with a single face - that are set into it and correspond internally to reinforcing walls forming guard rooms, each with two dark back-rooms. The ensemble responds quite apparently to the same abstraction as do the four-faced towers of the Bayon - with the regal power radiating to the four cardinal points.

Finally, at the base, the four inward corners contain the superb motif of the three headed elephant, whose vertical trunks descend to tug at lotuses, forming pillars. They represent none other than the mount of Indra, whom we can see clearly at the Victory gate, sitting between two apsaras and holding the thunderbolt or "*Vajra*". The presence here of the god at the extremity of the access causeway confirms the hypothesis suggested previously, - where the naga, imitating the rain-bow, simulates the bow of Indra.





Fifteen hundred metres of straight road separate the south gate of Angkor Thom from the Bayon. We recommend that, skirting it to the right, you gain access to the temple by the long redented eastern terrace, embellished with lions and naga-balustrades, that corresponds to its main entrance. One can see that the naga motif here is representative of the last period, where the hood is straddled by a garuda. On either side are the remains of ancient pools.

The Bayon best presents itself in the morning, when the sunlight is the most favourable. One should not fail, however, to return by the light of the moon, when the lines and shadows become softened and the stone and its verdant background composed in a perfect unity of hue and tone - when the faces, mellow and subdued, take on an emotive expression from which radiates a sort of lyrical charm - where each becomes exaggerated in over-scale, doubled in profile and infinite in multiplicity. One dissolves in the serenity of this Buddhist tranquillity, embryonic amongst the phantoms.

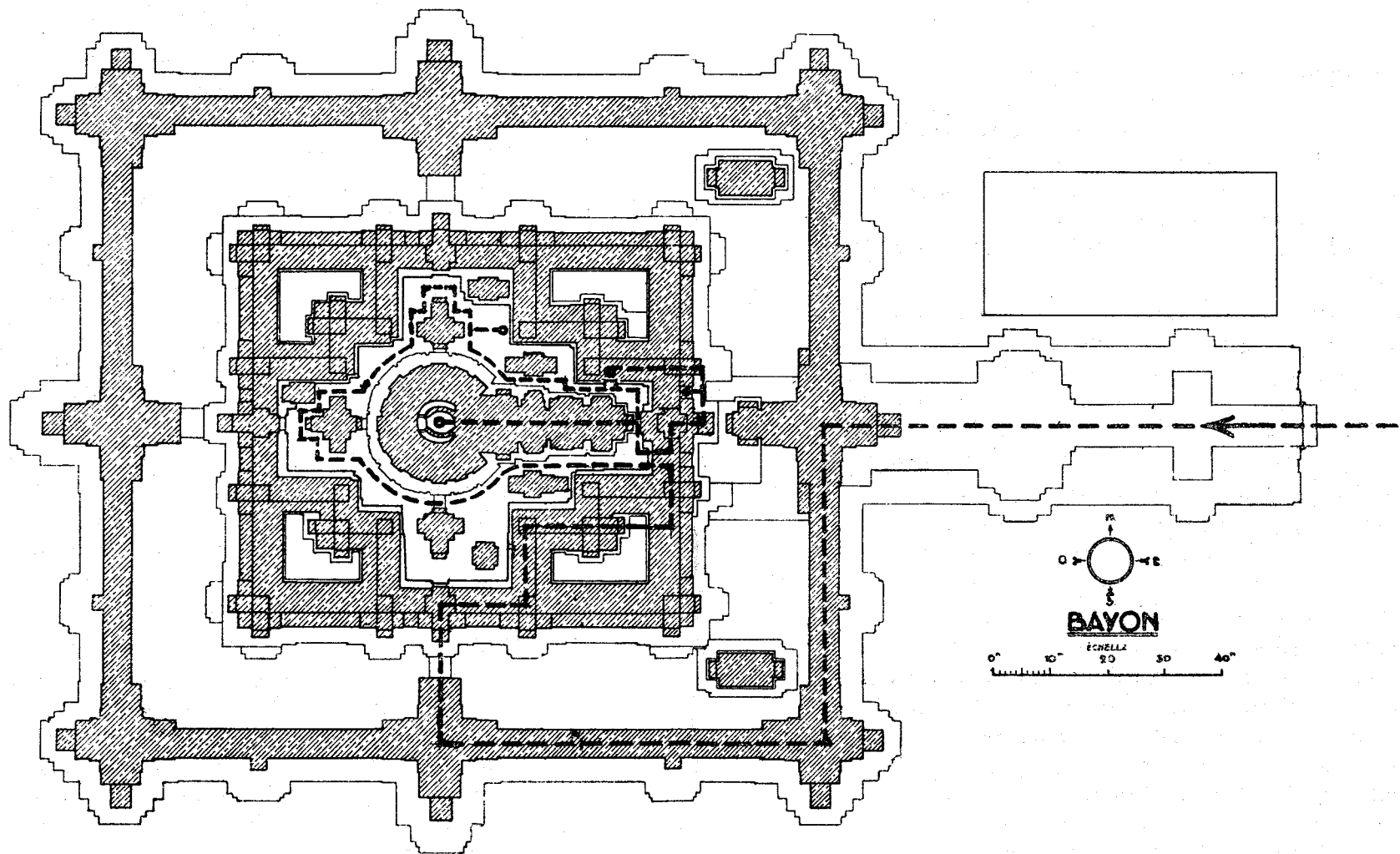
"Previously", Pierre Loti tells us, "it was necessary, in a complete tangle of dense undergrowth and hanging vegetation, to clear a path with a thrashing stick. Everywhere the forest entwines and constricts, choking and encumbering. The immense trees, completing the destruction, have taken hold even on the summit of the towers which serve them as pedestals. Here are the doors - the roots, like an old mane, draping them with a thousand fringes."

Like Commaille who effected the clearing works, we also mourn the loss of the *"natural state"* that contained so much potent charm. Alas *"Every month, perhaps every day, some stones would fall. The complete ruin of the temple was only a matter of time, and it was necessary to consider how to halt it without further delay."* - which did not stop Paul Claudel however from accusing the archaeologists of having given the Bayon the appearance of *"a sort of ugly game of skittles or a basket of bottles"*.

Separated by less than a century, the Bayon is the antithesis of Angkor Wat. While this latter sits at ease in its successive enclosure walls, realising according to a spacious plan a vast architectural composition through the harmonious equilibrium of its towers and its galleries, the Bayon, enclosed within the rectangle of 140 metres by 160 that constitutes its third enclosure (the gallery of the bas-reliefs), gives the impression of being compressed within a frame which is too tight for it. Like a cathedral built on the site of a village church, its central mass is crammed into its second gallery, of 70 metres by 80, in a jumbled confusion of piled blocks.

the Bayon

Date	late 12th - early 13th century
King	Jayavarman VII (posthumous name: Maha paramasangata pada)
Cult	Buddhist
Study	H. Dufour and Ch. Carpeaux (1901 - 1902 - 1904)
Clearing	by Commaille 1911 to 1913 Consolidation of central tower by G. Trouvé in 1933 Anastylosis of the four-faced towers and of the central tower by M. Glaize from 1939 to 1946



From a distance, with the only horizontal element being the last enclosure in the form of a base plinth, it appears as but a muddle of stones, a sort of moving chaos assaulting the sky. From wherever one views them - from the diagonal or from the fore - the fifty masked towers rear up on different planes to reinforce an impression of height.

On the upper terrace, however, calm returns. Dwarfed by the serenity of these stone faces, one no longer thinks of the vision of the whole or of the confusion in the plan. Wandering from one to another of the 200 masks - so distant from any normal proportion or architectural convention - one's attention becomes drawn by their image. Gradually the chaos becomes ordered, and one perceives the profusion of towers as being made from a combination of elements grouped at the centre in a sort of bunched sheaf. It's no longer the building that matters, but only its symbolism.

