

Sambor Prei Kuk

The Japanese University of Waseda is in charge of the study and restoration of the entire area, but so far only progress reports were produced. Previously Michel Tranet was charged by UNESCO to list all the details of the temples of Sambor Prei Kuk in 6 volumes with illustrations of all the monuments. Now, Apsara Authority has taken over the research and restoration.

First of all (in time), there were the polygonal brick temples of which many have collapsed but to them belong all the stone lintels found on the ground or assembled in and outside the small conservation room (in 2002) and photographed there.

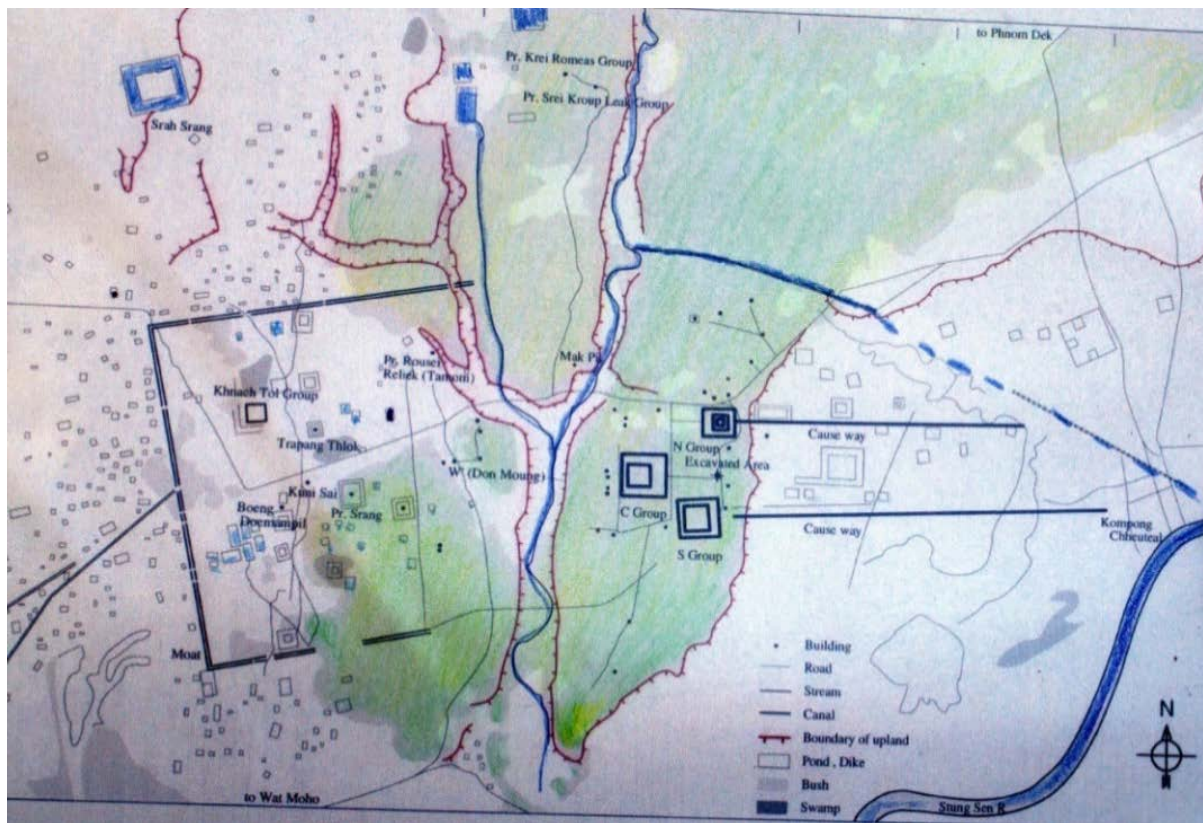
The origins - In the absence of decorated temples in the Angkor Borei/Phnom Da area, apart from the enigmatic unadorned Maha Rosei which was the focus of Early Preangkorean art (6th to 7th century), There was a great step in creativity in the invention of monstrous images carved on lintels. The lintel was over the door of the temple, over the entrance to the sacred site. Therefore the lintel had the sacred function to introduce the visitor to the god's statue erected inside.

At Tala Borivat (North of Kracet on the Mekong) its iconography precedes that of Sambor Prei Kuk, based on the components of the Tala Borivat's lintels being older lintels of Sambor comes from the dating of ceramics to the 4-5th century (Pipal). Tala Borivat could have been a commercial centre (rice and fisheries) that carried south, along with the Mekong line merchandise and other items from China, Thailand and Laos and from Kampong Cham to **Sambor Prei Kuk** and vice versa.

