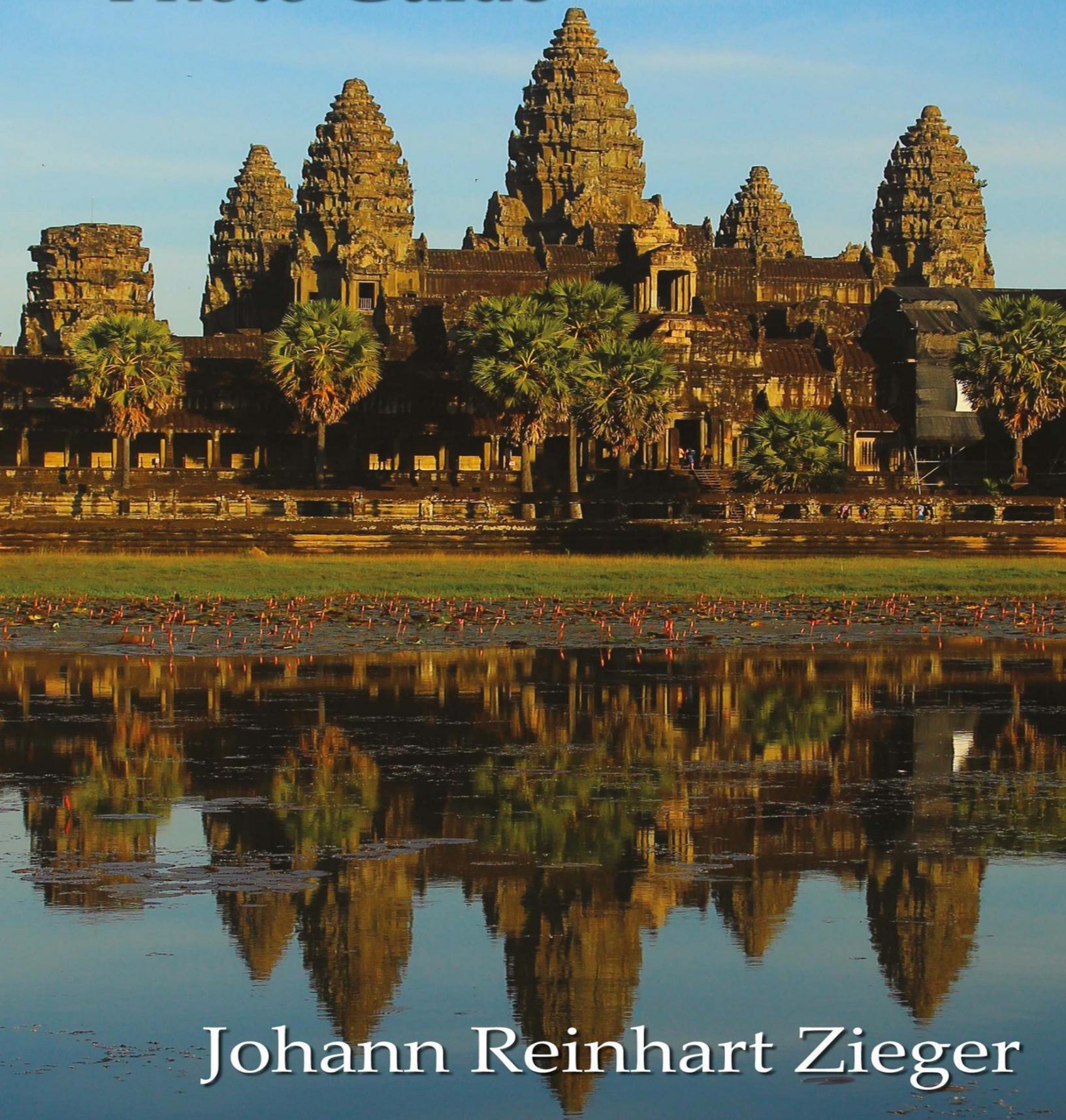


Angkor Wat

Photo Guide



Angkor Wat

A New Photo Guide to the Temples

Johann Reinhart Zieger



Terrace of the Leper King

Imprint

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More photos courtesy of Dave Tylor (DT) and Ota Veverka (OT).

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About this Book

I am Reinhart, from Germany. In the last decades of the last century, I used to teach German, Geography and History, was well read and travelled a lot, mainly in Asia. In 2000, I was retired and travelled to South- and Southeast Asia. I visited the temples of Angkor and eventually got stuck in Siem Reap, where I am living.

Like the ox in front of the new barn door

In 2001, I had to teach German speaking tour guides. But I could not explain the temples, even though I knew them (as I believed) and there were texts. Something was missing.

Inspiration by history

Real understanding started only when I viewed the temples in their historical context and their original function.

I have seen and been around a lot. Besides Angkor, I saw most of the essential temples abroad, from Banteay Chhmar in the west to Preah Ko (Prasat Boran) near Stoeng Treng on the Mekong, and from Preah Vihear in the north to Phnom Bayang in the south.

I have taken photographs, read books, and I have got the whole thing in a context.

I am not a tour guide but a searcher for traces of Ancient Angkor, and a story-teller.

Publications

- I am running the website *angkorguide.net* in English and German.
- *Angkor Map and Photos* is a map as well as a brief overview of the temples. There is an online version of the Map. See below.
- This E-Book is an attempt to give travellers a comprehensive, founded and updated guide on their Smartphones or Tablets.

Please give me feedback.

Introduction

Angkor is a gently inclined plain lowland between the Kulen Mountains and the Tonlé Sap Lake in northern Cambodia, the Land of the Khmers.

The locality is rich in temples and ruins, above all Angkor Wat.

From the 9th to the 15th century, Angkor was the heart of an empire and a unique civilisation.

"The ancient Khmer city of Angkor in Cambodia was the largest preindustrial metropolis in the world, with a population near 1 million and an urban sprawl that stretched over an area similar to modern-day Los Angeles, researchers reported Monday." (The Los Angeles Times, 15 August 2007.)

The kings built temples to venerate the Hindu god Shiva as supreme Lord of the World and rule their kingdom on behalf of Shiva. There were also Buddhist temples.

In the late 12th century, Buddhism got predominant. An excessive building program caused the final collapse of Angkor.

How Angkor was built

In the beginning, there was rice farming, but nothing besides the rice fields remained plain. Rice needs irrigation; there were canals and dykes.

Eventually, an irrigation system evolved. Besides, people dug water basins; their spoil helped to elevate the houses. Later on, there were big basins and barays, huge over-ground water reservoirs, as well as moats.

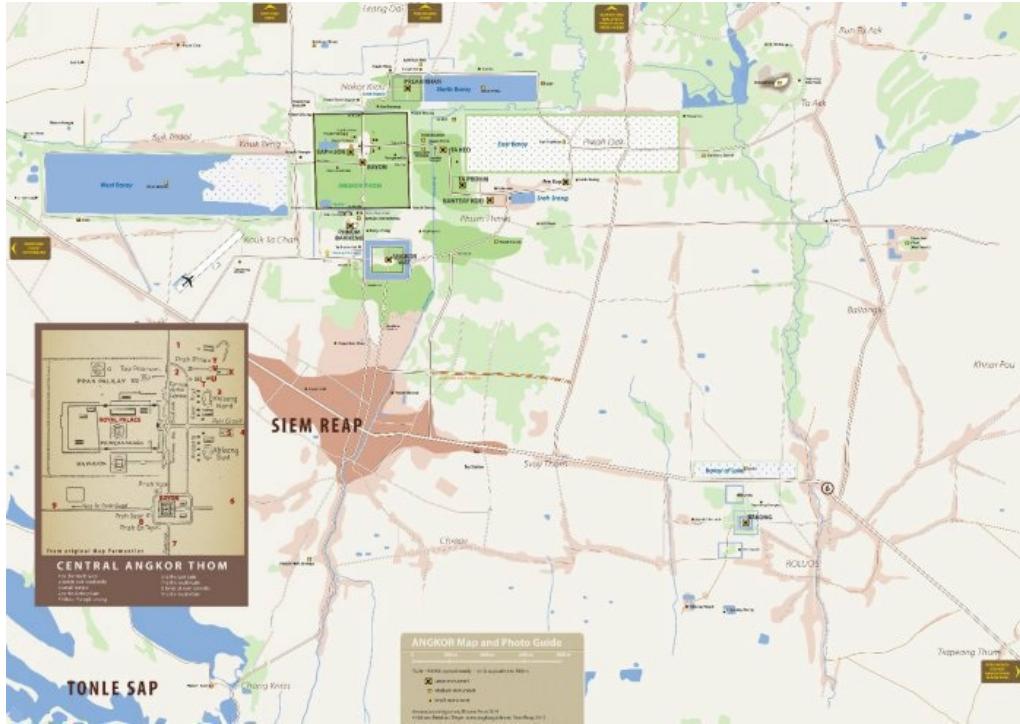
Houses were built of wood, bamboo and leafs, and generally on stilts. Palaces were of wood too.

When urban settlements developed under Indian influence, the kings built temples of brick, stone and laterite.

All earthworks and buildings are directed north-south or east-west.

Sandstone was mostly from the Kulen Mountains. Laterite, a kind of clay, it was cut into blocks and dried up. Brick was bonded with vegetal compound, sandstone and laterite were laid without mortar. There was no masonry bond; consequences are vertical cracks and broken corners. Vaulting was done by corbels.

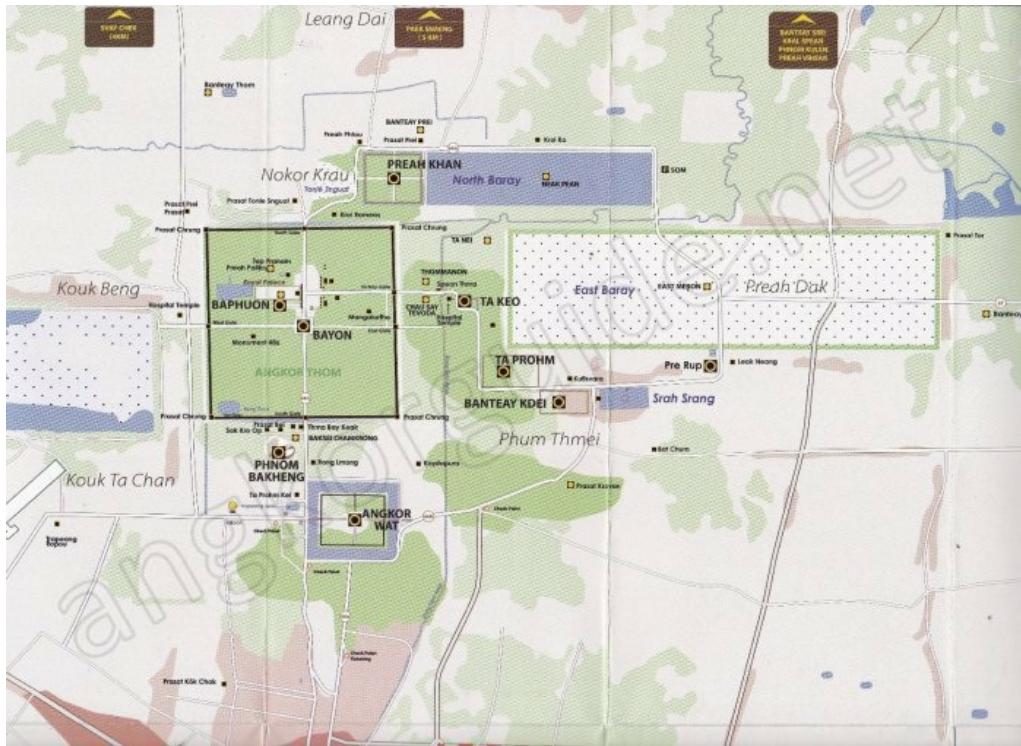
Angkor Map



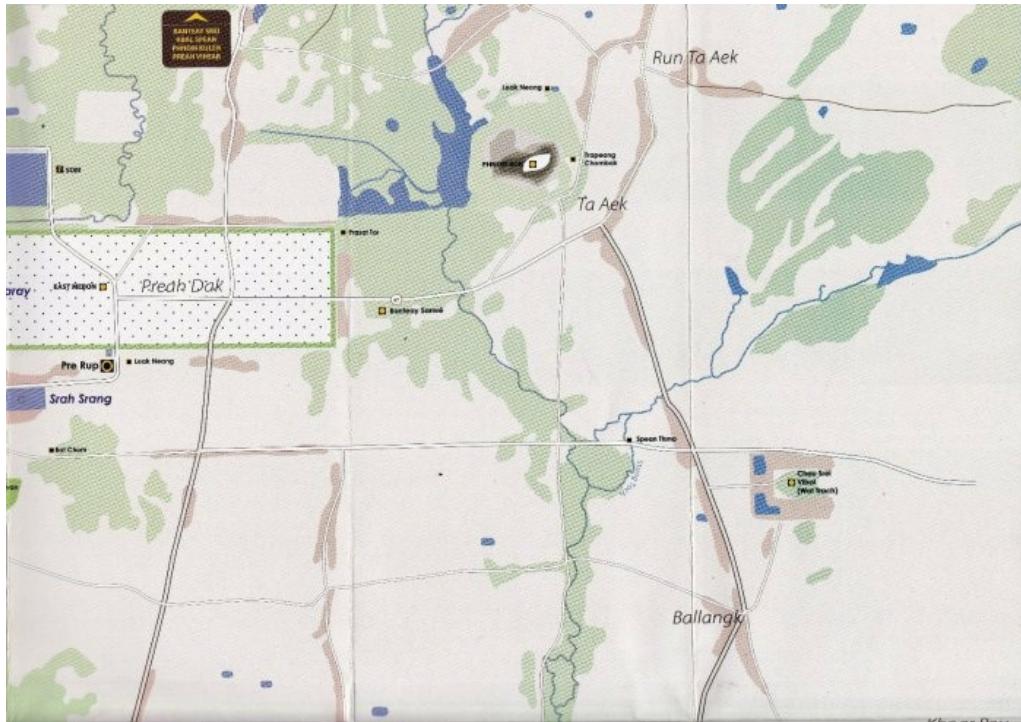
Angkor Total



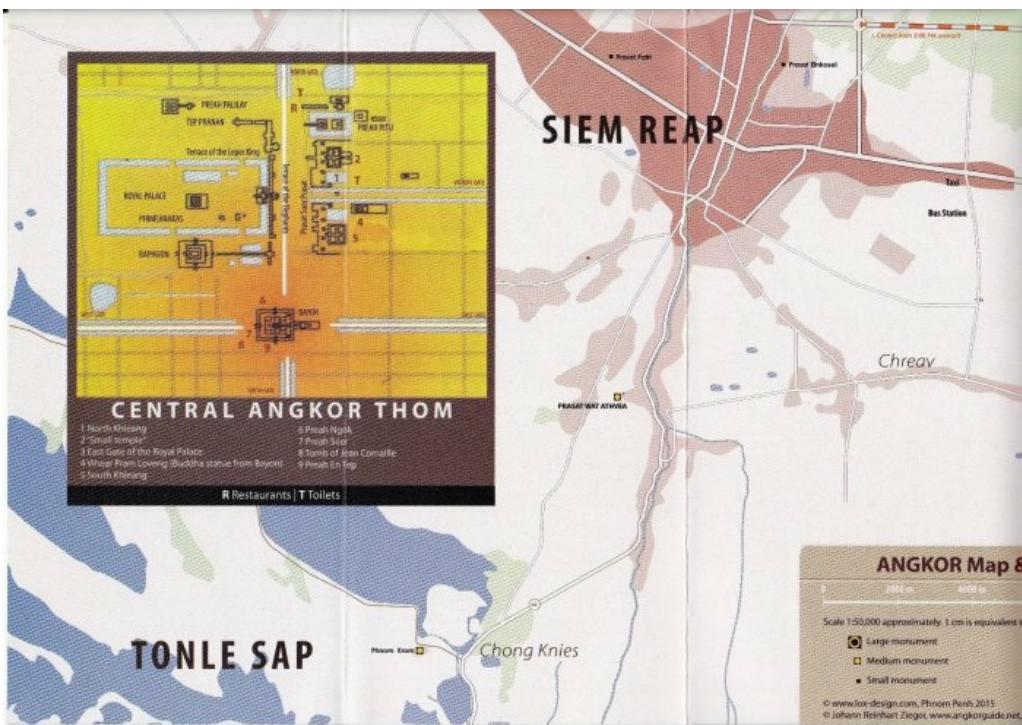
North-west Angkor



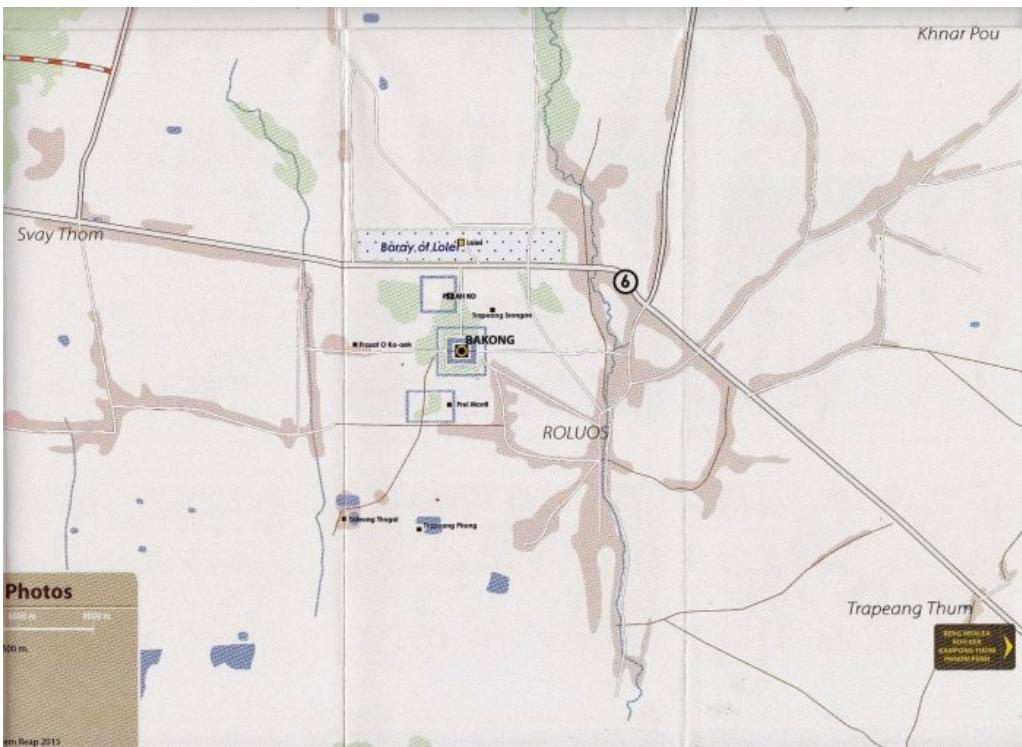
Central Angkor



North-east Angkor



South-west Angkor and central Angkor Thom



South-east Angkor (From Angkor Map and Photos)

Angkor Map PDF

Download the Angkor Map to your Smartphone or Tablet.

http://angkorguide.net/cms/upload/pdf/Angkor_Map.pdf

Angkor Map and Photos

Ancient Angkor at a glance with forty temple photos and profiles in context.

“The map is excellent and very different to the other Angkor maps.”

Don't settle for less, don't wander around like a lost soul.

Folded in a handy bag. Mit deutscher Übersetzung. Avec traduction francaise.

Available at Monument Books Siem Reap, between Old Market and Ta Prohm Hotel, at the River Side.

Angkor Wat

Ancient name: Bishnuloka, “Temple of Vishnu.”

D First half of 12th century

R Suryavarman II (1113–c. 1150), Jayavarman VII

O West

C Hindu, Vishnu

F State Temple

Angkor Wat is the biggest and most beautiful of all Khmer temples, perfect for its complex design, ingenious architecture, and the high quality of construction. It is adorned with a multitude of excellent reliefs.

Location and Layout

Angkor Wat covers an area of 195 hectares, nearly 2 square kilometres. It is marked off by a moat as well as by a laterite wall with gates at the cardinal points.

Causeways cross the moat at west and east.

In the centre of the temple is a three-step pyramid, with nine towers.

The first step of the pyramid shelters the Gallery of the Bas-Reliefs.

The western area was designed as the stage of the king's ritual visit to Vishnu. The route of the procession went from the west entrance (A), through the West Gate (B), along the Inner Avenue (C) and to the Lower Cruciform Gallery (D), from where the King proceeded to the Central Tower (E).

The area to the north, east, and south was inhabited by priests and their attendants, handicrafts, workshops, storerooms, security staff and so on.

Supplies were moved along the eastern causeway; for this, the enclosure wall was opened on both sides of the east gate.

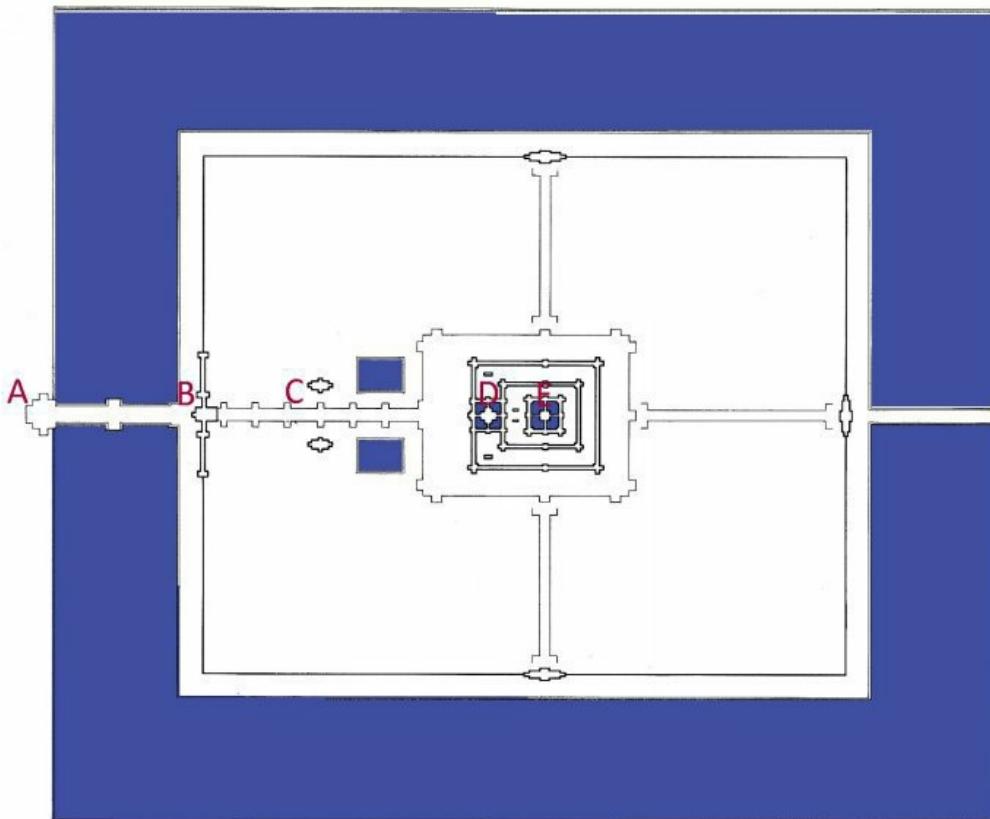
Though there lived thousands of people, Angkor Wat was a temple, and not designed as a city.



Angkor Wat. View from the balloon in the west.



Aerial view from the south-east (DT)



Angkor Wat total

A Vishnu temple to the higher glory of Shiva?

Angkor Wat is located, with less than 200 m distance, close to the Phnom Bakheng. It looks like the temple of Vishnu is facing und revering the temple

of Shiva.



The pyramid, seen from the Phnom Bakheng

Entering the Temple

The huge extension of Angkor Wat constitutes its grandeur and beauty. The Moat, the West Gate, and the Avenue are essential parts of the plant. The Moat is a beauty by itself. It is 190 m wide and c. 5 km long, covering nearly a square kilometre, the same space as the temple it includes. Sandstone steps frame it on both sides; their total length is more than 10 km.

Causeway and West Gate

A massive sandstone building crosses the Moat, 200 m long and 12 m wide. Restoration work is ongoing. A new floating bridge was recently installed. Across the Moat, we see a large symmetrical pavilion, 230 m wide. Towers top three entrances. Two more doors are at the ends.

The West Gate, 230 m wide, alludes to the horizontal structure of the west face of the Pyramid, with three towers, but reduced to one level.

The building blocks the view to the Pyramid like a curtain.

The north, east and south faces of the West Gate are adorned with Devata reliefs.

In the southern tower of the West Gate is a tall statue of Vishnu, now inhabited by **Lok Ta Reach**, a high-ranking ancestor spirit who is passionately adored by local people. He is, in fact, the Landlord of Angkor Wat.



Angkor Wat: Moat, West Gate and the floating bridge (June 2017)



Dancing Apsara at the West Gate

Apsaras are celestial nymphs, created for the amusement of the gods.



Ta Reach, residing in a statue of Vishnu in the West Gate



Devatas at the south face of the West Gate



The Grand Avenue from the west

The Grand Avenue

After passing the West Gate, the view of the Pyramid opens; the Grand Avenue, a 350 m causeway, begins. It is structured by six pairs of stairways and a pair of majestic pavilions.

The Grand Avenue made the stage for the royal procession when the king with his entourage processed from the West Gate to the Pyramid.

The Pyramid

The pyramid opens to the cardinal points by entrance pavilions and stairways. It stands on a vast terrace, 2 m high and surrounded by Naga balustrades. Galleries are surrounding each stage.

The three stages are each roughly half as broad and double as high as the stage under it.

The first stage, containing the Gallery of the Bas-Reliefs, is, north-south, 203 m wide and 3 m high.

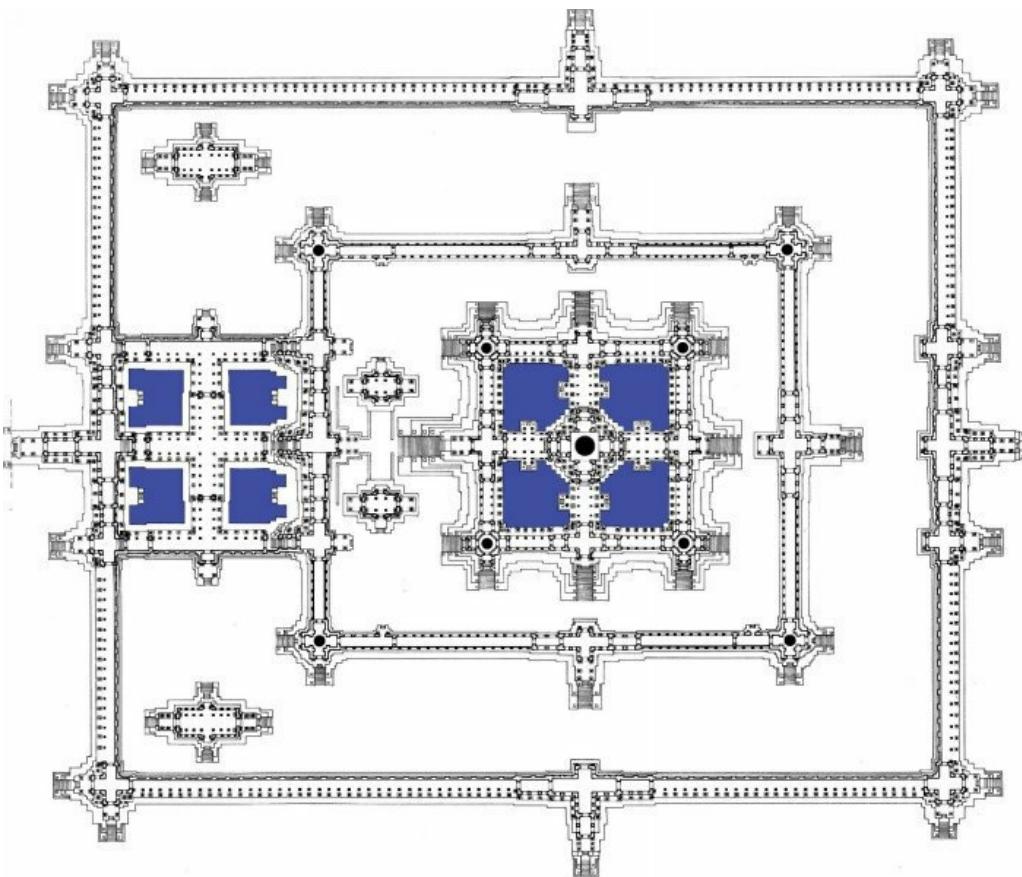
The second stage is 7 m high. At the four corners are towers, their superstructure is partly missing.

Steps three, four and five unite into the third stage, 13 m high, like a five-storey building. It is linked by twelve stairways and crowned by a quincunx of towers.

The spire of the central tower is 62 m above the ground.



The Pyramid from the east, displaying five towers side by side



Map of the Pyramid

The Lower Cruciform Gallery

After entering the pyramid you are in a spacious hall, covered by crossing galleries.

In the courtyards were water basins. Find the excellent Devata reliefs in the shadow of the framing galleries.

Here, the royal procession dissolved ceremonially and waited for the king's return from his visit to Vishnu.

Though there are three stairways, only the king, high priests and the porters of offerings went on the second stage, by the central stairway.

While the gallery gives an open view to the north and this pavilion, the view to the south is now obstructed by a huge statue of the standing Buddha.

Near this statue are the poor remains of what is, with unintentional irony, called "Thousand Buddhas".



The centre of the Lower Cruciform Gallery



Pavilion north of the Cruciform Gallery

Up the Pyramid

The third stage of the Pyramid is 13 m high, as high as a five-storey building. Twelve stairways link it; only the central western stairway was in use, all the others are only symbolical. (A wooden stairway was recently constructed at the northeast corner.)

Five towers crown the third stage, and galleries frame it, with gate pavilions at the cardinal points.

In the ground plan, the top is very similar to the Lower Cruciform Gallery: Galleries are linking the five towers; water basins cover the courtyards.

All five towers open to the cardinal directions, giving light and air, as well as open views to the cardinal points.

A statue of Vishnu was standing in the open central shrine.

This airy hall was the most enchanting and most focused work of Khmer architecture, but later, Buddhist monks walled up the openings of the central sanctuary. (See Buddhist Takeover)

The top level was exclusively the space of God Vishnu and the King. He went up by the central eastern stairway.



Third stage of the pyramid from the north-west (2007)

Angkor Wat Background Knowledge

Symbolism

Angkor Wat is a mandala, an image of the world in harmony.

The Moat symbolises the Cosmic Sea.