The Bayon is not so much an architectural work as the translation to reality of the spiritual beliefs of a grand mystic - the Buddhist king Jayavarman VII - with the four faces of each tower looking to the four cardinal points signifying the omnipresence of the bodhisattva Lokeshvara, the kingdom's principal divinity. If, as Mr Coedès believed, they are also the portrait of the sovereign himself identified as the god - if, like the further suggestion of Paul Mus, the towers corresponded to the different provinces of the kingdom - then their multiplication becomes symbolic of the radiant power of the god-king flooding the country.

However, the masked towers were also sanctuaries - proven by the short inscriptions engraved on the jamb-stones of their door openings that mention a substantial number of divinities - both Brahmanic and Buddhist - which can be considered as emanations of the bodhisattva Lokeshvara. In the central tower was the idol itself of the kingdom - the "*Buddha-king*", corresponding to the royal *linga* or "*Devaraja*" of the Brahmanic temple-

mountains. Sitting on the coils of a naga, the features probably represented king Jayavarman VII himself.

Found broken in 1933 by G. Trouvé at a depth of 14 metres during excavation down the core of the central tower, this superb 3m.60 high statue has been completely restored. Solemnly presented to His Majesty Sisowath Monivong, the king of Cambodia, on the 17th of May 1935, it now sits on the south side of the road leading to the Victory Gate - not far from the royal square of Angkor Thom - sheltered in a small pavilion with a tiled roof.

The origin of the faced towers, a motif which did not in any case survive Jayavarman VII, remains to be discovered. Yi-Tsing, a religious Chinese of the 6th century, mentions brick towers in Nalanda (Bengal) crowned with "*heads the size of a man*". Later, as this was characteristic of the representation of Brahma, it was he who was at one time recognised on the towers of the Bayon. The theme in fact is the same - that of the omnipresent god.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The confusion in the plan of the Bayon and the intricacy of its buildings results no doubt from the successive alterations to which the monument was subjected, that are evident just about everywhere. These changes could well have been made either during the course of construction or at other times - so not all necessarily corresponding to the reign of Jayavarman VII.

In its present form the temple is composed; - of the level external gallery of the third enclosure, with four corner pavilions and four gopuras, - of a surrounding courtyard containing, to the east, two high libraries, - of the gallery of the second enclosure at varying levels with four corner towers and three intermediate towers on each side, the central of which forms a gopura, - of a system of galleries forming a redented cross with corner towers and four small square courtyards, - of an upper terrace, the outline of which follows at

a slight distance the plan of the cross-formed galleries below, which it clearly dominates, - and of a circular central mass, whose peak towers 43 metres above the surrounding city ground level and which is ringed with an arrangement of loggias, preceded to the east by a series of small halls and vestibules and, finally, flanked on each of its other axes by a high tower.

It would seem probable, according to research by Mr Parmentier and various archaeological excavations; -

1 - that the central block of the monument corresponding to the galleries of the second enclosure is part of a combination of galleries that once formed a redented cross surrounding a central sanctuary, perhaps raised, which was then adjusted to a rectangle by the addition of the internal galleries enclosing the four small courtyards.¹⁰

2 - that the upper crossed terrace carrying the central sanctuary was finally constructed by Jayavarman VII, when he decided to make the Bayon the temple-mountain of Angkor Thom - the siege of the Buddha king.

3 - that the present level of the surrounding courtyard corresponds to two successive in-fills, the sandstone base plinth of the second enclosure galleries continuing, with its cladding crudely cut, for 2m.50 below ground - excavation having revealed the presence of a first pavement in laterite at this lower level with another at an intermediate level 1 metre higher.

4 - that the galleries of the third enclosure and the two "*libraries*" were built on this filled ground, and therefore towards the end of the project.

5 - that the surrounding courtyard was divided into smaller courtyards by sixteen buildings which have now disappeared - four on each side - whose laterite foundations can still be seen at ground level joining the galleries of the

second and the third enclosures - just in front of each tower of the second enclosure and on either side of the axial towers.

There was originally an access stair to the upper terrace on each axis - the one to the east has been walled in at sometime to be replaced by two symmetrical others that are steep and slippery. Some narrower concrete stairs have been formed in part of their width, easing the climb to the north, the south and the east (the left-hand stairway).

Approaching the monument from the eastern terrace, one reaches the pillars of the cruciform gopura of the third enclosure, on which one can see the delightful motifs, sculpted in bas-relief within poly-lobed niches and set on a background decorated "*in tapestry*", of groups of two or three apsaras dancing on lotus flowers. From here, turning to the left, one enters the gallery of the bas-reliefs that one should follow according to the ritual manner of "*pradakshina*" (keeping the monument constantly to one's right) until reaching the south gopura.

This gallery is formed by a nave bordered to one side by a 4m.50 high wall - 3m.50 of which is sculpted - and to the other side by a double row of pillars forming a side-aisle. All the surrounding vaults have disappeared, as have those of the cruciform corner pavilions and gopuras.

The visitor with limited time should at least examine the reliefs in this south-east quarter gallery - the most interesting - pausing in front of each opening to the internal courtyard to enjoy the composition from different viewpoints.

From the south gopura, where there stood a curious statue of a hunchback and still is a delightful frieze of large apsaras above the north door, one enters the surrounding courtyard which one crosses to gain access to the axial tower-gopura, forming part of the system of galleries on varying levels.

The general north-south axis of the Bayon is considerably offset to the west, leaving the rectangle of the second enclosure wider to the east. Here, the external section of the galleries, while simulating a half-vault on their exterior, have on their inner side a full vault covering a series of bas-reliefs whose continuity is broken by each tower.

Turning right at the centre of the tower-gopura one follows, towards the east, the internal gallery with a side-aisle. At its far end - in the south-east corner tower situated at a lower level - one can see a statue of Buddha sitting sheltered by naga heads, set clearly against a background of light.

Bearing to the north, at the first encountered tower, one continues through the gallery of the redented cross that is bordered by a half-vaulted side-aisle. From here the view is blocked in less than a metre by the retaining wall of the upper terrace, added as an afterthought and which exactly follows its line, so completely masking the tympanums with scenes on each of the corner frontons. One descends to the small square courtyard of the south-east corner and gains - by the southern tower of the group of three which mark the eastern side of the second enclosure - the first stairs on the left, which lead up to the large terrace. This route gives a clear idea of the jumbled complication of the Bayon's plan and of its countless alterations. The courtyards which must have existed in the initial form of the monument have been reduced to gloomy passageways without light or air, and one feels a long way from the elegant simplicity of Angkor Wat.

On the upper terrace, mystery reigns. Wherever one wanders, the faces of Lokeshvara follow and dominate with their multiple presence, always countered by the overwhelming mass of the central core. These towers, rising everywhere to varying heights, are not in fact heads with four faces which could have been taken for some representation of Brahma, but simply a variation on the theme of the square "*prasat*", with four upper tiers and a

crowning lotus, - but sculpted on each axis with human faces, varying from 1m.75 to 2m.40 in height, within the rising of the first two tiers.

Composed of a structure with a central chimney that had generally remained intact, and with facing blocks that are simply placed without any bonding in a manner that offers no resistance to roots, the towers appeared, after clearing, to be cracked from top to bottom - their vertical joints, stacked without any overlapping, having caused the mass of stones to split like an over-ripe fruit. Dismantled and reconstructed according to the process of anastylosis and now held together by invisible iron cramps, the composition was just saved from the imminent ruin that threatened it.