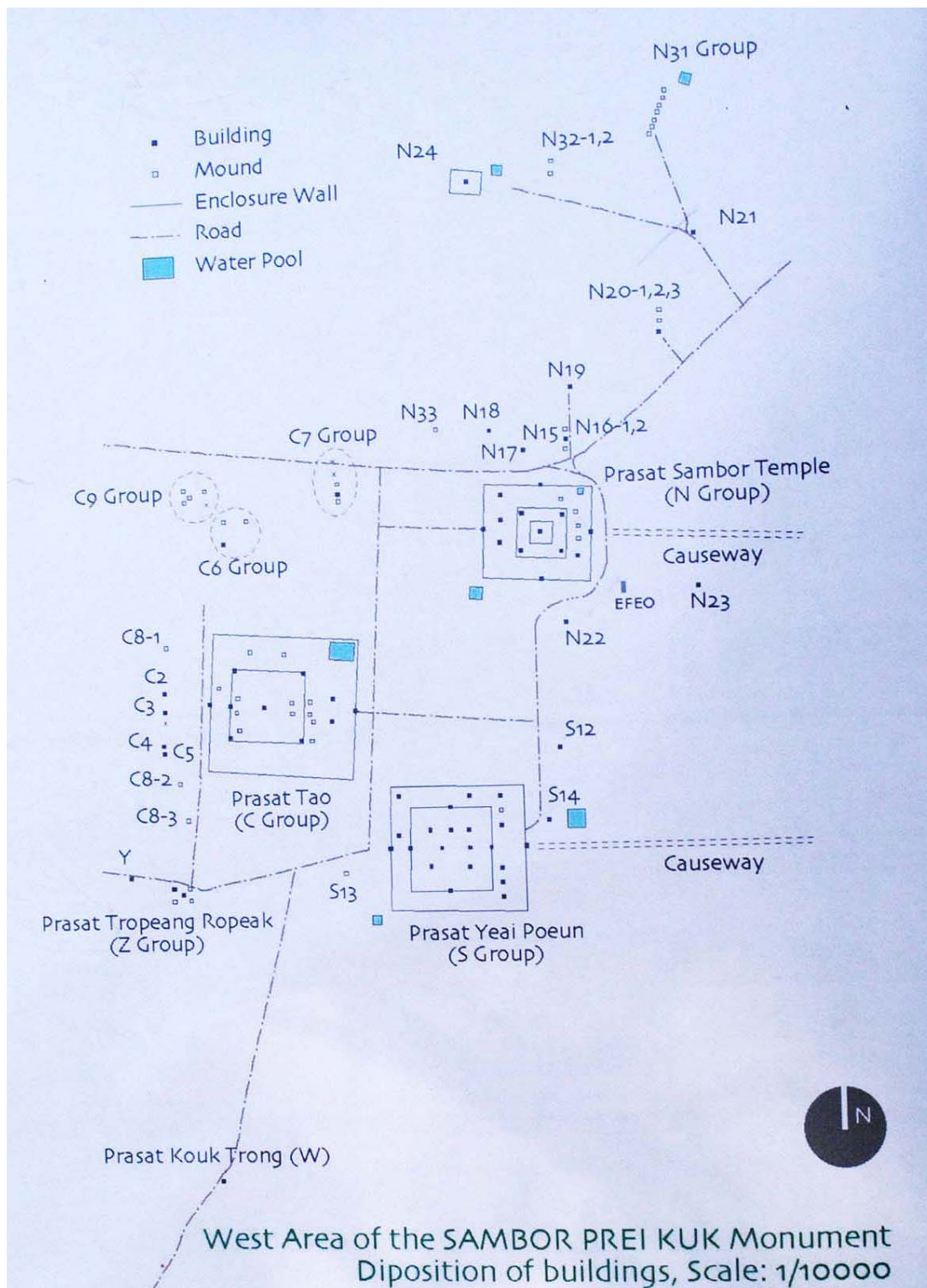
I believe that at Sambor Prei Kuk first of all there were dozens of small polygonal brick shrines decorated with the "flying palaces". In my opinion, the meaning of these decorative palaces is the idealized union of humans (of the Khmer aristocracy?), with gods in their earthly pleasures of drinking and conviviality "as it appears graphically".

At Sambor, contemporaneously to the polygonal brick shrines, or slightly later, 3 large stone, brick and mortar towers were built, also decorated with "Flying Palaces" carved externally on walls flanking doors. In 1927 Parmentier described with care the monuments of Sambor Prei Kuk in his Vol.2, pages 44-93.

Maps below



The area to the west with an enclosure wall (with a ramp) was part of the city of Ishvanapura. The religious portion is to the east (right) without enclosure had 3 large towers Prasat Sambor named (N group), Prasat Tao (C group) and Prasat Yeai Poeun (S group). They were surrounded by hundreds of polygonal brick shrines. A small river crossed the area, but the main water supply was from the Mekong to the southeast. The bottom right portion communicates with the navigable Stung Sien (affluent to the Mekong) river facilitating commerce with central Cambodia. The Saeng Sien River connects with the Tonle Sap Lake. The Khmers always searched locations easily connected to rivers.



Map by courtesy of Waseda university team and APSARA

The tall stone, brick and mortar tower of Sabor Prei Kuk are defined as;

- Northern group: **Prasat Sambor**
- Southern group: **Prasat Yeai Poeum**
- Central group: **S or Prasat Tao**

The archaeological park of Sambor Prei Kuk (Southeast of Kampong Thom) is so vast and fundamental to the art history of Cambodia that I prefer to split my research in chapters

Iconographic study of Sambor Prei Kuk

Principal events to be examined in detail

1. The two main towers
2. The Flying Palaces
3. Evolution of the Flying Palaces
4. The use of plaster and white paint
5. Evolution of the lintels
6. Visual narrative lintels
7. The carved walls
8. N.17 and its *kala* faces
9. Comments on Sambor iconography
10. personal view

1. *The two main towers*



Sambor Prei Kuk. The tower of Central group: S or Prasat Tao (picture by Roveda 2003)

This is probably the latest tower having the lintel over the three false doors in the Prei Khmeng style which is a style only a few decades younger than the Sambor Prei Kuk Style represented only by the lintel of the entrance door (eastern) that is carved with a Shivite scene under a strong serpent (naga).

At **Sambor Prei Kuk, Tower S1**. The lintels of the type shown above have evolved into having a straight arc with a bunch of leaves replacing the medallions and terminating with a large garland of leaves straight over the top of the colonette. From the arc things series of idealised jewellery in the shape of a descending lotus stem terminating with buds in between a series of chains of pearls or glass beads. The lintel has evolved in the **Prei Khmeng style**, considered contemporaneous or slightly younger. We will see the possible overlap of styles in time, at the end of the iconological comments. The arc has evolved in a series of leaf bunches making the continuous evolution into vegetal invasion even more evident. This lintel was carved on the ground and lifted in place with the help of wood posts inserted in the hole visible at the sides of the lintel.

