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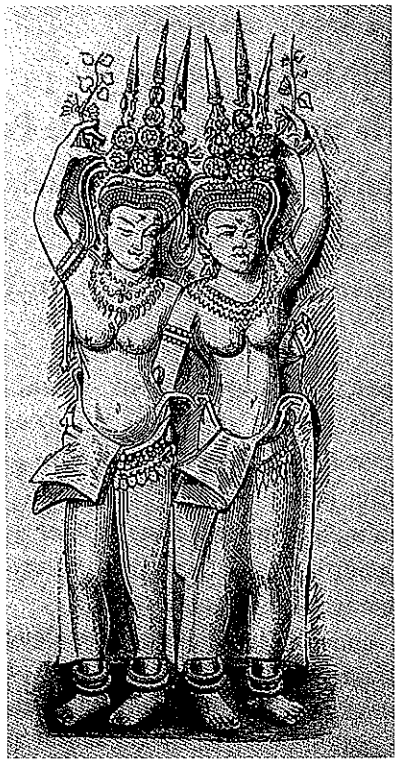

Apsaras—a ubiquitous design in Khmer art.

Previous page: Preah Khan is a Buddhist monument, but also has several Hindu shrines.

ANGKOR

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TEMPLES

Dawn F Rooney

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Historical Background

Prehistoric Period

Evidence suggests the presence of occupation in Cambodia in the prehistoric period. The earliest inhabitants are unknown. Neither their origins nor the dates they lived in the area can be traced. It is likely, though, that inhabitants throughout mainland south-east Asia — Cambodia, Burma, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam — developed basic skills such as the cultivation of rice, the domestication of the ox and buffalo and the use of metals, and practiced animistic worship at about the same time and in a similar way. The earliest settlement found so far at Loang Spean in Battambang province has produced evidence of occupation over 6,000 years ago.[6] The people lived in caves and knew the techniques of polishing stone and decorating pottery with cord-marked, combed and carved designs.

A second prehistoric site, Bas-Plateaux in Kompong Cham province, has yielded radiocarbon dates from the second century BC.[7] The inhabitants of this later site lived in groups resembling villages. Their level of domestication was similar to that of the people of Loang Spean. Samrong Sen in central Cambodia, a third prehistoric site, was occupied about 1500 BC. Opinions differ as to when the prehistoric period ended, but it is generally agreed it occurred sometime between 500 BC and AD 100.

First Century To Eighth Century Ad

The succeeding period, known as protohistoric, lasted for about seven hundred years, from the first until the end of the eighth century. From then onwards sufficient historical records have survived to trace a continuous development of the people and places of Cambodia. The patterns of civilisation established in prehistoric societies may have continued to develop in the protohistoric period, although evidence of such a continuity is lacking.

But by the first century AD, the coastal and valley regions comprised settlements whose members grew rice and root crops, had domesticated pigs and water buffalo, made low fired earthenware for cooking food and storing liquids, and were adept at using metals. They practised animism, worshipping both the spirits of the land and their ancestors.

During the first centuries of the Christian era, the Chinese travelled by sea to the 'barbarian lands of the southern ocean' searching for new trade routes and commercial outlets to replace the formerly lucrative overland passages to India, which were blocked by nomadic tribes in Central Asia. Concurrently, India also ventured east for commercial purposes to establish trade with China by sea.

Trading ships sailed from the eastern coast of India across the Bay of Bengal to the upper western coast of the Malay peninsula. From there, goods were transported by land across the Isthmus of Kra to the western coast of the Gulf of Thailand. Then they followed the coastline around the gulf and on to the southern provinces of China. Mainland south-east Asia, ideally situated to offer the protection of an inland sea, developed as a mid-way station along this route.

Use of this seaway increased as maritime trade between India and China accelerated through better knowledge of shipbuilding, an understanding of the monsoon patterns, and improvements in navigational skills. It seems likely that religious and social ideas from India reached the shores of south-east Asia through these Indian-infiltrated areas and were transmitted by brahmin priests over a long period from the beginning of the Christian era. The phenomenon of elements of the Indian culture being absorbed by the Khmers is known as Indianisation.

As trade developed, groups of settlers emerged at ports along the coast. Archaeological evidence of one of these early habitation sites has been found at Oc-Eo, an ancient centre in the Mekong Delta used by traders in the early centuries of the Christian era.[8] Finds of Roman coins, Indian jewellery and Buddhist religious objects dating from the second and third centuries at Oc-Eo suggest it was a port along the vast maritime trading network that extended from the Roman empire and the Mediterranean region, eastward to India and the Spice Islands.