The central mass is - a rare thing in Khmer building - circular in plan (in fact slightly oval) measuring over 25 metres in diameter at the base. Above its moulded plinth, small triangular or rectangular loggias open to little porticoes with frontons forming a peristyle. Higher still is another level of small chambers, without access and lit by balustered windows, and then, marking the four cardinal points and their intermediaries, eight towers with faces - of which only a single face stands out in entirety - surrounded by a kind of circular walkway. Crudely cut or later hacked, they were perhaps covered in a plaster coating.

The high crowning motif is imprecise in form and ringed at its base with the few remaining elements of a final peristyle. It was perhaps itself also sculpted with four stone faces like the towers, or otherwise it simply served to support a tall light-weight structure. This is, with no doubt, the "*Golden Tower*" described by Tchou Ta-Kouan as "*marking the centre of the kingdom, flanked by more than 20 stone towers and at least one hundred stone chambers*". Repaired and consolidated in 1933 - after first having raised a sturdy scaffolding - the whole of this upper part was disintegrating. The substructure having maintained its stability, it was sufficient to restore the architectural elements which, as a facing, served as strengthening.

Internally, the obscure sanctuary chamber of 5 metres in diameter is surrounded by a narrow passageway. It was here that the idol of the kingdom was set up - the large statue of Buddha mentioned above, whose remains were found down the central well. One gains access from the east side through a series of cruciform chambers, three with towers, that are separated by small vestibules. Two long rooms on either side, also towered, occupy the usual position of the "*libraries*". One should note, near the northern one and below the terrace at its returning north-east corner, an admirably preserved fronton which, for a long time protected and concealed by the paving, has a standing Lokesvara as its central figure. It was this which first drew attention to the Buddhist nature of the Bayon.

The ornamentation is very dense, in the usual manner of this final period of Khmer art, but remains nonetheless careful. On a base of foliated scrolls and organic decoration it has some delightfully delicate detail. Characteristic of this style are the false windows with partially lowered blinds concealing the height of the balusters, and the skirts with flowers and the belts with pendants of the smiling devatas whose head-dress is formed in small flaming discs set in a triangle - the deep relief has allowed their feet to be shown almost full forwards. We would also draw attention to the charming twinned apsaras, enlivening the window cills of the central mass, and to the interesting sculpted panel above the south stair that gives access to the terrace - probably a representation of the "*Elephant of Glory*", charged to find the man designated by Destiny to take the vacant throne.

Re-descending into the gallery of the second enclosure by the same stairway that was first climbed, the visitor who is pressed for time can get some idea of the bas-reliefs in this gallery by entering the recess situated between the east axial tower and the tower immediately to the north - where the legend of the "*Leper King*" can be seen.

Returning eastwards to the crossed gallery, one can then finally pay a visit to the covered well, of a dozen metres in depth, that is to be found on the left towards its middle, protected by a hand-rail.

THE BAS-RELIEFS

The Bayon is the only temple to have two concentric galleries sculpted with bas-reliefs; - the internal gallery is complete in its ornamentation and was almost exclusively reserved for mythological subjects of Brahmanic inspiration, while the outer gallery, accessible to the mass of the faithful, was dedicated both to scenes of everyday life and to certain historic episodes - processions and battles - from the reign of Jayavarman VII. Remaining incomplete, these were to have shown - according to Paul Mus - scenes of contemporary mythology under the aegis of Lokesvara, of whom the deified king himself was but an emanation, given life by the sculptor's chisel.

The Bayon bas-reliefs are less stylised and more deeply incised than those of Angkor Wat, and although often quite crude in execution and simplistic in form, they provide a source of documentation which is remarkable, both for the care taken in the representation of the smallest detail and for the qualities of observation which they show - and it is practically the only source we have that gives an idea of the customs and conditions of life in ancient Cambodia.

They are sculpted in superposed registers, with the lower panel representing, for the ancient Khmer who were ignorant of the laws of perspective, the foreground, and the upper panel the horizon. Starting from the eastern entrance, we begin with the southern section of the eastern side, keeping the monument to our right in accordance with the rite of "*pradakshina*".

1 OUTER GALLERIES (3rd ENCLOSURE)

EAST GALLERY, SOUTHERN PART

Here, in three highly accomplished registers, is a military procession marching from the south to the north. The soldiers are armed with javelins and shields, and most have short hair and bare heads, while a group on the lower register wear goatee beards and strange hair styles pierced at the top. Musicians accompany them, with a small dancing figure beating an enormous gong with two sticks. They are flanked by cavaliers riding with neither saddle nor stirrups, while the chiefs are armed with bows or javelins and surrounded by parasols and banners in a forest setting. They sit on elephants guided by their drivers who brandish the usual hooks.

Towards the end of the line, enlivened with charming everyday scenes, one can see the army suppliers - the covered carts with axle-skates are exactly the same as those still in use today. On the upper panel, three princesses pass by, carried in rich palanquins. At the other end is the ark of the sacred flame, also to be found in the "*historical gallery*" of Angkor Wat.

Passing the door to the courtyard the direction of the march is reversed. The upper register, where one can see interior scenes and a few ascetics, has only its lower area remaining and shows again the same nature of procession, but where the elephants are only ridden by their drivers. The coconut-palms are treated in realistic fashion, while one can see to the extreme left of the upper register, tied to a tree, an ox probably destined for sacrifice.

Beyond, in four tiered panels, follow scenes of interiors. The roofs of the houses are shown with their finialed ridges on which several birds are perched. The particular nature of the hair-styles, the costumes and the objects suspended from the ceiling lead one to suspect that the figures represent some Chinese merchants in business discussion.

SOUTH EAST CORNER PAVILION

The sculptures of this gallery remain unfinished, with the first panel giving a good indication of the working methods of the Khmer. Passing a wall that has first been prepared (and of which one should note the unlikely bonding), they proceed with the direct sculpting first drawn in sketch, - then slightly relieved, - then given volume - and finally finished. Two charming apsaras dance to the right, while to the left are outlined three towers surmounted by a trident. The central shelters a linga.

The other panels are dedicated to nautical scenes.

SOUTH GALLERY EASTERN PART

This section, which is one of the best, relates to a naval combat that took place in the last quarter of the 12th century between the Khmer (whose hair is cut short) and the Chams (coiffed with a sort of upturned lotus flower). It shows a conflict of battleships with richly ornate prows - like galleys - where the line of oarsmen's heads is dominated by warriors armed with javelins, bows and shields. Bodies are thrown overboard, some to be devoured by crocodiles.

The larger king is sitting in his palace to the extreme right, presiding over preparations and giving orders, while below him a gambolling figure recalls the buffoons who rouse the oarsmen during water festivals in Phnom Penh. Numerous species of fish are shown, often amongst the trees - since the forest becomes flooded during the rainy season - faithfully reproducing the features of those that one can still find in the Great Lake today.

On the banks of the lake, as a lower register, events from everyday life are shown, depicted with much candour and humour; - market scenes, scenes of open-air cooking, of hunting or of attack by wild animals. A woman picks lice from one figure, while another plays with her children and a further mourns an invalid who lies in her arms. To the extreme left, a hunter,

preparing to shoot a buffalo, holds his crossbow - similar to the weapon still favoured in present day Cambodia.

Past the door is a fishing scene showing casting nets - a junk, apparently mounted by Chinese, displays the curious arrangement of its anchor and pulley - while the occupants of another, which is flatter, amuse themselves with various games. At the base are more familiar scenes including a cock fight that is superbly composed with a great intensity of expression.

