

Белые пятна истории

Ashley Thompson

Professor
University of California,
Berkeley

Pilgrims to Angkor: A Buddhist «Cosmopolis» in Southeast Asia?¹

Вопреки тому, что так часто преподносится в качестве истины, Ангкор не был заброшен после падения столицы Кхмерского государства в конце 15 века. Еще долго до сегодняшнего дня, когда он стал местом туристского паломничества, он оставался важным региональным центром буддийского паломничества. Для того чтобы иметь лучшее представление о постоянно обновляющейся жизни Ангкорских храмов и о месте, которое они занимали в жизни людей, в данной статье прослеживаются вероятные пути первых паломников Ангкора. В качестве доказательства исторических событий, а также имевших место социально-религиозных преобразований следы раннего паломничества проливают свет на малоизученный период истории Камбоджи, приблизительно между 15-ми 19-м веками. В первом разделе рассматривается очевидность паломничества камбоджийцев в этот район. Заключительный раздел приводит обнаруженные в Ангкоре доказательства посещения его паломниками из других стран.

Beginning in the wake of the Angkorian empire and ending with the formation of French Indochina, the middle period in Khmer history – roughly between the 15th and the 19th centuries – is frequently defined in terms of absence. In contrast to both its own earlier history and to the concurrent political, social and «cultural» climate of many other Southeast Asian countries, the Cambodia of this time can hardly be characterized as one of fruitful growth and trade. To the contrary, the middle period is generally presented as a time of loss, defeat, retreat, instability².

Of the many factors which helped create this retrospective view, one of the more influential was undoubtedly the spread of Theravada Buddhism, the very tenets of which emphasize humility in the face of impermanence. Signaling the relatively rapid though incomplete abandonment of Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism, and an accompanying move away from the production of stone inscriptions and the building of stone temples, Theravada Buddhism itself became associated in Cambodian history with a post-Angkorian period of economic and politi-

cal decline. Paradoxically, the predominantly negative historical impression of Cambodia after Angkor results at least in part from the positive hold Theravada came to take on the land.

The Cambodian middle period is indeed heralded by a sudden lack of traditional historical evidence. A simple comparison of the quantity of stone inscriptions from the ancient and middle periods demonstrates the significance of changes which were taking place, and the effects those changes were to have on the historiography of Cambodia. The more than one thousand inscriptions from the ancient period have been the collective object of extensive research for more than a century. The large majority have been translated, and the information obtained has been invaluable in establishing the chronology of reigns and a remarkably sophisticated understanding of the evolution of politico-religious institutions. Yet, with only one hundred or so middle Khmer inscriptions, epigraphists have been frustrated in attempts to do the same for the middle period.

However, this undeniable lack, viewed as it has been from within a rigid conceptual and methodological frame, is only one dimension of a more complex social transformation. The profoundly negative impression to which it has contributed is compounded in turn by the relative absence of research on the Khmer middle period. It was not until the 1970s, for instance, that systematic study of middle period inscriptions was undertaken. And this dearth of research has been accompanied by an insistent discourse on abandonment as part of a dramatic historiography of Cambodia in two acts (plus one): (1) The great Angkorian age; (2) the dark forgotten middle period; (3) The «rediscovery» of Angkor. In the cast of this Cambodian history play as compiled by more than a century of (primarily Western) authors, the middle period plays an important role as the very embodiment of obscurity. The middle period is *not* characterized by glory and power, and for this very reason did not catch the colonial historian's attention. The modern colonizer identified instead with the ancient colonial empire of Angkor. Yet, the middle period was never abandoned in this historiographical process; it was instead maintained as the very incarnation of abandonment, as the negative image of the colony without which the latter, in its ancient or modern incarnation, could not appear triumphant.

This rhetoric of loss and recovery is not however *strictly* a colonial fabrication. Interestingly, a series of similar tropes are found in what we might call the indigenous historiography of the middle period. Cambodian legend has it, for example, that a 16th-century Khmer King named Ang Chan (or Preah Chan Reachea) was on an elephant hunt in the forest when he stumbled upon a sandstone block in the underbrush. This was not any old stone; it emitted light – which the King and his followers understood to be a sign of the divine. The King began clearing the brush, to find another stone and yet another... until he had discovered a vast temple – and then all of Angkor! This King, or his immediate successors, was in fact to re-occupy the Angkor area, restoring temples and making new religious foundations and so effectively re-establish Khmer control over the ancient capital after some 100 years of abandonment by the Cambodian royal court. This trope of lost and found, this story of re-establishing cultural and territorial integrity through recovery of the past architectural and artistic heritage, continues to play a powerful role in the Khmer imagination of the nation. It is unlikely that the legend in its elephant-hunting details is actually true – indeed similar legends are known in neighboring countries and at other periods and other places in Cambodia. Yet, the story does reflect a certain historical reality – a reality in which metaphor and imagination play defining roles. Repeated recovery and commemoration of Angkor's ancient temples – themselves sites of commemoration – have been an important motivating factor of Cambodian history since post-Angkorian times.

As I mentioned above, for the post-Angkorian period we do not have the same plethora of information that we do for the ancient period – great temples and statues, abundant and lengthy Sanskrit and Khmer inscriptions or Chinese annals. Nonetheless, through what can be

tedious collection of disparate signs here and there – remains of Theravadin Buddhist worship halls (*vihāra*), modifications and repair of ancient temples, inscriptions and statuary remains, etc., we can piece together an image of Angkor after Angkor. In the following I simply want to lay out some of this evidence which reveals the transformation of Angkor from the living capital of an empire to an important site of spiritual pilgrimage.