This lintel of S.1 can still belong to the Prei Khmeng style, exceptionally with the ribbon-undulated arc. again with medallions of which the central is boarded into the image of *Kala's* head with confused vegetal elements instead of pure medallions.

The Central door with a much-damaged lintel with the arch made by an undulated nags serpent terminating (to the left) with a cobra head with 4 smaller heads. Over the arc there is a manly figure of a god over the god Indra on his elephant and men to the left and the right a line of active women devoted to the god Shiva

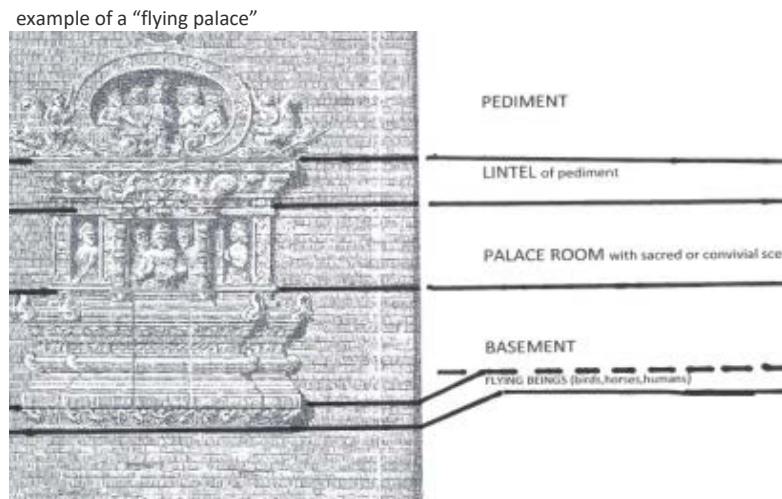
I am unable to attribute a style to this lintel, except that from Sambor Prei Kuk.



The Northern group: **Prasat Sambor**

2. The Flying Palaces.

It is accepted that Sambor Prei Kuk is a great source of decoration. What catches the eyes of visitors are the “Flying Palaces”. Their name derives from the rows of flying *hamsas* (ducks, horses, men and other flying beings) carved under the palace were gliding over beautiful Hearth and not-so-good humans. To facilitate their decoding I have sketched a Parmentier engraving defining a pediment at the top of the building in which people gather.



Below the pediment, the Palace usually has a space looking like a lounge with columns and often two side windows with figures peering out (usually women). At one Palace it seems that some of the carved guests had drunk too much, where a figure sits dishevelled in appearance after having left empty containers on a table. Most of the time the lounge was packed with people enjoying the party or waiting to be admitted to the upper floor with divine beings (?).

Below the central room, there is a thick basement of ornate floors. At the bottom of the basement, a line of flying beings is carved (*hamsas*) mixed with winged horses and humans. They are the ‘engine’ that makes the palace fly. The objective is to find a thread into the evolution of narrativity’s elements, to mentally narrate a story. This will reveal socio-economic and cultural elements of the Cambodian Culture of the time.

It is assumed that several workshops operated at Sambor: many in charge of the decoration of the brick towers with ‘Flying Palaces’ made to fly by lines of *hamsas* (mythological ducks) or any being with wings (horses, men, monsters). Other teams worked on the building and decoration at the edges of each elevation composing the roof; another was exclusive of the sandstone lintels and colonettes of the doors. Talented artists may have been called to work outside projects bringing back new ideas. There must have been a workshop for carpentry. It is also assumed there must have been a time gap between the carvings of these elements; consequently there were different ages in the completion of monuments.

It is believed that the polygonal brick shrines were built, carved and finished before the three towers. The towers had false doors with lintels. The tower S was the last to be built, considering it has lintels of the Prei Khmeng style and is of different (younger) age from the Sambor

Sambor Prei Kuk including the western walled city of Ishvarapura is a dreamy archaeological park that is more difficult to study than believed.



These two “Flying Palaces embody their entire characteristic, unfortunately, I do not have the number of the octagonal brick temples. The characteristics include:

1. The oval pediments are encased in divergent *makara* with the figure of a human rider. The pediment represents a small group of people (including Indra or Vishnu entertained in a sort of dancing ritual, or drinking ceremony)
2. A pediment under it and over the Palace’s room
3. A lame figure in the basement
4. A real line of flying mythological animals, mainly ducks for tradition. They support and make the Palace fly
5. The room is sometimes used to show a human figure, perhaps a king or the “owner” of the temple. Curiously there are differences in the dress of the girls. Usually, they are topless but with a long sarong, others with trousers. More interesting is the shape of the hat. As visible in the above right
6. Over the apex of the oval pediment, there is a hole in the brick wall (left picture) assumed to be for holding something special like a relic or a presumed relic later sealed by bricks of the wall (right picture)



Polygonal brick shrine with Flying Palaces on all the walls



Micro-lintels of the Flying Palaces



It is of particular interest to study the “flying palaces” relative to the invention of lintels, so often used in defining the age of monuments. In this palace, the elements are the curved arc with a central medallion and pendants of beads. *Makara* exists but is difficult to see. These features are thus the layout of Sambor Prei Kuk and the 7th century. Colonettes are supporting the lintel.



This Flying Palace shows the application of white stucco on the side of the head of the standing figure in the central room. All the religious constructions had probably been given a hand of white-wash and stucco around the figures to highlight them, and later painted. A curious scene was carved in the palace (bottom right), where a drunk man is supported by others after the abundant drinking that has indicated by discarded empty bottles on the table carved on the pediment.



Various types of flying beings make the Palace move in the sky of myths and legends.