Then come palace scenes - princesses surrounded by their servants, dances, conversations, games of chess - with wrestlers, gladiators and a wild boar fight below. The whole scene is surmounted by the faint outline of a larger reclining figure - this could perhaps be the king taking possession of his palace according to the rite, still in use, of the coronation ceremony.

The battle continues. At the bottom we can see the Chams arriving in their battle junks. They land and, above, they battle against the Khmer who, in the form of giants with short hair and their bodies coiled in ropes, clearly dominate. Peace returns and the king, sitting in his palace, celebrates victory amidst his subjects who perform their various trades - as carpenters, blacksmiths, cooks - in preparation for a banquet.

To the far left, next to the last door that one passes, a narrow panel shows three registers with scenes of conversation above scenes of wrestling.

SOUTH GALLERY, WESTERN PART

This section, where the lower register has been finished while the upper remains incomplete, is only of mediocre interest. There are more military processions with elephants playing an important role. The scene gives a precious indication of contemporary war machines, - one is a sort of large crossbow carried on the back of an elephant and manoeuvred by two

archers, the other is a catapult mounted on wheels. To the extreme west must be the bathing of the sacred elephants. They shelter under parasols and are being led to the river, represented below by a band of fish.

WEST GALLERY, SOUTHERN PART

Here again many areas have not been sculpted. On the lower panel, warriors and their chiefs mounted on elephants pass before a background of forests and mountains (indicated by a pattern of small triangles) while towards the centre, an ascetic escapes from an inquisitive tiger by climbing a tree.

Above, one can see some intriguing methods of construction - workers haul a block of stone on which a foreman stands with a cane, others carry materials and more are grinding the blocks that are suspended from a special frame. Further still are isolated scenes describing the life of the ascetics.

Beyond the door extends a long panel that Mr Cœdes refers to as "*the civil war*". It shows a large crowd moving in front of a line of houses - perhaps a street - with men and women gesticulating and threatening, while others are armed ready for a fight. Above, a kneeling figure to whom two severed heads are being carried seems to present them to the multitude, while at the top, another in a palanquin approaches a prince who awaits him in his palace.

Further is the furious melee of fighters - semi-naked warriors with the usual hair style of the Khmer and with nothing distinguishing them from one another. Numerous elephants participate in the action.

WESTERN GALLERY, NORTHERN PART

Warriors armed simply with sticks seem to chase others protected by small round shields and preceded by elephants. They pass a pool where an enormous fish is swallowing a small quadruped. A short inscription identifies it, explaining that "*the deer is his nourishment*".

Another longer text, engraved under a large shrimp, indicates that *"the king pursues and overcomes the vanquished"*. The upper part of this panel, where the main characters would have been, remains unfortunately only in sketch outline.

Beyond the door, a last inscription tells us that *"the king then retires for a time to the forest where he celebrates the saint Indrabhisaka"*, drawing Mr Cœdes to conclude that *"this peaceful procession through a backdrop of trees represents the king going to retreat in the forest before celebrating the Consecration of Indra"* - recalling an ancient vedite ceremony. At the end of the procession are women and children. Amongst others one will notice the king, always shown larger than those who surround him, standing on an elephant - and then, ahead, the ark of the sacred flame.

NORTH GALLERY, WESTERN PART

The wall is only sculpted on its lower part, and there some parts remain only in sketch outline. The first panel certainly follows that which precedes: - *"the games in which athletes, jugglers, acrobats and horses take part and which clearly constitute public merrymaking - one of the essential elements of the Indrabhisaka"* (Mr Cœdes). Above the interior scene, over which the king presides, is a curious procession of animals, giving an idea of the Cambodian fauna. At the other extremity, ascetics sit in the forest and then, on the bank of a winding river, a group of women to whom presents are being brought, close to a larger figure in sketch outline.

Beyond the door are more combat scenes where the Chams reappear as the traditional enemies of the Khmer.

NORTH GALLERY, EASTERN PART

The wall has almost entirely crumbled, except for its two extremities where one can again find the same adversaries in battle. The Chams come from the west in tight ranks, but this time it is the Khmer who flee towards the

mountain without appearing to offer serious opposition. The eastern part is highly animated and treated with a curious realism.

NORTH EAST CORNER PAVILION

Processions of Khmer warriors and elephants without particular interest. In the centre of the pavilion is a fine circular pedestal of a type that is generally reserved for statues of Brahma. Its origin is unknown since its style differs to that of the Bayon and places it around the 10th century.

EAST GALLERY, NORTHERN PART

In a large deployment, Cham and Khmer forces are again in battle, forming a furious melee towards the centre with the elephants themselves also taking part in the action. One of them tries, with his coiled trunk, to pull a tusk from another who opposes him. Another is unusually represented from the front. Countless standards, banners and sunshades form a veritable back-cloth - and one can see, on the side of the Khmer who seem finally to dominate, some curious grilled panels that were perhaps designed to stop the arrows from the adversary without obscuring the view.

2 INNER GALLERIES (2ND ENCLOSURE)

Once again, for the purpose of the visit, we will adopt the usual mode of circulation whereby on leaving the principal east entrance the monument is kept always to one's right. Here we find, in fact, not one single surrounding gallery on a constant level, but rather a succession of independent chambers, cells and truncated galleries that are clearly separate. The various panels of bas-reliefs should be considered as a number of tableaux, with only some of them evidently relating in direction to the development of the subject represented - we will indicate where necessary those that will be contrary to our circulation.

EASTERN GALLERY, SOUTHERN PART.

1. between the towers

To the right, ascetics and animals in mountainous and forested scenery - in front (badly deteriorated) a palace scene dominated by a royal figure. To the left, another palace scene with the principal figure in sketch outline.

2. vestibule

To the right, the king in a palace with some ascetics above rural and hunting scenes. In front, some Brahmans gather around a brazier within a temple surrounded by flying apsaras.

3. low gallery

To the right of the door, a princess in a palace amongst her servants.

- on the large panel in front and returning to the left.

The army in the usual procession, but where Khmer and Chams (?) are mixed. A royal figure stands on an elephant, preceded by the ark of the sacred flame.

SOUTH EAST CORNER

Marching warriors and a chief standing on an elephant.

SOUTH GALLERY, EASTERN PART

1. lower gallery

A panel that is badly deteriorated and unclear. A procession of warriors (Chams?), - a fight between two high ranking figures, - warriors coming from the opposite direction, apparently of the same nationality. A palace scene next to which one can see a man climbing a coconut tree, and then an enormous garuda and a gigantic fish symbolising the ocean into which the base of Mount Meru, represented as a mountain inhabited by

ascetics and animals, is supposed to plunge. The procession again, with another high ranking figure. Behind is the palace façade of a palace that seems to have some of its rooms empty but for a few accessories, and others occupied with princesses - one smelling flowers and another combing her hair in front of a mirror.

2. vestibule

A large royal figure wrestles with a lion (?). To the left, he holds the rear foot of an elephant that he has just overpowered.

3. between the two towers

Starting from the left-hand returning wall, above a line of warriors, a king leaves his palace that is decorated with a few accessories (a bow, a quiver and a fly swat) - its main hall remains empty, while a princess sits with her servants. In front and from the left to the right is a less developed scene showing a battle against another prince and his army - then a palace next to a pool with another building where several figures surround a fire.

Next come a group of musicians and men carrying an empty throne on their shoulders, leaving a palace that is occupied only by women - the lord being absent. On the lower register, a princess prepares to incarcerate a child in a chest - which looks as if it is destined to be dropped into the neighbouring pond. A fisherman in a boat throws his net in the presence of a richly dressed princess on a sumptuous boat with apsaras flying above.