Chinese records of the third century name Funan as one of the earliest Indianised settlements in mainland south-east Asia. It was located in the area of the lower Mekong Delta of south Cambodia and south Vietnam. The inhabitants of this historic state are believed to have been a tribe which spoke a tongue from the Mon-Khmer family of languages, which provides a linguistic source for the Cambodians as early as the beginning of the Christian era. Thus Funan was linked to Cambodia geographically and linguistically and, as such, is the earliest recorded precursor of the Khmer empire. The name Funan may be a Chinese interpretation of *bnam*, an ancient Khmer word meaning 'mountain' and sounding like *phnom* ('hill' in modern Khmer).

Chinese texts describe the mythical founding of Funan, and later a variation of the same story was recounted in Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions. Versions differ, but the main theme centres around a marriage between a foreigner from India, who was either a brahmin or a king of the Cholas, a dynasty in south India, and a daughter of the *naga* king, who inhabited the waters and ruled over the soil. An inscription from the third century in Champa names Kaudinya as the founder of the new kingdom and he travelled to the land where he met Princess Soma, daughter of the *naga* king, and married her. He carried with him a spear which he planted in the ground of the new land symbolising his authority.

The Khmer version has been linked to the nation's origins and the geneaology of

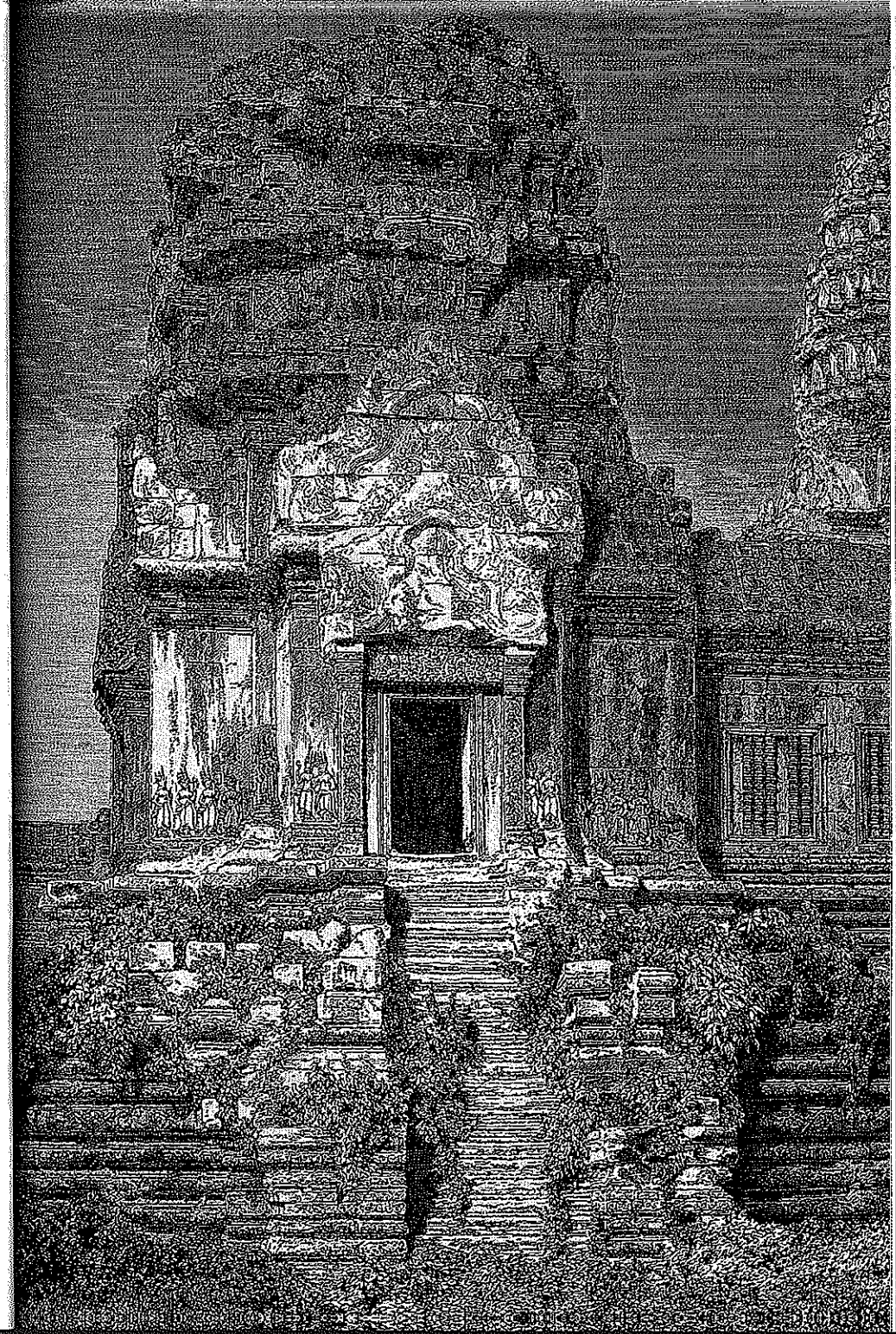
the kings of Cambodia throughout history. According to the Khmer legend, the race is descended from Kamu, the mythical ancestor of the Khmers. His descendant, Preah Thong, left India and sailed for Cambodia after he was exiled for displeasing the king. One night he saw a beautiful *nagini* on the shore of the water. They fell in love and married. The girl's father, king of the *nagas*, drank the waters that covered the land, built a capital, gave the country to them and named it Kambuja.