Details of a crowded pediment (upper room)



Gods and divine figures assembled perhaps for a ritual on some pediments of 'Flying Palaces'. They are close together, as people at a party are in modern photographs.



Detail of an undignified figure after drinking possibly dreaming of a monstrous *kala*



Sambor - The Flying palaces wanted to tell us that there was a hierarchy in the use of the shrine, with the upper floor (pediment) reserved for visits of important figures (Gods, kings and princes) or such pretending to be divine persons. Alternatively, the pediments were preserved for Gods desiring to enjoy the life of Gods with tier assistants and wives.

3. Evolution of the Flying Palaces

When looking at the flying palaces in their totality, they contain a strong narrative potential. Furthermore, they satisfy the trend to embellish the architecture of the polygonal brick temples of the 7th century. The Palaces host only humans of different status and age, questionably of divine or semi-divine or early origin.

The origin of Cambodia from water may be reflected in the Preangkorean lintels carved with images of mythic snakes, such as *Kala*, *naga* and *makara*, all being mythological water creatures.

There is a great richness of detail and elegance, especially in the design of the pediment, no *kala* but also in the 2 diverging *makara* (eroded and degraded) appearing at the side of the pediment, with a curved arc and a single mini-medallion at the centres. As in several other lintels from early Sambor, large figures are carved on the tower's carved windows. There are female figures (girls) who appear wearing a tall felt conical hat, possibly from India or central Asia (Zoroastrians) or some other source. In the Cambodian groups located in the palace basement, there is a large discomposed (drunk, sleepy, enraged?) person; from the arc are pending beads (glass or pearls) and collars ending in lotus buds as in Sambor Prei Kuk's lintels.

The Flying Palaces wanted to tell us that there was a hierarchy in the use of the shrine, with the upper floor (pediment) reserved for visits of important figures (Gods, kings and princes) or such pretending to be divine persons. Alternatively, the pediments were preserved for Gods desiring to enjoy life on Earth, with tier assistants and wives

4. The use of plaster and white paint



Sambor Prei Kuk, Detail of a face which was modelled by hand in plaster over the core of bricks. After polishing, the sculpture was painted white, before a general white wash of the temple. Unfortunately, for this nature, the plaster crust detached easily from its carved brick support.



Sambor Prei Kuk - Examples of plaster layers of the decoration



Sambor Prei Kuk - A brick temple with traces of white coloured plaster, as well as the two “applied edifices” (Pasarmientier 1927) at both sides of the door, these decorations are of the same family as the Flying Palaces.



The thick coat of plaster was applied to the bricks and then white-painted as all the temple.

Sambor Prei Kuk lintels



A lintel on the ground in 2003. It has the typical elements of the Sambor style, *makaras* disgorging the arc which is undulated and supporting large medallions. Below the arc there is a series of hanging beads (pearls or glass) some terminating in a sort of lotus bud. The medallions as visible in the two pictures below represent:



Left picture: Indra on his elephant Airavata.



Right: medallion with a horse rider and a dog.
This picture is represented optically inverted



Sambor Prei Kuk. Sandstone lintel on the ground. The *makaras* are an open mouthed baring their teeth and converging to the central medallion; they look like they are expelling an animal or possibly a man or their thick tongues. They disgorge an undulated arc interspersed with medallions. The figure on the central medallion seems to be the god Indra on his elephant Airavata. The other two medallions have a man with a horse and a small animal (dog?). This lintel is identical to the one described on the previous page, demonstrating the persistent identity of the Sambor Prei Kuk style.



Same as above but with 3 medallions only. This is another lintel in the typical Sambor Prei Kuk style, with inward-looking makaras with open mouths and teeth generally with a man on its back.



A beautiful lintel of Sambor Prei Kuk is preserved at the Musée Guimet of Paris. (2003)



Sambor Prei Kuk – A very characteristic lintel of this style. The *makaras* stand over the capital of the colonettes.



Sambor Prei Kuk - Detail of the previous lintel showing clearly the face of a *kala* replacing the central medallion. *that* typifies this style.



The spectacular lintel of the Sambor Prei Kuk style in the Khmer collection of the Guimet Musée in Paris (Picture from internet). The *makara* is regurgitating a human figure (clear to the left) towards the central medallion with Indra on his elephant (Airawata)



Detail of the *makara*. At Sambor, they always converge to the centre of the lintel.



Detail of the *makaras* that at Sambor are always uniting with a human rider



Sambor Prei Kuk – It would be possible to consider this *somasutra* to have the head of a *kala*

5. Evolution of the lintels

An essay on the evolution of lintels from the Sambor Prei Kuk style into the Prei Khmeng style.



Sambor Prei Kuk. Thin lintel carved in the bricks presents a large wavy ribbon with the medallions becoming small made of a flower with leaves. It monitors the evolution. When the large vegetal medallions become rare and smaller but a more geometric bunch of leaves and when the bunch of leaves becomes much smaller the lintel will be of pure Prei Khmeng style.



Sambor Prei Kuk – The lintel is the same as in the previous picture. In this picture I show the overall decoration with a high dome-like design carved on bricks which anticipates a pediment. Here, it contains traces of edifices with small shrines occupied by the figure of the human face, as in *kudus*. This design pediment-looking design is the first in the history of Khmer art and that magnificently flourish in the Angkorian Period.



Sambor Prei Kuk – This sandstone lintel is carved with a highly positioned arc which bends in the Sambor Style but with the medallions replaced by deeply carved *kala's* heads. Over this lintel, the decoration is composed of an edifice completely degraded by now but with heavy large lateral volumes. At the centre of the very base, there is a heavily degraded Shrine containing what is similar to a recipient for rituals.