The Pyramid is an image of the mythological Mount Meru in the centre of the World, whose five peaks, the abode of the gods, loom into the Heaven. From the cardinal points, five (of nine) towers are to be seen.

The Grand Avenue in front of the pyramid symbolises the Sacred Path of Pilgrimage from Earth to Haven.

Reliefs help to make the manmade temple a sacred space; they revive the myths and the presence of the divine.



Reclining Vishnu, in the Lower Cruciform Gallery

Reclining Vishnu

Vishnu is a God in the Trimurti, the trinity of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma.

Between times, Vishnu is reclining on the Naga Ananta, an endless Naga, floating in the Cosmic Sea. The Naga's heads are protecting him.

Lakshmi, his consort, is holding his legs. A golden lotus is growing up; in its blossom appears God Brahma; he will create the world.

Krishna and Rama

Vishnu descends on Earth as Avatar, a manifestation of human shape. The most famous Avatars are **Krishna** and **Rama**.



Vishnu paying homage to Shiva

Shiva and Vishnu

Vishnu paying respect to Shiva

The east wing of the north face of the Gallery of Bas-Reliefs displays the Victory of Krishna over the Demon Bana. At the end of the long fighting, Krishna, in the shape of Vishnu, pays respect to Shiva, who orders him to save the life of the Demon.

With Shiva are his sons, the elephant-headed Ganesha and Skanda, the God of War. In the background is the four-faced Brahma, the God of Creation. Vishnu confirms the Supremacy of Shiva. (Reference: Roveda 2003, p. 60–66.)

Suryavarman on Mount Shivapada

Near the King is a small inscription: “Paramavishnuloka has his army descend Mount Shivapapada.”

The king is throning on Mount Shivapada, “Footprint of Shiva”. Shivapada is the manifestation of the supreme power of Shiva.

Paramavishnuloka, “He who rests in the paradise of Vishnu”, is the posthumous name of Suryavarman.” The inscription was made after the death of Suryavarman. The king is not regarded as a god; his status is somehow like that of a Christian saint. (References: Roveda 2003, p. 29, Sahai 2011, p. 14, 71-74.)



Devatas at the second stage of the pyramid

Devatas at Angkor Wat

1850 reliefs, depicting Devatas as beautiful girls and young women in a fabulous outfit, are manifestations of Vishnu's spouse Lakshmi, who is praised for her radiant beauty.

As the reliefs are shallow, the feet are turned to the side.

Their charm and sensuality are a distinct representation of the divine. They help to transform the man-made building into a sanctified area.

When you see them smiling, they give you their blessing.

The temple was dedicated to Vishnu. Later monks undertook the change to a Buddhist sanctuary. They expelled Vishnu and disfigured the centre of the sanctuary (Glaize, p. 65.), without an impressive result: The interior of Angkor Wat looks somehow "godforsaken".

The Devatas were initially thought to play small roles. But if you open your eyes you see how they are dominating the temple. In Angkor Wat, the Devatas have taken centre stage.



A crudely walled up opening at the Central Tower

Buddhist Takeover

"The sanctuary [in the central tower] was open originally to the 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. ... It can be seen ... that the monks have in places undertaken some regrettable repair work ..." (Glaize p.65.)

Design and Construction

Preparations

It took, at least, five years to plan and carefully prepare the construction. Later modifications were impossible.

First, they made a wooden model on the scale about 1:10.

Building Materials

The main materials were sandstone and laterite. Laterite is a soil of non-volcanic origin, a mixture of clay, loam, and bauxite. It is cut into blocks and dried up in the air to become as hard as a rock. The sandstone blocks were cut at the foot of the Phnom Kulen, some 30 km northeast, and transported by oxen or buffalo carts. For the monolithic pillars, weighing c. 11 tonnes each, they needed carts with several axes.

There are, and there were no waterways big enough to transport 11-ton-weights! Elephants would have raised a special logistic problem: They need too much food.

Foundations

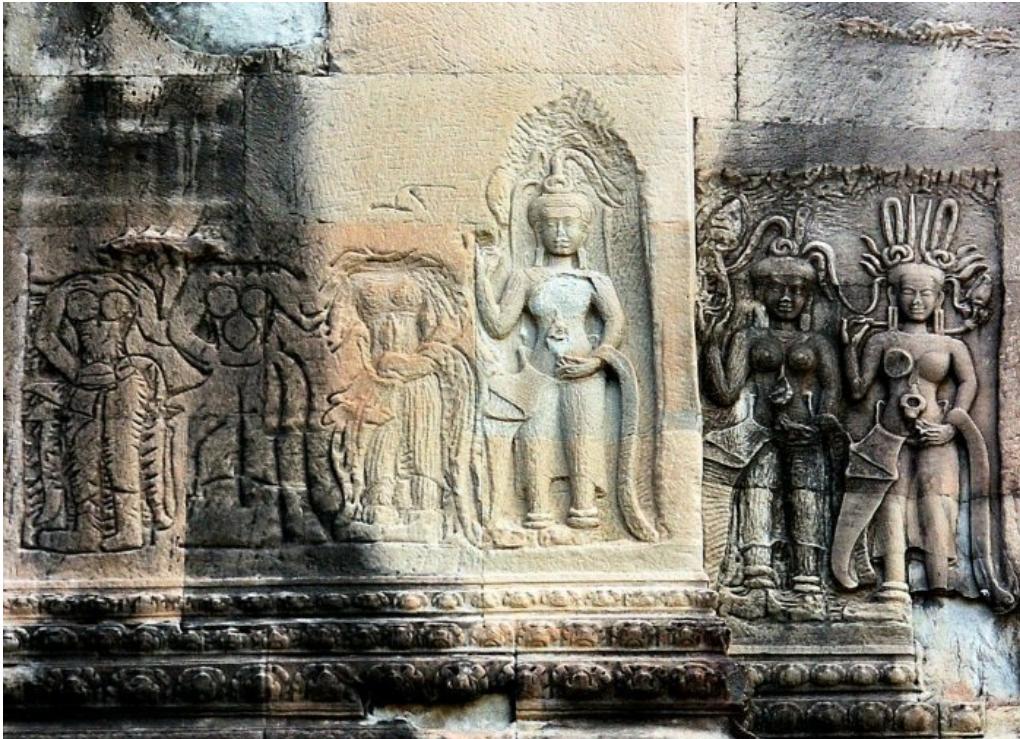
The construction started with the fixing of the soil. To gain the foundations, workers excavated a pit, 2.5 m deep. It was filled up by

4. A floor of laterite blocks.
3. Tamped granule of laterite
2. Pebble for drainage.
1. A layer of loam, impermeable to water.

The ground water level was to be controlled by the moat, to sustain the building.

A crane

In the centre, a pit was walled up step by step. A teakwood beam fixed inside the pit served as a crane to pull the 11-ton sandstone slabs into position. The construction started from inside outwards; at last, they built the enclosure wall and the moat.



Unfinished Devata reliefs. The carvings were executed after the walls were finished.

Workmen

The King must have had a tremendous manpower at his disposal.

Many jobs could be done by unskilled men, subjects or slaves.

The masonry and carving were done by independent craftsmen, professional workers, talented, trained, skilled, and experienced.

How many men have worked there? Men were doing the masonry, others were heaving the sandstone blocks and pillars to their place, others were preparing the blocks and pillars, others did the logistics, and some artists did the carvings. The estimates of the total numbers are differing.

(This hypothesis is based on the assessments of civil engineers visiting Angkor Wat.)

Visiting Angkor Wat

Walking and climbing

The distance from the west to the east entrance is c. 1.5 km, as the crow flows. The upper platform in the pyramid is 25 m over the ground. The eight large bas-reliefs measure more than 517 m together.

The major parts of the temple are

1. The western approach with the more than 300 m long West Gate,
2. The Lower Cruciform Gallery,
3. The second stage of the Pyramid with the view of the upper tiers, the towers, and their stairways,
4. The summit of the Pyramid; you will have to queue to climb up the wooden stairway
5. The Gallery of Bas-Reliefs and the Western Corner Pavilions.
6. The gate pavilions in the south, east, and west linked by shady walkways.

Every part is adorned with Devata reliefs.

First visit in the afternoon

Your first visit to Angkor Wat should be in the afternoon, starting about 2.30 pm. (It may be crowded.)

Before you enter the temple, look for a shady place outside and enjoy the view of the majestic Moat and the large West Gate, which blocks the view of the pyramid.

Look around in the West Gate, find Lok Ta Reach and the Apsara reliefs.

Having passed the gate, you see the curtain open. What you see now, maybe the most impressive moment of your journey: the view of the pyramid.

The space in the west, between the moat and the pyramid, is arranged like a stage for the walk to the central sanctuary. In the pyramid, visit first the Lower Cruciform Gallery.

Climb up the second stage where a wooden stairway at the northeast tower goes to the upper stage. As the access is limited, you have to queue. A fitting dress is expected.

You have to decide: You can do this now, or visit bas-reliefs (The most important are *The Army of Suryavarman II* and the *Churning of the Sea of Milk.*) and postpone the third stage to the next morning.

The temple closes at 5.30 pm. Leave at the east.

Visit from the east in the morning

Approaching from the east, you will first see the East Gate, then the east face of the Pyramid with five towers in line.

The Devata reliefs at the south-, east and north faces of the West Gate get the best light in the morning

I recommend meeting your driver on the way to the toilet, c. 200 m west of

the west entrance.

Leisurely walks

Shadowy walks around the Pyramid, and from there to the southern door of the West Gate, or to the South or North Gate. Take a stick with you; there may be monkeys.

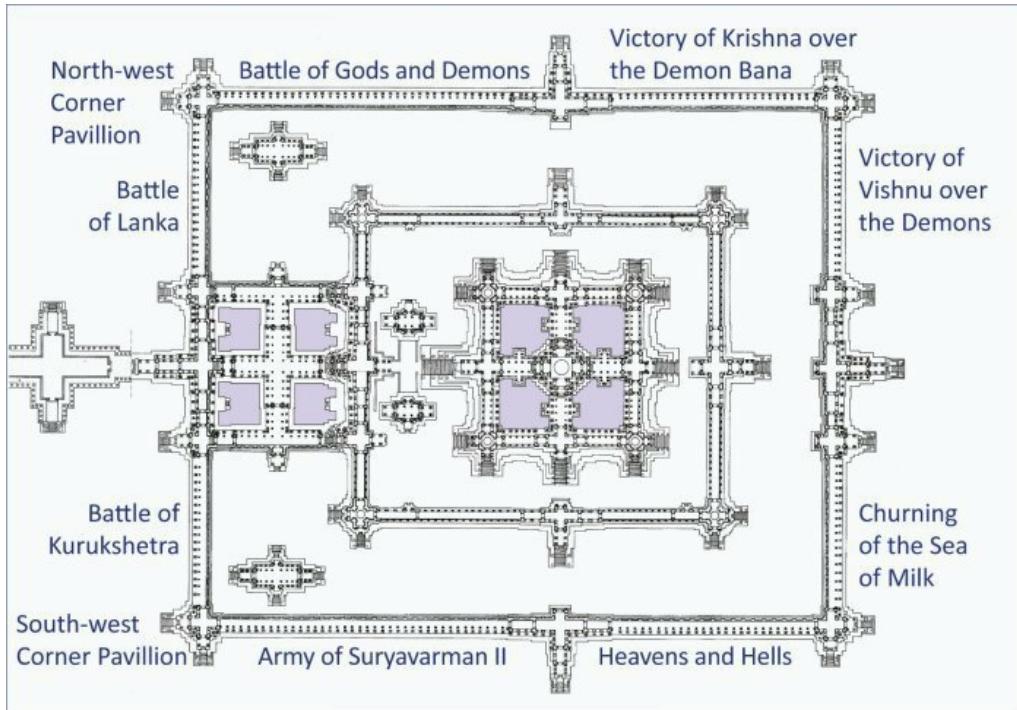
Sunrise and Sunset

Sunrise at Angkor Wat is very popular and very overcrowded. Sunset is excellent at the southern moat.



Sunset at the southern moat

The Gallery of the Bas-Reliefs



Location of the Bas-Reliefs

The large reliefs of the Gallery display seven mythological scenes, and a historical event.

The Large Panels

C. 2 m high, and together extending c. 700 m, they are said to be the longest connected relief of the world.

West Gallery, North Wing

The Battle of Lanka

Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, has abducted Rama's spouse, Sita. Rama and the monkeys (from left) are fighting against Ravana and his demons. The monkeys have monkeys' faces and human bodies –shown frontal. Unarmed; they fight with stones, sticks, fists or their teeth. Parts of the scene look like a ballet.



Hanuman attacking Ravana. Detail from the Battle of Lanka.

Ravana has his grand appearance: monstrous draughts, flashy chariot, multiple arms, clubs, and faces; but the Monkey General Hanuman beats him, and he will lose his life in this battle.



Bhishma dying, pierced by Arjuna's arrows.

West Gallery, South Wing

The Battle of Kurukshetra

This mythical battle brings the final decision in a deadly conflict between two

royal families, the Pandava and Kaurava, who are related to each other. In the lower register, their armies are marching and fighting: The Pandava, from the right, the Kaurava from the left. Dress and equipment of the soldiers are equal to the army of King Suryavarman.

In the turmoil of the battle, we can see Krishna with four arms as Arjuna's charioteer.

The Kauravas are sitting on the left; the Pandavas are sitting on the right side. At the top left, we see Bhishma, the dying head of the Kaurava dynasty.

South Gallery, West Wing

The Army of Suryavarman II

This relief shows King Suryavarman II, who has built Angkor Wat, and his army marching east, where the Chams are, with whom he is in the war.

At the left, King Suryavarman is holding court at the top of a hill. In a small inscription we can read:

"Paramavishnuloka orders his army to descend from the hill Shivapada."

Paramavishnuloka, "He who is staying in the heaven of Vishnu", is the posthumous name of King Suryavarman II. *Shivapada* means 'Shiva's footprint'. - Suryavarman is regarded as something like a saint, not as a god.) Commanders on elephants are leading the troops. Their rank is shown by the number of umbrellas and other decorating signs, awarded by the King. With every dignitary is a small inscription, calling his name and his titles.

The king is depicted once more in the centre of the relief. He is carrying a *phkaek*, a typical Khmer tool, and weapon.

The shrine containing the Holy Fire is carried in the centre of the army. It is preceded by musicians and followed by Brahmins.



King Suryavarman II giving orders



The Royal Vanguard

Ethnical mercenaries of unknown origin, commanded by their tribal chief,

make the vanguard.



Heavens and Hells, detail

South Gallery, East Wing

Heavens and Hells

Human beings have to die and to go to the hereafter – along three different routes.

On top people are going straight to the heavens. (Amongst them are 19 nobles, like in the army of King Suryavarman.) At the bottom, the poor are trudging to the hells.

Those on the middle way are presented to Yama, the god of death and judgment. He is first enthroned on a buffalo and second judging, assisted by Citragupta, who is aware of the deeds of mortals. The mortals either go to the 37 heavens or to one of the 32 hells where you can study a large variety of punishments.

The heavens are monotonous flying palaces, raised by hamsa (sacred wild geese); Apsaras are dancing above the palaces.

The relief is well executed and full of interesting details, but its message is crude: The nobles go to the heavens, the poor go to the hell. Who are those who serve in the heaven?



The Churning of the Sea of Milk. Vishnu directing the demons (left) and the gods (right).

East Gallery, South Wing

The Churning of the Sea of Milk

The myth of the Churning was very popular during the Angkor era. It is depicted in temples in Angkor and all over Cambodia.

At the beginning of the World, Gods and Demons pursued immortality by gaining Amrita, the elixir of immortality, and they chased each other for that. After thousand years, they asked Vishnu for help. He ordered them to churn the Sea of Milk together. The Naga Vasuki became the rope, and Mount Mandara, an island in the middle of the sea, became the pivot. When Mount Mandara began to sink, Vishnu incarnated as Kurma, the King of the tortoises, to support the pivot. Vasuki also incarnated; his double held Kurma. Meanwhile, Indra held the mountain in position.

After thousand years of churning, the Sea of Milk produced Amrita and other treasures: Lakshmi, the spouse of Vishnu, the three-headed elephant Airavan, the Apsaras, and much more. Eventually, the Naga vomits a lot of poison which would have ruined the World if Shiva had not swallowed it.

The Relief in Angkor Wat

Taking the south wing of the east lower gallery, it is 48.45 m long.

In the centre is Vishnu with four arms in front of the – unfinished – Mount Mandara. On top of him is Indra. Below the Mount Mandara is Kurma, wearing a small crown.

In the main register, Demons, to the south, and Gods, to the north, are pulling the giant Naga Vasuki. Three bigger figures section each crew.

In the lower register are fishes and other creatures of the water; to the centre, they are more and more cut into pieces by the power of the rotation. In the upper register, a cloud of Apsaras is soaring to the sky.



A demon king, holding the heads of the Naga

At the south end is the most impressive figure: a demon king is heroically holding out next to the menacing heads of the excited Naga, while his incarnation below is looking quite relaxed.

The monkey God at the tail (not Hanuman but probably Sugriva) is more comfortable than his colleague at the head; he can be merry.

The Churning and the Calendar

In the tropics, the sun is shuttling between South, at the winter solstice (21 December), and North, at the summer solstice (21 June).

The centre with Mount Mandara corresponds with the equinox (21 March and 21 September).

The number of gods and demons in the picture tallies with the number of days of a half-year.

Gods and demons are divided into six groups, corresponding to the six months between the solstices.

The rhythmic of the churning symbolises the course of the sun: the rhythm of seasons gives rise to all growing in the World.

Other large Reliefs

The reliefs at the eastern gallery, north wing, and at the northern gallery were executed in the 16th century by the original designs; they are of lower quality.

East Gallery, North Wing:

The Victory of Vishnu over the Demons

North Gallery, East Wing:

The Victory of Krishna over the Demon Bana

Krishna and Garuda struggle against the demon Bana in several stages. The relief contains "*perhaps the largest number of severed heads ever represented in any relief.*" (Roveda)

See also: *Shiva at Angkor Wat.*

North Gallery, West Wing:

The Battle between the Gods and the Demons

Nineteen Gods are present, discernible by their mounts; the fight and defeat just as many Demons.

The Corner Pavilions

The south-western Pavilion

- The Churning of the Sea of Milk,
- Krishna lifting Mount Govardhana
Indra got angry when Krishna had received his offerings (see L) and sent a torrential rain. Krishna, together with his brother Balarama, lifts Mount Govardhana to protect the shepherds and their herds.
- Rama killing Maricha

- Ravana has sent a golden gazelle to Rama to distract the latter. While Rama is hunting for Maricha, Ravana abducts Sita.
- Shiva in the Pine Forest
Shiva appears almost naked to the wives of the hermits in order to test the self-control of the ascetics.
- Ravana shaking Mount Kailasha
Ravana, the Demon King of Lanka, goes to Mount Kailasha to visit Shiva but is denied access. Furious with rage, he shakes Mount Kailasha.
- Young Krishna dragging a heavy Mortar,
- Shiva killing the God of Love
The gods need Shiva to father a son who can help them against the Demon who is superior in strength. They ask Kana, the God of Love, to wake up Shiva from meditation to turn his mind to making love with his spouse.
Kama shoots an arrow of mango blossoms on Shiva, who with the fire energy of his third eye, kills him.
Shiva then calms down, makes love with Uma, and later lets Kama arise.
- Rama killing Valin
Rama and Sugriva want Valin, the king of the monkeys killed.
- While Valin is fighting with Sugriva, Rama kills him secretly with an arrow.
- Two un-decoded scenes with Vishnu or Krishna
- The Dvaravati Water Festival
Scenes with boats.
- Shiva receiving Homage,



Krishna receiving offerings

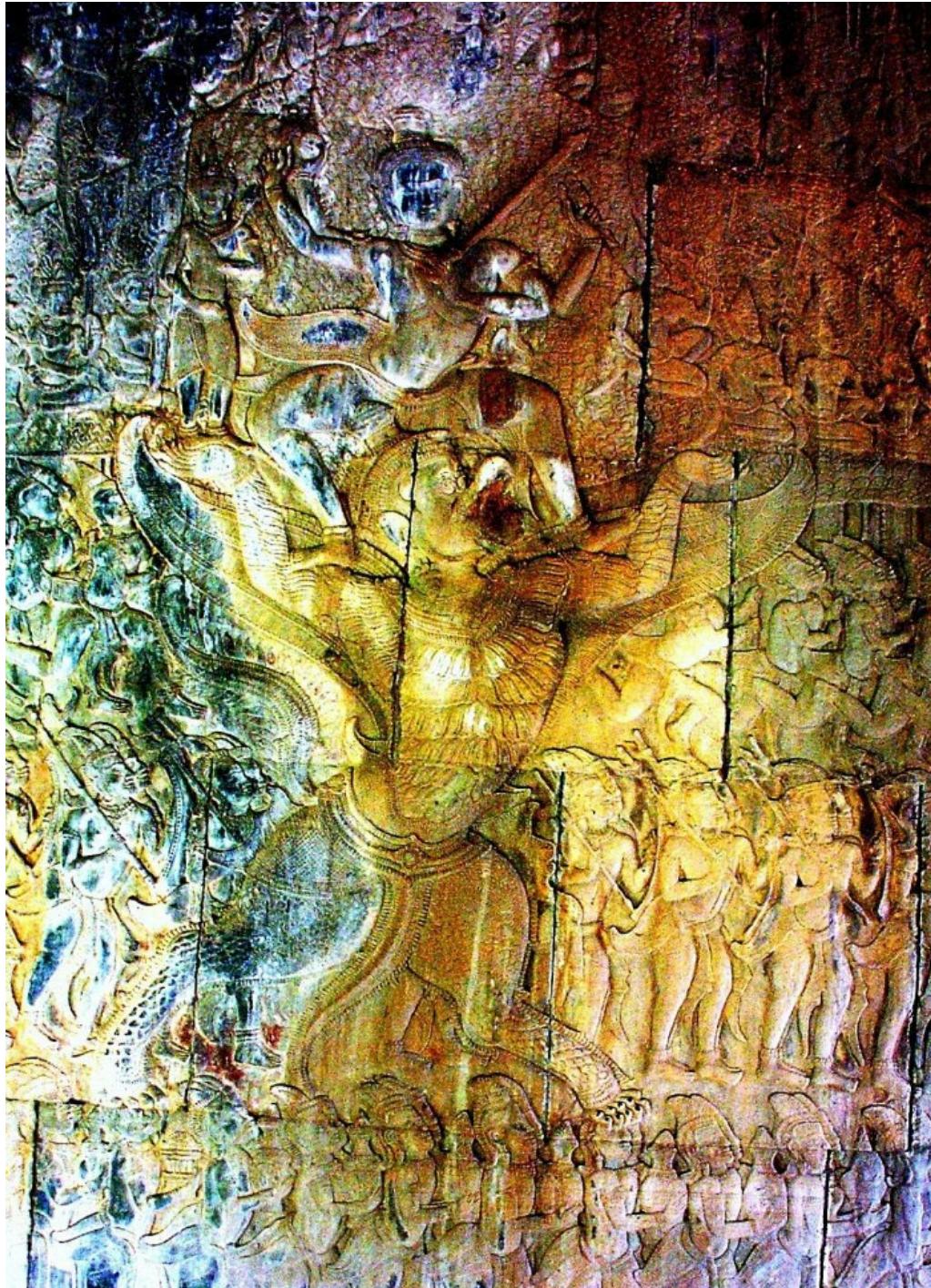
- Krishna receiving offerings destined for Indra, Krishna, appearing as Vishnu with four arms.

The north-western Pavilion



Gods inviting Vishnu to descent on Earth

- Gods invite Vishnu to descend to the Earth to incarnate as Krishna. The gods (and their directions from left to right):
 - Nirrti (Southwest on a Yaksha)
 - Varuna (West on goose)
 - Skanda (Northeast on a peacock)
 - Kubera (North on a horse)
 - Indra (East on Airavan)
 - Yama (South on a buffalo)
 - Agni (Southeast on rhinoceros)
 - Vayu (Northwest on a lion).*further down:*
 - Chandra, the God of the Moon
 - Surya, the God of the Sun



Krishna and Garuda bringing back Mount Maniparvata

- Krishna bringing back Mount Maniparvata
A Demon had stolen the peak of Mount Maniparvata with Indra's harem, and also the spouse of Garuda, now in the palm of his right hand.

- Rama's Alliance with Sugriva

- The Vision of Akrura

While Krishna, his brother Balarama and their uncle Akrura are bathing in the holy river Yamuna, Akrura perceives their divine nature.

- Sita's Ordeal by Fire

- Viradha trying to abduct Sita

- Rama on the Pushpaka Chariot

The triumphant Rama rides on Pushpaka, a magic chariot carried by Hamsas, to his capital Ajodhya where he will be crowned. (The scene is better depicted on the west face of the northern shrine in Preah Khan.)

- Sita meeting Hanuman

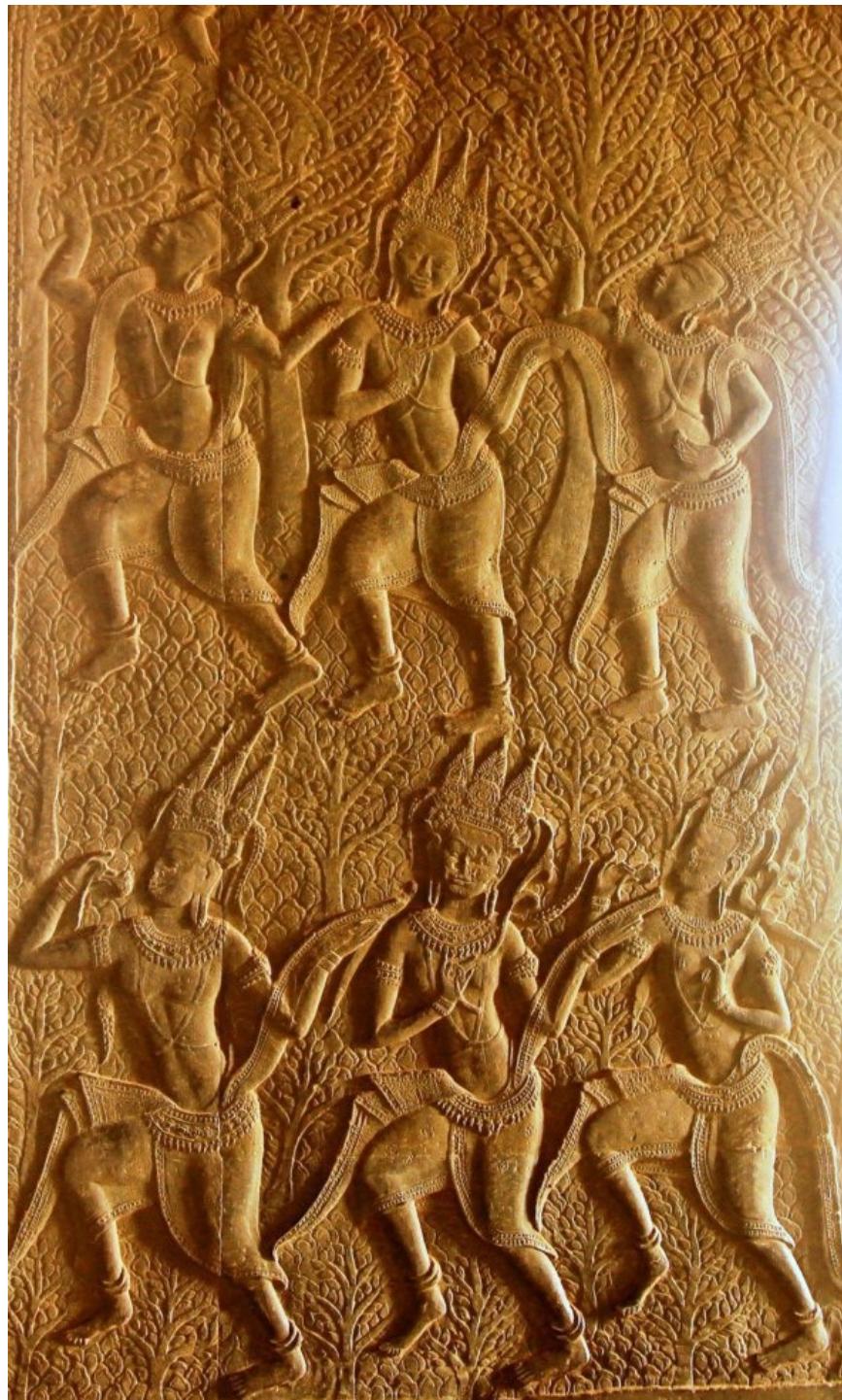
The monkey General Hanuman has sneaked into Sita's exile in Lanka and presented to her the ring of Rama.

- Rama's Alliance with Vibhishana

The latter is the exiled brother of Ravana.

- Archery Contest

Rama wins Sita's hand by meeting the target with his arrow.



Dancing girls

- Krishna with the Shepherdesses
Young Krishna in the centre of a circular love dance with the girls.,
- Rama killing Kabandha
The monster Kabandha has grabbed the legs of Rama and

Lakshmana.

References

- Stierlin, p. 97–130.
- Freeman/Jacques, p. 46–68.
- Roveda 2003.
- Roveda 2005, p. 374–389.
- Petrotchenko, p. 142-173.



Bayon, the towers from the north-east

Bayon with Angkor Thom

King Jayavarman VII (1181 - c. 1220) made Mahayana Buddhism the state religion. He started an enormous number of constructions, in Angkor, and all over the kingdom.

He built the North Baray and a series of monastic cities and temples, each city centred by a temple. Around this temple were the cells of the monks, as well as the housings of staff and of further inhabitants.

Buildings were generally of sandstone; almost all temples had galleries, and nearly all the galleries have broken down.

While the Bayon is the temple, Angkor Thom is its outer enclosure wall of the temple, measuring c. 3 km by 3 km. The enclosed area became a new city within the capital city Yasodharapura.

Bayon

D Late 12th to early 13th centuries

R Jayavarman VII (1181 - c. 1220)

O East

C Buddhist

F State Temple



Bayon, drawing by Delaporte, 1880

Layout

The central tower is raised on a cruciform terrace, surrounded by many more towers and framed by two galleries.

