

សម្រាប់សម្រស់កម្ពុជា

ភាសាខ្មែរ

VOLUME 5 — 2012

CAMBODIA, THE ANGKOR ERA



Cambodian Community Day

Sunday, August 19th, 2012
12 PM - 6 PM

Ben Brenman Park | 4800 Brenman Park Drive | Alexandria, VA

Promoting Khmer Culture | Celebrating Khmer Achievements
Strengthening Khmer Voice

Bridging Distances | Healing Rifts | Building Bonds

Co-sponsored by The Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities, Cambodian Community Day Committee, and the Cambodian communities of Washington, D.C Metro Area.

www.cambodiancommunityday.org



www.alexandriava.gov

Message from The P resident



Dear friends and families,

It seems like it was yesterday that we had fun together during last year Cambodian Festival. Since then, we have been busy organizing even a bigger event this year, the Cambodian Community Day of 2012. Our members and volunteers work tirelessly throughout the years to make the event exciting and fun for everybody. At the same time we provide an opportunity for you to learn something about our culture.

On behalf of Cambodian Community (CCD), I would like to welcome you who are here today. We are please to bring different aspects of our culture. This year, we would like to present how Cambodia reached its zenith and become a most powerful nation in Southeast Asian during the period 800-1500AD known as the Angkorian period. During the time, several thousands of monuments were built by many kings. Today show will depict the culture and traditions and a way of life during Angkorian period. In this brochure, we briefly recounts most of Cambodian history. I Hope you find it educational and informative. We will also present you three classical dances, Cambodian traditional music, live band and social dances, tradition

games and children activities. All are for your leisure and entertainment. Most importantly, we like to integrate our culture into America. We also believe in the value of keeping and passing our cultural heritage on to our children. Also, we work to empower our Community, bridge distances, heal rifts and build bonds. Today is a day to promote Cambodian culture to the next highest level, to celebrate Khmer achievements, and to strengthen Cambodian voice.

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ខ្មែរយើងខ្ញុំ។ សូមអញ្ជើញកំសាន្តរីករាយជាមួយយើងខ្ញុំថ្ងៃនេះ។

Happy Cambodian Community day!

Sincerely,
Ben Bao
CCD President

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, every year for the past 32 years, the Heritage of Cambodian Americans has been honored and celebrated in the Greater Washington Metropolitan area and in other parts of the United States; and

WHEREAS, the City of Alexandria is home to many Cambodians who are rich in their cultural heritage and are very successful in their professional lives; and

WHEREAS, this year, the Cambodian Community in the City of Alexandria and in the Greater Washington Metropolitan area, will celebrate its rich heritage and culture through various cultural activities, live performance of classical, folk and traditional dances, arts and crafts displays, traditional games, and ethnic food tasting; and

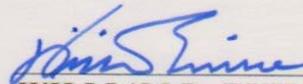
WHEREAS, the City of Alexandria is very proud of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of its Cambodian citizens, and recognizing their continuing contribution to the culture, education, arts, industries, community, civic life, the City of Alexandria joins the rest of the Commonwealth in celebrating Cambodian Community Day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM D. EUILLE, Mayor of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, and on behalf of the Alexandria City Council, do hereby proclaim August 19, 2012 as:

"CAMBODIAN COMMUNITY DAY"

in the City of Alexandria, and call upon all the residents of this great city to join me in recognizing the multiculturalism and diversity of the Cambodian American heritage.

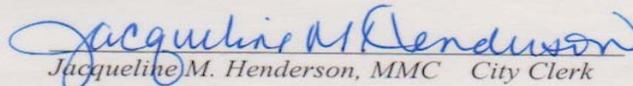
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of Alexandria to be affixed this 19th day of August, 2012.



WILLIAM D. EUILLE **MAYOR**

On behalf of the City Council
of Alexandria, Virginia

ATTEST:



Jacqueline M. Henderson, MMC City Clerk



MEMBER OF CONGRESS
11TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA



GERALD E. CONNOLLY



August 19, 2012

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 2012 Cambodian Community Day Festival!

The 11th Congressional District of Virginia is blessed by its diversity; 1 in 4 residents is foreign born and more than 40% are minorities. Asian-Americans, including Cambodians, comprise the largest single ethnic group and have contributed greatly to our community's rich cultural tapestry as well as our social growth and strength.

I am honored to serve on the Congressional Asian and Pacific American Caucus, and I am a member of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia. I will continue working to strengthen our nation through partnerships with countries in Asia and around the world.

This festival provides an opportunity to share the rich and glorious Khmer culture with the entire Washington D.C. metropolitan area. The Cambodian Community Day Festival allows our communities to enjoy the vivid Khmer music, dance and other art forms, and it gives us a small taste of Cambodia right in our own neighborhood.

I thank the Cambodian community for its efforts to share and promote the Khmer culture. Please accept my very best wishes for an enjoyable festival and your continued success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerald E. Connolly". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress
11th District, Virginia



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FACTS ABOUT CAMBODIA

At a Glance



Location: Southeastern Asia, bordering the Gulf of Thailand, between Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos.

Map Reference: Southeast Asia

Capital: Phnom Penh

Population: 14,244,290 (July 2009 estimate)

Area: 181,035 square kilometers (69,898 square miles, slightly smaller than Oklahoma)

Land Boundaries: Total 2,572 km Border Countries: Laos 541 km, Thailand 803 km, Vietnam 1,228 km

Coastline: 443 Km

Maritime claims: territorial sea: 12 nm contiguous zone: 24 nm exclusive economic zone: 200 nm continental shelf: 200 nm

Terrain: mostly low, flat plains; mountains in southwest and north

Language: Khmer (official) 95%, French, English

Religion: Theravada Buddhist (95%), Others 5%

Currency: Riel

Natural Resources: oil and gas, timber, gemstones, iron ore, manganese, phosphates, hydropower potential

Industry: garments, rice milling, fishing, wood and wood products, rubber, cement, gem mining, textiles

Agriculture: rice, rubber, corn, vegetables

Arable Land: arable land: 20.44% permanent crops: 0.59% other: 78.97% (2005)

Exports

timber, garments, rubber, rice, fish

Imports

cigarettes, gold, construction materials, petroleum products, machinery, motor vehicles

Natural Resources

timber, gemstones, some iron ore, manganese, phosphates, hydropower potential

Environment—international agreements:

party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, Whaling signed, but not ratified: Law of the Sea



ANGKOR ERA EVOLUTION

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Brief History

Legend

Traditional stories passed down from generation to generation tell how the land of Cambodia was formed. Once, there was an ocean ruled by Naga who built an empire under the sea. The land was ruled by the Indian Empire. One day, Neang Neak, a daughter of the Naga king, took a bath by the seashore. Her beauty caught the eyes of Preah Thong, a young Indian prince who was visiting the area. Falling in love with the princess at first sight, the prince went to ask the Naga king for Neang Neak's hand in marriage. The king refused to give his permission unless Preah Thong defeated the Naga's most powerful warrior. The prince won the contest, and the marriage took place. Keeping his word and as a token of his love for his daughter, the Naga King swallowed the water to uncover the land that is now known as Cambodia and gave it to the newlywed couple as a wedding gift.

Prehistoric Era

Let's set aside the legend for now. Archaeological evidence suggests that early Cambodians were cave-dwellers. The earliest known site is Laang Spean cave which occupies the country's northwest region and inhabited by a Neolithic culture that may have migrated from southeastern China to the Indochinese Peninsula. Laang Spean cave was first occupied beginning in 7000 B.C. Rice has been grown on Cambodian soil since well before the 1st century AD. The inhabitants had developed relatively stable, organized societies far surpassed the primitive stage in culture and technical skills. The most advanced groups lived along the coast and in the lower Mekong River. Some historians speculate that these people arrived before their present Vietnamese, Thai, and Lao neighbors.

Funan (63 AD - 550 AD)

Cambodians consider Funan to be the earliest kingdom of Cambodia. Little is known about Funan except that it was a powerful trading state. It was one of the Indianized states that were often no larger than fortified city. They warred among themselves, coalescing over time into a shifting set of larger states. According to 3rd century Chinese chronicles, one of China's principal trading partners and a dominant power in the region was the state of Funan centered in today's southern Vietnam and Cambodia. Archaeological evidence indicates that this commercial society centered on the Mekong Delta and flourished from the 1st century to the 6th century. Through increasing trade and contact through the travels of merchants, diplomats, and learned Brahmins, Funan became an Indianized state. Immigrants, believed to have arrived in the fourth and the fifth centuries, accelerated the process. By the fifth century, the elite culture was thoroughly Indianized. Language, character symbols, tradition, custom, ceremony and the structure of political institutions were based on Indian models. The Sanskrit language was widely used. There is evidence that the Funanese spoke Mon-Khmer, strongly indicating a connection to later Angkorian and Camtoodian civilization. Funan was predominate over its smaller neighboring states, including the state of Chendla in northern Cambodia.

DATE	PERIODS	DEVELOPMENT
1600—1900	Declining/ Protectorate	Rulers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norodom Ang Duong Developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1863 Treaty with France Capital: Phnom Penh Vietnam Control Cambodia Vietnam annex Delta
1400—1600	Post-Angkor	Rulers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chey Chetha II Ang Chan I Developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital: Udong Fall of Longvek to Thai
800—1400	Angkor Era (Classical Age)	Rulers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jayavarman VIII Jayavarman VII Suryavarman II Udayadityavarman II Suryavarman I Rajendravarman II Jayavarman IV Indravarman I Jayavarman II Developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angkor Thom Apogee of Khmer Empire Cham invasion of Angkor Angkor Wat Phimai Baphuon Banteay Srey Yashodharapura the Capital Bakheng Hariharalaya the Capital Founding of the Khmer Empire
400—800	Early Kingdom	Rulers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jayadevi Jayavarman I Bhavavarman II Chetrasena/Bhavavarman I Rudravarman Developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sambo Prey Kuk
0—400	Iron Age	Developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angkor Borei Hinduism & Buddhism Circular Earthworks

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Chenla (550 AD - 802 AD)

Chinese called a group of inland kingdoms Zhenla (Chenla) which flourished in the 6th and 7th centuries from southern Cambodia to southern Laos. The first stone inscriptions in the Khmer language and the first brick and stone Hindu temples in Cambodia are dated from the Chenla period. People of Chenla, referred to as Khmer, established control over Funan. They embarked on a course of conquest that continued for three centuries. They subjugated central and upper Laos, annexed portions of the Mekong Delta, and brought what are now western Cambodia and southern Thailand under their direct control.