It was during the middle period that Angkor came to embody what would eventually evolve into the remarkable cultural configuration that it is today: an expression of both the memory *and* the promise of moral order, commemorating at once the empire's ancient gods and glory, and the precepts, stories and symbols of Theravada Buddhism. Pilgrimage is of course as much about preserving the past as it is about ensuring the future. We might see this particularly post-Angkorian relation to cultural heritage, which we could describe as a forward-looking nostalgia whereby signs of past glory stand in as tokens of a promising future, to be culturally specific and historically defined, and so most potent for the Khmer people themselves. Yet, it was in this post-Angkorian period that Angkor also became a site of regional pilgrimage, attracting believers from well beyond Cambodia's cultural and political borders. We might even see this international movement, which would seem to have begun around the 16th century, as the prehistory of the World Heritage site Angkor is today, attracting modern-day jumbo-jet pilgrims from around the globe. Interestingly, it was only once Angkor was no longer the seat of political power that we clearly see it to become a site of multi-cultural spiritual pilgrimage. An agricultural kingdom based on hydraulic infrastructure rather than international trade, Angkor at its height would appear to have been relatively isolated from neighboring powers. According to what is **to** many of us a strangely familiar scenario in an anachronistic way, power seems to have been wielded at Angkor through a conjunction of isolationism and imperial conquest. As the embodiment of *loss*, on the other hand, Angkor after Angkor came to embody radically different values highlighting instead impermanence – or perhaps the permanence of impermanence, and the power not of the powerful but of the powerless themselves – or even of power lost – and to be found.

*Lost and found: the Cambodian trope*³

As noted above, the legend of a 16th-century Khmer King rediscovering Angkor is not without historical basis. There is in fact abundant proof that the Khmer royalty, most probably under the auspices of King Ang Chan and his two successors, re-established Khmer control over the ancient site over the course of the 16th century. Though it would seem that the royal court itself was never to permanently return to Angkor, royalty returned to the area, perhaps establishing temporary or secondary residence there for relatively long periods during this time. This re-occupation was not simply physical or militarily-based; it was rather powerfully symbolic, and performed through a series of religious foundations.

The most significant material evidence of this 16th-century royal re-occupation is at the temple of Angkor Vat (Figure 1). This temple would seem in fact to have long been the primary destination of Khmer pilgrimage – be it by royalty or commoners. Two short Khmer language inscriptions on the gallery walls of the northeastern wing of this 12th-century Vishnuite temple allow us to identify with near certainty Ang Chan as the patron of an important addition made to the temple in the mid-16th century. On the northern wing of the eastern gallery we read:

His Majesty Mahā Visnūōuloka (= Suryavarman II) left these panels incomplete; when His Majesty Braṅ Rāja Oikār Parama Rājādhirāja Rāmādhpati Parama Cakravartirāja (= Ang Chan) rose to the throne, he ordered Braṅ Mahādhara and the royal artisans to con-

tinue sculpting these narrative panels in ...÷aka, the eighth year (of the decade), year of the Horse, Wednesday, the full moon of Bhadrapad (= 1546 A.D. 4).

The second text, in the eastern wing of the northern gallery, announces the completion of this work in 1564:

His Majesty Mahà Viūōuloka (= Suryavarman II) left these panels incomplete; having risen to the throne, His Majesty Braḥ Ràja Oikàr Parama Ràjādhirāja Parama Pavitra (= Ang Chan) ordered that the effort be made to complete the narrative panels. In 1485 ÷aka, year of the Pig, Sunday, the full moon of Phalguōa, the two corner wings of the galleries were completed, in accordance with the (spirit of the) past.

The northeastern wing of Angkor Vat was the only portion of the temple's third enclosure galleries to have been left unsculpted at the original construction of the temple under the patronage of Suryavarman II in the 12th century. The reasons for leaving this corner blank are unknown. On the other hand, the reasons for renewing the sculpture in the 16th century are relatively clear: Ang Chan wished to perpetuate the work of his ancestor. Ang Chan was by all accounts a Buddhist ruler, and Angkor Vat, we will see shortly, was itself to be transformed into a Theravadin Buddhist site of worship – yet here, in this northeastern corner, the King ordered that narratives faithful to the spirit of the past be sculpted. Accordingly, what we see here are Vishnuite scenes: on the northern wing of the eastern gallery, we see the victory of Vishnu over the Demons; on the eastern wing of the northern gallery we see the Victory of Krishna (Vishnu) over the Demon Bana.

Now, in Hindu and Buddhist beliefs that have been a central part of Khmer culture since pre-Angkorian times, the northeast has a privileged relation to death – and so rebirth. Though we can not be certain that Suryavarman II, or his artisans, chose to leave the northeast galleries free in conjunction with such beliefs – it is clear that for Ang Chan, the completion of the reliefs here realized a sort of rebirth of the past. The victory over the Demons may well have been meant to convey an allegorical representation of Ang Chan himself – and/or of his predecessor Suryavarman II – in their own epic conquests of the throne.⁵

A series of slightly later inscriptions reveal the Buddhist devotional aspect of this 16th-century royal re-occupation. These texts, which identify themselves as *satyapranidhan*, or «vows of truth», are carved on the pillars of Preah Pean, the Hall of a «Thousand Buddhas», and at Bakan, the temple's central sanctuary and highest terrace. Each of these vows of truth can be seen as marking the event of a pilgrimage as testimony each time to a singular return to Angkor. And as the temple began to be the physical archive of these inscriptions, it no doubt gained particular significance as a pilgrimage center. The first of these vows was composed by the Queen Mother in 1577.⁶ The Queen Mother opens her text with the vision of her son the King (Ang Chan's grandson) restoring Angkor Vat:

