

Jayavarman VII ,

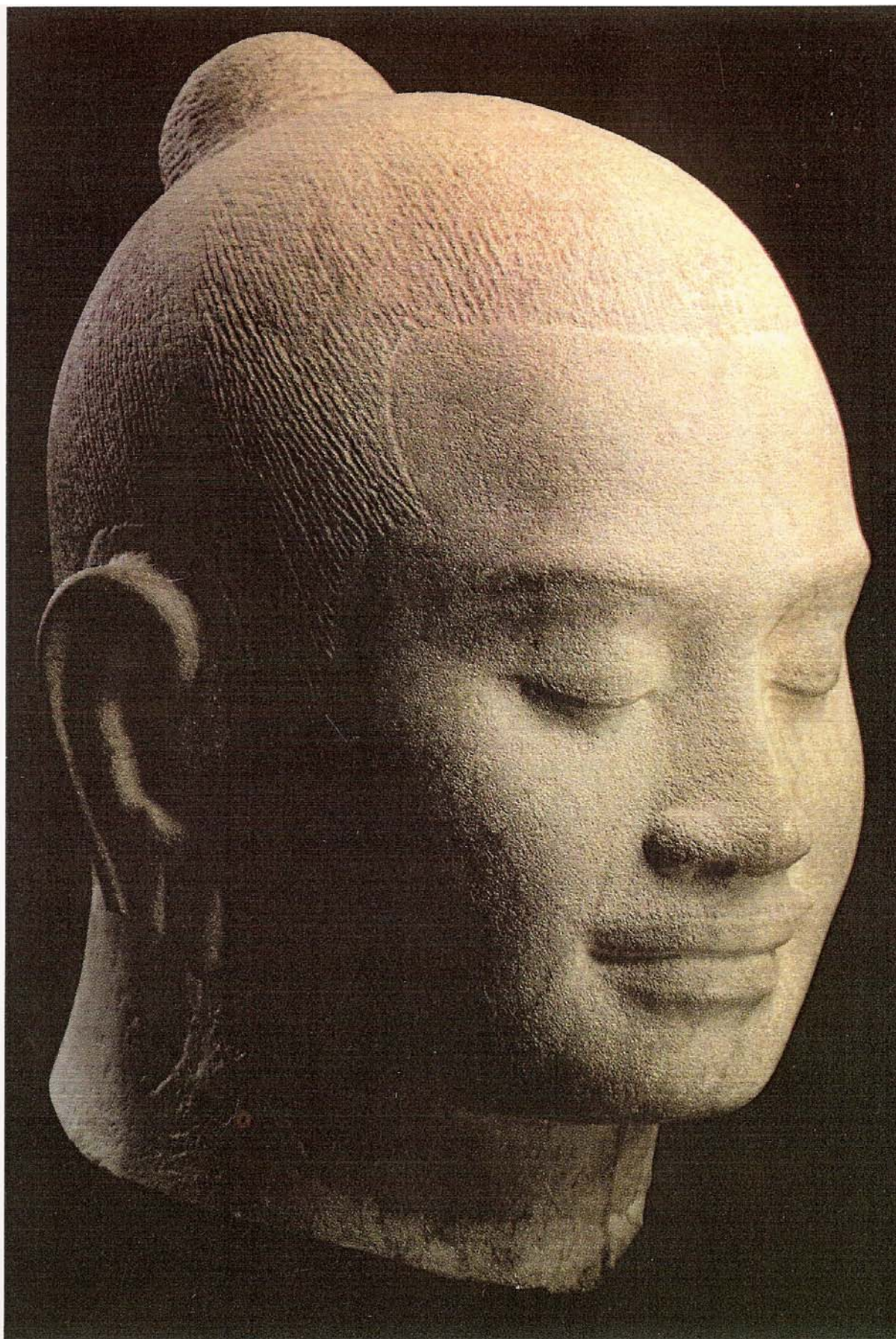
A great Khmer king And an emblematic Figure Of the Khmer Nation

By MEY SIPHAL

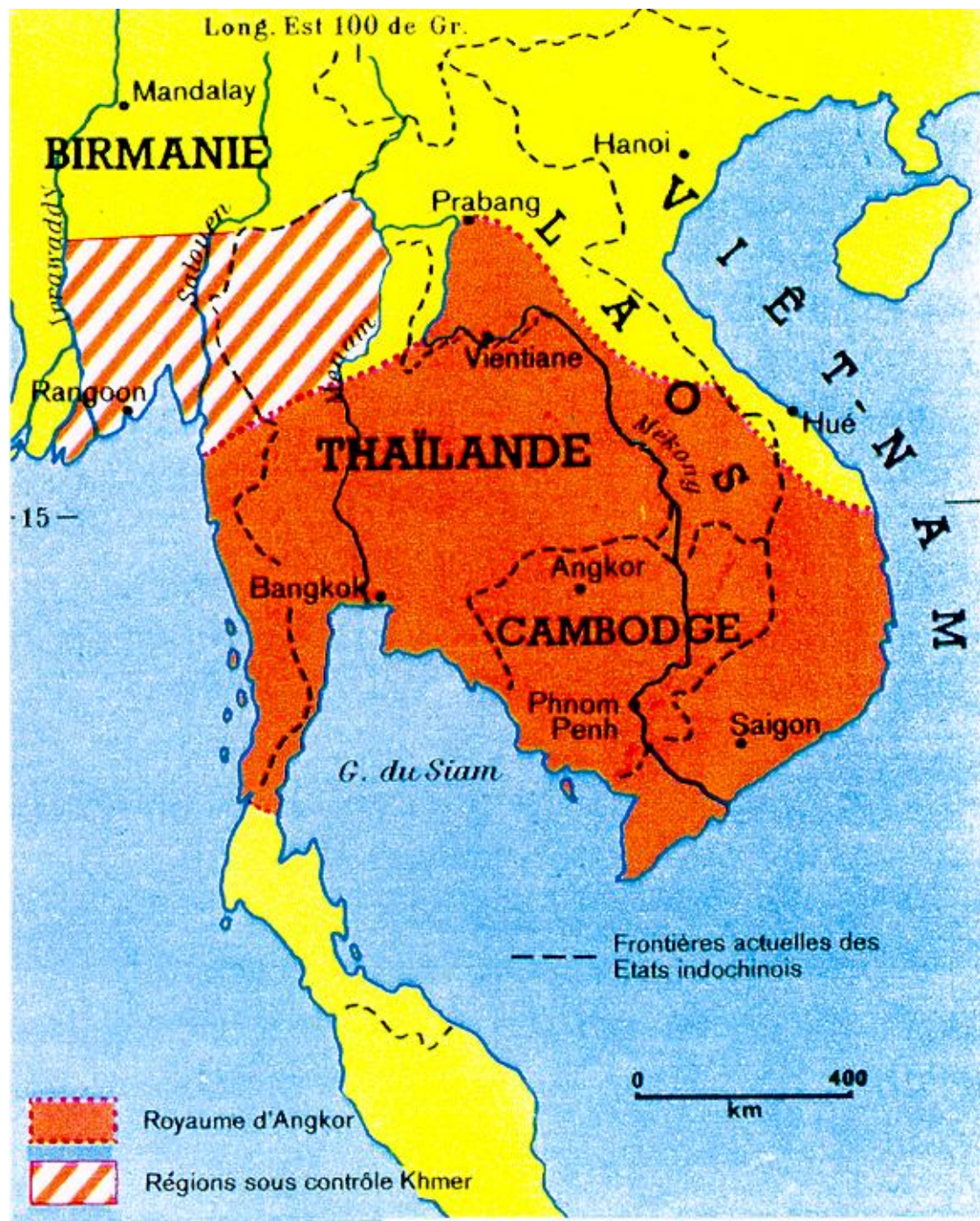
His Majesty Jayavarman VII , the greatest Khmer king of the Angkor era is fascinating in several aspects. He is the only king, from the beginning up to contemporary period of our national history who left behind for the posterity three statues at his effigy, one in Prasat Preah Khan of Kampong Svay and two others respectively in Phimai to the north of Korat in Thailand and in Krol Romeas of Angkor. Warrior king, he liberated the country from the Cham domination and, by a brilliant revenge, conducted a punitive expedition against this country he swallowed up and annexed to the Khmer empire. Under his glorious reign, Cambodia reached the apogee of its power and its territorial expansion¹ « since it covered, independently of the Khmer country, the Champa, the present territories of Laos and Thailand, a part of the Malay peninsula (up to the isthmus of Kra) and of Burma (up to the Salwen river). That is why in the Khmer army conducted in 1207 against Vietnam there were Thai and Birman contingents ».² Pious king full of compassion toward his subjects because he is a fervent mahâyanist buddhist, he built his hospitals, one hundred and two, scattered throughout the empire, and innumerable rest houses (*dharmasalas*) along all the principal lines of communications within the empire. Great builder, he elevated several great monuments, the most important of which is the Bayon of Angkor Thom, *Mahanagara* the central State building of his reign he wanted to be the centre of the Khmer empire like mount *Meru* which is the centre of the world. It was from him the edict which was found on the stele of Say Fong in Laos and which says: « He suffered from the diseases of his subjects more than his own because it is the public pains which cause the pains of the kings, and not his own pains ». These prodigious and particularly fascinating traits incite us to learn more about this great king. It is the object of the present article which tends to produce a very modest contribution to the study of this *Chakravatin* king, a great universal Khmer monarch at the image of the great Indian emperor Açoka who, like him, converted himself to Buddhism after wars and wars that caused innumerable deaths and indescribable devastations.

¹ A. Dauphin-Meunier, Histoire du Cambodge, PUF, 1968, pp 44-45

² Map : The kingdom of Cambodia under Jayavarman VII,



Bust of Jayavarman VII found at Prasat Preah Khan of Kampong Svay. He was more than 50 years old.

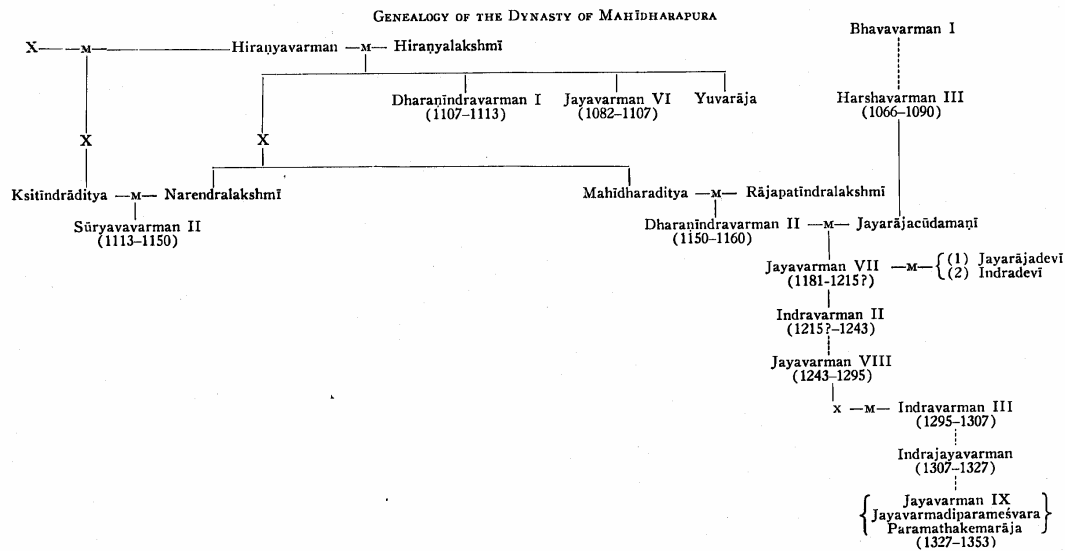


The kingdom of Cambodia under Jayavarman VII

The prince of Great Destiny: *The future Jayavarman VII unifies in himself the great lines of pre-Angkor and Angkor dynasties*

Jayavarman VII came from the junction of three great dynasties. By his father Dharanindravarman II he belonged to the dynasty of Mahîdharapura³ whose founders were Hiranyavarman and Hiranyalakshmi.