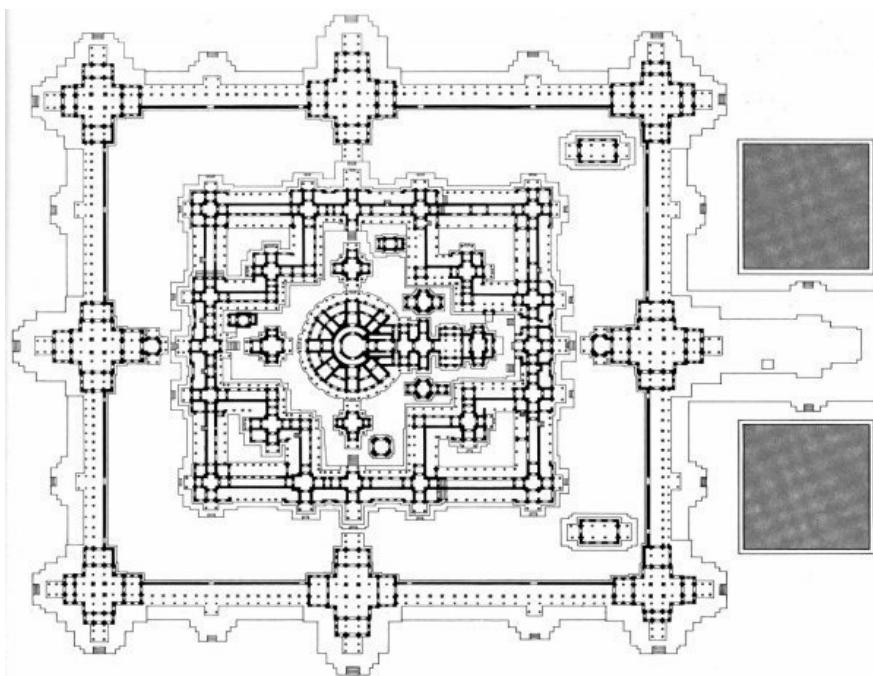
Around the central tower were numerous shrines of Buddhist and Hindu gods, for all gods venerated in the kingdom.

The outer gallery, 156 m by 141 m, was formerly accentuated by a full vault and a preceding half vault. There were eight big towers at the corners and at the axes. Only the inner wall and pillars have remained. The reliefs of the outer gallery show daily life and scenes of wars against the Chams.

The inner gallery shows daily life too, and mythological scenes.

Reliefs of Devatas and dancing Apsaras are displayed all over the temple.

The design and construction of the Bayon, even its dedication to Buddhism or Hinduism, was modified several times. Anyhow, the result of this complicated story is a great picture: a hillock overgrown with towers, which, like trees in a natural forest, getting taller towards the centre.



Map of the Bayon, from EFEO.



Face of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara at the Bayon

Face Towers

The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is the Buddhist God of universal compassion. His face – in the likeness of King Jayavarman VII – is depicted on the four fronts of every Bayon tower.

With his smile, his blessings are radiating in the cardinal directions, everywhere in the whole world, to everyone who is open-hearted.

How many towers and faces are there? The question is idle: In reality, the faces are countless; the bodhisattva is ubiquitous.

(There are 51 towers with 173 faces.)

Better you open your mind to their message: "*Le sourir khmer*" or "The smile of Angkor".



Devata in shrine, with worshiper

Outer Relief Gallery



Chinese in houses, east face, south wing

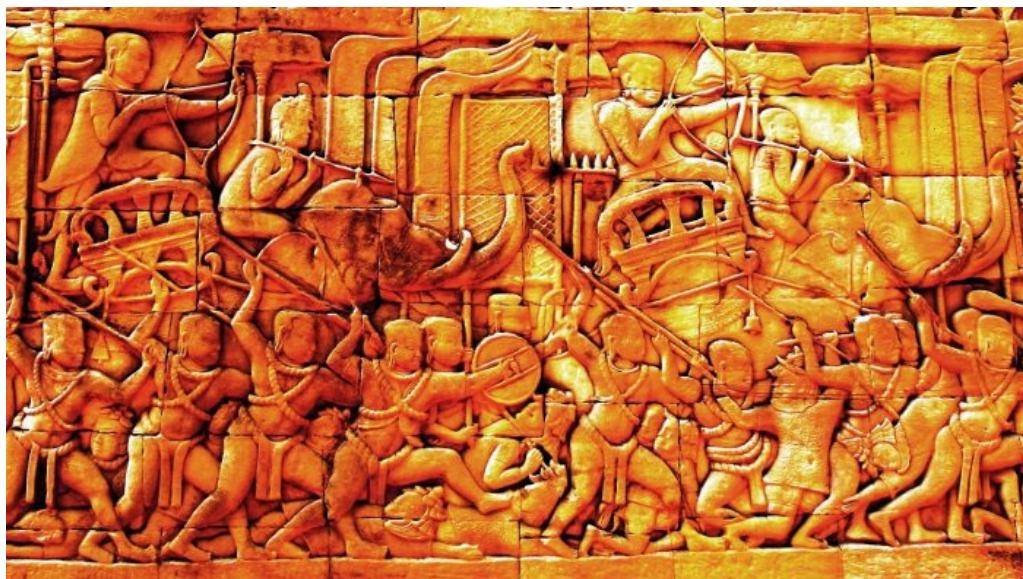


Scenes at a Shiva temple. A high-ranking person (the relief was not finished for this part) entering the shrine with his or her entourage. Downstairs are two rishis with spectators, men are seated, and women are standing. East

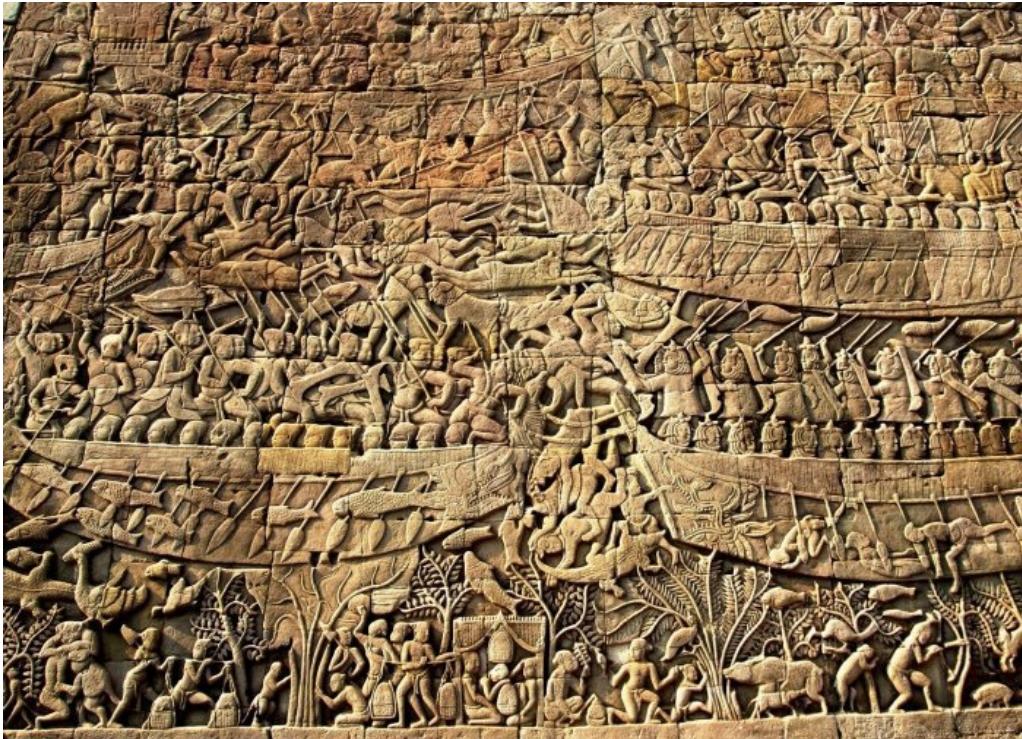
face, south wing.



Army parade, east face, south wing.



Khmer fighting Chams with lotus-like helmets. East face, north wing.



Boat scenes at the Tonlé Sap, below daily life at the shore. South face, east wing.

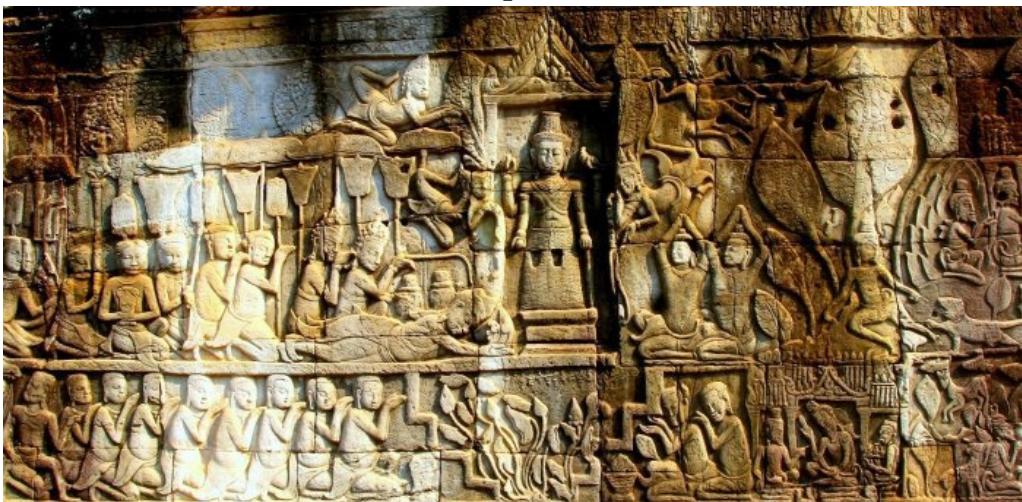
Inner Relief Gallery



A king in his palace is starting a pilgrimage. South face, west wing.



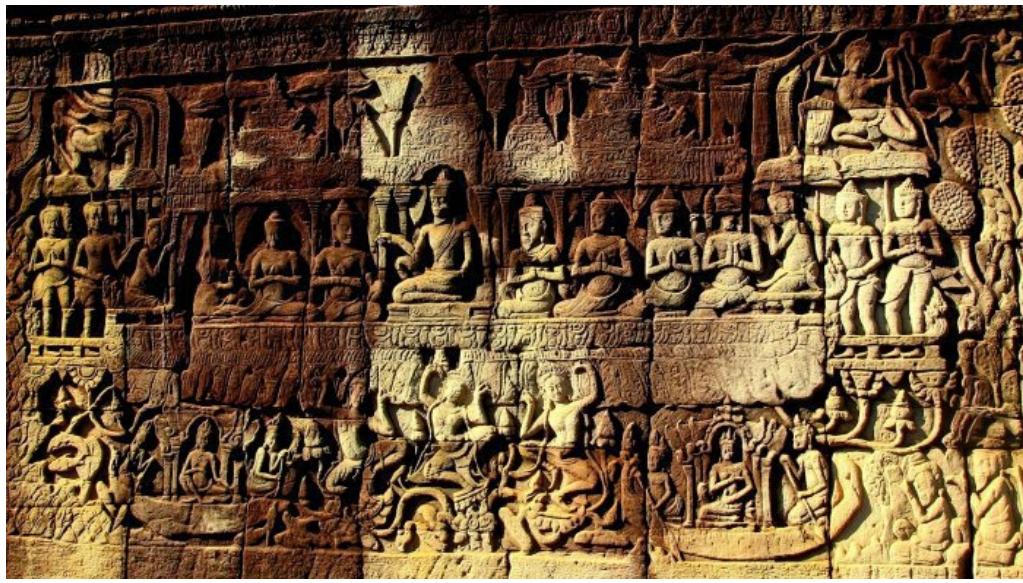
In the palace.



Visit of a Vishnu shrine. The king, in front of his entourage, prostrates himself before Vishnu. The shrine is located in a water basin framed by stairs. Celestial dancers are in the air. A Tiger attacks a hermit.



Paying homage to Shiva, the shrine is located near a river.



Shiva in his heavenly palace. With flying dancers and dancing Apsaras.



*Statue of the Buddha, originally in the central tower of the Bayon, now at
Vihear Prampil Loveng*

Buddha on the Naga

The central tower sheltered a huge statue of the meditating Buddha, enthroned on the Naga King Mucalinda. It was destroyed during the Iconoclasm. The statue was recently restored and is now in Vihear Prampil

Loveng.

Visit

The best time to visit the Bodhisattva faces is early morning or around noon. Then the temple is quiet, the steep sunlight accentuating the faces. (Take water with you!)

Angkor Thom

D Late 12th to early 13th centuries

R Jayavarman VII (1181 - c. 1220)

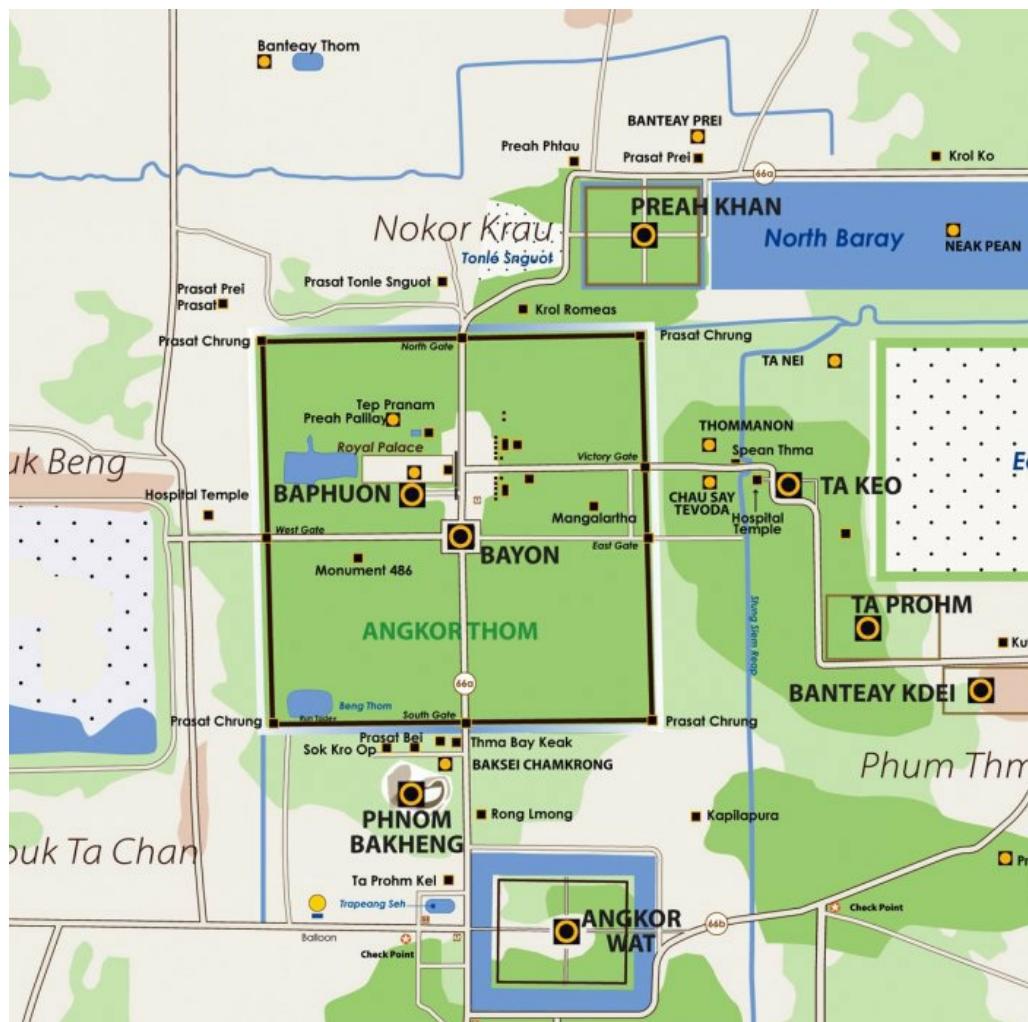
O East

C Buddhist

F Outer Enclosure of the Bayon

Angkor Thom, the outer enclosure of the Bayon, is a square of c. 3000 m by c. 3000 m, surrounded by a laterite wall, 8 m high, and a moat, 100 m wide. Angkor Thom became “a city in the city” but not a new capital.

The wall is lined by a broad rampart. A pleasant footway runs along the entire wall on the top of this rampart. (Not recommended when it is dusty.)



Angkor Thom, detail of the Angkor Map



South Gate



Giant Balustrades at the South Gate



Run Tadev

Run Tadev

The sewage was collected in Beng Thom ('The Big Pond'), and then it poured out of the city through Run Tadev, five corbelled arches under the wall and the rampart. Access by paths from the South Gate or West Gate, along with the top of the rampart.

The Gates of Angkor Thom

There are five gates in the wall and five causeways crossing the moat, four are at the cardinal points, and one is east of the Royal Palace.

All gates and causeways are of the same design:

The central tower, more than 23 m high, is flanked by two smaller towers. Huge faces are looking to the cardinal points.

In the corners of the towers' bases, God Indra appears with two spouses, mounted on the three-headed elephant Airavan, whose trunks are pulling lotus flowers.

Giant balustrades: In front of the gate, Naga Kings are guarding the causeway, escorting human beings from the secular world to the sacred area of the temple.



West Gate



North Gate



Indra at the East Gate

Every single gate is worth a visit.

The **South Gate** has the most extensive collection of giants' heads. This area may sometimes be pretty crowded.

The **West Gate** has the best-preserved faces. The remains of the Causeway of Giants have not been restored. The site is quiet and picturesque.

The **North Gate** is best preserved. Look for the Indra reliefs! The Causeway of Giants is restored. It is a rather tranquil area.

At the **Victory Gate**, the causeway of giants has been restored. Climb up and look at the faces from both sides of the wall.

The East Gate of Angkor Thom

An abandoned road runs from the Bayon to the east. After 1.5 km through the forest, the East Gate appears. It is the only gate of Angkor Thom which still looks untouched, like eight hundred years ago.

The pavement of the doorway shows traces of the old oxen carts.

Rarely a visitor will come here: You can enjoy a summit of human art, a wonder of the world—in solitude.



East Gate



South Gate, giant Gods holding a Naga

How the Naga went underground

The Nagas are held by giants. Looking outside, you see 54 gods to the right and 54 demons to the left.

"The fifty-four deities are all pulling at the snake with their hands, and look as if they are preventing it from escaping." (Zhou Daguan)

The capture of the Naga turned out as a failure. Technic and nature fell out of balance; the irrigation system broke down. See Phimeanakas.



North-East Prasat Chrung



South-East Prasat Chrung

Prasat Chrung

Four temples are located at the corners of the wall, in the south-west, north-west, northeast, and south-east. All towers are similar in shape: cruciform ground plan. On the walls are Devatas in niches. The pediments show the standing Bodhisattva; his face was scratched out. A square pavilion sheltered a stele.



Prasat Tonlé Snguot

Hospital Temples

Four Hospital Temples are located a few hundred metres out of the gates of Angkor Thom; they are witnesses of the more than a hundred hospitals erected or fitted by Jayavarman VII in his kingdom. These are sandstone towers or the ruins of them, with some fragments of reliefs.

Ta Prohm Kel is located near the north-west corner of Angkor Wat.

The **East Hospital Temple** is near the north-western corner of Ta Keo.

Prasat Tonlé Snguot is located 500 m north of the North Gate of Angkor Thom in a picturesque setting.

The ruin of the **West Hospital Temple** is located 900 m off the West Gate of Angkor Thom.

Angkor Thom makes a Mandala or a Microcosm: From the Buddha in the centre, spiritual energy is spread all over the world, symbolically, while

healing was carried out in the hospitals.



Ta Prohm, a tree with its roots at the inner gallery

Ta Prohm

Original name: Rajavihara, “Royal Monastery.”

D Inaugurated 1186

R Jayavarman VII (1181 - c. 1220)

O East

C Buddhist

F Monastic city and Ancestor Temple

The temple, dedicated to the Bodhisattva Prajnaparamita, the Buddhist Goddess of Universal Wisdom, was the core of a monastic university, a theological college.

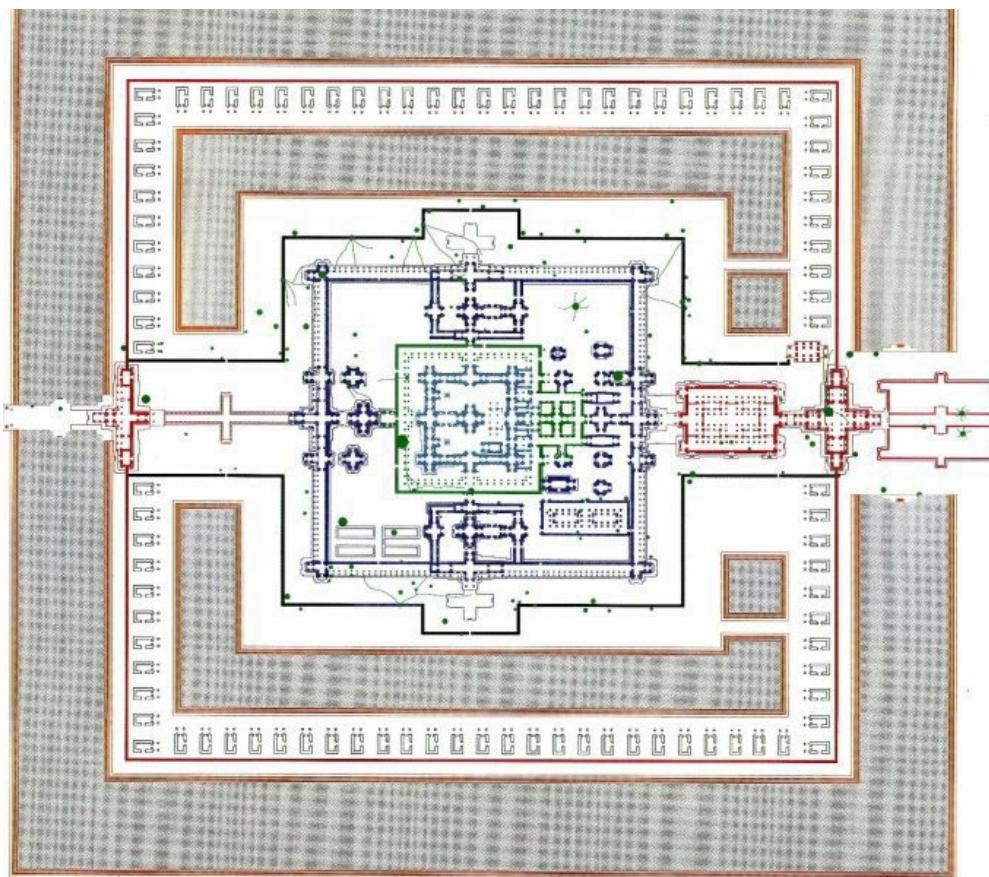
The city is surrounded by an enclosure wall, 1000 m by 670 m. Face towers make the gates in the cardinal directions. The east and south towers have collapsed.



At the East Gate of the temple



Crowned Buddha in meditation



Ta Prohm, plan of the temple with tree growth. Courtesy of Sachchidanand Sahai.

Layout of the temple

- The central temple, enclosed by two galleries (the first and second enclosure);
- The central tower and the towers of the inner gallery form a mandala.
- Satellite temples are in the north and the south.
- All is included in a gallery with gates to the east and to the west (third enclosure).
- This core is enclosed by two groups of monastic cells, 93 in total. Each group is aligned along a U-shaped water basin and surrounded by a wall (fourth enclosure). Another moat encloses the whole complex. The moats supplied the inhabitants of the city with water.

Iconoclasm

In Ta Prohm, and still more in Preah Khan, reliefs are scratched out.

About the middle of the 13th century, images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva were systematically destroyed by scratching out the reliefs; statues were defaced or smashed to bits. This was a backlash against the policy of King Jayavarman VII, who had pushed the supremacy of the Bodhisattva and displaced Shiva.



Scratched out Buddhist reliefs at the second gallery

A Jungle Temple?

This temple has been made famous by numerous trees left when the site was uncovered in 1920. After birds had excreted seeds at the top of the walls, trees overgrow the walls; their decorative roots cling to the stones like sprawling Nagas and force their way into any gaps of the masonry which they gradually burst.

Trees have only remained where the construction of the walls and galleries was solid enough to bear their weight. A real jungle would be full of almost impenetrable undergrowth.

Restoration

The Archaeological Survey of India is restoring parts of the temple complex. Work at the western terrace is completed. Now the Hall of Dancers is in scaffolds.

Visit

It is recommended to visit Ta Prohm *after* Preah Khan, where the complex structure of these temples is better to understand.

Best, you enter the city at the beautiful north face tower; your driver can drop you at the north-west corner of the outer enclosure wall.

Cross the temple from east to west.

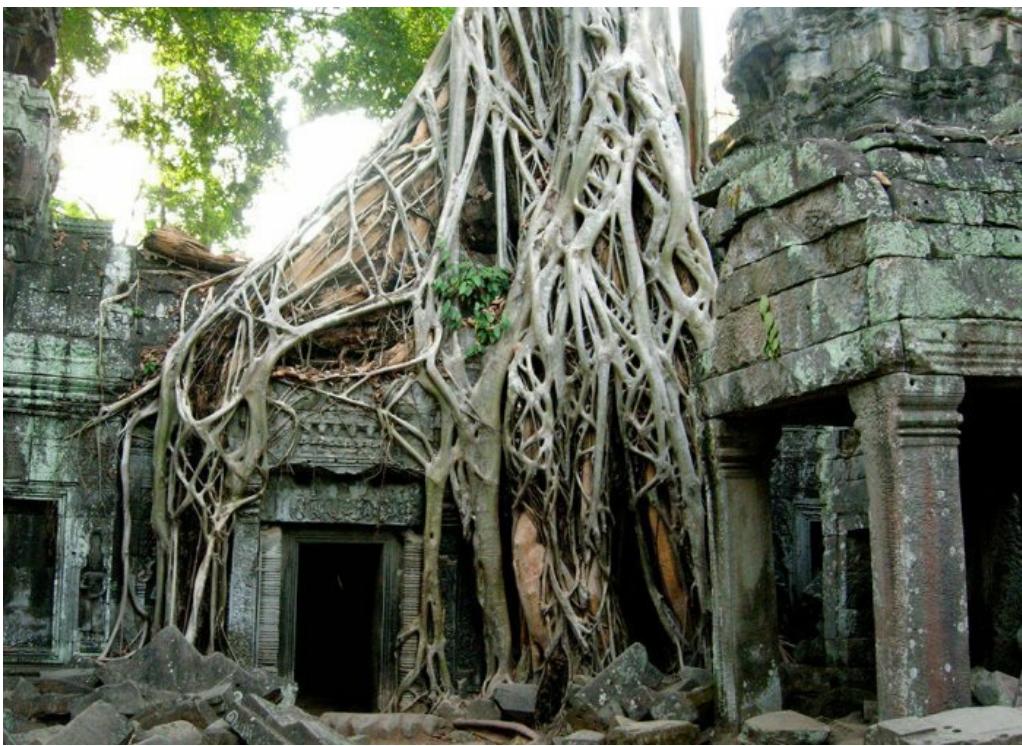
Big guided groups usually enter the Ta Prohm at 10, and 11 am, as well as 2 and 3 pm. The temple may be pretty quiet in the early morning and late afternoon.



Ta Prohm, ruin of a Dharmasala near the eastern terrace



The Hall of Dancers in Restoration, 2015.



Corner of the central courtyard, overgrown with wrangler figs

A Ta Prohm Limerick

A Ta Prohm Limerick

At Ta Prohm was a goddess of wits
But birds sh... a plenty of pits
So trees grow up and in their shade
An off-colour movie was made
Now Ta Prohm has got famous for tits

Ta Prohm, the Royal Monastery, was dedicated to Prajnaparamita, the Buddhist Goddess of Universal Wisdom. Some scenes of the movie *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001) were taken in Ta Prohm.



The inner West Gate of the Temple before Restoration, 2008



Banteay Srei, south-eastern Fire Shrine, with Shiva killing the God of Love



Banteay Srei, the towers and inner enclosure from the south-west

Banteay Srei

Original name Isvarapura, "City of Shiva".

D Inaugurated 968

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

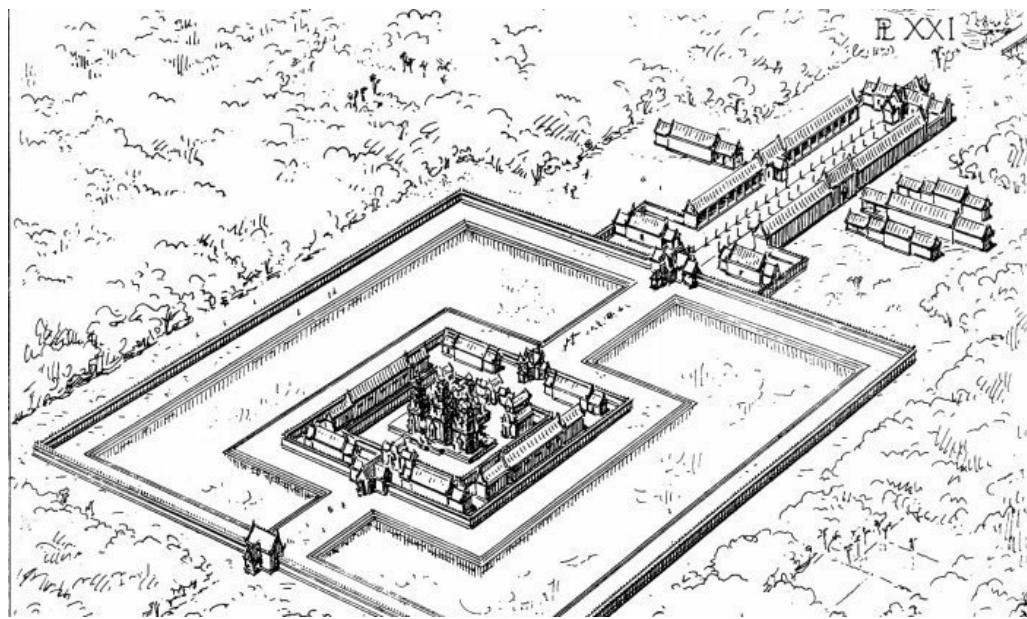
F Private Temple

"This temple of particular charm is remarkable for its state of preservation and the excellence of a near perfect ornamental technique." (Glaize)

Banteay Srei was originally built of brick. What we see today is mostly from the 11th and 12th centuries.

The central and south towers are dedicated to Shiva, the north tower to Vishnu.

It is located some 20 km north of Angkor near the first slopes of the Phnom Kulen. Far away from other monuments, it was forgotten and overgrown. It was re-discovered only in 1914 and restored 1924 to 1936.



Banteay Srei from the south-west. Drawing by Parmentier.

Reliefs cover the lintels, the pediments, and the walls. In niches on the towers are charming gods and goddesses as guardians, wearing lotus flowers or spears.