Sambor Prei Kuk - The stone lintel over the door is not in the Sambor style. The arc is rectilinear and decorated with 5 small bunches of leaves or flowers, one leaves sticking out at the top. Below the arc there are well-separated collars of glass beads or pearls, which when uniting at the base create a distinct U-shaped decoration. This lintel strike for its simplicity, not seen before in Khmer iconography. Thus I will name it **Transitional 1** lintel



Reussei Reliek northwestern area, is probably the best example of the **Prei Khmeng style** represented here to show the evolution of layouts and that of styles.



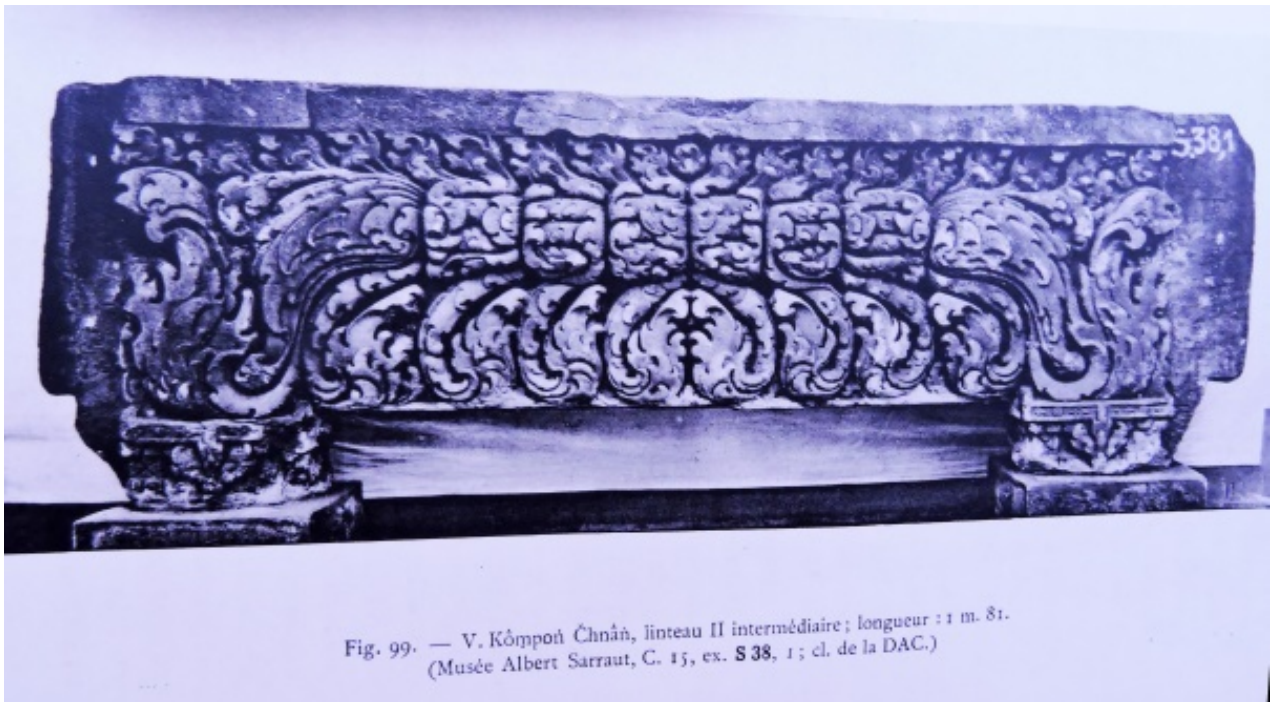
This lintel's layout is characterized by a flat rectilinear arc with 5 large tufts of leaves in the Prey Khmeng style. From the arc hung falling sets of the stems of leaves in between which emerge small bags of glass or pearls, almost invisible. The arc terminates with a robust lotus bud amongst its leaves; it stands over the flowery capital of the octagonal colonette. There are no *kala* or *makara*. This lintel reminds me of a variety of the style of Sambor Prei Kuk that I define as **Transitional 2 lintel**.



Sambor Prei Kuk, tower S1. Another unusual layout. The arc is rectilinear as on the previous lintel and again flat carrying large bunches of leaves; from the arc hangs a set of leaves with a space in between occupied by pendants of fine glass or pearls. The arc terminates with a large lotus bud with its petals. It stands over the capital of the octagonal colonettes; The capital looks like a herald shield. **Transitional 3 lintel**



Sambor Prei Kuk, tower S1 – This is another variety in the Sambor Prei Kuk style, The main difference with the previous lintels is in the massive arc as a line of lotus buds. Several other minuscule differences but they do not forbid the nomination as Transitional 4 lintel



(Pictures from Parmentier 1927 and 1936). The style of this lintel is entirely invaded by vegetal elements that is unknown and rare from the arc. I provisionally attribute it to an unknown Prei Khmeng style from an unknown locality.