³ Genealogy of the Dynasty of Mahîdharapura, Lawrence Palmer BRIGGS, page 186

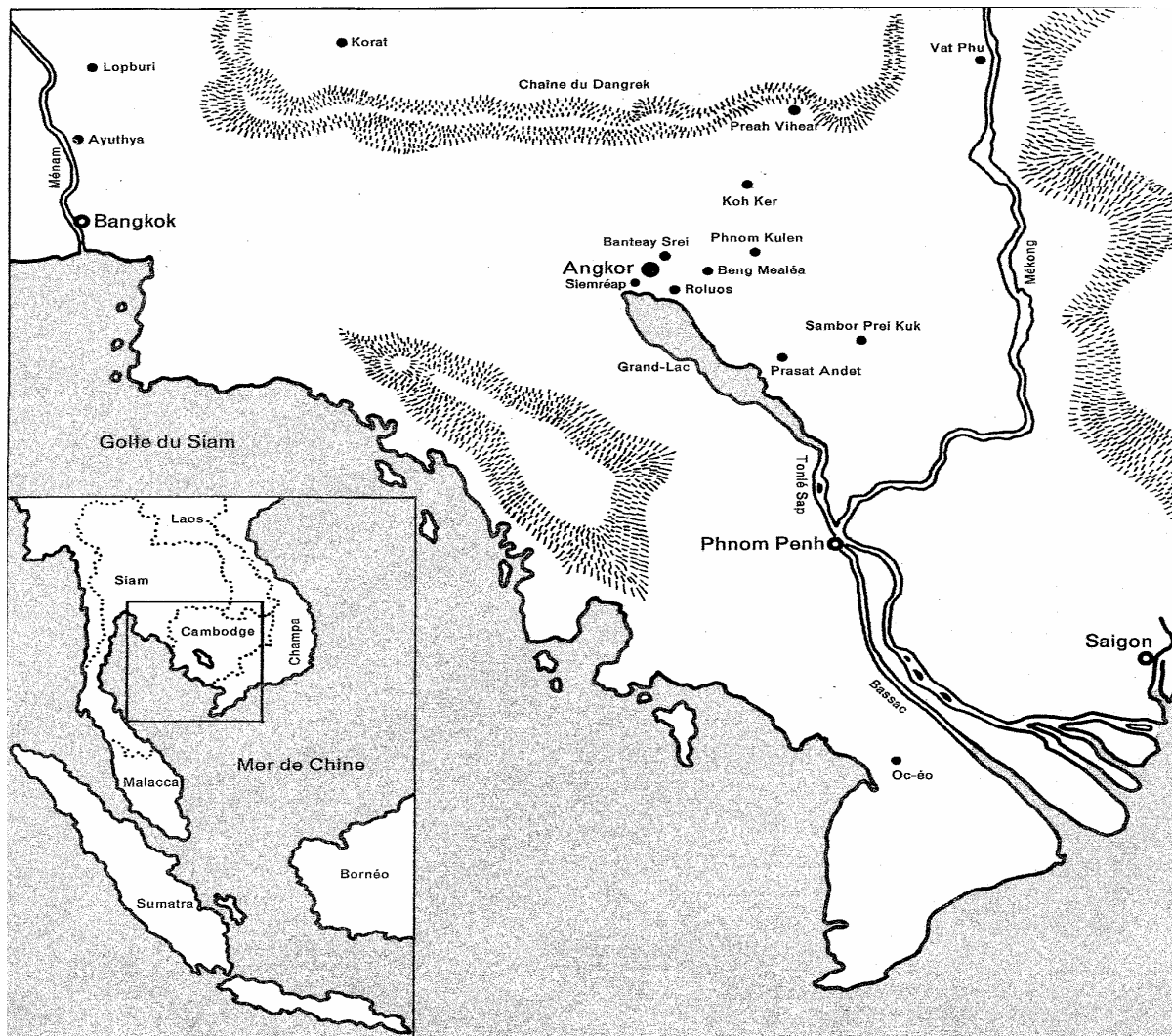


By his mother he came out from the union of two other dynasties, the dynasty of Kambu-Mera whose the first kings were Śrutavarman et Śresthavarman et whose territory centred on Vat Phu in le Champassak⁴ in Laos covered the region of Mekong comprised between Paksé in Laos to the north and Kratié to the south and most part of the Semoun basin in the present-day Thailand and the dynasty of Kaundinya-Soma of Founan whose direct representatives were Bhavavarman 1^{er} et Harshavarman III.

Hiranyavarman and Hiranyalakshmi had at least three sons and one daughter⁵: the oldest one who was named Dharanindravarman 1^{er} took the religious life. The second one was Jayavarman VI (1082-1107). The third son was called Yuvarāja (the crown prince). As for the daughter whose name was unknown, she gave birth to Narendralakshmi who will be the mother of the future Suryavarman II (1113-1150), the builder of Angkor Wat. The brother of Narendralakshmi, Mahîdaraditya, got married with Rājapatindralakshmi. From this couple was born Dharanindravarman II. The future Jayavarman VII sprang from the union of the latter with princess Jayarâcûdamani, daughter of Harshavarman III (1066-1080). As he was descended from these great pre-Angkor and Angkor dynasties, Jayavarman VII inherited the great heroic values from these dynasties.

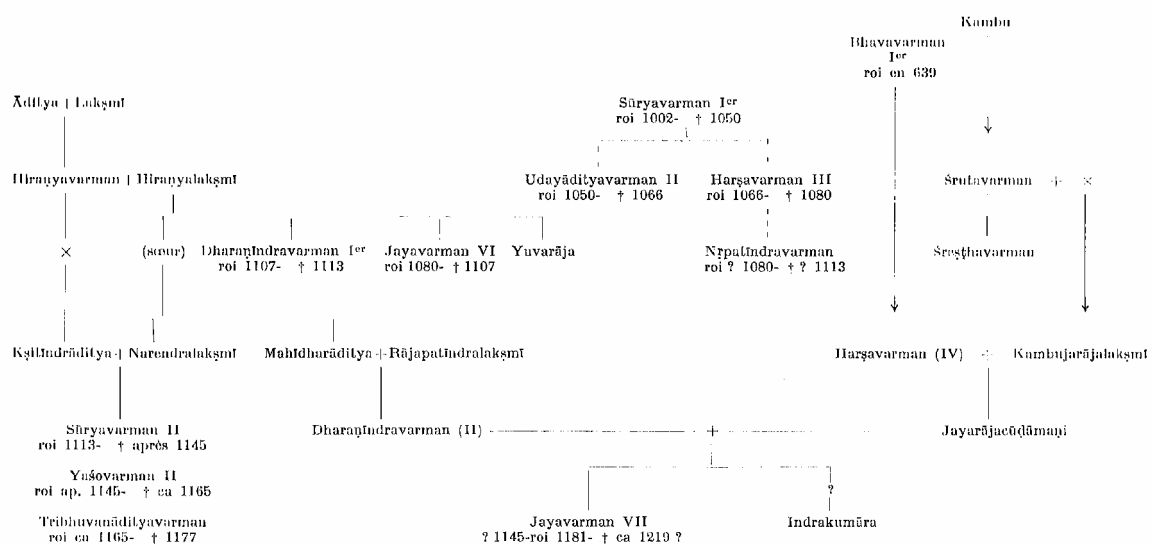
⁴ Map of the Khmer Region where is Vat Phu, Henri Stierlin, Angkor, Office du livre, Fribourg, 1970

⁵ Ascendants and predecessors of Jayavarman VII, Bernard Philippe Groslier, Inscriptions du Bayon, EFEO, 1973



ASCENDANTS ET PIERRECEPREURS DE JAYAVARMAN VII

12



INSCRIPTIONS DE BAYON

La répartition par génération est arbitraire. Pour la descendance d'Hiranyalakṣmi, seul l'ordre d'aînesse des trois frères est assuré. Nous ignorons la position de leur sœur, sœur du père de Jayavarman VII. Il en est de même pour les âges respectifs de Narendralakṣmi et de Mahīdharaḍitya. Pour l'ascendance de Kambujarājākṣmi, la position de Śrūtavarman, et de son fils, est arbitraire, car tout ce que nous savons est que la princesse, ancêtre de Kambujarājākṣmi, est issue de la famille maternelle de Śreṣṭhavarman, donc au plus tard de l'épouse de Śrūtavarman, mais tout aussi bien d'un ancêtre de cette dernière. Les lignes pointillées indiquent les descendants possibles de Śūryavarman Ier. Pour les successeurs de Śūryavarman II, on les a indiqués dans l'ordre, mais non pas impliqués une filiation, quasi-improbable en tout cas entre Yaśovarman II et son meurtrier Tribhuvanāditya.

Bref recall of the recent past: long period of troubles at the end of the reign of Harshavarman III (1066-1080) and continuing up to the event of Jayavarman VII in 1181 through Suryavarman II (1113-1150), the builder of Angkor Wat

While Harshavarman III still reigned at Angkor, Jayavarman VI auto-proclaimed king and established his authority on the Northern provinces. At the death of Harshavarman III in 1080, his successor Nripatindravarman continued to reside at Angkor until 1113. Durant this period, Jayavarman VI had to fight Nripatindravarman but he succeeded nevertheless to reconcile the favour of Harshavarman III's chaplain, Divakarapandita, and to consecrate his authority by the latter. In order to render himself favourable to the celestial Powers, Jayavarman VI dedicated a good number of his sanctuaries to Shiva as well as to Buddha.⁶ As he had no children, he pass on, at his death in 1107, all his powers to his youngest brother but the latter died prematurely a few time later. Divakarapandita then transmitted the crown to his eldest brother Dharanindravarman the first after the partisans of the deceased king had succeeded to get him out of his Buddhist monastery. As related to him, an inscription reports: « Without desiring of royalty, when his brother returned to Heaven, by simple compassion and yielding to the prayers of the multitudes of human beings without protector, he governed the earth with prudence ». Dharanindravarman the first reigned until 1112. Having been at the end betrayed by Divakarapandita he had however filled with honour and favours, he was overthrown by Suryavarman II (1113-1150) who was not anything else than his own second cousin.