Having seen my royal and august son, brimming with faith, restore this Preah Pisnulok (name of Angkor Vat) of ancient Cambodia to its ancient plenitude, I was seized with joy and an overwhelming satisfaction in him ! (ll. 11 – 15)

The Queen's vision of her son restoring Angkor Vat leads her to another vision, an interior and thoroughly Buddhist vision of impermanence:

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Experiencing sheer faith in the teaching of the Buddha, I was brought to contemplate impermanence, to meditate in order to see the dharma of the name and the body (*nama-rupa*): these are not permanent, that is, the self is not true. (ll. 15 – 18)

The Queen then recounts her own act of devotion:

So I abandoned my august chignon of hair in front of all the authorities at the celebration of the head aspersion ceremony at Preah Pisnulok. Then I had it burned, and from the lacquer obtained, I restored the statues of the Buddha on this Bakan (upper terrace of Angkor Vat). (ll. 18 – 21)

The abandonment or offering of hair is a very common pious act in Cambodia today. It is, on the other hand, relatively rare today that the burned offering be then mixed with resin or oil to produce lacquer to repaint statues. The restoration of Angkor Vat clearly represents here the restoration of territorial integrity and royal power at Angkor. Yet, the sight of her son in the act of restoration inspires in the Queen reflections on impermanence, and indeed lead her to make of her own impermanent self a sort of permanent memorial to impermanence as she blends her own body into that of a Buddha statue. Like many pilgrims would do in her wake, the Queen concludes her «vow of truth» with a wish to be reborn at the time of the future Buddha Maitreya. This restoration of a heritage from the past is thus itself an appeal to the future.

The son's own «vow of truth» was carved at Angkor Vat two years later, in 1579.⁷ This text provides what I believe to be crucial evidence for understanding the transformation of Angkor Vat into a Theravadin Buddhist site of worship. We read:

When His Majesty the great devotee rose to the throne as protector of the royal line, he sought to elevate the religion of the Buddha in truth by restoring the great temple of Preah Pisnulok, stone by stone, he restored its summit with its nine-pronged spire, embellishing and covering it in gold. Then he deposited the sacred relics⁸ transferring the fruit of his royal works to the four august ancestors (or Buddhas)⁹, in homage above all to his noble father the deceased King, as well as to his august ancestors of the past seven generations [...] After this, His Majesty, the great and pure devotee, recalled a vow he had once made to propagate the teachings of the Buddha in truth in the country of Kampuchea, to elevate the glory of the royal family to its past brilliance, to stave off its ruin: may we be granted peace, success and stability.¹⁰ (Face A, ll. 16)

The image of four Buddhas reappears in the next dated inscription at Angkor Vat.¹¹ This text, written in or after the year 1586, records pious foundations made by a court dignitary at the temple. It begins by recounting the foundation of a Buddhist worship hall (*vihàra*) by the dignitary and his wife in the year 1566. The text continues to describe the good works accomplished by the same dignitary some twenty years later:

The dignitary Abhayaraja, brimming with faith, restored the cruciform stone tower with its four stone Buddha images conserved in this five-towered temple...[*After listing the various offerings made, the inscription continues to note that the dignitary Abhayaraj*] deposited sacred relics... [*Transferring the merits gained through these acts to relatives and others, he then expressed the wish to*] become a perfect devotee of the bodhisattva Preah Si Ar Metriy...¹²

Thirteen years were to pass before the dignitary Abhayaraja accomplished and archived other religious acts at Angkor Vat. In another inscription he writes:

[...] our hearts brimming with faith, we built¹³ a four-faced tower with stone and metal Buddhas symbolizing Preah Pisnulok [...]¹⁴

The information contained in these inscriptions is underscored by archaeological and ethnographic evidence at the temple itself. The uppermost terrace of Angkor Vat supports five towers, one at each of the four corners of the first enclosure and a fifth in the center; each of these sanctuaries originally opened to each of the four cardinal directions. However the central sanctuary was to undergo significant modification during the middle period. Each of its four entranceways was blocked up with sandstone, into which was sculpted a standing Buddha image (Figure 2).

An attentive reading of these inscriptions suggests that this modification of the central sanctuary at Angkor Vat took place at the end of the 16th century, during the particular political and religious context I have been describing here. Stylistically, the reliefs sculpted onto the stone entrances of the central sanctuary can be roughly dated to this time. Together, these texts tell us that particular attention was paid to the restoration of the sanctuary summit. Relics were deposited. Maitreya was invoked. What transpired at the uppermost level of Angkor Vat sometime around 1580 seems in fact to have been typical of a number of important political-religious events in which the recurrent theme of the four Buddhas emerged in middle Cambodia: an ancient Brahmanic or Mahayanic sanctuary was transformed into a Buddhist stupa, which was itself surrounded by 4 Buddhas. The stupa itself, a funerary monument of course, but also a place of gestation, was seen, I believe, to signal the fifth Buddha to come: Maitreya.

The inscription concerning the offerings and vows made by the King himself is particularly enlightening. The names used in this inscription do not correspond to those found in the Cambodian Royal Chronicles, which are the main source for reconstructing Cambodian royal history during the middle period. However, this text is dated 1579, just after this King Ang Chan's grandson had risen to power, and there is compelling evidence to suppose that the king referred to in the inscription and Ang Chan's grandson were one and the same person. As the Chronicles illustrate repeatedly, the initial duty of a new king is to render homage to his ancestors, in particular to the preceding king: the son inaugurates his reign in laying his father's remains to rest. The 1579 inscription reveals the importance of this gesture as a perpetuation of the royal line and of the Buddhist religion, both seen as essential to the preservation of the kingdom's stability. Veneration of the ancestors itself propagates Buddhism. And, in this context, burial of the past serves to ensure rebirth in the future. Closed off to the mundane world as its four entries were walled in and sculpted, the central sanctuary of Angkor Vat may well have served as a stupa for the father of the newly coronated king.