Khmer Empire (802 AD - 1431 AD)

The Khmer Empire was the largest empire of Southeast Asia. The empire, which seceded from the kingdom of Chenla, at times ruled over great parts of modern-day Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. Cultural accomplishments, immense political power and wealth, as well as a variety of belief systems during the period made Cambodia a powerful state. This was the golden age of Khmer civilization. Its greatest legacy is Angkor, which was its capital during the empire's zenith. The official religions included Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism, until Theravada Buddhism prevailed after its introduction from Sri Lanka in the 13th century.

The Angkor Era: From Kingdom to Empire

The Angkorian period span more than 600 years from 802 AD to 1432 AD. During this incredible period, hundreds temples of Angkor were built, many kingdoms were consolidated as a Khmer Empire that became one of the great powers in Southeast Asia. The ancient Khmer culture at the time of its apogee (802-1327) is characterized by some of the key developments:

- Monarch is a head of imperial state
- Khmer Capital is always based in Angkor (Temple City)
- Hinduism/Mahayana Buddhism is state religion
- Worship of Linga
- Prasats (temples) are house of gods, often arranged in block of stones supported by stepped pyramids
- Massive and extensive public waterworks (canals, moat, reservoirs)
- Network of highways, causeways and masonry bridges
- Inscriptions in Sanskrit and Khmer

Jayavarman II

Not until 802 AD, Cambodia consists of a number of independent kingdoms. They often waged war against each other, but found common external enemies such as Cham. Those were to change by a man known to us as Jayavarman II. He was a political heirs of Parameshvara (the supreme lord). His reign marks the beginning of Angkorian period. As a young prince, Jayavarman II spent his formative years on the island of Java, at the court of Sheilandra Kingdom. He returned home after a long stay at the court of Sheilandra. The purpose of his stay in Java is unknown, but he brought back the art and culture of Javanese Sailendran court to Cambodia. He may have been inspired by many Hindu temples he saw.

After his return to the former kingdom of Chenla, he quickly built up his influence, began his relentless, expansionist military campaigns and conquered a series of competing kings including Vydhapura (across the Mekong from Phnom Penh), Sambhupura (presently known as Sambor on the Mekong above Kratie). He inaugurated a cult honoring the Hindu god Shiva (one of the principal deities of Hinduism) as a Devaraja (Sanskrit term meaning "god-king"). He was crowned in 790 by the Khmers and became king of a kingdom then called "Kambuja" or "Kampuchea". In the following years he extended his territory and eventually established his new capital of Hariharalaya near the modern Cambodian town of Roluos, where he laid down a foundation of Angkor. In 802, he declared himself devaraja or Chakravartin, the earthly representative of Hindu god Shiva, in a ritual taken from the Indian-Hindu tradition that made him a divinely appointed and uncontested ruler. He simultaneously declared the independence of his kingdom from Java. He built a temple-mountain at Phom Kulen (litchi mountain) that symbolized the dwelling places of god Shiva on top of Mount Meru. It is believed that Jayavarman II descended from Phnom Kulen and established his imperial capital at Hariharalaya (today is known as Roluos). Harihara is the name of the combined godhead of Shiva and Vishnu. The style and architecture of temple-mountain set a precedent that became a dominant feature of Khmer architectural productivities. Jayavarman II died in 834. His successors continued to expand territory and built many great temples (more than a thousand sites) within the vicinity of Angkor.



Different forms of Shiva reflect god's unity in diversity.

ANGKOR ERA EVOLUTION

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Indravarman I

After Jayavarman II death, his son Jayavarman III succeed the throne and began building many shrines at Hariharalaya (Roluos). But his achievements are overshadowed by his successor, Indravarman I (877—889 AD) works. Indravarman I is believed to inherit the mantle of devaraja through conquest. He gained wealth through trade and agriculture. He began extensive building projects, most importantly, the temple of Preah Ko and the irrigation systems, a 6.5 sq Km baray (reservoir) at Roluos. Consecrated to gods in 880, Preah Ko is six brick-built towers dedicated to the memory of his parents, the dynasty founder, Jayavarman II, and his wife. He was one of the truly great Khmer rulers. He was not a crown prince, but rather a nephew of Jayavarman II's Queen. During his reign, the baray was the first stage of an hydraulic irrigation system and the Khmer often used the cycle of nature to water their lands. His final work was Bakong, a pyramidal representation Mount Meru, laid to the south of Preah Ko. It is a stepped pyramid towers surrounded by massive double moats. It is truly a major public work and its architecture is in many ways a precursor to Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom built centuries later. Indravarman I was a pivotal figure in Khmer history, endowed with all merits, truly a 'lion among kings'.



Preah Ko (Sacred Bull) derives its name from the three statues of sandstone located in the front of and facing the temple's central towers. These statues represent Nandi, the white bull who serves as the mount of Shiva. *Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preah_Ko*

Yasovarman I

Indravarman I's death led to a period of armed conflict, a struggle for his successor, apparently by two of his sons. Scholars believe that there was even a naval battle at Tole Sap. The victor emerged. Yasovarman I (reigned 889 - 910), son of Indravarman I, established a new capital, Yasodharapura - the first city of Angkor, a central temple of Phnom Bakheng, built on a hill, 60m above the plain. East Baray, a massive water reservoir of 7.5 by 1.8 km was also created under his reign. Soon after his coronation in 889, he built more than 100 monasteries (ashram) throughout his domain. They were constructed of woods and are now perished, only inscribed steles remain. Yasovarman I further strengthened his divinity and glory in a temple-mountain of his own. He built Prasat Lolei on island of east baray that was established by his father (now a rice field). It is brick towers that looks similar to Prasat Preah Ko. According to the inscriptions on doorjambs, Lolei was dedicated to the sprit of his father. His next act was to build Bakeng, a temple situated on a hill near Angkor Wat. Today, Bakheng is one the favorite spots for visitors viewing the sunset over Angkor. Other major Yasovarman I's achievements are a 16 Km highway that connected Phnom Bakheng and Roluos; the east baray which is nowadays silted up. He also established the temple-mountains of Phnom Krom and Phnom Bok. The most significance history



Prasat Lolei is four brick-towers sandstone carving temple, built by Yasovarman I and was dedicated to his mother.



Bakong the first temple-mountain of sandstone constructed by rulers of the Khmer empire at Angkor near modern Siem Reap in Cambodia. In the final decades of the 9th century AD, it served as the official state temple of King Indravarman I in the ancient city of Hariharalaya, located in an area that today is called Roluos. *Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bakong>*

The main attraction at Phnom Bakheng is sunset viewing. It is located on a hillside within the vicinity of Angkor. Reaching the top of the hill is challenging for most visitors, but elephant ride is also available. Once at the top, there is usually a circus scene as the crowd is competing for the best spot. Bakheng is claimed to be one of the first temple-mountains ever build within the vicinity of Angkor. *Picture Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phnom_Bakheng*

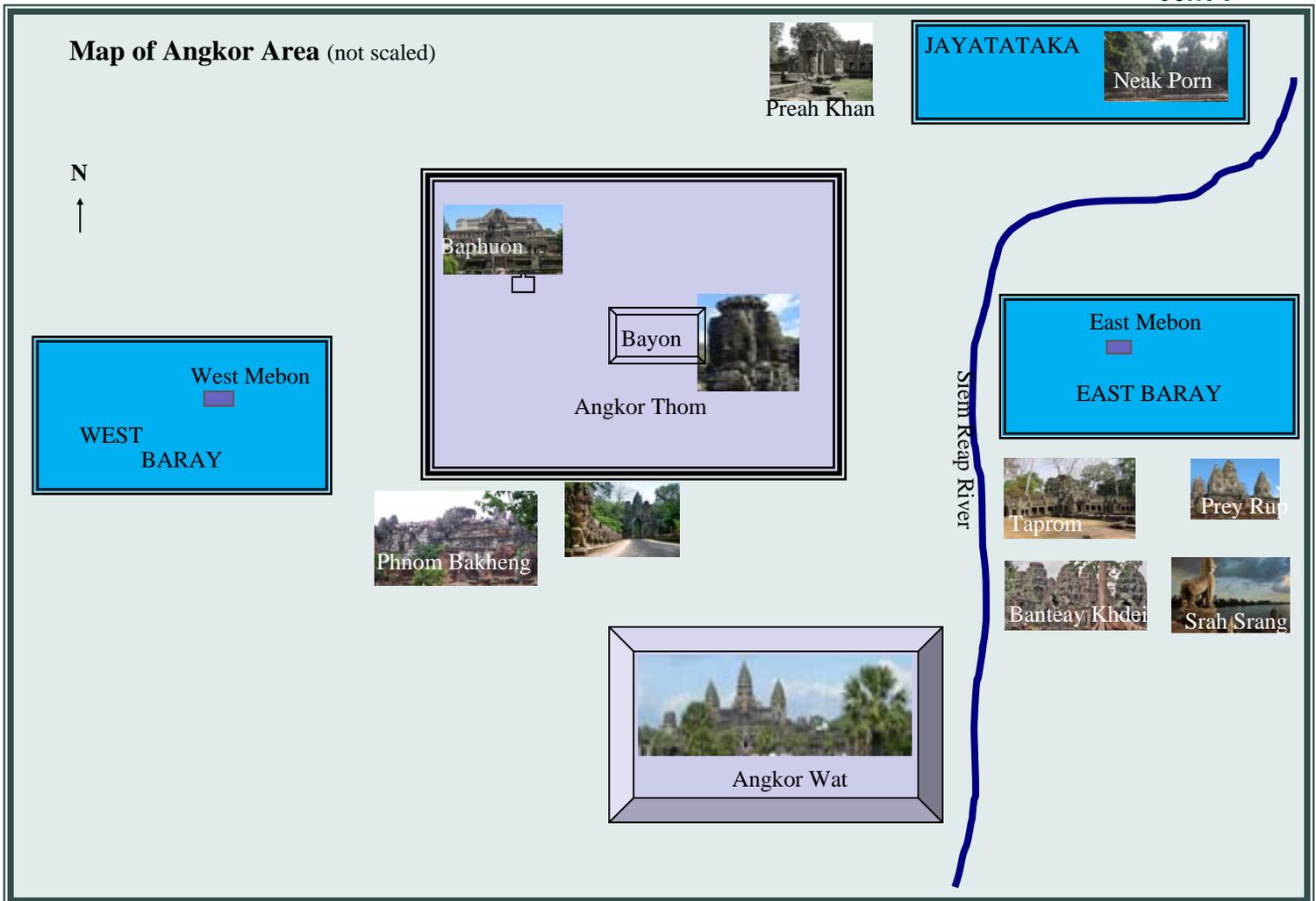


of Yasovarman I is his decision to move the Capital of Khmer Empire from Hariharalaya to Angkor where it

ANGKOR ERA EVOLUTION

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remains there for five centuries. There were probably many compelling reasons for this move: economic, sociopolitical and military. Religion might be the main factor as he was constantly advised by Brahmin gurus. Strategically, this was a good move as Angkor is at the bank of Siem Reap river and is half way between Phnom Kulen and Tonle Sap, a massive hydraulic system that contemplates his ruling.