Indian ideas were absorbed into the culture of Funan during the early centuries of the Christian era on an increasing scale. A new influence seems to have arrived in the fifth century which may have been due to the presence of a Hindu ruler at Funan. The main Indian concepts implanted in south-east Asia during that time include the introduction of formal religions — both Hinduism and Buddhism — and the adoption of the Sanskrit language at court level, which gave birth to a writing system and the first inscriptions. Other Indian ideas absorbed into the local culture were astronomy, a legal system, literature and universal kingship.

Civil wars undermined the stability of Funan and by the early sixth century the centre of political power had shifted inland. Chinese records mention the emergence of a new state called Zhenla (Chenla) in the latter half of the sixth century, situated on the Mekong in the area of modern-day, south-eastern Laos. Zhenla seems to have gained control of Funan and extended its territorial boundaries to the border of today's Vietnam in the north-east and as far as southern China in the north.

Some time in the eighth century, rivalry forced Zhenla to split into two parts, according to Chinese records. Upper Zhenla (of the land), situated on the upper reaches of the Mekong in south Laos and along the northern shore of the Tonle Sap, seems to correspond to the area of the original Zhenla. Lower Zhenla (of the Water) was situated east of the Tonle Sap with its capital at Isanapura (Sambor Prei Kuk). It comprised several small principalities, including the former one of Funan in the Mekong Valley. The time from the fall of Funan to the beginning of the ninth century is known as the pre-Angkor Period of Cambodian history.

Western historians have long held the view that Funan and Zhenla were kingdoms in south-east Asia and that they were predecessors to the Khmer civilisation. Knowledge of them, though, relies solely on Chinese sources and their existence is not supported by either archaeological or epigraphical evidence. Additionally the names of the two states are not mentioned in any existing inscriptions of the time and they are unknown in the Khmer language. A more plausible theory, according to some scholars, such as Claude Jacques, a French epigraphist, is that Cambodia consisted of numerous states and that Funan and Zhenla were only two of several, albeit perhaps the most important ones. They may have called themselves kingdoms for the purpose of offering tribute to China.[9]



Sketch of Angkor Wat by Louis Delaporte.

Angkor Period: Ninth Century to Fifteenth Century AD

The generally accepted dates for the Angkor Period are 802 to 1432. It began when Jayavarman II conducted a ritual that installed him as universal monarch and ended with the relocation of the Khmers from Angkor, first to Basan on the eastern side of the Mekong and to Phnom Penh in southern Cambodia in 1434. Neither date, though, is absolute as the area was occupied both before and after these years. The dates do, however, designate the period during which the Khmer empire reached its greatest territorial limits and its apogee in cultural and artistic achievements.

The history of this period has been reconstructed from the monuments and their reliefs, statuary, excavated artefacts and inscriptions in Pali, Sanskrit and Khmer — all found within the boundaries of the former empire. The inscriptions provide a genealogy and a chronological framework, describe the merits of the kings, give details about the temples such as the founding and inventories, and about the political organisation. Despite this seemingly large amount of information about the Angkor Period, there are areas such as daily life where information is scarce.