The four past Buddhas are in fact associated with the royal ancestors in the text. It tells us that in depositing relics (or building a reliquary), the monarch transferred merits to «*saiūtec braḥ jā ta' pān braḥ aīg*» While we can read this expression as literally designating four ancestors, «*saiūtec braḥ jā ta' pān braḥ aīg*» can simultaneously designate four Buddhas. This 16th-century linguistic ambivalence is corroborated by modern ritual practice at the temple itself in which the four Buddha images sculpted into the entranceways of Angkor Vat's central sanctuary are associated with sacred ancestors. Each of the four images is also worshipped as one of the four past Buddhas. Any of the numerous local caretakers of this central sanctuary will readily identify these religious ancestors by name: Kuk Sandho, Neak Gamano, Kassapo, Samana Gotam.¹⁵ The western¹⁶ image is also known as Preah Buddh Preah Bida (*braḥ buddh braḥ pātā*),

«August Buddha, August Father» (the *braḥ varapitādhiraḥ* of the inscription?); the southern is Preah Buddh Preah Meada (*braḥ buddh braḥ mātā*), «August Buddha, August Mother». Why? Because, I have been told, those Buddhas contain the *dhātu*, that is the relics or the essence, of the father and the mother.

This cult may well explain the abundance of a particular kind of miniature monument with four sides sculpted with four Buddhas and most frequently found at post-Angkorian religious sites (Figure 3). There are a number of them displayed at Preah Pean today. These are called *sthâp*, another form of stupa. Perhaps one of the Preah Pean *sthâp* is the «four-faced tower with stone and metal Buddhas symbolizing Angkor Vat» which our dignitary Abhayaraja offered to the temple in the 16th century? And perhaps these *sthâp* are a cultural memory that bears witness to the original meaning of the middle-period transformation of Angkor Vat's central sanctuary...

This middle period transformation may well explain other contemporary cults at Angkor Vat. A statue thought to represent Vishnu, located today in one of the gopuras of the 3rd enclosure's western entrance is well known throughout the Angkor area, and even beyond. Venerated as a guardian spirit of the temple, this statue is called Ta Reac – «Royal Ancestor» (Figure 4). Though we have no proof of this hypothesis, it seems quite possible that it may have been Angkor Vat's central image – which was transferred to a marginal position within the temple when the central sanctuary was closed off as a stupa.

I have only touched here on the evidence we have to understand the early Khmer Theravadin complex at Angkor Vat. There are in fact more than 40 «vows of truth» dating from the 16th-18th centuries on the temple's walls and pillars. Let me just mention one more of these texts. On the third gallery's eastern wall we find the first Cambodian inscription ever to be written in Khmer verse (Figure 5). This early 18th-century poem was composed by a court dignitary in commemoration of his deceased wife and sons.¹⁷ The remains of his loved ones may in fact be encased in a small stupa standing on the third enclosure terrace, facing the inscription itself (Figures 6 and 7). There is an interesting contemporary cult of this stupa. Once a year members of a family from the nearby town of Siem Reap come to Angkor Vat to render homage to the stupa; they say they have inherited this obligation from their ancestors, who inherited it from their ancestors, etc. With this, we have a specific example of the perpetuation of pilgrimage to Angkor manifest through a private stupa cult enhanced, as it were, by its place in the shadow of the 12th-century temple/16th-century stupa.

Many more Buddhist foundations were made at Angkor over the course of this period. I will quickly mention a few to simply indicate the extent of the Theravadin presence in the area around the time of the transfer of the capital to Cambodia's southerly regions.

– Prasat Top, southwestern quadrant of Angkor Thom. This temple, originally constructed in the 10th – 11th centuries, was transformed into a Theravadin pagoda over the course of the 13 – 17th centuries (Figures 8 and 9).

– Phnom Bakheng, outside the southern gate of Angkor Thom. The five sanctuaries of the upper terrace of this late 9th-century Shivaite temple were dismantled and rebuilt as a colossal seated Buddha around the 16th century (Figure 10).

– Ta Tuot, northeastern quadrant of Angkor Thom. Late (16th c.?) Buddhist friezes decorate the interior of this 12th-century sanctuary, which remains a favored site of meditation for religious and lay-people in the Siem Reap region (Figures 11 and 12).

– Vat Adhvea, south of Siem Reap town. Numerous Theravadin Buddhist inscriptions were engraved inside this 12th-century temple in the middle period (Figure 13).

– Buddhist terraces. Stone platforms which once supported wooden *vihàra* (Buddhist worship halls) dot the Angkor region. This «Buddhist terrace», known as Prasat Prampil

Lavaeng, is perhaps the most monumental of them all. Situated in the southeastern quadrant of Angkor Thom, the terrace now supports the Buddha image found by 20th-century archaeologists inside the central well of the Bayon. (Figure 14)

Lost and Found?: foreign pilgrims to Angkor

I want to end here with a brief note on foreign pilgrimage to Angkor during the middle period. Cambodia's direct participation in the international economic trade which developed across the Southeast Asian region, primarily through maritime networks, during this time was relatively limited. Yet Angkor was affected by this international movement in the region in important ways. Situated inland, Angkor became a special travel destination, and a locus of international cultural exchange.