From the pool grows an enormous lotus, serving as a pedestal for some idol or figure whose image has been defaced, close to a group of worshippers who pay him homage.

It is quite probable that this scene leads as a prelude to some others, sculpted on the panel to the right on the return, and which has been identified as the history of "*Pradyumna, the son of Krishna and of Rukmini, thrown into*

the sea by the demon Sambara. The child is eaten by a fish which the fishermen catch in their nets, offering it then to Sambara. In gutting their catch, the fishermen find Pradyumna (who is none other than Kama, the god of love). A handmaid of Sambara, Mayavati (an incarnation of Rati, the wife of Kama) secretly rears the child who is to become her husband and who will later kill Sambara.” (Cœdes)

One can see the living child sitting in the stomach of the fish which the king wants to gut, and then presented to Mayavati who greets him.

SOUTH GALLERY, WESTERN PART

1. between the towers

On the right hand returning panel, though badly deteriorated, one can distinguish a figure lying in a palace. His wife sits by his bed, seeming to lament.

In front, a Shivaïte panel of appalling craftsmanship. The god is represented twice; - standing first on a throne and then on a lotus blossom with some figures in prayer, one of whom is stretched on the ground. A sort of coffin or shrine is carried on a cart.

To the left in the return is another Shiva, deformed and holding a trident over some apsaras dancing to an accompanying orchestra.

2. vestibule

To the right, in the return, at the base one can see an interior scene where pigeons perch on the roof. Higher, temple architecture, from where Vishnou with four arms seems to descend towards a standing Shiva who holds a trident. In front, a similar scene, but without the four-armed figure.

3. lower gallery

Apsaras flying and a standing figure (Shiva?) girdled with a Brahmanic cord, receiving homage from some Brahmans. Mountain scenery inhabited by wild animals (a tiger eating a man) serves as a backdrop for a temple with closed doors.

Princesses walk by a pool on either side of a charming group of apsaras dancing on lotuses - above is probably Shiva, sitting in his celestial palace and surrounded by his court.

Further is the temple of Shiva (shown standing) in the middle of a pool with ascetics and animals on the banks. A tiger chases an ascetic, while other religious figures converse in a palace and several worshippers bow before the god. In the centre of the panel stands Vishnou with four arms as a statue next to a pool, surrounded by flying apsaras. A crowd pays homage and one figure lies on the ground. They accompany the same coffin mounted on wheels mentioned above. Horses are shown in the procession, which comes from a palace shown on the left with its stair guarded by lions - an important figure seems to give orders, while numerous servants feverishly prepare for the departure. At the extremity, in the return, princesses walk in a garden beside a lake where one of them picks lotuses. We are perhaps witnessing the organisation of some royal pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the god.

WESTERN GALLERY, SOUTHERN PART

1. lower gallery

To the right, women in a palace, where the main room is empty. In front is Vishnou with four arms, equipped with his usual attributes and standing on Garuda - “*subduing, for his own sake or for the figure who stands behind him, an army of Asuras*”. (G. Cœdes). Then is a scene in a partly empty palace.

2. *vestibule*

Another palace scene with apsaras dancing to an orchestra. To the left are women swimming and picking lotuses in a pool, near to an ascetic. Above, more dancers, and at the top, two wrestling figures.

3. *between the two towers*

To the right, the god Vishnou with four arms in a prayer scene over some episodes from the construction of a temple that are more detailed than those on the bas-reliefs of the external gallery; - workers haul a block of stone that slides on rollers, while more are rubbing and placing the blocks with the help of a special levering device. Others transport materials under the threat of a cane.

In front is Vishnou in another scene of prayer. His statue is seen above an evacuation hole for water disgorged from the interior of the monument. Apsaras fly and a crowd of servants carry trays in what is perhaps the inauguration ceremony of the temple. A nautical scene shows chess players in a richly decorated junk surrounded by other boats, and fighting cocks - the same subject as the "*Nautical festival of Dvaravati*" in the south-west corner pavilion of Angkor Wat. To the left in the return, under a palace scene (Shiva with Vishnou dancing on his right), are various scenes from the life of the ascetics, meditating in caves or swimming amongst lotuses close to a bird holding a fish in its beak.

WEST GALLERY, NORTHERN PART

1. *between the towers*

To the right in the return are some badly deteriorated palace scenes. In front on three registers, a line of warriors - mainly cavaliers - with two imposing figures, sit in their horse drawn chariots. To the left, in the return, the procession continues.

2. *vestibule*

To the right in the return, two lords talking in a palace, young princesses in the hands of their dressers and, to the left, a temple sheltering a canopy set on a tiered pyramid (perhaps an incineration pavilion). In front, in the middle of an assembly of Brahmans - of which some surround a sort of hearth under a roof - an archer shoots an arrow while another prepares his weapon.

3. *lower gallery*

Another archery scene with, to the left, a lord in his palace.

The large panel has crumbled for part of its length. It shows the churning of the Sea of Milk, and its remains display some fine modelling. First is an assembly of Brahmans, then, under a flight of birds and apsaras, the body of the serpent - with the asuras at the head and the devas, helped by Hanuman the monkey, at the tail. A replica of the serpent crawls at the bottom of the ocean, represented by fish. At the centre, the pivot is shown as a column resting on the tortoise (an incarnation of Vishnou). The shaft is held by the god in his human form with four arms, while another figure surmounts the scene, as at Angkor Wat, above the lotus-formed capital.

One can see the two discs of the sun and of the moon, as well as the flask destined to contain the Amrita - the elixir of immortality coveted by the gods and demons. To the left, a god sitting on a bird seems to want to appease the group of asuras in battle which terminates the composition. Their chief is standing on a chariot drawn by some superb lions.

NORTH WEST CORNER

A procession of warriors.

NORTH GALLERY, WESTERN PART

1. *lower Gallery*

Palace scenes on three registers. Then, on two registers, a line of servants seem to carry offerings and follow a large figure towards a mountain inhabited by wild animals (elephants, rhinoceros, nagas and other snakes), separated by a pool and crowned with a sanctuary. Its doors are closed. One can then see another more imposing temple. The doors are locked and guarded by two dvarapalas.

Some kneeling ascetics seem to receive another procession coming from the left and led by two tall figures carrying tridents. Perhaps they have just landed on the bank, since the scene becomes nautical, with a group of three large, richly ornate boats - the first two bear men with short hair and a lord holding a trident, the other, figures whose heads are covered with an upturned flower surrounding a central couple and entertaining themselves under a flight of birds. One returns, finally, to firm ground where, in a mountain palace and amongst the ascetics, sit several figures. At least one carries a trident (Shiva?).

2. *vestibule*

In front, under a flight of apsaras and clumsily represented, is Shiva with ten arms dancing the "*tandava*" that sets the rhythm of the universe. Vishnou is at his right and Brahma with four faces at his left with Ganesha, while beneath is a devouring Rahu. On the returning panel of wall; - at the top of a mountain populated with ascetics is another aspect of the "*Trimurti*" - Shiva sitting between Vishnou and Brahma - above an enormous charging boar.

3. *between the towers*

To the right in the return is Shiva, again seated, surrounded by ascetics and women, the first of whom must be his wife, Parvati. The bull Nandin can be seen close by.

In front, in mountain scenery where the ascetics are in prayer, a woman arranging her hair with a gracious gesture stands in the doorway between a prince or a god and an ascetic. On the lintel one can see a sort of lizard. This is, according to some, the legend, already represented at Angkor Wat, of Ravana taking the form of a chameleon in order to gain access to the ladies chamber in the palace of Indra. Others see the descent to earth of the goddess Ganga (the river Ganges). Then is the scene, also evident at Angkor Wat, of Kama, the god of love, shooting an arrow at Shiva who is meditating on a mountain with Uma at his side - the angry god strikes Kama, whom one can see lying on the ground with his wife Rati at his feet. Nandin the bull can be seen again, climbing the hill. The panel ends in an indefinite scene where a prince sits in his palace at the top of a hill.