Little is known about Jayavarman II, the founder of Angkor, as no inscriptions from his reign have been found. Evidence of the achievements of this first king comes from the Sdok Kak Thom inscription, dating from the middle of the 11th century, some two hundred years after his reign. Uncovered in north-western Cambodia, this is the most important inscription on the history of the reign of Jayavarman II. It says that he spent some time at the court of the Sailendras dynasty in Indonesia before returning to Cambodia. According to a later account by an Arab merchant, the king of the Sailendras dynasty staged a surprise attack on the Khmers by approaching the capital from the river and the Great Lake. The young king, son of Rajendravarman I, was beheaded and the Khmer Empire became a vassal of the Sailendras dynasty.[10] So it could be that Jayavarman II was taken to Indonesia as a prisoner at the time of the attack.

The date that Jayavarman II returned to Cambodia from Indonesia is debated by historians, but most agree that he was back in the country by 790 if not earlier. He asserted his control and power through military campaigns to extend the area of his territorial jurisdiction and to consolidate small principalities before establishing a capital at Indrapura. He then moved his base three more times. The reasons for the changes are uncertain, but it may have been for a better source of food. One of the locations was Hariharalaya (present-day Roluos), an area that had been occupied in pre-Angkor times.

At the beginning of the ninth century Jayavarman II (reigned 802-50) moved his capital again, this time to another pre-Angkor site, Mount Mahendraparvata (today Phnom Kulen), 40 kilometres (25 miles) north-east of Angkor Thom, and it is at this site that the inscriptions say Jayavarman II proclaimed himself universal ruler. This

historic event took place in 802 and marked the unification of the Khmer state, the declaration of its independence from Indonesia, and the beginning of the Angkor period. At the same time, Jayavarman II established a new religious belief, the devaraja god-king cult. Soon afterwards he moved the capital back to Roluos where he ruled until his death in 850.

Successive kings after Jayavarman II continued to unify and expand the Khmer Empire. The inscriptions give the names of 39 kings from the Angkor period. Seven of these, selected for worthy achievements and the mark they left on Khmer civilisation, are described in this guidebook.

Indravarman I (reigned 877-89) set a precedent for future kings by building a temple-mountain (Bakong), honouring his ancestors with a temple (Preah Ko), and building a *baray*, the Indratataka, at the capital of Hariharalaya. These elements became *de rigueur* as a means for successive rulers to display their omnipotence.

His son, Yasovarman I, (reigned 889-900) built the temple of Lolei at Roluos on an island in the middle of the large *baray* constructed by his father and he dedicated it to his ancestors. Then he moved the capital to Yasodharapura (Angkor) which served as the Khmer centre for the next 500 years, except for a brief time in the first half of the tenth century. Yasovarman I built Bakheng as his temple-mountain on a natural hill and smaller temples on the hills known as Phnom Bok and Phnom Krom. To the east of his temple-mountain he constructed a large *baray*, the Yasodharatataka (East Baray).

Two sons succeeded Yasovarman, then Jayavarman IV (reigned 928-944), a usurper, set up another capital at Koh Ker, north-east of Angkor in 928, and ruled for some 20 years. Colossal stone sculptures were produced during his reign and fine examples are on view at the National Museum in Phnom Penh.

His nephew, Rajendravarman II (reigned 944-68), brought the capital back to Yashodharapura in 944 and consolidated the empire. He built the two great temple-mountains of East Mebon and Pre Rup and staged a successful military campaign against Champa.

He was succeeded by his son, Jayavarman V (reigned 968-1001) who was a child when he ascended the throne. He left two significant architectural legacies: the temple of Banteay Srei, dedicated to him by an official who later became the king's tutor, and the majestic temple-mountain of Ta Keo.

Suryavarman I (reigned 1002-50) was the next significant king. He claimed dynastic lineage to a family at Nakorn Sri Thammarat in the south of peninsular Thailand, but his origins are obscure. He strengthened the organisation of the government, established internal security, and achieved political acclaim for extending the territorial boundaries southward to the Gulf of Thailand through a series of wars. He conquered the Mon kingdom of central and south Thailand, sometime

Following pages: the library at Angkor Wat is built in a symmetrical plan in the shape of a cross.

around 1025, and established a Khmer centre at Louvo (Lopburi), a move that strengthened the empire's economic control and extended it to include the Lower Menam. During Suryavarman I's reign the Khmer empire reached its greatest degree of territorial expansion.