A first indication of this can be read in an inscription found at Phnom Bakheng¹⁸ (Figures 15 and 16). This Khmer text, carved into the base of a Buddha image, was composed by a monk in the 16th century. In it he recounts his travels from afar to an ancient religious site near Oudong, a region in southern Cambodia, where the Khmer royal capital would eventually settle into the 19th century. After restoring Buddhist statues at Oudong, he travels to Angkor where he will then restore more statues and make more religious foundations atop Phnom Bakheng. As I mentioned a moment ago, this text is in Khmer – yet it is a slightly strange Khmer. Linguistic analyses in fact strongly suggest that this text was composed by a Tai speaker. I won't go into the details here; suffice it to say that this was very probably a Khmer-speaking Siamese monk (or a Tai-speaking Khmer monk) who made the pilgrimage to Angkor. It is particularly interesting in this context to note a central wish made in the text:

I offer another wish to the King...: may he reign and protect our Kingdom of Kambuja and ensure stability and long life until the end of time, in pushing out all malevolent enemies.

Even though – or perhaps because Siam and Cambodia had been at war, this Khmer speaking Tai monk or Tai-speaking Khmer monk wishes the Khmer King to vanquish enemies at Angkor.

Japanese people – religious men or traders – were among other early pilgrims to Angkor.¹⁹ There are 14 Japanese calligraphic inscriptions at Angkor Vat, most of which are located in Preah Pean. These texts were painted in ink, rather than carved in stone, and date to the twenty years between 1612 and 1632. (Figure 17). Most of these give only the name and place of origin of their writers – a sort of 17th-century Japanese «I was here». Their authors would seem to have been primarily merchants, who, conducting maritime trade in the region, made the pilgrimage or tourist trek to Angkor. One text however stands out among the rest (Figure 18). This text contains an invocation to the Buddha and is dedicated to the well-being of the author's parents. Recent research by Japanese scholars has provided convincing evidence to see in this Buddhist pilgrim the original author or artist of the famous first map of Angkor Vat (Figure 19). This beautiful document, in ink and watercolor on paper, is archived now in the Shokokan Museum of Mito, Japan. The map would seem to be the last in a series of copies of an original made around 1630. Yet, this map, nor presumably its predecessors, is not labeled Angkor Vat. The map is instead labeled Jetavana-vihara, that is the forest monastery built for the Buddha in the Buddha's time. For this mislabeling the map was only understood to represent Angkor Vat by an alert 20th century scholar who recognized in it the temple's unique architectural plan and 3rd enclosure gallery reliefs by the astonishingly accurate description given of these.²⁰ Now,

Jetavana had of course long been an important site of pilgrimage by the time this map was made; scholars have frequently presumed that its pilgrim-author – or perhaps his boatmaster or tour guides simply misnavigated, taking Cambodia for India. It seems to me, however, that it may well be worth our while to attempt another reading of what has too often been seen as a mistake. Could it not be that, by the 17th century, Angkor Vat was assimilated with Jetavana? That the great temple, now a great Theravadin Buddhist pilgrimage site, was seen to represent Jetavana itself – in much the same way that Angkor’s Siem Reap river was long called the Ganges or that its Kulen mountains have been called the Himalayas, or even that Angkor Vat itself was once seen to represent Vishnu’s paradise on earth? This phenomenon of localization, or transposition of sacred geography to the here and now, is indeed fundamental to the Buddhist imagination. So rather than proof of the poor geographical knowledge or navigational skills of our 17th-century Japanese pilgrims, this map may well stand as proof to the importance of Angkor Vat in the Buddhist imagination well beyond the confines of Cambodia in the post-Angkorian period.

I want to conclude with an ecumenical message left us by some anonymous pilgrim to Angkor – perhaps in the 16th century, perhaps later. Colonial researchers and conservation authorities were rather taken aback by the late Theravadin transformation of the ancient Brahmanic temple of Phnom Bakheng noted above. Construction of the great seated Buddha around the 16th-century had of course meant the disfiguration and significant dismantlement of the 9th-century temple. The satellite sanctuaries were largely taken apart such that their stones could be re-employed in the colossal Buddha image. Initially, it would seem, French conservationists did not understand that the construction covering the true temple was a Buddha at all. So they promptly set about taking apart the then partially ruined Buddha in order to restore the ancient temple as best they could. In their own modern-day dismantlement process, they discovered an abundance of sacred deposits in the masonry: Buddha statues, gold leaves, remarkable Buddha images in gold and silver repoussé, along with a fascinating stela (Figure 20). This stela contains a four-line text in Arabic, of which three have been deciphered.²¹ They are stock phrases, one of which at least comes from the Koran. And they read something like this:

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Benevolent
 There is no other god than Allah and Muhammad is the envoy of Allah
 Aid from Allah and future victory; and the good news is announced to Believers.

Analysis of the script led the text’s translator to believe that a local scribe, unfamiliar with Arabic script, carved the stone according to a written model. Now, while Allah is proclaimed here to be the only God, the text was inscribed atop Phnom Bakheng, this site of Buddhist worship. It doesn’t seem to me that this declaration of faith would indicate some past religious conflict. Instead, it points up the range of Angkor’s attraction as a site not only, then, of Buddhist pilgrimage but of religious pilgrimage in a much broader sense. And that this invocation to Allah was eventually incorporated into the body of Phnom Bakheng’s colossal Buddha, again, should not be interpreted as a sign of contempt for the Islamic faith on the part of the Buddhist builders; the stela was used, instead, like other sacred images, literally to build the Buddha, and metaphorically of course to build the Buddha’s spiritual power.

So, Angkor teaches us many things. When I first conceived this paper I was not thinking of this unique and uniquely significant Islamic inscription; and I was certainly not expecting to end with a note on religious tolerance, or with an appeal to our collective future. But, I shouldn’t be surprised: Angkor after Angkor is at its heart a place of spirituality – and if we simply take the time to make the pilgrimage, we will, I believe, always find in Angkor the memory *and* the promise of another order.