Harshavarman I

Yasovarman I died in 900, succeeded by his son Harshavarman I (910-923) and subsequently by his younger brother, Ishanavarman II (923-928). Not much known during their entire reigns, except that the Khmer Empire suffered a period of instability. Both brothers were involved in a power struggle with their maternal uncle, Jayavarman IV, a conflict that lasted for their entire reigns. The uncle was eventually driven out of Angkor to set up his own capital about 100 km away during the reign of Ishanavarman. The only known legacies of Harshavarman I is a small temple-mountain Baksei Chamkrong at the foot of Phnom Bakheng, built to dedicate to his parents, and Prasat Kravan, a three-tower-brick-built temple dedicate to god Vishnu.



located in the Angkor complex. This temple is one of the first temples constructed of durable material such as bricks and laterite and with decoration in sandstone. Much of the stucco on the surface of the temple has vanished.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baksei_Chamkrong

Prasat Kravan is a small 10th century temple consisting of five reddish brick towers on a common terrace, located at Angkor area south of the artificial lake or baray called Srah Srang.



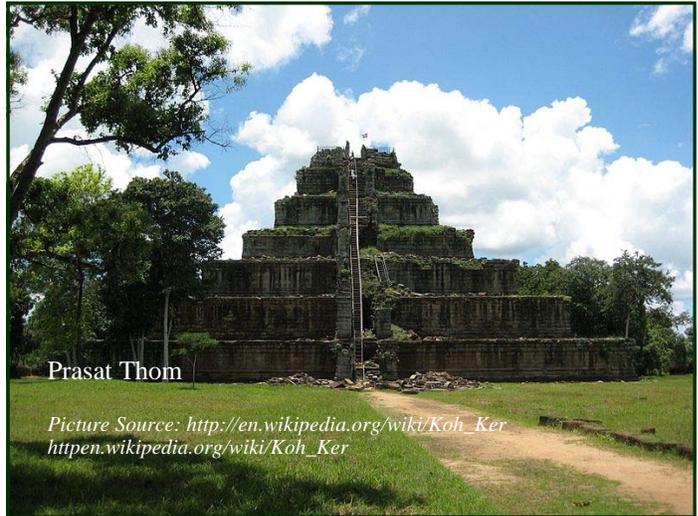
ANGKOR ERA EVOLUTION

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Jayavarman IV

During the armed conflict with Harshavarman I and his brother Ishanavarman II, Jayavarman IV moved to Koh Ker and build his capital there, some 100 km to the northeast of Angkor. He was believed to be another usurper, but evidences suggest that he had legitimate right to the throne. He was the son of king Indravarman I's daughter, Mahendradevi. He was married to his aunt, a half-sister of king Yasovarman I. Because there was no clear-cut rule of succession, his claim to the throne seems to be valid. An inscription dated 921 states, "Jayavarman IV left the city of Yashodharapura to reign at Chok Gargyar taking the Devaraja with him." The rivalry lasted from 921 until the death of Ishanavarman II in 928, after which Jayavarman IV reigned supreme until 941 when he died. However, he did not move back to the imperial city of Yashodharapura for an unknown reason. This had caused a downturn of prosperity that once Yashodharapura enjoyed. He remains at the capital of Koh Ker, known as Chak Gargya, situated at a relatively poor region, but not far from the southeast region rich in iron ore, copper or even gold mine. At Koh Ker, a vast number of temples were built under his reign. His successor returned to the Angkor area about twenty years later. Koh Ker is distinguished by its state temple, Prasat Thom, a seven-story stepped pyramid temple, 52m wide and 30m tall above the plan and surrounding forest. Koh Ker was such a magnificent city built in such a short period of time, within 20 years of his reign. He must had acquired an enormous wealth and labor. It was believed to have gathered labor and imposed taxation on people in his area of control in form of rice, elephants, cattle, clothes, etc. The Khmer during Angkor era did not use coin as currency. The tax collection were enforced by the 'royal inspector' and the enforcement was fierce. Whoever refused to pay will be put into a cage and brought in front of the king for punishment. However, the king, palace functionaries, monks and slaves were exempt from paying taxes.



Prasat Thom

Picture Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koh_Ker
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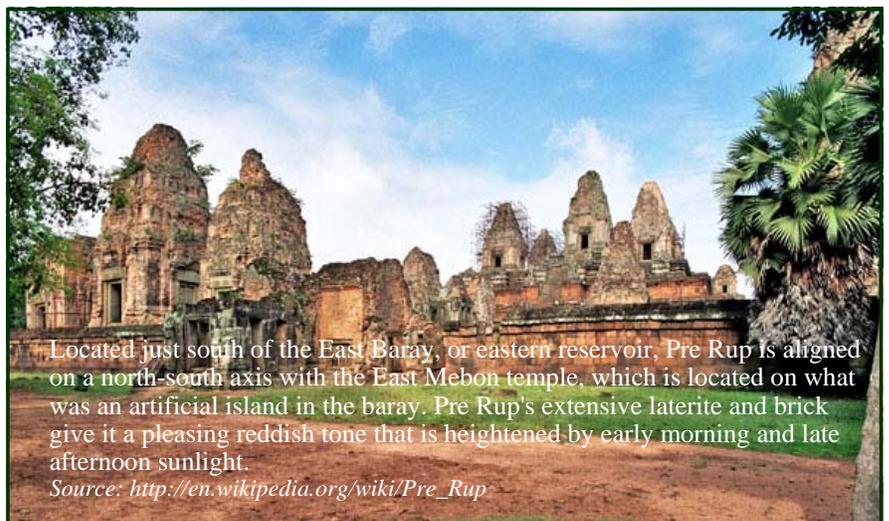
Harshavarman II

The successor of King Jayavarman IV after his death in 941 was his son Harshavarman II. But his reign was brief, His cousin Rajendrarvarman II wrestled the power away from him and moved the capital back to Yashodharapura. He died in 944 and received the posthumous name of Brahmaloaka.

Rajendrarvarman II

The Khmer was reborn as its ruler Rajendrarvarman II, a nephew of former king Yasovarman I, brought back all the various breakaways kingdom under his control. Rajendrarvarman II claimed links to the royal line of the Chenla that predates the start of the Khmer empire in 802 AD. According to

inscriptions, the Khmer empire under his reign extended to southern Vietnam, Laos and much of Thailand and as far north as southern China. Among the major achievements are temples of Pre Rup (changing body), his state temple, and East Mebon on the island of East Baray. Construction of Banteay Srey also began in his reign. Rajendrarvarman II was a great warrior. His sword was always stained with blood. His body is believed to be as hard as diamond. He led fighting against the rival state of Champa in the east in 950. But he was a compassionate and religious king. He instituted a central system of administration and established a more direct control over princes who had been largely independent at their estates in the provinces. His administrative center was around the temple of Bakheng. Rajendrarvarman II died in 968 and was succeeded by his 10-year-old son, who reigned as Jayavarman V.



Located just south of the East Baray, or eastern reservoir, Pre Rup is aligned on a north-south axis with the East Mebon temple, which is located on what was an artificial island in the baray. Pre Rup's extensive laterite and brick give it a pleasing reddish tone that is heightened by early morning and late afternoon sunlight.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pre_Rup

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East Mebon

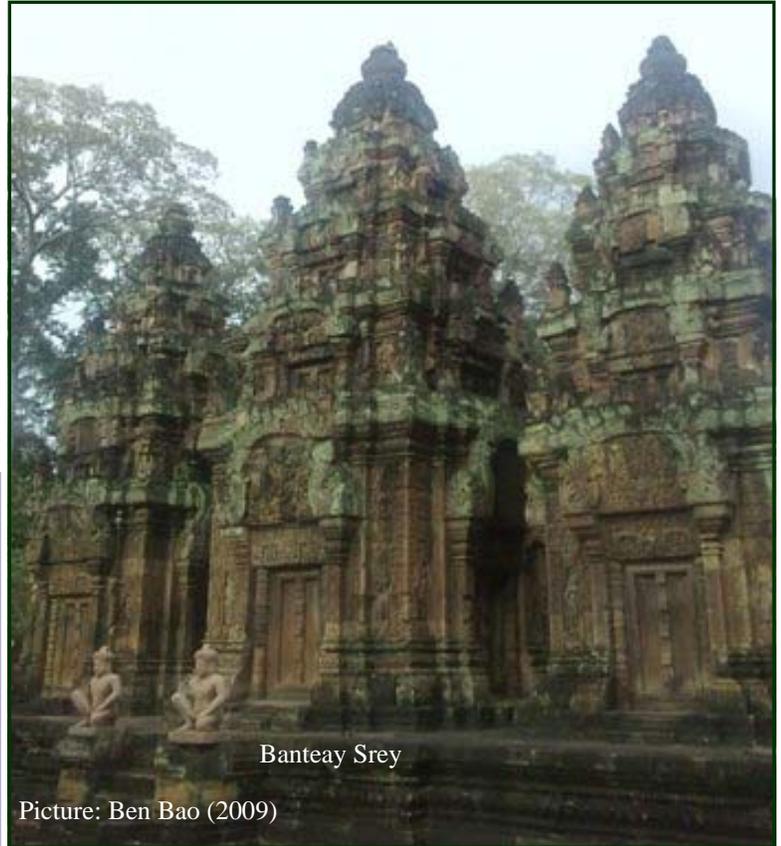
Picture: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Mebon

Banteay Srey was constructed by a Brahmin counselor under a powerful king, Rajendrarvarman, and later under Jayavarman V. Banteay Srey displays some of the finest examples of classical Khmer art. The walls are densely covered with some of the most beautiful, deep and intricate carvings of any Angkorian temple.