According to the inscriptions of Vat Phu, Suryavarman II « took the royalty by unifying double kingdoms ». He began by killing Dharanindravarman 1^{er}. The stele of Vat Phu adds: « Following a fight which lasted one day, king Çri Dharanindravarman 1^{er} was stripped of royalty which was without defence by Çri Suryavarman ...Leaving on the battlefield the ocean of his armies, he delivered a terrible fight. Leaping up on the head of the elephant of the enemy king, he killed him like Garuda who landed on the summit of a mountain, killed a snake ». Once Dharanindravarman the first killed, he hurried to attack Nripatindravarman, the legitimate descendant of Harshavarman III he massacred. Divakarapandita, as loyal to himself as he was legitimated the coup of Suryavarman II and proceeded to his coronation in 1113. As soon as he was comfortably sat on his throne, Suryavarman II sent his first embassy to China. The history of the Songs mentions the coming of his embassies in 1116 and 1120. Suryavarman II was a great conqueror. Immediately after his coronation, he went battling against his eastern neighbours, Champa and Dai Viet and against his western neighbours, the Thaï principalities of high Menam and the Môns to the east of Haripunjaya and made his conquests recognized by the emperor of China who conferred to him high distinctions. Concerning his campaigns against Champa and Dai Viet, here is what A. Dauphin-Meunier relates in his above mentioned work:

« Taking advantage of the civil discord which accompanied the event of Suryavarman II, the Chams tried to take root in the Mekong delta. Their bands harassed the Khmer's coasts, sacked the villages, seized treasures from sanctuaries and took the peasants as slaves. As soon as he was consolidated on the throne, Suryavarman II hurried to chase them; in 1123, he pursued them into Vietnam. As the emperor of Vietnam, Li Công-Binh, assured the protection of the Chams who took refuge in his territory, Suryavarman II declared the war with him. He sent against him an army of 20.000 men and a fleet of 700 ships; in 1131, as he was determined to win the

⁶ A. Dauphin-Meunier, Histoire du Cambodge, PUF, pp 39-40

Vietnamese, he forced the Cham king, Jaya Indravarman III, to join his forces to his own. The Khmer and Cham troops did not succeed to vanquish the Vietnamese ; the Cham king withdrew from the coalition and even consented to recognize his vassalage to Vietnam, in 1136. Suryavarman vowed to vengeance. Obligated to leave Vietnam, he meticulously prepared against Champa a war which, in his spirit, will end up with the annexation of that country. In 1145, he went in war. He invaded Champa, crushed in the plain of Çaklang his adversary who was going to disappear, a little later on, death or prisoner, seized the city of Vijaya and occupied the whole country ; in 1147, he designated as viceroy of Champa his brother in law, Harideva. The annexation of Champa lasted five years; in 1149, the Chams in the southern districts raised up against the Khmer authorities, killed the viceroy and recognized as king a prince of their race who took the reigning name of Jaya Hari the first. Suryavarman died at that time. His German cousin, Dharanindravarman II (1150-1160) replaced him and pursued the war against the Chams... »

Between the death of Suryavarman II, the founder of Angkor Wat, occurred in 1150 and the accession to the throne of Jayavarman VII in 1181, Cambodia crossed a period of troubles where there are only rare indications to light it. Dharanindravarman II, the father of Jayavarman VII, was not the direct descendant of Suryavarman II because his name was not on the official listing of the successors of the latter. However he was the cousin of his predecessor by his father. It seems he became king⁷ « at the favour of some palace revolution, what explains the silence of the epigraphy during the last years of Suryavarman II. In addition, the new sovereign was Buddhist and broke away from a long tradition of Hinduism orthodoxy, although this tradition was tolerant towards Buddhism. What we know about him is that he got married with a daughter of Harshavarman III, princess Jayarâchûdamani, who gave him around 1125 a son who will reign later under the name of Jayavarman VII. The latter seemed to have been sent by his father, the new king, in a military expedition against Champa. The Buddhist fervour of Dharanindravarman II was attested by the inscription of Ta Prohm which talks of him in these terms: « Finding his satisfaction in the nectar that is the religion of that moon which is the Sakya (dynastic name of Buddha), putting the best of his power at the disposal of Bihikshus, Brahmins and all the subjects who implore him, desiring to extract the marrow from this body without marrow, impure sojourn, he honoured ceaselessly the feet of Jina (= Buddha) ». Dharanindravarman II, by his Buddhist faith exerted a strong influence on his son, the future Jayavarman VII. The latter will later estimate that it is thanks to the merits acquired by his father that he gained victory over the Chams. That is why he rendered homage to him and veneered him in his aspect of « Jayavarmecvaralokeça » divinity⁸.

In 1160, at the death of Dharanindravarman II who will have reigned 10 years, the throne was transmitted to Yaçovarman II whose genealogy was not known instead of his son, prince Jayavarman who fought with Champa. According to an inscription of Banteay Chhmâr that cite G.Coedès and B.P. Groslier and which talks of « difficult road », the prince was surprised in a defile by the Chams and could have preserved his life thanks to the sacrifices of two of his generals, both of them natives of Vijaya (Champa). One of them the K.A.Ś. Vardhana (Kamraten Añ Śri = Anak Sañjak (general) divinised after his death), could be that military chief that accompanied Suryavarman II on the bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat and that Dharanindravarman II had assigned to protect his young son aged at that time of 35 years in that expedition⁹. Prince Jayavarman was wounded in that murderous ambush set up by the Chams. It was probably one of the reasons which, adding to his great responsibilities in the war, made him unable to put forward his claims for his rights to the throne.¹⁰ Nevertheless, this period which separates this date from the accession to the throne of Jayavarman VII in 1181 in occurrence 21 years remains obscure. It was completely ignored by the Khmer epigraphy. There is no any inscription that comes to explain it except a part of the inscriptions of Jayavarman VII and those and other documents from Champa and other neighbours. The

⁷ Georges Coedès, *Les Etats hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie*, De Broccard 1989, p 298 et suivantes

⁸ Madeleine Giteau, *Histoire d'Angkor*, PUF 1974, p.70

⁹ Bernard Philippe Groslier, *Indochine, carrefour des arts*, p.149

¹⁰ Bernard Philippe Groslier, *Indochine, carrefour des arts*, p.168

Brahman priests Divâkarapandita and Bhûpendrapandita I and II died under the reign of Suryavarman II and Bhûpendrapandita III seemed to have served only under Jayavarman VII. In the inscription of Ta Prohm under the reign of de Jayavarman VII, the latter comes directly in the order of succession after his father Dharanindravarman II. But the purpose of this inscription seemed to deliver a genealogy than the listing of kings in succession. What is strange is he did not try against Yaçovarman II who ascended the throne in his place. Because the latter was his cousin, it is assumed that his silence could result partly from his wounds and his military and patriotic responsibilities at the front, partly from his family link with Yaçovarman II and finally and may-be principally from his incomparable Buddhist faith which made him unwilling to cause a bloodshed between Khmers and preferring thus renounce to his rights. In fact, he was along with his family bathing in a fervent Mahayanist Buddhist atmosphere. First, there is his father who, as it is previously indicated, converted himself to Buddhism before his accession to the throne. Then there is his wife Jayarâjadevî who manifested a profound Buddhist piety tainted with mysticism. Finally, there will be the oldest sister of the latter, Indradevî with whom Jayavarman VII married at the death of the latter and who was equally a fervent Buddhist. Because she certainly had to confront with inconsolable sufferings owing to the usurpation of the throne which logically should have been transmitted to his husband and also because of the heavy absence of the latter following this event, the pious Jayarâjadevî, while she was waiting for the return of her husband, became considerably thin « because she imposed to herself a severe asceticism like Sita in the Ramayana who did the same while she was waiting for the arrival of Rama at Lanka, the country of the ten-head Ravana ». Yaçovarman II reigned until 1165.

The reign of Yaçovarman II « was marked by a dramatic incident ¹¹ mentioned in an inscription of Banteay Chhmar and on the bas-reliefs of the same monument ». He was attacked by a mysterious man who bore the name of « Bharata-Râhu » (Râhu is an Asura who devours the Sun and the Moon at the time of eclipses. During the churning of the Ocean of milk, this Asura was prevented by the Sun and the Moon who are both Deva from stealing the liquor of immortality. That is why he always seeks to avenge the Sun and the Moon. He is thus a harmful and terrifying personage). The king was then saved by a young prince named Çindrakumâra who was called Râjakumâra (son of the king) and who came out to be a powerful prince but who unhappily died young. It is for the memory of that prince and for that of four military chiefs two of whom had perished in the fight under the order of Çindrakumâra and two others had sacrificed their life for him in Champa, that Jayavarman VII built a monument in one of the temples of Banteay Chhmar. Concerning both events, the inscription K227 of Banteay Chhmar writes: « The « prince » fought with Bharata Râhu saving the royal palace (vrah mandira) of Śri Yaçovarmadeva. The A.S. Arjuna et Dharadevapura (A.S. = Anak Sañjak (general) fell down in the fight ». The second part reports that «the prince » was in Champa, his rear guard was surprised in the mountainous region ; he had his safety thanks to the sacrifice for him of A.S. deva et Vardhana. In order to Show his gratitude to them, «the prince » elevated five statues, conferred posthumous honours and titles to these heroes and their descendants ». Georges Coedès estimated that the statue of Çindrakumâra in the « central sanctuary » had only been consecrated after the passing away of the young prince. It is to note that the four A.S. (Anak Sañjak=general) all came from Vijaya in Champa (present Binh Dinh in Vietnam). It seems that a certain number of Cham generals who had served under Suryavarman II, continued to serve under Dharanindravarman II and Yaçovarman II. The son of A.Ś.Dharadevapura lived under Jayavarman VII. As for Arjunadeva, he should be that Arjuna of Angkor Wat, that one who was manifestly a powerful chief and who marched behind Suryavarman II. Bernard Philippe Groslier thinks that prince Çindrakumâra would be the younger brother of Jayavarman VII ¹² who could have been born around 1140 and who

¹¹ Georges Coedès, *Les Etats hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie*, De Brocard, 1989 p.299

¹² K.J.Ś = Kamrateng Jigat Śri.

received full confidence from Yaçovarman II who then resided at Banteay Chhmar to protect him and defend the royal city.

In 1165, another incident fatal this time occurred against Yaçovarman II. A high dignitary rebelled against him, killed him and self-proclaimed king under the name of Tribhuvanâdityavarman (the one who has as shield the Sun of the Three Worlds). After the coup, he rapidly endeavoured to consolidate his power, obviously to eventually counter the claims from the future Jayavarman VII. As soon as he got the news of this new usurpation, the latter hastily left Champa but he arrived too late because Tribhuvanâdityavarman had firmly established his power. Because he could not or did not want to consequently react, Jayavarman VII went to live at Prasat Preah Khan of Kompong Svay « in semi-exile or as an independent kinglet » looking for a favourable occasion to intervene. One inscription of Banteay Chhmar writes in this regard: « Yaçovarman, being stripped of his royalty and of the life by the usurper, Jayavarman has to stay in Cambodia in order to save the land rendered heavy by crimes and awaiting for a propitious occasion »¹³. In 1166 Tribhuvanâdityavarman commemorated the first anniversary of his seizure of power by offering sacrifices to K.J.Ś¹⁴ Kâlaparvata of Phnom Svam and K.J. Ś Lingaparvata at Vat Phu. Prince Jayavarman had just 40 years at that time. One can ask why even at this time, he did not react to such an event and consented on the contrary to live « all this period in a quite retirement at Preah Khan of Kampong Svay »¹⁵. This passivity contradicted noticeably with his ulterior carrier. Is it attributed to his illnesses? It is possible that Jayavarman had been leprous and then miraculously cured, what explains his return to the political arena and also his fate. It is also possible that he would want to scrupulously respect the laws to the point that he consented to suffer from injustice and consequently decided to prevent himself from taking any actions before the circumstances would allow him to do so. That is why he had waited until the Cham invasion before he set in motion». It is also possible that he had no under hands sufficiently troops and supporters he could count on. Besides, he just got out from an ambush at Vijaya where his troops were decimated and he himself was seriously wounded. Concerning this episode, the inscription of Banteay Chhmar, the text K227 gives much more details:

« ... The prince went to the country of Câmpa. After he had seized the fortress the king of the Chams named Śri Jaya Indravarman had built on the mount Cak Katân, the prince came back. The Cham generals...conducted the Chams...The advanced guard of the Cham army, having taken the short cut followed furtively (the Khmers) and surprised by trick their rear guard which was unable to reassemble. The prince then ordered all his forces to get back to the rear in order to succour (his rear guard). He marched on the mount Trayâ ...when the Chams succeeded in assembling their forces...The soldiers of the rear guard (khmer) were all fallen down; only thirty remained. The prince went down to the foot of the mount in fighting. The Chams encircled the *Samtac*; there was no one of his men who dared to fight. The Anak Sanjak Śri Deva and... Śri Vardhana...came to him (the prince)... Then they fought and rushed before him and pushed the Chams who were climbing the mount in great numbers ... the Chams threw their lances, reached them at their belly. They fell down (loyal) to their oath... »¹⁶.