Figure Legends for «Pilgrims to Angkor»

Figure 1: Angkor Vat. The areas indicated each contain significant evidence of reappropriation of the temple in the middle period, and will be discussed below. (Image produced by Khut Sokhan, Reyum)



Figure 2: One of four Buddhas sculpted on sandstone blocks filling in what were originally the four entrances to the central sanctuary of Angkor Wat. (Photo by A. Thompson)

Figure 3: Sculptures in Preah Pean, Angkor Vat. A *sthupa* is in the middle of the alignment pictured here. (Photo by A. Thompson)



Figure 4: Ta Reac statue, Angkor Vat. (Photo by Ang Chouléan)

Figure 5: IMA 38, early 18th-c. inscription on eastern side of Angkor Vat's third enclosure. (Photo by Epigraphic Inventory Unit, Department of Culture and Research, APSARA)



Figure 6: Stupa outside of Angkor Vat's third gallery, eastern wall, facing IMA 38. (Photo by Sociological Research Unit, Department of Culture and Research, APSARA)



Figure 7: Annual familial ceremony at same stupa (see Figure 6), July 17, 2000. (Photo by Sociological Research Unit, Department of Culture and Research, APSARA)



Figure 8: Prasat Top, seen from the southeast. Note the Buddhist border stone in the foreground. (Photo by Research Unit, Department of Culture and Research, APSARA)



Figure 9: Remains of Buddhist sculpture worshipped today in the central sanctuary of Prasat Top. (Photo by Research Unit, Department of Culture and Research, APSARA)

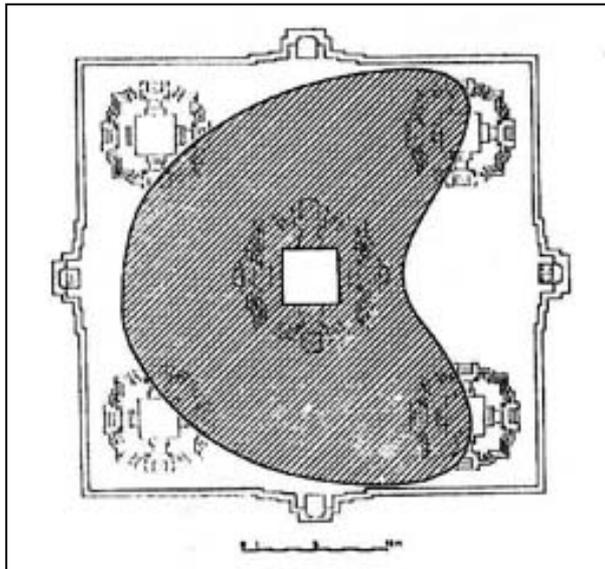


Figure 10: Contour of seated Buddha found at summit of Phnom Bakheng before dismantlement by 20th-century restoration teams in view of reconstitution of the original sanctuaries. (from J. Dumarçay, *Phnom Bakheng. Etude Architecturale du Temple*, EFEO, Paris, 1971)



Figure 11: Ta Tuot temple. (Photo by A. Thompson)

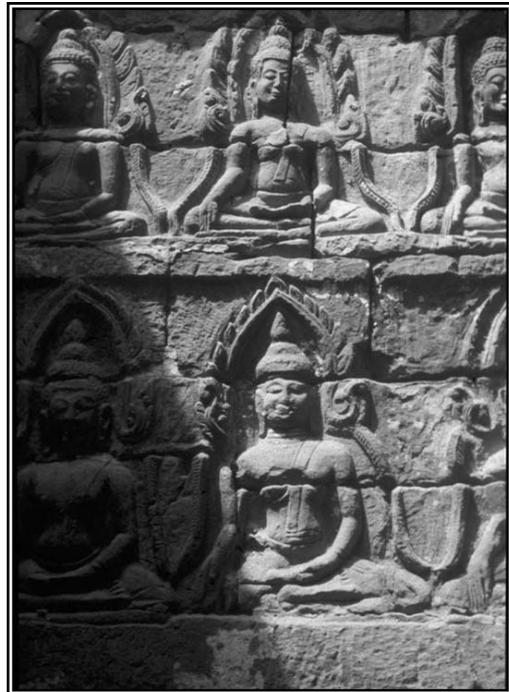


Figure 12: Buddhist frieze inside Ta Tuot. (Photo by A. Thompson)