After a series of minor kings and short reigns, Suryavarman II took the throne around 1113 and reigned until 1150. He was one of the most brilliant of the Khmer rulers and the builder of the great temple of Angkor Wat. He also established relations with China and sent embassies to the Song Emperor. Near the end of his reign he engaged in several wars against the Chams. In 1145, he attacked, defeated the king, and sacked the royal capital. He appears twice in the bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat (South Gallery). At one point he is shown standing on the back of an elephant reviewing his troops and accompanied by his field marshals, and at another he is seated on an elaborately carved throne.

The last major king was Jayavarman VII (reigned 1181–1220). He undertook a massive building programme and is accredited for constructing more monuments, roads, bridges, and resthouses than all the other kings put together. He was a devout follower of Mahayana Buddhism and this spiritual dedication permeated every aspect of his reign. He lived outside of Angkor for several years before he became king and then returned, perhaps to prepare to assert his claim to the throne some years later.

Before he took power, the Chams launched a naval battle in 1177 that destroyed the royal capital — the Khmers' worst defeat in history. The Chams launched a brilliantly planned and unexpected attack by sailing their fleet around the coast from central Vietnam and up the Mekong River to the Great Lake, then ravaging the city and setting it on fire. Following the attack, the Chams occupied Cambodia for the next four years until Jayavarman VII staged a war, regained the capital and ascended the throne at the age of 55. He then ruled for about 40 years more.

During his reign, he invaded Champa and took its king as prisoner to Angkor in 1190, claiming a major military victory. The annexation of Champa to Cambodia followed, and lasted from 1203 to 1220, after which Jayavarman VII died. The victories of the Khmers over the Chams in battles under the direction of Jayavarman VII are depicted on the historic bas-reliefs at the Bayon. Besides being a military leader of excellence, he extended the boundaries of the empire from the coast of Vietnam to the borders of Pagan in Burma and from the vicinity of Vientiane in Laos to much of the Malay Peninsula.

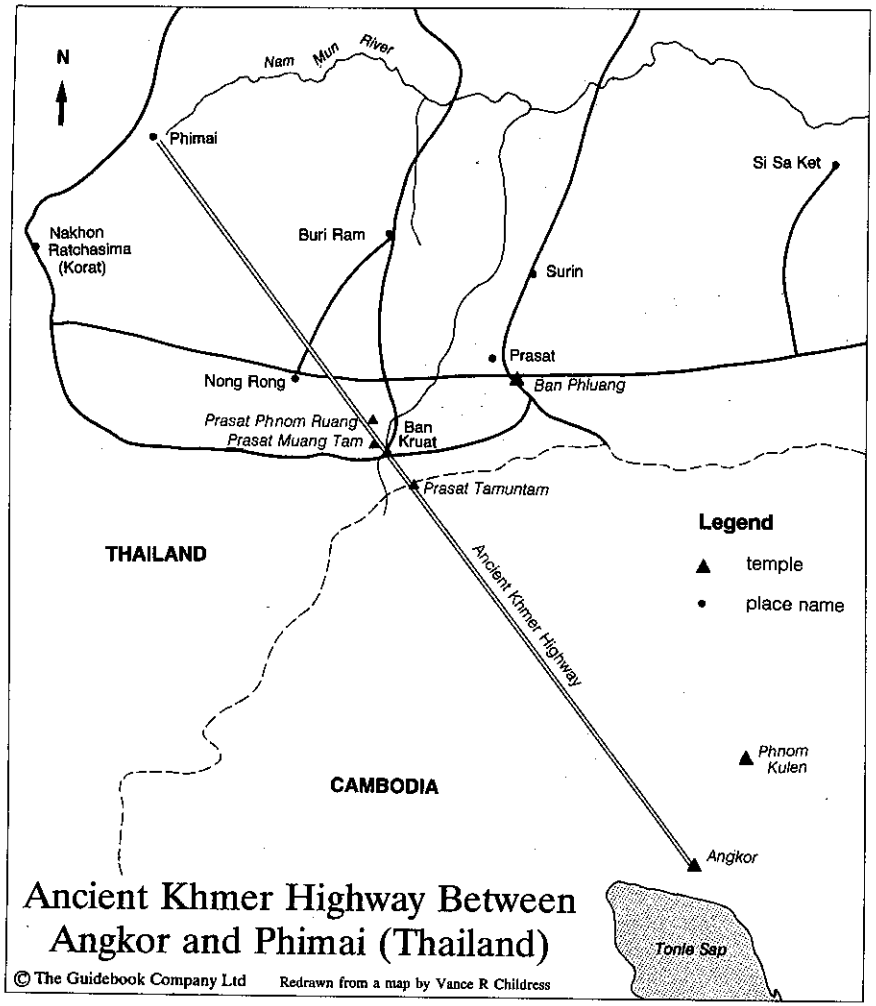
Several descendants of Jayavarman VII reigned after his death and, although they built no major monuments, we know that the capital was flourishing to some extent as late as the end of the 13th century because Zhou Daguan described several opulent monuments which he said, 'caused merchants from overseas to speak...of "Cambodia the rich and noble" '. At approximately the same time, a shift from Buddhism to a revival in Hinduism may have been responsible for the defacement of some Buddhist images at Angkor.