Let's note in passing that in parallel with the usurpation at Angkor, another usurpation occurred at Vijaya in 1166-1167 ending up with an accession of a new king named Jaya Indravarman to the throne of Champa. It was the troops of this Cham king who set an ambush to prince Jayavarman on the mount Trayâ à Vijaya in Champa. And it was the same king who assaulted and seized Angkor in 1177.

¹³Bernard Philippe Groslier, Les inscriptions du Bayon, p.153

¹⁴ Bernard Philippe Groslier, Indochine, Carrefour des Arts, p.168

¹⁵ Lawrence Palmer Briggs, The ancient Khmer empire, p.207

¹⁶K.J.Ś = Kamrateng Jigat Śri.

1177 : Grave national mourning : *The Chams took Angkor by surprise and sacked it. The country was fallen to ruins and the people in the desolation and the unnamed misery*

In this dark year 1177, Jayavarman VII had 52 years. Since his hasty return from Champa following the usurpation of the throne of Yaçovarman II by Tribhuvanâdityavarman, he had sojourned 12 years at Prasat Preah Khan of Kampong Svay. It is obviously at the beginning of his sojourn in this retirement that he ordered the sculpture of his first bust in stone, that one of Kampong Svay.

Around 1165, as it is mentioned above, another usurper seized the power in Champa under the name of Jaya Indravarman IV. He came from Gramâpura¹⁷. Without delay, he asked for the investiture of China, then after being conciliated with the king of Dai Viet by sending him presents, and « presumptuous as Râvana (the ten heads demon who abducted Sita, the spouse of Rama), carrying his army on carts, came to combat Cambodia equal to the sky », says an inscription. A little later, he rescued a Chinese mandarin whose ship was sunk in the coast of Champa. This mandarin taught him about the use of horses in the war as well as that of arch. « The success of this innovation of the military art is enormous ». By the intermediary of the Chinese mandarin, he managed to bring from Kwang Tung in China a sufficient number of horses to equip his invading army. But his terrestrial military expeditions against Cambodia conducted in 1167 and in 1170 were ineffective. After three years of expectations during which he worked out to create a powerful fleet, he decided in 1177 to change tactics. This time, he conducted his army by sea and by rivers and went to hit Cambodia in its heart. He was always accompanied by the Chinese mandarin who served as his guide in this expedition. Under the guidance of the latter, his fleet navigated along the coast, reached the mouth of the Mekong and mounted that river to the Great Lake¹⁸. « It easily dispersed the Cambodian junks, surprised Angkor which was finally sacked. The Cham king killed the usurper without taking into consideration his peace proposals. The Khmer power seemed definitely destroyed. This occurred the 15th day of the 5th moon of 1177 ». It is noted that the surprise effect was total because Angkor was not organised to be militarily defended except for Angkor Wat which was surrounded by walls and large moats. « The protection of Yaçodhapura was not military but religious¹⁹. Since Yaçovarman the first, the Khmer kings were devoted in establishing in Angkor a divine world which must be, from itself, invulnerable. The disaster was complete». It was the second setback of Cambodia after the conquest of maritime Tchenla by the Malaysian pirates coming from Java. « Around this epoch (in 787), they accosted Cambodia in the Mekong delta, mounted the river to Çambhupura (Kratie), set fire to the city, invested the palace. They captured the king, may-be Mahîpati, son of Rajendra ... ; They beheaded him and brought the head to Java. There the Malaysian monarch made it embalmed, then put it in a vase and sent to the Khmer king who replaced the decapitated sovereign »²⁰. During the Cham occupation which lasted five years, light constructions as well as constructions in brick were destroyed and the objects of cult and of values completely sacked. The destruction of the City was total. All the divinities that protected the country were brought to Champa or mutilated, thus stripped of their mystical

¹⁸ A. Dauphin-Meunier, Histoire du Cambodge, PUF, p.43

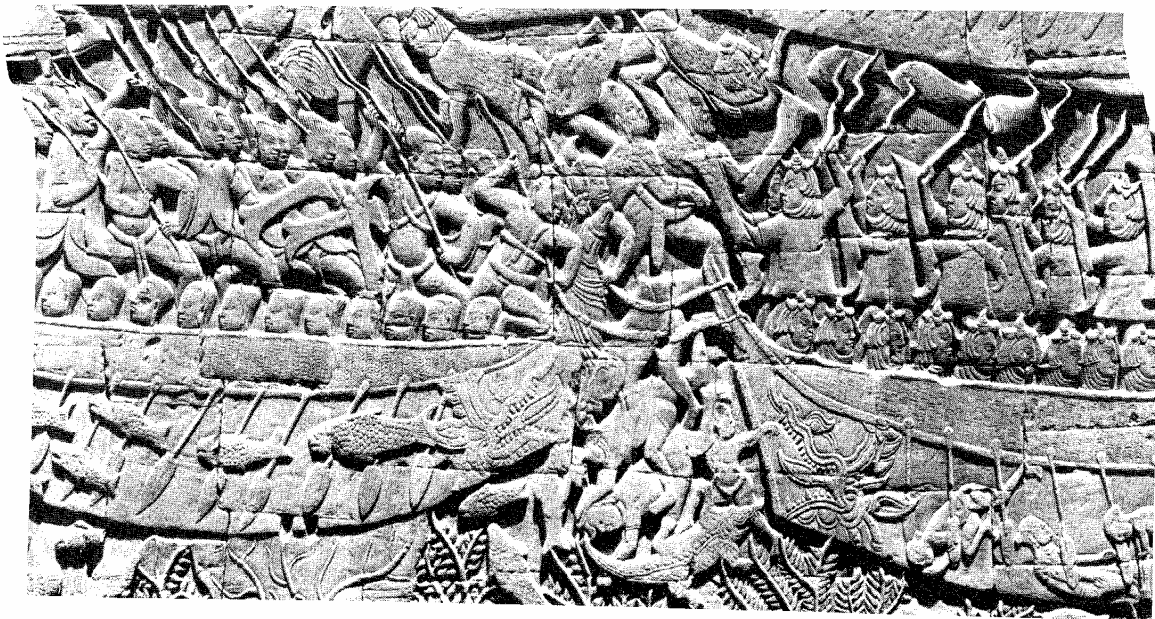
¹⁹ Madeleine Giteau, Histoire d'Angkor, PUF p.73

²⁰ Madeleine Giteau, Histoire d'Angkor, PUF, p.26

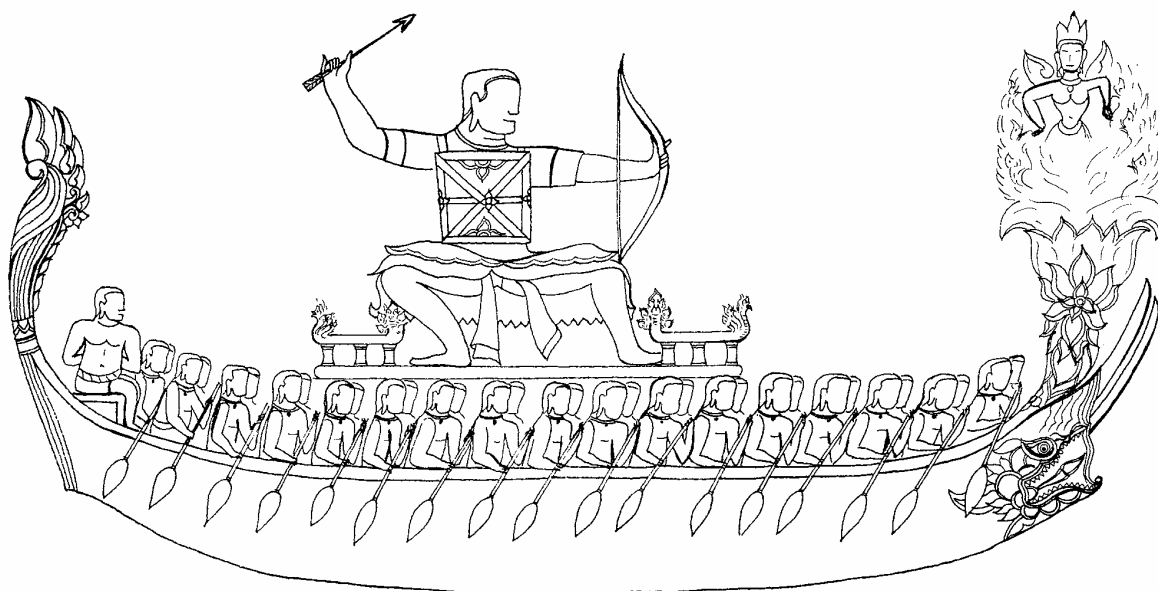
power. The land of Cambodia was « heavy of crimes ». This unprecedented disaster stirred up the sharp hatred against the foreign occupants and consequently created a great movement of National Liberation which will serve as a spearhead to the future Jayavarman VII to liberate the motherland and subjugate in his turn the Champa.

1181 : National great victory : Jayavarman VII liberated Angkor after a brilliant and decisive victory which definitely chased the Chams out of the country

Jayavarman VII had waited until the death of Trivhuvanâdityavarman to get out from his forced retirement. Using the National Liberation movement which was on the roll, he rose up the country against the foreign occupants and mounted an army of liberation he began to launch in guerrilla actions like ambushes and hit and ran actions for example in order to derange and fatigue the enemy (he profited from his rich experiences in this matter brought from his precedent campaign in Champa) before engaging it in ranged battles. At the same time he mounted his army of National Liberation, he built a big fleet and it is with this fleet that he definitely liberated Angkor and the country from the Cham occupation after a naval battle with the Cham fleet on the Great Lake during which the Khmer fleet he commanded inflicted a scathing defeat to the Cham fleet. On the aftermath of this resounding victory, Jayavarman VII organised his enthronisation as king of Cambodia. The event took place in 1181. This naval battle is represented in two bas-reliefs, one at Banteay Chhmar and another one much more important at Bayon. The latter covers the entire wall of a gallery.