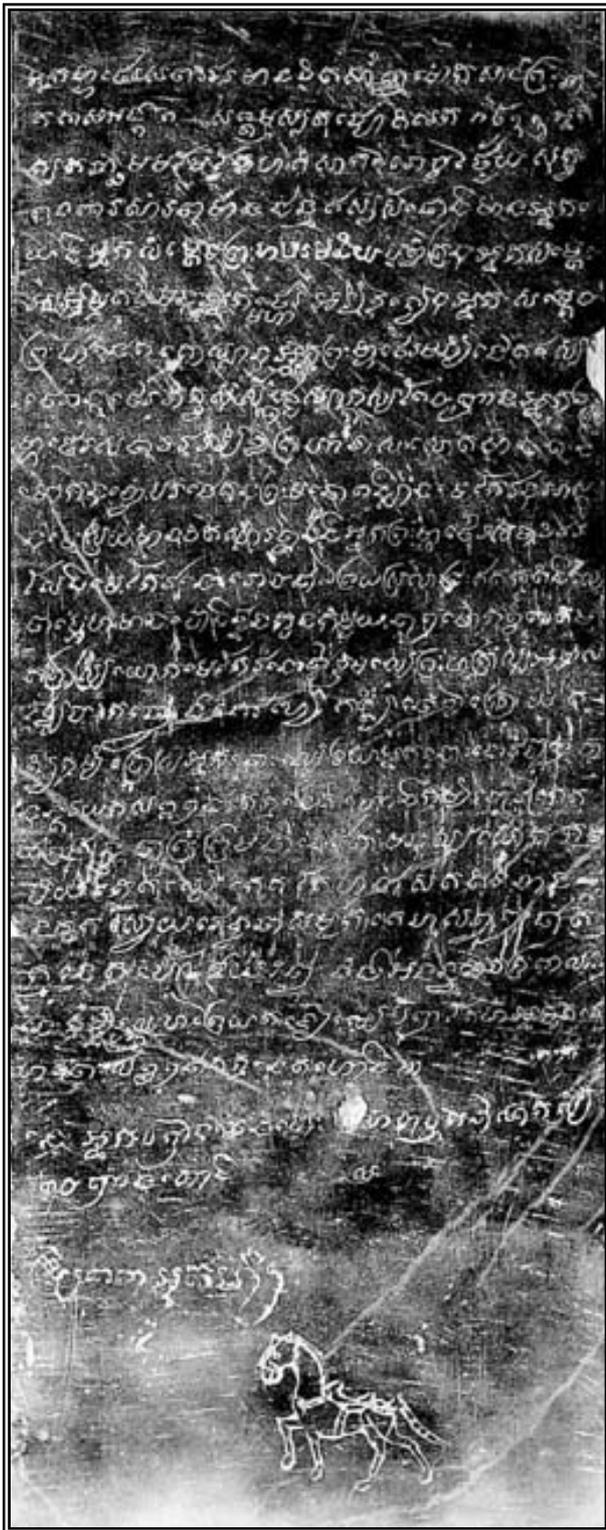


Figure 13: One of numerous middle period inscriptions at Vat Adhvea. Inventoried as K. 261. (Photo by Heritage Inventory Unit, Department of Culture and Research, APSARA)



Figure 14: Prasat Prampil Lavaeng, Angkor Thom. (Photo by A. Thompson)



Figure 15: Stela from Phnom Bakheng supporting a Buddha image. (Photo by Heritage Inventory Unit, Department of Culture and Research, APSARA)



Figure 16: Rubbing of K. 465, Phnom Bakheng inscription (see Figure 15). (Photo by Heritage Inventory Unit, Department of Culture and Research, APSARA)



Figure 17: 17th-c. Japanese ink text at Angkor Vat (Inscription H). (Photo by Heritage Inventory Unit, Department of Culture and Research, APSARA)



Figure 18: 17th-c. Japanese ink text at Angkor Vat (Inscription A). (Photo by Heritage Inventory Unit, Department of Culture and Research, APSARA)

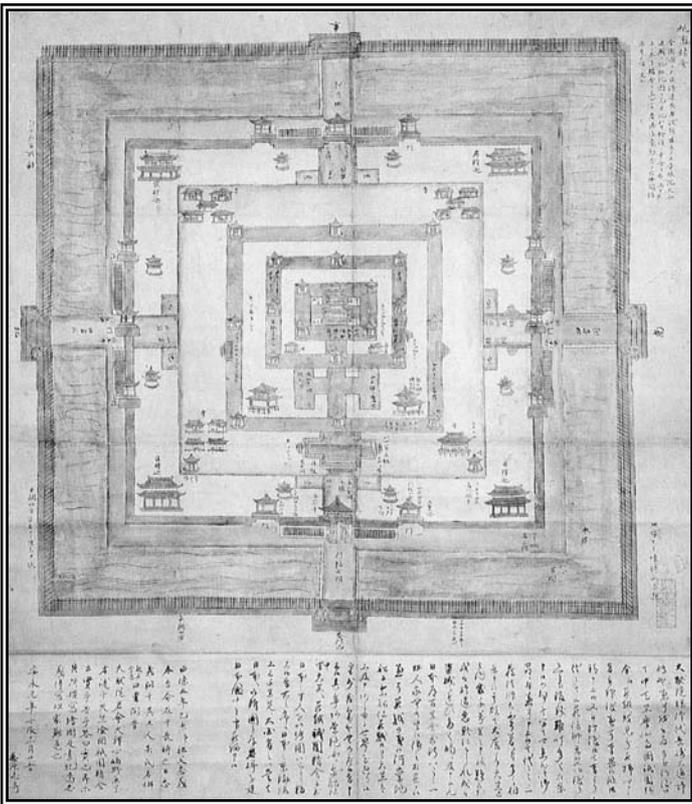


Figure 19: 17th-c. Japanese map of Angkor Vat, Shokokan Museum, Mito, Japan (from Ang Chouléan, A. Thompson, and E. Prenowitz, *Angkor. A Manual for the past, Present and Future*, APSARA, Phnom Penh, 1995)



Figure 20: Arabic inscription from Phnom Bakheng. (from «La stèle arabe du Phnom Bakheng», *BEFEO* XXII, pl. XX)

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the San Francisco Society for Asian Art's 2002 Fall Arts of Asia Series: «Spiritual Journeys: Art and Culture on Pilgrimage Paths through Asia». An abbreviated Khmer version, presented at Phnom Penh's Royal University of Fine Arts in December 2002, is to appear in the *Student Bulletin of the Department of Archaeology, Royal University of Fine Arts*, 2004. The Introduction and Part I are based in part on a series of previous publications. I refer the reader to these at relevant points throughout the text, particularly for further analyses and bibliographical information.