Location: 25 kilometers north-east of East Mebon
Date: second half of the 10th century (967)
King: Rajendrarvarman II (reigned 944-968) and Jayavarman V (reigned 968-1001)
Religion: Hindu (dedicated to Shiva)

The East Mebona was built during the reign of King Rajendrarvarman II on an artificial island at the center of the now dry East Baray reservoir and lies on an east-west axis with the palace temple Phimeanakas, another creation of Rajendrarvarman's reign, located about 6,800 meters due west.

In 953, it was dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva and honors the parents of the king. It has two enclosing walls and three tiers. The materials used in the Khmer construction were sandstone, brick, laterite and stucco.



Banteay Srey

Picture: Ben Bao (2009)

Banteay Srey loosely translates to "citadel of women" but this is a modern appellation that probably refers to the delicate beauty of the carvings. Built at a time when the Khmer Empire was gaining significant power and territory. It is renowned for its intricate decoration carved in pinkish sandstone that covers the walls like tapestry. It is an exquisite miniature, a fairy palace in the heart of an immense and mysterious forest.

Jayavarman V

Jayavarman V was a reverent Mahayana Buddhist, just like his father, king Rajendrarvarman II, but he still paid homage to god shiva and Vishnu for Mahayanist Buddhism is quite tolerance. He succeeded his father when he was only ten years old. During his early years, the court officials dominated the royal politics. He studied under a very knowledgeable teacher Yajnavaraha, a grandson of King Harshavarman I. Yajnavaraha was a distinguished scholar as he was first in the knowledge of the doctrines of the Buddha, medicine and astronomy. In 967 he finished constructing Banteay Srei, started by his father. Banteay Srey is considered to be the jewel of Khmer art for its very beautiful display of bas-reliefs. When Jayavarman turned seventeen years old, he began the construction of his own state shrine, Ta Keo near the west bank of East baray (now dried). Ta Keo is a massive sandstone temple pyramid style, 22m high with a summit shrines



Ta Keo was the first temple built entirely of sandstone. It never completed. A lightning strike hit the unfinished building, an evil omen, so the works stopped.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ta_Keo

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of quincunx pattern. According inscriptions, it was never completed as King Jayavarman V abandoned its construction after an inauspicious lightning strike during its construction, a mythical belief of a bad luck. Jayavarman V dies in 1000, ended a long remarkable peaceful epoch of Angkorian history. In 1001, a transition ruler Udayadityavarman I took power, but his reign lasted only one year, 1001-1002. The Angkorian had one more turbulence and violence era as rival kings fought for supreme throne.

Jayaviravarman (1002-1006) Suryavarman I (1002-1049)

Following Udayadityavarman I's death, there were two rulers competing for supreme throne, The legitimacy of Jayaviravarman to the throne is unknown. In one inscription, he assumed the administrative continuity from the previous regime in the area he controlled. A series of other inscriptions from the east—northeast of the capital mention Suryavarman I as a ruler who exercised a prerogative of kingship. By 1006, he appeared to have been in full control of the city through strategic alliances and military conquests. Inscriptions never mention about of Jayaviravarman since then. Suryavarman I was a Mahayana Buddhist even though he adopted Hindu cult of the god-king. Buddhism flourished during his reign, manifested by a number of Buddhist sculptures in common places around Angkor region. There were great devastation during the civil war. Suryavarman I position himself as the builder and the restorer. The construction of temples, palaces of unprecedented splendor was a way to display his royal status and grandeur. He was using them to consolidate his power. He expanded the empire territory into of much of Laos and Thailand. He initiated a massive project at Preah Khan, 75km to the east . Peace brought renewed constructions at Yashodharapura. The focal point of his capital was Prasat Phimeanikas, a single shrine surrounded by narrow roofed galleries on top of three tiers laterites.

Suryavarman I underlined his authority by beginning a construction of West Baray, the largest reservoir at Angkor and the one that presently still retains considerable amount of water. The southern dyke partly covers temple of Ak Yum, The energy required in its construction of a massive earthen dykes enclosing 17.6 square kilometers entailed a well-managed organization of labor, a testament of Suryavarman 's leadership. A temple of West Mebon was also built during his immediate successor, but believe started by him. Construction activities were not confined to the capital. In the provinces, several temple were built, including Vat Ek and Phnom Chiso. But no temples of any period match the magnificent of temple of Preah Vihear, built on top of Danrek mountain range giving



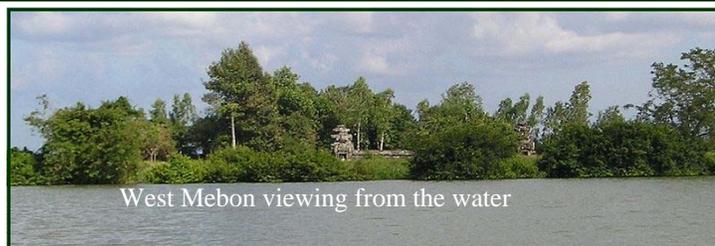
Phimeanakas, the State Temple of Suryavarman I (1002-1049), is located in the middle of the old Royal Palace area. The temple is small (35m x 28m, or 115' x 92'), but impressively rises to a height of about 40m (130').
Source: <http://www.art-and-archaeology.com/seasia/angkorthom/palace/pn01.html>



West Baray

West Mebon

Photo by Ben Bao



West Mebon viewing from the water

an unbroken view to the northern plain of Cambodia 550m below. Viewed from below the mountain, Preah Vihear appears as a veritable mountain home of gods.

The temple's date of construction is not known, but evidence suggests the 11th Century during the reign of King Suryavarman I or Udayadityavarman II. Khmer architects typically surrounded temples with moats that represent the Hindu sea of creation. The West Mebon, located amid waters so vast that they can seem like a real sea, takes this religious symbolism to the ultimate level.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Mebon



West Mebon

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Udayadityavarman II (1050-1066)

Udayadityavarman II was a successor of Suryavarman I. He was not his son, but a descendant from a different lineage of Yosarvarman I's spouse. rather . He ruled Angkor Kingdom in period of turbulence. Stone inscription reveals he praised one his faithful generals, Sangrama, who crushed several rebellions for the king. Udayadityavarman II built Baphuon, a temple dedicated to god Shiva. However, some sculptures appeared to be dedicated to Buddha. He completed west baray that was started by his predecessor and built West Mebon on its island.

Harshavarman III (1066-1080)

Harshavarman III succeeded his elder brother Udayadityavarman. His capital was the so called Second Yasodharapura, which had its center in Baphuon, built by his brother. West Baray was its principal baray. His reign was upset by internal rebellions he was not able to battle. He abandoned Angkor and took refuge in the south, where his followers kept fighting against Jayavarman VI, a usurper from Phimai area (presently Thailand). He was named in stele at Preah Khan as a maternal ancestor of Jayavarman VII.

Jayavarman VI (1080-1107)

Internal rebellions and war against Champa during the reigns of Udayadityavarman II and Harshavarman III brought Jayavarman VI, believed to be an usurper from Phimai and known as a vessel prince, to power. He found a new dynasty Mahidharapura. He did have a real ancestors of royal lineage. In inscriptions, he claimed to be a descendant of the mythical couple of princess Sage Kambu Swayambhuva and his sister (and wife) Mera. During his reign, he constantly fought against those who were loyal to legitimate line of Harshavarman III and his heirs. He is credited with construction of Phimai, a temple similar but smaller than Angkor wat and is presently in Thailand. Phimai marked one end of ancient Khmer highway from Angkor.

Dharanindravarman I (1107-1113)

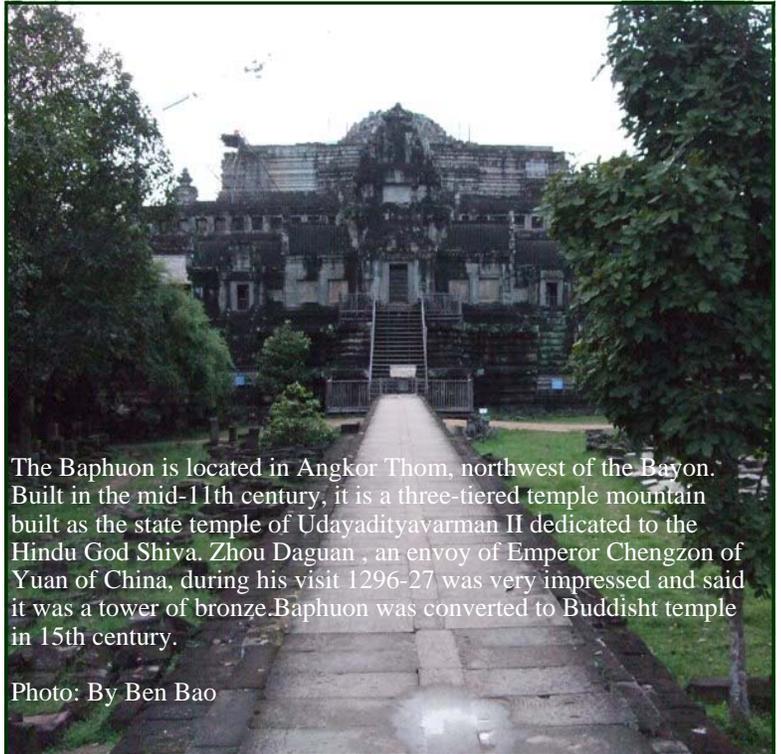
Dharanindravarman I was Jayavarman VI's older brother and he was overthrown and killed in a civil war by his nephew, Suryavarman II, who became the most powerful and greatest kings of the Khmer Empire.