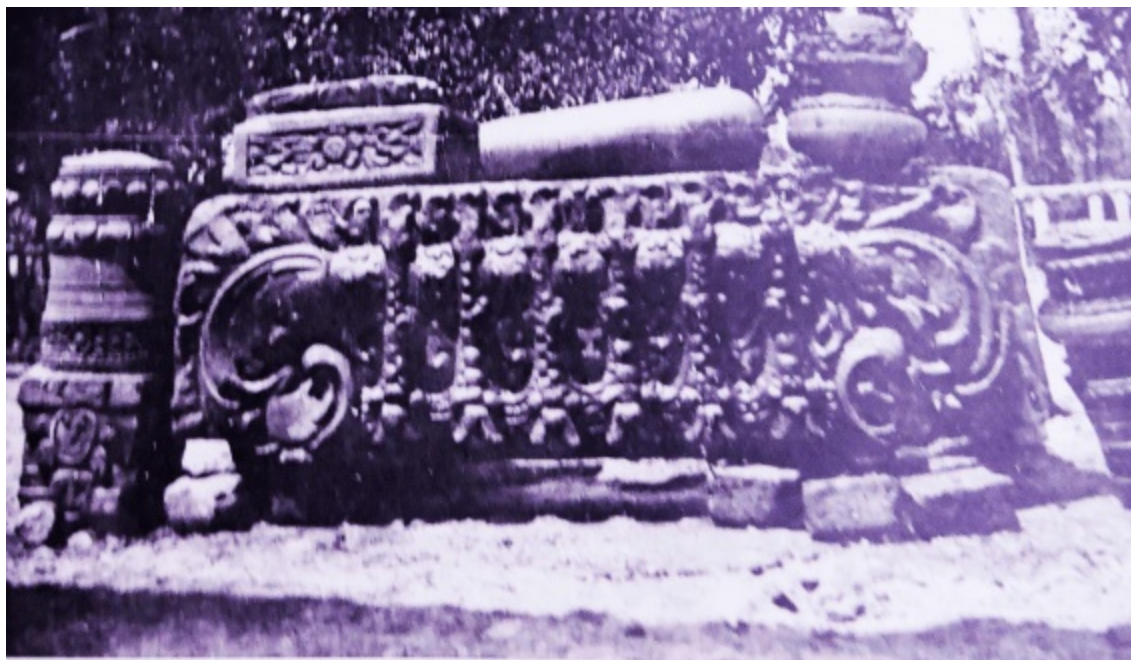


Fig. 33. — Pr. Ampil Rolin, linteau II intermédiaire et colonnettes de porte.

The lintel of Type II of Lunet

In his classic *L'Art Khmer primitif* of 1927, Parmentier published 5-6 pictures of lintels from Sambor and nearby areas; I have not seen these interesting lintels in any museum, thus I report only some ideas. The ones from Sambor are flat with a wavy arc with lines of pearls and medallions. The provenance is not always clear.

The lintel of this Parmentier illustrates a lintel of which the style appears to be rare, possibly a variety of the Prei Khmeng style. (Parmentier 1936)

Quite puzzling is the narration of Parmentier (1924:87-88) that edifices with lintels were stored at the pagoda of Wat En Khna. It turned out that the Wat (Buddhist monument) had a terrace supported by laterite blocks and two lintels of type 2 of Lunet de la Jonquiere. Fortunately, both lintels are now stored at the National Museum of Phnom Penh, each depicting scenes of devotion to Shiva (described here in the chapter of Sambor Prei Kuk), the Shivalinga (Parmentier 1924: and Fig.34 page 88) together with another lintel equally with scenes of a Shivaite ritual. I described them together with a third lintel from Tower S1 of Sambor, equally with a Shivaite celebration with women under a very thick naga.

6. Visual narrative of the lintels



Wat Ek Khna Lintel at the National Museum of Phnom Pemh (V.Roveda picture 2003)

The lintel presents a large band with three medallions, the central and larger with *Shivalinga* flanked by Brahma to the left and Vishnu to the right. To the side of the *linga*, lost in the foliage Parmentier could see the divine boar and the bird (looking as if they want to escape; agreed). The great flowers over the capitals show a figure holding a trident and others a fly whisk. The extreme figures are musicians (Coedes inscription IK 273).

The usual pendant of leaves and pearl beads is replaced here by a Brahmanic scene: brahmins paying homage to the figure of Shiva at the centre with spread legs and hands on knees seated on a throne under a canopy, probably a venerated statue of Shiva. The brahmins, with their hair pulled up in tall chignons, carry gifts. The two closest to the shrine seem to carry the poles of an indistinct object. The figures at the ends are musicians (Coedes inscription IK 273). The layout of the rows of Brahmins indicates movement converging slowly to the central shrine. This scene is the illustration of people moving towards the statue of a deity. There is a great effort to naturalism. The figure at the left of the statue is on his toes to reach the height needed to pour the anointment liquid and the figure to be anointed is seated in a relaxed position with one arm on his knee; the feet were also miniaturized because the size of the lintel required a compressed figure, still with all the details.



The central figure being anointed is Shiva in a small shrine



The central figure is a linga with the face of crowned Shiva

On the previous page, we have examined the very rare narrative lintel of Shivalinga that was discovered amongst the dispersed element abandoned around Sambor Prei Kuk and brought to safety at the Pagoda of Wat Ek Khna. Therefore we do not have the original provenance of the lintels. At Sambor, there are different types of lintels.

This narrative lintel that is surely from Sambor Prei Kuk, Tower S1 where remains in place, at the site it was originally installed. This broken lintel is dominated by the wavy arc of a naga serpent that has figures riding it and a complex scene below. I copy the interpretation of Henry Parmentier's 1937: 89, Fig.32



This lintel was originally over the east door of tower S1. This broken lintel is dominated by the wavy arc of a naga serpent that has figures over and under. In the interpretation of Henry Parmentier 1927, and my photographs it is possible to see over the snake two figures at the side of a larger central god riding a monster. The snake terminates with naga with open cobra heads, leaving space on which are armed warriors on lions. Below the snake, the scene is that of a ritual presentation of men to the left and by bare-chested girls to the right, to the central figure of a woman with a crown. It is a lintel probably dedicated to Shiva's wives.