² These first four introductory paragraphs draw from A. Thompson, «Between the Lines: Writing Histories of Middle Cambodia», in *Other Pasts: Women, Gender and History in Early Modern Southeast Asia*, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Hawai'i, 2000.

³ Parts of this section draw from the first two chapters of my doctoral dissertation, *Mémoires du Cambodge*, Université de Paris 8, 1999, as well as A. Thompson, «The Future of Cambodia's Past: A Messianic Middle-Cambodian Royal Cult», *Building Cambodian Buddhism Anew: Historical and Contemporary Configurations of a Religious Tradition*, edited by E. Guthrie and J. Marston, University of Hawaii, 2004.

⁴ Dates calculated by G. Cœdès in «La date d'exécution des deux bas-reliefs tardifs d'Angkor Vat», *Journal Asiatique* 1962, 2, p. 236 – 7.

⁵ The life of Suryavarman II is frequently represented as an epic tale in ancient epigraphy. Through his posthumous name given in the first of the two inscriptions cited above, Ang Chan, like many other Khmer monarchs, is clearly associated with Rama, a popular avatar of Vishnu.

The end of the story of Krishna's victory over Bana, in which the victorious god does not harm his vanquished enemy, renders equally well the compassion of a Buddhist king. In fact, this last episode of the Vishnuite epic, well known in ancient Cambodia, took the form of Buddhist jataka tales and historical legends in Sri Lanka and numerous Southeast Asian traditions. On the story's assimilation in Thailand, see Nandana Chutiwongs, «Phu Phra Bat – An Archaeological Site in Northeastern Thailand», paper given at the 7th Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Berlin, September 1998.

⁶ IMA 2. For a critical edition of the full text see S. Lewitz, «Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 2 et 3», *BEFEO*, LVII, Paris, 1970, p. 99 – 126.

⁷ IMA 3. See S. Lewitz, «Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 2 et 3», *BEFEO*, LVII, Paris, 1970, p. 99 – 126.

⁸ Or «consecrated the sacred reliquary». In modern khmer the term *sarikadhatu* (corrected by S. Lewitz as *saririkadhatu*, «corporal relic») can designate the corporal relics of either the Buddha or a royal or high-ranking religious leader. Through a common metonymical association, this term seems to have also designated the reliquary itself since the middle period. See A. Thompson, «The Ancestral Cult in Transition: Reflections on Spatial Organization of Cambodia's early Theravada Complex», in Marijke J. Klokke and Thomas de Bruijn, eds., *Southeast Asian Archaeology 1996. Proceedings of the 6th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Leiden, 2 – 6 September 1996*, Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Hull, 1998.

⁹ *saiitec braḥ jāta' pān braḥ aig*. See explanation of this alternative translation below.

¹⁰ My English translation here differs only slightly from S. Lewitz's French. In addition to changes explained below, I chose to understand *prākār* not in its literal sense, «rampart, enclosing wall», but, through metonymical association, as «temple»; in this reading *braḥ biüḍulokaprākār* becomes a compound noun «temple of Preah Pisnulok», which reiterates the preceding term, *mahàpràsaddh*.

¹¹ IMA 4. See S. Lewitz, «Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 4, 5, 6 et 7», *BEFEO*, LVIII, Paris, 1971, p. 105 – 23.

¹² I have slightly modified S. Lewitz translation (1971: 114 – 115: «... a bâti une tour de pierre à quatre faces, fabriquée quatre statues de Buddha de pierre déposées en cette tour au toit à cinq étages...») to better highlight the conjunction of epigraphic and archaeological evidence. That *pañcaprāsād* designates the

five towers of the uppermost level of Angkor Vat, rather than referring to a «tower with a five-story roof», is confirmed by modern usage of a variation of this term: *pràsàd prài*.

The ambiguity of the term *sàï*, which can mean either «build» or «restore» must be taken into consideration in each of the inscriptions from Angkor Vat cited here. Though it is clear that the prasat itself was only restored, we can not be certain whether the Buddha images mentioned were newly sculpted or restored. It is possible, for example, that this dignitary restored the «four ancestors» of Preah Satha's inscription represented by four Buddhas sculpted during or before his reign.

¹³ Or «repaired» (*sàï*).

¹⁴ IMA 6. Again, I have modified S. Lewitz' translation (1971). See following commentary.

¹⁵ These are the popular Khmer versions of the Pali (Kakusandha, Koḍagamana, Kassapa, Gotama), in which the first two names include the animals associated with the first two Buddhas: the *kuka* (cock) and the *naga* (neak). Although the order varies some depending on the informant, in general we find Kuk Sandho to the north, Neak Gamano to the west, Kassapo to the south and Samana Gotam to the east.

¹⁶ Or, according to some, the eastern image.

¹⁷ See S. Pou, Inscriptions modernes d'Angkor 34 et 38, *BEFEO*, LXII, Paris, 1975, p. 283 – 353.

¹⁸ See S. Pou, «Inscription du Phnom Bakheng (K.465)», *Nouvelles inscriptions du Cambodge*, EFEO, Paris 1989.

¹⁹ Y. Ishizawa has published numerous articles on this topic. See in particular «Inscriptions calligraphiques japonaises dans Angkor Vat au 17ème siècle».

²⁰ See N. Péri, «Un plan japonais d'Angkor Vat. Essai sur les relations du Japon et de l'Indochine aux XVIè et XVIIè siècles», *BEFEO*, XXIII, 1923, p. 119 ff.

²¹ See translation by G. Ferrand in «La stèle arabe du Phnom Bakheng», *BEFEO* XXII, p. 160. See also J. Dumarçay, *Phnom Bakheng. Etude Architecturale du Temple*, EFEO, Paris, 1971, p. 2.