Suryavarman II (1113-1150)

After a long fifty years of unrest, internal feuding and chaos, Suryavarman II defeated rival claimants to the throne and established sole rule over Cambodia. He was formally crowned in 1113, presiding by his guru, the powerful priest Divakarapandita. This was the third time the priest had officiated coronation in Khmer history. The king was a religious reformer who blended the mystical cults of Vishnu and Shiva, supreme Hindu deities, and promulgated Vaishnavism as the official religion, rather than Buddhism, which had briefly flourished under his predecessors.

After overcoming his rivals for the throne, Suryavarman began a series of successful invasions into neighboring states and occupied what is now Thailand and Myanmar. Through his efforts, the empire re-established contact with China to the north and formed a powerful alliance with Champa to the east. In 1116 Suryavarman resumed diplomatic relations with the Chinese, the first since 9th century, according to Chinese historian Ma Duan-Lin. The Chinese officially recognized his kingdom as their vassal in 1128. By sending tribute to China, he acquired a powerful ally to discourage attacks from neighbouring Southeast Asian kingdoms and ensured that China would not interfere in Khmer domestic affairs. Historians believe during his decades in power, the king reunited the empire, reversing many of the benign policies of his predecessor.

Together with his Champa allies, Suryavarman launched an attack against the neighboring state of Dai Viet (Viet Nam) which ended in loss. The Champa King broke alliance with the Khmer empire. Upset with treachery, Suryavarman invaded neighboring Champa, deposed the Cham king in 1144 and annexed Champa in the following year. The Chams fought back and defeated Khmer troops in a decisive battle at Chakling, near Phan Rang, in southern Vietnam. Suryavarman put his brother-in-law, Harideva, on the Cham



The Baphuon is located in Angkor Thom, northwest of the Bayon. Built in the mid-11th century, it is a three-tiered temple mountain built as the state temple of Udayadityavarman II dedicated to the Hindu God Shiva. Zhou Daguan, an envoy of Emperor Chengzong of Yuan of China, during his visit 1296-27 was very impressed and said it was a tower of bronze. Baphuon was converted to Buddhist temple in 15th century.

Photo: By Ben Bao

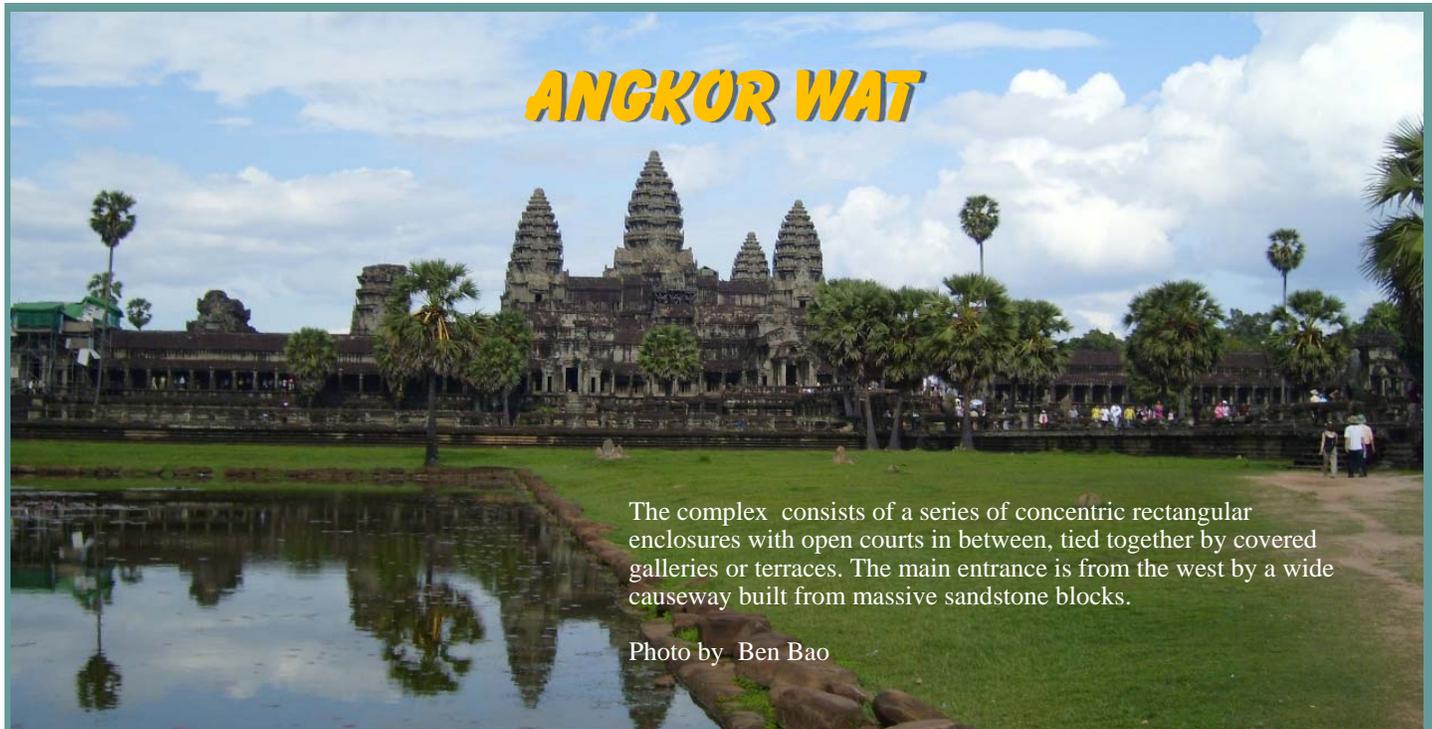
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throne, but Chams' king Jaya Harivarman I deposed him and reclaimed the throne. In 1150 Suryavarman died in the midst of a new campaign against Champa, leaving his people exhausted by war and victimized by the once-subservient Chams, who eventually ravaged Angkor.

Suryavarman 's legacy was far beyond the territorial gains. He constructed a massive temple of Angkor Wat, the largest religious structure in the world. Angkor Wat is considered the epitome of Khmer architecture. To Suryavarman, it was an art work symbolizing the Khmer expansion. It also served as a masterful propaganda piece for the lord of the Khmer. Numerous bas-reliefs of the ruler cover the temple. Many of the sculptures depict Suryavarman among his court or in combat, but above all, they portray him as a calm and talented ruler. He was the first Khmer king depicted in art. Suryavarman's wondrous temple complex remains one of the a central symbols of Khmer heritage and today appears on the modern Cambodian flag.



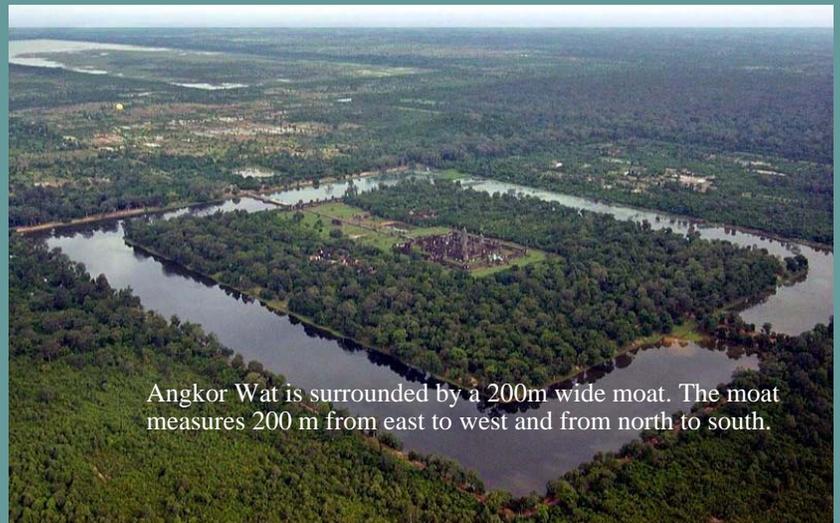
The complex consists of a series of concentric rectangular enclosures with open courts in between, tied together by covered galleries or terraces. The main entrance is from the west by a wide causeway built from massive sandstone blocks.

Photo by Ben Bao

Angkor Wat is the largest Hindu temple complex in the world. The temple was built by King Suryavarman II in the early 12th century in Yasodharapura, the capital of the Khmer Empire. Khmer temples was usually dedicated to Shiva, but Angkor Wat was instead dedicated to Vishnu Vishnu, then Buddhist in 16th century. The temple is at the top of the high classical style of Khmer architecture. It has become a symbol of Cambodia. It is the country's prime attraction for visitors.

Architectural Styles

From the earliest time of the Angkorian monuments, Khmer architecture was continuously evolving, often from the rule one king to next. It was based on a central theme of temple-mountain. In addition to its religious and political influence, Hindu mythology also dictated the architectural layout and artistic content of most pre-Bayon (i.e. pre-Buddhist) monuments. Temple-mountains' such as Bakong, Ta Keo, East Mebon, Pre Rup, Baphuon and Angkor Wat were based on the layout of mythological Mt. Meru, which sits at the center of the universe, and is the home of the gods of Hindu mythology. Mt. Meru is a five peaked mountain surrounded by six other mountain chains and oceans.



Angkor Wat is surrounded by a 200m wide moat. The moat measures 200 m from east to west and from north to south.