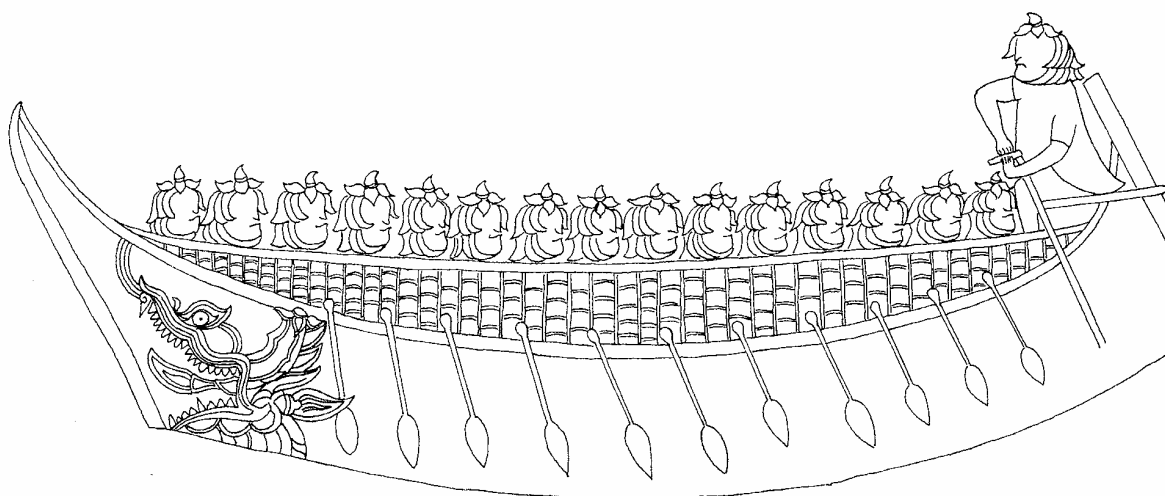
Scenery of an accosting of a Cham naval ship by a Cambodian naval ship represented in the bas-reliefs of Bayon



Doc. 118. — Bateau amiral khmer. Type 6
Banteay Chmar : Gal. E., Partie Sup. — BEYLIÉ, 62

LES BATEAUX DE GUERRE

175



Doc. 119. — Bateau de guerre cham
Bàyon : Gal. Ext., Face S., Aile E., Partie Inf. — DUFOR, pl. 22

Extracts of the armament and the organisation of the Khmer army in 12th and 13th century in the bas-reliefs of Bayon and Banteay Chhmar by Michel Jacq-Hergoualc'h with preface by Jean Boisselier

The first Bas-relief above shows scenery of an accosting of a Cham naval ship by a Khmer naval ship. In the right ship, the Cham marines are recognizable by their uniform and their particular hairstyle. The leaning attitude of the Khmer marines in the left ship indicates the offensive nature of their actions. In this scenery, one can see the corpses of the Cham marines killed or wounded by the Khmer marines fallen down in the water and becoming the preys of the crocodiles.

1181 : The sacre of Jayavarman VII : *Abiseka et Indrabhiseka*

According to the bas-reliefs related to the coronation of Jayavarman VII in Bayon and also in Preah Khan of Banteay Chhmar, we are tempted to think that Jayavarman VII could have been sacred king a little time before 1181, not at Angkor but in his family fief at Mahîdharapura the region of both Sambor, Sambor Prei Kuk and Sambor at the East of the Mekong in Kratié. This assumption derives from the importance and the particular role played by the Kamraten Jagat Śakavrâmana, originating from Sambaor Prei Kuk that Jayavarman put in the gallery of Bayon where it was question of his coronation. If this interpretation was correct, Jayavarman VII should have fought against other aspirers to the throne between the sack of Angkor by the Chams and the death of Tribhuvanâdityavarman and the liberation of the country under his command in 1181. It was evident that being king, it could have been much more easily to rally his people and his army to launch a decisive action against the foreign occupants. The fact that seems to confirm this hypothesis is that there was two *Abhiseka*, the traditional one which made him king and which marked his holding of the power and the *Indrabhiseka* which reaffirmed it and consolidated it.

Bernard Philippe Groslier, in his interpretation of the bas-reliefs of Bayon related to the coronation writes²¹: « The first big panel, between the angle pavilion and the door of the chapel J, shows on the upper side a palace -or a temple- which looks empty, then on the two registers below, the Khmer army parading from the south to the north. Ahead of the procession is the arch of the sacred fire... The king, if it is he, is in the midst of the rear guard on his elephant. He has a quite curious hairstyle with three points cover drills, whereas he is everywhere represented with all the hair drawn to the rear and tied up in small bun like in his portray-statues. May-be is it a ritual hairstyle fixed in the ceremony of abhiseka and designing the prince before his coronation, because the same kind of hairstyle are founded on certain young noblemen in these bas-reliefs too. Behind him, the inhabitants, in the forest, watch the parade going away. It is behind the king, a little bit to the south, that we find the texte K499-IV of which G. Coedès translated the end, alone readable: «... the peace in the universe. Then the king withdraws to the forest at the moment where he celebrates the saint *Indrâbhiseka* ».

1190: Royal and national triumph: *Overwhelming revenge of Jayavarman VII: invasion of Champa followed by its annexation as a khmer province*

After his coronation, Jayavarman VII immediately undertook the restoration of the city. By having seized Angkor, the Chams had proved that « the city was not invulnerable even though it was a representation of the divine world on earth. Jayavarman must thus find a protection farther better than what had been established so far. It was the object of the main occupations of Jayavarman VII. But the task turned out to be at once very rough for him. However, before he commenced his restoration works, he had to discourage definitely the Chams from coming back all the more because the Cham monarch did not yet consider himself as vanquished. So, Jayavarman VII had to properly do his job till the end by transporting the war on the territory of his enemy. « The war against Champa was long, hard and merciless »²². On the occasion of

²¹ Inscriptions du Bayon, pages 161 à 162 et page 175

²² Madeleine Giteau, Histoire d'Angkor, PUF, p ; 76

the Cham invasion, Jayavarman had, according to the Chinese writer Ma Touan-Lin, « sworn that he will have a brilliant revenge on his enemy, what he came out after eighteen years of patient dissimulation »²³. In 1190, the Chams resumed their hostilities against Cambodia. After having secured the neutrality of the Dai-Viet emperor Li Cao-tôn, Jayavarman VII dashed out in the retort. In this invasion, he used the service of a Cham prince he had formed at Angkor, prince Vidyânandana. This prince had previously helped him to overcome a revolt which broke out at Malyang, in the south of the present-day province of Battambang:

« The retort of Jayavarman VII was overwhelming²⁴ : transporting his offensive on his enemy territory, he captured his city and his person, and then occupied the whole Champa. The Cham provinces neighbouring Vijaya were made under the authority of a Cambodian prince, a brother-in-law of Jayavarman VII; the rest of the country was placed under the responsibility of a Cham prince who had a very long-time lived in the Court of Angkor and who had previously helped the king to crush a revolt in the province of Battambang, Vidyânandana. As the latter, later on, was trying to unify Champa and to disengage from the Khmer obedience, he was chased from his post in 1203 and, from 1203 to 1226, Champa became a Khmer province, directly submitted to the central authority ».



Photo above: Scenery of « attendants » of a marching army
 Photo below: Scenery of a fighting between Cham and Khmer troops. Here, the Khmer troops have the advantage on the Cham troops

²³ G. Coedès, *Les Etats hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie*, p311

²⁴ Madeleine Giteau, *Histoire d'Angkor*, PUF, p.44

From now on, Cambodia had nothing to fear from Champa. This country was not going to disappear soon from history. In 1227, the governor of Champa became king with the consent of the Khmer authorities and re-established the Cham monarchy. Henceforth, it was against the Vietnamese and never more against the Khmers, that the Chams will have to fight for their own survival.

After he had chased the Chams out of Cambodia, Jayavarman VII « affirmed his power on the Menam basin and on the south of Laos where a Khmer inscription related to his reign was founded at Say Fong, near Vientiane. »

1181-1219: Jayavarman VII feverishly undertook the restoration of the country: *the new royal city, Angkor Thom, took a new look*

Soon after his coronation, Jayavarman VII undertook the restoration of ancient temples and the construction of new ones he enlarged afterwards ceaselessly. He used more stones than those of all his predecessors united. He covered Angkor of new religious monuments by sometimes using stones from the ancient ones demolished by the Chams. With his new realisations he had completely modified the landscape of Angkor. It was between 1165 and 1180 when he lived at Prasat Preah Khan that he meditated on and drew his general plan of reconstruction of the Royal City. After his coronation, he proceeded to the building of diverse monuments of which the most important are as follows:

- **The temple of Banteay Kdey (1181)** destined to his preceptor; It is built at the East of the capital on the old site of Kutî and preceded at the East by the Sras Srâng (Royal Bath)
- **The temple of Ta Prohm, the « Old Brahma » (1186)** dedicated to his mother deified under the form of Prajnaparamita (Perfection of wisdom) and to his Guru²⁵; It is the Râjavihâra (Royal Monastery). It is a monastery composed of cells destined to the religious. According to an inscription, the personnel of the temple at that time were numbered 12.640 persons of whom 18 priests, 2740 officiates and 2232 assistants.
- **Prasat Preah Khan (1191)** which shelters the statue of his father under the form of Lokeçvara, a « Lokeça named Śrî Jayavarmeçvara », the divinity of predilection of Jayavarman VII ; the monument is surrounded by a moat of 40m width and of 1.000m x 750m et preceded at the East by his « Baray », the Jayatâtaka with in its centre the little temple of Râjyaçrî called Neak Peân and at the East of these Prasat Ta Som ;
- **The provincial temple of Banteay Chhmar** located at the present province of Banteay Meanchey
- **Many artificial lakes** of which both **Barays** framing **Preah Khan and Sras Srang (1181-1186)** of 400m x 750m with terrace bordered by beautiful Nagas-balustrades and one wharf;
- **The temple of Ta Nei**
- **The chapels of the hospitals** at the exit of the four main doors of Angkor Thom ;

²⁵ Madeleine Giteau, Histoire d'Angkor, PUF, p 82

- **The terrace of elephants** of 300 m width serving as tribune to the festivities with its great esplanade in front of it;
- **The terrace of the Leprous King** for the cremation of the high ranking officials in the kingdom ;
- **The Royal Palace** ;
- **ANGKOR THOM with in its middle the State temple, the Bayon** which constitutes his master piece and of which it will be question later on.

The country owed to Jayavarman VII the reorganisation of the hydraulic system in the city and of the communication network. Along the latter, he built **121 rest houses with fire**. He also built **102 hospitals** throughout the empire. The rest houses which are the Dharmasala are distant one from another of fifteen kilometres. There were 57 on the road Angkor-Vijaya, 17 on the road Angkor-Pimai on the plateau of Korat, 44 on a circuit crossing towns and 1 at Phnom Chisor in Takeo province. A century later, at the venue of Tcheo Ta Kouan, these rest houses still remained and were functioning. Tcheo Ta Kouan writes: « On the great axes there are places to rest similarly to our relay posts »²⁶. As for the hospitals, they are placed under the invocation of the healing Buddha, the Bhaishajyaguru Vaidûrapreabhâ (the master of medicines who has the splendour of beryl). About twenty steles bearing the inscriptions on the regulations of these hospitals were found of which the farthest were one at Say Fong to the north of Vientiane and another to the south in Vietnam. Claude Jacques, Director of Study of the Practical School of High Studies in his article entitled « The Khmer epigraphy and the problems of history » remarks: « A Khmer king has never governed such a vast domain ».