Under the rule of Indravarman III (1295-1307), Theravada Buddhism became the state religion of Cambodia. In 1350, the Thais established their capital at Ayutthaya and became a great threat to Angkor. The names and dates of the kings who ruled during the remainder of the Angkor period are obscure and dependent on unreliable chronicles composed at a later date. Angkor remained the capital until 1432, but from then onwards the Khmers moved, by degrees, southward to Phnom Penh, where the capital still stands today.

During the Angkor period several kingdoms rose to power in the region and threatened the supremacy of the Khmer Empire. Champa, located in the Mekong delta north of the Funan in an area corresponding to modern central and south Vietnam, was founded at the end of the second century, according to Chinese records. Indian influences penetrated Champa two or three hundred years later and Hinduism became the dominant religion. It is possible the Indian influence reached Champa by way of Indonesia as comparative decorative elements are found in the monuments of both cultures dating from the late ninth and early tenth centuries.

Natural geographical barriers restricted the development of Champa into a centralised state. The Chams concentrated on maritime activities and became a strong naval power. After the collapse of Funan in the sixth century, the Chams extended their influence southward. They came under the rule of the Khmers for a short time in the beginning of the 13th century, but otherwise Champa remained an independent state until the last half of the 15th century when it was absorbed by Vietnam.

Name	Period of Power (centuries)	Area
Champa	2nd-15th	central Vietnam
Dvaravati/Mon	6th/7th-11th	Thailand
Pyu	6th-11th	Burma
Srivijaya	6th-13th	Indonesia (Sumatra);
(9th-13th: ruled by Sailendras)		Malay Peninsula; south Thailand
Sailendras	8th-9th	Indonesia (central Java)
Pegu/Mon	9th-11th	Burma
Pagan	11th-13th	Burma
Sukhothai	13th-14th	Thailand (north-central)
Lan Na	13th-16th	north Thailand
Ayutthaya	mid-14th-mid-18th	Thailand (central plain)



The Mons established several centres in mainland south-east Asia. The kingdom of Dvaravati controlled the Menam Valley, in central Thailand, from the sixth or seventh century to the eleventh century. The Pyu established a centre in the sixth century situated in the valleys of the central Irrawaddy and Sittang rivers in Burma. Pegu, another Mon site, was founded in the ninth century. The Burmese emerged from the north in the 11th century and took over the Pyus in the central valleys and

established a capital at Pagan. The Burmese extended their territorial boundaries southward and conquered the Mons at Pegu.

Two states situated in the Indonesian islands emerged following the demise of Funan and grew to become powerful empires in the region. The south-east coast of Sumatra gained importance in the fifth century because of the development of a direct sea route from Indonesia to China and also because it served as a trans-shipment point between India and China. The Srivajayan empire became a centre in Indonesia of this trade. Its origins probably date to the sixth century and by the late seventh century it was a strong commercial power that had extended its territorial boundaries to the coasts of west Java, Malaysia and Chaiya in southern Thailand.

Although the capital of the Srivijaya dynasty has not yet been found, the south-east coast of Sumatra at Pandalembang and the Malay peninsula have been suggested as possibilities. Details of the decline of Srivijaya are sketchy. It was besieged by piracy in the Straits of Sunda and Malacca in the 11th century, and, during the Southern Song period (1127-1278) when China allowed its own vessels to conduct trade with south-east Asia, Srivijaya's importance decreased.