To the left in the return is Shiva mounted on Nandin, of mediocre execution.

NORTH GALLERY, EAST PART

1. *between two towers*

To the right in the return is Shiva on Nandin with his wife Uma sitting on his lap, passing in front of a palace where one can see the king of the nagas with multiple serpent heads. Below are dancing apsaras.

In front seems to be the preparation for the incineration of the figure being carried by hand on the lower register. Above are the funerary urn and the cremation pavilion, surmounted by a head of Kala.

Then comes an episode from the Mahabharata - the "*duel between Arjuna and Shiva disguised as Kirata over a wild boar which both claim to have killed, and which is none other than the rakshasa Muka. Shiva wins and reveals himself, giving Arjuna the Pasupata, the weapon which is to serve him in his future exploits*" (G. Coedès).

To the left of the door, a figure sits in a palace on top of a mountain, surrounded by women. Then is the *"legend of Ravana, half crushed by Shiva under the mountain that he tried to shake - well known from the Angkor Wat bas-relief. The sculptors took care not to forget the Pushpaka chariot"*, pulled by Hamsas (G. Coëdes).

On the returning panel, palace scenes in two registers.

2. *vestibule*

A procession of no particular interest.

3. *lower gallery*

Servants carrying offerings (?) - and then - above a panel of praying ascetics followed by a pool lined with steps - a rich palace with three towers surmounted by tridents, set against a backdrop of palm trees. The central throne is empty, and the sanctuaries to the side shelter statues of Vishnou and Lakshmi. Further on is Shiva blessing his worshippers under a flight of apsaras. A king, followed by his army, seems to come to beg a favour from the god. There is the usual procession of infantrymen with short hair, with musicians, elephants and horses. Princesses follow, carried in palanquins, as well as an enormous case and a cart with a canopy pulled by oxen. Passing in front of some deserted residences, one then sees the king climbing into his six wheeled chariot to leave his palace where some dancers enliven the leaving party.

NORTH EAST CORNER

Fragments of a procession without much interest.

EASTERN GALLERY, NORTHERN PART

1. *lower gallery*

A large army parade where one can see two different hair-styles - short-cropped and inverted-flower. Below pass musicians, infantrymen

framed by cavaliers, a prince's horse-drawn chariot and others with canopies pulled by hand. Above is a large litter with six wheels mounted on Hamsas, carried or pulled on shoulders and occupied by a prince between two of his wives, - princesses in palanquins surrounded by children, - the ark of the sacred flame (?), - an empty throne and the king armed with a bow sitting on an elephant and followed by two other chiefs.

Passing the door, a small panel shows a prince - perhaps the king asking the god's favour before leaving for war (?). He stretches on the ground at Shiva's feet, near his empty throne.

2. *vestibule*

Two boats float on a pool lined with steps surrounded by fish, amongst which one can distinguish two with human heads. Divers seem to look for something precious - perhaps the shapeless object that one can see above, carried by shoulder on a sort of throne. A flight of apsaras and birds crowns the composition.

To the left, in the return, some see the representation of an act of vandalism - the iconoclasts seeming to want to topple and break the statue of a woman surrounded by ropes which are pulled simultaneously by men and elephants.

Dr Bosch however gives a preferable interpretation. *"Far from any attempt to topple or break anything, some people are occupied in trying to deliver a prisoner from her cell. Above her head, some prise open the rock with picks - and the elephants pull it apart. Below they apply the ancient method for splitting hard rock - by heating it with fire and then dousing it with water - or preferably with vinegar. It seems that the scene describes a popular legend - of a king or prince who passes by a mountain and hears the voice of a woman who is singing or crying. He opens the rock and releases the woman, (princess/nagi/nymph) whom he then marries"*.

Thus explained, the scene could have some relation to the preceding scene, which could therefore represent the liberated nymph becoming an object of adoration as a source of healing. In the same way, some would see a link with the legend of the Leper King that appears as an element of the neighbouring gallery - and Shiva in the last panel of the lower gallery would so become a simple Rishi healer, in front of whom the king, who has been saved by him, lies prostrate... - just a simple hypothesis...

3. *between the towers*

Here is the legend of the Leper King identified by Mr Goloubew, which one should read from left to right.

A king is throned in his palace near his wife and surrounded by his courtiers and dancers. He fights with a serpent, while below, the crowd looks on. Having been spattered with the monster's venom, he contracts leprosy. Sitting in his palace he gives orders to his servants who, descending a stair, seem to rush in order to consult with the ascetic healers in the forest. Women surround the sick king, examining the progress of the disease on his hands. One can see him finally at rest with an ascetic standing at his side.

Interesting to note, under the wrestling scene with the serpent, is a removable stone that serves as a plug for the opening of an internal channel for the evacuation of water.

AROUND THE BAYON

Around the quadrilateral of roads surrounding the Bayon, one can see - apart from the enormous gilded statues of the Buddha of a much later period which are to be found to the north and south - two modern commemorative monuments. The one in the south-west corner is the grave of Commaillie, the first Angkor Conservator, who was assassinated in 1916 by armed robbers. The other, in the north-west corner and not far from the sculpture depot of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient and the old house of Commaillie, is the stele erected in honour of Ch. Carpeaux, who died in service in 1904.

If one takes the other section of the route Carpeaux, one will find, halfway between the Bayon and the west gate of Angkor Thom - at 200 metres south of the road - a small monument that is unnamed but classified as number "486".

Monument 486

A laterite terrace with lions precedes a platform, used as a Buddhist terrace, surrounded by steles or “*sema*”, at the far end of which one can still see the pedestal that carried the idol. Just behind, raised on a triple plinth of moulded sandstone and mostly ruined, is the principal sanctuary. This is a late construction, dedicated to the Buddha - whom one can see under the Bodhi tree on the eastern fronton - and seems to have taken the place of an original Brahmanic prasat, of which the primary laterite base has been heightened by the addition of two subsequent sandstone tiers.

The colonnettes and lintels are in rose coloured sandstone in the style of Banteay Srei (end of the 10th century). They are well preserved and finely crafted - some have been re-cut. One can recognise, to the east, Shiva on Nandin (the sacred bull) and to the north, Indra on an elephant.¹¹ The cruciform sanctuary chamber is 2m.00 by 2m.30 at the centre and open to the four axes.

Two other later sanctuaries opening to the east are aligned on the principal tower to either side of it. They are set on the same base-platform and therefore much lower, though only a few parts of crumbling wall remain - particularly of the southern. On the northern tower one can still see, above the false western door sculpted with a standing Buddha with a flaming “*ushnisha*”, the lower courses of a fronton with a sitting Buddha. The false southern door also remains almost intact.

Several frontons have been reconstructed on the surrounding ground. They are adorned with quite unusual motifs, - in particular a stylised floral decoration, an enormous head of Kala, and an ewer with a mouth in the form of a birds beak. The lines are generally rounded and the various elements badly deteriorated.

Date	late, with elements from the end of the 10th century
Cult	Brahmanic, then Buddhist
Clearing	by H. Marchal in 1918

the Royal Square, Angkor Thom

Just north of the Bayon, two parallel roads running north-south frame a long rectangle of 720 metres by 80, intersected towards their middle by a road that runs east from the axis of the ancient Royal Palace and leads to the Victory Gate (the east side of Angkor Thom). These roads serve, on the one side, the monuments to the west of the royal square so defined - the Baphuon, the Terrace of the Elephants with the Royal Palace and its temple the Phimeanakas, the Terrace of the Leper King, Tep Pranam and Prah Palilay - and on the other, the monuments situated to the east - the prasats Suor Prat, the two Kleang and Prah Pithu.