Angkor Thom with the Bayon in its middle: *New defence conception of the country combining at the same time a reinforced religious defence and a powerful physical defence. It is the fundamental work of Jayavarman VII bearing a grandiose and incomparable symbolism*

The recent surprised attack of the Capital by the Chams had totally questioned the defence foundations of the capital. These foundations relied almost exclusively on their religious and mystic characters rather than on the concrete structure of an objective defence otherwise military. « He rebuilt Angkor by charging it with a symbolism infinitely richer than that had been done so far in the matter »²⁷.

Angkor Thom is the masterpiece of Jayavarman VII. He was built around 1200. The Bayon is a quadrilateral built at the geometric centre of the city on a horizontal terrain of 141 m x 228 m. It is totally made of sandstone on a structure in laterite. The volume of sandstone necessary to its construction is estimated at 62.520 m³²⁸. It is built on three levels. The new City, *Mahânagara*, is surrounded by a powerful wall of stone and a surrounding moat large of 100 meters to protect the City according to the expression of Jayavarman VII who always remind of the weaknesses of the physical defence of the ancient City of Angkor. Five great doors start

²⁶ G. Coedès, Les Etats hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie, p.320 et 321

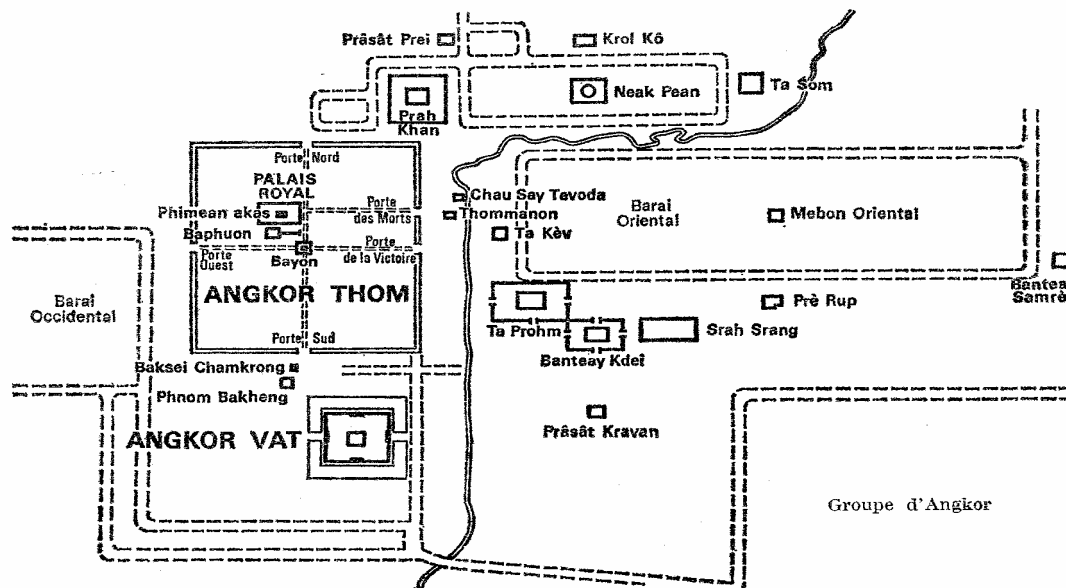
²⁷ Madeleine Giteau, Histoire d'Angkor, PUF, p.77

²⁸ Jacques Dumarçay, Le Bayon, Histoire architecturale du Temple, p.13

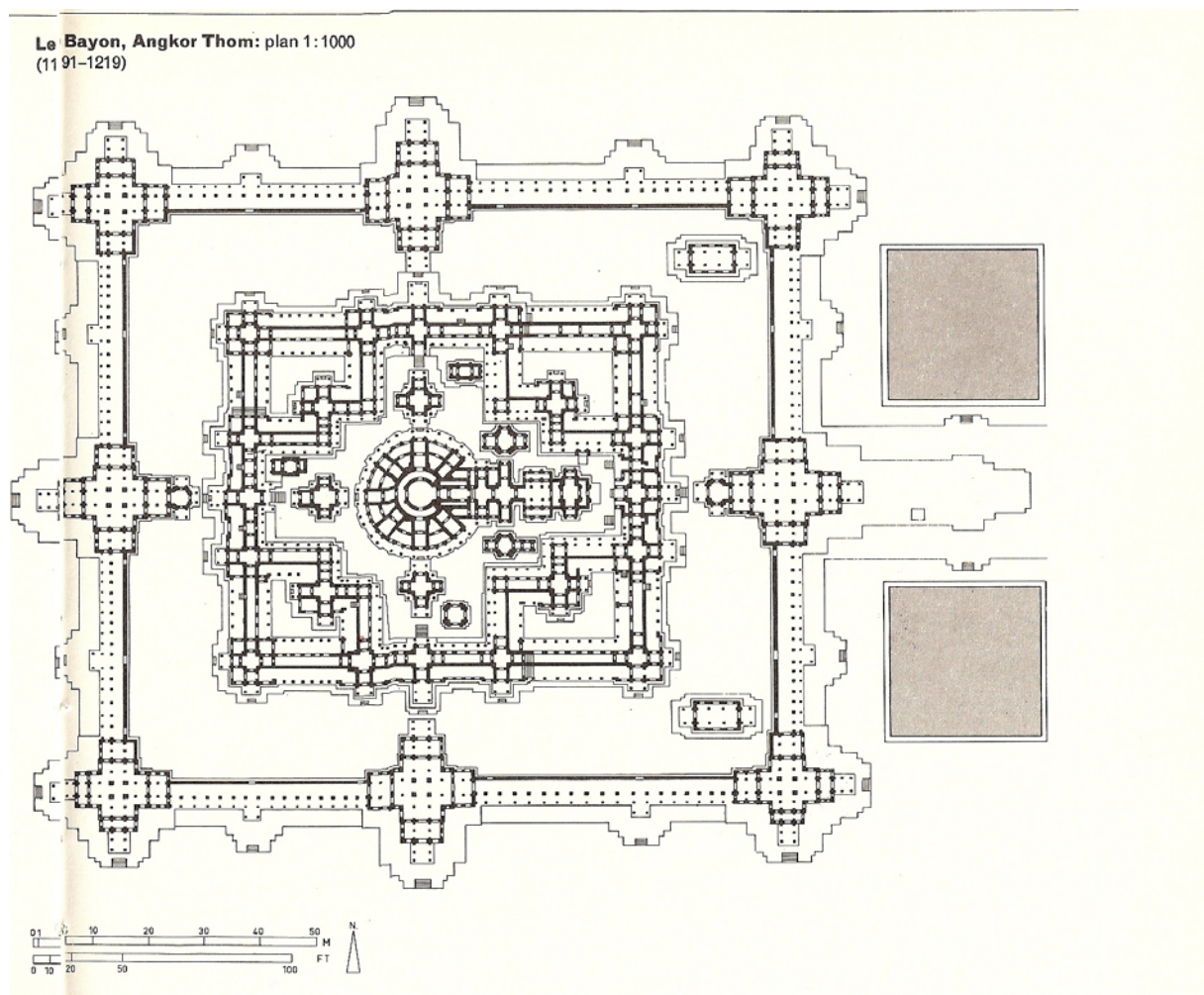
from this thick and high enclosure of which four open to the four cardinal points and the fifth to the East. This is the door of Victory. These doors are surmounted by visage towers like at the Bayon in the centre. By enclosing Nokor Thom, his new City, behind powerful walls, Jayavarman VII was seeking to reinforce its physical defence. Moreover, he brought a change in the royal habit because being thus fixed and with the State building in the middle, the Royal City was not going anymore to displace at the will of his successors as what had been done so far. The height from the soil to the summit of the central tower is of 41 meters. There are 60 buildings and 49 visage towers. By taking into account of some towers that have no four faces, there are all in all 194 visages.



Ph. 6. — Le Bayon, lithographie de H. Clerget d'après un dessin de L. Delaporte (cl. CA).



Plan d'Angkor Thom



Plan of the Bayon with all its superposed levels

The richest symbolism of Angkor Thom and Baryon:

- *The Macrocosm and the microcosm*

The main idea was to make Angkor Thom the sketch of the kingdom and the latter the microcosm of the universe. Then, the idea of a *Cakravartin* king (*universal king*) representing the celestial world on earth like the Indian emperor *Açoka*, he embraced for himself, « may-be by taste of power, but mostly, because under such a monarch, the kingdom enjoys prosperity and stability ». According to the new conception which is that of Mahayanist Buddhism of the universe, « the axis of the world rises up on a five-summits-mountain, the Meru, on the top of which stretch three categories of skies and by what arrange the space and the time; likewise at the geometric centre of the City raises a mountain-temple, the Bayon, surmounted by a quincunxes of facial towers, establishing a liaison between men and the Divinity. Likewise the Divinity looks at all the directions; likewise the Bayon irradiates four avenues ending up at a same number of monumental doors in the four cardinal points. Likewise again the world is surrounded by a chain of concentric mountains, whom the base immerge in the great Ocean, the Royal City will be protected by a moat and a wall of stone. Likewise finally the mount Meru continues under the earth in the middle of a vast gulf, likewise the mountain-temple will be supposed to prolong itself in the submarine Ocean symbolised by an enormous fish on the bas-reliefs²⁹ ».

According to the traditional conception of the cosmic order, « from the centre of the universe, we first find the four major projections corresponding to the Orients: their role is manifestly held by the axial pavilions, then by the doors of Angkor Thom, the latter very explicitly affect the forms of the Bayon reduced to its essence: the tower with four visages³⁰. At the 2nd and 3rd levels, « the sanctuaries of the Bayon group, three by three, in eight triads Bouddha-Lokeçvara-Prajnaparamitâ, projected towards the four Orients and the four intermediary Points ». From now on it won't be the Lingam anymore who will reside in the central State Building of the reign but rather the Buddha-King (the Buddha raja) under the form of *Bothisattva* Avalokiteçvara whose traits are sculpted on the towers of the latter and on the doors of the City.

- *From the Hinduism triad Brahma-Vishnu-Śiva to the Mahayanist Buddhist triad Buddha-Avalokitçvara-Prajñaparamitâ*

The mountain-temples have become during the Angkorian period the habit of the kings in their foundations. This habit has commenced with Yaçovarman the first (889-900), the founder of Angkor, who built on the mount Bakheng his reigning monument because « his desire was to found a sacred Residence whose symbolism should establish on earth a divine sojourn, radiating on the kingdom³¹ ». This monument is composed on his top of five towers disposed in quincunxes and with the central tower, bigger and higher than the four other

²⁹ Madeleine Giteau, *Histoire d'Angkor*, PUF, p. 46

³⁰ Bernard Philippe Groslier, *Inscriptions du Bayon*, p.125 et suivants

³¹ Madeleine Giteau, *Histoire d'Angkor*, PUF, p.12-14

towers. If we look at these towers in front of them, we only see three of them like Angkor Wat. This is the symbol of the Hinduist Trinity: Brahmâ-Vishnu-Śiva.