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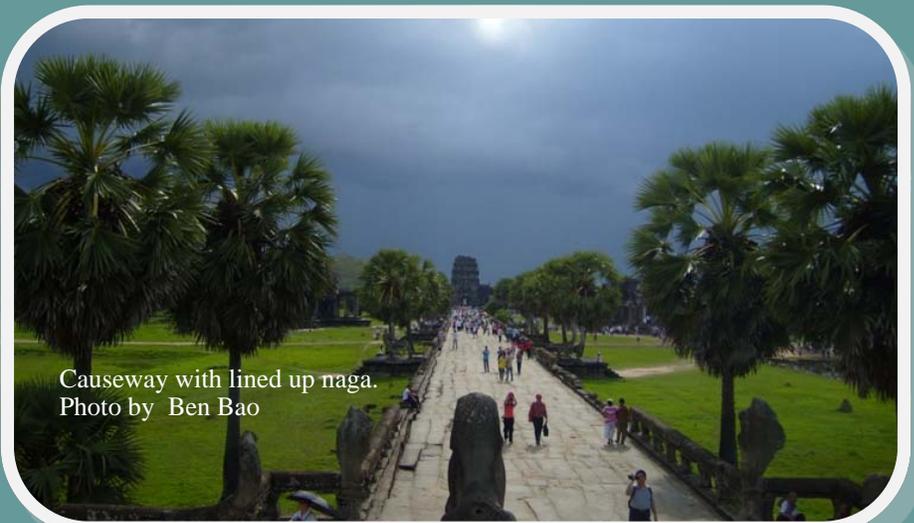
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This plan is reflected in the architectural layout of temple-mountains in which moats surround a multi-tiered temple pyramid, peaked by towers representing the peaks of Mt. Meru. Hindu mythology finds a more literal expression in the temple carvings. A variety of scenes from Hindu mythology can be found although the most commonly carved mythological characters are apsaras - celestial dancers generated in the froth as the gods churned the oceans to create the elixir of life. There are nearly 2000 apsara images carved in Angkor Wat alone.

To adhere to this fundamental idea, many earliest temples were usually constructed on real hill or in a representation of a hill. Peah Vihear is one of them. The tower of the temple represents a mountain on a tiered base. The summit was usually a sanctuary with one door facing east and three false doors at the remaining of the cardinal points of the compass. By the time of Bakheng period, the layout was being evolved. The summit was crowned with five peaks, four at the point of compass and one in the center. The architecture of Angkor Wat features this layout on a grandiose scale and came with entry tower and causeway lined up with nagas(mythical serpent) leading up to the temple.

Its architecture is a combination of temple mountain and galleried temple. It was designed to represent Mount Meru, home of the devas in Hindu mythology, within a moat and an outer wall 3.6 kilometers long. At the center of the temple stands a quincunx of towers. Unlike most Angkorian temples, Angkor Wat is oriented to the west. The reason is unknown. Scholars are divided as to the significance of this. Some believe it was constructed as a royal tomb. Nevertheless, the temple is admired for the grandeur and harmony of the architecture, its extensive bas-reliefs, and for the numerous devatas adorning its walls.

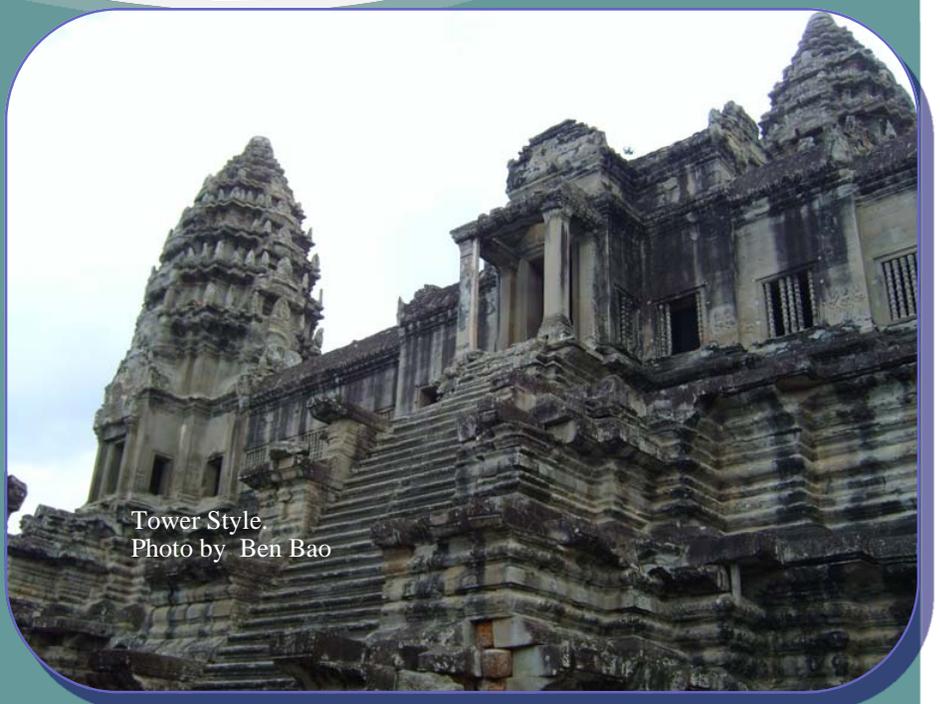
The central tower in Khmer architecture later became less prominent, although it remained a focus point. The central tower later was flanked by courtyard and richly decorated galleries. Smaller towers were placed on gates and on the corner of the walls. They represent a religious and astrological significance. The architecture refinement culminated in Angkor Wat period which showcases the evolution of Angkorian style.



Causeway with lined up naga.
Photo by Ben Bao



Gallery style.
Photo by Ben Bao



Tower Style.
Photo by Ben Bao

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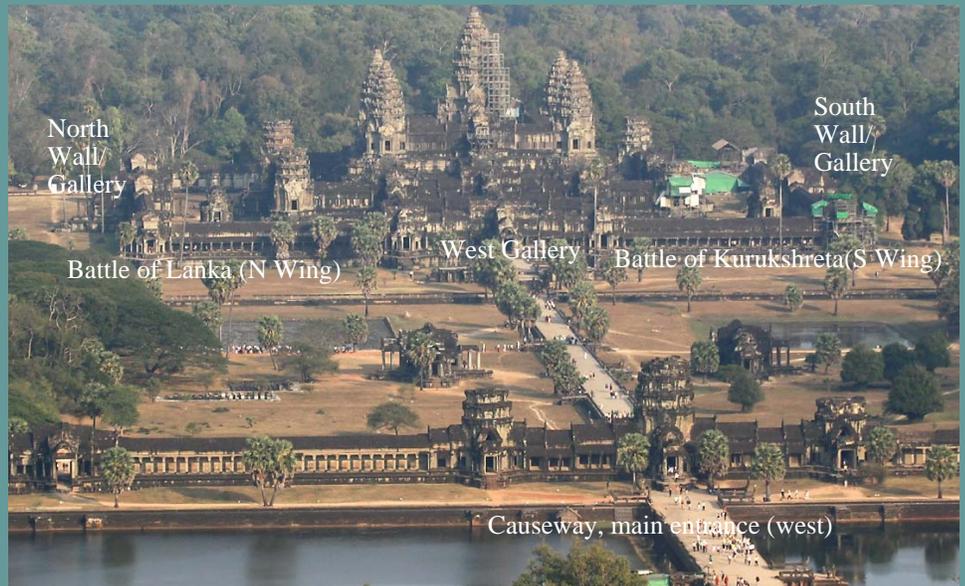
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Bas-relief

Angkor Wat's complex consists of rectangular enclosures or galleries. The walls of enclosure features the longest continuous bas-relief in the world, which runs along the outer gallery walls, narrating stories from Hindu Mythology. The mass of bas-relief carving is of the highest quality and are the most brilliant Khmer arts. The carving always tells a story of some sorts.

On north wing of the west second-tier enclosure or walls from the west main entrance, the bas-relief depicts the battle of Lanka and the south wing, the battle of Kurukshetra. The south enclosure, the bas-relief of the west wing depict the historic procession and the south wing, the heaven and hell,. The corner where the south and east enclosures meet depict the churning of the sea of milk. The corner where the north and east enclosures meet and along the east wing of the north enclosure depict the victory of Vishnu over Asuras. The west wing of the north enclosure depicts the battle of Devas and Asuras.

Crossing the cruciform terrace and ascending staircases passing through three successive galleries lead to the Third Gallery renowned for its exceptional and bas-reliefs, beautifully carved to the walls continuously, 700m long, 2 meter high, the longest reliefs in the world. There literally thousands of figures drawn from the Hindu epics and the courts of Suryavarman II.



Suryavarman II is depicted at the west wing of south gallery of bas-relief in Angkor Wat. He is shown enthroned in majesty talking with Brahmins of the courts, one of whom holds a manuscript in his hands, perhaps a list of army dignitaries marching past the king. The king seated on throne covered with rugs, surrounded by courtiers carrying umbrellas, fans and fly whisks.

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Foot soldiers marching and perhaps the scene of battlefield with Chams.

Right: this bas-relief depicts a procession of the King and Queen, in palanquins and chariots, and the concubines to the Royal Court. Zhou Dagan wrote that palanquins are made from one piece of wood, curved in the middle, with two ends rise vertically and carved with flowery motifs plated with gold or silver.



A section of "Heaven and Hell" from the east side of the south wall.
 Right: this is a "Heaven" scene, a princess parts with the queen, Royal processions are also visible.
 Below: this is a "Hell" scene, and unpleasant, harsh punishment.