Visitors enter the temple at the outer East Gopura IV. An avenue, flanked by halls runs to East Gopura III. Here you enter the enclosure III, framed by a laterite wall. You cross a moat. The inner temple is framed by two enclosure walls. You enter at East Gopura II; in front of East Gopura I is a fragmentary Nandi. The inner enclosure is cordoned. You go around and look at two fire shrines and three towers; in front of the central tower is a mandapa.

From east to west, or from outside to inside, the scale is gradually reduced; the inner enclosure the buildings are almost miniaturised.

Visit

It's a long way to Banteay Srei. Better you visit the temple in the afternoon. They close at 5 pm.

My favourite route in the afternoon is Prasat Kravan, Banteay Srei, and East Mebon.

Or you make a whole day trip: Banteay Samré and Kbal Spean in the morning, and Banteay Srei in the afternoon.

Some people have visited the temple in the very early morning, before the official opening.

Reliefs



Indra on Airavan (Entrance Gate)



Narasimha (Hall north of the colonnades)

Vishnu, incarnated as *Narasimha*, “lion-men”, tears up the breast of the Demon King Hiranyakashipu. (Roveda 2005, p. 70.)



Shiva and Uma on Nandi (Hall south of the colonnades))

Shiva and his spouse sit on the back of Nandi like a Khmer couple uses to sit on their motorbike.



Ravana robbing Sita, from the Ramayana (On the ground before Gopura III)



Elephants pouring lustral water on Lakshmi (Gopura II)



Shiva the King of Dance (Gopura I, east face)

At the end of times, Shiva's Dance destracts the World. (Roveda 2005, p. 162-162.)



Durga killing the Buffalo Monster (Mchlom) (Gopura I, west face)



Krishna killing the Demon King Kamsa in his palace (North-eastern fire shrine, west face)



Fire in the Khandava Forest (North-eastern fire shrine, east face)

Fire in the Khandava Forest

The relief

Indra is sending a thunderstorm; Airavan, his mount, is standing on wavy lines, the rainwater. The parallel lines depict a coat of arrows, brandished by Krishna and Lakshmana, below left and right. Under the coat of arrows, the inhabitants of the forest are excited and want to escape. Birds and a three-headed Naga are flying.

The myth

Agni, the god of fire, wants to "eat" the forest and to kill the Naga, his enemy. Indra, the friend of the Naga, tries to stop the fire by a thunderstorm. Agni asks Krishna and Lakshmana for help. They halt the downpour with their arrows. (Roveda 205, p. 349.)



Ravana shaking Mount Kailasha (South-eastern fire shrine, east face)



Rama killing Valin (West Gopura II)

While Valin, the King of the Monkeys is wrestling with his brother Sugriva, Rama kills him with an arrow on him from behind.



Banteay Srei, Devata



Banteay Srei, juvenile Dvarapala

Hidden Beauties



Bakong. Aerial view from the west (DT)

Bakong

Original Name: Indresvara.

D Inaugurated 881

R Jayavarman III (c. 835–c. 887), Indravarman I (877–c. 889), Yasovarman II (1150–c. 1165)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

F State-Temple

L Centre of the Roluos Group, ca. 12 km east of Siem Reap

The Bakong was the first state temple, the centre of the capital Hariharalaya (see below).

In its centre is a five-tier pyramid built of sandstone. In its time, it was the biggest building in Mainland Southeast Asia.

Shiva in Angkor

In Cambodia, the women traditionally own the land. Literally, the queens owned the kingdom. Jayavarman II (c. 770–835), the founder king, married a number of women who owned their land. (Jacobsen, p. 28.)

Shiva is declared Overlord of the World; the king rules the World on behalf of Shiva and claims supremacy over the country.

Entering the Temple

Coming from Siem Reap along the National Road 6, you will first meet with the south-east corner of the **Baray of Lolei**. The road has climbed up some metres and is now on top of the southern dyke of the Baray, which runs strictly west-east.

After 2 km we turn right. (The Lolei temple, not visible from here, is on the left-hand side.) We are now on the north-south axis of the Baray, which also makes the main axis of the capital. We pass the Preah Ko temple, which we will visit later, and meet with the **North Gate of the Bakong**. We leave the car; the driver may wait for us at the West Gate.

The inner part of the temple is framed by a laterite wall and a moat. From the gate, we see the pyramid, but there is no causeway or bridge; the gate is symbolical and serves only for the axis.

We follow the enclosure wall to the east. After 200 m, at the left-hand side, we find a group of three ruined brick towers. We are in the outer enclosure of the temple, where there are 25 towers in 22 groups regularly distributed. To the north is the outer moat, 950 m square. The temple covers 0.9 square kilometres.



A group of three towers in the north of the outer enclosure of the Bakong

Avenue

Around the corner of the enclosure wall, we come to a wide place in front of the temple's East Gate. Originally, this place was framed in the north and south by brick towers.

Here, a straight avenue runs in from the east.

By this avenue, the king approached the temple to venerate Shiva.

Procession

Zhou Daguan, a Chinese envoy in Angkor, describes c. 400 years later how the king leaves his palace:

"[A]ll his soldiers were gathered in front of him, with people bearing banners, musicians, and drummers following behind him. One contingent was made of three to five hundred women of the palace. They wore clothes with a floral design and flowers in their coiled up hair and carried huge candles, alight even in daylight. There were also women of the palace carrying gold and silver utensils from the palace and finely decorated instruments made in exotic and unusual styles, for what purpose I do not know. Palace women carrying lances and shields made up another contingent as the palace guard. Then there were carts drawn by goats, deer, and horses, all of them decorated with gold

All the ministers, officials, and relatives of the king were in front, riding elephants. Their red parasols, too many to number, were visible in the distance. Next came the king's wives and concubines and their servants, some in palanquins and carts, others on horses or elephants, with well over a hundred gold filigree parasols. Last came the king, standing on an elephant, the gold sword in his hand and the tusks of the elephant encased in gold. He had more than twenty white parasols decorated with gold filigree, their handles all made of gold. Surrounding him on all four sides were elephants in very large number, with soldiers to protect him as well." (Zhou Daguan, p.82-83.)

A similar procession used to arrive at the place in front of the East Gate. From here, the king entered the inner temple with a small entourage.



View from the East Gate to the Pyramid

Inner Moat and Causeways

After passing the East Gate, we cross the moat by a causeway.

Two Sprawling Nagas escort and protect us against the spirits of the water.
Find their tail tips.

Sprawling Nagas

The Naga or Naga King symbolises the Water, the Soil, Nature, and female-maternal energy. He is the great ancestor of the Khmers. He is a God, residing in the deepest Underworld and at the bottom of the waters.

The Naga is depicted with the body of a cobra and an array of heads. Neginis, Naga Princesses appear as beautiful women, some have Naga heads in their hair.

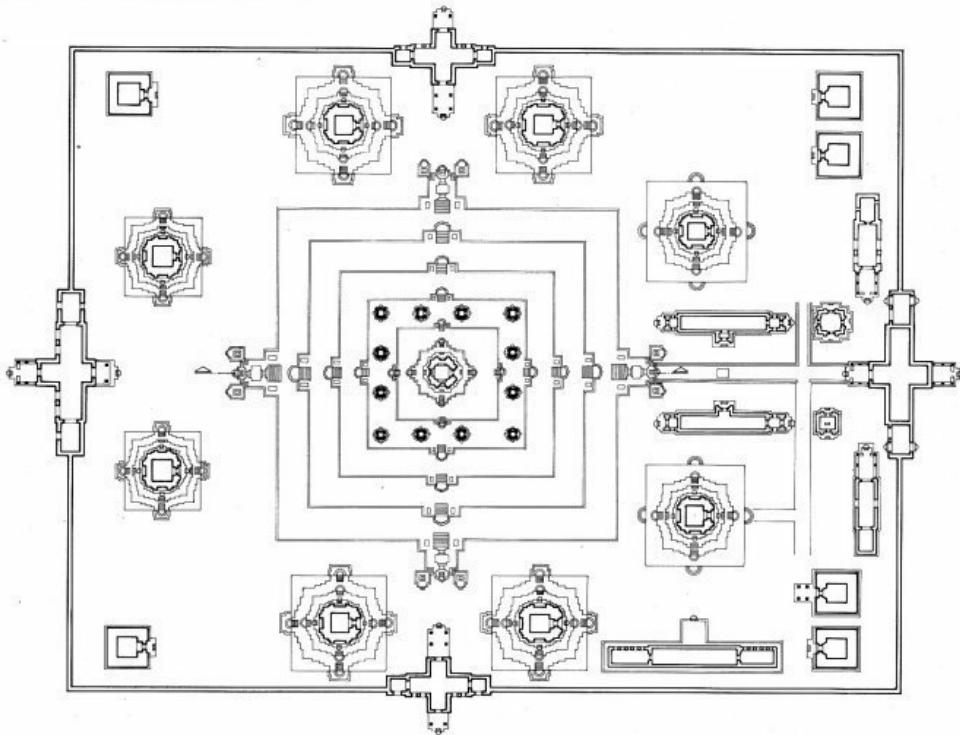
Sprawling Nagas are in their element, in touch with the Earth. Proudly they guard the entrances of the Bakong and other temples.



Naga guarding the eastern causeway



Tail tip of a Naga



Bakong, central temple, map by EFEQ

At the Base of the Pyramid

An enclosure wall with gates in the cardinal directions frames the inner part of the temple. At the south-east and north-east are pairs of fire shrines. In front of each face of the pyramid is a pair of stately brick towers and a statue of Nandi, the mount of Shiva.



brick tower and a Nandi statue in the west of the inner enclosure



Fire Shrines at the south-east



The Pyramid from the east

The Pyramid

The five-tear pyramid is built of sandstone. The central tower, the sanctuary of Shiva, rebuilt in the 12th century, raises on a prominent pedestal. At the fourth tier are twelve small sandstone towers. Elephants are guarding the corners of the three lower tears.

The king climbed up the eastern stairway while offerings were burnt in the fire shrines. He prostrated himself on the fifth floor below Shiva in the central tower.

The pyramid is a symbol of the mythical Mount Meru in the centre of the World, the five summits of which are looming in the Heaven and make the abode of the Gods. The pyramid shows five towers in every cardinal direction.

Gradually increasing Sanctity

- Central Tower: Shiva.
- Pyramid: The King.
- Central part of the Temple: The King with a small entourage.
- The outer part of the Temple: The king with numerous entourage.



Bakong: View from the central tower to the east. The king will prostrate himself before Shiva on the platform in the foreground.



Devatas at the central tower (12th century), dressed in the style of the 9th century.

In the southern part of the outer enclosure

We leave the inner temple by the West Gate and find a food stall where I use to drink hot green tea. Here you will meet your driver. On the way back, we cross the south of the temple. There is a remarkable tower, just before the remains of the South Gate. Ask for “Prasat”.

Significance

The Bakong, the first big pyramid temple, marks the roaring start of Angkor. The pyramid was in its time the most significant building in Mainland South-East Asia, demonstrating the power of the kingdom.

The five-tear pyramid and the large square concentric enclosures became the prototype of all pyramid temples in Angkor.

Though the oldest, the Bakong is in total the best preserved of all pyramid temples.



A brick tower at the outer enclosure. Doors and false doors of the brick towers are mostly of sandstone and monolithic.



Preah Ko, the towers from the east

Preah Ko

D Inaugurated 879

R Indravarman I (877–c. 889)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

F Ancestor Temple

L In front of the Royal Palace

The west side of the road running from the Baray of Lolei to the Bakong is given to a compound, 500 m square and enclosed by a moat. The temple interrupts this moat at its east side.

Six brick towers in two rows share a sandstone platform. The towers in the first row are bigger than those of the second row. In front of each descends a flight of stairs, and in front of the stairs are three Nandi sculptures. They give the temple's name: *Preah Ko*, which means "Sacred Bull".

There are magnificent reliefs on lintels and the walls, in sandstone and stucco. The colonnettes serve as the best in Khmer art.

By inscriptions on the door jambs, we know, that the front towers were dedicated to Shiva as the protector of the king's father (central tower), and his mother's father, and the husband of his mother's sister respectively (lateral

towers). The towers of the second row were dedicated to Uma as the protector of the respective spouses.

Preah Ko is an ancestor temple. The spirits of the ancestors own the soil and the place. They are invited to reside in their temple. Simultaneously, the King proudly presents his royal ancestors.



Preah Ko, the towers of the second row



Preah Ko, Nandi statues



Preah Ko: Dvarapala and Devata

Dvarapalas and Devatas

For the first time, there are guardian figures in sandstone, Dvarapalas at the

front towers, and Devatas at the rear towers.

The Dvarapalas represent Shiva as a demon who is guarding his sanctuary; the Devatas represent Uma, the spouse of Shiva, in the same function.



Lolei, the towers from the north-east

Lolei

D Inaugurated 893

R Yasovarman I (889–c. 915)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

F Ancestor Temple

L In the Baray of Lolei

This ancestor temple is located in the north of the Roluos group. It makes a square island in the middle of the now dried up Baray of Lolei.

There are four brick towers, dedicated to the parents and maternal grandparents of King Yasovarman I, (who built his state temple on the Phnom Bakheng in central Angkor). The northern towers were never built. Excellent reliefs are on the lintels and the walls. The inscriptions are masterpieces of calligraphy.



Phnom Bakheng, the pyramid from the south-east

Phnom Bakheng

D Built towards 900

R Yasovarman I (889–c. 915)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

F State-Temple

L Now between Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom

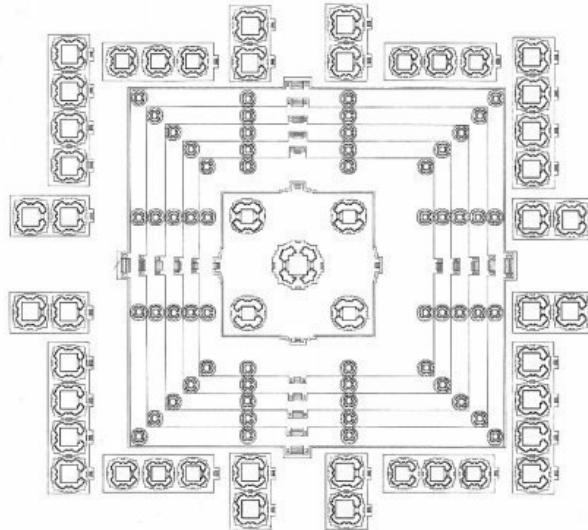
As a dominant hill, the Phnom Bakheng is the temple location par excellence. Here, the first state temple in central Angkor came into being.

The creation of the Quincunx

The top of the hill was flattened and a five-tier pyramid cut from the bedrock.

All towers on the pyramid were of sandstone.

For the first time in the world, the towers were arranged in a quincunx: a tower in the centre and four towers in the corners. We will find this arrangement of five towers again at East Mebon, Pre Rup, Ta Keo, Angkor Wat, and Ta Prohm.



Map of the pyramid by EFE

These towers were surrounded by 60 towers on the pyramid and 44 brick towers at its foot.

A hill becomes a temple

Stairways run down the hill in the cardinal directions, except to the south. At the north, near Prasat Bei, we can visit two beautiful and well-preserved lions. Two more lions are to the east.

A series of shrines were arranged at the foot of the hill, six of them have remained: Rong Lmong, Thma Bay Kaek, two smaller shrines without names, Prasat Bei, and Sok Kro Op. Together with Baksei Chamkrong and the lions at the northern stairway, they make a fine walk.

The hill was framed by a moat, c. 900 m by 560 m.

Views and walks

From this central point in Angkor, you have a view to the West Baray, to Angkor Thom in the north, where you can make out the moat and the wall, and, to the south-east, Angkor Wat, and its moat.

Far away you can see Phnom Dei and Phnom Kulen in the north.

You can see three more temples built by Yasovarman: Phnom Bok in the east, Phnom Krom, near the Tonlé Sap Lake in the south, and Phnom Dei in the north.

Double Destruction

The temple was two times destroyed.

1. The southern arterial road of Angkor Thom runs through the frontal eastern parts of the temple. The outer east gate was razed to the ground; the stairway climbing up the hill looks as thwarted. The avenue from the east has vanished, and the shrines in the east of the outer enclosure were cut off by the road.
The northern part of the moat vanished under the Moat of Angkor Thom.
2. In the 16th or 17th centuries, the towers on top of the pyramid were dismantled for a Buddha statue which was never finished.



Panorama of the top of the pyramid, view from the east

Here were five sandstone towers, a central tower plus four towers in the corners. This was the first quincunx ever, which became typical for Angkor temples.

The towers, with 40 Devata reliefs, were dismantled for a loosely built up Buddha statue. The eastern towers vanished in the knees, the central tower in the body, the western vanished entirely.

The holes in the foreground held a canopy.



A Devata at the remains of the north-east tower on top of the pyramid



Lingam on top of the pyramid



Small sandstone towers at the pyramid



The pyramid in reconstruction (2016)

The view from the pyramid is breath-taking: Angkor Thom with the moat, the pyramid of Angkor Wat and the West Baray. In the distance, we see Phnom Kulen, Phnom Bok and Phnom Krom.

Visiting Phnom Bakheng is excellent for sunrise and overcrowded for sunset.



South-eastern fire shrine, view from east (2005)



Buddha statues in the south-east fire shrine



A lion at the foot of the northern stairway

Yasodharapura

The Phnom Bakheng is a prominent hill in central Angkor, a temple location par excellence.

About 900 AD, King Yasovarman I founded the new capital *Yasodharapura*,

“The City of Yasovarman”.

The **Phnom Bakheng** became his state temple.

He diverted the **Siem Reap River**, which then ran north-south, 2 km east of the Phnom Bakheng,

He built the **East Baray**.

The second capital was shaped like an L and integrated three cores, first the Baray and the Temple. The Residence was on the axes, west of the East Baray and north of the Phnom Bakheng.

Temples were also built at Phnom Bok, Phnom Krom and Phnom Dei (near Banteay Srei).

With an interruption by the Koh-Ker episode, Yasodharapura was the capital till to the end in the 14th or 15th century. Angkor Thom (late 12th to 13th centuries) was just a quarter in the capital.

Baksei Chamkrong

D Inauguration 947

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

F State Temple, and then Ancestor Temple

L In the Phnom Bakheng compound

The construction started in the early 10th century; it was then interrupted by the Koh-Ker episode. It

A brick tower is standing on top of a dainty pyramid. The tiers of the pyramid are made of laterite; base of the tower is covered with moulded sandstone.

As the pyramid is small, we can easily study the proportional reduction: The above steps get gradually lower which makes them look more distant.

Four axial stairways rise in a single flight which gets proportionally lower at every tier of the pyramid. Each tier is framed by sidewalls. The north stairway is the best preserved.

Look at the brick tower: Its above steps get gradually lower, the tower is also shaped like is a stepped pyramid.



Baksei Chamkrong from the south-west

On the door jambs are fine inscriptions. They tell the genealogy of the Khmer kings from the mythical beginnings when the ascetic Kambu married the Apsara Mera.

The beauty of this temple comes from its harmony. From here on, the use of laterite and the slender shape of the pyramid can be seen as the determining features of Khmer architecture.

Baksei Chamkrong has become a trendsetter, the first steep pyramid in Angkor.

History

The great King Yasovarman I died about 900. His not so great sons followed him. One of them started the construction of Baksei Chamkrong, within the compound of his father's state temple Phnom Bakheng, and could not even finish it.

King Rajendravarman II finished it in 947.



Prasat Kravan, standing Vishnu

Prasat Kravan

D Inauguration 921

O East

C Hindu, Vishnu

F Private Temple

L Between Angkor Wat and Pre Rup

This temple has five brick towers, surrounded by a moat. In the central and the northernmost towers we find brick reliefs on the inner walls of two towers, unique in Angkor art.

In the central tower:

- In the middle standing Vishnu with eight arms, surrounded by proselytes and topped by a mysterious crocodile.
- At the left side Vishnu's Three Strides; he is stepping from the Sea, where his spouse Lakshmi is holding a lotus blossom, to the Earth.
- On the right side Vishnu on Garuda. Similar to the opposite relief, he is wearing a disc, a lotus blossom, a conch, and a club.
- In the north tower Lakshmi, Vishnu's spouse, with four arms. Besides Vishnu's disc, she holds Shiva's trident.

At noon time, one has the best light to see the reliefs.



Prasat Kravan, Vishnu on Garuda



Prasat Kravan: Vishnu's Three Strides



Prasat Kravan: Lakshmi



East Mebon, the towers from the north

East Mebon

D Inauguration 952

R Rajendravarman II (944–968)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

F Ancestor Temple

L In the centre of the East Baray

The temple was once surrounded by the water of the East Baray, which has since dried up. In its time, the temple was accessed by boat. There are jetties in the cardinal directions. Five brick towers in a quincunx, on top of a flat pyramid, make a pretty ensemble. This arrangement resembles the top platform of Phnom Bakheng where the towers have vanished. By inscriptions, we know that in the towers were statues of Shiva and Uma in the likeness of King Rajendravarman's father and mother: Other idols depicted Vishnu and Brahma. The towers of the quincunx are surrounded and enclosed by eight small towers, fire shrines, halls, and two walls with axial door pavilions. Each tower sheltered a lingam.

At the East Mebon, lintel reliefs make a wonderful appearance: Indra, Vishnu as Narasimha, Garuda, Shiva, Kala, Yama, Ganesha, and Skanda. Elephants are pouring lustral water from amphorae on Lakshmi. On the walls are brick reliefs of guardians. All brick walls were covered with a sculpted lime-base mortar; only a lot of small holes aimed to aid adhesion, have remained. Eight pretty elephants take care of the far corners of the pyramid.



An Elephant is guarding the north-east corner of the East Mebon



Pre Rup from the south-east

Pre Rup

Original name: Rajendrabhadresvara, "Shiva, the protector of [King] Rajendravarman."

D Inauguration 961

R Rajendravarman II (944–968)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

F State-Temple

L South of the East Baray

Despite the fact that nobody really knows the meaning of the modern name Pre Rup, tour guides will explain it with unsavoury stories and "waste visitors' time" (Freeman/Jacques). Corpses were never burnt in a Shiva temple!

The temple is centred by a three-tier pyramid. It is 12 m high, measures 50 m square at the base, and 35 m square at the top platform.

The third, fourth and fifth tiers of the pyramid are compressed to a single step. Pre Rup has the first steep five-tower pyramid and the first quincunx of towers on top of a steep pyramid.

Entering from the east, we meet five stately towers (the sixth tower was never constructed).

The inner enclosure is framed by halls; a pair of tower-shaped fire shrines opens west. Between them is the big rectangular pedestal of a vanished Nandi

statue. At the north-east corner is the pavilion of the stele.

An imposing stairway runs up, guarded by lions.

The tower in the north-east is dedicated to Shiva, in the north-west to Uma, Shiva's spouse, in the south-east to Vishnu, and in the south-west to Lakshmi, Vishnu's spouse.

The central and eastern towers have male guardians; the western towers are guarded by Devatas (Goddesses).

The outer enclosure of the temple, some 1000 m square, touched the East Baray at the north. It is now almost entirely destroyed. Only one shrine has remained: Prasat Leak Neang.

History

After the Koh-Ker episode, King Rajendravarman II restarted Yasodharapura, the capital, in the south of the East Baray, with the East Mebon and Pre Rup.



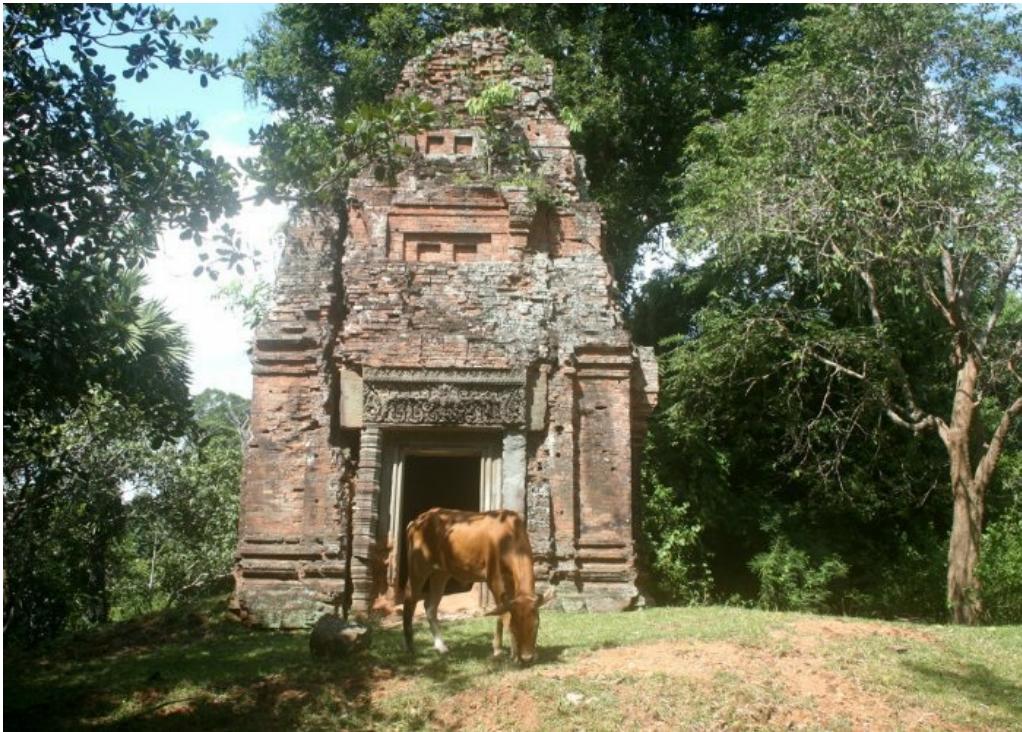
Pre Rup, the eastern stairway



A lion is watching the eastern stairway, in the background the south-eastern fire shrine



The south-east fire shrine and three towers in the east of the temple



Prasat Leak Neang

References

- Roveda 2005, p. 339–346.
Petrochenko, p. 118–126.

Ta Keo

Original name: Hema-sringagiri, "Mountain with Golden Peaks"

D Late 10th to early 11th centuries

R Jayavarman V (968–c. 1000), Jayaviravarman (1002-1011)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

F State-Temple

L West of the East Baray

Layout

The pyramid rises to 21.5 m, 45 m with the towers.

The ground tier, 122 by 106 m, is built of laterite and framed by an enclosure wall of sandstone.

The second tier is built of sandstone and framed by a gallery, the oldest in Angkor. It was originally vaulted by bricks.

The third tier, of moulded sandstone, consists of three narrow steps or registers.

On the top platform are five towers in a quincunx. The central tower is raised on a plinth of 4 m and is taller than the corner towers. So, looking from outside to the pyramid, you can see three towers in one line.

The pyramid is surrounded by a moat, encompassing a pair of oblong water basins at the east; an avenue with border stones links the pyramid to a terrace at the East Baray.

500 m south-east of the pyramid is an unfinished sandstone tower, a part of the original Ta Keo complex.



Ta Keo, the pyramid from the east



Ta Keo, the eastern stairway

History

King Jayavarman V started in 975 with the construction of the laterite base. King Jayaviravarman continued the building. The upper tiers of the pyramid were built of sandstone. The towers, built of a hard bluish sandstone, remained without any carving. The construction was stopped, be it after lightning or because the hard stone resisted to any carving. The upper tier was never used for worship.

Towers with cruciform ground plan

Five towers in a quincunx encompass the top platform; each tower is open on four sides with projecting porches, doubled at the central tower. This makes their ground plan look cruciform. From every tower, there are free views in the cardinal directions.



Ta Keo, south-west corner of the pyramid. The photo displays the different building materials, as laterite, brown, grey, yellow, and bluish sandstone.



Baphuon from the east

Baphuon

D Mid-11th century

R Suryavarman I (1002–1049), Udayadityavarman II (1049–1066)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

F State-Temple

The Baphuon was the biggest and most magnificent Shiva temple ever built in Angkor, with a total height (without tower) of 38.5 m. The tower was covered with bronze and higher than that of the Bayon. (Zhou Daguan, p. 48.) It must make do with a field of 425 m by 125 m, adjoining the south face of the Royal Palace.

The pyramid has five tiers, the second and third, as well as the fourth and

fifth, make one step each. Concentric galleries with gate towers and corner towers frame the first, third and fifth tier. Stairways lead to the gates.



Baphuon under reconstruction, 2009

"... [T]he perspective effects give the illusion of a larger structure than reality, and create a different structure with a number of false stairways leading nowhere." (Dumarçay/Royère)

The stories of the pyramid and their filling were not built stable enough; later the pyramid has collapsed.

King Udayadityavarman II has also built the **West Baray**, 8km by 2 km, and the **West Mebon** in its centre.

Buddhist takeover

In the 15th century, "it was transformed into a Buddhist shrine with the construction, on the west face of the second storey, of a giant sleeping Buddha, more than 60 m long. There was no hesitation in using architectural elements for masonry, not only from the first and third levels but also, probably, from the central tower, to form the statue at the base of the second storey." (Dumarçay/Royère)

The Rebirth

The site was cleared and superficially conserved from 1908 to 1918. However, the thorough consolidation of the pyramid was only possible by dismantling it and reconstructing it completely, stone by stone, registering every part. The filling had to be partially replaced by concrete. This started in

1960-1972, was interrupted by the Khmer Rouge period, restated in 1995 and finished in 2011. The restoration process is well displayed at the east and west gate pavilions of the first level.

Narrative Reliefs

The real treasure of the Baphuon is the narrative reliefs.

They are arranged in superposed framed panels, mostly measuring 40 cm by 70, generally reading from bottom to top. We find these panels at the proceeding pavilion, east face, at the south gate pavilion of the third enclosure, at the gate pavilions of the second level, and at the west face of the outer west gate.

Selection of reliefs at the second tier

- South gate pavilion, south face: Scenes of daily life and the life of hermits, and of the childhood of Krishna. North face: Scenes of the life of hermits, and of the Ramayana.
- East gate pavilion, east face: Scenes of the Ramayana, Arjuna and Shiva struggling over a boar. Scenes of the Mahabharata.
- North gate pavilion: Scenes from the Ramayana.

Visit

A visit to the Baphuon temple takes one hour at least. You can easily climb up the temple on your own, just follow the arrows – and don't miss the reliefs, in the corners at the *outside* of the gate pavilions! Best time is in the early morning; later it may be hot.



Narrative reliefs at the pyramid

Royal Palace, Royal Plaza, Khleang, and Prasat Suor Prat

The **Royal Plaza**, in front of the Royal Palace, was laid out in the late 10th and early 11th centuries. Symmetrically to the east gate of the palace are two **Khleang** (halls) and twelve **Prasat Suor Prat**; they are shrines, very

probably dedicated to Shiva.

East of the North Khleang is an unnamed "**Small Temple**", orientated west. King Suryavarman I laid out the **Royal Palace**; it is framed by a laterite wall, 246 m N-S and 585 m E-W, and a moat.