The mountain-temple comes from the old funds of the Hindouism that Buddhism adopted much more easily that it had already admitted this cosmogony. In reference to the latter, the Mahayanist Buddhism set up the « theory of the three bodies of Buddha »: the Nirmâna-kaya, the Sambhoga-kaya and the Dharma-kaya. It must be noted that according to the primitive doctrine defended by the Hinâyanist Buddhism the Cambodians practice, a person is responsible of his acts (*karma*) and it is these acts and their effects (the causality) which set in motion the *samsara* (the round of reincarnations). Because this doctrine is atheist, thus there is no possibility to change the chain of causes and effects and any divine grace doesn't intervene in the transcendental action of Karma, to the contrary of other religions notably Hinduism and Christianity which admit the divine grace. But at the very moment the Grand Vehicle admits the possibility of a superior intercession³², it was then fatal that the personage of Buddha be deified. This logic gave birth to a theory of three bodies of Buddha mentioned above. According to this new theory, Buddha disposes of :

- a body of creation (Nirmâna-kaya) as long as he sojourns on earth and exercise there a humane activity. It is his humane aspect represented by Avalokitiçvara;
- a body of enjoyment (Sambhoga-kaya) when he gets into the supra-terrestrial regions. He is represented by Prajñapârâmitâ;
- a body of Law (Dharma-kaya) when he is stripped of every personification and mixes with the Absolute who is the base of everything. He is represented by Buddha.

Besides the Buddhist triads which are founded in the three levels of the Bayon, it is believed, based on these triads, that all the first floor of the Bayon which shelters the men, the divinities on the soil and the powers of the nature, is under the protection of Lokeçvara, that the second floor where are represented the divinised spouses of the old kings of Cambodia, is placed under that of Prajñapârâmitâ where the intercession is necessary and that the third floor where is the king, is under the direct protection of Buddha.

- The materialisation on earth of the churning of the cosmic Ocean in view of the prosperity of the kingdom and its inhabitants

When the visitors get in Angkor Thom through the southern door, they are surprised by the presence of two rows of giants drawing on one side and another a big Naga with its head and its tail risen up. The giants on the left side are the Asuras (the demons) and those on the right side, the Deva (the gods). Bernard Philippe Groslier gives his interpretation to this symbolic representation: « The celestial gods of the southern door, for example, hold the Naga who symbolically rolls up around the Bayon whereas the infernal gods hold its extremity at the northern door. Drawing alternatively, the gods revolve on itself the Bayon which churns the cosmic Ocean... It is the same of the Eastern and Western doors. From the cyclopean agitation is born the *amrita*, the immortality elixir, the ambrosia. » During the churning of the cosmic Ocean, miraculous treasures get out from the Ocean. Here, on earth, at Angkor Thom, by reproducing at a microscopic scale this phenomenon, Jayavarman VII, would seek to produce the life and the riches to the kingdom and its people. Beyond this mythic scenery rise up the four visages at the image of the Buddha-king (Buddha raja) who look, all smile, at the four Orients from all the summits of the towers of the Bayon as if they spray the cosmic rays

³² Henri Arvon, *le Bouddhisme*, PUF, p.71

to the whole country and in the same time discourage its eventual aggressors. And M. B.P. Groslier to add : «Was it an image much more adapted than this one if we recall that the Khmer king brings the riches and the life to his lands because of the fertilizing water captured by these works? The inscriptions explicitly say : « The City (of Angkor Thom) adorned with a palace and precious stones, was espoused by this king in view of the procreation of this universe. » This symbol automatically explains itself if we know that at the eyes of the Khmers, the Naga is the God of waters and was the father of the first queen of Cambodia.

- The Bayon as Mandala of stone

At the first floor many chapels shelter a total of 49 divinities « full conserved » or 53 if we add 4 mutilated divinities. They are divinities of soil called Kamraten Jagat³³. At the second and third floors, the sanctuaries group three by three in eight triads Bouddha-Lokeçvara-Prajñaparâmitâ, projected to the four Orients and to the four intermediary Points.

If we look at the Bayon from the summit to the base, we have successively: the central sanctuary pointing to the sky and sheltering the statue of Buddha sit on the Naga, the terrace of the third floor which has two idols: the Buddha and the king and 16 principal sanctuaries (towers), on the second floor, 3 other idols : Buddha, Lokeçvara, and Prajñaparâmitâ and 24 sanctuaries with the two groups of triads, on the first floor, 32 sanctuaries : the 4 added angle towers, the 16 chapels, the 8 pavilions of the first gallery, the 2 libraries and two other sanctuaries, the sanctuaries 50 et 51.

According to the Indian traditional cosmogony, the universe stretches from its centre as a lotus³⁴. Here, if we look seriously at the general dispositions of the towers, we will be in presence of such a deployment of the universe in microcosm with in the middle, « the principal cellar which is like a pericarp of the lotus³⁵, the corridor which surrounds it which is its crown of pistils, the radiating chapels which are the petals blooming towards the Orients and the major towers which are the emanations of the central foyer towards each of the *dvipa* surrounding the Sumeru ». Besides this, if we look at the monument in front of each of his faces, « the major Orients stand two by two framing the central tower, drawing in the sky the triad Bouddha-Lokeçvara- Prajñaparâmitâ, like those of the old mountain-temples which show in the sky the power of Śiva, Vishnu and Brahma ». We will find the same types of mandala recreating the Sumeru in Tibet.

Thus, the concentration of all these divinities coming from different regions of faith of the empire beside the manes of the ancient kings of Cambodia since its birth and of their predilection gods aimed at concentrating and monopolizing all the divine powers in the Royal City so that they reinforce the protection of the king and of the kingdom as well as of the whole people of the empire by the projections in all the directions of all these powers being thus concentrated and monopolised from that centre which is the Bayon.

³³ M. Filliozart oppose Kamraten Jagat « Lord of animated beings, of the world in its essence » and Vrah Kamraten Añ «Lord of personal, humane or Divine .Lord individualised in a concrete particular representation, in a personality of figuration »

³⁴ See General repartition of Kamraten Jagat below

³⁵ B.P. Groslier, Inscritons du Bayon, p.225

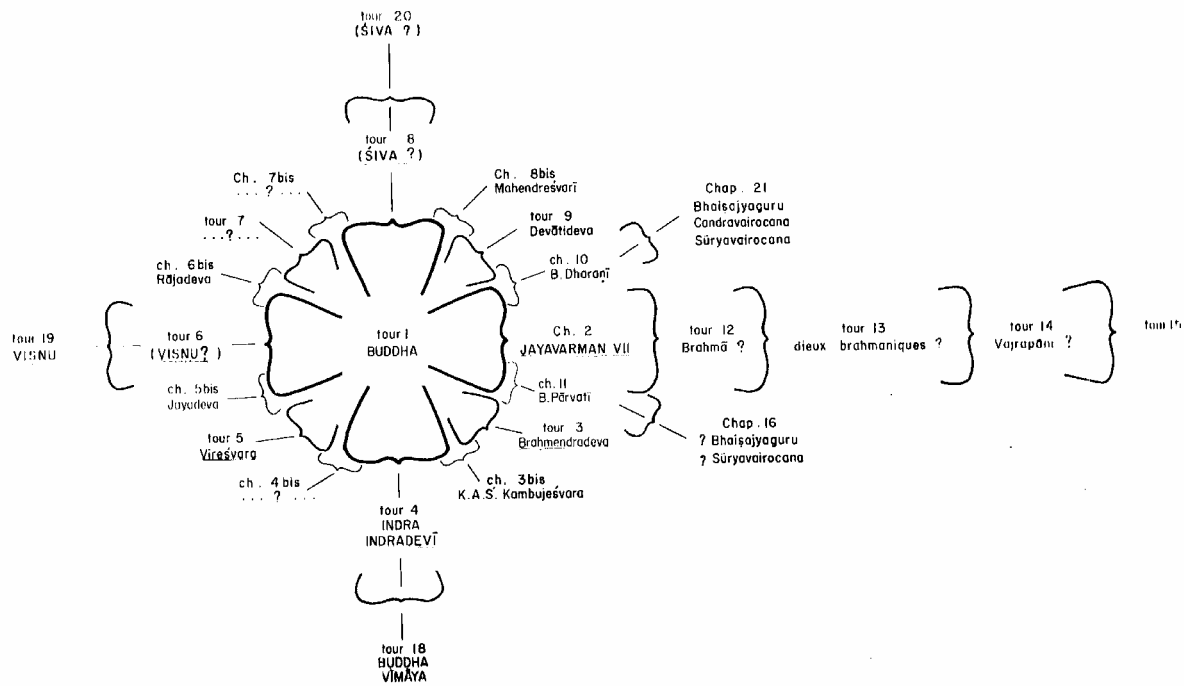


Fig. 11. Troisième étage. Répartition cosmographique des dieux.

Note : The above figure let distinguish the presence of the Brahmanist divinities beside the Buddhist divinities and the ancient kings divinised, proving that way that Jayavarman VII, although he was a fervent Buddhist, never completely cut the links with Brahmanism. It is to note in this respect that he continued to use the Brahmins to officiate in religious ceremonies, the habit that has been successively transmitted till the post-Angkor and contemporary periods.

- The Bayon as Yantra of stone

We have noticed that all the cult images represented in Bayon are oriented outside wards and are in some sorts protected by the Buddhist triads composed of Buddha in the middle, of Prajñāparāmitā on his left side and of Avalokiteśvara on his right side. Near these protective triads, we also find although plus or less dissimulated the Brahmanist Gods. It seems that the Brahmanism could have not be completely secluded for the reason that it had dominated a very long past so far. Then Śiva reigned in the North, Vishnu in the West, Indra in the South, Brahma in the East, Isāna in the North East, Agni in the South East, Nirrti in the South West and Vayu in the South West. Are also represented there the God of Royalty, the God of Victory and the Goddess Earth. The northern hemisphere³⁶ is consecrated to the ancestors starting from Bhavavarman the first as well as their queens. On the southern axis, under the double guardianship of Indra and Buddha, Jayavarman VII honoured Indravarman, « the real founder of the Angkor Royalty ». On the western axis, under the guardianship of Vishnu, it is « Rajendravarman reinforced by the God of Royalty and the God of Victory ». On the northern axis are evoked the royal ancestors of Jayavarman VII, maternal and paternal. Are also evoked Suryavarman the first, the restorer of the royal power at Angkor, Dharanindravarman the first and Jayavarman VI who are of Mahādhara dynasty and Suryavarman II as well as those who had sacrificed their life for the king, his generals notably. The chapels of the first floor shelter « under the direction and at the feet of the king and in

³⁶ B.P. Groslier, Inscriptions du Bayon p.244 et suivants

conformity with a concrete geographic repartition the gods of soil of the empire ». They were gods that accompanied Jayavarman VII during the itinerary of his conquest of power. B.P. Groslier estimates that according to «the overall functions, complexes but coherent and very systematically expressed by the Bayon, its structure, its texts, certainly its idols and its bas-reliefs, the Bayon is finally considered much more as a Yantra than as a Mandala». A Yantra in general terms is a creation on a material support of the universal order. Here the Bayon recreated by its structure and the presence of its idols on this massive support of stone this universal order. Because the universe embraces in its bosom the past, the present and the future, Jayavarman VII, by creating this microscopic structure, wanted following this example act on the past, the present and the future of his empire. A Khmer Yantra is constituted by the geometric figures surrounded by circles and quadrilaterals. Inside the cases formed by the multitude of traits, are inscribed protective magical words. Here, in the Bayon, the cases are instead and impressively occupied by the divinities of all categories to begin with those of soil, the ancient Khmer sovereigns divinised with theirs queens, the heroes and Khmer generals divinised...up to the celestial divinities etc...If a Khmer Yantra in fabric offers a personal protection to its bearer, here this massive Yantra of stone, the Bayon, is supposed to offer the immense protection to the sovereign, the Royal City and the whole Khmer empire. It is also in this idea that people must understand the architectural motivations of Jayavarman VII. This idea find its affirmation even in the word designing the Bayon itself, the latter comes from Ba + Yon, otherwise from Ba (the father) + Yon (Yantra), that means the father of the Yantra. That are the grandiose signification and symbolism of the Bayon.