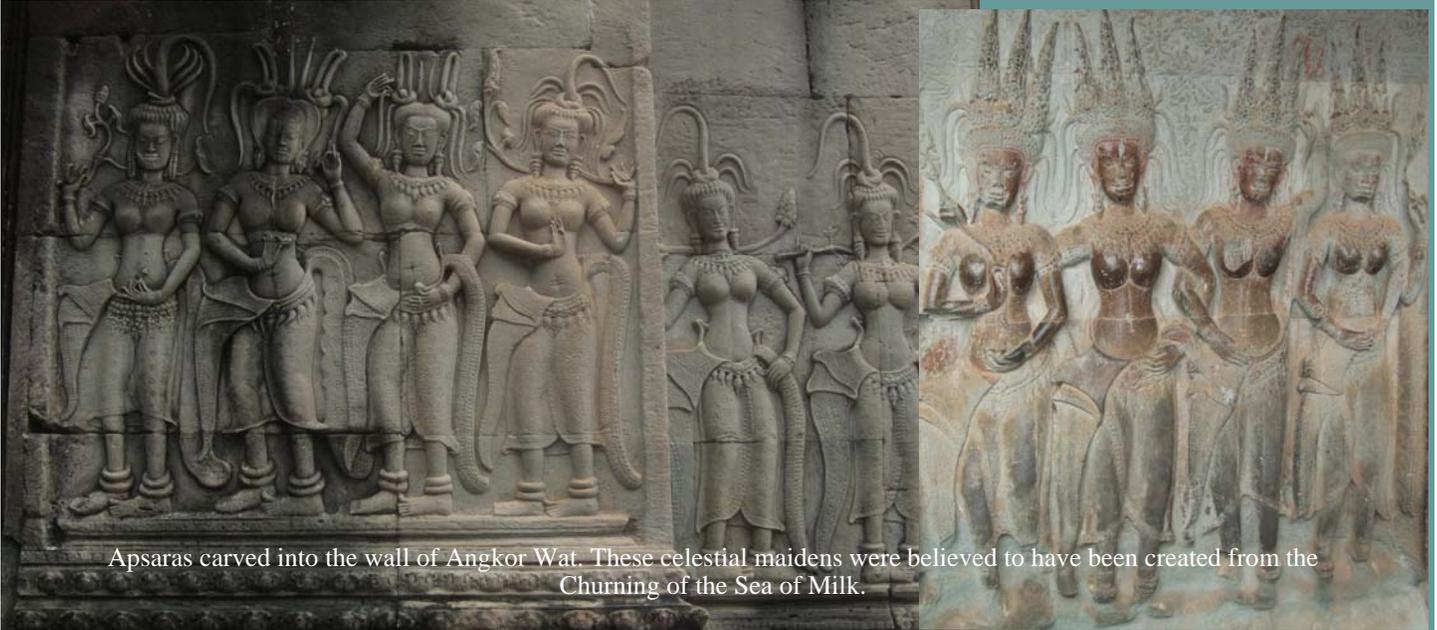
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Apsara

Apsaras are supernatural beings in Hindu and Buddhist mythology, appearing as young women of great beauty and elegance. They are proficient in the art of dancing. They are the wives of the Gandharvas, court servants of Indra. They dance to the music made by their husbands, usually in the palaces of the gods, and entertain gods and fallen heroes. As Hinduism and Buddhism made ways into Cambodia, Apsara became a symbol of dancing art. The walls of many Angkorian temples are covered inside and out with bas-reliefs and carvings including Apsara. Nearly 2,000 distinctively rendered apsara carvings adorn the walls of Angkor Wat. Other fine apsara carving arts are also found at the walls and pillars of Bayon temple.

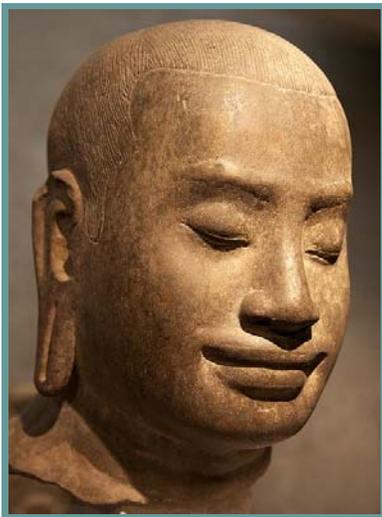


Apsaras carved into the wall of Angkor Wat. These celestial maidens were believed to have been created from the Churning of the Sea of Milk.

Dharanindravarman II (1150-1160)

Inscriptional evidence suggests that Suryavarman II died at some point between 1145 AD and 1150 AD, possibly during a military campaign against Champa. He was succeeded by Dharanindravarman II, a cousin, son of the brother of the king's mother. A period of weak rule and feuding began. The sack of Angkor by the Cham may happen during his reign. His son Jayavarman VII would become known as one of the most ambitious builders of Angkor, the empire's capital.

Jayavarman VII (1181-1200)



Jayavarman VII was the son of King Dharanindravarman II (1150-1160) and Queen Sri Jayarajacudamani. He married Jayarajadevi and then, after her death, married her sister Indradevi. The two women are commonly thought to have been a great inspiration to him, particularly in his unusual devotion to Buddhism. There was only one Buddhist king before him in a predominantly Hindu society. He was one of the most forceful and productive kings of Khmer Empire. He expanded the empire to its greatest territorial extent and engaged in a building program that yielded numerous temples, the major one was Angkor Thom, highways, rest houses, and hospitals.

Not much known about his childhood. Historians suggest Jayavarman probably spent his early years away from the Khmer capital. Kingship and succession in Cambodia at the time was not clearly defined. When his father died, his brother or cousin, Yasovarman, had claimed the throne. Prince Jayavarman renounced it and voluntarily exiled to Champa, alone without his wife.

In 1166 Tribhuvanadityavarman, a court official, usurped the throne of King Yasovarman. When Prince Jayavarman learned about a palace rebellion, he quickly returned to Cambodia, perhaps to prevent rebellion or to assert his own rights to the throne. But he arrived too late. Yasovarman was already dead and the usurper was firmly in control. Jayavarman seemed unwilling to overthrow

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Tribhuvanadityavarman by force. Instead he decided to wait for a right moment.

Great Battle of Tonle Sap

In 1177, some 12 years later, The Cham king Jaya Indravarman, taking advantage of confused situation, decide to invade Cambodia. They launched a surprise attack on the Khmer capital by guiding along Vietnam coast by a Chinese shipwrecked sailor, navigated through difficult delta waterways, sailing a fleet up the Mekong River, across Lake Tonlé Sap, and then up the Siem Reap River, a tributary of the Tonle Sap. The invaders sacked the Khmer capital of Yasodharapura and made her subjected to foreign rule, brought about a demise of Tribhuvanadityavarman and put the king to death, as well as taking the Apsara dancers.

In 1178, Jayavarman believed it was a good opportunity for him to organize a movement to fight for independence. He came to historical prominence by leading a Khmer army to oust the invaders. In less than five years, he succeeded. He drove out the invaders and began establishing his hegemony over all his Cambodian rivals. At the time, he may already have been in his 60s. Upon returning to the capital, he found it in disorder. He immediately began his reconstruction programs as well as putting to an end to all disputes between warring factions.

At one point in his life, Jayavarman VII reached a decision to end the period of anarchy that had prevailed since Cham defeated Khmer Empire. He turned the table around. In 1181, at the age of 61, he was crowned a sole king of Khmer Empire and began a brilliant reign of more than 30 years, during which he brought the empire to its zenith, both in terms of territorial expansion and of royal architecture and construction. He is considered by many Cambodians and world scholars as the greatest of all Khmer kings.

Early in his reign, he probably repelled another Cham attack and quelled a rebellion of the vassal Kingdom of Malyang (Battambang). He was greatly helped by the military skill of refugee Prince Sri Vidyananda, who also played a part in the subsequent sacking and conquest of Champa (1190–1191). Jayavarman expanded Khmer control of the Mekong Valley northward to Vientiane and to the south, down the Kra Isthmus.

Jayavarman VII's Achievements

His outstanding monarch not only reestablished and even extended the empire, but also he entered on a massive building program in his capital city of Angkor Thom, a city within the city, and throughout the realm. It was truly unprecedented. Over the 30 some years of his reign, Jayavarman embarked on a grand program of construction that included both public works and monuments. As a Mahayana Buddhist, his declared aim was to alleviate the suffering of his people. One inscription tells us, "He suffered from the illnesses of his subjects more than from his own; the pain that affected men's bodies was for him a spiritual pain, and thus more piercing." This declaration must be read in light of the undeniable fact that the numerous monuments erected by must have required the labor of thousands of workers, and that Jayavarman's reign was marked by the centralization of the state and the herding of people into ever greater population centers.

Historians have identified three stages in Jayavarman's building program. In the first stage, he focussed on useful constructions, such as hospitals, rest houses along the roads, and reservoirs. Thereafter, he built a pair of temples in honor of his parents: Ta Prohm in honor of his mother and Preah Khan in honor of his father. Finally, he constructed his own "temple-mountain" at Bayon and developed the city of Angkor Thom around it. He also built Neak Pean ("Coiled Serpent"), one of the smallest but most beautiful temples in the Angkor complex, a fountain with four surrounding ponds set on an island in that artificial lake. Jayavarman VII was a great and generous king of Cambodia. He built 102 hospitals to treat all of his citizens. According to the Preah Khan inscription, he had two wives and four sons, as also noted on the inscription in Ta Prom's temple.

TA PROM

This temple was a monastery built by Jayavarman VII as a residence for his mother. In 1186, Jayavarman dedicated Ta Prom to his mother. An inscription indicates that this massive temple at one time had 80,000 people assigned to its upkeep, including 18 high priests and 615 female dancers. The first Lara Croft film was shot in Ta Prom as well as a few scenes from the movie Troy.

Located east of Angkor Thom, the temple is one of the largest, with an outer wall measuring 600 by 1000 meters, largely collapsed. The sanctuary is a square with sides of 120m. Some parts are inaccessible because the roofs caved in.



ANGKOR THOM AND BAYON

The south gate of Angkor Thom.

Angkor Thom is quadrangle of defensive walls once protected the Khmer capital of the same name (Angkor Thom means "Great City"). Built in the late 12th and early 13th centuries by King Jayavarman VII, the walls are divided by two axes running north-south and east-west. The walls are 8 meters high and 3 kilometers long each side, covering an area of 9 square kilometers. Angkor Thom is located in present Cambodia about 7 Km north of Siem Reap and about 1.7 km north of entrance to the famous Angkor Wat.



Bayon Temple, viewed from the south, situated at the heart of Javarman VII's capital city of Angkor.