A second dynasty, the Sailendras, rose in Indonesia in central Java. Its origins and identity are not clear, but one theory is that survivors of Funan went to Java and, after some time, appeared as the Sailendra dynasty. Both Funan and Sailendra are known as the 'kings of the mountain'. The dynasty was well established in the eighth and ninth centuries when it undertook the construction of the great Buddhist monument Borobudur and others in central Java. Shortly afterwards, the Sailendras lost control of the central area and the capital moved to east Java.

Thailand was a persistent invader of Khmer territory. Sukhothai, the first organised Thai settlement, was established in the 13th century in north-central Thailand. About the same time, the Thai principality of Lan Na was founded with its capital at Chiang Mai. The Thais also controlled the area around the mouth of the Chao Phraya River which became the Ayutthaya kingdom in the middle of the 14th century. Within a hundred years, the Thais had gained control of a large part of the area corresponding to modern-day Thailand. Ayutthaya became the dominant power in the region until it was sacked by the Burmese in 1767.

The Thais seem to have made repeated raids on Angkor in the 14th century, and battles continued between the two rivals for almost another century until a final siege in 1431 which lasted, according to the Ayutthaya chronicles, for seven months. The Thai invasions, however, did not lead to permanent occupation of Khmer territory. Some time after the brutal attack on the city of Angkor Thom, the Khmers gradually retreated and shifted their capital southward to Phnom Penh, with Lovek and Udong briefly serving as capitals in the 16th and 18th centuries respectively.

Exactly how long this change took is unknown, but it probably occurred over

several years and Angkor was never completely abandoned. Some temples, such as Angkor Wat, were maintained by monks even in the 15th and 16th centuries. The court returned to Angkor briefly in the late 16th century and again intermittently in the 17th century, but it never regained its former glory.

The evidence is inconclusive, but it seems likely that several forces acted as catalysts leading to the decline of the Khmer Empire. The most important reason was the increasing pressure brought about by the encroachment of the Thais, rendering Angkor unsuitable as a capital because of its proximity to the enemy. The loss of manpower through the ensuing wars further meant that maintenance of the hydraulic system was neglected. Not surprisingly, the Khmer people also revolted against harsh conditions in the empire, against Jayavarman VII's extravagant building and against his opulent lifestyle which exhausted the kingdom's resources. As central control weakened, the vassal states gradually asserted their independence.

In addition, ecologists point out that by the 13th century forests may well have become depleted. Sustaining the large population probably put pressure on the agricultural system, and drought, or other climatic factors, may well have contributed to the weakening of the state's authority. Increased missions from Cambodia to China in the late 14th and early 15th centuries suggest an interest in developing maritime trade in south-east Asia, and Phnom Penh would have been a more suitable base from which it could be developed.

A new religion, Theravada Buddhism, spread from Sri Lanka across south-east Asia in the 13th century eclipsing former beliefs. In summary, the Khmer rulers probably shifted south-east early in the 15th century and established a base at Phnom Penh and when this shift occurred the character of the kingdom changed.[11] It required new ways of unifying and administering the country and its people.

Sixteenth Century to Nineteenth Century AD

The ruins of Angkor were reported by many foreigners as early as the 16th century. Portuguese refugees forced out of Sumatra by the Dutch in that century sought asylum in Cambodia and were among the earliest Europeans to see Angkor. Numerous overseas traders from China, Japan, Arabia, Spain and Portugal resided in the Cambodian capitals of Phnom Penh and Lovek in the 16th century and were joined briefly by the Dutch and the English in the following century. At about the same time, Portuguese and Spanish missionaries arrived from Malacca.

The earliest and most detailed account of Angkor was by the Portuguese writer Diego do Couto, who described how, in the middle of the 16th century, a king of Cambodia came upon the ruins while hunting elephants. Although he never saw Cambodia it is believed that Antonio de Magdalena, a Capuchin friar, who visited Angkor about 1585, was his main source of information. He described a Cambodian king who went on an elephant hunt and came upon a 'number of imposing constructions' enshrouded in vegetation.