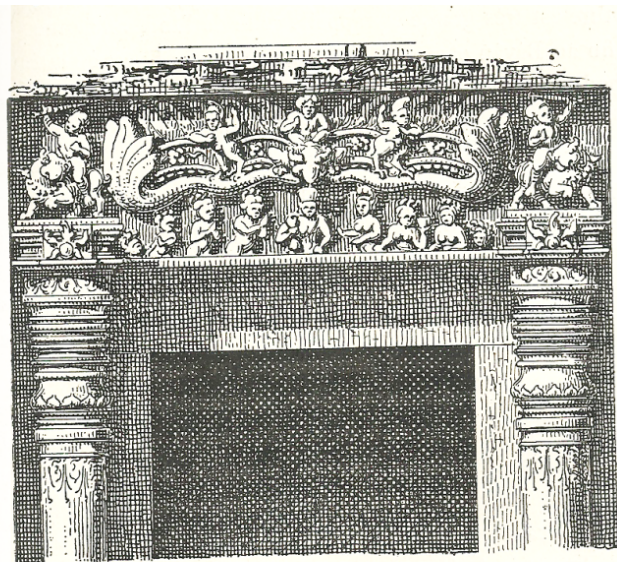


Fig. 97. — Sambor-Prei Kùk Sr. Linteau restauré de la porte d'entrée Est.
Ech. : 0 m. 04 p. m. (Le texte donne l'indication de l'état actuel.)

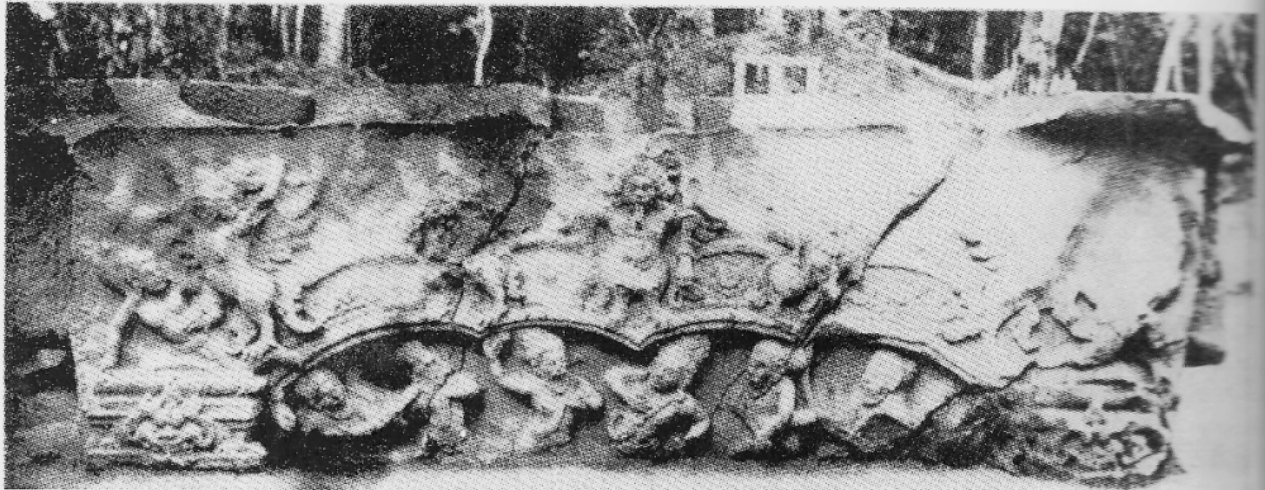
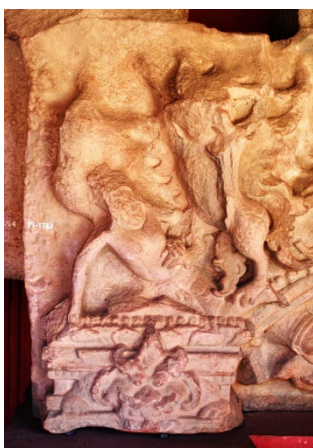


FIG. 13. Sambor-Prei Kuk: bas-reliefs with scenes.



Another very rare narrative lintel saved from the ruins of Sambor Prei Kuk and brought to a local refuge in the Sambor area before 1927 and then to the National Museum of Phnom is described below:



Sambor Prei Kuk – Picture taken in 2004, in naturel colors.

From the stone and bricks of tower S1 of Sambor Prei Kuk possibly comes this large lintel with two carved layers. The upper layer includes several arched bands with the medallions replaced by lions facing outwards with a central figure, possibly a garuda, carved frontally with the bird's lower claws, holding a heavy mace or club. The six men below, under the arc, are in a are leaning to the left with hair drawn back into a tall chignon and raised arm of the central one with tall chignon also leaning to the right together with two more brahmins, in an inebriated dance? The *makaras* have been eliminated. The two central figures have higher chignons and earrings meaning that they are figures of importance. The left picture displays a sort of flying garuda attacking or killing a man praying on the ground who fell to the ground on a capital carved with two embracing figures. The question of the

provenance of this interesting lintel, which is the first to be narrative in Khmer art history, is a mystery. If coming from Sambor Prei Kuk, it should be in grey sandstone that must be revealed under the layer of thick pink paint, and some details will also appear. There is also the possibility that this lintel is a fake and not the legendary one that had been hidden at the Eng Khna Pagoda. The black & white picture of 1950s shows better the winged lion (?) which is overpowering a man on the ground, located at the left end of the lintel.

In 1927, Henri Parmentier mentioned some temples from the western side of Sambor Prei Kuk that have disappeared. Fragments were brought from other temples and this has confused the issue of provenance, also because of the high level of narrativity in a period of simple geometric abstract forms and static layout. Fortunately, lintels 1 and 3 were transported to the National Museum of Phnom Penh.



Sambor Prei Kuk – Lintel found in the small conservation hut in 2004. Under the linear arc of the lintel there is an unidentifiable scene of ritual music with people paying homage to a central figure.



Sambor Prei Kuk – provenance and site of conservation unknown. The usual scene of a Shiva ritual is unfinished or very degraded.