- The Bayon as reflecting the dwelling of the 33 Gods from the Paradise and the great miracle of Śrāvastī

If we look at the Bayon in front of all its façades, we can number, at the sole exception of its western façade, 33 sanctuary-towers. This is the number of the 33 Gods that dwell in the Sumeru and to whom Buddha once preached his sermon, flanked by Indra and Brahmā. This is a great miracle.

But what is more impressive it the sensation one has to see all the towers of the Bayon float in the sky when we look at them from the base. It is the sensation of the great Miracle of Śrāvastī. After his illumination, the Bhagavat (the Buddha) had to confront with six Brahman-masters ascetics who contested his prediction³⁷. This confrontation was organised by Prasenajit, king of Kosala, in a place called Mandapa situated between Śrāvastī and the Jetavana. Five hundred rishis, alerted by an earthquake, participated to the event. In their presence, « the Bhagavat takes off in the air and appears in his « four attributes » whereas lights of all colours, lightings and cold rains come out from his body ». This miracle is « superior to what a man can produce ». Being informed by the presence of Bhagavat, the Gods came to see. It was at that time that Buddha appears on a lotus and « ...replacing his memory before his spirit, he produces an infinite number of himself, all identical, before him, above him, under him, behind him and around him and the all levying up till the 8th sky of the Akanisthās, some in the « four positions » and all surrounded by flames, multicoloured lights, lightning and rains».

³⁷ B.P. Groslier, Inscriptions du Bayon p.291

- Another symbolism of great significance: the Neak Poân

Another symbolism, outside the perimeter of Angkor Thom is represented by the temple of Neak Peân (the Nagas rolling up), annexe of Prasat Preah Khan and built on an island called Râyaçri³⁸ in the middle of Jayatatâka. Of this island, the inscription of Preah Khan describes as « a fortunate mirror, coloured by the stones, gold and garlands ». This Prasat is sustained by a lotus, staying on a base rolled up by two Nagas. « In 1923, L. Finot et V. Goloubev recognised that Neak Peân was a reply of Lake Anavatapta, saint mythical place of Himalaya... According to the Indian texts, the waters of Lake Anavatapta are always fresh, because they receive no direct rays from the sun, but their reflected light. » The inscription of Preah Khan is explicit to this regard. It writes that the water of Neak Poân « is illuminated by the light of the *prâsâda* in gold ». It is thus a reflected light of the sun which is softer and more refreshing. « In the Buddhist cosmogony, Anavatapta lake will be the last basin which will only dry up at the end of time; a kingdom who possesses it is thus assured to remain as long as the present world. On the other hand, the waters of the lake are particularly saint; at the coronation ceremony of a *cakravartin* king, the priest must proceed to the bathing of the sovereign with the water scooped from the lake Anavatapta. » The foundation of Neak Peân, according to M. J. Boisselier, has for Cambodia double effects: « it grants the duration to the kingdom and assures in the same time the universality of its sovereigns ». Jayavarman VII had regrouped in Neak Peân lake, around Buddha, 14 gods « in the island of a thousand lingams » in order to sanctify its water. At the East of this island, we find the most famous horse Balaha, who is the aspect taken by Lokeçvara when he urged to save the sinkers at the point to be devoured by the ogresses and who invoked this compassionate Bothisattva to come to their succour.

The spouses and sons of Jayavarman VII

It is supposed that Jayavarman VII had reigned until 1218, the year of his probable death. So far, we have no any document which attests his death. His posthumous name is Mahâparamasaugata. Jayavarman VII had many spouses, three principal and four secondary whose role had been important: princess Jayarâjadevî and her older sister, Indradevî he married with at the death of the precedent, both fervent Buddhists and Râjendradevi whose we do not know the filiations but who appears nonetheless on the bas-reliefs of the Bayon. Queen Indradevî was an educated and very erudite woman. She « surpassed by her science the science of the philosophers ». It is she who composed in an impeccable Sanskrit³⁹ This inscription of Phimeanakas, panegyric of her sister, from which has been extracted most of biographic information linking to the carrier of Jayavarman VII. The king had numerous sons who all shared his faith. Four of them, at least, are known : Tamalinda who became monk (Hinayânist) and lived in Sri Lanka which was at that time an important centre for Buddhism reforms ; Sûryakumâra, author of the inscription of Ta Prohm ; Indravarman, son of queen Jayarâjadevî, gouvernor of Lavo ; Vîrakumâra⁴⁰ who wrote « the admirable » text of the grand stele of Preah Khan of Angkor which states as follows : « I honour the supreme path which conducts to the supreme illumination, the unique doctrine which is without obstacle to attain the comprehension of the Reality, the Law that in the three worlds the immortals must honour, the sword which destroys the grove of six internal enemies ... ». It is perhaps him, the son of queen Indradevi, who was sacred king under the name of Indra-Varman II (1201-1243). « The

³⁸ Madeleine Giteau, Histoire d'Angkor, pp 84-87

³⁹ G. Coedès, Les Etats Hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie, p ; 314

⁴⁰ A. Dauphin-Meunier, Histoire du Cambodge, PUF, p.48

latter strived to maintain the cohesion between the diverse parts of the immense kingdom⁴¹ he inherited from his father but, probably pushed by his Buddhist love of peace and his desire to not entail the interests of anybody, he voluntarily proceed to the evacuation of Champa and to the enthronisation of a prince of Chame race as sovereign of that country». This occurred in 1220, two years after the presumed death of Jayavarman VII. The new Cham sovereign was named Angçarâja. « He was the eldest son of Jaya Harivarman II who, as has been indicated above, had been raised in the court of Jayavarman VII, and was come back to his country at the beginning of the Khmer occupation⁴² ».

Global appreciations of the reign of Jayavarman VII: *Great Cakravartin king with immense merits*

As it has been indicated at the beginning of this modest study, the kingdom of Cambodia under Jayavarman VII attained the apogee of its territorial expansion and its power. The listing of its dependences was attested by the future Chinese visitor Tcheou Ta Kouen in 1225 who writes that « Cambodia at that time exerted suzerainty at least nominal on a part of the Malay peninsula and up to Burma». Its northern frontier touched China and its eastern frontier to the gulf of China. « An inscription of Jayavarman VII dated in 1191 teaches us that the daily ablution water was furnished to him by the Brahmans to begin with Suryabhatta, by the king of Java, the king of the Yavanas and the two Cham kings⁴³ ». (Suryabhatta is the Brahman chief at the Court, the king of the Yavanas is the emperor of Dai Viet (1175-1210) under the name of Li Cao-tôn, the king of Java is undoubtedly Kâmeçvara and the two kings of Champa are Suryajayarmadeva of Vijaya (Binh-Dinh), brother-in-law of Jayavarman VII and Sûryavarmadeva, of Pânduranga (Phan Rang), previous prince Vidyânanda, protégé of Jayavarman VII). Until the presumed death of Jayavarman VII in 1218, all the frontiers of the country were always and firmly under his control. It is after his death that the eastern and northern frontiers began to move. The last embassy the great monarch had sent to China goes back to 1200.

Jayavarman VII's realisations are considerable as it has been enumerated above. They are not all cited in this study. It is through his numerous works which bear highly important symbolist and religious significances that can be seen his immense personality. Let's G. Coedès describe his portrait. His description relies on the statue of Jayavarman VII shown at the second page of the present study: « Physically he is a corpulent man with heavy traits, bearing the hair drawn to the summit of his head where it is tied up in a little chignon...Through these exceptional biographic data arises the figure of an energetic and ambitious man who, after long years of waiting and testing, saves his country from the ruins and raised it to the apogee of its power ...⁴⁴ ». He is a man of iron will but who nevertheless bears an immense patience like the earth. He is also a statesman with exceptional political qualities who, sustained and pushed by an incomparable religious faith, prevented himself from taking actions against two usurpations of whom he was personally victim in order to avoid bloodsheds prejudicial to the highest interest of the kingdom, that of his father Dharanîndravarman II by Yaçovarman II and that of the latter by Tribhuvanâdityavarman. He is a great military strategist who knows to be patient and to wait for the good occasion before rushing to liberate the country from the foreign domination and subsequently going to invade the enemy country and subjugate it. He is a *chakravartin* king with exceptional organisation capabilities based on the total centralisation of the State power rendered possible thanks to a good network of

⁴¹ A. Dauphin-Meunier, Histoire du Cambodge, PUF, p.48

⁴² G. Coedès, Les Etats hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie, p.329

⁴³ G. Coedès, Les Etats hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie, p.314

⁴⁴ G. Coedès, Les Etats hindouisés d'Indochine et d'Indonésie, p.315

communications linking the capital to the farthest points of the empire and also the defence conception of the country absolutely genial and marvellous, based on the correspondence between the macrocosm that represents le divine sojourn in the Paradise and the microcosm that represents the same sojourn symbolically transposed at Nokor Thom. He is a sovereign particularly compassionate towards his subjects and who paternally and thoroughly takes care of their life and of their health as largely proven by his diverse foundations with exclusive religious character of which Preah Khan, Bayon, Ta Prohm and Neak Peân notably as well as numerous hospitals and rest houses.

Certain critics think that Jayavarman VII is megalomania. Here is what Madeleine Giteau thinks of him to this respect: « The work left by Jayavarman VII is considerable. His name is linked with not only Angkor Thom and Bayon but also with a considerable number of sanctuaries of which the town-temple of Preah Khan and the monastery of Ta Prohm. This monumental testimony of the political and religious organisation of the Khmer kingdom should not be considered as an ensemble of monuments erected by a fever of construction of a megalomaniac monarch. All charged with symbolism, the monuments should make Cambodia an unshakeable kingdom⁴⁵ ». Lawrence Palmer Briggs reports Georges Coedès's assertion, in 1935, in relation with these critics against Jayavarman VII: « The king, of whom scarcely more than the name was known in 1900, is now considered as the greatest sovereign of Cambodia, he who enlarged his country up to its extreme limits, incorporating therein for a time the kingdom of Champa, and covered his capital and his states with the most prodigious ensemble of monuments which monarch has ever conceived. ... This great prince who founded hospitals only by hundreds, distributed rice only by tons and dispensed gold only by hundred of kilograms, was he a megalomaniac whose foolish prodigality was one of the causes of the decadence of the country?⁴⁶ It is the same question that each Cambodian who wants to have a responsible judgment on this great sovereign normally has to pose to himself.



February 15, 2007

⁴⁵ Madeleine Giteau, *Histoire d'Angkor*, PUF, p. 93

⁴⁶ Lawrence Palmer Briggs, *The ancient Khmer Empire*, p. 236