The royal square as such, today cleared of the trees which once crowded it, forms a vast court of about 550 metres by 200 that must have lent itself admirably to the display of processions and military parades. From the reign of Jayavarman VII, the builder of the Elephant Terrace towards the end of the 12th century, the king and his courtiers were able to view these proceedings from the Terrace - that was probably embellished with elegant light-weight tribunes.

In 1296, towards the end of the period of glory, the Chinese envoy Tcheou Ta-Kouan wrote an informative description for us of some of these festivals:

"In front of the royal palace a great platform is raised, sufficient to hold more than a thousand people, and decorated from end to end with lanterns and flowers. Opposite they construct a high timber scaffolding on top of which rockets and firecrackers are arranged. As night falls, the King is besought to take part in the spectacle. The crackers are touched off and the rocket, big as cannons, are fired - shaking the whole city with their explosions..."

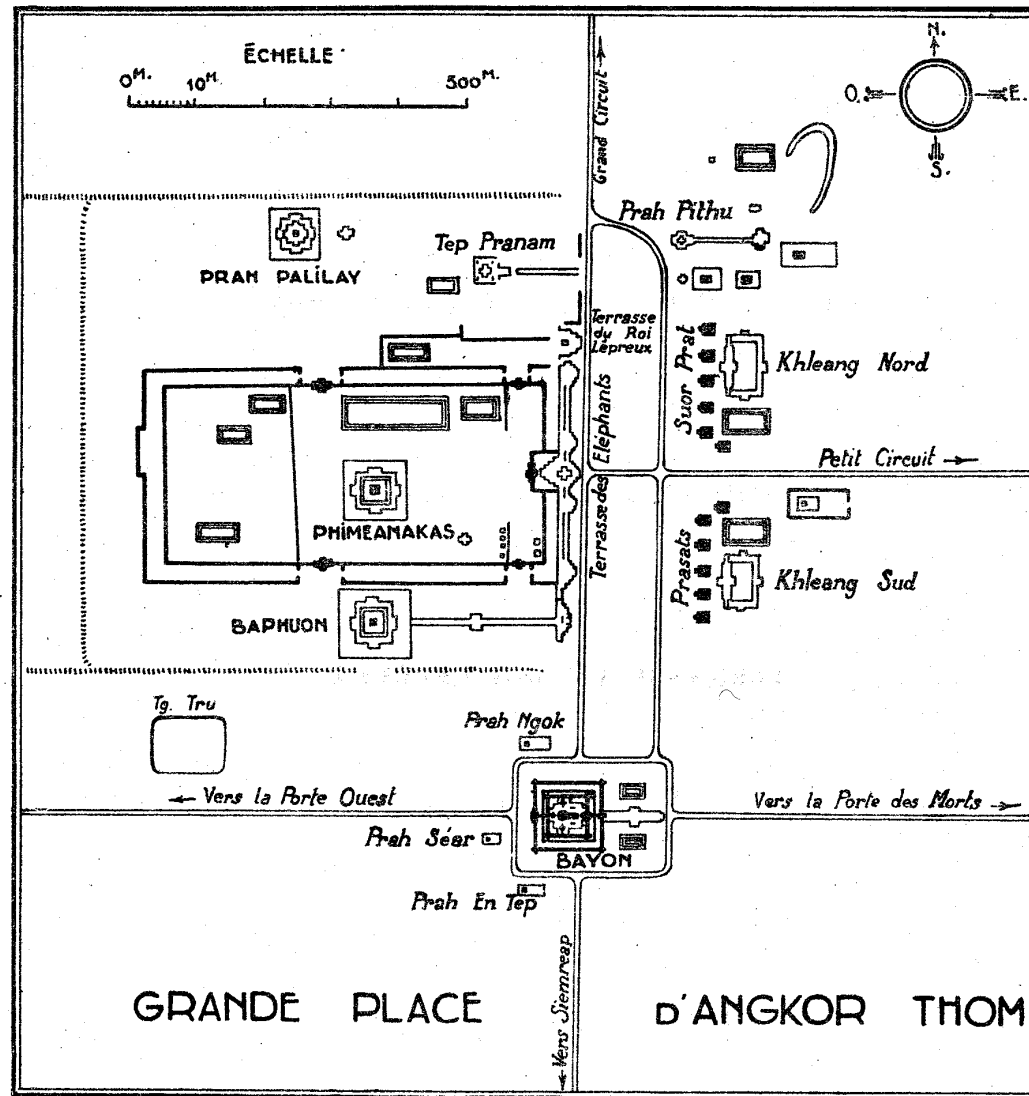
"Every month a festival is held. In the ninth month the entire population of the kingdom is summoned to the capital to pass in review before the palace. With the fifth month comes the ceremony of "washing the Buddhas". Then Buddhas are carried from all over the kingdom, water is procured and the king lends a hand in the cleansing ...

"... When the King leaves his palace the procession is headed by cavalry - then come the flags, the banners and the music. Three to five hundred gaily dressed palace girls, with flowers in their hair and tapers in their hands, are massed together in a separate group. The tapers are alight even in broad daylight. Then come other girls carrying gold and silver vessels from the palace and a whole collection of ornaments, of a

very particular design, whose uses were strange to me. Then come still more girls, the bodyguard of the palace, holding shields and lances. They, too, were separately aligned. Following them come chariots drawn by goats and horses, all adorned with gold. Ministers and princes, mounted on elephants, are preceded by countless bearers of scarlet parasols. Close behind come the royal wives and concubines, in palanquins and chariots, or mounted on horses or elephants, to whom are assigned at least a hundred parasols mottled with gold. Finally the Sovereign appears, standing erect on an elephant and holding the sacred sword. This elephant, his tusks sheathed in gold, is accompanied by bearers of twenty white parasols with golden shafts. All around is a bodyguard of elephants, drawn close together, and still more soldiers for complete protection, marching in close rank."

Can we not see such a parade represented on the bas-reliefs of the Bayon?

We recommend that a visit is best made in the morning to the monuments situated on the west of the main road, where one can wander along the Elephant Terrace - gaining access by its central stairway - to then visit successively the Terrace of the Leper King, the Buddha of Tep Pranam, Prah Palilay, the Royal Palace with Phimeanakas, to finish with the Baphuon. The monuments situated on the eastern side of the square should then be viewed in the afternoon, when the light is more favourable.



The terrace of the Elephants in its present form extends in length for over 300 metres - from the Baphuon to the terrace of the Leper King - though the two extremities remain imprecise in their layout and the terrace itself shows evidence of additions and alterations.

Along the square it presents five perrons, three of which dominate. The southern of these is framed by motifs, already found on the gates of Angkor Thom, of three elephant heads with trunks forming pillars tugging at lotuses.

The same arrangement can be seen on the two secondary stairways which frame the central perron. As the most imposing, this has its side walls - as well as the walls of the terrace itself up to the secondary stairways - sculpted with lions and garudas "as atlantes". Above, the various changes in level are marked with lions sculpted in the round and naga-balustrades on blocks with garudas on their hoods, clearly in the style of the Bayon - except for a few earlier ones that have no garuda.

The northern extension has, rather than an axial stairway, two steep symmetrically arranged stairs. Another stairway on the northern façade is, like that on the southern, sculpted partly with garudas and lions "as atlantes", partly in a bas-relief of horizontal bands representing scenes of sport, wrestling, chariot racing and polo - which originated from India.