Angkor Thom, bounded as usual with moat and laterite walls, was Jayavarman new city center, called in its day Indrapattha. At the center of the new city stands one of his most massive achievements—the temple now called the Bayon, a multi-faceted,

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multi-towered temple that mixes Buddhist and Hindu iconography. Its outer walls have startling bas reliefs not only of warfare but the everyday life of the Khmer army and its followers. These reliefs show camp followers on the move with animals and oxcarts, hunters, women cooking, female traders selling to Chinese merchants, and celebrations of common foot soldiers. The reliefs also depict a naval battle on the great lake, the Tonle Sap. Angkor Thom has five gates, each with double portals. The east has two gates. South, west, and north only have one gate. The outer wall of the outer gallery features a series of bas-reliefs depicting historical



events and scenes from the everyday life of the Angkorian Khmer. In the southern part of the eastern gallery a marching Khmer army with musicians, horsemen, and officers mounted on elephants, followed by wagons of provisions. Still in the eastern gallery, on the other side of the doorway leading into the courtyard, another procession followed by domestic scenes depicting Angkorian houses, some of the occupants of which appear to be Chinese merchants.



Left: a scene from the southern gallery depicts a naval battle; this section shows Cham warriors in a boat and dead Khmer fighters in the water.

Right: a market scene in the southern gallery shows the weighing of goods; the fish belong to a naval battle taking place above.



ANGKOR ERA EVOLUTION

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Within the vicinity of the Great City, several temples were built during King Jayavarman VII reign. At the very center of this urban compound is Bayon temple. It was dedicated as a state temple. The focus of the worship in this monumental complex was Mahayana Buddhist, although many Hindu deities presented in multiple galleries and shrines. The most striking feature of Bayon is the smiling faces of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha compassion and mercy that looks out all four directions. Fifty gigantic four-face statues were constructed at Bayon, and a few more at the south gate.

Jayavarman VII's reign represents a radical departure from the reigns of his predecessors. For centuries, the royal divinity was based on Hinduism, reposed mainly on deity Shiva and occasionally Vishnu. Jayavarman VII's adopted Mahayana Buddhism and looked to Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. By converting to a religion that already and widely practiced by many, he enjoyed support from people who may be tired of wars and destruction of Angkor.

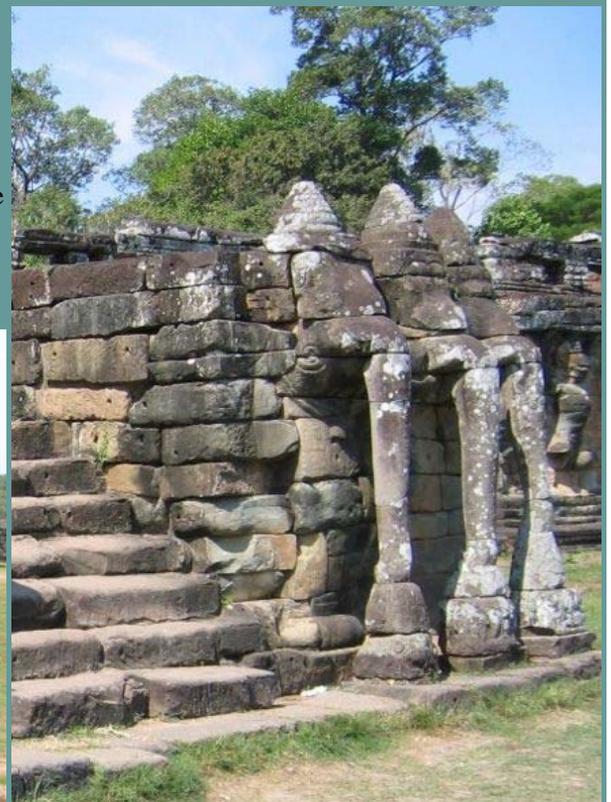


Photo by Ben Bao

Historians have identified three stages in Jayavarman's building program. In the first stage, he focussed on useful constructions, such as hospitals, rest houses along the roads, and reservoirs. Thereafter, he built a pair of temples in honor of his parents: Ta Prohm in honor of his mother and Preah Khan in honor of his father. Finally, he constructed his own "temple-mountain" at Bayon and developed the city of Angkor Thom around it. He also built Neak Pean ("Coiled Serpent"), one of the smallest but most beautiful temples in the Angkor complex, a fountain with four surrounding ponds set on an island in that artificial lake.

Elephants Terrace

Elephant Terrace is part of the walled city of Angkor Thom. The terrace was used by Angkor's king Jayavarman VII as a platform from which to view his victorious returning army. The 350m-long Terrace of Elephants was used as a giant reviewing stand for public ceremonies and served as a base for the king's grand audience hall. It is over 3m tall and is carved with a long line of elephants. There is a road from the terrace to the Victory Gate. Two rows of twelve tower structures call Khleang (storage place) stand on each side of the road. The king viewed his forces from here when setting out a royal procession or sending troop off to battle.



ANGKOR ERA EVOLUTION

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Angkor Era, the Archaeological Perspective

The first bronze age in Angkor Civilizations, Cambodia, is dating to 3,500 BC. Angkor City lays over 386 square miles. There are more than 1,000 temples in Angkor which have been reclaimed from the jungle. Recent Satellite photos have revealed that Angkor spread over 400 square miles and is the largest pre-industrial city in the world. What led the civilization to demise is subject to debate among historians. Some believe the internal conflicts that led neighboring state Siam to overpower the Khmers which led them to abandon Angkor area. Other think that the religious transformation from Hinduism to Buddhism that fundamentally based on compassionate life and not an aggressive warlike behaviors that gave the opportunities for the enemies to take advantage of.

For whatever reasons, the temples of the Angkor complex, were abandoned and left to decay for nearly 500 years after the fall of the Khmer empire in the 15th century. The indigenous jungle plants of Cambodia quickly began to invade and destroy the structures. The most recent Archaeological evidences suggest the fall was partly attributed to unfavorable climate changes. A long-held mystery may be explained by advanced research into the region's climatic conditions. Scientists have now found that long spells of droughts interspersed with intense monsoon have brought curtains over Cambodia's Khmer empire, which flourished from the ninth to the thirteenth Century. The drought in 1403 was reflective of moisture stress in the soil. Droughts of grand magnitude would have had deleterious effects on the Angkor citizenry.

The Khmer empire relied on a sprawling water supply system that covered an area of nearly 1000 sq km. The drought had caused a massive damage to the systems. While successive droughts weakened the water supply, the rain that fell heavily in the intervening years had only extended the damage. The collapsing infrastructure was hard to bear for an empire that struggled to withstand wars and other social factors.

Archaeological Works

Attempting to explain the rise and fall of Khmer Empire, many scholars have researched and studied the civilization from the ruin artifacts and archaeological excavations throughout Cambodia. Many publications have been circulated in many difference languages, and each of them may have their own interpretation. Non-Cambodian researchers lack of understanding local custom, tradition. They based their researches on ancient inscriptions or Chinese account of Zhou Dagan .

Prof. THUY Chanthourn, PhD is a young Cambodian Archaeologist, a Deputy Director of Institute of Culture and Fine Arts, Royal Academy of Cambodia. He spend his career researching Khmer Culture Archaeological Artifacts that are scattered around Cambodia. He believe that Cambodia is rich in cultural heritage, but the world know little about it. His belief is shared by all members of Cambodia community Day and many Cambodians living abroad. Many cultural artifacts have been buried deep under the surface. During his presentation in Annandale, VA, Dr Chanthourn Thuy told the audiences he found archaeological evidences of iron slakes that Khmer used to make tools for temple building. His areas of work include, but not limited to:

- Collect relevant literature, published and unpublished, and is related to history of the Angkor empire, to refine Zhou Dagan, a Chinese diplomat who came to Angkor from 1296 to 1297 AD and wrote eye-witnesses accounts.
- Conduct fieldwork in a wide geographic area that includes all parts of the Northern provinces of Cambodia, and the Northeast parts of Thailand.
- Laboratory Analysis that will attempt to build up a chronological sequence of the site development in relation to periods of time.



The Angkor Era evolution is researched by Ben Bao.

Sources:

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Angkor Era Cultural show Rehearsal



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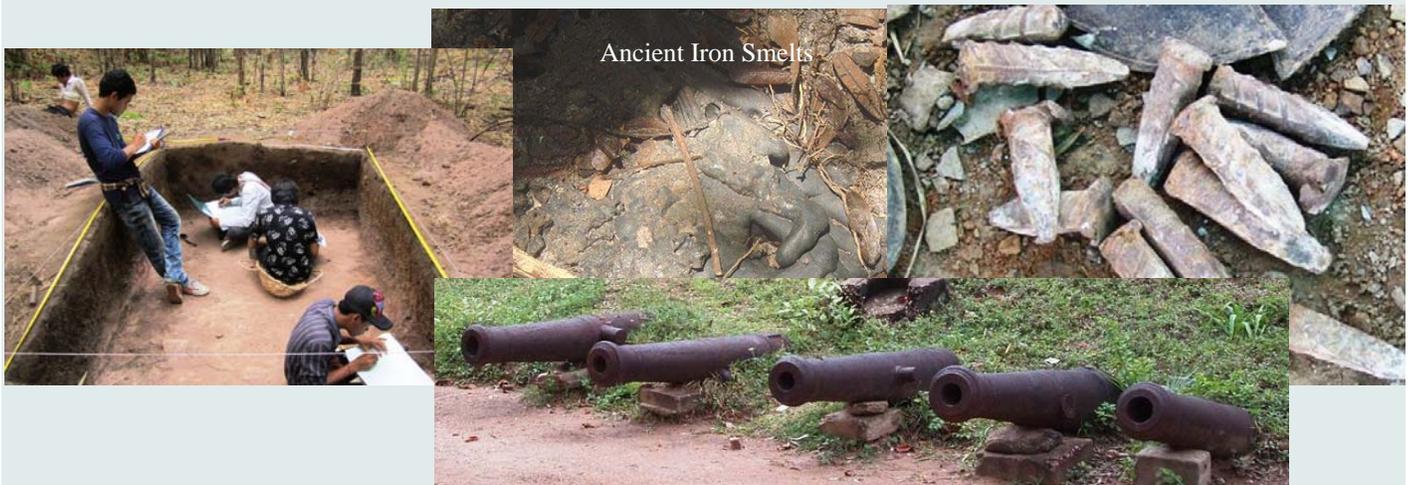
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