Most buildings, including the royal abode, were built of wood and have vanished.

In the East Gate, Suryavarman I had an inscription engraved, in 1010, containing the Oath of Loyalty to be given by the royal officials. See also Preah Vihear. (Sahai 2009, p. 80.)



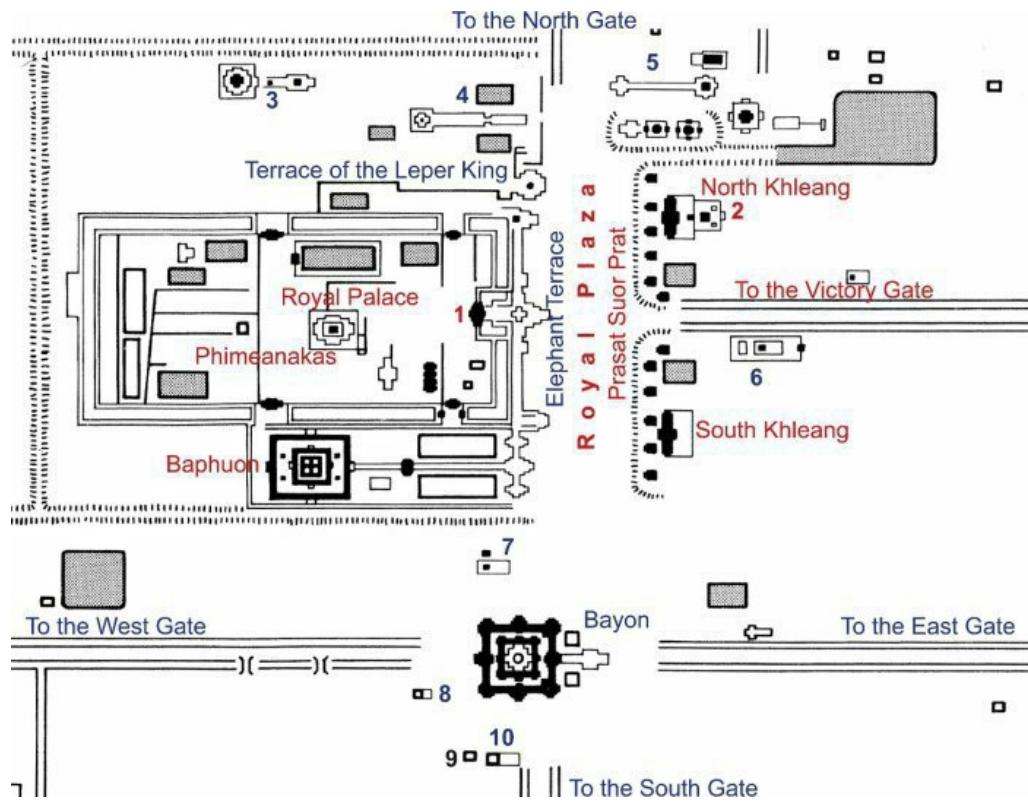
"Small Temple" from the west



East Gate of the Royal Palace



North Khleang and two towers of the Prasat Suor Prat



Central Angkor Thom

11th century

1 East Gate of the Palace

2 Small Temple

Late 12th century and later

3 Preah Palilay

4 Tep Pranam

5 Preah Pithu Group

6 Vihear Prampil Loveng

7 Preah Ngok

8 Preah Séer

9 Tomb of Jean Comaille

10 Preah En Tep



Prasat Suor Prat and North Khleang



Phimeanakas from the south-east

Phimeanakas

D 2nd half of 8th to early 11th centuries

R Harshavarman II (941-944), Jayavarman V (968–c. 1000), Suryavarman I (1002-1049)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

F Royal Chapel

The Phimeanakas, a small pyramid temple in the core of the Royal Palace, is the oldest known building in Angkor Thom. It features the first perfect galleries.

The rectangular ground plan of the Pyramid refers to the pre-Angkorian origins of the building.

The Naga underground

Zhou Daguan, a Chinese envoy (1295/96) in Angkor, reports a legend:

In the “gold tower”, the Phimeanakas, lived a “*nine-headed snake who was the lord of the earth of the whole country*”. Every night, the Naga appeared to the king as a young woman, and he had her to let her way with him. About the Naga. see also The Gates of Angkor Thom. (Zhou Daguan, p. 49.)



Terrace of the Elephants, view from the south



Terrace of the Elephants, a giant lion is fighting upright.

Terrace of the Elephants

King Jayavarman VII (1181 – c. 1220) who built the Bayon and laid out Angkor Thom, has also constructed the Terrace of the Elephants, 300 m long, in front of the Royal Palace, hiding the old face.

On top in the middle was a wooden pavilion.

Most remarkable are reliefs showing hunters on elephants in a mystic jungle. Among other figures, one can find spirits, the meditating Buddha, and lions, which are fabulous too.

The front of the northern bastion was two times pushed forward. Remains of the former fronts were unearthed and can be visited.



The northern part of the Terrace of the Elephants



Terrace of the Leper King, view from the south

Terrace of the Leper King

The Terrace of the Leper King was probably started by Jayavarman VII, and modified and finished later. Scholars consider the terrace to have been the place for royal cremations. The formerly seven layers of the faces depict the underworld with Naga, demons, anti-gods, the god Kubera, and so on.

The terrace was later moved forward. The old face is now to be visited in a corridor, with close-ups of the Naga King and his entourage.

The statue on top of the terrace (original in the National Museum Phnom

Penh) depicts a naked demon, with fangs (!), squatting on the ground. By evidence that is neither the “God of Death” nor ”Leper King”; these are arbitrarily given names.

References

Freeman/Jacques, p.74–101, 106–110.

Roveda 2005, p. 422–433, 444–446.

Petrotchenko, p. 206–238, 244–250.



Terrace of the Leper King, the Naga King with his princesses



The north face of the Terrace of the Leper King



Thommanon, tower and mandapa from the south

Thommanon

D Late 11th to 12th centuries

R Jayavarman VI (1080-1107), Suryavarman II (1113–c. 1150)

O East

C Buddhist

The temple is located north of the road running from the Royal Palace to Takeo and the East Baray, near the west bank of the river.

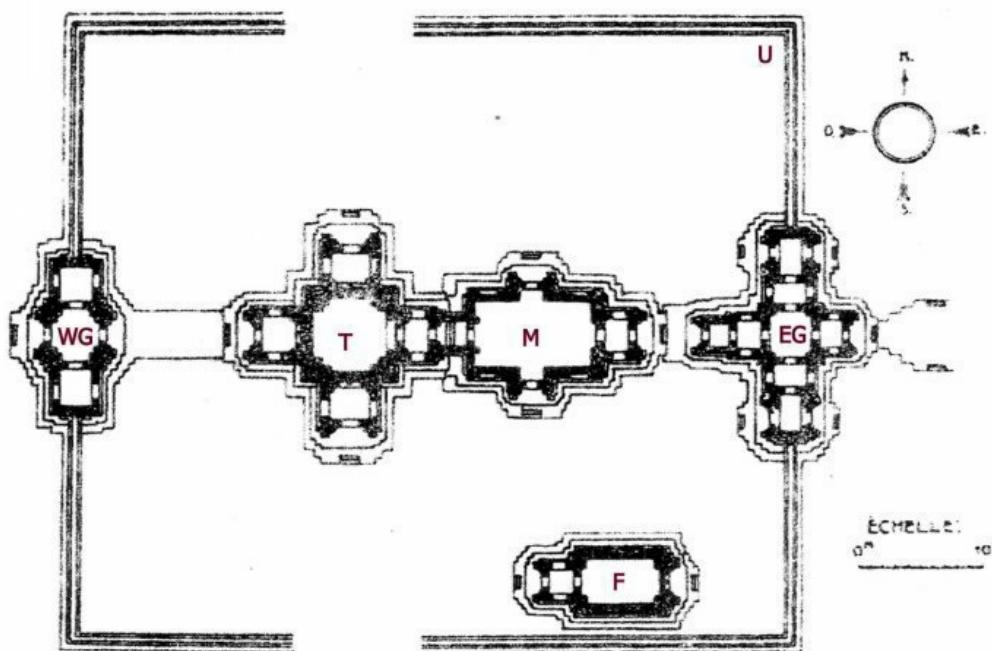
Thommanon displays the typical structure of a flat Buddhist temple.

The tower is cruciform similar to Ta Keo or Phimeanakas but opens only to the east. The other porches shelter false doors. Devatas adorn the tower. It attracts the eyes not only by the height but also by clear lines and the quality of the ornamentation.

In the mandapa and the antarala are well-preserved lintel reliefs: Vishnu on Garuda and Vishnu rescuing the Lord of the Elephants; the elephant is irregularly depicted with three heads.

Thommanon is a typical flat temple, distinguished by a single dominant and elegant tower with spire, preceded by an ornate mandapa.

All these big flat temples are Buddhist (This is proved by Buddhist reliefs which would never be in an Angkorian Hindu temple.) All elements are on one well-elevated level; the Buddha is at eye level with his followers.



Thommanon, plan by Glaize, modified.

A tower (T) with mandapa (M) and a fire shrine (F) are enclosed by a laterite wall (U), some 45 m by 60 m, with gates (EG/WG) in the east and west.. To the east is a terrace.



Superimposed Pediments at the West Gate of the Thommanon



Chau Say Tevoda, view from the north

Chau Say Tevoda

D Late 11th to 12th centuries

R Suryavarman II (1113–c. 1150), Yasovarman II (1150–65), Jayavarman VII (1181–c. 1220)

O East

C Buddhist

The temple is located on the road to Ta Keo, opposite of Thommanon. Enclosed by a laterite wall with four gopuras in the cardinal directions, is a tower with antarala and mandapa, and two fire shrines. The reliefs on the west face of the southern fire shrine are Buddhist. Some reliefs at the pediments were thoroughly scratched out during the Iconoclasm.

The temple is linked to the nearby river by an avenue, a stone bridge, and a cruciform terrace.

It was recently restored by a Chinese team.

Banteay Samré

D Late 11th to 12th centuries

R Dharaindravarman II (1107–1112), Yasovarman II (1150–65),
Jayavarman VII (1181–c. 1220)

O East

C Buddhist

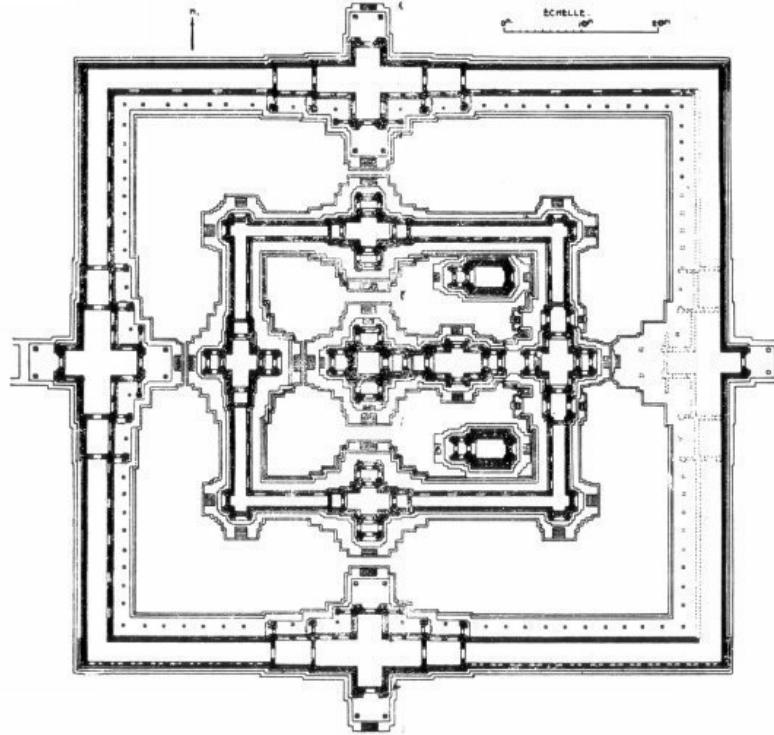
F Monastery

L East of the East Baray

To the east, the temple has an avenue: a causeway of 300 m, with Naga balustrades.

- There are two enclosures.
The outer enclosure was framed by a colonnade; the tiled roofs have vanished. Both enclosures have gate pavilions at the cardinal points.
- The inner enclosure, framed by galleries, is similar to Chau Say Tevoda. The buildings inside are framed by narrow platforms; they make a way to go around but they also let it look like perched together.

Reliefs are at pediments and lintels, and at the bases of the pilasters at the tower and the mandapa.



Banteay Samré, map by Glaize

Banteay Samré was cleared in 1930 and restored 1936–44.

"Anastylosis has transformed it into one of the finest monuments of the Angkor group, and one of the most complete. Its ornamentation, exceptional in quality and very well preserved in its entirety, became thereafter presented in its unique integrity – it is a pure specimen of the classic art from the finest period where the decoration, shown to its best advantage on a clear background, is itself a function of the architecture." (Glaize, p. 190.)



Banteay Samré, outer and inner gate, and tower from the east



Banteay Samré, south-east corner of the inner enclosure



Vishnu with ten arms fighting two demon kings



Gods and Goddesses in niches



Banteay Samré, the tower



North Gate of Preah Khan

Preah Khan

D Inaugurated 1191

R Jayavarman VII (1181-c. 1220)

O East

C Buddhist

F Monastic city and Ancestor Temple

This large temple is located north-east of Angkor Thom. Preah Khan was dedicated to Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Universal Compassion, and to the memory of the king's father.

Like in Ta Prohm, a complex flat temple makes the core of a monastic city.

A significant medical centre

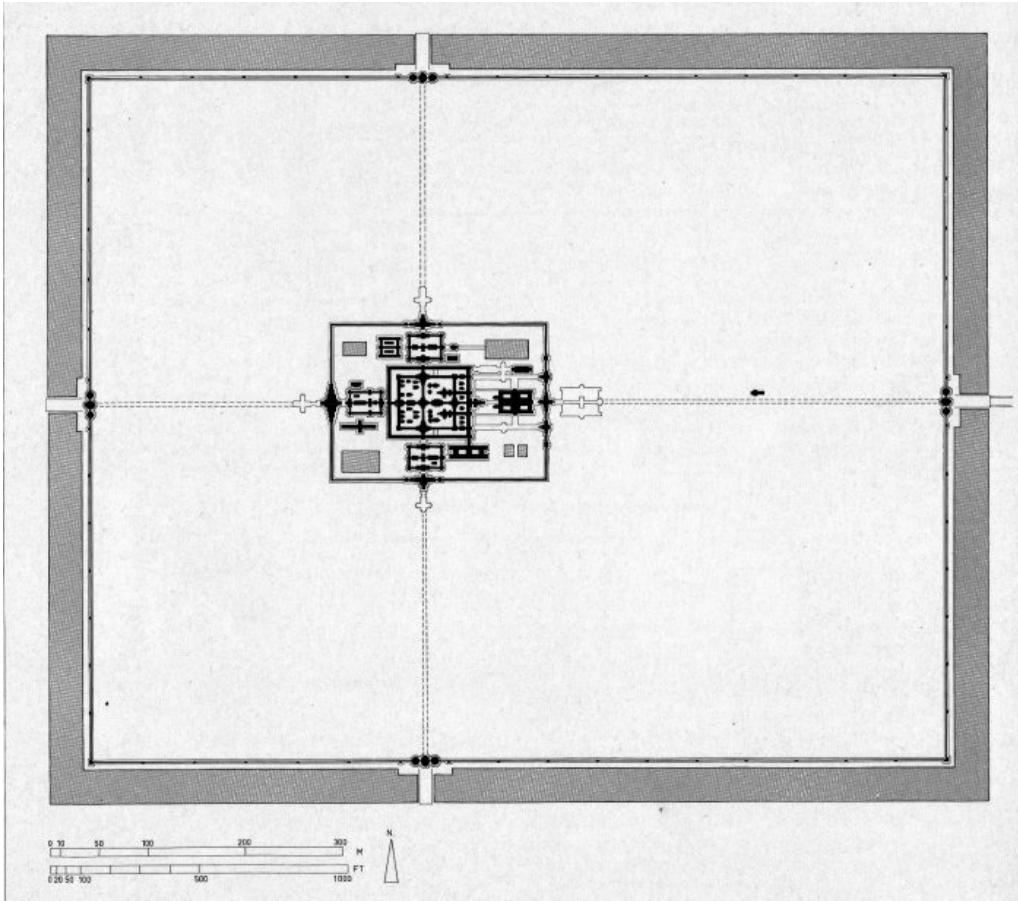
In Preah Khan lived more than 15,000 people, monks and their servants, and other citizens.

The temple was a centre of medical research and practice, where experts of Khmer, Chinese, and Indian Ayurveda medicine joined together.

Preah Khan was the core of a progressive health policy, unique in the world; it was the mother of more than a hundred hospitals in the kingdom.



Garuda holding two Nagas



Preah Khan, map of the city by EFEAO

The city

The city measures 870 m east-west by 700 m north-south.

The Enclosure Wall of the city is topped by sandstone slabs; standing upright, they show the meditating Buddha, mostly scratched out.

Along the wall, every 35 m, are 72 huge sandstone reliefs, depicting Garuda, holding two Nagas.

At the cardinal points, the wall of the city is opened by three-tower gates, preceded by causeways which are flanked giants holding Nagas.



The frontal part of the giant's balustrade at the outer East Gate of Preah Khan, Musee Guimet Paris.

An avenue, framed by sculptured border stones, connects the gate to the North Baray, where we find a terrace and the remains of a landing stage. Inside the gate, we are on a shady way across the thick forest. Here was the classiest main road of the city, leading from the main entrance gate to the inner temple.

The houses of the city, made of perishable materials, have entirely gone; so has an assumed royal palace in the north-east quarter of the city.

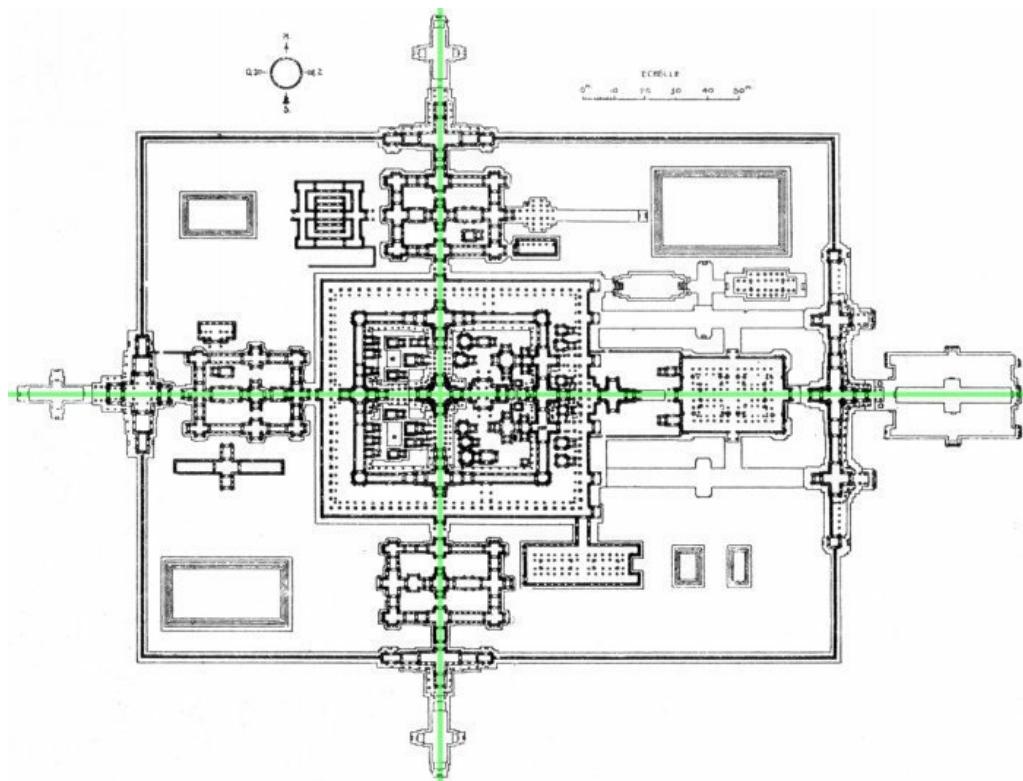


Dharmasala

Dharmasala

On the way is a Dharmasala, a chapel of a pilgrims' rest place. Whilst the back side of the building is entirely closed, the face to the road is opened by five square windows, the northernmost much bigger than the others. All windows were closed by double rows of balusters. In the vault are openings for the flue. Doors go to east and west. The corbelled vault covers a room of 4.50 m (!). This building was brilliantly restored by John Sanday, World Monuments Fund.

Layout of the temple



Plan of the temple, from Glaize, modified.

The temple, at the centre of the city, measures 220 m east-west by 170 m north-south.

Framed by an enclosure wall are:

- The central shrine, dedicated to the Bodhisattva, with Hall of Dancers, the main gate of the temple, and a cruciform terrace to the east.

- West of it, a shrine dedicated to Vishnu, with the west gate of the temple.
- On its north-south axis, the shrines are orientated east, transverse to the axis; they are dedicated to Shiva (north), and the memory of the king's uncle (south).

Later, more buildings were perched into the open space of the courtyards; a charming architectural chaos came into being.



Preah Khan, East Gate of the Temple

The East Gate of the Temple

The structure is similar to the west gate of Angkor Wat:

Three gate towers, linked by graduated chambers and roofs.

Two outer gate pavilions are linked by galleries with adjacent half galleries.

The gate is some meters wider than the west face of the central temple.



In the Hall of Dancers, view to the west



In the Hall of Dancers, view to the north

Hall of Dancers

Friezes with Apsaras dancing on lotus flowers give the name of this cruciform gallery. Its structure is similar to the cruciform gallery in the third enclosure of Angkor Wat – so was its F a space of transition from outside to inside.



Building on stilts

Building on stilts

To the north you see a building, standing on massive cylindrical columns. No stairway gives access to the second floor. The columns copy wooden piles. By local tradition, it sheltered the Preah Khan, “The Holy Sword”. This is sandstone copy of a wooden rice granary and served to support the monks (personal communication by Christophe Pottier). It was located at the entrance of the monks’ quarter. (Similar stone granaries were at Ta Prohm and Banteay Kdei.)



View of the central tower from the north

Central shrine and inner enclosure

The central tower is framed by eight towers and two concentric galleries. It is guarded by Gods and Demons as Dvarapalas and by Devatas.

The inner walls of the mandapa and of the central tower look bare; here are rows of dowel holes; the dowels held bronze panels. The outside was plastered and gilded.

The centre of the tower, and at the same time of the entire temple complex, is at the intersection of the principal axes. From here we have free sight in the cardinal directions: to the gates at the south, west, and north, and back through the Hall of Dancers and the east entrance.

The centre is now taken by a stupa of modest style (16th century).

Initially, the scene looked very different: The entrances of the various temples were closed by wooden doors. The vaults were hidden by wooden ceilings. The interior was illuminated by lamps or torches; their light was mirrored by the polished bronze walls. In the centre was a statue of the standing Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara with the features of the king's father.

The axes are now open and give free sight in the cardinal direction

The courtyards of the inner enclosure are filled with small shrines which were

added later.

Northern Shrine

This part of the temple was dedicated to Shiva and features fine reliefs.



In the northern shrine



Reclining Vishnu. The Naga is replaced by a Reachisey.



Krishna lifting Mount Govardhana



Rama's triumphant return to his capital



South Gate of the Temple with view to the centre

South gate of the city

Off the route, it is almost forgotten. The causeway of giants was never restored. The site is lonely and picturesque.



At the south gate of the city



Srei Krup Leak

Srei Krup Leak

The central temple of Preah Khan is framed by two galleries, standing next to each other. The outer gallery is adorned by guardians, Dvarapalas; the inner gallery is embellished by Devatas in niches. The most beautiful Devata reliefs are in the north-east corner, hidden in winding and narrow passages which are often blocked by crashed down debris; some of them are well preserved. Local people venerate two certain reliefs. They are called Srei Krup Leak. They figure the spirits of Jarayajadevi and Indradevi, the two consecutive wives of King Jayavarman VII, the builder of Preah Khan. Women or couples, some of them well-known people from Phnom Penh, visit the site to pray for fertility. Neang Srei Sumpon, the attendant in this part of the temple, told us that they have often returned to thank for the fulfilling of their wishes



Neak Pean, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara

Neak Pean

D Late 12th to early 13th century

R Jayavarman VII (1181 - c. 1220)

O East

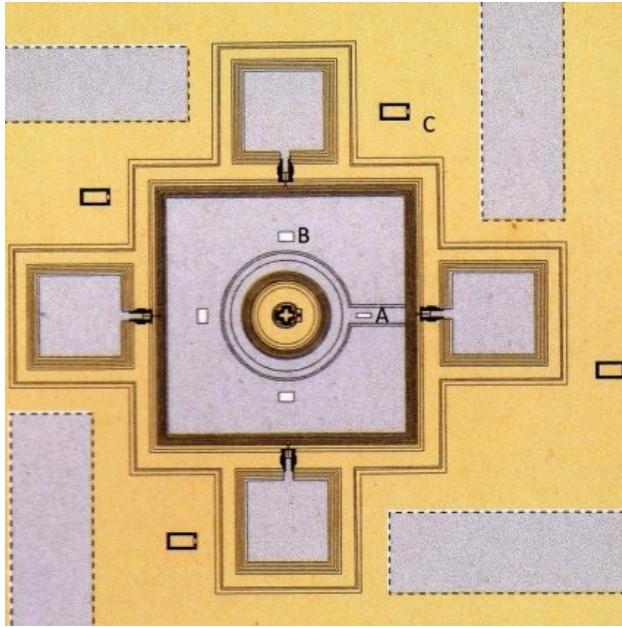
C Originally Hindu, then Buddhist

F Water Sanctuary

This fine temple is located on an artificial island in the centre of the North Baray.

It symbolises the holy lake Anavatapta on the vertex of the world in the Himalayas. From there, four sacred streams spring up, bringing healing water into the whole world.

Pilgrims visited this place to draw salutary water.



Neak Pean, map by EFEÖ, modified

Layout

- **Tower**

The tower opens to the east; the other faces show false doors with reliefs of Lokeshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. At the pediments are legends of the Buddha.

- **Circular Island**

The base of the island is surrounded by two Naga. Their tails are twisted in the west, thus giving the name of the temple which means: "Twisted Snakes".

- **Central basin**

The water flew from the central basin through the chapels to the outer basins.



Neak Pean, view from the lookout point

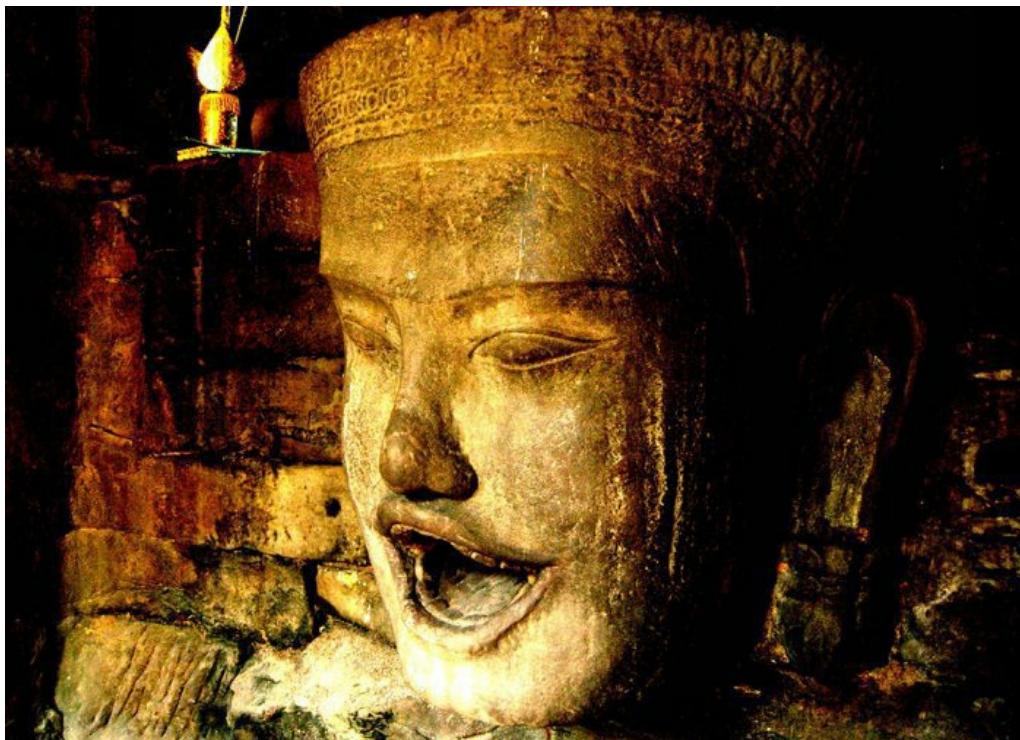


The northern chapel

- **Horse Balaha (A)**

East of the prasat in the pond is a statue of the Horse Balaha.
(A copy of this sculpture is to be seen at Siem Reap Airport.)

- **Remains of Linga reliefs (B)**
in the north of the central basin.
- **Outer Basins**
Representing Water, Earth, Fire, and Wind.
- **Chapels**
- **Water reservoirs**
- **Lookout point (C)**



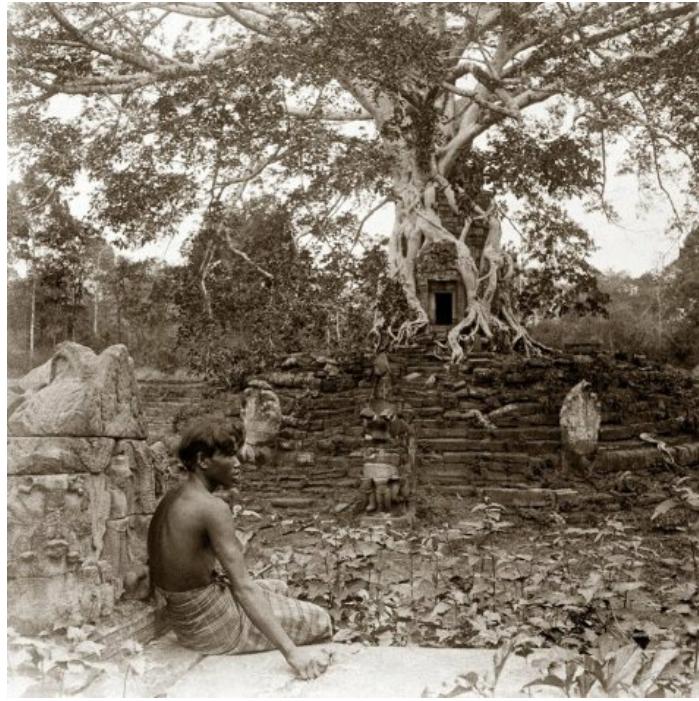
Gargoyle at the eastern chamber

A Face in a Chapel

The water flows through four chapels to four square basins. These chambers are of excellent architecture. Look at the decoration inside of the corbelled vault. The gargoyles show masks; the finest is in the east, a human face.