The other panels have been sculpted for their entire length in a high relief of elephants mounted with drivers. Represented in profile and almost full in size, they are depicted with some realism in hunting scenes and surmounted by a naga-balustrade on blocks.

The upper terrace - from where one can see the enclosure walls and the eastern gopura below of the earlier Royal Palace - has two levels with a four metre wide border towards the square and an upper platform of 10 metres, with a base sculpted with "Hamsas" (sacred geese). It certainly occupied by light-weight palatial pavilions, whose nature one can only guess at. The remains of some laterite blockwork lie just in front of the northern end which must have been clad with sandstone bas-reliefs.

An excavation undertaken just in front of this blockwork showed that the layout of this area had been altered. One can see - effectively in a kind of pit - a panel sculpted in high relief that can only have been part of an ancient façade, with expressive craftsmanship showing some remarkable modelling. It represents

the Terrace of the Elephants

Date	late 12th century
King	Jayavarman VII (posthumous name: Maha paramasangata pada)
Clearing	by de Mecquenem in 1911 and H. Marchal in 1916

a horse with five heads - the king's horse sheltered under tiered parasols - surrounded by apsaras and menacing genies armed with sticks who chase some terrified smaller figures. Finot and Goloubew suggest that this was a representation of Lokeshvara in the form of the divine horse Balaha.

On the second southern stairway of the central group, another excavation has revealed some superb garudas and lions “as *atlantes*” in perfect preservation and aligned with the front of the main façade. This would seem to prove that this stairway was an addition.¹²



The terrace of the Leper King lies just to the north of the Terrace of the Elephants, aligned with it but standing separate.¹³ As a mound of masonry about 25 metres across by 6 high, it forms a redented bastion with sides that are lined in sandstone and entirely sculpted with figures in a high relief, juxtaposed and separated in seven registers - the uppermost of which has almost entirely disappeared. Although now standing isolated - joined only at its north and south by the start of some returning walls - it is probable that this motif was previously but one element in a vast composition, perhaps complemented with pools, that has evidently undergone some later alteration.

The clearing work has revealed the existence, at two metres behind the outer face and following its line, of a second system of walls, also sculpted in bas-reliefs that are identical in composition - the void between them was filled with laterite that had to be extracted by pick. The fact that some of the sculptures on the internal wall remain in rough form and that the start of its north-south return towards the Elephant Terrace seems to align with it leads one to suspect that there must have been a simple modification to the plan, perhaps decided during the course of the work by a sovereign who was little concerned with practicalities of construction. It is not impossible, however, that this curious arrangement was a response to some symbolic preoccupation with the concept of Mount Meru, - with the buried wall representing the underworld of the cosmic mountain, balanced by its volume visible in elevation.

Whatever the reason, both the internal and external bas-reliefs are intentionally monotonous in presentation. They show only lines of seated figures, apparently representing the various fabulous characters - Naga, Garuda, Kumbhanda - which haunt the flanks of Mount Meru, shown as giants (sometimes with multiple arms), sword or club bearers, and women with bare torsos whose costume and triangular head dress with flaming discs relate to the style of the Bayon. To appreciate the exterior reliefs, the visitor should not forget to examine the north side - the best preserved - and its northern return that runs parallel to the road, where the start of some palace scenes are treated in quite a different spirit. One can see here in particular a sword swallower and some followers wearing a curious side-chignon.

Returning to the south side, one enters the internal corridor where the decor, set on a lower frieze of fish, elephants and the representation of a river running vertically, follows with the same elements as the exterior but is here enhanced with apsaras. Long protected, the sculpture remain very well preserved. At the end of the scene some laterite steps allow access to the upper level of the terrace.

the Terrace of the Leper King

<i>Date</i>	<i>late 12th</i>
<i>King</i>	<i>Jayavarman VII</i> <i>(posthumous name:</i> <i>Maha paramasangata pada)</i>
<i>Clearing</i>	<i>by de Mecquenem in 1911 and</i> <i>H. Marchal in 1917</i>

Surrounded by three smaller decapitated statues carrying clubs on their right shoulders, the “*Leper King*” sits in the *Javanese* manner with his right knee raised. Resting on a simple stone slab just where he was found¹⁴ and which perhaps corresponds to his original position, he offers the peculiarity that he is entirely naked - a unique phenomenon in Khmer art - though with no indication of any genitalia. He also has no sign of leprosy other than a few patches of lichen - his celebrity being more literary than artistic. Uninspired in craftsmanship and a little foppish in nature, he must rank amongst average works without attaining the first order.

The statue of the “*Leper King*”, held by some to be a representation of “*Shiva ascetic*” is perhaps, in fact - if one is to believe a short 15th century inscription on the base - a “*Dharmaraja*”. This name is sometimes given to Yama and sometimes to one of his assessors - “*the Inspector of Qualities and Faults*” - the supreme judge in the hour of judgement. Cœdes considers that the hair-style - which is quite particular to this individual and formed of thick coils starting from the front and covering the nape of the neck - emphasises, like the two “*fangs*” near the corner of the lips, his demonic character. For Cœdes, the “*Terrace of the Leper King with its superimposed levels of fabulous figures is without doubt a representation of the ‘Meru’, and the fact that it occupies an area to the north of the Royal Palace - the area in Phnom Penh as in Bangkok reserved still now for royal cremations known as ‘Val Prah Men’ (the name of the pavilion prepared there for the funeral pyre) - leads one to suspect that the Terrace of the Leper King was none other than a permanent Men, which would explain why, at a time when this cult was still remembered, images of Dharmaraja, the ‘god of the Dead’, were placed there*”.

From the north-west corner of the Terrace of the Leper King one can then reach the Large Buddha of Tep Pranam along a track - without having to re-descend the stair on the south side or take the road again.



From the road, a hundred metres north of the Terrace of the Leper King, one can see the large sitting Buddha of Tep Pranam at the end of a long cutting through the forest. One gains access along a laterite pavement of 75 metres by 8, after which is a typical Buddhist terrace delimited with “sema”, or doubled steles, placed at the corners and on the axis.

Fifty metres long by fourteen wide, the western end of this terrace terminates with a cruciform platform of 30 metres by 30. The moulded walls of its plinth are in sandstone, as is part of its paving. Two lions in the style of the Bayon precede it to the east side, while the nagas of its balustrades date from an earlier period.

A stele inscribed on its four sides, found in the vicinity but whose true origin is unknown, tells of its ancient Buddhist monastery or “asrama” (Saugatasrama) founded by Yasovarman towards the end of the 9th century. The text defines the various rules of organisation - that are almost identical to those of the Shivaïte “Brahmanasrama” and of the “Voirsnavasrama” founded by the same king to the south of the eastern baray. The buildings were certainly constructed in light-weight materials and one can find, on either side, the remains of funerary monuments or “cedei”, as well as two stone tanks.

Set on a 1m.00 high moulded base, the statue itself is formed in assembled blocks and reaches to a height of 6m.00 - an enormous Buddha, sitting on a lotus and “calling the earth to witness”. Constructed from a number of re-used stones, the body has the look of a rough-formed model whose head - with its “ushnisha” topped by a flame - is certainly of a late period.

Just to the west of Tep Pranam are the remains of a pool with laterite steps, next to which it has been possible to reconstruct another large standing Buddha, over 4m.00 in height and making the ritual gesture of “absence of fear”. His face has not been found.

Tep Pranam

“The adoring god”

*A large Buddha of a late period
(15th and 16th centuries)*

Clearing by H. Marchal in 1918