7. The carved walls of Tower C



Sambor Prei Kuk - A subdued figure squashed in a circular structure



Sambor Prei Kuk - On the inner face of the circular carvings, there is the main figure normally at the centre, surrounded by figures contorted to fit the circular edge, making the interpretation of the scene difficult.



Sambor Prei Kuk - The brick wall around the main shrine in 2004

8. N.17 and its Kala faces - the old cell of Sambor Prei Kuk



The N17 Southern face of the cell is made of 4 vertical slabs of fine sandstone, one with an opening as a door, this basement is carved with a sequence of small temples containing a figure (see next page). Furthermore, over this monolithic base, the side walls are decorated with a motif of flat colons. The roof is also monolithic the edges decorated with a series of *kudus* with the head of a man looking out with the fingers of an arm as helping the man to escape from the window, the Kudu.



The N17 – The northern face of the cell was further damaged by the Khmer Rouge target shooting.



N17 cell of Samor Prei kuk. The man is an enthusiast of what he sees out from the kudu and perhaps thinks of escaping to freedom.....The decorative elements of the Cell were precisely executed, especially the basement with the small shrine with a staircase to a shrine containing a seated man, To the right is the alignment of the kudu of the roof, with evident hand's fingers.



N.17 Samor Prei Kuk carved decoration with kala (6-7th centuries)

The triangular composition with the face of a *Kala* in a circle was carved with great accuracy (pictured above). Being composed of sandstone slabs, the monument survived time and disasters. It probably belonged to a temple complex older than that of any of Sambor Prei Kuk.

The *kala* face was known in Cambodia well before the one from Indonesian influence proposed by de Coral-Rémusat in 1951 and followed by most scholars of the last centuries who believe *kala* arrived in Cambodia with Jayavarman.



Sambor Prei Kuk – *Kala* faces decorating the base of circular statue support.



Detail of the Kala face on the statue's pedestal found on the ground near tower N1



Sambor Prei Kuk, a kala biting the column of a Flying Palace

In conclusion, the period of Sambor Prei Kuk under the rule of kings of the Bhavarman dynasty was a period of intense creativity considering that there was no other art culture before in continental Southeast Asia, except that of the Oc'CEO culture. From nothing, in the early 7th century, the geniality of Khmer artists gave life to a vibrant art culture which perpetuated for many centuries (the end of the Bayon style at the end 13th century), and which has few equivalents in Western art.

9. Comments on the iconography of Sambor

Reviewing what happened in art before the Sambor Prei Kuk culture developed as well as deciding where to draw the probable boundary from proto to historic times and art. If it was that of the end of the culture of Oc-Ceo, or of others in peninsular Thailand and lower Laos mentioned in late inscriptions from central Cambodia. The art of Sambor flourished because had a stable political period of the Bhavavarman and Mahendravarman-Citrasena at the beginning of the 7th century—which created the first capital at Ishvanapura (Sambor Prei Kuk area). The kings of the Bhavarman dynasty were presumably concerned with having art workshops performing with elegance the sponsored requirements.

Contemporaneously, stone and wood statues of Vishnu and Buddha were carved at the end of the 6th century in the area of modern Phnom Da, near Angkor Borei, attesting to the existence of already important workshops. At Sambor four narrative lintels were carved in Tower S1 which show a high maturity in narrativity techniques that will not be seen until the Hariharalaya temples, Prah Bô and especially Lolei.

Sambor Prei Kuk art started with the delicate carving of the so-called “Flying Palaces” on the polygonal brick temples (from the 7th century). Innovations were probably derived from Indian architecture and decorative elements but were transformed into a clear Khmer style from Sambor, Kulen and later of Prah Kô and Lolei. The complexity of narrativity of three levels(floors) of the Flying Palace would require a long pre-existing period of gestation.

10. Personal view

As in all art history of continental Southeast Asia, images and their development depended essentially on the length of royal sponsorship, a sequence that inevitably included kings, one after the other, name after name unravelling the genealogy/chronology and History of Cambodia. The making of art depended on the length of the ruling of an art-prone king.

Khmer Art History is composed of styles that did not evolve from socio-economic or revolutionary events but by artists with the participation of a king. It is thus essential to follow simple management of styles which was made more difficult than believed because in the early 20th century the concept of style was little understood to date a period of history. The first scholar who simply introduced the concept of style was Lunet de la Jonquiere in 1902.

At the time when Jayavarman II descended from Kulen to Hariharalaya (800-803?) only the work had started for the construction of the future Bakong colossal pyramid. Jayavarman II had a particular interest in Hariharalaya where he lived for about 34-35 years(Jacques), in time to see King Indravarman I build 3 temple complexes: the state temple of Bakong, the temple to the ancestors Prah Kô and the Lolei temple related to water management (*baray*),(terminated later by Yashovarman I.

The Sambor style went through clear stages of evolution, as evidenced by the lintels of the S1.Tower steps of evolution. Tower S. 1 was the last to be decorated at Sambor before the different general layout and design of the Prei Khmeng style. The starting date of the evolution is not known, but according to de Coral-Rémusat the date may be after the second half of the 7th century, the Sambor style being of the first half of the 7th(de Coral-Rémusat: 1951:129). I think that the Pri Kmeng could therefore arbitrarily be taken as a marker of the middle 7th century.

Art History is sometimes falsified by the authors entangled in polemics defending their discovery, such as Stern (1938: 11-150), starting from his statement of 19 temples were built at Kulen during Jayavarman II presence. This is untrue because nothing is known of the length of Jayavarman II stay at Kulen and his building of 19 temples is absurd. Modern research indicates the existence of a pre-existing culture with its religious religion and traditions (Chevance et al, 2019) and that many temples existed before the arrival of Jayavarman II on Mount Kulen and the fantastic Lldar discoveries of the capital city of Mahendraparvata, do tell us anything about the movements of this Jayavarman II life.