Visit

The entrance is by a causeway and a narrow wooden bridge across the North Baray from the north. The visit is restricted by a fence around the northern basin. Last time, I saw the temple at 7.30 am, excellent!



Neak Pean in the 1920s, view from the east chapel to the Horse Balaha and the central island. Photo by EFEO.



View from the north

Banteay Kdei

D Late 12th to early 13th centuries

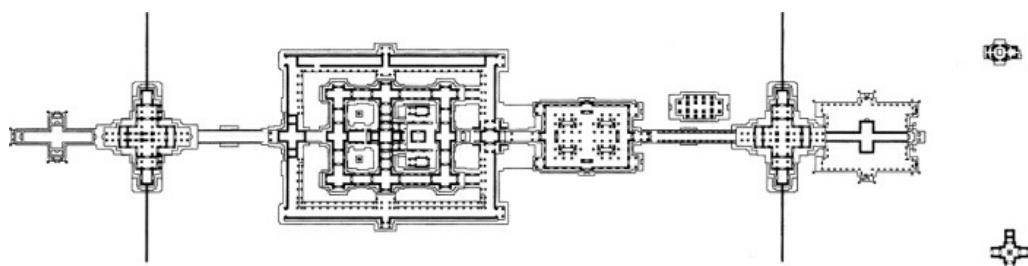
R Jayavarman VII (1181 - c. 1220)

O East

C Buddhist

F Monastic city

Located on the west face of Srah Srang and next to Ta Prohm, Banteay Kdei is similar to Ta Prohm or Preah Khan. As it is smaller than these, Banteay Kdei is more comfortable to visit.



Banteay Kdei (EFEOJ)

From east to west: Terrace, East Gopura III, Rice Granary, Hall of Dancers, Central Shrine, West Gopura III, Terrace.

Layout of the Temple

A mandala: The central tower is linked to the inner gallery where there are eight more towers, enclosing four courtyards. All nine towers are standing upright.

Another gallery, measuring 80 m by 60 m, frames this group, enclosing six more courtyards. The best view of this ensemble is from the west.

The Hall of Dancers precedes the east face of the second gallery. Nearby are the ruins of a pillared building, probably it was a rice granary, same as in Preah Khan.

The ensemble is enclosed by a laterite wall, open to the east and the west by gate pavilions.

In the East Gate, we find a beautiful Buddha statue of a later age. In front of the East Gate is a magnificent terrace.



Banteay Kdei, the towers from the west

The temple is enclosed by a double chain of moats or basins, intended for the water supply of the monks and other inhabitants of the city.



Interior of the East Gopura III with a recent statue of the Buddha



Hall of Dancers, view from the south



Banteay Kdei, North Gate of the city

The City

Face towers in the cardinal directions open the enclosure wall of the city, 700 m by 500 m. Visitors usually only see the east and west face towers, but those in north and south are also remarkable.

Srah Srang

By 10th-century's inscriptions, we know that Kavindrarimathana, the architect of King Rajendravarman (who has also built the East Mebon and Bat Chum) has constructed this baray, "*for the use of the public, excluding the elephants, which are destroying the dykes*". (Freeman/Jacques, p. 151.)

Srah Srang may be translated as "Bath of the Monks."

In the centre of the baray are vestiges of something that was probably a Mebon.

Contemporary with Banteay Kdei, the baray was converted to a basin. It was framed with sandstone steps.

Terrace

A terrace is preceding the main gate of the compound; originally there was a wooden pavilion on top. Pretty stairs with Naga balustrades lead to a landing

stage at the basin.

Srah Srang is an airy place for a rest, at sunrise and sunset.



Terrace at Srah Srang.



Ta Som, Devata arched over by Nagas

Ta Som

D Late 12th to early 13th centuries

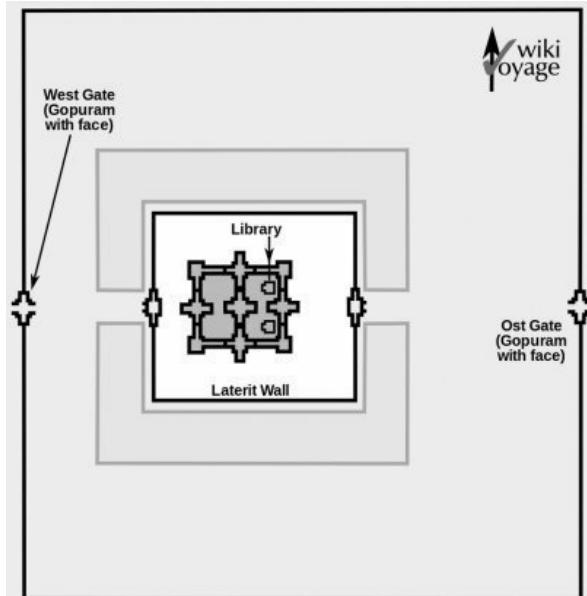
R Jayavarman VII (1181 - c. 1220)

O East

C Buddhist

F Monastic city

Located at the north-east corner of the North Baray, a bit off the way, this temple is a quiet and charming site.



Map of Ta Som (Wikivoyage)

Entering from the west, we first pass a face tower. Then we cross a large moat by a causeway. This moat supplied the monks with water.



Relief at the west causeway

At the north face of the west causeway is an intriguing relief of the *Churning of the Sea of Milk*.

After passing another gate pavilion, we are in front of the sanctuary.

A mandala: The central tower and two fire shrines in the south-east and south-west are enclosed by a gallery with towers in the cardinal directions and corner pavilions; all is more or less ruined.

173 Devatas are in niches, some of them are framed by Nagas.

The east face of the east gate is overgrown by a wrangler fig; reliefs are partly veiled, a picturesque view.



Ta Som, outer West Gate



Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara



Ta Som, outer East Gate



Preah Palilay, east gate and tower

Preah Palilay

D Late 13th century or later

O East

C Buddhist

Preah Palilay, 200 m north of the Royal Palace, consists of a ruined tower on a high pedestal, a well-preserved gate pavilion with delicate Buddhist reliefs, and a cruciform terrace with Naga balustrades. The tower shelters a fragment of a statue, picturing the Buddha calling the Earth.



*Preah Palilay, Standing Buddha with worshipers; on the lintel Transcending
Buddha above Kala*



Preah Palilay, the terrace



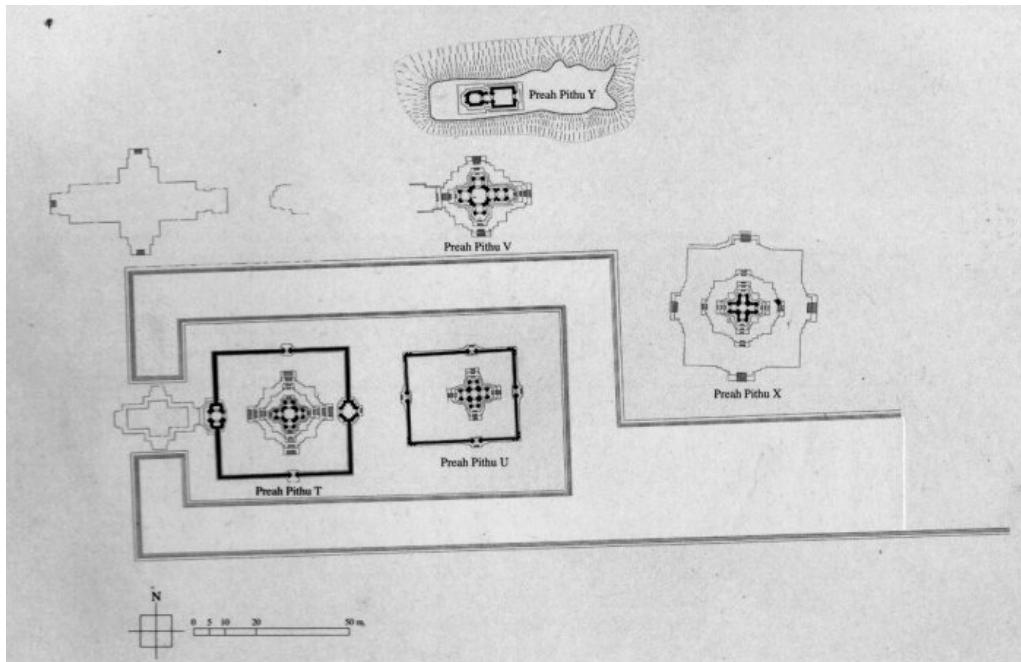
Preah Pithu Temple T from the west

Preah Pithu

D 12th century till late

O Temples V, X, and Y: east, Temples T and U: west

In the north-east of the Royal Plaza, under shady trees, is an ensemble of five small temples. They are called Temples T, U, V, X, and Y. Except for Temple Y, the temples are similar: cruciform towers raised on sandstone pedestals.



Preah Pithu, map by EFEO



Temple U from the south



Devata at Temple U

Temples T and U

Dating from 12th to early 13th century, they shelter impressive lintel reliefs. At the *Churning of the Sea of Milk*, Vishnu is riding the Naga; there is no pivot. The legs of the gods and demons are hidden by foliage. In the middle, above Kurma, are some products of the churning: Lakshmi and another goddess, a horse and a baby elephant, young Airavan.



Dancing Shiva between Vishnu and Brahma, Temple U



The Churning of the Sea of Milk, Temple U



Lingam at Temple V

Temple V

This temple dates from the 13th century. It is linked to the Royal Plaza by a cruciform terrace, but it opens to the east.

A big Lingam is standing in the north entrance.

At the north face, you can find a Neriphal (“Fruit Woman”).



Neriphal at Temple V



Temple X from the south

Temple X or Prasat Ta Tuot

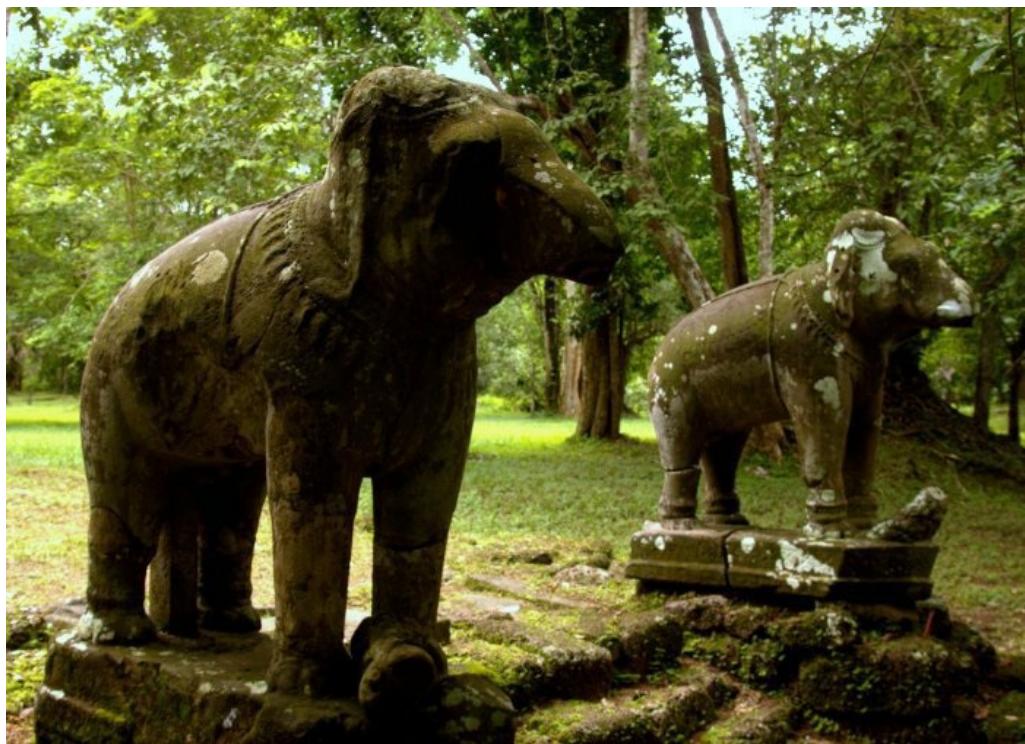
Dating from the 13th to 16th centuries, the small tower rises on a big base. In the cella is a two-register frieze, showing the Buddha calling the Earth. The ushnisha (dome at the vertex) is topped by a flame; this is Thai style and post-Angkorian.



Temple X, freeze in the cella

Buddhist Terrace

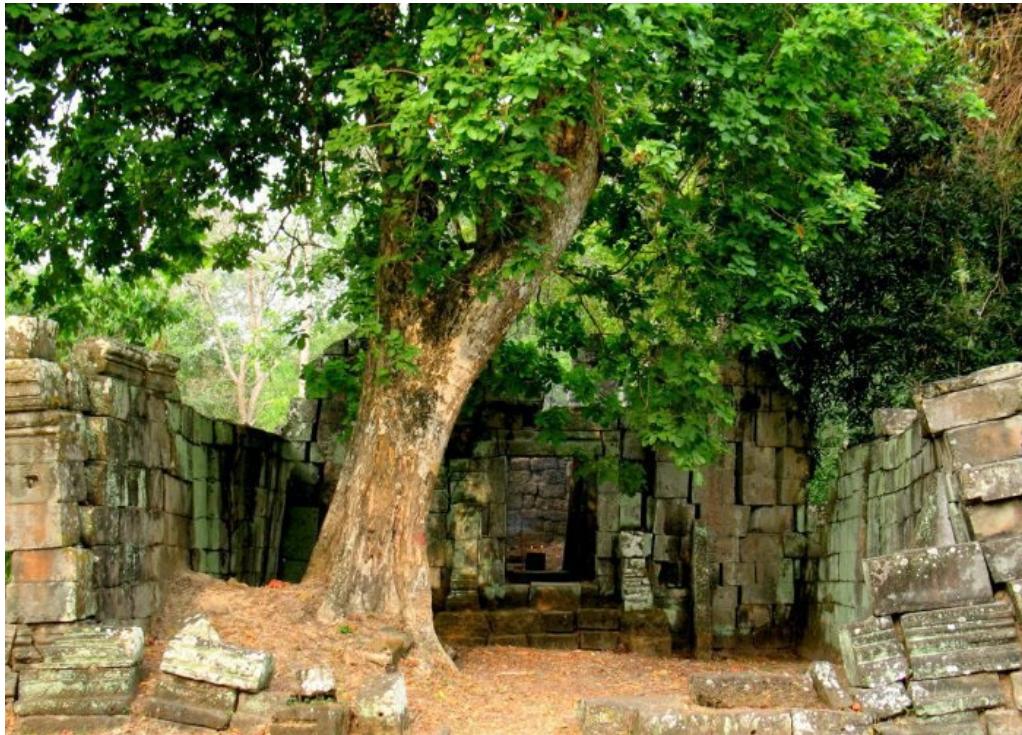
A terrace is located between the temple and a pond to the east. Two Elephants, 2/3 life size, are guarding a long gone stairway.



Elephants east of Temple X

Temple Y

(12th to 13th centuries) At the west side of the mandapa, we find two half-pediments, showing the Battle of Lanka and Vishnu's Three Strides.



Temple Y from the east



Temple Y, Vishnu's Three Strides



Spean Thma

Spean Thma

Spean Thma means “Stone Bridge”. It was built in the 16th century, where the road from the Royal Palace to Ta Keo crossed the river and had 18 pillars. The building material was sandstone blocks that were taken from Angkor Thom some of them are with reliefs.

Die Brücke hatte 16 Joche, jedes 1,10 m weit, die Pfeiler waren 1,60 m breit. Als sie gebaut wurde, hatte der Fluss eine alte Brücke zerstört, aber die neue hielt auch nicht stand. Der Fluss zerstörte sie und verlagerte sich nach Osten. Das Flussbett vertiefte sich um einige Meter.

There were 16 bays of 1.10 m each; the pillars measure 1.60 m each. While the river was 17 m wide, the whole bridge spanned 45 m.

Originally, the water ran through these bays, and, running faster, eventually destroyed the bridge. Now, the river has shifted to the east and runs c. 6 m deeper.

The Decline of Angkor

King Jayavarman VII had the area of rice cultivation and artificial irrigation extended to the north, off the plain and into the slopes of the Phnom Kulen and Kbal Spean where the water runs faster.

The outcome was an increase of erosion which gradually destroyed the system of irrigation. In addition, there was a drought in the 14th century.

Jayavarman's building program put too much strain on the capital and the people. Inner tensions cropped up as the Hindus refused to accept the supremacy of Buddhism.

The royal court moved to the south of Cambodia. By and by, people abandoned Angkor.

Angkor declined by itself and hardly by forces from outside.

The Siamese (Thais) are said to have conquered Cambodia in 1431. This is not proved; it's mere fiction. History knows next to nothing about the 14th and 15th centuries. By the way, *Siem Reap* is traditionally translated as "Defeat of the Siamese".

References

Glaize, p. 107–129.

Roveda 2005, p. 450–454.

Petrotchenko, p. 260–261, 276–281.

Stars at the Outskirts

Ak Yum

Located near the south-west corner of the West Baray, Ak Yum was the centre of a city and a regional pre-Angkorian kingdom, constructed in the 8th century. It is the first pyramid temple.

Little has remained as earth masses from the nearby dyke of the Baray (built about 1050) have almost buried the temple.



Banteay Thom, inner east gate

Banteay Thom

D Late 12th to early 13th centuries

R Jayavarman VII (1181 - c. 1220)

O East

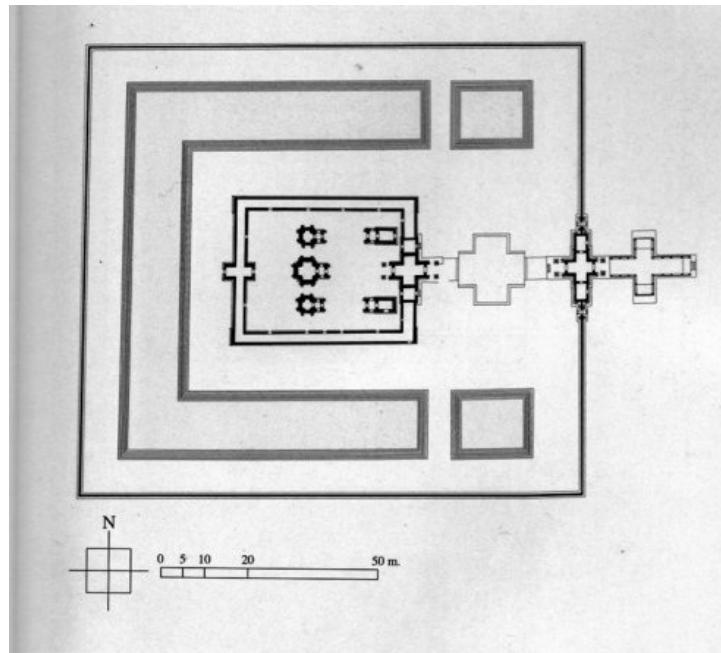
C Buddhist

F Monastery

The temple is located c. 4 km north of the north-west corner of Angkor Thom. Banteay Thom means “Big Citadel”. So it looks: enclosed by a stately wall and a gallery with gates to the west and, much bigger, to the east, are three stately towers, lined north-south, and two fire shrines.

The gallery opens to the east and west with gates.

A cruciform terrace precedes the stately outer East Gate.



Map by EFEÖ, modified



Banteay Thom, the towers from the east



Banteay Thom, the Great Departure of the Buddha

Beng Mealea

D Late 11th to 12th centuries

R Dharaindravarman II (1107–1112), Suryavarman II (1113–c. 1150)

O East

C Buddhist

F Monastery

By the dimensions, by the ground plan, and by the style, the temple is similar (and roughly contemporary) to Angkor Wat, but unlike there, it has no pyramid; Beng Mealea is a flat Buddhist temple and a monastery.

The – collapsed – central tower is framed by three galleries; the outer gallery measures 180 m by 150 m.

In the east, a cruciform gallery links the first gallery to the second. In the south of the third enclosure are two "palaces" (gallery halls).

The city was surrounded by an enclosure wall and a moat. The moat is crossed by causeways of sandstone.

East of it is a Baray; from there, starting with a terrace, an avenue runs to the temple's East Terrace. At the East Gate of the city are the remains of Naga parapets.

Beng Mealea is located east of the Phnom Kulen, c. 60 km north-east of Siem Reap, on the ancient road from Angkor to Preah Khan of Kampong Svay,

where the ancient road to Ko Ker branches.

Beng Mealea is to a great extend collapsed, drown in its debris and partially overgrown.

In the west of the complex is Prasat Kansaeng, the ruin of a Dharmasala.

Visit

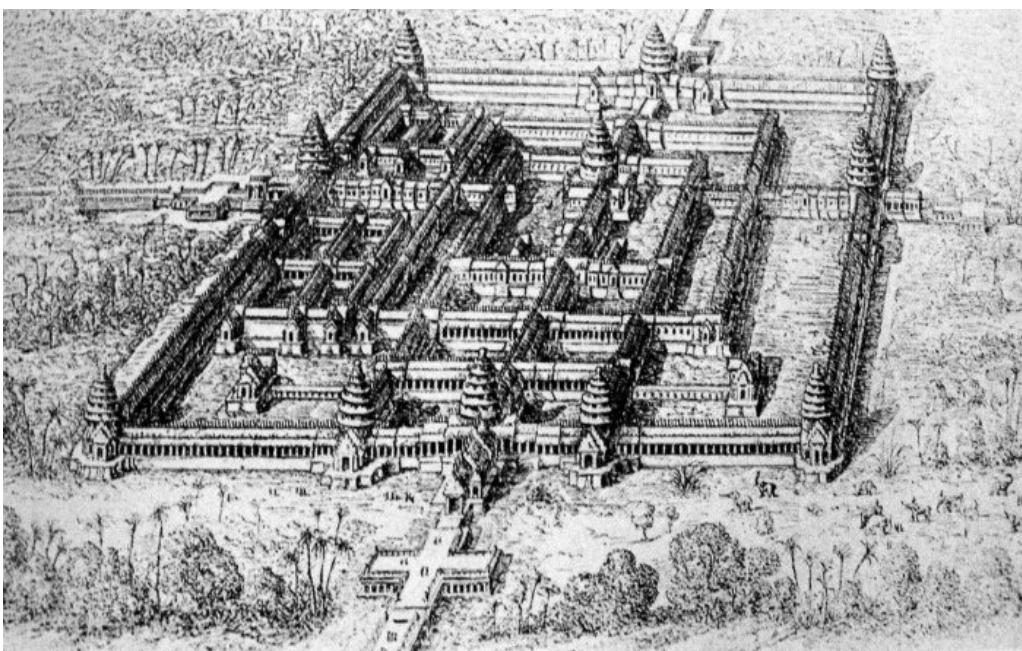
The interior of the temple may only be visited along the wooden stairways and bridges. Entrance fee is 5 \$.



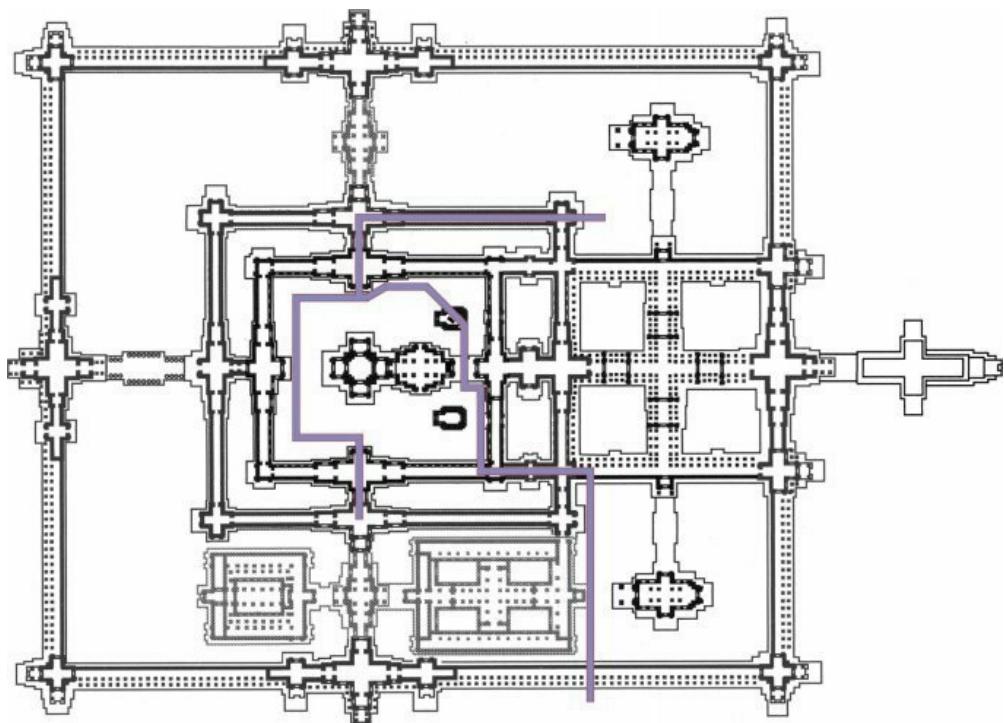
Beng Mealea, passage between the gallery of the second enclosure and the western Gallery Hall in 2014.



Beng Mealea, outer north-eastern pavilion in 2003.



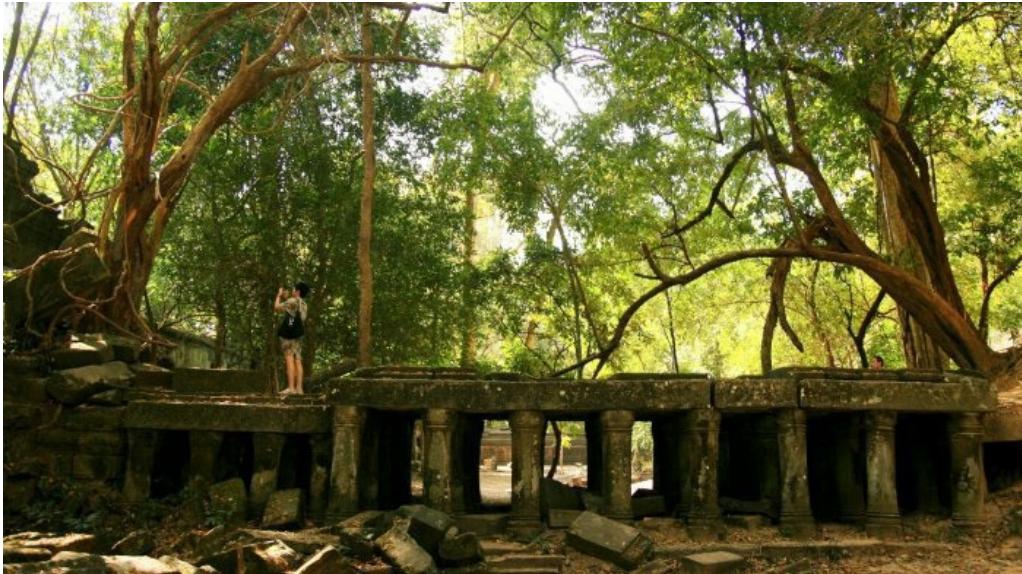
Beng Mealea from the east. Drawing by Delaporte (1880).



Beng Mealea, plan with the wooden footbridge.



At the inner South Gate in 2008



At the inner West Gate in 2014



The outer South Gate in 2003



At the inner East Gate in 2017



Chau Srei Vibol, the tower

Chau Srei Vibol

D Mid-11th century

O East

This vast temple complex is located south-east of Phnom Bok, at the ancient road to Beng Mealea and Preah Khan of Kampong Svay.

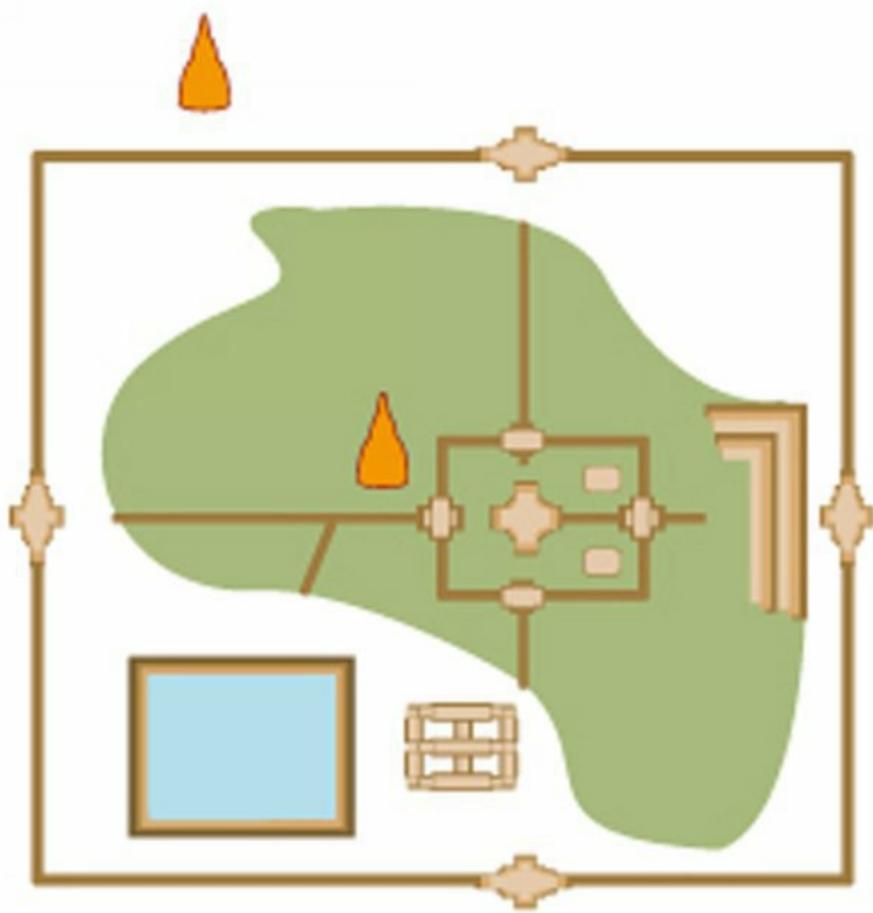
The central sanctuary covers the top of a natural hill: a tower and two fire shrines, framed by galleries with four gates. In the south-west of the compound is a **Cruciform Gallery**; a water basin is nearby; the function is unknown. One can find similar structures at Beng Mealea. A laterite wall, with four big gate pavilions in the cardinal directions, frames the outer enclosure. Parts of the wide moat are still under water. They were a part of Angkor's irrigation system. There are no inscriptions, fragments of reliefs are in the style of Baphuon, mid-11th century. The temple was heavily destroyed; we neither know when this happened nor who did it.