Other published reports by Spanish visitors in the early 17th century seem to have been based on Couto's account. Marcelo de Ribadeneira in a description of Angkor published in 1601 wrote: 'There are in Cambodia the ruins of an ancient city, which some say was constructed by the Romans or by Alexander the Great'.[12] Gabriel Quiroga de San Antonio, a Spanish missionary, wrote in 1603: 'In 1570 a city was brought to light that had never been seen or heard of by the natives'.[13] Christoval de Jaque also mentioned visitors at the ruins in 1570 and, in a book published on his travels in Indo-China in 1606, he called the site 'Anjog' and described the wall surrounding the city of Angkor Thom.[14]

Spanish missionaries in Cambodia in the 1580s heard of a city of ancient ruins and prayed that the ruins 'may be rehabilitated to become an outpost of Christian missions outside the Philippines....'[15] In 1672 Pere Chevruel, a French missionary, wrote: 'There is an ancient and very celebrated temple situated at a distance of eight days from the place where I live. This temple is called Onco, and it is famous among the gentiles as St Peter's in Rome'.[16] Few reports of Dutch visitors have come to light, which is surprising given their strong commercial presence in south-east Asia in the 16th and 17th centuries. Gerard van Wusthoff described Angkor in 1641 and 15 years later Hendrick Indjick, a merchant, wrote: 'The king paid a visit to a lovely pleasant place known as Anckoor, which the Portuguese and Castilians call Rome, and which is situated an eight or ten-day journey from here [Phnom Penh]'.[17]

Evidence of the Japanese at Angkor in the 17th century is carved in sandstone at Angkor Wat. Calligraphic characters corresponding to the date of 1632 can be seen on a pillar on the second level of Angkor Wat. The oldest known plan of Angkor Wat was drawn by Kenryo Shimano, a Japanese interpreter from Nagasaki, who journeyed to Angkor some time between 1632 and 1636 and drew a remarkably accurate diagram of the temple. Even though he called it Jetavana-vihara, a Buddhist site in India, and Angkor is not named on the diagram, other facts such as the unusual layout and the orientation to the west confirm the identity of Angkor Wat. The most telling reference is a note on the diagram that says 'sculptures in relief...four gods pull the rope', which clearly refers to the Churning of the Ocean of Milk in the gallery of bas-reliefs at Angkor Wat. Shimano's son, Morimoto Ukondayu, visited the great temple some time later in the 17th century to pay tribute to his father and purportedly carved the calligraphic characters which can be seen today.

Other foreigners published accounts of Angkor, but they received little recognition in the west. For example, Dr A House, an American missionary and long-time resident of Siam, wrote a lively and interesting description of Angkor in 1855.

Charles-Emile Bouilleaux, a French missionary, saw Angkor in 1850 and published an account of his travels eight years later. DO King, an Englishman who travelled in Indo-China in 1857-8, detailed his journey in a paper read to the Royal Geographical Society in London in 1859. He pointed out the ruins and the existence of a map of Angkor in a French work. 'The Temple stands solitary and alone in the jungle, in too perfect order to be called a ruin, a relic of a race far ahead of the present in all the arts and sciences', he wrote.[18]

Despite these published accounts by foreigners who saw and wrote about Angkor, they seem to have gone mainly unnoticed in the West. European interest in the ruins was not aroused until Henri Mouhot, a French naturalist, reported on his visit. At the time he planned his trip to the East he was living in Jersey with his Scottish wife. He was fortunate to gain the support of the Royal Geographical Society in London. Mouhot departed for Singapore in April 1858 and arrived in Siam in September.

Three months later he set off on a journey that continued until April 1860. During that time he spent two months in Cambodia, including three weeks at Angkor. He surveyed and measured the temple of Angkor Wat and kept detailed notes on his observations of the ruins. His last journey in the region was an exploration of uncharted territory in north-eastern Siam and a survey of the Mekong in Laos designed to fill in the blanks on maps made in the 17th century. Mouhot continued his work until November 1861 when he contracted a fever and died at Luang Prabang in Laos at the age of 35. His notes were taken to Bangkok by his faithful servants and later sent to his widow and brother in Jersey where they were published in 1864.

By the time of the publication of Mouhot's diaries, France had a presence in Indo-China. In 1864 a French Protectorate over Cambodia was in place except for Battambang and Siem Reap provinces, which were under the jurisdiction of Siam. A treaty between Siam and France in 1907 ceded these territories to France where they remained except for a brief period during the Second World War when they were returned to Siam.

The temple of Banteay Srei, north-east of Angkor, was disputed because it was located in the territory granted to Thailand. In 1941 the Japanese served as mediators in negotiations between Thailand and France and it was decided the temple should belong to Cambodia.