Visit

You do not need a guide, but sturdy shoes. Your Angkor ticket may be checked.

Enter the temple at the control post, at the north-west corner of the outer enclosure wall. Go inside along the wall to the north, east, and south gate. From there you go to the Cruciform Gallery, the eastern parts are accessible, and then a long way, paved with laterite flagstones, up to the sanctuary. On the way back, you can follow the paved way to the west, or the, or you go back to the south gate. See the relief at the west gate, and leave the temple at the north-west corner.

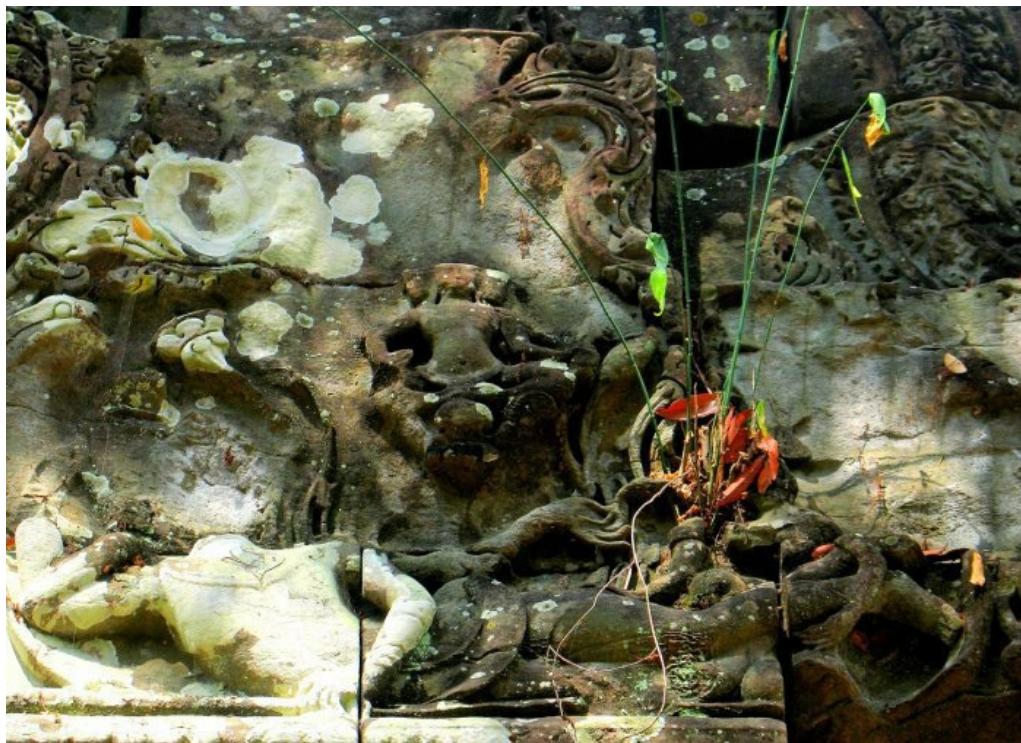
At the ancient road, c. 2 km west of Chau Srei Vibol, is **Spean Thma Stong Toch**, the ruin of a stone bridge.



Chau Srei Vibol, map by Krorma



In the Cruciform Gallery



Reclining Vishnu and the Birth of Brahma, a hidden relief at the west gate of Chau Srei Vibol

Kbal Spean

Angkor's prettiest river sanctuary is located 8 km north of Banteay Srei. It is a stretch of a river, a tributary of the Siem Reap River, running in a rocky bed and then over a waterfall.

There are reliefs of Lingams and Yonis, as well as other Hindu icons. Inscriptions are dating from the 11th century.

Visit

From the entrance (Angkor Ticket required. it closes at 3 pm), it is a 30-minutes foot walk uphill.

There is a waterfall; bring swimming dress with you.

Kuk Po

D 8th and 9th century

O West and north

C Hindu: Vishnu

Located exactly north of and contemporary with Ak Yum, the temple was a part of the pre-Angkorian city Amarendrapura

Now its ruins are in a secluded area north of the western part of the West Baray.

There were four brick towers. C was the oldest, facing west.

The other towers were from the late 9th century; they were facing north.



Kuk Po

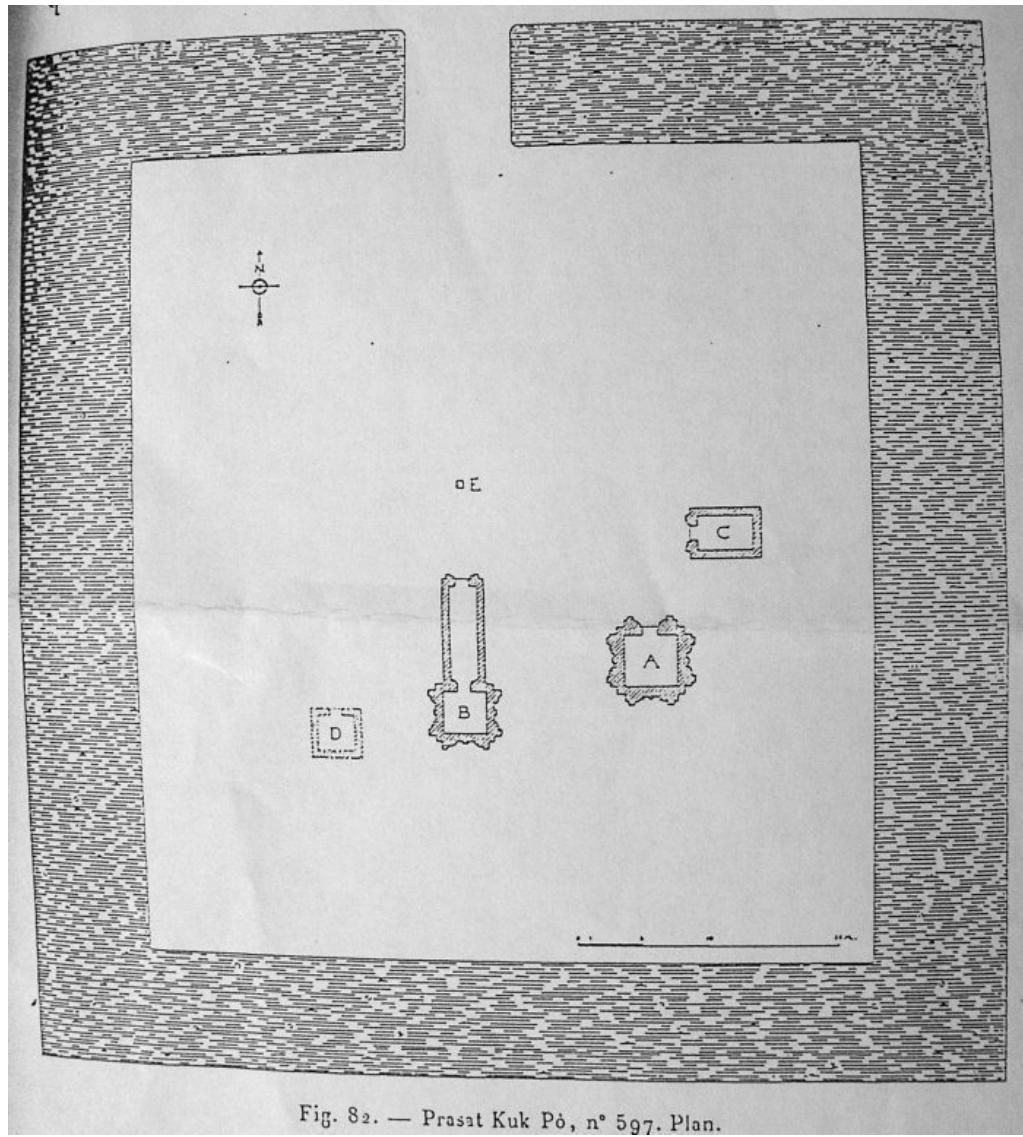
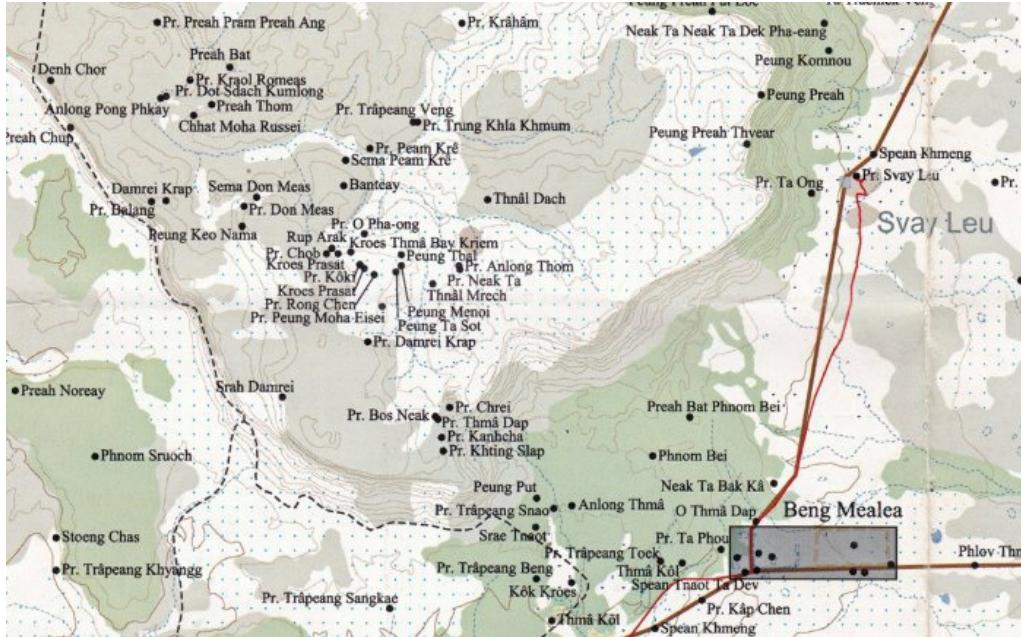


Fig. 82. — Prasat Kuk Po, n° 597. Plan.

Kuk Po, Plan by Lajonquière



Phnom Kulen, map from CAC

Phnom Kulen

The Phnom Kulen (“Litchi Mountain”) is a sandstone plateau, northeast of Angkor, 320 to 380 m above sea level. Here are the sources of rivers flowing to the plains of Angkor. The Mountain is a popular destination, mainly for locals at weekends.

The Temples of Mahendraparvata

Mahendraparvata, “The Mountain of Great Indra”, is an ancient city on the Phnom Kulen.

A disputed inscription of 1053 says that Jayavarman II (802–835) founded the Kingdom of Cambodia in Mahendraparvata, which is said to have then been his capital.

There is a lot of temples; the best known are:

- Prasat Anlong Thom
- Prasat Bos Neak
- Prasat Chrei
- Prasat Damrei Krap
- Prasat Khting Slap
- Prasat Kraham
- Prasat Neak Ta
- Prasat O Pha-Ong

- Prasat Rong Chen, or Krus Preah Aram Rong Chen
- Prasat Thma Dap or O Thmei Dap,
- Prasat Trung Khla Khmum

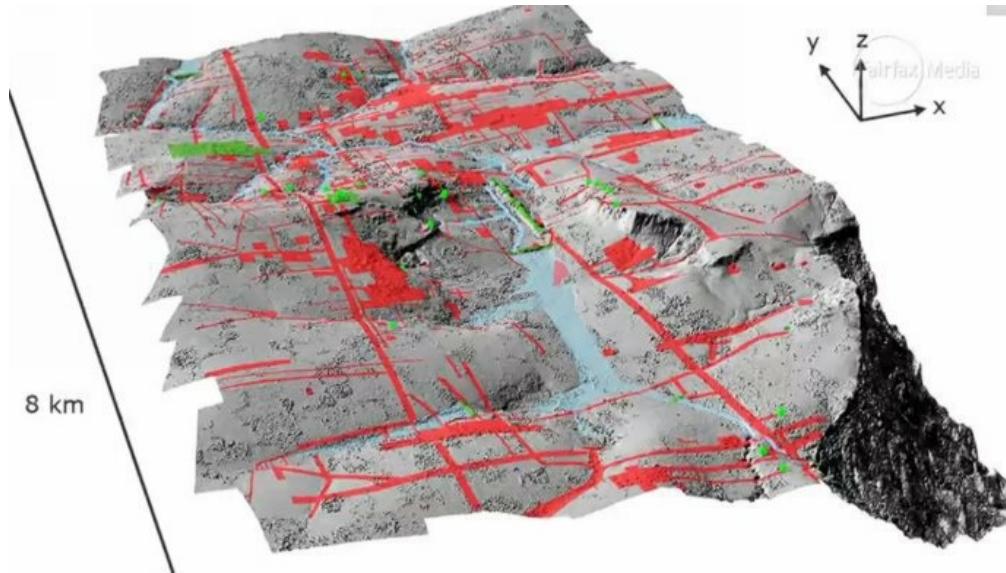


Prasat Damrei Krap (OV)

Recent Research

French archaeologists explored Mahendraparvata from the 1930s onwards and described temples.

Starting 2012, researchers discovered, with the aid of airborne laser scanning technology called LIDAR, that Mahendraparvata was many times more extended.



*Sites newly detected by LIDAR. Reference: KHMER ARCHAEOLOGY
LIDAR CONSORTIUM*

Other Sites

Prasat Kraol Romeas. The temple is locally called Prasat Toek Thlea, “Temple at the Waterfall”. It is built of laterite and dates from the Bayon era (late 12th to early 13th centuries). The surrounding enclosure wall is cut through by a river with some reliefs under water. The temple is of poor condition. Picnic shelters disfigure the site.

Just beyond this ruin is a two-stepped Water Fall.

Preah Thom. The relief on top of a big sandstone boulder is regarded and venerated as a transcendent Buddha. But this figure is lying on his left side, and the Buddha passed away lying on his right side. – Something is wrong with this!

Inscriptions are from the 16th century. As Cambodia was founded in the late 8th and early 9th century, Preah Thom has nothing to do with it.

Thousand Lingas is a stretch of the river west of Preah Thom; its bed is covered with Linga reliefs. Don’t step on them!

Srah Damrei. At the edge of the Kulen plateau are some huge sculptures of unknown age, showing animals like an elephant, lions, a frog and a bull. There is a fantastic view of the plain of Angkor.

Access

From Angkor, you follow the road from Preah Dak village to the north. At the junction 2 km before Banteay Srei you keep right. After the next junction

is a checkpoint, it is closed at 12 am.

Foreigners pay \$ 20 tolls per person to the private owner of the road.

Via Peung Preah Chup. At the junction, before the checkpoint, you turn right, towards Beng Mealea. After 6.5 km is Wat Prohm Bram Bei (“Eight Brahma”) on the left. Leave your vehicle at a shop at the foot of the concrete stairway. After some 20 minutes easy walk you are at Wat Preah Cup, a sacred spring, (bring a bottle with you) and a swimming pool. The relief shows the Buddha standing between a kneeling elephant and a coiled Naga. It looks like a clumsy copy and may be from the 16th century or later. There is also a shrine for Neak Ta (ancestor spirits).

From there a stairway climbs to the plateau, a fine walk again; first to the “Thousand Lingas” (c. 2.5 km), then to Preah Thom, no entrance fee.

The “Phnom-Kulen” Scam

Agents, guides, and drivers may be very keen to bring you there and to make money with you.

But:

Preah Thom is not “consecrated ground” or the “cradle of Cambodia”, which is in Mahendraparvata. Preah Thom is much later than Mahendraparvata and has nothing to do with that.

The trip is not worth 20 \$, or a day of your stay in Angkor.

Preah Thom is a profit-orientated, unfriendly, dirty place, with poor food stalls and no proper toilets.

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Trudy Jacobsen, *Lost Goddesses, The Denial of Female Power in Cambodian History*, 2008. P. 28-31.

Martin Polkinghorne, *Decorative Lintels and Ateliers at Mahendraparvata and Hariharalaya*, in Materializing Southeast Asia’s Past: Selected Papers from the 12th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists. 2013.

Updates: *Google/Mahendraparvata*

Peung Komnou

Huge sandstone boulders are scattered at the slope of the easternmost corner of the Phnom Kulen, north of Svay Leu, 2.5 km as the crow flies. Access by a dirt lane.

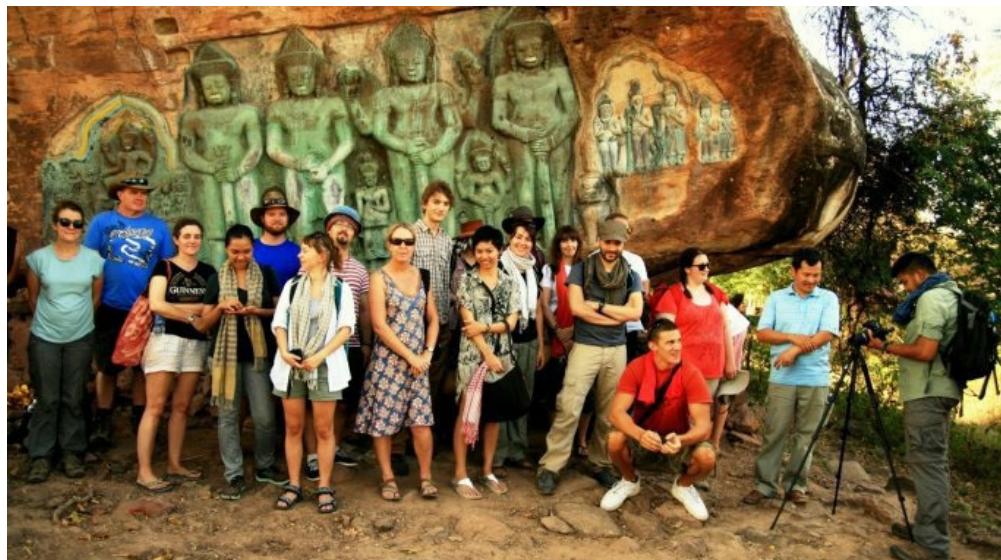
I have visited this site in January 2014 conducted by [Noel Hidalgo Tan](#).

The reliefs are remarkable.

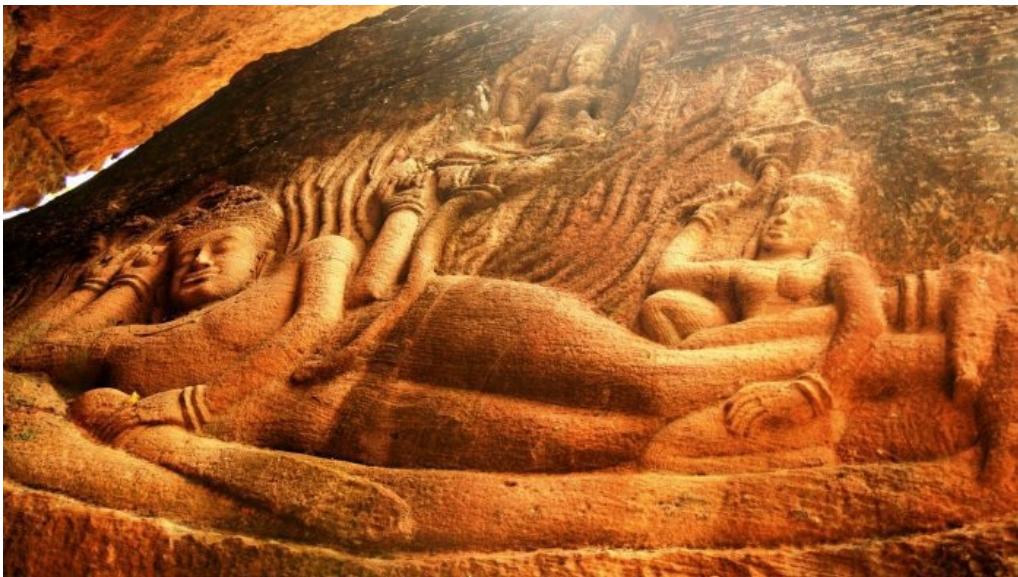
In an inscription, dated 1074, a hermit writes that he has carved the reliefs.

Access: Follow the road from Svay Leu to Koh Ker. After c. 1 km, a road branches to the north, left side. This you follow c. 2.5 km. Then a small way runs west, left, c. 1km foot walk. A local scout is recommended.

Reference: GAC 5, p. 170-174.



Peung Komnou, at the Frieze



Reclining Vishnu



Garuda



Ganesha



Peung Komnou, the Frieze again



Phnom Bok, the towers from the north-east

Phnom Bok

D Built towards 900

R Yasovarman I (889–c. 915)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

The Phnom Bok is a prominent hill in the east of Angkor. Here, King Yasovarman I built a sandstone temple.

The towers were dedicated to Shiva (centre), Vishnu (north), and Brahma (south). Four fire shrines are opposite of the towers.

We can visualise the king with pompous entourage ascending the hill and moving into the temple to prostrate himself in front of the idol of Shiva, the “Lord of the Mountains”.

Indeed, this summit gives a grand view of the world, i.e. Angkor. But now, the towers are without upper tiers and ruined.



Linga at Phnom Bok (OV)

To re-enact the king's visit, you have to climb over fallen blocks of stone and to make detours. The towers are godforsaken; there seems to be no longer any reason to approach to them reverentially.

An enormous Linga

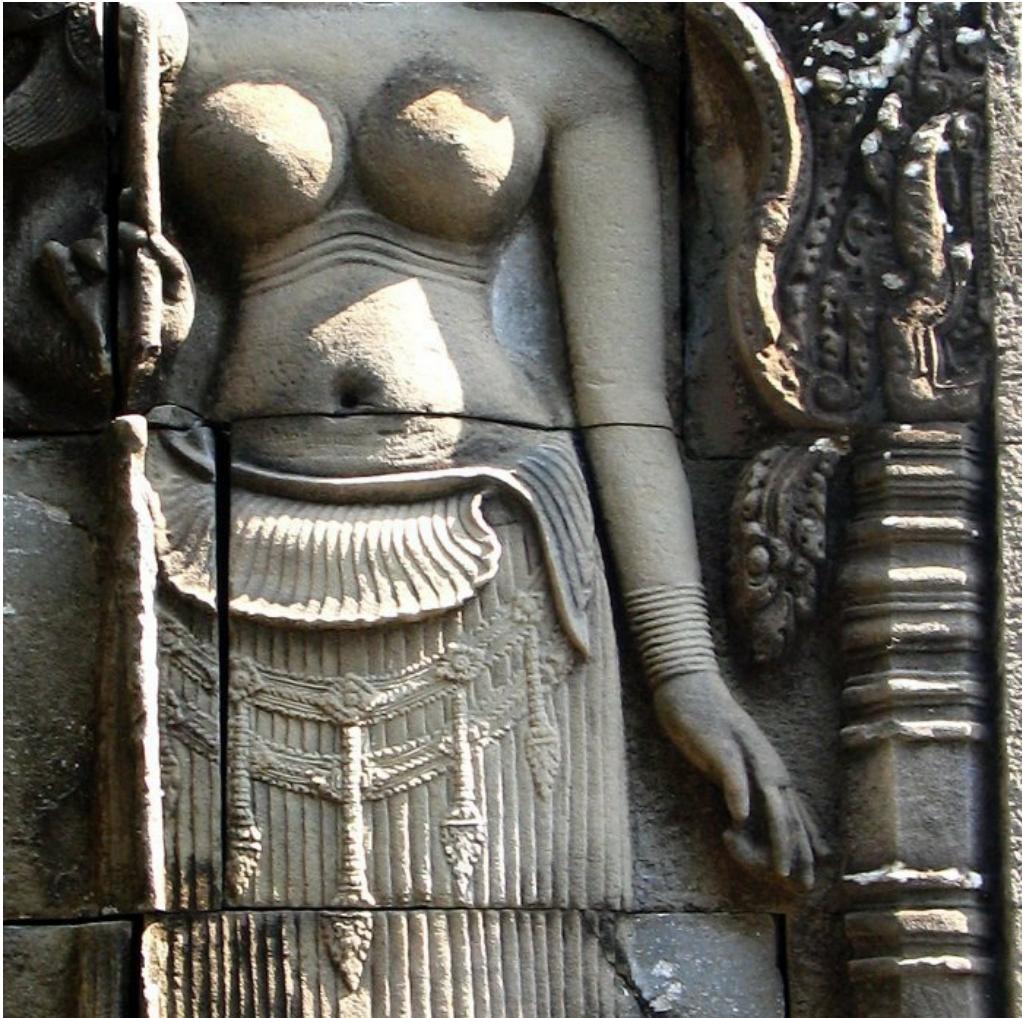
At c. 150 m west, we find the ruin of a laterite platform which was topped by an enormous lingam: now it has come crashing down and broken. It was 4 m high, with 1.20 m diameter, and more than 10 tonnes of weight.

Appearance of the Goddesses

In this ruins, the goddesses have taken centre stage: At the outer walls of the towers, twenty-four sensual Devatas are standing in niches which are framed by colonnettes; and an elegant vault of foliage. Though partly unfinished and badly destroyed, the impressive and radiating traces of former glory make now the main attraction of the temple. Even in the current state, they can wrap you with their beauty.

Access

Follow the road from Banteay Samré to the east/northeast. The gate of the wat after c. 6 km at the left-hand side is the entrance. Angkor Ticket required. You have to climb up a 630-steps stairway. It's worth it!



Devata at Phnom Bok



Fire Shrines at Phnom Bok



Phnom Bok: View of the East Baray and Phnom Bakheng



Mural in the Vihear



Phnom Krom, the towers from the west

Phnom Krom

D Built towards 900

R Yasovarman I (889–c. 915)

O East

C Hindu, Shiva

By its structure, the temple is similar to Phnom Bok. Located on a hill on the shores of the Tonlé Sap, the towers open to the east and, facing the lake, to the west.

It is an excellent place for watching the sunset.



Prasat Char

Prasat Char

Located some 10 km north-west of Angkor Thom, the Prasat Char has three towers built of brick and laterite, with richly ornamented door posts of sandstone.

The towers are raised on an artificial hill and enclosed by a moat, 60 m square, and an earth dam of some 550 m square.

The inscriptions date from 979 and 994 AD, the reign of Jayavarman IV.

The prasat is remote, but a picturesque site.

Reference

Aymonier 1999, p. 193-195.



Trapeang Phong

Trapeang Phong

D Early 9th century

R Jayavarman II (781–835) or Jayavarman III (c. 835–877)

O East

C Hindu

A brick tower looms up in a secluded area, 3 km south of the Bakong. Only the central tower is still standing upright. The false doors are of sandstone, lintels and colonnettes are well executed. The east entrance is destroyed.

Noteworthy for the quality of its brick decoration is the base of another tower nearby. There is also the ruin of a fire shrine and a moat.

To the west is what may have been a residential area. The reliefs are carved on brick and covered with stucco.



Trapeang Phong, south face of the tower with false door and Devatas

The Devatas of Trapeang Phong are the first and oldest in Angkor. They stand in niches on the wall and sit in small medallions at the upper tier.

Access

From Bakong, you go 300 m to the West. Then you follow a raised way to the South. After 1.5 km, there is a school on the right-hand side. There you ask for “prasat”; the path, c. 3 km, goes roughly to the south-east.

Or you walk 1.25 km across the country from Trapeang Totoeng Thngai to the east. The tower is well visible from a distance.

At the end of the rainy season, the way may be under water.

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Aymonier 2003, p. 233–235.

Freeman/Jacques, p. 111-113, 133–135, 194–203.

Roveda 2005, p. 332–337, 351–365

Petrotchenko, p. 106–117, 138-141, 253–275.

Practicalities

Travelling to Angkor

Updated practical information at angkorguide.net.

Figure out your own Tour

Get the *Angkor Map*.

Take your time!

Start with the Bakong, where a well turned out Angkor tour begins.

Make your choice.

Avoid the Routine! Avoid the crowds. Avoid guided tours. Leave the trodden path! To visit frequented temples, study the tips.

Your own discoveries will be the best of your tours. Stay aware of the unexpected. Find rarely known ruins.

The optimal Route

Day one

Bakong, c. 15 km east of Siem Reap, is the best entry point for your tour. It is well-preserved and features unique beauties, the prototype of the pyramid temples.

Hidden in the jungle around are lonely brick towers.

Preah Ko nearby is the prototype of the ancestor temples. Recently cleaned, the temple is dazzlingly beautiful. Experts say that the décor, reliefs in stucco and sandstone, is among the best in Angkor.

Lunch break at a restaurant in the vicinity where one can rest in hammocks.

Banteay Srei, c. 25 km north of Angkor, is a treasure.

Sunset at Pre Rup or Srah Srang.

For this tour, you need a car.

Day two

A whole day in **Angkor Wat** gives you the leisure for a placid visit. Warmly recommended!

Or you make a walk on top of the Wall of Angkor Thom in the morning, starting at the South Gate, passing the secluded South-East Prasat Chrung, to the East Gate, 3 km. Not recommended when the ways have got dusty.

Day three

Temples of the Bayon era.

Start with **Preah Khan**, the most complex and intriguing of all Angkor

temples. The water sanctuary **Neak Pean** is nearby.

Back to **Angkor Thom**. Visit the **North Gate**; it is usually much quieter than the South Gate.

Lunch break in your hotel.

In the afternoon, you meet the faces of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara at the **Bayon** and the Gods of the Underworld in the **Leper-King Terrace**. Then you go to the secluded **East Gate**, and in the late afternoon, when the hordes have gone off, Ta Prohm and its roots.

At day two and three you can go by tuk-tuk.

Further Temples

Prasat Kravan, Baksei Chamkrong, Baphuon Thommanon, Ta Keo, Banteay Kdei, East Mebon, Ta Som. Ta Nei, Preah Palilay, Preah Pithu.

Bicycle Tours

A Start at the west entrance of Angkor Wat, Ta Prohm Kel, view of the North Gate of Angkor Wat from across the moat, Prasat Rong Lmong, Baksei Chamkrong, Prasat Thma Bay Kaek, Lions at the northern stairway of the Phnom Bakheng, Prasat Bei, and Prasat Sok Kro op (3 km).

B The circuit on the wall of Angkor Thom (12 km in total).

C Start at Wat Damnak, Chreav Village, Wat L'ak, Prasat O Ka-aeck, Prasat Prei Monti, Prasat Totoeng Thngai, Prasat Trapeang Phong (12 km)

Trips

- Kbal Spean – Banteay Srei – East Mebon – Pre Rup or Srah Srang for sunset.
- Phnom Bok, Chau Srei Vibol, Temples of Roluos.
- Phnom Bok, Trapeang Khyangg.
- Beng Mealea and Peung Komnou.
- Prasat Preah Enkosei and Prasat Wat Athvea.
- Prasat Prei Prasat, Banteay Thom, Prasat Char.
- Phnom Krom for sunset.

Visiting the Temples

Timing

Start early; early morning is generally the best time, start at 7 AM, or even

sooner. The locals take a noon break from 11 am to 2 pm, for good reasons, it may be hot!

Visiting Hours

- General: 7.30 AM to 5.30 PM
- Angkor Wat: 5 AM to 5.30 PM
- Srah Srang 5.30 AM to 5.30 PM
- Pre Rup: 5.00 AM to 7.00 PM
- Phnom Bakheng: 5.30 AM to 7.00 PM

Dress and Equipment

Wear light and airy clothes.

To show respect in the temples, shoulders, and knees should be covered.

Have headgear.

Check if your driver will provide umbrellas.

At the end of the rainy season, ways can be under water.

If you are sensible, have sun protection cream and mosquito spray.

Decent boots are warmly recommended for visiting Angkor; injuries or sprains of ankles use to happen quite often.

Take care of you

Visiting Angkor can be strenuous. Don't try to take on too much.

Have rests, and drink plenty of water; you need 2 - 3 litres of water per day.

Take enough water with you; in Angkor, water is often of low quality and overpriced. I use to drink Kulen Mineral Water, available at good Supermarkets in Siem Reap.

Ask your driver for toilets.



Electric Car

Transportation

Angkor Wat, the nearest temple, is located some 5 km north of Siem Reap. Various means of transport are available from bicycles to air conditioned cars.

Electric vehicles (3 seats) 40 \$

Taxis (3–4 seats) 30–40 \$

Vans (12-15 seats) 30–40 \$

Tuk-Tuks 15–20 \$

Moped taxis* 10–12 \$

E-Bikes* 10 \$

Bicycles* 2–3 \$

(Approximate prices per day)

* Wear a helmet.

Additional fees for distant places. Negotiate the price with your driver.

The so-called Tuk-Tuks are very popular. They are not what you may know from Thailand, but mopeds with unbraked trailers. Don't drive fast!

Tourists are not allowed to rent motorbikes.

Entrance Tickets

Tickets for the Angkor Archaeological Park are only available at the Ticket Booth, located at Route 60, near the crossing with Apsara Road.

Tickets for the next day, valuable also for the rest of this day, are available from 4.45 to 5.00 PM.

Entrance fees

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| • 1 day | • \$
37.00 |
| • 3 days in a week | • \$
62.00 |
| • 7 days within 30
days | • \$
72.00 |

2 \$ of each ticket go to the Jayavarman VII Hospital.

Children under 12 years are free.

Begging

Children or other people begging or hawking in Angkor or Siem Reap are not poor at all! Ignore them with friendliness.

Inside the East Mebon temple, I watched some happy children, mostly girls, begging or trying to sell trinkets. They received three dollars.

When the tourists had gone, they rendered the money to a police officer.

"Think twice before buying anything from children on the street, beaches or at temples and refrain from giving money to begging children or parents with infants. It keeps them on the street and places them at risk." (ChildSave)

Appendix

Time Line

Sources: Jacques, Roveda.

Capitals are in italics, **State Temples** are bold, Buddhist temples are blue.

King	Reign	Temples and Capitals
Jayavarman II	c. 760/90–835	<i>Mahendraparvata?</i>
Jayavarman III	835–877	Prei Monti?, Trapeang Phong, Bakong
Indravarman I	881–c. 886	Bakong , Preah Ko, Baray of Lolei, <i>Hariharalaya</i>
Yasovarman I	889–c. 915	Lolei, Phnom Bakheng , Phimeanakas; Phnom Bok, Phnom Krom, Phnom Dei, East Baray <i>Yasodharapura</i> Preah Vihear, Huei Thamo (Laos)
Harshavarman I	c. 915–922	Baksei Chamkrong
Jayavarman IV	c. 928–c. 941	<i>Koh Ker</i>
Rajendravarman	944–968	East Mebon, Pre Rup <i>Yasodharapura II</i>
Jayavarman V	968–c. 1000	Ta Keo
Jayaviravarman	1002–1010	Ta Keo , North Khleang
Suryavarman I	1002/10–1049	South Khleang, Prasat Suor Prat, Phimeanakas, Royal Palace, Royal Plaza, West Baray, Preah Vihear, Phnom Chisor, Preah Khan of Kampong Svay, Wat Phu (Laos)
Udayadityavarman II	1050–1066	Baphuon , West Mebon
Jayavarman VI	1080–c. 1107	Phimai (Thailand)
Suryavarman II	1113–c. 1150	Angkor Wat, Thommanon , Chau Say Tevoda, Banteay Samré, Beng Mealea, Phnom Rung (Thailand)
Yasovarman II	c. 1150–1165	Beng Mealea, Chau Say Tevoda, Banteay Samré, Bakong
Jayavarman VII	1181–c. 1220	Ta Prohm (1186), Preah Khan (1191), North Baray, Neak Pean, Bayon with Angkor Thom , Banteay Kdei, Ta Som, Ta Nei, Elephant Terrace, Royal Palace, Banteay Chhmar, Banteay Toap
(Later)		Mangalartha, Leper King Terrace, Preah Pithu (mixed), Preah Palilay

Literature

Abbreviations

AC

Angkor Göttliches Erbe Kambodschas.

CAC

Carte archéologique du Cambodge

EFEO

Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, French School of the Far-East

GACP

German Apsara Conservation Project

GHF

Global Heritage Fund

JSA

Japanese Government Team for Safeguarding Angkor

WMF

World Monument Fund

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Web Links

More Temples, more Information, more Photos, more Links. Updates. At
angkorguide.net.

Glossary

Agni

God of the Fire, Guardian of the Southeast, riding on a rhino

Airavan, Airavata

One- or three-headed white elephant, the mount of Indra

Amrita

A magic potion of immortality. See Churning of the Sea of Milk.

Ananta

A Naga King. Vishnu is reclining on Ananta.

Anastylosis

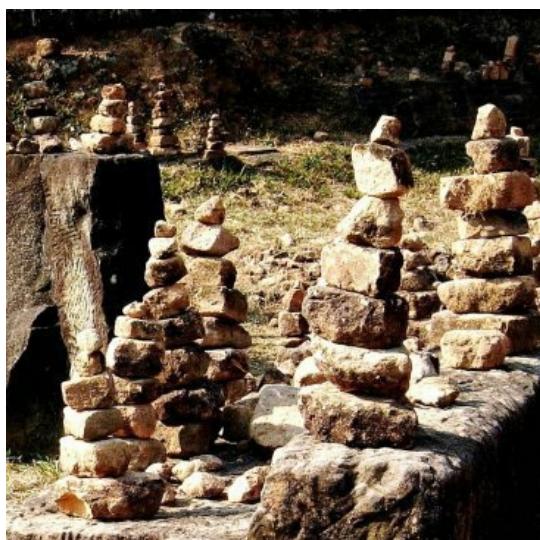
"[C]onsists of the re-establishment or rebuilding of a monument with its own materials and according to its own methods of construction. Anastylosis allows the discreet and justified use of new materials in replacement of missing stones without which the original elements could not be repositioned." (Glaize)

Anavatapta

A legendary lake in the Himalayas "whose miraculous and curative waters escape in the four directions" (Coedès), see Neak Pean.

Ancestor cult

The worship of the ancestors is autochthonous in Cambodia. The Khmers believe that the spirits of the ancestors are the owners of the soil. The most important holidays are stamped by the ancestor cult. See *Neak Ta*.



Stone settings at Phnom Bakheng

Ancestor temple

A temple where the spirits of ancestors of a king are worshipped.

Angkor

The original meaning of “angkor” in the Khmer language is “indistinct place”, not “city”.

Now, Angkor has become the name of the ancient Khmer capital city, the empire, and its civilisation.

Angkor Conservation

(CA), a depot of Angkor artefacts in Siem Reap

Antefix

A carved stone standing on a cornice

Antarala

The corridor connecting the cella to the mandapa

Aniruddha

Grandson of *Krishna*, persecuted by *Bana*

Apsaras

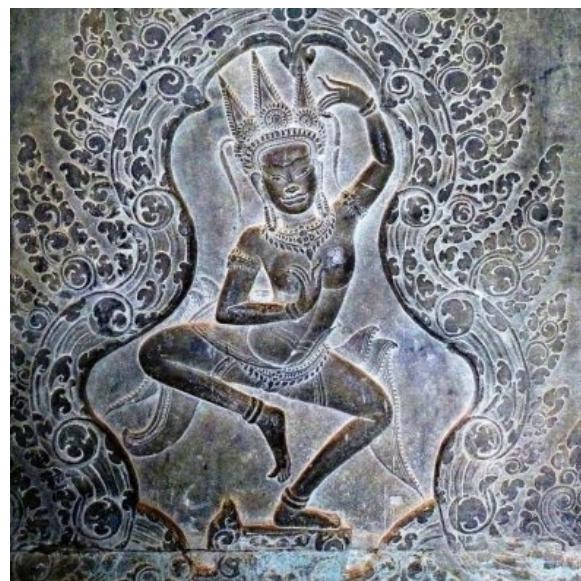
The word Apsara has different meanings:

Authentically, *Apsaras* are nymphs, celestial dancers.

The Devatas (goddesses) in Angkor are often misnamed *Apsaras*.

In colloquial Khmer, an *Apsara* is a person of not so good reputation.

APSARA or Apsara Authority, “The Authority for the protection of the site and the Management of the Region of Angkor”.



Dancing Apsara, Angkor Wat

Arjuna

A Pandava king, a friend of Krishna; see *Mahabharata*.

Asram, ashram, aram

Place of meditation, shrine

Asuras

Anti-Gods, Demons.

Avalokiteshvara

The Bodhisattva of Universal Compassion, see *Lokesvara* and Face Towers.

Avatar

"Descent", temporary incarnation of *Vishnu*

Avenue

The route of the Royal procession to the state temple, see *Temple*, Bakong, Angkor Wat.

Bhagavad Gita

(Sanskrit: "Song of God") an episode recorded in the ... *Mahabharata*. It ... is composed in the form of a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and Krishna, an avatar (incarnation) of the god Vishnu. Composed perhaps in the 1st or 2nd century CE [Christian era], it is commonly known as the Gita.

On the brink of a great battle between warring branches of the same family, Arjuna is suddenly overwhelmed with misgivings about the justice of killing so many people, some of whom are his friends and relatives, and expresses his qualms to Krishna, his charioteer—a combination bodyguard and court historian. Krishna's reply expresses the central themes of the Gita. He persuades Arjuna to do his duty as a man born into the class of warriors, which is to fight, and the battle takes place.

Extract of Encyclopaedia Britannica,

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bhagavadgita>.

Balaha

Incarnation of Avalokiteshvara as a flying horse, see Neak Pean

Bali

Demon King, deceived and killed by Vishnu, see *Three Strides*, Prasat Kravan

Bana

Son of *Bali*

Banteay

"fortress", a temple enclosed by stately walls or galleries

Barang

“Frank”, Western foreigner

Barangsay

French, France

Barays

Huge rectangular water basins, over the ground, arranged east-west and north-south, dedicated to a God. Barays were essential elements of the hydraulic system.

Name	Original Name	Extension E-W	Extension N-S
Baray of Lolei	Indratataka	3800 m	800 m
East Baray	Yasodharatataka	7500 m	1800 m
West Baray		8000 m	2200 m
North Baray	Jayatataka	3500 m	900 m

Bodhi

“The Great Awakening”, Buddhist.

Bodhisattva

“Enlightened being”, a Buddhist god, see *Avalokiteshvara* and *Prajnaparamita*.

Brahma

A Hindu god, see Trimurti.

Brahmins

Priests, highest Hindu caste

Buddhapada

Footprint of the Buddha, a Buddhist symbol

Capital

In texts about Angkor, the word capital is often used as a synonym for the royal quarter or the core of the capital, encompassing the state temple and the royal palace. See *Hariharalaya*, *Yasodharapura*.

Chakra

Circle, discus, the World

Chakravartin

“Ruler of the World”. The kings of Angkor were regarded as Chakravartin. See Kings.

Champak, Chams

Champak was the kingdom of the Chams in now central Vietnam,

contemporary with the Khmer kingdom and of similar civilisation. The Chams are mostly living now in Vietnam and Cambodia, most of them have turned Moslem.

Cella

Central room of a temple, see *Tower*.

Colonnades

Long halls with tiled roofs, opening by pillars

Colonnettes

“Small columns”, flanking the doors.

Columns

In Angkor, there are no real columns but only stone imitations of wooden piles.

Date

Temple inscriptions may give us the date of the inauguration; the date of the construction is another thing, usually encompassing several years.

Devaraja

"God who is king" or "king of the [small] gods". The kings of Angkor were NOT "god-kings". See Kings.

Devatas

Goddesses; in Angkor wrongly mixed up with Apsaras. See also: Tevoda.



Devatas at Angkor Wat

Dharmasala

Chapel of a pilgrims' rest place on a Royal Road

Durga

“The Great Goddess”, killer of the Buffalo Monster, spouse of Shiva. See Sambor Prei Kuk and Banteay Srei.

Dvarapalas

Male guardians, gods or demons

Elephants

They are symbols of stability, guarding the corners of pyramids.

Enclosures

Courts, walls or galleries are concentrically framing a sanctuary; enclosures are counted with Roman numerals (I, II, III) from inside to outside.

Fire shrine

Sheltering the Holy Fire, or fire for ritual sacrifices, traditionally called "library."

Flying palaces

Reliefs of palaces of gods, supported by a frieze of flying hamsas, on the walls of temples in Sambor Prei Kuk

Gajasimha

"Elephant lion", a mythical beast, shaped like a lion, with an elephant's trunk

Ganesha

Son of Shiva, with an elephant's head, lord of Shiva's troops, sets up or removes obstacles, god of knowledge, patron saint of educated persons and voyagers. His mount is a rat.

Garuda

Divine king of the birds, mount of *Vishnu*

Gopa, Gopi

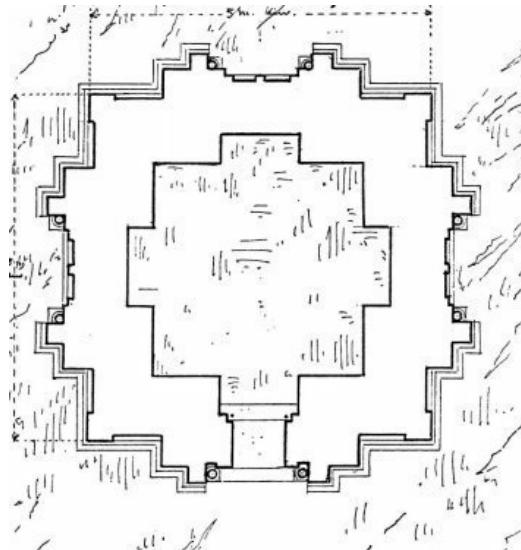
Cowherd

Gopura

Gate tower or gate pavilion

Graduated walls

A typical feature of pre-Angkorian and Angkorian architecture



Graduated walls at Prasat Thma Dap (Phnom Kulen), drawing by Parmentier

Great Departure

The future Buddha, leaving his palace.

Hamsa

Sacred wild goose, mount of Brahma

Hanuman

White faced monkey general in the *Ramayana*

Harihara

A Hindu god, half Shiva, half Vishnu

Hariharalaya

The first capital of Angkor in Roluos.

Indra

Hindu god of the weather, riding on *Airavan*, and guardian of the East

Indradevi and Jayarajadevi

In succession spouses of King Jayavarman VII. See Srei Krup Leak

Kala

Head of a monster, representing the terrible aspect of Shiva. See Preah Vihear.



Shiva above Kala, Banteay Srei

Kama

The God of Love

Kambujadesa

"Land of the Descendants of Kambu"

(a legendary founder of the Khmer Kingdom), Cambodia

Kesin

An asura.

Ketu

Comet, the tail of *Rahu*.

Khmer

Cambodian

Kings

The Kings of Angkor (till 12th century) ruled the World on behalf of *Shiva* whom they venerated in pyramid temples. They had to bring and keep the *World* in peace and in harmony with the Universe. By their posthumous names, we know that they were believed to be in Heaven. They were NOT god-kings. See *Chakravartin* and *Devaraja*.

Krishna

An incarnation of *Vishnu*, see *Mahabharata*.

Kubera

God of Wealth, lord of the *Yakshas* and Guardian of the North

Kuk

Tower, cave

Lakshmana

Brother of *Rama*

Lakshmi

Spouse of *Vishnu*, goddess of luck, also called Sri ("The Beauty")

Lanka

The capital city of the demon king *Ravana*

Laterite

Sediment soil (of non-volcanic origin) , a mixture of clay, loam, and bauxite

"Library"

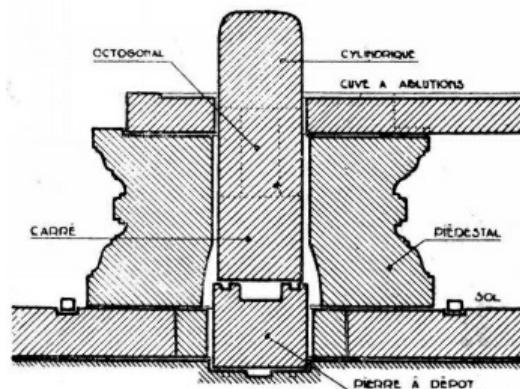
Fire Shrines in Angkor are mistakenly called "libraries".

Linga or Lingam and Yoni

Lingam means "Symbol of *Shiva*".



Linga in Yoni, Phnom Bakheng



Linga in Yoni. Drawing by Glaize.

In Angkor, the Lingam is cylindrical, sheathed by *Vishnu*, octagonal, and *Brahma*, square.

The Yoni, symbolising the Earth, is a square cover slab, with a gargoyle to the north.

Lintel

Sandstone block above a door often adorned with relief. See *Tower*.



Lion at Phnom Bakheng, c. 900



Lion at the Feldherrnhalle Munich, 1906 (Wikipedia)

Lions

More mythical figures than animals; they serve as guardians.

Lokeshvara

"Lord of the World"; title of *Shiva*, and of the Bodhisattva *Avalokiteshvara*

Mahabharata

Sanskrit: "Great Epic of the Bharata Dynasty", one of the two Sanskrit epic poems of ancient India (the other being the *Ramayana*). Appearing in its present form about 400 BCE, the *Mahabharata* consists of a mass of

mythological and didactic material arranged around a central heroic narrative that tells of the struggle for sovereignty between two groups of cousins, the Kauravas (sons of Dhritarashtra, the descendant of Kuru) and the Pandavas (sons of Pandu). The feud culminates in a series of great battles on the field of Kurukshetra (north of Delhi, in Haryana state). All the Kauravas are annihilated, and, on the victorious side, only the five Pandava brothers and Krishna survive.

(Source: Extract from Encyclopaedia Britannica,
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mahabharata>)

Mahendraparvata

Temple site of King Jayavarman II and others at the Phnom Kulen.

Makara

A deity of the water, half a fish, and half a crocodile, with a short trunk. In Khmer, the month January is called Makara.

Mandala

Image of the World in Harmony

Mandapa

Antechamber

Mara

Buddhist God of Death, Lord of the Demons.

Mebon

"Supreme place for ceremonies or offerings", a temple on an artificial island in a baray.

Moats

Ditches enclosing temples or capitals

Mount Kailasha

The abode of Shiva

Mount Mandara

The pivot at the Churning of the Sea.

Mount Maniparvata

The summit of Mount Mandara

Mount Meru

abode of the gods in the centre of the world

Muchalinda

A Naga king

Mukata

Conical hairdo of gods and kings

Naga, Naga Raja

Cobra-shaped snake with multiple heads; King of the snakes, a symbol of nature, controlling the water, Lord of Cambodia. Naga princesses are of human shape, with Naga heads in their hairdo. See Bakong, South Gate of Angkor Thom.

Nandi

Sacred bull, mount of Shiva

Neak Ta, Anak Ta

Tutelary spirits of ancestors. See Ancestor Cult.

Neariphal

"Women-fruit", small female figures in reliefs. See Preah Pithu Temple V.

Nirrti

God of Misfortune, Death, Destruction, Corruption, Guardian of the Southwest, riding on a yaksha

"Pagodas"

In Cambodia, monasteries, *wats*, and temples, *vihears*, are vulgarly called "pagodas".

"Palace"

Four halls are forming a rectangle with an interior courtyard; the function is unknown.

Prajnaparamita

Female Bodhisattva of Universal Wisdom

Pralamba

A demon who wants to seduce boys, killed by Krishna

Prasat

Ancient temple, tower, a sacred site

Preah

Khmer: *brah*, sacred, holy

Preah Thorani/Dharani

Buddhist Goddess of Earth

Quincunx

Five towers arranged like five pips on a dice. See Phnom Bakheng.

Rahu, Reahu

Off-putting, grotesque face of a monster, with two hands, transformed into the demon of eclipses. His tail is *Ketu*. See *Kala*.

Rakshasa

Demon

Rama

An incarnation of *Vishnu*

Ramayana

The Hindu epic of Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu and son of a king, who is banned for life in the forest and later defeats Ravana, the demon king of Lanka.

Rama wins the hand of the beautiful Sita, an incarnation of Lakshmi.

When Rama is to be installed as crown prince and co-regent, he, together with Sita, is banned into the forest where they live together with Rama's brother Lakshmana.

Ravana abducts Sita to Lanka.

Rama makes an alliance with Sugriva, the brother of Valin, king of the monkeys. He helps him to kill Valin and to become king himself. With the monkey army under their general Hanuman, they advance to Lanka, conquer and kill Ravana and eventually free Sita.

But Sita must stand an ordeal by fire before she can reunite with Rama.

Ravana

The mighty King of Lanka, a friend of Shiva; see *Ramayana*.

Reachisey

A sea monster



Vishnu reclining on a Reachisey, Preah Khan

Rishis

Hermits, sages, gurus

Roluos

The temple site in the south-east of Angkor. See Early Temples.

Royal Roads

There were six major roads:

- From Angkor to Kampong Thom.
- From Angkor to Preah Khan of Kampong Svay, via Beng Mealea.
- From Beng Mealea to Neak Buos, and onwards to Wat Phu (Laos).
- From Beng Mealea to the Tonlé Sap.
- From Angkor to Phimai (Thailand).
- From Angkor to near Sisophon, and possibly to Banteay Chhmar.

King Jayavarman VII built stone bridges (*spean*) and Dharmasalas along these roads. (Source: Coe, p. 151–153.)

Sema Stones

Boundary stones of *vihears*.

Shakti

The feminine aspect of a god, his spouse

Shiva

A Hindu god, head of the Trimurti, revered as national god. See Trimurti, and Shiva at Angkor Wat.

Shrine

Chapel, a small temple, or a sanctuary as a part of a temple

Sita

Spouse of Rama; see *Ramayana*.

Skanda

Hindu god of war, son of Shiva, his mount is a peacock.

Snânadroni

Gargoyle

Srei Krup Leak

“Women of virtue”, see Preah Khan, *Indradevi and Jayarajadevi*

State temple

The central place of worship, the centre of the kingdom. See *Temple*.

Stele

Detached stone with inscriptions

Stung, stong

River, stream

Stupa

A Buddhist symbol, representation of a burial mound, shelters relics or ashes



Stupa at Preah Khan



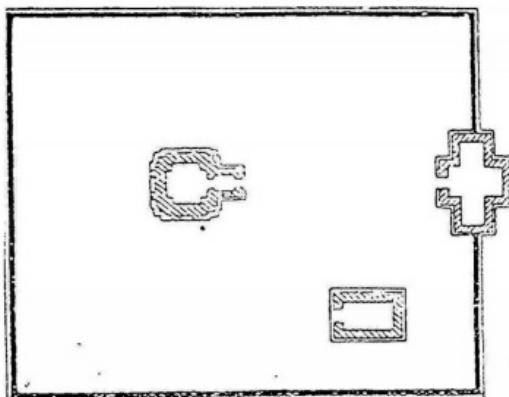
Shvedagon Pagoda, a stupa in Yangon, Myanmar

Sugriva

King of the monkeys in the *Ramayana*

Temple

Temple means “field”, an area sacred to a God (and not only a tower!). A temple is also a meeting place, where humans may approach the God and venerate him.



Prasat Dong Chan, drawing by Lajonquièvre

The essential parts of a temple are a tower, a fire shrine, and an enclosure wall with entrance gate.

The avenue is a genuine part of the temple; a temple without an avenue would be like a pan without a handle.

Temple pyramids

State temples have pyramids, except the Bayon.

Baksei Chamkrong has three stages, the Pyramid at Koh Ker has seven, and all the other pyramids have five stages. At Pre Rup, Ta Keo and Angkor Wat steps III, IV, and V are united to one stage; at the Baphuon, the steps II and III, respectively IV and V are united.

Tevoda

Guardian angel, tutelary spirit; see: Devata

Three Strides

Vishnu killing the Demon King Bali.

Tonlé Sap

A large lake in the South-West of Angkor, connected to the Mekong by the Tonlé Sap River

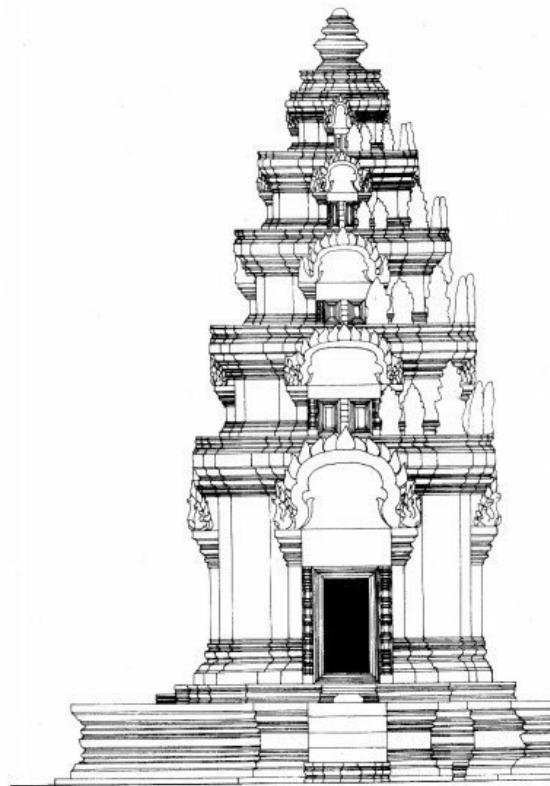
Tower

The core of a tower is a square cella (central room) which shelters the idol of the God. It is closed by a wooden ceiling.

Brick towers have an entrance door, generally to the east; the other walls have false doors.

The tower symbolises the Mount Meru, the centre of the World. Its four faces look identical. Above the base with the cella is a four-tier pyramidal roof: this is corresponding to the five peaks of Mount Meru.

See also: Graduated walls.



A tower of Banteay Srei, drawing by Dumarcay



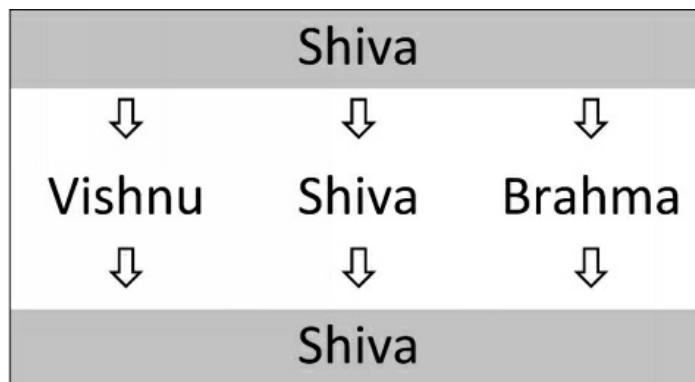
False door with lintel, colonnettes, pilasters, and pediment. Phnom Chisor.

Trapeang

An oblong pond

Trimurti

“Trinity”, the Hindu Trimurti consists of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma.



“Tuk-tuk”

The Khmer “tuk-tuk” is a primitive motorbike trailer without breaks.

Uma

The spouse of Shiva

Valin

Brother of Sugriva, king of the monkeys, killed by Rama in the Ramayana

-varman

"He who is protected by ...", the ending of names of Khmer kings

Varuna

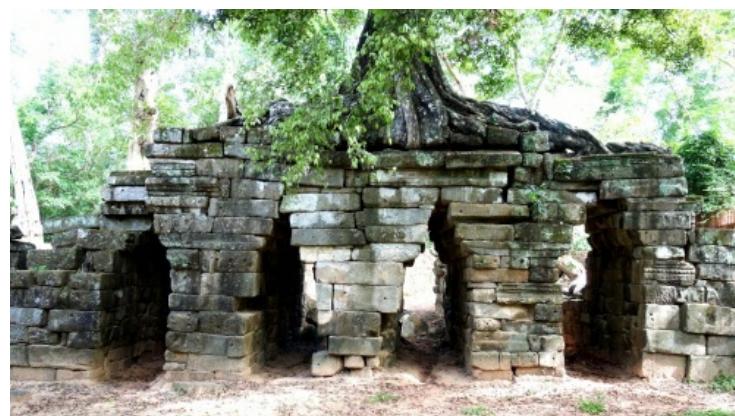
God of the Ocean, the Rain, Guardian of the West

Vasuki

A Naga king. See Churning of the Sea of Milk.

Vaults

Corbel vaults are common in Angkorian architecture.



Corbel vaults at Spean Thma

Vayu

Guardian of the Northwest

Vessantara

Prince, a figure of Buddhist legends

Vihear

Buddhist temple, vulgarly "pagoda."

Viradha

A demon, abducts Sita on behalf of *Ravana*

Vishnu

A Hindu god. See *Trimurti*,

Wat

Buddhist monastery, vulgarly "pagoda."

Water Sanctuaries

Running over reliefs of Lingas and other images, the water is charged with divine energy. West Mebon and Neak Pean are particular forms.

World

Kings have to stabilise the World, the space of living, by bringing it in harmony with the Universe. See Bakong, Hariharalaya.

Yaksha

semi-divine guardian of treasures, in the entourage of Kubera

Yama

Hindu god of death and judgment, guardian of the South, riding a water buffalo

Yasodharapura

The capital founded by King Yasovarman I, now called Angkor.

Yoni

see Lingam